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THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS FOR TURKISH-GERMAN RELATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CRITICAL EBBS AND FLOWS IN THE BILATERAL DIALOGUE*

MÜLTECİ KRİZİNİN TÜRKİYE-ALMANYA İLİŞKİLERİNE ETKİLERİ: İKİLİ DİYALOGTA YAŞANAN ÖNEMLİ İNİŞ ÇIKIŞLARIN ANALİZİ

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Abstract

This article analyses the implications of the refugee crisis for the scope and key features of the relationship between Turkey and Germany and defines the critical ebbs and flows that Turkish-German bilateral dialogue has experienced during the crisis era. In doing so, it also evaluates the challenges and opportunities that have emerged for both parties from efforts for enhanced collaboration on finding a common solution to migrants' entering into the EU irregularly. The article first provides an overview of the evolution of the refugee crisis, its transformation into a crisis of the EU and the roles played by Turkey and Germany in its evolution and prospective management. It then evaluates in three successive eras the changes and continuities in the Turkish-German dialogue: a) Contemporary Turkish-German dialogue until the emergence of a "European" refugee crisis b) Bilateral relations throughout the crisis ahead of the announcement of the "EU-Turkey Statement", widely known as the EU-Turkey "refugee deal" and c) Turkish-German relations after the initiation of the deal. In the final part some concluding remarks are made concerning the future of Turkish-German relations and the future of the EU-Turkey "deal" by taking into account the findings of the previous parts of this article.

Keywords: Refugee Crisis, EU-Turkey "Refugee Deal", Germany, Turkey, EU-Turkey Relations, Accession Negotiations

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Öz:

Bu çalışmada, mülteci krizinin Türkiye ve Almanya arasındaki ilişkinin kapsam ve öncelikli özelliklerine etkileri incelenmekte ve kriz boyunca Türk-Alman ikili ilişkilerinin yaşadığı önemli inişler ve çıkışlar belirlenmektedir. Böylelikle, çalışma aynı zamanda iki taraf için mülteci krizinin yönetimi sırasında derinleşen ikili iş birliği sırasında ortaya çıkan zorluklar ve fırsatları da mercek altına almaktadır. Çalışma ilk önce mülteci krizinin gelişiminin ve bir AB krizi halini almasının sürecini gözden geçirecek ve Türkiye'nin ve Almanya'nın krizin gelişimi ve yönetiminde oynadıkları rolleri analiz edecektir. Daha sonra, art arda birbirini izleyen üç dönemde mülteci krizi ışığında Türk-Alman diyaloğunda gerçekleşen değişimler ve süreklilikler değerlendirilecektir: a) Mülteci krizinin bir "Avrupa krizi" olmaya başladığı döneme kadar yakın dönem Türk-Alman diyaloğu b) Mülteci krizi döneminde "AB-Türkiye mülteci mutabakatı" olarak adlandırılan ortak açıklamanın yapıldığı ana kadar süregelen ikili ilişkiler ve c) İlgili anlaşmanın uygulanmaya başlanmasından itibaren Türk-Alman diyaloğunun gelişimi. Son bölümde, önceki bölümlerin bulguları bir araya getirilecektir ve bu bulgular ışığında Türk-Alman ilişkilerinin ve "AB-Türkiye mülteci mutabakatının" geleceği kısaca yorumlanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mülteci Krizi, AB-Türkiye "Mülteci Mutabakatı", Almanya, Türkiye, AB-Türkiye İlişkileri, Katılım Müzakereleri

I. INTRODUCTION

Turkey and Germany enjoy an exceptionally multidimensional, complex and dynamic relationship, the scope of which has until now been shaped to a large extent by interdependencies in economic, political and societal terms. These bilateral interdependencies are in fact the result of the deep-rooted historical ties between Germany and Turkey, which span over many centuries as well as issue-areas and are marked by both ebbs and flows. The institutionalization of the bilateral ties dates back to 1761, when a treaty of friendship and commercial dialogue was concluded between the then Prussian Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire (Aksan, 2012). Following the conclusion of this treaty, Ahmed Resmi Efendi acted as the very first official ambassador of the Ottoman Empire to Berlin (1763/64), which kicked off the still ongoing institutionalization process of the already existing frequent diplomatic dialogue between Turkey and Germany. The development of the institutional machinery of the bilateral ties between both parties was extended to the sphere of security and defense policy when on 31 January 1790 the Ottoman Empire and the Prussian Kingdom signed a treaty of defensive alliance (Gibler, 2009). Thus, until the establishment of the German Empire in 1871, the bilateral relations between Turkey and Germany particularly focused on initial efforts to strengthen trade dialogue and to transfer know-how with regard to military administration and innovations from Germany to Turkey, which contributed to endeavors to reform the Ottoman army. Throughout this era, alongside the pursuit of economic interests and motivation to restructure its military pillar, another key reason for Turkish efforts

to foster the bilateral ties with Germany was a strategic one: By means of a strategic alliance with Germany, the Ottoman Empire intended to counterbalance the power of France, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK) and Austria and repulse those countries from their expansionist ambitions (Akkaya, 2016; İnat, 2016). The joint military interests accompanied by gradually institutionalized diplomatic dialogue culminated then in the initiation of an alliance between the Ottoman Empire and the German Empire in 1914, who fought on the same front throughout the World War I.

