



## Germany's European Policy:

# Some Implications for Turkey

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Relations between Turkey and Germany have never been as close as they are today. This is true for economic, political and cultural relations: Germany is Turkey's largest trading partner in the European Union. Over 1,000 firms with German participation (more than 50% investment share) operate in Turkey today. About 2.4 million Turkish residents – many of whom have taken German citizenship – live in Germany and constitute the strongest link between the two countries. The mirror image of this is the presence of approximately 60,000 German citizens who live in Turkey.<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, Germany has a strong cultural presence in Turkey through various institutions like the Goethe-Institute, political foundations, German schools and German-teaching schools, as well as German-teaching faculties in Turkish universities. Turkey served as a place of refuge for many German scientists persecuted by the Nazis before and during the Second World

War. They lived and worked in Turkey for decades, leaving irretraceable marks in their various fields of occupation (education, engineering, natural sciences etc.).

The German Ambassador to Turkey, Dr. Rudolph Schmidt, pointed out that common cultural roots have been discovered at excavation sites in Troy. The exhibition of these findings ('Troy – Dream and Reality') was opened jointly by Presidents Sezer and Rau. Germans who had read Homer, regarded Troy and the Trojan War as a classical inheritance of ancient Greece. The exhibition, however, has revealed that the city of Troy had equally been a part of the Hittite and, therefore, Anatolian culture. This fact reveals the common roots between Germany and Turkey and the civilizations they belong to.

Is the question of common roots and heritage important for today's relationship between Turkey and Germany? – It has played a significant role for a long time and continues to

dominate the political discourse in Germany when the question of Turkey's possible membership in the European Union is discussed. This article undertakes to trace the development of Germany's European policy before and after unification. It is argued here that although German foreign policy has undergone substantial changes after unification, Germany's European policy is so far characterized by changes in style, not in substance. The exception to this is Germany's position on the prospects of Turkey's full membership in the European Union. The red-green coalition, which came to power in 1998, has a fundamentally different approach in this regard when compared with the previous coalition government of Christian Democrats and Liberals. Germany's modified position vis-a-vis Turkey's membership in the EU is the external, that is to say foreign-policy component of Germany's U-turn in domestic policy regarding the citizenship law and

immigration policy. A look at Germany's foreign policy will provide insights into the rationale of its European policy.

### Germany's Foreign Policy before and after Unification

When the Berlin Wall fell in the night of November 9, 1989, the Cold War came to an end virtually overnight. All of a sudden, national unification – that is to say unification of East and West Germany – was looming on the horizon and became a reality only eleven months later. The Germans, like the rest of the world, were quite overwhelmed by the pace at which events were unfolding. German unification brought the German Question(2) back onto the international agenda. Many of Germany's friends and allies, especially in Western Europe feared that a united, bigger Germany could revive old hegemonic aspirations. In particular, Germany's enhanced geopolitical importance gave rise to concern. As the largest middle-European state, it had now become the "West of the East, and the East of the West". Economically speaking, West Germany was already the strongest European economy. In addition, through unification it integrated what was deemed at the time the strongest economy among all Eastern European economies. In the immediate post-unification period, Germany was therefore prompted to demonstrate at every possible occasion that the country had no future plans to disengage from its European responsibilities and commitments; quite the contrary was its earnest intention.

Germany's European policy and commitment to European integration is based upon historical constraints

that the country faced after World War II. The Federal Republic was granted only limited sovereignty and its destiny was, in a way, controlled by the Allied Powers until unification. It was, therefore, easier for West Germany to subordinate to European supranational institutions than for other member states. West Germany actively fostered European integration to a point where, as Hans-Dietrich Genscher stated, the country's national interests had become European interests. Having adapted successfully to multilateral decision-making, united Germany was better equipped to meet the political and institutional challenges presented by the third wave of globalization in the 1990's than other European countries.

