

Turkish-German Challenges in the Light of German Federal Elections

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ABSTRACT *There are few, if any, examples of two countries, without common state borders, that possess such an intense relationship as that of Turkey and Germany. Nowadays, the relationship of the two states while closely intertwined, and however paradoxically, seems to be as bad as it has ever been. This commentary provides a brief analysis of the bilateral relations since 2005 to conclude with the latest German federal elections in 2017 and their impact on Turkish-German relations. Accordingly, it is argued that it is more likely that essential Turkish-German disputes will persist in the short and medium term.*

Turkey and Germany: A Distinctive Relationship

There are few, if any, examples of two countries, without common state borders, that possess such an intense relationship as that of Turkey and Germany. Nowadays, the relationship of the two states while closely intertwined, and however paradoxically, seems to be as bad as it has ever been. Thus, it would not be exaggerating to discuss the historic low that currently plagues the Turkish-German partnership and the issues still to overcome. It is true that the mutual statements made in the wake of the German elections

tend towards the cautiously optimistic. However, the widening gap in recent years has rekindled old pessimistic convictions about the future of the EU and Turkey's role, thereby strengthening the fundamental bilateral disagreement.

Over and above historical ties, through the lenses of Realpolitik, strong cooperation between the two nations becomes inevitable. There is no other country outside of Turkey where such a huge Turkish population is settled. Half of the three million people of Turkish descent in Germany possess German nationality.¹ Moreover, Germany constitutes Turkey's leading trade partner.

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Turkey's geographical location attributes to it an exceptional role as a Eurasian bridge to the Near and Middle East, but also to Asia and Africa

In 2016, the bilateral trade volume between Turkey and Germany grew by 4 percent, reaching a new all-time high of 37.3 billion Euros. In the same year, the value of Turkish exports to Germany was about 15.4 billion Euros (total export in 2016: 129 billion Euros), marking a growth by 6.4 percent compared to the year before. German imports, meanwhile, were worth around 21.9 billion Euros (total import in 2016: 179.5 billion Euros).² At the same time, Turkey became the fifth largest trading partner of the European Union.³ The bilateral trade volume between Turkey and the EU amounted to 131 billion Euros in 2016 (total export from Turkey to the EU: 61 billion Euros; total import from the EU to Turkey: 70 billion Euros).⁴ In addition, it is predicted that the modernization and extension of the Customs Union would bring substantial benefits for both partners and thereby enhance Turkey's economic performance by 2 percent. According to the European Commission, such an extension would mean that Turkey could export additional goods amounting to 5 billion Euros to the Union.⁵ In the first six months of 2017, foreign direct investments in Turkey comprised around 4.2 billion Euros, with investments from EU

member countries which grew by 61 percent compared to 2017, making up more than half of the foreign direct investment.⁶

There are numerous areas that promise considerable prospects for development. The consumer sector and the market for luxury goods offer good chances for prolific cooperation. The expansion of the railway system and the development of the energy sector will transform Turkey into a significant growth market that will be certainly of special interest to German investors and energy companies. Turkey is expected to almost double its demand for energy by 2023. Due to its geostrategic role, Turkey strives to become an 'energy hub,' thereby functioning as a bridge connecting Europe, the Middle East and Africa.⁷ Currently, there are around 6,800 German companies or Turkish companies with German equity participation operating in diverse sectors across Turkey.⁸ On the other hand, Germany is home to nearly 96,000 businesses that are owned by people of Turkish descent, employing around 500,000 individuals. These businesses generate a total annual turnover of more than 50 billion Euros.⁹ Similarly, tourism is another industry that illustrates the interconnectedness of the two countries; despite contemporary clashes, around 3.9 million Germans visited Turkey in 2016.¹⁰

As highlighted above, the economic features of this special relationship are enriched by geopolitical challenges that have to be taken up to-

gether as NATO partners. Undeniably, Turkey's geographical location attributes to it an exceptional role as a Eurasian bridge to the Near and Middle East, but also to Asia and Africa.¹¹ The international community faces extraordinary challenges, particularly in the Middle East, that pose a threat to global peace and stability of nations worldwide.¹² Ever since Europe's refugee crisis in 2015, stability in the Middle East has become crucial for the European Union and Germany in particular.¹³ As a consequence of the war in Syria, Germany and Turkey have turned into the most important countries of their respective regions in terms of accommodating refugees. However, these waves of migration have also triggered the mobility of terrorists from the Middle East, thus necessitating closer Turkish-European cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Not so long ago, on the January 22, 2016, the first bilateral Turkish-German intergovernmental consultations took place in Berlin, where both countries committed themselves to a closer partnership in the field of counter-terrorism, EU membership, irregular migration, visa liberalization and burden-sharing with regard to refugees.¹⁴

