

HOME COUNTRY PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION OF  
DIASPORAS: THE CASE OF TURKEY

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DIASPORAS: THE CASE OF TURKEY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **HOME COUNTRY PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION OF DIASPORAS: THE CASE OF TURKEY**

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Turkey’s diaspora in Europe, constituting around five million citizens, has been central to Turkish domestic politics since the early days of mass labour migration in the 1960s. The Turkish Parliament, as the ultimate representative body, has played a crucial role both in shaping diaspora policies and defining who “the diaspora” is as individual MPs and party groups have placed diaspora-related issues high on the agenda, integrating these issues into various legislative processes. This dissertation looks at the oft-overlooked role of home country parliaments in diaspora engagement by focusing on Turkey and asks how Turkey’s diaspora in Europe has been represented in the Turkish Parliament by different political parties and how the forms and substance of such representation evolved over time. The study uses legislative material — plenary and committee speeches, written and oral questions, draft bills, committee reports — on diaspora issues between 1961-2020 as empirical evidence in order to understand the Parliament’s role in establishing a diaspora policy and how the image of “the Turkish diaspora” has been continuously produced and reproduced by Turkish politicians. The findings from the study address both continuity and rupture in

the Parliament's diaspora engagement history: The continuity occurred in the Turkish politicians' attempts to protect the diaspora from what they considered as (politically) malign and radical. On the other hand, the solution-based approach central to diaspora policy in the early periods transformed gradually into a policy style defined by pre-conceptions. The incumbent parties and their ideologies have been particularly prominent in this transformation.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Political representation, Turkish Parliament, political parties, government & opposition relations

## ÖZ

### DİASPORALARIN ANA VATAN PARLAMENTOLARINDA SİYASİ TEMSİLİ: TÜRKİYE ÖRNEĞİ

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Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

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Türkiye'nin Avrupa'daki diasporası, işçi göçünün başladığı 1960'lardan günümüze dek Türk siyaseti için her zaman önemli bir konuma sahip olmuştur. Ana temsil organı olan TBMM de gerek diaspora politikalarının şekillenmesinde gerekse de kimlerin “diaspora” olduğunun belirlenmesinde başından beri önemli bir işlev üstlenmiş, milletvekilleri ve siyasi parti grupları çeşitli yasama mekanizmaları aracılığıyla diaspora sorunlarını sistematik bir şekilde Meclis gündemine taşımışlardır. Bu bağlamda, bu tez; anavatan parlamentolarının diaspora siyasetinde sıklıkla göz ardı edilen rolüne odaklanarak Türkiye'nin Avrupa'daki diasporasının TBMM'deki farklı siyasi partiler tarafından tarihsel olarak nasıl temsil edildiğini ve bu temsil biçimlerinin zaman içerisinde nasıl geliştiğini incelemektedir. Diaspora alanında gerçekleşen bu dönüşümü anlayabilmek için çalışmada 1961-2020 arasındaki yasama ve denetim süreçlerine ilişkin farklı materyaller — genel kurul ve komisyon konuşmaları, kanun teklifleri, yazılı ve sözlü sorular — incelenmiş, başlangıçtan günümüze “Türk diasporası” imgesinin siyasetçiler tarafından nasıl şekillendirildiği

sorusuna cevap aranmıştır. Çalışmanın ana bulguları, diaspora siyaseti tarihinin süreklilikler ve kopuşlardan oluştuğuna işaret etmektedir: Türkiye'deki siyasetçilerin diaspora üyelerini (siyaseten) zararlı ve radikal görülen unsurlardan koruma güdüsü bir devamlılık arz ederken; ilk dönemlerde hâkim olan, diasporanın sorunlarına çözüm getirme odaklı anlayışın zamanla sorunların ve çözümlerin iktidar partisi siyasetçilerinin iç siyasetteki ideolojik önceliklerine göre belirlendiği bir yaklaşıma dönüşmesi ise diaspora temsili tarihindeki ana kopuşu oluşturmaktadır. Sonuç olarak çalışma, Türkiye örneği üzerinden diaspora ve siyasi temsil literatürleriyle disiplinler arası bir diyalog kurmayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Diaspora, Siyasi temsil, TBMM, siyasi partiler, iktidar ve muhalefet ilişkileri

*To (transnational) sisterhood,  
which got this thesis written*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANAP	Anavatan Partisi
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi
DİB	Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı
DİTİB	Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği
DSP	Demokratik Sol Parti
DYP	Doğru Yol Partisi
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi
ICMG	Islamic Community Millî Görüş
KEFEK	Kadın Erkek Fırsat Eşitliği Komisyonu
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	Millî Selamet Partisi
RP	Refah Partisi
SHP	Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti
TBMM	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi
YTB	Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There might be various different reasons that motivate a political scientist to study a particular topic – a curiosity, the need to bring a tangible solution to a burning problem, or merely the urge to understand a complex political event or a phenomenon. Like it makes the perfect prelude to so many real-life situations when an analogy is needed, if pushed harder, Tolstoy’s seminal opening lines in *Anna Karenina* that originally refer to happy and unhappy families can also be used for many vigorous political science research: the inspiration behind each thesis is different in its own ways. My research was motivated by an interest that connects two areas of my personal life.

The Turkish Parliament, which has been my professional home for seven years between 2012-2019, has ultimately inspired the way I look at politics and determined the choice of my academic practice. Being a parliamentary reporter/stenographer came with some lucky perks for a politics geek like myself, such as having a special corner at any parliamentary occasion, from countless committee meetings to plenary sessions with often high, seldom low tension. I attended parliamentary meetings, watched interactions between the MPs, wrote down their speeches and left every meeting room with a new unique experience. I watched politicians speak, fight, compromise and bluff, day and night (literally). My political scientist side savoured this opportunity to make something academic out of my years-long observations. From the moment I started my PhD, I knew I wanted to study the Turkish Parliament and the parliamentarians’ speeches in particular, both of which were actually a big part of my daily routine.

Three years into my time in the Parliament, my professional life brought some romantic perks too, as I met my future husband in one of these parliamentary conferences, though he was from a somewhat quieter and more stable part of the world, the Netherlands. As the relationship grew into something rather serious and I found myself as a potential diaspora member, I started warming up for my future life in the Netherlands in my own way. Academically, not only I suddenly gravitated towards learning more about the history of labour migration, transnational links between migrants and home country, or the *gurbetçi* life here and there, but also as a social scientist and avid observer, I wanted to see how it was experienced in reality. During my occasional visits, I started going to the Turkish neighbourhoods to create random encounters with the Turkish and Kurdish immigrants so that I could see, observe, and preferably interact with them and listen to what they had to say about their experiences of being politically between here and there (Waldinger, 2008). I wanted to know more about how it felt like living with the “immigrant” label that sticks with them forever and the dilemma it created between integration pushed by their government and assimilation opposed by their homeland. I wondered how they made sense of continuous targeting by far-right leaders for their inability to integrate, their dual loyalty, or wanted to learn more about how they interact among each other as Kurds, Turks, Alevis, second or third generations, or new exile group affiliated with the Gülen movement. Now that I knew more about the nuances between different political parties in Europe and the Netherlands, I had this urge to find out more about how their political choices in Turkey and those societies are linked, if ever, and whether they affect one another.

In the Parliament too, I became way more selective towards speeches that referred to a diaspora-related issue. My usual autopilot mood while listening and transcribing speeches was replaced with an alert reaction when an MP, for example, took the floor to speak about racism or Islamophobia in Europe, on the anniversaries of labour agreements with European states, far-right in Europe targeting Turkish nationals abroad, or an accusatory speech blaming the Western

governments for their double standards on human rights. As I became more alert and selective, I realized that, actually, my new area of interest is quite often mentioned in the Parliament by the MPs, and I regretted for all that time I had failed to recognize how often the topic found a platform for itself in the Parliament.

Incidentally, the relations between Turkey and many migrant-hosting European countries were increasingly getting tense following the coup attempt, which admittedly functioned to feed my newfound curiosity with more abundant parliamentary material. Soon afterwards, following weeks of escalating tensions with Germany ahead of Turkey's presidential referendum over not allowing Turkey's pre-referendum electoral rallies, it was the deporting of a Turkish Minister from the Netherlands who travelled to the country for an electoral campaign that triggered a diplomatic spat between two countries. The fact that the diplomatic crisis arose from a country that I thought would be my future country made the topic even more personal and interesting for me. Out of curiosity about what politicians had to say on the issue, I attended the entire plenary and committee sessions following the incident and was stunned by how diverse the reactions were to an issue that would normally be expected to unite ruling and opposition parties. On the one hand, ruling party MPs were agitated because of the treatment to their party member and saw the incident as yet another proof of Western hypocrisy on freedom of expression, while opposition MPs, mainly of CHP, were angry at the Ak Party for humiliating the entire nation and country for petty electoral calculations. It was striking for me to realize how dividing diaspora-related issues can be or how diaspora-related issues can function to reveal already existing political grievances.

I started wondering whether there had been a time during which issues on citizens abroad, which were now dividing parties, were agreed upon by all parties. I wanted to understand how it was before and how did it lead up to here. Was there a time when citizens abroad was a uniting subject? Why or since when

did the representatives make citizens in Europe part of their so-called politicized discourse. Then I knew I wanted to answer these questions through a method I knew the best: parliamentary speeches, which I have been writing professionally for years already, to understand different domestic political dynamics behind this new area I was keenly interested in, that is, the diaspora.

At that sweet spot where these questions hung on somewhere between a mere personal interest and a potential research topic, I wanted to go back to where it all started and read early parliamentary debates to fulfil this curiosity –a geeky pastime hobby to take. When I saw politicians talking with the same enthusiasm on “workers abroad”, even more questions occurred than the ones I meant to answer: Why would a politician dedicate time, energy and resources on seemingly niche issues such as social security, marriage or divorce, property ownership or integration of a community that emigrated from homeland nearly sixty years ago? Why would representatives in homeland parliament care that much about the wellbeing or the issues surrounding their former and non-resident nationals and establish parliamentary committees, take personal or institutional initiatives to solve problems ranging from language and education to their legal rights? What kind of understanding of representation can explain these types of initiatives when these representatives do not even come to parliament are not even elected through direct participation of people they claim to and endeavour to represent? All these questions ignited by my personal, professional and academic observations, as well as the urge to understand these dynamics, has thus shaped the backbone of this research.

Like my tentative early researches also revealed, the issues related to workers in Europe has indeed been brought to the Turkish Parliament’s attention by various different political parties and their representatives since the beginning of labour migration. While this continuous interest can be seen as the proof of the responsibility felt by the Turkish state towards the wellbeing of migrants since the early stages of emigration (Mügge, 2012: 33), the last two decades have

witnessed a proliferation of a different sort of diaspora engagement attempts (Aydın, 2014; Öktem, 2014). Different aspects of the institutionalized form of Turkey's new interest towards its citizens abroad have also been widely studied in the literature with a ranging focus from external voting (Şahin-Mencütek and Erdoğan, 2016; Abadan-Unat et al., 2014) to diaspora institutions (Aydın, 2014, Öktem, 2014). The recent increase in the volume of scholarly interest in Turkey's diaspora engagement usually sees this new episode of diaspora engagement as part of a revised public diplomacy vision with new initiatives and institutions such as Yunus Emre Institutes, YTB (Yurt Dışı Türkler Başkanlığı), a more enhanced network of DITIB (Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği), and out-of-country voting (Aksel, 2014; Akçapar and Aksel, 2017).

While acknowledging the institutional components of diaspora engagement policies, the significant role played by the Turkish Parliament in diaspora engagement is often overlooked. Individual MPs and party groups have continuously voiced diaspora-related issues on the Parliament floor and engaged themselves in various legislative activities regarding the Turks in Europe -setting up committees, sponsoring private bills, initiating parliamentary investigations on issues they consider that these populations face. In this study, I will focus on the Parliament's function and the involvement in diaspora engagement as the ultimate representative body in order to answer how Turkey's diaspora in Europe has been represented in the Parliament. The Turkish Parliament, as a historically a well-respected institution by Turkish citizens (Turan, 1994), has played a crucial part in the country's institutional and political ties with the overseas population by enacting laws that establish diaspora-related institutions, bringing diaspora-related issues into several committee agendas and having extensive debates on these issues through different legislative mechanisms. Therefore, I will first investigate the following question:

*Research Question 1: How has Turkey's diaspora in Europe been represented in the Turkish Parliament by different political parties and individual MPs since the beginning of labour migration in the 1960s.*

Although the MPs have shown interest in the issues of citizens abroad early on, it would be misleading to consider this political interest as a consistent whole from the 1960s to the 2020s. Turkey is far from being a politically stable country, with a constant change of governments and even governmental systems. Therefore, I will elaborate on diaspora representation within this context of changing political dynamic and approach the Parliament's stance on diaspora in Europe both as a form of continuity and rupture. I will specifically look at the underlying political moments and mindsets of this gradual transformation, which puts domestic political variables (dominant ideologies, ruling-opposition party relationship, socio-political and cultural priorities of different governments and eras) at the centre of my study.

Situating domestic political parameters at the core of the study necessitates looking primarily into the components of the domestic political scene. In a parliamentary setting, this component is ultimately the inter-party relations within the legislature. Political positions and motives of each party, be it ruling or opposition, have substantially influenced the ways in which diaspora policy was shaped, and diaspora topics were debated. These topics sometimes happened to be above political divides and agreed upon, sometimes happened to be discussed in the same fault lines that inherently ruled Turkish politics. Some political parties, for instance, saw political Islam in Europe essentially as a civil society movement that should be fostered, while others considered it as a potential threat from which to protect diaspora members. Therefore, another main focus of the study will build on these domestic political nuances revealed in the context of diaspora topics. Accordingly, my second question will go as follows:

*Research Question 2: How have different political parties responded to diaspora issues in different periods, and how were ruling-opposition party relations shaped on diaspora-related issues?*

Even though the number of studies that take into account the domestic political variables in the study of diaspora engagement has risen, in this study, I will direct the focus on the Parliament and show different political party positions within the parliament when they are in the government and opposition. Since we can expect diaspora-related debates to reveal long-held political grievances, positions, or ideologies, through the analysis of different party discourses, we can understand how different political traditions a) approach and characterize the diaspora, b) the issues on which different parties agree or disagree.

In line with this problem and the main questions posed above, the diaspora's homeland representation, particularly in Turkey, raises several follow-up questions, which could be considered as sub-questions of the research: What motivated the representatives to act for the interest of those groups, for instance, in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, when there were still no electoral enfranchise – i.e. when they were not the representatives elected by them, hence not accountable to them? In those time frames and later, what was the direction of the representative/legislative activity of the Turkish politicians, and how did it evolve over time? How did the representatives discursively and performatively characterize, categorize and identify the populations abroad with the legislative activities they were engaged with? Can we talk about a shift in the political discourse from that of diaspora as a group of working men and women to a group of kin, co-ethnic community -from more economic to a political & cultural emphasis? Did the diaspora, from the eyes of the representative, slowly evolved from economic agents to mass electorate/electoral support providers? Did the attempts of different government to incorporate overseas citizens into the domestic democratic field succeed or did these attempt worked only for some segments of the diaspora, whom can be identified as the “ideal expatriates”

(Okyay, 2015) perpetuating the gulf between acceptable and unacceptable citizen imaginary? While attempting to answer these questions, the study will analyze the debates in each decade starting from the 1960s, during which workers were mainly approached as agents for economic development due to the high volume of remittances sent to the homeland. As the overall political climate in Turkey has gradually altered, so did the politicians' way of approaching citizens abroad and what they meant for the country. The subsequent expansion of various citizenship rights for expatriates, such as voting rights, gave diaspora engagement strategies a rather political character in the coming decades. Therefore, the thesis will address such a shift from an economic to a political perspective that drives politicians' understanding and attitude towards the diaspora while representing them in the Parliament.

After answering these questions, the study will contribute to the literature in three ways. The first contribution will be to diaspora studies. As will be discussed in the literature review section, diaspora engagement or transnationalism studies have shown little or no interest in the Parliaments' role in diaspora policy or political representation of the diaspora in the homeland context. This dissertation will use Turkey as a case to show that the parliaments are crucial entities to understand the complex dynamics behind the home country's diaspora engagement policies. Moreover, approaching diaspora policy from government-opposition party perspectives and the debates it stimulates in the domestic political scene will be a unique contribution to the field.

Second, the study will be a valuable contribution to the literature on political representation in a broad sense and on diaspora's political representation in particular. Political representation scholars have long debated on the nature and implications of representation, substantially drawing on Pitkin's (1967) work. As the ultimate representative body, parliaments play a crucial role in understanding the dynamics behind political representation. Specifically for the Turkish Parliament, acting in the interest of a group (diaspora) without being directly

elected by them induces a theoretical and practical gap that I will try to bridge through diaspora representation studies and theoretical debates on representation. The former mostly focuses on representation by looking at home country elections and identifies how much minority groups are represented and by whom. I will move beyond these territorially defined modes of explanation and introduce the home country political representation of the diaspora.

Finally, the most significant contribution of this study can be considered as the big data-set it introduces in the field and possibly for future researchers on this topic. I have scanned all diaspora-related initiatives, as well as debates in the Parliament, started from 1961, the year the first labour agreement was signed and categorized them according to decades, and within decades, according to the subjects. What I have found is a large and rich body of legislative material from which many different topics within Turkish politics can branch out, from Islamophobia to the status of (migrant) women in the eyes of Turkish politicians. Turkey incorporates many different strands studied within diaspora studies, ranging from long-distance nationalism to authoritarian country. Given that this study presents valuable findings from Turkey's six-decades long diaspora engagement history that accommodates many more episodes such as the economic contribution of migrants and external voting, this dissertation offers present and future researchers a first big leap to further dive deep into different aspects of Turkey's diaspora and representation.

Discussing the research findings in the light of these theories and answering all these questions, as a result, will contribute to our understanding of different modalities through which migrant-sending states might shape their diasporas politically and how domestic political variables play into this process. Addressing the symbiotic relationship between domestic political dynamics and diaspora politics will also help us understand diaspora politics and representation as a multi-dimensional, multi-actor process.

## **1.1. Diaspora, Representation and Parliaments: What Do We Know and Do Not Know?**

This thesis will be based on a number of literatures, to name the few main ones, on representation, diaspora studies and what falls at the intersection between these two, namely the political representation of diasporas and immigrant groups.

### **1.1.1. Representation**

The representative relationships are complex both in theory and in practice. Many scholars in the field of political representation set off their work usually by referring to the seminal taxonomy developed by Pitkin (1967) that differentiates between formal, symbolic, descriptive, and substantive representation. The last one among them, a substantive representation which is defined as “acting in the interest of the represented”, is the term that received the most attention and further advanced by democratic theory scholars. Among others, Mansbridge (2003) and Saward (2010) have developed theoretical perspectives to understand this gulf between the represented and the representative in terms of the issues addressed. Propagating the components of political representation, these scholars underlined the fact that elected representatives often represent interests and people with whom they do not necessarily have an electoral relationship. For instance, a disabled MP from constituency A might as well speak for the interests of the disabled beyond the constituency. The non-geographical representation of interests and perspectives as such is referred to as “surrogate representation” by Mansbridge (2003), which is essential for the representation of interests that would otherwise be neglected. Since the term explains political representation that takes place beyond constituencies, it is helpful to explain the Turkish diaspora’s representation in the Turkish Parliament without a direct electoral or constituency-based relationship.

Saward likewise acknowledges the central aspect of political representation as to the “active making of symbols or images of what is to be represented” (Saward, 2010: 15). An MP seated in a parliament, for instance, do not only actualize a de facto representation by being elected, but also through their legislative activities, make a claim on where the interest of the represented lies. In this line of thinking, a diaspora still exists regardless of the representation, but it is also discursively constructed by politicians who claim to represent these citizens anytime through the means available to them (bills, committees, questions etc.). A Turk living in Germany might not consider their biggest day-to-day problem as Islamophobia, yet a Turkish MP seated at the Turkish Parliament might very well construct the fundamental problem the Turks face in Europe as Islamophobia with a constant emphasis on the issue during the debates or in the sponsored bills. This claim upon the interest of the represented is what Saward calls “representative claim”. Drawing on Pitkin’s critique, Saward argues that seeing representation merely as “acting in the interests of the voters” is a limiting approach to comprehend representation in its totality. The representative process also entails claim-making on where the electorate’s interests and perspectives lie. Approaching the concept of political representation as such enables us to see it as a more dynamic process through which not only the interests are reflected, but also actively constructed (Castiglione and Warren, 2006) through the acts of the representative.

The approach that conceptualizes representation as claim-making potentially explains the initial question and particular focus of this study, why and how representatives in the Turkish Parliament represent the diaspora. If these questions are tackled from a perspective that defines representation as depicting the wants, needs and interests of a constituency, it is particularly explanatory for the Turkish case, given that the diaspora has no directly elected representative in the Turkish Parliament. Instead, it is the Turkish politicians who actively make claims about their constituency and depict the possible issues of diaspora as a constituency. In this line of thinking, it is thus plausible to consider each and

every legislative act as a representative claim deciding on where the interest of the represented is vested. However, what we refer to as “the Turkish diaspora” is far from being a homogenous unit. It is an immensely diverse group with various ethnic, religious and sectarian different groups involved, very much reflecting the divide within Turkey. Alevi, Kurdish, political exiles, along with central Anatolian Sunni Turks, are the most prominent groups among those emigrated from Turkey. The way in which Turkish politicians have addressed those communities differently, and especially how party stances and ideologies have been influential in speaking out these different outlooks, will possibly be interesting sub-topics of the research. With a brief overview of the available legislative material, one can easily identify considerable transformation, and more importantly, a divergence between the decades, between the ruling and the opposition party, between male and female MPs. The problematization of each decade is almost different from the other one, the viewpoint regarding the same issue shared by the republican or the Kurdish party is different from that of the ruling party. Additionally, against such complex features of the diaspora, some issues are given prominence over the others by homeland politicians or, put it simply, issues and the interests of the diaspora are selectively chosen by the representatives in the Turkish Parliament.

### **1.1.2. Diaspora Engagement**

There are many different ways in which immigrant-sending countries are engaged with their populations abroad. Through practices such as extending dual nationality, voting rights, taxing expatriates, celebrating national days, issuing special IDs, etc., sending states mobilize their efforts for diaspora building and diaspora integration to the homeland (Gamlen, 2008). Diaspora engagement policies function both for (re)producing citizen-sovereign relationships with expatriates and for extending states’ attempts to manage the scale of their political and economic manoeuvres (Gamlen, 2006). In some states, political parties might play an active role in mobilizing the diaspora politically, whereas

other countries use their state bodies to do the same (Burgess, 2018). For instance, the Turkish state has always kept a close eye on its populations abroad since the early days of outward immigration, as can be a textbook example of long-distance nationalism (Aydın, 2016). In recent years, a lot has been said and written about the ever-evolving diaspora policy of Turkey, with an increasing focus on the Ak Party years, often addressing diaspora policy as a foreign policy tool. Diplomatic spats between homeland and host countries, expansion of the electoral franchise to overseas population (Abadan-Unat et al., 2014), and a more pro-active foreign policy highlighting the cultural ties on the basis of common heritage (Aydın, 2014; Mencutek and Başer, 2018; Öktem, 2016) can be listed as the reasons for reviving interest in Turkey's diaspora policy.

However, diaspora and representation are seldom studied together, and when it is done, the focus was hardly on diaspora's home-country representation or diaspora's place in the domestic politics of the home country. Political representation of diasporas is essentially approached from two strands in the literature. It is either engaged in from the perspective of immigrant group's political representation in host countries or immigrant participation in their home country elections which is generally referred to as "external voting" or "overseas voting" in the literature. As far as the first branch within diaspora representation literature is concerned, many studies look at the descriptive or substantive representation by MPs of minority origin in host country parliaments (Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2010; Saalfeld and Bischof, 2013). Most of these studies focused on, for example, legislative activities of immigrant-origin MPs (Wüst, 2010, 2014; Aydemir and Vliegthart, 2016; Mügge, van der Pas, van de Wardt, 2019), legislative behaviour of the parliamentarians with minority backgrounds (Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou, 2011) or for voter turnout or party choices of immigrants (Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2011). The second strand in the literature that looked at the transnational political link of migrants with their homelands, on the other hand, have mostly looked at external voting, analysing

different dynamics behind sending state motivations to enfranchise citizens abroad (Lafleur, 2011, 2013).

The Turkish diaspora's political participation in the Turkish elections and their representation in the Turkish Parliament presents a unique case. Despite having nearly 5 million citizens abroad, the country does not have an overseas electoral district to date, and out-of-country voting started to be practised fully only in the 2014 presidential elections. Nevertheless, a historical overview of the Turkish Parliament's approach towards citizens abroad since the 1960s reveal that owing to the connection of citizenship and identity, various MPs in Ankara from different parties have usually been attentive to the issues faced by citizens abroad and brought their home or host-country related issues and to the attention of the Parliament. In other words, Turkish politicians deemed themselves as the representatives authorized to represent (descriptive representation) and act for (substantive representation) the populations abroad, even though this very population were withheld from the right to vote directly in the Turkish elections until very recently.