In the post war era, the newly founded Turkish Republic and Weimar Republic signed many bilateral dialogue agreements in diplomatic and economic / commercial spheres, which fostered Turkey's reconstruction and development endeavors (Ermağan, 2012). While throughout the World War II Turkey had acted as a safe haven for many intellectuals and academics who fled from Nazi Germany, in the post-World War II era Turkey significantly contributed to Germany's economic growth and development following the conclusion of a labor recruitment agreement between Turkey and then West Germany in 1961 that led to the kick off of Turkish labor migration to Germany. While this agreement initially aimed at temporary labor migration, it gradually culminated in permanent immigration and the birth of a Turkish diaspora in Germany (Holzmann et al., 2016). This made the inclusion of integration and diaspora policies related discussions to the agenda of bilateral contemporary dialogue between both countries a necessity. Of course, the contemporary bilateral dialogue between Turkey and Germany incorporates also other dimensions that are particularly founded on multifaceted interdependencies between both parties.

The interdependence between the two countries is particularly evident in the economic sphere of the contemporary bilateral dialogue. Germany serves as Turkey's largest trading partner. In particular, the entering into force of the Customs Union (CU) between Turkey and the European Union (EU) in 1996 and the launch of the membership negotiations between Turkey and the EU in 2005 boosted the trade dialogue between Turkey and Germany. During 1995-2004, the bilateral trade volume increased from € 8.7 billion to € 19.8 billion, whereas following the opening of talks on Turkish accession to the EU the bilateral trade volume rapidly rose to € 32 billion in 2011 despite the Eurozone crisis (Destatis, 2017). Bilateral interdependence between Turkey and Germany does also exist in the political realm of the relations. The depth of the political dialogue between both parties is in particular reflected in the 2015 decision of Chancellor Angela Merkel and then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to hold regular intergovernmental consultations starting from 2016 (Die Bundesregierung, 2015a). That Turkey became with this declaration the 11th country on the very short list (Janning, 2016) of third countries that conduct regular intergovernmental consultations with Germany points to Turkey's acknowledgement as a key partner for German foreign policy making. This is not surprising given that the two countries share many foreign policy objectives such as stabilization of the MENA region,

reduction of vulnerabilities stemming from energy dependency and fight against international terrorism (Nowak, 2015).

The transformation of the Syria's refugee crisis, which emerged as a crisis of the MENA in 2011, into a "European crisis" in late 2015 added a new complexity to the Turkish-German relationship. Germany emerged as the top haven in the eyes of the Syrian refugees, especially, after the federal government announced that it was going to provisionally drop the Dublin System, which instructs that refugees are obliged to seek asylum from the first EU member state they arrive at (Official Journal of the European Union, 2013). On the other hand, throughout the refugee crisis, Turkey became a key player in both the further evolution as well as the elimination of the crisis as a primary country of destination and transit due its geographical proximity both to the conflict region and the EU as well as its new asylum legislation, which brought along several advantages for the refugees in the aftermath of the adoption of the new law on foreigners and international protection in 2013 (Turhan, 2017; Yıldız, 2016: 104). The central role of both countries in the evolution and prospective management of the refugee crisis made Turkish-German cooperation on the issue indispensable.

Hence, this article aims at analysing the impact of the refugee crisis on the scope, content and leading features of the relationship between Turkey and Germany, and at defining the critical ebbs and flows that the Turkish-German bilateral dialogue has experienced throughout the evolution of the crisis from a crisis of neighbouring countries to a crisis of Europe / Germany. In doing so, it evaluates the challenges and opportunities that have emerged for both parties from efforts for enhanced collaboration on finding a common solution to migrants' entering into the EU in an irregular manner. In the next part, the article first provides an overview of the evolution of the refugee crisis and the roles played by Turkey and Germany in its progression and prospective handling in order to illustrate the relevance of the research topic. The article then evaluates in the following three a priori defined eras the changes and continuities in Turkish-German dialogue in view of the evolution of the refugee crisis: a) Contemporary Turkish-German dialogue until the emergence of a "European" refugee crisis b) Bilateral relations throughout the crisis and the process that led to the announcement of the "EU-Turkey Statement", widely known as the EU-Turkey "deal", with the aim to minimize further irregular migration waves to the EU via Turkey and c) Turkish-German relations after the initiation of the deal. In the final part of the study some concluding remarks are made with regard to the future of Turkish-German relations and EU-Turkey "deal" by taking into account the findings of the previous parts of this article.

II. TURKEY AND GERMANY: KEY ACTORS IN THE REFUGEE CRISIS

The Syrian refugee crisis originally rose as an emergency situation that took rather place in Europe's wider neighbourhood in 2011 when Syrians sought to find shelter first in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. The crisis has "remained largely a "non-European" crisis until April 2015" (Turhan, 2017: 279). While in 2014 there were approximately 130,000 Syrian applications for international protection in the EU (European Asylum Support Office, 2015: 42), Syria's neighbours Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq were already hosting all together around 3,9 million Syrian refugees by the start of 2015 (UNHCR, 2017). However, with the Syrian refugees increasingly seeking to reach the EU soil for a higher quality of life and safety, and following the death of almost 850 refugees due to the collision of a refugee boat close to Italy in Spring 2015, the crisis of the European periphery has turned into a "European refugee crisis" (Anghel, Drachenberg and de Finance, 2016). In 2015, around 1.2 million refugees applied for asylum in EU member states, doubling the numbers of the previous year (Bordignon and Moriconi). This meant that almost all EU member states "experienced a growth rate of over 100 percent in the inflow of asylum seekers from 2013-15" (Bordignon and Moriconi, 2017: 3).

