



German Cabinet (2022)

Topic Description

Olaf Scholz has been sworn in as Germany's new chancellor, formally taking power after Angela Merkel's historic 16 years as leader. His Social Democrat Party (SDP) carefully negotiated a difficult coalition and will hold the reins of Europe's de-facto leadership. Still, there are challenges abound, and as part of Olaf's cabinet, you will need to move quickly and deliberately to promote European Stability and German prosperity. The Green Party had its best showing ever in the last election and will be looking to push this cabinet to the left on climate change and social issues. The E.U., with Germany at the helm, fights irrelevancy in a world that increasingly focuses on the U.S. and China. Refugees flood into Poland and other European countries through the borders of Turkey and Belarus. Russia continues mounting an aggressive hybrid military campaign that threatens to destabilize countries like Ukraine and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Historical Background

2016 European Turkey Immigration Deal

The civil war in Syria beginning in 2011—along with a number of other global crises during this time frame—forced millions of displaced persons into neighboring countries and Europe. As a result of the hundreds of thousands of migrants traveling through Turkey to reach the European Union (E.U.), the E.U. entered into an agreement with Turkey to limit the number of refugees seeking asylum in E.U. soil. Ankara, Turkey's capital, would take steps to prevent new migration routes into the E.U. from opening, and migrants who entered Greece irregularly would be returned to Turkey. In exchange for limiting the influx of refugees, the European Union agreed to resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey on a one-to-one basis, reduce visa restrictions for Turkish citizens, pay six billion euros in aid for Syrian migrant communities in Turkey, and restart halted talks regarding Turkey's admission to the E.U..¹

Turkey was, and continues to be, the largest refugee-hosting country in the world. The majority of its three million refugees come from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. With the last of the six billion euros in aid committed in December 2020, there has been resurged interest in renewing the arrangement. Considering that the European Union continues to rely heavily on Turkey for migrant management, this deal is in Germany's best interest. Former Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, after receiving more than one million asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, has praised the deal's effectiveness and even suggested it could be a model pact for future migration and refugee crises. Meanwhile, President Erdoğan and his government have claimed that key

¹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-turkey-deal-five-years-on>

parts of the agreement were not met by the E.U.. Yet, leaders on both sides have discussed renewing it.²

2002 Nuclear Phase-Out

Since January 2022, Germany has closed down three of its six nuclear plants scattered throughout the country. These shutdowns are in anticipation of the country's total phase-out of atomic power after decades of usage, which is scheduled to be fully completed just one year from now. The decision to phase out nuclear power began in 2002, an announcement made by the center-left government of Gerhard Schroeder in 2002. His successor, Angela Merkel, initially disagreed with Schroeder, and planned to extend the lifetime of the country's nuclear plants. However, she reversed her decision in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan. As a result, 2022 was set as the final deadline for shutting down the nuclear plants. Despite the seemingly obvious beneficial impacts of moving away from atomic power, some in Germany have called for Merkel's decision to be reconsidered, arguing that the power plants produce relatively little carbon dioxide. In fact, there are advocates of atomic energy who argue that it will help Germany meet its climate targets for greenhouse gas emissions. Environment Minister Steffi Lemke continues to reject the idea that a new generation of nuclear power plants could change Germany's course once again.³ As Europe's largest economy, will Germany successfully become carbon-neutral by 2045, avoiding nuclear rifts that may arise along the way?

Current Situation

Belarus-European Immigration Crisis

Throughout 2021, a geopolitical refugee crisis developed at the border of Belarus and the European Union (E.U.). Given the circumstantial and legal limitations imposed due to the pandemic, thousands of migrants may be trying to enter Europe through less conventional paths, such as through Belarus and Poland. At these border flashpoints, the E.U. has responded with force. Where refugees have formed camps, they are often without basic food, water, and medical care. Compared to refugee streams at other parts of the E.U. border, this particular crisis is renewing geopolitical tensions between the E.U. and Belarus. To an outsider, it seems to be more about borders and E.U. power than about the condition of refugees or consequences of war in the Middle East.