Despite the fact that the form of this representative engagement with the diaspora has arguably shifted from economy-related issues to more nuanced political and cultural emphasis in the policies, the fact that the legislative activity in the Parliament is not bounded by the votes of those who are represented brings forth a new puzzle in the conceptual debates on representation. What motivated the representatives, for instance, in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, when there was still no electoral franchise -i.e. when they were not the representatives elected by them, hence not accountable to them? What was the context and justification of the legislative activities that the MPs were involved in in early periods of labour migration?? How did they characterize the populations abroad with the legislative activities they were involved in? How have these characterizations change, shifted over time? Can we talk about a shift in the political discourse from that of diaspora as a group of working men and women to a group of kin,

co-ethnic community -from more economic to a political & cultural emphasis? Answering these questions necessitates moving beyond the existing paradigms in diaspora representation and insert domestic political dynamics into the picture, parliaments in particular.

## **1.2. What Do We Not Know: Why Study Parliaments in Diaspora Engagement Policy**

Domestic political conditions and actors significantly affect diaspora policymaking and diaspora institutions in migrant-sending countries. These actors include political parties, bureaucracies and civil society organizations and civil society actors, while the ways in which they engage with diasporas might range from partisan to non-partisan reasons (Fitzgerald, 2006).

There are many valid reasons to consider parliaments as crucial domestic political actors and include the MP behaviour in the study of diaspora engagement policies, which has hitherto been neglected to a significant extent. As the bedrock of political representation, legislature bodies not only influence the process through which diaspora-related laws are made, but more importantly, they host rich debates on diaspora's problems and determine the course of how diaspora issues are represented – in economic, political, or cultural terms. By looking at the legislative material, we can identify both the change in political mindset on diaspora issues and how diaspora members are delineated as subjects. In that regard, parliaments can be considered both as an important diaspora policymaking pillar and as a domestic political actor that harbours heterogeneous political positions within and influences the course of diaspora actions.

Laguerre (2013) points to the lack of interest by political scientists, sociologists, and immigration scholars, while he argues that studying the relationship between parliaments and diaspora is vital to understand the diverse mechanisms behind the diaspora-country of origin relationship. According to him, the body of

literature that indirectly touches on the parliament's role in diaspora engagement looks at either technical laws that regulate legal, procedural, and logistical issues or transnational political links between diaspora members and homeland politicians. The focus in the first category can be broadly defined as the role of the state in the welfare of emigrants and protecting their rights such as security concerns, housing, repatriation procedures, language schools, religious expression, discrimination in employment and other citizenship-related rights (Laguerre, 2013: 5). Turkey's attempts to reach diaspora through modified citizenship schemes such as blue card, social security-related provisions for the diaspora and various other consular services can be listed under this first category.

The second category in the literature addresses a twofold relationship between diaspora members and homeland politics. Accordingly, either diaspora members become involved in home country politics by voting abroad in home country elections, lobbying in host countries on behalf of home country governments and/or serving as MPs representing districts inside the homeland; or home country politicians become involved in diaspora affairs by doing fundraising in the diaspora or using diaspora members as consuls or ambassadors (Laguerre, 2013: 5). It is possible to identify both of these abovementioned aspects of diaspora engagement. The Turkish Parliament's diaspora engagement includes both of these abovementioned criteria. Both Turkey's diaspora has increasingly become part of domestic politics in Turkey, as evident in the number of MPs in the Turkish Parliament with a diaspora background, and starting from the 1990s onwards, diaspora members embarked on lobbying activities for Turkey in various European countries. These indicators alone are sufficient to pay the scholarly attention that is long overdue to the nexus between home country parliaments and the diaspora.

Despite the lack of interest in the literature, there has nonetheless been a revival of interest in transnationalism literature that attempted to fill this gap between

the diaspora and representation literatures by placing domestic political explanations to the centre of diaspora representation (Peltoniemi, 2016; Østergaard-Nielsen and Camattari, 2020). For example, the questions such as why some political parties are more concerned than others on emigrant issues, and the general level of attention on emigrant issues in homeland parliaments (Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei, 2019), different consequences of state-led and party-led diaspora outreach (Burgess, 2018), or how political parties' expectations or perceptions of its emigrant determine their action (Wellman, 2021) incorporates the role of domestic actors and institutions into the study of diaspora's home country political representation. Though much timely and needed, these attempts should be further developed to include parliaments in a more nuanced way so that a comprehensive account of different domestic political components of a migrant-sending state could be offered.

Within Turkey's long history of diaspora engagement, the Turkish Parliament has historically played a crucial part in the country's institutional and political ties with the overseas population. Since the early 1960s, the Parliament has passed several laws on diaspora-related issues, and while doing so, it witnessed vivid debates on how to diaspora members should be approached. A few studies used parliamentary documents (Okyay, 2015; Kadirbeyoğlu, 2007) and some entirely minutes (Artan, 2009; Köse, 2020) to analyse different aspects of Turkey's diaspora engagement. However, focusing on diaspora representation by reviewing the entire body of legislative material on diaspora is an endeavour that has not yet been undertaken, and this study will seek to fill that vacuum in the literature setting forth from the Turkish case. For instance, in order to answer questions such as how different political actors react to diaspora-related issues, how government-opposition nexus determines diaspora policies, or whether domestic political developments or dominant ideologies affect diaspora outreach can only be answered with a dialogue between representation and diaspora studies. Therefore, the legislative material from the Turkish Parliament will provide that framework by looking into domestic political explanations created

by the parliamentary actors and mechanisms (MPs, committees, speeches, questions, sponsored bills etc.) to see how and why different political actors respond to diaspora issues differently and how domestic political changes influence the behaviour of domestic political actors regarding diaspora issues. As one of the major migrant-sending countries in the world, an analysis of Turkey will be highly illuminating for broader theoretical debates on domestic political components on diaspora engagement.

Since the early days of labour migration, several legislative and oversight mechanisms were put in practice by MPs from different parties, such as investigation committees, written questions for relevant ministries, sub-committees to deep dive into diaspora-related topics and similar efforts. The debates that took place and the discourse used on those occasions are helpful to understand different political mindsets, the ideological drives behind the shifts in diaspora policy, as well as the normative diaspora framework presented by different political actors. Lastly, the legislative debates retrieved from the Turkish Parliament can legitimately be considered as the epitome of the representative claim for diaspora members as conceptualized by Saward (2006, 2010). Since the onset of emigration, the MPs brought numerous diaspora-related issues to the Parliament's attention and claimed to represent what their wants, needs and issues are. Therefore, looking at the Parliament's diaspora engagement will be a useful contribution for scholarly debates on representation in general and diaspora representation in particular.

### **1.2.2. Methodology**

The thesis will locate the debates on the forms of political representation at its centre while analysing the parliamentary activities on Turkey's diaspora in Europe. Therefore, I will mainly utilize the legislative activities and mechanisms –committee and plenary debates, speeches, bills, written questions.- of the Turkish Grand National Assembly as the main source of empirical evidence and

address the ways in which Turkish parliamentarians have historically framed the Turkish diaspora in Europe to date. In order to explain the shifts and continuities in the Parliament's and parliamentarians approach towards the diaspora, I will benefit from qualitative text analysis, and following Fairclough's (2010) approach that sees discourse as a set of social relations between entities, I will apply a critical discourse analysis of the legislative speeches on diaspora between 1961 and 2020. Legislative speeches are widely considered as useful tools for measuring political positions (Lauderdale and Herzog, 2016; Proksch and Slapin, 2010). Hence, in a study that applies critical discourse analysis to a parliament setting, it is crucial to include legislative speeches to identify the changes in party positions. Likewise, other miscellaneous legislative documents such as draft bills, proposals and questions will also be analysed with critical discourse analysis.

It is essential to note the criteria according to which I have conducted my archival research and chose which legislative material to include and analyse. For all decades focused, I have found any parliamentary material related to the diaspora and analysed them. I have particularly focused on budget meetings of each year since debates during budget meetings provide a broad overview of each and every policy area in Turkey. MPs and ministers offer their future visions and the assessment of the previous years, making them fruitful means to get hints of different political positions. I looked at the debates on relevant ministries during budget debates (Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, and YTB after 2010) and scanned what each party spokesperson had to say on diaspora-related issues. Since TBMM's Library and Archive services are fully digitalized and offer an advanced search option, I have used relevant keywords (i.e. "*yurt dışı*", "*gurbetçi*", "*diaspora*", "*Avrupa, Türkler/işçiler*" or host country names etc.) to reach targeted information through the keyword search portal of the Library and Archive Services of the Parliament, among other customized search facilities such as search according to MP name, term, bill or occasion.

Until the 1980s and 1990s, the laws regarding the diaspora did not gain a systematic character, nor did the debates on the issue. Nevertheless, during the 1960s and 1970s, there were a number of laws (on social security provision for citizens abroad, new institutional structure within the Ministry for workers abroad etc.) and legislative initiatives (investigation committees in the National Assembly and the Senate) that were evaluated individually apart from the budget meetings of each year. As the Turkish state's attempt to reach diaspora gained a rather systematic character from the 1980s onwards, and the number of diaspora-related bills and regulations increased, I could work with more debates and legislative material. This included various citizenship-related topics such as voting rights, military service or the problem of education for second-generation immigrants. Furthermore, some host country related developments such as xenophobic attacks have led to an increase in the frequency and intensity with which the issues were debated. The increasing volume has given me a better opportunity to analyse more debates and contrast different political party positions on diaspora.

The MPs in the Turkish Parliament usually take the floor to deliver their messages to the public on any politically salient special occasion. The special days that are considered as milestones in the history of diaspora engagement, such as labour agreement anniversaries with host countries, the anniversaries of some tragedies like Mölln or Solingen attacks in the 1990s, or the aftermath of diplomatic spats with migrant-hosting countries in the late 2010s are no exception to that. Politicians have used the Parliament floor on special occasions like these to state their position on diaspora subjects. I have specifically looked at the plenary minutes of these days.

When we come to the 2000s, with the digitalization of all parliamentary data and the archiving of previously unavailable legislative tools starting from the 24<sup>th</sup> legislative term (2011), the repertoire of parliamentary documents became remarkably diversified when previously inaccessible committee tools such as

minutes, written questions, press releases and declarations became accessible. I could hence analyse the abundance of parliamentary data in the 2000s with ever-increasing diaspora-related developments. That has made the chapter analysing the 2000s the most voluminous one. It also means that, once diaspora gradually grew into a separate policy unit, the amount of empirical evidence within the scope of this study became more enriched.

All empirical chapters contain long-form quotes often by MPs, sometimes from proposals or bills as excerpts. I tried to comply with two criteria while choosing which quotes to include. I included the quote *a)* if/when the quote expresses the overall political tendency on a given issue hence represented the overall view *b)* when the quote presented a striking opinion on a given topic. My aim for citing these quotes is the conviction that the excerpts from legislative speeches are highly useful means to understand the political rationality and different way of reasoning that drives the mindset on diaspora-related issues.

Lastly, I find it necessary to make a conceptual clarification on the principal terms used throughout the thesis. The conceptual confusion surrounding the term diaspora can be linked with different strands in the literature that sees diasporas as corporate agents/actors or diasporas as the objects of state policy (Adamson, 2019). Though I consider the overall thesis to be based on the concept of diaspora, I have used the term interchangeably throughout the thesis as immigrants, emigrants, overseas citizens, expatriates. This multiplicity of use emerges from the fact that until recently, we could not talk about the salience of a term and a community as “the diaspora” at the practical or academic level. What diaspora is now used to be “guest workers” or “workers abroad” in the 1960s and 1970s, “citizens abroad” or “Euro Turks” throughout the 1980s and 1990s and finally became “the Turkish diaspora” in the last two decades. Therefore, the reader should understand the same entity when encountered with one of these terms.

The chapters will proceed in the following order: The next chapter, Chapter 2, will outline the main theories, concepts and frameworks that will be used in the study. In this regard, since the studies on diaspora engagement and political representation are instructive to understand diaspora's home country political representation, I will present a possible dialogue between these two separate literatures.

My empirical study commences in Chapter 3 with the parliamentary debates and developments in the first decade of labour migration, the 1960s. The MPs in the Turkish Parliament treated outward migration early on as a temporary phenomenon, and the legislative initiatives taken revolved around this short-termist approach with laws targeting the workers' anticipated return. Therefore, the chapter on the 1960s outlines different political standpoints that shaped diaspora outreach in the decade.

Chapter 4 likewise looks at the main legislative developments and debates in the 1970s, a period dominated by a tumultuous political atmosphere and constant change of coalition governments. The 1980s is the time when the governmental system became unicameral again following the coup. Hence, Chapter 5 discusses the debates, especially after the democratically elected governments came to power following a three-year hiatus after the military coup. As far as the diaspora representation is concerned, the chapter looks into one of the most important milestones in diaspora engagement history the period has witnessed, the expatriate voting.

The 1990s are analysed in Chapter 6 with a slightly longer volume in proportion to the number of legislative developments that took place. As the expatriates gained a more political character in both Turkey and host countries, new challenges faced the Parliament regarding how to give a direction to diaspora policy. The chapter on the 1990s will give a detailed account of both these recent political developments and of relevant legislative initiatives.

Chapter 7 looks at a twenty-year period under the Ak Party governments. Since the period is ruled by a single-party government, I focus on that era as one whole chapter rather than a ten-year period contrary to other chapters. The 2000s have witnessed the richest period in terms of the amount, intensity and depth of diaspora-related laws, regulations and legislative debates that these laws hosted. Multiple parliamentary initiatives on diaspora have been taken in this period, with committees directly and indirectly related to the issues on citizens abroad. Therefore, I have designed the chapter both on issue and theme-based (i.e. Islamophobia, women), as well as initiative-based (committee, draft bill, report).

In Chapter 8, I evaluate the empirical findings in the light of the theoretical frameworks and concepts I outline in Chapter 2. I review the types of diaspora representation in each decade and discuss the place in which we can map the Turkish case in the literature. In addition to the analysis on representation, I also assess myriad ways in which the Parliament have been engaged with the diaspora in Europe and how it transformed over time. Lastly, I wrap up the thesis with the conclusion in Chapter 9 and possible further questions derived from the present research, which can potentially influence future researches.

## CHAPTER 2

### **DIASPORA, REPRESENTATION AND TURKEY'S DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL INSIGHTS**

The study of diaspora representation in the home country parliament requires a cross-cut dialogue between different disciplines and academic fields. Hence, this thesis will be based on a number of literature, namely, those on representation, diaspora studies, and Turkey's diaspora engagement. The main focus, however, will be on diaspora representation, which stands at the intersection of these two strands bringing forth new topics such as citizenship.

There are different strands in each of the abovementioned fields. For instance, in representation literature, many recent works are sprung from the disciplinary rupture that occurred in the 1990s. I will mainly elaborate on the taxonomy developed by Pitkin (1967) and the way scholars developed it over the decades, as well as a political-theory informed approach that defines representation as a process of claim-making (Saward, 2006, 2010). In the second part, an account of different orientations towards diaspora and transnational studies will be presented with a specific focus on the types of the home country (sending country) engagement with the diaspora. Then the following section will analyse the history of Turkey's diaspora engagement by outlining different arguments and focuses on the widely held belief in the literature on the shift that occurred in the last two decades. In the final part, I will inquire about the possibility of a dialogue between diaspora and representation literature that render the study of parliaments relevant.

## **2.1. Representation: Where Are We Now in the Study of Representation?**

It is possible to identify two different branches in representation studies. The first one can be classified as those focusing on the institutional aspect of and various forms within the institutionalized form of representation. This part of the literature seeks to answer tangible issues such as who represents whom in legislatures and how much they are represented. The second category tackles the question of representation from a political theory perspective and partially borrowing from the debates in democratization literature. I will analyse the literature on representation by dividing it into these two categories as such in order to facilitate categorization and comparison. It will also allow a further dialogue between these two approaches since my case benefits from both.

Most of the studies on representation, be it theoretical or empirical, start with Pitkin's seminal work *The Concept of Representation* (1967). Pitkin develops a taxonomy of four different types of representation, formal, symbolic, descriptive, and substantive representation, all of which identifies different roles for elected officials. By formal representation, she refers to the authorization and accountability of the representative by the represented to act for others. Symbolic representation, on the other hand, means the recognition of the symbolic quality of the representative. Since the first two categories were thought to be rather limited both by Pitkin and her later followers, the other two categories - descriptive and substantive representation- drew more attention and hence used more frequently due to their more sophisticated characterization of representation.

Descriptive representation essentially looks at who the elected representatives are and the extent to which they resemble the represented. Accordingly, for example, as the number of representatives from a particular group within society increases in a legislature, then this group becomes better represented, or the legislature becomes more representative. Conversely, substantive representation

is about the activities of representatives rather than their numbers. It focuses on what the elected officials do, what kind of issues they emphasize, what their political concerns are and most significantly, whether these issues they voice are compatible with the concerns of the represented. With this line of thinking, it is plausible to think that any person, without having to come from that group, can represent such a group, as long as they reflect the group's concerns, support their needs and interests through their actions. According to Pitkin, substantive representation is thus the most significant form of representation, for it means "acting in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin 1967, 209). Since "acting for" highlights the specific wants and needs of a particular group of the electorate in a more nuanced way, researches on substantive representation came from scholars focusing mainly on the political representation of marginalized groups, such as women (Celis et al., 2008) or immigrants (Bird et al., 2011). Since these two areas -representation of women and immigrant groups- are primarily interested in the extent to which wishes of the represented and the actions of the representative converge (Pitkin 1967, 163–165), Pitkin's substantive representation framework provided a valid reference point for the development of other salient concepts on representation in the following decades.

However, it was not until the late 1990s and early 2000s that Pitkin's concepts were re-interpreted by democratization scholars. Jane Mansbridge stands out as the most notable contributor to the development of Pitkin's framework juxtaposing the types of representation. Drawing upon her conceptualization, Mansbridge (1999, 2003) introduced novel concepts into the study of representation such as 'gyroscopic' and 'surrogate' representation, through which she addressed the need to think beyond groups and focus on the act and scope of representation by elected officials instead. Within that framework, while gyroscopic representation can roughly be characterized as the kind of "common sense" that representatives should be after as the basis of their actions, surrogate representation is the "representation by a representative with whom

one has no electoral connection— that is, a representative in another district.” (2003, 522).

Surrogate representation typically occurs when legislatures start representing the interests of people beyond their own constituencies. Mansbridge gives the example of Barney Frank, the US House of Representatives member for Massachusetts, who is openly gay and speaks for the interests of the gay people well beyond the boundaries of Massachusetts. This practice highlights a form of representation of interests and perspectives that are primarily non-geographical and hence not fitting into conventional territorially-based constituency modes of representation. The theory is underpinned by the assumption that it can bring into the legislative arena interests and opinions commonly held but cannot find a platform due to formal territorial representation. With this line of thinking, representation becomes a non-geographical phenomenon. An MP seated in Ankara, elected from the province of Çorum can speak out issues such as access to social welfare, marginalized groups, university students and so on, which might be far beyond the problems of his/her constituents.

Mansbridge’s theoretical framework has greatly influenced later studies on the representation of ethnic minorities, children or women (Angevinge, 2017) as historically marginalized groups, especially in a situation in which these groups may have lost representation in their own district. Similarly, parliamentary representation of the interests of non-constituents or other living beings – animals, environment etc.- can be explained with reference to the concept of surrogate representation (Sawer, 2001). As far as the scope of this thesis is concerned, surrogate representation is likewise a useful analytical tool to map diaspora representation in the broader debate on representation. It is especially so while discussing Turkey, which has no separate electoral constituency for its diaspora, yet the diaspora issues have come to be represented since the beginning of labour migration in the 1960s.

### **2.1.1. Representation as “Claim-Making”: Constructivist Turn in the Representation Literature**

Until the mid-1990s, the literature on representation was primarily seen in relational terms, that is, the simple connection between the elected officials and the electorate. In the early 2000s, however, the prevailing approaches on representation have come under challenge from what I have just named as political theory-influenced scholars. The question of representation was no longer understood as a unidirectional relationship between the representative and the represented as in Pitkin’s taxonomy. Instead, the emerging view that representation is a rather complex process led to a reconceptualization of the term, through which representation became a constitutive activity or an event (Saward 2010: 14, 43). Saward emerges as the main proponent of this approach by introducing representation as a claim-making process. This moment in the representation theory is often referred to as the “constructivist turn” (Disch, 2012), which takes off where the standard theories end (Lord and Pollak, 2013). It identifies considerable gaps the conventional representation theories have ignored and fills them with the flexible and dynamic concept of claims-making (Saward 2010: 1). I outline Saward’s elusive approach that defines representation as claim-making as the backbone of the study since it allows me to explain the Turkish parliamentarians’ actions while representing the issues of the diaspora.

Saward argues that we should change the frame of reference in order to alter our understanding of representation. For instance, those working on representation theory still look at the same aspect of representation, such as legislatures, group representation or constituent-represented nexus. According to him, these conventional frames of reference should be altered to expand our understanding of representation that prevails well beyond the parliaments. For him, representation is a performative action than something simple like delivering an electoral promise. Seeing this from the perspective of a simple dichotomy of the represented and the representative would ultimately lead us to a zero-sum game-

like rigid and politically conservative view of representation (Saward, 2006: 299). Especially the substantive representation framework received his utmost criticisms, since the theory frames representatives acting for the represented, who remain passive subjects apart from being represented (Saward, 2006: 300). Furthermore, these theories have ignored the fact that “at the heart of the act of representing is the depicting of a constituency as this or that, as requiring this or that, as having this or that set of interests” (2006: 300–301). Moving beyond these fixed assumptions, Saward focused explicitly on the creative aspect of representation.

Just as representation is not a mere fact that ‘just is’, so representations (depictions, portrayals, encapsulations) of self and others in politics do not just happen. People construct them, put them forward, make claims for them — make them. More specifically, political figures (or political parties or other groups, for example) make representations of their constituencies, their countries, themselves. (Saward, 2006: 299).

He, therefore, proposes a fundamental shift towards understanding representation in terms of a claim-making process, during which a representative creates the represented, himself or herself, and the broader audience via these claims. Instead of focusing on representation as a fixed institutional fact resulting from elections, Saward sees it as an ongoing, constant, tripartite exchange between representatives, their representative claims targeting an audience, and subjects of the decisions by the representatives (2006, 2010). Hence, representatives make assumptions about their audience, as well as for themselves.

The Representative claim-making approach potentially explains the initial question and particular focus of this thesis, why and how representatives in the Turkish Parliament represent the diaspora. Suppose these questions are tackled from a perspective that defines representation as depicting the wants, needs and interests of a constituency. In that case, it is particularly explanatory for the Turkish case, given that the diaspora has no direct representation in the Turkish Parliament. Instead, it is the Turkish politicians who actively make claims about

their constituency and depict the possible issues of diaspora as a constituency. Just like elected officials construct visual or verbal images of their constituencies such as hardworking, angry, frustrated, conservative, and so on, MPs in the Turkish Parliament make claims about the primary issues of their audience (diaspora), such as discrimination, unemployment, assimilation to name a few. Borrowing from Benedict Anderson's seminal notion of "imagined communities" that he used for nationalism, Saward argues that constituencies, just like communities, have to be "imagined" (Saward, 2006: 303). Then the Turkish MPs who have been raising diaspora issues becomes a group creating and "imagining" a constituency as a diaspora. For example, a category like "citizens of Turkish origin who are discriminated in Europe" still exists, but through Saward's framework, we can argue that they are also constructed by Turkish politicians who claim to represent them.

In addition to the creative and performative aspect of representation as such, the fact that representation is not bounded by the elections makes it even more relevant. In the representative claim framework, representatives sometimes "can speak and act for groups they are not chosen by and are not directly or formally accountable to" (Saward, 2010: 140), inducing representatives to tailor their appeals in a different context that can be well beyond electoral settings. Hence, representation is not conditional upon direct and two-way electoral relationship. I suggest that diaspora can be considered one of those contexts in which politicians make appeals and claims for those whom they do not directly represent. Furthermore, Saward addressed the transnational level in his later studies, which he calls "unfamiliar forms of representative claims." Even though this transnational aspect was used for different cases beyond parliamentary representation, such as transnational populism (Moffit, 2017) or for the European Union context (Lord and Pollak), I argue that diaspora representation in the Turkish Parliament can also be seen as a salient use of the framework since Turkish MPs representing the diaspora in Europe without a constituency

relationship is one such “unfamiliar form of representative claim” (Saward, 2011: 8).

Overall, Saward’s representative claim-making approach provides a new and valuable analytical tool for scholars since it “renews our conceptual vocabulary for making sense of a complex and changing political phenomenon” (Schaap, 2012). And, together with Mansbridge’s notion of surrogate representation, these ideas open up these processes to incorporate a broader range of actors, contexts, objects, and outcomes than traditional theories of political representation.

