

Kapitel 20

The Swedish Perspective on Turkey's EU Membership: Contextualizing the Shifts in Attitude

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The Swedish position on Turkey's EU membership has gone through significant changes over the last 20 years. Having long been a harsh and vocal critic of Turkey's human rights record, Sweden was not initially a strong supporter of Turkey's EU-membership. With shifting political winds in Turkey, however, Sweden came to support Turkey's EU membership even before it had itself become an EU member. At this point also some political actors in Sweden who were against Sweden's EU membership were in favour of Turkey's EU-accession. Their argument was that Sweden as an advanced and healthy democracy did not need to join the EU but that it would be good for Turkey as the accession negotiation process and membership itself would contribute to its prosperity and development of democracy. Since then, Sweden has supported Turkey's EU-membership aspirations, however with different ardor. For some time, Sweden was a very active supporter – one of the strongest supporters of Turkey's EU membership among all member states. Lately, however, we detect a shift in attitude, as Sweden seems to have adopted a more passive stance regarding Turkey's EU-membership.

In this chapter, we analyze how and why the Swedish attitudes towards Turkey's EU membership bid have changed over time, aiming at understanding and contextualizing these shifts in attitude from a Swedish perspective. Sweden has a long history of officially supporting democracy and human rights in its foreign policy (Brodin, 2000). Can these shifts in attitude be explained by a staunch idealist support for democracy and human rights? Or are constructivist ideas on a com-

mon Europeanness at the centre of the discourse? Or might, in fact, other real-political interests motivate the Swedish stance?

To explore this, we analyze the discourse at the political level over Sweden's 20 years in the EU (1995-2014), on the basis of the governmental declarations and the foreign policy debates in the Swedish Parliament and interviews with officials in the foreign office and the Swedish Embassy in Ankara. Politicians' public statements in the media (including social media) are also primary sources of data for this study. As secondary sources of data, we refer to expert opinions (i.e. journalists and researchers focusing on Swedish-Turkish relations and European Union affairs) by means of interviews and their writings on this topic. By mapping the official picture and then contextualizing it, we aim at reaching a broader understanding of the shifts in the Swedish position on the Turkish EU accession negotiations.

Theoretical approach

According to Helene Sjursen (2008), there are three ways in which the EU can be conceptualized by its members, ways which stand out clearly when it comes to how the member states relate to the EU's enlargement: the EU as a problem-solving entity, as a value-based entity or as a rights-based entity. The problem-solving perspective is based in a realist, pragmatic discourse and focuses on the interests that the EU can promote, such as potential economic gain and political stability. Emphasis on the utility and efficiency of the EU indicates such a perspective. The value-based perspective derives from a constructivist, ethical-political discourse, which focuses on the European values and the common good. According to this perspective, there is a sense of a common European identity, a "We" that share common values. The idealist, rights-based perspective, however, is more universal. It aims at securing respect for democratic principles and human rights and is based on universal moral norms. Emphasis on rights and justice is indicative of such a perspective (Sjursen, 2008).

Using this analytical framework, we next explore the official positions of different political parties to a Turkish EU membership over time, revealing notable shifts in emphasis over time. We end this chapter by attempting to reach a broader understanding of the Swedish stance by contextualizing those shifts.

The Swedish approach to Turkish EU-membership over time

After having applied for EU membership in 1987, Turkey was officially declared a candidate in 1999, as it was then considered to sufficiently fulfil the political Copenhagen criterion, which requires that a candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. Accession negotiations began in 2005. From the Swedish perspective, the issue was never *whether* Turkey should join the EU but *when*.¹

For us Social Democrats, it is important to establish that the enlargement of the EU is the biggest success that has taken place on the continent of Europe, and it must continue. Turkey's future membership is a hotly debated issue in many European countries. For us Social Democrats, the approach has always been that the question is not whether Turkey can join the EU but when. This when is determined by how quickly Turkey manages to fulfill the criteria required for membership.

