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**Research Report**

The new Turkish diaspora policy: Its aims, their limits and the challenges for associations of people of Turkish origin and decision-makers in Germany

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# SWP Research Paper

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*Yaşar Aydın*

## The New Turkish Diaspora Policy

Its Aims, Their Limits and the Challenges for  
Associations of People of Turkish Origin and  
Decision-makers in Germany

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**The New Turkish Diaspora Policy  
Its Aims, Their Limits and the Challenges for  
Associations of People of Turkish Origin and  
Decision-makers in Germany**

Why is it often so difficult in this country to make a balanced assessment of the interest of the Turkish government in people in Germany who originated in Turkey? The reason for this is clearly on the one hand the scepticism of many decision-makers in Germany in relation to the transnational connections of people originating in Turkey, which are regarded as an obstacle to their integration into German society. And on the other hand there is widespread concern about “externally controlled penetration” by their country of origin, Turkey. In its judgement of the Turkish diaspora and the diaspora policy pursued by Ankara, German politicians are often influenced by the spectre of a “fifth column” or “Trojan horse”, consequently losing sight of the integrative aspects of both the diaspora as a way of life and of diaspora policy. Political decision-makers and institutions should rid themselves of such attitudes and recognise the role of the transnational links to Turkey of people who originated there in mediating and building bridges. The main problem is not that the Turkish government takes up the cause of these people in Germany, but that it promotes conservative social values and a collective identity marked by religion that not only arouses the scepticism of German decision-makers but also at the same time contributes to reinforcing the cultural fragmentation of the Turkish diaspora.

The course of the German debate until now about the involvement of the Turkish government for people in Germany who originated in Turkey and for their political activities shows that there is an urgent need to view the problem with objectivity and in its historical setting. There are two prerequisites for this: an analysis of the relationship of the new Turkish diaspora policy to the integration requirements of German society and the efforts to integrate made by people from Turkey in Germany; and a realistic assessment of the capacity of the Turkish government to control and guide. Thus first of all the roots of Ankara’s new diaspora policy will be summarised in this paper, the socio-political and economic drivers of this strategy will be illuminated and the relevant central institutions for this purpose will then be introduced.

Finally the reactions of Turkish migrant organisations to Turkish diaspora policy will be discussed.

Regardless of the subject involved, interventions by Turkish politicians in matters that concern people from Turkey in Germany are normally subject to criticism in the German media and by German politicians, and cause friction in German-Turkish relations. Contrary to widespread assessments, the increasing interest of the Turkish government in people from Turkey who live in Germany is by no means economic in origin, but is part of a political strategy that aims to build up and strengthen diaspora organisations and extend their scope of action. It can therefore be assumed that Ankara will continue to focus on the Turkish diaspora in Germany, which will result in both challenges for the foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany and in opportunities for integration policy. The aim that the former Turkish prime minister, now president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan proposes to people from Turkey in Germany, to make better use of education opportunities and to make efforts to improve their social status, to take an active part in the life of society and also in the formation of political attitudes, can only be achieved if those who are being addressed adopt modern types of behaviour and habits of openness. The decision-makers and institutions in Germany that are engaged with such issues should therefore be open for cooperation with the Turkish diaspora and the Turkish government, and at the same time should press it to respect the autonomy of migrants' associations and not to further reinforce cultural fragmentation within the Turkish diaspora in Germany through its policy.

## Driving Forces and Central Institutions of the New Turkish Diaspora Policy

With his self-confident appearance in Cologne in 2008, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then Turkish prime minister, triggered a wave of criticism and outrage in Germany. In his speech he condemned assimilation as a “crime against humanity”<sup>1</sup>, calling on people in Germany who originated in Turkey to maintain their relationship to Turkey and to Turkish culture, and to work in the interests of Turkey. Little notice was taken, however, of his appeal to people from Turkey to learn the German language, to be active politically and to make better use of the opportunities provided by the German education system. Erdoğan, according to the verdict of an author in *Spiegel* whose view can undoubtedly be regarded as representative of the media response, was using for his own ends the community in Germany of people from Turkey with his “aggressive diaspora policy”, behaving like a “substitute chancellor” and claiming to “work for the integration of Turkish immigrants and their children in Germany”. In fact, according to the *Spiegel* author, he was achieving the opposite of this.<sup>2</sup>

Erdoğan’s second speech in Cologne on 24 May 2014 also led to vehement reactions amongst German politicians. The occasion for the visit was officially the tenth anniversary of the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD), but in reality the election in Turkey, then approaching, of the state president, in which Turkish citizens living abroad were allowed to vote and to whom Erdoğan had announced his – as is now known, successful – candidature. In 2007 Armin

Laschet, the former CDU integration minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, had already criticised the intention of the Turkish government to give the right to vote to Turkish citizens abroad as “damaging to integration policy”.<sup>3</sup> What are the reasons for this increasing interest by the government in Ankara in people from Turkey in Germany, and the criticism that it thus arouses in Germany? What reasons, motives and driving forces can be identified for this interest and for the scepticism of the German side?

The new Turkish diaspora policy must be regarded in the context of three developments. *Firstly*, the emergence of a transnational diaspora in Germany, in other European states and in the USA. The population in Germany of people who originated in Turkey can be described as a “diaspora” because its members differ from the majority in society in terms of their identity, their way of life and because of the disadvantages that they experience and feel. The involvement and strategy of the Turkish government towards this community in Germany can be described as a “diaspora policy” because their purpose is to build up and strengthen Turkish associations and organisations and to extend their scope for action.<sup>4</sup> *Secondly*, the new Turkish diaspora policy is related to the establishment of a new state elite and the implementation of a new discourse on modernity and Muslim national identity in Turkey. *Thirdly*, the new diaspora policy needs to be related to the context of the re-orientation of Turkish foreign policy, which would possibly not have taken place without shifts of power in society.

1 “Erdoğan’s Rede erzürnt deutsche Politiker”, in: *Die Welt*, 28 February 2011. On the subject of assimilation Erdoğan said among other things the following: “I understand very well the sensitivity that you show towards assimilation. No-one can expect you to tolerate assimilation. No-one can expect you to submit to assimilation. Because assimilation is a crime against humanity. You should be aware of this”, quoted from “Das sagte Ministerpräsident Erdogan in Köln”, *Die Welt*, 11 February 2008, <http://www.welt.de/debatte/article1660510/Das-sagte-Ministerpraesident-Erdogan-in-Koeln.html> (accessed 9 January 2014). Erdoğan’s allegation of assimilation is directed against the German policy of integration, which is critical of the relations of people of Turkish origin in Germany to Turkey.

2 Maximilian Popp, “Ersatzkanzler in Ankara”, *Der Spiegel*, no. 19 (2013): 36–7.

3 A politician of Turkish origin, Cem Özdemir from the Green Party, also regards “voting rights abroad” for second- and third-generation people of Turkish origin as “scarcely helpful” for the purpose of “arriving in modern times”; see “Warum das Heim-Wahlrecht der Türken die Integration behindert”, *Spiegel online*, 28 March 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/diaspora-warum-das-heim-wahlrecht-der-tuerken-die-integration-behindert-a-474170.html> (accessed 18 April 2013).

4 Johann Heiss and Maria Six-Hohenbalken, “Diaspora”, in F. Kreff et al., *Lexikon der Globalisierung* (Bielefeld, 2011), 44f.; Alan Gamlen, *Diaspora Engagement Policies. What Are They, and What Kinds of States Use Them* (Oxford: University of Oxford, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, 2006).



Before the principal driving forces and interests of the current diaspora policy are discussed, a historical review of the early stages of this strategy is helpful.

## Retrospective – historical stages of Turkish diaspora policy

From the 1960s Turkey promoted the migration of its citizens to Europe, partly in order to relieve pressure on its own labour market and thus to prevent possible socio-political tension in this way. The government in Ankara assumed at that time that the “guest workers” would return to Turkey with new skills and qualifications after staying in Western Europe for a few years and so contribute to alleviating the shortage of skilled workers.<sup>5</sup> Through a largely defensive policy of influence and identity, the Turkish governments of those years attempted to preserve and strengthen the links of migrant workers to their homeland and their loyalty to the Turkish state. The purpose was to prevent citizens living abroad from assimilating to the cultures of the countries in question and breaking with Turkey and “Turkish culture”. As the German government also expected Turkish workers and their families to return during this phase, it did not counteract this relationship to their home country.

In its assistance for migrant workers originating from Turkey, until the 1980s the Turkish state concentrated on giving expert advice in pensions and other social matters in Turkish consulates through social attachés who were employed especially for this purpose. In 1984 the Turkish Islamic Union of the State Office of Religious Affairs (DİTİB) was registered as a society in Cologne. In this way Ankara extended its portfolio of services towards Turks living in Germany by attending to the maintenance of religious practices.

The economic dimension of the Turkish policy of influence and identity primarily consisted in motivating Turkish citizens working in Germany to invest their savings in their home country.

The late 1970s were marked by a change in the perception of migrant workers from Turkey by Turkish politicians. Firstly they became conscious of the fact that “guest workers” would permanently remain in various European states, when they brought remain-

ing members of their family to join them instead of returning to Turkey. Secondly, as a result of transfers of foreign currency, which accounted for a considerable proportion of Turkish gross national product at that time, it was realised that the continuing residence in European countries of people originating in Turkey could be more advantageous to Turkey than their return.

The year 1982 represented an even more important break with the past: by means of a new law on nationality, the government in Ankara permitted Turkish nationals to acquire a further nationality (dual nationality). Furthermore, the aims and obligations of “diaspora policy”, i.e. to represent the interests of people from Turkey abroad and to strengthen their ties to Turkey, were given constitutional status.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1980s the focus of the Turkish state with respect to migrant workers shifted from economic to political matters. Two new areas of activity made this clear.<sup>7</sup> The first is that the Turkish government introduced a practice of coordinated representation of its interests vis-à-vis the states in which migrant workers resided, local authorities and other local state institutions. Secondly it now mobilised Turkish citizens abroad in matters that affected the “national interests” of Turkey and made efforts to involve migrants in its conflicts with Islamist, Kurdish national and radical left-wing groups, which for their part – this applies above all to the radical left-wing groups and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) – attempted to use the organisations that they controlled to mobilise people from Turkey against the military coup of 12 September 1980. For this purpose, in the late 1980s the government in Ankara encouraged the establishment of coordinating committees, which operated as quasi umbrella organisations of nationalist, religious and conservative associations as well as the ultra-nationalist *Idealist Associations*, which stood close to the Party of the Nationalist Movement (MHP). In this way it was intended to combine all forces that were willing to promote the “national interests” of Turkey in Germany by influencing the politics of the Federal Repub-

<sup>5</sup> Sabri Sayarı, “Migration Policies of Sending Countries”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 485 (1986): 87–97.

