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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper looks at how the complex and intertwined relationship between Germany and Turkey is viewed in Germany. It examines the political legacy of the Angela Merkel years and her policies toward Ankara, the views of the general German public and of the main German political parties, and the impact of the large Turkish-origin population living in Germany. It also examines the German-Turkish economic relationship and the clash between values and interests in German policy, which have come into a high state of tension in the wake of the Syrian refugee crisis, the failed military coup in Turkey, and what Germans consider Turkey's "hostage diplomacy." It concludes that Germany needs to take a long-term approach in dealing with Ankara and should pursue a policy toward Turkey as a whole, rather than a policy aimed strictly at Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

INTRODUCTION

The term "partnership" in German has a strictly business connotation without any hint of friendship or affection. A partner is someone with whom you participate, a *teilnehmer*; partnership is an open business relationship, *offene Handelsgesellschaft*. While the term can extend to a partner on a sports team, a colleague, or even a marriage, its neutral meaning is what is intended in this discussion of the contemporary Germany-Turkey relationship. Although there is little warmth or identification in this partnership today, it is founded on real mutual interests and dependencies that are more important than the lack of common values or mutual admiration. Germany and Turkey have a special relationship unique among European countries, as they are linked by the large population of people of Turkish origin living in Germany, which totals 3 million people. Add to this an extensive economic relationship and important strategic concerns, especially regarding refugee flows, and the result is two closely interwoven polities. Yet today, these interests are under greater stress than at any time in the past decade, as the gap in national values and identification has widened. A recent public opinion poll in Germany indicates that Turkey ranks lowest in trust as a partner among eight key countries, and the clashes at the highest levels of government have been unprecedented. This paper will examine the current state of the relationship from the German perspective, policy options for the coming term of the new German government, and implications for the United States and the trans-Atlantic relationship.

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONTEMPORARY RELATIONSHIP

The German relationship with Turkey since the 1960s can be characterized as “intermestic,” combining both domestic and foreign policy components. As a leading German analyst Heinz Kramer noted in 2007, the bilateral relationship has been influenced by the unsolved problems of integration of some of the Turkish and Kurdish immigrants living in Germany and the overall state of human rights and democracy in Turkey.¹ The European and NATO dimensions have been central as well and have played out in German party politics, with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) more concerned than the Social Democratic Party (SPD) about the importance of Turkey as a NATO ally. Finally, the economic relationship has been a constant and generally positive factor in the relationship.

As with Turkey’s relationships with many other countries, there have been numerous ups and downs in the Germany-Turkey bilateral history since the end of World War II and the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany. During the Cold War, West Germany saw Turkey as a key NATO ally and became, in Kramer’s phrase, “a mentor for Turkey in Europe.”² By this Kramer was referring to the support Germany gave for Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) aid to Turkey during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This mentor role also took the form of open critiques by the Federal Republic about the state of democracy in Turkey and the role of the military in Turkish politics in the 1980s and 1990s. This generally positive condition changed with the end of the Cold War as security ties became less of a concern, thereby making Turkey’s regression on human rights and democracy more prominent. During the last years of Helmut Kohl’s chancellorship, united Germany moved away from its mentor role and concerns about Turkish membership in the EU grew within the CDU.

Relations improved dramatically during the SPD-Green coalition of Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer in the first years of the 21st century, which coincided with the early, promising years of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) government. During this short period, which has been characterized as a “golden age of the Europeanization of Turkey,” Germany proactively promoted Turkey’s membership in the EU and opened German citizenship to Germans of Turkish origin.³

All of this changed with the return of the CDU to power in 2005 under the leadership of Angela Merkel, who called for a “privileged partnership” with Turkey that would fall short of full EU membership, which was viewed in Turkey as second-class membership. Her SPD foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, continued the SPD’s support for full Turkish membership in the EU and Merkel recognized the principle of *Pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept). As an assessment of this period concluded, “Turkey policy was not a breaking point in the Grand Coalition while it held to the formal continuity of the Schröder government, but the Merkel government did not take any proactive steps to support the EU accession of Turkey.”⁴ The Christian Democratic-Liberal

1 Heinz Kramer, “Türkei,” in *Handbuch zur deutschen Aussenpolitik*, eds., Siegmund Schmidt, Gunther Hellmann, and Reinhard Wolf (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007).

2 Heinz Kramer, “Türkei,” 483.

3 Rosa Burc and Burak Copur, “Deutsche Türkeipolitik unter Merkel: eine Kritische Bilanz,” (Paris: Institut Français des Relations Internationales, September 2017), 9. For an overview of Turkey’s relationship with the West during this period, see Kemal Kirişçi, *Turkey and the West: Fault Lines in a Troubled Alliance* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018).

4 Rosa Burc and Burak Copur, “Deutsche Türkeipolitik unter Merkel,” 9 (author’s translation).

government that followed (2009-13) did not see any formal changes in German policy but coincided with the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy in France, and the Franco-German tandem made it clear that Turkish membership, while still open, was not supported. The EU accession process slowed down after the EU Council decided in December 2006 to suspend negotiations of eight chapters. The Arab Spring and the movement of the AKP government away from domestic reforms under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also marked a further distancing of the EU from Ankara.

It took the eruption of the refugee crisis in 2015 for Merkel to rediscover the value of Turkey to Germany and the EU, culminating in the EU-Turkey agreement on refugees of March 18, 2016. The most recent and severe downturn in the Germany-Turkey relationship came following the June 2, 2016 vote in the Bundestag passing a resolution recognizing the killing of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as genocide. Although Chancellor Merkel stated the resolution had no legal binding, the Turkish government blocked a visit by German parliamentarians to meet with German troops at the NATO base in İncirlik, which in turn led to calls by members of the CDU for the possible withdrawal of German troops from the base. This had been preceded in March 2016 by a major flap over a satirical poem aired by German satirist Jan Böhmermann on his television show, which ridiculed President Erdoğan in crude terms. Erdoğan demanded that Böhmermann be prosecuted under a 19th century German law that prohibits insulting foreign leaders. Merkel apologized to Erdoğan and allowed the case to proceed in the courts, but the case was later dropped. She received heavy criticism for caving in to Erdoğan and sacrificing basic German principles to appease an important partner.