Turkish-German Relations since 2005

From Turkey's point of view, Turkish-German cooperation between 1999 and 2005 during the Schröder/Fischer era is regarded as a golden age of Turkey-Europe relations, specifically due to the reliable EU member-

ship perspective that was conveyed. Consequently, the power asymmetry between Turkey and Germany has balanced out and developed into a symmetric relationship over the years. However, with Chancellor Angela Merkel's victory and the formation of a new government in 2005, an asymmetric Turkish-German relationship emerged once again.¹⁵ Along with this, Turkey encountered Germany's reluctance to proactively support Turkey's EU accession and instead, the nation was merely regarded as a buffer zone between the East and the West.¹⁶ As a consequence thereof, the accession negotiations halted before they even started properly. The election of Sarkozy as the French President, the blocking of several significant EU-Turkey negotiation chapters, the failure of the constitutional referenda in the Netherlands and France, the Euro crisis, the Syrian crisis and along with it the refugee crisis, the Russian crisis, Brexit and last but not least the recent advance of right wing populism in Europe have all contributed to certain consequences for bilateral relations between Turkey and Germany.

These crises have undoubtedly increased the fears and criticisms in segments of the European population regarding the enlargement of the European Union. As a result, one can observe that calls for the strengthening of European nation-states became louder and nationalism as well as populism gained ground.¹⁷ As to the relationship with Turkey, it becomes apparent that Angela Merkel's concept of 'privileged partnership'

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has demotivated the Turkish government and consequently decelerated the political and legal reforms supposed to lead to Turkey's implementation of the EU acquis.¹⁸ Step by step, public opinion in Turkey has realized that the country is transferring sovereign rights and is being externally evaluated by undergoing a lengthy process of adaptation without a realistic prospect to have a say, one day, in the decision-making bodies of the European Union. Accordingly, EU accession talks have come to a de facto halt.

With the emergence of the refugee crisis in 2015, which has prompted existential consequences for the future of the Schengen area, Chancellor Merkel has rediscovered the 'partial' importance of Turkey vis-a-vis the security of the European continent. Merkel's personal endeavors have encouraged the Union to stress the

significance of Turkey as a strategic partner and on top of that, EU leaders began making a considerable effort to revive the accession negotiations.

On March 18, 2016, following the EU-Turkey Action Plan activated in November 2015, the European Union and Turkey agreed to end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU. It was decided that all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of March 20, 2016 would be returned to Turkey. Pursuant to the 1:1 scheme, for every Syrian refugee being returned to Turkey from Greece, another Syrian individual would be resettled to the EU. Moreover, the EU assured an immediate disbursement of 3 billion Euros for the support of refugees settled in Turkey. A further 3 billion was to be paid for concrete refugee projects until the end of 2018. In addition, pledges to re-energize the EU accession process were made, as well as visa liberation negotiations designed to reach the goal of lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016.¹⁹ Since the entry into force of the so-called EU-Turkey Deal, the number of refugees passing from Turkey to Greece has dropped around 97 percent and amounts now to approximately 75 refugees a day.²⁰ During this period, 1,989 refugees were returned to Turkey from the Greek side, 11,333 Syrian refugees residing in Turkey were resettled within the EU.²¹ Turkey's hope that by November 2016 up to 72,000 refugees from Turkey would be resettled in the EU,²² as well as the promise to resettle around 250,000



refugees yearly amongst member states,²³ vanished pretty quickly. The EU also did not fulfill its financial obligations under the deal; from the envisaged 3 billion Euros for 2016-2017, 55 projects worth about 1.78 billion Euros were signed and only around 908 million Euros disbursed so far.²⁴ As Turkey has assumed enormous humanitarian responsibility compared to her economic power, this development has increased frustration about EU reliability in Turkey. Nowadays, in some Turkish cities there are more refugees living than residents and governmental costs for support of refugees added up to \$30 billion,²⁵ hence it becomes increasingly absurd that the wealthy European Union only procures a fraction of the expenses and in doing so permanently sets up new obstacles.

