KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

40 Years of Dialogue. Democracy and Partnership

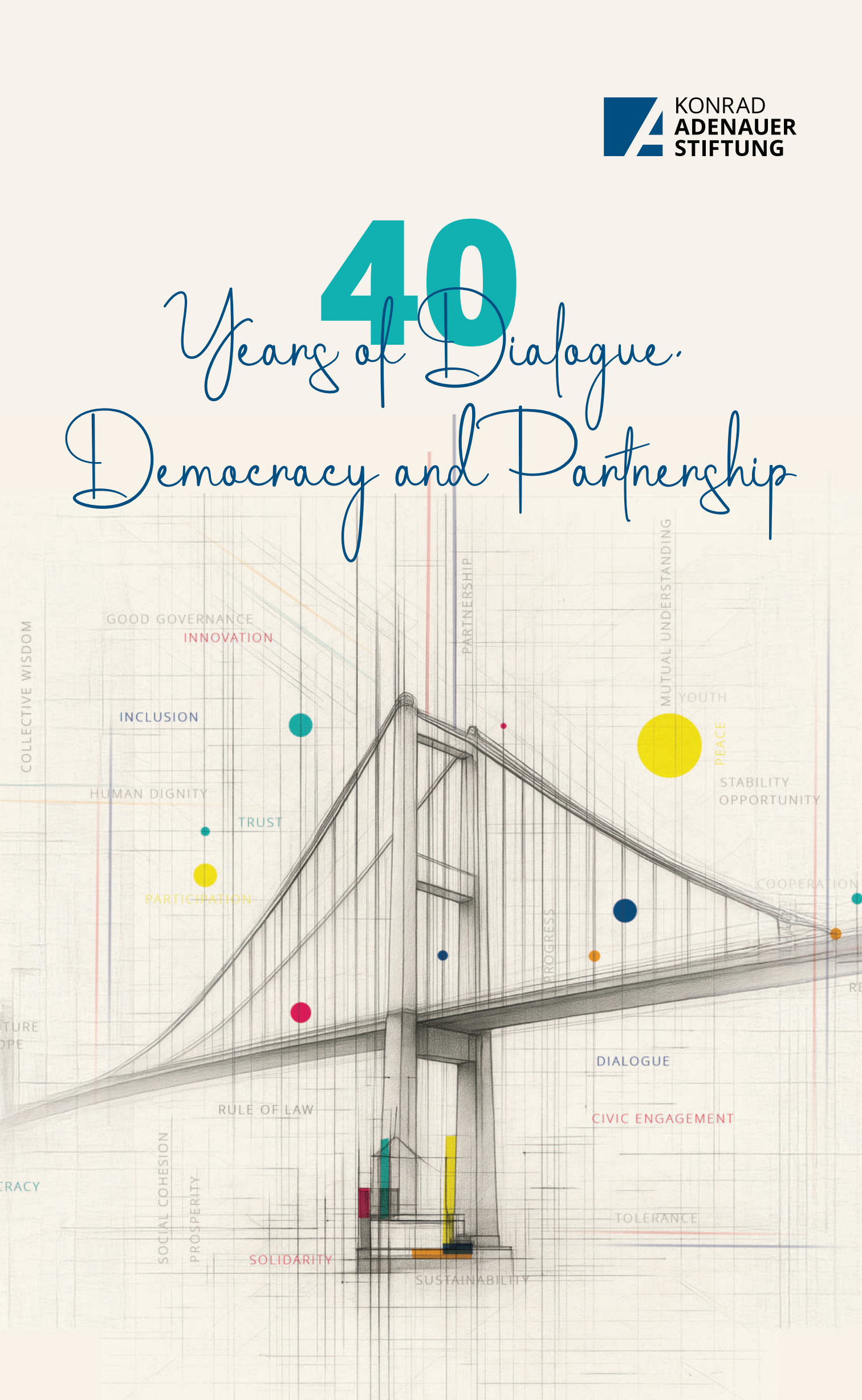


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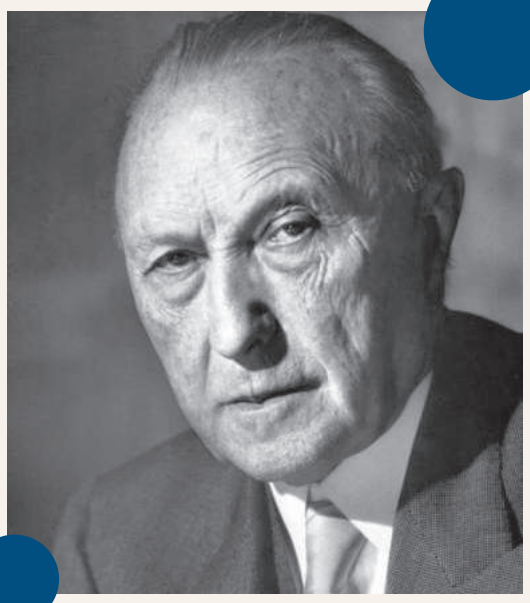
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Biography of Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967)

5 January 1876: Born in Cologne
1894: Graduated from Aposteln-Gymnasium in Cologne (Abitur)
1894–1897: Studied law in Freiburg, Munich, and Bonn
1897: First state law examination; began legal clerkship
1901: Second state law examination
1903–1906: Legal assessor at the Cologne Public Prosecutor's Office; worked in a law firm; assistant judge at the Cologne District Court
1906–1909: Municipal councillor in Cologne
1909–1917: First municipal councillor and deputy mayor of Cologne
1**917–1933:** Mayor of Cologne
1921–1933: President of the Prussian State Council
1933: Dismissed by the National Socialists as mayor
1933–1934: Stayed at the Benedictine Abbey Maria Laach in the Eifel
1934–1935: Stayed in Neubabelsberg
From 1935: Resided in Rhöndorf
4 May 1945: Reinstated as mayor of Cologne by the occupying forces, then dismissed again
22 January 1946: Elected provisional chairman of the CDU in the British zone in Herford
1 March 1946: Elected chairman of the CDU in the British zone in Neheim-Hüsten
1946–1950: Member of the State Parliament (MdL) in North Rhine-Westphalia
1946–1949: Chairman of the CDU parliamentary group in the North Rhine-Westphalia State Parliament
1948–1949: President of the Parliamentary Council
1949–1963: First Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
1949–1967: Member of the Bundestag (MdB)
1950–1966: Federal Chairman of the CDU
1951–1955: Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs
1966–1967: Honorary Chairman of the CDU
19 April 1967: Died in Rhöndorf, Bad Honnef



Konrad Adenauer was born in Cologne on January 5, 1876, into a modest civil servant family. After completing his education in law at Freiburg, Munich, and Bonn, he began his legal career in Cologne. His political journey started after marrying Emma Weyer, which connected him to Cologne's influential bourgeoisie. He rose through the city's administration and became mayor in 1917, the youngest in Prussia at the time.

In 1949, at age 73, he was elected the first Chancellor of West Germany, a position he held for 14 years. His tenure was marked by the country's postwar recovery, integration into the Western alliance, reconciliation with France, and the foundation of the European Union. Domestically, he championed the social market economy and policies that laid the groundwork for the German "economic miracle."





Despite political challenges in his later years, including the Berlin Crisis and internal party struggles, Adenauer remained a dominant figure. His final major achievement was the 1963 Franco-German Treaty of Friendship. He retired from politics in 1966 and died on April 19, 1967, at the age of 91.

Adenauer is buried in Rhöndorf, where his home has been preserved as a museum. His memoirs and correspondence remain key historical sources, and he is remembered as a founding father of modern Germany and a symbol of postwar democratic renewal.



KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Türkiye

History and Areas of Work

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a German political foundation with offices in more than 100 countries worldwide.

KAS Türkiye was established in 1985 in Ankara with the support of Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. KAS Türkiye aims to strengthen relations and foster dialogue between Türkiye, Germany and the EU. Working with a broad network of Turkish and international institutions and organisations, KAS Türkiye hosts high-level meetings, discussion forums and dialogue programs to connect policymakers, experts and young scholars to promote cooperation and mutual understanding.



Political and Economic Dialogue & EU Relations

KAS Türkiye provides a dialogue platform for decision-makers, business representatives, and experts. This dialogue covers key areas such as energy, technology, business cooperation, and trade and therefore enhances economic cooperation between Germany, the EU, and Türkiye.

In addition, KAS Türkiye organizes political dialogue programs that unite politicians, bureaucrats, and policy advisors from Germany and Türkiye, encouraging the exchange of perspectives on current political issues and strengthening bilateral relations. Through these conferences and dialogues, KAS Türkiye contributes to the deepening of EU–Türkiye relations in an ever-evolving global landscape, offering innovative platforms to explore new opportunities for cooperation and building a strategic partnership founded on mutual understanding and shared goals.

