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Triangle: EU- Turkey- Germany

How Does Refugee Crisis Promote Turkey's Position in the Triangle “Turkey, Germany and the European Union”?

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Introduction to European and International Affairs: Turkey, Germany and the European Union in the World

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1.Introduction …………………………………………………………………………. 4

2.Theoterical Approach ..………………………………………………………………6

3.Methodology …………………………………………………………………………6

4.Analysis ………………………………………………………………………………7

5.Conclusion…………………………………………………………………………….9

6. References ….………………………………………………………………………11

**ABBREVIATIONS**

EU: European Union

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

JAP: Joint Action Plan

**INTRODUCTION**

In this paper, I argue that refugee crisis has a crucial impact on Turkey, Germany, and the EU relations. Along with this statement, I clarify the role of Turkey in terms of refugee crisis policy of the EU and Germany. In the first section of my paper, I explain what is the refugee, how do refugee crisis occurred and general view of Turkey, Germany, and the EU relations. Then, I indicate theoretical approach and methodology of the paper. In analysis section, I focus on the triangle of Turkey, Germany, and the EU in terms of the refugee crisis. Also, I include information about future scenarios of this triangle. In the last section, I will make a brief conclusion. Germany and Turkey have different dimensions of relations in terms of economics, human, and culture. Human dimension can be explained by referring the Labor Agreement in the 1960s. Along with this agreement, a lot of Turkish people migrated to Germany as guest workers. Today, there are more than 3 million Turkish origin people live in Germany and half of them have dual citizenship. Also, there is currently 1 member of the European Parliament and 11 members of the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) from Turkey. Economic dimension can be analyzed by looking the numbers of German companies in Turkey or Turkish businessmen in Germany. Germany is the first economic partner of Turkey. So, there is a strong partnership between Turkey and Germany (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). On the other hand, Germany is one of the founding countries of the EU and has a critical position in the EU. So, Germany is an important country for Turkey and the EU. Turkey and the EU relations developed by specific events. In conjunction with "Ankara Agreement in 1963, Customs Union in 1996, candidate status of Turkey in 1999, accession negotiations in 2005, opening of first chapter (Chapter 25-Science and Research) in 2006, opening of Chapter 17-Economic and Monetary Policy in 2015 and opening of Chapter 33-Financial and Budgetary Provisions in 2016 combined Turkey and the EU (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). All of this information forms the triangle of Turkey, Germany, and the EU. Over the years, this triangle has experienced new developments or problems with one another. Recently, there is a common problem which is known as "refugee crisis". This concept was used in Western media to express people who escape from the Middle East, Western and South Asia, Africa, and the Western Balkans to Europe or other countries in the west. Many people had left their homes and endangered their lives. Large numbers of European citizens and politicians perceived this situation that a lot of people are fleeing to Europe by using boats and rafts in the Mediterranean Sea. This situation leads to the deaths of a lot of people and was foreseeing more than current numbers. That is why this problem turned into a crisis for Europe (Duarte et al., 2016, p.245). Before explaining the crisis, it is important to define what refugee is. According to UN Refugee Agency, "a refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries" (UNHCR, n.d.). The Arab Spring started in 2010 in Tunisia after a young man burnt himself to demand of democracy, freedom and human rights. This situation influenced other countries in the same region, so it became a political, social and economic crisis. Syria was one of the influenced countries and millions of people escaped to other regions. In this respect, Turkey was the first destination of these people, therefore, Turkey faced to negative impacts of this crisis intensely. In the Southeast of Turkey, refugee camps were provided for Syrian refugees. Moreover, the Aegean Sea is preferred by the Syrian refugees to reach European countries by using illegal ways. So, this issue created a conflict between the EU and Turkey (Tatar & Ülker, 2017, p. 278). Primarily refugee crisis and human, economic and cultural dimensions provided a recent motion for the EU, Turkey and Germany in terms of cooperation. Since Turkey hosts approximately 3 million recorded refugees, it is seen as crucial partner for the EU to deal with this crisis (Hauge et all., 2016, p.20). In accordance with this critical issue, the EU decided to take measures by negotiating with Turkey and Germany was the major supporter of this negotiations because Germany hosts many refugees rather than other European countries. All these circumstances shaped and developed in the frame of close relationships between the EU, Germany and Turkey.