Particularly the pledge to lift the visa requirements for Turkish citizens has

been regarded by the general Turkish public as an overdue compensation for the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal.²⁶ In a short period, Turkey fulfilled 67 out of the 72 requirements for visa liberalization. The last five criteria concern notably anti-terror laws of Turkey and would necessitate a new definition of terrorism and terror organizations.²⁷ Considering the significant terrorist threats faced by Turkey since 2015 and in light of what it has done to maintain stability in Europe during the refugee crisis, the country has expected genuine solidarity from Europe in the fight against terrorism. As the refugee crisis abated thanks to Turkey's efforts, the EU interest in debating possibilities for visa liberalization waned. Due to rising Euroscepticism, as well as widespread right wing populism, visa liberalization simply does not seem favorable anymore.

While banning Turkish politicians from addressing ethnic Turks in Germany, the German government allowed PKK supporters to demonstrate in German cities with PKK symbols and Öcalan flags.

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ABDULSELAM
DURDAK

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Recent Bilateral Crisis

Soon after signing the refugee deal, no sign of the initial euphoria was visible anymore. The already strained relations between Turkey and Germany worsened at breathtaking speed. A detrimental crisis arose and it remains in existence until today. It all started with offensive and defamatory humiliations by German public service channels and the German media towards the Turkish President²⁸ to which the Turkish media has reacted using similarly insulting language.²⁹ By reason thereof, on several occasions, Ankara has summoned the German ambassador to the Turkish Foreign Ministry.

The Armenian Resolution by the German Parliament caused another diplomatic crisis between the two countries. In June 2016, the German Bundestag adopted a resolution, which accused Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, of genocide on the Armenian population. Although

the Merkel Government classified the resolution as non-binding, it did not distance itself from the decision.³⁰ The Turkish public was outraged. Subsequently, German parliamentarians were prohibited from visiting the İncirlik airbase; hereafter the crisis resulted in the withdrawal of German soldiers from İncirlik.³¹

The already burdened Turkish-German relationship hit the bottom after the coup attempt on July 15, 2016. Unaware of the facts and the threat Turkish democracy faced, reactions of German officials, as well as German media lacked empathy. Germany's belated condemnation of the failed coup was regarded as cautious and insincere.³² Numerous high-ranking FETÖ members received political asylum from the German state relatively quickly,³³ including 196 Turkish diplomats and their family members. As of mid-September 2017, a total of 250 citizens with Turkish diplomatic documents and another 380 holding diplomatic passes have officially sought asylum in Germany.³⁴ However, it remains legally and diplomatically questionable that even members of the military, who are known to have directly participated in the coup attempt, were granted political asylum. In the light of the statements of Bruno Kahl, the head of Germany's foreign intelligence service (BND), according to whom the Gülen movement constitutes "a civil association that aims to provide further religious and secular education" and according to whom there are no signs for the movement's involvement in the July coup, the German approach seems not really

surprising.³⁵ Admittedly, this course of action fosters assumptions about the BND, including suspicions of protecting the movement for dubious reasons. Various extradition requests from Turkey were rejected.³⁶ Among these are central figures that played a leading role in the failed coup who might help clarify the background of the coup attempt.

Another crucial unresolved matter in the bilateral relationship relates to Germany's approach to the terror organization PKK and its substitute organizations. Though members of the German government permanently express their solidarity with the Turkish fight against terrorism and even though they assure that they fight against the PKK also on German soil, official reports such as that of the domestic intelligence service of Germany (*Bundesverfassungsschutz*) acknowledge exactly the opposite. The 2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution certifies the unimpaired propaganda, financing and recruitment activities of the PKK in Germany.³⁷ Despite having 14,000 sympathizers, the PKK is not even listed under 'terrorist organizations' in the report; instead it is to be found in the chapter entitled "Extremist Efforts of Foreigners Posing a Threat to Security."³⁸

In 2016, Germany saw more than 200 demonstrations with PKK symbols and Öcalan flags. Daily newspapers such as the *Özgür Politika* and two TV channels called *Sterk TV* and *Med Nuve TV* are well-known propaganda tools of the PKK and yet they freely

continue their activities.³⁹ The PKK's fundraising campaign from September 2015 until the beginning of 2016 generated over 13 million Euros in Germany.⁴⁰ In addition to this, the PKK openly recruits young people at its events and cultural festivals for its terrorist acts against Turkey. The report indicates that 180 individuals have been recruited in the reporting period.⁴¹ This ambivalent approach by political and security forces is reflected also in public opinion. Despite having sufficient German journalists in Turkey, the terrorist character of the PKK is generally omitted in the media coverage. The daily terror victims are barely mentioned in the news and the PKK is primarily depicted merely as a prohibited workers party. From time to time, media coverage reflects sympathy for the PKK, sometimes implying the legitimate Turkish fight against terrorism constitutes an ethnic civil war.

