



GLOBAL NET

**STOP
THE
ARMS
TRADE**

Case 09

GLOBAL NET – STOP THE ARMS TRADE (GN-STAT)

A special brotherhood in arms: German arms deliveries to Türkiye from 1890 to the present day

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Introduction

The close brotherhood in arms between Germany and Türkiye, which has existed for more than 100 years, has already been partially addressed in GN-STAT Case 1 "*German arms exports for genocide: Mauser rifles and Krupp cannons used in Türkiye's genocide in Armenia (1895-1916)*". The following is about the continuation of the extensive arms deliveries by German defence companies to Türkiye since the founding of NATO in 1949. While the *Mauser* and *Krupp* companies were the main beneficiaries of the deliveries at that time, today they are companies that can be regarded as their successors in terms of weapons technology and sales: *Heckler & Koch*, which emerged from the *Mauser* company, and the *Rheinmetall* Group, whose main shareholder was *Friedrich Krupp AG* in 1909, before it became the property of the Reich government and other companies. At that time, German weapons were used, among other things, in the campaign against the Armenian people with well over a million dead - today the main victims of a conflict that has been going on for decades are the Kurds in eastern Türkiye and some neighbouring countries.

For centuries, the Kurds have been a people without their own state. Scattered in settlement areas in Türkiye, Syria, Iraq and Iran, they have either been forcibly assimilated or militarily fought against up to the present day. Their oppression by force of arms provoked sometimes fierce resistance and even guerrilla warfare. In Iraq and Türkiye in particular, this repeatedly led to collective punitive actions and massacres that claimed thousands of victims and, in response, to bomb attacks and raids on barracks and military posts in both countries. Since the founding of the republic by Atatürk and the beginning of the rule of the dictator Saddam Hussein in Iraq, outlawed weapons such as chemical warfare agents were also used in the suppression of Kurdish uprisings and guerrilla actions, whereby the civilian population was not spared (see GN-STAT Case 8 "*Chemical weapons in warfare*", Chapters 4, 7 and 8).

After a brief review, the following will describe how all German governments since Konrad Adenauer have supplied Türkiye with conventional weapons, enabling it to fight Kurdish nationalists with extreme vigour.¹ This war - along with many others in other countries around the world - also became part of the East-West conflict for several decades, in which the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) was supplied with weapons by the USSR and the GDR for its armed conflicts with the Turkish authorities, while the Federal Republic of Germany took on the role of the most important Western European arms supplier for Türkiye.

"Militarily unsolvable" is the verdict of political analysts when it comes to the chances of ending the violence between Turks and Kurds.² However, it is not only the ongoing

¹ The ruthlessness of these attacks is shown in the book "*Versteck dich, wenn sie schießen*" by Jürgen Grässlin, Droemersch Verlag, Munich 2003

² Rafik Hähnlein: "*Militärisch unlösbar - Die jüngste Eskalation zwischen Kurden und dem türkischen Staat*" in: bpb.de (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung) v.10.4.2018, retrieved on 3.2.2025. Hähnlein is an employee of the Federal Academy for Security Policy (BAKS) - see there

Turkish-Kurdish conflict that has kept the intensive armaments cooperation between Berlin (or Bonn) and Ankara alive to this day. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has long made no secret of the fact that his country, located in Russia's neighbourhood on the Black Sea, wants to play a greater strategic role in the region. Added to this is the latent conflict with Greece over natural resources in the eastern Mediterranean.

Türkiye's membership of NATO since 1952 has been very convenient for European arms suppliers and their export interests. This is because many armaments were ordered in the post-war period with the justification of securing NATO's eastern flank against the former Soviet Union - a task that remained with NATO against Russia after the end of the Warsaw Pact. In contrast, the fight against Kurdish insurgents has hardly been mentioned in recent decades when ordering assault rifles and machine guns, battle tanks and infantry fighting vehicles as well as artillery and other ammunition. The required end-use certificates, which are supposed to provide information about the military purposes of the desired military equipment, remain meaningless if the same weapons are used for national defence or for domestic counter-insurgency after delivery.