In the first months following the increase of the inflow of refugees into the EU during early summer 2015, in particular the frontline member states such as Greece, Italy and Bulgaria were affected by the "great migration" due to the EU's Dublin System that states that refugees are obliged to seek asylum from the first EU member state they arrive at. Thus, as Selcen Öner emphasizes, "the Dublin system puts a disproportionate amount of pressure on the member states, which are located at external borders of the EU such as Greece and Italy" (Öner, 2016: 75). In light of the exacerbation of the refugee crisis within the borders of the EU and the incapacity of the frontline member states to deal with the migration wave alone, the 25-26 June 2015 European Council endorsed the realization of temporary relocation of 40,000 refugees from frontline countries to remaining member states and the resettlement of 20,000 displaced persons, who were in immediate need of international protection (European Council, 2015). The temporary relocation foresaw the distribution of refugees on the basis of member states' GDP, unemployment rate as well as population. However, despite the European Council decision just a couple of countries such as Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg and Germany had shown minor interest in the relocation system by accepting a small number of refugees (Carrera, Blockmans, Gros and Guild, 2015).

During the summer of 2015, Chancellor Merkel has risen as the top supporter of the enhancement of solidarity among the member states and the realization of the relocation and resettlement system with the aim to accomplish a more proportionate division of labour in the EU. In June 2015, she called all "EU states to demonstrate their will to accept a fair distribution of refugees throughout Europe" and emphasized Germany's readiness to "do its bit" (The Federal Chancellor, 2015). Following the minor (if not, absent) interest of

the member states in active participation in the relocation system that was originally endorsed by the European Council, the German federal government declared in August 2015 its unilateral suspension of the Dublin System, and consequently, its readiness to accept refugees, who would enter the German borders passing through other member states (Deutsche Welle, 2015). By means of this decision, the Germany sought, above all, to set example for other member states and mobilize them for participation in relocation (Die Bundesregierung, 2015b). However, by the end of October 2015, the EU was far away from achieving solidarity among its member states in order to implement the relocation and, thus, enhance the prospects of finding an EU-wide solution for the migration crisis.

Germany, on the other hand, became following its "open-door policy" the prime destination for the Syrian refugees and, consequently, started to hold an even more prominent position in the handling of the migration crisis, not only as a result of its economic and political aggregate structural capabilities, but also because of the number of refugees it started to host. Indeed, even during August-October 2015 around 570,000 refugees had arrived in Germany (Bild.de, 2015; Tagesspiegel, 2015). Germany's pivotal role in the management of the refugee crisis and its immense share of burden within the EU becomes even more evident by means of comparative data. The number of first time asylum applicants in Germany increased from 476,510 in 2015 to 745,155 in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017a). Accordingly, Germany's share of the total first time asylum applicants to the EU-28 rose from 35 percent in 2015 to 60 percent in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017b).

Like Germany, Turkey has also become a prominent actor in the further evolution and management of the irregular migration crisis. For many years, as far as migration related questions were concerned, Turkey had been perceived by many as a "country of emigration." Emigration from Turkey occurred in particular throughout the 1960s and 1970s in the form of labour migration to EU countries such as Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium and France (Yıldız, 2016: 98). However, in the last few decades, Turkey has gradually emerged as a both transit and destination country. Due to its unique geographic position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the Middle East, the country attracted many transit migrants, who arrived in Turkey with the intention of entering the EU. As many transit migrants have spent a considerable amount of time in Turkey before moving on to the EU or have even settled in Turkey for good, Turkey's profile as a "country of destination" or "country of immigration" has been also gradually nurtured (Düvell, 2014).

Turkey's transition into a country of immigration accompanied by its EU accession process culminated in the need to harmonize its asylum and migration laws and institutional architecture with the EU. Although the Chapter 24 "Justice, Freedom and Security" that also deals with migration policies and legal framework is still unilaterally blocked by Cyprus, Turkey has so far achieved significant progress in aligning itself with the EU acquis, as far as migration related issues are concerned. Above all, the adoption of the 2013 Law on

Foreigners and International Protection and the establishment of the Directorate General of Migration Management accompanied by the December 2013 EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement to combat irregular migration flows via Turkey have enhanced Turkey's alignment with the EU standards (Yıldız, 2016; Şen and Özkorul, 2016). These developments greatly fostered Turkey's potential as a transit and immigration country, as well.

However, Turkey's status as a key transit and destination country particularly emerged after the exacerbation of the violence in Syria and the consequent refugee crisis. Due to Turkey's geographical proximity to the conflict region and to the EU's frontline member states coupled with its "open-door policy", the "Aegean route" between Turkey and Greece acted as one of the main gates to the EU for refugees from Syria. While Germany had started to face a massive increase in the arrival of Syrian refugees, in October 2015, the number of Syrians in Turkey had already reached around 2.1 million (Erdoğan and Ünver, 2015). Whereas some of these Syrian refugees arrive in Turkey with the objective of moving on to the EU, studies emphasize that "Syrians in Turkey have a growing tendency to permanently stay in Turkey" (Erdoğan, 2014: 5). Although Syrians in Turkey do not possess an official refugee status due to Turkey's maintaining of the "geographical limitation" as defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention, they have under the terms of "temporary protection" access to public services such as healthcare and education, even if with some limitations (European Commission, 2017). As a result of the unprecedented number of Syrians in Turkey, Turkey found itself at the very epicentre of debates on the management of the refugee crisis, alongside another key player, Germany. This made Turkish-German cooperation essential.