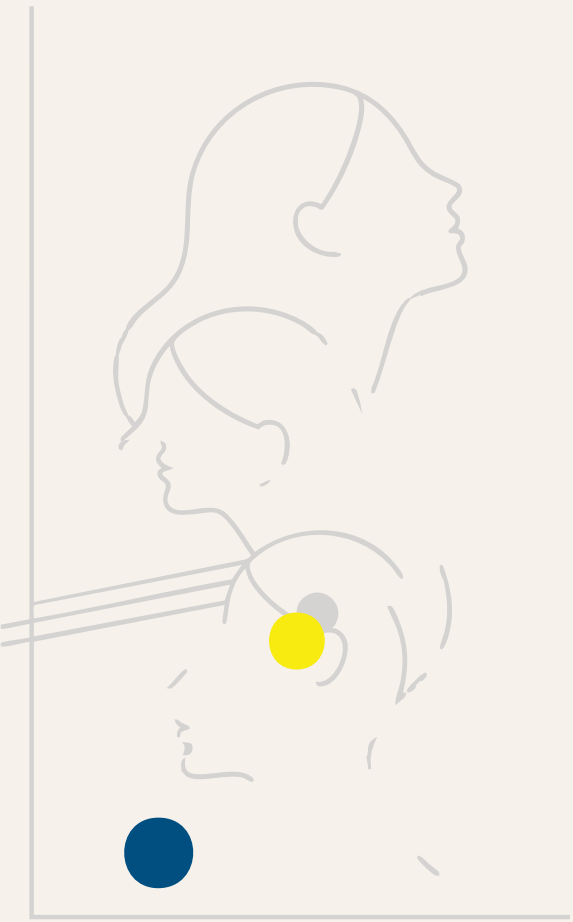
Security and Migration

Since 2008, KAS Türkiye and Başkent University Ankara have hosted one of Europe's leading security conference - the Istanbul Security Conference®(ISC) - bringing together top officials, experts, and academics to address global challenges and strengthen connections between regional and international actors. As a NATO member since 1952, Türkiye plays a pivotal role in regional and global security, and platforms such as the ISC® and the Ankara Security Workshop (ASW) provide dynamic spaces for policymakers and professionals to exchange insights, shape policy recommendations, and foster collaboration.

In addition, KAS Türkiye connects national and international migration experts through delegation visits, conferences, workshops, and field exchanges, encouraging knowledge sharing, strategic partnerships, and sustainable solutions to address migration challenges in Türkiye, Germany, and Europe.



Media, Youth and Future Leaders



In response to fast-breaking global developments, KAS Türkiye hosts media roundtable discussions in Ankara and Istanbul, bringing together journalists and experts to explore diverse themes and perspectives, fostering insightful and impactful dialogue.

Each year, the Antalya Media Forum further connects international journalists, correspondents, political figures, and academics to discuss current affairs and trends in Germany, Türkiye, and across the globe.

KAS Türkiye is committed to promote the active participation of youth and future leaders -particularly women- in defence, security affairs, and diplomacy, fostering a more inclusive international security landscape.

In collaboration with the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), KAS Türkiye organizes a one-year, practice-oriented training program for young leaders, offering politically active students and young professionals aspiring to careers in policy the chance to engage with peers, policymakers, and diplomats. Through these initiatives, KAS Türkiye empowers women, youth, and future leaders to connect, collaborate, and shape a more inclusive and sustainable future.

With Migport, KAS Türkiye drives social innovation through the Globus Academy, where participants receive training, mentoring, and networking opportunities to develop solutions for societal and environmental challenges, encouraging them to pitch their own ideas for positive change.

Scholarships

KAS Türkiye empowers Turkish students and graduates through innovative education experiences in Germany and Türkiye. The Sur-Place Scholarship supports academic research and professional growth, while the global alumni network of over 15,000 members drives bilateral dialogue and international academic exchange, building bridges for future cooperation.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Türkiye Team

October 2025



Names from left to right - Uğur Atasever, Zeynep Pekdemir, Haşim Çelik, Arzu Yüzgeç, Aydan Özen, Kıymet Gülderen, Türkmen Özmen, Dr. Ellinor Zeino, Anastasia Pazer-Ilgaz, Mehtap Yorulmaz, Metin Necef, Dr. Markus Hildebrand, Bekir Öncel

TÜRKİYE-GERMANY RELATIONS FROM PAST TO PRESENT

1871 — Establishing diplomatic relations between the German Reich and the Ottoman Empire

1924 — Establishing diplomatic relations between the Republic of Türkiye and Weimar Republic

1949 — The Federal Republic of Germany was founded; Konrad Adenauer became the first chancellor.

2005 — The beginning of "privileged partnership" under the Chancellor Angela Merkel.

2016 — EU–Türkiye Statement was signed on 18 March 2016.

1961

The Türkiye–Germany Labor Recruitment Agreement was signed.

1973

Germany halted labor recruitment; the era of family reunification began.

1995

The EU-Türkiye Customs Union came into force.

1999

Türkiye was declared a candidate country for EU membership.

2023

Germany provided extensive humanitarian assistance following the earthquakes on February 6 in Türkiye.

2025

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz visited Ankara and announces the beginning of a new strategic partnership.

Editorial



Dr. Ellinor Zeino

Country Director KAS Türkiye

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Türkiye this year, both the global order and our societies have undergone fundamental changes. The visit of Chancellor Merz to Türkiye in October 2025 marked a new chapter in Turkish-German relations. Perhaps more than ever before, our two countries understand how much we depend on each other and how important our partnership is for the whole of Europe and the entire region.

In an era of global transactionalism and the return of power politics, people-to-people ties remain our strongest asset. For us, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Türkiye, it is one of our central missions to build bridges, bring people together, and make concrete improvements visible for both sides. Our goal is also to bind Türkiye as closely as possible to Europe, to reduce barriers to exchange, and to bring the great potential in our relations to life. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung will stay committed to this mission and will continue to serve the Turkish-German relations.

At this point, it is worth mentioning the young generation from Türkiye and Germany, who will be the driving forces and changemakers in our relationship. Their energy, enthusiasm, openness, and positive attitude are something I experience anew each time through our projects. This makes them the best ambassadors for our countries. In the future, but also already now, the young perspective can make a significant contribution to the positive development of Turkish-German relations. With their fresh ideas and impulses, they can enrich the relationship.

This brochure provides an overview of where Türkiye's relationship with Germany and Europe stands today. The contributions of our partners from state institutions, civil society, business associations, media and academia provide an accurate snapshot of Turkish-German relations in various areas – from education, trade and economy, migration and social cohesion, media and public perceptions to foreign policy, security and regional developments. The authors address both challenges and achievements and offer insights into what lies ahead of us.

It is often mentioned that Germany is Türkiye's largest trading partner. The Turkish-German trade volume is twice as high as that between Türkiye and the United States. More than 40 per cent of Turkish exports go to the European Union. Germany is also one of the most important direct investors in Türkiye. More than 8,000 German companies create over 100,000 jobs in Türkiye.

Türkiye, on the other hand, has been a long-standing NATO ally since 1952 and maintains the second largest army in the alliance. Türkiye is an integral part of the European single market through its membership in the Customs Union and remains a candidate for accession to the European Union. Türkiye has become an indispensable middle power and a global actor which is actively engaged in the Near and Middle East, the Caucasus, the Black Sea as well as in Africa and beyond.

Saying all this, our relationship cannot and should not be reduced solely to economic figures or geostrategic interests. It is the hearts and minds that connect our nations. The numerous family ties, work relations and friendships - built by four generations of people who have grown up, studied, worked and lived together - have shaped our relationship.

The following congratulatory messages clearly highlight how important the Turkish-German relationship is to both sides. At this point, I would also like to thank our numerous partners who have contributed with their excellent articles on the following pages of this brochure.

We look back with gratitude on what has been, and we look forward with confidence and excitement to what we aim to achieve and change in the future. We are especially thankful for our partners with whom we would have not been able to engage in Türkiye. We are more than happy to have our partners on board and to be able to shape the future together with them.

A special thanks also goes to all my predecessors, all the German representatives, as well as to my team and all our former colleagues who have worked at our office in Türkiye over the past 40 years and achieved remarkable success. Without them, it would not have been possible to achieve all of this.

İş birliğiniz ve desteğiniz için hepinize en içten teşekkürlerimi sunarım!



Dr. Ellinor Zeino

Country Director KAS Türkiye

Greetings



Photo Credit © Inga Haar

Prof. Dr. Norbert Lammert

Chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung,
Former President of the German Bundestag

40 years of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Türkiye - this anniversary offers a welcome opportunity to both reflect upon the past and look toward the future.

The establishment of our Turkish office was made possible through the support and commitment of Prime Minister Turgut Özal and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who laid the foundation for our enduring mission: to promote democracy, freedom, and rule of law.

As we revisit the past four decades, we do so with sincere appreciation for the partnerships and joint accomplishments that have shaped our journey, a journey that has been marked by the realisation of many successful projects that would not have been possible without the collaboration with our Turkish partners. Our work spans a wide spectrum, from fostering political and economic dialogue to promoting entrepreneurship and supporting promising young talents through scholarship programs. Among our most prominent projects is the Istanbul Security Conference®, a distinguished forum that brings together leading international experts and decision-makers.

Germany and Türkiye share a special relationship. Today, nearly three million people of Turkish origin reside in Germany, forming a living bridge between our societies. Our countries are deeply connected, both socially and economically. Germany remains the top destination for Turkish students studying abroad and is Türkiye's most important trading partner.

Türkiye's strategic role as a vital member of NATO and a key partner to the EU makes close cooperation more important than ever. In the face of today's global challenges, collective resolve and coordinated action are essential. This includes issues with different perceptions and expectations on both sides. Together with our Turkish partners, we remain committed to fostering dialogue, mutual respect, and shared responsibility – for Europe, for democracy, and for peace.

We look forward to continuing to build and strengthen the bridges between our countries. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung remains a committed partner in Türkiye, and we are dedicated to continuing our close and trusting cooperation in the years to come.

Thank You.



H.E. Ambassador Akif Çağatay Kılıç

Chief Advisor to the President on Foreign Policy and Security

In this era of uncertainty, power competition, and global economic change, it is highly important for Türkiye and Germany to strengthen their relations based on mutual trust and a forward-looking vision. Such a partnership would not only reinforce bilateral ties but also make a lasting contribution to Europe's stability, security, and prosperity. Türkiye is not merely a neighbouring ally; it is an indispensable partner in shaping a safer, more resilient, and more integrated future for Europe.