Belarussian head of state Alexander Lukashenko currently oversees this crisis amidst civil unrest. Lukashenko is already under sanctions by the E.U. due to his violent crackdown regarding Belarussian protests. These protests began in response to a potentially rigged election that brought Lukashenko a landslide victory in 2020. Lukashenko has continued to crackdown on dissent in the populace, imprisoning and arresting thousands, imprisoning or targeting journalists with violence, and otherwise using force to subdue Belarus and enact his policies. These activities have prompted multiple further rounds of E.U. sanctions. The situation today culminates in a crisis at the border that may be at least partially manufactured to put pressure on Europe.

² <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-turkey-deal-five-years-on>

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<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/correction-germany-nuclear-shutdown-story-82051054#:~:text=Germany%27s%20re%20three%20nuclear%20plants,by%20the%20end%20of%202022.&text=Germany%27s%20nuclear%20power%20companies%20will,early%20shutdown%20of%20their%20plants>

Lukashenko declared he wouldn't be stopping migrants from heading to the E.U. The Lukashenko administration created new ways to lure them into the country, including tourist visas and relaxed restrictions. Thousands of migrants from war-torn zones arrived in Belarus and went in the direction of Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia. These countries declared a state of emergency and pushed back the refugees with thousands of migrants. Poland used tear gas and water cannons against the refugees, drawing some muted international criticism. On the Belarusian side, border guards stopped the refugees' retreats and pushed them back towards Europe.

This situation harkens back to the last major refugee crisis. In 2015, instability in Syria, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern countries pushed migrants through Turkey and crossing into Greece. In 2016, the E.U. made a deal with Turkey, paying them €6 billion to hold back migrants and prevent them from crossing over. Human rights groups warned the deal was reckless and illegal, and it made migrants subject to human rights violations. Still the law was implemented and by all accounts was startlingly effective at reducing the flow of migration into Europe.

Over the years, Turkey used this deal as a weapon to threaten the E.U. that it would let migrants in if the E.U. did not provide more funds. Other countries, the latest being Belarus, have copied this example and used migrants as a negotiation point. Europe has paid several African countries to create an immigration buffer all around Europe.

In many of these places, migrants are subject to abuse and violence. But Europe usually gets away with this migrant strategy because it happens far away. This essentially means that all surrounding countries have the ability to use these migrants as negotiation chips. In Belarus, Lukashenko is attempting to use these refugees to negotiate a lifting of the sanctions placed on members of his administration and travel restrictions placed by European airlines across Belarusian air space. Belarus has admitted to moving migrants from the Middle East to Poland and Lukashenko shows no sign of easing up on this strategy.

Bosnia-Herzegovina Crisis

To understand the situation facing Bosnia-Herzegovina one must look at how the country came to be. Modern Bosnia-Herzegovina came about in the sixth and seventh centuries when the Slavs migrated into the Balkans. The two main Slavic tribes were the Croats and the Serbs, and they were prone to cycles of infighting and conflict. In 1463, the region was conquered by invading Ottoman Empire troops. Over time, migration and conflict brought Muslim people and faith into the country, creating the three ethnic divisions that we see today: Serbian-Bosnians, Croat-Bosnians, and Muslim-Bosnians.

Over time the Ottoman Empire began its slow decline, and Bosnia-Herzegovina slowly began to slip out from the Ottoman Sphere of influence, eventually being annexed by Austria. World War II brought more infighting between the Serbs and the Croats. Yugoslavia came out of the war as the regional power but eventually collapsed due to economic pressure, and that is when modern Bosnia truly came to be.

Bosnia was divided among Bosnian Muslims, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats. The Serbs attempted to take over the country and closed in on the capital, but they were pushed back by U.N. forces and the combined Bosniakk and Croat forces. Peace negotiations created the

Bosnia-Herzegovina country which would be split into two parts: the Bosnia Croat Federation and the Serb Republic. This peace negotiation was unexpectedly successful, and Bosnia-Herzegovina has rebounded economically into the global stage.

Unfortunately, historical tensions persist and those tensions have flared up in the past few years, threatening to unravel the delicate power-sharing agreement that has kept all three ethnic minorities at peace.