The manifestations of Germany's changing foreign policy have been characterized as 'normalization' by some and as 'assertiveness' by others. There are particularly three discussions that highlight these changes: the 'out-of-area' discussion, the 'proud-to-be-German' discussion and the '*Leitkultur*'(3) discussion. They are all part of Germany's new self-definition after unification, internationally as well as domestically. Yet, they have different starting points and origins. The 'out-of-area' discussion - and Germany's subsequent shift in foreign policy – as well as the 'proud-to-be-German' discussion were direct outcomes of Germany's emancipation efforts after unification. The '*Leitkultur*' discussion stemmed from efforts to come to terms with, or rather oppose, the multicultural society into which German society had evolved over the last decades. A look at the basic principles of Bonn's foreign policy before unification helps clarify the nature and extent of the changes that Germany's relations with the outside

world had undergone since then.

**1. Policy of Responsibility:** Informed by FDR's historical responsibilities, this principle stated that national "power politics" was to give way to a more humane and universal understanding of international politics. This approach goes back to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Germany's longest-serving foreign minister for almost 20 years. He emphasized Germany's 'European peace task' before and after unification.

**2. Civilian Policy:** This principle underlines the Federal Republic's wish to abstain from the use of military power. The German constitution explicitly limits the task of the Bundeswehr to 'defensive purposes'. West Germany has abstained from the production of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Kenneth Waltz' prediction in 1993 that a united Germany would become a nuclear power has so far proved incorrect.

**3. Parochialism:** Despite the global presence of its economic enterprises, the scope of action of West Germany's foreign policy was limited. It was practically absent from the world political stage and its hot spots, be it in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America or Southeast Asia. Its political voice could only be heard in Western Europe and even there rather quietly compared to France.

**4. Multilateralist Approach:** Wishing to avoid open pursuit of its national interests, West Germany preferred acting in a multilateral context. Here, it stressed the shared nature of common interests and sought the full support of its partners before acting. Yet, skillfull diplomatic maneuvering has enabled it many times to achieve national goals within a multilateral framework.(4) Germany's unilateral diplomatic recognition of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, a couple of weeks before

recognition by the European Community that Bonn had forced to follow suit, has been noted as the foremost example of breaking with its tradition of multilateralist behavior.

### The 'Out-of-Area' Discussion

Bonn's foreign policy before 1989 differed greatly from the foreign policies of other states due to the exceptional circumstances under which the FDR had been founded after World War II. The FDR could only come into being because the United States – a staunch believer in a second chance – had already decided upon the orientation of the new state: a country firmly embedded in the Western Alliance and a core country in the new European integration process. West Germany's geopolitical significance as a front-line state vis-à-vis the ideological enemy Soviet Union and its satellites would be controlled by the Western Allied Powers through massive economic aid for reconstruction (Marshall Plan) and sufficient security provided to help the country focus on the building-up of its economic potential. The label 'economic giant, political dwarf' was one often applied to West Germany.

Today, however, Germany is slowly shedding off old ties. In February 2002, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has, to the astonishment of his party, started to criticize the United States' unilateralism within the anti-terror alliance by saying that 'democratic alliance partners are no satellites'. This statement falls in line with the EU's increasing efforts to distance itself from America's global anti-terror policy and its aim of establishing a more independent European profile. This process of increasing independence has been evolving throughout the 1990's. During the unification process,

Germany had been busy assuring everyone that it would not strife for military power again. Public opinion – in line with Germany's burden of historic responsibility – was strongly opposed to military engagements. This, however, started to change soon thereafter. Already in 1993, polls revealed that half of Germany's



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population – even more so younger Germans – thought Germany should participate in international military actions just as England, France, or the United States do. On July 12, 1994, the German Constitutional Court ruled that there was no clear provision in Germany's constitution prohibiting the Bundeswehr from participating in missions outside NATO-territory, as long as the Bundestag approved of such action. In a historic vote in December 1995, the Bundestag voted for the deployment of German troops in Bosnia.