<sup>6</sup> O. Can Ünver, “Changing Diaspora Politics of Turkey and Public Diplomacy”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2013): 183 and 184. See also idem, *35 Jahre Zeitzeuge der Migration und der Bürokratie* (Turkish), (Ankara, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Özge Bilgili and Melissa Siegel, *Understanding the Changing Role of the Turkish Diaspora*, UNU-MERIT Working Paper Series 39/2011 (Maastricht: United Nations University/Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology [UNU-MERIT], September 2010).

lic. While the institution *Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland* (TGD; Turkish Community in Germany) tended towards a neutral position, the “publicity work” of organisations close to the PKK, for example, in Germany and other European states aimed among other things at influencing decision-makers there for the Kurdish cause. For this purpose they made alliances with German parties and political groupings.<sup>8</sup> In the late 1980s and early 1990s the principal aim of Turkey was therefore to thwart the attempts of the PKK and other radical left-wing groups to “undermine” loyalty to the state.

In the 1990s the term “Euro-Turks”<sup>9</sup> (“Avrupa Türkleri”) gained currency in the Turkish language. This expressed the idea that the permanent residence in Europe outside Turkey of people from Turkey was now a generally recognised fact. Institutionally this paradigm change was accompanied by the foundation of the Committee for Citizens Abroad.<sup>10</sup> Two aims or intentions lay at the heart of Turkish diaspora policy in this decade: the successful integration of all people from Turkey in the countries that received them, and support of migrants in their demands for cultural rights. The Turkish government’s conception of “integration” was, however, very narrow. In the 1980s and 1990s it was confined to the inclusion of people from Turkey in the social structure of the states to which they migrated; adaptation to the culture of those countries or to national values and traditions there continued to be rejected. Turkish diaspora policy attached importance to integration in social policy, because Turkish politicians and civil servants had realised that lack of adaptation in this area would restrict the scope of action of Turkish foreign policy and lead to tension between Turkey and the other states concerned.<sup>11</sup> In this context, in 1995 the state president at the time, Süleyman Demirel, appealed to people from Turkey in Europe to take citizenship of the countries in which they lived. A year later Ankara reduced the legal obstacles to renouncing Turkish citizenship.<sup>12</sup>

8 Canan Atılgan, *Türkische Diaspora in Deutschland. Chance oder Risiko für die deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen* (Hamburg, 2002), 219.

9 Ayhan Kaya and Ferhat Kentel, *Euro Turks: A Bridge or a Breach between Turkey and the European Union* (Brussels, 2005).

10 Official website of YTB, <http://www.ytb.gov.tr/index.php/yurtdisi-vatandaslar-danisma-kurulu.html> (accessed 4 February 2014).

11 Atılgan, *Türkische Diaspora* (see note 8), 153f. and 166ff.

12 Law no. 4112 of 7 June 1995 gave to former Turkish citizens who had renounced Turkish citizenship with official

All in all, Turkish diaspora policy was mainly concerned with three areas of activity in the 1990s. Firstly it was directed towards combating the activities of “extremist” or “radical” political organisations that constituted a threat to security. In doing so it relied heavily on the coordinating committees, which were publicly criticised in Germany for their strict orientation to Turkish national culture and rejection of an “independent German-Turkish culture”. Secondly, diaspora policy was intended to reinforce the demands of people originating in Turkey vis-à-vis the countries of residence. Thirdly, its task was to retain influence on Turks living in Germany (and other European states) and their organisations. In the 1990s the focus of attention of migrants’ associations shifted from their origins to migration-specific issues, though without loss of interest in their home country. This is evident in, for example, the appeals of the *Islamische Gemeinde* (Islamic Community) *Millî Görüş* (IGMG) to its members to take German citizenship, learn the German language and take part in German politics.<sup>13</sup>

## The development of a transnational diaspora originating in Turkey

In 1961 an agreement was made between Germany and Turkey for the recruitment of Turkish workers that had unforeseen consequences for both sides, because it resulted in migration that continues to this day.<sup>14</sup> Similar recruitment agreements were later made with Belgium, Austria (1964), the Netherlands (1967) and France (1973). From the 1970s Turkish workers also sought employment in Arab states, and after the collapse of the Communist bloc and the Soviet Union a further region for migration for Turk-

permission rights to stay in Turkey and to acquire property, etc., rights that were not granted to non-citizens of Turkey.

13 Oğuz Üçüncü (secretary general of IGMG at the time of the interview) emphasises that the focus of the work of IGMG is in Germany, although there continues to be interest in Turkey: “I have to have a living relationship to my homeland. There continue to be many things that affect me, that I wish to influence” (interview on 29 October 2013). The development was similar in other umbrella organisations. Cf. Betigül E. Argun, *Turkey in Germany: The Transnational Sphere of Deutscher* (New York and London, 2003).

14 Previously there had been migration for work and education during the First World War from the Ottoman Empire to the German Empire, and migration of exiles and highly qualified persons from German to Turkey during the National Socialist period.

ish workers opened up in Russia, Ukraine, the Turkish republics and later Romania and Poland.<sup>15</sup> Today more than five million Turkish citizens live outside Turkey: approximately four million in Western Europe, 30,000 in North America, 20,000 in the Middle East and 15,000 in Australia.<sup>16</sup>

Germany is the country with the largest number of people originating in Turkey globally. Between 1961 and the 1990s, more than four million people came from Turkey to Germany. About half of them returned to Turkey. Of the three million such persons in Germany, according to the *Migrationsbericht 2012* (Migration Report), some 1.6 million are Turkish citizens and approximately 1.4 million have German nationality.

In half a century the profile of mobility between Germany and Turkey has changed greatly. Currently German-Turkish migration consists not only of family migration, which has become less significant in recent years, and pendulum migration by retired persons from Germany and Turkey. In both directions there has been a great increase in business and holiday trips, and temporary movements of students, researchers and other highly qualified persons. This enormous intensification and diversification of the exchange is only one characteristic of the transnationalisation that has taken place in relations between Germany and Turkey in the past. Transnationality is expressed in bicultural orientation and in the double identities and double loyalties of people from Turkey in Germany, but also in their activities, which relate to both countries. This trend has been reinforced by current process of globalisation in general, by new means of communication and transport, and by the extension of citizens', social and political rights to migrants.

In Germany a transnational diaspora of persons originating from Turkey has emerged in which social, cultural and political elements from Turkey continue to operate and mix with local elements, influencing both societies and political systems. In this process Turkish media with their editorial teams for Germany and Europe have an important role in transmission. They form an "intermediate world", as it were, of German-Turkish relations. In view of the fact that the interests of people from Turkey are given little cover-

age and are little served in German media, this is particularly important. A significant intermediary function in the communication process between native residents and people originating in Turkey is also fulfilled by the migrants' own organisations, which usually have a transnational orientation. People from Turkey with their economic, socio-political and cultural activities not only have a lasting influence on society and politics in Germany but also on parts of German-Turkish and EU-Turkish relations. But what characteristics of identity can be ascertained that make it justifiable to speak of a "diaspora of people from Turkey"?

Going beyond the classic uses of the term, today "diaspora" characterises ethno-cultural or religious groups that live outside their countries of origin for various reasons. Diasporas are "part of and stakeholders in those transnational networks in which the life of society is simultaneously contextualised 'here' and 'there'", in which "dual loyalties and multiple identities are formed and asserted against the identity demands of the nation state".<sup>17</sup> Four distinguishing features constitute a diaspora:

- a) *Dispersion*: spread beyond the territory of origin;
- b) *Retrospection*: ties to the country of origin and identification with it;
- c) *Community spirit*: collective experience of exclusion and discrimination in the host country;
- d) *Exterritoriality*: a collective identity that is no longer necessarily tied to belonging to a specific territorial area.<sup>18</sup>

People originating from Turkey in Germany have an identity that can be distinguished from that of the majority of society. They maintain close and permanent relationships to Turkey and possess a high degree of organisation. Although they have not been entirely included from the formation of public opinion in Germany, they are nevertheless now perceived as a target group by political parties more strongly than in the past. The spectrum of employment in this transnational diaspora in Germany is far from homogeneous. It ranges from successful businesspeople, academics, artists, skilled workers, unskilled workers to retired persons and the unemployed.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmet İçduygu and Deniz Sert, *Länderprofil Türkei*, Focus Migration 5/2009 (Hamburg and Bonn, April 2009), <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/Tuerkei-Update-04-2.6026.0.html> (accessed 22 August 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Turkish Citizens Living Abroad* (online), <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-expatriate-turkish-citizens.en.mfa> (accessed 13 January 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Helmuth Berking, "Homes away from Home": Zum Spannungsverhältnis von Diaspora und Nationalstaat", *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 10, no. 1 (2000): 49–60 (53).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## Power shifts in society

For more than a decade, Turkey has been undergoing a process of transformation that is already accompanied by clear shifts in political, economic and social power. In 2001 the three-party coalition consisting of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), the Party of the Nationalist Movement (MHP) and the Motherland Party (Anap) under Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit initiated a reform programme that was continued by the AKP government. Far-reaching legislative changes brought the political institutions and the economic and legal system of Turkey closer to EU standards and contributed to a further democratisation and pluralisation of the country. This earned respect for Turkey and increased the confidence placed in it by third parties, which in turn meant that Turkey was able to extend the scope of its economic and foreign policy. In the last decade, direct investment from abroad has increased enormously, the overall size of the economy has increased<sup>19</sup> and Turkey has become a destination for migrants.

The AKP government was able to take credit for these developments and thus gain legitimacy for its fight against the secular national power bloc, which includes the army and members of the civil service and judiciary. The party won three parliamentary elections in succession (2002, 2007, 2011) and three nationwide rounds of local elections (2004, 2009, 2014), increasing its share of the vote every time except in 2009. In 2007 the AKP was already strong enough to stand up to the army in an open confrontation when the armed forces tried to put the government under pressure with an internet memorandum in order to force a compromise in the election of the state president. The leadership of the AKP decided to bring forward the parliamentary elections, from which the party emerged as the clear winner in July 2007, and had their candidate, Abdullah Gül, elected to the office of state president in the new parliament. In 2008 the AKP fought off a proposed prohibition, and in 2010 won a referendum to change the constitution and in 2011 a further power struggle with the army leadership. Through the referendum in 2010 the AKP government succeeded in pushing through a change in the law for restructuring the High Council of judges and state prosecutors and in breaking resistance in the judiciary. Step by step the AKP consoli-

dated its hegemony in opposition to the old Kemalist and secular elites and institutions.

