Status and Situation of the Jews in Turkey: Historical Lines of Development and contemporary Circumstances in the Context of socio-political Transformations

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Abstract

The Turkish Jewish community looks back to a long tradition in Anatolia and Western Thrace. Their particularly strong reticence is one of the main reasons why few well-researched studies of this group exist. It can, however, be expected that Turkey's Jewish community will become significantly smaller in the medium term. This is likely to be the result of various potential social and political threats, further assimilation into Turkish culture and systematic emigration to Israel, Europe and elsewhere.

This paper aims to provide a general, but comprehensive overview of historical, political, social, ethnic-religious and legal situation of Turkey's Jews. It includes information about their characteristics, spread, religious- ethnographic facets, migration processes, the socio-political status and circumstances in past and present and others. Beside it, the study focuses on socio-psychological and socio-anthropological aspects (like issues of assimilation, identity, social and political attitudes and ethnic mimicry). The main sections of this paper are dealing with the situation of the Jewry during the Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Formation of Turkish Nationalism from the 19th Century to 1920, basic political conditions and situation of the Jewry in the context of the socio-political changes in Turkey from the late 1980s until today.

Key words: Ethnic mimicry, Socio-political Transformation, Religious Minority Issues, Assimilation, Genesis and Erosion of Turkish Ethno-Nationalism

Özet

Türkiye'de yaşayan Yahudi cemaati Anadolu ve Batı Trakya'da uzun bir geçmişe sahiptir. Onların ketumluğu cemaatleri üzerine yazılmış az sayıda eserin var olmasının temel nedenlerinden biridir. Ancak Türkiye'deki Yahudi cemaatinin orta vadede Türk kültürüne ileri düzeyde uyum sağlama, İsrail, Avrupa ve başka yerlere yapılan sistemli göç gibi muhtemel bir takım sosyal ve siyasal tehditlerin sonucu olarak belirgin şekilde küçüleceği beklenmelidir.

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de yaşayan Yahudilerin tarihsel, siyasal, sosyal, dini-etnik ve yasal hakları üzerine genel fakat bütüncül bir yaklaşım getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca onların geçmişteki ve günümüzdeki karakter özellikleri, yaşadıkları yerler, dini ve etnik yapıları, göç süreci ve sosyal-siyasal durumları hakkında bilgi verilecektir. Bu araştırma ayrıca Yahudi cemaatinin sosyo-psikolojik ve sosyo-antropolojik yönlerine (asimilasyon, kimlik, sosyo-politik bakış açıları ve etnik taklitçilik gibi) eğilecektir. Bu çalışmanın temel bölümleri Osmanlının son döneminden başlayarak 1920'lerde Türk milliyetçiliğinin ortaya çıkışı ve 1980'lerde yaşanan sosyo-politik değişimden günümüze kadar yaşanan gelişmelere odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etnik Taklitçilik, Sosyo-politik Değişim, Dini Azınlık Meseleleri, Asimilasyon, Türk Etnik Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu ve Erozyonu

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The Jewry in Anatolia and Eastern Thrace, which has a long tradition in this region, was historically characterised by linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity. Generally speaking, the Jews in today's Turkey can be regarded as a separate and relatively compact ethnic group due to their religio-cultural idiosyncrasies, historical amalgamation and absorption processes inside the Jewish community and the collective experiences made during their historical, political, social and cultural integration in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the ideologically inspired Turkish assimilation and laicism processes of the 20th century caused many Jews to adopt diffuse ethno-national, (pro-) Turkish identities and resulted in a reduction in the meaning of the Jewish religion as such. Ultimately, the fundamental boundaries between an ethnic and a purely religious group as well as between the ethnic and national identities adopted by members of the Jewish community are subject to constant changes.

The total number of Jews resident in Turkey is currently estimated at 20.000 to 26.000 with most sources agreeing that the approximate number is around 25.000.[1] In addition to this, there is an unknown number of people who have a historical and partially religio-cultural connection to Judaism and who are the descendants of the so-called crypto-Jewish "Dönme" who are outwardly adhering to Sunni Islam. Today's Jewish community (excluding the Dönme) is dominated to 96% by Sephardic Jews with its Iberian culture and its distinctive religious rite. Alongside this 'mainstream', the community of Ashkenazi, who originate from Central and Eastern Europe and whose culture and religious rites are influenced by this, has been preserved and represents the second largest Jewish group. A third group which differs from Rabbinic Judaism and which has its own rite are the Turcic-speaking Karaites (or Karaims), who originally emigrated from the Crimea. Regarding the origins of this group, it is unclear if it consists of Crimean Tatars who converted to Judaism or of assimilated Jews who spoke a Turkic language like Crimean Tatar. In today's Turkey their membership is estimated at approximately 100 persons. Finally, several thousand members of the ethnically very different Asiatic or Oriental Jewish community or *Mizrachim* lived in Turkey until the mid-1950s. A handful of members of this group with Jewish Georgian, Iranian or Kurdish origins can still be found in Istanbul today. Religious forms of ultra-Orthodox Judaism cannot be found in Turkey. Istanbul with its 18.000 to 23.000 Jewish residents remains the uncontested centre of Jewish life in today's Turkey.[2] Apart from this city, the Jewish community clusters in Izmir, where approximately 1.500 to 2.500 of its members live. A handful of Jewish families also live in Bursa, Adana, Ankara, Çanakkale, Kırklareli and Antakya.[3] Turkish Jews are therefore an integral part of Turkey's historical legacy and its multi-ethnic and multi-religious mosaic which was weakened, but not wiped out by the rigid nationalist assimilation and homogenisation policies pursued during the 20th century.

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[1] Güleryüz, Naim Avigdor, The Turkish Jews. 700 Years of Togetherness, Istanbul 2009, p. 33; Güleryüz, Naim Avigdor, The History of Turkish Jews, www.turkyahudileri.com/content/view/246/272/lang,en/, retrived 20.05.2013 and Şalom, Türk Yahudilerinin sessiz hayatı, www.salom.com.tr/newsdetails.asp?id=87016#.UZvP7Jx73IU, 15.05.2013.

[2] Today, Jews settle predominantly in the modern and Western influenced districts Nişantaşı, Şişli,, Bakırköy, Beyoğlu (Karaköy, Galata) etc. on the European side and in Suadiye, Burgaz Adası, Heybeli Ada und Büyük Ada etc. on the Asian side.

[3] Andrews, Peter Alford / Benninghaus, Rüdiger, Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey, Wiesbaden 1989, p. 158; Çiloğlu, Fahrettin, Gürcüler, in: Çveneburi 8-9 (March-June 1994), p. 28; Güleryüz, 2009, p. 33; Türkoğlu, İnci / Yenen, Şerif, Jewish Heritage in Turkey, Istanbul 2011; ZfT (Zentrum für Türkeistudien), Das ethnische und religiöse Mosaik der Türkei und seine Reflexionen auf Deutschland, Münster 1998, p. 62 and others.

The working conditions for researchers interested in ethno-religious groups like the Jews have noticeably improved since the early 1990s as a result of the socio-political liberalisation and transformation processes which were driven to a large degree by the Turkish government's ambition to join the EU. However, the Turkish Jewish community's particularly strong reticence is one of the reasons why few well-researched studies of this group exist.

This paper aims at making a contribution to filling this gap by providing a general, but comprehensive overview of the historical, political, social and legal situation of Turkey's Jews and their organisational structure. Beside it, the study focuses on socio-psychological and socio-anthropological aspects and pays special attention to the Jews' socio-political embeddedness in contemporary Turkey.[4]

The Jews on contemporary Turkish Territory: Overview of their Spread, religious-ethnographic Facets, Migration Processes and socio-political Circumstances in Past and Present

Spread, Characteristics and Status of the Jewry in Anatolia until the 18th Century

There is evidence testifying to the existence of pious Jewish in Anatolia starting from the 4th century BC into the Byzantine era. Already at this time, the indigenous Jewish population mixed with the new arrivals. In the Western regions of Anatolia as well as Eastern Thrace, the majority of Jews were Greek speakers from Byzantium who followed the rabbinic tradition. Although they were subject to extensive persecution and discrimination by the Christian-Byzantine rulers they succeeded in establishing a number of congregations. The Karaites, who migrated to Constantinople and Antalya in the 10th and 11th centuries (e.g. as a result of the crusades), represent an exception to this norm as they were not repressed thanks to their non-rabbinic tradition resp. direct interpretation of the Torah and their close relationship with the Bible that resulted from this.[5] In South-Eastern Anatolia, the Jewish population consisted of Arabic or Aramaic speakers who identified with the Kurds in an ethnic and cultural sense.

After they had conquered Anatolia and Thrace in the 14th and 15th centuries, the Ottomans encouraged European (but also Oriental) Jews to settle in their empire (especially to Edirne, Bursa, Thessaloniki and Istanbul) as they appreciated their skills and special knowledge in areas such as technology, economy, arts and crafts, trade, traffic, medicine and science. Therefore, they were granted religious, cultural and economic freedom, support and special rights. By the 17th century, this had led to waves of immigration of Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Karaitic and Romaniotic Jews from Spain, Portugal, Southern Germany, Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine (including Crimea), France, Greece and Italy who had experienced discrimination and persecution in their countries of origin. The most significant waves of Jewish immigration in Ottoman history

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[4] This paper draws on the findings produced by extensive research on the manifestations and social dynamics of multi-ethnicity and multi-religiosity in the post-Ottoman space which focuses on Muslim minorities in the Balkans and non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. The sources used include secondary academic and information literature, media reports and my own field researches held in 2011 and 2012. I am especially grateful to the Gerda-Henkel-Stiftung whose dedication and financial support within the framework of the project Islam, modern nation-state and transnationalism"enabled me to complete the main part of this research.

[5] There is also evidence of the historical existence of the Krymchaks in Turkey who are another Jewish and Turkic-speaking group from the Crimea. Most of the Krymchaks were absorbed by the Ashkenazi. They differ from the Karaites in a number of cultural and linguistic aspects as well as in a religious way in that they are more orientated towards the Talmudic tradition (see Andrews / Benninghaus, 1989, p. 159).

occurred in 1492 and 1496/97 when approximately 80.000 Iberian or Sephardic, Judeo-Spanish speaking Jews arrived from Spain and Portugal. They were either fleeing the Inquisition in these countries or had been expropriated and expelled. Between the early 16th and the late 17th century, assimilation and absorption processes occurred which led to the different theological, linguistic and cultural features of the different Jewish communities gradually being levelled out. This resulted in the creation of a cultural, linguistic and ritual mainstream, especially in Istanbul, which was dominated by the Sephardim who represented the numerically largest, economically and organisationally most developed group amongst the Jews. While most Romaniotic communities were fully absorbed into the Sephardic stream of Judaism some Karaites and also a few Ashkenazi succeeded in maintaining their independence.[6]

Apart from this, a section of the Ottoman Jews came under the influence of the pseudo-messiah Shabbtai Zvi in the 17th century which led to their separation from the Jewish mainstream. Heeding to Shabbtai Zvi's teachings, they officially converted to Islam and appeared to be practicing this religion, but secretly continued to live according to Jewish customs. The members of this group, which partially still exists today, are called Dönme (converts)[7], Sabbateans or crypto-Jews.[8]

Legally, the Ottoman rulers recognised the Jews as a part of the 'Dhimmi' (non-Muslim subjects) and as a separate religious group (Millet-i Yahudi) within the millet system. On the one hand, this status led to certain forms of discrimination or deprivations in comparison with Sunni Muslims, e.g. higher taxes or extra fees, special regulations, restrictions, bans and duties. On the other hand, however, it also granted them – like all other recognised non-Muslim groups – certain rights to self-government, broad religious freedom and opportunities for development as well as the possibility to open schools and other institutions. In the long term, Jewish colonies developed and prospered especially in the economic centres of the Ottoman Empire. They cultivated their religious, linguistic and cultural life and developed their own sub-culture.[9] Apart from this, the Jews succeeded in carving out a significant economic, social and cultural position for themselves within the Ottoman Empire. This resulted in a number of advancement opportunities for Jews who played important roles in areas like domestic and external trade, finance, administration,

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[6] Andrews / Benninghaus, 1989, p. 157-159; Çağlar, Gazi, Staat und Zivilgesellschaft in der Türkei und im Osmanischen Reich, Frankfurt a.M. 2000, p. 472ff; Epstein, Marc Alan, The Jews in Turkey, in: Andrews, Peter Alford / Benninghaus, Rüdiger, Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey, Wiesbaden 1989, p. 519-524, p. 519ff; Güleryüz, Naim Avigdor, Türk Yahudileri Tarihi. I: 20. yüzyılın başına kadar, Istanbul 1993, p. 43ff; Güleryüz, 2009, p. 9-11, 15-17, 37, 45-47; Panova, Snežka, Die Juden zwischen Toleranz und Völkerrecht im Osmanischen Reich, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, p. 47ff, 56, 61ff and Trebilco, Paul Raymond, Jewish Communities in Asia Minor, Cambridge 1991.