### **2.1.2. Diaspora Representation: Is There a Way Beyond “External Voting” and “Immigrant Voting” in the Literature?**

Diaspora representation is essentially approached from two strands in the literature. It is either engaged in from the perspective of immigrant group’s political representation in the host countries or immigrant participation in their home country elections which is generally referred to as “external voting” or “overseas voting” in the literature. I will primarily focus on the latter since the way external voting is approached in the literature is more relevant and helpful to explain diaspora representation in Turkey. Nevertheless, my aim is to amalgamate the main arguments in the literature for diaspora representation which is fulfilled without necessarily being attached to a separate electoral district, like in the case of Turkey. In that regard, though it is possible to observe a growing interest in the literature on this “domestic” aspect of home-country representation of diasporas (Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei, 2019, Burgess, 2018; Peltoniemi, 2016; Østergaard-Nielsen and Camattari, 2020; Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019) migrant representation in home country politics is still a gap in the literature that needs to be further analysed.

As far as the first branch within diaspora representation literature, immigrant voting, is concerned, studies generally used theoretical frameworks on

representation discussed above, such as substantive representation, and used these frameworks to explain the nature of minority representation in the host country parliaments (Bird, 2011; Severs, 2012). Most of these studies, however, focused on the legislative activities of immigrant-origin MPs (Wüst, 2011, 2014; Aydemir and Vliegenthart, 2016; Mügge et al., 2016), legislative behaviour of the parliamentarians with minority background (Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou, 2011), voter turnout or party choices of immigrants (Bird et al., 2011). Since it is a rich scholarly field, examples can be multiplied, yet overall, the scholars in immigrant representation sought to theorize migrant political participation (Boccagni et al., 2016).

### **2.1.3. External Voting: Why Do States Enfranchise Citizens Abroad**

The main focus in the field of diaspora representation is given to the right to vote for diaspora members in home country elections. Numerous studies (Collyer, 2014; Lafleur, 2011a, 2013, 2015; Boccagni, 2011) have analysed external voting by focusing on different country cases and sought to answer why states enfranchise citizens and why citizens do participate from overseas to their home country elections.

In practice, the participation of non-resident citizens in national elections (external voting) is now the norm. Currently, it is permitted or facilitated by more than 80% of all states (Collyer and Vathi, 2007). Furthermore, 13 countries have a special representation (separate overseas constituency) of emigrants in national, legislative elections (Collyer, 2014)<sup>1</sup>. Collyer looks at the concept of

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<sup>1</sup> These countries and the number of seats reserved for overseas citizens are as follows: **Algeria** (8 seats = 1.73 % of total seats), **Cape Verde** (6 seats = 8.33 % of total seats), **Colombia** (1 seat = 0.60 % of total seats), **Croatia** (4 seats = 2.65 % of total seats), **Dominican Republic** (7 seats = 3.83 % of total seats), **Ecuador** (6 seats = 4.84 % of total seats), **France** (11 seats in the National Assembly = 1.91 % of total seats and 12 seats in the Senate = 3.45 % of total seats), **Italy** (12 seats in the Chamber of Deputies = 1.90 % of total seats and 6 seats in the Senate = 1.90 % of total seats), **Macedonia** (3 seats = 2.44 % of total seats), **Mozambique** (2 seats = 0.80 % of total seats), **Portugal** (4 seats = 1.74 % of total seats), **Romania** (4 seats = 1.20 % of total seats), **Tunisia** (18 seats = 8.29 of % of total seats)

the overseas electoral district with a “territorially focused analysis” by problematizing this practice from the perspective of territorial boundaries, sovereignty and citizenship. He argues that the concept and practice of special representation cannot be explained territorially but rather by underlining the significance of popular sovereignty. Since the states legitimize themselves through “the people”, its extra-territorial performance turns these dynamics, especially the state inside out (2014: 9), by bringing the “outside” to “inside”.

Notwithstanding the somewhat rare example of special diaspora representation in the national legislative, out-of-country voting, in general, became the common citizenship practice all around the world. Given the uniformity of the practice, scholars sought to explain different dynamics and motivations for states to grant overseas citizens the right to participate in national elections. Arguments draw on different combinations of approaches, which can roughly be characterized as economic explanations and legal/citizenship-based explanations.

Arguments for the economic aspect of extending voting rights have addressed the tremendous financial resources provided by citizens abroad in the form of remittances and other direct investments to the homeland (Barry, 2006), though it does not necessarily entail “vote-buying” per se. Hence, states enfranchise citizens abroad with the expectation of contributions to economic development from “engaged diasporas” (Gamlen, 2008b, 2014). In his studies focusing on Latin America, Lafleur (2011b, 2013, 2015) also found a close connection between emigrant enfranchisement and home states’ desires to stimulate emigrant loyalty for economic purposes. This understanding builds on a perspective that places extra-territorial voting into a broader scope of transnational political practices carried out by migrants. The analysis points out the significance of multilevel opportunity structures that migrants negotiate in their political activities (for a discussion, see Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a).

Legal/citizenship-based explanations to external voting, on the other hand, has focused primarily on the legal extension of voting rights as a defining moment. That approach is usually referred to as a normative-theoretical one for it inquires the “why” and “how” aspect of political participation from overseas asks the ways in which state should allow and implement voting abroad. Bauböck’s (2003) influential work establishes a framework for considering the relationship between international migration and electoral participation from a citizenship perspective. There is no wonder why this strand contributes the biggest share in the literature on external voting for voting is first and foremost a fundamental citizenship practice. Bauböck (2005) explains the implementation of this fundamental citizenship practice by developing two related concepts, expansive citizenship and stakeholder citizenship. According to Bauböck, external voting equals extending the scope of citizenship by incorporating both non-citizen residents and non-resident citizens to this fundamental citizenship right that is voting, which noted as “expansive citizenship”.

Secondly, another key concept to make sense of external voting is “stakeholder citizenship”. Bauböck’s “stakeholder” principle (2006, 2008) maintains the idea that non-resident citizens do have “stakes” in their home countries and practising voting rights, as a fundamental citizenship right, is one way to protect their stakes as citizens. From the perspective of non-resident citizens or diaspora members, as we might put it, external voting practice is the expression of interest in membership of a state because the wellbeing of that citizen is tied to the common good of that state (Bauböck, 2006: 2422). The stake in a home country might come in a material or non-material form. For example, the stake as such might be based on property ownership or the presence of a family in the home county, or might as well be regular visits and or a desire to return permanently to live, as most emigrants do (Bauböck, 2009).

While these two approaches, economic contributions and citizenship perspective, are evidently practical to explain diverging motivations behind external voting

and partially explanatory for Turkey's story, the scope of this thesis requires moving beyond these frameworks. The actual political landscape in Turkey changes so rapidly, affecting all aspects of policymaking from the field of foreign policy to institutional restructuring. Diaspora engagement is not immune from such dynamism. Therefore, it compels one to focus on domestic elements more than anything, such as party politics, elections, or dominant cultural and political ideology, when these seem to affect the country's way of handling diaspora affairs as well.

As I have mentioned earlier in this section, the literature has witnessed ever-growing interest in domestic political explanations such as how party politics in the home country affect diaspora engagement. Such perspective focusing on home country's domestic political dynamics has long been a vacuum in the literature to a large extent, which is started to be filled with valuable contributions. One such recent intervention from Wellman (2021) focuses on Sub-Saharan African countries to explain a country's willingness to enfranchising its populations abroad or the lack thereof. Despite a majority of countries extending voting rights to their diasporas in principle, in practice, there is significant variation in the extent of diaspora voting, and that variation lies in incumbent parties' ideas of its diaspora. In her research, she finds that it is the electoral logic of the ruling political parties, as well as their expectations or perceptions of its emigrant, that determines the country's decision to enfranchise its citizens abroad or not. Lafleur (2011a) draws a similar conclusion in his domestic dynamics-focused analysis on Italy, Mexico and Belgium, through which he found that homeland political parties' calculation on expected outcomes of the emigrant vote determines their decision to enfranchise citizens abroad or not. Once political parties articulate the potential impact of the external votes on overall electoral results, they support or block legislation according to expected electoral gains or losses. Lafleur, 2011a: 484). Moreover, the content of the legislation that enables external voting is also shaped through the same calculation on the expected outcome of the external voters' preferences. Both

viewpoints that direct their lenses to domestic elements in general and party politics in particular can be considered highly relevant frameworks while analysing Turkey's relations with external voters.

In a more system-focused analysis, Brand looks at the regime's impact on external voting practice. By looking at authoritarian countries, she asks why authoritarian states enfranchise their overseas population and whether these motivations somewhat resemble those of democratic states (Brand, 2006, 2010). She argues that rather than meaning to establish or restore the content of citizenship, cultivating emigrant loyalty is at the heart of enfranchising citizens abroad for North African countries. Hence, making "subjects" rather than "citizens" has been the primary goal of the authoritarian regimes, characterizing the nature of belonging (2010: 95). Such urge to create loyalty can be seen as a Janus-faced approach, on the other side of which stands an impulse to care for citizens abroad, which Brand names as "ethic of care for non-resident citizens." This "care" translates into a greater sovereign legitimacy for the states in question. This stimulating inference that points out to the loyalty, sovereignty and justification perspectives might be somewhat helpful to keep in mind regarding the Turkish context while exploring the question of why the Turkish state in general and Turkish parliamentarians in particular have long been occupied with the issues of the non-resident citizens.

## **2.2. Identifying the Community: Who is "The Diaspora"?**

Diaspora is a contested term, and agreement on what the concept implies is far from agreed upon. Even though the common (and early) usage of the term bring communities such as Jews, Armenians or Africans to mind immediately, the terms have since evolved into a broader definition to include more diverse groups. It also so developed as to become an ambiguous or all-encompassing term. Such proliferation is called "diaspora diaspora" by Brubaker, implying "a dispersion of meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary

space” (Brubaker, 2005: 1). Accordingly, he argues that in a world where everyone is diasporic, then no one is. Here in this section, I will thus trace the concept of diaspora (engagement) and transnationalism, which often overlaps one another and is sometimes replaced with each other by scholars. In that regard, as far as the central questions of my thesis are concerned, the main focus of this section will be a) on the category in which we can potentially place Turkey’s overseas citizens b) the mechanisms through which the relationship between diasporas and home country (or sending states) is shaped.

### **2.2.1. The Evolution of the Concepts: Diaspora and Transnationalism**

Even though etymological roots of the term “diaspora” goes back to ancient Greek with a meaning of “scattering” (Dufoix, 2008: 5-20), the current use of the term is highly politicized with mostly negative connotations evoking an image of an exiled or banished groups. In Turkey, for instance, the term would immediately bring Armenian or Jewish diaspora to minds. In current scholarly works, conceptual deliberations on the term are abundant. As one of the pioneers in the field, Cohen (2008) identifies five types of diaspora: victim diasporas, labour diasporas, trade diasporas, imperial diasporas and cultural diasporas. Early discussions primarily focused on Jewish, Greek and Armenian groups by highlighting the victimized character of these communities. Over time, immigrant labour, or “guest workers” as widely used in Turkey, started to be called diaspora too (Sheffer, 2003). It was in the 1990s that scholars attempted to broaden these narrow juxtaposition after realizing that pigeonholing certain nations under specific categories was not possible. Therefore, while the older conceptualizations of diaspora always implied a return to the homeland one day, the new approaches directed their focus to constant interaction and links between homeland and the diaspora. In that vein, Brubaker (2005) introduced three different criteria as a dispersion as space, homeland orientation, boundary maintenance (i.e. preserving home-country identity and resisting assimilation).

Taking these definitions into account, it is plausible to consider Turkey's overseas populations abroad as a diaspora with its ever-changing characteristics from a typical labour diaspora to fulfilling Brubaker's characteristics. Though all these definitions are explanatory for Turkey's population in Europe, the definition of the diaspora in this chapter is in line with the identification of it as "people with common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland" (Shain & Barth, 2003: 452).

Another essential concept widely uttered in migration studies is transnationalism, or transnational communities, which is often used interchangeably with diaspora and diasporic community. In the beginning, both terms had totally separate implications signifying different aspects of cross-border relations. "Diaspora" referred to a community, whereas transnationalism denoted the processes that stretch beyond national borders (Bauböck and Faist, 2010). In fact, "transnational" as an overarching concept was first used in the 1970s by international relations scholars in order to highlight the importance of rising global interactions and their impacts on interstate politics (Keohane and Nye, 1972). These first accounts approached the issue from a more statist and top-down perspective, making "transnational" a vague concept the same way the "international" or "multinational" was.

In the 1990s, however, migration scholars took away the accentuate from the state and began to use the term to refer not to the connection between states or nations but between individual actors and associations. Thus, in the context of international migration, transnationalism refers to cross-border "circulation of goods, people, and information traversing the borders of sending and receiving states" (Faist, 2000: 206). Aydın (2016: 171) argues that two key elements distinguish diaspora from the transnational community: a long-term residence spanning at least two generations and a high degree of political and social organisation. Indeed, the co-existence of mobility and locality that political

connection entails is at the heart of transnationalism. As Dahinden (2010: 51) puts it, transnational formations are the outcome of both mobilities that comes with international migration and locality, which means being socially, economically or politically rooted or anchored to the sending state. Hence, it is perfectly legitimate to consider the Turkish/Kurdish community in Europe as a transnational community for being rooted or anchored in homeland political, social and economic dynamics.

For the scope of our analysis, transnationalism literature also matters since it essentially looks at the variety of roles that sending states can play. Different studies focused on formal attempts of the sending states to maintain and enhance ties with their populations abroad, such as voting rights, dual citizenship and citizenship rights and services (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a, Bauböck, 2010). Especially Østergaard-Nielsen highlighted the political aspect of transnational activities by situating political participation at the heart of transnationalism. Extraterritorial citizenship practices should likewise be thought of in this vein. The togetherness of the locality and mobility aspects, as was shown by three decades of research on migrant transnationalism, is evident in the dual citizen loyalties, though such cohabitation came under challenge with increasing involvement of immigrants in home country political developments as in the case of Turkey.

### **2.2.2. Why Do States Engage with Their Diasporas?**

Scholars have comprehensively dealt with the question of why sending countries (or home countries) engage with their diasporas. Three veins in the literature that explain countries' motives have been identified by Koinova and Tsourapas (2018). According to the first one, the utilitarian view, sending states tend to see their populations abroad as a material power, be it in an economic or political sense. Countries like Turkey, which are high on labour supply but short on foreign exchange, regard diasporas as an economic powerhouse and extensively

benefit from their remittances for their cash-strapped economy (Escriba-Folch et al., 2015; Tsourapas, 2015). Some scholars (e.g. Itzigsohn, 2000) explained the external voting practice with structural independence of countries to migrants' remittances. In addition to remittances, economic contribution might be expected in the form of bringing back technical development or direct investment to the homeland (Brinkerhoff, 2008).

The utilitarian outlook might also manifest itself politically. For instance, countries might expect their citizens abroad to serve for their domestic or foreign political purposes, such as expecting them to act as a lobbying group (Shain and Barth, 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003a; Adamson and Demetriou, 2007) or be instrumental in their broader foreign policy purposes (see the next section for a more detailed discussion).

The second cluster in the literature, identity-based explanations, draws attention to the symbolic power of the diasporas for sending countries. Accordingly, home countries attempt to strengthen symbolic ties with their populations abroad through schemes and activities that would potentially reawaken the sense of national (or religious) belonging. In this regard, recruiting teachers, language instructors, religious officials might be considered part of enhancing the country's symbolic ties with the expatriates (Gamlén, 2014; Tsourapas, 2015; De Haas, 2007). Under dual citizenship practice, various citizenship services can be considered in this category, the framework of which scholars in the field draws as "transnational citizenship" (Bauböck, 2005).

The term "long-distance nationalism" coined by Benedict Anderson (1998) can be shown as one of the most often used frameworks by the scholars within an identity-based approach to explain the symbolic link of a diaspora to the homeland as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006). Long-distance nationalism "binds together immigrants and those who have remained in their homeland into a single transborder citizenry", and regardless of the citizenship

they have, it views diaspora members as part of the nation of the home country (Glick-Schiller and Fouron, 2001: 20). Though it is often interpreted as the nationalist sentiments felt for home country's ethnic or national identity, Anderson's interpretation is rather on the dark side of it, implying the acceptance of the home state's authority, legitimacy, and its nationalist projects (Okuy, 2015: 33). In the host country context, however, it bears the potential of creating a self-exclusion or segregation among immigrant groups in host countries (Aydın, 2016: 173).

The third group in the literature looks into the governance aspect of diaspora engagement by addressing several actors and channels such as specially designated diaspora institutions, consulates or bilateral relations with the international organizations (Gamlen, 2014). The latter aspect has been remarkably influential in the field of migration studies especially following the 2015 global refugee crises, particularly in the study of international organizations' management of migration flows (Koinova and Tsourapas 2018). A political theory-influenced outlook has also been prominent in the governance strand of the literature, which looked at diaspora engagement practices from the Foucauldian "governmentality" perspective. Accordingly, diaspora-making and diaspora engagement strategies are seen as a neoliberal way of governing populations. As a result of his comparative study, Ragazzi (2014) created a typology sending state policies in which he identified five different categories – expatriate, closed, indifferent, global nation and managed labour- demonstrating that states engage with their diasporas for different intentions and purposes. Such intents might range from creating surveillance or attracting remittances to creating "global nations" so that the sending state's soft power and public diplomacy abilities are enhanced. Through such diaspora engagement mechanisms, home country governments do not treat their diaspora as given entities out there but constantly constitute and govern them in line with the neoliberal logic and values (Larner, 2007; Ragazzi 2009; Kunz, 2012). Hence, diaspora members can become subjects of various governmental technique and

practices of their home countries. It is not far-fetched to think of Turkey's diaspora strategies and mechanisms -TRT, Yunus Emre Institutes, Diyanet- as tools through which the government can infiltrate a certain mentality to its overseas population, but the details of this aspect are to be discussed in the upcoming chapters.

### **2.2.3. How Do States Engage with Their Diasporas?**

Apart from the reasons for engagement, different ways in which countries engage their diasporas have also been extensively analysed by scholars. Parallel to the development in the literature intersecting citizenship and transnationalism studies in the 1990s and 2000s; various studies focused on home countries' effort to build and maintain ties with their diasporas, as well as on methods to institutionalize these ties

In diaspora studies, Gamlen (2008b) laid two significant theoretical groundworks that comprehensively explains sending states' diaspora engagement mechanisms. According to Gamlen, there is a particular formation of state apparatus dedicated particularly to diaspora engagement, which he names as "emigration state". Accordingly, there are typically two ways this emigration state can configure its diaspora engagement: through "diaspora building" and "diaspora engagement". Diaspora building includes "cultivating new diaspora communities and recognizing the pre-existing ones", while diaspora integration aims at attracting resident and non-resident citizens into the realm of rights and obligations (Gamlen, 2008b: 843). Various mechanisms could be employed to ensure diaspora building and engagement, such as establishing special diaspora advisory bodies or institutions (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003a; Gamlen, 2014). Designating special diaspora institutions is undoubtedly a turning point in home country-diaspora relations, for it situates this mutual interaction in a systematic path. Other ways to cultivate a sense of belonging hence "diaspora building" in Gamlen's framework, could be listed as celebrating national days, enabling dual

nationality or special citizenship status. Empirical chapters will elaborate on how the Turkish state's pink card or blue card initiatives could be seen as part of such ambition.

Extending voting rights is possibly the most effective strategy for diaspora engagement, which explains why it is the most frequently studied field within diaspora engagement literature, as was discussed in the representation section. As one of the pioneers in the area, Collyer (2014a, 2014b) questioned the role of external voting practice as a force pushing the boundaries of territorial understanding of citizenship, in addition to the influence of external voting on sending states policies. However, though tempting to generalize, external voting should not be seen as a uniform practice that means the same thing for different countries. The scholars in the growing body of literature on extra-territorial state power argue the attention should be shifted from the western contexts (Brand, 2006, 2010; Glasius, 2017) since diaspora engagement can turn into extraterritorial repression under the authoritarian governments of the Global South. Dalmasso et al. (2017) also assert that it is through mimicking democratic instruments such as external voting rights that the authoritarian states could exert control over their populations abroad. In her comprehensive researches looking at the North African countries, Brand has also shown that the ultimate aim of those prevailing regimes was cultivating loyalty to the home country than ensuring democratic participation.

Turkey, one of the most eminent “emigration states” since the 1960s, has been in touch with its diaspora through what Gamlen (2006) named as diaspora building and diaspora engagement to bind its citizens abroad to the homeland. In this regard, studying Turkey through the frameworks of Gamlen and other abovementioned scholars is instructive to understand the shifts and continuities that occurred in diaspora policies in the last five decades.

### **2.3. Turkey's Diaspora Engagement: Past and Present**

In recent years, there is a growing body of literature that looks at the different components and periods of Turkey's diaspora engagement strategy. Burgeoning scholarly interest focuses mainly on the last two decades as the inception of Turkey's systematic diaspora policy, which many refer to as "the new diaspora policy" (Aydın, 2014; Öktem, 2014; Mencütek and Başer, 2018; Adamson, 2019). These studies focused on diverse aspects within diaspora engagement, such as the institutionalization of diaspora policies (Öktem, 2014), expatriate voting (Yanaşmayan and Kaşlı, 2019; Mencütek-Şahin and Erdoğan, 2016), the role of Diyanet in diaspora engagement (Maritato, 2020; Bruce, 2020), the Kurdish-Turkish conflict abroad (Başer, 2016) and Turkey's approach towards newly-emerging opposition abroad (Öztürk, 2020; Taş, 2019). This section will touch upon the main focus of and the developments in the literature on Turkey's diaspora engagement strategies.

#### **2.3.1. Diaspora Before It Became "The Diaspora"<sup>2</sup>**

The state elite promoted the early stages of labour migration in the 1960s to relieve the pressure of unemployment, which was a burning problem at the time in Turkey. It was also supported with the hope that the guest workers would come back equipped with technical knowledge with the experience they gain and transmit these new set of skills to their fellow citizens in their hometowns (Sayarı, 1986), a wish that is also documented in the parliamentary speeches as will be demonstrated in the following chapters. Institutionally, the State Planning Organisation (DPT – Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı) and Employment Agency (İşçi Bulma Kurumu) were at the heart of organizing the bureaucratic aspect of migrant flows (Akgündüz, 2008). All in all, the underlying theme in the 1960s

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<sup>2</sup> It is generally argued that compared to the last twenty years of institutional and political attempts by the Turkish government, a systematic diaspora policy was lacking since hitherto existing policies were preoccupied mostly with the technical and legal matters. Hence, "the diaspora" in the title above corresponds to the recent period with a well-rounded diaspora policy.

regarding the workers abroad was the temporality of their term in Europe. Though preserving the migrants' ties and loyalty to the homeland was an ultimate priority, the expected utility was rather economic in the 1960s, incentivizing them to invest their savings in their home country (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a).

Such expected economic gain from labour remittances gained new momentum in the 1970s when it saved the Turkish economy from the brink of a collapse by closing the whopping current account deficit. The oil shock of 1973 halted the labour migration to Europe from Turkey when countries officially announced the end of new labour force intake, though new waves ensued through family formations, unifications or illegal migration. Nonetheless, the main policy goal in the 1970s was still managing their anticipated return (Mügge, 2012: 32).

The transition from the 1970s to 1980s witnessed a shift in official understanding from seeing citizens abroad as "distant workers" to "migrant workers" or "Turkish citizens abroad" (Aksel, 2014). With the gradual realization of the permanence of their stay, the policies aiming at institutionalizing fundamental citizenship rights and services accelerated in this period (İçduygu and Aksel, 2013: 177). But more importantly, what characterized the decade was the repercussions of the 1980 coup, making the state elite more alert towards dissident elements with the new wave of migration to European countries. As outward migration patterns became more diversified with different political opposition groups (leftists, Kurdish nationalists, Islamists and Alevi) fleeing from the authoritarian military rule (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a; Sökefeld, 2008), the state elite's priority became minimizing the opposition both home and abroad (Mügge, 2012). Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) argued that the immediate state reaction against these new dissident groups abroad was reactionary rather than pro-active. The primary goal was to maintain control and monitor the political activism of the political immigrants abroad. One significant method to offset this possible extremism was to expand the scope of Diyanet's activities,

recruiting more imams (Aydın, 2014), through which Turkish-Islamic synthesis, the de facto official ideology of the post-coup era, could be spread and buffered against oppositional activities. Furthermore, establishing ties with the citizens abroad were also guaranteed under the new clause to the 1982 Constitution, which allowed dual citizenship for Turkish nationals, significantly increasing the number of Turkish citizens who have also obtained the citizenship of a host country (İçdugu, 1996). Such a move was also interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the ties and giving constitutional status to representing the interests of the Turkish people abroad (Ünver, 2003).

