

MONTEUS Public Lecture

Joint Panel Discussion

Istanbul Policy Center (IPC), Sabancı University
Centre for Turkey and European Studies (CETEUS), University of Cologne

“EU-Turkey relations in times of global and regional turmoil”

Thursday, 19 April 2018, Cologne

Studierenden-Service-Center (SSC, Building 102): Room 2.101, University of Cologne

Chair:

Prof Dr Wolfgang Wessels, CETEUS

Speakers:

Prof Dr Atila Eralp, IPC & Middle East Technical University

Assoc Prof Dr Senem Aydin-Düzgit, Sabancı University

Dr Metin Gürcan, IPC

Hanna-Lisa Hauge, CETEUS

Concluding Remarks:

Prof Dr Fuat Keyman, IPC & Sabancı University

Dr Wolf-Ruthart Born, former State Secretary & German ambassador to Turkey

In the turbulent global and European climate as well as the current conflict in Syria, it is timely to contextualize the debate on Turkey and the long-lasting Turkey-EU relationship in terms of global trends and the present debate on the future of Europe. This timely event coincides with the planned publication of the European Commission’s Country Report on Turkey. The debate thus aimed to focus on the possibility of the revitalization of the EU-Turkey-Germany relationship in changing global, European, and neighbourhood contexts and put special emphasis on Germany, which has always been one of the key drivers of the process of European Integration and the EU-Turkey relationship.

Wolfgang Wessels chaired the event and welcomed distinguished experts from Germany and Turkey in Cologne who shared their views on EU-Turkey relations in exchange with a public audience. Atila Eralp reminded the audience that though Germany has always been one of the main drivers in the European Union (EU), France would now be taking concrete initiatives on reforming the EU, which might be a chance of revitalizing the relationship between Germany and France. However, this should

not neglect the relationship between the EU and Turkey. He stressed that indeed the EU-Turkey relationship seemed gloomy nowadays and that some people even called the latest progress report of the European Commission on Turkey a “regress” report. There is no prospect of opening new chapters and the association council has not met since two years. In addition, key EU member states have reservations against a modernization of the customs union with Turkey. Finally, Atila Eralp underlined the need for the EU and Turkey to establish a rule-based cooperation.

Senem Aydin-Düzgit stated that one could identify a massive emphasis of stressing Turkey’s role as strategic partner for the EU – most of the time without this being defined in more detail. She also posed the question whether relations could be more bilateral in the future, i.e. with Turkey cooperating on a more transactional basis with certain EU member states. However, this would bear the problem that there are many issues which only can be dealt with at EU level. In this framework, she emphasized in particular the modernization of the Customs Union, PESCO as well as the visa liberalization.

Afterwards, Metin Gürcan laid briefly down the conflicting interests of actors involved in the Syria conflict that determine Turkey’s security environment. According to him, Ankara’s strategic decision in Syria will have major impact on the future Turkish security structure.

In her intervention, Hanna-Lisa Hauge presented some of the main findings of the research she conducted together with Wolfgang Wessels, as well as Atila Eralp and Ebru Ece Özbey from METU within the EU-funded FEUTURE project, coordinated by the University of Cologne. She introduced the narrative of a contested relationship, which outlines how narratives on EU-Turkey relations changed over time since the 1960s and until the present. The research team has identified through its qualitative narrative analysis and the coding of a set of more than 250 official documents from EU and Turkey. Overall, the research draws the conclusion that currently there is a combination of conflictual elements as well as arguments emphasizing the importance to cooperate with each other. Hence, the findings are in line with the main conclusion drawn by the FEUTURE project, namely, that the most likely scenario for the future is “*conflictual cooperation*”.

Fuat Keyman and Wolf-Ruthard Born concluded the Joint Panel Discussion with final remarks on the future of EU-Turkey Relations. Fuat Keyman started his intervention with quoting a statement from Marx, namely that leaders make history but not under the conditions, they like. As regards EU-Turkey relations, he stated that there was a paradigm shift from accession to power and security. The discourse moved more towards partnership instead of membership. This translates to a more transactional form of relationship for EU and Turkey, and a growing importance of flexible alliances. The positive aspect of these changes is that the

need to work together remains. He also underlined the importance of universities and think tanks in pushing for more cooperation, including platforms for scholars to meet and exchange.

Finally, Wolf-Ruthard Born concluded the discussion by mentioning that it is a difficult time for EU-Turkey relations. He also suggested looking at history when making predictions for the future relationship. He indicated that from the beginning, Turkey was perceived as a special case and that this would be part of the reason for the current struggles. However, despite all conflicts, he claimed that the EU and Turkey should come back together on the table when perceived necessary.