How Does Identity Relate to Attitudes Towards Differentiation? The Cases of France, Germany, Czech Republic and Turkey

Senem Aydın-Düzgit, Jan Kovář and Petr Kratochvíl
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Abstract
This paper explores the ways in which national identities shape attitudes towards differentiated integration in two old member states, one relatively new member state and one candidate country – namely France, Germany, the Czech Republic and Turkey. It also observes how the impact of differentiated integration on European identity is perceived in these given countries in terms of preserving European identity (deepening), the dilution of European identity (disintegration) and the territorial/geographic limits of European identity (widening). By employing primary research and discourse analysis, the study finds that there is no single and monolithic national identity which produces a uniform attitude towards differentiated integration in member and candidate states, but rather that competing domestic national identity narratives produce differing attitudes within a state on differentiated integration. These national identity narratives can translate into starkly different policy positions concerning the policy area that is subject to differentiated integration, as well as on how differentiation is expected to impact the future of European integration and European identity.
Introduction

The literature on European integration has produced a plethora of works exploring the relationship between national and European identity. Some of these studies have focused on how perceptions of national/European identity play a role in citizens’ attitudes towards European integration (Díez Medrano 2003, Fuchs and Klingemann 2011), while others have examined the relationship between nation-state identities and member state positions on European integration (Larsen 1997) or the impact of national identities on member states’ positions on selected EU policies such as enlargement (Aydın-Düzgit 2012). In a similar vein, the last decade has seen a proliferation of studies on differentiated integration in the EU, be it in the context of the politics of differentiated integration (Dyson and Sepos 2010), its institutional design (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016), implications for democracy and legitimacy in the EU (Fossum 2015), its legal repercussions (Kroll and Leuffen 2015, Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2014) and its feasibility, desirability and consequences in select policy areas (Howorth 2019, Keleman 2019, Lavenex 2015).

Despite the growth of research in both streams, there has been relatively little interaction between the literature on national/European identity and that of differentiated integration. In the rare cases where the two met, identity has either been treated as an epiphenomenal variable with little impact on member states’ positions on differentiated integration; or as a significant variable with an overall but undifferentiated impact on the member state’s overall position on differentiation. In cases where identity was found to have an effect (Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2017), it was argued that those member states with “exclusive national identities” that are generally negatively oriented towards multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism tended to be more in favour of differentiated integration. Yet, these studies are conceptually inspired by rational-choice theories in which identity is theorised as a more or less fixed independent variable affecting a state’s attitudes towards differentiated integration.

Different to these works, we employ interpretivist lenses which theorise identity as a discursive and a relational phenomenon. Identity is discursive in the sense that it is not fixed or inherent to any entity but is constructed through discourse. Thus identities “emerge out of a process of representation through which individuals […] describe to themselves and others the world in which they live” (Weldes et al. 1999: 14) and in line with this discursive nature, they remain unstable and fragmented. We conceptualise identity as relational in the sense that the identity of any Self only acquires meaning through its relation to Other(s). Hence identity is unthinkably without its “constitutive outside” and remains unstable and fragmented. We conceptualise identity as a discursive and a relational phenomenon. Identity is discursive in the sense that it is emerging out of a process of representation through which individuals […] describe to themselves and others the world in which they live. From an interpretivist perspective in which social reality is conceptualised as discursively constructed, discourses, including those on identity, do not “cause” but that they can “enable” certain actions by “setting limits to what is possible to be articulated” (Diez 1999: 611). Applied to the case of national and European identities, this conceptual framework posits that both national and European identities are discursively constructed. Furthermore, as the vast literature on European identity have aptly demonstrated, European identities are heavily contingent on the ways in which national identities are discursively constructed, discourses, including those on identity, do not “cause” but that they can “enable” certain actions by “setting limits to what is possible to be articulated” (Diez 1999: 611).
How Does Identity Relate to Attitudes Towards Differentiation?

In this paper, our goal is to identify the ways in which national identities that are discursively articulated with reference to Europe shape attitudes towards differentiated integration by enabling/disabling proposed policy options in two old member states, one relatively new member state and one candidate country – namely France, Germany, the Czech Republic and Turkey. In turn, we also aim to observe how the impact of differentiated integration on European identity articulated in national colours is perceived in these given countries in terms of preserving European identity (deepening), the dilution of European identity (disintegration) and the territorial/geographic limits of European identity (widening).

In doing that, we focus on the respective political discourses in the four selected events of political differentiation in the EU. The events that are selected are the signing of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (fiscal compact) in March 2012, the EU migration crisis in November 2015, the Brexit referendum in June 2016 and the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the area of security and defence policy in December 2017. These four cases were selected on the grounds that they are all relatively recent events which sparked considerable national and EU-wide debates on differentiated integration, and because they have led to varied outcomes regarding differentiation in the EU: two cases where concrete outcomes of internal differentiation were reached (fiscal compact and PESCO); one where attempts for internal differentiation failed and led instead to international cooperation with a third (candidate) country outside the EU legal framework (EU–Turkey statement on migration); and one where internal differentiation did not suffice to keep a country...
(Britain) as a member and led in turn to further debates on the future of both internal
derived visions of Europe, including the perceived impact of such differentiation
on preserving (deepening), dilution of (disintegration) and territorial/geographic
limits of (widening) European identity; as well as b) the ways in which these visions
articulated visions of Europe; the texts that are subject to analysis consist of national parliamentary debates;
statements by officials from the government and the main opposition; and editorials
published in the main newspapers which represent the centre-left and the centre-
right of the political spectrum in each selected state. Hence our analysis relies on
original data drawn from the representation of these events in the discourses of the political actors and key media representatives. In approaching the texts, we focus in
texts to define the Self in relation to Other(s). For the purposes of this study, we focus particularly on
two discursive strategies in texts, namely predication and argumentation (Reisigl and
texts, a closer look at argumentation strategies will reveal the central arguments and argumentation schemes that are used in justifying, legitimising and naturalising
representations of actors and the selected events in discourse.

In terms of methodology, we conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the texts
under scrutiny. CDA is a method of discourse analysis which focuses on the study
of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different
social domains. It views discursive practices as an important form of social practice
that contributes to the constitution of the social world, including social identities
discourses and is particularly utilised in studying demarcations of identity in texts.

