



Universiteit Leiden

# Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Leadership Style and Sensitivity to Role Change and Traumatic Events

How is Erdoğan's leadership style reflected in the interactions between Turkey and the EU?

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*“As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personalities make.” – Henry Kissinger, 1975*

## **Introduction**

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is one of the most debated leaders these days (Görener & Ucal, 2011). By carrying out several remarkable actions, like winning the elections four times in a row, building a presidential palace, introducing Islamic policies, limiting the freedom of speech, hunting Gülenists, threatening to blow up the refugee-deal, putting members of parliament in jail and changing the Turkish constitution through a referendum, he managed to attract the attention of the Turkish and international community over and over again (BBC, 17/04/2017). Erdoğan is number eight in the top 500 most powerful Muslims, leaving many sheiks and emirs behind (Muslim500, 2017). Some see him as a hero, others call him a dictator. What kind of leader is he? A relevant question to raise, given the great deal of influence he exerts not only in Turkey, but also in Europe and the Middle-East (Görener & Ucal, 2011). Due to the referendum on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2017, Erdoğan will remain the strongest man of Turkey in the new presidential system, at least until 2029 (NOS, 17/05/2017). This makes it important to get a better understanding of his leadership style. Most information about Erdoğan is based on opinions and subjectivity. However, this research will try to assess his leadership style in a more objective and systematic way by using Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis. This method provides a framework to determine Erdoğan's scores on seven different leadership traits. By studying these leadership traits in three different time periods, his sensitivity to role change and traumatic events will be examined. Are his leadership traits rather stable, or do they change over time? After assessing Erdoğan's leadership traits and sensitivity to change, it will be discussed how his leadership traits are reflected in the interactions between Turkey and the EU. The larger aim of this extensive study on Erdoğan's leadership traits is to enhance the understanding of the current political decisions being made in Turkey and to stress the importance of the role political leaders play in international relations.

## **Literature review**

In the field of international relations there is a tendency to turn a blind eye to the role individual leaders play on the world stage. International conflicts are often being explained by looking at structural causes. Political scientists then argue that in the end individuals are overruled by the roar of the anarchic system, domestic politics or institutional dynamics (Byman & Pollack, 2001). These scientists focus on impersonal causes at what can be called the macrolevel of analysis (Byman &

Pollack, 2001). Macrolevel explanations for foreign policy can be found in for instance the realist or liberalist tradition in international relations. In these traditions foreign policy is understood as a response to certain structural factors (Heywood, 2014). Also in the case of Turkey most studies focus on structural causes when explaining the country's foreign policy (Görener & Ucal, 2011). The role of leaders is disregarded. Keyman (2016), for example, writes about Turkey's foreign policy without even mentioning the name Erdoğan once. He claims that Turkey's foreign policy changed from a proactive to a buffer state role and explains this by presenting two structural causes: the influence of international threats and Turkey's power position in the international system (Keyman, 2016). The international threats that shape Turkey's current foreign policy are the refugee crisis and the ISIL crisis (Keyman, 2016). According to Keyman (2016), Turkey responds to those crises in a way that strokes with its position in the international system: Turkey's foreign policy had to meet the expectations of the West and the US, therefore Turkey has become a buffer state, protecting the West from the crises. Keyman (2016) assumes that Turkey will respond in a logical way to the existing threats and power structures. By doing this he neglects the great influence president Erdogan has in this case (Okuy & Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). In fact it is Erdoğan who determines whether or not Turkey will play this buffer state role any longer. Several times he has threatened the EU with 'opening the gates'. He could do this as a reaction to any dispute involving the EU, which would put an end to Turkey's buffer state role (Okuy & Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016).

Another study on Turkey focusses on its foreign policy in the Gulf region and explains this by looking at Turkey's economic interests. It says "although there are some explicit political and security dimensions to Turkish foreign policy in the Gulf region, the overall rationale is economic (Hürsoy, 2013 p. 503)". It means that the quality of Turkey's relations with the Gulf region mainly depends on the interconnectedness between Turkey and the Gulf in terms of trade and business (Hürsoy, 2013). Hürsoy (2013) argues that it are economic structures and interests that determine Turkey's attitude towards the Gulf. He only briefly discusses the influence of the Justice and Development Party on Turkey's foreign policy attitudes and its interactions with the Middle East, but does not zoom in on the role of political leaders in these interactions.

These structural arguments are problematic, because there are exceptional cases to find of states that do not behave in line with their economic interests, their capabilities or the existing power structures or international threats (O Fordham, 2011). Structural theories cannot explain all of the variance between states (Byman & Pollack, 2001). For example, it is impossible to explain twentieth-century politics by just looking at economic or power structures without taking Hitler, Stalin, Roosevelt or Gandhi into consideration (Byman & Pollack, 2001). Structural theories have been criticised for ignoring the importance of the individual's capacity and will in international relations.

They are “failing to grasp the importance of the leadership that gives meaning to structures outside and inside of the state” (Görener & Ucal, 2011, p. 359-360).

Although it may not be common to take political leaders into consideration when studying foreign policy, Görener & Ucal (2011) state that it does matter who makes a political decision, because these decisions go back to a leader’s personality type and the way the brain functions. The idea that individual-level variables can enhance the understanding of state behaviour is becoming more widely accepted (Gorener & Ucal, 2011). Findings of many studies support this claim and show the relationship between a leader’s worldview and how confrontational, how active in taking initiatives, how likely to impose sanctions on others or how likely to join military interventions a country is (Snyder, 1991; Hagan, 1994; Driver 1977; Hermann & Kegley, 1995). Charles Hermann (1990) also stresses the importance of political leaders. He names change in a leader’s international role and behaviour as one of the four main reasons for large-scale foreign policy change. If a leader has the conviction, energy, authority and power, he can impose his own vision on the foreign policy and change the course of his government (Hermann, 1990). Hermann (1990) assumes not all leaders can do this, therefore it is interesting to look at the existing differences between leaders and examine their traits, since leadership traits are the building blocks of a leader’s world view. As Kesgin points out, leadership traits “affect the personal orientation to behaviour, which in turn shapes one’s general orientation to foreign affairs” (Kesgin, 2013, p.138).

Margaret Hermann is a prominent researcher when it comes to leadership traits. Her studies show how international conflicts can be understood by examining the personal characteristics and orientations of leaders (Hermann, 1980). Hermann analysed the content of what political leaders say and by doing this she developed an at-a-distance-method to assess leadership style: the Leadership Trait Analysis. She distinguishes certain characteristics of leaders and found out to which attitudes these can lead. For example, the need to establish relations, the ability to consider alternatives, little suspiciousness of others, no overriding concern with the own nation and little interest in initiating action can lead to a participative attitude. This means that the leader is willing to cooperate in the international arena. On contrary, leaders who lack these aspects have a more independent attitude. They are not very willing to cooperate, distrustful of others and their own nation comes first (Hermann, 1980). It is likely that whether a leader has a participative attitude or an independent attitude will influence international relations to a great extent, because political leaders do not only influence their country’s foreign policy, but they also shape the reactions of other nations (Byman & Pollack, 2001). This makes the characteristics of political leaders worth including in the study of international relations. Especially when there are little institutional constraints or checks and

balances and the power is concentrated in the hands of one leader, it is very useful to assess the leadership style of that leader (Byman & Pollack, 2001). This is the case in Turkey at the moment.