III. CONTEMPORARY TURKISH-GERMAN DIALOGUE UNTIL THE EMERGENCE OF A "EUROPEAN" REFUGEE CRISIS

Turkish-German dialogue founded on a complex interdependence in various terms has usually been marked by consecutive phases of ebb and flow. In particular, the bilateral relationship between both countries has in recent years taken after "a rollercoaster ride, with the display of dramatic tensions followed by signs of rapprochement" (Turhan, 2016a). One of the key reasons for the existence of sequential phases of ebb and flow in Turkish-German relationship is that "the relations between the two countries are based on mutual interests rather than 'historical friendship'" (İnat, 2016: 21). Indeed, on the basis of diverging / converging interests, until the emergence of a "European" refugee crisis in late summer 2015, the previous few years witnessed phases of intensified cooperation followed by moments of distance and conflict. A few years before the unprecedented flow of Syrian refugees to the EU, and thus, the transformation of the "Middle Eastern" refugee crisis to a crisis of Europe, two incidents played a leading role in the formation of the scope and key features of the Turkish-German dialogue: The outbreak of the popular uprisings in the MENA region

in December 2010, which are referred to as Arab Spring and have been accompanied by the rise of Syrian civil war in early 2011, and the onset of the Eurozone crisis in late 2009, the consequences of which for the German economy became apparent particularly after 2012.

As far as the Arab Spring and the onset the Syrian civil war are concerned, Germany and Turkey have implemented somehow diverging foreign policy approaches in the early phases of those two interconnected crises. For Turkey, the popular uprisings generated a sense of optimism about the possibility to become an "order-instituting [regional] power" (Yorulmazlar and Turhan, 2015: 9) that would rise as an "an irresolutely pro-change, pro-democracy actor in the region" (Alessandri and Benli Altunışık, 2013: 226). Following the onset of the Syrian crisis, the Turkish government rapidly made its preferences clear by putting emphasis on the removal of the Assad Regime and by breaking off all diplomatic links with Damascus (Öniş and Kutlay, 2017; D'Alema, 2017). Turkey's proactive style throughout the uprisings and the early post-Arab Spring political landscape represented a contrast to the initially restrained German approach, which even rejected the British and French proposal about the delivery of EU weapons to "moderate" opposition forces and did not advocate participation in military operations following a chemical weapons attack by the Assad regime in August 2013 (König, 2016). Another key difference between Turkey and Germany concerning the handling of the initial phases of the Syrian crisis has been their approach towards the Syrian refugees. While Turkey implemented from the initial kick off of the violence an "open-door" policy vis-à-vis the refugees, the German federal government refrained from hosting the Syrian refugees in the early phases of the crisis and advocated their hosting by countries that are located in Syria's immediate neighbourhood (VOA, 2012).

While such preferences indicated a clear divergence between German and Turkish foreign policy approaches with regard to the initial uprisings and resulting post-Arab Spring geopolitical landscape, these differences, i.e. the German restraint from entering the conflict region, on the one hand, and Turkish pro-activeness in the field and openness to Syrian refugees, on the other, were presumably favoured by Berlin and culminated in the implementation of a more strategic Turkey policy by the German federal government, particularly in the first half of 2013. Against this background, Turkish and German foreign ministries signed the Strategic Dialogue Mechanism in the crisis era with the aim to nurture German-Turkish dialogue on key international issues including the turbulence in the Arab world and the Middle East, fight against international terrorism and organized crime as well as supply of energy security in Europe (Auswärtiges Amt, 2013). German efforts to enhance cooperation with Turkey in security and foreign policy related matters were accompanied by increased support for Turkish EU accession process among key German political circles. Former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and co-leaders of the Alliance 90/The Greens, Cem Özdemir and Claudia Roth, for instance, stated in May 2013 and April 2012, respectively, that Turkey should join the EU above all to preserve stability in the EU's wider neighbourhood (Schröder, 2013; Grüne.de, 2012).

The positive German attitude vis-à-vis Turkey in the first half of 2013 was fostered by the implications of the Eurozone crisis for the German economic growth rates. In fact, the crisis kicked off in late 2009 and triggered extensive losses in European economies, yet did not hit Germany at its very core. Throughout the crisis the unemployment rate gradually diminished in Germany from 8.1 percent in 2009 to 6.9 percent in 2013 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017). However, in view of the "gathering of clouds in Germany's key export market, the Eurozone" (Turhan, 2014) and consequently, the decrease in German exports to the Euro area in 2012 and 2013, the German economy grew annually by only 0.5 percent (OECD StatExtracts, 2017). When compared with Germany, the Turkish economy, on the other hand, grew by 4.8 percent in 2012 and by a remarkable 8.5 percent in 2013 (OECD StatExtracts, 2017) getting even ahead of China. In an attempt to offset some negative externalities arising from the Eurozone crisis, Germany aimed at deepening the economic relations with Turkey by means of enhanced political dialogue. This was reflected in regular official visits of the German Chancellor, federal and state ministers to Turkey accompanied by high-level business delegations (Turhan, 2014) and Chancellor Merkel's sudden call to launch talks in new chapters in Turkey's EU endeavours (Die Bundesregierung, 2013) after many years of silence on this issue.