The texts that are subject to analysis consist of national parliamentary debates;
1. France and differentiated integration: Centrality of the French self in a differentiated Europe

In the case of France, national identity perceptions seem to be closely intertwined with how differentiated integration is discussed in all policy areas under analysis. Regardless of the policy in question, the French debate centres almost always on the centrality of the French Self and its Republican values, seen as central to the healthy functioning of Europe. In turn, the success of European integration is seen as key to maintaining and increasing France’s weight on the global stage. With the exception of the migration crisis, differentiation is generally welcome as long as France remains at the core of the process. In the case of PESCO and the fiscal compact, differentiation is expected to deepen the sense of Europe and European identity, whereas the opposite, hence disintegration, is feared with Brexit and the migration crisis. While there are often considerable disagreements between different political actors on the policy content of differentiation based on their political and ideological stances, we observe that differentiation as a general component of European integration is widely accepted and preferred in the French context.

The following subsections will discuss how each selected case of differentiation, presented in temporal order, has been discursively represented by French policy makers and in the media discourse, in relation to national identity narratives and articulations of Europe.

1.1 Fiscal Compact

For centuries, France is a major actor in the world. Our voice counts because we defend universal values. How can France, inheritor of the French tradition of upholding freedom and democracy, remain on the sidelines while Europe faces its most critical challenges? In this context, the fiscal compact was presented as a means to prevent economic instability and to strengthen the European Union. The fiscal compact was seen as a necessary step to ensure the stability of the eurozone and to protect France’s position in the global economy.

Jean Leonetti, Minister of European Affairs from the UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire), articulated this view in his opening remarks to the French Parliament’s debate on the fiscal compact: 

"For centuries, France is a major actor in the world. Our voice counts because we defend universal values. How can France, inheritor of the French tradition of upholding freedom and democracy, remain on the sidelines while Europe faces its most critical challenges? In this context, the fiscal compact was presented as a means to prevent economic instability and to strengthen the European Union. The fiscal compact was seen as a necessary step to ensure the stability of the eurozone and to protect France’s position in the global economy."
The excerpt above predicates France as a “major [global] actor” thanks to its defender role of “universal values” which derives from its national history and is thus also the part of Europe to be proactive in a situation where the fates of France and Europe are intertwined – and thus justifies its support for the fiscal compact. There is ample secondary literature on the ways in which “Europe” plays a key role in conceptions of the French “Self”. It has widely been argued that a fusion was constructed between the concept of the “French nation” and “Europe”, primarily during the Presidency of Mitterrand in the face of the French political and economic decline of the 1980s (Larsen 1997: 89), which was later to be adopted by the French right in defining the new role of France in the world after the end of the Cold War. In this discursive fusion, Europe is created as a larger France which takes on the traditional tasks and ideals of France, namely its “mission civilisatrice”, because France has become too small as a “free trade zone”, and having the “political capacity to act” (Larsen 1997: 89, 104). This is necessary for French interests to be guarded and promoted to prevent France from becoming an “ordinary republic” (Larsen 1997: 112). Yet, in most cases, this also paves the way for the welcoming of differentiated integration with a strong core, so long as this will serve to strengthen France and the European project. Hence Alex Poniatowski, president of the foreign affairs commission from the UMP, argues in the same debate that the Eurocrisis and the ensuing fiscal compact demonstrate the need for Europe to “create strong cores among those states that wish to take new steps in integration” and “progress at different speeds” which could in turn deliver urgent and effective European responses to crises. Hence differentiation through the fiscal compact is perceived in the French discourse as a way of deepening Europe and European identity, in order to save the project from disintegration in the face of crises.

This enthusiasm for differentiation with a strong core does not seem to be shared by the sovereigntist-Gaullist wing of the French centre-right, for which the “sovereign” right of the nation to make the budget cannot be transferred from national parliaments onto the European level. The analysis also suggests that although the content of the fiscal compact is heavily criticised by the French left, and in particular the far left, these segments do not attack these initiatives for promoting differentiation, but left, these segments do not attack these initiatives for promoting differentiation, but main for advancing austerity measures. Hence both sides question and/or reject the policy content rather than differentiation itself. Nonetheless, even when criticising the compact for its punitive nature, the representatives of the far left in particular draw from historical analogies with the French national past such as the French Revolution and draw attention to how austerity by abandoning solidarity betrays its...
1.2 Migration crisis


statement that French and European identities are most explicitly invoked in the *VIRGL GEW 18L I *VIRGL TVM Q I Q M R M W X IV 1 E R Y I P : E P P W M R L M W E H H V I W W X S X L I *VIRGL

national assembly, underlines that the refugee crisis


and a positive representation of the French Self around history (sometimes with reference to the French history of migration) and founding values of the Republic. The deictic “we” used interchangeably for the French nation is associated with


enters into the debates in terms of what shape these policies must take, often in the form of a call for European solidarity. Nonetheless, different than the other policy areas examined, differentiation is shunned by all political actors when the issue concerns migration. While the suggested policy content may differ across different political party groups, nearly all seem to be united on the need for the inclusion of all European countries, including the establishment of a common migration and asylum T S P M G J M R X E G O P M R K X L I V I ] Y K I I G V M W M W - R X L I W E O [ W T I I G L : E P P W V J ] I V W X S 7 G L I R K I E R W

an “essential element of European identity” and makes a plea for “a more, and not a less Europe” in managing the crisis. Others refer to this particular instance as an *opportunity to build a united and stronger Europe* and/or a test case of “French and European values” (used often interchangeably). Hence the perceived impact of differentiation regarding migration on European identity is overwhelmingly one of dilution, hence disintegration, of European solidarity and identity.


government representatives from the Socialist party condemning it by referring to

legacy and the true French/European Self. 

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it as “illegal”, “in contravention of the foundations of Europe and the Republic”, and a “disgrace to the country [France]”, with the culprit being the “lack of solidarity in Europe”.

1.3 Brexit

In the French debates, with the exception of the French far right (Front National) which celebrates it and calls for a ‘Fraxit’, Brexit is very often represented as an existential crisis for both France and the European integration project. As with the WGEPSQTederation and the lack of solidarity in Europe, which is central to the understanding of XLI*VIRGLREXMSREP7IP|MWEXWEOISERHXYLVIIUYMVIYVVRKIRXEGXMSR[MXL*VE taking the initiative to save itself and Europe from destruction, as expressed by prime QMRMWXIV:EPPWMRLMWMWTIIGLXSXLIREXMSREPEWQFFP]MRLIEJEIVQEXLSJXLI&VIJIVIRHYQ

Every time the essence of Europe is at stake, France has to respond […] because we are France, a country which is respected, listened to, heard! &IYEGYWI[EVIJEYRHRMKGYSYRXV]A BLIUYIWXMSR[LMLG*VERGI]EGIWMWRSXSPIEZ]YVSTIFYX5VISYJSLXLIYVSTIERTVSNIGX%WQFFIP2EXMSREPIF