The distinction between "authorised" and "prohibited" is even more difficult in the case of arms exports when so-called "dual-use goods" are at issue, i.e. goods that can be used for both military and civilian purposes. These include, for example, chemical warfare agents, which are also contained in fertilisers or insecticides and - as described in detail in GN-STAT case 8 "Chemical weapons in warfare" with regard to Türkiye and Iraq - were often used against Kurdish civilians.

The history of German-Turkish armaments cooperation since 1860

The last German Emperor Wilhelm II, the Ottoman Sultans Abdülhamid II and Mehmet V, the Turkish Minister of War Enver Pasha and the Prussian Field Marshal Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von der Goltz can be regarded as the historical founders of a brotherhood in arms that began in the second half of the 19th century and continues, with interruptions, to this day. Between 1860 and 1910, hundreds of thousands of *Mauser rifles* and carbines and several hundred state-of-the-art *Krupp cannons* were shipped to the Ottoman Empire, and several dozen Prussian staff officers from the rank of major upwards taught Turkish cadets modern warfare according to Wilhelmine-Prussian standards. Kaiser Wilhelm II repeatedly had himself photographed in Turkish parade uniform, and Field Marshal Baron von der Goltz was given the honorary title of "Pasha" as the reformer of the Turkish army. However, the fact that he also fuelled the Armenian genocide as an advisor to the Turkish General Staff is still not mentioned in any official biography. The German-Turkish brotherhood in arms initially ended with the defeat of both states in the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman and German empires. However, it was not long before it was revived after the Second World War.

Between 1918, the end of the First World War, and 1933, the election victory of the National Socialists, both countries became republics based on democratic constitutions. The Weimar Republic was proclaimed in November 1918 and the Turkish Republic under

Mustafa Kemal, known as Atatürk, in 1923. While the Weimar Republic had to accept a restriction of its sovereignty due to the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, which resulted, among other things, in the limitation of the number of troops and weapons of the Reichswehr, the Turkish Republic was a fully sovereign state after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. In the 1920s, both sides were interested in maintaining good relations, which led to the conclusion of a German-Turkish friendship treaty in 1924. This intensified German-Turkish trade relations and allowed, among other things, the re-deployment of German military advisors to Türkiye.³

During the Second World War, Türkiye remained officially neutral, but it remained an important trading partner of the German Reich and repeatedly allowed Hitler to deploy German troops through Turkish territory in the Middle East. It was only in the final months of the war that Ankara declared war on Germany under pressure from the Allies.

Heckler & Koch rifles as standard weapons for the Turkish army

When the Federal Republic of Germany joined NATO in 1955 and the Bundeswehr was set up and armed, the German-Turkish arms trade also picked up again. Two engineers from the *Mauser* company in Oberndorf am Neckar, which had belonged to the *Quandt Group* during the Second World War, had also founded the *Heckler&Koch* rifle factory in Oberndorf and equipped the Bundeswehr with G3 rifles and MP 5 submachine guns from the mid-1950s. The Bundeswehr soon reached the 500,000 troops envisaged during the Cold War, and its demand for small arms was correspondingly high. But the modern factory on a Black Forest hill high above Oberndorf could do much more. Not only did it supply G3 rifles for other NATO armies in Western Europe, it also sold small arms to many countries around the world that were considered to be friendly with NATO, with the authorisation of first the CDU/CSU-led and then the social-liberal federal governments. However, this did not prevent from fighting bloody colonial and civil wars in Africa, for example, with weapons from Oberndorf⁴. Finally, as early as the 1960s, *Heckler & Koch* granted licences with friendly government permission from the then German capital Bonn to countries that set up their own factories for the production of G3 and MP 5. This also included Türkiye. The licensed production was taken over by the company *Makina ve Kimya Endüstrisi* (MKE), which was nationalised in 1950 and which, in addition to the *Heckler & Koch* G3 and HK 33 rifles and the MP5 submachine gun, also manufactures missile systems, ammunition and propellants at twelve locations in Türkiye - including for foreign customers, as a company brochure emphasises.