[7] In this context, the Jewish ‚Dönme' must not be confused with the persons of Armenian origin who are also called ‚Dönme' as they or their ancestors converted to Sunni or Alevite Islam after the mass murder of 1915.

[8] Baer, Marc David, The Dönme. Jewish converts, Muslim revolutionaries, and secular Turks, Stanford 2010.

[9] In a study of the Ottoman Empire's civil society, Çağlar (2000, p. 475ff; see also Güleryüz, 1993, p. 17-33, 125, 227) comments on this issue by saying that "the Jewish communities (…) had access to a wide network of pre-civil society organisations consisting of synagogues (…), schools, academies (…), charities (…), publishing houses, foundations, (…) etc. This civil society was closely entangled with the Empire's structure and its political society and provided the basis for the Jewish population's active consensus. Jewish congregations that enjoyed autonomous internal organisation constituted an inherent part of the Ottoman civil society, but they were not closed societies. Quite on the contrary, they were related to their environment in multiple ways and took an active part in shaping their surroundings." The author further notes that "… the relative security, which the Ottoman state provided, seems to not only have facilitated the development of an extensive Jewish civil society. It also seems to have been the main reason for which the Jewish population actively approved of the Ottoman way of life (…)."

transport, taxation, mining, mineral resources, coin printing, etc. The admission, acceptance of and support for European Jews led to numerous economic, technical, intellectual, cultural and social innovations for the Ottoman Empire.[10] The Ottoman rulers consequently involved them in government affairs (e.g. as ministers, diplomats or military advisors) or gave them positions as physicists or doctors at the sultan's court. At certain times, the leader of the Jewish community or ethnarch (Hahambaşı), who had the most legislative and judicial power over the members of his religious group within the framework of self-government, was asked to sit on the Sultan's state council. The ethnarchs usually maintained good and direct relations with this council. Under these conditions, the Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire flourished in the 16th century. Istanbul, with a population of 50.000 Jews, became the most important centre of Jewish life in Europe. The Ottomans regarded the Jews as a 'loyal nation' (*millet –i sadıka*) due to their strong affinity towards the Ottomans and many common economic and political interests. The same can be said about the Armenians until the 19th century.[11]

In contrast to this, the Ottoman Jews were at times faced with serious problems. Their fate was often dependent on their relationship with the ruling Sultan as well as his or his associates' political and economic interests at the national or local level. In unfavourable circumstances, this could lead to arbitrary threats, persecution, harassment, deportation and economic coercion in certain situations, locations or at certain times. Within this context, the high tax burden in combination with the arbitrary levying of extra duties by regional or local Ottoman officials proved particularly problematic and often led to serious economic difficulties and impoverishment amongst parts of the Jewish population. Those Jews who were subject to illegitimate local extra duties rarely received support from the central Ottoman authorities. If they put up resistance the state often reacted with expropriation and persecution. This demonstrates that the Ottomans' religious tolerance towards the Jews could quickly reach its limits. These kinds of problems led to Jews emigrating from the Ottoman Empire, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries. In this context, the Ottoman Jews experienced a relative economic and cultural marginalisation, that increased gradually as of the 17th century. This went hand in hand with a loss of influence on the economic and political levels which resulted from the ascent of the Greeks and the Armenians as of the 18th century.[12]

The Situation of the Jewry during the Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Formation of Turkish Nationalism from the 19th Century to 1920

The profound economic, social and political transformations and their consequences, which shaped Europe and the Ottoman Empire from the 18th century onwards and especially during the 19th century, had a noticeable impact on the numerous ethnic and religious groups based in the Ottoman Empire. The fragile social and political balance between general tolerance and obvious disadvantages was upset by the gradual military and economic decline of the Sultan's state and the rise of the European great powers and industrial states, including Russia, France, Great Britain, Prussia and the

[10] Apart from the hope of recruiting the professionals that were desperately needed to revive the economy, "the privileges granted to Jewish communities in the millet system resulted from the similarities between Islam and Judaism, but they were first and foremost due to the fact that the Byzantine and Balkan rulers were Christians and that Christian Europe was involved in a permanent war with the Ottoman Empire" (see Caglar, 2000, p. 473; see also Güleryüz, 1993, p. 53).
[11] Epstein, 1989, p. 520; Güleryüz, 1993, p. 60f. and 2009, p. 15-9; Lewis, Bernard, The Jews of Islam, New Jersey 1984, p. 134-39 and ZfT, 1998, p. 64.
[12] Caglar, 2000, p. 475; Güleryüz, 1993, p. 134 and Panova, 1997, p. 69-74, 207.

Austro-Hungarian Empire that continuously expanded their spheres of interests, including into a large area controlled by the Ottomans. Despite the international competition, the Ottoman leadership looked upon the political, societal and economic systems embraced by Central and West European states as models which it sought to imitate when implementing far reaching liberalising reforms that were aimed at halting the further decline of the Empire, which was characterised by obstructive feudal structures, and at strengthening its position in regards to its European competitors. It can therefore be said that the conception and implementation of the *Tanzimat* reforms from 1839 to 1876 was influenced by internal impulses as well as pressure from the European great powers.[13] Within the context of the transformation processes, the reform edict of 1856 represented a landmark in the formal improvement of the position of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. This edict stipulated the abolition of the ‘Dhimmi status’ and the ‘millet system’ and granted subject rights to the members of all religious groups whilst preserving their respective immunities and privileges. It thus led to a normative equality in civil law of all the Empire’s subjects irrespective of their religious backgrounds.[14] This meant, for example, equal access to public offices, equal taxation and the extension of the military draft to non-Muslims (which could be bypassed due to special regulations).[15]

However, it was not only high-ranking groups within the Ottoman leadership who regarded Central and Western European concepts as role models worthy of imitation, but also or even more so the Empire’s religious minorities as well as large sections of the progressively orientated Muslim-Ottoman society. This applied especially to political, social, intellectual and cultural issues. The Jewish community was no exception to this. It supported the reform and modernisation processes and became increasingly secular as a result of the policies adopted in 1856. In many regards, it modelled itself more and more according to French ideas, especially since the second half of the 19th century.[16] Ultimately, the first Ottoman constitution of 1876 was based on the reforms of 1856 and French constitutional law. However, the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II abolished this constitution in 1878 as a consequence of the military and diplomatic defeats earlier that decade, which led to the loss of large Ottoman controlled areas in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the persecution and displacement of the local Muslim population on a massive

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[13] This external pressure was aimed, on the one hand, at improving the socio-political position of the non-Muslim groups protected by the respective European state. Within this context, Great Britain played the role of protector of the Ottoman Jews since the end of the 18th century. This led, amongst other things, to a reduction in the Jewish ethnarch’s political significance. On the other hand, however, the European great powers also aimed at instrumentalising the ethno-religious minorities to further destabilise the Ottoman Empire and to thereby promote their own expansionist policies.

[14] Due to the economic nature of the Tanzimat reforms a decree was issued in 1857 which aimed at promoting agricultural activity by allowing foreigners to take up residence in the Empire if they abode by its laws and subjected themselves to the Sultan. This led to the immigration of numerous European Jews (see Karpat, Kemal Haşim, Ottoman population 1830-1914. Demographic and social characteristics, Wisconsin 1985, p. 62ff).

[15] With reference to the edict of 1856, the Jews developed by 1865 a set of rules which led to the creation of their own parliament which was responsible for internal Jewish affairs. The Armenians and Greeks had done the same a few years earlier.

[16] This also applied to education and language. The schools, which were founded by the Alliance Israélite Universelle after 1863, heavily promoted the use of French amongst Turkish Jews. This resulted in the long-term marginalisation of Judeo-Spanish which in turn catalysed the increased use of Turkish in the 20th century (see Andrews / Benninghaus, 1989, p. 159).

scale and the start-up and development of the genesis of the Turkish national movement. Thus, the Ottoman state regained more absolutist characteristics until 1908.[17]

These steps backwards on the path of the reform process were met with disappointment by the members of all non-Muslim groups as well as parts of the Ottoman Muslims. During this time, the Armenian-Ottoman relationship deteriorated due to the high number of obvious political and social problems which eventually led to violent conflict and the mass murder of Armenians and Syriacs during the First World War (which is widely regarded as genocide by international scientists and politicians as well as the descendants of the affected groups). In contrast to this, the overwhelming majority of Jews had a relationship with the Ottomans or Turks that was characterised by restraint and widespread loyalty despite the existing strong potential for conflict. A number of reasons can be advanced for this difference in the development of the bilateral relations between the previously 'loyal nations' and the Ottomans: the Jews arrived later, were much less numerous, more mobile and spread over a larger area than the Armenians who had deep historical roots in Anatolia where they had often settled in compact communities making up a strong minority in many areas. In contrast to the Jews, the Armenians were much more often involved in intensive social and political conflicts with the Muslim population or administration, especially in rural areas. Five main factors encouraged influential parts of the Armenian elites to make national, political and territorial claims, something the Jewish community did not do due to its specific situation, nor could it have had any hope of having these claims met. These five factors were i) the impression that Armenian-Ottoman relations were deteriorating; ii) the disappointment over the lack of help from the Ottoman political leadership as a result of the delayed reform process; iii) the increase in nationalism and the escalation of the conflict between the Armenian and Ottoman adversaries; iv) the strong support for and self-interested instrumentalisation of the Armenians by the Ottomans' arch enemy Russia and v) the Armenian consciousness of its own social, political and economic potential, strength and influence.

In this context, it is noticeable that the Jews had developed a specific psychological loyalty to the Ottomans which was based on their gratefulness for the admission as well as economic and social support extended by the Empire to their ancestors who were fleeing life-threatening persecution and discrimination in their Christian dominated countries of origin or had been expelled from there. Many Ottoman Jews therefore ruled out any political cooperation with Christian great powers like Russia which were threatening the Ottoman Empire while persecuting or discriminating against their own Jewish population. This attitude was reinforced by the waves of Jewish refugees from Bukovina, the Crimea and other Russian controlled regions which were caused by the pogroms that took place in these areas between 1881 and 1902.[18] At the same time, Sephardic Jews relocated from those areas of the Balkans that had previously been part of the Ottoman Empire[19], but were

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[17] Andrews / Benninghaus, 1989, p. 159; Güleryüz, 2009, p. 27; Kreiser, Klaus / Neumann, Christoph, Kleine Geschichte der Türkei. Stuttgart 2003, p. 371-77; Matuz, Josef, Das Osmanische Reich. Grundlinien seiner Geschichte, Darmstadt 1996., p. 224-45; Scheel, Helmuth, Die staatsrechtliche Stellung der ökumenischen Kirchenfürsten in der alten Türkei. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der türkischen Verfassung und Verwaltung, Berlin 1945, p. 10ff and Tanör, Bülent, Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri, Istanbul 2009, p. 131.

[18] This led to a revival of the Ashkenazi communities which had previously been absorbed by the Sephardim.

[19] As Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire was not restricted to the areas which make up today's Turkey the number of Jews resident in the Empire was reduced drastically due to the territorial losses suffered by the Ottoman state. The Jews who subsequently found themselves living under Christian rule were occasionally subject to discrimination on religious grounds, but often also due to their pro-Ottoman attitudes. A similar point can be made about the Muslims in these territories.

by then ruled by Christian-dominated states as they preferred to continue living under the aegis of the Ottomans.[20]

Despite the domestic and foreign policy difficulties, many Ottoman Jews (as well as certain Muslim intellectual and political actors, including many Young Turks) cherished their Western inspired stances and their desire for reforms and modernisation. They (as well as many politically moderate Armenian actors) retained a loyal attitude towards the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. They aimed at bringing forth changes in domestic politics by supporting like-minded Turkish-Ottoman forces.