This central role accorded to France is not contested, where the French fate is tied once again to the fate of the European project. Brexit is heavily perceived in the French discourse as a development with the potential to dilute the European project by triggering further disintegration. To prevent the dissolution of Europe, a “certain conception of Europe” which means much more than a single market, but stands for “social protection”, “protection of borders” and the “protection of a cultural model” WLSYFHIHJIRHISPPERHI11 Hence a deepening of European identity is TYWLIHJSVMRXLIPEGISJXLIYXIVEXSJHWMWRXIKVEXMSR8IVIEWWMKRMTYRYMVSIEMRVSSXJSJTISSIPUKMIZERGIW111 and the right placing a strong emphasis on the protection of borders.13=XEPWSXEPGSRZIKSRXLIZMIXLEXQSVICYVSTIMWVIUYMVIH&VIMXGFERWTIERWERTTSXYRMXJSX that effect and differentiation is welcome so long as France remains at its core and IJJJIGXMIWSPYXMRSWEVIJSYRH&YVSTIAXSHE]MXXSPEVKIXSEPPS[EPPSMWXWQIFFIV
states to move forward at the same time. This is why we think that the Eurozone constitutes the most appropriate level of action and that France must take initiatives.

Even in the discourses of those who prioritise national sovereignty, subsidiarity is called for together with a Europe of “variable geometry” with a strong France leading. This is why we think that the Eurozone constitutes the most appropriate level of action and that France must take initiatives.

14 Even in the discourses of those who prioritise national sovereignty, subsidiarity is called for together with a Europe of “variable geometry” with a strong France leading:

15 Subsidiarity and variable geometry must prevail in place of the current uniformity. […] Europe is a place of power where the strong nations impose their rhythm on others. When France is weak, Europe suffers; when it is strong, it drives it:”

1.4 PESCO

The data suggests that PESCO, as a specific modality of differentiated integration which was in fact originally a French-driven proposal (together with Germany), is widely supported by the French political elite. It is perceived as a significant response to the need for European “strategic autonomy”, deriving from a Gaullist vision of Europe sitting comfortably with the dominant narrative of French national identity. Yet, PESCO is also seen to be insufficient, where a “truly European defence policy” is needed (Anglade and Pueyo 2018: 22). This is the point at which differentiated integration in the field of defence is further encouraged in, for instance, building common operational capacity, and is explicitly contrasted with the German vision of “inclusivity” (Anglade and Pueyo 2018: 23). This should also be considered in the context of the potential competitive advantage that the French defence industry expects to enjoy in the EU market in the case of further (differentiated) integration in the field of defence. Hence overall, differentiation in the field of defence is seen as key to deepening European identity in the French case, where there is caution expressed with respect to the territorial/geographic limits of differentiation in this field, and hence the widening of European identity through defence initiatives such as PESCO. This is also highlighted by President Macron (2017), who calls explicitly for a “multi speed Europe” in defence, alongside other, policy matters.
French national identity also figures strongly in the way in which French foreign policy priorities are externalised onto the proposed differentiated initiatives in this field such as a stronger focus on Africa and the Mediterranean, where “NATO lacks the experience which France possesses” (Anglade and Pueyo 2018: 34). While there are some objections to the policy content of the proposed initiatives, notably by the far left which contests external power projection, there is general agreement on the need for further differentiation for a stronger defence policy with France in the driving seat.

2. Germany and differentiated integration: shifting views on differentiation

In the German political discourse, differentiation has gained an entirely different meaning in the course of the last ten years. Originally, the identity of Germany was tied to its identity as good Europeans who take part in all the advanced forms of integration, and differentiation was understood as useful tool for bypassing the more Eurosceptic member states. The mantra that differentiation begets more differentiation also meant that the increasingly different speeds of integration were understood as natural and not harmful. If this logic was ever challenged, it was only on the question of how the decisions about further differentiation should be reached and whether actions taken outside the framework of EU treaties were permissible. With the migration crisis and even more strongly with Brexit, the stress on differentiation was replaced with solidarity and unity as the central notions. German self-understanding as good Europeans suddenly meant not advancing the integration process as quickly as possible, without giving much attention to the laggards. Instead, the danger of the EU’s fragmentation and break-up became an oft-discussed possibility. Differentiation thus became a sensitive topic. The paradigmatic change was that divergence had to be replaced with convergence, listening and unity. As the analysis of the German discourses surrounding PESCO attests, even when differentiated integration takes place, it is re-interpreted as steps leading to more unity and the EU speaking with one voice.

As far as the three dimensions related to differentiation are concerned, i.e., widening, deepening and disintegration, only two come into play in Germany. It is widening that is entirely left out and the discussion about differentiation thus oscillates only on the axis from deepening to the concerns about possible disintegration. While originally, with the fiscal compact, differentiation was still seen as preferable, with the migration crisis and the case of Brexit the fear that disintegration might be imminent became the strongest factor and the extent of suitable differentiation started to be measured crisis and the case of Brexit the fear that disintegration might be imminent became the strongest factor and the extent of suitable differentiation started to be measured
has taken place from seeing the more deeply integrated as the true Europeans, to a more inclusive understanding of European identity. Differentiation thus partly loses its normative status and instead becomes a pragmatic tool for accommodating differences among EU member states.

2.1 Fiscal Compact

In the German case, the fiscal compact and the preceding crisis are strong examples of how identity and differentiation are linked. However, there is not one simple narrative that would derive the German attitude towards the fiscal compact from German identity. Rather, German identity is layered, with deeper elements of this identity shared across the political spectrum. Disagreements exist but they are linked to more superficial differences of how German identity should be enacted in each particular case.

Hence, the near consensually shared framing of the German position is based on the understanding that Germany is a thrifty state that always pays its debts and expects others to do so as well. The underlying tenor is well captured by the argument of Steffen Kampeter: “More debts produce less trust and decreased trust only produces more problems” (Deutscher Bundestag 2012a: 18890-18892).

This basic paradigm is almost never challenged in the German political discourse. Hence, any argument in favour of further differentiation (in particular in the field of monetary integration) has to be shaped in such a way as to make it compatible with this overall understanding of the German role.