In the 1990s, the term “Euro-Turks” gained prominence and became widely used (Kaya and Kentel, 2005). From this, we can infer that the permanency of citizens abroad now was an indisputable fact. Given that Turkish officials recognised their permanence in host countries, Turkey’s new policy priority in the 1990s thus became facilitating integration to host countries without being assimilated and passing citizenship regulations that incentivize them to naturalize. The enactment of the Pink Card regulation that guarantees almost the same citizenship rights to those who had to renounce their Turkish citizenship, for instance, aimed at facilitating the social and political integration of former nationals. According to Kadirbeyoğlu (2010), these regulations were sought as an answer to burning problems that citizens abroad face, such as rising xenophobia. Hence, the Turkish politicians believed that by becoming German citizens, thus enjoying their political rights -to vote and be elected- they would face less hardship in their day-to-day lives in host countries.

### **2.3.2. The Shift: What is New in “The New Diaspora Policy”?**

If there is one continuity in state policy since the 1960s, it is the fact that since the beginning of labour migration, the Turkish state has felt responsible for its citizens’ wellbeing (Mügge, 2012: 33). As the upcoming chapters will show, legislative initiatives prove this conventional wisdom right. However, the 2000s

are widely accepted in the literature during which the major shifts in diaspora policy took place, even though Turkey's approach towards its citizens in Europe from the 1980s onwards fell into the diaspora policy category (Aydın, 2014: 13).

The studies focusing on Turkey's diaspora policy approach to the last two decades under the consequent Ak Party governments as a moment when the fundamental rupture occurred compared with the previous migration management strategies (Öktem, 2014). Many components add up to this policy change. For instance, Aydın (2014) argues that what is new in this "new diaspora policy" is the fact that diaspora engagement policies are now embedded in a strategy of public diplomacy, which is one of the main pillars of the Ak Party era foreign policy (Aydın, 2014: 13). Likewise, Akçapar and Aksel (2017) suggest that we can consider the diaspora policy as part of the new public diplomacy vision, in which ample initiatives and institutions, such as Yunus Emre Institutes, YTB, a more enhanced network of DITIB, and out-of-country voting are embedded. Especially the establishment of YTB was crucial for launching a new period in the art of diaspora governance in Turkey (Aksel, 2014: 212).

Voting abroad, which was first practised in 2014 presidential elections, was also addressed as another turning point for Turkey's diaspora engagement strategies. Studies both looked at the broader motivation of external voters for electoral participation, as well as a willingness on the side of Turkish politicians to enable out-of-country voting. The research group led by Abadan-Unat inquired into the impetus behind external voters participation in the Turkish elections in 2014. As a result of their field research, the scholars found that despite their close interest in Turkish political developments, the external voters' political priorities and expectations differ remarkably from the ruling party's political agenda (Abadan-Unat et al., 2014). Notwithstanding such divergence, however, their enthusiastic participation in homeland elections, as evident in the ever-increasing numbers, was explained with the visible improvement in the public services home and abroad (Adar, 2019), while other social factors such as birthplace, gender and

social class influenced electoral participation and party choice (Mügge et al., 2019). As for the reasons behind implementing voting abroad, Şahin-Mencütek and Erdoğan (2016) argued that emigrant lobbying, expected electoral benefit from external voting by the Ak Party, and the broader diaspora engagement policies in place have contributed to franchising citizens abroad.

While acknowledging the significance of legal and institutional changes in the form of external voting or mushrooming of public diplomacy institutions, studies generally focused on the new diaspora policy as part of the shift in foreign policy narratives and practices (Mencutek and Baser 2018; Okyay 2015). Accordingly, the changes that took place in diaspora policy was somewhat parallel with the developments in the new foreign policy of the Ak Party, which is “casually connected with Turkey’s rising ambitions and ‘soft power’ capabilities” (Öktem, 2014: 6). What is broadly defined as neo-Ottomanism, a political ideology suggesting that Turkey should re-assume its critical political role in the world due to its Ottoman legacy, as the dominant element of 2000s foreign policy has likewise shaped the diaspora policy (Adamson, 2019: 224; Aydın, 2014). Hence, contrary to the previous type of diaspora outreach that was heavily determined through the economic and social aspects (remittances, social security rights etc.), the new era is marked by the new institutions and new ideology giving a new shape to the diaspora-homeland relations.

Studies addresses different explanations for the change in diaspora policy. For instance, in her relatively early but nonetheless seminal work, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003a) highlights international factors, such as the EU accession process, which was a real possibility in the early 2000s. Similarly, while Mencütek and Başer (2018) agree on the vitality of international aspect such as the EU anchor, they also point out to the reformulated foreign policy aspirations of which the diaspora engagement is seen as a part. Okyay (2015), on the other hand, refers to the combination of domestic and international elements, such as the transformation in Turkey’s economic development model towards liberalism,

changing conceptions of nationhood and narratives of nationalism employed by Turkish politicians, and Turkey's position vis-à-vis the West on political and cultural levels. In her recent analysis, Arkılıç (2020) argues that the recent shift in diaspora engagement can be understood best through a holistic approach that brings together all the above mentioned domestic, transnational and international elements. While domestic factors refer to broader home-country political developments such as the rise of political Islam and its increasing prevalence in political-social life, international and transnational elements include Turkey's relations with the EU, the rise of Islamophobia and xenophobia in Europe jeopardizing the situation of Turkish nationals, or growing relevance of political or business figures of Turkish descends in Europe. However, Arkılıç gives the lion's share to domestic dynamics as having the most considerable influence among these multiple factors.

However, domestic politics in Turkey is far from stable, so is Turkey's diaspora engagement strategy. As the domestic political atmosphere in Turkey became increasingly antidemocratic and conflict-ridden from the early 2010s onwards, diaspora literature started to look at the impact of increasing authoritarianism in Turkey on the diaspora realm. Such emergent authoritarian transnational practices are referred as "negative diaspora engagement" (Yanaşmayan and Kaşlı, 2019). According to the scholars, countries engage with diaspora both positively –by establishing institutions, granting citizenship rights, enfranchising etc.– and negatively –through authoritarian practices such as extraterritorial surveillance, monitoring and policing– with its extensive repertoire of diaspora engagement, Turkey is an example for both ways of engagement, the scholars suggest. Hence, negative diaspora engagement can (and does) take place under the same diaspora governance institutions and policies that carry out positive diaspora engagement. In that regard, while Turkey has been making considerable efforts to include citizens abroad, on the one hand, the country vigorously excludes other citizen groups that are deemed "enemies of the state". It is essentially an act of replicating the citizenship boundaries in the domestic realm

that is drawn between the acceptable and undesired citizens<sup>3</sup>. Başer and Öztürk (2020) used negative and positive diaspora engagement framework to analyze the diaspora governance under the Ak Party governments and found that the state can use diaspora institutions to create ideological and repressive transnational state apparatuses. Hence, Turkey's diaspora engagement policies in recent years started to move into the category "transnational authoritarianism" or long-distance authoritarianism for Turkey has been increasingly involved in monitoring, intimidating and harassing diasporic populations abroad (Adamson, 2020), especially following the failed coup attempt.

These recent transnational authoritarian practices were also elaborated with reference to the concept of "spillover effect". Just like the changes in the domestic system can infiltrate into diaspora engagement strategies, fundamental developments in home countries are also exported to the transnational spaces. Similar to the 1990s during which Turkey's clash with PKK was transmitted to host country contexts in the form of Turkish-Kurdish confrontation (Başer, 2016), in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, similar clashes were witnessed among Turkish nationals and the followers of Gülen movement (Başer, 2017: 32). Post-coup developments can thus be considered an instance when domestic problems spilled into Europe, affecting the lives of the diaspora members.

Indeed, the ruling elite's relationship with the exiled Gülen movement followers is recently studied to illustrate such transnational authoritarian practices. Gülen movement, the supposed organizers of the 2016 coup attempt, became one of the determining factors of Turkey's relations with Western countries in the aftermath of July 2016. It has undoubtedly affected diaspora engagement policy, making extraction of the movement-affiliated individuals residing on those a top priority for Turkey. Not only that diaspora became a dissident-sheltering field, but it also

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<sup>3</sup> One can follow a Foucauldian perspective to reach similar conclusions on diaspora members being constructed as loyal or "docile" citizen-subjects. For an account that historically analyses Turkey's diaspora engagement account from the perspective of Foucauldian neoliberal governmentality, see Bahçecik (2020).

triggered protectionist reflexes once again, akin to the aftermath of the 1980 coup, during which the seeds of a new diaspora was planted by Kurdish dissidents fleeing Turkey for political reasons (Başer, 2013). So, for scholars analysing Turkey's diaspora engagement, the post-2016 period marked an era in which diaspora became a field of "extraterritorial repression" elucidating the repressive side of diaspora engagement. (Öztürk and Taş, 2019: 66).

Furthermore, the Gülen movement in Europe was referred to as "exilic diaspora in the making" (Watmough and Öztürk, 2018: 49) as a community of dissidents dispersed across Europe<sup>4</sup>. The outcome of this process was approached as a case exemplifying "transporting domestic conflicts abroad" (Féron, 2017) for it brought Turkish diaspora members and alleged Gülen movement followers against each other in many instances, which again resembles the deep-seated divide and conflict between the Kurdish and Turkish diaspora in Europe. Turkey is increasing involvement in political affairs in the diaspora space re-ignite the old debates of the Turks' lack of integration to their host societies. So even though the development seems like a totally new phenomenon, the controversy it resurfaces is the old one, such as integration or the lack thereof in the host countries.

In Turkey's renewed attempt to reach citizens abroad, a great deal of attention has also been directed towards the role and activities of Diyanet in Europe, which became one of the primary domestic policy actors under the Ak Party governments. In the post-2000s period, Diyanet was seen by many as yet another policy tool in the Ak Party governments' diaspora policy for spreading its Islamic influence to overseas citizens. Within the diaspora context, scholars approached the growing role of Diyanet from different perspectives. For example, it was interpreted as a foreign policy tools in Turkey's relations with diaspora-hosting countries of Europe (Öztürk and Sözeri, 2018), especially

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis of Gülen movement's exile in Europe in pos-2016 period, see the Special Issue of *Politics, Religion & Ideology* (2018), "Ruin or Resilience? The Future of the Gülen Movement in Transnational Political Exile" 19(1).

promoting the Turkish version of Islam (Çıtak, 2010). Accordingly, the use of religion as a policy instrument as such functions to preserve an identity beyond the Turkishness and rather entails loyalty to the Diyanet's version of the ethnic-national idea of Muslim identity (Çıtak, 2018: 378). Beyond its role of fostering a tailored understanding of ethnic-national identity as one of the policy tools, Diyanet was also studied as a governing tool to create citizen loyalty from a Foucauldian perspective, in which diaspora is posited merely as a passive recipient of the sending state's discourses and practices exposed to Diyanet services (Maritato, 2020: 8).

Despite the surge in contested topics in diaspora policy, such as FETÖ, diplomatic spats between Turkey and host countries or the espionage allegations for Diyanet imams, Turkey's diaspora engagement has witnessed a continuous line as well as breaking points. The literature, however, seems to agree on a radical rupture with the Ak Party governments' diaspora agenda and the implementation of the party's domestic and foreign policy visions in the diaspora realm.

### **2.3.3. Is There Room for Parliaments in the Study of Diaspora Engagement?**

Within the field of diaspora politics, transnational studies, and state-citizenship relations, the empirical studies on Turkey have formed such an important part of the literature, even to the level of becoming a basis of main theories eminent in transnational and diaspora studies. As was hopefully seen in this brief glimpse of the literature, there has been a visible increase in the studies that seek to identify different dynamics of Turkey's changing diaspora policy with its ruptures and continuities. However, as the mainly debated issues and concepts have shown thus far, there is a missing piece in the literature to situate home country parliaments in diaspora studies as the venues in which both diaspora members and issues are represented, as well as the main diaspora policymaking body. The

absence of such a vantage point stands on the way of expanding our analytical tools to explain sending state attitude towards diaspora.

Despite this low interest in studying parliaments or inserting legislatures in the study of diaspora, it is necessary to note that scholarly interest in the politics of sending state has not been totally absent from the scene, as literature outlined in this chapter demonstrates. Studies on Turkey, in particular, have looked at different dynamics and institutions of diaspora policy in recent years, such as the role of Diyanet, YTB, Kurdish conflict or the impact of increasing diaspora participation in homeland elections. At the international level too, there is a burgeoning literature trying to understand different domestic dynamics of diaspora engagement for sending states., there has been a growing interest in recent years for incorporating domestic political actors such as political parties, and the way of engaging diverging methods of approaching to overseas citizens here. For example, one recent attempt by Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei (2019) can be taken as a showcase for growing interest in domestic political structures on diaspora issues. Drawing on the broader framework of issue salience and substantive representation literature, scholars look at the reasons why political parties tend to emphasize diaspora issues in home country parliaments, as a result of which they aptly argued that parties with more electoral support from emigrants prioritize emigrant-related issues in their parliamentary activities. In a similar endeavour, Burgess (2018) attempts to understand the impact of who takes the lead (the state or political parties) in diaspora outreach on emigrant political mobilization and participation by looking at four countries. She finds that while state-led outreach (in the Philippines and Mexico) helped eliminate partisan divisions among expatriates but had a demobilizing effect on overseas voting, party-led outreach (in Lebanon and the Dominican Republic) succeeded in mobilizing external voters but reproduced and reinforced clientelist patterns of interest representation.

Apart from studying political parties, placing parliaments in the debate, the discussion of diaspora engagement is also crucial and lacking in the study of especially diaspora representation. So, bringing domestic political explanations into the picture in a more pronounced way is an urgent endeavour to take. Therefore recent studies that ask these much-needed and timely questions such as why some political parties are more concerned than others on emigrants, what the general level of attention to emigrant issues in homeland parliaments (Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei, 2019), the different consequences of state-led and part-led diaspora outreach (Burgess, 2018), or how political parties' expectations or perceptions of its emigrant determine their action (Wellman, 2021). These questions put the representative mechanisms and political parties at the centre of diaspora engagement policies. This thesis will draw on these accounts in order to fill this gap in the literature by incorporating home country parliaments into the picture, in which diaspora is not only represented but as an avenue that all diaspora-related policymaking has to go through and be debated.

## CHAPTER 3

### PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES ON THE TURKISH WORKERS IN EUROPE DURING THE FIRST DECADE OF LABOUR MIGRATION

From the early 1960s onwards, Turkey became one of the main migrant-sending countries in Europe. With the reciprocal agreements between Turkey and the governments of various European countries, outward migration from Turkey started<sup>5</sup>, with its lasting effects to be observed in the coming decades. By the end of the 1960s, the number of Turkish workers in Europe was around 300.000.

The issue of the guest workers immediately became a part of Turkish politicians' agenda. A detailed analysis of the parliamentary minutes shows that the repertoire of the topics highlighted during the parliamentary debates regarding the Turkish community in Europe is quite wide-ranging. While fundamental state services occupy the central place in the agenda, such as the continuation of social security rights, the transfer of remittances, in the 1960s, the MPs were concerned about the day-to-day problems faced by the workers in Europe, which might even seem trivial for some today. One such example is their refusal to eat at the cafeterias of their workplaces since meals containing pork were prepared next to theirs in the kitchen.<sup>6</sup> On the higher political level, the politicians were attempting to find a solution to their housing problems upon their return or how to make use of their savings. During their trips to those countries, parliamentarians took note of those and similar challenges faced by the workers and tried to solve them.

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<sup>5</sup> Turkey mutually signed agreements with Germany in 1961, with Austria, Netherlands and Belgium in 1964, with France in 1965, and with Sweden in 1967.

<sup>6</sup> Kemal Nebioğlu, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 69'uncu Birleşim, 5 nisan 1968, page 545.

Overall, the fact that various worker-related topics became the focus of the politicians has shown that the parliamentarians saw themselves as the representative of the outgoing workers with a genuine effort to solve their problems. Below is the categorization of the main topics, concerns and policy responses debated in the Turkish Parliament in the 1960s regarding the guest workers.

The chapter will follow in two parts: the policy response on their anticipated return and the social problems regarding the immigration/surrounding the lives of the migrant workers. The discussion will be based on the legislative texts and speeches by the parliamentarians.

#### *Notes on the diaspora legislation in the 1960s*

Before going into the featured debate topics of the 1960s on the Turkish diaspora, it is essential to point out some inventories derived from the meetings of two major bills analysed in this chapter. Overall, by looking at the voting patterns of these two laws, we can conclude that there was a convergence between different political parties on diaspora legislation in the early years.

During the debates of the 1964 bill, which provides loans to the workers abroad, 23 different MPs had the floor. Twelve of these MPs were the members of three other opposition parties of the day -AP, CKMP and YTP- whereas the remaining 11 MPs that spoke were from the ruling party of the day, CHP. During the Senate debates of the bill, 10 different senators spoke. Among 240 MPs present in the House during the final voting of the bill, 232 MPs voted for, 3 against and 5 abstentions. Since the bill was accepted with an overwhelming majority by all parties, the political inclination of against and absentee voters become insignificant to determine the divergence on the issue.

During the debates of the 1966 bill that amends the organizational structure of the Ministry of Labour, a total number of 13 parliamentarians spoke, 8 of which were the members of three different opposition parties -CHP, CKMP, TİP- and 5 were the member of the ruling AP MPs. At the Senate, 9 members had the floor. Since showing of hands was used as a method for the final voting of this bill, it is impossible to identify which party members accepted or rejected the legislation. However, by looking at the overall debates, one can argue that the general tendency by all parties was positive towards the draft bill.

The overwhelming majority with which these bills were approved in the parliament does not necessarily mean that there were no disagreements over the policy framework. Notwithstanding such convergence in a fragmented parliament, there were many vocal MPs critical of the government about how the policy approach to Turkish workers abroad should be shaped. As could be seen from the arguments below, it can be suggested that the issues criticized by the ruling and opposition party members alike had a strong hint of cultural nationalism, among other things. In the following sections below, these debates are further categorized and discussed.

### **3.1. Will They Ever Come Back to the Homeland: Possible Scenarios and Policy Responses for Returning Guest Workers**

*“The homeland of the Turkish worker is not the place where he is bred, but where the Turkish flag is waved, and that place is Turkey.”*

Minister of Labour Ali Naili Erdem, 1968

When the first wave of immigration began in the 1960s, it was a commonly held belief that the guest workers would return to their countries after spending a certain period of time. Their stay in those countries was not considered as remotely long-term as it ended up being. This understanding of the politicians

also made the temporality of their time in Europe the core topic discussed in the Parliament related to guest workers. Their return to their homeland sooner than later was a widely held belief.

In many documents and speeches of the late 1960s, even the typical way of referral for this population was “Turkish workers in Europe” signifying the aim (work) hence the temporality of the purpose of their stay there, in contrast to Euro Turks (*Avrupalı Türkler*), which is a more widespread way of referral to this population by media, academic circles and by a wider public. The possibility that “these qualified workers desire to settle down in those places rather than coming back to Turkey after a certain period”<sup>7</sup> was a common concern to many MPs as a feared scenario. Against that prospect, opposition parties strongly urged the government to take necessary policy measures in order to avoid their permanent settlement in Europe. In response to such widespread concern, the Minister of Labour of the day, Ali Naili Erdem, refused those claims with a highly nationalist speech: “The homeland of the Turkish worker is not the place where he is bred, but where the Turkish flag is waved, and that place is Turkey. (Applause from the AP seats) Therefore, thinking that the Turkish worker is there to stay is an unnecessary concern and a doubt.”<sup>8</sup> It can be argued that such understanding that the state is still responsible for its own citizens despite the geographical distance has been the basis of Turkey’s official approach towards its populations abroad for decades to come. However, in the early years of immigration, the state response centred around two main concerns: How to make the returning workers part of the economic life and how to reintegrate them into the society. Therefore, the legislative effort targeted regulating their lives once they come back. One of the two most prominent policy step taken during the 1960s, for instance, was to solve the housing problem they were expected to face

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<sup>7</sup> Coşkun Kırca, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 69’uncu Birleşim, 5 nisan 1968, page 550.

<sup>8</sup> Ali Naili Erdem, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 70’inci Birleşim, 8 Nisan 1968, page 585.

after they return<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, apart from those policy efforts, we can find this underlying assumption as the basis of many speeches, be it the draft bill related to the use of the remittances or the social problems their migration caused.

The following section analyses the repercussions of this common presumption in two parts: expectations from the guest workers as the agents of progress and the discovery of the workers as economic agents to contribute to the Turkish economy.

### **3.1.1. The Life After (Anticipated) Return: Guest Workers as Agents of Bringing Civilization and Development**

The first time that labour migration has officially entered the policy agenda was the first five-year development plan covering the years between 1963-67. Under the employment policy forecast, labour migration was noted as one of the several strategies to overcome unemployment, which was a burning problem in the country at the time:

Another aspect of the employment policy is the export of labour surplus to Western European countries experiencing labour shortages. However, while being a labour-surplus country, Turkey is also a country facing high-skilled labour shortages. A high number of high-skilled labour export might increase this shortage even further. Necessary measures must be taken to prevent this inconvenience.<sup>10</sup>

Exporting the labour force was considered and eventually implemented as a systematic measure against the increase in the unemployed population. As mentioned by Abadan-Unat, the accompanying idea was that labour export would provide Turkey with the much needed well-trained personnel in the

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<sup>9</sup> Yurt Dışında Çalışan İşçilere Konut ve Küçük Sanat Kredisi Açılması ve Ödünç Para Verilmesi Hakkında Kanun, 1964.

<sup>10</sup> Kalkınma Planı (Birinci Beş Yıl) 1963-1967, Ocak 1963 .  
[http://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Birinci\\_Bes\\_Yillik\\_Kalkinma\\_Plani-1962-1967.pdf](http://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Birinci_Bes_Yillik_Kalkinma_Plani-1962-1967.pdf) (retrieved on 18 March 2020)

industrialization path (Abadan-Unat, 2007: 4). Therefore, the prevalent assumption of the politicians in the 1960s was that the guest workers would come back to their home countries sooner than later. Instead, it was believed that they would work, observe, experience, and bring their whole new expertise back home. So, it is not a coincidence that the first significant bill -in 1964- introduced regarding the workers' lives abroad was about facilitating homeownership in Turkey by giving them credit with low-interest rates.

In the early phases of immigration, positive and negative impacts of this experience on the workers' lives started to be observed by the policymakers. Enhancing the knowledge and expertise of the low-skilled guest workers was generally stated as a significant advantage. In the pre-text of the 1964 bill that aims to provide housing support for the workers, the positive impacts of the labour migration were listed as “improvement in workers’ technical knowledge, increase in their cultural levels, and development in their productive capacity, all of which will lead to a higher level of life quality.”<sup>11</sup> Apart from its economic contribution, sending workers abroad were thought to be very useful for the country and the workers themselves in many ways. There was a common outlook that these workers could be utilized as a well-trained workforce in a place like Turkey, which is in absolute need of high skilled labour.

During the debates of the same bill, prominent CHP representative Kasım Gülek remarks: “Labour export is both beneficial and harmful for a country. Our population is overgrowing. We cannot find enough jobs for the growing population. It is for our benefit that these workers work abroad. It is in our best interest that these workers learn a profession and see the civilization there.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, another MP from a right-wing party of the day Yeni Türkiye Partisi

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<sup>11</sup> Yurt Dışında Çalışan İşçilere Konut ve Küçük Sanat Kredisi Açılması ve Ödünç Para Verilmesi Hakkında Kanun Teklifi Gerekçe Metni, 1964.

<sup>12</sup> Kasım Gülek, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116’ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 336.

highlights the significance of enhancing the cultural capacity by asserting that: “Since our workers abroad work in many different industrial enterprises, they have increased their knowledge and experience on many issues compared to their time in Turkey.”<sup>13</sup> The same representative emphasizes the necessity of this bill not only as an easy credit facility for housing but also as an important initiative to “help them establish industrial enterprises here in Turkey by making use of their enhanced knowledge and experience in those industrially developed countries.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the common hope from all parties, regardless of their political stance, was the returning workers’ service to the country with their enhanced technical and cultural capacity.

Some addressed not only the importance of know-how, techniques or savings of the guest workers but also the values they will bring back to the country. Another member of Adalet Partisi contends that, besides the money flow to Turkey, the time Turkish workers spent in Germany will also result in the import of key German values such as work ethic and discipline. “An important element for our national industry brought by the returning workers from Germany is the transfer of the work ethic and discipline of the German industry. If we turn these workers into business owners, albeit in small craftsmanship, without being spoiled in a Turkish workplace, the small business owner will both work and be the owner of his work. Then the transfer of highly significant work ethic and discipline, along with foreign currency, will be ensured for the future Turkish industry.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the cultural encounter and interaction at the workplace were expected to bring some good for the Turkish industrial development through the transfer of soft skills gained, in addition to the hard skills.

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<sup>13</sup> Hacı Ali Dizman *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116’ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 368.

<sup>14</sup> Hacı Ali Dizman *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116’ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 379.