According to German law, subsidiaries of the PKK that are well known and appear yearly in an exhaustive manner in the German domestic intelligence service reports, would need to be encompassed by the 1993 PKK-ban⁴² and thus be prohibited from engaging in any activities. However, to the contrary, these substitute organizations enjoy great opportunities for development. The domestic intelligence service itself elaborates in its annual report that the PKK in Germany consistently renames its subsidiaries in order to create the impression of political and democratic realignment. Using this tactic, the organization tries to disengage from the



Martin Schulz (SPD) welcomes Angela Merkel (CDU) for preliminary coalition negotiations on January 7, 2017 in Berlin.

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stigma of a terror organization and circumvent the PKK-ban.⁴³ As a consequence, one can observe that the PKK is optimally organized throughout Germany. NAV-DEM,⁴⁴ Komalen Ciwan,⁴⁵ YXK,⁴⁶ AZADI e.V.⁴⁷ are just a few of the many existing organizations⁴⁸ that are seamlessly integrated into the PKK-hierarchy, implementing orders in Germany stemming from the PKK-leadership in Qandil (Iraq).⁴⁹ They engage freely in activities and quite often they are the official organizers of the PKK-propaganda events, where young people are recruited for committing terrorist acts in Turkey. According to the German domestic intelligence service, which is subordinate to the Minister of Interior, these organizations should be treated as subsidiaries and hence be encompassed by the PKK-ban.⁵⁰ Yet the actual implementation of the assessments of the federal domestic

intelligence service and those of the state domestic intelligence services, as well as court judgments, seem not to be expedient for Germany's political leaders. Thus, laws and jurisprudence concerning the PKK are many times disrespected by the Executive. Currently, the Federal Government is content with collecting certain prohibited symbols and flags at some official propaganda events of the PKK.⁵¹ Instead of banning those PKK subsidiaries and eliminating all possibilities of support to the terrorist organization, the government continues focusing on trivial aspects of the problem.

Turkish Diaspora

On top of the bilateral difficulties, the concerns of the Turkish diaspora in Germany have often become a

matter of dispute. The rise of racism predominantly affects Turkish Muslims. In the first six months of 2017, around 400 Islamophobic offences against Muslims or Muslim establishments were reported.⁵² One can observe that all in all, there is a considerable increase in racist attacks. In 2016, more than 23,500 offences were attributed to the right wing. Refugee accommodations suffered almost 1,000 attacks in the same year.⁵³

With regard to one of the prime examples of racism, the NSU case, it is acknowledged that the incidental detection of the racist terror organization NSU in 2011 and the on-going lawsuit since 2013 provide more questions than answers. Chancellor Angela Merkel's promise to thoroughly investigate all ten murders has not been realized even though six years have passed.⁵⁴ A seemingly endless series of mishaps, systematic cover-ups, destruction of files, involvement of the domestic intelligence service in the murders, as well as sudden deaths of several witnesses constitute only some key features of the NSU process.⁵⁵ Several committees of inquiry of the federal and regional German parliaments have conducted significant investigations with regard to institutional failures and involvements; however, most of the recommendations have not been effectively implemented as yet. Institutional racism, mainly established in national security authorities and secret services, but also to be found in the daily work of public institutions, still lacks efficient combatting and sustainable prevention. Continuously, policies of

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exclusion towards Islamic communities are sustained, their basic rights are infinitely delayed⁵⁶ and they often become the target of insults and smear campaigns.⁵⁷

A precondition for family reunification of Turkish people residing in Europe is the completion of a language test before entering the EU. Although there is a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgment stipulating that this requirement violates basic rights, as well as the EU-Turkey Association Agreement, the German institutions continue applying their own rules.⁵⁸ If the Turkish language is concerned, bilingualism seems not to be well appreciated in Germany. Only a minor fraction of the students of Turkish origin have access to Turkish language classes and existing offers are permanently publicly discredited and even eliminated.

