



Stiftung
Mercator

How does Turkey see itself today? - European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) and Stiftung Mercator publish study entitled "What does Turkey think?"

Berlin/Essen, 8.6.2011 – Yesterday, shortly before the parliamentary elections in Turkey, the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) and Stiftung Mercator jointly presented a study entitled "What does Turkey Think?" to the public. Among others, Hans Eichel, Federal Finance Minister (retired), and Cem Özdemir, Chairman of Alliance 90/The Greens, joined the study's makers in a discussion of modern Turkey today and the results of the study. The publication was made possible through the support of Stiftung Mercator and is a joint project between ECFR, Stiftung Mercator, the Centre for Liberal Studies in Sofia (CLS) and the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies in Istanbul (EDAM).

In this collection of essays on the subject of "What does Turkey think?", Turkish politicians, experts and intellectuals of various political and secular orientation give their views of Turkey's domestic and foreign policy situation and explore the topics of democracy, foreign policy and national identity. As such, the publication also covers issues of key relevance to this year's parliamentary elections: democratic consolidation, the Kurdish question, the economy and changes to the constitution.

Today's modern Turkey is no longer waiting for EU accession, but with 10 % economic growth (2010) is itself a political force to be reckoned with – one that has outgrown its former role as a mere partner of the West. Governed by the AKP, a Moslem democratic party, Turkey is both an important and an active member of NATO, while at the same time retaining strong ties to Hamas and Iran and pursuing its own security policy and commercial agenda.

The publication concludes that many Turks feel alienated by the EU and its reticent attitude towards Turkish EU accession, and that the EU has become less important in many Turkish debates. Nonetheless, it remains relevant in central political and economic areas. It has helped to drive forward significantly the democratization process in Turkey and is the largest market for Turkish products. Turkey's economic and political proximity to the EU also exerts a certain pull on the country's neighbours in the Middle East. In the area of domestic policy, it is recognized that the EU could help to resolve the Kurdish question and to reduce internal differences in Turkey.

"What does Turkey think?" is part of a series of studies conducted by ECFR in an attempt to shed light on internal debates and dynamics in a multipolar world. The publication adopts

the same methodology as “What does Russia think?” and the book by ECFR director Mark Leonard entitled “What does China think?”.

Statements about the study

Dr Bernhard Lorentz, Director of Stiftung Mercator

“The collection of essays entitled ‘What does Turkey think?’ gives us an up-to-date insight into the way modern Turkey views itself today. The core objective of Stiftung Mercator in publishing this study is not to talk ‘about’ Turkey but with it, and to listen attentively to what it has to say. This is our goal.”

Cem Özdemir, Chairman Alliance 90/The Greens

“‘What does Turkey think?’ offers a good and contemporary insight into the dynamic political debate in Turkey. The study makes a valuable contribution to better understanding Turkey on its path to democracy and its role as regional actor.”

Ruprecht Polenz, Member of the Bundestag

“The Arab Spring is increasing the strategic importance of Turkey. ‘What does Turkey think?’ gives valuable insights into the internal sensitivities and foreign policy intentions of a country whose path should lead it into the European Union – in the interests of both sides – once all accession criteria are met.”

Dr Dimitar Bechev, Senior Policy Fellow, Chief of ECFR Office, Sofia

“Turkey is now an actor, an economic pole, and perhaps an aspiring regional hegemon. Shunned by the EU, Turkey has paradoxically become more like it: globalised, economically liberal and democratic.”

Ibrahim Kalın, Foreign Policy Adviser to the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

“The new dynamism in Turkish foreign policy over the last decade has prompted a range of questions. To answer such questions, one needs to understand the changes in Turkish domestic politics, in surrounding regions and in the global order over the first decade of the 21st century.”

European Council on Foreign Relations

The European Council on Foreign Relations is the first pan-European think tank. Established in 2007, ECFR’s aim is to promote a value-based and coherent European foreign policy.

Stiftung Mercator

Stiftung Mercator is one of Germany’s largest foundations. It initiates and funds projects that promote better educational opportunities in schools and universities. In the spirit of Gerhard Mercator, it supports initiatives that embody the idea of open-mindedness and tolerance through intercultural encounters, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and culture: www.stiftung-mercator.de

Further information

Download "What does Turkey think?":

http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR35_TURKEY_AW.pdf

Background information, articles and podcasts from ECFR on the subject of Turkey:

<http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/turkey>

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