Türkiye and Germany share a close and longstanding relationship built on profound human connections and strong societal bridges, with over three million people of Turkish descent living in Germany forming a living testament to our enduring ties. These deep-rooted human bonds not only reflect our shared history but also continue to shape our common aspirations for peace, stability, and prosperity. Alongside this solid social foundation, our partnership has also been strengthened over more than seventy years within NATO, where we have worked together as allies committed to collective security and shared strategic interests.

In recent years, Europe's security landscape has been undergoing a profound transformation. The war in Ukraine has once again reminded us that peace in Europe cannot be taken for granted. As German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated, the post-war world will no longer be the same. In this new environment, Türkiye's role has become of vital importance. Located at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East, and the Black Sea, Türkiye serves as the strategic cornerstone of NATO's southeastern flank. From ensuring stability in the Black Sea to security in the Middle East, Türkiye plays an indispensable role in Europe's collective defence.

Beyond Europe's eastern front, developments in the Middle East -particularly in Gaza- also call for principled and coordinated engagement. Ensuring the continuation of the ceasefire in Gaza, securing full compliance by Israel, and advancing a just and lasting peace remain priorities that align not only with international humanitarian principles but also with long-term regional stability. Greater alignment between Germany and Türkiye would support diplomatic efforts toward a balanced peace framework and demonstrate a shared commitment to upholding human dignity and international law.

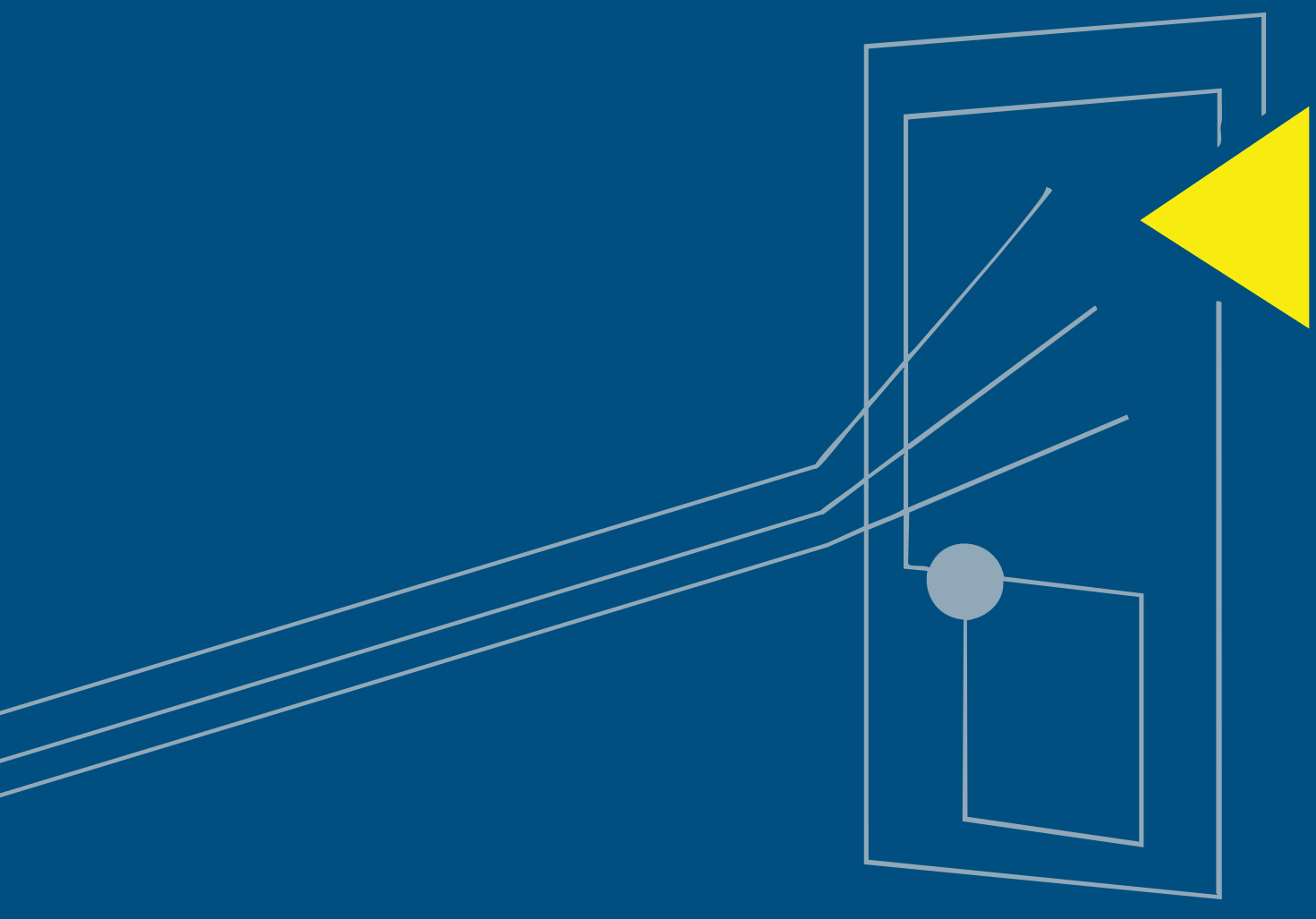
On a global scale, Türkiye's expanding diplomatic and economic presence in Africa aligns with Germany's strategic goals of sustainable development and diversified investment. In this context, both countries can jointly assume responsibility by undertaking large-scale initiatives in infrastructure, renewable energy, and industrial development across the continent, thereby contributing together to stability and inclusive growth. Likewise, within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States, Türkiye's influence in Central Asia and Germany's strong economic and technological capacity creates reciprocal opportunities for cooperation in energy and connectivity.

Furthermore, Türkiye and Germany share a responsibility to contribute to peace and development in regions characterized by chronic instability, including the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Caucasus. Joint diplomatic initiatives and coordinated development projects could enable both countries to support reconstruction efforts in these strategically important areas and foster a stable and prosperous regional environment.

Cooperation in the fields of defence and technology also presents significant opportunities for both countries. Joint projects between Germany's well-established defence industry and Türkiye's rapidly developing, technologically compatible and innovative defence sector are both feasible and mutually beneficial. Such initiatives would not only strengthen NATO's overall capabilities but also ensure that both nations remain at the forefront of modern security developments.

In addition, reforming international organizations such as the United Nations to establish a more effective, representative, and equitable multilateral governance system remains an essential priority. In this context, a comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council -enabling responsible and constructive actors such as Türkiye and Germany to assume more meaningful roles- would greatly strengthen the legitimacy, inclusiveness, and operational capacity of global governance and collective security. As President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has expressed through the phrase "The world is bigger than five," reinforcing a fair and accountable governance architecture within international organizations, particularly the United Nations, is essential for safeguarding global stability and ensuring a more just international order.

I wish continued success to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary and is one of the leading non-governmental organizations contributing to the development of bilateral relations with Germany, as well as to the progress of social, cultural, economic, and political ties.





Zafer Sırakaya

Vice Chairman of AK Parti, AK Parti Chairman of Foreign Affairs, Member of Parliament for İstanbul

Türkiye and Germany stand as two pivotal actors shaping the stability, security, and future of Europe. This relationship rooted in a century of diplomatic engagement and strengthened by extensive security, social and economic ties. Through the years, the relationship has become a cornerstone of stability amid an increasingly uncertain geopolitical environment. The strategic importance of Türkiye for Germany, and vice versa, derives from their complementary capacities to promote regional security, foster constructive dialogue across multiple regions and cement mutual relations with strong Turkish community.

Türkiye's geography, bridging Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, has long made it an indispensable actor in maintaining order within a volatile region. With conflicts and shifting power balances reshaping the international system, Türkiye has strategic capacity in mediation, counterterrorism, and humanitarian diplomacy. Germany, as a leading voice within the European Union, has supported these stabilising efforts through diplomacy, development assistance, and its advocacy for deeper EU–Türkiye engagement. Together, both nations play a balancing role in preserving stability along Europe's periphery. In an era of multipolar competition and hybrid threats, closer coordination between Ankara and Berlin is essential, for both European defence and for maintaining global stability and transatlantic unity.

Interconnectivity remains a defining pillar of the partnership between the two nations. The more than three million people of Turkish origin living in Germany form a vibrant human bridge between the two nations. Their social and economic contributions enrich German society and symbolise the deep interdependence between the two countries, transforming a shared history into a shared future. Under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye remains committed to work for a peaceful and fairer world order based on dialogue and mutual respect. A revitalised Turkish German partnership, anchored in shared interests, trust, and the strength of our peoples, will continue to play a defining role in shaping the future of Europe and its surrounding regions.



Photo Credit © Laurence Chaperon

Armin Laschet

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag, Former Minister-President of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

The understanding between Türkiye and Germany has been a matter of the heart to me since I entered politics. It includes not only the relationship between our countries but also the integration of people with Turkish roots in Germany. Nowadays, around four million people with Turkish roots are living in Germany. Many of them are German citizens. Turkish people made an undeniable contribution to the reconstruction of Germany after World War II. Many of them now hold top positions in politics, business and culture.

It is largely unknown that the relationship between Türkiye and Germany was already deepened at the beginning of the last century. In 1914, the German-Turkish Association was founded in Berlin. Vice versa, at the same time, the Turkish-German Association was founded in Constantinople. It was a completely new idea to build a binational association with the goal of fostering the cultural relationship of Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Not to forget, many Germans flew to Türkiye during the Second World War. It is known that around 80 German professors lived and researched in Türkiye.

Germany and Türkiye are closely linked with each other. Despite different opinions on some details, we are partners, and we share similar values. I have realised that Türkiye has been a member of NATO since 1952, three years before Germany joined the alliance. Türkiye has also been a member of the Council of Europe since 1949, one year before Germany joined the Council.