It wasn't long before the entire world market for handguns was flooded with products from Oberndorf or from the more than 30 countries that had licences from H&K for their own production, like a pandemic. Only the Soviet AK 47 *Kalashnikov* and its countless variants,

³ On the history of German-Turkish relations 1918-1998, German Bundestag, Research Services, No. 26/07, accessed on 3 January 2017

⁴ Much evidence of this can be found in the documentary films "Fern vom Krieg" by Wolfgang Landgraeber (1982) and "Tödliche Geschäfte" by Peter Ohlendorf (2003) as well as in the book "Versteck dich, wenn sie schießen" (2003) by Jürgen Grässlin

which are widespread in all countries of the former Warsaw Pact and in the friendly states of the former Soviet Union, which, like the H&K products, had (have) corresponding licences for replication, were and still are more "successful".

From the early 1970s, PKK fighters with *Kalashnikovs* and Turkish soldiers or gendarmes with the G3 or MP 5 faced each other in the Kurdish regions of Türkiye. The G3 has since been replaced by the more modern G36 in Türkiye, but the military situation in the Kurdish regions has remained unchanged for decades. Until recently, PKK fighters, who are classified as terrorists in the USA and some other NATO countries such as Germany, carried out attacks in Turkish metropolises such as Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and Antalya⁵, and the Turkish government responded with retaliatory strikes in Kurdish provinces east of Diyarbakir using tanks and fighter jets. The figure of 45,000 people killed in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict cited by the Turkish government is therefore unlikely to be an exaggeration. In the meantime, the signs are pointing to an easing of tensions: PKK leader Öcalan has called on his fighters to lay down their arms. The condition for this is his release. However, Erdogan does not (yet) seem willing to do so. So, the conflict continues. A conflict for which German governments and arms companies have diligently aided and abetted. Here are a few more examples:

German wheeled armoured vehicles against Kurds in eastern Türkiye

In 1994, the editors of the political ARD magazine programme *Monitor* pulled off a journalistic coup in connection with arms deliveries to Türkiye that proved both the Turkish and German governments wrong. Three years earlier, the Federal Republic of Germany had taken over 300 BTR 60 armoured personnel carriers from the stocks of the NVA - the armed forces of the defunct GDR - and sold some of them to Türkiye on the condition that they were not to be used in the ongoing conflict with the Kurds. However, the Turkish side did not honour this agreement, as film footage and photos from the Kurdish areas in the province of Diyarbakir prove. Kurdish human rights groups in Türkiye had secretly produced them and sent them to colleagues in Germany, who contacted *the Monitor* editorial team. They had already shown the pictures of BTR tanks in Kurdish areas in an earlier programme, and the German government under Helmut Kohl had denied that the tanks came from the Federal Republic. Rather, they were deliveries from the Soviet Union or, after its collapse, from Russia. *Monitor's* task now was to prove that the vehicles came from the estate of the former GDR and that the Federal Government was responsible for their export. The proof was easy to provide by carefully analysing the available photos, as the NVA had fitted a number of specifications to its wheeled tanks, e.g. larger exterior mirrors, a separate infrared spotlight on the roof and special brackets for loading chocks when transporting the tanks. A former lieutenant colonel of the NVA and a colonel of the Soviet Army confirmed these findings on the basis of the available photographic material.

⁵ An overview of attacks between 1980 and 2017 can be found on Wikipedia under the title "List of terrorist attacks by the Kurdistan Workers' Party". According to Wikipedia, this list is based on information provided by the PKK and its affiliated organisations. According to Wikipedia, the government in Ankara puts the number of people killed so far in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict at 45,000. However, these figures cannot be verified by independent sources.

⁶ This discredited the Federal Ministry of Defence, which had stuck to its version that the tanks came from Russia until the very end. Even more serious, however, were the testimonies of eyewitnesses from the Kurdish regions who had observed the use of the wheeled armoured vehicles or had lost relatives when their homes were shot at by the BTR 60. The case of Mesut Dündar, who was tied to a BTR 60 wheeled tank and dragged to death by Turkish security forces on 6 September 1992, caused a particular stir. The photo series of this murder went around the world. The then, now deceased, *Monitor presenter* Klaus Bednarz was not afraid to speak of "genocide against the Kurds" in view of the reported atrocities. If this assessment is correct, then it would be the second genocide committed by Turkish governments with German weapons in around 120 years.⁷

Further German arms deliveries to Türkiye 1980 – 1999

An almost complete overview of extensive German arms deliveries to Türkiye between 1980 and 1999 was published by the left-wing weekly *Jungle World* at the end of the 1990s.⁸ It includes deliveries worth several billion DM (the euro was only introduced in Germany in 2002). It is reproduced here in extracts.