**2.THEORETICAL APPROACH**

Over the past five years, the refugee crisis reached an inevitable level for powerful states, especially, in European countries. A lot of people fled to Europe by applying dangerous ways, therefore, many people have died while they were fleeing to have a better life. Then, these countries decided to react this situation.

In conjunction with this situation, realist approach is convenient to explain the impact of the refugee crisis. According to realism, national security is the fundamental issue in order to ensure. Refugee crisis was not understood by the world because it was not clear which superpower is threatening. In light of realist approach, it is not allowed a risk against the security of nations, when the nation is already in a hazardous situation by external powers. On the other hand, from realist point of view, refugee crisis causes economic scathes to the state in the long term (Jackson and Sorenson, 2015, p.61). In other words, "European refugee crisis is state-centric, meaning that the focus of discussions pertaining to the European refugee crisis centers on state policies and how those policies reflect the best interests of the said state". Also, refugees are seen as aliens to the state, that is why the main aim is to be sure about the survival of the state (Rose, 2016, p.1). With respect to this statement, European countries changed or created their policies internally and externally. For external policies, Turkey became a crucial partner to deal with refugee crisis because Turkey was known as the major country where millions of refugees are hosted. At the same time, Germany received a lot of refugees in Europe.

In the analysis section, refugee crisis will be explained in the frame of Turkey, Germany, and the EU triangle.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

In this paper, both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used in order to explain refugee crisis. Content analysis will be applied to give more information about the topic. At the same time, statistical data about the impacts of the refugee crisis on the EU, Germany and Turkey perspective. They will be illustrated in a detailed way by referring some reports. According to data of Disaster and Emergency Management Agency, the number of refugees residing in refugee camps respectively were 9.078 in 2011, 148.527 in 2012, 210.336 in 2013, and 219.495 in 2014. Also, there were approximately 700.000 refugees residing outside of the camps (ORSAM, 2015). These numbers increase day by day, so recently, there are 3.424.237 refugees who are registered in Turkey (Mülteciler Derneği, 2017).

On the other hand, refugee crisis refers to independent variable because it influences the dependent variable which shows the EU, Germany and Turkey Triangle. The triangle has changed in terms of economic, political and social relations. In addition, Turkey's importance was realized by Germany and the EU in order to deal with refugee crisis.

**4. ANALYSIS**

Turkey and the European Union have a dialogue in several contexts. Before the second half of 2015, EU-Turkey relations were especially based on Readmission Agreement which was signed in 2013 to form visa liberalization process. According to this agreement, reciprocal system should be established to tackle with irregular migration movement to the EU from Turkish territory "by means of effective procedures for the identification and safe return of third-country nationals, stateless persons and nationals of the two signatories that have crossed to the territory of the other side in an irregular manner" (Turhan, 2016, p.471). The Readmission Agreement was thought as a revival of Turkey's accession process, however, political conflicts in Syria aroused and a remarkable number of refugees fled to the EU soil to reach a safe location. Refugees fled to the EU by going the Aegean See route via Turkey, therefore, the Readmission Agreement was decided to implement immediately. Approximately 50.000 refugees came to Greece in July 2015 in contrast to July 2014 which was less than 6000 refugees (European Commission, 2015).

Regarding this situation, Joint Action Plan (JAP) with Turkey was settled by the European Council on 15 October 2015. The Joint Action Plan aims to promote coordination between Turkey and Europe by supporting refugees living in Turkey in terms of preventing irregular migration to the EU (European Commission, 2015). This case also underlines to reactivate accession process of Turkey. However, there were no specific statements about this issue from the European Commission President or European Council President who are significant EU officials. On the other hand, Chancellor Angela Merkel proclaimed the EU's objective of opening new chapters for accession negotiations of Turkey from her own side. This announcement was made just before Merkel's visit to Turkey in order to emphasize the cooperation among EU and Turkey in dealing with irregular migration. In the time of her visit, Merkel restated her assistance to speed up Turkey's accession procedure. Also, she pointed out specific chapters (Chapter 17, 23, and 24) which are ready to accept or prepare by Germany. Along with this statement, Ankara requested to start negotiations on five chapters (15, 17, 23, 24, and 31), visa liberalization for Turkish citizens by July 2016, Turkey's attendance to the EU Summits and €3 billion support for Ankara to maintain refugees living in Turkey. Regarding all these, during the rise of the refugee crisis, Germany behaved as the main actor in the arrangement of enlargement politics of the EU in terms of Turkey (Turhan, 2016, pp. 471-474).