This has not only been the view of the Social Democrats, who have been in power for most of the 20th century, but also of all other parties in the parliament (Langdal 2006), at least until 2010 when the Sweden Democrats entered the parliament. However, when Turkey should become an EU member was not an easy question because of the severe problems of democracy in the country. From the Swedish perspective, Turkey could become a member *when* it puts an end to torture and other violations of human rights by the state, *when* it stops repressing the Kurdish people and grants them their rights and freedoms, and *when* the military retreats into its military functions having no say on politics, along with several other *whens*.

Despite this uncertainty in relation to timing, Sweden has officially been a strong supporter of the Turkish EU accession since it became a member itself on 1 January 1995. However, as we will see, support has come with different arguments – and different ardour. Next, we outline the three different phases in Sweden's position on Turkey's EU membership that we have identified in the yearly foreign policy debates of the Swedish parliament, which open with the government's foreign policy declaration.

Phase 1: The harsh critic

The first time during the studied time-period that Turkey was mentioned in the foreign policy declaration of the government was in 1997/1998, when the Social Democratic foreign minister Lena Hjelm-Wallén stated that

“The government wants the EU to develop relations with Turkey. The country has a clear membership perspective, which means that we expect improvements in respect for human rights, democracy and the protection of minorities”.

This focus of the government on a rights-based perspective on Turkey’s EU membership bid, strongly emphasizing the need for Turkey to deal with its problems in relation to democracy and human rights and viewing the membership perspective as a way to do so, was then reiterated by the Social Democratic government all through the 1990s and first half of the 2000s - even if rarely and less extensively in the foreign policy declaration itself, but in the debate following it.² The rights-based perspective was also pressed, often fervently, by the opposition parties in the foreign policy debate. In particular, the Centre party and the Left party were very vocal when it came to pointing out the shortcomings in democracy and human rights in Turkey, despite its commitments to the contrary.

Even if focus remained on the shortcomings in relation to democracy and human rights throughout the 1995-2005 period, some positive developments in this regard were highlighted in the foreign policy debates after the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) took power in 2002. Interestingly, some values- and identity-based arguments were now also brought into the debates by the government as well as the opposition, both emphasizing that Turkey belongs in Europe, particularly in the wake of the 2005 Muhammad-caricature crisis.

Phase 2: The ardent supporter

From November 2002 onwards, the AK Party government made striking progress in terms of the above-mentioned *whens* (the peace process with the Kurds, curbing of the military’s power over politics, zero tolerance against torture, etc) and Sweden warmly welcomed them all (Herolf, 2010). The accession talks between Turkey and the EU that started in 2005 however came to a halt already in 2006, due to the Cyprus question. Sweden however expressed strong support for Turkey’s EU mem-

bership all along. Until the 2010 entry of the Sweden Democrats, there was a broad consensus on supporting the Turkish EU-bid in the Riksdag.

The foreign minister of the right-wing Alliance, Carl Bildt, generally put more emphasis on Turkey in his foreign policy declarations than was the case during the preceding ten years of Social Democratic rule. In his first foreign policy declaration of 2006/2007, Bildt declared that

"We expect both that the reform process in Turkey and the membership negotiations with the European Union will continue. A democratic and dynamic Turkey that fully respects the rights of individuals and minorities, and is firmly anchored in the European integration strengthens the whole of Europe."

Broad support was thus given with reference to rights-based arguments on democracy and human rights. However, also value- and identity-based arguments – emphasizing that Turkey belongs in Europe – were notably used. In the 2009/2010 foreign policy declaration, Bildt emphasized that

"we are convinced that the European Union will be both more dynamic economically and stronger politically with Turkey as a member. We would show even more clearly that our European cooperation can overcome the contradictions that formerly characterized the history of our continent, and still characterizes parts of our world."