However, by mid-June 2013, the phase of rapprochement between Turkey and Germany was transformed into a new phase of conflict and estrangement as a result of an unexpected shift in Germany's attitude towards Turkey's EU accession process. On 20 June 2013, the German federal government vetoed the launch of negotiations with regard to Chapter 22 all of a sudden (Turhan, 2014). This was a decision, which contradicted the original EU decision and the initial German position on the issue. While the German Foreign Office inexplicitly linked the German veto to Ankara's handling of the Gezi Park demonstrations, various European leaders criticized the German federal government for utilising Turkish accession process as an instrument for the upcoming federal elections (Turhan, 2013; Turhan, 2014). In the aftermath of the German ban, the diplomatic affairs between both countries entered a provisional phase of estrangement and conflict and the German federal government did not show any explicit support for the revitalization of Turkey's EU perspective right until the exacerbation of the refugee crisis. Some studies have emphasized the increasing negative tonality in German news coverage on Turkey starting with the third quarter of 2013 (Turhan and Bozdağ, 2016), which indicated the growing tension and disparities between the two countries.

IV. TURKISH-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP THROUGHOUT THE PROCESSS THAT LED TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE EU-TURKEY "DEAL"

The phase of estrangement between Turkey and Germany, which kicked off following the Gezi events and the German veto on the opening of Chapter 22, continued until the third quarter of 2015, which witnessed the transformation of the Syrian refugee crisis from a crisis of

Europe's wider periphery into a European one. Whereas throughout this phase of estrangement, the bilateral tension did not reach a severe level (when compared with the more recent intergovernmental diplomatic crises), it yet contributed to some extent to a standstill in the further evolution of already established intergovernmental mechanisms and coincided with some regression in the bilateral economic dialogue.

Numerous developments fostered during this period the diplomatic distance between both parties. To start with, while the German federal government started to take a more proactive stance towards the Syrian civil war and, consequently began to depart from "its traditional restraint" (König, 2016: 93), Berlin's understanding of "proactiveness" vis-à-vis the Syrian crisis fairly differed from the one of Ankara. The transformation of Germany's reserved approach towards Syria into a more assertive one kicked off with the 20 August 2014 decision of the federal government to deliver weapons to Kurdish Peshmerga (König 2016), which then seem to be delivered to the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which Ankara regards as an annex to the armed terrorist organization the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) (Yılmaz, 2016). This has culminated in concerns and challenges in the eyes of the Turkish government concerning Syria's fracturing, PKK's strengthening, the rise of Syrian Kurdish autonomy and potential threats to Turkey's territorial integrity.

Throughout this phase of bilateral estrangement, as far as the already established bilateral dialogue mechanisms are concerned, the Strategic Dialogue was convened at the ministerial level only twice. The gatherings took place in May 2013 and June 2014, respectively. Although it was emphasized in the joint declaration on the launch of the German-Turkish Strategic Dialogue Mechanism that annual meetings were to be realized at the level of foreign ministers (Federal Foreign Office, 2013), the mechanism reached a dead end by the year 2015. In a similar vein, the German-Turkish Energy Forum, which was established in November 2012 convened only once in April 2013. In terms of official German view on Turkish EU bid, the German federal government preferred to keep silent on the issue most of the time until the arrival of the refugee crisis at its very doors and did not explicitly call for the acceleration of the membership negotiations, which experienced a clear standstill between November 2013 and December 2015. The diplomatic estrangement between Turkey and Germany throughout this period was also reflected in the number of high-level political visits. Whereas between March 2013 and October 2015 Chancellor Merkel did not pay any official visit to Turkey, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's 2014 visits to Germany ahead of the presidential election were received with significantly negative tonality by the German media (Turhan and Bozdağ, 2016).

However, with the appearance of the refugee crisis at the very borders of Germany and many member states' reluctance to show solidarity with regard to the implementation of an EU-wide relocation and resettlement procedure, Turkish-German dialogue took a new turn in the third quarter of 2015. On 14 September 2015, Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel stated

that Germany was likely to take in around one million Syrian refugees until the end of 2015, which exceeded the previous forecasts (Al Jazeera, 2015). Germany's unilateral open-door policy greatly damaged Merkel's previous image of "the strict defender of German interests" in the EU (Deutsche Welle, 2013), an image that arose particularly after the outset of the sovereign debt crisis in the Euro area both within German and European public opinion. According to the November 2015 opinion poll ZDF-Politbarometer, 52 percent of Germans rejected Merkel's refugee policies, while the German public opinion placed Merkel at number four on the ranking of most popular German politicians behind Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble and then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Zeit Online, 2015). The diminishing domestic popularity of the German Chancellor was accompanied by a decrease in support for her party Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), and an increase in the popularity of Germany's new Eurosceptic party Alternative for Germany (AfD) by the end of October 2015 (Wahlrecht.de, 2017). For Merkel and her party, this came at an unfortunate time as Germany was moving toward elections in three federal states in March 2016 and a federal election in September 2017. Some scholars even emphasized that German Chancellor was going to have a chance to win the next federal election only if "the numbers of incoming refugees can be reduced" (Dempsey, 2015). [1]