Leader dominance has always been an important feature of the Turkish party system and its political culture (Görener & Ucal, 2011). In Turkey individuals are more important than ideologies, there is a lack of intra-party democracy and the checks and balances are weak (Görener & Ucal, 2011). The amount of power Erdoğan has illustrates this. Specifically nowadays, when Erdoğan is rapidly enlarging his power, his leadership is worth examining (Winter, 2016). "Erdoğan's great popularity, and his command of a large percentage of the popular vote, provides him with a virtually unchallengeable authority in the current political context" (Görener & Ucal, 2011, p.359). Turkey's current domestic and foreign policy cannot be studied without taking Erdoğan's leadership qualities into consideration, because he has clearly influenced the major decisions made in foreign and domestic policy (Arik & Yavuz, 2015). Therefore this study will try to enhance the understanding of Erdoğan's leadership style.

According to Hermann (1980), in order to establish a complete leadership profile it is necessary to analyse different periods of a leader's tenure in office, include contextual factors in the analysis and examine whether any changes in leadership traits occur. This is important, because a change of context can lead to a change in leadership traits (Malici, 2006, p.130). When comparing how Erdoğan was depicted by the media during his first term as prime minister with how he is depicted nowadays, there seems to be a world of difference (BBC, 17/04/2017). In the beginning he seemed to be, using Margaret Hermann's terms, a conciliatory leader carrying out a participatory foreign policy. He had a cooperative attitude towards the EU and searched for rapprochement (Dağı, 2006). In 2004 he was even chosen by the European Voice as 'European of the Year' (Kirk, 2004). Dağı (2006) explains Erdoğan's cooperative attitude. According to him Erdoğan needed the EU to consolidate his power within Turkey. He used the EU-discourse on democracy and human rights to weaken the power of the military and other radical secularist forces in the country, that were threatening his position. This discourse provided him with legitimacy in his confrontation with the Kemalist, secularist centre (Dağı, 2006). However, nowadays, more than 12 years later, there is not much left of this human rights discourse and pro-EU attitude of Erdoğan. His participatory attitude disappeared and now he could better be described as an aggressive leader carrying out an independent foreign policy (Hermann, 1980). The man that was once called 'European of the Year' is turning Turkey into an authoritarian state and becoming its dictator (Winter, 2016). A small majority of 51% of the Turkish people voted in favour of the enlargement of Erdoğan's power during the referendum on the 16th of April, 2017. He is still supported by a large group of Turks, who consider him a charismatic and strong leader (Görener & Ucal, 2011). However, many others condemn his actions and see him as an aggressive

leader, seeking for confrontation (Görener & Ucal, 2011). His relationship with the EU is completely different now than in the beginning and rather characterized by conflict than cooperation (Winter, 2016). It is clear that something has changed, therefore this study will pay attention to the possibility of change in Erdoğan's leadership traits.

One of the scientists that has examined the possibility of change in leadership is Renshon. Renshon (2008) has examined the influence of role change, traumatic events and learning in office on the belief system of George W. Bush. For role change and traumatic events he found support (Renshon, 2008). Also other studies on different leaders argue that role change and traumatic events can change a leader's belief system (Tetlock, 2005; Robison, 2011; Hermann, 2002). In the current study it is assumed that these findings about belief systems are also applicable to leadership traits, because some traits are in fact beliefs. For example the trait: 'belief in ability to control events' (Hermann, 2005). How beliefs and traits relate to each other will be discussed in more detail later. The influence of role change and the influence of traumatic events will be tested in this research. These two ideas on change in leadership traits have never been applied to the case of Erdoğan before. The idea that change in leadership traits can occur when a leader accepts a new institutional role, is based on the assumption that a leader's behaviour is a reflection of what his tasks are according to his institutional position (Cuhadar et al., 2017). The other possible reason for change in leadership traits is a traumatic event the leader and his nation have experienced. Here the traumatic event functions as a contextual clue to which the leader will respond, which will be explained later (Walker & Schafer, 2006). Given the limited scope of this research it is not possible to analyse Erdoğan's whole tenure in office. Therefore the focus is on a period in which it is likely that changes have occurred. The period that will be examined encompasses both a change of roles and a traumatic event. The purpose of this study is to assess Erdoğan's leadership style and his sensitivity to role change and traumatic events in particular, in order to create a better understanding of the current political decisions being made in Turkey. This will be done by examining Erdoğan's leadership style and the possibility of change in his leadership traits from the beginning of Cabinet Erdoğan III in July 2011 until the end of his first year as a president in August 2015. This leads to the following research question:

*Which leadership style does Erdoğan have, and to which extent is he sensitive to role change and traumatic events?*

Furthermore, this research will provide a contextual analysis of Erdoğan's leadership style. According to Hermann this is necessary to "add depth and nuance to the more general profile constructed" (Hermann, 2005, p.16). In this part the following extra question will be answered:

*How is Erdoğan's leadership style reflected in the interactions between Turkey and the EU?*

## **Theoretical framework**

### ***How to define leadership style?***

First of all it is important to clarify what is meant by leadership style in this research. A comprehensive definition of leadership style is developed by Hermann and Kaarbo: “the ways in which leaders relate to those around them, whether constituents or other leaders – how they structure interactions and the norms, rules and principles they use to guide such interactions” (1998, p.244). A variety of research has shown which factors can determine the leadership style of a political leader. Examples are a leader’s personality (Hermann, 2005) or a leader’s belief system (Renshon, 2008). According to Hermann personality can be conceptualized as seven different leadership traits: belief in ability to control events, conceptual complexity, need for power, distrust of others, ingroup bias, self-confidence and task orientation. She developed the Leadership Trait Analysis, which is a model to assess leadership style (Hermann, 2005). It provides a framework to determine whether a leader scores high, average or low on a leadership trait. Hermann has examined more than 122 different leaders, resulting in a logic about which traits lead to what kind of behaviour. For example, a high score on conceptual complexity and low score on self-confidence, make a leader more open to his environment (Hermann, 2005). A leader’s openness to his environment is useful information when predicting his actions, also in the case of Erdoğan. It can enhance the understanding of the current political decisions being made in Turkey, which is the larger aim of this study. Besides Erdoğan’s openness to his environment, it is relevant to know how he reacts to constraints and what his reasons are for seeking office. These are the three factors that Hermann (2005) interrelated, what resulted in eight different leadership styles, shown in table 1 (Hermann, 2005).

Table 1: Leadership style as a function of responsiveness to constraints, openness to information, and motivation

Responsiveness to Constraints	Motivation		
	Openness to Information	Problem Focus	Relationship Focus
Challenges Constraints	Closed to information	<b>Expansionistic</b> <i>Focus is on expanding one's power and influence</i>	<b>Evangelistic</b> <i>Focus is on persuading others to accept one's message and join one's cause</i>
Challenges Constraints	Open to information	<b>Incremental</b> <i>Focus is on maintaining one's manoeuvrability and flexibility while avoiding the obstacles that continually try to limit both</i>	<b>Charismatic</b> <i>Focus is on achieving one's agenda by engaging others in the process and persuading them to act</i>
Respects Constraints	Closed to information	<b>Directive</b> <i>Focus is on personally guiding policy along paths consistent with one's own views while still working within the norms and rules of one's position</i>	<b>Consultative</b> <i>Focus is on monitoring that important others will support, or not actively oppose, what one wants to do in a particular situation</i>
Respects Constraints	Open to information	<b>Reactive</b> <i>Focus is on assessing what is possible in the current situation given the nature of the problem and considering what important constituencies will allow</i>	<b>Accommodative</b> <i>Focus is on reconciling differences and building consensus, empowering others and sharing accountability in the process</i>

Source: Hermann (2005), in Post, J. (2005). *Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders : With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*, chapter 8, p. 185



