
Introduction: 50 Years of Emigration from Turkey to Germany - A Success Story?

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It has been fifty years since the guest worker agreement was signed between Turkey and Germany on 30 October 1961. In subsequent years, although Turkey has signed similar agreements with such countries as Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden, and Australia, in terms of scope and volume, emigration to Germany has been the hallmark of contemporary Turkish immigration in contemporary Europe, and it has constituted the backbone of the 'Euro-Turk' phenomenon. The first group of workers needed by Germany for the reconstruction efforts following World War II landed in Munich from a train which departed from the Sirkeci station in Istanbul. Since then,

several other waves have followed. The guestworker agreement allowed for temporary migration, which included work permits valid for one year; however, as migration theory tells us, temporary migration can easily be transformed into permanent settlement, which is what happened in the Turko-German case. Today, as a result of the waves of migration which have encompassed a wide range of types, from labour migration and family re-unions to refugee and asylum seeking, immigrants in Germany from Turkey demographically represent a community of over 2.5 million individuals. The influence of these mass influxes expanded to include social, cultural, political and economic life, with diverse and pervasive impacts on the transnational communities of Germany and Turkey, as well as on Euro-Turks themselves.

Several events have been held in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Turkish-German migrant worker agreement, including film festivals, cultural activities, a train voyage from Sirkeci to Munich, concerts, art exhibitions, conferences,

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competitions, media appearances, and theatre and dance performances. At the state level, official delegates from Germany and Turkey also gathered to celebrate this special anniversary as well. All of these events, naturally, reveal a desire to evaluate the past fifty years and to raise the critical question of whether the migration from Turkey to Germany has been a success or a failure.

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From an optimistic perspective, this history of migration could be considered to be quite unique and successful. The movement from Turkey to Germany of immigrants included the initial guest workers who migrated under the auspices of the agreement made between Turkey and Germany as well as those that followed with the aim of re-joining families, and this number was expanded upon by influxes of Turkish expatriates, students, refugees and asylum seekers; this large immigrant community came to be known as Euro-Turks. Despite their differences in ethnic background, language, faith, gender, age, or town

of origin, the members of this Euro-Turkish community have experienced integration and reception in their host countries to varying degrees. Today, the second, third, and even fourth generation of immigrants represent a unique profile of immigration which has contributed to the cosmopolitan multiculturalism of Germany. As a consequence of these migrations from Turkey to Germany, it is possible to not only talk about the emergence of a transnational society but also to take into consideration the resultant amalgamations of German culture and society. In terms of internationalization, this movement contributed to a series of transformations which are an asset for society in both the host and home countries.

Turkey has gained from emigration primarily in economic terms. The remittances that workers sent to their families in Turkey were a major source of foreign exchange that offset economic deficiencies and trade imbalances, especially in the 1970s when an import substitution economic model was in place. Relatives working in Germany brought to their families in Turkey such gifts as radios, colour TVs, cameras and instant coffee, items which previously had been difficult to obtain. Also, as an effect of migration to Germany, unemployment rates in Turkey remained at tolerable levels. Over time, the amount of remittances decreased as immigrants in Germany started

to become naturalized and as family members in Turkey to whom they were sending remittances began moving to Germany, and consequently investments in Germany increased. Fewer and fewer individuals moved back to Turkey, and the economic processes associated with migration continued.

Germany, just like Turkey, benefitted from this state of affairs. The reconstruction of Germany in the post-WW II era owed much to the contributions of guest workers who came not only from Turkey but from other countries as well. Most of the migrants from Turkey worked in the automotive, construction, and technical industry sectors, but over time worker distribution diversified to include such sectors as tourism and services. In the process of the transformation of 'Gastarbeiter' (guest worker) to 'Euro-Turk', Germany became one of the largest, most competitive and dynamic economies in the world and has come to hold a place at the top of the list of most developed countries. It was through the contribution of the labour of migrants from Turkey that Germany was able to achieve this status. In terms of the immigrant society itself, it could also be possible to invoke a success story in light of the fact that some immigrants from Turkey settled in Germany, acquired dual citizenship (if they didn't become German citizens altogether), learned German, integrated into the host society,

and achieved higher standards of living. Additionally, some migrants settled and became entrepreneurs who moved up the social ladder. In literature, cinema, the arts, politics, and sports, there has been an increasing presence of Germans of Turkish descent and Turkish nationals living in Germany. In fact, discussions have emerged in literary circles about whether writers who migrated from Turkey, but write in German and live in Germany and write on the issue of immigration in Germany and Turkish society, should be considered to be in the domain of Turkish or German literature.