The rise of a new power elite and a new conservative class of business people was the prerequisite for the U-turn in foreign policy at the end of the first decade of the 21st century.<sup>20</sup> The changeover of power was accompanied and legitimised by the idea of “multiple modernity” and a discourse that indicated geopolitical ambitions and was labelled “neo-Ottoman”, especially abroad. The neo-Ottoman attitude is exemplified in a speech that Erdoğan made following the parliamentary elections on 12 June 2011. He portrayed the election victory of the AKP as a “victory for Muslims” and greeted countries and cities that once belonged to the Ottoman Empire: “Today both Istanbul and Sarajevo have won, both Ankara and Damascus, both Diyarbakır and Ramallah, as well as Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank of Jordan, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip”.<sup>21</sup> The speech of the Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu at the conference on “Ottoman Legacy and Muslim Communities in the Balkans Today” in Sarajevo tended in the same direction: “What is Turkey?”, Davutoğlu asked there, and provided the answer himself: “Turkey is the Lesser Balkans, the Lesser Middle East, the Lesser Caucasus. More Bosnians live among us than in Bosnia, more Albanians than in Albania, more Chechens than in Chechnya, more Abkhazians than in Abkhazia. How is that possible? The Ottoman legacy makes it possible.”<sup>22</sup> Neo-Ottomanism can be explained in three ways: it provides an alternative frame of reference vis-à-vis Kemalism; it has a motivating effect domestically; and it gives ideological support to the opening of the economy internationally and the expansionary Turkish export policy.<sup>23</sup>

The emphasis on multiple – geographical, historical and religious – identities of Turkey by the state elites was accompanied by the propagation of a Muslim nationalism that is not based primarily on race and language but is oriented towards a historic Turkish and Ottoman identity. This “Muslim nationalism”

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed discussion of internal political dynamics of the reorientation in foreign policy and the rise of new players, see Günter Seufert, *Außenpolitik und Selbstverständnis. Die gesellschaftliche Fundierung von Strategiewechseln in der Türkei*, SWP-Studie 11/2012 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2012).

<sup>21</sup> See *Hürriyet*, 13 June 2011, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/18015912.asp> (accessed 23 March 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Quoted according to Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy* (Turkish), vol. 3: 2001–2012 (Istanbul, 2013), 199.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>19</sup> For relevant economic data cf. *Das Statistik-Portal* (online), <http://de.statista.com>.

makes it possible on the one hand to recognise other identities such as that of the Kurds which were ignored and repressed in Turkish public life for a long time. On the other hand it reinforces the “feeling of Muslim national identity”, which has a stronger appeal than Kemalism in the broad population, being a religiously motivated, exclusive internal group solidarity that demands an affirmative position in relation to state authority.<sup>24</sup> Emphasising “common historical and cultural heritage” also makes it easier for Ankara to turn to Muslim neighbours and “related communities”. The new Turkish diaspora policy with its focus on people originating from Turkey in Europe therefore goes hand in hand with a foreign policy that aims to intensify relations to Muslims in the Balkans and the Caucasus and to Turkic peoples.

### The new orientation in Turkish foreign policy

Turkey’s “new” diaspora policy is partly a consequence of the re-orientation in foreign policy described above, which is by no means merely a shift in priorities within the “continuity of Turkish foreign policy activism following the end of the east-west conflicts”.<sup>25</sup> Even though increased foreign policy activity in the region and the controversial concept of “strategic depth” are in line with the tradition of Turkish foreign policy as the implementation of national interests, the project of foreign minister Davutoğlu represents a “break with Kemalist tradition” in four ways.<sup>26</sup> Turkish foreign policy after the Second World War was characterised by four constant elements that were revised under the AKP government:

1. Ties to the western alliance and political system in foreign and security policy (*western ties*);
2. Distance to neighbouring states due to tensions in relationships arising from the Ottoman past (*regional foreign-policy abstinence*);

3. Absolute priority for securing the territorial and societal foundations of the Turkish Republic (*orientation to security paradigm*);

4. Setting down of foreign policy guidelines by the Turkish army with the inclusion of high-ranking civil servants (*military hegemony*).<sup>27</sup>

The factors that were responsible for the change in Turkish foreign policy, which began after the end of the Cold War, were shifts in global power, the disintegration of the Communist bloc and processes of globalisation that also affected Turkey. In this connection, four developments were of especial importance:

#### 1) From a state on the wings to a front-line state:

With its membership of the western military alliance, Turkey recognised the “protective and leading role of the USA as the undisputed primary western power”. After the end of the east-west conflict, which Davutoğlu describes as a geopolitical “earthquake”<sup>28</sup>, the significance of Turkey as the “south-eastern pillar of NATO” disappeared and its geostrategic importance sank to its nadir; Ankara reacted to this by turning increasingly to the newly founded Turkic states of Central Asia.

#### 2) Foreign policy activism:

In the era of Turgut Özal (1983–93) the Turkish government departed from its traditionally passive and one-dimensional foreign policy in favour of an active and multidimensional foreign policy, with which several aims in various fields were connected: by means of multilateral economic cooperation in its region, it aimed to deepen economic relations to its neighbours; in regional and international politics Turkey was to establish its position as a leading power; and a belt of security, stability and affluence was to be created around the country, without abandoning “the priority of strategic partnership with the West”.<sup>29</sup>

#### 3) Extending the radius of foreign policy:

Turkey reacted to the break-up of the Communist bloc and of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia by extending the radius of its foreign policy. The aim of this was to put relations with states in the Caucasus, the Near East, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Balkans on a new

<sup>24</sup> Jenny White, *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Gülistan Gürbey, “Wandel in der türkischen Außenpolitik unter der AKP-Regierung?”, *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 50, no. 2 (2010): 16–27 (26).

<sup>26</sup> Heinz Kramer, “Zwischen Tradition und Neuorientierung: Die Außenpolitik”, in idem, *Türkei, Informationen zur politischen Bildung* 313 (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2011), 55.

<sup>27</sup> Gürbey, “Wandel in der türkischen Außenpolitik” (see note 25): 18.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “The Three Major Earthquakes in the International System and Turkey”, *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs* 48, no. 2 (June 2013): 1–11 (2).

<sup>29</sup> Gürbey, “Wandel in der türkischen Außenpolitik” (see note 25): 19.

basis. While Ahmet Davutoğlu was in office, North Africa too was included in this area of primary activity.

**4) Discovery of the role of bridge and model:** With the increased strength of political Islam and following the terror attacks of 11 September 2001, Turkey was increasingly hailed as a bridge between the Orient and the West, and between Islam and the West, and as a model for the compatibility of democracy and Islam.<sup>30</sup>

After Ahmet Davutoğlu took office in May 2009, the parameters of Turkish foreign policy shifted considerably once more. “Strategic depth” and “no problems with neighbouring states”<sup>31</sup> are the key concepts in this multidimensional foreign policy, which not only goes hand in hand with a new feeling of national identity but is also guided by the maxims of economic rationality and is accompanied by an export-oriented economic policy (*primacy of the economy*)<sup>32</sup>. The concept of “strategic depth” is based on four principles, among other things:

1. Emphasising the *multiple identities* of Turkey, which result from various religions, historical experiences and geographical peculiarities.<sup>33</sup>
2. *Proactivity* and *multidimensionality* as essential guidelines of foreign policy towards the states of the Near and Middle East, Africa and Asia. In other words, relations to these regions are to be maintained and deepened on manifold levels, from business to security and geostrategic questions.
3. *Presence in solving conflicts*, which is to be expressed in the role of Turkey as a mediator between parties to conflicts. This aim is underpinned by a liberal visa policy and immigration regulations from citizens of states in the region.

<sup>30</sup> In the words of the former Turkish foreign minister and prime minister Mesut Yılmaz in an interview with *Eurasisches Magazin* on 6 March 2003: “We, the Turks, add a new element. We know Europe, as we have been part of its history and will be part of it again soon, though in a much more peaceful way. But we also know Asia and thus fulfil the function of a bridge that the EU ought not to do without. This is our Eurasian task”, *Eurasisches Magazin* (online), 25 June 2003, <http://www.eurasischesmagazin.de/artikel/Wir-Tuerken-erfuellen-eine-Brueckenfunktion-das-ist-unsere-eurasische-Aufgabe/> 60603 (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Strategische Tiefe: Internationale Position der Türkei* (Turkish), (Istanbul, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State”, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 40 (2009): 29–57.

<sup>33</sup> Heinz Kramer, “The Future of Turkish-Western Relations”, *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 53, no. 1 (2013): 57–72 (60).

4. Regarding *civil society* and the business community as target groups of foreign policy.

The new orientation of Turkish foreign policy is also reflected in the restructuring of the responsible offices and the introduction of new institutions. On 13 July 2010 a new “organisation law” for the foreign ministry came into force. In 2012 the scope of activities of the Turkish Presidium for International Co-operation and Coordination (TİKA), the Turkish state agency for development aid, was extended and its budget significantly increased. In the Office for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) the government created a new state organ. It also established new institutions for public diplomacy. One core component of the multidimensional foreign policy of Turkey is an active diaspora policy, which is connected to economic, political and cultural interests.

## What is “new” about the new diaspora policy?

Turkey’s policy towards Turkish citizens in Europe can be described as a diaspora policy since the 1980s at the latest, as the permanence of the presence of people from Turkey in various European countries has been undisputed since then. But what is “new” about the current diaspora policy? Firstly the explicit designation of people abroad who originated in Turkey as a “diaspora”; secondly that a policy relating to them is embedded in a strategy of public diplomacy<sup>34</sup> that is a core element of the present proactive foreign policy; and finally the connection of this policy with a new view of the nation, which is compatible with multiple Muslim identities.

The current diaspora policy must also be seen in the context of a general transnationalisation of Turkish foreign policy: although this continues to be the domain of the executive, in recent years it has been opened to members of civil society, think-tanks and business associations, and has a stronger obligation today to justify itself publicly. A consequence of transnationalisation in turn is that communications

<sup>34</sup> The term “public diplomacy” refers to a method of promoting national interests by directly convincing the foreign public and foreign opinion leaders. İbrahim Kalın, foreign-policy adviser to the former Turkish prime minister Erdoğan, writes: “The new Turkish public diplomacy is building on Turkey’s expanding soft power in the Balkans, the Middle East and Caucasus”, see İbrahim Kalın, “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey”, *Perceptions* 16, no. 3 (2011): 5–23 (5).

between Germany and Turkey, which was previously entirely at state level, is increasingly marked by informal, individual relationships beneath the level of state communication. The result of this is that the separation between domestic and foreign-policy issues is becoming blurred. Domestic issues such as the paths of integration of people from Turkey in Germany, dual nationality, the uniting of families or the placement of children of Turkish origin with foster parents are becoming a foreign-policy issue, and foreign-policy topics such as EU membership for Turkey or criticism of the Turkish government are becoming matters of German domestic politics, partly because they are being raised by organisations of the Turkish diaspora. In consequence domestic policy is becoming foreign policy, and foreign policy is becoming domestic policy, an effect that is reinforced by Turkish diaspora policy, leading to additional conflicts in German-Turkish relations.