The failed Turkish coup attempt of July 15-16, 2016 and the repression and arrests that followed resulted in calls by the Erdoğan government for the German government to extradite hundreds of Turkish military officers who requested asylum in Germany. These calls were rejected by Berlin on the grounds of Turkey's weak rule of law and weak judiciary.⁵ The arrest of Turkish-German journalist Deniz Yücel in February 2017 was the first time a German journalist had been jailed in Turkey and resulted in Germany banning Turkish officials from campaigning in Germany for the approval of a constitutional referendum in the spring of 2017, following similar actions by the government of the Netherlands toward the Turks. Both the Dutch and German decisions were made based on upcoming elections and the need to appear to be standing firm against Erdoğan and Islamist politics. These actions in turn led Erdoğan to rebuke Germany and Merkel for using "Nazi methods."

After the successful passage of the referendum, the Bundestag voted to withdraw German troops from İncirlik and to redeploy them to Jordan. In July 2017, the Turkish government canceled a planned visit by a Bundestag delegation to the NATO base at Konya. A Bundestag inquiry led by a Green member of the Bundestag, Özcan Mutlu, found that over 54 German citizens were incarcerated in Turkish prisons (although the number turned out to be 28, of whom all but six have since been released) and Chancellor Merkel warned that Berlin would reverse course on its economic cooperation with Ankara if Germans were not released from Turkish prisons.⁶ Erdoğan continued to

5 In Turkey, there is a widely shared consensus that the coup attempt was staged by elements in the military closely associated with Fethullah Gülen, leader of the Gülen movement based in the United States. For a discussion of who perpetrated the coup see Kemal Kirişçi, *Turkey and the West*, 127-33.

6 "How Deniz Yücel's Year in Prison affects German-Turkish relations," *Deutsche Welle*, February 14, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/how-deniz-y%C3%BCcels-year-in-prison-affects-german-turkish-relations/a-42555983>.

speak of trading German prisoners for those Turks currently seeking asylum in Germany, causing outrage in the German public and media over what they considered “hostage diplomacy.”

GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION ON TURKEY AND THE GERMAN-TURKISH RELATIONSHIP

The general public

The German public has an overwhelmingly negative view of contemporary Turkey. A Pew/Körber poll conducted in late 2017 found that relations with Turkey ranked only behind refugees and relations with the United States as the greatest challenge facing German foreign policy. Turkey ranked lowest in trust of eight countries (at 2 percent) among Germany’s most important partners. Three-fourths of Germans polled believed that EU accession talks with Turkey should be broken off, and by a margin of 75 percent to 19 percent believed that Germany should adopt a hard position toward Turkey on the refugee agreement, even if it jeopardizes the deal.⁷ Polls taken earlier in 2017 produced similar findings.⁸ In a poll taken by the German broadcaster *ARD* in 2017, only 11 percent of those polled held out any hope “that the German-Turkish relationship will improve in the next years,” while 57 percent believed the chances to be small, and 30 percent very small.⁹

German public support for Turkey’s accession to the EU has dropped since the end of the Red-Green coalition in 2005. An *ARD* poll taken in September 2017 found that support for Turkish membership in the EU in the middle or long term had dropped to 12 percent while those opposing Turkish membership stood at 84 percent. At the beginning of the Erdoğan era in March 2004, the number supporting accession stood at 58 percent while only 35 percent were opposed.¹⁰

Opinions of Germans of Turkish origin

The part of the German population with Turkish heritage stands in contrast to the general public on Turkey-related issues. Of the approximately 3 million people of Turkish origin living in Germany, about 1.2 million are German citizens and can vote in German elections, while about 1.43 million can vote in Turkish elections. Between one-quarter to one-third of the Germans of Turkish heritage are Kurds. Germans with Turkish origins or heritage have been supportive of Erdoğan and the AKP, with 50 to 70 percent having supported them in Turkish elections from 2014-17.¹¹ It is estimated

7 Körber Stiftung, “The Berlin Pulse: German Foreign Policy in Perspective” (Berlin: Koerber Stiftung, November 2017) 33-40, https://www.koerber-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/koerber-stiftung/redaktion/berliner-forum-aussenpolitik/pdf/2017/The-Berlin-Pulse.pdf.

8 Ellen Ehni, “84 Prozent gegen Türkei in der EU,” *ARD-DeutschlandTrend*, September 7, 2017, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend-909.html>.

9 “Infratest Dimap,” (Berlin: ARD-Deutschland Trend, June 2017), 13, https://www.infratest-dimap.de/fileadmin/user_upload/dt1706_bericht.pdf.

10 Ellen Ehni, “84 Prozent gegen Türkei in der EU.”

11 Funda Tekin, “Quadratur des Kreises? Hintergründe der EU-Türkei-Beziehungen,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 9, no. 10 (February 27, 2017): 36-41, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/243033/quadratur-des-kreises-hintergruende-der-eu-tuerkei-beziehungen?p=all>; Haci-Halil Uslucan, “Türkeistämmige in Deutschland. Heimatlos oder überall zuhause?” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 11, no. 12 (March 13, 2017), 31-37, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/243864/tuerkeistaemmige-in-deutschland-heimatlos-oder-ueberall-zuhause?p=all>; Guy Chazan, “Turkish rifts stir up Germany as referendum nears,” *Financial Times*, April 11, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/2a930076-1ae6-11e7-bcac-6d03d067f81f>.

that 63 percent supported the April 2017 referendum on constitutional change.¹² All of these are indicators that substantial segments of the Turkish-German population have not been fully integrated into German society and that the gap with the rest of Germany is growing. As Table 1 indicates, the number of Turkish-Germans identifying with Turkey rather than with Germany has grown since 2011 to close to half those polled, while only about one-fifth identify with Germany.