These aspirations were fuelled by the Young Turk revolution of 1908. Borrowing from the 1876 constitution, the Young Turks initially attempted to establish a constitutional state and a parliamentary form of government which granted the polity's non-Sunni and non-Turkish minorities participation rights and certain autonomies. Within this context, parts of Christians and Jews initially supported the Young Turks. In this context, a considerable number of Jewish intellectuals endorsed and supported Turkish nationalism and the idea of a nation-state.[21] In practice, these developments led to the admission of Jews as regular soldiers into the Turkish army as of 1909. However, already at this time, the liberal forces within the heterogeneous Young Turk movement started being marginalised which paved the way for the increasing dominance of its pro-Islamic, Turkish-nationalist and turanistic orientated representatives who pursued policies which disadvantaged non-Muslim and non-Turkish groups. The embrace of Western concepts by the Young Turks also led to their adoption of the notion of nationalism as early as the 19th century.[22] This resulted in an increasing awareness and spread of anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic ideas, that had deep roots in Europe, among radical Young Turkish nationalists and Islamists. This had a negative impact on the Ottoman or Turkish Jews during the course of the 20th century. The increasing aversion towards Jews can, however, not only be explained with reference to the unquestioning adoption of anti-Semitic notions imported from Europe. It was also the result of fundamental suspicions and a negative attitude towards all non-Muslim minorities living in the Ottoman Empire as they were regarded as disloyal. This perception was further reinforced by an increasing Turkish nationalism which was catalysed by further territorial losses, the murder and expulsion of the local Muslim population (especially from Balkans and Caucasus) and the support that the Empire's war enemies received from parts of its non-Muslim residents. It seems to be paradox that these kind of sentiments were also felt in regards to the Jews given that most of them had pro-Ottoman and Turkish loyalties.

Nevertheless, due to their specific situation and their cautious and often loyal positions, the Jews of the Ottoman Empire were largely spared from the well-known, seriously destructive measures aimed at the state's non-Muslims between the 1880s and 1910s. Despite the difficulties caused by the war and nationalist sentiments in the 1910s the living conditions of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire were considered relatively secure. This encouraged further Jews of the Sephardic, Ashkenazic and Mizrachim traditions to move to the regions controlled by the Ottomans as they preferred the conditions

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[20] Babuna, Aydin, Die nationale Entwicklung der bosnischen Muslime, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 48; Epstein, 1989, p. 521; Güleryüz, 2009, p. 16, 45ff and others.

[21] While certain Christian intellectuals were active in the leading Turkish nationalist party „İttihad ve Terakki" only in the initial stages, a considerable number of Jewish activists remained involved until the end of the Young Turkish period in 1918.

[22] Akçam, Taner, Armenien und der Völkermord. Die Istanbuler Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung, Hamburg 1996, p. 27-39; Kreiser / Neumann, 2003, 359, 362 and ZfT, 1998, p. 64ff.

encountered in these areas to the problems and insecurities in their countries of origin.[23] However, when the First World War and the Turkish war of independence broke out a number of long-established Jews as well as recent Jewish refugees emigrated from the Ottoman Empire to North and Latin America, Africa, the Far East and Palestine. Nevertheless, the Jewish community in the remaining Turkish-Ottoman territories counted approximately 100.000 members in 1920.[24]

The Jews in the Kemalist Turkish Republic until the End of the Cold War

During the period of the Turkish war of independence and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, many Jews advocated and supported the Kemalist movement and the creation of a Turkish Nation state. This was mostly based on the movement's political and social modernisation and reform agendas as well as its ambition to replace the Sultan monarchy, which was legitimised by Islam, with a secular parliamentary republic. An important role was played in this by secularism or laicism, which was one of the key elements of political Kemalism and which had gained great popularity in the Jewish-Turkish community in the previous decades. Beside it, Mustafa Kemal developed tactical strategies during the Turkish war of independence and the time immediately after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic which should create the impression that the new state would implement moderate ethnic policies. This strategy aimed at mobilising and committing the largest number possible for his nation-state project and intended to stabilise the new polity. Therefore the members of Jewish community often remained loyal to the Turks and avoided collaboration with Turkey's enemies even during the war of independence when some of them found themselves living in areas occupied by European powers.[25] After the declaration of the Turkish Republic, a number of Jewish intellectuals participated in the drafting in the Kemalist nationality policy. The 'theories of economic Turkism' and a general Turkification programme, for example, are based on the ten commandments of the Old Testament and the ideas of the Jewish-Turkish scholar Munis Tekinalp who was also known as Moiz Cohen. Furthermore, some Jewish intellectuals supported the later campaign for linguistic Turkification („Vatandaş, Türkçe konuş!“).[26]

The crypto-Jewish Dönme, who – similar to the Ottoman Jews – had been heavily secularised, were strongly involved in the Kemalist movement and the political system of the Turkish Republic. Due to their official status as Muslims the crypto-Jews were forced to leave their key base in Thessaloniki as a consequence of the Greek-Turkish population exchange of 1922/23 agreed upon in the Treaty of Lausanne.[27]

Although the pro-Kemalist attitudes held by many representatives of the Jewish elites Turkey's Jews became the targets of the discriminatory nationalist Turkification policies. Despite its embrace of the principles of laicism and republicanism, the Kemalist

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[23] On the one hand, this applies to the Jews from e.g. Greece and Syria as well as those territories that the Ottomans lost during the course of the Balkan wars, the First World War and the Turkish war of independence. On the other hand, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia 1917 and the gradual expansion of the Soviet Union under the leadership of the militarily increasingly successful Bolsheviks between 1917 and 1921 led to the migration of Georgian, Ukrainian, Russian and other Jews to Istanbul. By 1921, approximately 2.000 Jews of Georgian origin had arrived in the city (see Çiloğlu, 1994 and ZfT, 1998, p. 62).

[24] Çiloğlu, 1994; Epstein, 1989, p. 521 and others.

[25] Their good relations with the Kemalists as well as the Christian minorities in these regions enabled the Jews in Tekirdağ (Eastern Thrace), for example, to take over the properties left behind by killed or expelled Armenians after the Turkish war of independence (see Andrews / Benninghaus, 1989, p. 158).

[26] Güleryüz, 2009, p. 27 and ZfT, 1998, p. 64ff.

[27] Baer, 2010.

national ideology made an inextricable link between membership in the Turkish nation and adherence to Islam. The majority of Turkish society and its national-political leadership therefore regarded non-Muslims as foreign elements in Turkish society which allegedly had been placed there by the international Treaty of Lausanne. In consequence of this treaty the Armenians and the Greeks were explicitly recognised as a minority. As a result of this agreement, Armenians and Greeks were explicitly recognised as minorities due to the pressure put up by their respective kin states. In this context, the Jews were also granted a quasi legal status as a minority although they did not have a kin state at this time. This status was the result of their special position and rights in the Ottoman millet system. Based on this status, the granted certain rights as an ethno-religious groups included, amongst others, the right to maintain their own institutions like schools, hospitals and cemeteries, the right to preserve their specific non-Turkish first and family names, to apply specific Jewish-religious rules in several areas of the law to members of their own group, etc.[28] In the subsequent years and decades, however, the Turkish government used legal, administrative and practical measures to undermine these minority rights.[29]

In the context of the new political conditions, the Jews tended to regard their minority status as a social and political stigma which ultimately led to the loss of the high social standing which they had achieved in the Ottoman Empire. As early as 1925, the religious leadership of the Jewish community prepared a petition to the Turkish state which aimed at counteracting its social and political marginalisation due to Turkish nationalism and which corresponded to the Jewish community's secular orientation. The petition's authors go out of their way to emphasise that their community recognises the Republic's secular laws and that it will therefore refrain from making use of the right, stipulated by the Treaty of Lausanne, to apply its own rules in there area of civil law and especially in regards to family and personal law.[30]

In the exceptional case of the Dönme the existence of crypto-Jewish elements provoked controversies and problems in regards to their classification which were discussed both by the Turkish mainstream society and inside the Dönme community. Nevertheless, the Dönme succeeded in establishing themselves and to get promoted within the Turkish system much more than the Jews despite their secular and pro-Kemalist orientations and commitment to the Turkish Republic.[31] This difference is due, on the one hand, to the Dönme's elites' public profession of Islam, laicism and Turkishness and, on the other hand, to the Jews being discredited simply on the basis of their religion and their status as minority.

As a consequence of their designation as a minority by the Turkish Republic, the Jews lost their previously high status within the state. This resulted in deterioration of their

[28] These kinds of rights were either totally denied to other ethno-religious minorities like the Syriacs or partially denied to ethnic, but not religious minorities or religious, but not ethnic minorities like the Sunni Kurds or Turkish Alevites. Ultimately, mostly all non-Turkish (ethnic) and non-Sunni (religious) groups in one way or another were subject to the state's rigidly nationalist, assimilatory and discriminatory homogenisation and Turkification policies.

[29] Bali, Rıfat, The politics of Turcification during the Single Party period, in: Kieser, Hans-Lukas (Ed.), Turkey beyond nationalism. Towards post-nationalist-identities, London 2006, p. 43-49; Goltz, Gabriel, The non-Muslim minorities and reform in Turkey, in: Kieser, Hans-Lukas (ed.), Turkey beyond nationalism. Towards post-nationalist-identities, London 2006, p. 175-182; Rumpf, Christian, Minderheiten in der Türkei und die Frage nach ihrem rechtlichen Schutz, in: Zeitschrift für Türkeistudien 2/1993, p. 173-209, p. 186-188; ZfT 1998, p. 25, 64 and others.

[30] Güleryüz, 2009, p. 27ff.

[31] Baer, 2010.

living standards until the end of World War II. Step by step, many of them lost their official positions within the state and society as well as their leading roles as traders as a result of the Turkification of the economy. These rigid homogenisation measures extended to other social and cultural areas, e.g. in the form of vehement linguistic Turkification. The mere lack of opportunities in trade and social development, which resulted from this policy, inspired Jewish migration processes already in the inter-war period. Furthermore, a significant number of Jews were expatriated as it was claimed that they had refused to participate in the Turkish war of independence.[32] The increasing social, political and economic marginalisation and discrimination of the Jews, which was accompanied by open hostility, anti-Semitism and abuse, reached its negative climax in the 'Thrace pogrom' of 1934. In addition to this, the additional taxes, which were introduced for non-Muslims in 1942 (The Wealth Tax, *Varlık Vergisi*)[33] caused particularly serious economic problems and poverty which occasionally led to expropriations and forced labour.[34]

At the same time as these discriminatory policies were being pursued Turkey opened its borders to several hundred Jewish intellectuals and academics from Germany and Austria who were seeking shelter from the Nazis after 1933. The idea was that they would improve and develop Turkey's public institutions and its academic system. Moreover, Turkish ambassadors to several European states saved numerous Jews from certain death by offering them shelter in their embassies or facilitating their emigration to Turkey.[35] More recent research findings, however, indicate that these cases represented exceptions or personal initiatives rather than a coordinated policy. In this context, some studies point out that Ankara's policy towards the Jews during World War II was highly ambivalent.[36]

Due to the political developments in Turkey, increasing Nazi-German control over parts of Europe and the Near East Turkish Jews started emigrating to Palestine from the early 1940s onwards. This outward migration, which continued into the mid-1950s, reached its climax after the founding of the state of Israel (which was recognised by Muslim-dominated-Turkey as early as 1948) in 1948/49. During this period, approximately half of 70.000 Jews who had remained in Turkey during the War left the country.[37] In addition to the Sephardim and Ashkenazim, the vast majority of the Karaites, the Jewish

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[32] It was, however, very difficult for the majority of Ottoman Jews to take advantage of these opportunities as the areas in which most of them had settled were controlled by Turkey's enemies during the war of independence.

[33] This measure, which functioned almost as a war tax, was rescinded in 1944 when Turkey was seeking rapprochement with the Allies. According to a study by the German Centre for Turkish Studies, this experience and the fear of its re-introduction had a tangible impact on the affected generations until the 1990s.

[34] Andrews / Benninghaus, 1989, p. 160; Bali, 2006; Benbassa, Esther / Rodrigue, Aron, The Jews of the Balkans: the Judeo-Spanish community. 15th to 20th centuries, Oxford 1995, p. 101-4; Guttstadt, Corry, Depriving non-Muslims of citizenship as part of the Turkification policy in the early years of the Turkish Republic: The case of Turkish Jews and its consequences during the Holocaust, in: Kieser, Hans-Lukas (ed.), Turkey beyond nationalism. Towards post-nationalist-identities, London 2006, p. 50-56; Güven, Dilek, Nationalismus und Minderheiten. Die Ausschreitungen gegen die Christen und Juden der Türkei vom September 1955. München 2012, p. 85-118; Özkırımlı, Umut / Sofos, Spyros, Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey, London 2008, p. 163-178 and ZfT, 1998, 28ff, p. 65.