The shrinking of distances that once kept worlds apart thanks to new transport and communication technologies and facilities such as cheap flights, flat-rate telephone accounts and satellite TV, and the liberalisation of international flows of money and goods have made the instrument of diaspora policy an attractive option for Turkey: members of the diaspora constitute human, economic and social capital that can be used to intensify economic relations and trade with the host country and to open up new investment opportunities. The perspectives associated with this partly explain the eagerness with which Turkey supports its diaspora policy by means of public diplomacy.<sup>35</sup>

The “new” element of current Turkish diaspora policy is also reflected in institutional developments and official rhetoric. Here the founding of YTB in 2010 may be regarded as a break. At the fourth Ambassadors’ Conference of the foreign ministry, the Turkish foreign minister Davutoğlu argued for a new definition of diaspora on 23 December 2011. Every individual who originated in Anatolia belongs to the Turkish diaspora, he stated, regardless of religion and ethnic-

ity. This also included Armenians and Greeks, whom the Turkish government would approach in order to “win their hearts”. “We will talk to every Armenian and member of the Orthodox church who has emigrated from Turkey. We will talk about our glorious shared past,” continued Davutoğlu.<sup>36</sup> Despite paternalistic undertones and the romanticisation of the Ottoman past, this could have been the beginning of opening the official view of the nation towards a multicultural Turkish identity. Contrary to this “inclusive” rhetoric, however, shortly afterwards, on 26 February 2012 in Istanbul, it was tolerated that a demonstration of solidarity with Azerbaijanis murdered by Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh, in which the then Turkish minister of the interior participated, took on a character hostile to Armenia and that racist slogans were chanted. So far Turkey has not succeeded in matching words supporting integration with corresponding actions.

## Economic, political and cultural interests

### Economic interests

Not only Turkish foreign policy has been sensitive to business interests since the change of course; this also applies to the new diaspora policy. In the last 10 years, Turkish direct investment abroad has increased continuously. In 2010 it amounted to 1,784 million, in 2011 to 2,657 million and in 2012 to 4,043 million US dollars. Its main destination was Europe (81 per cent, or 3273 million US dollars), followed by the Near and Middle East (10 per cent, or 421 million US dollars) and Asia (3 per cent, or 132 million US dollars). Among individual states, in 2012 Germany was in eighth place among the destinations of Turkish direct investment abroad with 5.7 million US dollars.<sup>37</sup> The importance of the Turkish diaspora for Ankara’s foreign economic policy is due not only to the close trade links

<sup>35</sup> Kemal Yurtnaç, chairman of the YTB, writes on this matter: “Today many countries work to strengthen their public diplomacy efforts, or ‘soft power’, and expand their sphere of influence through their diasporas. [T]he transformations in Turkish foreign policy in recent years facilitated its quest to have richer relations with the citizens and kin communities abroad” (*Turkey’s New Horizon: Turks Abroad and Related Communities*, SAM Papers 3/2012 [Ankara: SAM, Center for Strategic Research, October 2012], 3f.).

<sup>36</sup> Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy* (see note 22), 189. Similar comments were made by Ömer Çelik, former Turkish minister for culture and tourism: “Armenians from Anatolia are part of the Turkish diaspora”, quoted in: *Milliyet*, 26 April 2013, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/anadolu-dan-cikanlar-turkiye-diasporasidir/siyaset/siyasetdetay/26.04.2013/1698688/default.htm> (accessed 21 March 2014).

<sup>37</sup> DEİK, *Dünya’da ve Türkiye’de Yurtdışı Doğrudan Yatırımlar* [Foreign Direct Investments in the World and in Turkey], (Istanbul, August 2013), 43f., <http://www.ydy.gov.tr/upload/Yatirim2013.pdf> (accessed 14 June 2014).

between Germany and Turkey – Germany was Turkey’s biggest trade partner in 2012 – but also to the large number of entrepreneurs in Germany who originated in Turkey: according to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, half of the approximately 140,000 businesses in Europe run by such people are in Germany (70,000). In the whole of Europe they employ 640,000, in Germany 330,000 persons. They have an annual turnover of more than 50 billion euros in Europe, and 32.7 billion euros in Germany.<sup>38</sup>

In view of this it is understandable that the established organisation of Turkish entrepreneurs, the Association of Turkish Chambers of Commerce and Exchanges (TOBB), is a pioneer of the idea of an active diaspora policy. The TOBB, which is regarded as loyal to the state, and its chairman M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu work to expand diaspora networks and played a leading role at the major conference of non-governmental organisations that was held on 7 and 8 June 2012 in Ankara. At irregular intervals the YTB holds meetings of diaspora organisations, to which representatives of associations of people abroad who originated in Turkey are invited. The founding of the Committee for Foreign Economic Relations (DEİK)<sup>39</sup> 1986 under the auspices of the TOBB was already an indication of a new orientation and enhanced consideration of international markets by the association of chambers of commerce. The explicit task of the DEİK is to strengthen cooperation worldwide with the Turkish diaspora with the aim of opening up new opportunities for exports and investments.<sup>40</sup> In order to exploit the potential of people from Turkey abroad for the benefit of the Turkish economy, a coherent and active diaspora policy is stated to be necessary.

With this approach and this rhetoric, the TOBB is in harmony with the official discourse of the Turkish political leadership in respect of the topic of the diaspora. The arguments for the use of the term “diaspora”, which has been adopted in official terminology,

are said to be first of all the advanced state of integration and participation of people from Turkey in society, politics and business in their European host countries. A further reason why the term “diaspora” is used, it is stated, is the global spread of people originating in Turkey, which continues regardless of their cultural ties and manifold relationships to Turkey. At the same time, it is stated, among the migrants, especially in Western Europe, a marked differentiation in social, political and employment matters has taken place, yet the Turkish diaspora lacks effective institutions despite the diversity of its organisational structure.<sup>41</sup>

In a policy paper published in 2011 the TOBB therefore suggested a number of measures and strategies for a more effective diaspora policy. These can be categorised in three groups:

1. *Increasing the economic potential of the Turkish diaspora by means of targeted business promotion:* For this purpose, with professional support, entrepreneurs’ networks are to be formed, diaspora organisations made more effective and a global diaspora network established.
2. *Strengthening the integration of members of the diaspora in the host countries:* For this purpose training and internship positions for people originating from Turkey are to be offered in Turkey, programmes to promote integration initiated, and cultural institutes established. It is also intended to create platforms for legal assistance and to found a diaspora support fund.
3. *Promoting positive mutual interaction between the Turkish diaspora and Turkey:* In this connection extended citizenship, programmes or travel to Turkey, and training, education and internship projects in Turkey for members of the diaspora are under discussion.<sup>42</sup>

## Political interests

The diaspora in Germany is important to the Turkish government for political reasons, too, because of its degree of organisation and the social influence that it has now acquired. In addition to numerous representatives of people from Turkey in local councils and in the parliaments of federal states, at present 11 mem-

<sup>38</sup> Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Turkish Citizens Living Abroad* (see note 16).

<sup>39</sup> DEİK is an association representing business interests, founded in 1986 on the instructions of the then prime minister, Turgut Özal, and directed by the TOBB. Its declared aims include supporting Turkish companies in the public and private sector in opening up new markets; see <http://www.deik.org.tr/287/DeikHakkinda.html> (accessed 24 March 2014). DEİK is associated with the Turkish development ministry of maintains offices in Washington, Moscow and Brussels.

<sup>40</sup> Internet site of DEİK, <http://en.deik.org.tr/287/DeikHakkinda.html> (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>41</sup> DEİK, *International Diaspora Strategies and Proposals for the Turkish Diaspora* (Turkish), (Istanbul, 2011), 3, [http://www.deik.org.tr/2886/Dünyada\\_Diaspora\\_Stratejileri\\_ve\\_Türk\\_Diasporası\\_için\\_Öneriler.htm](http://www.deik.org.tr/2886/Dünyada_Diaspora_Stratejileri_ve_Türk_Diasporası_için_Öneriler.htm) (accessed 16 January 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 29–31.



bers of the 18th Bundestag and one minister of state (Aydan Özoğuz, commissioner for migration, refugees and integration) come from a Turkish migrant background. The Turkish government is aware of the importance of this political representation and regards it as a political lever for exerting favourable influence on the relationship of Turkey to the EU.

One of the main interests of Turkish diaspora policy is to deepen and improve relations with the EU. The need for an active diaspora policy is justified today with reference, among other factors, to the membership negotiations with the EU. Turkish decision-makers assume that the degree of integration of people from Turkey in various European countries will be a significant factor in discussions about EU membership for Turkey. In Germany the view is widely held that the admission of Turkey to the EU would set off a flow of migration that could make the integration of people from Turkey more difficult.

From the official point of view in Ankara, the fact of the diaspora in Europe of people originating in Turkey is a “strong legitimation” for Turkey’s membership of the EU and for its belonging to Europe.<sup>43</sup> Statements by the AKP leadership also suggest that it regards the numerous and relatively well organised migrant community in Germany partly as a lobby.

For the Turkish government, the diaspora in Germany is a legitimate political player whose loyalty and strength it can count on. Accordingly it attaches great importance to the economic success, the upward social mobility and the “multicultural contribution” of people from Turkey in Europe. It supports full integration of these people in their European countries of residence partly because it sees the diaspora as a “representative of Turkey” and its success as proof of the compatibility of Turkey with the EU.<sup>44</sup> Consequently one aim of the new Turkish diaspora policy is to support the political activities of people of Turkish origin and their demand for extension of their economic, social, cultural and legal rights in the European host countries.

<sup>43</sup> Bilgili and Siegel, *Understanding the Changing Role of the Turkish Diaspora* (see note 7), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 1; Ünver, “Changing Diaspora Politics” (see note 6): 188. Gürsel Dönmez, vice-chairman of the YTB, explained in an interview: “We wish Turkey to have a good image in Europe. We cannot achieve this simply by wishing. You already know that we bear a great responsibility here. Together we have seen that we can enrich and complement each other both on the institutional and on the subjective level”, quoted in *Artı 90* (October–December 2013): 94.

The AKP government also has a political interest in establishing symmetry by activating the Turkish diaspora in relation to those countries. German-Turkish relations, for example, were asymmetrical in the past due to the political and economic weakness of Turkey. The asymmetry was evident in the German-Turkish agreement for recruiting workers: Germany was able to negotiate conditions in its favour. In private conversations, Turkish diplomats frequently express their dissatisfaction with this inequality in German-Turkish relations. One undoubted reason for this – in addition to the inequality in power – was the poorer status of Turkey arising from infringements of human rights.

