

Jean Monnet Chair Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels

CETEUS
Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies



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CETEUS Annual Meeting 2018

Full steam ahead? Reflections on the Future of the European Union and Developments in EU-Turkey Relations

14 December 2018 | Cologne

Institut Français Köln | Sachsenring 77 | 50677 Cologne



<i>Friday, 14.12.2018</i>	
9:30-11:00h	Narrations of EU-German/Turkish Relations Chair: Béatrice Hendrich, University of Cologne Ebru Ece Özbey, Middle East Technical University, Ankara Mirja Schröder, CETEUS, University of Cologne Ertug Tombus, Humboldt University Berlin

This panel dealt with the question how the EU and Germany as well as Turkey narrate the EU-German/Turkish Relations: What collective stories do the actors construct and renegotiate over time? Which narratives became relevant at what time in history? After the introduction by Béatrice Hendrich from University of Cologne, Ebru Ece Özbey from Middle East Technical University in Ankara started by giving some insights on the Turkish narratives regarding the role of Turkey vis-à-vis Europe since 1958. From Westernisation over Europeanisation to Eurasianisation, she stated; whether Turkey identifies itself as “the heir” of imperial legacy or a “Great Power” at eyelevel with the EU – Turkey always had one goal, which was membership of the European Union. Time can be seen as a negative driver in this respect – the longer the accession process takes the worse get the relations and the more aggressive appears Turkey.

Mirja Schröder from the CETEUS, University of Cologne explained German official narratives on Turkey by looking at government statements and parliamentary debates. By comparing value-based, political arguments and interest-based, geopolitical or economic arguments, Schröder concluded that in a historical trend, the geopolitical dimension always had been an important pillar of argumentation in favor of closer cooperation or even integration with and into the EU. Taking the parliamentary debates from the latest years in focus, the political dimension more and more dominated the debate. Unlike on the geostrategic level though, there is no consensus on value-based questions as Turkey’s EU-membership.

The third speaker was Ertuğ Tombuş from Humboldt University in Berlin, focusing on populist strategies during the AKP era. Differentiating between six phases of populism, he observes an increased use of populist discourse. While in the early years of governance populism was not the dominant strategy, the presidential elections in 2007, the Gezi protests in 2013 as well as the June parliamentary elections in 2015 posed critical junctures to the AKP’s organization of political reality that heavily relied on the party’s opponents. With the coup attempt in July 2016,

populism in Turkey peaked. Tombuş concluded that the EU needed to understand the political logic of leading Turkish actors as authoritarian populist and to react accordingly – given also the increasing “Erdoğanisation” within Turkish diaspora in many member countries of the EU.

<p>11:30-13:00h</p>	<p>Which way forward? Scenarios for EU-Turkey Relations Chair: Darius Ribbe, CETEUS, University of Cologne Nikola Gillhoff, Federal Foreign Office, Berlin Ebru Turhan, Turkish - German University, Istanbul</p>
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Darius Ribbe CETEUS, University of Cologne commenced the panel by introducing Dr. Ebru Turhan (Turkish-German University) and Nikola Gillhoff (Federal Foreign Office Berlin) as two designated experts dealing with future scenarios of EU-Turkey relations from the academic as well as the practical perspective.

In her speech, Ebru Turhan emphasized that EU-Turkey relations currently are at the most important crossroads in contemporary history. Referring to the popular image of “ebbs and flows”, indicating the atmosphere in EU-Turkey relations, she noticed a predominance of escalation and conflict in recent years that challenge the nature of tides – Turkey’s EU accession process is comatose; there is little sign of recovery and EU’s political conditionality vis-à-vis Turkey has lost its effectiveness. Against this backdrop the future of Turkey will not be within the EU, but will most likely cover specific agreements adopted from other partnership models linking third countries with the EU (European Economic Area Model, EU neighborhood model, Strategic partnership). In this context, the definite Brexit-agreement is expected to represent an important point of reference for establishing the territory of the future relationship.

Nikola Gillhoff started her speech by stressing her preference for rather dealing with existent realities than making predictions about an ambiguous future. Following this train of thought, she elaborated on the status quo and pointed out that there are no ongoing negotiations for accession, that there is no visa-liberalization as well as no modernization of the Customs Union. Dealing with EU’s expectations vis-à-vis Turkey Gillhoff mentioned the annual progress report by the European Commission, which emphasizes serious concerns about the rule of law. On a

more positive noted, Gillhoff highlighted the maintenance of EU-Turkey High-Level political dialogue on key policy issues as a good sign.

13:00-13:15h	Concluding Remarks Mirja Schröder, CETEUS, University of Cologne Wolfgang Wessels, CETEUS, University of Cologne
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At the end of the conference, Mirja Schröder, CETEUS, University of Cologne, and Prof. Wolfgang Wessels, CETEUS, University of Cologne summarized the annual meeting by highlighting the key points of each panel from the last two days. A special emphasis was put on the role of Brexit and its effects on the developments within the European Union as well as on EU-Turkey relations. The audience engaged in a vivid discussion about how to keep EU-Turkey relations alive in a constructive way.