In 2006, then, as the accession negotiations had started and Sweden had got a new government, the change of discourse noted since the AK Party took power in Turkey became even more marked. Indeed, in the 2006/2007 – 2011/2012 period, values- and identity-based arguments for Turkey's accession to the EU was as common as rights-based arguments in the foreign policy declarations of the Alliance, with some reference also to arguments of problem-solving kind. While the rightist Alliance government thus used value- and identity-based arguments alongside rights-based arguments, the opposition however generally stuck to rights-based arguments.

The Alliance government steadfastly put forth an optimistic view of Turkey's membership bid and the chances for the accession negotiations to make for democratic developments in Turkey in its foreign policy declarations, albeit with some expressions of worry for the situation (in 2009/2010, 2011/2012, and, to lesser extent, in 2013/2014). The leftist opposition has however been worried all along, pointing to the continu-

ing shortcomings in Turkey's relation to democracy and human rights. Initially, these worries were predominantly expressed by the opposition parties in the foreign policy debate following the government's foreign policy declaration. However from 2009/2010 onwards, rights-based worries were expressed also by representatives from the Alliance parties in the debates.

Phase 3: The passive supporter?

Since 2011, when the AK Party government entered its third term in power, it and especially its then Prime Minister Erdogan have increasingly been criticized for a mounting authoritarianism, veering from the process of democratization which it had itself started in line with the EU accession talks. How has the Swedish government and the parliamentary parties reacted to this development?

In the foreign policy declaration of 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 it can be noted that whereas the government still expresses an optimistic view of Turkey's chances to progress democratically on its way to EU membership, it does so without referring to value- and identity-based arguments. Instead, rights-based arguments are in focus. In the 2013/2014 foreign policy declaration, Bildt stated that

“the adaptation to the EU continues to be the primary driver of the reform process in Turkey. A new chapter has been opened in the negotiations, and a first step has been taken towards visa liberalization. Further change and reform to strengthen human rights and judicial independence are required. Substantial steps are the adoption of a new constitution and progress in the Kurdish peace process”.

In the following foreign policy debates, rights-based worries about the deterioration of democracy and human rights in Turkey are expressed by government and opposition representatives alike.

Contextualising the shifts in Sweden's approach to Turkey's EU accession negotiations

From being a harsh critic, on rights-based grounds, of Turkey's record on democracy and human rights – however envisioning Turkish EU-membership negotiations as a way to deal with these shortcomings – in the 1995-2005 period of Social Democratic rule, Sweden thus moved to becoming an ardent supporter of Turkey's process of democratization

within the frames of the EU accession negotiations, based on value- and identity-arguments as well as rights-based argument in 2006, as the situation in Turkey changed and the rightist Alliance government took office in Sweden. However, from 2012 on the discourse has apparently changed. While the importance of continuing Turkish accession negotiations is still emphasized, little focus is now bestowed on Turkey as intrinsically European in terms of values and identity; instead, a rights-based perspective, focusing the benefits for democracy and human rights of accession negotiations, is applied.

At all times, Sweden thus comes out as a strong supporter for Turkey's EU membership, which is seen as the best way for Turkey to democratize. Throughout the period, the Swedish stance appears to be driven by a rights-based approach to enlargement, based on an idealist, universal perspective, aiming at securing respect for democratic principles and human rights on the basis of universal moral norms. The idealist banner is held high, even if some arguments based on common and shared European values and identity are expressed by the Alliance government, at least as long as things moved in the right direction in Turkey. This analysis gives at hand that Sweden primarily regards EU as a rights-based post-national union, rather than as a problem-solving entity or a value-based community, using Sjursen's typology (2008).³

This is the official picture. However, this picture needs to be contextualized. Are there other interpretations of the Swedish stance? Scratching the surface somewhat, Sweden's steadfast support to Turkey's democratization seemingly portrays some cracks. In particular, the rather lame response by the Swedish government to the harsh treatment of demonstrators by the Turkish government in the summer of 2013 arguably belies a fervent support for democracy and human rights.