TABLE 1: TURKISH-GERMAN ATTACHMENT TO GERMANY AND TURKEY AS HOME (1999-2015)

	1999	2001	2005	2010	2015
Attachment to Turkey	42%	35%	41%	40%	49%
Attachment to Germany	22%	32%	22%	26%	19%
Attachment to both	31%	28%	28%	40%	30%
Attachment to neither	5%	7%	8%	5%	5%

Source: Haci-Halil Uslucan, "Türkeistämmige in Deutschland. Heimatlos oder überall zuhause?" *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 11, no. 12 (March 13, 2017), 31-37, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/243864/tuerkeistaemmige-in-deutschland-heimatlos-oder-ueberall-zuhause?p=all>.

Erdoğan plays on these sentiments of discrimination among Germans of Turkish origins with his tough stances against German officials. Yet one of the leading German critics of Erdoğan is Cem Özdemir of the Greens, who is of Turkish-German heritage himself. Had there been a so-called "Jamaica coalition" among the CDU, Free Democratic Party (FDP), and Green party, Özdemir could have emerged as foreign minister, which could have led to a further deterioration of relations.¹³

GERMANY'S POLITICAL PARTIES AND OTHER OPINION SHAPERS ON TURKEY

Opposition to Turkey's EU membership is widespread across all of Germany's political parties, including the Greens and the Social Democrats, who were longtime supporters of Turkish EU membership. A 2017 *ARD* survey found that support for Turkey's EU membership was 21 percent among Die Linke, 15 percent in the CDU, 14 percent in the SPD, 13 percent in the Greens, 10 percent in the FDP, and 3 percent in the Alternative for Germany (AfD).¹⁴ In a television debate during the 2017 Bundestag election campaign, both leading candidates, Angela Merkel and Martin Schulz, came out in opposition to Turkey joining the EU. Schulz took this position, however, without coordinating with the key Turkey experts within his own party and this position was modified in the final negotiations to form a grand coalition. Merkel's position also seemed improvised during the debate in response to Schulz's unexpected position on Turkey.¹⁵

12 Dagmar Breitenbach, "Why many Turks in Germany voted 'yes' in Erdogan's referendum," *Deutsche Welle*, April 18, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/why-many-turks-in-germany-voted-yes-in-erdogans-referendum/a-38472130>.

13 Özgür Özvatan, "German-Turkish tensions in a collapsing Jamaica coalition," *Open Democracy*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/zg-r-zvatan/german-turkish-tensions-in-collapsing-jamaica-coalition>.

14 Ellen Ehni, "84 Prozent gegen Türkei in der EU."

15 According to one report, "Schulz's hard-line stance on Turkey, which Germany accuses of human rights breaches, led Merkel to say that she would 'speak to my (EU) colleagues to see if we can reach a joint position on this so that we can end these accession talks.'" See Karen Gilchrist, "Merkel faces down Schulz in TV election debate as Trump and Turkey dominate," *CNBC*, September 4, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/04/merkel-schulz-tv-election-debate-trump-and-turkey-dominate.html>.

In terms of party preference, the Turkish-German population is overwhelmingly Social Democratic with between 64 and 69 percent supporting the SPD compared to 6.1 percent supporting the CDU, 13.4 percent supporting the Greens, and 9.6 percent Die Linke, according to a 2016 poll. However, older immigrants were more pro-SPD than younger ones. Of the 11 Turkish-German members in the previous Bundestag, five were members of the SPD, three were Greens, and 2 were in Die Linke. Only one CDU member of the outgoing Bundestag was of Turkish heritage.¹⁶ In the Bundestag elected in September 2017, these numbers increased to 14 total Turkish-German members, with six in the SPD, five in the Green Party, and three in Die Linke. Significantly, there are no Turkish-origin Bundestag members in the CDU-CSU parliamentary group. The rise of the anti-immigrant AfD, which is now the third-largest party in the Bundestag and the largest opposition party, is not good news for Turkey. The AfD's anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant positions are bound to make the governing coalition's Turkey policy more difficult.¹⁷

The increasing repression of opposition in Turkey, the violation of the human rights of Germans, and the growing public concern about refugees have pushed the SPD to take a harder line on Turkey. The Social Democratic foreign minister, Sigmar Gabriel, stated that Ankara had "abandoned the ground of European values" by jailing "innocent visitors to their country on outrageous charges" and called for a travel advisory for Germans planning to visit Turkey.¹⁸ As tourism accounts for 13 percent of Turkish GDP and Germans make up the largest group of tourists to Turkey with 5.5 million visitors, or 15 percent of the total, a 25 percent decline in Germany tourism in Turkey over the previous year will have an important economic impact.¹⁹ It is instructive that when Russia imposed sanctions on Turkey following the downing of a Russian fighter aircraft by Turkish forces, the reduction in Russian tourism to Turkey helped foster a rapprochement between the two countries.

The traditional political home of Turks and Kurds in Germany, the Social Democratic Party, is now torn between those who welcome refugees and immigrants and those who oppose more immigration. The latter group includes some in the trade unions who worry about the impact of immigration on wages and employment. The rise of the AfD and its anti-immigrant and anti-Islam positions resulted in losses for both the SPD and the CDU in the 2017 Bundestag election. The CDU lost 21 percent of those who had voted for them in the previous election to the AfD and the SPD lost 10 percent, which further undermined support for Turkish accession to the EU among all parties in the Bundestag.