### ***What is known about change in leadership traits?***

There is plenty of literature available on political leadership, however little research has been carried out on change in leadership traits. Traditionally, traits are assumed to be patterns of behaviour that are stable across time and cannot change (Johnson, 1997). However, more recent studies contest this (Robert & Mroczek, 2008; Winter, 2005). Winter (2005) argues that personality traits can change across time, because they react to opportunities and obstacles provided by situational contexts. However, at the same time “personality can be defined as a series of embodied contexts”, what makes it complex (Winter, 2005, p.574). Hermann, on the other hand, writes that if a trait does not change while the situational context is changing, stability of this trait can be seen as a personality characteristic itself (Hermann, 1980). Research on change in leader’s belief systems shows that it is possible for leaders to change, that some leaders are more likely to change than others and that some characteristics of a leader are more likely to change than others (Cuhadar, et al., 2017). This points at a variability in change between different leaders and different characteristics. Although these results come from research on belief systems, they may also be useful here, given the lack of information on change in leadership traits and because Hermann (2005) also pays attention to beliefs, like the ‘belief in ability to control events’. Renshon describes what beliefs are: “beliefs structure and order reality for decision makers and help them to sort the signals in their environment from the noise. They exert a tremendous influence on how leaders interpret information, perceive the social environment, and make decisions” (2008, p.821). Whereas Hermann (1980) focusses on the leader’s behavioural traits, by examining how leaders structure interactions, Renshon (2008) focusses on the perceptions of the leader. However, if change in perceptions of the leader is possible, change in behaviour is also possible, because psychological research shows that the perceptions someone has influence his behavioural traits (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). For example, the belief that conflict and dangers are lurking everywhere in the world makes leaders less capable of settling conflicts peacefully (Brummer, 2016). This belief goes together with the trait ‘distrust of others’. Leaders with a high distrust of others also see conflict and dangers lurking everywhere and are less capable of settling conflicts peacefully (Hermann, 2005). Here we see a link between beliefs and traits: if someone has the belief that the world is highly conflictual, he will score high on the behavioural trait ‘distrust of others’, since his beliefs influence his behaviour (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). Given the lack of information on change in traits and the link between beliefs and traits, in this research ideas on change in leadership that are mostly applied to a leader’s beliefs, will be taken into consideration when studying a leader’s traits.

### ***Reasons for change in leadership traits***

Firstly, it is argued that leadership traits can change due to role change (Cuhadar et al, 2017). Role change can be defined as “a change in the shared conception and execution of typical role performance and role boundaries” (Turner, 1990, p.88). According to the institutional perspective, leadership traits are being determined by the leader’s institutional role. How a leader behaves is a reflection of what his tasks are according to his institutional position (Cuhadar et al, 2017). Roberts (2007) explains this. When we occupy a new role, a process of adaptation and socialization starts to take place. People adapt to the role they have, because a role comes with certain expectations of how to behave. If the individual meets those role-expectations he will be rewarded and accepted, however if he does not live up to the role-expectations, he will be punished (Roberts, 2007). In the case of Erdoğan, as a president in a democratic system this could be for example a punishment in the form of a loss of votes in the next presidential elections (Roberts, 2007). This idea of reward and punishment could be a reason for Erdoğan to adapt to his new role. A second reason why his leadership traits could change is because he will go through new experiences in his new role. For example, as a president the people surrounding him might behave differently towards him and treat him with more respect. Adult personality development studies show that these role-specific experiences and interactions with others are associated with personality trait change (Roberts, 2007). Thirdly, leadership trait change is likely, because Erdoğan will go through a process of ‘role learning’. Role learning may be induced by inter or intra role-conflicts, when for example a president defines his role in the administration differently than the members of his cabinet do (Harnish, 2012). This was also the case with Erdoğan. Immediately after he became president there were tensions between him and the new prime minister Davutoğlu (Letsch, 2016). Erdoğan was enlarging his own role and thereby interfering in Davutoglu’s role. He forced the prime minister to play a backseat role, what eventually led to Davutoğlu’s resignation (Letsch, 2016). This role-conflict may have made Erdoğan more prone to role learning (Harnish, 2012). If there is more role learning, a change in behaviour is more likely. A fourth aspect that makes leadership trait change likely in Erdoğan’s case is that the role of president has a very different task description in the Turkish constitution than the role of prime minister (Cuhadar et al, 2017). Where the prime minister is the supervisor of the governments general policy, the president is the ‘head of state’, who has to guarantee the unity of the Turkish nation and the implementation of the Turkish constitution. The more difference between the roles, the more likely change in leadership traits is (Cuhadar et al, 2017).

Secondly, Walker and Schafer (2006) argue that traumatic events can affect the beliefs of a leader. For example, these events can make the leader more negative and conflict-oriented (Walker & Schafer, 2006). The traumatic event functions as a contextual cue to which the leader will respond,

which may lead to a change in trait scores (Hermann, 2002). As a reaction to a traumatic event, two types of change can occur (Renshon, 2008). A leader's existing beliefs can be consolidated, because he does not know how to deal with a new situation of crisis and therefore falls back to his original beliefs (Renshon, 2008; Tetlock, 2005; Robison, 2011). Or, a leader's beliefs can be reversed. For example, before the traumatic event the leader thought he could trust the people around him and after the event he becomes distrustful of others and afraid that more traumatic events will happen (Renshon, 2008). By measuring the leader's trait scores before and after an event it can be examined if the leader was affected by the event or not (Hermann, 2002). Looking at several studies on change in leadership, their results point into different directions. In some studies the leader does change due to a traumatic event and in other studies he does not. Striking is that in none of these studies it is defined what is actually meant by 'traumatic event'. Some speak only of an 'event', others say 'traumatic event' or 'exogenous shock'. Tetlock defines an 'exogenous shock' in his book as 'anything that falls outside the expert's framework' (2005, chapter 4). They do not need to be measured on a micro level, but can also be big, like a financial crisis. Generally these exogenous shocks are unexpected. The expert, in this case the political leader, does not know how to fit the event into his cognitive framework, because he has never experienced something like that before. There are two ways for the expert to deal with the event: ignore it and exclude it from their models or incorporate it, which messes up their models but also increases the absorptive capacity (Tetlock, 2005). Robison (2011) and Renshon (2008) do not define the 'traumatic event'. They examine the 9/11 terror-attacks, which is easy to agree upon that these count as a traumatic event. Hermann (2002) gives some examples of 'events' that could influence leadership traits: negotiations, international agreements, scandals, or crises. Building on Renshon (2008), Tetlock (2005), Robison (2011) and Hermann (2002) we define a traumatic event in this research in the following way: an unexpected, exogenous, unprecedented event that happens beyond the control of the expert, falls out of the expert's cognitive framework and causes a shock for the expert and his country.

Several traumatic events have happened during Erdoğan's rule. Two events in particular could have influenced Erdoğan's leadership traits, because of their grandeur: the Gezi Park Protests in 2013 and the Coup Attempt of the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2016. Given the limited scope of this research it is not possible to examine them both.<sup>1</sup> The traumatic event that this study will focus on is the Gezi Park Protests. The Gezi Park Protests started on the 31st of May 2013 as a small protest by environmentalists against the government's destruction of Gezi Park, a public park in Istanbul (Onbaşı, 2016). However,

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<sup>1</sup> The Coup Attempt of the 15th of July 2016 is a very recent event, of which it is still unsure what the actual cause was (Gunter, 2016). Some people argue that Erdoğan himself partly orchestrated it (Fontanella-Khan, 2016). This makes it unclear whether it can be counted as an exogenous event, which was completely beyond the leader's control. Therefore in this research the Coup Attempt will be left out of account. However, the influence of the Coup Attempt on Erdoğan's leadership is an interesting topic to examine in the future.

it rapidly escalated into a nationwide protest that created a situation of chaos, lasting for two months. Many different groups of people united and joined the protests that were not about the park anymore, but an outburst of resistance towards Erdoğan's perceived authoritarianism. In 80 out of 81 cities demonstrations took place, with 3,611,208 people participating in 5,532 protests (Onbaşı, 2016). The Turkish government ended the protests by using excessive police force, for which it was criticised by the international community. 22 people died, 8000 people got injured and more than 3000 people were arrested (Elsen-Ziya & Erhart, 2015). It was 'one of the most turbulent periods in the history of the Turkish Republic' (Onbaşı, 2016)<sup>2</sup>. This research will examine whether Erdoğan's leadership traits have changed after the Gezi Park Period.