In view of the unpresented arrival of refugees from Syria in Germany following the announcement of the open-door policy, the reluctance of other member states to participate in the relocation mechanism accompanied by her diminishing domestic approval ahead of the upcoming state and federal elections, Merkel shifted her attention to Turkey for the management of the refugee crisis. Against this background, she called Turkey a major partner with regard to the successful handling of the refugee crisis when she gave a talk at the European Parliament (EP) early October 2015 (European Parliament, 2015). Germany's "strategic dependency on Turkey" (Akkaya, 2016: 40) culminated very quickly in efforts to establish a "reward mechanism" for enhanced cooperation with Turkey on finding a solution to migrants' entering into the EU in an irregular manner. Following the 15 October 2015 European Council gathering Merkel unilaterally announced during a press conference that the EU was likely to launch accession talks with Ankara in yet closed chapters (Die Bundesregierung, 2015c; Turhan, 2016b). As neither the European Council nor representatives of leading EU institutions made any explicit reference to the opening of new negotiation chapters during or following the summit, this indicated the German leadership in the formulation of the EU's attitude towards Turkey in the crisis epoch.

1 German federal elections took place on 24 September 2017. Although Angela Merkel's CDU together with its Bavarian sister party CSU won 32,9 percent of the total vote and Merkel secured a fourth term as Chancellor, CDU/CSU lost almost 9 percent when compared with the results of the previous federal elections.

Merkel's sudden support for the revitalization of Turkey's EU perspective contradicted however with her preceding statement of only a week ago. On 8 October 2015, the German Chancellor told on national television, "I have always been against EU membership, President (Tayyip) Erdoğan knows this, and I still am" (EurActiv, 2015). Changes in Merkel's stance on Turkey's EU bid appeared at a time when she sought to deepen the strategic dialogue with Turkey on the handling of the migration crisis and was made public only on the eve of her official meetings in Turkey, which were going to be realized with the aim to elaborate on the conditions for and prospective content of the collaboration between Ankara and Brussels concerning the migration crisis. The German Chancellor then played the key role in the formulation of the scope and the conditions of the so-called EU-Turkey "deal" concerning efforts to minimize irregular migration to the EU via Turkey, which was endorsed by the renowned 18 March bilateral Summit between Turkey and the EU and its concluding statement (European Council, 2016). Ahead of the March 2016 statement, Merkel significantly contributed to the formulation of its conclusions and the integration of some reward mechanisms such as the opening of new chapters, the acceleration of the visa liberalization dialogue and the allocation of €6 billion for Turkey to be used throughout its hosting of the Syrian refugees. The German Chancellor realized this by means of minilateral closed-door meetings with relevant Turkish and European counterparts (Turhan, 2016b), in particular with her long talk with the former EU Affairs Minister Volkan Bozkır and Davutoğlu a few days prior to the summit, which was "of key importance for shaping the fundamentals of the refugee deal" (Nas and Özer, 2017: 162).

Merkel further nurtured the reward mechanism by signalling her increasing interest in perceiving Turkey as a key strategic partner with the launch of the annual German-Turkish intergovernmental consultations on 22 January 2016. The German Chancellor further emphasized in April 2016 her support for Turkey's proposal concerning the creation of "safe zones" inside Syria for sheltering purposes; a proposal that was opposed by both the USA and Russia (Hürriyet Daily News, 2016a; Akkaya, 2016). Thus, it could be concluded that in view of Germany's increasing interdependence throughout the refugee crisis a rapprochement has been achieved between Turkey and Germany and a shift occurred with regard to Germany's attitude towards Turkey's accession process. Whether this new impetus has been preserved in succeeding terms will be analysed in the next part of this study.

V. TURKISH-GERMAN RELATIONS AFTER THE DECLARATION OF THE EU-TURKEY "DEAL"

Following the announcement of the 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey statement on finding a solution to irregular migration flows to Europe, Chancellor Merkel has been widely perceived as the leading architect of the deal by Ankara and Brussels. This brought along not only

applauds for German leadership in the enhancement of the collaboration between Turkey and the EU but also the responsibility for the successful implementation of the deal and the successful application of the promised reward mechanism vis-à-vis Turkey.

In the aftermath of the pronouncement of the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, Turkey made significant progress in the fulfilment of the obligations stemming from the Roadmap towards a visa free regime with Turkey, a document that defines the 72 benchmarks needed to be fulfilled by Turkey and that was created in juxtaposition to the Readmission Admission Agreement between Turkey and the EU (European Commission, 2013). Although the realization of the visa-free travel regime for Turkish citizens was originally formulated as a reward mechanism within the framework of the Readmission Agreement between Turkey and the EU and was linked to Turkey's fulfilling of the 72 conditions defined in the Roadmap, with the 18 March 2016 joint statement of Turkey and the EU it was also strongly linked to the so-called EU-Turkey refugee deal. As a matter of fact, the EU-Turkey statement emphasized that "the fulfilment of the visa liberalisation roadmap will be accelerated vis-à-vis all participating Member States with a view to lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens at the latest by the end of June 2016, provided that all benchmarks have been met" (European Council, 2016). Indeed, following the statement, an acceleration of the completion of the requirements stemming from the Roadmap towards a visa free regime with Turkey was observed. The third Progress Report of the European Commission (EC) on Turkey's progress in fulfilling the benchmarks of the visa liberalization roadmap published on 4 May 2016 underlined that Turkey had made significant progress in accomplishing the criteria and fulfilled 65 out of 72 benchmarks necessary for visa-free travel regime. The Commission further emphasized that it encouraged Turkey to meet the remaining benchmarks so that it could acquire visa liberalization until the end of June 2016 (European Commission, 2016a). In light of the positive progression of the visa liberalization process no explicit tension has been witnessed both between Turkey and the EU as well as between Turkey and Germany in the early phases of post EU-Turkey statement era and until the publication of the Commission's report.