<sup>15</sup> Şadi Pehlivanoglu, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116’ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 380.

Some considered the return of these workers functioning as something akin to the role of *Köy Enstitüleri*, in a way that the progress reaches the local level through the hands of the well-trained individuals, who take an active role in the development of their hometowns and educate their fellow countrymen. An Adalet Partisi MP talks about his visit to the Black Sea region and cites a scene he witnessed there. He notices that one particular village has electricity whereas the rest of the neighbouring ones do not and asks where it comes from. He finds out with great pleasure that, in such a remote Black Sea village that cannot even be reached with the existing state capacities, a returning worker from Germany brought the electricity and illuminated his own mountain village with his knowledge and expertise. And he concludes that “it is wrong to think that these workers will cause immense problems for our social life and understanding when they return”<sup>16</sup> for their contributions as such would exceed the burden they bring. Indeed, the possibility that their return in big numbers would be problematic for Turkey in many aspects was a widely held belief and a source of concern for the politicians. Again, Kasım Gülek asked the government as early as 1964 “to take preventive measures for the future of the guest workers, which will be a big trouble for Turkey.”<sup>17</sup> There were essentially two main questions glooming over the future of the workers abroad: What if they do not return; or if and when they return, what if they are discontent with the conditions they find here. These two concerns can often be found in the speeches of different MPs while discussing various issues regarding the guest workers abroad. The possibility that the returning workers would be disappointed upon their return and be unhappy with the overall conditions in Turkey often cast a shadow over the excitement about the prospect of progress they would lead. “What if”, one MP asked, “we end up with an army of the unhappy hundreds of thousands?” and he continued:

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<sup>16</sup> Kaya Özdemir, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 69’uncu Birleşim, 5 nisan 1968, page 548.

<sup>17</sup> Kasım Gülek, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116’ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 366.

It is essential to accept that a worker who lived in Europe for a few years by leaving both his family and his old self, gave a comfortable life to his family, observed and enjoyed the opportunities of civilization there, understood the kind of measures a state should take for the welfare and security of its own citizens, and who -unhappily- compared all these with the conditions in his own country is no longer the same Ahmet or Mehmet who left his village years ago. If he loses the conditions and opportunities he is enjoying there today, he will be filled with feelings of rebellion and resentment, becoming a dangerous element for his country, even for himself. It is impossible not to worry about the social and economic consequences that such discontent might cause.<sup>18</sup>

Even though the idea of permanent settlement of the guest workers in the European countries was still not spoken out as a future possibility, concerns as such were growing among the politicians. What would they do for a living? Where would they go when they return? Where and how would they choose to settle: would they go back to their villages or the cities? Or would they continue their lives as farmers like they used to be, or else would they open a new page as urban merchants?

Amid these questions, there were active efforts to make their lives as pleasant and easy as possible once they return. However, some problems were too big to escape. The high unemployment rate in the country was evidently among those, and since these people would come back to the homeland “with a more developed worldview”<sup>19</sup>, the social structure might be affected negatively. Politicians thus often pondered whether this would cause unrest among the workers as well, which ultimately has led them to devise smart policy options to ensure their employment and similar living standards they have seen in those countries. They suggested various ways to handle the economic and social problems they were bound to face upon their return. Since these workers would be coming back in large numbers, some systematic measures should be taken, it was believed, for them to readapt to life back in Turkey. A member of the senate,

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<sup>18</sup> Osman Bölükbaşı *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116’ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 536.

<sup>19</sup> Ali Naili Erdem, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 70’inci Birleşim, 8 Nisan 1968, page 589.

for example, came up with a partnership model in large economic establishments as a possible life and economic choice waiting for the guest workers following their return.

400.000 workers, yes. Sooner or later, these workers will come back to Turkey. What will be Turkey's response to that? I think with the money they earn (and send), we should already start investing in the new fields of jobs they have worked there already and create job opportunities for them in those fields. Could the savings of these workers be made more attractive with a partnership model to large industrial plants? If partnership opportunities are provided in such facilities according to the areas they work, they can find jobs in a large establishment, industrial facilities and work as trained workers, therefore increase the efficiency since they became a partner to the institution they work at.<sup>20</sup>

Overall, as can be seen commonly from all the remarks above, politicians had two things in mind: Workers abroad would unquestionably come back, and as politicians, they should do something about this taken-for-granted return. The fact that their stay in Europe was seen as temporary made policymakers take measures to regulate their lives after they return, such as housing and or re-adapting them to life back in Turkey. However, as Abadan-Unat (2007) observes, these attempts did not succeed early on. The real impact or the efficient use of remittances was rather profoundly seen in the 1970s, a time when the Turkish economy suffered heavily from a substantial current account deficit. Yet, in the first decade of labour immigration, politicians kept hopeful that these workers would come back and find a new life for themselves in their homeland in the coming years.

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<sup>20</sup> Hüsnu Dikeçligil, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, Seksenaltıncı Birleşim, 14 temmuz 1964, page 447.

### **3.1.2. Discovering Migrants as Economic Agents: How to Make Use of Their Savings?**

For the majority of its modern history, Turkey has typically been a budget-deficit country. Therefore, it is not a surprise to anyone that the Turkish state had some clear expectations from its workers abroad: they would work and earn in foreign currencies, and Turkey would make use of their savings in the most beneficial ways for them and the country. The bill designed to provide credit for workers abroad with favourable repayment options to make them homeowners in Turkey can be considered the first systematic policy attempt of the Turkish state to create economic gain out of their savings. It can also be regarded as the starting point of a decades-long perception which constructed guest workers as economic agents.

Until the Turks abroad became the topic of other political debates -the problem of integration, discrimination, and eventually their voting rights- the way they occupied the domestic political agenda in Turkey has been dominated by the contribution they make to the economy. Thus, it can be argued that the prominent role the workers had in the eyes of the politicians and the wider public was economically vital actors who back their country in time of economic distress.

The first law on the workers abroad was the early indication of that precise understanding. Titled as the "*The bill on lending loans to workers abroad for housing and starting small enterprises*", the proposal that came to the Parliament's agenda in 1964 came from the fact that the workers' money was not kept or used beneficially for themselves, nor the country. Since the workers lacked adequate banking mechanisms to transfer their earnings to their families as cash, they tended to use their money for buying expensive durable goods and send them to Turkey instead, considering them as a form of saving. The pre-text to the bill openly acknowledged such vacuum in the system: "It is a well-known

fact that rather than providing consistent and continuous support for their families left behind, the workers abroad try to make use of their savings through complex ways that are neither useful for their families nor the country. In that regard, it appears as a socially and economically vital necessity to incentivize these workers towards savings.” Therefore, the law did not only come from an economic need but also the need for a social regulation:

In this way, the continuation of the relationship of the workers with their families and the motherland will be ensured on the one hand, and the savings will be transferred to Turkey in the form of cash rather than inessential consumer goods on the other. The bill is therefore drafted to ensure that the foreign currency earned by our workers abroad is used first in the country, and then following the solution of a social issue, as a residential investment for the family and the community.<sup>21</sup>

Through this mechanism, two early symptoms of immigration were tried to be cured with this twofold law. During the debates on the same bill, we see that the politicians commonly acknowledge the value of the guest workers as a potential source of foreign exchange for the country and propose different opinions on how their savings can be brought to the country most efficiently. Minister of Finance of the day openly declared the primary rationale behind this bill by stating that: “It is an imperative that these currencies are brought to this country in the least harmful way for the worker and used in a way that is the most beneficial to the country.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the bill was designed to establish a fund making it possible, in the words of the lawmaker, “for our country-devoted workers to transfer their foreign exchange to Turkey through Türkiye Emlak Kredi Bankası and either keep them in their savings account with an interest rate

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<sup>21</sup> Hariçte Çalışan İşçilere Konut Kredisi Açılması ve İkrarda Bulunulması Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı ve İmar ve İskân, Maliye ve Plân Komisyonları Raporları Gerekçe Metni, (1/669).

<sup>22</sup>Ferid Melen, Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi, Seksenaltıncı Birleşim, 14 temmuz 1964, page 443.

or ensure an immediate cash transfer to their families.”<sup>23</sup> It was a practical way to overcome the cash transfer problem by preventing the waste of their savings with non-essential goods consumption. Also, by providing low-interest rate loans to the workers abroad and making them homeowners in return, it was beneficial both for them and the government, opening up the way for the remittances, which would play a significant role in Turkish politics in the coming decade.

All in all, while taking the first step to establishing the connection with its citizens abroad, the Turkish state’s approach to the workers started to be shaped by economic concerns, among other things. At the same time, the state has intervened in the way in which they connect with their families. Even though the impact of this law on the Turkish economy was limited, it was an important first step to assure that the Turkish state would safeguard their money and ensure the smooth transfer to their families (Abadan-Unat, 2007), which was the bedrock of the future political and economic developments.

### **3.2. Social and Cultural Issues Surrounding the Lives of the Guest Workers**

Politicians were slowly starting to realize the thorny social problems surrounding the worker migration and highlighted some of them consistently throughout their speeches. The families left behind was the most prominent of those. The bills in the parliament’s agenda in the 1960s regarding the workers abroad can be considered acknowledging these newly emerging side effects of immigration, materializing as social problems that need tangible policy solutions. This section categorizes these fundamental problems as voiced by the parliamentarians. While some of these issues are purely related to the ideological environment of the day, some of them are the early social consequences of this first migration experience in Turkey.

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<sup>23</sup> Hariçte Çalışan İşçilere Konut Kredisi Açılması ve İkrazda Bulunulması Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı ve İmar ve İskân, Maliye ve Plân Komisyonları Raporları Gerekçe Metni, (1/669).

### **3.2.1. The Ties That Bind: Families Left Behind and the Situation Of Women**

One of the most anticipated outcomes of the labour migration was the situation of the families of the workers who continued to live in Turkey. Because the workers were not thought to stay in those countries for too long, they went there as single men, leaving their families and relatives behind. One primary justification for the 1964 law mentioned above was the need to institutionalize government-guest worker relations in order to ensure that their ties are still strong with their families. In addition to its economic objectives, policymakers stated the ground for the 1964 law as “ensuring the continuation of their connections with and the obligations for the people they left in Turkey, as well as monitoring the requests and complaints that came from Turkey on these matters.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, one big concern was the loosening of family ties.

It is observed that the family ties between the workers going abroad and their family members behind are socially loosened. The main reason for this is differing social and individual relations in our country and that of the migrated country. In that respect, the measures to enhance familial ties should rapidly be taken.<sup>25</sup>

In this way, the family became one of the first issues politicized as the state deemed itself the responsible entity to preserve the family ties. The protective role assumed by the state concerning immigrants can also be observed in other areas in the years and decades to follow. Yet, the fact that this was expressed as a common concern early on regardless of political affiliation and the use of political initiative to strengthening the family ties gives us some hints about the way politicians characterize the labour migration: its moral aspect plays as equal role as the pragmatist ones, such as the remittances.

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<sup>24</sup> Hariçte Çalışan İşçilere Konut Kredisi Açılması ve İkrarda Bulunulması Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı ve İmar ve İskân, Maliye ve Plân Komisyonları Raporları Gerekçe Metni, (1/669).

<sup>25</sup> Hariçte Çalışan İşçilere Konut Kredisi Açılması ve İkrarda Bulunulması Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı ve İmar ve İskân, Maliye ve Plân Komisyonları Raporları Gerekçe Metni, (1/669).

In the early years of labour migration, mostly the men went abroad to work, leaving their wives and families behind. But this already small number of female workers in Europe occasionally became a concern of a novel kind for the political elite in Turkey. In a written question by a senator, the minister in charge was asked whether or not the situation of some female workers offend the Turkish public and its moral codes, and if so, what possible measures could be taken.<sup>26</sup> “I am in favour of the workers leaving together with their families,” the same senator further noted during the debate of his written question in the Senate, and continued: “However, how is it possible that being after money, a woman on its own leaves her husband and children, and goes to Germany for work? Can this public not see that the roof of their house has collapsed?”<sup>27</sup> Based on the complaints from the people in his constituencies, he demanded an inquiry into outgoing female workers. To this agitated outcry, the Minister of Labour’s response instead highlights the moral nature of the Turkish women not only as hard-working individuals but also as the epitome of moral purity as the representative of their country:

It was the demand of the employers there to have female workers along with the male ones. Likewise, most female workers in the Telefunken factory are Turkish women, outnumber foreign workers. When we ask why, they tell us that each and every one of them is the symbol of honour and that they think of the great nation they represent with honour and dignity in their behaviour. Because of that, they said that no man even dares to walk in places where the Turkish women are.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, since longing for a “loose and independent way of living” was observed in some outgoing female workers, an investigation from the Ministry of

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<sup>26</sup> Cumhuriyet Senatosu Kayseri Üyesi Hüsni Dikeçligil’in, Batı Almanya’da çalışan işçilerimize dair sözlü sorusu ve Çalışma Bakanı Ali Naili Erdem’in cevabı (6/383).

<sup>27</sup> Hüsni Dikeçligil, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, Dördüncü Birleşim, 14 Kasım 1966, page 116.

<sup>28</sup> Ali Naili Erdem, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, Dördüncü Birleşim, 14 Kasım 1966, page 114.

Interior was demanded for certain “suspicious female applicants.” However, while morality is the dominant framework in politicians’ approach to the migrating women question, male workers, which constitutes 80 % of the outgoing workers, were primarily thought to be “those who leave with the concern of providing subsistence to his kids” except those “adventurous vagabonds whose numbers do not exceed 1-2 per cent.”<sup>29</sup> The difference between the approaches to women and men’s migration conditions can be considered both as personal opinions and political propaganda of the conservative political parties as Abadan-Unat suggests (2002: 159).

Nevertheless, the fact that women could come under the spotlight as a separate issue among many newly emerging crucial problems of the workers abroad is critical for showing the understanding on women’s role and status in society. We understand that in the 1960s Turkish society, strict moral codes were in place for women, even in the eyes of the political elite. However, the same moral framework somewhat fails to be applied to male workers, unfolding the hypocritical approach. Thus, one of the state's ultimate responsibility is to ensure that those outgoing women are pure and virtuous, representing the actual Turkish values well. Another critical point to note is the reach of the Turkish state into the lives of the Turkish women, which can be considered a facet of protectionism intrinsic to the Turkish state-society relations. The section below analyses other forms of protective behaviour vis-à-vis the workers abroad as observed in the Turkish politicians.

### **3.2.2. The Long Arm of the State: Protecting Citizens Abroad**

*“It is unacceptable for this Parliament to forget these people and not being concerned with their problems.”*

Senator Ali Cüceoğlu, 1967

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<sup>29</sup> Mehmet Altınsoy, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116’ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 371.

The fundamental approach of the politicians in the (nascent) diaspora relations was, as the patron of their citizens, first to protect them both from the effects of what they considered to be ‘harmful’ and second, to extend the rights and benefits of Turkish citizenship so as to make their lives easier in those host countries.

The course of this protective behaviour included not allowing its citizens to diverge from the official stance of the state in general, be it in the field of ideology, morality or future outlook. In more general terms, one can suggest that the state still wanted to ‘keep an eye on’ its citizens to ensure they are not affected by the currents, mindsets or ways of living that contradicts the *raison d’être* of the Turkish state.

Furthermore, the part of the protective attitude was extending certain citizenship services, thinking that if they are not living in the homeland, they can both fully enjoy their rights as Turks, as well as have the support of their governments to actualize themselves as independent individuals in those foreign lands. This help came in the form of providing language teaching -in Turkish and in German, both to stay connected and to get integrated- radio broadcasts, recruiting teachers and *Diyanet* clerics and so forth. In that respect, the laws passed in the parliament can be considered as an institutionalized attempt to keep them under the wings of the Turkish state. The section below analyses the scope and implications of these bills and the overall political attitude shaping the 1960s diaspora policies.

### **3.2.2.1. Legal Protection: Extending Citizenship Rights and Benefits**

As the problems faced by the guest workers mounted day by day and the side effects of immigration were started to be felt more and more, extending essential state services to those countries became an ultimate necessity. The number of outgoing workers was rapidly increasing, leaving the capacity and the staff of

consulates insufficient for fulfilling the needs of the workers in the countries they reside in. With the observations they made during their trips to European countries heavily populated by the Turkish workers, many MPs expressed the need to support them institutionally, culturally and spiritually by expanding the scope of the state services. “Our consulates in Europe are not in a position to handle such a large number of workers”, observed Kasım Gülek. “These outgoing workers, they do not know what Europe is, they cannot fully comprehend what their rights are, they do not yet know what kind of benefits they can claim due to illness. Can they receive child maintenance or not? What kind of rights are granted to them in their contracts? We are obliged to send assistants to guide them on these matters since they do not know about any of those issues.”<sup>30</sup> Another MP likened them to “orphans that are treated as serves”<sup>31</sup> who therefore needs their state’s support and guidance. Thus, according to the parliamentarians, what the Turkish state had to do was to reach out to them and make its power felt by their citizens.

As a result of that need, in 1966, the law was passed in the parliament, which expands the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour to overseas and authorizing it to open missions abroad. We understand from the pre-text to this bill that, even when its citizens are not living within its borders anymore, the Turkish state felt obliged to safeguard them and mobilize its institutions to this aim: “Turkish workers need to be enlightened and warned on their rights. There is also a need to assist these workers on the administrative and legal mechanisms to which they can apply to claim their rights in case of a dispute with their employers and their insurance agencies.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kasım Gülek, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116’ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 365

<sup>31</sup> İhsan Kabadayı, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 122’nci Birleşim, 1 Ağustos 1966, page 797

<sup>32</sup> Çalışma Bakanlığının Kuruluş ve görevleri hakkındaki 4841 sayılı Kanunun 4 ncü maddesinin (D) fıkrasının değiştirilmesi ve bu kanuna yeni maddeler eklenmesi hakkında kanun tasarısı ve Geçici Komisyon raporu (1/123)

The law, which can be considered as the first real attempt to institutionalize migration affairs, aimed to reinforce the ties between the Turkish authorities and the outgoing workers. It established departments in foreign missions in countries like Germany, France, Belgium, the countries populated mainly by Turkish workers. The scope of duty and authority of the newly appointed personnel was specified in the bill as: “Labour advisors and attachés help the mission for protecting the rights and interests of Turkish workers working in foreign countries. They help to organize the relationship between the workers and the employers .” The ‘rights and interests’ in question under the jurisdiction of labour missions included the oversight of the workers’ rights such as the wages, duration of work, overtime payments, holidays, social and family benefits, annual leaves and other rights and benefits attached to their work.

Overall, in this way, the paternal state figure was called out to help those citizens to enjoy their rights fully in the countries they were working in. The outcome of this bill was two-fold: the law both made the Turkish state’s presence felt by the workers, and the citizens working were tried to be turned into right-seeking individuals in the societies they were living in. Giving rights to workers abroad in connection with their work in the 1960s was the first step in the official approach of the state, the examples of which will be seen more increasingly over the years.

#### **3.2.2.2. Moral Protection: The Pursuit of Preserving the Language, Religion and Culture**

The support given by the Turkish government to outgoing workers were not merely limited to legal rights. Turkish politicians also vigorously endeavoured to preserve the culture, language and the Turkish way of living in general. Therefore in the 1960s, we see the beginning of an important debate on the issues of integration and assimilation with a hint of cultural nationalism, which will continue in Turkish politics for a long time.

One of the main reasons behind the abovementioned bill was also listed as “reinforcing the moral tendencies and the national sentiments of the Turkish workers.” Thus, the policymakers did not only seek to resolve the problem of rights and benefits, but they were equally concerned about “solving the problems Turkish workers face in terms of our social, religious, moral, codes and traditions.” The Ministry of Labour staff appointed by the government would hence also work to tackle the issues of religious practices faced by the citizens there, such as “the provision of the places of worship, fasting and adjusting their working time in accordance with the fasting times.”<sup>33</sup> In general, safeguarding the cultural values was an underlying motive in the politicians’ approach to the Turkish communities in Europe early on.

With the law in 1966 that regulates the recruitment of Turkish government officials in Europe, three types of government staff were recruited under the title “social envoy” in order to provide assistance to the Turks abroad; lawyers and economists for the social issues faced, trade union representatives to raise awareness on their labour rights, and lastly, the clerics appointed by Diyanet to provide essential religious services.<sup>34</sup>

However, in the following years, the concerns over the possible loss of Turkish and Islamic identity among the Turks in Europe did not cease and became one of the most commonly referred topics in the parliament about the workers in Europe. In the summer of 1967, a group of MP went to West Germany to investigate the issues Turkish guest workers face and make a first-hand observation on the situation of the guest workers. Some came back to Turkey worried about the possible religious, cultural and ideological influence of the Western culture on the workers, which might potentially disconnect them from

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<sup>33</sup> Çalışma Bakanlığının Kuruluş ve görevleri hakkındaki 4841 sayılı Kanunun 4 ncü maddesinin (D) fıkrasının değiştirilmesi ve bu kanuna yeni maddeler eklenmesi hakkında kanun tasarısı ve Geçici Komisyon raporu (1/123).

<sup>34</sup> Ali Naili Erdem, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 70’inci Birleşim, 8 Nisan 1968, page 585.

their roots. Critical of the lack of measures taken by the government to fight assimilation, MPs called for more action from the Parliament. “Against all those Christian propaganda sent to our citizens every day, we cannot even send a single religious book to them, we deprive their children of a proper education”, one MP protested and noted that “It is unacceptable for this Parliament to forget these people and not being concerned with their problems.”<sup>35</sup> Another member of the Senate cited the complaints he heard from the workers he met in Cologne in a similar vein:

In Cologne, to what extent will these satisfy people: two hours of broadcast in Turkish, radio, some books sent to ninety locations. No, they will not. I am personally sure, though, that our workers will not stay under bad influence thanks to their national identity, belonging, and piety, especially of those Anatolian kids. However, there are also some facts out there. Some of them complain, saying, ‘We are so neglected that our children are now praying like Christians at dinners.’<sup>36</sup>

The fears as such -the loss of traditions, loss of religion, loss of language- fed into the national policy on diasporas. Therefore, since the outset, concerns over belonging and national identity became one of the footings upon which the diaspora policy was shaped. Attachment to the language, culture, religious and overall national identity and belonging were since then stressed with utmost importance in the Parliament, when the Turks abroad came under the spotlight. As in the case of providing legal protection, the ‘paternal state’, so to speak, mobilized its institutional capacity to establish the cultural connection with the citizens abroad.

Besides, even though the priority on the cultural sphere was given to preventing their disconnection from the Turkish culture, the integration of the Turks abroad to societies they were living in were equally stressed as a cause for concern. The

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<sup>35</sup> Giresun Milletvekili Ali Cüceoğlu’nın 11/52 no.lu gensoru önergesi, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 88’inci Birleşim, 19 Nisan 1967, page 246.

<sup>36</sup> Hüseyin Dikeçligil, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, Dördüncü Birleşim, 14 Kasım 1966, page 116

fine line between being assimilated by and integrated into those societies was separated, and the latter was tried to be endorsed by the politicians. On top of extending fundamental citizenship services, the abovementioned law also pointed to the need for “the adaptation of Turkish workers to the social life and daily life of the foreign countries where they work, and their leisure needs” in which “cultural and vocational training and language learning of Turkish workers” were essential. Thus, merely helping them to enjoy their labour rights were not seen enough, they should be encouraged, policymakers contended “to adapt into the social and daily life of the countries they work at, and their leisure”<sup>37</sup>, for which speaking their language was essential. One MP briefly summarized the challenges of not being able to speak the language:

First of all, Turkish workers do not speak any language. Even if they stay for a year at their destination, they need help to explain their problems to their bosses or their trade unions. If he gets sick and goes to the doctor, he can use nothing but body language. In case of a work accident or a dispute at a workplace, even if he is right, unfortunately, he finds himself in a disadvantaged position. We read in the newspapers, Turkish workers go to jail. Even if they are completely right, they find themselves in those situations because they do not speak the language. Then, without knowing their balance sheets and their money, they end up confronting their employers.<sup>38</sup>

In order to prevent them from having similar problems and being isolated from social life, the politicians addressed the necessary step to be taken. The question of balanced integration was thus started to be addressed early on in order to make their lives easier in those countries. By appointing language-speaking officials to the consulates, as well as collaborating with the German governments and Goethe Institutes for custom-made language courses, this problem was attempted to be overcome.

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<sup>37</sup> Çalışma Bakanlığının Kuruluş ve Görevleri Hakkındaki 4841 sayılı Kanunun 4 nci maddesinin (D) fıkrasının değiştirilmesi ve bu kanuna yeni maddeler eklenmesi hakkında kanun tasarısı ve Geçici Komisyon raporu (1/123)

<sup>38</sup> Abdülbari Akdoğan, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 122’nci Birleşim, 1 Ağustos 1966, page 797

After all, those who migrated were not high-skilled workers. They left their small towns or villages for labour-intensive works in Europe. Undoubtedly an under-educated group, they still needed the state's protective hand to actualize themselves as individuals. Being aware that the Turkish state intervened and passed laws in the legislative necessary both for their rights and the cultural connection with Turkey. So the early attitude of the Turkish state can be categorized as the one which seeks to keep the citizens abroad under control and protection on the one hand, while trying to take official steps to help them integrate with the society they live in.