It is hard to shape the expectations of this research, given the wide variety of results from previous studies: some provide evidence for leadership change, others for stability. Based on Erdoğan's leadership profile as established by Görener and Ucal (2011), Erdoğan is not the type of leader whose traits are likely to change over time, since he is not very sensitive to his environment. However, Görener and Ucal (2011) focussed on a time period from 2004 until 2009. During this period Erdoğan had not changed roles yet and a traumatic event comparable to the Gezi Park Protests had not taken place yet. Therefore in this research, which will focus on a later period, it is expected to see a change in Erdoğan's leadership traits, based on what is written about him by scholars and journalists. His image changed completely, from 'European of the Year' to 'Dictator' and it is argued that he became more authoritarian (Gunter, 2016). Also given the existing studies on role change and traumatic events, a change in Erdogan's leadership traits is possible. Firstly, I expect the Gezi Park Protests have made Erdoğan more authoritarian, more negative and more conflict oriented (Walker & Schafer, 2006). This might be reflected in higher scores for 'distrust of others' and 'need for power'. Secondly, I expect that Erdogan will adapt his leadership style to his new role as president, because he does not want to be punished in the next elections, because he will go through new experiences, because there has been a role conflict in his administration and because of the big difference in task description between the two roles.

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<sup>2</sup> See Funda Gençoğlu Onbaşı's study *Gezi Park protests in Turkey: from 'enough is enough' to counter-hegemony?* (2016) for an extensive analysis of what happened before, during and after Gezi.

## Research design

This research combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The question '*Which leadership style does Erdoğan have and to which extent is he sensitive to role change and traumatic events?*' is answered by a quantitative content analysis, based on Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis. The aim is to assess Erdoğan's leadership style and find out whether any statistically significant changes occur in his leadership traits due to role change or a traumatic event. The last part of the research will be a qualitative analysis in which the leadership style found in the first part will be put into context. This will be done by a literature study. In this part the question '*How is Erdoğan's leadership style reflected in the interactions between Turkey and the EU?*' will be answered.

In the first part of the research the technique of content analysis is applied to three different phases:

1. **Phase 1: July 07, 2011 – May 30, 2013**

This phase starts with the beginning of Erdoğan's third term as a prime-minister. The third Erdoğan Cabinet was formed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 (Alchetron Encyclopaedia). This phase ends with the beginning of the Gezi Park Protests, seen as a traumatic event, on the 31<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 (Onbaşı, 2016).

2. **Phase 2: August 5, 2013 – August 27, 2014**

This phase starts when the Gezi Protests came to an end. Also in August there have been protest in Turkey, some of them in the spirit of the Gezi Movement, however these protests were only sporadic and have not been linked to the Gezi Period, because during the Gezi Period there were protests almost every day which were more severe than the few smaller protests in August (Onbaşı, 2016). This phase ends when Erdogan changed his role as prime-minister for the role of president on August 28, 2014.

3. **Phase 3: August 28, 2014 – August 28, 2015**

This phase encompasses Erdogan's first year as the president of Turkey. Currently, in 2017, he is still president, however given the limited scope of this research only his first year as a president is taken into account here.

By using this division of time the influence of both role change and traumatic events on Erdogan's leadership style can be tested. For each period Erdoğan's leadership traits will be determined. Phase 1 will be compared to phase 2 and phase 2 will be compared to phase 3, to see if any changes occur. Independent T-tests will be used to see whether the possible changes are statistically significant.

The content analysis focusses on the seven leadership traits conceptualized by Hermann (2005). To determine Erdogan's scores on these traits, the computerized programme Profiler Plus is used.<sup>3</sup> The main advantages of using a computerized coding system are that it is highly systematic and objective, there is no researcher-bias and it makes it possible to analyse the text on a deeper level (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004).

The data consists of Erdoğan's verbal output in interviews. By using spontaneous material instead of speeches the analysis of Erdogan's leadership style will be more accurate. There will be no speechwriter-bias (Hermann, 2005). To avoid an 'interviewer-bias' the interviews come from different news sources. For example Turkish, Arabic, American, English, French, Danish and Italian news sources are included. Yet, only material translated in English will be used. Hermann found out that using translated material is possible when assessing leadership style. She found an inter-coder agreement of 92% between native speaking coders using the original language and coders using the translated text.<sup>4</sup> Hermann examined this for material in French and Russian (Hermann, 1980, 1987a, 1987b). Previous studies have shown that this also counts for Turkish: using material translated from Turkish will not cause any problems for the validity of the research (Görener & Ucal, 2011; Cuhadar et al. 2017). A sampling-bias is avoided in this research, because all the available English transcripts of interviews with Erdogan in the particular periods are included (Görener & Ucal, 2011). To make this sure, systematic searching tool Factiva was used. Factiva is a database that provides access to more than 32.000 news sources from all over the world. Here it was possible to filter on the exact time period, language: English, and content: interviews. Also an executive could be selected: Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The searching term used was: 'Erdogan'. Also 'Erdoğan' was tried, but this did not lead to more results. Additionally to Factiva, Google was used. Also here the sources were filtered on the exact time period and a broad searching term was used: 'interview Erdogan'.<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> This research is based on 78505 words in total said by Erdogan, which is much more than the minimum of 5000 words necessary for an adequate Leadership Trait Analysis (Görener & Ucal, 2011, p.364).

When applying the Leadership Trait Analysis, the traits will be measured by using Hermann's operationalization of the seven traits, which is already incorporated in Profiler Plus (Hermann, 2002). Table 2 shows the operationalization of the traits, done by Profiler Plus, based on Hermann.

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<sup>3</sup> Profiler Plus can sometimes replace its coding scheme for a new version. In this research all Profiler Plus output is generated by Profiler Plus Version 7.3.2.

<sup>4</sup> The inter-coder agreement was calculated by Hermann, using Scott's pi. She determined the inter-coder agreement for each of the seven leadership traits and calculated the average of this, which was 0.92.

<sup>5</sup> When searching via Google I came across two interviews, one by France24 and one by Al Jazeera, that were translated in English, but only available as videos. In these cases I wrote down every word said by Erdogan's translator in the videos so that also these interviews could be analysed by Profiler Plus.

<sup>6</sup> Screenshots of the Factiva search builder and the searching terms used in Google can be found in the appendix.