Monetary differentiation is thus generally conceived as the appropriate course, and broad agreement also exists as far as further differentiation in the field is concerned. As both Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Westerwelle claim, “Everybody will understand that the countries which are linked through a common currency, will also have to continue working more closely” (Merkel 2012, Traynor 2012), leading to a political union (Westerwelle 2012). How this can be achieved, however, depends on particular party-related narratives: For the right, the German identity of a thrifty manager, who in a sense is responsible for the EU as a whole, trumps the worry about excessive assertiveness; for the left, differentiated integration can successfully continue only if the decision to move forward is taken in the right communitarian way, without bypassing EU treaties as was the case with the fiscal compact.
2.2 Migration crisis

In the German political discourse, the lesson from the Eurozone crisis was that European integration may be facing. However, starting with the migration crisis, differentiation began to be treated in a more cautious manner as the worry emerged that differentiation may lead to fragmentation. This seemed to be confirmed by the subsequent development, Brexit, which thus led to a radical reassessment of differentiation and what it meant for German identity. Differentiation, if approached appropriately, could be readily accommodated within the German self-understanding as a thrifty manager. However, once the framing of differentiation as fragmentation gained the upper hand, it began to clash with an even deeper self-interpretation of Germany as constructively European.

Consequently, the EU ceases to be treated as an increasingly differentiated cluster of various member states, but instead becomes a single whole. This whole sometimes takes on the disguise of a "value Union" or a unified, economically powerful actor.

The narrative of the EU as a whole is further reinforced by the stress on the protection of EU external borders which, according to the Foreign Minister, has become the cornerstone of the policy (Steinmeier 2016b). In the end, differentiation is entirely pushed into the background. Solidarity becomes the new keyword, which is seen as antithetical to differentiation and to selective participation.

This turn towards solidarity is in itself more or less undisputed. What is, however, heavily contested is the question of whether the EU–Turkey migration statement is a step in the right direction. First, the question of whether Turkish President Erdoğan was in fact blackmailing the EU while violating human rights in the country is often discussed. Second, the question of the extent of solidarity is also often disputed in the German political discourse. Solidarity within does not necessarily translate into solidarity with the refugees or with the democratic forces in Turkey. To sum up, the German political discourse. Solidarity within does not necessarily translate into solidarity with the refugees or with the democratic forces in Turkey. To sum up, the German political discourse.

2.3 Brexit

As important as both the Eurozone crisis as well as the refugee crisis were for the reconstruction of German identity, Brexit constituted the single biggest shift in the way Germany perceived itself within the broader integration context. Correspondingly, for
months Brexit dominated the German debates on the future shape of the European Union. The lesson was unambiguous: Germany’s identity is European to such an extent that “the EU is deeply connected to the DNA of the post-war Germany” (Kornelius 2016). But this identity was shaken. Hence, the lesson is that Europe (i.e., EU 27) has to stick together. Focusing on the “core Europe” (Kerneuropa) would be a terrible mistake, as this would drive further wedges among Europeans. As the Vice-President of the German Bundestag Thomas Oppermann claimed, “In the long term, Germans will be HSMRK⁰ RI[LIR]¥VSTIM WSMRK⁰ RI*SVXLEXVIEWSRPIXYW⁰ KLXJŚVEFIIXIVWXSVSRKIV J¥VSTIERHPXIXY[W]ŚVOXSKILIVÅYXWGLIV&YRHIWXEKF

At the same time, the voices in the governing party stressed that after Brexit, Germans must come to terms with the fact that the EU is a conglomerate of national identities and those must be respected. Before Brexit, differentiation was understood normatively as enacted by the more advanced, and thus taking integration steps ahead of others was seen in a more positive light. After Brexit, however, this attitude is FigEqxiEviKxX[v]ÉæeVTeVyMKXRMKREzSYVSHMJ]JIVIRXEMXLY WYGLEW,SVIMKR1RMWXIV7XIMRQIMIV EEVKYIHXLEX B[ERX XSIRWYVIXLEX the others are not seen as bad Europeans just because they want to proceed more slowly”. Hence, the time after Brexit is not a time “to take any big gambles”; the goal is instead “to hold Europe together” (Steinmeier 2016a). Federal President Gauck (2016) went as far as claiming that this goal is so important that even “a break” in accelerating integration would be welcome. Similarly, when the Foreign Minister took part in the talks among the six founding members just two days after the referendum, this step was sharply criticised because of its exclusive nature, as “this HMZMHIW]¥VSTIMRWXIEHS]YRMXRMKX*VMIHVMGL


2.4 PESCO

The new understanding of differentiation became a central point in the subsequent political framing of Permanent Structured Cooperation. Even though PESCO is a clear example of differentiated integration, neither the government nor the opposition drew sustained attention to it. In fact, the government as well as many CDU-CSU deputies very often directly denied the differentiated nature of PESCO, arguing instead that PESCO is a tool through which the EU could speak and act in a unified matter. This was sharply criticised because of its exclusive nature, as “this 979HITYXMIWZIV[S]XIRHMIVGXD[HIRMHIHXLIHM]JIVIRXMEXIHERYXIS]473EVKYMRAKRMWRIXEHXL[473MWEVXSPXLVSYKLMGLXL]9GYSFHWIITEOERHSEGXMREYRM⁰ IHQEXIV8LMW

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was facilitated by Brexit but it was still striking how the non-participating member states were entirely absent from the political debates, using the argument that 25 member states involved in PESCO was what one “could not dream of.”

Hence, Chancellor Angela Merkel argued that PESCO will allow “Europe” to act decisively, “further strengthening the security and defense policy” (Deutscher Bundestag 2018: 1078). Deputy Henning Otte saw in PESCO a better coordination of the EU’s external policy (Deutscher Bundestag 2017c: 239). Others, such as State Secretary Michael Roth, stressed explicitly that PESCO would make the European Union “speak with one voice in the field of external security as well as defence policies” (Deutscher Bundestag 2017f: 339). The logical consequence of this refusal to see PESCO as differentiated integration was the enthusiastic talk about the expected emergence of a “defence union”: as FDP’s Deputy Alexander Graf Lambsdorff claimed, PESCO would guarantee that “common European defense projects will take place […] the shift towards a European defense union must succeed now” (Deutscher Bundestag 2017e: 47).

While the reinterpretation of PESCO as a common policy of the entire EU was rendered possible by the British exit from the EU, the changing relation to the United States was even more instrumental here. Hence, German Foreign Minister Gabriel not only hailed PESCO as a milestone in European integration, but also argued that it constituted a big step towards “European independence” (German Federal Foreign Office 2017). Similar arguments in which the alleged European unity in external and security issues was posited against the insecurity of the transatlantic relations were also discussed in the media.