### Cultural interests

Cultural interests too are ultimately associated with the new Turkish diaspora policy. They are expressed most clearly in the shape of the Yunus Emre Cultural Centres (YEKM).<sup>45</sup> The law establishing the Yunus Emre Foundation (YEV) names a number of intentions of cultural policy. They include presenting Turkish cultural heritage, promoting cultural exchange, making information about Turkey available and providing educational services on Turkish language and culture and on the country’s arts.<sup>46</sup> These intentions can hardly be separated from political aims, as they are also part of public diplomacy and are intended to improve the image of Turkey abroad.<sup>47</sup>

In relation to the task of disseminating the Turkish language and culture, recourse is had, depending on the situation, to a neo-Ottoman or modernist discourse. In the EU the emphasis is on mobilising people from Turkey in order to gain influence on politics in those countries, while in the Balkans, Caucasus, Near East and Central Asia the primary aim is to position Turkey as an important regional player by means of language and cultural offerings.

In his speech for the opening of the YEKM in the Albanian capital Tirana on 11 December 2009, the Turkish state president Abdullah Gül described the cul-

<sup>45</sup> The Yunus Emre Cultural Centres are part of the Yunus Emre Foundation, which was established in 2007. Its legal basis is law no. 5653, passed on 5 May 2007. Yunus Emre was an Anatolian poet and Sufi mystic who lived in the 14th century. Today he is regarded as a pioneer of Turkish culture in Anatolia and has the approval of both the Sunni and the Alevi population.

<sup>46</sup> Law no. 5653 of 5 May 2007, article 1.

<sup>47</sup> Ünver, “Changing Diaspora Politics” (see note 6): 188.

tural institutes as “the invisible power” of Turkey. Their cultural heritage, he said, was “the greatest power of Turkey” and had therefore to be cared for: “Not all countries have the power. We should value this cultural heritage.” Foreign minister Davutoğlu in turn put the spotlight on two tasks in his opening speech on 16 October 2009 in Sarajevo: “Firstly to make possible an encounter of our national culture with universal culture and [secondly] to reinforce the effect of our national culture within the ‘universal culture’.”<sup>48</sup>

### Central institutions of the new Turkish diaspora policy

The legal basis of diaspora policy is article 62 of the Turkish constitution, which stipulates that the state should “take all necessary measures to ensure family unity, the education of children, and the social security of Turkish citizens working abroad, to secure their ties to their homeland and to help them to return”.<sup>49</sup> A further legal foundation is the law about the organisation and tasks of the YTB.<sup>50</sup> The following institutions are relevant to Turkish diaspora policy.

#### The Turkish Islamic Union (DİTİB)

The Turkish Islamic Union of the State Office of Religious Affairs (DİTİB) was founded as a religious association in 1982 in Berlin. In 1985 DİTİB in Cologne was extended to become the umbrella organisation for mosque associations in Germany. The foundation of DİTİB by the Turkish Office of Religious Affairs was by no means only a reaction to the religious needs of people originating from Turkey, but at the same time a reaction to the “emergence of Islamic communities in the European diaspora that are independent and critical of the regime”, such as the Islamic Cultural Centre of the *Süleymanîs* (IKMB), the Islamic Community Millî Görüş (IGMG) and the supporters of

Kaplan.<sup>51</sup> The Turkish state saw the activities of these groups as a threat to the collective identity of members of the diaspora and to the official view of the secular state. The aim of DİTİB in its own words is to give Muslims “a place to exercise their religious beliefs and to make a contribution to integration”. In addition to carrying out religious services, the support work of DİTİB is organised in four areas: a department for education and culture; a youth department; a women’s department; and a department concerned with intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

DİTİB is subject to the management and control of the Turkish state Presidium for Religious Affairs (DİB) and thus represents a view of Islam that is compatible with the official policy of a secular state. The association also runs a fund for financing and organising the repatriation and burial of deceased Turkish Muslims.

#### The Office for Turks Abroad (YTB)

On 6 April 2010 a law came into force that founded the Office for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB). The YTB has the status of a state secretariat and is supervised by the prime minister’s office of the Republic of Turkey. By creating this new office, the government in Ankara gave an institutional basis to relations to Turkish citizens abroad and to related communities.<sup>52</sup> The YTB has four areas of activity:

1. *Turkish citizens abroad*: The task of the YTB is to explore opportunities for cooperation with Turkish citizens abroad, to develop relevant strategies and coordinate activities relating to people from Turkey and their associations.
2. *“Related communities”*: This term refers to, for example, Muslims in the Balkans who have historically shared the geography and “culture” of the Turks. These communities too are in the focus of the YTB.
3. *International students*: A further role of the YTB is to support students of Turkish origin and Muslim students from the Turkic republics and the Balkan states for studies in Turkey. The YTB is tasked with offering different courses of education to potential students and keeping contact to them after their studies.

<sup>48</sup> Yunus Emre Bülteni 1, no. 1 (September 2009): 6, [http://yee.org.tr/media/\\_bulten/pdf/eylul\\_2009.pdf](http://yee.org.tr/media/_bulten/pdf/eylul_2009.pdf) (accessed 22 January 2014).

<sup>49</sup> See *Constitution of the Republic of Turkey* (Turkish), [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa\\_2011.pdf](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa_2011.pdf) (accessed 27 February 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Law no. 5978, § 8, *Resmî Gazete* (official publication), 6 April 2010, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2010/04/20100406-1.htm> (accessed 27 February 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Werner Schiffauer, “Die Islamische Gemeinde Milli Görüş”, in *Migrationsreport 2004*, ed. Klaus Bade et al. (Frankfurt, 2004), 77.

<sup>52</sup> See the website of the *Office for Turks Abroad and Related Communities*, <http://www.ytb.gov.tr/index.php/kurumsal/hakkimizda.html> (accessed 20 January 2014).

4. *Non-governmental organisations*: To accompany the previous three aims, the YTB is to assist organisations of people from Turkey abroad in their efforts to gain political participation in their countries of residence and to help them to intensify their relations to Turkey.<sup>53</sup>

The YTB publishes a quarterly magazine, *Artı 90* (Plus 90), whose motto is: “We are everywhere where we have a citizen, a comrade, a relative.” The leading article of one issue of this magazine begins with the sentence: “The Republic of Turkey, whose voice carries weight in the region and the world, stands behind you.”<sup>54</sup> In this article Kemal Yurtnaç, chairman of the YTB, describes Islamophobia that “was made to circulate” after the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 as the biggest problem of Turks abroad. A further evil, he writes, is the structural discrimination of pupils originating from Turkey, which is expressed in “paternalistic assignment of roles” and “prejudiced guidance in the choice of schools and professions” by teachers. In contrast to the German authorities, he writes, which do not motivate Turkish migrants towards upward social mobility, the YTB encourages young people originating from Turkey to educate themselves. A further criticism expressed by Yurtnaç relates to the social services for young people, which “deliberately” place Turkish foster children with Christian families, in some cases even with families that have drug-addiction problems or with “lesbian partners”. This, he alleges, is part of a conscious policy of assimilation.

By its own account this office offers help to people from Turkey if they feel discriminated against, subjected to great pressure to assimilate or exposed to hostility to foreigners.<sup>55</sup> According to the head of the YTB, representatives of associations of people of Turkish origin are invited to meetings several times each year. The decisive criterion for invitation is degree to which the organisations are rooted in the migrant community; ethnicity and religion are said not to be the criteria. The guiding principle is: the more diversity, the better. An advisory committee, to which people with origins in Turkey in countries of migration from various professions and various associations belong, takes care of communication with Europe.<sup>56</sup> Murat

Gürbüz from the YTB has emphasised in an interview<sup>57</sup> that the term “Turks abroad” is based on the principle of state citizenship while the term “related communities” suggests an ethno-cultural view of the nation.

### The Yunus Emre Cultural Centres (YEKM)

As has been seen, the aim of Turkish *public diplomacy* and foreign cultural policy is to strengthen “soft power”.<sup>58</sup> The pillars of this strategy are the Yunus Emre Foundation (YEV) and the Yunus Emre Cultural Centres (YEKMs). The choice of cities that are the locations of the first YEKM is in harmony with the diaspora policy concept of historical and cultural heritage, which has clear neo-Ottoman undertones. In the opinion of the sociologist and migration expert Ayhan Kaya, the task of the cultural institutes, in these locations especially, will be to popularise neo-Ottoman discourse with reference to common history.<sup>59</sup> The speech of foreign minister Davutoğlu at the inauguration of the YEKM branch in Sarajevo is evidence of this: “This is the first cultural centre that we have opened. It is no coincidence that the first cultural centre is opened in Sarajevo. This is a conscious decision that we have made on the basis of careful consideration. If one were to ask which is the place that reflects Turkish culture in the best way, this would be Sarajevo. Just as Istanbul is a fundamental city of Turkish culture, Sarajevo is the city of our common culture. Just as Sarajevo is a city of the Bosniaks, Istanbul is the common city of the Bosniaks. Başçarşı and Kapalı Çarşı,<sup>60</sup> the Gazi Hüsrev

<sup>57</sup> The interview was conducted in November 2013 in Ankara.

<sup>58</sup> In contrast to “hard power”, i.e. to traditional forms of military or economic power that can be used to exert pressure on others, “soft power” describes the ability to win over others or to induce them to take a decision in one’s own interest without applying forcible measures. According to the American political scientist Joseph S. Nye, “soft power” consists of the persuasive force and attractiveness of the players, which lends them credibility; see Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Ayhan Kaya and Ayşe Tecmen, *The Role of Common Cultural Heritage in External Promotion of Modern Turkey: Yunus Emre Cultural Centres*, Working Paper 4, EU/4/2011 (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University, European Institute, 2011), 13, [http://eu.bilgi.edu.tr/media/uploads/2014/05/22/working-paper4\\_2.pdf](http://eu.bilgi.edu.tr/media/uploads/2014/05/22/working-paper4_2.pdf) (accessed 22 January 2014).

<sup>60</sup> *Başçarşı* (Serbo-Croat: *Baščaršija*) is the old quarter and bazaar of Sarajevo, which was built in the 16th century by the Ottomans. *Kapalı Çarşı*, the “great covered bazaar”, was

<sup>53</sup> *Artı 90*, no. 5 (January 2013): 12.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 6f.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 12f., and 15.

<sup>56</sup> Engin Akçay and Farkhad Alimukhamedov, “Revaluating Contemporary ‘Diaspora Policy of Turkey’”, *The Journal of Faculty of Economics* (Süleyman Demirel University) 18, no. 1 (2013): 103–15 (107).

Bey Mosque and the Sultanahmet<sup>61</sup> have the same spirit. Istanbul and Sarajevo are twin souls.”<sup>62</sup>

Through research projects and a programme of cultural events and courses, the YEKMs are to make the Turkish language, culture, art and history known abroad and intensify intercultural relations to the associations in the target countries. For people originating from Turkeyk there are also special courses to learn or improve knowledge of the Turkish language and to learn about Turkish culture as a way of reinforcing the ties to Turkey of the persons thus addressed.<sup>63</sup>

built by Sultan Mehmet II following the conquest of Istanbul. Later this complex was extended and used for a period as a bank or safe deposit for the private fortunes of rich merchants.