*Table 2: Operationalization of the seven leadership traits done by Profiler Plus, based on Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis, source: [www.profilerplus.org](http://www.profilerplus.org)*

Trait	Description	Coding words
Conceptual Complexity	Degree of differentiation which the author shows in describing or discussing other people, places, policies, ideas or things.	Words that suggest the author can see different dimensions in the environment and words that indicate the author sees only a few categories along which to classify objects and ideas. High score: approximately, possibility, trend and for example. Low score: absolutely, without a doubt, certainly and irreversible.
Belief in Ability to Control events	Degree of control the author perceives over the situations that he is in, perception that he can influence what happens.	Verbs that indicate people taking responsibility for planning or initiating an action. Actions proposed or taken by the author indicates belief in control over events.
Self-Confidence	The author's sense of self-importance, or image of his ability to cope adequately with objects and persons in the environment.	The pronouns my, myself, I, me and mine. When the pronoun reflects the speaker is instigating an activity, should be viewed as an authority figure or is the recipient of a positive response, self-confidence is indicated.
Task Orientation	The author's relative emphasis on interactions with others when dealing with problems as opposed to focusing on the feelings and needs of relevant and important constituents.	Words that indicate work on a task, as well as words that center around concern for another's feelings. Task-oriented: achievement, plan, position, recommendation. Group-maintenance: appreciation, amnesty, collaboration, disappointment.
Distrust of Others	Wariness about others or the degree of the author's inclination to suspect the motives and actions of others.	References to persons other than the leader and to groups other than those to whom the leader identifies, that convey distrust, doubt, misgivings or concern.
In-Group Bias	View of the world in which one's own group holds center stage, is perceived as the best and there are strong emotional attachment to this in-group.	References to the author's own group that are favourable (great, prosperous, successful), suggest strength (powerful, capable), or indicate the need to maintain the group honour and identity (decide our own policies).
Need for Power	Degree of the author's concern for establishing, maintaining or restoring one's power. The desire to control, influence or have an impact.	Verbs where the author (1) engages in a strong, forceful action, (2) gives unasked advice, (3) attempts to regulate some else's behaviour, (4) tries to persuade, bribe, argue, (5) endeavours to impress or gain fame with an action, (6) is concerned with his reputation or position.

### Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership style

To assess Erdoğan's general leadership style, the data of the first period will be used as a baseline. Profiler Plus generated the trait scores for this data, consisting of interviews from July 07, 2011 to May 30, 2013. Table 3 added below shows Erdoğan's scores for each of the seven leadership traits. By using two reference groups of political leaders and political leaders in the Middle-East, provided by Hermann (2003, p.187), it can be determined whether Erdoğan's scores are high, low or average. Scores that fall at least one standard deviation lower than the mean of the reference group are considered as low. Scores that fall at least one standard deviation higher than the mean of the reference group are considered as high. Erdoğan's scores on each trait will be discussed. Also the trait combinations 'responsiveness to constraints', 'openness to information' and 'motivation to seek office' will be taken into account to create a complete image of Erdoğan's leadership style.

*Table 3: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Leadership Traits compared to two reference groups*

Leadership Trait	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's score (P1, 2011-2013)	Political leaders (n=214)	Political leaders in the Middle-East (n=83)
Distrust of others	0.13 <i>High</i>	0.01 Low < 0.01, High > 0.01	0.01 Low < 0.01, High > 0.01
Task focus	0.59 <i>Low</i>	0.73 Low < 0.67, High > 0.79	0.71 Low < 0.65, High > 0.77
In-group bias	0.12 <i>Low</i>	0.51 Low < 0.44, High > 0.58	0.50 Low < 0.43, High > 0.57
Belief in ability to control events	0.38 <i>High</i>	0.34 Low < 0.30, High > 0.38	0.33 Low < 0.29, High > 0.37
Need for power	0.25 <i>Average</i>	0.26 Low < 0.22, High > 0.30	0.25 Low < 0.22, High > 0.28
Self-confidence	0.35 <i>Average</i>	0.36 Low < 0.27, High > 0.45	0.37 Low < 0.26, High > 0.48
Conceptual complexity	0.59 <i>Low</i>	0.65 Low < 0.61, High > 0.69	0.64 Low < 0.60, High > 0.68

*Note: the two reference groups are based on research of Hermann and colleagues, who also used the Profiler Plus software to obtain the data. Source: Hermann, 2003, p. 187.*



### *Distrust of others*

Distrust of other refers to “a general feeling of doubt, uneasiness, misgiving and wariness about others – an inclination to suspect the motives and actions of others” (Hermann, 2002, p.30). Erdoğan scores high on distrust of others. This makes that he does not rely on others, because he is afraid they will sabotage his plans. He is in particular suspicious about the intentions and actions of other actors, which can be individuals, groups or countries, that are competing for his position or speaking out against his cause or ideology (Hermann, 2002). If he doubts people’s loyalty, he will not work with them and will not let them participate in the policy-making process. These leaders often fire their advisors and appoint new ones, to make sure no one can challenge their power. Furthermore Erdoğan’s distrust of others makes him extremely sensitive to criticism and likely to take measures when he perceives another actor is challenging his authority (Hermann, 2002).

### *Task focus*

Erdoğan scores low on ‘task focus’. Task focus is about whether the leader is focussing on the completion of a task and solving a problem or more on maintaining relations with others and creating a group spirit (Hermann, 2002). Because Erdoğan has a low score on task focus he belongs to the second group: he has a group-maintenance, relationship focus. For these leaders reaching the goal is not their main concern. The focus is more on commitment, loyalty and keeping the morale of the group high (Hermann, 2002). “For these leaders, mobilizing and empowering members are what leading is all about” (Hermann, 2002, p. 28).

### *In-group bias*

On in-group bias Erdoğan has a score of 0.12, which is much lower than the scores of 0.51 and 0.50 of the reference groups. In-group bias is a worldview in which there is a strong emotional attachment to the own group, decisions are made in the interest of the group and protecting the in-group culture and status against perceived external threats is important (Hermann, 2002). Since Erdoğan is often described as a nationalistic leader (Özbudun, 2014), this low score was a surprise. Nevertheless, it is in line with Erdoğan’s in-group bias score as established in a previous study (Görener & Ucal, 2011). What is important here is that leaders with a low score on in-group bias, can still be nationalistic. “They are still patriots interested in the maintenance of their groups as a separate entity” (Hermann, 2002, p. 30). However, the extent to which they emphasize the in-group depends on the situation they are in or the problem they are trying to solve. They can use nationalistic sentiments in a pragmatic way. Furthermore, when dealing with domestic discontent they are likely to use interactions like conferences or diplomatic gestures instead of external scapegoats to temper the domestic opposition (Hermann, 2002).

### *Motivation*

Two types of motivation can be distinguished: the leader's reason for seeking office and their need to maintain a good relationship with the group they are leading (Hermann, 2002). By combining the traits 'distrust of others', 'task focus' and 'in-group bias' these two types of motivation can be measured. As mentioned before Erdogan's low score on task focus means he has the second type of motivation: **relationship focussed**. Additionally to this information, it is also possible to determine Erdogan's motivation towards the world by using the traits 'distrust of others' and 'in-group bias'. This is about "whether the leader is driven by the threats or problems he or she perceives or by the opportunities to form cooperative relationships" (Hermann, 2002, p. 27). Erdogan scores high on 'distrust of others' and low on 'in-group bias'. This means that his motivation towards the world is being determined by the opportunities he wants to take advantage of and the relationships he is building, but at the same time his suspiciousness towards other actors (Hermann, 2002).

### *Belief in ability to control events*

Erdogan scores more than one standard deviation higher on 'belief in ability to control events', than the reference group consisting of political leaders in the Middle-East. This means that in his eyes he is able to control the situations that he is in (Hermann, 2002). Leaders with a high score on this trait are generally very focussed on keeping the control. Not only in the policy-making process, but also in the implementation they play an active role so that they can make sure things happen as they want them to happen. They are afraid things go wrong if they are not involved so they check on their subordinates, on policy-makers and determine how interactions with other leaders should proceed. Leaders, like Erdogan, who score high on this trait prefer quick action and take initiatives themselves, rather than waiting for others. To some extent this trait works as a self-fulfilling prophecy, leaders who believe they can influence events are more likely to be able to influence events for real. The downside of this trait is that leaders with a high score are less able to compromise or reach a consensus with others, because they are so confident that their decision is the right one (Hermann, 2002).