At the end of 2001, there were more

than 7,000 German soldiers employed in various missions in the Balkans: approximately 1,900 in Bosnia, about 5,000 in Kosovo, and 600 in Macedonia. Apart from that, German soldiers have joined NATO and UN-forces in Cambodia, Serbia, Somalia, Georgia, Chechnya, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Tadjikistan and the Ukraine, albeit mostly in an observer status or as medical personnel. In December 2001, Chancellor Schröder linked a vote on German participation in the coalition forces in Afghanistan with a vote of confidence. He thus wanted to ensure the support of his Green coalition partner. Many Green parliamentarians were opposed to sending German forces to Afghanistan. However, voting against the motion would have meant an end to the red-green coalition. Eventually, 538 parliamentarians out of 581 in the Bundestag voted in favor of sending up to 1,200 German soldiers to Afghanistan. The recent visit of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to Germany at the beginning of March 2002 has further helped to overcome the resistance to Germany's out-of-area engagements. In a historic speech in the Bundestag, Annan said that Germany was, due to its history, obliged to contribute to peacekeeping on a global scale. He further encouraged Germany to take over the lead in peacekeeping in Afghanistan.

### The 'Proud-to-be-German' Discussion

Recently another important debate has started in Germany over the propriety of saying 'I am proud to be German'. Germany's historical legacy made it politically incorrect to be 'proud to be German'. An ongoing sense of guilt and responsibility over Germany's Nazi past had been instilled in German pupils as they went through

the educational system. At the same time, however, Germany's free and pluralistic society has also allowed radical and non-radical right-wing activism and ideology to become part of the political landscape. Despite this, the 'burden of history' has become an integral part of German political culture. It is in this context that the absence of an open, national articulation of German interests can be explained. Rather, multilateral approaches have become the method of choice for problem solving in foreign policy. As multilateralism was the only available tool to achieve desired results in foreign policy, German politicians have developed an advanced ability to use it for national purposes.

Today, a generational change in attitudes can be observed in civil society, reflected in public opinion polls on various issues of foreign and European policy. The "proud-to-be-German" discussion of 1999 and 2000 attested to this change in attitude. It was Chancellor Schröder who declared publicly that he was proud to be German, just as the Frenchmen were proud to be French. He especially underscored Germany's achievements as one of the economically strongest nations in the world and as a consolidated liberal democracy that had reason to be proud of its foundations.

### Germany's European Policy

Konrad Adenauer, West Germany's first Chancellor and, at the same time, foreign minister, was determined to bind his country firmly into the West. Economic integration with other Western European countries was an ideal way out of Bonn's political isolation after World War II. The aims of the European Coal and Steel Community of 1953, as well as of

subsequent communities, were to foster peace and prosperity among the nations of Europe. By working towards that goal, especially together with her new found ally and closest friend France, West Germany grasped the chance to rehabilitate herself morally. Many analysts described West Germany as a 'trading state' (5), implying that the country's 'power' was based on economic might rather than on military might. Later on, West Germany – similar to Japan – was perceived to fulfil most criteria of a 'civilian power' (6). The Federal Republic was fully integrated into the West in security (NATO), economic (EC) and political (CSCE) terms at the time the opportunity for unification arose in 1989. With regard to the EC, it traditionally pushed for greater integration in the political sphere as well. On the basis of close German-French friendship (7), West Germany was able to make its voice heard throughout Western Europe. The consensus regarding the country's commitment to European integration encompassed all major parties – despite minor differences – and society (8).

While pushing for more integration – and this meant giving away increasingly more national sovereignty to supranational institutions in Brussels – Germany's influence within the EU has been growing as well. The emphasis was on cooperation and identification with European interests and ideals because this strategy suited German national interests best. This approach contributed positively to West Germany's economic miracle. Under the protection of the United States and other NATO partners, West Germany became a 'free rider on security'. Military expenditure was much lower than in countries like France or Great Britain. West

Germany grasped the chance that European economic integration offered. In the 1950's, Minister of Economic Affairs Ludwig Erhard realized these opportunities and developed the foundations of a successful export strategy, the basis for Germany's economic success today.