The German public has come to reject what it sees as an appeasement policy toward Erdoğan, making any improvement in Germany-Turkey relations highly unlikely in the medium term. In addition to political parties, the NGO community in Berlin, with its concerns over the state of human rights and democracy in Turkey, plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. Important in this regard are such groups as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and a number of church-affiliated groups including those representing Syrian Christians. Syrian refugees who have recently traveled through Turkey have been

16 Christoph Ricking, "How will Turkish Germans vote in the country's upcoming election?" *Deutsche Welle*, August 24, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/how-will-turkish-germans-vote-in-the-countrys-upcoming-election/a-40229374>.

17 "AfD censures firebrand Andre Poggenburg over anti-Turkish remarks," *Deutsche Welle*, February 16, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/afd-censures-firebrand-andre-poggenburg-over-anti-turkish-remarks/a-42619155>.

18 Jakob Handke, "Relations with Germany 'can't go on as before' says Germany," *Politico*, July 21, 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/sigmar-gabriel-peter-steudtner-erdogan-relations-with-turkey-cant-go-on-as-before-says-germany/>.

19 Diego Cupolo, "As German spat deepens, Turkey draws tourists from elsewhere," *Deutsche Welle*, July 24, 2017 <http://www.dw.com/en/as-german-spat-deepens-turkey-draws-tourists-from-elsewhere/a-39813794>.

reported to have brought with them negative views on Turkey.²⁰ Finally, television talk shows that like to raise ratings by having controversial and confrontational guests have been credited with influencing the debate on Turkey, leaving the German public with the impression that the Turks are always fighting among themselves and are hopeless.²¹

GERMAN ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN TURKEY AND THE TURKEY LOBBY

The only major bright spot in the Germany-Turkey relationship has been the economic relationship between the two countries. German exports to Turkey have grown from \$5.74 billion in 1995 to \$21.5 billion in 2016, resulting in a German trade surplus of \$7.5 billion, down from its high point in 2013, when exports to Turkey exceeded \$25 billion with a \$10.3 billion trade surplus.²² The investment climate worsened when the Turkish government provided a list of around 680 German companies allegedly linked to the Fethullah Gülen movement, including Daimler and BASF, charging them with supporting a terrorist group. Erdoğan was forced to back down from his threats against these businesses, indicating the importance of this relationship to both sides, but especially to Turkey. However, the German government in September 2017 limited government Hermes credit guarantees against investment risks for German firms investing in Turkey to \$1.8 billion for 2017 and has stopped EU discussions on an expanded customs union with Turkey, indicating the limits of any German business lobby in Berlin. This is a largely superficial move, as a source from the BDI (Federation of German Industry) stated, “from our point of view this was in the first place a politically symbolic measure. In 2016 the volume of cover for business with Turkey had declined from about \$2.4 billion to \$1.2 billion because of the political situation. So it was more or less clear that the limitation to \$1.8 billion in 2017 wouldn’t affect the businesses directly.”²³ German businesses remained committed to the Turkish market, but in the view of the DIHK (German Chamber of Commerce and Industry), new investments without Hermes backing are not thinkable.²⁴

German foreign direct investment (FDI) into Turkey between 2002-17 was above \$9 billion, with Germany the sixth-largest investor in Turkey. FDI from Germany, generally in the energy, insurance, and manufacturing sectors, is calculated to comprise 6.3 percent of total FDI into Turkey. German FDI of \$6.9 billion in 2016 was down from \$10.8 billion in 2012. While overall foreign investment in Turkey picked up in the first half of 2017, German investment dropped by 6 percent from \$181 million to \$170 million during this period.²⁵ Close to 7,000 German companies had investments and partners in Turkey, the most of any foreign country in the Turkish market. Turkish-Germans transferred around \$954 million back to Turkey in 2016.²⁶

20 Based on an interview with German diplomats, January 2018.

21 Based on an interview with a German political party official, January 2018.

22 “What does Turkey import from Germany? (2016),” Observatory of Economic Complexity, https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/import/tur/deu/show/2016/.

23 Interview with BDI official.

24 Sinan Ülgen, “Trade as Turkey’s EU Anchor,” *Carnegie Europe*, December 13, 2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/12/13/trade-as-turkey-s-eu-anchor-pub-75002>; Abdullah Ayasun, “Berlin Limits Export Guarantees for German Business in Turkey,” *The Globe Post*, September 22, 2017, <http://www.theglobepost.com/2017/09/22/germany-export-limit-turkey/>; Veronika Völlinger and Zia Weise, “Wenn es um die Wirtschaft geht,” *Die Zeit*, July 21, 2017, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/2017-07/deutsch-tuerkische-beziehungen-reisehinweis-hermes-buergschaften>.

25 “FDI inflow from EU countries to Turkey up by 61 pct,” *Daily Sabah*, August 23, 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/economy/2017/08/24/fdi-inflow-from-eu-countries-to-turkey-up-by-61-pct>.

26 “Turks living in Germany transfer over \$954M to families in Turkey,” *Daily Sabah*, August 28, 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/2017/08/28/turks-living-in-germany-transfer-over-954m-to-families-in-turkey>.

Key German players in Turkey include Deutsche Bank, Siemens, and MAN, a Volkswagen subsidiary. Robert Bosch is the biggest German company in Turkey, with 16,500 employees.²⁷ The BDI has a working relationship with the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD)²⁸ and held a meeting in Berlin in October 2017 that resulted in a memorandum of understanding to increase cooperation in areas related to Industry 4.0, a German governmental initiative to digitize manufacturing.²⁹ At the same time, BDI President Dieter Kempf and the chief of foreign economic policy for the DIHK, Volker Treier, voiced concerns about the direction Turkey was headed in the lead-up to the Turkish referendum on constitutional amendments. “The uncertainty of many German firms is clear to see following the failed coup, and current developments have substantially heightened this uncertainty. In such an environment new investment by German firms is hardly thinkable,” said Treier.³⁰

It is clear that both sides have a large stake in this deep economic relationship, which is likely to act as a stabilizer, but the partnership is still subject to the worsening political relationship. Treier noted this in his comments about the long-term prospects for German-Turkish economic relations.