As much as the integration of the workers was cared about, the image of Turkey conveyed through these workers to the Western audience was equally a cause for concern. The logic followed that, since the outgoing workers were an undereducated, mostly rural group, they should be educated and controlled on behaving in those countries. Because when left to their own devices, some might potentially behave irresponsibly, which would lead to a misleading representation of Turkey. Since each and every single individual sent abroad were seen as an agent embodying the virtues and principles of the Turkish Republic, they were expected to act as voluntary ambassadors to act in line with dignity and integrity while pursuing their jobs there. One of the significant figures in the 1960s, Osman Bölükbaşı, vehemently signals to this issue upon the issue calling for a unity among the workers to punish the insurgent few:

The bad behaviour of any Turk will not be considered as the individual behaviours of Ahmet or Mehmet. They will say 'Look at this Turk'. In the end, what is harmed from these acts is our national pride and dignity. In all our meetings and speeches, we asked our workers to establish a national unity to warn those who act irresponsibly, and if necessary, to put moral sanctions by cutting off their ties with those who do not still comply. The state has to take some measures against those who still damage our national pride and dignity despite all warnings. The opinions on Turks and Turkey were quite different from when I went to Germany as a student 35 years ago, it has changed a lot this time. While the wartime has an impact on this, the bad influence left by a couple of scandal-making rascals surely has a share in this too.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Osman Bölükbaşı *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 69'uncu Birleşim, 5 Nisan 1968, page 531

It was feared that without the state's oversight and control, these workers are free to badly and irresponsibly, causing harm to the much-fragile image of the country and the people. One has good reasons to perceive this worry as yet another facet of the image problem that is the intrinsic part of the Turkish political culture in its approach to the West since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, this understanding is essentially shaped by the workers' perception as vulnerable beings in the face of many unknown threats without the state's safeguarding presence. The following part looks into a different aspect of such vulnerability in the eyes of the politicians.

### **3.2.2.3. Ideological Protection: Protecting the Citizens from 'Harmful' Ideologies**

*"Wherever they are, Turkish workers are never Leninist, Stalinist, Maoist, or Castroist; they are always Kemalists."*

Minister of Labour Ali Naili Erdem, 1968

While talking about the early years of labour migration, the dominant political atmosphere of the time should be kept in mind. During the bipolar system of the Cold War years, anti-communism held a central place for the agendas of the 'free world' countries. As a citizen-sending state, it does not come as a surprise that Turkey's objective was to protect its own citizens against what it considered to be malevolent. As discussed so far, the scope of such protective behaviour can come in tangible forms, such as training them about their rights or safeguard their economic interests. Ideological protection was not exempt from this official attitude.

One of the growing concerns among the MPs was the vulnerability of the workers abroad against communist propaganda. Without the help of state mechanisms, they were considered helpless in the face of communist

propaganda. The prevalence of this question can be seen in many legislative tools; various written and oral questions being presented to the ruling party, numerous speeches made both in the Senate and the National Assembly pointing to the communist threat the workers were surrounded with. For instance, one Senate member posed a written question to the Minister of Labour asking whether our workers in West Germany were 'poisoned' with the negative radio broadcasts by the neighbouring communist countries.<sup>40</sup> Another prominent parliamentarian Kasım Gülek also points to the exposure of the workers to those 'poisonous' Ideologies and complains about the lack of access to the Turkish news and radio broadcast, which may potentially cause the workers' inclination towards communism:

Honourable friends, we have to take care of our workers in Europe; we have to give them material and moral support. Neither Istanbul Radio nor Ankara Radio is heard from European cities. Some of the Iron Curtain countries who know about this situation create special broadcasts targeting the Turkish audience in Germany. They are not doing this for the sake of our workers for sure. These are harmful things. We should be aware of them, and if necessary, we should make broadcasts at certain times in agreement with the European radios. The Turkish worker, who has left his homeland and has not yet learned the language, understandably wants to listen to his homeland's news, which is the best outlet to get the most recent recap about his country. When he cannot listen to Ankara or Istanbul radios, the only option he is left with becomes the Budapest radio and gets poisoned from there.<sup>41</sup>

According to these MPs, passing laws on their material needs were not enough. In order to show a total state capacity, Turkey should be using all its institutional means to act as a shield between radical ideologies and their citizens. Whatever is the official policy in Turkey in that respect should be taken overseas, to countries where the migrant workers live.

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<sup>40</sup> Cumhuriyet Senatosu Kayseri Üyesi Hüsni Dikeçligil'in Batı Almanya'da çalışan işçilerimize dair sözlü sorusu ve Çalışma Bakanı Ali Naili Erdem'in cevabı (6/383)

<sup>41</sup> Kasım Gülek, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 116'ncı Birleşim, 30 Haziran 1964, page 367

Some accusations were made mainly by the nationalist MPs, arguing that those who were previously renounced from Turkish citizenship due to radical political inclinations lobby in the West in order to affect the Turkish workers. During interpellation debates over negligence of the Turks abroad, we see the Labour Minister, the minister making a clear separation between two types of citizens while he was defending his Ministry's activities: those with us vs those against us. In this context, it can be argued that categorization was made between 'the real citizen' as opposed to the communists:

Dear friends, I should immediately clarify an issue: First of all, it is known that communist propaganda is done among our workers in Germany. However, those who take part in that communist propaganda are not the workers themselves. Some of them are those who have been expelled from Turkish citizenship, they have nothing to do with Turkishness or Turkish citizenship. These communist activities do not come from within the Turkish workers. We do not doubt that wherever they are, Turkish workers are never Leninist, Stalinist, Maoist, or Castroist, but they are always Kemalists.<sup>42</sup>

It is the understanding that 'for as long as they are our real citizens, they are not communists' shapes the logic of this binary. The fact that workers left their country by no means implied, according to the Minister, that they also ceased to carry the fundamental principles of their country with them. Contrarily, they took those values with themselves wherever they go, be it acting morally and responsibly, or being a Kemalist. This understanding not only lays the foundation of what is the acceptable behaviour for a citizen and what is not, but it also extends this very state-citizen relationship beyond its borders, making the fundamental state principles go 'transnational'. The figure of an "acceptable citizen" at home (Üstel, 2004) does not morph into a new identity once leaving the country; anything not acceptable for the "acceptable Turkish citizen" thus also becomes not acceptable for those abroad. The state's approach to communist threat occurs as an area through which we can see the convergence between the domestic and the transnational, eventually ruling the diaspora relations throughout the coming decades.

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<sup>42</sup> Ali Naili Erdem, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 70'inci Birleşim, 8 Nisan 1968, page 587

Hence, we have a rough picture of an (ideal) guest worker drawn by the politicians of the 1960s onwards. Being unaware of the dangers surrounding him in this new world he migrated to, ideological or otherwise, he nonetheless needs his state's protection. Without such state support, he can easily fall victim to unlawful acts (in the workplace) or ideological brainwashing (communist propaganda) due to his vulnerability. That is why, the Minister asserts, workers abroad "will never be left alone"<sup>43</sup>, for without state help, they can be drawn into undesired places.

## **Conclusion**

The issue of migrant workers, which became the topic of political debates in the 1960s as a nascent topic following the onset of migration, is vital for Turkish politics in many respects. Not only because it presents the first case of extending the argument of citizenship beyond its borders, but it unfolded different nuances within the state's understanding of what Turkish citizenship entails. Overall, several points can be distilled from these debates that came to dominate Turkish politics ever since.

First of all, we can conclude from the 1960's debates is that the politicians did not see these populations as permanent residents of Europe. Instead, the underlying tone common in all speeches is the belief that they would one day come back. For this reason, the bills passed or proposed in the parliament often targeted life after their return. Still, politicians endorsed language learning and integration to the societies in the west, albeit this temporary stay.

Second, unlike other migrant-sending countries, we observe a strong bond between the state and the workers on the basis of citizenship. Labour migration, in a way, functioned as a test case to show how far the limits of the citizenship regime in Turkey can go. Even when its citizens are out of its geographical

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<sup>43</sup> Ali Naili Erdem, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 70'inci Birleşim, 8 Nisan 1968, page 591

boundaries, the state has shown that it would mobilize its capabilities to continue delivering citizenship services. This applies not only to the basic social services such as pensions or benefits but also ideological protection. Politicians in Turkey still were willing to use state mechanisms to work as a shield between their citizens and what it considers as malevolent. While the discourse on anti-communism is where we can observe this tendency most starkly, the efforts such as teaching them the host country language for integration or the concern over those citizens representing Turkey with their good or bad behaviour can be given as examples to such protective and partly paternalistic of the Turkish state. Given the fact that the Turkish state has been actively involved with their citizens abroad through novel services such as the pink card (later blue card), retirement schemes, and eventually voting abroad, among other things, early policies of the 1960s can be seen as a starting point of this long period of engagement with the Turkish diaspora. It is also because we can observe some stark patterns between the past and the future.

Despite not directly relevant to the guest workers per se, another point can be made about the political system of the 1960s. Analysing the overall debates of the day, one can observe that the parliament's oversight function was relatively strong and that the MP's could enjoy their power over the cabinet. This can be said by looking at the intensity and frequency that the ministers are present in the house to respond to the questions, written or oral, especially by the opposition representatives both in the National Assembly and in the Senate. Especially interpellation debates are the ultimate sources through which we can understand the official diaspora policy through the government's activities.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **IN THE NEXUS BETWEEN CRISIS AND CONFLICT: THE PARLIAMENT AND THE DIASPORA IN THE 1970s**

If the 1960s was the decade of burgeoning diaspora relations, the 1970s was the time of its gradual maturity. During this period, various problems arising from workers abroad came to the parliamentarians' agenda more often and became more visible and discussed more frequently in the media and the greater public. In the 1970s, there was an increased awareness about the significance and the scope of the problems arising from labour migration and citizens living abroad. However, what characterised this decade was the global economic downturn, the oil crisis, and subsequent political turmoil, the impacts of which have been acutely experienced both in European countries and in Turkey.

As a result of this deep crisis, Germany stopped admitting new workers in 1973. However, labour migration from Turkey continued through unofficial ways. Many workers continued to arrive in Germany en masse as tourists with regular passports and ended up working and staying there illegally, which eventually became a de facto situation. Despite the decreasing number of outgoing workers, Turkey started to reap the benefits of having a diaspora abroad, albeit nascent, thanks to their remittances. In the 1970s, workers remittances saved the country from the brink of an economic collapse, closing the whopping budget account deficit. The ratio of workers' remittances to the balance of payments never reached the level of the 1970s again in the decades that followed. In 1972, during the height of the crisis, the ratio of workers' remittances to foreign trade balance reached 109 %, and in 1973 it was 154 %, meaning that the remittances alone were enough to close the deficit. Even though the cumulative amount of remittances in the 1990s was sometimes higher in total, the ratio in 1972 and

1973 was not reached again in any period (Atukoğlu, 2005: 22). Therefore, one can simply suggest that Turkey's diaspora relations were heavily characterized by economic terms in the 1970s.

The significant share of remittances in the economy made the law-making in the eyes of politicians as a payoff to workers' "heavy sacrifices." It was seen as an imperative for the Parliament to work in return for the service of those citizens "who work under hefty conditions and do a great service to the country with the savings they made under these difficult conditions."<sup>44</sup>

Such an important role played by the migrant workers made them a significant aspect in the mutual accusations between the opposition and the ruling parties. Whoever was in opposition criticized the ruling party and its approach towards diaspora for seeing the workers merely as "foreign exchange machines"<sup>45</sup>, "money-making trees"<sup>46</sup> or "money-providing commodity"<sup>47</sup>. Instead, ruling party politicians were urged to have a more extensive outlook on workers than seeing them simply with an economic perception.

The 1970s was also the time when it was slowly realized, both by Turkey and the host countries, that the guest workers were there to stay and that their return time was nowhere near. As the problems caused by the economic distress mounted in Turkey, leading to high levels of unemployment, workers started to make long term plans in the countries they lived in rather than coming back for an uncertain future. Knowing that their medium-term future is in those countries, they brought their families with themselves and started a more settled living. Seeing this new

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<sup>44</sup> Ali Oğuz, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, 61'inci Birleşim, 20 Mayıs 1978, page 604.

<sup>45</sup> Mustafa Başoğlu, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 136'ncı Birleşim, 25 Nisan 1978, page 300.

<sup>46</sup> Sabri Tıǧlı, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 136'ncı Birleşim, 25 Nisan 1978, page 302.

<sup>47</sup> Hasan Türkay, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 27 Mart 1972 61'inci Birleşim, page 346.

trend, governments not only started negotiations with the host countries on recognising their social rights -i.e. retirement, pensions- but also passed laws based upon this new reality. Hence, while the early policy attempts in the 1960s targeted regulating workers' lives upon their return, 1970s legislative efforts can be characterized as (i) an attempt to expand the institutional capacity of the state to deliver better services to the citizens, (ii) protecting their social rights in Turkey by adjusting retirement and pension regulations for them.

This chapter will analyse the diaspora engagement policies of the 1970s by giving an outline of its general characteristics. Since the term of office for the governments lasted very short throughout the 1970s, the chapter's primary focus will be the ruling and opposition party relationship in diaspora policies in an unstable context. The need to highlight that particular dynamic came out from the observation that parties claimed ownership of specific policies while consistently accusing each other of neglecting diaspora related problems at the same time. Coupled with stark political clashes among right and left-wing parties, diaspora policy became a means for attacking each other politically.

To outline the general features of the 1970s debates on diaspora relations, I first look at the main bills and other parliamentary activities regarding the workers abroad, followed by the discussion of key themes and patterns derived from the debates of these legislative activities. To this aim, the chapter starts with a brief account of the turbulent political atmosphere of the 1970s. Then I will touch upon the main legislation regarding the workers abroad. Subsequently, I will analyse separate themes and issues -political conflict in an outside Turkey, the education of the new generation migrants, the situation of woman workers- that came to the forefront throughout these debates.

#### **4.1. Unstable Political Atmosphere of the 1970s and its Implications on Diaspora Engagement**

The 1970s was arguably the most tumultuous era in Turkish politics. The increasingly polarized atmosphere among political parties, severe violence between left and right groups, coupled with prolonged economic downturn triggered by the US embargo and oil crisis have shaped the social and economic life in the 1970s.

In politics, this grim picture was experienced in the form of instability, with an ongoing process of formation and dissolution of coalition governments. Following the 1971 military memorandum, democratic politics was once again halted. Nihat Erim, who was appointed externally after the memorandum, formed a cabinet where almost half of its members were non-elected and appointed from outside. In the shadow of military interference and increasing political tension, a non-democratic environment was increasingly felt in politics and society. Liberal clauses that expanded the scope of rights and freedoms of the 1961 Constitution were changed and reversed towards a rather restrictive direction.

Under these circumstances, the Parliament was getting more and more ineffective. While the government, as the main decision-making body, issued the laws and regulations demanded by the military one by one, elected officials became less relevant in the decision-making processes up until the end of the interim regime in 1973. Following the 1973 general elections, as a result of which the CHP triumphed as the first party, an era of complex coalitions and political instability started. From 1973 to the 1980 military coup, overall, 8 governments were formed, the longest-lasting two years. The average lifespan of a government could be measured in months, leading both to a contentious political atmosphere within the Parliament and to a considerably unstable ground for effective policymaking since different ministries changed hand almost every

few months. This antagonistic political context also continued after the 1977 general elections until the 1980 military coup.

Against this backdrop, the issues regarding the Turkish diaspora in Europe were approached in the same conflictual manner that dominated other policy areas in the 1970s. The tense political environment shaped by instability, polarization, and hostility among political parties manifested itself in the realm of diaspora policy. Different party members criticized each other's diaspora policies that developed during their term in office. Thus, the issues that were once tackled from a technical and non-political point of view with consensus, such as education, language, culture or retirement, started to be increasingly politicized and became yet another field in which parties attack each other.

The workers-related issues discussed in the Parliament were generally linked to the Ministry of Labour. At that date, The General Directorate for the Issues of the Workers Abroad (Yurt Dışı İşçi Sorunları Genel Müdürlüğü) was the primary unit specialized on the matters related to the workers in Europe. Therefore, the issues faced by workers and their families, be it the problems at the workplace or religious services, was coordinated under the auspices of this general directorate. Overall, the dominant approach in the 1970s towards Turks abroad was still based on the understanding of delivering fundamental citizenship services with an emphasis on workers.

Regarding the party distribution, we can suggest that the diaspora issues were expressed equally by all parties, right, left or Islamist parties alike, with different emphasis on different aspects. In other words, it is hard to suggest that Party A was more proactive on diaspora issues than Party B. However, as will be discussed in the coming sections in detail, whoever finds itself in the opposition in the Parliament turned out to be more vocal and critical about the problems of workers abroad. Since one can assume that the realities did not change within a

few months, it can be argued that the diaspora-related issues were used as a tool for opposition.

The following section will look at the key legislative developments in the 1970s regarding the populations abroad by giving a general account of each.

#### **4.1.1. Law No. 1579 Changing the Organizational Structure of the Ministry Of Labour (1972)**

The draft bill that was brought to the Parliament's agenda in 1972 introduced a new unit within the Ministry of Labour, whose mere function was to focus on issues faced by workers abroad. By amending the organizational structure of the Ministry of Labour one more time, the General Directorate for the Issues of the Workers Abroad was established. Therefore, the law can be seen as an attempt to further deepening of diaspora policy institutionalization.

The pretext of the bill mentions years-long negligence of the workers aboard due to insufficient interest by politicians, which raised problems in claiming their rights in the countries they work in and hindering the effective transfer of their savings to Turkey. This law, therefore, aims to overcome these problems by launching a new general directorate within the Ministry, which would specifically focus on the workers abroad. Unlike the 1966 law with the same endeavour, language proficiency became compulsory for the recruited Ministry staff. The aim was to facilitate the communication between the Turks, the majority of which still did not speak the language of the country of residence, and the official bodies so that they can be more conscious about claiming their social rights.

During plenary debates of the bill, 20 MPs took the floor, 8 of which were from Adalet Partisi, 7 from CHP, and the rest of the MPs were from other small party

groups represented in the Parliament<sup>48</sup>. Since the bill established the first political and bureaucratic attempt to institutionalize the emigrant outreach at the ministerial level, there was little to oppose politically for the members of the Parliament. That is possibly why there was a consensus on the vitality of the bill, while the debates took only one day in the Parliament. For instance, during the discussions, the MGP representative İhsan Kabadayı referred to the bill as a “necessary but a late step”<sup>49</sup>, while CHP’s spokesperson İbrahim Öztürk agreed on the vitality of establishing such an institution but nonetheless pointed out the need to take further initiatives on workers abroad<sup>50</sup>.

Overall, all MPs who took the floor declared their full support for the bill, and almost all party representatives addressed the bill as an initiative. This law can thus be considered another example of the early consensus between different political parties on the issues surrounding the lives of guest workers. Since this particular proposal has rather a technical and arguably a non-political character, it is hardly surprising that a partisan confrontation was not observed during the debate of the bill.

#### **4.1.2. Law No. 2147 on the Use of the Employment Period of Turkish Citizens Working Abroad in terms of Their Social Security (1978)<sup>51</sup>**

In the early days of labour migration, it was thought that the workers abroad would return to their homeland after working in European countries for a certain

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<sup>48</sup> At the time of the debate of the bill, second Nihat Erim Government was in power, half of which was comprised of the ministers recruited from outside the Parliament. The relevant ministry, however, the Ministry of Labour was controlled by CHP member Ali Rıza Uzuner.

<sup>49</sup> *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 61’inci Birleşim, 27 Mart 1972, page 339

<sup>50</sup> *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 61’inci Birleşim, 27 Mart 1972, page 340-344

<sup>51</sup> “Yurt Dışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşlarının Çalışma Sürelerinin Sosyal Güvenlikleri Bakımından Değerlendirilmesi Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı”

time. When it was slowly realized in the 1970s that this was not the case and that the workers were there to stay, the need to regulate the retirement and pension system emerged due to different retirement regimes in Turkey and the European countries. This bill facilitated their retirement in Turkey by taking into account their employment days in those countries. Therefore, this bill's aim can be considered an attempt to secure their rights back home, which is one of the main pillars of diaspora engagement policies.

Ecevit Government was in power when this bill was proposed and passed in the Parliament. The draft bill was the combination of separate proposals on the same issue presented at different times by 6 other MPs from CHP, Adalet Partisi and Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi. It should be noted that, rather than a compromising political gesture by the ruling party, bringing together different draft bills on the same issue proposed by different party members is a parliamentary procedure if the ruling party wants to bring a bill on that particular issue to the Parliament's agenda. For this particular draft bill too, different proposals were submitted to the Parliament by different MPs in 1974 and 1975, but they could not find themselves a place in the plenary agenda. As far as combining different proposals is concerned, we can suggest that since the content of the draft bill was again a technical one, it made it easier to merge different proposals on the same issue into one. However, it would not be misleading to consider this law among those passed with a parliamentary consensus among different parties. As far as we understand from the MP speeches during the plenary debates, the committee stage of the bill was also harmonious, where each party supported the content unanimously.<sup>52</sup> The fact that this was a practical solution to arguably a non-political matter that answers the needs of the workers made it easier for parties to meet on common ground.

In two sessions where the draft bill was debated, 12 MPs in total took the floor. 4 of these speakers were from CHP, 4 from AP, 2 from pro-Islamist Milli Selamet

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<sup>52</sup> Sabri Tıǒlı, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 136'ncı Birleşim, 25 Nisan 1978, page 302.

Partisi, and 2 MPs from MHP. Since the bill was passed with a hand vote, it is not possible to identify the voting distribution among the parties, but by looking at the tone of the debates, we can suggest that it was approved with consensus. Similar to Law no. 1579, which introduced a new institutional mechanism for emigration outreach, the debates of this bill also witnessed an agreement. By looking at its content, it can be suggested that the early bills that regulated social benefits for workers abroad, like this one, or introduced new institutional structures were instead seen as vital and beneficial for citizens abroad. This contention possibly prevented the existing deep political divides from casting a shadow over these legislative regulations. Thus, no legislative conflict was seen in these early institutional and legal regulations.

#### **4.2. Parliamentary Initiatives on Workers Abroad**

Investigation committees are one of the most fundamental oversight mechanisms of the Turkish Parliament. In the constitution, they are defined as “an inquiry aiming to obtain information about a particular subject” (Article 98/3 of the Constitution). Composed by different members of all parties represented proportionally, investigation committees aim to go further into a particular issue area or a problem by listening to leading experts in the field, organizing trips if necessary, and stating their solutions in the final report of their work. In that respect, investigation committees are equipped with more powers than ordinary standing committees. Also different from the standing committees, the duration of the investigation committees are limited to three months, which can be extended upon the approval of the Plenary.

In both houses, the Senate and the National Assembly, separate investigation committees were established in 1977 to take a closer look at the problems faced by the workers abroad and their families, the outcome of which would serve as a guideline for the policymakers. Until their dissolution with the 1980 military coup, they continued their activities by extending their regular duration granted

with the law. However, since the military regime demolished many legislative documents belonging to this era, unfortunately, it is impossible to reach its final report.

In the same year, these two investigation committees were the first of their kind since labour migration to Europe started, the total number of which is three. The other two investigation committees were established in 1993 and 2003. It is possible to assert that extending the focus of diaspora issues to the level of investigation committees demonstrates the growing importance of the migrant workers within Turkish politics.

#### **4.2.1. Senate Investigation Committee in 1978**

Launching an investigation committee in the Senate was proposed by CHP members of the upper house. 10 of 11 signatories in the proposal were CHP members, whereas the non-CHP member was a senator appointed by the president. When the committee was established, as an outcome of proportional representation 4 of its members were from CHP, 4 from AP, 1 from MHP and two remaining members were the permanent Senate members.

In the proposal text, the mounting problems of the workers and their families were referred to as the ultimate reason for opening an investigation committee. As family migration also started to unite family members, the problems related to their children's education, integration and language started to occur. These problems were listed roughly as "working conditions, social security, vocational education, education of children, making use of savings, relations with the homeland, consular services, and the issues related to their visits to the country" by CHP members that advocated for opening an investigation committee. As new problems added up to the already existing ones, it became inevitable to explore and respond to the issues of "those who want to see the Turkish state

always with them to overcome the difficulties they encounter while struggling to survive under difficult conditions in foreign countries.”<sup>53</sup>

The Senate members, who pointed to the absence of a comprehensive policy framework that goes about diaspora related problems, were also critical of the governments for the lack of initiatives they show in this area. Instead, the Senate investigative committee members asserted, the governments’ priority had been increasing workers remittances, an outlook which did not go beyond seeing them simply as currency-pumping machines. Throughout the 1970s, that became a recurring theme in the parliamentary debates.