### *Need for power and influence*

Erdogan has an average score on 'need for power'. This means that he does not have a special need to be the only one who has influence (Hermann, 2002). On the other hand, leaders that are average to low in need for power function as an agent for the group. For them it is important to represent the needs and interests of the group and create a feeling of social solidarity. They make their followers feel responsible and empower them by enlarging the assets of the group. Also, they try to treat all people equally and build a relationship of trust with their followers (Hermann, 2002).

### *Response to constraints*

Previous research has shown that leaders with a high score on 'belief in ability to control events' and a low to average score on 'need for power', like Erdogan has, will take the lead and they will **challenge constraints**. However "they will not do as well in reading how to manipulate the people and setting behind the scenes to have the desired influence. They will be too direct and open in their use of power, signalling others on how to react without really meaning to" (Hermann, 2002, p. 12).

### *Self-confidence*

Erdogan scores average on self-confidence. Self-confidence is developed by placing one's self in a certain position compared to others, based on a sense of self-importance and the assumption of being able to deal adequately with people and objects in the environment (Hermann, 2002). An average score on self-confidence means that Erdogan is not totally immune for incoming information from the environment like people who score high on self-confidence. Also, it is possible that he still seeks to enhance his sense of self-worth and strengthen his identity (Hermann, 2002).

### *Conceptual complexity*

Erdogan scores low on conceptual complexity. This means he is conceptually simple and does not see nuance (Hermann, 2002). He classifies things in either good or bad, there is no middle. It is difficult for him to perceive ambiguity in the environment and to respond in a flexible way to new situations. Leaders with a low conceptual complexity follow their intuition and tend to go for the option that comes first. They prefer quick action over thinking it through another time. They interpret contextual information by placing it into categories. Their political orientation is highly ordered and structured (Hermann, 2002).

### *Openness to information*

When combining a leader's scores on self-confidence and conceptual complexity, the leader's openness to contextual information can be determined (Jonsson, 1982; Kaarbo and Hermann, 1998). Both self-confidence and conceptual complexity give information on the leader's self-other orientation (Ziller, 1977). In Erdogan's case his self-confidence is average and his conceptual complexity is low. This means that he tends to be **closed to contextual information** (Hermann, 2002). With contextual information is meant "input from others in the decision-making process and from the political environment in general" (Hermann, 2002, p. 18). These kind of leaders, like Erdogan, are driven by ideologies, principles and causes. They do not need others to tell them what should happen. They want to do things in their own way and use coercive tactics to impose their view on others (Hermann, 2002).

### *Evangelistic leadership style*

Now Erdogan's leadership traits and trait-combinations are known, his leadership style can be determined by using the table below. The fact that he challenges constraints, is closed to information and has a relationship focus makes his leadership style 'Evangelistic' according to Hermann's terminology (Hermann, 2002). As can be seen in table 4 an evangelistic leader focusses on "persuading others to accept one's message and join one's cause" (Hermann, 2002, p. 9).

*Table 4: Leadership style as function of responsiveness to constraints, openness to information, and motivation*

Responsiveness to Constraints	Motivation		
	Openness to Information	Problem Focus	Relationship Focus
Challenges Constraints	Closed to information	<b>Expansionistic</b> <i>Focus is on expanding one's power and influence</i>	<b>Evangelistic</b> <i>Focus is on persuading others to accept one's message and join one's cause</i>
Challenges Constraints	Open to information	<b>Incremental</b> <i>Focus is on maintaining one's manoeuvrability and flexibility while avoiding the obstacles that continually try to limit both</i>	<b>Charismatic</b> <i>Focus is on achieving one's agenda by engaging others in the process and persuading them to act</i>
Respects Constraints	Closed to information	<b>Directive</b> <i>Focus is on personally guiding policy along paths consistent with one's own views while still working within the norms and rules of one's position</i>	<b>Consultative</b> <i>Focus is on monitoring that important others will support, or not actively oppose, what one wants to do in a particular situation</i>
Respects Constraints	Open to information	<b>Reactive</b> <i>Focus is on assessing possibilities in current situation given the nature of the problem and considering allowance of important constituencies</i>	<b>Accommodative</b> <i>Focus is on reconciling differences and building consensus, empowering others and sharing accountability in the process</i>

Source: Hermann (2005), in Post, J. (2005). *Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders : With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*, chapter 8, p. 185

## Recep Tayyip Erdogan's sensitivity to role change and traumatic events

To find out whether Erdogan is sensitive to role change or traumatic events it is measured whether any changes occur in leadership trait scores across three phases. Table 4 shows the results.

*Table 4: The Leadership Traits of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan across time*

Leadership Trait	Phase 1 (n = 17)	Phase 2 (n = 13)	Phase 3 (n = 12)
Distrust of others	0.13	0.14 (- 0.11)	<b>0.28*</b> (- 1.80)
Task focus	0.59	0.66 (- 1.23)	0.63 (0.45)
In-group bias	0.12	0.12 (- 0.02)	0.11 (0.44)
Belief in ability to control events	0.38	0.44 (- 0.98)	0.32 (1.60)
Need for power	0.25	0.27 (- 0.42)	0.20 (1.48)
Self-confidence	0.35	0.42 (- 0.74)	0.34 (0.76)
Conceptual complexity	0.59	0.59 (- 0.14)	0.58 (0.30)
<i>Interviews</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Words</i>	<i>29075</i>	<i>20526</i>	<i>28904</i>
<i>Profiler Version</i>	<i>7.3.2</i>	<i>7.3.2</i>	<i>7.3.2</i>

*Note: The number in bold denotes a significant result. Values in parentheses are t-statistics for change from previous phase. \* $p \leq 0.10$*

### *The effect of the Gezi Park Protests, a traumatic event, phase 1 → 2*

As table 4 shows there are no statistically significant changes between phase 1 and phase 2. This means that the Gezi Park Protests, which are considered as a traumatic event in this research, did not change Erdogan's leadership traits. The expectation that his distrust of others and his need for power would increase significantly after the Gezi Park Protests, has not been realized. These results point

out that Erdogan's traits are very stable, even when the situational context is changing. According to Hermann (1980) this stability of traits can be seen as a personality characteristic itself.

#### *The effect of role change, phase 2 → 3*

As table 4 shows Erdogan's leadership traits across phase 2 and 3 remain relatively stable. However, there is one trait that changes significantly: distrust of others. Because of the low number of cases studied in this research the significance level that is used is  $p \leq 0.10$ , instead of  $p \leq 0.05$ .<sup>7</sup> For the change in score in distrust of others the level of significance was 0.9, which means it is 91% sure that a real change is found here and that it is not just coincidence. Erdogan's score on distrust of others in the third phase is twice as high as in the second phase. It changed from 0.14 into 0.28. This means that as a president Erdogan is more suspicious about the intentions and actions of others than he was as a prime-minister (Hermann, 2002). This makes him as a president more likely to fear that others will challenge his position, more sensitive to criticism and less able to cooperate with others (Hermann, 2002). Placing this high score on distrust of others in the wider Turkish context it appears to be something special. When looking at earlier research on Turkish presidents the difference between Erdogan's score on distrust of others and the scores of the other presidents is striking (Cuhadar et al., 2017). Table 5 illustrates this. Where Erdogan scores 0.28, the three other presidents score 0.13, 0.12 and 0.13. The scores of the other presidents are obtained by using the exact same method as is used in this research. In his role as prime-minister Erdogan's score on distrust of others was 0.14, which is comparable to the scores of the other Turkish leaders in table 5. However, his role change has increased this score significantly.