“It is not a question that Turkey from a variety of perspectives has an important function for Germany, its economy, and the European Union, and is a country that, given its growing population, naturally wants to take part in the affluence, which in many parts of the world exists. I believe that there is nothing wrong when we try with German companies to equip Turkey, which geographically is truly a door to the Asian world and to the Arab world. All of this leads me to conclude that it is important, despite all the attacks, to find a way to stay in contact and to care for a good partnership. On the other hand, naturally, we will make it clear that we cannot tolerate everything.”³¹

A business- and strategy-related concern regards German arms sales to Turkey. Berlin has supplied arms to Ankara since the time of the Ottoman Empire, but Turkey is only one customer in a larger German arms market. In the past year, the German government approved roughly \$7.4 billion in global arms sales, making it the fifth-largest arms exporter in the world. German arms manufacturers employ about 55,000 people. Germany is the second-largest arms supplier to Turkey, a relationship that was re-established in the 1980s. In the 1980s and 1990s, Germany exported more than 400 tanks to the Turkish military as part of “NATO defense aid.”³² In 2005, Turkey began receiving an additional 354 upgraded tanks without any mention of the self-defense

27 Elisabeth Behrmann, Asli Kandemir, and Richard Weiss, “Deutsche Bank Among German Firms Hit by Deepening Turkey Row,” *Bloomberg*, July 21, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-21/deutsche-bank-among-german-firms-hit-by-escalating-turkey-spat>.

28 TÜSİAD is a donor to the Brookings Foreign Policy program.

29 “Important step taken by TUSIAD and BDI on Turkey-Germany economic relations,” *Global Business Coalition*, October 12, 2017, <http://www.globalbusinesscoalition.org/gbc-news/important-step-taken-tusiad-bdi-turkey-germany-economic-relations/>.

30 “An Investitionen deutscher Unternehmen in der Türkei ist kaum zu denken,” *Manager Magazin*, July 20, 2017, <http://www.manager-magazin.de/politik/deutschland/tuerkei-deutsche-industrie-und-handelskammer-dihk-warnt-vor-investitionen-a-1158888.html>; Sina Fröhndrich interviews Volker Treier, “Die Exporte in die Türkei werden zurückgehen,” *Deutschlandfunk*, July 20, 2017, http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/deutsch-tuerkische-wirtschaftsbeziehungen-die-exporte-in-769.de.html?dram:article_id=391616.

31 Sina Fröhndrich interviews Volker Treier, “Die Exporte in die Türkei werden zurückgehen.”

32 Luisa Beck and Griff Witte, “Germans up in arms about weapons sales to Turkey,” *The Washington Post*, January 28, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/germans-up-in-arms-about-weapons-sales-to-turkey-and-others/2018/01/26/a4f190b0-02a0-11e8-86b9-8908743c79dd_story.html?utm_term=.b51203dc5ced.

condition, which had applied to past sales. Arms sales to Turkey in 2017 totaled \$70.7 million, up from \$31.5 million in 2015. These sales continued despite their use against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) in Turkey and the YPG (the Kurdish Democratic Union Party) in the recent offensive in the Afrin region of Syria. The Greens and Die Linke have called for a cessation of sales to Turkey and Foreign Minister Gabriel froze them pending the release of jailed Turkish-German journalist Deniz Yücel, who was eventually released in February 2018.³³

Although Germany is a geoeconomic power and the roles of economic interests and the private sector are central to an export-dependent country, the German relationship with Turkey is not driven by its economic relationship. This is due in part to Turkey's relatively small proportion of trade relative to Germany's overall exports and the asymmetrical nature of the relationship with Turkey, which is more important to Ankara than to Berlin. Other interests, including those regarding human rights and the rule of law, therefore, play a more important role.

BERLIN'S TÜRKEIPOLITIK

Given the deep and widespread nature of the relationship, German policymaking on Turkey involves numerous players including businesses, NGOs, political parties, the media, and the broader civil society. Within the government, the Foreign Office has been the lead agency on the development of official government policy, but the Chancellor's Office has been involved on the refugee issue given its sensitivity. Most governmental statements have been issued by the Foreign Office and the recent slight thaw in the relationship has been led by Foreign Minister Gabriel in two meetings with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. The future of *Türkeipolitik* will be influenced by strategic, economic, and social concerns with special attention to the state of democracy and human rights in Turkey.

Human rights and the state of democracy in Turkey

The condition of the liberal order in Turkey has been a constant strain on Turkey-EU relations going back to the pre-Erdoğan years when the Turkish military was seen as undermining democratic institutions.³⁴ The steady deterioration of Turkish democracy and civil liberties, which began well before the Gezi Park protests in 2013, and which accelerated dramatically following the failed coup of 2016, has been the main driver in the worsening relationship. Most leading German political figures including Merkel, Martin Schulz, and Cem Özdemir condemned the coup attempt right after it took place, but also reminded Erdoğan to respect the rule of law and not use the coup attempt as an excuse to further undermine any opposition to his rule.³⁵ The head of the German's Federal Intelligence Service (BND) spoke for the government when he stated that he

33 Andreas Kynast, "Erdoğan bekommt wieder mehr deutsche Waffen," *ZDF*, January 24, 2018, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/heute/waffenexporte-in-die-tuerkei-nehmen-zu-100.html>; Hans Monath, "Vor dem Besuch des türkischen Außenministers Gabriel stellt der Türkei Waffen in Aussicht," *Der Tagesspiegel*, January 5, 2018, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/vor-dem-besuch-des-tuerkischen-aussenministers-gabriel-stellt-der-tuerkei-waffen-in-aussicht/20818338.html>.