By drawing on interviews with government officials and independent analysts, the rest of this chapter deals with contextualizing the shifts in the Swedish stance towards Turkey's EU membership, focusing on the latest shift. Does this context indicate that the stances taken are based on staunch idealist support for democracy and human rights, constructivist ideas on a common Europeanness or more on realist calculations on what benefits Sweden's national interests?

From harsh critic to ardent supporter

In the 1990s, the evidence suggests that Sweden took upon itself to be cruel in order to be kind in relation to Turkey. Therefore, "for several years, the Swedish government was one of the most vocal critics of Tur-

key's serious violations of human rights within the EU and at the UN. At the EU summit in Helsinki in 1999 Sweden was one of the last EU member states to agree to grant Turkey EU candidate status" (Dismorr, 2008: 84). Applying a rights-based perspective vis-a-vis Turkey's membership bid, Sweden argued that Turkey should not be granted a candidate status until it met the political Copenhagen criteria.

There is a wide consensus that this attitude started to change after the AK Party's rise to power in 2002. From the same, rights-based perspective, things now appeared to move in the right direction in Turkey. Sweden envisioned Turkish EU accession negotiations as an essential pull-factor for the necessary reforms. On rights-based grounds, Sweden thus turned into the strong supporter for Turkish EU-membership that it has since remained.

However, also more realist calculations might have motivated the shift of attitude towards the Turkish EU-membership bid. According to one analyst, Sweden's hard-line stance as to when Turkey can become an EU member might have started to soften in late 1999 and early 2000 after Greek-Turkish relations came to a point of normalization after the earthquakes in both countries and after the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) declared ceasefire following its leader Abdullah Öcalan's capture and imprisonment. Before this, Sweden was careful to take sides with the Greek government in its opposition to Turkey's membership because otherwise Greece could block the accession talks of the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) whose membership to the EU were crucial to Sweden for reasons of security in the region. When Greece started to normalize its relations with Turkey, Sweden stopped worrying about a Greek blockade of Baltic accession. Öcalan's capture also opened space for a solution to the war in the southeast of Turkey for which Sweden had been raising the harshest critiques towards the Turkish state. Along this reasoning, the Swedish shift in attitude might have also a non-neglectable realist, problem-solving side to it.

According to an Embassy official, the Swedish change of position was a result of a re-evaluation of strategy. After long having criticized Turkey, the discourse changed under Foreign Minister Anna Lindh, into one favouring inclusion, on the rationale that it is "better to get Turkey on board because it is much easier to discuss, to criticise if it is somebody you have on board. If you are on the outside and everybody is just shouting, the one that you are shouting (at), which is in this case Turkey, would say 'we don't care'. But if you get Turkey into the club then they

are bound, if not completely, to start playing by the rules". While still aiming at reaching the rights-based objective of democracy and human rights, Sweden thus along this argument chose another way of getting there: from opponent to supportive friend.

Different reasons thus might have motivated the first shift of attitude – from the harsh critic to the ardent supporter. Arguably, by this shift Sweden aimed to combine an idealist, rights-based focus with more pragmatic, real-political considerations.

From ardent supporter to passive supporter?

After a period of fervent advocacy for Turkey's EU accession negotiations as *the* way forward for Turkey's process of democratization, Sweden's staunch support of democracy and human rights in Turkey however seems to have been downplayed lately. Notably, the Swedish criticism of the Turkish government during the 2013 Gezi Park protests was remarkably weak.

As we have seen, the AK Party government and especially its PM Erdogan have increasingly been criticized for the authoritarian tendencies since 2011, deviating from the road of democratization as staked out in the accession negotiations. This was particularly blatant in the spring of 2013, as the AK Party government was shaken by widespread protests which had been triggered by excessive police brutality towards those who demonstrated against the demolition of a park in the centre of Istanbul (Gezi Park) to build a shopping mall in its place.