*Table 5: Distrust of others, president Erdoğan compared with previous Turkish presidents*

President	Özal	Demirel	Gül	Erdoğan
Distrust of others	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.28

*Note: Since the complete dataset on Özal, Demirel and Gül was not available it could not be measured whether the difference between Erdogan and the others is statistically significant. However, this table illustrates that the other presidents have a quite similar score on 'Distrust of others' while Erdogan's score is twice as high. Source: Cuhadar et al., 2017, p. 46.*

<sup>7</sup> It is common in leadership studies to use  $p \leq 0.10$ , because there is often a small number of cases studied. For example Renshon (2008) and Cuhadar et al. (2017) included results with  $p \leq 0.10$  in their research on change in leadership.

## **How is Erdogan's leadership style reflected in the interactions between Turkey and the EU?**

Based on the established leadership style, some expectations about Erdoğan's behaviour in international relations can be shaped. He is likely to be suspicious of others, very sensitive to criticism and focussed on group commitment and loyalty more than on reaching the goal. Furthermore, he is expected to exert a lot of influence on the situations that he is in, because he wants to keep the control himself. Also, he will challenge constraints and try to enhance his self-worth. He sees things as either good or bad, cannot deal with ambiguity, prefers quick action and is closed to the input of others.

In the following part it will be discussed whether these behavioural characteristics can be seen in practice. Several timelines of the interactions between Turkey and the EU were used and the events in which Erdogan was involved were closely examined (Europa-nu, 2017). This was done by using secondary sources, but in one case also transcripts of the negotiations were available. It was examined whether the progress of the interactions was in line with Erdogan's behaviour as it can be extrapolated from the leadership traits identified in this research. This gives an indication of whether the leadership trait scores found are conforming to the reality. It gives depth and nuance to the leadership profile constructed (Hermann, 2005).

In October 2005 Erdogan started to negotiate with the EU. He wanted to make Turkey a member of the EU, because he believed this would improve Turkey's political and economic situation (Gunter, 2016). However, EU-membership never became reality for Turkey and in recent years the relationship between Turkey and the EU was merely characterized by tensions and conflict (Gunter, 2016). There were plenty of situations to find in which Erdogan's leadership traits were visible. Three of them will be discussed here: the Turkey-EU refugee deal (2016), the Böhmermann-affaire (2017) and the diplomatic riot with the Netherlands (2017).

### **The Turkey-EU refugee deal, March 2016**

A series of meetings in which Erdogan's leadership traits are clearly visible is during the negotiations about the refugee deal between Turkey and the EU. This deal was made on March 19, 2016. In short, it says that Turkey has to accept more refugees and that it has to protect its borders better. In return the EU will give Turkey extra financial support and they will make it easier for Turks to travel to Europe in the future (Europa-nu, 2017). Also, the EU re-opened the talks about an EU-membership for Turkey. Turkey had a powerful bargaining position in the negotiations, since it is "the gatekeeper situated between Syria and an increasingly immigration-averse and securitised EU" (Okuy & Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016, p.51). Okuy & Zaragoza-Cristiani (2016) traced the bargaining process of the refugee deal in their study and came to the following conclusion: "Turkey has progressively

reversed the asymmetries of power existing between the two parties (Turkey & EU) by demonstrating the indispensability of its continued commitment to act as gatekeeper vis-à-vis an increasingly fragmented and anxious EU” (p. 51). It is likely that Erdoğan played a large role in this, since his leadership traits are clearly visible in the negotiations. Two things in particular were special about the refugee deal: the rapid pace of the progress achieved while negotiating and the great number of benefits that Turkey has managed to obtain from the deal (Okuy & Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016).

**Conceptual Complexity & Belief in Ability to Control Events.** The rapidity of the process can be brought back to the trait conceptual complexity. Leaders with a low conceptual complexity, like Erdoğan, prefer quick action over thinking it through another time (Hermann, 2002). The great benefits Turkey extracted from the deal can be brought back to Erdoğan’s high score in ability to control events, which functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy and makes him able to control events indeed (Hermann, 2002). During the negotiations Erdogan kept the control. Because of his high belief in ability to control events, things happen either exactly how he wants them to happen, or they do not happen at all (Hermann, 2002). This is emphasized by Erdoğan many times. Turkey had four sine qua non conditions during the negotiations: “completion of the Visa Liberalisation Dialogue within 2016, official inclusion of Turkey in EU summits, its recognition as a safe country of origin and the opening of a total of six new chapters of the *acquis* in 2015-16” (Okuy & Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016, p.7). After there was agreed upon the Action Plan and after Erdogan’s meetings with Merkel in October 2015, he stressed that there would be no deal until all four conditions were met (Okuy & Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). So: no room for a compromise, which is also in line with his low conceptual complexity. Things are either good, or bad, there is no middle and no nuance. Erdogan determines what happens.

**Challenging Constraints.** The re-opening of the discussion on Turkey’s EU-membership at a time when human rights were being violated in Turkey and the country was further away from meeting the Copenhagen criteria than ever, lead to massive criticism of the EU (Okuy & Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). Mid-november 2015 a G-20 meeting took place between Erdogan, Tusk and Juncker. Of this meeting leaked transcripts are available (Transcript, 2015). Here it can be seen that Erdogan is a leader who challenges constraints. According to Hermann these type of leaders are not very tactical and have a tendency to show off their power in negotiations: “they will be too direct and open in their use of power, signalling others on how to react without really meaning to” (Hermann, 2002, p. 12). This is clearly visible in the transcript. When Juncker confirms that Turkey gets 3 billion euros, Erdoğan, who thinks this is not enough, responded that Turkey didn’t need the EU’s money anyway: “We can open the doors to Greece and Bulgaria anytime and we can put the refugees on buses. If



you say 3bn for two years, no need to discuss further” (Transcript, 2015). Here Erdogan is very open in his use of power, typical of a leader who challenges constraints. He reminds the EU that they are nowhere without Turkey’s support and threatens that Europe will be flooded with refugees if the EU does not manage to meet the standards he has set. Also in this rhetorical question he shows Juncker and Tusk that they are dependent on him: “So how will you deal with refugees if you don’t get a deal? Kill the refugees?” (Transcript, 2015).

**Self-confidence.** Later on in the negotiation Erdoğan belittles Juncker, the former prime-minister of Luxembourg, by telling him that “Luxembourg is just like a little town in Turkey” (Transcript, 2015). He compares Juncker to himself by mentioning that he himself is representing over 80 million people. This is in line with his average score on self-confidence. Self-confidence is about comparing one’s self to others. By making this comparison Erdoğan tries to enhance his self-confidence and that is what leaders with an average self-confidence score are likely to do (Hermann, 2002).

**Distrust of others.** Furthermore, Erdoğan’s high distrust of others is clearly visible in his talk with Juncker and Tusk. The others cannot do anything right in the eyes of a distrustful leader (Hermann, 2002). That is also seen here. Erdoğan is constantly blaming the EU throughout the process (Okyay & Zaragoza-Crisitani, 2016). In speeches he accused the EU of its negligence in the refugee crisis, of being inconsistent with its own values and having caused deaths in the Mediterranean (Okyay & Zaragoza-Crisitani, 2016). Accusing the distrusted other is a normal thing for distrustful leaders to do (Hermann, 2002). Erdoğan perceives the EU as a possible threat to his position, therefore he puts the EU in a bad daylight while legitimizing Turkey in the eyes of the international community (Okyay & Zaragoza-Crisitani, 2016; Hermann, 2002). According to Hermann a high distrust of others does not occur in a blanket fashion, but is based on a past experience and certain realistic cues (Hermann, 2002, p.33). A possible explanation for Erdoğan’s high distrust towards the EU is that the EU has not been able to fulfil the pledges made about an EU-membership for Turkey or that the EU criticised Erdogan’s authoritarian behaviour in domestic politics, especially after the Gezi Park Protests (Gülseven, 2015). A leader who has a high distrust of others is not very willing to cooperate with organizations, if he doubts their loyalty to his cause (Hermann, 2002). This makes it likely that Erdoğan’s distrust towards the EU has hampered reaching an agreement during the refugee crisis.