1980-1982: The German government grants Türkiye military aid totalling DM 1.2 billion. The aid includes 77 battle tanks, 249 Milan launchers and the upgrading of 160 M-48 tanks (from American WW II production, note WL). In addition, the expansion of rifle factories in Arifiye, Kirikale and Elmadagi and the modernisation of two naval shipyards in Gölcüküy and Tashizak are being supported. The G36 is also produced there as a successor to the G3.

- 1985 to 1987: The "*Black Beetle*" anti-terrorist force is trained in Germany by the GSG9. In the course of the Turkish-Kurdish war, Türkiye increases its arms imports. Suppliers include *Siemens, Thyssen, VW, Dornier, Eurometall, Krauss-Maffei, AEG, Krupp and MAN*. Among other things, armoured personnel carriers and armoured recovery vehicles worth DM 500 million are sold.
- 1989: The Turkish government upgrades its air defence system. MBB concludes a contract worth DM 600 million with five Turkish companies for the sale of combat helicopters. The importance of German companies for Turkish warfare is illustrated by a quote from the magazine *Defence and Aerospace*: "If there can be any talk of an arms industry in Türkiye today, it is first and foremost thanks to the Federal Republic of Germany. Companies such as *Fritz Werner, Heckler & Koch, Rheinmetall, MBB and Diehl* are well known to our association of the mechanical and chemical industry."

⁶ Michael Enger, Wolfgang Landgraeber, Hans-Peter Weymar with the assistance of Jürgen Neitzert: *Deutsche Waffen gegen Kurden - Die Lügen der Bundesregierung*, in *Monitor* of 12 May 1994

⁷ See GN-STAT Case 1: "German arms exports for genocide - Mauser rifles and Krupp cannons used in the genocide of the Turks in Armenia 1895-1916" , www.gn-stat.de

⁸ "Weapons made in Germany", author Felix Lee, *Jungle World* of 10 March 1999

- 1990: The defence companies *Blohm & Voss*, *Thyssen-Rheinstahl Technik* and *HDW Kiel* sign a contract for the construction of MEKO-200 frigates worth DM 800 million.
- 1991: The Ministry of Defence delivers weapons worth DM 1.5 billion to Türkiye. These are mainly leftover stocks from the NVA. "A whole army's worth of equipment" (FAZ) is given away: more than 100,000 bazookas, 350,000 *Kalashnikov submachine guns*, 440 million pieces of ammunition, 30 RF 4E combat and reconnaissance aircraft and 300 BTR-60 tanks, as well as 131 artillery rocket launchers, 550 armoured personnel carriers and 200 helicopters.
- 1992: *Eurometall* exports 18,000 artillery shells, 15 Leopard tanks and 46 RF-4E *Phantom* aircraft to Türkiye. And this despite the fact that a delivery stop was imposed for almost six months... After the lifting of the arms embargo, a German consortium concludes a contract with the Turkish navy for the construction of two frigates worth around 800 million marks.
- 1994: In May, arms deliveries to Türkiye are stopped when observer delegations prove the use of German weapons in the Kurdish part of Türkiye. Four weeks later, arms deliveries are resumed. In addition to 15 *Phantom aircraft* and a reconnaissance system, Türkiye also receives ammunition, refuelling and fire-fighting vehicles worth DM 300 million.
- 1996: The FRG provides a guarantee of DM 48.8 million for the construction of *Stinger defence missiles* - the order goes to *Mercedes-Benz*. The subsidiary DASA receives the order for the production of missile systems and armoured casings.
- 1997: *Krauss-Maffei* is awarded the contract to build 1,000 Leopard I and II tanks for DM 4.5 billion. The *Lürssen shipyard* is to produce patrol speedboats.
- 1998: The Franco-German consortium *Eurocopter* delivers 30 Cougar AS 532 combat and transport helicopters worth DM 700 million. *Howaldtswerke Deutsche Werft AK*, a subsidiary of *Thyssen AG*, builds four U 212 submarines. *Rheinmetall AG* and *Heckler & Koch* conclude licence agreements with Ankara for the production of MG 3, MP 5 and G 3 A3 machine guns.