34 See Kemal Kirişçi, *Turkey and the West*, 27-28.

35 Michael Nienaber, "Merkel condemns coup in Turkey, urges rule of law in aftermath," *Reuters*, July 16, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-germany-merkel/merkel-condemns-coup-in-turkey-urges-rule-of-law-in-aftermath-idUSKCN0ZW033>.

did not believe the Gülen organization was behind the failed coup.³⁶ These concerns have only grown with the increased repression and arrests in Turkey, supposedly against those who supported the coup attempt. Hundreds of Turkish military officers are exiled in Germany and over 80 have already been granted asylum. The Turkish government has made 81 requests for the extradition of people it considers involved in the failed coup, in addition to over 4,000 extradition requests for members of the PKK, but Germany has not delivered anyone, as yet, back to Turkey. In fact, Berlin in February 2018 granted asylum to four more Turkish officers, including the former head of the military academy, who Turkey claims were key members of the coup group.³⁷

This is a major problem and reflects the very different national perceptions of what happened in June 2016, who was behind it, and how it is being instrumentalized. The Turkish government retaliated by detaining five German journalists and human rights activists, while President Erdoğan brazenly suggested that they can be seen as hostages for exchange with those he wanted extradited, resulting in a worse atmosphere. The jailing of Deniz Yücel has been an especially sensitive issue for Berlin and resulted in calls from Green and Die Linke parliamentarians for sanctions to be directed against the Turkish president. Even German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in his inaugural speech called for Yücel to be freed.³⁸ In discussing Yücel's February 2018 release, Jürgen Hardt, the CDU's foreign policy spokesperson, stressed that that the German government "didn't pay any political price and appreciates the efforts of the Turkish government."³⁹

These concerns are linked with what the German government regards as direct interference by both Erdoğan and the AKP in the German electoral process, and in his calls on Germans of Turkish heritage to reject integration into German society. The AKP has established an extensive network of groups within Germany that it has used to influence elections both in Germany and in Turkey. One is the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD), which operates in Germany and a number of other EU member states. Headquartered in Cologne, it has branches in Munich, Stuttgart, and Berlin. The Turkish government has made donations of over \$11.9 million to this group.⁴⁰ Other groups include the Agency for Turks Abroad (YTB) and the Turkish Islamic Union (DITIB), which pays for mosques and claims to represent 70 percent of Germany's Muslims.⁴¹ More dangerous is the Turkish biker gang, the Osmanen Germania Boxclub, which is a nationalist, anti-PKK, and anti-Gülen group funded by the AKP and the Turkish government.⁴²

36 "German spy agency chief says does not believe Gülen behind Turkey coup attempt," *Reuters*, March 19, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-germany/german-spy-agency-chief-says-does-not-believe-gulen-behind-turkey-coup-attempt-idUSKBN16POLQ>.

37 "Germany grants asylum to alleged Turkey plotters: Spiegel," *Reuters*, February 3, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-turkey-asylum/germany-grants-asylum-to-alleged-turkey-plotters-spiegel-idUSKBN1FM1X4>.

38 Rosa Burc and Burak Copur, "Deutsche Türkeipolitik unter Merkel," 21.

39 "German Journalist Deniz Yücel; released from jail in Turkey," *Deutsche Welle*, February 16, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/german-journalist-deniz-y%C3%BCcel-released-from-jail-in-turkey-lawyer/a-42612785>.

40 Nastasja Steude, "The lobby behind Turkey's prime minister," *Deutsche Welle*, May 21, 2014, <http://www.dw.com/en/the-lobby-behind-turkeys-prime-minister/a-17652516>.

41 Ben Knight, "German-Turkish associations blasted for Erdogan influence," *Deutsche Welle*, June 13, 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/german-turkish-associations-blasted-for-erdogan-influence/a-19327189>.

42 "Rockergruppe 'Osmanen Germania' soll mit der Türkei zusammenarbeiten," *Tagesspiegel*, October 18, 2017, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/erkenntnisse-des-nrw-innenministeriums-rockergruppe-osmanen-germania-soll-mit-der-tuerkei-zusammenarbeiten/20471794.html>.

In addition to these tactics, reports that Turkish intelligence agencies are spying on Turks in Germany have further worsened the atmosphere. These reports allege that the head of the MIT, the Turkish National Intelligence Organization, handed over a list of 300 individuals and 200 organizations in Germany associated with the Gülen movement to his German counterpart, leading the German minister of the interior, Thomas de Maizière, to comment, “We have repeatedly told Turkey that something like this is unacceptable. No matter what position someone may have on the Gülen movement, here German jurisdiction applies and citizens will not be spied on by foreign countries.”⁴³

The Gülenists also have an extensive network in Germany, but have seen major drops in enrollment with membership declining from 150,000 to 70,000 following the failed coup. Enrollments in Gülen schools have halved from 2,800 to 1,250. The UETD has spread angst and hatred against Gülenists through social networks in Germany.⁴⁴ While the movement was always relatively small in Germany compared to its presence in Turkey, with the coup attempt, Germany has now become a center for its activities in Europe and a lightning rod in the broader relationship.

The refugee agreement

The refugee situation in Germany remains a main driver in the broader relationship. The crisis exploded in 2015 when Merkel closed the German border to refugees from Syria and beyond.⁴⁵ As Table 2 shows, Germany saw an influx of over 800,000 asylum-seekers entering the country.