Turkey in the Light of the German Federal Elections

The Turkish-German affairs were disproportionately decisive during the electoral campaign of the German

federal elections in September 2017. Most of all, the debate between Chancellor Angela Merkel and SPD candidate Martin Schulz was criticized for focusing too much on policies regarding Turkey, instead of addressing actual concerns of the German population. Martin Schulz' populist statement to break off EU accession talks with Turkey should he be elected did not trigger the counteraction he desired. Merkel replied that she does not plan to call off diplomatic relations with Turkey just because they have to outdo each other during the election campaign to prove who is tougher.⁵⁹ The Social Democrats in particular tried to benefit from the prevalent anti-Turkey atmosphere. Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel has presented the realignment of Germany's policies towards Turkey and furthermore, he has tightened the travel advisory to Turkey in the midst of peak season.⁶⁰ Gabriel also proclaimed that German tourists might be detained during their holidays in Turkey and that he could not advise any German to spend their vacations in Turkey.⁶¹

The Impact of Election Results on Germany & Turkish-German Relations

Due to Germany's international role, the election results of the elections on September 24, 2017 attracted global curiosity. The ruling grand coalition comprising the two biggest and centrist parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), incurred heavy losses despite a good economy and record low unemployment numbers. The CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union

(CSU) remained the largest party, however they lost around 8.7 percent, thus dropping to 33 percent. This is their worst election result since 1949. The SPD, on the other hand, suffered a loss of 5.2 percent, dropping to 20.5 percent. This is the party's worst result in its post-war history. After failing to reach the 5 percent threshold in 2013, the far-right populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) won 12.6 percent and became the third biggest party in the German parliament.⁶² The Liberals (FDP), winning 10.7 percent, succeeded in returning to parliament and obtained the opportunity to take part in the so-called Jamaica coalition⁶³ talks together with the Greens, who reached 8.9 percent. The socialist Left Party (Linke) obtained 9.2 percent of the votes.

Instead of four parties, there are now six parties represented in the Bundestag. It is beyond doubt that the party system has become fragmented. According to an election analysis of the Bertelsmann Foundation, the mainstream parties lost not only right wing sympathizers, but also many others coming from the bourgeois middle-class. The AfD has reached 20 percent of these voters and the CDU/CSU suffered a loss of 14.6 percent in their main electorate, the bourgeois middle-class. Right after the announcement of its catastrophic election results, the SPD ruled out another grand coalition with the CDU/CSU and declared its intention to head directly into opposition. All parties denied cooperation with the right wing, extremist AfD. The socialist left is particularly not

accepted by the middle-class; therefore, the only possible way to form a government remained the Jamaica coalition. However, on November 19, the lengthy Jamaica negotiation talks to form a government under Merkel collapsed due to the parties' disagreements especially regarding migration and energy policy. Forecasts predict that new elections will not lead to any novel coalition constellations and that the two big parties will continue losing votes and mandates. As a result thereof and President Steinmeier's special endeavor, the SPD reconsidered a grand coalition with the CDU/CSU. It seems 2018 will be marked by grand coalition agreement talks and notably by the Social Democrat's final decision whether to form a government or not. In these talks, it remains to be seen whether compromises on key topics can be reached, so that the mutual governance of the country seems feasible. The actual negotiations would start after reaching a first consensus. The longest Germany has ever taken to form a new government was 86 days; this record has now been broken. If these negotiations also fail, there are only two viable options left for Merkel; either she forms a minority government or there will be new elections.⁶⁴ In the case of new elections, calls for Merkel's resignation from CDU/CSU members will become louder.

As seen from the perspective of the Turkish-German affairs, the prospect of bilateral relations is as important as ideas and expectations related to the future of Europe, integration and migration. Though the CDU/CSU is

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willing to intensify the EU-Turkey relations when in power, full EU membership of Turkey is still not desired. However, by virtue of Turkey's strategic and economic significance for Europe, a close and strong partnership particularly in matters of foreign and security policies is desired. This being said, the CDU attaches great importance on the mutual efforts to overcome the refugee crisis.⁶⁵ Chancellor candidate Martin Schulz' surprising demand to call off EU negotiations with Turkey even surprised his own party, since the SPD has always regarded the accession talks as the only effective platform for EU-Turkey dialogue. In principle, the Social Democrats have never supported the end of the EU membership talks, though the realization of such an accession seems unlikely in the foreseeable future. The SPD values Turkey as an important, yet difficult partner and supports visa liberalization for civil society activists, Turkish-German companies, scientists, artists and journalists.⁶⁶