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From a pessimistic perspective, however, one could also raise questions about the 'success' of the story of emigration from Turkey to Germany. First, the integration and naturalization of immigrants in Germany has been slow and limited in scope. In 2010, Turkish citizens represented the largest group of non-nationals living in the EU; it should also be pointed out that approximately 1.5 million Turks living in Germany retained their Turkish citizenship, and by 2011 the number of

immigrants who acquired German citizenship (around 1 million) was not even half of the total community. Additionally, German naturalization laws have become increasingly strict over the years, and, compounding the problem, some members of the Turkish community in Germany have actively resisted full naturalization. In terms of economic success, Turkish immigrants are predominantly in the lower strata of German society and poverty levels are higher among members of the Turkish community. Although there has been greater integration among subsequent generations of immigrants, younger groups have nonetheless experienced difficulty adapting to the host society, an issue which has frequently been taken up in films and novels. Low levels of education, unemployment, drug use, and crime are just a few of the problems Turkish immigrant families face in Germany.

Political unrest among members of the Turkish community in Germany has also materialized alongside the rise of political Islam, Kurdish ethnic revivalism, and Alevi-Sunni sectarian divisions. But these issues are not just one-sided; in Germany, incidents of discrimination, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and racism have raised questions about societal tolerance.

Although immigration from Turkey to Germany has not resulted in mass ethnic conflict at the inter-societal level, there have been occasional bouts of violence, such as the burning of houses occupied by Turks, and this has led to a sense of insecurity for the Turkish community. Turkish migrants to Germany have even encountered discrimination and degradation back in their home country; the label '*Almanci*' (meaning a Turk from Germany) is just one example of this. It should be noted, however, that the key players in Turkish domestic politics

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have developed a close relationship with the political communities in Germany, and many civil society associations in Turkey have branches in Germany, or

vice versa. A large number of the political parties active in the Turkish political arena have a constituency in Germany which votes in Turkish general elections. What is more, the Turkish community in Germany is able to raise its voice, and it has lobbied for Turkey's membership in the EU. Yet, despite the societal connections between political life in Germany and Turkey, migrants have often not received their fair share of recognition in terms of their contributions to Turkey's economic and

political life. Needless to say, tourism is a major source of revenue for the Turkish economy, and each year Germans represent the largest number of tourists visiting Turkey. Yet, the large amount of trade between Germany and Turkey, which to a certain extent is carried out by members of the immigrant community in Germany, has not been properly acknowledged.

Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs has prepared this special issue titled '50 Years of Migration from Turkey to Germany: Current Perspectives and Historical Backgrounds' to commemorate this process of emigration from Turkey to Germany. This issue contains studies written by distinguished scholars of migration, and it is a great pleasure for *Perceptions* to present these articles, all of which deal with the particularities of this migration and examine its fundamental characteristics through an analysis of empirical research and new facts and data. Since the Turkish community in Germany has been analysed extensively via multivariate social-scientific studies, the articles in this special issue were selected on the basis of their contributions to current discussions highlighting contemporary dynamics. However, the state of affairs today cannot be viewed independently of the past; subsequently, all of the articles in this issue provide a historical perspective to ensure relevance and a sense of continuity.

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It is my hope that the discussions raised in these articles will contribute to an opening of further dialogue concerning migration and integration in Turkey and Germany, as well as for other countries which have undergone similar processes of labour migration. As a result of fifty years of migratory trans-border exchange between Turkey and Germany, these two countries have been drawn into a relationship that is marked by complex cultural, economic, and political interchanges. As the articles in this special edition of *Perceptions* suggest, the impacts of migration are far-reaching, and it is only through further dialogue that the 'success' of the story told here can unfold. At this point I would like to thank our contributors for their interest and expertise which made this special issue possible, and we are also indebted to the journal's editorial board for their supporting efforts. Last but not least, all of the articles have been peer reviewed by referees who are experts in their field of specialization. I would like to thank anonymous readers who have contributed to the articles published at this special issue with their valuable comments and feedback.