[35] Epstein, 1989, p. 521 and Güleryüz, 2009, p. 29.

[36] Benbassa/Rodrigue, 1995, p. 179-184; Guttstadt 2006 and Guttstadt, Corry, Die Türkei, die Juden und der Holocaust, Hamburg 2008.

[37] According to official Israeli statistics published in 1996, 8,277 Jews migrated from Turkey to Palestine or Israel between 1919 and 1948. This number increased to 30,657 in 1948/49 and to a total of 61,374 between 1948 and 1996 (see ZfT, 1998, p. 62ff).

Kurds from South-Eastern Anatolia and those Jews who had not settled in Turkey until the 20th century moved to Israel. This emigration resulted in a membership reduction for nearly all Jewish communities in Anatolia. It was compounded by internal migration to Istanbul where the new arrivals were assimilated into the existing congregations. This led to the rapid disappearance of many local Jewish customs which had survived for many centuries. Difficult living conditions in Israel and the impression that the DP government in Turkey was pursing modestly liberalising policies towards its non-Muslim minorities encouraged a considerable number of Jews to return to the country in the early 1950s (and even to support the DP in a in a direct or indirect manner). This trend was, however, cut short by the climax of the Cyprus Crisis in 1954 and the state-sponsored, serious pogroms in Istanbul of September 1955 which primarily targeted the local Greek population, but also affected Jews and other non-Muslims. Out of fear of renewed persecution many Jews reconsidered a move to Israel or emigrated to France or the USA. In the 1960s and 70s, Jews continued to move to these countries or to Istanbul. This also formed part of the mostly economically motivated internal migration or migrant workers movement which affected the whole of Turkish society. This led to the dissolution of the remaining Jewish congregations in the cities of Edirne, Tekirdağ und Çanakkale in Eastern Thrace and the relocation of the last Kurdish Jews from South-East Anatolia to Istanbul. According to the 1965 Turkish census, 38.267 persons identified themselves as adherents of Judaism.[38] Due to economic problems, terrorist attacks and the civil war-like situation between 1977 and 1980 groups of Jews again started to move abroad. Their number, however, declined after the military coup of 1980.[39]

Within this context, the remaining Jews were subject not only to the general political and social stigmatisation that affected every ethnic and religious group which was perceived as non-Turkish and non-Muslim and had an official minority status. For them specifically anti-Semitism also continued to play a problematic role which should not be underestimated. For most of the 20th century and in contrast to all other Muslim-dominated states in the Near East, the Turkish state – which was a strategically very important NATO ally for the 'Western' world during the Cold War – maintained good political, economic and especially military and intelligence service ties with Israel which was protected by the 'Western' powers. Furthermore, Turkey enjoyed great popularity as a tourist destination for Israeli Jews. Nevertheless, both countries, however, neglected a cultural and humane exchange at the societal level. Israel's rigid policy towards Palestine and the intensity of the increasing escalation of this conflict in the Near East fuelled and reinforced the already existing anti-Zionist, anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic sentiments amongst larger parts of Turkey's Muslim population (which initially represented a phenomenon at the margins of Turkish society).[40] This has proved a heavy burden for Turkish Jews who are (to the present day) often blamed for the suffering of the Muslims in Palestine und regarded as collaborators and supporters of Israel simply because of their Jewish heritage or their contacts with Israelis, most of whom are family relations. The thus resulting

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[38] In the first Turkish census of 1927 approximately 81,000 persons identified themselves as Jews. For information about the steady decrease of the Jewish population please refer to the official statistics contained in all Turkish censuses between 1927 and 1965 (in which questions about Turkish Jews or speakers of Judeo-Spanish were asked) in Tunçay, Mehmet., Azınlıklar Nüfusu, in: Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansikopedisi Bd. 6, Istanbul 1983, p. 1563f.

[39] Andrews / Benninghaus, 1989, p. 157ff; Epstein, 1989, p. 521ff and Güven, 2012, 115-125.

[40] In the 1970s and 1980s, the main protagonists in the field of a publicly expressed anti-Semitism were the Islamic movement „Milli Görüş" founded by the politician Necmettin Erbakan and the right-wing, nationalist party MHP.

dangers can be illustrated by the 1986 bomb attacks on the *Neve-Şalom* Synagogue in Istanbul which claimed a total of 24 lives. On the one hand, these general conditions represented an additional factor which encouraged parts of the Turkish Jewry to consider emigration. On the other hand, however, Epstein concluded that, by the late 1980s, the members of the Jewish community could generally feel sufficiently safe in their private and personal environments.[41]

Basic Political Conditions and Situation of the Jewry in the Context of the socio-political Changes in Turkey from the late 1980s until today

After a period during which Turkish politics were characterised by turbulence and occasional violence some liberalising tendencies could be noted as of the 1980s and especially after the end of the Cold War. These affected mainly the social and political level and were driven both by internal and external factors.[42] The accompanying discourse acknowledged, initially informally but later increasingly openly, the existence of (ethnically) non-Turkish and (religiously) non-Sunni groups in Turkey. It was felt that this was a subject which could and should no longer be ignored or denied at that time despite the thorough assimilation drive carried out in the preceding decades. Beside it, already at the end of the 1980s, the Turkish Prime Minister Özal made modest attempts to place religious minorities more firmly in the public and political sector in order to improve Turkey's international reputation. This encouraged at, for example, members of the laic Jewish elite, who were close to the state (see section 3) to compare their positions, influence and opportunities with a view to organising extensive public projects, events and festivities to mark the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the first Sephardi in the Ottoman Empire in 1992. These projects, in which the state was heavily involved, were meant to solemnly mark a purely historical event or aspect of Turkish-Ottoman history, but they were also instrumentalised to project the image of a tolerant Turkish polity.[43] At the same time, these projects contained references to ethnic and cultural elements of non-Turkish life which were broadly taboo in Turkish politics at the time. A development, which occurred at approximately the 1980s (in some cases already before) was the ethno-cultural organisation of ethnic (mostly *Muhacir*-) communities from the North Caucasus, the East Turkestanis, Tatars, Georgians, Bosniacs and others, who adhere to Sunni Islam. This

[41] Epstein, 1989, p. 523.

[42] This development formed part of the global changes that were spawned by the end of the Cold War and the demise of the bipolar world as well as the accompanying process that led to partial democratisation and social liberalisation in the states of Central and Eastern Europe and the former USSR. These reforms took place in Turkey's immediate neighbourhood or in its geographic, cultural or potentially historical spheres of interest. This led to certain synergies which impacted on Turkish society and politics. Four main factors created the impression amongst large parts of Turkish society that thorough (civil) society changes and liberalisation were urgently needed. These are: i) the three military coups, which have taken place since 1960; ii) a domestic political situation that at times resembled civil war; iii) the implementation of a highly authoritarian style of government and iv) the bloody fight between the Turkish military and the Kurdish separatists that had started in the early 1980s and that nationwide acts of terrorism carried to the very heart of Turkish society (see Giesel, Christoph, Facetten von Multiethnizität und Multireligiosität in der Türkei. Historische Entwicklungslinien und aktuelle Bedingungen im Rahmen politisch-gesellschaftlicher Transformationen, in: Leisse, Olaf (ed.), Die Türkei im Wandel – Innen-und außenpolitische Dynamiken, Baden-Baden 2013, p. 319-64, p. 355ff and Giesel, Christoph (2014b), Die muslimischen Georgier in der Türkei zwischen Assimilation und „ethnic revival" – Ein allgemeiner Überblick, in: Reineck, Natia / Rieger, Ute / Zippel, Wolfgang (ed.), Kaukasiologie heute. Festschrift für Prof. Heinz Fähnrich, Greiz 2014, p. 109-52; p. 136ff.

[43] Benbassa / Rodrigue, 1995, 8; Güleryüz, 2009, 6 and ZfT, 1998, 30.

developments gradually proceeded throughout the entire 1990s and were catalyzed by the change resp. liberalization occurred in the Kurdish policy by Özal in 1991. During this decade, it could also be noticed that some high-ranking representatives of the Turkish administration addressed the topic of their country's multi-ethnic diversity increasingly openly.[44]

On the basis of these circumstances, the government's intensified efforts to join the EU in the foreseeable future proved to be an important catalyst for further socio-political reforms. These efforts gained further buoyancy when the EU opened accession talks with Turkey in 1999, which increasingly had consequences at the practical level. Especially the AKP (Justice and Development Party, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) government under the leadership of the AKP party chairman and Prime Minister *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*, which has been in power since 2002 and which pursues a conservative, Islamic agenda, has made a name for itself as an administration, which implements political reforms inspired by the EU's Copenhagen Criteria. The AKP's policies had four main consequences which (partially) improved the situation of the Jewish community as a recognised minority. These were i) the gradual easing or revision of the previous restrictions that had been inspired by a nationalist ideology, ii) increased possibilities for non-Turkish ethno-cultural groups to develop and voice their opinions publicly; iii) increasingly public debates about these groups' idiosyncrasies and problems and iv) the general improvements in the protection of minorities according to internally recognised legal standards. Within this context, the beginning of the restitution of properties that had been seized by the state and the refurbishment of synagogues since 2011 can be seen as one of the successes for the Jewish community.[45]

Generally speaking, however, the situation in Turkey remains ambiguous despite the tangible increase in opportunities for development for non-Turkish ethnic groups and a number of partial successes at the political and legal level. Quite often both the scope and the effect of the reforms and their implementation remain limited. As before, extensive violations of the law and unsolved political problems that affect both the recognised minorities and those who are seeking this status can be recorded.[46] While the AKP

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[44] Giesel, 2013, p. 355ff; Giesel, Christoph (2014a), Identität und Sprachgebrauch der slawophonen bosniakischen Auswanderer in Istanbul, Univ. PhD 2010, Jena 2014, p. 136-144; Giesel, 2014b, p. 129-137; Scholl-Latour, Peter, Allahs Schatten über Atatürk. Die Türkei in der Zerreißprobe, München 2001, p. 102ff and ZfT, 1998, p. 41, 47-50, 100-102, 106-109.

[45] Goltz, 2006; Schlötzer-Scotland, Christiane, Die neue türkische Identitätskrise und das Erbe des Nationalismus, in: Südosteuropa Mitteilungen 03/2008, p. 32-39; Yannier, Ester, Gaziantep´te unutulan Yahudi mirası, in: Şalom No. 3224, 01.02.2012, p. 3 and others.

[46] This refers e.g. to the lack of status as a juristic person for religious associations (which means that they are continuously facing the potential threat of losing their real estate like prayer houses, schools, guest houses, etc. which can officially only be registered as the property of private persons or a trust), the legally stipulated impossibility of establishing educational institutions for their clerics or other religious officials, an incomplete critical assessment of the Turkish state's past policies on minorities, persistent hostilities and violent acts towards members of minorities, unsatisfactory state protection in case of attacks, delays in returning the religious property illegitimately confiscated by the state, all sorts of limitations placed on the opportunities for development for ethnic or religious minorities (for example in regards to the training of religious officials, the construction and maintenance of prayer houses, the acquisition or donation of real estate, the free exercise of ethno-cultural and religious activities, etc.), inferior rights in comparison with Sunni Turks in the public and religious arenas (this affects, for example, tax-payer funded support for religious and ethnic communities as well as civil service recruitment policies), etc. Moreover, minorities are exposed to discrimination by high-ranking officials of the AKP government. In the out-dated textbooks for secondary schools accredited by the ministry of education Christians and Jews are described as trouble-makers, barbarians, traitors and spies. Furthermore, the schools run by minority groups are compelled to have

government has implemented reforms which have indeed improved the situation of minorities it still denies equal rights to non-Muslims in certain areas. This reminisces of political Ottomanism and the *millet* system in which minorities were granted numerous rights, but nevertheless remained subordinated to the Muslim population. Moreover, Jews as well as other non-Muslims are still regarded as 'local foreigners with Turkish citizenship' by the majority of ordinary Turks and bureaucrats who treat them accordingly.[47] Many members of minorities, ethno-political activists and human rights campaigners are therefore putting high hopes on fundamental improvements on the draft of the new Turkish constitution, which is currently being written. Furthermore, Turkey's recognition of the European Court for Human Rights affords members of minority groups with the opportunity to file a lawsuit against the Turkish state, if necessary.