3. Czech Republic and differentiated integration: Should we stay behind or go along?

Our study suggests that there is a significant difference in the intensity of the responses to the four cases of differentiated integration in the Czech Republic. The politicisation of and polarisation regarding differentiated integration is the most intense concerning the fiscal compact and to a lesser extent the migration crisis. Four main interrelated factors can help account for the Czech position towards differentiated integration. The first is related to the fact that the Czech Republic is a country with a deep-rooted identity-based Euroscepticism. This Euroscepticism is partly related to the difficult history of Czech lands and negative experience with "higher" political centres (Vienna during the Habsburg and Moscow during the communist era), and to the connected concept of "Czech smallness". Such a national identity conception provides an important source of Czech Euroscepticism whereby EU membership is seen as a marriage of convenience, involuntary but inevitable. This rather general Eurosceptic approach towards European integration means, in particular, that the Czech are somewhat cautious about attempts to deepen (political) integration. A second and related factor is that integration in the field of core state powers is generally viewed with scepticism, and when differentiated integration concerns core state powers and national sovereignty, most, albeit not all, political actors in Czechia reject it. The third factor is that this longstanding reserved position towards deepening of PESCO, the fiscal compact and partially the migration crisis, differentiation is seen as contributing to European identity. In the case of PESCO and the migration crisis, differentiation also showcases the limits of European identity. In contrast, the case of Brexit clearly shows that differentiation can be seen as potentially causing a dilution of European identity and leading to disintegration.
In what follows, we discuss the discursive representations of each of the four selected cases of differentiated integration in the Czech discourse as they relate to narratives of national identity and visions of European integration.

3.1 Fiscal Compact

The fiscal compact is the most politicised initiative of differentiated integration in the Czech case. The debate is also clearly the most polarised one, following the cleavage between the clearly Eurosceptic (ODS, government and the president) and the less Eurosceptic, or even EU-optimist, actors (opposition, ČSSD, TOP 09). There are two main strands of the debate in terms of its relation towards national identity. The first is represented by the senior government partner, the Eurosceptic ODS and the then president Václav Klaus. It departs from the identity of the Czech Republic as a country that is proud of its currency and sceptical towards integration of core state powers, including in the field of monetary and fiscal policy. For this reason, the fiscal compact is rejected as an excessive intervention into national sovereignty in fiscal policy and the government therefore supports differentiated integration as a means to not participate. The following excerpt approximates this strand of the debate:

Thank god for flexible geometry in the EU! Do we really want to have completely unified EU where everything is identical and where diversity of interests, traditions, political opinions and historical development in individual member states is not taken into account? [...] To be sure, the club that slowly tends to have 30 members cannot operate without flexible geometry, unless it wants to progressively transform in a degenerative way into basically a unified superstate. I do not want such a Europe. I want to say that the government of the Czech Republic under my leadership makes steps towards fiscal responsibility regardless of the existence of any intergovernmental treaty [fiscal compact]. We do not have to be pressured towards it by a similar treaty. (Czech Chamber of Deputies 2011: 552)

The excerpt above is a common example of how fiscal compact and integration in core state powers are rejected based on a specific reading of Czech identity. The Czech government also rejected institutionalisation of the fiscal compact in EU law because it was afraid that it would later be made to join. At the same time, differentiation was supported in order for the Czech Republic to assume a position of cooperative actor which supports integration of “the others” while itself staying outside. As such, it would send a signal to the other member states that Czechia does not want to prevent others from moving forward and by doing so (re)constitute...
The other strand of the debate departs from a different perspective. Although Czech identity is based on scepticism towards integration in sovereignty-sensitive areas, it should participate in specific differentiated integration initiatives such as the fiscal compact in order to (re)constitute its identity as a credible, constructive partner and a member state belonging to the integration core, not only because of its economic compact. Nevertheless, this text does not give reasons to state that there is a crossroads towards fiscal union and we need to stay away from it. It is simply part of a train journey, a journey that we have already joined, thus committed ourselves to participate on this journey. [...] We have a commitment to work on that. And we cannot react to the decision of a majority of member states to move forward by putting a spoke in a wheel. That is simply a behaviour that does not belong into a society that has a certain culture of demeanour. [...] Our refusal to participate makes us an unintelligible and obscure partner and creates a feeling that we simply do not trust the Union and that we envisage that by being aside we will not face serious consequences. (Czech Chamber of Deputies 2012: 648)

2.2 Migration crisis

The migration crisis, the EU–Turkey Statement and in particular the relocation mechanism were among the most politicised EU issues in the Czech discourse over its entire membership period. However, the debate surrounding the migration crisis and possible differentiated integration exhibited a very low level of politicisation as practically all political actors were in agreement. Migration and asylum are basically viewed as threatening to Czech identity, culture and social cohesion due to the different religious and cultural backgrounds of migrants and asylum-seekers. In the eyes of the majority, migrants and asylum-seekers should either be stopped from entering the EU or at least be forced to avoid the Czech Republic. Differentiation...
and its relation to national and European identity is therefore less present in the Czech discourse on the migration crisis and the EU-Turkey statement, compared to the case of the fiscal compact, and externalisation of the EU’s migration policy is the most preferred policy option. Intra-EU solidarity expressed by burden sharing was also shunned for risking disunity among member states. Czechia voted against the temporary relocation scheme of September 2015, seeing the scheme as an instrument of fragmentation. Political actors used identity-based arguments on the incompatibility of migrants and refugees, in particular from the MENA region, with Czech society.

Czech identity as sceptical towards integration of core state powers, such as immigration and asylum policy, also played a role. To avoid fragmentation based on enforced relocations, political actors supported a particular kind of differentiated integration of core state powers, such as immigration and asylum policy, also played a role. To avoid fragmentation based on enforced relocations, political actors supported a particular kind of differentiated integration. This specific kind of differentiation was dubbed as flexible solidarity. Flexible solidarity as a form of differentiation was promoted in order to not have to participate in a specific initiative (the relocation scheme) while not preventing others from doing so, again in a bid to assume the identity of a constructive actor. Whereupon the resolution of the debated responses of some western EU member states to the refusal of Czechia and others to relocate refugees on the basis of the relocation scheme was to create a mini-Schengen to which troublemakers would not be invited. This would not only clearly undermine Czech interests since Czechs value freedom of movement, but also the desired identity of Czechia as a fully fledged member state and country belonging to the integration core.

Hence regarding the relationship between differentiation and European identity, during the migration crisis and in particular after the proposal to establish a relocation mechanism, it was clear that if there was no differentiation in terms of how solidarity can be expressed then the migration crisis would lead to a dilution of European identity (disintegration). At the same time, the Czech discourse also showed clear territorial, geographical, cultural and religious limits to European identity (widening) as Czechia strictly rejected hosting non-Christian immigrants and refugees, including through the divisive relocation mechanism.