### **Böhmermann-affaire, April 2016**

Another example where Erdogan’s leadership traits are clearly visible, is in the rows about the German comedian Jan Böhmermann who was criticizing Erdogan in an offensive, satirical poem. He presented his poem on German television in April 2016, a bad timing for Merkel who was still negotiating with Erdogan about the refugee-deal at that time (Troianovski & Bender, 2016).

***Distrust of Others.*** As a leader who scores high on distrust of others, Erdogan is extremely sensitive to criticism (Hermann, 2002). Therefore his reaction to Böhmermann's poem makes perfectly sense: he sees this as a threat to his position so he made a big issue of it, tried to impose sanctions on the comedian and expressed his anger to other political leaders (the Guardian, April 22, 2016). This led to tensions between Merkel and Erdogan and eventually to the prosecution of Böhmermann (the Guardian, April 22, 2016).

***Belief in Ability to Control events.*** Another trait that is clearly visible in this case, is Erdogan's high belief in ability to control events. This trait makes him think that he can even control events that happen in other states. This is what is called the 'long arm of Erdogan': Erdogan has the power to control events in several Western European states (Bodissey, 2017). The Böhmermann-affaire is just an example of this. It shows again how the 'belief in ability to control events' functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Hermann, 2002).

#### **Diplomatic riot with the Netherlands, March 2017**

In the weekend of March 11, 2017 a diplomatic riot between the Netherlands and Turkey started. In this case it was clearly visible that Erdogan is a leader who challenges constraints.

***Challenging Constraints.*** The Netherlands prohibited Erdogan to send his minister of foreign affairs, Çavuşoğlu, to convince the Dutch-Turks to vote 'evet' in the referendum for constitutional change that would enlarge Erdogan's power (the Guardian, 12/03/2017). However, Erdogan ignored those constraints and let Çavuşoğlu fly to Holland anyway. Çavuşoğlu's plane was not allowed to land, but also this did not stop Erdogan. He tried again by sending another minister by car (the Guardian, 12/03/2017). This is a logical reaction for a leader who challenges constraints. Those leaders "are more intent on meeting a situation head-on, achieving quick resolution to an issue, being decisive, and dealing forcefully with the problem of the moment" (Hermann, 2005, p.3). That is how Erdogan acted in this case. He came with a quick and forceful response to the constraints. Immediately he started to express harsh critique on the Dutch government, instead of adapting to the situation and respecting the constraints (NOS, 11/03/2017).

These examples show that the leadership trait scores found in this study are in line with what happens in practice. Furthermore it illustrates the importance of leaders in international relations. If there had been another leader in charge that had a high score on conceptual complexity, a low distrust of others, a low belief in ability to control events and a tendency to respect constraints, those situations would probably have evolved in a completely different way.

## Conclusion

Given the importance of incorporating leaders in International Relations, this research has tried to enhance the understanding of Erdogan's leadership style. It has placed his leadership into context, by examining the effect of the Gezi Park Protests, seen as a traumatic event, the effect of role change and how his leadership traits are visible in interactions between Turkey and the EU. By using Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA), this study shows that Erdogan has a high distrust of others, a low task focus, a low in-group bias, a high belief in ability to control events, an average need for power, an average self-confidence and a low conceptual complexity. Furthermore, Erdogan is motivated by a relationship-focus, challenges constraints and is relatively closed to contextual information. Only one of Erdogan's leadership traits has changed over time. His distrust of others has increased significantly when he changed roles from prime-minister to president. It became twice as high. Also compared to other Turkish presidents, Erdogan has an unusual high distrust of others. Perhaps a leader's distrust of others increases when his amount of power increases. An interesting topic for future research. For now, Erdogan's high distrust of others is something to keep in mind, when trying to understand the current political decisions being made in Turkey.

Except for distrust of others, no other statistically significant changes in Erdogan's leadership traits occurred. This makes Renshon's (2008) conclusion still valid: "leadership style is generally stable, unless when it is not" (2008, p.837). The findings of this research cannot be generalized, but it is known now that almost all Erdogan's leadership traits remained stable over time. This makes these trait scores more valid and shows that Erdoğan has a strong personality that is not easily influenced. Trait-stability is a leadership characteristic itself (Hermann, 2002). However, the expectations of this study, based on media coverage and several studies, was to see a change in Erdogan's leadership traits, while the results show rather stability. This could be a reason to question the accuracy of this study, however, the trait scores found here are very similar to the scores provided by a previous study on Erdogan (Görener & Ucal, 2011). Also, the trait scores correspond to Erdogan's behaviour during interactions with the EU. However, it is problematic that this study does not show much change, while many journalists write that, for example, after the Gezi Park Protests Erdogan has become more authoritarian (Gülseven, 2015). That this could not be shown by using the LTA, points out that perhaps just studying a leader's traits is not enough. The LTA focusses on verbal output, not on what the leader does in practice. Aware of this, I would argue that to establish a more extensive leadership profile, leadership trait scores should be combined with a study of the leader's actions. Unfortunately it was outside the scope of this research to dive deeper into Erdogan's actions and his behaviour in practice. Also, there is not yet a recognized method developed for how to study a leader's actions systematically. When interpreting a leader's actions there is a tendency to do this in

a subjective way. A framework like Hermann's should be developed to link concrete actions to leadership traits in an objective way.

Although the LTA did not show the expected change, this method is of great value. Especially in the case of Erdoğan, who controls the Turkish media, the LTA is a very useful tool to study Erdoğan at a distance and establish an objective, non-biased leadership profile. As we have seen, Erdoğan's leadership traits were clearly reflected in interactions with the EU. This indicates that the leadership trait scores found, correspond to the reality and that these scores can enhance the understanding of Erdoğan's actions and the international negotiations in which he is involved. This once again underlines the importance of taking individuals like Recep Tayyip Erdoğan into consideration when studying international relations. Given the recent developments in Turkey it looks like president Erdoğan will remain to exert a great deal of influence for at least the following 12 years, not only concerning Turkish politics, but also in Europe and the Middle-East he will continue to play a major role (NOS, 17/05/2017). Therefore more research on his leadership style should be conducted. This study was just the beginning.

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## Appendix

1. Screenshot of the  
Factiva Search  
Builder

The screenshot shows the Factiva Search Builder interface. At the top is a navigation bar with the Factiva logo and links for Home, Search (highlighted), Alerts, Newsletters, and News. Below this is a search bar with the following filters: TEXT: Erdogan, DATE: 07/07/2011 to 28/05/2013, SOURCE: All Sources, and a MORE button. Below the search bar is a Filters section with the following filters: Executive: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Subject: Interviews, and Language: English.

2. Screenshot of the Google Search Builder

The screenshot shows the Google Search Builder interface. At the top is the Google logo and a search bar with the text "interview Erdogan". Below the search bar are tabs for All (highlighted), Videos, News, Images, Shopping, and More. To the right of the tabs are links for Settings and Tools. Below the tabs is a date range filter: 7 Jul 2011 – 28 May 2013, and a sorting option: Sorted by relevance. Below the sorting option is a link for All results and a Clear button. Below the Clear button is a search result snippet for "TIME Exclusive Interview: Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan | TIME.com" with a link to the article.