The Liberals advocate the end of the EU accession talks with Turkey on the grounds of the 'current Turkish lead-

How the relations between the two nations will evolve is heavily dependent on the new German government's coalition negotiations and the language chosen in a possible coalition agreement between the CDU/CSU and SPD

ership.' They are also supportive of establishing a new common ground with the aim of strengthening the co-operation in security and economic matters. Although Turkey is deemed to be an 'indispensable partner,' the FDP argues that new models must be developed to achieve a satisfying co-operation.⁶⁷ The Greens encourage a remeasurement of the Turkish-European relations. The export of German arms to Turkey should be stopped immediately; however, on the other hand, they favor visa liberalization for Turkish people. The doors of the European Union should not be closed; although the Greens endorse negotiations regarding an extension of the Customs Union with Turkey should only start, when 'Turkey finds its way back to democracy and rule of law.' Turkey's military interventions in Syria and North Iraq have sparked severe criticism in the Green Party.⁶⁸ The socialist Left Party, that openly backs the PKK terror organization, favors a radical turn in German and European policies on Turkey. Furthermore, the party demands the end of the EU accession talks and the im-

mediate end to German arms exports to Turkey. An extension of the customs union is also not supported.⁶⁹

In the light of the electoral programs of the probable coalition parties and the difficult bilateral relationship of recent years, one can expect the positive and open use of language towards Turkey, as it was preferred and established in the coalition agreement of 2013,⁷⁰ turns into negative and pessimistic language that would continue to burden Turkish-German relations.

Concluding Remarks

Against the backdrop of the electoral campaign of the German parties and their electoral program, it is more likely that essential Turkish-German disputes will persist in the short and medium term. Specifically, the EU accession process is a topic where positive steps seem difficult. Thus, the emphasis on discrepancies could be maintained and so, Turkey and Germany would fail to take up common historical challenges by clinging to day-to-day politics. Although one can currently witness a certain change in the reciprocal rhetoric and rapprochement between the two states, a genuine normalization of the relations presupposes measurable developments on the issues of concern. Hereafter, challenges in bilateral disputes have to be addressed with full awareness of the breadth and depth of Turkish-German relations and on the basis of mutual respect, constructiveness and sincerity. This is the only approach that would make it feasible

to restore confidence in each other in spite of enduring disagreements. However, this also implies that continuous contempt of essential Turkish security interests would hamper the reestablishment of trust between the partners. Prospectively, the actual solidarity in the fight against terrorism will be regarded as crucial for a reliable partnership.

Turkish-German intergovernmental consultations have to be considered as an important tool to re-establish confidence in each other, hence the initial efforts in this field must be resumed. The Ministers of Justice and the Ministers of Interior of both countries have to intensify their communication. Apart from that, concrete steps, such as the opening of Chapter 23 (Justice and Fundamental Rights) and Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom, Security) could revive the halted accession negotiations and stimulate new impulses for the stabilization of Turkey's European perspective. Whether all of this has any chance of realization and how the relations between the two nations will evolve is heavily dependent on the new German government's coalition negotiations and the language chosen in a possible coalition agreement between the CDU/CSU and SPD. In any case, the SPD seems to have come closer to the CDU/CSU's position according to which Turkey was never really considered a serious candidate for accession, but rather a strategic and economic partner of the EU. From the German perspective, this consequently means that on the one hand, a breach with Turkey should be avoided, and on the other

hand, the accession negotiations should continue with the same lack of enthusiasm and as slowly as possible. As a result, the rapprochement might possibly lie in cooperation around security policies, the extension of the existing Customs Union and selective visa liberalization. According to this, it seems that the Turkish-German relations will continue to be marked by inevitable disagreements on several important subjects and that the challenge, for both sides, lies in the pragmatic harmonization of partly opposing approaches. ■

Endnotes

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for participation in the armed war in the PKK's media (magazines, TV channels etc.) as well as on the internet"; *2015 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, p. 113: "Even during the peace process in Turkey until Summer 2015, the PKK strived for the recruitment of young people for its military arm (HPG)."

38. *2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, p. 26.

39. *2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, p. 229.

40. *2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, p. 228.

41. *2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, p. 223.

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44. NAV-DEM "Navenda Civaka Demokratik ya Kurdên li Elmanyayê" is an umbrella organization for organizations that are close to the PKK in Germany. It is responsible for implementing the orders of the PKK-leadership. *2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, pp. 227, 244.