3.3 Brexit

Brexit has attracted high visibility in the Czech discourse. The identity of the Czech Republic as a country presumably belonging to the integration core as well as a country sceptic towards integration in sovereignty-sensitive policy fields was directly challenged by Brexit. First, Czech actors were afraid that Brexit could lead to differentiation within the EU based on eurozone vs. non-eurozone lines. Secondly, such differentiation would produce centrifugal forces affecting the presumed Czech identity core.29
belonging to the integration core. Czechia as a small and economically dependent state, however, needs to belong to the core. Hence post-Brexit differentiation and division in the EU was overwhelmingly rejected in the Czech debate; differentiation is to be allowed only if it strengthens the EU, not if it drives it apart. Integration may be based on more flexibility but not two-speed Europe that would create first- and second-class member states, as expressed in the following:

There is a view that integration is not sustainable in the current form for 28 member states with different political culture and history. And that it would need to narrow down the EU to the core, for instance based on Germany, France and a couple others, and the periphery where Czechia would belong. (Marjanovič 2016)

But if the EU’s core, relieved of the insular weight, unites around the idea of more political integration, it would be a serious challenge for the countries which do not want more integration and would thus sit on the periphery. (Pehe 2016a)

Brexit was thus another instance of differentiation potentially causing a dilution to European identity by presumably creating a two-tier membership (disintegration). Differentiation after Brexit is only to be allowed if it contributes to European identity by providing flexibility while at the same time respecting needs of all member states.

3.4 PESCO

The debate surrounding PESCO exhibits similarities to the debate on Brexit. The extent of politicisation of PESCO was also low and so was the level of polarisation. What is different from the Brexit debate is that practically all actors support differentiation in the field of defence. Three main identity-related factors account for the across-the-board support for differentiation in this area. The first is the Czech self-perception as well as the alleged perception of Czechia by other member states as a reactive, or even destructive, troublemaker without a clear vision of what it wants to achieve in the EU. Against this backdrop, the support for PESCO was promoted as an instrument of providing a positive vision for European integration and to (re)constitute its identity as a first-class member state belonging to the integration core.

The second factor is related to the timing of the proposal to step up cooperation in defence even at the cost of using means of differentiated integration. Czechia never openly promoted such cooperation before the migration crisis, even though the Lisbon Treaty opened an avenue for enhanced cooperation in defence. As the migration crisis was clearly perceived as threatening Czech identity (see above) by undermining its cultural and religious homogeneity and social cohesion, it enabled open support for deeper cooperation in defence. In light of the migration crisis, political actors argued that the EU needs to deliver in the fields where citizens require
Fortifying the EU against the "migration threat" by stepping up cooperation in defence was claimed to be the exact example of such a field where the EU should deliver. More effective cooperation in defence could be used to protect the EU external borders, to combat migrant smuggling or even to stabilise countries of origin of migration.

The final factor pertains to Czech scepticism towards integration of core state powers in fields such as defence. Politicians argued that integration in defence cannot lead to the creation of a common EU army or any other form of infringement of national sovereignty in defence. Instead, the aim of enhanced cooperation in defence needs to improve capabilities, capitalise on economies of scale and make defence spending more effective without infringing on national sovereignty. The following quotations are typical examples of these three factors at work in the Czech debate:

- Strengthening security and defence of the EU are crucial for the future development of Europe. It was the Czech Republic who started the debate about strengthening defence and security, together with other countries. The Czech Republic is heading to the core of European integration thanks to its active approach towards defence and security. (Sobotka quoted in Government Media Centre 2017)

- My government managed to change the image of the Czech Republic in the EU vis-a-vis its partners. In the past, we were perceived as a partner with unintelligible opinions. We are a strong representative of Central Europe thanks to the pro-European policy of my government. We have a clear vision; we speak with a loud voice and Europe takes us seriously. (Bydžovská 2017)

The case of PESCO and differentiation in the Czech discourse is a clear case of differentiation contributing to and preserving European identity (deepening). By launching differentiation in defence, European identity will be strengthened by delivering what the citizens of the EU want and thus by providing the feeling of unity and safety. At the same time, by fortifying the EU against the "migration threat" through deeper cooperation in defence and security matters, the Czech discourse on differentiation again highlighted the territorial, geographical, cultural and religious limits of European identity (widening) by linking it to the defence against migration.
4. Turkey and differentiated integration: Polarisated national identities and differentiation

In the case of Turkey, similar to the Czech case, there is a marked difference in the intensity of responses to the four instances of differentiated integration. While Brexit and the migration crisis seem to have raised substantive discussions in political discourses and the media, PESCO and the fiscal compact are found to garner relatively little attention from these circles. The analysis suggests that this could be attributed to two factors. One is related to the way in which PESCO, when mentioned, is attributed little significance in the eyes of the Turkish policy makers, given the continuing primacy of NATO in the collective defence of the region. The second factor is bound up with the idea that those initiatives like PESCO and the fiscal compact which primarily concern the member states and soon-to-be-member candidates are perceived by Turkish policy makers as of little relevance to Turkey, which is a officially a candidate country negotiating accession but with little credible prospect of joining the EU in the foreseeable future. Since Turkey is the only candidate country across our country cases, this suggests that candidate countries with no immediate prospects of membership may be more vocal on steps towards further differentiation within the EU when and if they perceive a short-term immediate impact from differentiation.

In the Turkish case, each instance of differentiation (with the exception of PESCO where there is very limited data) is overwhelmingly perceived by the government and the pro-government circles as a case of further disintegration within the EU, whereas for the main opposition, this is mainly the case for the migration crisis. For the Turkish main opposition, Brexit even provides a potential for the territorial/geographic widening of the European project and identity by creating alternative paths to, but not excluding the prospect of, membership for a country like Turkey.

The following subsections will discuss how each selected case of differentiation has been discursively represented by Turkish policy makers and in the media discourse, concerning differentiated integration.

4.1 Fiscal Compact

The EU debates on the fiscal compact are rarely taken up in the Turkish discourse, the analysis suggests that when the issue is mentioned, it is mostly used to lend support to the broader national identity narrative of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), which stipulates that Turkey is superior to Europe and thus functions better than Europe in every policy area including the economy (see Aydın-Düzgit 2016), as in the following contribution from the spokesman of the AKP in the Turkish Parliament:
Today, many EU member states have given up in the face of the global crisis, and some countries are facing bankruptcy. The future of these countries where social explosions are incurred and governments are replaced by technocratic governments, are surrounded by dark clouds. While all this is happening, Turkey with its economy, stability and strong leadership is standing tall. If you ask anyone in Europe today whether they would prefer to live in Turkey or in Europe, most people will probably say “Turkey”. [...] The Eurozone is asking IMF support. Do you see this? It was Turkey who asked for IMF support in the past. [...] This is the state of the European Union today. Today, Europe is under IMF custody. [...] We are now at a stage at which EU countries are losing the right to prepare their own budgets.