Apart from the above-mentioned political and legal problems, the potential threat that non-Muslim groups have been exposed to Turkey over the last decades has increased as a result of the rise of radical Islamic positions within Turkish society in the recent years as well as the heightened activities of international Islamic terror networks. This has especially affected the Turkish Jews in the late 20th and early 21st centuries due to the continuing escalation of the conflict in the Near East. Despite the gradual liberalisation on the political and societal levels tensions have arisen, which have impacted on members and institutions of the Jewish minority.[48] The climax of anti-Jewish violence was reached in 2003 when terrorist attacks on two synagogues in Istanbul claimed 57 lives. Within this context, a step-by-step increase in fundamental anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic tendencies within Turkish society and public life can be noted over the last decade. Whilst the *Milli Görüş* movement has officially distanced itself from anti-Semitism by now, the political parties *Refah Partisi* (which was banned as a party of government in 1998) and *Saadet Partisi* which is associated with the Milli Görüş – movement as well as the ultra-nationalistic *MHP* and *Genç Parti* are furthermore regarded as the main political actors that publicly articulate their anti-Semitism. In the meantime, anti-Semitic tendencies have started to spread to left-wing nationalist circles. In addition to this, the popularity of and demand for anti-Semitic essays and books (polemics as well as pseudo-scientific writings) published in Turkey or abroad has risen. The same can be said about specific products of the information media (e.g. "Vakit" or "Milli Gazete" published by the *Milli Görüş* movement) and televised entertainment.[49] The recorded anti-Semitic attitudes and hostilities refer not only to Jews as such, but even more so to the descendants of the Dönme. Especially radical Islamists are very critical of the Dönmes' descendants' strong social, economic and political status in Turkey and their strictly laic-Kemalist and often liberal, social democratic or socialist orientations. It is on this basis that they accuse the Dönme of conspiring against the Turkish-Muslim population in favour of Jewish interests

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a dual leadership structure, which in practice reduces their scope for independent action significantly. This dual leadership consists of a director, who represents the respective minority and a director, who is appointed by the state and who cooperates with the Turkish secret service. The latter also has extensive rights to control and intervene in the running of the school so that he/she is able to influence it in the state's interests.

[47] Goltz, 2006.

[48] Between 1992 and 1996 and in 2001, several attacks on synagogues, cemeteries, Jewish intellectuals, businessmen and other officials have taken place, which did not only damage property, but also left several persons dead.

[49] Nevertheless, most Turks perceive their country as one that is mostly Jewish-friendly. They would deny the existence of anti-Semitic tendencies in their society, a view, which is corroborated by some Jewish intellectuals (see section 3). Apart from a few intellectuals and media outlets that belong to political left wing, virtually nobody has so far publicly addressed and debated the topic of Turkish anti-Semitism.

and the state of Israel. They are convinced that the Dönme have created a conspiratorial, but powerful social network with the help of which they have undermined key positions in the spheres of politics, economics, culture and sports. Within this context, Atatürk's historical and political actions (especially the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate and the implementation of laic principles) are regarded as part of an anti-Islamic, Judeo-Zionist conspiracy facilitated by the Dönme.[50]

In the last few years, these developments were amplified by the rapid deterioration of the bilateral relations between the strongly nationalistic Israeli and the Turkish AKP governments. The consequences of this can ultimately be felt not only on the social, but also on the political level. Turkish-Israeli relations reached a low point on 31 May 2010 when the Israeli army stormed a Turkish ship carrying pro-Palestinensian activists and supplies that was sailing in international waters. This incident, which claimed nine Turkish lives, provoked high-ranking Turkish politicians to make ambiguous statements, to which the members of Turkey's Jewish community reacted with public discontent, fear and insecurity.[51] Despite his critical and occasionally threatening remarks in regards to Israel, Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasised in 2011 that his government had no problems at all with the country's Jewish community.[52] In early 2013, however, public accusations were

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[50] Aydın, Yaşar, Antisemitische Verschwörungstheorien in der Türkei, Nov. 2005, www.graswurzel.net/303/tuerkei.shtml; Bax, Daniel / Kiefer, Michael, Sarahs blaue Augen, 02.05.2006, www.taz.de/1/archiv/archiv/?dig=2006/05/02/a0198; BBC, Hitler book bestseller in Turkey, 18.03. 2005, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4361733.stm; Eygi, Mehmet Şevket, Medyanın %40 Sabetaycıların Elinde, Milli Gazete, 13.02.1999; Kiefer, Michael, Islamkunde in deutscher Sprache in Nordrhein-Westfalen, Kontext, Geschichte, Verlauf und Akzeptanz eines Schulversuchs, Berlin/Hamburg/Münster 2005, p. 48; Küçük, Yalçın, Yanlış Medyada Doğru Söylenmez, in: Yeni Harman, 21.05.2004, p. 19; MEMRI - Middle East Media Research Institute (2005a), Antisemitism in the Turkish Media (Part I), 28.04.2005, http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/1365.htm#_edn3; MEMRI - Middle East Media Research Institute (2005b), Antisemitism in the Turkish Media (Part II) - Turkish Intellectuals Against Antisemitism, 05.052005, http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/1371.htm; MEMRI - Middle East Media Research Institute (2005c), Antisemitism in the Turkish Media (Part III): Targeting Turkey's Jewish Citizens, 06.06.2005, http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/1388.htm; Sarısözen, Veysi, Ruhsal ekolojik yıkım:Toprağın Nazileşmesi, 12.08.2012, www.ozgur-gundem.com/index.php?haberID=47062&haberBaslik=Ruhsal%20ekoloj ik%20y%C4%B1k%C4%B1m:Topra%C4%9F%C4%B1n%20Nazile%C5%9Fmesi&action=haber_detay&m odule=nuce&authorName=Veysi%20SARIS%C3%96ZEN&authorID=2; Sayar, Süleyman, Yahudi Karakteri. Tarihî ve Sosyo-Psikolojik Bir Yaklaşım, Bursa 2000, http://home.uludag.edu.tr/users/ucmaz/PDF/ilh/2000-9%289%29/htmpdf/M-14.pdf; SZ (Süddeutsche Zeitung), Türkei „Nie ein antisemitisches Land", 17.11.2003, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/tuerkei-nie-ein-antisemitisches-land-1.840480 and Yalcın, Soner, Efendi Beyaz Türklerin Büyük Sirri, Istanbul 2004.

[51] In contrast to this, the deterioration of Israeli-Turkish relations restarted the heated debate in Israeli politics and society about the official recognition of the mass murder of Armenians and Syriacs committed by officials of the Ottoman Empire during World War One as genocide. This was the case especially after the so-called "Mavi Marmara incident" and represented a serious provocation of the Turkish government. During the years of the strategic Israeli-Turkish partnership, this kind of debate was subdued or diverted for reasons of political interest although there are undoubtedly close parallels between the above-mentioned mass murder and the Jewish holocaust. Driven by the concern that the current Israeli-Turkish conflict might escalate even further important Israeli politicians are trying to divert these discussions again or are denying that the genocide debate was motivated by contemporary politics. Their aim is to minimise the consequences of this conflict. Those, who have initiated this discussion, however, have repeatedly emphasised that their primary intention is to fulfil their moral and pedagogical responsibility and that they are not motivated by geopolitical or security interests (see FAZ, Völkermord? Massaker? Ein Knesset-Ausschuss spricht über die Armenier, in: FAZ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) No. 302 / 2011, 28.12.2011, p. 29).

[52] Şalom, „Musevi vatandaşlarla problemimiz yok", in: Şalom No. 3206, 14.9.2011, p. 1.

made that Turkish citizens of Jewish origin had collaborated with the Israeli army over the „Mavi Marmara“ incident and therefore committed treason. These claims attracted broad media attention and included the statement that the public prosecution department had investigated a number of questionable persons which had led to the suspicion that Israel was being supported by members of ‘influential families’ resident in Turkey. It was further claimed that the prosecution had established that several Turkish Jews also held Israeli citizenship and maintained active relations with this country.[53] Some of them were said to have done their military service in Israel.[54] In contrast to this, the remarks made by Turkey’s deputy prime minister Bülent Arınç in March 2013 gave rise to hope about an easing of tensions. Arınç emphasised publicly that his administration regarded the country’s different ethnic, religious and cultural minorities as enriching/a national treasure. Therefore, he said, no effort is spared to solve the problems experienced by religious minorities and to ensure that people of different faiths live peacefully side-by-side. He also expressed the wish/hope that those, who had left Turkey due to the mistakes made by state officials, would return.[55] But in early July 2013, media reports about the statements made by Turkey’s deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay were a cause for further concern. According to these reports, Atalay accused Israel and parts of the Jewish diaspora (which was understood by the general public as an indirect reference to the Jews living in Turkey) of having played a role in organising the anti-government protests of summer 2013. He allegedly claimed that Israel was pursuing political and economic interests and was aiming at destabilising Turkey. Atalay himself, however, immediately denied having made the claims carried in the media. The increased feeling of insecurity which was resulted from these reports could nevertheless not be thwarted by this denial.[56]

Apart from this specific set of problems, the policies pursued by the AKP government in the last years furthered developments, which only initially gave rise to hope and progress, but have recently become a cause for increasing concern amongst sections of Turkey’s ethnic and religious minorities. This refers to set-backs on the path to EU accession that are closely connected to the rise in Islamic, strategically deployed nationalist and authoritarian policies and therefore also to the foot-dragging over reforms in the sphere

[53] The Turkish Jews’ relationship to Israel is nevertheless ambivalent despite their relatively close religious, cultural and family contacts. Many of Turkey’s Jews have adopted a fundamentally critical attitude towards Israeli politics and especially find fault with the current Israeli government’s nationalism and its strong and seemingly undifferentiated anti-Muslim sentiments. In a 2011 interview, the Jewish entrepreneur Ishak Alaton stated f.e.: “I could imagine that there are people in Israel, who would not mind if the Jewish community in Turkey suffered from this crisis. Because then they could say: ‘Why don’t you come to Israel?!’ This would not be an option for me at all because Israel is moving in the wrong direction, the government is becoming more and more repressive. I wouldn’t be happier there – on the contrary” (Köhne, Gunnar, Ein jüdischer Unternehmer und die Krise zwischen der Türkei und Israel, 06.09.2011, www.deutschlandfunk.de/ein-juedischer-unternehmer-und-die-krise-zwischen-der.795.de.html?dram:article_id=119577).

[54] Seibert, Thomas, Vorwurf Landesverrat. Türkische Juden werden der Hilfe für Israel beschuldigt, dpa 4.1.2013, www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/14854.

[55] Çevik, İsmail, Bülent Arınç, azınlıklardan özür dileyip ‘dönün çağrısı’ yaptı, 6.3.2013, www.zaman.com.tr/politika_bulent-arinc-azinliklardan-ozur-dileyip-donun-cagrisi-yapti_2061591.html.

[56] Hürriyet, Turkish deputy PM denies remarks on 'Jewish diaspora', 02.07.2013, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-deputy-prime-minister-denies-remarks-on-jewish-diaspora-.aspx?PageID= 238&NID=49858&NewsCatID=338 and Ravid, Barak / Reuters, Turkish Jews express fears after deputy PM links Jewish Diaspora to protests, 2.7.2013, www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.533379.

of minority rights.[57] This has further reinforced the Turkish Jew's already tangibly high willingness to consider emigration.

Social Status and Aspects of Ethnicity, Religion, Assimilation, political Attitudes and Self-Identification of the Jews in today's Turkey

The collective historical experiences of the political and social circumstances in the Kemalist Turkish Republic have resulted in the formation of socio-anthropological, social and socio-psychological features that characterise the Jewry in this part of the world. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to regard the different ethnic and religious groups that exist in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies such as Turkey as 'homogeneous cells.' Just like other minorities, Turkey's Jewry is characterised in several ways by a number of internal differences and various points of view which are created by such factors as social and economic status, historical, political and social experiences or attitudes and their degree of assimilation into the Turkish mainstream or absorption of national-political ideas. This has resulted in a multitude of individual and collective, political and social attitudes and identities within the different ethnic and religious communities. Nevertheless, it can be noted that certain general characteristics, experiences and attitudes exist that are shared by several ethnic and religious groups or a certain number of their members. Given the complexity of the topic and the difficult working conditions faced by researchers dealing with Turkey's Jewry (see footnote 63) the following observations should primarily be seen as tendencies, which apply to a major part of the Jews living in Turkey.[58] The political and social opinions, problems, attitudes, ways of behaviour, processes of assimilation and self-identification of Turkey's Jewish community that are detailed below are phenomena and processes that slowly developed under the circumstances of Kemalism in the 20th century and that have been preserved until today despite the liberalisation at the political and social levels during the 1990s and the 2000s.