Former Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller left no doubt that most of these weapons and weapon systems were and are also used in Türkiye's war against the Kurds. In an interview in 1995, she made it unmistakably clear: "We are using the weapons we have".⁹ And that includes German weapons.

⁹ And that includes German weapons.

In general, the history of German arms exports to Türkiye is a story of constant alternation between authorisation and failure, deception and cover-up. Whenever reports of serious human rights violations emerged, the German government - whether under Chancellors Kiesinger, Brandt, Schmidt, Kohl, Schröder, Merkel or Scholz - imposed an export ban, which was lifted shortly afterwards. What is relatively new is that the Turkish-Kurdish

⁹ Die Tageszeitung (taz) from 31 July 1995; Tansu Ciller, Turkish Prime Minister from 1993 to 1996

conflict has now spread beyond Türkiye's borders and is also shaping the agenda of neighbouring countries such as Iraq and Syria. Although appeals by PKK leader Öcalan to his fighters to lay down their arms and simultaneous signals from Erdogan's presidential palace in February 2025 give hope for peace, it remains to be seen whether there are any serious intentions behind this. Promises of peace have been broken too often in recent decades.

Leopard 2 tanks as NATO armaments aid - misappropriated for the war against the Kurds in Syria

Even the predecessor to the Leopard 2, the Leopard 1, with variants from A1 to A6, was a huge business for the German companies Krauss-Maffei-Wegmann and Rheinmetall when sold to many armies inside and outside Europe. Over the course of several years, almost 400 units were delivered to Türkiye, 320 of them from Bundeswehr stocks, which needed capacity to accommodate the more modern Leopard 2 A4 version. Even then, it seemed extremely unlikely that Türkiye would be attacked by an aggressor outside NATO. Nevertheless, it received generous defence aid in the form of tanks and warships. According to research by *Der Spiegel*, Türkiye received 274 main battle tanks of the first model series from Bundeswehr stocks in the 1980s and another 150 Leopard 1A4s in the early 1990s. All deliveries were declared as "German" NATO defence aid.¹⁰ The ageing Leopard 1s were soon replaced by the more modern Leopard 2 A 4s, and this deal also went smoothly through the ministries and approval authorities involved.

According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Türkiye owned 170 Leopard 1A3s, 227 Leopard 1A4s and 316 Leopard 2 A4s in 2023.¹¹

When, during the first offensive against the Kurds in Syria in 2018 under the prosaic name "Operation Peace Spring" - the dictator Assad was still in office - there were growing signs that Türkiye needed its "equipment" for purposes other than national defence, the German government at the time under Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) and Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) held back with protests or even cancellations. *Der Spiegel* commented at the time: "The Turkish army is marching into Syria on the orders of President Erdogan with Leopard tanks from German armourers, of all things. He has them brutally attack the Kurdish militia YPG there. Erdogan sees it as an arm of the PKK terrorist group and a threat to Türkiye. For Germany and the USA, on the other hand, it is also an ally in the fight against the 'Islamic State' (IS)".¹² Afrin, which was considered a peaceful province of Syria populated by Kurds, was occupied by Turkish forces and still is - as of March 2025. Kurdish militias that put up resistance were crushed.

Türkiye justified the invasion of Afrin with the creation of a security zone against Kurdish militias on the Turkish-Syrian border. This was an act of defence in the sense of international law, which was also covered by the NATO treaty. The aim was to prevent a possible attack by Syria on Turkish territory. As a result, fears spread within NATO that Erdogan would declare a NATO alliance case, which would have obliged NATO to provide