The excerpt above is a standard example of how Turkey is positively represented in AKP discourse in relation to a negatively represented Europe/EU. While Turkey is predicated with active agency and positive evaluative attributes such as “stability” and “strong leadership”, Europe/EU and its member states are predicated as passive actors in loss of sovereignty and agency due to the “custody” of the IMF, “technocratic governments” and the loss of budgetary prerogatives, moving towards an uncertain and gloomy future as expressed through the metaphoric expression of “dark clouds”. Hence the Eurocrisis and the ensuing economic measures undertaken by the EU countries are perceived as emblematic of a diluted and disintegrating Europe. The binary dichotomy of Europe/EU/member states vs. Turkey (also referred to via the deictic “we”) is discursively reproduced over economic and governance standards. As can be expected, such narratives persistently exclude accounts on the fragility of the Turkish economy.

While this representation can be interpreted as an extension of the discursive construction of the Turkish national Self against the European Other in overall AKP discourse (Aydın-Düzgit 2016, 2018) onto the domestic debates on the Eurozone crisis and the fiscal compact, it needs to be highlighted that the opposition contests this discourse, mainly by pointing to the deficiencies of the Turkish economy.

4.2 Migration crisis

Despite the fact that the migration crisis in the summer of 2015 ultimately led to the EU–Turkey migration statement, representation of the events surrounding the migration crisis and the ensuing statement in the discourse of the governing AKP have primarily rested on the articulation of Europe/EU as an essentially discriminatory entity as opposed the normatively superior Turkish Self, as demonstrated in the following excerpt from a speech delivered by President Erdoğan:

4. Migration crisis

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European states are panicking in the face of 150-200 thousand refugees knocking on their door in the last months. They are not poorer than us, they are much, much richer than us. Why are you panicking, why did you panic? They have almost been at each other's throats, they even started discussing the future of the EU. […] While European states are trying to forcefully return and even sink ships and boats which approach their countries from the Mediterranean, we have saved the lives of 65,000 people at sea. […] Problems in Syria and Iraq will end one day, we have full faith in this. When they do, the only thing that will be remembered will be Turkey's humanitarian posture and the shameful attitude of Western countries. We will continue supporting our brothers then. We come from a civilization in which those who help are the ensar,35 and those who seek that help are the muhacir. (Erdoğan 2015a)

In the excerpt above, Turkey is represented as a normative actor by being predicated negatively represented with predicates such as “shameful” and “sink[ing] ships”, thus killing people. Furthermore, this binary and antithetical positioning of Europe and Turkey is essentialised with reference to a fixed (Islamic) “civilisation” to which Turkey belongs and Europe does not. This is discursively made possible by drawing parallels with the time of Prophet Muhammed when he and the first Muslims around him migrated from Mecca to Medine during the early years of Islam. Hence it is Turkey's essentially religious identity which sets it in opposition to Europe, which in other speeches by the President on this topic is also referred to as “Islamophobic”36 and “insincere”37 by nature. The reasons for the lack of burden sharing in Europe, even after agreement on the migration statement, is also mainly sought in essentialist factors such as culture and identity which set Europe normatively apart from and inferior to Turkey.38

It has been argued elsewhere that one of the key national identity narratives in which the AKP operates and which it attempts to make hegemonic at home is the discursive construction of Turkey and the Turkish Self as superior to the European Other, not only in policy performance (as seen in the debate above on the Eurocrisis and the fiscal compact), but also in normative terms (Aydın-Düzgit 2016, 2018). It needs to be highlighted that this representation is not new, but has a long legacy in the history of Turkish political Islam dating back to the late Ottoman era. This representation of Turkey's essential religious identity which sets it in opposition to Europe, which in the pro-government discourse on the lack of burden sharing in the EU on the issue of migration and the externalisation of the EU's migration policy. It can thus also be argued that the lack of a common European response to the migration crisis is in turn utilised by the
While the opposition is observed to share the government's view on the lack of burden sharing and the EU's lack of a common response as a clear case of disintegration on the part of Europe, its discourse differs from that of the government in two main ways. One is that it refrains from essentialising a normative difference between Turkey and Europe in their responses to the crisis, and even goes further by problematising Turkey's own normativity. The second major difference is seen in the way in which the EU–Turkey statement is problematised by the main opposition not just for bearing the risk of making Turkey "one big external refugee camp" for Europe, but also for the downgrade it represents for the EU–Turkey relationship.

This is understandable, given the dominant pro-European identity which the main opposition in particular adheres to in its representations of Turkey and its future (Balkır and Eylemer 2016).

4.3 Brexit

Similar to the debates on migration, the political discussions on the Brexit referendum are also indicative of how polarised national identities in Turkey give way to different interpretations of a single event related to differentiated integration. The pro-government camp in the country represents Brexit as emblematic of the EU's failure and its disintegration, as expressed in the following by the current spokesman of the President, Fahrettin Altun:

“This [the referendum] result points not at the EU's crisis, but its exhaustion. Even though the Westerners in Turkey refuse to accept this, the EU project is at the stage of collapse. The political wave created by the far right is reproducing the “fear of barbarian invasion” in social and political areas. In this process, racism, discrimination, Islamophobia are rapidly spreading in today’s Europe.”

Europe/EU in the excerpt above is predicated as “collapsing” and “exhausted”, and this vision is immediately inverted to domestic political debates with reference to “Westerners” indicating those in Turkey who hold pro-European/Western views and are often opposed to the government. Hence Brexit is utilised to lend support to the pro-government camp's claim that the EU is disintegrating. The Brexit debate also emboldens the argument that Europe increasingly suffers from “racism”, “discrimination”, and even “Islamophobia”. Both government officials and even the main opposition are observed to express several times their concern with the anti-Turkey and the anti-migrant debates which dominated much of Brexit discussions in the UK.

President Erdoğan goes one step further and ties the perceived decay of the...
I think Brexit has just come about nicely. These things can happen in other states in Europe. There are voices in France, from Italy. [\ldots] Here is the thing: Turkey should feel comfortable. It shouldn't say that it is only the EU that matters to me. [\ldots] For instance I say, why shouldn't Turkey be in the Shanghai Five? (Özcan 2016)

In the excerpt above and elsewhere, Brexit is represented positively by the President for furthering disintegration in the EU and paving the way for alternatives for Turkey. In one instance, he calls for a similar national referendum in Turkey, where the voters would be asked to decide on ending Turkey's EU membership bid (Erdoğan 2016a). Nonetheless, the data also suggests that this discourse is mostly seen in domestic debates, whereas in formal international meetings both Erdoğan and other government officials use a more neutral language or express discontent due to the loss of a country which officially backed Turkey's membership.