The tension between Germany/the EU and Turkey started to rise following the publication of the third Commission report, which identified some benchmarks such as the amendment of legislations on terrorism and on personal data protection, which were according to Ankara difficult to fulfil in the short term, as clear obstacles to visa-free travel for Turkish passport holders in the Schengen Area. This culminated in the rise of gradually increasing tensions between Turkey and the EU/Germany. Whereas Chancellor Merkel stated on the day of the EC's report launch that she "was hopeful that Turkey would soon realize the remaining benchmarks to obtain the right for its citizens to travel inside the EU without a visa" (Hürriyet Daily News, 2016b), her positive tonality towards the issue started to experience a shift toward a more negative one by the end of May 2016 when Ankara signalled its objection to implement revisions in the critical benchmarks stated above. On 23 May 2016, during

her visit to Turkey for an UN-Summit, the German Chancellor stated that "it's foreseeable that some things won't be able to be implemented by July 1, namely visa freedom because the conditions are not yet fulfilled" (Al Jazeera, 2016). As a reaction to Merkel's statement, President Erdoğan underlined that the Turkish Parliament was likely not to ratify the Readmission Agreement, if not progress was going to be achieved concerning the visa liberalization dialogue (Deutsche Welle, 2016a).

As already discussed previously, Merkel's acting as a key architect of the EU-Turkey deal on finding a common solution to migrants' entering into the EU via Turkey in an irregular manner brought along enhanced responsibility for her concerning the successful implementation of the deal. The EC noted that following the announcement of the EU-Turkey statement and the deepening of the cooperation between Turkey and the EU "there has been a substantial decrease in the numbers leaving Turkey for Greece: In the weeks before the implementation of the Statement, around 1,740 migrants were crossing the Aegean Sea to the Greek islands every day. By contrast, the average daily arrivals since 1 May are down to 47, a decrease of over 95%" (European Commission, 2016b). In view of this success, as its master architect, Merkel put substantial effort in the preservation of the deal as it proved to be efficient in the minimization of further migration waves to the EU. To do so, as stated by a leaked cable from the British ambassador to Germany, by the end of May 2016 the German Chancellor even underlined her readiness to "compromise formulations on the anti-terror law" (The Telegraph, 2016). Thus, despite differences concerning the implementation of the visa liberalization roadmap, Turkish-German relationship did not experience an immediate tension due to Merkel's political balancing act in order to preserve the deal.

However, by the end of May 2016 Turkish-German dialogue experienced a sharp U-turn and started to truly deteriorate. The so-called Armenian resolution of the German Federal Parliament, which called the deportation and death of Armenians in 1915 a "genocide", culminated in the withdrawal of the Turkish ambassador to Germany, Hüseyin Avni Karslıoğlu, to Ankara between June and early October 2016 (Turhan, 2016a; Hürriyet, 2016). The resolution acted as a breakpoint in the contemporary Turkish-German dialogue as in the wake of it the contemporary bilateral relationship steadily worsened. That being said, other incidents fostered bilateral distrust and estrangement between both countries. Incidents such as Ankara's temporary ban on German parliamentarians' visit to İncirlik military base due to the Armenian resolution, on the one hand, and German Ministry of Interior's secret, yet, publicly leaked report accusing Turkey of becoming a hub for terrorist groups from the MENA region as a result of "the increasing Islamization of Ankara's domestic and foreign policy since 2011" (Deutsche Welle, 2016b), on the other, widened the diplomatic gap between Germany and Turkey. Another issue that stoked an intensive and still ongoing dispute between Ankara and Berlin has been the apparent mismatch between both governments' understandings of post-coup developments in Turkey and on the actions needed to be taken following the 15

July 2016 coup attempt. Then Foreign Minister Steinmeier made between July and November 2016 approximately 20 official statements in front of cameras and microphones on post-coup actions taken by Ankara. The majority of these public statements had a strictly negative tonality (Turhan, 2016a).

In the aftermath of the declaration of the refugee "deal" between Turkey and the EU, there has been a mutual interaction between the progression of the deal and Turkish-German bilateral relations. While the challenges concerning the successful completion of the visa liberalization dialogue that was perceived as an important aspect of the deal culminated in tensions between EU/Germany and Turkey, various bilateral disputes between Turkey and Germany appeared to have the potential to have a negative impact on the further execution of the deal between Turkey and the EU. A good example illustrating the negative implications of intergovernmental tensions between Turkey and Germany for the refugee "deal" between Turkey and the EU has been the effects of German government's ban on Turkish ministers' talks in several German cities during the referendum campaign in March 2017. Following the diplomatic crisis with Germany Ankara signalled its readiness to end the deal with the EU (The Independent, 2017). In a similar vein, while calling Germany for more support in the fight against PKK and FETÖ, Turkish authorities regularly made emphasis on Turkey's importance for Europe's security due to Turkey's hosting of more than 3 million refugees (BBC, 2017). Though the deal currently continues to be officially implemented, the examples given above illustrates that its success is prone to tensions between Turkey and the EU/member states (particularly Germany), which may be greatly influenced by the blurred line between domestic and foreign policy in the sphere of German-Turkish bilateral dialogue and the negative externalities that are created by one's foreign and security preferences for the preferences and interests of the other.