In Germany, we recognise Türkiye's outstanding role for Europe. Türkiye has become more important than ever as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine. German-Turkish economic relations have intensified for decades. Germany is Türkiye's third-largest export partner after Russia and China. Many foreign direct investments in Türkiye come from Germany. Türkiye has great potential for renewable energy and the production of green hydrogen, in which we are particularly interested. Last but not least, there are many regional cooperations and projects between universities.

This is the time to say thank you to the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation for 40 years of engagement for the German-Turkish relationship. The representation in Ankara contributes to provide first-hand information on Türkiye, which we highly appreciate in Germany. Moreover, we benefit from excellent dialogues and meetings between Turkish and German key actors. All the best and let's shape the future together.



Photo Credit © Federal Foreign Office

H.E. Ambassador Sibylle Katharina Sorg

Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Türkiye

Germany enjoys few relationships as close and multifaceted as the one it shares with Türkiye. Our countries are connected by deep human, economic, and political ties that have grown over generations. Most visibly, around three million people with roots in Türkiye today call Germany their home. Their stories -of hard work, opportunity, and belonging- have woven a unique fabric of shared identity between our societies. These countless family and friendship bonds continue to shape and enrich both our nations.

Our partnership is also grounded in strong economic relations. Bilateral trade now exceeds 50 billion euros annually, making each country one of the other's most important economic partners. Beyond trade, cooperation extends to politics and security: as an EU candidate country and a close neighbour, Türkiye is a key partner for the European Union. Germany and Türkiye also work hand in hand in international fora such as the G20, and as NATO allies, we share responsibility for peace and stability in our region and beyond.

This close exchange, however, is not only a dialogue between governments. Party-to-party contacts and dialogue among political institutions are equally vital in fostering mutual understanding and strengthening the broader foundations of our bilateral relationship. For the past 40 years, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation has played an invaluable role in this endeavour.

Since opening its office in Ankara, the Foundation has built bridges between our societies, promoting cooperation, political dialogue, and social exchange. It provides an important platform for discussion on key issues -from the future of German-Turkish relations to social and economic development to regional security policy. A prime example is the Istanbul Security Conference®, a format that brings together experts and decision-makers. It strengthens not only the German-Turkish exchange on security matters, but also transatlantic and regional dialogue.

For four decades, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation has contributed to deepening mutual trust and understanding between Germans and Turks. Its work exemplifies the power of dialogue, openness, and partnership.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and its dedicated team for their tireless efforts and lasting commitment to our common values. Congratulations on this 40th anniversary – and best wishes for continued success in the years to come.



Photo Credit © Tobias Koch

Thomas Bareiß

Member of the German Bundestag

First of all, let me congratulate the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in Türkiye on its 40th anniversary! For decades, the KAS has been a cornerstone for strengthening relations between Germany and Türkiye and has significantly contributed to political, economic, and cultural exchange between our two countries.

Few bilateral relationships are as strongly shaped by human ties as those between Germany and Türkiye. Germany remains Türkiye's most important partner in Europe – economically, socially, and politically. Today, around 1.5 million Turkish citizens and another 1.5 million people of Turkish descent live in Germany. Germany is Türkiye's most important trading partner. More than 8,000 German companies are active in Türkiye. In terms of imports, Germany ranks third in 2024.

Conversely, Türkiye is a key strategic partner for Germany within NATO, a neighbour of the European Union, and an influential actor in the Middle East. Türkiye will play an increasingly important role as a link between Europe and Asia, particularly in light of the evolving geopolitical situation and rising global tensions. This means that it becomes more crucial for Germany to strengthen German-Turkish relations.

Even before my election into the German Bundestag, I had already come to know, appreciate, and love the country and its people. I lived and worked for a German textile company in Izmir, Türkiye, for several months.

Since my election to the German Bundestag in 2005, I have always tried to establish ties and intensify contact between the countries, for instance during numerous visits to Türkiye. The work of the KAS is irreplaceable in this regard, ranging from precise planning and providing information to acting as a link to ministries, political parties, organizations, and civil society.

It is essential that the KAS maintains an office there and works on the ground: As a bridge builder and protector of democracy and freedom, conveying the German perspective and representing German interests. During many visits, including one a few weeks ago, I was able to see for myself the invaluable contribution that the KAS makes to German-Turkish relations.

Many thanks to the current and all former heads of the KAS office in Türkiye whom I had the pleasure of meeting, as well as to the wonderful staff at the representative offices in Ankara and Istanbul. I wish the KAS in Türkiye all the best for its work and commitment in the country!

Voices from Our Partners



Prof. Dr. M. Nail Alkan

President of TANDEM (Turkish-German Solidarity and Integration Association), Faculty Member at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University

As Europe navigates geopolitical uncertainty, climate stress, and rapid technological change, its comparative advantage lies in a generation that experiences Europe as a shared civic space. The EU's future will be shaped not only by institutional design but by our capacity to translate plural identities into policy, converting diversity into capability.

The Turkish–German partnership is well placed to advance this shift. Dense networks of academic cooperation, vocational training, municipal partnerships, research consortia, business supply chains, and civil-society dialogue equip young Europeans with the skills and trust needed to co-produce policy that is open, resilient, and innovation-oriented. When cooperation is organized around concrete outcomes such as skills, standards, and mobility rather than slogans, it accelerates the green and digital transitions while normalizing the rule of law and fundamental rights in everyday practice.

The Turkish diaspora in Germany illustrates this next-generation advantage. Lived experiences of dual belonging cultivate linguistic agility, cultural brokerage, and market literacy. These are not merely sociological curiosities; they are strategic resources for credible integration policies, social cohesion at the neighbourhood level, and economic connectivity beyond the EU. By the end of 2024, 1.54 million Turkish citizens lived in Germany, while roughly 2.9–3.0 million residents had a migration background from Türkiye; in 2024, 22,525 Turkish nationals naturalised. This expanding pool of bicultural Europeans strengthens trust, improves policy delivery in diverse communities, and links EU markets to wider regions.

A practical agenda follows. Make recognition of learning genuinely portable across academic and vocational tracks. Scale inclusive apprenticeships that connect Turkish and German firms in green tech and advanced manufacturing. Institutionalize structured youth participation through policy labs that involve diaspora voices from design to evaluation. Such mechanisms do not dilute European identity; they future-proof it by aligning belonging with opportunity and responsibility.

A Europe confident in its plurality will be stronger at home and more reliable abroad. The Turkish–German relationship shows a pathway: invest in people-to-people bridges, measure outcomes rigorously, and empower the next generation to lead.



Ali Aslan

International Moderator and Journalist

Marking 40 years of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's presence in Türkiye offers an opportunity to reflect on one of Europe's most multifaceted and enduring bilateral relationships. The German-Turkish partnership is not merely defined by diplomacy - it is woven into the fabric of both societies through deep human, economic, and cultural ties.

Millions of people with Turkish roots have contributed to Germany's social and economic life, forming one of the strongest bridges between two nations on the European continent. At the same time, Germany remains Türkiye's largest trading partner and one of its most important allies within NATO and beyond. These connections give this relationship a unique depth and resilience, even in times of political disagreement.

Over the past four decades, the German-Turkish partnership has weathered regional crises, global transformations, and domestic shifts. What has remained constant is a mutual recognition of shared interests and the importance of maintaining open, constructive dialogue.

Institutions like the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung have played an important role in building trust and fostering understanding and dialogue between the two nations.

As the international order grows more complex, the strategic relevance of the German-Turkish relationship continues to grow as both countries have much to gain from working more closely together -on equal footing and with a forward-looking perspective.

The next chapter of this partnership will be defined not just by geography or necessity, but by vision. A vision that is based on a common purpose and mutual respect while facing shared global challenges in a rapidly changing world.



Asst. Prof. Dr. Suna Güzin Aydemir Decker

Faculty Member at Turkish-German University

The bilateral relations between Türkiye and Germany undoubtedly have a sui generis character. They are multidimensional, dynamic, and productive - yet at the same time fragile. The relationship extends beyond the classical diplomatic framework, encompassing a wide spectrum ranging from the economy to art, sports, science, and technology.

According to 2024 data, the trade volume between the two countries is around 50 billion USD. The number of Turkish students studying at German universities has reached 18,000, and the Turkish–German University active in education since 2014 accommodates around 5,000 students today.

With over 100 twin-city partnerships, relations also continue to develop at the local level. Since 2014, youth exchange programs have been continuously implemented between the two countries.

These bilateral relations not only generate significant flows of goods, services, knowledge, and intercultural art, but also stand out for their strong tendency toward institutionalization. Institutions such as the Goethe-Institute and the Yunus Emre Institute, as well as a vibrant network of civil society organizations, have brought new dynamics and actors to the relationship in the 21st century. This has led to the emergence of a multi-layered diplomatic framework - encompassing cultural, economic and science diplomacy - which has, in turn, increased the resilience of bilateral relations against conjunctural challenges.

On the other hand, Türkiye–Germany relations also display a fragility that limits their interaction and productive capacity in the economic, cultural and scientific realms. The two countries have defined their national interests in ways that at times contradict each other on several political issues, notably the Cyprus question, EU-Türkiye relations, and policies concerning identity, integration, and security related to the Turkish diaspora in Germany.

Unresolved issues carried over from the 20th into the 21st century have been further complicated by new divergences in perspectives and policies regarding wars in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Official statements show that Türkiye's current perception of the United States, Russia, Israel, Hamas, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) differs considerably from Germany's. Moreover, the two countries observe each other's domestic politics with a critical attitude.

Nevertheless, neither these chronic tensions nor differing approaches to regional conflicts - which could potentially reshape the geopolitical order - have been enough to distance the two nations from one another. One reason, as noted above, is the strong human ties connecting them.