The political context at the time of the proposal and its subsequent approval is a noteworthy one. As of January 1977, when the proposal was presented to the Senate, Adalet Partisi was in power in a coalition government, and CHP was in opposition. Nevertheless, a proposal brought to the agenda by the opposition party, possibly because the house was still dominated by CHP members.

#### **4.2.2. National Assembly Investigation Committee in 1978**

Akin to the Senate committee established in the same year, the investigation committee in the National Assembly was also formed with CHP proposal. And similarly, CHP parliamentary group’s proposal was accepted owing to their majority in the Parliament, even though the party itself was not part of the coalition government.

The tone of the CHP proposal brought to the National Assembly is somewhat more different than other legislative texts. Whereas the previous motions, written questions, or proposals were mainly focusing on the issues that need to be addressed related to the diaspora, this proposal had an accusatory language

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<sup>53</sup> Kayseri Üyesi Ziya Müezzinoğlu ve 10 arkadaşının, yabancı ülkelerde çalışan yurttaşlarımızın sorunlarına dair Senato Araştırması isteyen önergesi. (10/62), *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi* 19’uncu Birleşim, 4 Ocak 1977, page 430.

against previous governments, pointing out to the hypocrisy between their actions and their rhetoric: “Despite welfare, development and ‘great Turkey’ rhetoric of pro-capital parties, which have been determining the fate of the nation, the biggest labour migration that the Anatolian people have ever seen shows of our actual development level.”<sup>54</sup>, sharply stated CHP’s proposal. Unlike other times, diaspora policy was slowly becoming a tool for the opposition party to criticize the right-wing government’s pro-development and populist policies. For CHP, addressing this contrast was a way to criticise the government and point out what they considered a hypocritical populist stance. Similar examples of such a stance adopted by both parties will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Another noteworthy point in CHP’s proposal is the emphasis on moral and cultural values that need to be cherished by the Turks in Europe. In the proposal, outgoing migrant workers were defined as “those who were randomly sent to countries whose language, religion, culture, all social and moral values we have no familiarity with.” Additionally, in the pretext to the proposal, one of the fundamental problems that the workers faced was listed as “national, religious, cultural and social problems” which might eventually lead to “alienation for the religion of Islam and Turkish culture.”<sup>55</sup> The stress on moral, cultural and religious values can be seen as a point at which the party’s stance overlapped with the right-wing political parties at the time.

During the plenary debates of the proposal, some of the CHP members spoke in line with these concerns mentioned in the proposal. They addressed the lack of religious services provided by the state, which might eventually lead them to be abused under malicious or radical religious circles. As the first signatory of the

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<sup>54</sup> Kayseri Milletvekili Gani Âşık ve 9 arkadaşının, yurt dışında çalışan işçilerin sosyal ve ekonomik sorunlarını saptamak amacıyla, Anayasanın 88 nci, Millet Meclisi İ.tüzüğü’nün 102 ve 103 ncü maddeleri uyarınca bir Meclis Araştırması açılmasına ilişkin önergesi. (10/7), *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 83’üncü Birleşim, 28 Aralık 1977, page 27.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

proposal, Gani Aşık<sup>56</sup> addressed the dissatisfaction among religious and nationalist workers “arising from the inability to satisfy their spiritual needs.” He continued to assert that: “There are not enough mosques to meet the worship needs of our citizens, whose savings immensely contribute to our balance of payments. This kind of religious services is carried out voluntarily. Sometimes this essential need for worship might be misused. It is also a fact that our workers are exploited since, in the absence of state provision of such fundamental services, the replicas of those are bound to emerge.”<sup>57</sup> To prevent extremism that could be caused by these replicas, the state's more articulate control of these services advised by CHP for more state-controlled religious services abroad.

Islamist MSP instead emphasized the necessity of focusing on the causes of labour migration than the problems faced by them in the countries they lived in. As an extension of the party's ‘heavy industrialization’ doctrine, they saw the core of the problem as unemployment which needs to be urgently solved with establishing heavy industries. Without paying attention to domestic reasons that made worker migration unavoidable, they argued, focusing on their problems would remain shallow. Therefore, the real solution was to “establish heavy industries and make the living standards here as high as in Europe.”<sup>58</sup>

All in all, both of CHP's proposals, for the Senate and the National Assembly, might be considered part of their opposition strategy against right-wing and conservative National Front governments and part of their plan to contain their

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<sup>56</sup> The identity and background of Gani Aşık is worthy to note here. As a former bureaucrat, and an *ilahiyat*-trained mufti, he worked as an attaché in charge of religious affairs in Germany for several years before becoming an MP in CHP. His background as a former diplomat was reflected in his legislative work as he became more actively involved in legislative processes that concern workers abroad. His parliamentary work can thus be seen as an early proof of relatively more visible representation of migration affairs by MPs with migration history.

<sup>57</sup> Gani Aşık, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 83'üncü Birleşim, 28 Aralık 1977, page 31.

<sup>58</sup> Hasan Aksay, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 83'üncü Birleşim, 28 Aralık 1977, page 30.

conservatism and Islamization agenda. Additionally, these committees are the markers of how the Turkish state took the diaspora issue more and more seriously.

### **4.3. Social, Political and Cultural Implications of Labour Migration in the Parliamentary Debates**

#### **4.3.1. The ‘Spectre of Communism’ among Workers Abroad**

Among many other portrayals, the image of the worker as a potential victim of political propaganda, namely of communism, continued to be cherished by the politicians throughout the 1970s as well. Workers were often depicted as oblivious Anatolians exposed to dangerous ideologies, thus helpless to protect themselves, for they were not equipped with sufficient means to defy that threat. They were already, or were in danger of being captivated by “sneaky people and the communists” through means such as leaflets, bulletins, or books, the result of which could lead to “harming our national unity and political integrity.”<sup>59</sup>

We can see almost all parties voicing uneasiness about the communist threat, albeit with different emphasis. For instance, a member of a Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi, established by a group of MPs from CHP’s centrist wing, addresses the threat of “foreign and divisive ideologies among workers that aims at dividing and destroying the integrity of our nation and country.”<sup>60</sup> While speaking about the danger more or less with the same terms, an AP member, who has a cleric background himself, suggested recruiting more clergy abroad to inspire them by religious knowledge, which he considered the most effective panacea for

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<sup>59</sup> Mehmet Kılıç, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 48’inci Birleşim, 24 Şubat 1972, page 196.

<sup>60</sup> İhsan Kabadayı, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 61’inci Birleşim, 27 Mart 1972, page 340.

communist tendencies.<sup>61</sup> In the CHP proposal, while communism was referred to as “illegal radical trends that target our young republic and unity of our state” the root cause of the problem was addressed as the “exploitation of the advanced freedoms in Europe.”<sup>62</sup> Overall, one can conclude that the parties met on a common ground acknowledging the potential threat posed by communism to the workers in Europe.

Against the threat, however, Turkish citizens had full confidence and support of the politicians for not being trapped by such political propaganda, which was commonly seen as “malicious” by all MPs. The minister's words from Adalet Partisi hinted at the already burgeoning tension between right-wing and leftist citizens, the details of which will be discussed more in detail below. He emphasized the national virtues treasured by the Turkish workers as a hindrance against harmful ad ideological influence.

We often read in newspapers, some young people carrying red flags chase our workers on the streets and drive them out of the cities. You shall never worry, we can easily say that, even though there are a handful of people who pursue perverse ideology against the principles of our national unity, our democratic constitutional regime and our national sovereignty, Turkish workers are standing against them, standing in the cities and standing in their workplaces. It is a moral power, a patriotic power. Such important patriotic movements are taking place in foreign countries.<sup>63</sup>

Many more examples of this sort can be cited, in which politicians maintain that the love of and belonging to a nation prevents one instinctively from being captivated by radical ideologies. However, if strong national belonging is one

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<sup>61</sup> Sami Arslan, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 61'inci Birleşim, 27 Mart 1972, page 348.

<sup>62</sup> Kayseri Milletvekili Gani Âşık ve 9 arkadaşının, yurt dışında çalışan işçilerin sosyal ve ekonomik sorunlarını saptamak amacıyla, Anayasanın 88 nci, Millet Meclisi İ.tüzüğü'nün 102 ve 103 ncü maddeleri uyarınca bir Meclis Araştırması açılmasına ilişkin önergesi. (10/7), *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 83'üncü Birleşim, 28 Aralık 1977, page 27.

<sup>63</sup> Çalışma Bakanı Seyfi Öztürk, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 90'inci Birleşim, 28 Mayıs 1970, page 906.

thing implied here, the other is the heightening tension between right and left-wing groups in Europe, which was exported from homegrown political conflicts. As radical left and right political ideologies found themselves ground in Turkey and turned into strong movements, they not only deepened the threat in the eyes of the politicians but transferred the societal cleavage and antagonism beyond Turkish borders.

#### **4.3.2. ‘The Unity in Danger’: Ideological Conflicts Beyond the Turkish Borders**

Whilst political conflicts accelerated between left and right-wing groups, and street violence became a new reality, the polarization among different ideological groups started to permeate into the Turkish community in Europe. Indeed, Turkey witnessed the most severe political conflicts of its history between different ideological groups. This sometimes turned into a street clash with many fatal incidents, leading up to the process that ended up with the bloody 1980 military coup. As we understand from the words of the politicians, the right-left or the communist-nationalist rivalry became a strong dividing force among the workers in Europe as well. From time to time, they questioned the degree to which these clashed were widespread among the workers in Europe. As early as 1970, right-of-centre party Milli Güven Partisi MP asked the minister “whether or not these disputes we have at home also exist abroad among our citizens.”

Towards the end of the 1970s, at a time when the right-left divide in Turkey was at its peak, the same tension was also the case for the Turkish populations abroad. We understand from the debates that the unity among the Turkish workers was under serious threat, wherein *ülküçü* youth were fighting against leftists, just like in Turkey at the day. A member of CHP points out to this dangerous divide among hitherto united migrant workers:

In the last few months *ülkü ocakları* was established in Federal Germany. Our workers are tried to be divided by saying, ‘The workers who are members of *ülkü ocakları* are nationalist, those who don’t are not nationalist. So, our national unity is put in danger.

The situation described here will not sound unfamiliar to anyone who is somewhat acquainted with the 1970s political context in Turkey. The replica of this context was now in the process of being recreated in other lands where Turkish citizens live. The same CHP representative holds the Second National Front Government in charge, particularly its small coalition partner nationalist MHP, for causing polarization among citizen.

If a conflict arises among our citizens and it results in casualties, MHP officials will look whether or not the murdered citizen is registered in *ülkü ocakları*. If he is a registered member of *ülkü ocakları*, they will give a fatwa as ‘criminal gangs martyred our worker’, if not, they will remain silent as if those who were murdered were not our citizens.<sup>64</sup>

Projecting from the 1970s to this day, we might consider these developments as the incitement for the divisive and hostile environment for the diaspora community, which has significantly characterized Turkish politics in the coming decades.

#### **4.3.3. The Politicization of Diaspora Relations: Diaspora Policy as an Arena of Blame Game**

Policymaking on diaspora issues had an above-politics place in the eyes of the politicians for a long time, and they treated the topic from this relatively non-partisan perspective during the parliamentary debates. The need of the workers, their social or economic problems, and the policy responses were usually approached from such a technical, non-political perspective without parties or governments blaming each other for failures. Take social security regulation, for instance. If you remove the name of an MP speaking in the plenary debates, the

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<sup>64</sup> Zeki Eroğlu, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 83’üncü Birleşim, 28 Aralık 1977, page 28.

chances are small that one could guess which party that MP is a member of. The way they elaborated on problems and the solutions they offered were more or less in a similar direction. Even a politically hot topic as the threat of communism was something all parties, left or right alike, agreed upon, as we have seen above. Thus, the consensus was the outcome in many of the diaspora-related policymaking in the early years.

However, there was a sea change in this dominant tendency starting from the second half of the 1970s. Due to the turbulent political atmosphere, coalition governments were short-lived, sometimes formed and dissolved even in a few months. The unstable political atmosphere coupled with deep political divides and populism caused politicians to play the blame game in many different policy areas, including diaspora policies. The topics about the lives of migrant workers, which kept its above-politics position for more than a decade, became another area where politicians started to use against each other politically. One of MHP member's remark towards Ecevit government is a small example of such "what goes around comes around" kind of vindictive mindset: "While he was once visiting foreign countries, CHP leader said, referring to the National Front governments, 'Do not send your savings to Turkey, this government will waste your money.' Today, they are looking for ways to find foreign money in this currency shortage."<sup>65</sup>

The actual scope of such mutual accusations was much deeper than that. As the parties controlling different ministries changed almost every year, parties started to accuse each other of applying their own political agenda in the policies and to the cadres in the ministries they control. As the top politician in charge of diaspora policy, the Minister of Labour was not immune from being exposed to such populist critique. For example, when MSP took over the ministry, CHP accused them of imposing their Islamist agenda on citizens abroad. When CHP

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<sup>65</sup> Faruk Demirtola, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 63'üncü Birleşim, 25 Şubat 1979, page 307.

controlled the ministry, this time they were charged with filling the cadres with militant leftist staff.

One of these big fights broke out, both in the National Assembly and in the Senate. The opposition MPs claimed that the Minister of Labour from Islamist MSP, Şevket Kazan, pursued propaganda activities in one of his trips to Germany by distributing his party leaflets and showing videos featuring the activities of the party's leader Erbakan<sup>66</sup>. One of the senators appointed by President Cevdet Sunay brought the issue to the Senate's agenda by asserting that the minister financed the calendars he distributed as a gift from the Ministry of Labour. Moreover, he claimed that the Kazan printed 125 thousand lira worth MSP propaganda leaflets, which started with the foreword by Mr Erbakan, and then distributed it to the citizens in Germany.<sup>67</sup> Against widespread criticism voiced during the budget meetings of the same year, Minister Kazan defended himself, saying what he did there was a state service, not party propaganda. During the Senate debates, he explained himself in detail:

During my visit as the Minister of Labour, 50 thousand leaflets and 3 thousand calendars printed by Diyanet were distributed. There was not a single mention of the word MSP on them. We made the propaganda of Turkey's industrialization, not of MSP, and we will continue to do it. Our cause is not MSP, our cause is Turkey's industrialization, as well as morality and spirituality. The inscription on those calendar reads as 'the gift of the Ministry of Labour' not as 'Şevket Kazan's gift.' If I wrote "Şevket Kazan's gift" on them, but financed it from the Ministry of Labour's budget, then you were right to criticize. But there is nothing more normal than a calendar that says 'the gift of the Ministry of Labour' being financed from the Ministry's budget, which was approved by you last year.

More than a matter of how these calendars were financed from, CHP representatives or senators' concern was whether party ideologies were promoted among the Turks abroad under the disguise of official state policy. Particularly

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<sup>66</sup> Cemal Külahlı, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 54'üncü Birleşim, 24 Şubat 1977, page 155.

<sup>67</sup> Halil Tunç, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, 34'üncü Birleşim, 9 Şubat 1977, page 474.

here, the critiques were towards religious governments reinforcing more religiosity towards migrant workers.

In the light of the broader political events Turkey was undergoing, it does not come as a surprise that the diaspora's politicization process accelerated in 1970, as a result of which the lines between party ideology and the official government policy inextricably blurred. Both house members voiced their discontent about using state institutions and channels as a party propaganda mechanism. Following his defence before the senators, Minister Kazan had to elaborate further on his ministry's motives and activities in Europe in the National Assembly since the MPs once again brought the issue during budget meetings.

I would like to express this with all my sincerity that I did not go abroad to make my party's propaganda. I went with the thought of eliminating the sense of negligence that our brothers and sisters had, to identify their unresolved problems by seeing it with my own eyes there, and to do whatever it takes by working day and night. As part of our preparations, we took flyers introducing Turkey's heavy industrialization attempt. There is not a single utterance to the word MSP in those. This is a brochure that introduced the heavy industrialization movement to our workers abroad that the government started in 1976 and will continue in 1977.<sup>68</sup>

Heavy industrialization attempt, which was the main pillar of MSP's electoral promise, was far from being shared by other coalition partners. It is hence not misleading to assume that as the minor partner of the coalition government, MSP attempted to introduce party activities to the diaspora in the name of pursuing a state policy. As far as the diaspora policy is concerned, the minister's activities in Europe and the subsequent criticism in the legislative can offer some insights to the broader theoretical debate on the ideological influence of the official diaspora policy pursued by a state. It can be considered as an instance where a government can cross a line in diaspora policy-making by mingling it with its own ideological agenda, taking diaspora policy beyond the level of state policy.

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<sup>68</sup> Çalışma Bakanı Şevket Kazan, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 54'üncü Birleşim, 24 Şubat 1977.

Another topic that the government and the opposition parties confronted each other in the Parliament was the politicization of the ministerial cadres by the party controlling the ministry. Since the Ministry of Labour was directly in charge of diaspora affairs in the 1970s, the policymaking within or about the ministry directly impacted how the country connected with its citizens abroad. Parties on both sides blamed each other for filling civil service posts with staff closer to their ideology, thus politicizing the diaspora governance. One example of such criticism is AP's accusation against CHP in 1978 on the ground that the party removed the ministry staff who 'did not share the same worldview with them' from their posts.

Once the militant cadre of CHP took over the party leadership, it was followed by the militarization of Ministry of Labour's central, local and overseas organizations or the dismissal of the staff who did not think like themselves. This is an ugly act to make room for the party's far-left militants within the ranks of the Ministry. The vast majority of this dismissed personnel have worked at various levels of the Ministry for at least 20 to 25 years and have served at the top positions. Those who replaced these positions were chosen from the ranks of the leftist associations, which practically functions as the party's side organization. Instead of choosing from those who love serving for the nation, they chose from the ones pursuing and serving for twisted ideologies.<sup>69</sup>

One of the most partisan aspects in the relationship between ruling parties and opposition is this very claim that whoever takes over the power replaces the official ranks with their 'own people' dismissing the previous ones. In the tumultuous political background of the 1970s, the main actors of the diaspora policymaking also became subject to these partisan charges.

Like AP or other right-wing parties, CHP was also no short of similar accusations about the politicization of civil service by the right-wing governments. CHP MPs and ministers often raised this issue in the debates by

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<sup>69</sup> Mehmet Kılıç, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, 35'inci Birleşim, 5 şubat 1979, page 371.

blaming the right-wing governments that came before them for placing incompetent staff in the ranks within the ministry.

All these complaints [about diaspora issues] arise from the shortcomings of the ministerial staff who exploit the cadres of the ministry for their political purposes. If those appointed to overseas posts were competent enough to deliver state services, 50 per cent of these complaints would cease. Am I the one sending these incompetent people to Europe, am I the one loading Europe with the officials who cannot even speak a language?<sup>70</sup>

Even further investigation for the acts of National Front governments abroad was demanded by some CHP representatives, accusing them of various problems related to workers in Europe, including foreign currency shortage at home.

The Ministry staff sent abroad during the National Front governments should be investigated. The Ministry of Labour is obliged to withdraw these unqualified officials sent abroad during the National Front period, who caused anarchy among our workers and placed them in a dire situation. They have also contributed greatly to the foreign currency shortage we are facing right now. Unless we bring these National Front remains to account, they still claim here that they will bring us to account.<sup>71</sup>

Considering this mutual blame game played by left or right parties alike, one cannot help but think that the politics in the 1970s took an irreversibly populist turn, affecting the diaspora engagement policies and a sharp and conflictual political discourse. Moreover, this debate that took place during the budget meeting of that year was unlike any other year before the second half of the 1970s. The one who follows the budget debates of the other years, especially before the second half of the 1970s, for instance, would barely notice the nuance between different parties presiding over the ministry, even though the government changes for almost every budget year. Parties highlighted more or less the same technical policy areas, such as citizenship services, pension and

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<sup>70</sup> Çalışma Bakanı Bahir Ersoy, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, 28'inci Birleşim, 10 şubat 1978, page 543.

<sup>71</sup> Doğan Onur, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 63'üncü Birleşim, 25 Şubat 1979, page 298.

retirement schemes, education of the second generation migrants and so forth. However, it is a novel turn in politicizing the debates over the diaspora.

#### **4.3.4. Generation Next: Who is Responsible for the ‘Bilingual Illiterate’?**

In the 1960s, workers migrated with the hope of making enough savings and returning to Turkey to continue their lives in their home country. However, since the economic situation went direr in Turkey, they abandoned the returning option but instead took their families with them to Europe. Family migration has undoubtedly quantified the problems. While problems were limited to the workers before, now their families came into the picture and became part of the problem.

This is how workers’ children, especially their education, quickly turned into a hot topic in the politicians’ list of diaspora problems. As the new generation of ‘bilingual illiterate’<sup>72</sup> emerged –a new generation of migrant children who can speak neither Turkish nor German properly and have more propensity for crimes- the way they grew up in the Western societies became a severe cause for concern for policymakers. Again, parties held each other’s governments responsible for turning a blind eye on the issues of workers’ children. Akin to the examples above, an MSP representative addresses the lack of measures taken by the previous governments to prevent these kids from “breaking off from their religion, customs, history and culture.”<sup>73</sup> However, the odd fact to note about this MP is that he was the minister in charge just a year before, and his term ended a month before this session that this speech took place. However, consistent with the ‘blame game’ trend mentioned above, he still accused the previous governments of ‘not doing enough’.

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<sup>72</sup> Nermin Abadan Unat, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, 35’inci Birleşim, 5 şubat 1979, page 379.

<sup>73</sup> Fehmi Cumalıoğlu, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 117’nci Birleşim, 26 Şubat 1978, page 266.

Nevertheless, the fact that these children were trained with the western education curriculum indeed offered a fertile ground for right-wing parties and Islamist MSP for addressing the lack of national and religious identity they were imbued with. The former minister from MSP asserted: “Our 300 thousand children at the school-age are left to their own devices in the streets with German kids because their parents are working. These children do not know about their religion, mother tongue or history, and are exposed to cultural imperialism<sup>74</sup>. Similarly, an MP from AP highlights the same issue during the following year’s budget meetings with further allegations against the CHP government:

The majority of Turkish workers’ children who attend primary school are taught by foreign teachers, namely Christian teachers. Some of these teachers are priests and nuns affiliated with the church. The classrooms have oversize crosses in front of which Christian students cross themselves every lesson. On the other hand, in a written order sent to the Ministry of Labour’s foreign missions, it is said that ‘If those working in your mission help or partake in the activities of Qur’an courses opened in your duty area as cleric, supervisor or instructor, they should immediately be discharged from their posts.’ On top of that, these officials are asked to encourage these workers for sending their kids to secular schools and directing them to fulfil their religious needs within this secular framework.<sup>75</sup>

These remarks can be thought of both as part of the tendency to blame the actions of the previous governments in a dynamic coalition setting and as the political strategy to forge new areas for polarization. We see that the new generation immigrants were used as a means in the domestic political area, here in this particular example to reinforce the already existing religious vs secular education paradigm.

The issue of education was not missed by CHP politicians either, albeit with a different twist. Citing from a French newspaper story on the Turkish workers, the CHP senator complains about the lack of identity and history knowledge in

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<sup>74</sup> Fehmi Cumalıoğlu, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 136’ncü Birleşim, 25 Nisan 1978, page 297.

<sup>75</sup> Ali Ak, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 63’üncü Birleşim, 25 Şubat 1979, page 296.

the formation of the workers' children. According to the MP, the French paper wrote: "The children of Turkish workers learn the heroic stories of Napoleon in French schools, but the Government of Ankara does not do anything to teach them about the existence of a river named the Euphrates, or even who Kemal Atatürk is."<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the issue of education exemplifies the diverse way in which different ideological traditions perceive a common problem faced by migrant workers.

In the face of the newly emerging problems, politicians still hoped that the legislative body could bridge the homeland and this new generation. They were confident that the laws passed in the parliament would eventually be seen by the workers and their children "as a sign that their state was still with them and considered them"<sup>77</sup> enduring the national belonging. So, the law-making was a way of reconnecting with these undereducated, socially disadvantaged, culturally in-between generation and a way of recreate-re their national, religious identity; the identity which was left void from the values by leaving the homeland.

#### **4.3.5. The Group with Problems or Group Causing Problems: the Question of Woman Workers**

One of the most recurrent themes of the 1970s parliamentary debates on diaspora issues was the question of female workers. Similar to the 1960s, the context within which the issue was discussed remained within the limits of moral virtues that women should have, mainly their chastity. What is more striking in the 1970s compared to the previous decade, however, is the participation of some female MPs in this debate by using the same discourse with their male colleagues.

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<sup>76</sup> Orhan Vural, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi* , 28'inci Birleşim, 10 şubat 1978, page 533.

<sup>77</sup> Fethi Çelikbaş, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi* , 61'inci Birleşim, page 693.