45. Komalen Ciwan is affiliated to the structures of the prohibited PKK-subsiidiary KONGRA-GEL and as the youth organization of the PKK responsible for attacks, actions of occupation and recruitment in Germany and Europe, *2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, p. 221.

46. YXK "Yekitiya Xwendekarên Kurdistan" is an umbrella organization for Kurdish students in Europe. The YXK is a so-called mass-organization of the PKK that has the objective to popularize the ideology of the PKK. *2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, p. 228.

47. AZADI e.V. provides legal aid to PKK-fighters and supporters that are facing criminal charges before the German courts. The organization has close ties with PKK subsidiaries *2016 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution*, p. 245.

48. Further PKK mass-organizations: "Kurdische Frauenbewegung in Europa" (AKKH/TJK-E), "Union der Journalisten Kurdistans" (YRK), "Union der kurdischen Lehrer" (YMK), "Union der Juristen Kurdistans" (YHK), Die "Union kurdischer Familien" (YEK-MAL) sowie die Religionsgemeinschaften "Islamische Gemeinde Kurdistans" (CIK), "Föderation der demokratischen Aleviten e.V." (FEDA) and "Föderation der yezidischen Vereine e.V." (FKE).

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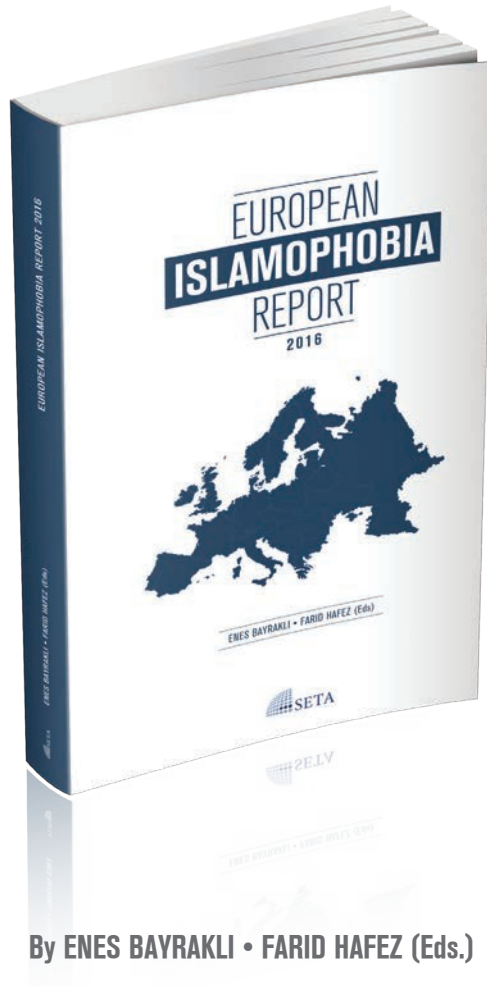
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70. "Turkey is of strategic and economic importance for Europe. Furthermore, we have close ties to Turkey because of the innumerable relationships between people in our two countries. We wish to deepen further the relations between the European Union and Turkey, including close strategic cooperation in foreign and security policy issues. We are not just looking at the impressive economic development of Turkey, but also and above all the reform efforts that have been undertaken with regard to the accession negotiations. The negotiation process will continue with the opening of new chapters in the negotiations. Unconditional respect for the values on which the EU is based, such as democracy, the state under the rule of law as well as freedom of religion and opinion is a prerequisite for further process, as is implementation of these values within the country. The negotiations, which commenced in 2005 with the aim of accession, are an open-ended process that is not automatic in nature and the outcome cannot be guaranteed in advance. The question of EU membership is also under discussion in Turkey. If the EU proves to be unable to absorb Turkey, or the country is unable to comply in full with all the obligations associated with membership, then Turkey will have to be linked as closely as possible to European structures in a way that allows its privileged relationship to the EU and Germany to be developed further. It is in the vital interest of Germany and the EU to promote stability, democracy, the rule of law and economic development in other adjacent regions as well. The European neighborhood policy has proven effective in this regard. Association, free trade and visa relaxation agreements remain the best instruments for the eastern partnership. The neighboring countries on the southern and eastern Mediterranean littoral are of strategic importance for Europe. Closer links between these states and the EU can contribute to stabilization of the region."

EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2016



By ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds.)

The second annual European Islamophobia Report (EIR) scrutinizes the developments of Islamophobia in 27 European countries for 2016.