**61** The Gazi Husrev Beg Mosque was built in the 16th century, commissioned by Gazi Husrev Beg, a nephew of Sultan Bayazit II, and is situated on the *Başçarşı* in Sarajevo. The *Blue Mosque (Sultanahmet Camii)* was commissioned by Sultan Ahmet I between 1609 and 1616 directly opposite Hagia Sophia and is now the main mosque in Istanbul and a leading example of Ottoman architecture.

**62** Opening speech by Ahmet Davutoğlu in Sarajevo, *Yunus Emre Bülteni* 1/2 (December 2009): 3, [http://yee.org.tr/media/\\_bulten/pdf/aralik\\_2009.pdf](http://yee.org.tr/media/_bulten/pdf/aralik_2009.pdf) (accessed 22 January 2014).

**63** *Yunus Emre Institut*, <http://yee.org.tr/turkiye/tr/kurumsal/enstitu-baskanligi> (accessed 11 October 2013).

## Turkish Diaspora Policy – Consequences, Reactions and Controversies

The transnational umbrella organisations of people from Turkey in Germany fulfil an important role as bridges and mediators between Turkish migrant communities and the state institutions of the Federal Republic. They play a decisive role in the institutionalised communication process between Germans and people from Turkey, and are involved to varying degrees – not fully, but partially – in the process of forming public opinion. They make political participation possible for Turkish migrants and lend them freedom of action that enables them to resist socio-political pressure to assimilate and tendencies to exclude or marginalise them. The transnationality of these umbrella organisations is manifested in their permanent contacts to political representatives in Germany and Turkey, and in decisions that they take on the basis of their knowledge of institutions and politics in both countries.<sup>64</sup> Regardless of their role as a bridge and mediator, however, in Germany they are regarded by some decision-makers as an obstacle to the integration of people from Turkey and as an instrument of “extra-territorial expansion” by the Turkish state. Fears that associations of originating from Turkey could be dominated and made use of by the Turkish state are indeed strengthened by the conservative rhetoric of some Turkish politicians.

Similar concerns are involved in the issue of dual nationality, which most umbrella organisations of people from Turkey demand. An article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* exemplifies the problems that might be associated with acceptance of dual nationality: “Conflicts could [arise] [...] in relations with Turkey, above all. Turkey would be able to conscript German Turks who live here to do military service. Is Germany then willing to buy out these holders of dual nationality? At extremely well attended events here in Germany, the Turkish prime minister Erdoğan has repeatedly made it clear that Turkey regards Turks living in Germany as its fellow countrymen. [...] Turkey thus has a

foothold in Germany through nationality. [...] Turkey is hardly mentioned as a problem.”<sup>65</sup>

The umbrella associations are exposed to extremely diverse external expectations. On the one hand they have to respond to the needs of their members, who maintain relationships to their home country and wish to have their interests represented towards German institutions. On the other hand they are exposed to political expectations on the part of the government of the Federal Republic that demand cooperation in fighting “Islamist” terrorism and radicalism, as well as effective work for integration.<sup>66</sup>

The activities so far and positions currently adopted by the umbrella organisations of people originating from Turkey suggest that the ability of the Turkish government to control them is limited. Conversations<sup>67</sup> with representatives of the associations also lead to the assessment that the Turkish diaspora policy will scarcely have the opportunity to exercise a controlling influence on these organisations.

<sup>64</sup> Anna Amelina and Thomas Faist, “Turkish Migrant Associations in Germany: Between Integration Pressure and Transnational Linkages”, *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 24, no. 2 (2008): 91–120.

<sup>65</sup> Reinhard Müller, “Doppelpass macht doppelt Spaß?”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 January 2014, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Kerstin Rosenow-Williams, “DITIB und IGMG als grenzüberschreitende islamische Akteure – ein Vergleich”, lecture at the conference “Bosnisch, türkisch, deutsch oder? Wege zu einem europäischen Islam?”, Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart, 15–16 November 2013 (Stuttgart-Hohenheim, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> For this purpose interviews were conducted with chairmen and representatives of the Alevi Community in Germany (AABF), the Federation of Democratic Workers’ Associations (DİİF), the Islamische Gemeinde Milli Görüş (IGMG; Milli Görüş Islamic Community), the Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland (TGD; Turkish Community in Germany) and the Federation of Kurdish Associations in Germany (YEK-KOM, see summary, p. 21). These associations reflect approximately the political, religious and ethnic divisions within the diaspora communities of Turkish origin in Germany and have support among people of Turkish origin in Germany.

## Summary

### Data on umbrella organisations and interviewees

| Associa-<br>tions | Interviewee / Function   | Direction, aims, positions  |
|-------------------|--|---|
| AABF              | Yılmaz Kahraman<br>(board member<br>responsible for<br>education)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious community according to art. 7 para. 3 of GG, with cultural focus<br><input type="checkbox"/> Member of the umbrella organisation for the European Union of Alevi Communities (AABK)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Represents the Alevi in the Deutsche Islam-Konferenz (DIK) and at the integration summit<br><input type="checkbox"/> Revitalisation of Alevi religion, writing down and publishing “Alevi beliefs”<br><input type="checkbox"/> Interreligious dialogue and political consultancy<br><input type="checkbox"/> For integration, democratic values and secularism   |
| DİDF              | Özlem Alev Demirel<br>(co-chairman)                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Political organisation, left-wing socialist: orientation to “class struggle”, “international solidarity of workers” and anti-imperialism<br><input type="checkbox"/> Mobilisation of workers and young people against discrimination and social injustice<br><input type="checkbox"/> Approach: integration is a genuine “social issue”<br><input type="checkbox"/> Critical of religion   |
| IGMG              | Oğuz Üçüncü<br>(secretary general at the<br>time of the interview) | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious community that organises “the religious life of Muslims comprehensively” and “all affairs of Muslims”<br><input type="checkbox"/> Improving the living conditions of Muslims and protection of their fundamental rights<br><input type="checkbox"/> Participation in social discourse that serves to solve economic, political and social problems of society  |
| TGD               | Kenan Kolat<br>(chairman at the time<br>of the interview)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Pluralist and “ideologically neutral” representation of interests with a secular emphasis<br><input type="checkbox"/> “Attending to the concerns and interests of Turks in Germany in public and vis-à-vis state institutions”<br><input type="checkbox"/> Equal treatment for migrants in Germany<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fighting hostility to foreigners and discrimination<br><input type="checkbox"/> Demanding the recognition of minorities as part of society with equal rights<br><input type="checkbox"/> Integration while “preserving cultural identity”<br><input type="checkbox"/> Appeal to migrants to identify “with Germany as a new home” |
| YEK-KOM           | Yüksel Koç<br>(co-chairman)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Integration of Kurds “into German society while preserving their own identity”,<br><input type="checkbox"/> Promoting cultural identity, religious and philosophical “values of the Kurdish people”<br><input type="checkbox"/> Realising the principles of peace and friendship among peoples, establishing “peace in Kurdistan”<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commitment “to the unity of Kurdish society” and establishment of contacts to “democratic institutions in Turkey”  |

**AABF** = Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu  
(Alevi Community in Germany);

**DİDF** = Demokratik İşçi Dernekleri Federasyonu  
(Federation of Democratic Workers’ Associations);

**IGMG** = İslam Toplumu Millî Görüş (Islamische Gemeinde Milli  
Görüş/Millî Görüş Islamic Community);

**TGD** = Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland  
(Turkish Community in Germany);

**YEK-KOM** = Yekitîya Komalên Kurd Li Elmanya/  
Almanya Kürt Dernekleri Federasyonu  
(Federation of Kurdish Associations in Germany)

## Convergence and common ground

Despite this conclusion there is common ground between the contents and aims of Turkish diaspora policy and those of the largest umbrella organisations.<sup>68</sup> This convergence primarily relates to three points:

1. On the question of maintaining and intensifying social, economic and political ties between the Turkish migrant community and Turkey: most people whose origins are in Turkey maintain close and extremely lively connections to their country of origin and do not wish to be without these contacts. This transnational orientation and these connections are not called into question by the leaders of the umbrella organisations who were interviewed on this question, but rather explicitly welcomed in many cases. The organisations of people from Turkey employ transnationality as a strategy to enhance their institutional and political efficiency and their legitimacy, as cross-border structures do indeed expand their access to resources, for example by diversifying sources of income and supporters.

2. On the question of preserving cultural identity: the organisations that were questioned are in favour of the integration of people from Turkey into the society of the Federal Republic, but at the same time support the cultural distinctiveness of the diaspora community. Almost all organisations see part of their task as strengthening contacts to the country of origin, maintaining its culture and language and to an extent also conserving the values that apply in their country of origin. These aims are in contradiction to the expectations for integration of the German government, which are directed towards de-transnationalisation, i.e. to dissociation from the country of origin.

3. On the question of Turkish membership of the EU: apart from the Federation of Democratic Workers' Associations (DİİF), all umbrella organisations – although their motivations and considerations are highly diverse – support membership of the EU. In this point there is almost total convergence between the expectations of Turkey and those of almost all organisations of people from Turkey in Germany.

The Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland (Turkish Community in Germany, TGD), for example, which has a secular orientation and the majority of whose

members approve of the CHP and are critical of the AKP, shares at least three aims with the Turkish government: opening further stages in negotiations to join the EU; abolishing the obligation to opt for one nationality and acceptance of dual nationality by the federal government; and rejection of assimilation as the aim of integration.<sup>69</sup> Kenan Kolat, chairman of the TGD when the interview was conducted, expresses the transnational position of his organisation in the following words: "Our hardware is Turkish, our software German. We are bicultural people and want German Turks to feel secure in both cultures and to speak both languages and others well. We are Europeans with a special affinity to Turkey, but at the same time we wish to represent the interests of this country."<sup>70</sup> Yılmaz Kahraman, representative for education for the Alevi Community in Germany (AABF), also underlines the importance of the "culture of Turkey", by which he primarily means music, literature and cuisine. He rejects an "emotional orientation to the country of origin" and uncritical "ties" to Turkey, however, because this would go hand in hand with intolerance towards minorities in Turkey. Nevertheless he regards it as important to preserve connections with Anatolia, the "country of origin of the Alevi religion", and to the language of the place of origin. He rejects dual nationality because "you have to opt for one country". Why should people originating in Turkey possess a privilege that Germans do not have, he asks.

Oğuz Üçüncü, secretary general of the Millî Görüş Islamic Community (IGMG)<sup>71</sup> at the time of the interview, also emphasises the importance of maintaining connections to Turkey, the Turkish language and cultural identity. The work of IGMG is principally in Germany; in accordance with this, Üçüncü criticises the polarisation and division of people from Turkey according to political and social conflicts in Turkey.