VI. CONCLUSION

The complex and multi-dimensional relationship between Turkey and Germany improved its comprehensiveness, and strategic significance with the transformation of the Syrian refugee crisis from the crisis of the European periphery into a European / German crisis in late 2015. The central roles played by both countries in the progression and management of the refugee crisis made Turkish-German cooperation crucial and unavoidable. This article aimed at elucidating the implications of the refugee crisis for the scope, content and key features of the relationship between Turkey and Germany, which has been prone to both ebbs as well as flows throughout the contemporary history. In order to scrutinize the changes and continuities in the bilateral dialogue, the study paid attention to the key parameters of the bilateral dialogue in three a priori selected phases: the pre-crisis phase that included contemporary Turkish-German bilateral relationship until the emergence of a "European / German" refugee crisis; the

negotiation phase between both countries that led to the formation of the EU-Turkey "deal"; and the ex-post phase that covered the state of Turkish-German affairs in view of efforts to implement the deal.

While a sudden rapprochement between Turkey and Germany has been observed following the transformation of the refugee crisis from a crisis of the European periphery into a crisis of the EU/Germany, the findings of the article hint at continuities in terms of the existence of alternating phases of ebb and flow, i.e. phases of rapprochement followed by phases of conflict, in the overall structure of the Turkish-German dialogue. The pre-crisis phase was marked by a rapprochement followed by a period of estrangement. A few years before the emergence of the Syrian refugee crisis, Turkish-German dialogue first experienced a rapprochement in view of Germany's increasing dependence on Turkey in economic and foreign policy terms after the arrival of the sovereign debt crisis in the EU and the Arab Spring, respectively. Following this short phase of rapprochement, Turkish-German dialogue entered another cycle of estrangement as a result of Germany's negative approach towards the injection of new impetus into Turkey's EU bid throughout the election season. In this era, a standstill was observed also in the further evolution of the already established intergovernmental dialogue mechanisms between Turkey and Germany during the rapprochement era stated above.

The article found out that in the second phase, with the transformation of the refugee crisis into a crisis of Europe/Germany in late summer 2015, the Turkish-German relationship took a new turn and entered another cycle of reconcilement and deepened intergovernmental dialogue. Following its open-door policy vis-à-vis the Syrian refugees, which culminated in both Merkel's and the CDU's diminishing public approval ahead of the upcoming federal and state elections and the uncontrolled flow of refugees to German cities, Chancellor Merkel all of a sudden started to act as one of the primary enthusiasts of the speeding up of Turkish accession negotiations. Merkel perceived this and further issues such as the kick off of the visa liberalisation process for Turkish citizens and the supply of financial aid for Turkey in return for hosting Syrian refugees as elements of the reward mechanism that was created as components of the EU-Turkey refugee "deal" that aimed to prevent the arrival of irregular migrants in the EU via Turkey. The framework of the deal was to a large extent shaped by German influence, while throughout its formulation Germany also established new intergovernmental dialogue instruments with Turkey (such as the intergovernmental consultations).

The phase of rapprochement in EU/German-Turkish relations continued in particular until the announcement of the third Progress Report of the EC on Turkey's progression towards fulfilling the obligations stemming from the visa liberalization roadmap, which identified not only the progress made but also the remaining benchmarks to be fulfilled. As the key architect of the EU-Turkey deal and hence, as the responsible person for its successful implementation, Merkel took first a more diplomatic and restrained attitude towards Ankara's refusal to quickly fulfil the remaining benchmarks and searched behind the closed doors for compromises in

order to guarantee the preservation of the deal. However, after Turkish-German dialogue entered a new phase of enhanced conflict and estrangement and experienced a new low in the contemporary history, the Chancellor did not point to any compromise models for the finalization of the visa liberalization dialogue with Turkey. Throughout this era of magnified estrangement between both countries the increasing blurring of the thin line between domestic and foreign policy spheres within the context of German-Turkish dialogue has occurred.

The findings of this article indicate on the one hand Merkel's difficult position and her obligation to act as the key architect and the preserver of the EU-Turkey deal both during its formulation and its implementation as a result of various internal constraints and developments. The findings furthermore point to a mutual interaction between the progression of the EU-Turkey deal and Turkish-German bilateral relations. Whereas difficulties regarding the complete implementation of the deal and the promised reward mechanism vis-à-vis Turkey led to increased political tensions between EU/Germany and Turkey, the profound crisis the Turkish-German relationship has lately entered could have a negative impact on the future of the "deal" between Turkey and the EU. This would not be surprising taking into account Ankara's statements concerning its readiness to end the deal in case of profound crises. That being said, although the Turkish-German relationship appears to have reached a new low in recent years, the overall cyclical fluctuations in the relationship point to the possible emergence of another phase of rapprochement between Turkey and Germany in the future, which may have a positive impact on the successful execution of many components of the EU-Turkey deal, such as the visa liberalization dialogue.

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