At the same time, both Turkish and German societies, confronted in the first quarter of the 21st century by political and economic crises, the pandemic, and regional conflicts, share a common interest for a more secure, just, and prosperous global order. This shared aspiration for security and socio-economic stability creates a mutuality of interest strong enough to outweigh many of the existing disputes between the two countries.



Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Bağcı

President of ANKUDA (Ankara Global Advisory Group), Faculty Member at METU (Middle East Technical University)

The world is undergoing a profound transformation. Despite the United States' preference – especially during Donald Trump's second term – for a unipolar order reminiscent of the 1990s, the global system is becoming increasingly multipolar. In this emerging world order, Türkiye is rising as a "modified middle power," recognized as a global player, game changer, and contributor to conflict resolution.

Over the past decade, Türkiye's political, economic, and military influence has grown, reaching its peak since the Russia–Ukraine war and the Hamas–Israel conflict. Relations with the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union have deepened, enhancing Türkiye's strategic role in their grand strategies. Following a difficult decade (2014–2024), ties with Washington are improving. Türkiye maintains a balance-of-power policy between Moscow and Kyiv and a firm stance in Middle Eastern conflicts, particularly regarding Gaza.

Relations with Russia remain strong despite EU pressure. Türkiye's NATO membership – but absence from the EU – offers flexibility in managing ties with Moscow while expanding influence in the Black Sea, Balkans, and Caucasus. In the South Caucasus, peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the Zangezur Corridor signal a decade of regional stabilization. Türkiye's leadership in the Organization of Turkic States underscores its growing diplomatic reach.

Türkiye's engagement with the Global South, BRICS, and China highlights its ambition for diversified partnerships. While its EU relations are increasingly transactional, Türkiye's strategic importance in European security has risen, reinforced by defence cooperation and the Eurofighter deal. As NATO's cornerstone ally, Türkiye preserves its strategic autonomy.

Germany remains a key partner. Despite differences under Chancellor Scholz's coalition, recent developments – such as easing defence restrictions and visa facilitation – have revived cooperation. Germany classifies Türkiye among its "special relations" countries, alongside Israel and Poland.

A Türkiye–Germany–Russia triangle is emerging in Central and Eastern Europe, shaping new geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics after the Russia–Ukraine war.

Marking the 40th anniversary of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) in Türkiye, I commend its lasting contributions to academic cooperation and youth exchange. Having collaborated with KAS for 37 years, I have witnessed its pivotal role in fostering dialogue, scholarships, and mutual understanding. The KAS–Türkiye legacy is a model of partnership and must continue to inspire future generations.



Arda Batu

Secretary General & Board Member of
TÜRKONFED (Turkish Business Confederation)

Türkiye's path toward sustainable development is defined not only by growth, but by transformation, resilience, and inclusion. Representing 31 federations, 340 associations, and over 100,000 enterprises, the Turkish Business Confederation (TÜRKONFED) has long served as the leading voice of the private sector across Türkiye empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and advocating for a balanced, competitive, and inclusive economy.

Throughout this journey, our long-standing cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) has stood as a testament to one shared belief: that economic progress must advance hand in hand with democracy and social inclusion. On the occasion of KAS's 40th Anniversary in Türkiye, we reflect not only on the outcomes of our joint projects, but also on a mindset transformation that continues to take root across the business landscape.

TÜRKONFED's "Middle Democracy Trap" reports have shown that sustainable growth is impossible without strong democratic institutions and human capital. As highlighted in our recent analysis, "Is the 'Middle Education Trap' behind the Middle-Income and Middle-Democracy Traps?", the quality of education, skills, and civic participation directly affects a nation's economic and democratic resilience. This holistic understanding lies at the heart of our collaboration with KAS, which bridges economic transformation with social inclusion and democratic values.

In this spirit, TÜRKONFED and KAS have jointly organised a series of Green Transition Dialogues across Türkiye, engaging SMEs, local business leaders, and experts in exploring how climate resilience, digitalisation, and good governance can jointly shape the country's economic future. These dialogues -supported by policy research and regional outreach- have strengthened the foundations for a fair and climate-friendly transformation.

Today, TÜRKONFED is equipping SMEs, entrepreneurs, and young professionals with the tools to navigate the twin green and digital transitions, building a more sustainable, resilient, and competitive future that reflects Türkiye's broader transformation story -one where growth is measured not only by numbers, but also by education, equality, and responsible production.

Our partnership with KAS has consistently linked economic resilience with universal values. The digitalisation journey of an SME in Anatolia is connected to the green transformation efforts of a manufacturer in the West -together illustrating a more inclusive, democratic, and sustainable future for Türkiye's economy.

Looking ahead, TÜRKONFED and KAS remain committed to building an economy that is fair, climate-friendly, and human-centred. Because we firmly believe that an economy not rooted in democratic principles and civic participation can never truly sustain its growth.



Ercan Çitlioğlu

Specialist / Başkent University

As the Başkent University Strategic Studies Implementation and Research Centre, we are proud and honored to share 18 years of partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Türkiye Office, which will celebrate its 40th anniversary in November 2025.

Our project partnership, which started in Ankara in 2007 under the name "Turkish-German Security Dialogue," developed into the Istanbul Security Conference® in 2015.

To date, Istanbul Security Conference® and Ankara Security Workshop have hosted 1,777 participants from 67 countries, including statesmen, politicians, academics, high-level civilian and military officials, experts, civil society organization representatives, and media members. It is the only international conference in Türkiye that is institutionalized and organized by a civil initiative.

We are honored to organize Istanbul Security Conference®, which has established a respected international reputation and sees an increasing number of participating countries each year, in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Türkiye Office. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for our successful and productive partnership, which we hope will continue for many decades to come.

Now in its 18th year, our platform not only shares our views on regional and global issues through presentations and discussions but also provides our recommendations for solutions to decision-makers.

We believe that countries, like individuals, cannot share the same views on every issue or make identical assessments. Our differences in opinion and perspective, as well as our similarities, are a source of shared understanding and empathy.

We consider that our platform, which embraces diversity as a fundamental principle, plays an important role in assessing ongoing developments in our region.

I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Türkiye Office for its successful efforts in strengthening mutual understanding, friendship, and cooperation between our countries across a wide range of areas.

We sincerely thank the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Headquarters for their steadfast support and endorsement of our collaborative efforts. Their commitment has been crucial in maintaining and institutionalizing our partnership over the years. Additionally, we would like to especially thank Dr. Ellinor Zeino and the former Türkiye Representatives, with whom we have had the honour of working for 18 years. We convey our best wishes to all of them.



Tülin Daloğlu

Journalist, Director of the United States Centre at TEPAV (The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Türkiye)

NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan marked not only a failure but also a moment of reckoning that exposed the limits of Western interventionism and the fragility of transatlantic unity. Yet the true turning point for NATO and U.S. policy came with Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine. The invasion redefined Euro-Atlantic security and compelled the Alliance to reassess its strategic foundations. NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept, naming Russia as the "most significant and direct threat" to Allied security, signalled a decisive departure from the cooperative tone of earlier decades.

This reassessment gained further urgency during the Trump presidency, when European allies came to see that the United States' security guarantees could no longer be taken for granted. Trump's insistence on higher defence spending exposed Europe's overreliance on the United States defence umbrella and its post–Cold War complacency. Having reduced military investments for decades, most European states now face serious capability gaps just as the Russian threat resurges.

In response, NATO's European members have accelerated defence spending and modernization programs. Still, senior military and intelligence figures warn that time is short. France's Chief of Defence Staff Fabien Mandon has cautioned that Russia could "continue the war on the continent," while Germany's intelligence chief Martin Jäger has warned that a potential Russian attack might not wait until 2029. Europe's ability to turn renewed intent into credible deterrence remains uncertain.

Against this backdrop, Türkiye's geopolitical and military significance has multiplied. Though politically distant from EU norms, Türkiye's strategic geography, defence capabilities, and diplomatic agility make it indispensable to European security. Its actions facilitating dialogue between Ukraine and Russia and ensuring Black Sea stability illustrate that Türkiye is not a peripheral partner but a central actor in Europe's defence architecture.

This evolution has also reshaped Türkiye's relationship with Germany. Despite historic ties and a large Turkish diaspora, bilateral relations have remained constrained by the Merkel-era migration-centred frameworks rather than by a shared strategic vision. By viewing Türkiye primarily through an EU institutional lens, Berlin has limited its strategic flexibility and failed to develop a forward-looking partnership.

A shift, however, is emerging. Recent visits to Ankara by top German leaders reflect a growing recognition of Türkiye's strategic role. As Europe faces a more fragmented and competitive environment, Berlin increasingly sees Türkiye not as a policy challenge but as a strategic necessity. Yet if this recognition is not translated into institutional inclusion, particularly within initiatives like the SAFE (Security Action for Europe), Europe risks undermining its own security goals. Excluding Türkiye -despite its geostrategic location, military capability, and experience in regional stabilization- would weaken the very framework designed to strengthen Europe's defence resilience. In an era where deterrence depends on credible partnerships and strategic depth, sidelining Türkiye would amount to a self-inflicted vulnerability for Europe's collective defence.



Ozan Demircan

Journalist, Head of the Newsletters "Türkei-Briefing" and "Türkiye Nabzı"

The relationship between media and foreign policy is never one-directional: media both reflects and shapes the political environment in which states interact. In the case of Türkiye and Germany, this dynamic is particularly pronounced. For more than ten years I have reported as a correspondent from Türkiye for German audiences, while personally navigating a dual identity as the son of a German mother and a Turkish father. This vantage point makes it clear that the media sphere functions less as a neutral mirror and more as an active site of perception-building, often reinforcing polarization rather than dialogue.