The fact that the anti-European rhetoric determines mostly the domestic tone of the debate in government discourse can be interpreted as instrumentalisation of Brexit in countering rival and pro-European national identity narratives leading to expressions as in the following: Concerning the EU, we should stick to our very own process, we need to do whatever our process necessitates. [\ldots] If we see opportunity in a situation in which Europe is dealing with its own domestic troubles and adopt an approach such as 'let us also leave Europe', this would only hurt us. We need to leave this approach. (Oğuz Salıcı (CHP) contribution to parliamentary debate on 27 June 2016).

Adopting the membership process for Turkey is equated here with "leaving Europe", which for the segments of the opposition that harbour pro-European sentiments is not an option for Turkey. Elsewhere, pro-European commentators from liberal/secular camps are also found to underline the prospects that further post-Brexit differentiated integration may offer for EU–Turkey relations, but not as a substitute for full membership (see, for instance, Özalp 2016).

4.4 PESCO

As indicated above, we find very limited discussion of PESCO in the Turkish context. Among the policies selected for analysis in this paper, this is the one that receives the least attention. Where discussed, it is represented by both pro-government and opposition circles mostly as a weak and inconsequential EU initiative which cannot constitute an alternative to NATO's role in the collective defense of Europe (Çetin 2017, Çeviköz 2017). Both sides seem to agree however that PESCO is a clear signal of the growing rift between Europe and the US, with little reflection on what this may mean for the future of EU–Turkey relations.

42 See also, among others, Erdoğan (2016a), Çavuşoğlu (2016).
43 See, for instance, Karakuş (2016).
44 Oğuz Salıcı (CHP) contribution to parliamentary debate on 27 June 2016.
Conclusion

In this paper, we attempted to unpack the relationship between national/European identity and attitudes towards differentiation in four selected countries (France, Germany, Czech Republic, Turkey) through a critical analysis of discourses produced in response to four select instances of differentiation (fiscal compact, migration crisis, Brexit, PESCO). In turn, we have also aimed to observe how the impact of differentiation on European identity is perceived in these given countries in terms of preserving European identity (deepening), the dilution of European identity (disintegration) and the territorial/geographic limits of European identity (widening).

We have seen that national identity representations can both enable/disable certain policy positions on differentiation as well as being (re)produced/enacted through the policy positions adopted on instances of differentiation. For instance, while the Czech national identity narrative as sceptical of sovereignty delegation in core state to national sovereignty. Similarly, we observe that the Turkish government uses most which it is trying to make hegemonic at home.

Our study has also shown that attitudes towards differentiation can differ across time as well as across different policy areas, where national identity can serve to delimit policy options available to the political elites. For instance, in the case of Germany, attitudes towards differentiation are observed to take a negative turn particularly after Brexit, where the dictates of the perception of the German Self as the “good Europeans” disable the articulation of favourable attitudes towards any form of differentiation that could potentially lead to the dissolution of the European project. One should also not expect a country to have a uniform position on differentiated integration as a whole, but that attitudes may differ depending on the policy area where differentiation is generally preferred as long as the centrality of France is not challenged, the area of migration – which is politically sensitive and speaks to the core of national identity and cohesion – is where the inclusion of all member states under the banner of solidarity is called for.

We have also demonstrated that there is no single and monolithic national identity discourse within any of these national settings which would produce a uniform case of France where differentiation is generally preferred as long as the centrality of France is not challenged, the area of migration – which is politically sensitive and speaks to the core of national identity and cohesion – is where the inclusion of all member states under the banner of solidarity is called for.

We have also demonstrated that there is no single and monolithic national identity discourse within any of these national settings which would produce a uniform case of France where differentiation is generally preferred as long as the centrality of France is not challenged, the area of migration – which is politically sensitive and speaks to the core of national identity and cohesion – is where the inclusion of all member states under the banner of solidarity is called for.

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imply for Turkey.\textsuperscript{45}
with the potential to produce differing attitudes within a state on differentiated integration. While contesting national identities leading to starkly differing opinions on differentiation are less visible in the cases of France and Germany, they are particularly strong in settings such as the Czech Republic and especially Turkey.

Finally, concerning the impact of differentiation on deepening, disintegration and widening of Europe and European identity, we have found that the perceived implications in each country case vary considerably depending on the policy area. Discussions range from deepening to disintegration with little mention of widening, in the Turkish case, Brexit in particular is discussed by the main opposition as a potential opportunity to widen Europe through leading to novel ways of external engagement with the EU. We have also seen that the nature of the policy area has a bearing on how differentiated integration is viewed to impact on European identity in our country cases. In cases where concrete outcomes of internal differentiation were reached (fiscal compact and PESCO), differentiation was generally welcomed and viewed as a boost to European identity in three of the countries but not for the Turkish government, which generally represents steps towards differentiation as diluting and disintegaration in all four cases, with the exception of the Turkish main opposition which saw an opportunity in it for widening to Turkey. In the case of Germany, the fear was strong enough to lead to a paradigmatic shift on differentiation which was the migration crisis where the lack of any form of formal differentiation ultimately led to a paradigmatic shift.
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Differentiation has become the new normal in the European Union and one of the most crucial matters in defining its future. A certain degree of differentiation has always been part of the European integration project since its early days. The Eurozone and the Schengen area have further consolidated this trend into long-term projects of differentiated integration among EU Member States.

A number of unprecedented internal and external challenges to the EU, however, including the financial and economic crisis, the migration phenomenon, renewed geopolitical tensions and Brexit, have reinforced today the belief that more flexibility is needed within the complex EU machinery. A Permanent Structured Cooperation, for example, has been launched in the field of defence, enabling groups of willing and able Member States to join forces through new, flexible arrangements. Differentiation could offer a way forward also in many other key policy fields within the Union, where uniformity is undesirable or unattainable, as well as in the design of EU external action within an increasingly unstable global environment, offering manifold models of cooperation between the EU and candidate countries, potential accession countries and associated third countries.

EU IDEA’s key goal is to address whether, how much and what form of differentiation is not only compatible with, but is also conducive to a more effective, cohesive and democratic EU. The basic claim of the project is that differentiation is not only necessary to address current challenges more effectively, by making the Union more resilient and responsive to citizens. Differentiation is also desirable as long as such flexibility is compatible with the core principles of the EU’s constitutionalism and identity, sustainable in terms of governance, and acceptable to EU citizens, Member States and affected third partners.

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