¹⁰ Der Spiegel from 23 January 2018

¹¹ Quoted from *Handelsblatt* from 19.1.2023

¹² Markus Becker and Matthias Gebauer "Heikle Geschäfte" in: *Der Spiegel* from 23 January 2018

military assistance to Türkiye. This concern was also expressed in German government circles. However, the Bundestag's scientific services quickly gave the all-clear in a 2018 report *entitled "International law aspects of the Turkish military operation 'Friedensquelle' in northern Syria"*. Neither the consent of all 29 NATO member states was to be expected, which would be a prerequisite for recognition as a NATO alliance case, nor was the potential threat from Syria to be regarded as an attack on the NATO country Türkiye. On the contrary: Türkiye is the real aggressor. In plain language: "If there were to be a Syrian defence against the Turkish advance in northern Syria, then from the Syrian point of view this would be an **act of defence in accordance with international law** against an **aggression by Türkiye that violates international law**. In the course of this act of defence, Syria could push the Turkish troops back into Turkish territory and even use military force against Türkiye within the framework of proportionality. As long as a (potential) Syrian defence remains necessary and proportionate, it would **not 'tip over' into an act of aggression in violation of international law**. As long as this is the case, the **legal requirements for a declaration of a NATO alliance case would not be met.**"

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This is likely to apply all the more to the new Turkish invasion of Afrin, which Erdogan had carried out after the collapse of the Assad regime at the end of 2024. Once again, Leopard tanks rolled in and hundreds of people died. Whether Erdogan is really serious about his peace signals to the PKK will be proven, among other things, by the further fate of Afrin.

The Eurofighter - much sought after by the Turkish air force

Shortly before Christmas 2024, Erdogan had two British Eurofighter *Typhoons* flown in from Qatar to be inspected by officers from the Turkish Air Force. The fighter aircraft, a German-Spanish-Italian-British joint project, has long been on their wish list and is intended to replace the ageing American F-15s. This has so far come up against a political obstacle, as all four producing countries must agree to a sale, and Chancellor Scholz has so far refused to do so, citing Türkiye's aggressive behaviour in Syria. However, with the new political developments (regime change in Syria, war in Ukraine), all reservations are gone. In autumn 2024, the German Chancellor's refusal to participate in Erdogan's state visit to Berlin caused a major upset. Turkish Defence Minister Güler then threatened to procure the American F-16 instead of the 40 Eurofighters. Six months later, there is no longer any sign of anger. The sale under German leadership is (as of November 2024)¹⁴ a done deal. It will shift the strategic status quo in the Middle East to the benefit of Türkiye and NATO. Or fuel further wars in the region, as many peace activists in Europe fear.¹⁵

German warships and torpedoes for the Turkish Mediterranean fleet

¹³ Research Services - Elaboration - WD 2 - 3000 - 116/19 p. 14 (bold in original)
retrieved on 27 February 2025

¹⁴ "Blockade lifted - Germany approves 40 Eurofighters for Türkiye" Frankfurter Rundschau
16.11.2024

¹⁵ Action Outcry: "No Eurofighters for Türkiye!" 25.10.2024, retrieved 20.2.2025

The same applies to the armament of the Turkish navy by German shipyards and electronics companies. In the background: the decades-long rivalry between Greece and Türkiye over natural resources in the eastern Mediterranean. In October 2024, the coalition under Chancellor Scholz suddenly ended its years-long moratorium on Türkiye and approved arms exports worth a quarter of a billion euros. According to *Der Spiegel*, this included 100 anti-aircraft missiles and torpedoes for the navy as well as large packages of material for the modernisation of Turkish submarines and frigates. "The licences are based on a list from the Ministry of Economics for the Bundestag, which is available to SPIEGEL. According to the list, the weapons manufacturer MBDA may supply Türkiye with 100 guided missiles for the air defence of ships. The list does not specify the financial scope of the deal, but the price of the so-called RAM missiles is likely to be around 100 million euros. The Federal Security Council also approved the delivery of 28 *SeaHake* torpedoes from Thyssen-Krupp's naval division for 156 million euros." ¹⁶

Greece and Türkiye are both members of NATO. It's hard to imagine what would happen if they were to come to blows over the exploitation of gas reserves off Greece and Cyprus, as they did in 2020 when Erdogan threatened Greece with war. ¹⁷

German help with the development of a Turkish high-tech defence industry

"Türkiye is striving for sovereignty in armaments and defence policy. It wants to be less and less dependent on partners from third countries in terms of logistics, technology, concepts and the manufacture of weapons systems; in other words, Ankara is focussing on in-house production instead of procurement from abroad. In order to achieve this goal, companies in the defence sector are being networked, local supply chain capacities are being expanded and defence-related research in the country's various economic sectors is being coordinated centrally." These are the first sentences of a recent report by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs entitled "Türkiye on the way to becoming a global arms exporter - Growing competitiveness and strategic reorientation of the Turkish defence industry" from 2024. ¹⁸

The study cites several examples of their rapid rise: Bayraktar-TB2 drones from the Turkish company Baykar, which have been exported to numerous countries and were used against Russian troops in Ukraine, for example, or in Azerbaijan's conflict with Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh on the Azerbaijani side. They have also appeared in Syria, northern Iraq and Libya.