In conjunction with the JAP, Turkey was recognized as a "strategic partner and border guard of the EU", therefore, it was a critical point for both sides (Öner, 2016, p.76).

The JAP was activated by the Summit of 29 November 2015. Its purpose was to deal with refugees "by supporting Syrians and their Turkish host communities and strengthening cooperation to prevent irregular migration". With the JAP, the number of refugees fleeing from Turkey to Greece/ Europe has decreased effectively (European Commission, 2017a). With regard to this accomplishment, visa liberalization issue came to the scene in terms of several criteria. In this respect, biometric travel documents should be formed with EU standards; specific measures should be taken to prevent corruption; operational cooperation agreement with Europol should be established; legislation and practices about terrorism should be altered in accordance with European standards and so on. Moreover, upgrading the Customs Union will provide bilateral economic relations in terms of accession negotiations. At the same time, the highest level of democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression are expected by the EU for the accession procedure (European Commission, 2017b).

The JAP is still in force, but the relations between Turkey, Germany and the EU is complicated. So, there are some possible scenarios regarding the future relations of this triangle, especially EU and Turkey. These scenarios can be categorized under different headlines as convergence, competition, and cooperation. Convergence refers to completing EU accession of Turkey; competition is related to an increasing disaffection between Turkey-EU relations, so accession process would be stopped entirely and this would lead to negative thoughts both in Europe and Turkey; cooperation includes withdrawing the accession process, however, "privileged partnership" would be established (Benvenuti, 2017, p.16).

In addition to this information, migration is a crucial factor which prevents convergence scenario. Recently, the JAP illustrates the cooperation between the EU and Turkey over refugee crisis and irregular migration, so this situation will influence the future relations. If the JAP have negatively resulted, skepticism and anti-Europeanism would extend in Turkey. On the other hand, competition scenario would occur if Turkey's domestic inconstancy and authority of the government increase extremely. So, the rise of migration might be inevitable and this influences both Turkey and Europe in a negative way. Moreover, cooperation scenario might be possible when existing deal continues to prevent illegal migration effectively. In this respect, the EU has several commitments for Turkey's cooperation in the frame of the refugee crisis. These commitments are expected to provide revised accession process, visa liberalization and financial aid for Turkey to deal with irregular migration to Europe. However, the idea of full membership is seen as faded, therefore, "privileged partnership" might be an alternative for Turkey-EU relations (Benvenuti, 2017, p.16). It might be understood that Turkey will not be a member, but there are certain economic relations, so new concepts for cooperation are needed.

**5. CONCLUSION**

As expressed above, EU, Germany, and Turkey usually have relations in terms of economic, cultural and human dimensions. Recently, the conflict in the Middle East, especially in Syria turned into a war and thousands of people immigrate to neighbor countries to have better life conditions. In this case, Turkey was the major receiving country and people attempted to reach Europe via Turkey through the Aegean Sea. In 2015, Europe exposed a lot of refugees who were coming illegally by boats or rafts to its borders. Some of those people died due to inconvenient transportation conditions. This situation boosted and became a crisis for the EU. On the other hand, Turkey was hosting many refugees and had the capacity to overcome this influx. Regarding this, the EU decided to cooperate with Turkey to deal with the refugee crisis. So, the JAP was established by commitments about Turkey's accession negotiations and visa liberalization. After the implementation of the JAP, there was a decrease in refugee influx to Europe.

Furthermore, Germany was the key actor in Europe for dealing with refugees. Chancellor Merkel decided to host many refugees because other member countries did not accept them. Along with the JAP, Germany has a significant role in the EU to cooperate with Turkey. She visited Turkey to make a deal on refugee crisis and presented commitments about Turkey's accession process, visa liberalization to motivate Turkey. So, it is seen that Germany is a leading actor in the EU- Turkey relations.

Additionally, future relations of EU, Germany, and Turkey is viewed from different perspectives in terms of convergence, competition, and cooperation. Cooperation is possible than the other scenarios due to the existing situation. However, Turkey is against a privileged partnership. Turkey's aim is to be a member of the EU and works for achieving this.

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