At the same time, a learning process had set in among politicians and civil society alike. Adenauer saw European unification as a means to achieve national unification – one of the foremost national priorities. Successive political leaders of different political colors built upon this orientation, but European unification became increasingly an end in itself. Willy Brandt widened Adenauer's policy by establishing close ties with countries beyond the Iron Curtain through his *Ostpolitik* ('Eastern Policy'). Helmut Kohl – who considered himself as "Adenauer's grandson" – pursued European integration with great fervor. Due to personal war experiences he was genuinely devoted to European integration as an end in itself that would ensure lasting peace in Europe. He is remembered for his emotional and teary-eyed calls for European unification and peace. Yet, towards the end of his chancellorship in 1998, this attitude had cooled down, at least in public. This apparent shift can also be explained by the increasing Euro-scepticism of the CSU, the sister-party to Kohl's CDU. The CDU even dropped the goal of creating a "United States of Europe" from its party program.

Despite the fears of a new German 'assertiveness' that sprang up in the 1990's, Germany's European policy under the new leadership of Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer has remained consistent. So far, the Red-Green coalition displayed only some

changes in style, and almost none in substance, with the notable exception of support for Turkey's bid for full EU membership. The new government, for the first time, represented a generation raised after World War II. Personal horrors of the war were not part of the personal histories of the leaders belonging to this generation. While the new leadership generation has been deeply influenced by Germany's confrontation with its past and culture of historic responsibility, it is characterized by a more pragmatic approach in politics. Daniel Vernet, International Affairs editor at *Le Monde*, has characterized Kohl as putting "history before business", and Schröder as putting "praxis before morals". (9)

When it comes to enlargement plans of the EU, it was the Germans who were most enthusiastic. At the time of unification and in its immediate aftermath, the 'window-of-opportunity' concept that President Bush had perceived for the two Germanies, was applied to enlargement as well. Since then, sentiment has given way to more pragmatic reasoning about the cost of such an undertaking. Therefore, when Schröder's first official visit abroad after his election in 1998 led him to Poland –hitherto, inaugural visits by German Chancellors had led to Paris – his basic message to the Polish people was that he had come with empty pockets. The German EU-presidency of the first half of the year 2000 achieved some results with respect to putting the Common Agriculture Policy of the EU on track through the reform package of the Agenda 2000. Another stumbling bloc on the difficult path for full membership of Central and Eastern European Countries in the EU involved the issue of the free movement of

persons. Here again, it was Berlin which - in the face of sustained high unemployment in Germany and the rest of the EU – has put its foot on the brake by insisting that free movement of persons should not be applied for almost a decade into Poland's full membership.

Germany's initial support for



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enlargement can be described as having switched from emotional to cool-headed in the face of practical problems. At the level of high politics, the option of EU-membership has been used as a road sign for the candidate countries. This has been successful. Most countries in the region and almost all political parties have identified with the 'return-to-Europe' idea. However, the level of low politics, and the problem areas that it entails, has increasingly gained pragmatic importance. The reasons for this are rooted in German domestic politics: High unemployment, immigration

pressures and, lately, security concerns with respect to terrorism and slow economic growth account for a more careful and pragmatic approach by German political leaders.

Yet, at the same time, business links and other civil society networking with the candidate countries are increasing. German foreign investment in the candidate countries is on the rise and other economic ties are being expanded. Securing export markets through various means, including the establishment of bilateral business councils, as well as support for regional integration schemes are worth mentioning. German civil society organizations continue to play an important role in the networking process of establishing links between the candidate countries and Germany – and the EU. It is especially through informal networking and a low-politics approach that Germany will continue to gain influence in the candidate countries.

Regarding external relations, the new Germany has basically two aims: In the first place it has to secure and find new export markets in order to keep its economy – in which two in three jobs are in export or export-related sectors – afloat. In the second place it aims to export political and economic values, that is to say it promotes democracy, human rights, the civilization of peaceful resolution of internal and international conflict, as well as a free market economy. The failure of such an approach in its geographical neighborhood is perceived to be counter-productive for the realization of peace and prosperity in Germany and across the EU.