The EU Commission reacted strongly to these events, condemning the excessive use of force to silence peaceful protests (Füle, 2013; Ashton, 2013; European Commission, 2013). Germany blocked the re-opening of accession talks with Turkey on the grounds of unfounded police brutality towards the protestors. However, no statement came from the Swedish government or foreign office except for the Swedish ambassador's statement that he urges the authorities to show constraint and to respect human rights including the right of freedom of assembly (Åkesson, 2013).

Since then, the apparent Swedish reluctance to criticize the Turkish government has continued. In late 2013 and early 2014, the AK Party government confronted severe allegations of corruption with investigations targeting figures as PM Erdogan, his family and members of the cabinet. The AK Party government's response was to intervene in the judicial processes to stop investigations, curbing the independence of the judiciary (Hurriyet Daily News, 2014). These developments in Turkey occurred at a time when the AK Party government received criticism from

many political and civil society actors both domestically and internationally due to the government's efforts to decline separation of powers and curb the power of democratic checks and balances, and the increasing number of jailed journalists and politically active Kurds, students, and trade union members who were critical to the AK Party government. The EU reacted immediately, calling Turkey to return to the rule of law (New York Times, 2014). Some members of the European Parliament and Commissioners proposed that the EU should freeze talks with Turkey since it no longer sufficiently meets the Copenhagen political criteria for democracy and rule of law (Today's Zaman, 2014). However, again, there was no response from Sweden, except for FM Carl Bildt's tweet that calls stupid the efforts to block Twitter in Turkey (Bildt, 2014). Notably, no official Swedish criticism was raised during then President Gül's visit in March 2013 and PM Erdogan's visit in November 2013 to Stockholm.

Arguably, a rights-based perspective would have led Sweden to stark reactions against these violations of democracy and human rights. The silence from Sweden is striking as Sweden has always followed violations of human rights and malfunctioning of democratic processes in Turkey closely and has reacted immediately.⁴ Has Sweden left its rights-based perspective in favour of a more realist, problem-solving approach?

Interviews with government officials as well as independent analysts indicate that Sweden tries to navigate in the rough seas by combining an idealist objective with a pragmatic approach, often termed "silent diplomacy" – purportedly aiming at working for democracy and human rights, but without risking the relationship with Turkey.

An Embassy official interviewed admitted to being surprised at the silence of the Swedish government, not least given the several daily reports sent home to the Foreign Office from the Embassy on the excessive use of violence and force by the police during the 2013 protests. The silence was thus not due to ignorance on the side of the Swedish government. Instead, the Embassy official points out, silence was a political decision, in spite of a strong advocacy for a much more vocal approach from the Embassy. The rationale for this silence, the Embassy official ponders – regarding it as somewhat uncharacteristic of Sweden – might be that Sweden knew that other actors would be criticising Turkey very hard. Instead of just being another criticizer, Sweden might have opted to keep the door open to engage in dialogue, according to the Embassy official, pointing out that a less confrontational, more mediatory stance also is characteristic historically of Sweden's foreign policy – and of Swedish mentality.

The Embassy official however points out that some things were done by Sweden, but behind the scenes. Notably, the Swedish Secretary of State did call the Turkish Ambassador to Sweden in order to raise concerns, which is not very common. Sweden was also active in the EU, the Embassy official points out, engaging with Enlargement Commissioner Füle to make the Commission react. The Embassy official emphasises that Sweden wanted the Commission to react because the Commission is the key counterpart in the Turkish EU accession process, stating that working through the EU is Sweden's preferred approach in foreign policy:

"We almost always act like that, because our point is that being inside the Union we think that speaking with one voice where you have 28 member states behind you in that voice is much easier. It is much easier to speak clearly, instead of having 28 running and shouting around. And you as a country will have to deal with that and that doesn't make sense. We do this basically on all foreign policy matters..."