German media tends to frame Türkiye predominantly through the lenses of democratic backsliding, migration, and economic instability. While these issues are real, the reduction to a narrow set of narratives obscures other dimensions: Türkiye's rapid economic modernization, its societal diversity, and its increasingly assertive role in regional security. Turkish media, in turn, frequently depicts German coverage as moralizing and biased, positioning Germany as a critical but unsympathetic observer of Turkish domestic politics. In both contexts, the other is represented less as a complex actor and more as a symbolic device.

This dynamic reveals deeper meta-patterns. For Germany, persistent criticism of Türkiye often reflects unresolved anxieties within German society itself -about integration, identity, and the fragility of liberal democracy. Türkiye becomes a projection screen for Germany's internal debates. Conversely, in Turkish discourse, Germany frequently symbolizes Western dominance and historical asymmetries, providing a rhetorical foil against which national pride and sovereignty are asserted.

The result is a cycle of mutual reduction. Important developments are overlooked: Türkiye has become a central geopolitical actor, exemplified by the fact that it remains the only NATO member to have downed a Russian jet. Economically, while German headlines fixate on inflation, the broader picture is more complex. Living standards have risen significantly in the past decades, though distributed unevenly. By ignoring these realities, media coverage risks misrepresenting Türkiye's structural position and underestimating its weight in international affairs.

Breaking this cycle requires more than simply balancing "negative" with "positive" stories. Constructive journalism must focus on contextualization: placing disagreements within broader historical trajectories, highlighting structural interdependence, and recognizing the multiplicity of perspectives within both societies. Cross-border media cooperation, long-term field reporting, and joint projects between German and Turkish journalists could help counteract selective perception.

In this sense, media is not merely an observer of Turkish-German relations, but a constitutive factor in shaping them. If it succeeds in offering layered, contextualized reporting, it can help establish bilateral relations that are resilient not despite differences, but because they are understood in their full complexity.



H.E. Ambassador Hüseyin Diriöz (R)

President of Foreign Policy Institute (FPI)

The main direction of the foreign policy of Türkiye at the beginning was laid down by its founding cadres under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Their main motto (which covered both domestic and foreign affairs) was “Peace at Home, Peace Abroad.” Peace Abroad basically signalled peaceful relations with the neighbours and regional countries After the end of the Second World War, in response to the security environment and the strategic requirements Türkiye wanted to join (and eventually joined) NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). At the same time, the country was in the process of moving in the direction of reform and modernization. And also, it was moving in the direction of joining European institutions. For example, Türkiye was a founding member of the Council of Europe in 1949.

Türkiye, while remaining firmly within NATO Alliance, in the 1960’s and 1970’s started also to enhance and diversify its foreign relations in line with the détente atmosphere of those times. Yet, it not only continued its strong commitment to and membership in NATO, but it also moved in the direction of the EU (at that time EEC-European Economic Community). It made its application of partnership in 1959 and in 1963, the Partnership Agreement was signed which mentioned full membership as the final goal. Membership negotiations started in 2005.

Relations with Europe:
- As mentioned above, Türkiye saw its place in Europe (without denying its critical location between the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus) and continued its reform and modernization process.

- After the World War II, whose had similar threat perceptions with Europe and therefore became member in NATO, (it had similar strategic considerations with European NATO members) Türkiye contributed to NATO and therefore to European security but also benefited from NATO.

- EU is Türkiye’s biggest economic partner and Türkiye is EU’s 5th biggest economic (trade) partner. This shows the importance of the economic relations.

Global engagement and national priorities: Türkiye’s global engagement increased due to two main factors: a) The Republic’s GDP increased almost 50 times since its establishment in 1923. Moreover, in the mid-1980’s, liberalization in economy took place and this increased greatly its volume of exports and its interaction with global economy, thus leading to increased global engagement. b) Türkiye’s location at the centre of critical regions such as the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East is yet another factor pushing it to be involved in or contribute to efforts towards supporting regional peace and stability.

In the light of these developments, Türkiye’s priorities include the further development of relations with the EU with the eventual objective of integration, peace and stability in the region, and enhancing its economic interaction with other countries and regions. Countering terrorism and other emerging challenges and risks such as global warming and cyber threats are also among Türkiye’s priorities. Türkiye’s relations with Germany and EU today: Türkiye’s relations with Germany have critical importance: In addition to the friendly relations and the human dimensions between the two countries, Germany is Türkiye’s biggest trading partner. For Türkiye’s EU aspirations, Germany is a critical country with its role in the EU.



Prof. Dr. M. Murat Erdoğan

Migration Researcher, former Faculty Member at Hacettepe University, Turkish-German University

Since the 1960s, migration has become an inseparable part of Türkiye–Germany relations. The 1961 Labour Agreement not only turned Germany into a "new and bitter homeland" for millions of people of Turkish origin but also transformed inter-state relations into inter-societal ones, creating a space for mutual transfer of ideas and mindsets. Although 65 years have passed and some challenges stemming from the initial perception of temporariness can still be felt today, it is undeniable that these two societies with their vastly different mentalities have overall achieved a successful process of integration.

Today, with more than half of its members born in Germany and more than half having acquired German citizenship, the Türkiye-origin community has become part of Germany in every field—from the economy to culture, from sports to politics, from science to the arts. The presence of 19 members of parliament in the Bundestag; the appointment of Sinan Selen as head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz); ministers at federal and state levels; a vice-president of the Bundestag; the global scientific success of Özlem Türeci and Uğur Şahin who developed the COVID-19 vaccine; the Berlinale Golden Bear winner Fatih Akın; and İlkay Gündoğan, captain of Germany's national football team are just a few of the symbolic success stories that can be mentioned. This success also highlights Germany's self-confidence that underpins these achievements.

However, the real and often overlooked success lies in the millions of ordinary members of the Turkish community in Germany who have built lives there by doing regular jobs, complying with the country's laws and social norms, and contributing to both Germany and Türkiye. This achievement should be recognized not only as the success of Turks but, perhaps even more so, as that of German society. Even the now "tabloidized" debate around döner kebab can be seen as a symbol of the deep intertwinement and the new culture that has emerged.

Exactly fifty years after 1961, another migration issue -this time centred on Syria- became one of the most significant topics and areas of strategic cooperation in Türkiye–Germany relations. In the face of one of the greatest challenges in post–World War II European history, both countries became not only the most heavily affected by the crisis but also the closest partners in addressing it. The crisis that emerged as hundreds of thousands of refugees and irregular migrants, mainly Syrians, sought to cross into Europe primarily aiming for Germany through Türkiye, required close cooperation between the two countries, as much as it reflected the confidence expressed by Chancellor Angela Merkel's famous words "Wir schaffen das!" (We can do it). In that context, Chancellor's "we" implicitly included Türkiye as well.

The 18 March 2016 Agreement was built upon this close cooperation and mutual trust. Although Türkiye's political expectations from the agreement such as progress on EU–Türkiye relations, visa liberalization, and an updated Customs Union were not met, the deal proved highly functional in terms of stopping the refugee influx, ensuring border security, and supporting integration processes.

While Türkiye remains, the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world, and Germany the one hosting the most in Europe, both have received insufficient support in terms of international solidarity and burden-sharing. Yet, through a pragmatic and strategic approach, they managed to strengthen cooperation. Germany became by far the leading contributor of financial resources, capacity-building, and support for integration processes in Türkiye. In this way, Türkiye, which during the Cold War years contributed to Germany's security and reunification by standing with the Western alliance, has in recent years also helped balance the economic, social, security, and political pressures caused by refugees and irregular migration.

It is not surprising that two important European powers such as Türkiye and Germany have political, interest-based, and conceptual differences or even areas of competition. However, as the history of migration between them demonstrates, there exists a clear and strong capacity and will for strategic cooperation, far outweighing conflict or divergence.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hakan Gülerce

Director, Migration Lab., Institute of Population and Social Research, Faculty Member at Marmara University

Having closely collaborated with KAS Türkiye on impactful initiatives such as the "Migration Awareness Program" and the "Youth Recovery Project/From Recovery to Resilience Project" following the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, I have personally witnessed the shared commitment and mutual trust that define our cooperation.

Migration is not merely about crossing borders, it is a deep human process that involves departure, journey, encounter, and ultimately, social cohesion. Perhaps the most critical stage is the meeting between migrant and local communities. These encounters can produce both cohesion and tension, and how they are managed determines the health of our broader social harmony. Social cohesion, therefore, is not only about integration; it is a human rights-based process grounded in human dignity, participation, and mutual respect.

Türkiye's experience with mass displacement presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Participation of migrants in labor markets helps sustain vital economic activity. At the same time, the entrepreneurial spirit within migrant communities drives innovation and social transformation, enriching local economies and strengthening community life. Yet beyond economic integration, what is most needed is a broader sense of social cohesion, one that ensures access to education, healthcare, justice, and social participation, all rooted in human dignity. Addressing this global challenge of forced displacement requires genuine responsibility sharing among nations.

As I often say, "Responsibility should be shared. This is not only the responsibility of people in İstanbul; it is also the responsibility of people in Berlin." Our joint efforts with KAS Türkiye are a small yet meaningful example of this shared responsibility. Through projects promoting vocational skills, intercultural understanding, and post-disaster recovery, we help remove structural and social barriers, strengthen inclusion, and enable migrants to realize their full potential.

Ultimately, our cooperation stands as a living example of how Germany and Türkiye, two sister countries guided by a shared respect for human dignity, can work hand in hand to build inclusive, resilient, and peaceful societies. It is through such partnerships that we transform challenges into opportunities and uphold the common good in an increasingly fragmented world.



H.E. Ambassador Alev Kılıç (R)

Director of AVİM (Centre for Eurasian Studies)

Türkiye straddles two continents, Europe and Asia. After World War II, Türkiye's connections with the Turkic world were blocked. Türkiye became the easternmost post of NATO which it joined in 1952, cementing its identity with the Western world.