It is important to note that the Jews living in Turkey have had a series of negative collective experiences in the country whose politics has been dominated by nationalism and its many consequences for several decades. Nevertheless, the tradition of Jewish loyalty towards the Muslim-Turkish rulers that originated in the Ottoman period, has influenced or characterised the behaviour and attitudes of many Turkish Jews also from the times of the Turkish Republic until today. So, despite the discrimination, Turkish Jews tend to form a closer attachment to their Turkish homeland and its political system[59] than

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[57] Due to Turkey's increasing economic power and its status as a major foreign policy actor (especially in regards to Arab states) the AKP government is able to act more and more assertively towards the EU and its demands for further domestic reforms. This has led to a situation, in which reform proposals are stuck at the draft stage and set-backs in the sphere of civil society development. These are currently attributed to a decreasing interest in European integration on the part of the Turkish government.

[58] Whilst my focus is on the idiosyncrasies of Turkey's Jewish community parallels with other non-Sunni groups or minorities or the pious Sunni, who are not ethnically Turkish can be noted. Their further exploration, however, goes beyond the scope of this paper.

[59] This kind of attachment can still be found even amongst some of those Jews, who emigrated to Israel. The consciousness of their regional origin, including their partial adoption of pro-Kemalist viewpoints, is expressed e.g. in the creation of several Turkish-Jewish associations, the Choice of Turkish names in the naming of companies and shops or the naming after Atatürk of a forest near the Israeli town of Haifa. The Turkish-Jewish community in Israel, which is also called Turko there, has maintained until today certain cultural idiosyncrasies from their former homeland. This includes partial language skills amongst the older generation. According to Israeli statistics from 2001, 804.000 of the country's residents claim to be of ‚Turkish origin' while only 70.407 Jews officially immigrated from Turkey. Apart from the Turkish community, the Kurdish Jews are well organised in Israel and some Kurdish language skills have been

other stigmatised ethnic and religious groups. The same can be said about the Jews'desire for socio-political adaptation, integration and participation as well as social success. Generally speaking, the majority of the Jewish population considers itself a part of Turkish society.

Despite the hostile social and political environment, the social situation of many members of the Jewish community is characterised by above-average economic status. They traditionally worked in trade, traffic and industry. Within this context, it is noteworthy that the number of Jews who managed to establish themselves in the public and social sphere by means of adaptation, innovation and perseverance during the 20th and 21st centuries is astonishingly high, especially if one considers their very small group size in comparison to Turkey's overall population. As a rule, their level of education, especially in areas such as the arts, journalism, academia and economics, is also above average.

Especially in Istanbul, members of the Jewish (but also of the Armenian) community are often disproportionally highly represented in these sectors in comparison to their overall number in Turkey.[60] Apart from this, some Jews were politically active both during the period of one-party rule until 1945 and also in the multi-party system (especially until the 1960s) and a few were elected to parliament. According to the Centre for Turkish Studies, the recognised minorities were unofficially given a certain allowance of seats.[61] Most of them – as well as their fellow non-Muslims – were and are, however, denied access to the higher ranks of the state administration and the army despite their theoretical or legal equality. Generally speaking, it can nevertheless be said that the tendency can be observed that more Jews succeeded in gaining access to social resources in this socio-political environment, which was characterised by strong nationalist sentiments, than members of other non-Muslim groups. In other words, it seems that Turkey's Jews managed the delicate balancing act between membership in a stigmatised, non-Muslim group and the simultaneous adaptation to and integration into the Muslim dominated mainstream more successfully than the adherents to other religions.

The desire to avoid the problems typically faced by non-Muslim groups and to establish themselves as much as possible in the economic, social and political spheres of Kemalist Turkey encouraged especially the Jews to be conformist, considerate and reserved in their public social and political behaviour. This often led to withdrawal into the private sphere or self-isolation. In this context, the strategy of 'ethnic mimicry' was often drawn on, both in the past and present. This includes the adoption of Turkish names and attempts to hide their Jewish origin in the workplace (see f.e. footnote 77) and in the private sphere when coming into contact with Muslims. This tendency can be observed in all non-Muslim groups, but is especially amplified in the Jewish community due to the particularly high threat level caused by the religiously and politically motivated anti-

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preserved. A study carried out by the Centre for Turkish Studies in the 1990s found that Jews of Turkish origin who had migrated to Germany "were attached to a greater or lesser extent to their Turkish homeland." The study noted that this was manifested in "contacts to Turkish migrants in Germany and visits to Turkey" (ZfT 1998, p. 63, 186; see also Hitahdut Yotsey Turkia [Türkiyeliler Birliği - İsrael / Union of Jews from Turkey in Israel], turkisrael.org/TurkishMain/Bulten.htm, retrived 25.09.2013).

[60] The most famous representatives include Can Bonomo, Dario Moreno and the band Sefarad as musicians, Mario Levi and Rifat Bali as authors, Ishak Alaton (Alarko Holding) as entrepreneurs and, as politicians, Salomon Adato, who was one of the co-founders of the former governing party DP and a member of parliament from 1946 to 1954, and Cefi Kamhi, who was a member of parliament for the DYP (later DP) from 1995 to 1999.

[61] Epstein, 1989, p. 523; Güleryüz, 2009, p. 34; Köhne, 2011 and ZfT, 1998, p. 30.

Israelism and anti-Semitism.[62] This withdrawal from public life has been accompanied since the early phase of the Turkish Republic by efforts made especially by influential sections of the religious, intellectual and economic elite of the Turkish Jews to demonstrate their affinity for the state.[63]In the context of the ethno-political liberalisation of the 1990s, certain efforts were made by members of the Jewish (as well as the Armenian) community to facilitate a greater openness and heightened perception of their respective communities by Turkish society.[64]

In addition to the rigid, state-sponsored Turkification measures, the assimilation processes of the Jews, who had remained in Turkey, were furthered by their ambition to adapt and integrate. This had a long-term effect on the Turkish Jews' ethno-national self-identification. As a result of the laicism and Turkification processes that started in 1923, Turkey's Jewry were subject to changes in regards to its official classification and description. While they were designated as a religious group in the Ottoman *millet* system the Turkish Republic initially recognised them as 'Turkish Jews', later as 'Jewish Turks' and finally as 'Turks of Mosaic Faith'. In its public relations, today's Jewish community therefore presents itself as a religious and cultural rather than an ethnic group.[65]

Already in the early years of the Turkish Republic's existence, many Jews tended to embrace highly secular and liberal political concepts, which brought them in line with Kemalist principles, especially the laicism and republicanism advocated by Atatürk. This trend as well as the impression that Judaism was becoming more and more stigmatised and freedom of religion increasingly restricted ultimately resulted in a gradual loss of religiosity within the community. This represents the marginalisation of a central ethno-cultural characteristic which was originally the basis of the Jews' ethnic identity. For non-religious or atheistic members of the Jewish community this meant that their Jewish ancestry became a key feature of their identity on the ethnic or, for some, on the sub-ethnic level.[66]

Language can be seen as another central feature of ethnic identity for the members of many different ethnic groups. Regarding the Turkish Jews, however, it can be noted that Turkish (and French as the traditionally established language of education and culture since the second half of the 19th century) have replaced the Judeo-Spanish language. This is a result of the rigid linguistic Turkification policies pursued in the 1920s and the mass emigration to Palestine in the 1940s and 1950s and represents a serious ethno-linguistic loss. Today, Judeo-Spanish acts only as a historic-cultural characteristic and a symbol of

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[62] This is one of the reasons why even today fieldwork on the Jewish community in Turkey is much more difficult than on other non-Muslim groups. In this context, it has been observed that both private individuals as well as activists, intellectuals and representatives of religious or ethno-cultural organisations are reluctant to speak about their experiences as members of the Jewish community and that their behaviour was distanced and characterised by fundamental suspiciousness. In contrast to many Christian organisations, most Jewish institutions are sealed off by extensive security measures and can only be visited after extensive bureaucratic and practical obstacles have been overcome and one's ID has been verified.

[63] These close relations facilitated, for example, the extensive public presentation of Jewish history and culture as part of the celebrations dedicated to the 500th anniversary of the Sephardic Jews' arrival in the Ottoman Empire, which were held in 1992 (see Section 2.4).

[64] ZfT, 1998, p. 66.

[65] Ibid. and Bali, Rıfat, Les Relations entre Turcs et Juifs dans La Turquie Moderne, Istanbul 2001.

[66] In this, the family relation to the religion or the historical and cultural impact that Judaism has had on the in-group as well as the long-term effect of Jewish traditions play a crucial role in an individual's self-identification. The same can be said about the collective historical experiences (e.g. stigmatisation, persecution and discrimination), which resulted from the connection to Judaism.

identity.[67] Furthermore, the lack of eligible bachelors, which was caused by the emigration of many Jews, provoked a break-up of widespread endogamy. Faced with this situation most Jews preferred to marry members of other non-Muslim groups, but later also wedded Muslims. The remaining Dönme have always preferred to inter-marry with Muslims which led to the permanent loss of many secret crypto-Jewish rites.[68] Four factors have encouraged many Jews to adopt strongly pro-Turkish identities, which often go hand in hand with a denial of the ethnic component of their Jewish identity (see f.e. footnote 77). These factors are i) the marginalisation or gradual disappearance of three crucial markers of ethnicity (religion, language, endogamy), ii) the impact of Turkish assimilation processes, iii) the confusion about the meaning and difference of ethnicity and nationality in Turkey[69] and iv) the fundamentally diffuse ethnic delimitation resp. determination of Turkishness and Jewishness. Depending on the individual, these pro-Turkish identities might interact with their Jewish identities and produce fluctuating, hybrid, dual or multiple identities with numerous facets, dimensions and emphases[70]. Therefore, it can often be difficult for Turkish Jews to find clear ethnic, national and religious identities for themselves.[71]

In this, they resemble many Sunni (Muhacir-) groups of non-Turkish ethnic origin, who have settled in the Caucasus and the Balkans.[72] The main difference here is, however, that the Jews are not usually recognised as equal members of Turkish mainstream society despite their secular orientation, their decreased religiosity, the successes in social integration and partial assimilation and their political loyalty as Turkish citizens. The main cause for this is their non-Muslim religious inclination or origin and their official status as a minority, which is based on this (see section 2.3).[73]

Due to this phenomenon as well as the general conditions and the views taken by numerous political and social actors, many Jews believe that it is precisely their official recognition as a minority, which obstructs their social and political equality and advancement. Therefore, the Jewish community is split by the issue of their status as a minority. One part fundamentally dislikes being called a minority due to its personally successful embedding into Turkish society. It might, at best, regard itself as a religious, but not as a national or social minority although a lot of its members have experienced stigmatisation and discrimination in certain social environments. With a view to these

[67] According to a study by Saul 84.5% of Turkish Jews of the younger generation used Turkish as their primary language in the early 1980s (see Saul, Mahir, The Mother Tongue of the Polyglot. Cosmopolitism and Nationalism Among the Sephardim of Istanbul, in: Anthropological Linguistics, 25/3 1983 [Indiana], p. 326-358).

[68] Epstein, 1989, p. 523.

[69] Andrews / Benninghaus, 1989, p. 17ff, 35.

[70] See also Giesel, 2013, p. 360-362.

[71] Due to their different interactions, experiences, bonds and contacts on the international level and, ultimately, their historical multi-linguality, which results from this, very many Ottoman and Turkish Jews have developed primarily cosmopolitan identities. In most cases, these identities include a Turkish-Jewish ancestral component at the margins.

[72] Giesel, 2013, p. 346ff, 360-362.