This position is reiterated by a senior government advisor, who points out that:

"(f)or mid-size countries in the EU this is a very important instrument because Sweden could never exercise any influence on anything. We could make demonstrations, we could raise our voice but it could have no impact. But if we can have a voice in the formation of the European foreign policy then we have an impact."

Also the independent analyst argues that Sweden "believes it is more powerful as a country acting from within the EU". Indeed, the independent analyst emphasises, Sweden tends to use this approach strategically, arguing that it is a matter of "the good and the bad cop. Main criticisms are communicated via the EU and Sweden maintains the bilateral relations".

While the Embassy official thus admits to being surprised at Sweden's silence in relation to developments in Turkey from 2013 on, other analysts and government officials however claim that Sweden, in fact, has not been silent at all. Sweden is still tough and critical on these issues and raises concern for the latest developments in Turkey from a rights-based perspective, but *not* publicly. Sweden prefers to communicate its concerns to Turkish authorities behind closed doors.

Different rationales for this approach are put forth by the interviewees. The approach is described as an extension of what is referred to as the “silent diplomacy” of Sweden. It is pointed out that silent diplomacy is not specific to Turkey, but has become something of a trademark of the Swedish government and foreign office’s strategy over the years, not least as a vital aspect of Sweden’s participation in peace-mediations. However, the interviewees argue that FM Bildt has developed his own brand of silent diplomacy, more attached to his person, in line with the more personalized style of foreign policy under his command. Examples include Sweden’s relations to Ethiopia previously and is claimed to be maintained as well in relations to Thailand, following the military coup in May 2014. FM Bildt has defended silent diplomacy as “wise and proper”, referring to the release of two Swedish journalists imprisoned in Ethiopia as a result of silent diplomacy (Bildt, 2012).

Silent diplomacy: pragmatic idealism?

Sweden’s approach to Turkey in the face of the deteriorating democratic developments is thus regarded as an instance of silent diplomacy by the interviewees. The argument for silent diplomacy is that a low-key, pragmatic approach is more beneficial for furthering the cause than cornering the government in question, here the Turkish one. An independent analyst states of the government that “(t)hey think they can be more influential with a friendly approach”, terming this stance a principled-pragmatism or pragmatic idealism.

The “silent diplomacy”-approach is however criticized in some quarters. Criticisms of silent diplomacy are based on the view that it is not the “Swedish” way of doing politics, which requires open public debate. Other respondents define this shift in Sweden’s attitude to silent diplomacy as “Bildt style” of politics, referring to the personalization of Swedish foreign policy under FM Bildt. Indeed, one independent analyst described this as a Faustian deal between PM Reinfeldt and FM Bildt which makes Bildt the sole authority in foreign policy, acting quite independently and in a personal way using social media actively. Further, Bildt has allegedly developed a close friendship with his Turkish counterpart, then FM Ahmet Davutoglu. Another interviewee however argues that personalization of foreign policy is not only a Swedish phenomenon. Indeed, foreign policy in general has become more personalized recently.

According to some of the interviewees, this “silent diplomacy”-approach is specific to the right-wing Alliance government and will change with the left-wing government in power. What is known as a crit-

ical but supportive stance of Sweden towards Turkey had been built by social democratic governments, which are claimed to embrace idealist conceptions of foreign policy more than right-wing parties and their governments. The foreign policy of the Alliance is said to have been more realist, prioritizing trade relations over democracy promotion and spreading the Swedish model of democracy and development. However, social democratic governments have also been blamed, if not for making compromises of democratic values for the sake of trade relations, but for having double standards in condemning the regime in Turkey, yet maintaining trade with it, as early as 1983 (Riksdagens protokoll 1983/84:103). Indeed, one of our respondents claims that there will not be a change of attitude towards Turkey with a government led by social democrats, as social democrats are now aware of the realities of a changing world.