This massive influx was expected to grow until Berlin began to implement controls and reached a controversial deal with Turkey in 2016, which included the transfer of \$7.1 billion to Ankara to support the housing of refugees, the reopening of a number of chapters in EU accession talks, and the promise of visa-free travel for Turks in the EU. The deal was formally signed between the EU and Turkey, but engineered by Merkel in order to cut the refugee influx down to 280,000 asylum-seekers in 2016 and 186,644 in 2017.⁴⁶ The agreement with Erdoğan was a major factor in slowing this flow but the topic of refugees and foreigners was still listed by 44 percent of Germans as the most important problem facing Germany in the 2017 election, by far the most significant issue listed.⁴⁷

43 “Turkey ‘spied’ on pro-Gülen opponents in Germany,” *BBC*, March 18, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39416954>; Arnfrid Schenk and Martin Spiewak, “Die Musterschüler,” *Die Zeit*, July 19, 2017, <http://www.zeit.de/2017/30/guelen-bewegung-schulen-deutschland>.

44 Leonie Feuerbach, “In ständiger Angst,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 15, 2017, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/guelen-anhaenger-in-deutschland-in-staendiger-angst-15104718.html>; Deniz Aykanat and Hakan Tanriverdi, “Ein Jahr nach dem Putschversuch: So geht es der Gülen-Bewegung in Deutschland,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 14, 2017, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/nach-putschversuch-in-der-tuerkei-so-geht-es-der-guelen-bewegung-in-deutschland-1.3584377>.

45 For a detailed account of the development of Merkel’s policy, including interviews with the key players both in Germany and the EU, see Robin Alexander, *Die Getriebenen: Merkel und die Flüchtlingspolitik: Report aus dem Innern der Macht* (Munich: Siedler, 2017).

46 “Refugee numbers in Germany dropped dramatically in 2017,” *Deutsche Welle*, January 1, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/refugee-numbers-in-germany-dropped-dramatically-in-2017/a-42162223>.

47 “Klare Mehrheit erwartet Große Koalition: SPD legt zu – FDP verliert,” *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen*, December 8, 2017, http://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Umfragen/Politbarometer/Archiv/Politbarometer_2017/Dezember_2017/.

TABLE 2: REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN GERMANY BY MONTH

	Refugee registrations	Notes
January–June 2014	12,900	Average per month.
July–December 2014	27,000	Average per month.
January–May 2015	34,500	Average per month.
June 2015	53,721	
July 2015	82,798	
August 2015	104,460	It becomes clear that Germany will no longer enforce the Dublin Agreement by opening its border to refugees coming in through another EU country.
September 2015	163,772	
October 2015	181,166	
November 2015	206,101	
December 2015	127,320	
January 2016	91,671	
February 2016	61,428	
March 2016	20,608	March 18: The EU and Turkey sign refugee deal.
April–July 2016	16,200	Average per month.

Sources: “Erstverteilung der Asylbegehrenden (EASY),” Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF), <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Fluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsylv/Erstverteilung/erstverteilung-node.html>; “Sharp drop in migrant arrivals in Germany,” *Spiegel*, January 11, 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/taking-stock-one-year-after-the-arrival-of-refugees-in-germany-a-1110654.html>.

The chancellor met extensively with President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu while negotiating the refugee deal, as this was a priority for her. She described her first ever meeting with Erdoğan in 2005 as “agonizing” and the meetings she held with him negotiating the refugee agreement were painful, largely because Erdoğan did not feel she respected him or Turkey.⁴⁸ Having grown up in East Germany, Merkel, unlike most of her West German counterparts, had few experiences with Germans of Turkish origin before becoming chancellor. Sigmar Gabriel, in contrast, had been married to a German of Turkish origin and had a strong connection to that country, as did many in the SPD and the Greens. While Merkel’s dealings with other domineering males like Russian President Vladimir Putin were always demanding, she at least respected Putin. One journalist with sources close to Merkel described her view of the Turkish leader as follows: “Erdoğan was for her just a miniature Putin who rules a hysterical country that always tries to box above its real weight class.”⁴⁹ She understood she had to reverse her long-standing position on Turkish membership in the EU and reopen it as an incentive to get a deal on refugees. In return, Turkey agreed to take back all refugees entering Greece.⁵⁰

48 Robin Alexander, *Die Getriebenen*, 194.

49 *Ibid.*, 204.

50 For the text of the agreement, see “EU-Turkey statement,” *European Council*, March 18, 2016, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>.

The deterioration of relations with Ankara has halted visa liberalization and the reopening of accession chapters. The text of Merkel's coalition agreement with the SPD rules out any reopening of the chapters or visa liberalization until the situation inside Turkey changes. The text on Turkey reads:

"Turkey is an important partner of Germany and neighbor to the EU, with which we have a variety of relations. Therefore, we have a special interest in a good relationship to Turkey. The state of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in Turkey has been worsening for a long period. Therefore, we are not willing to close any chapters in accession negotiations or open new ones. Visa liberalization or an expansion of the customs union will only be possible once Turkey fulfills the necessary preconditions."⁵¹

A TURKEY POLICY RATHER THAN AN ERDOĞAN POLICY?

The legacy of 12 years of Merkel's Turkey policy has been characterized as one "without concept or strategy, or if there is a strategic element, it concerns preserving the power and party political interests of the Chancellor."⁵² Merkel has shifted from an emphasis on democratic values and human rights to a purely realist concern about stemming the flow of refugees, and has alternated between a policy of confrontation and appeasement. Berlin's policy toward Ankara has now reached its lowest point in her chancellorship. As the coalition agreement text on Turkey indicates, German policy on Turkey is on hold and the assessment within the Chancellery seems to be to wait until after the Turkish elections of 2019. Germany, however, cannot simply shut the door on Ankara given its deep relationship with Turkey. From the German perspective, Turkey is not lost and cannot be lost. The view in Berlin now seems to be that Erdoğan is badly isolated in the West, most importantly from Germany and the United States, and has an incentive to repair relations. Recent Turkish engagement in Europe has seen Erdoğan and his senior ministers meeting with counterparts in France, Germany, and Austria, while Erdoğan's meeting with the pope and release of Deniz Yücel reflect Erdoğan's desire to show his public that Turkey is not isolated. However, as one recent article concludes, "EU diplomats view Turkish attempts with scepticism, warning it will be hard to make concrete progress unless there is a marked improvement in human rights and the rule of law."⁵³

As Germany's leading analyst on the Middle East, Volker Perthes, advises, Germany should separate its Turkey policy from Erdoğan.