[73] This demonstrates that, in this regard, the principle of laicism is overshadowed or replaced by the principle of nationalism in Turkey's political and social sphere. In other words, a Sunni heritage or inclination is seen as an integral part of Turkishness, according to the national ideology. Within this context, many Jews regard it as a contradiction that they are primarily stigmatised because of their religion, which hardly plays any role in the everyday life of most of their group members.

difficulties as well as a strong consciousness of their ethnic and/or religious identity another part of the Jewish community perceives itself as a minority.[74]

The controversy inside the Jewish community regarding its minority status is also reflected in its members' diverging political views. Regarding the 1990s, a study described these political opinions thus: "Experts who commented on the range of political sympathies and voting behaviour of the Jewish community in Turkey estimated that approximately 80% of its members supported centre-right parties and approximately 20% favoured the social democrats"[75]. It is, however, difficult to verify this estimate which has the weakness of ignoring other political opinions or parts there of. For today, according to own field research findings, the following can be noted:

Disregarding the nationalist and radical right-wing as well as radical Islamic positions, Turkey's Jews support many different political parties and camps. In this, they resemble the country's other Muslim and non-Muslim groups. Most Jews sympathise with and vote for three (partly formerly) established parties (CHP, AKP and DP) resp. their politically liberal and only moderately nationalist wings. They have a pronounced desire to make use of the opportunities at political participation afforded them by their Turkish citizenship and the country's parliamentarianism. (The creation of explicitly ethnic parties in Turkey is strictly forbidden). Nevertheless, many Jews keep critical attitudes towards parts of the agendas pursued by their favourite political parties and therefore support those that have the most common ground with their individual views, i.e. the ones they regard as the 'lesser evil'.

A number of Jews support the CHP which initially pursued nationalist-Kemalist policies, but which moved into the more liberal spectrum during the course of Turkey's social and political transformation. This support from parts of the Jewish community is based on the party's laic and republican credentials and is driven by the fear that the country's society might become too Islamic under the AKP's leadership. Given the attempts at internal liberalisation by parts of the CHP and its status as the strongest opposition party in the parliament the CHP's Jewish supporters hope that this party can not only counterbalance the AKP's one party rule, but also promote further socio-political innovations and thereby improve minority rights.

In contrast to this, the AKP is supported by a different part of the Jewry due to its neo-liberal orientation, the short-term economic successes achieved under its leadership, its political and social liberal agenda and its policies orientated towards EU membership which at least partially improved the situation for the minorities. The Jews, who sympathise with the AKP object to the CHP's past and the open hostility towards minorities expressed by its radically nationalist wing. In this context, it is often emphasised that it was not the Kemalists with their laic and republican ideals, who stood up for the rights of non-Muslim groups, but the AKP despite its Islamic-conservative or even Islamic orientation.[76] Noticing the AKP's gradual policy shift (see section 2.4) Jews have started to tend to turn away from this party in the last few years.

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[74] Similar splits can also be observed in Istanbul's urban environment amongst the Armenians and Syriacs, both of whom are Christian. The same can be said about the majority of the Turkish Alevites who are Muslims, but not of the Sunni branch. Given their ethnic Turkish heritage and their strong Kemalist orientation most of them do no regard themselves as an ethnic or national minority, but as a religious one at the utmost.

[75] ZfT, 1998, p. 66ff.

[76] In an interview, the influential Turkish-Jewish businessman Ishak Alaton assessed the situation thus: „I would argue that the current government understands the needs of our minorities more than all previous governments. I remember the 40s, 50s and 60s when we were described as locally resident ‚foreigners.'

The DP, too, is traditionally supported by a large number of Turkish Jews. This is based on the historical fact that one of its co-founders was of Jewish origin and that it includes several Jewish politicians, two of whom have served as members of the Turkish parliament (see footnote 60). In addition to this, its occasionally relatively liberal-democratic and ethno-politically moderate positions also played a role. This tradition of a Jewish DP-affinity continued by Yusuf Bahar, a DP politician of Jewish origin who ran as a candidate for mayor of the Princes Islands (Adalar) in Istanbul during the local elections in March 2009 (He failed to obtain the necessary majority in the 2009 mayoral elections, but was a member of the executive committee of Adalar city council from 2009 to 2011 at least)[77].

Another part of Turkey's Jewry positions itself within the wide spectrum of the political left and supports views, movements and parties advocating ideas ranging from leftist-liberal to socialist or communist. Many representatives of this political field, but also some of the AKP, CHP and DP supporters are currently very critical of Turkey's political, social and public course. They are thus in conflict with the Jewish community's religious, intellectual and economic elites who have remained close to the state. Especially official representatives of Jewish institutions, some members of the intellectual elite and successful businesspeople are keen to demonstrate their proximity and loyalty to the state as well as their patriotism as Turkish citizens. This applies both to the informal and the public sphere. These views are mainly articulated in public statements, the media and ethno-cultural publications.[78] Currently, Turkish Jews are faced with the difficulty to find a

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Today, we are all citizens of the country and equal before the law. Why should I be more worried today than yesterday?" (Köhne, 2011).

[77] During these elections, it was the first time that a total of 30 members of recognised minorities ran as candidates for the offices of mayor and city councillor. The media interpreted this as a sign for these minorities' increasing self-confidence in the public. In an interview with a foreign journalist, the Jewish DP-candidate Yusuf Bahar, however, also pointed out that he agreed with the advice given by his congregation that he should refrain from emphasising his origins and only mention them when asked. At the same time, he noted that his name sounded Turkish, that he looked and felt like a Turk and that his community had lived in this area for more than 500 years (see Steinvorth, Daniel, Wahlen in der Türkei: Minderheiten streben aus der politischen Isolation, 21.03.2009, http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/wahlen-in-der-tuerkei-minderheiten-streben-aus-der-politischen-isolation-a-614581.html). This represents a typical example of at least partial, public „ethnic mimicry," i.e. the adoption of a pro-Turkish identity or at least a publicly articulated pro-Turkish stance.

[78] Depending on time and context, these pronouncements are often characterised by five features, including i) emphatically patriotic commitments to Turkey and Turkish identity (see footnote 77), ii) positive evaluations of the current government (see footnote 76), iii) an over-emphasis of the positive aspects of Ottoman-Jewish or Turkish-Jews relations in regards to history and politics, which goes hand in hand with a tendency to avoid the critical aspects of these relations, iv) the glorified equation of the historical, political and social situation faced by non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, which represents a falsification of some crucial points and v) attempts to give outsiders the impression that the Turkish always behaved well towards the Jews, e.g. that both in the past and the present, the state and society were selflessly tolerant and helpful. Thus, parts of the Jewish elite demonstratively reinforce and disseminate the positive image of the Turks, which is unquestioningly held by most members of the Turkish-Sunni mainstream society. The Turkish-Jewish publicist Robert Schild, for example, stressed during an interview that Turkey had never been an anti-Semitic country (see Schönborn, Marcella, Istanbuls Gemeinde. Bewußt unauffällig, 14.09.2006, www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/6457 and SZ, 2003). In one of his publications, the ethno-cultural top official Naim Güleryüz (2009) assesses the situation of Turkish Jews in past and present thus: „ (…) Turkish Jewry celebrated not only the anniversary of this gracious welcome, but also the remarkable humanitarian spirit, which has characterized the whole Jewish experience in Turkey. (…) As a whole, the celebration aimed to demonstrate the richness and security of life Jews have found in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic over seven centuries, and showed that indeed it is not impossible for people of different creeds to live together peacefully under one flag." (p. 6); "Turkey continues to be a shelter, a haven

balance between, on the one side, proximity to the state or loyalty to Turkey's political system and society which have been shaped by Kemalism and, on the other side, the incumbent Islamic-conservative AKP government which has positioned itself as a party that is partially critical of Kemalism without being totally anti-Kemalist.[79] This behaviour is at least partially motivated by two factors: i) the ambivalent mix of partial conviction as a result of the adoption of Turkish nationalist ideology and ii) the fear of political and social hostility as well as social and economic disadvantages.[80]

Criticism tends to be expressed much more often and openly within the confines of the Jewish community than in public.[81] Given these general conditions it is noticeable that politically critical (or otherwise socially stigmatised) Jews tend to emigrate or choose to reside in Turkey only temporarily.

Generally speaking, this kind of behaviour does not represent a phenomenon typical of the community of Turkish Jews, but is a fundamental socio-psychological phenomenon which tends to characterise small and stigmatised minority groups under certain circumstances. Adequate parallels can consequently be drawn between the Jews and other non-Muslim groups in Turkey and especially those surrounded by Istanbul's urban and multi-cultural environment.

Current religious and ethno-cultural Institutions, Activities and Organisational Structures

In contrast to certain other ethnic and religious groups, Turkey's Jews have been officially recognised as a minority since the creation of the Turkish Republic. This affords

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for all those, who have to flee dogmatism, intolerance and persecution." (p. 29); "The humanitarism (…) was consistent with the beneficence and goodwill traditionally displayed by the Turkish government and people towards those different creeds, cultures and backgrounds."(p. 55).

[79] Since its inception, political Kemalism has contained contradictory and ambivalent aspects in theory and practice. At first sight, the contradiction between the traditional Kemalist laicism and the increasing Islamisation of politics and society that is currently taking place under the AKP's leadership seems to be the main bone of contention. However, the theoretical principle of laicism was neglected in day-to-day Kemalist politics, which opened the door to a religion-based notion of Turkishness. In other words, Kemalists viewed Sunni Islam as one of the key components of Turkish identity. Ultimately, it must not be forgotten that AKP representatives and sympathisers have been socialised and influenced to a significant degree by aspects of Kemalism and that the nationalism as the most important Kemalist principle is being instrumentalised by the AKP depending on political circumstances and interests. It is therefore possible to conclude that the political ties between conservative Islamism and nationalist-republican Kemalism is closer than it seems at first sight and than various media representatives and political analysts would claim. It is also closer than the polemicists polarised by party political interests and ultimately by a lust for power would present it.

[80] Apart from the wish to serve personal (and especially economic) needs and interests, the loyalty to the government or state, noticed especially amongst certain representatives of religious and ethno-cultural institutions, is motivated by their community's general desire to lead problem-free, peaceful and socially rewarding lives. Furthermore, the aim is to improve the opportunities for ethno-cultural, religious and social development enjoyed by the Jewish minority in a politically and socially difficult environment. It must not be forgotten in this context that the public activities of certain Jewish officials are also motivated by their ambition to increase their legitimacy and acceptance within the Jewish community. Inspired by the minorities' political and social problems, socio-critical members of the Jewish community reproach these actors with trivialising or ignoring the fundamental problems of Turkey's Jews by engaging in this kind of behaviour which, they believe, is driven by the pursuit of personal advantages. Their adversaries, however, argue that these arrangements improved the conditions for ethno-cultural development.

[81] The nationally and internationally renowned author Rifat Bali, for example, uses his reputation to criticise aspects of the Turkish state's treatment of its Jewish and other non-Muslim minorities in his publications (see f.e. Bali, 2006; Bali, Rıfat, Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri. Devlet´in Örnek Yurttaşları (1950-2003), Istanbul 2009 and Bali, Rıfat, Gayrimüslim Mehmetçikler Hatıralar-Tanıklıklar, Istanbul 2011.

them with limited opportunities for religious and ethno-cultural development in the public sphere (see sections 2.3 and 3). As a consequence of the current political liberalisation processes these kinds of opportunities have improved not only for Turkey's Jews, but also for other ethnic and non-Sunni groups that lack formal recognition as a minority. The scope, intensity and structure of the Jewish community's cultural and religious activities are conditioned by a number of factors, including their above-mentioned political and social situation, the continuing dependence on the state's favour, the past and present urge to demonstrate their loyalty to the state, the fear of hostilities, discrimination and loss of economic status, the eagerness to stay out of the public eye and the corresponding reticence. Within this context, the desire to expand the publicly accessible, ethno-cultural activities is relatively low. This can be attributed to concrete social, political and psychological reasons, but also to the Jews' increasing assimilation into the Turkish mainstream and the emigration of Jewish intellectuals. Most members and official representatives of their community have therefore not taken full advantage of the opportunity to intensify their ethno-cultural and ethno-political activities. Ethno-political activities or initiatives as well as behaviour typical of political pressure groups are principally avoided. This tendency partially can also be noted in regards to Christian groups, which is not to say that Jewish ethno-cultural activities have not increased during the 21st century. But in comparison to groups like the Armenians, the Jews are noticeably less active in this regard in the public sphere, for example.[82] Within its own circle the Jewish community is nevertheless very active. Due to the customary withdrawal from the public eye and the potential threats it is necessary to implement extra security measures. Therefore, ethno-cultural events are usually advertised without time and date (if these events will be advertised at all). This information is normally passed in an informal or even conspiratorial and exclusive space, which operates on the basis of trust. Thus, certain contacts or access to specific networks are required to come by this information. Generally speaking, the Turkish Jews' current religious and ethno-cultural organisational structure is modelled in many ways on the structures that already existed at the beginning of the socio-political transformation period. At the same time, a gradual restoration of Jewish places of worship and cemeteries as well as the inauguration of cultural institutes or museums started in the late 1990s. The basic structure of today's Jewish community dominated by Sephardism is the umbrella organisation "Foundation of the Turkish Jewish Congregation". In addition to this, local foundations (vakıf) exist in cities with a sizeable Jewish population like Istanbul and Izmir. Today, there are approximately 20 synagogues in Istanbul and 4 in Izmir. Most of them are in active use whilst some are only used seasonally.[83] Some of the active synagogues as well as the congregations themselves are registered as (religious) foundations.[84] In addition to the synagogues in Istanbul and Izmir, there are one Jewish hospital, a nursing home for the elderly and 7 cemeteries (including one burial ground each for the Ashkenaseans, Karaites and the Italian Jews) in Istanbul. A Jewish educational establishment, including primary, secondary and grammar schools with

[82] Whilst the number of Armenians resident in Turkey is only three times higher than that of the Jews, the volume of their ethno-cultural and ethno-political activities surpasses that of the Jews many times more.