In terms of land and air warfare, Türkiye has already taken many steps forward on the path to the desired self-sufficiency: the Altay light battle tank, the Anka-3 stealth combat

¹⁶ "Ampelregierung approves arms exports to Türkiye again", author Matthias Gebauer, DER SPIEGEL Online of 6 October 2024, retrieved 1 December 2024

¹⁷ "Can the EU stop Erdogan?" Tagesschau Online from 12 August 2020, author Helga Schmidt, ARD Brussels, retrieved on 15.1.2026

¹⁸ SWP-Aktuell 2024/A 05 from 1 February 2024, author Jens Bastian, accessed 13 February 2025

drone, the KAAN stealth aircraft and a light fighter-bomber, along with other projects¹⁹, are milestones in a development that is only comparable to Israel's in this area in the Middle East.

And once again, the Federal Republic of Germany, in a cosy brotherhood in arms, has provided considerable assistance in achieving this goal. Right at the forefront: German defence companies from the high-tech sector. What Türkiye cannot yet do itself, it is happy to supply. In August 2020, the political magazine *Monitor* provided an example of the responsibility of the red-green-yellow traffic light coalition in this regard, which likes to give itself the appearance of particular restraint when it comes to arms exports to crisis regions. Under the title "Erdogan's drone wars: also thanks to German technology?", the editorial team reported on the delivery of warheads for Turkish drones that were used in violation of international law in the city of Kobane in Kurdish-populated western Syria and caused civilian casualties.²⁰

Bayraktar TB-2 drones from Türkiye were also used in Azerbaijan's recent war against Armenia over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, which led to the almost complete expulsion of Armenians from the region.²¹

Other sources reported that the West German company *Hensoldt*, which has been owned by the German government for several years, was involved in the production of components for the Turkish drone war, along with many others.²² In the four-month Operation *Olive Branch* alone, during which Türkiye occupied the Syrian city of Afrin, drones of this type are said to have scored 449 direct hits and enabled combat aircraft or helicopters to do so in a further 680 cases. The number of victims is not known. The report from *Netzpolitik.org* names many other suppliers of drone components from Germany. Some of them were not even subject to authorisation.

A small side note: the son of the founder of the *Baykar* drone factory and namesake of the Bayraktar *drone*, Selcuk Bayraktar, is now said to be the son-in-law of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.²³ There are pictures of Erdogan proudly signing a Bayraktar drone in felt-tip pen. Thanks to German and international aid, further bestsellers from Turkish defence factories are sure to follow soon.

Summary

The extent of armaments co-operation between the Federal Republic of Germany or the German Reich and Türkiye or the Ottoman Empire is probably unparalleled among the countries of Europe, both in terms of the quantity and cost as well as the variety and quality of the weapons supplied. The consequences of the wars waged with the armaments are also probably unrivalled - some of which (this should be emphasised once

¹⁹ "Türkiye's new boom industry", Tagesschau Online v. 14.11.2023, author Karin Senz, retrieved 3.3.2025

²⁰ *Monitor* from 20.8.2020, authors Otfried Nassauer and others, accessed 12.12.2024

²¹ "Seven seconds to run away"-Tagesschau Online from 20 November 2022, author Silvia Stöber, retrieved 6 March 2025

²² "Missiles and sensors-German technology for the Turkish drone war", Netzpolitik.org v.12.10. 2021 + 6 additions, author Matthias Monroy, dated 10.2.2025

²³ *ibid.*

again) were waged in violation of international law and even led to genocide. The German governments in the German Empire and the Federal Republic were aware of this and nevertheless authorised the billion-euro exports with their eyes open. An end to this dubious brotherhood in arms - NATO membership or not - is not in sight.