Türkiye's place and identity as part of the European family was formally established back in 1949 as the country was admitted to the Council of Europe as a founding member.

With the collapse of the USSR, a new horizon opened for Türkiye to its east. Türkiye also became the western most of the East and not merely a bridge but a nexus of the East and the West.

This is nothing new for the millennia-long Turkish history nor for the Anatolian geography. The Byzantines had a double headed eagle as state symbol, one looking to the East and the other to the West, signifying vigilance and ambition on both. The Seljuk Empire, which ruled over Anatolia, also had a double headed eagle as its state symbol, not identical with the Byzantine one but nevertheless signifying the same understanding.

From this perspective of an east-west axis, Türkiye rests on two linchpins: the Balkans and the Caucasus. Türkiye is a Balkan country, geographically, historically, socially with ethnic and religious roots. Türkiye has traditionally been a forerunner of Balkan cooperation initiatives. The expectation is for all the Balkan countries to eventually become EU members.

Türkiye neighbours all three South Caucasus states. The South Caucasus is the major connection for Türkiye to Central Asia and beyond. Hence, peace and stability in the region is of utmost priority. The connection through the South Caucasus both via existing lines through Georgia and potential one through Armenia, extending the capacity of the "Middle Corridor", is of paramount importance, also for Germany.

With Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), our Centre for Eurasian Studies (AVIM) jointly took part in numerous academic events over the years with such titles as: "Regional Cooperation Possibilities and Prospects for the Future in the Caucasus" ,Prospects for the Future of the Turkish-Armenian Relations", "Security, Stability and Cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Region", "EU-Türkiye Cooperation in Central Asia", "EU-Türkiye Cooperation in Central Asia-Challenges and Opportunities in the Central Asia Region"

A nexus between the East and the West, Türkiye incorporates the Wider Black Sea Region to this approach. In 1992, Türkiye took the initiative to organize the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) with 11 founding members, with headquarters in Istanbul. Many outsiders have since applied to participate in its work as it has the potential to be a conduit to the Middle East, Central Asia, and beyond.

Another institution with huge potential, also with headquarters in Istanbul is the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Following the independence of five Turkic speaking countries, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, a summit was held in Ankara as early as 1992 to seek ways of cooperation. In 2021 the "Turkic World 2040 Vision Document" was adopted, charting the long-term activities and targets of the organization. This makes Türkiye even more relevant to be the nexus, a conduit between the East and the West. Central Asia needs to open to the West.



Berat Kjamili

President of Kodluyoruz, Migport and Young Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative Alumni Board

Our partnership with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) has been one of the most meaningful collaborations in my journey as a social tech entrepreneur. Together, we created the GLOBUS Social Entrepreneurship Program, which has so far empowered over 110 young changemakers from all across Türkiye -from big cities to small towns- to turn their ideas into real, scalable social ventures.

When we first launched Migport, our goal was to build bridges between communities through empathy and technology. KAS believed in that vision from the beginning and became a key partner in amplifying it. Through their support, we have been able to provide young people with mentorship, training, and the right ecosystem to develop innovative solutions for issues like migration, digital inequality, AI ethics, and climate change.

What makes our cooperation unique is the shared belief that entrepreneurship is not just about business -it's about responsibility. The GLOBUS Program has helped participants not only learn how to start a social enterprise but also how to lead with purpose, inclusion, and sustainability. Many of our graduates have since launched their own initiatives, joined global fellowship programs, or become mentors themselves- continuing the cycle of impact we dreamed of creating.

In a time when Türkiye's young population is full of creativity and potential, KAS has played an instrumental role in giving them a platform to be heard and supported. The partnership between Türkiye and Germany, reflected in our work with KAS, shows how international cooperation can empower local talent and drive long-term positive change.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to continue growing this collaboration -especially in the fields of AI, social innovation, and entrepreneurship education. Together, we're building a movement that prepares the next generation to not just adapt to the future but to shape it.



H. E. Ambassador Mithat Rende (R)

Board Member of TSKB (Industrial Development Bank of Türkiye)

Given its unique location between oil and gas rich regions in the East and energy hungry Europe in the West, Türkiye took its rightful place on the global energy map as one of the fast growing energy markets, a transit country, the fourth artery, namely Southern Gas Corridor for European natural gas imports and an energy hub in the form of a potential natural gas trading centre in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The energy policies devised and implemented during the 1990s as well as the major energy projects realised during the last three decades further bolstered Türkiye's position as an important energy player. With the recent natural gas discovery in the Black Sea Türkiye also qualified as a gas producer and potential exporter in the region.

In fact, Türkiye has achieved a great deal by establishing extensive energy infrastructure in the form of crude oil as well as inland and offshore natural gas pipelines; BTC, TANAP, BLUESTREAM and TURKSTREAM to name a few. Building a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline to provide additional volumes from both Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to be sent to Europe via Türkiye has been under consideration. Enormous gas reserves of Iran and Iraq could also be tapped in the future in a more conducive political environment.

In addition, gas storage facilities, LNG reception and regassification terminals as well as FSRUs- Floating Storage and Regassification Units were also added to Türkiye's energy infrastructure, by doing so, unlike many EU countries Türkiye managed to diversify its energy routes and resources in a timely manner. It further enhanced its supply security by reducing its dependence on a single country. As a result, dependence on Russian gas went down from 50 percent to 36 percent in 2024.

Moreover, timely built LNG terminals and reception facilities enabled the Turkish authorities to conclude long-term LNG contracts with the US and Qatar which led to further diversification and a sound energy basket.

Geographically, Türkiye is also blessed with high potential of renewable energy resources, namely solar, wind and geo-thermal. According to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the share of renewables in the total electricity generation as of September 2025 reached 41,27 percent, hydro power included. The total renewable installed capacity has reached some 60 percent during the same period. According to the road map regarding the new energy strategy this figure is expected to increase dramatically, reaching 80 percent by 2035. The set objective can be achieved if the enormous solar and wind potential of the country is fully tapped through new investments. Enhanced cooperation between Türkiye and the EU countries, Germany in particular, in this field would be beneficial for both sides as additionally installed capacities could also contribute to Europe's efforts to diversify its supply chains.

Nevertheless, given the geopolitical uncertainties and the global economic upheaval, one of the major difficulty Türkiye and many European countries have faced was to deal simultaneously with security, energy and climate crises. The Ukrainian war created a serious security vacuum in the Black Sea and Europe as a whole. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war on Gaza compounded with creeping sanctions against both Russia and Iran and finally the weaponization of natural gas and oil pipelines led to complex challenges which should be dealt with in an urgent manner. A new vision and strategy should be devised which would -among other things- allow Türkiye to be part of the future of Europe and its new security architecture.



Sinan Ülgen

Former Turkish Diplomat, Director of EDAM (Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies), Senior Policy Fellow at Carnegie Europe

At present the Türkiye-EU relationship has stalled. This outcome is the result of two interlinked dynamics. On the Turkish side, the erosion of democratic norms and the rule of law has undermined progress towards accession. On the European side, the ambivalent stance of some capitals coupled with a more challenging domestic political landscape marked by the emergence of nationalist and extreme right political platforms has negatively affected the prospects of Türkiye's eventual EU membership.

And yet despite a more volatile geopolitical environment characterized by the return of military conflict to the European geography with Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine and the ongoing turbulence in the Middle East with the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza, Türkiye and the EU have been unable to foster any complementary framework that would have enabled the two partners to start to address these common challenges in more cooperative spirit. Even the Customs Union, the lynchpin of the Türkiye-EU economic integration, remains unreformed after 30 years.

This situation needs to change. It is unthinkable for Türkiye and the EU to have reached a disequilibrium of diminishing returns at a time when the both the global economic environment but also the regional geopolitical environment has become more challenging.

Against this backdrop and a as a key member state, Germany should play a lead role in rejuvenating EU's strategic ties with Türkiye. This political initiative will require a smart road map that is able to overcome the current obstacles. Given the range of existing barriers, it would be unrealistic to expect a return to a full-fledged dynamic of progress. But at the very least, the EU should be able identify avenues of cooperation of mutual benefit with Ankara. Obviously, the modernisation of the Customs Union would be one. But a deeper integration of Türkiye in the EU-led security and defence structures including the European defence industry ecosystem is another critical area. A more productive multi-partite collaboration under the framework for its Global Gateway is yet another sphere that has demonstrated clear potential.

So where Berlin's leadership is needed is in terms of repositioning the EU towards its strategic interest which should not be undermined by the agenda of minority interests.



Prof. Dr. Özgür Ünal Eriş

Jean Monnet Chair, Faculty Member at İstanbul 29 Mayıs University

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has dramatically altered the European continent's security landscape and changed the assumptions of the prevailing Euro-Atlantic security paradigm which had existed on the Kantian peace model provided by the European Union and concrete protection under the United States leadership. This new security challenge had the biggest impact on Germany. For decades, Germany relied on the United States and NATO for protection. Even key geopolitical events, ranging from Russia's annexation of Crimea to major terrorist attacks on European soil, did not seem to have had a major impact on German foreign and defence policy and defence spending has remained essentially flat. Even more Germany strengthened political and economic ties with Russia with a policy that argued that stability partly depends on relations with Russia, especially through trade and commercial ties (Wandel durch Handel).

However, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, war returned on European soil and fundamental assumptions of Germany's post- Cold War state identity was challenged. When Russia invaded Ukraine, Germany painfully realized that its business-oriented approach to geopolitics in general and with Russia in particular had failed. Against this backdrop, only three days into the Russian war against Ukraine, then Chancellor Olaf Scholz addressed the German Bundestag declaring "Zeitenwende" which led to a radical change of the German mindset. Through "Zeitenwende" German foreign policy would change in three main areas. First, Germany would break radically with its traditional Russia policy of "Wandel durch Handel". Second, it would increase defence spending and strengthen the military by meeting the 2% GDP defence target for NATO members and create an additional budget of 100 billion euros for strengthening the Bundeswehr. Third, it would break with its traditional policy of not shipping arms to war zones and give Ukraine weapons to defend itself.

As this change of mindset focuses on a more concrete defence component in German foreign policy, a critical question was whether this orientation would affect its relations with Türkiye and, if so, how? As Germany had been formulating its relationship with Türkiye through transactional means by concentrating on economic ties and reality of the Turkish community in Germany this new reality added another dimension to this transactional relationship defence. As the post–Cold War European security architecture continues to disintegrate and the understanding is that Europe let alone Germany needs to do more for its own security, NATO ally Türkiye with its strong military industry and developed army could be a significant force multiplier. How this new focus of "Zeitenwende" will be solidified in the transactional relationship between Türkiye and Germany will remain to be seen in the current government under the leadership of Chancellor Friedrich Merz.



Özgür Ünlühisarcıklı

Managing Director, South & Wider Europe GMF (German Marshall Fund of the United States)
Regional Director, Türkiye

Transatlantic relations have long rested on shared values of democracy, freedom, and rule of law, as well as intertwined strategic and economic interests. The partnership between North America and Europe has anchored global stability since World War II, shaping the liberal international order and sustaining peace and prosperity. Yet today, this relationship faces profound challenges.

Türkiye has been an integral part of this partnership as a NATO ally since 1952 and a long-standing partner of the European Union through its Customs Union. With its powerful and capable military, Türkiye plays a key role in NATO's collective defence and regional security architecture. Its strategic geography -connecting Europe, the Middle East, and Asia- makes it indispensable to addressing issues from migration to energy and regional stability.

Transatlantic unity is now tested by diverging interests, domestic polarization, and the rise of populism on both sides of the Atlantic. These trends erode trust in democratic institutions and weaken collective responses to global challenges. For Türkiye, balancing its Western ties with its pursuit of multi-alignment reflects the realities of a multipolar world. Yet its transatlantic connections remain the main pillar of its geopolitical identity -a foundation of security and prosperity that no alternative can replace.

To ensure this partnership's relevance, we must avoid short-termism. Reimagining and rebuilding transatlantic relations require vision beyond immediate crises. The alliance must adapt to new realities -technological transformation, climate change, and shifting power dynamics- while staying true to its founding principles. Renewed engagement should be inclusive, strategic, and forward-looking, with Türkiye firmly within this framework.

That is what the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the German Marshall Fund of the United States are doing -both through their own programs and through joint initiatives in Türkiye. The Trilateral Strategy Group (TSG) meetings exemplify this cooperation and commitment to dialogue. They have proven an ideal format to elevate bilateral dialogues between Türkiye, the United States, and the European Union into a trilateral one — building an enduring network of leaders and experts with a shared, issue-focused approach to strengthening Turkish-Western and broader transatlantic relations.



Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Üstün

Faculty Member at Nişantaşı University, Board Member of E-TEAM Research Center

Türkiye's European integration has long been a defining theme for its youth. The debates -whether focused on culture, geography, or values- have shifted over time, yet Europe still represents both a reference point and a horizon of opportunity. Despite stalled negotiations and mutual frustration, the aspiration to connect with Europe continues. What has faded is the belief that this connection will ever take a concrete, institutional form.

Since the migration crisis, young Turks have found it increasingly difficult to travel, study, or work with their European counterparts. Lengthy visa procedures, excessive documentation, and rigid bureaucracy have created a sense of alienation and distrust. Encounters that once built empathy and understanding are now replaced by barriers that reinforce distance.

Surveys -and everyday experience- reveal that the will to engage with Europe remains strong, but confidence in EU membership or genuine partnership has eroded sharply. This disconnect not only undermines the social foundation of cooperation; it also weakens the EU's credibility as a values-based and outward-looking actor.

In an era when power politics over-shadow principles, people-to-people ties remain Europe's strongest currency. Yet young people in Türkiye increasingly feel unseen and unsupported. Economic uncertainty, political fatigue, and limited mobility discourage many, pushing them to explore new horizons -in China, Russia, or the Gulf- where opportunities seem more accessible.

Europe cannot afford to ignore this generation. Türkiye's youth are not a challenge to manage but a resource to engage. Their creativity and ambition can renew Europe's competitiveness and sense of purpose, if only they are given the chance. A stronger Europe must open its doors to the energy surrounding it -especially from Türkiye. Excessive control and fear of migration may create a sense of security, but they also weaken openness and innovation Europe claims to defend.

This is a two-way street. Türkiye's youth need to feel welcomed and recognized to bridge the growing divide between societies. In turn, Europe needs the dynamism, talent, and imagination that new generations bring. As the global balance of power shifts and a new equilibrium emerges, Europe's ability to engage its neighborhood -starting with Türkiye's youth- will define both its competitiveness and its credibility.



Emeritus Prof. Dr. Bahri Yılmaz

Faculty Member at Sabancı University

It is an irrefutable fact that China is the emerging economic power of the 21st century. It has become a global player and a strong competitor, challenging the world economy. The two countries that currently hold the most global power are China and the United States. The EU and Japan are economic powers, but not military ones. Although Russia is a significant military force, it does not have the same economic weight.

China has entered Türkiye's economic life as a new player and Ankara has been keenly interested in intensifying its economic relations with China, which acts as both an investor and a creditor. Likewise, China has improved its trade and investment relations in recent years to win Türkiye's favor amid its serious political problems with the West -a move that is likely to be viewed as a strategic win for China. For all these reasons, Beijing has increased its financial support in the form of swap agreements and loans, even if these do not meet Türkiye's current needs.

Türkiye's relations with China have been equally long-standing. An important milestone in the political and diplomatic relations between Türkiye and China was the signing of a friendship agreement between them on April 4, 1934, and Türkiye's recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on August 5, 1971. Relations between Türkiye and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been strengthened since the 1980s, with the establishment of a consultation mechanism between the two countries playing a key role in this process. In 2010, bilateral relations were elevated to the level of "strategic cooperation," which was a significant development in the relationship between the two countries. Despite its NATO member, Türkiye has become a dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In 2024, China accounted for only 1.3 percent of Türkiye's total exports, while its share of imports was 13.0 percent. For Türkiye, China is insignificant as an export market. Trade relations between Türkiye and China have led to one of Türkiye's most unstable trade balances. From 2018 to 2024, Türkiye's cumulative trade deficit with China amounted to around USD 204.3 billion, accounting for 50.4 percent of Türkiye's total trade deficit in 2024. Exports from Türkiye to China are mainly agricultural raw materials, minerals and labour-intensive goods, while capital-intensive, high-tech products from China are among the main imports.

It is obvious that trade in goods between the two countries is largely characterized by inter-trade specialization. In other words, both countries export and import completely different types of goods. Trade between the two countries seems to be improving, but at the expense of the Turkish economy.

The results of the study suggest that China will not be able to replace the European Union/ Germany in the areas of trade, investment, and tourism in the foreseeable future. More importantly, despite the downturn in political and economic relations between Brussels and Ankara, it can be argued that Türkiye's economic, political, and security interests are still closely linked to the EU and NATO in the long term. Additionally, Türkiye is already an integral part of the European single market through membership in the European Customs Union.



Barçın Yinanç

Journalist

Türkiye and Germany are two countries with a very complex and complicated web of relationships. Bilateral ties have experienced many ups and downs, yet they have remained resilient even in the face of the most severe crises.

While the two capitals may not always see eye to eye on international and regional issues, NATO and transatlantic ties remain areas where they are often aligned.

Both countries value their relations with Washington, conscious of the fact that the United States has played a crucial unifying role in the alliance of democratic nations.

Both countries also value NATO as the core organization of the European defence architecture.

Indeed, Germany is said to have outsourced its security to the United States, while Türkiye, living in a turbulent neighbourhood, has also benefited from NATO's deterrence.

However, current changes in the world order require differentiated approaches to relations with friends and foes.

Washington's request that European capitals should do more on burden sharing is not new. US President Donald Trump's second term, however, has added urgency to the need for Europe to act.

In that respect, it is safe to assume that Ankara and Berlin would consult more and cooperate more to shape fast-moving developments.

Both countries are wary of the search for strategic autonomy for Europe. Both appear to be in favour of NATO remaining the core organization for the European defence architecture. However, they also realize the need to do more in terms of burden sharing.

Türkiye has NATO's second-largest army and has long been investing in its domestic defence industry. Germany's current administration, led by the Christian Democrats, also appears committed to boosting defence spending.

While problems in bilateral ties have so far obstructed meaningful cooperation in defence, one would expect the current changes to push these two countries to improve their defence-military collaboration.

Berlin's recent approval of the Eurofighter jet sale signals an early willingness to move in that direction.

Keeping Türkiye strongly anchored in the newly evolving European defence architecture can perhaps boost Türkiye's confidence and may open the way for democratic reforms, which are essential for Türkiye's welfare and stability.

Photos




















31 May




Konrad Adenauer
1876-1967
Vakıf, Almanya Federal Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk şansölyesinin ismini taşımaktadır.


NEARENATO


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RESILIENCE
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KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.
Türkiye Temsilciliği

Address: Güzeltepe Mahallesi Ahmet Rasim Sokak No: 27
06690 Çankaya - Ankara - Türkiye

e-Mail: info.tuerkei@kas.de

Phone: +90 312 440 40 80

Fax: +90 312 440 32 48

Web Site: www.kas.de/tr/web/tuerkei/home

You can scan the QR code to reach the website.