[83] There are numerous other synagogues in all localities that have a Jewish population (see section 1) and also in Gaziantep and Iskenderun, for example. Most of them are, however, unused or derelict. While some places of worship remain the property of the Jewish community, others have been sold, expropriated or used for different purposes in the last decades.

[84] This applies both to the Ashkenazi community that today counts approximately 600 members, recognises the Chief Rabbi and has one active synagogue as well as to the totally independent congregation of Karaites, who numbers approximately 100 members, has no clerics and one place of worship (Kenesa).

a contemporary capacity for about 500 to 600 pupils, has existed in the Ulus area of Istanbul since 1914. Beside it, one Jewish primary school for 140 children in Izmir represents a very important minority institution as well. In contrast to the Armenians and the Greeks, who run a total of 22 schools each, the Jews do not have any nursery schools.[85] In the Jewish schools, all subjects are taught in Turkish. This is in contrast to the educational institutions run by Armenians and Greeks where the respective languages are not only taught as a separate subject, but are also the language of instruction for selected subjects, especially the natural sciences. While a marginalisation of Armenian and Greek can be observed in their respective communities, the Judeo-Spanish or Ladino language has so little communicative value for the Jewish minority that it is not even taught any more in their schools. Only a few Jews of the older generation are still fluent in Ladino so that it has almost acquired the status of a museum exhibit. Consequently, between three and five hours per week are spent on teaching Hebrew as a foreign language. Judeo-Spanish is currently only taught by the Spanish cultural institute in Istanbul and in some private schools, but attempts at reviving it on a larger scale are planned for the future.[86] Apart from formal education, a number of recreational and social activities exist, most of which are organised by the officially registered Jewish congregation. There are, however, also some private initiatives.[87]

The cultivation of the Ladino language is a task, which is mainly carried out by the Jewish media. From amongst the newspapers with a long tradition (i.e. *La Buena Esperansa* and *La Puerta del Oriente*, which were founded in Izmir in 1834, and *Or Israel* which has been published in Istanbul since 1853) only the Turkish-language weekly *Şalom* with a contemporary circulation of 5000 pieces has survived. It has been published in Istanbul since 1947 and usually comprises 16 to 20 pages. Its articles address political, social and cultural topics with a Jewish dimension in Turkey, Israel and elsewhere. The recent liberalisation processes have afforded editors with greater opportunities than before to publish critical remarks about the social and political problems faced by Turkey's minorities. Each edition of *Şalom* contains one page in Ladino, the written form of Judeo-Spanish. In addition to this, *Şalom* has a monthly supplement called *El Amaneser* which usually consists of 16 to 24 pages written exclusively in Ladino. Furthermore, a magazine called "Şalom Dergi" has appeared every two months on average since 2007. Its target readership are female members of the Jewish community. The newspaper's editorial office

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[85] This again demonstrates the Jews' greater assimilation and incorporation into Turkey's political and social structures in comparison to other recognised minorities. The latter make as much use of international, foreign-language private schools (especially with French as the main language of instruction) as the Jews, but they send their children much less often to Turkish public or private schools than the Jews. Instead, the Armenians and Greeks prefer to make use of the educational establishments run by their respective minorities (see Güleryüz, 2009, p. 33 and others).

[86] Güleryüz, 2009, p. 33-47; Güleryüz, 2013; SZ, 2003 and Türkoglu / Yenen, 2011.

[87] These include social meeting points for all community members, summer camps on the Princes Islands of Istanbul and youth clubs in Istanbul and Izmir which offer sports, cultural activities, libraries, the publication of a bi-monthly teenage magazine and events involving music, dance and theatre, etc. Furthermore, a number of Jewish charities and relief organisations have been set up that care for economically deprived, elderly and sick people, children in need and orphans. Other cultural institutions are the Schneidertempel Art and Culture Centre, which was inaugurated in a former Ashkenasian synagogue in 1999, the Jewish Museum that opened in Istanbul in 2001 and the Zabbatai-Zevi House with an exhibition about the history and culture of the Dönme in Izmir. Research organisations that focus on Jewish culture and history include the „Ottoman-Turkish Sephardic Culture Research Centre" and the „500-Year Foundation." In the commercial sector, Jewish culture is maintained by butchers, restaurants and private supermarkets, some of whom supply the Turkish state-owned airline (see Güleryüz 2009, p. 34, 43, 46; Türkoğlu / Yenen 2011).

also houses a Jewish bookshop and a publishing house (*Gözlem*).[88] The annual calendar of the Jewish community is one of the minority's rare ethno-cultural or ethno-religious publications.

Turkey's Jews, as well as many of the country's other ethnic and religious groups, are increasingly visible in the Turkish media as well as in some journalistic and scientific works.[89] In the realm of multimedia, they are represented by websites maintained by various ethno-cultural and religious institutions, including musevicemaati.com; turkyahudileri.com; turkiye.net/sota/karaim.html; istanbulsephardiccenter.com; muze500.com, salom.com.tr, www.gozlemkitap.com, www.uoml.k12.tr (Ulus Özel Musevi Okulları).

Generally speaking, it is noticeable that the officially recognised and politically conformist institution of the Jewish Community represents the centre of gravity and control for the organisation and implementation of the Turkish Jews' ethno-cultural and religious activities. Within this framework, most other ethno-cultural Jewish institutions, including the journalistic ones, are closely associated with this centre.[90] Even if most of these institutions normally try to avoid provoking Turkish state and society by announcing critical political statements or providing activities connected with those issues, in the recent years, however, members of the Jewish community, including official representatives, have been voicing criticism and ethno-political demands. Silvio Ovadia, the head of the Jewish community in Turkey, emphasised during an interview in 2009 that he and his fellow Jews are no longer satisfied with acquiescence and tolerance and that they are seeking complete legal equality with other Turkish citizens. In this context, he also warned about the devastating effect that a further escalation of the conflict in the Near East could have on the Jews in Turkey.[91]

Individual initiatives, which are independent of the centre, represent a rarity and are usually confined to a small number of private persons or loosely affiliated groups. Jews, who are interested in ethno-political and ethno-cultural affairs and who take a critical approach to these topics, are sometimes involved in human rights organisations, various civil society organisations or associations with an ethno-cultural and political agenda, which are organised by other minorities, but are open to members of all ethnic and religious groups.

Beyond the Turkish borders, the Jewish communities in Israel, Europe (especially France) and the USA, who are of Turkish origin, but also all others represent important religious, cultural and intellectual points of reference for the Jews in Turkey. This is based on a historical tradition of networking on the international, cultural and economic levels and has been the case both in the past[92] and present.

[88] It is here that mainly Turkish, French and English language texts are published and sold. Most of them deal with Jewish history and culture, but occasionally a publication either about aspects of Turkey's minorities in general or its Jewish minority in particular or about historical and cultural topics relating to Turkey appears. Some treatises also address the topic of the Judeo-Spanish language. In addition to this, recordings of Jewish and Judeo-Spanish music as well as videos about Jewish culture are sold.

[89] See f.e. Bali, 2009; Bali, 2011; Bali, Rıfat, The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews, Istanbul 2013; Güleryüz, Naim Avigdor, Toplumsal Yaşamda Türk Yahudileri, Istanbul 2012; Onur, Oral, 1492´den günümüze Edirne Yahudi Cemaati, Istanbul 2005 and others.

[90] In contrast to this, the Armenian community's official ethno-cultural and religious life is characterised by decentralisation and the co-existence of several actors that act independently and occasionally compete with each other.

[91] Gut, Arye, Glava evrejskoj obštiny Turcii: "My ne prosim terpimosti i tolerantnosti, my hotim byt´ polnopravnymi graždanami Turcii", 1news.az, 14.03.2009, 1news.az/world/20090314011712772.html.

[92] Epstein, 1989, 523.

Concluding Remarks

The general situation of Turkey's Jews is closely linked to that of the country's wider treatment of minorities and has been very ambivalent throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Some improvements can be noticed in this regard which are associated with the current socio-political transformations. In this context, the AKP's ambivalent policies are characterised by two trends: the constant and politically motivated, but flexible interplay of multiple reform endeavours and efforts to improve the living conditions experienced by ethnic and religious groups, including recognised and non-recognised minorities on the one hand, and political obstructionism, delays in the implementation of further reforms, discrimination and other negative measures aimed at certain ethnic and religious groups on the other hand.

The specific situation of the strongly secularized Jewish community in Turkey, who – in contrast to other non-Muslim groups like the Syriacs and Armenians – has settled almost exclusively in urban areas, is conditioned by a combination of discrimination and many members' successful integration into Turkey's public, social and economic life. Especially when considering the small size of the country's Jewish community one realises that the number of integrated Jews is above average. This integration, however, goes hand in hand with a very conformist, considerate and reticent behaviour in regards to social issues and public politics. For the majority of Turkish Jews, it also involves withdrawal into the private sphere, which occasionally leads to self-isolation. In this context, it is noticeable that many Jews express a very pronounced, historically influenced need to participate in political and social affairs and to display their loyalty to (the Ottoman Empire and) the Turkish Republic, where they were partially influenced by Kemalism. This need is, however, also based on the fact that the specific situation of the Jews is also characterised by the interplay of the relative security they enjoy in the personal and professional sphere and various latent or openly expressed potential threats. In addition to the negative feelings towards all non-Muslim groups, which are always present in Turkish mainstream society, the potential dangers for the Jews are amplified by the gradually increasing adoption of anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic ideas. The potential threats are reinforced to a significant degree by the effects of the foreign policy crisis between Turkey and Israel over the conflict in the Near East. They are also accentuated by the consequences of the noticeable Islamification of Turkey's society and politics as well as the heightened activities of internationally active, radical Islamist terrorists. So far, the growth in Islamic and recently also nationalist tendencies in Turkish society and politics has had a negligible effect on the way mainstream society interacts with the country's Jews yet. Nevertheless, the current socio-political conditions and developments evoke additional feelings of insecurity and fear whilst encouraging a sizeable part of the Jewish community to consider emigration. In addition to this, members of Turkey's minorities are worried and distraught by the more authoritarian course pursued by the current government in the recent years and ultimately also by the repressive measures adopted by the AKP administration in reaction to the political mass protests that have erupted throughout the country since summer 2013.

It is difficult to predict which shape the social reform processes recommended by foreign policy actors, the socio-political Islamification and fundamental reorientation processes, the national and ethno-political course, relations with the EU and therefore also treatment and situation of the different ethnic and religious groups or minorities like the Jews are going to take. These processes are directly dependent on the AKP government's political interests and strategies as well as the thus created social and political

consequences. Future developments are also influenced by wider economic considerations, domestic politics and foreign affairs. Changes in the situation of the Jewish community are inextricably linked to the course and nature of Turkish-Israeli bilateral relations.

In the final analysis, EU pressure on Turkey to improve its minority rights provisions will not be sufficient to eliminate the widely-held view that Jews and members of other ethno-religious groups or minorities were foreign elements in the country's society and politics who should be treated accordingly. It is important in this regard to bring about a general change in social attitudes and to further strengthen civil society values and activism. Dedicated and responsible government policies, geared towards achieving these aims, should play an important catalytical role in this context.

Apart from Iran in the Middle East and Morocco and Tunisia in North Africa, Turkey remained as one of the only countries in the Muslim world, in which a small but namable and relatively organised, but increasingly disappearing Jewish community has been preserved until the 21st century. But it can, however, be expected that Turkey's Jewish community will become significantly smaller in the medium term. This is likely to be the result of various potential social and political threats, further assimilation into Turkish culture and systematic emigration to Israel, Europe and elsewhere.

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