#### **Turkish-German Relations**

At the Helsinki Summit of 1999, Germany was the strongest supporter

of Turkey's long-overdue acceptance as an official candidate for full membership. There are basically three reasons for this: In the first place, both coalition partners – Social Democrats and Greens – have had a fundamentally different approach to European integration compared with the former coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals. The new approach entailed a more inclusive conception of what Europe is. Whereas the former government emphasized religious and cultural aspects as unifying factors ('Christian Club'), the current government parties concentrated more on geographical proximity and good-neighborly relations irrespective of cultural or religious undertones. The emphasis was on creating a space of peace, in which respect for human rights would be the main unifying factor of European integration. This is the reason why Turkish-German relations in the last few years have sometimes run into difficulty. The conditionality of religious affiliation –i.e.

Christianity- has been lifted, but the insistence on respect for human rights, as perceived by Germany, has grown. In his famous letter of May 26, 1999 to Chancellor Schröder, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit acknowledged that Turkey would have to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria before starting negotiations on full membership. Arguably this was the single most important reason for Germany's support of Turkey's candidacy at the Helsinki Summit.

However, another factor appears to have played a part in the shaping of this momentous decision. This was the

domestic component of Germany's new approach to Turkey, namely the recognition by the new government that Germany is an immigration country with a multicultural society. The new citizenship law, which came into effect on January 1, 2000, stipulates that German citizenship shall no longer merely be based on the *jus*



*sanguinus* principle, but must incorporate elements of the *jus soli* principle as well. It is in this context that the '*Leitkultur*' discussion took place at the turn of the new century. This discussion had been initiated by oppositional and conservative circles as a reaction to the new government's acknowledgment that Germany had *de facto* become a multicultural society. A paradigmatic change in this context was the acknowledgement that immigration is desirable and necessary for economic as well as social reasons. In essence this debate revolves around the integration strategy chosen for

migrant members in German society. The discussion questions whether a leading culture ('*Leitkultur*') needs to serve as a point of reference for culturally diverse people to be integrated into society. The idea of '*Leitkultur*' is rejected on the grounds that it involves a sense of superiority of the German culture over others. In this regard, the integration of Turkish migrants posed a larger challenge than the integration of other migrant groups. This is due to the large number of Turkish migrants as well as the challenge of incorporating a Muslim community into the liberal democracy of Germany.

In addition to these domestic considerations and its vision of what Germany ought to be, the new German government made a new assessment of Turkey's influence in a region where political stability is very fragile and where new economic markets are located. For Germany, Turkey is an important partner because of its geopolitical and geo-economic location. Since

Germany would be negatively affected by instability in Central Europe and in the countries of Southeastern Europe, it supported Turkey's integration into the EU to help serve its own best interest. Economically speaking, Turkey presents a promising export market as well as a destination for investment. The interest is equally of a political nature in so far as it involves the "export" of European political values. In that respect, Turkey is considered to be an important partner and a possible "multiplier", that is to say that it will encourage other countries within its sphere of influence to adopt its form of

a secular representative democracy, based upon the European model. Yet, the question of whether Germany can and will continue to expand its influence in Turkey's favor regarding full membership, depends basically on three factors:

**1. Political developments in Germany:** In September 2002, the next federal election will take place. A change in government could lead to a more reserved attitude towards enlargement, and particularly towards Turkey's candidacy. For the first time, a candidate for chancellor has been selected from the Bavarian sister party of the Christian Democrats, namely the Christian Social Union. This is a conservative party that heavily emphasizes Christian values and, is the most Euro-sceptical party in the German parliament.

**2. Enlargement of the EU:** As early as next year, the enlargement of the EU may lead to a decreased German influence in the enlargement debate. The accession procedure provides for all members – including the new ones – to consent to the admission of any new member. Turkey's accession will then depend on Germany's ability and commitment to persuade new members to admit another new member with whom to share the allocation of already scarce EU funds. There is some concern in EU circles that the newcomers –most of which have achieved national sovereignty only after the breakdown of the Soviet Union– may not be willing to give up their hard-won sovereignty to the supranational institutions of the European Union soon. On the contrary, they may act as a brake on further "deepening" of the EU. This may –or may not– be to the advantage of Turkey.