"Speak less about Erdoğan! The more our Turkey policy is Erdoğan policy, the more we will make Turkey his private property. Erdoğan's personal agenda is always in the forefront, as it was in the strife over the election campaign. Then it is not about our economic relationship or about the country on the south flank of NATO but only about Erdoğan's ego. Following the difficult year of 2017, both sides have seen that it makes more sense to start anew. We have a large Turkish community and the economic relationship with Germany is irreplaceable for Turkey. And for all our differences, we are partners in NATO."⁵⁴

51 "Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land: Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD," February 7, 2018, 152-53, <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/koalitionsvertrag228.pdf>.

52 Rosa Burc and Burak Copur, "Deutsche Türkeipolitik unter Merkel," 25.

53 Laura Pitel, "Dutch withdraw ambassador to Turkey as diplomatic spat deepens," *Financial Times*, February 6, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/c96a0e32-0a92-11e8-8eb7-42f857ea9f09>.

54 Juliane Schäuble and Christian Böhme, "Deutschland sollte weniger über Erdogan reden," *Der Tagesspiegel*,

Germany will continue to push for a multidimensional approach that will rely not only on its relationship with the Turkish president, but with the broader civil society, making full use of its economic leverage. The idea of future EU membership for Turkey is dead in the minds of all main political parties, although Germany will not officially declare this, as it finds the prospect of membership useful to have in its diplomatic toolbox. This is a long-term liability that will need to be re-examined in the post-Merkel period. In the past, the prospect of being part of the West helped open up Turkish society and fostered the beginnings of a liberal order. To publicly give up on this goal will only reinforce those groups in Turkey arguing for a more authoritarian and nationalist state.

Specifically, Germany should try to reopen the issue of an upgraded customs union based on human rights conditionality, restore Hermes credits to German businesses, and move toward visa liberalization. All three of these changes would free up more channels with Turkish civil society and ease the sense of isolation in Turkey. German engagement on the Cyprus issue would be important to demonstrate to the Turkish side its commitment to a mutually agreeable solution. Finally, it has to take Turkish concerns about the Gülen movement seriously and return those officers who, following the rule of law, are found to have grounds to believe they had an involvement in the failed coup attempt. In return, Berlin should insist on the release of those Germans being held in Turkey. The February 2018 release of Deniz Yücel may allow the beginning of a thaw, but not much can be expected until after the Turkish elections. Time will tell.

The trans-Atlantic dimension

In regard to the trans-Atlantic relationship, Berlin and Washington seem to be on the same page regarding Turkey. Both countries have had a long-term strategic interest in a Turkey that would provide a model for a moderate, democratic, Muslim-majority country in the Middle East as an alternative to more radical options. In addition, Turkey's geography has made it a player in the Syrian conflict and in the anti-ISIS campaign, and it has become a main bulwark against the refugee flow from Syria into Germany. Turkey's changing security relationships with Germany and Russia are of concern as they raise the issue of NATO integrity. It is unfortunate that the German government felt compelled to relocate its base in Incirlik to Jordan as this is a short-term reaction that will have long-term consequences. This is the kind of mistake that policymakers fall into when pursuing an overly personalized approach to a key ally.

For the United States, security issues dominate the relationship with Turkey, while German policy is more than just about security. A major rift could open up over the rule of law and human rights conditions in Turkey. The Trump administration has a purely transactional view of its relationship with Ankara and the president has a preference for strong authoritarian leaders, including Erdoğan. If the United States and Turkey can avoid a major confrontation over the PYD in Syria, their common strategic interests should limit the degree to which Turkey drifts away from NATO. The PYD and PKK can be an obstacle to better relations both in Washington and Berlin. Germany in turn has begun to crack down on PKK activities within its borders.⁵⁵

January 28, 2018, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/swp-chef-volker-perthes-deutschland-sollte-weniger-ueber-erdogan-reden/20899564.html>.

55 See Amanda Sloat, "The West's Turkey Conundrum," (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, February 2018), 14, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/fp_20180212_west_turkey_conundrum.pdf.

In short, both Berlin and Washington are likely to have a realistic relationship with Turkey in the German sense of “partnership.” Turkey is not Erdoğan, as was apparent in the opposition to the referendum on expanding the power of the presidency, and it is short-sighted to base long-term policies on short-term personalities and regimes. While the Erdoğan regime could run into the 2030s, it could also end unexpectedly in elections in 2019. The vote on the constitutional referendum, after all, was a close call. A close German-American partnership on Turkey is essential to keeping open the possibility of a return to a better alliance relationship and a more open Turkey. There can be an effective division of labor between Washington on security issues and Berlin on economic issues and the broader relationship with Europe.

Amanda Sloat in her recent publication on the West’s relationship with Turkey outlined three policy options for the future: abandonment, transactionalism, and engagement.⁵⁶ Germany does not have the option of abandonment and is currently pursuing elements of transactionalism and engagement with the hope that over the long-term, engagement will return as the dominant approach. A common trans-Atlantic approach along these lines seems to be the best long-term approach, with transactionalism as the medium-term bridge. As Kemal Kirişçi has persuasively argued, “continuing to engage Turkey rather than abandoning it is of paramount importance. ... [I]t is important that both the EU and the United States continue to support the process in Turkey to keep its EU membership prospects alive, whatever the challenges might be.”⁵⁷

56 Amanda Sloat, “The West’s Turkey Conundrum,” 20-33.

57 Kemal Kirişçi, *Turkey and the West*, 192-93.

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