The Dayton Accords, as the power-sharing agreement came to be known, created a triad of presidents—one Serb, one Bosniak, and one Croat—to represent the ethnic groups within the country and to rule. Each president serves as head of the country for a period of time before passing it to the next triad president in line. Late last year, Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik sparked fears of a succession bid when he said Republika Srpska would pull out of three key Bosnia Herzegovina state institutions: the armed forces, the top judiciary body and the tax agency. In essence, this would create a de facto secession, if not a de jure one. Republika Srpska was angry over passage of a law banning genocide denial. He and his party have repeatedly denied assertions of any genocide committed by Serbs in the country after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and claim that the Dayton Accords are just a way of keeping Bosnia-Herzegovina dependent on the West. They see the accords as an unfair balance of power and an overreach by the international community. The E.U. and the U.S. have released statements condemning the rhetoric from Milorad Dodik, threatening sanctions if the situation continues. Turkey has always been a close ally of the Bosnian-Serbs and of Milorad's Party. This is potentially an opportunity for Bosnia-Herzegovina to pivot away from the West and towards closer relationships with Turkey.

Greece-Turkey Cyprus Tensions

Greece and Germany have seen a year of skirmishes and disagreements across every issue. Disagreements include territorial disputes in the Aegean sea, drilling rights in the Mediterranean, and renewed social strife between the Turkish-recognized Cypriots and the E.U.-recognized Cypriots. This is in addition to radically different approaches to refugee resettlement. The Greeks have pushed at every turn to reduce the number of refugees and asylum seekers entering the E.U. and to push the burden of refugees on neighboring African centers. The Erdogan administration has said they want Europe to do its part in responding to the unprecedented refugee crisis and to accept more asylum seekers over the next year.

Domestic Topics

The Bundestag, also known as the German Federal Parliament, is stuck in turmoil. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party lost over 50 seats in the last election, providing the Social Democratic Party's (SDP) Olaf Schultz with the chance to take the reins of German governance. Schultz assembled a fragile coalition of the Green Party (Greens) and the Free Democratic Party's (FDP), a so-called traffic light coalition. Unfortunately, now the coalition has fractured apart, with the Greens calling the FDP party cowards on climate change, and the FDP vowing never to work with the green party in any sort of power-sharing agreement. This has crippled Schultz's momentum at a fragile time for Germany.

Besides this power-sharing emergency, there are a number of other domestic disputes in Germany right now. Civic engagement is contagious, as all major cities are currently seeing protests. German protestors are marching against a variety of topics, including climate action, climate inaction, COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, stagnating wages, and against a growing tide of immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Experts say these protest movements are emboldening smaller parties on the left as well as the right. Along with widespread civil unrest, there also remains an ongoing investigation by the German police of the deadly floods, which killed over 180 people across Germany and Belgium in 2021 and remains an unhealed wound in the hearts of many.⁴

Key Terms

- 2016 E.U.-Turkey Deal⁵
- Asylum
- Asylum-seeker
- Exclusion Clauses
- Gender-related persecution
- Local integration
- Resettlement
- Dayton Accords
- Cold War
- Strategic Nuclear Warhead
- Nuclear Arsenal
- Nuclear Demilitarization
- Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
- Hybrid and Multi-Facet Conflicts
- AUKUS Trilateral Security Partnership
- Minority Parliament Coalition

Discussion Questions

- How can Germany reinvigorate Europe's spirit and become the heart of a newly united European Union?
- The European Union (E.U.) has long prided itself on a strong human rights record. Unfortunately, critics will often point to the E.U.'s immigration and refugee stance as a form of hypocrisy. Given the recent flood of videos and pictures from the Polish-Belarus border, showing E.U. forces shoving refugees out of the country, how can Germany keep the bloc united but also present a humanitarian and caring face to the world?
- Germany has taken many steps to become a leader in green technology and the fight against climate change. Some in the government, particularly in the Green Party, seek to take even more drastic measures, saying that we are still shy of our ambitious climate targets. Given the tenuous state of rule in the government, this cabinet can ill afford to alienate Green Party members. What actions should this administration take with regards to climate change?

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⁵ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-turkey-deal-five-years-on>

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