<sup>69</sup> Ute Rasche, "Türken-Sprecher", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 5 February 2014, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Kenan Kolat, chairman of the TGD, on 13 September 2013 in Berlin-Kreuzberg.

<sup>71</sup> IGMG is one of the most controversial communities of Turkish Islam in Germany. Reports for protection of the constitution have always portrayed a strictly organised community whose first aim is to establish a theocracy in Turkey and whose long-term aim is "Islamic rule of the world". For the intermediate period it aims to establish "structures of a parallel society". In the view of the migration researcher and Milli Görüş expert Werner Schiffauer, by contrast, the IGMG is a transnational religious community of migrant workers with a complex relationship to Germany and Turkey; see Schiffauer, "Die Islamische Gemeinde Milli Görüş" (see note 51): 67.

<sup>68</sup> The following observations on the positions of the umbrella organisations, if not shown otherwise, are taken from interviews conducted with their chairmen or representatives.

In this connection he refers to the protests in Gezi Park in Turkey in summer 2013, which also caused controversy among Turkish migrants in Germany and their families. The DİDF, by contrast, regards the integration of people originating in Turkey primarily from socio-political and economic points of view, and puts the focus on participation in society and politics. Özlem Alev Demirel, co-chairman of the DİDF, plays down the importance of preserving cultural identity: the process of integration as merging together and decline in ties to the country of origin and its culture is natural and logical. He sees the right to vote and reduction of obstacles to acquiring citizenship as much more important than dual nationality.

Yüksel Koç, co-chairman of the Federation of Kurdish Associations in Germany (YEK-KOM) makes the criticism that Kurds in Germany are always subsumed under the members of the majority communities of their respective countries of origin, and that the Turkish government's support of the demand for dual nationality has the purpose of controlling people with origins in Turkey. YEK-KOM for its part does not believe that dual nationality is an indispensable instrument of integration. The decision should be left to the individual, it believes. Yüksel Koç supports EU membership for Turkey, however, as the fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria will in his opinion solve many problems in the field of human rights and minority rights in Turkey. While the Turkish state seeks to join the EU for economic reasons, in this connection the Kurdish associations are more interested in raising standards of living and democracy in Turkey.

## Diaspora policy as an issue for conflict

Three positions can be distinguished in the attitude of the associations to Ankara's diaspora policy: the IGMG adopts a critical position, while the DİDF, YEK-KOM and AABF dispute the relevance of a diaspora policy. The TGD questions the current diaspora policy but does not reject it in principle. Its position and that of the IGMG differ from the position of the DİDF and AABF in that they are in principle open to cooperation with Turkish state institutions.

Oğuz Üçüncü (IGMG) does not favour a one-sided diaspora policy and expresses the criticism that Turkey is trying to regard people from Turkey "in a particular format". However, he sees a strict policy of remaining at a distance as problematic. He does not categorically refuse to accept cooperation with Turkey and the

work of the Turkish government: "There are still things [in Turkey, Y.A.] that affect me, which I wish to influence." The Turkish government, however, should not pursue its "diaspora policy" against host countries but must do so in harmony with them. He believes that Turkey should not push special interests and must beware of seeing people originating in Turkey as "bargaining counters". Oğuz Üçüncü views the foundation of the YTB, of which he is a member of the advisory committee, as "positive in principle" because it constitutes a "concentration of knowledge and expertise". At the same time he opposes attempts to intervene by the YTB or the responsible minister of state, for example in the case of Turkish foster children. Statements by Turkish politicians such as "We won't hand over our children to the Christians" are "completely out of place". He argues that it is necessary to avoid the impression of being a Turkish "fifth column".

Kenan Kolat (TGD) has reservations about an active diaspora policy of Turkey and criticises a lack of transparency. He comments that the exact nature of the Turkish diaspora policy is not known, as there is neither a paper stating its position nor a coherent strategy perceptible behind the state's actions. The current "diaspora policy" of Turkey, he believes, is a symbolic policy that does not contribute significantly to improving the lives of people from Turkey in Germany. To attack the placing of Turkish children with German foster parents as "Christianisation" or "assimilation" is an example of the diaspora being used as an instrument of domestic politics.<sup>72</sup>

He believes it is understandable that the Turkish state is trying to intensify its relations to people from Turkey abroad and to motivate them for lobbying, but says that the TGD is interested in "constructive cooperation" between Germany and Turkey: "What we need is not a diaspora policy but a policy of equality in Germany." To establish a "German-Turkish council for consultation" to address problems at government level, would, in his view, make more sense than diaspora policy and lobbying.

<sup>72</sup> Carsten Hoffmann, "Türkische Pflegekinder: 'Assimiliert und entfremdet'", *T-Online*, 21 February 2013, [http://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/ausland/eu/id\\_62260722/tuerkische-pflegekinder-assimiliert-und-entfremdet.html](http://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/ausland/eu/id_62260722/tuerkische-pflegekinder-assimiliert-und-entfremdet.html) (accessed 21 August 2014). In early 2013 the Turkish government and parliament examined the situation of Turkish foster children in states of the European Union and complained that thousands of children had been "taken away from their parents and given to Christian families". This case caused friction between Germany and Turkey.



The DİDF adopts a position of radical criticism of the Turkish state and government of Turkey and thus entirely rejects Turkish diaspora policy. Hasan Kamalak, a board member of DİDF, stated to the weekly newspaper *Yeni Hayat* that these government activities were part of preparations for the forthcoming elections, and that the AKP government had not solved but worsened the problems of people from Turkey. Its diaspora policy, he said, ultimately met the demands of “capitalists”. A meeting of the government with migrant organisations was not consultation about the affairs of people originating in Turkey but about the interests of the AKP’s clientele, the organisations associated with it and “the rich”.<sup>73</sup> The co-chairman of the DİDF, Özlem Alev Demirel, rejects all interference by Turkey in the “affairs of people from Turkey” and regards the diaspora policy as an attempt to make use of Turkish citizens living abroad and their offspring.

In 2012, according to *Yeni Hayat*, representatives of the AABF also took part in the meeting of the YTB with migrant organisations from Germany. They stayed away from the subsequent meetings, it was reported, giving the reason that they had no say in the proceedings. The secretary general at that time, Ali Doğan, described the conferences as the official Turkish political leadership “making use of” people originating from Turkey.<sup>74</sup> Yılmaz Kahraman, a board member of the AABF, also attributes to the YTB and Turkish diaspora policy the intention of taking over the migrant organisations. He also sees a danger that the predominantly uncritical approach in Turkey to the dark sides of Turkish history will be transferred to Germany.<sup>75</sup>

Yüksel Koç of the Federation of Kurdish Associations in Germany (YEK-KOM) also gives a negative assessment of the foreign and diaspora policy of

Turkey, to which he attributes “anti-Kurdish” tendencies. He believes its purpose is to discredit Kurdish organisations in Germany and manipulate the German public and people from Turkey living here. Ankara’s diaspora policy, he states, is neither in the interest of Turkey nor that of the people whom it addresses. By means of regular diaspora meetings in Ankara, in his view, Turkey aims to take over the institutions of people originating in Turkey and harness them to the policy of the AKP, as is demonstrated by the absence of invitations to associations with a critical attitude, among other things.

There are three essential reasons for the reservations of most umbrella organisations of people from Turkey towards Ankara’s current diaspora policy.

1. Conflicts of interest, for example in the case of Kurdish organisations, whose primary purpose is to induce the Turkish government to introduce more democracy and to allow more rights to the Kurdish population in Turkey.
2. Fear of increased control and take-over by the Turkish government of the organisations originating in Turkey, especially in the cases of the Alevi, Kurdish and oppositional associations.
3. The wish to retain institutional autonomy, which the associations believe is threatened by active diaspora policy.

### The Turkish government’s limited opportunities for intervention

Despite some convergence between the interests of the migrant organisations and the aims of Turkish diaspora policy, the community of Turkish origin in Germany is characterised by political and social fragmentation. Competing identities and conflicting loyalties put limits on the Turkish government’s capability of intervening and controlling.<sup>76</sup>

Because in the past they were themselves the target of mobilisation by right-wing conservative forces, liberal left-wing as well as radical left groups are opposed to or at least sceptical about an active diaspora policy. Due to their attitude, these associations remain outside the Turkish government’s reach and its capabilities to control and mobilise, and even cooperation with them is out of the question. Secular liberal and left-wing organisations reject the diaspora policy and cooperation with the AKP government because of the

<sup>73</sup> “The AKP Dream of a Diaspora” (Turkish), *Yeni Hayat*, 28 June 2012, <http://www.yenihayat.de/haber/akpnin-diaspora-hayali> (accessed 10 October 2013).

<sup>74</sup> See also “The Turkish Diaspora Gathers in Istanbul” (Turkish), *Net Tavr*, 18 November 2011, <http://www.nettavir.com/?islem=haberoku&id=3600> (accessed 27 February 2014).

<sup>75</sup> Between the AABF and Sunni organisations there are “hardly any points of contact beyond the aims of migration policy”. The AABF does not operate mosques and or hold Koran courses, but runs cultural centres which are known as Cemevi (Cem House) in which the Alevi religious ritual (Cem) is carried out. In addition to a women’s and youth organisation the AABF has established a burial fund especially for Alevi which can be used for repatriation and burial of the bodies of Alevi in Turkey, Şevket Küçüküşeyin, *Türkische Politische Organisationen in Deutschland*, Zukunftsforum Politik no. 45 (Sankt Augustin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2002), 30.

<sup>76</sup> Akçay and Alimukhamedov, “Revaluating Contemporary Diaspora” (see note 56): 112.

Islamic background and anti-democratic tendencies of the Turkish leadership. Although this leadership continues to try to influence people from Turkey and their associations in Germany, it is increasingly losing capabilities of control and influence due to domestic socio-cultural differences and the political fragmentation of the diaspora. Bearing in mind the conservative rhetoric of the persons driving Turkish diaspora policy, their scope for appealing to Alevi, Kurds, secular people from Turkey and the Christian minorities is extremely limited.

The prospect of rallying the migrant community against activities "hostile to the state" seems to be unpromising in view of political differences, even among people of Turkish origin with a Turkish ethnic and Sunni background. According to the police, 25,000 people from Germany and neighbouring states attended the mass meeting "Respect for Democracy", which the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD), which is close to the AKP, held in July 2013 in Düsseldorf to support the government during the Gezi Park protests. This relatively poor turnout and the non-participation of the IGMG, although it shares the tradition of and comes from the same milieu as the Turkish party of government AKP, do not suggest a strong ability of the AKP government to achieve mobilisation in the diaspora.