Along a different route, not all interviewees agree that present developments in Turkey are harmful to Turkish democracy in a wider, long-term perspective. According to this perspective, what we witness in Turkey is the necessary labour pains of a truly consolidated democracy, inclusive of all its citizens, also the Kurdish population which has been subjected to most of the human rights violations in Turkey. This process also includes the forging of a strong opposition that currently is largely lacking in Turkey. Thus, Sweden does not want to interfere by criticizing the process of democratization and therefore keeps silent.

According to some interviewees, Sweden is thus well aware of the problems of democracy in Turkey and the widely-criticized authoritarian tendencies of the AK Party government but prefers to keep silent. This helps Sweden avoid conflict with both the Turkish government and the EU, which has been much more vocal in its criticism. Swedish criticism is instead allegedly delivered behind closed doors.

Instead of abandoning the rights-based perspective, Sweden is thus claimed to keep pursuing it, but through "silent diplomacy" – in a less vocal, more pragmatic garb. While Sweden as an ardent supporter of Turkey's EU-membership bid openly took a rights- and value/identity based perspective as long as things went well in Turkey, Sweden restrained its official criticism as things turned sour, not to be offensive, instead opting for an age-old "mediating", "being friends" approach, which have long served its interests. Along this analysis, Sweden aims at combining an idealist right-based stance with a pragmatic, realist approach.

Conclusions

While Sweden throughout the 20 years covered in this chapter has supported democracy and human rights in Turkey, viewing EU accession negotiations as *the* way forward for Turkey in this regard, the analysis shows that it has done so in different ways. In the terms of Sjørusen's analytical framework, it can be concluded that while a rights-based perspective always has been at the core of the official Swedish stance, values- and identity based arguments also made their way into the discourse – but only as long as things were moving in the right direction in Turkey. Lately, as developments in Turkey veer from the democratic route, values- and identity based arguments have been played down and rights-based arguments only come to the fore.

However, the analysis shows that the rights-based arguments have been voiced in very different ways over time. From being a harsh critic on rights-based grounds during the first ten years of the period here under study, Sweden became an ardent supporter on the same grounds from 2006 on, along with positive developments in Turkey and the new right-wing Alliance government in Sweden. Lately, since 2012, as the democratic development in Turkey has stalled, Sweden has chosen another route than open criticism towards Turkey. For reasons seemingly based in realist calculations, Sweden has toned down public criticism, instead relegating to a “silent diplomacy” of raising criticism behind closed doors, presumably to keep the important relations with Turkey intact.

One possible explanation for this might be that Sweden relies on the EU for the promotion of democracy in Turkey. As long as the EU raises concerns and criticisms of what is happening to Turkish democracy, Sweden does not have to mention the elephant in the room. The effects of such a stance, for developments in Turkey and for the Swedish foreign policy, have to be further explored in other contexts. Further, it remains to be seen how the New Leftist government will deal with Turkey. The indications are that its foreign policies in vital fields might differ from those of the previous government.

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¹ Riksdagens protokoll 2006/07:60.

² Apart from 1997/1998, Turkey was mentioned only briefly in the foreign policy declarations of 1999/2000, 2000/2001, 2003/2004, 2004/2005 and 2005/2006.

³ These results are much in line with Edvardsson (2010), if with slightly different emphasis. Edvardsson (2010) concludes on the basis of a discourse analysis of – among other actors – Sweden's position on Turkey's EU membership in the EU institutions, that Sweden sees the EU as a problem-solving entity and a rights-based post-national union, rather than as a value-based community.

⁴ As one striking example, Ann Dismorr, former Swedish ambassador to Ankara, relates that in 2002 she was ordered directly by the late Anna Lindh, then the Swedish foreign minister, to go to the city of Diyarbakir in the southeast of Turkey to attend Mehmet Uzun's trial, who came to Sweden as a political refugee in late 1970s and was taken to state security court due to what he had written in his novels, which Sweden saw as a severe breach of freedom of speech. However, in similar recent situations, Sweden did not voice criticism of the AK Party government or sympathy with those who were subjected to such violations of rights.