**3. Internal developments in Turkey:** The willingness and ability to reform according to EU-norms may help to encourage, or discourage, the "EU club-members" to admit Turkey as a new member. Germany's contribution in this regard is that it helps transforming the so-called "Christian club" into a club with rules to which members from a neighborhood other than Western Europe can also subscribe. (10) Germany's weight is important in this respect as it is the country inside the EU with the largest Turkish population, or German population of Turkish origin, and can draw upon a wide range of experience regarding opportunities and difficulties of integration and co-existence. Germany's new immigration law –which, at present, is in danger of falling victim to election campaign squabbles– is an attempt at adapting to European immigration laws in the field of cooperation under the Justice and Home Affairs Pillar. It is as well an attempt at bringing the German experience into the EU-wide harmonization process.

Summing up, it can be said that Germany's support for Turkey's full membership in the EU hinges upon two dimensions: one economic in nature, the other political. Turkey, without doubt, represents a great and important market potential for the German economy. Through the completion of the Customs Union in 1996, a large part of the Turkish market has been opened to German entrepreneurs. Full membership, however, will ensure that business opportunities will further increase as Turkey must adopt economic elements of the EU's *acquis communautaire*, the complete set of rules and norms that govern the EU's internal market. It will be above all the political position of the

German government and its vision of who should be included in the European project that will determine whether Berlin will continue to support Turkey's bid for full membership and lend the support that is required for this undertaking.

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#### Notes

1) On this often neglected aspect of migration between Germany and Turkey see: B. Kaiser-Pehlivanoglu et als., *The Concept of 'Free Movement of Persons' and Turkey's Full Membership in the European Union*, Project at European Community Institute of Marmara University for the Research Fund of Marmara University (Project No. 2000/SOB-5), Istanbul 2001.

2) For a discussion on the different notions and dimensions of the German Question over time see: K. Kaiser, *Deutschlands Vereinigung: Die internationalen Aspekte*, Bonn/Bergisch Gladbach, 1991, pp.101-104.

3) '*Leitkultur*' literally means 'leading culture'. In the current German political discourse, the term stands for the belief that co-existence of various cultures is possible in Germany, yet the German culture should be the 'leading' one. The question involved here is certainly the legitimacy of putting one culture 'above' other cultures. In other words, the question is whether cultures can be organized vertically, or rather hierarchically?

4) See W.F. Hanrieder, *Deutschland, Europa, Amerika*, Paderborn, 1991, p.358.

5) This formulation was first used by R. Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World*, New York, 1986.

6) See H. Maull, "Zivilmacht Bundesrepublik Deutschland - Vierzehn Thesen für eine neue deutsche Aussenpolitik" in *Europa-Archiv* 47 (10), 1992, pp.269-278.

7) The German-French friendship was codified in the Elysée-Treaty of 1963. The treaty provides for a number of regular encounters between politicians (summits between heads of state and government every six months) and civil society (city-partnerships, extensive student-exchange programs). Provisions added later on provided for security cooperation which, in fact, have formed the basis of a European army.

8) See E. Noelle-Neumann, "Öffentliche Meinung und Aussenpolitik" in *Internationale Politik* 50 (8), 1995.

9) D. Vernet, "Kluge Ausschöpfung begrenzter Souveränität: Die Europa-Politik der rot-grünen Koalition" in *Internationale Politik* 54 (11), p.12.

10) In this context see also Joschka Fischer's speech at the EU-OIC Forum on February 12, 2002, in Istanbul. Here, Fischer talks of the need for a "culture of tolerance". He pleads for a "third way" in inter-cultural communication by citing German philosopher Jürgen Habermas' emphasis on a "democratically enlightened 'common sense'" as a civilizing force between science and religion.