Evidence of the AKP government's limited ability to mobilise is also the low participation of Turks abroad in the presidency elections on 10 August 2014. Of 2.8 million persons who were entitled to vote, only a little over half a million went to the polls; 230,938 voted abroad in specially installed polling stations, 295,621 cast their votes in customs offices and airports. Compared with the aim of gaining at least a million votes in the diaspora for Erdoğan, the result – 143,873 valid votes for the prime minister – was far below the expectations of the AKP. In Germany the voters' turnout of only 8.1 per cent was also low. Approximately 76,000 votes were cast for Erdoğan, around 26,000 and 8,000 respectively for his rivals Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu and Selahattin Demirtaş. This is, however, not to say that a separation from Turkey of people in Germany originating in Turkey or a weakening of transnational connections to Turkey is evident. Nevertheless, the low turnout to vote shows unmistakably how limited are the capability to act and the influence of the Turkish government, the new diaspora policy that it initiated, and the opposition in Ankara.

The realisation that the diaspora communities cannot be influenced from outside as desired is based on

three factors in the case of the diaspora of people of Turkish origin. *Firstly* there are alternative political, religious and ethnic orientations that are not subject to official Turkish national culture. *Secondly* the migrant organisations have evolved from having aims that are oriented to their country of origin to having aims oriented to the countries in which they reside,<sup>77</sup> and are not willing to relinquish their autonomy vis-à-vis Turkey. And *thirdly* the Alevi and Kurdish migrant organisations have their own interests, which are different from or contrary to those of their country of origin. In Germany the Alevi have an official status that has been denied them in Turkey: the Alevi confession has official recognition, and in several states of the Federal Republic of Germany Alevi religious instruction is even offered in public schools and the Alevi can express themselves politically in a democratic environment. In view of their fight for further democratisation, secularisation and recognition of the Alevi confession in Turkey, cooperation of Alevi associations in Germany with the AKP government in the context of a diaspora policy is unlikely, at least under the existing political circumstances. Kurdish organisations in turn are primarily concerned with drawing attention to the situation of the Kurds in Turkey and the curtailment of their rights there. As long as the Kurdish problem remains unsolved in Turkey, the PKK has not laid down its arms and there is no political agreement about a collective identity that includes Kurds, there will be no cooperation in Germany. With other umbrella associations, too, the capacity of the Turkish government to exert influence will remain limited.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Argun, *Turkey in Germany* (see note 13).

<sup>78</sup> Attempts by the Turkish government to influence the political organisations of Bulgarian Turks also failed. Despite a voting recommendation, the "Freedom and Dignity" party, supported by the Turkish government, which is directed towards voters of Turkish origin in Bulgaria, gained only 1.6 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections in May 2013, while the established "Movement for Rights and Freedoms" achieved 11.3 per cent. In the opinion of Michael Martens, who writes for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, this result contradicts "the accusation often made in nationalist circles in Bulgaria that the Bulgarian Turks are Ankara's fifth column", a conclusion that can also be taken as valid for the Turkish diaspora in Germany and the Turkish diaspora policy; Michael Martens, "Kolonie fünf antwortet nicht", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 May 2013, 6.

## **New players in the diaspora of people from Turkey: the UETD and CHP**

The Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD) is seen as a lobby association of the Turkish party in government, AKP, even though representatives of the organisation deny this. The present chairman, Süleyman Çelik, emphasises that the UETD has no “organic ties” to the AKP, but merely maintains good relations to government circles and thus fulfils an important “transmission function”. In the German media the UETD is accused “camouflaging” its true intentions and of using migrants for its own purposes.<sup>79</sup> Its importance for the AKP government results from the limited capability, described above, to influence the umbrella organisations of originating in Turkey. Before the Turkish elections, the UETD campaigned for the AKP and organised the controversial appearances of the Turkish prime minister Erdoğan in Cologne in 2008, in Düsseldorf in 2011 and recently in the Tempodrom in Berlin and the Lanxess-Arena in Cologne in February and May 2014 respectively. According to Çelik, the UETD was founded in 2004 by “people originating in Turkey from various professions” with the purpose of “improving the social and political status of Turks in Germany”. The UETD aims at political participation by people from Turkey as a first step, followed by cultural participation as a second step. In summer 2013 it organised a rally in Düsseldorf under the slogan “Respect for Democracy”, in order to support Erdoğan against the nationwide wave of demonstrations in Turkey.

The Republican People’s Party (CHP) also has the aim of basing its organisation on people from Turkey in Europe. The party vice-chairman Gürsel Tekin confirmed this intention at interview and explained the expectations that the CHP associates with this: “We will directly perceive the problems of people originating in Turkey, follow European politics closely and intensify our relations to social democratic parties in Europe”.<sup>80</sup> For many German politicians such a strategy is not in the interests of integration and the political participation of people from Turkey. A local politician from Hamburg expressed his concerns in this respect, and in an interview a member of the Bundestag expressed his reservations vis-à-vis the organisa-

tional efforts of the CHP. Gürsel Tekin admitted that misunderstandings could arise, but believes that they can easily be overcome. It remains to be seen how far the UETD and CHP can be successful as diaspora associations and how far the CHP can establish itself as a rival to the UETD.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. here for example Pascal Beucker, “Instrumentalisierte Migranten”, *taz*, 7 July 2013, <http://www.taz.de/Pro-Erdogan-Demo-/!119445/> (accessed 4 February 2014).

<sup>80</sup> Interview of Tekin by the author on 23 March 2013 in Hamburg.

## Conclusions and Implications for German Decision-Makers

Turkey's diaspora policy is the result of the Turkish government's increasing interest in people from Turkey. The causes of the new diaspora policy strategy in turn are less to be sought in the ideology of the AKP government than in new global circumstances that make it necessary for Turkey to reposition itself in international relations and to use for the country the economic and political potential of people originating in Turkey scattered across the world. The diaspora of people from Turkey in Germany has gained political weight in recent years and has enormous prospects for development that are in line with the economic interests of Turkish foreign policy. The aims of the new Turkish diaspora policy, to strengthen the associations of people from Turkey in Europe and to extend their scope for action pose a number of challenges for German foreign policy.

One challenge is that, due to the transnational interlinking of Germany and Turkey and the intensifying contacts of the Turkish government to the diaspora in Germany, a clear separation of German domestic and foreign policy is hardly possible any longer. The federal government's policy towards Turkey is simultaneously a domestic political matter, and the integration policy towards people from Turkey is in turn often a subject for German foreign policy. This forces the German government to shape its policy on Turkey and on integration as a balancing act between considerations of domestic policy and foreign-policy interests.

However, this also results in opportunities for German integration policy, as a principal aim of Ankara's diaspora policy is to encourage the integration of people originating from Turkey in order to strengthen their scope for action and political influence. On his controversial visits to Germany, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then Turkish prime minister, several times called on people from Turkey to make better use of opportunities for education in Germany, to gain a higher social status, to take part in the life of society and to engage in political activity. All of this can only be achieved if people from Turkey adopt modern ways of behaviour and an open attitude. To this extent, Turkish diaspora policy – despite its affirmation of conservative social values – complements the integration policy of the

German federal government and the efforts to integrate made by people originating in Turkey. However it also holds the danger – precisely because of its conservative social values – of reinforcing cultural fragmentation within the diaspora in Germany. This fragmentation for its part puts clear limits on the attempts of the Turkish government to intervene and control. The “new” Turkish diaspora policy and the rhetoric that accompanies it is not able to appeal to the diaspora in Germany in its diversity.

German decision-makers should recognise that the trend for people from Turkey to turn increasingly to Germany in political matters will continue, in spite of the strong interest of the Turkish state to tie German Turks to Turkey. There is important evidence for this in the interest expressed by members of the umbrella organisations of people originating in Turkey and the explicit endeavours of the associations to exploit their potential resources in Germany. Inclusion of these umbrella organisations among the recipients of public financial support will hold the diaspora associations to account for the activities of their organisations, which will strengthen their autonomy towards their country of origin and the pressure to assimilate. German decision-makers should, however, also be aware that people from Turkey in Germany will maintain their cross-border connections, and they should accept the transnational orientation of these people, which relates to both the country of origin and the country of residence and corresponds to the everyday reality of most of them in Germany.

It is also necessary for the responsible persons in the Federal Republic to abandon ideas that regard the diaspora as a “fifth column” or “extraterritorial expansion” of the country of origin and see transnational links as an obstacle to integration. Diaspora structures and transnational ties fulfil important bridge and transmission functions which are also in the interest of the host country. Furthermore, in an age of global communication technologies it is impossible to prevent migrants from having a relationship to their homeland.

## Abbreviations

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| AABF    | Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu<br>(Alevi Community in Germany)  |
| AABK    | Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Konfederasyonu<br>(European Union of Alevi Communities)   |
| AKP     | Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi<br>(Party for Justice and Development)   |
| AnaP    | Anavatan Partisi<br>(Motherland Party)  |
| CHP     | Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi<br>(Republican People's Party)  |
| DEİK    | Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu<br>(Committee for Foreign Economic Relations)   |
| DİB     | Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı<br>(Presidium for Religious Affairs)  |
| DİDF    | Demokratik İşçi Dernekleri Federasyonu<br>(Federation of Democratic Workers' Associations)                              |
| DIK     | Deutsche Islam-Konferenz<br>(German Islamic Conference)   |
| DİTİB   | Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği<br>(Turkish Islamic Union of the State Office of Religious Affairs)                   |
| DSP     | Demokratik Sol Parti<br>(Democratic Left Party)   |
| EU      | European Union  |
| GG      | Grundgesetz (Basic Law) of the Federal Republic of Germany  |
| IGMG    | İslam Toplumu Millî Görüş<br>(Islamic Community Millî Görüş)  |
| IKMB    | İslam Kültür Merkezleri Birliği<br>(Association of Islamic Cultural Centres in Germany)                                 |
| MHP     | Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi<br>(Party of the Nationalist Movement)   |
| NATO    | North Atlantic Treaty Organization  |
| PKK     | Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan<br>(Kurdistan Workers' Party)  |
| TGD     | Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland<br>(Turkish Community in Germany)   |
| TİKA    | Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı<br>(Turkish Presidium for International Cooperation and Coordination)  |
| TOBB    | Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği<br>(Association of Turkish Exchanges and Chambers of Trade)                          |
| UETD    | Avrupalı Türk Demokratlar Birliği<br>(Union of European Turkish Democrats)  |
| YEK-KOM | Yekitiya Komalên Kurd Li Elmanya/Almanya Kürt Dernekleri Federasyonu<br>(Federation of Kurdish Associations in Germany) |
| YEKM    | Yunus Emre Kültür Merkezi<br>(Yunus Emre Cultural Centre)   |
| YEV     | Yunus Emre Vakfı<br>(Yunus Emre Foundation)   |
| YTB     | Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı<br>(Office for Turks Abroad and Related Communities)                  |