Debates on a simply technical draft bill concerning the rights of diaspora members abroad could turn into a discussion on women's morality at one point. Discussions on the bill about social security regulation for the workers abroad also witnessed that sort of change of topic. While touching upon the lack of education and religious services for our citizens in Germany, right-wing conservative Adalet Partisi MP, who came from a cleric background, brought the issue to the “shameful events violating common Turkish values and ideals that offend the national pride” caused by certain female migrant workers. Taking on a remarkably nationalist tone, he called the government to behave very carefully and follow these women closely while asserting that: “The Turks have sent their army to the gates of Vienna for the honour of others. Now we are obliged to act very carefully for our own honour and take necessary precautions.”<sup>78</sup> Whatever the mentioned precautions might have been for the AP representative, these precautions were not urged for the male workers in the same way, who could equally be expected to commit ‘shameful’ acts of the same kind that harm the general moral values and national honour, given the vast number of male workers abroad.

This moralistic take on the female workers was not only limited to the members of right-wing conservative parties. Occasionally CHP representatives, amidst the party’s burgeoning left-leaning progressive trend, could be observed having the same concerns over the ‘disgraceful acts’ committed by female workers, as well as inquiring the government on the ‘measures’ taken to end these acts, just like AP representatives did. In a written question for the Minister of Labour from AP, CHP’s Denizli MP asks whether the government had any plans to take some action about some female workers in Germany who was “allegedly involved in disgraceful conduct”.<sup>79</sup> Minister confirms that, even though he became aware of some of these allegations during his trips to Germany, their extent is not as

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<sup>78</sup> Sami Arslan, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 61’inci Birleşim, 27 Mart 1972, page 348.

<sup>79</sup> İlhan Açıkalın, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 58’inci Birleşim, 24 Şubat 1971, page 578.

alarming as thought. As a deterrence and penalty, by confiscating the passports or not extending the visas, their obligatory return to Turkey might be considered as options for punishment, suggested the Minister<sup>80</sup>.

The convergence between the two party's position vis-à-vis the women question, despite stark differences between their approach on almost every single policy issue, unfolds the commonly shared normative perception of how women should be or behave cherished by the political elite day, regardless of their sharp ideological differences. However, what is more striking is the absence of the same moral framework applied for men, who made the majority of the population working in Europe. No male migrant worker was accused of wearing a crucifix, for instance. Still, the ministers were often exposed to questions such as whether the claims of some women wearing a crucifix on their necks are true, and if so, what explanations the minister have for such an unaccepted act<sup>81</sup>, nor any reference to a male worker's misconduct in society was made during the debates of their situation in Europe. Instead, they were usually characterized as sufferers who have to sacrifice a lot due to tough working conditions or having to stay in dormitories with unfavourable conditions without their families. Such difference in the tone used for male and female workers does not only reveal the double standard in the moral framework employed by the political elite but also shows how two ideologically different sides can come together when the issue in question is women's morality.

In the light of the discussions above, it might come as striking for some to see that it was not only the male politicians who had policing attitude towards women; some of the female MPs also did not hesitate to speak out their

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<sup>80</sup> Çalışma Bakanı Seyfi Öztürk, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 58'inci Birleşim, 24 Şubat 1971, page 579.

<sup>81</sup> Ali Ak, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 63'üncü Birleşim, 25 Şubat 1979, page 296.

discomfort about how female workers in Europe behave. A woman MP from AP unpleasantly express her observations from a recent trip to Europe:

I have observed it myself during our travels. The behaviour of some of our Turkish female workers there is a shame for my gender. These women, who had their hair dyed in red and wearing crucifix around their neck, found a way to escape the Turkish men who would suppress them and quickly adapted to the kind of dresses worn in the cities they moved to, from midi to maxi. It will not make any difference even if we mark their passports upon their return to signify who they are, it will not matter since they have already humiliated the pride of the chaste Turkish women. The womanhood or my country will not benefit even if they are punished. Since no differentiation can be made in the Constitution between men and women in 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkey, could it not have been prevented when the Turkish female workers were leaving by establishing a separate committee, with the participation of female officers, by focusing on the issue with more sensitivity and setting some criteria?<sup>82</sup>

Comparatively, the mindset and the tone of the female MP, who is one among the total number of 5 MPs at the day, can be reckoned as much harsher than those of her male counterparts. The way Mrs Tokgöz details the wrongdoings of female workers -dying hair, dressing style, wearing a cross- the ways she suggests for ‘penalizing’ their misbehaviour -marking their passports- demonstrates that it does not have to be the male perspective who has a somewhat restrictive, policing attitude towards women. As we have seen, it might as well be a woman that has the policing attitude even to a more strict degree than a man’s.

As an answer to these sharp and critical remarks against some female workers abroad, the Minister takes a relatively moderate approach. Admitting that they have observed “a deterioration and change in moral values after going to the foreign country”, he was more hesitant to make overgeneralizations contrary to the woman MP raising the claims. The minister from AP avoided pointing the

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<sup>82</sup> Naime İkbâl Tokgöz, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 58’inci Birleşim, 24 Şubat 1971, page 583.

finger at women only by saying that “I can say the same for men too.”<sup>83</sup> The fact that a woman MP can employ a much stricter attitude than her male counterpart raises the long-standing question of who actually represents women and voice their problems in Parliament. Who can and does, in fact, speak for women? Who actually expresses their concerns without restricted by common societal codes about them? Therefore, early discussions on the female workforce in Europe can offer rich ground for the relationship between women’s issues and women’s perspective in the parliaments (Lovenduski, 2001). In the case of the 1970s, the former did not guarantee the latter<sup>84</sup>.

Nevertheless, compared with male politicians, women MPs come to the forefront as the actors who speak about the problems of the women workers abroad, albeit to a limited extent. Indeed, while going over all the debates in the 1970s that includes a reference to women immigrant workers, I could identify only one MP characterizing them not as a group posing moral hazard but rather as a group that had specific problems of their own and that those problems were worthy of attention for the politicians. It was another woman MP from the same party as representative Tokgöz, yet her take on the issue was ultimately the opposite. Instead of taking up a moralistic approach that has the hints of “let us not send women workers, it is hard to keep them under control” kind of understanding, she brought different issues they faced into the attention of policymakers.

Among these were the problems arising from going there independently without their partners, hence trying suspicious and insecure networks to bring their husbands to live with them. Or the difficulties they face in workplaces where no

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<sup>83</sup> Çalışma Bakanı Seyfi Öztürk, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 58’inci Birleşim, 24 Şubat 1971, page 583.

<sup>84</sup> Also, the area offers a ground for further analysis for the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation in the Turkish Parliament (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008). The number of woman parliamentarians in the 1970s changed between 5, 6 and 4 with the elections held in 1969, 1973 and 1977 respectively. However, as we have seen, being female, ‘standing for’ within descriptive representation, is not an enabling condition for the substantive representation of women, which implies ‘acting for’ (Celis and Childs, 2008).

other woman staff is employed, especially in the service sector jobs, were referred to as another unpleasant situation women workers find themselves in. As a solution to these problems, Mrs Gulsen proposed recruiting female employees to the relevant posts within foreign missions that work closely with the workers abroad, which would immensely help 90 thousand female workers in Europe.<sup>85</sup> Keeping in mind the discussion above, this point also brings us to the question of whether it is essential or not to have woman MPs bring women-sensitive issues to the agenda and to say that “the problems that our woman workers abroad are enormous.”<sup>86</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In the tumultuous political atmosphere of the 1970s, diaspora engagement policies could not remain immune from the effects of a hostile political environment. This confrontational context had two significant impacts regarding the diaspora policy. First, diaspora became just another field for politicians to criticize and attack the policies brought about by each other. Second, with the help of populist political discourses on both sides of the political spectrum, Turkish citizens abroad were more easily agitated against each other as left-right or communist-nationalist groups as we understand from the words of the politicians. In other words, the seeds of the hostile political environment were planted beyond the Turkish borders as well.

Overall, the diaspora engagement policies in the first two decades, the 1960s and 1970s, can be characterized in two main ways. First, we see the legal-institutional attempts of expanding the institutional capacity of the state services abroad to reach and serve the citizens there. Legislative played a central role in this through the laws passed, such as launching new departments in the foreign

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<sup>85</sup> Zekiye Gülsen, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 27 Mart 1972 61'inci Birleşim, page 369.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

missions or introducing new regulations to facilitate their retirement in both countries. Even though all parties supported this initiative, recruited ministry staff to these posts came under scrutiny by the politicians and became a topic of critique, which accelerated the politicization process of the diaspora policies.

Second, new measures were taken to strengthen the sense of national identity and encourage diasporas members to stronger links with Turkey. It was a point supported by left and right-wing politicians alike. This pillar included sending teachers and cleric personnel to help workers and their children not detach from the Turkish culture in a broad sense.

Additionally, by establishing investigation committees both in the Senate and the National Assembly on the problems of the workers abroad, the elected politicians showed the recognition given to the growing significance of diaspora affairs in Turkish politics.

## CHAPTER 5

### CITIZENS OR THREATS?: POST-COUP DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

The 1980s witnessed one of the most dramatic political changes in Turkish political history. The tumultuous political atmosphere of the 1970s came to an end with yet another military coup in 1980, radically changing the socio-economic and political setting for good.

Such a dramatic shift in the domestic political landscape had significant impacts on how the state interacted with the citizens abroad. Politically-driven motives marked the 1980s diaspora policy. As a result of political and socio-economic developments in the 1980s that shaped Turkey's reading of the expatriate landscape, the policymakers reassessed its attitude towards citizens in Europe (Okay, 2015: 107). As will be discussed in this chapter in detail, education policy and religious services became the backbone of the 1980s state-diaspora relations in the context of this revised attitude.

While rapid shifts took place in Turkey, the Turkish diaspora in Europe has also undergone some fundamental changes and faced new challenges. The 1980s can be referred to as the era in which Turkish labour migration to Europe gained a permanent character as the emigrant community slowly but surely became a settled society. Accordingly, new citizenship services were extended to the diaspora, such as the regulations on granting voting rights and facilitating mandatory military service.

The sharp rivalry among parties became almost absent from the scene at the political level, making it a complete opposite of the previous decade. Any reader of the parliamentary debates from the 1960s and 1970s would notice a sharp

contrast between the tone and the language used by the politicians before and after the 1980 coup. Even after 1983, when the first democratic elections following the coup took place, a significant discursive shift can be observed in how parties addressed each other, even while criticizing. It was a stark difference compared to the fierce environment of the 1970s. While the political atmosphere witnessed a competitive turn towards the end of the 1980s, the approach adopted by the politicians did not come close to the hostile environment of the 1970s.

To elaborate on these dramatic political changes in the 1980s and their connection with the diaspora policy more in detail, the chapter will briefly overview the main political developments in the 1980s and how they have affected Turkey's relationship with its diaspora. Then the focus will be given to the diaspora front by looking at the most profound challenges and issues tackled by the diaspora and how these new problems shaped policymakers' attitudes in Turkey. Even though xenophobic attacks against Turks reached their peak in the 1990s, the 1980s are considered as the time when hostile behaviour towards Turks started to flourish. After this background, the chapter will discuss the specifics and look at the main themes and policy tendencies that came to the forefront during parliamentary debates. Overall, the representatives' inclinations vis-à-vis the diaspora can be roughly categorized as a protective behaviour that manifests itself mainly in education policy and religious services, as well as reconfiguring citizenship services, such as electoral participation and military service following the needs of the citizens abroad.

### **5.1. Political Atmosphere and the Diaspora in the 1980s**

The 1980s military coup is often addressed by many as one of the ultimate turning points in Turkish political history. The coup, which brought an end to the 1970s tumultuous political atmosphere, has in a way created a *tabula rasa* upon which the new economic, political, and social conditions could be rewritten. In the aftermath of the coup, all political figures were of the pre-1980s era were

banned from politics, from high level to local rank politicians. The political realm no longer belonged to its previous actors, while the military determined the limits and the new participants.

Between September 1980 November 1983, when the first democratic elections after the coup took place, the country was ruled by National Security Council (NSC) and Advisory Assembly, the members of which were chosen by the NSC. Dissolution of the Parliament did not necessarily entail no legislation. Quite the opposite, on the way to building a new regime, a series of decisions and arrangements were made, which formed the foundation of this new period since the coup essentially aimed a substantial regime restoration in line with the ideology of the NSC. During these three years under the military regime, 838 legislation, including 669 laws, 90 decree-laws, 76 NSC decisions, and 3 NSC declarations were passed (Aydın and Taşkın, 2016: 382). In this dual structure where the NSC and Advisory Assembly stood as the ultimate decision-making authorities, even though the legislative debates took place in the latter with representatives virtually chosen by the military, NSC had the final say in all decisions in this period.

At the first meeting of the NSC held two weeks after the coup during which the government program was declared, two main issues regarding the government's attitude towards diaspora in the new era came to the forefront: education and religion. While acknowledging the challenges faced by the citizens abroad along with their families and children, Prime Minister Bülend Ulusu announced that the necessary arrangements would be made to govern the education services of the Turkish children abroad in line with the same goals and objectives in domestic education.<sup>87</sup> Yet, a greater emphasis was on the vitality of the religious services. "Turkish children abroad will be provided with national and religious education," the same government program stated, while also pledging to endure citizens' adherence to national ideals, as well as to prevent the exploitation of

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<sup>87</sup> *Milli Güvenlik Konseyi Tutanak Dergisi*, 4'üncü Birleşim, 27.09.1980, page 595.

beliefs and sectarian differences among citizens abroad. During and after the military rule in the 1980s, extending the scope of religious services was actualized through a series of policy measures, as will be discussed in the following sections.

In the 1983 general elections, the first one following the coup, the electorate was given a choice between three new parties that were not previously in the political arena. Motherland Party (ANAP), which came to power as a single-party government after a landslide victory in 1983, also won the 1987 general elections and left a significant mark in the 1980s political life. The party's parliamentary majority allowed it to pass whichever legislation was in their party agenda, hence aligning the 1980s diaspora policy with the party's official position. After all, ANAP's policies focusing on Turks abroad were not much different from that of the military government in prioritizing religion and education, the details of which will be discussed in the following parts regarding Turkish-Islamic synthesis. The first Özal Government program put a similar mindset into words by assuring that the necessary measures would be taken to ensure that the citizens working abroad were not detached from national culture.<sup>88</sup> During the plenary debates of the government program, Prime Minister Özal emphasized his government's commitment to ensure that the new generation grew up connected to Turkey's morals and customs, an emphasis which would dominate the political debates regarding the diaspora in the 1980s. Before going more into detail about discussions in the parliament, the section below summarizes the main themes and developments in the lives of the diaspora members.

## **5.2. New Challenges: Asylum-Seekers and Xenophobia**

The experiences faced by diaspora members have been the core content of the parliamentary debates in Turkey. During the 1980s, two fundamental developments in Europe have shaped the lives of the diaspora, and subsequently,

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<sup>88</sup> Birinci Özal Hükümet Programı

the political discussions. The first one was the dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers from Turkey due to the undemocratic political environment after the coup that urged thousands to flee the country. The second important issue, partially in connection with the first one, was xenophobia caused partly due to the rising number of asylum seekers and partly due to other social reasons such as high unemployment rates. Especially the latter has been a core topic in Turkey's relations with the migrant-receiving states in the following decades as well.

The post-coup period witnessed an immense increase in political asylum applications to European countries, but mainly to Germany since the German constitution had a provision that facilitated the unconditional admission of the asylum seekers with political causes. The relevant article was straightforward: "Those who seek asylum due to political reasons are granted asylum rights." (Abadan-Unat, 2002: 256) The principle that was initially accepted with great optimism motivated by a liberal approach eventually led to an intense debate in society in the face of a large number of asylum requests that suddenly peaked in the 1980s. Turkish immigrants quickly discovered this route, which was initially designed for those who fled socialist countries. While the number of asylum-seekers for political reasons was 809 in 1976, by 1980 it went up to 57,913 (Abadan-Unat, 2002: 256). Political refugees arriving after the coup comprised mainly people with the record of being involved in opposition activities against the state and included a group of leftist activists, trade unionists, or ordinary citizens who were Kurds, Alevis, and Assyrians (Adaman & Kaya 2012). Such an increase in the number of political refugees to Europe both changed the relatively homogenous structure of the Turkish diaspora and increased the levels of groupness (Brubaker 2002: 171). The mobilization and organization of different ethnic or religious clusters such as Kurds, Islamists, and Alevis in the 1980s might be explained by such increased level of groupness.

Unlike labour migration, this new way and cause of leaving homeland were not entirely well-received by most Turkish politicians, especially by the right-wing representatives. The politicians did not welcome the way they sought refuge by stating in their application that “they belong to an ethnic group in Turkey, they are under pressure and the safety of their lives are under threat,” for these were “totally unrealistic statements and thus damage the name of our country abroad.”<sup>89</sup> Indeed, the fled in mass numbers reinforced the commonly held thought in European countries in the 1980s Turkey that human rights abuses became more and more common in prisons and daily life. Therefore, it was not surprising that this new form of migration created discontent among the state elite, unlike the labour migration in the 1960s and 1970s.

In addition to the diversification of the population abroad, the most profound outcome of the increase in the number of migrants was the rise of xenophobic sentiments targeting the Turks in the migrant hosting countries, especially in Germany. At the onset of the 1980s, the German public was heavily occupied with immigrants’ integration into society, making Turks the largest foreign ethnic group in Germany the direct target of the anti-immigrant sentiments and the subsequent xenophobic attacks by a group identified as neo-Nazis or skinheads. Resembling a typical textbook definition of anti-immigrant tendency, where immigrants become the target in a country facing socio-economic problems such as unemployment or economic distress, Turkish immigrants also became the scapegoats of the issues surrounding German society. With the inimical attitude of the politicians, especially from the ruling Christian Democrat Party, increasingly hostile sentiment in society could find a correspondence for itself in the political area too and hence widened its scope.

The inertia and indifference of the German politicians towards the attacks targeting Turkish immigrants agitated the politicians in Turkey. This frustration

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<sup>89</sup> Çalışma Bakanı Hüseyin Cavit Erdemir, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 54’üncü Birleşim, 26.02.1980, page 250.

was expressed in parliamentary debates as sentiments of helplessness, as well as the blaming of both German authorities for their lack of action and Turkish authorities for abandoning these citizens. During the 1982 budget debates, when the military still ruled the country, members of the Advisory Assembly called the Turkish authorities for action, while some likened the xenophobic tendencies to Hitler Germany. “Will they do something when our citizens are slaughtered one by one?”<sup>90</sup> one representative protested during the time of military rule, while others in the following years addressed the lack of action taken to protect the Turkish citizens.

In the post-coup democratic environment where political representation was confined to three political parties, diaspora-related problems were generally spoken out by all parties alike. In a written question to the minister in 1986, left-leaning Halkçı Parti member Fikri Sağlar asked, “which steps were taken to provide life and property safety, to free them from the social and political pressure? If there were not any to this day, what are you planning to do?”<sup>91</sup> Similar inquiries and accusations came from other parties too. “If necessary services were taken to those citizens and if they were well protected, the life-threatening hostility today would not have escalated, and they would not be humiliated with attempts of those countries to throw them out”<sup>92</sup> stated İmren Aykut in 1984, a member of Nationalist Democracy Party (MDP) by then, who later became the Minister of Labour from ANAP in the 1990s. Her legislative activities are worth mentioning distinctly as she stood out as a political figure who consistently brought the problems of the diaspora into the parliament’s attention throughout the 1980s. As a former trade unionist, she continued to

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<sup>90</sup> Mustafa Alpdündar, *Danışma Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 48’inci Birleşim, 29.01.1982, page 458.

<sup>91</sup> İçel Milletvekili Durmuş Fikri Sağlar’ın, Batı Almanya’daki yurttaşlarımıza yöneltilen baskılara karşı alınan önlemlere ilişkin Başbakan’dan sorusu ve Millî Eğitim Gençlik ve Spor Bakanı Metin Emiroğlu’nun yazılı cevabı (7/815)

<sup>92</sup> İmren Aykut, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 47’inci Birleşim, 19.12.1984, page 459.

highlight the workers' issues abroad during the budget meetings of the consecutive years, with particular emphasis on the anti-migrant sentiments in Europe.

Overall, rather than causing a mass flight from Europe, xenophobic attacks in Germany accelerated the process of mobilization for demanding improved rights and equal treatment in the host countries as an outcome (Okyay, 2015: 109). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Turkish public gradually learned to unite and demand their rights, giving a clear message that they were no longer guests but permanent dwellers in those countries.

### **5.3. New Era, New Issues: Changing Diaspora Engagement in the 1980s**

#### **5.3.1. The Problem of the Second Generation: “We Will Either Give Up On These Kids or Will Protect Them.”**

The discursive foundations of keeping citizens abroad within the boundaries of ‘the national’ were laid in the 1970s. Education was seen as the ultimate means to infiltrate such an ideal national identity to the new generation in Europe. The aftermath of the coup created an opportunity to mobilize the state’s organizational resources and put this idea into practice. How so?

Many scholars on Turkish political history agree that the ideational foundation of the 1980 coup was the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. As a mixture of Sunni Islam and Turkish nationalism, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis was adopted and implemented by the military elite and maintained by the subsequent centre-right ANAP in the following years (Eligür, 2010). The synthesis, which was a novel combination of Turkish culture, values, and Islam, functioned as a helpful tool to establish social control through cultural and religious motifs and defy leftist components from society.

The education curriculum needed to be restructured along the lines of this mindset, making it an official education policy to raise the new generation home and abroad under this new doctrine combining folk religion, Turkish cultural motifs, and Atatürkist nationalism (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003: 82). It was not that the politicians realized the importance of the new generation's education, especially those in Germany. As explained in the previous chapter, started to address the issue quite often in the parliamentary debates already in the 1970s politicians. Yet, it was not until the 1980s that recruiting teachers to Europe in mass numbers, as well as teaching a peculiar curriculum, was prioritized and implemented as a state policy.

When we look at the parliamentary debates, it could be observed that education of the migrants' children emerges as another field upon which all parties agree on the urgency and significance of the problem. Nonetheless, it would still be misleading to identify it among the topics discussed in an above-political manner, such as the legislative provisions on some social rights. It is fundamentally because different party positions collided with each other as to how to tackle the problem of education. All acknowledged the colossal problem surrounding the new generation Turks in Europe "who cannot speak neither their mother tongue nor the language of the country they live in"<sup>93</sup>, "who do not know their religion, language, history"<sup>94</sup>, "who could not overcome the influence of foreign cultures"<sup>95</sup>. In the face of all these problems, the abovementioned MP İmren Aykut, who took an active stance on diaspora issues, concluded: "We will either give up on these children completely or protect them."<sup>96</sup> Unless these

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<sup>93</sup> İmren Aykut, *Danışma Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 48'inci Birleşim, 29.01.1982, page 433.

<sup>94</sup> Fehmi Cumalıoğlu, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 54'üncü Birleşim, 26.02.1980, page 253.

<sup>95</sup> Köksal Toptan, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 44'üncü Birleşim, 17.12.1986, page 556.

<sup>96</sup> İmren Aykut, *Danışma Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 48'inci Birleşim, 29.01.1982, page 433.

children were aware of their national identity, the MPs commonly feared that they would be captivated by radical ideologies.

It is essential to establish a specific and effective education program and system for our second-generation citizens to adapt to the society they live in without losing their national conscience. If this is not done, harmful, destructive, and foreign elements will immediately try to benefit from this vacuum.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the common acknowledgment of the given problem, parties differed in the normative framework they offered regarding the solution to this problem, as well as the different aspects they highlighted. For right-wing conservative parties, sending more imams, focusing on religious education was seen as a response to this issue, whereas left parties opposed the loose structure within which training activities were organized.

A few months before the coup in 1980, an Islamist MSP representative expressed his disappointment with the rejection of his party's decree by their coalition partners, which sought to send more imams abroad to teach Turkish children their religion and holy Quran, for they were deprived of their national culture abroad.<sup>98</sup> In the aftermath of the 1980s, no party in the parliament could be named as a successor of any political parties in the past two decades, including the Islamists. But, even though all three parties present in the parliament occasionally acted in the footprints of the parties in the previous era, ANAP was unique in its attempt to bring different political traditions together that were otherwise hard to reconcile. The amalgam of different ideologies under a party roof came with its contradictions. Regarding the diaspora's education problem, while some ANAP MPs offered opening boarding schools in Turkey during summer holidays to host these children and train them following our moral and

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<sup>97</sup> Ali Ayhan Çetin, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 92'nci Birleşim, 21.04.1987, page 303.

<sup>98</sup> Fehmi Cumalıoğlu, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 54'üncü Birleşim, 26.02.1980, page 253.

spiritual values<sup>99</sup>, other members of the same part openly criticized unofficial Quran courses run by different religious sects in Germany for these children “learn nothing about Islam by memorizing Arabic Quran but rather their minds are tried to be controlled for certain purposes.”<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, Quran courses in Germany were a controversial issue among representatives. They were unsupervised places where families sent their children on weekends in fear that they would eventually break away from the Turkish customs and the culture. Mostly unlicensed, these courses were run by unofficially organized Turkish Islamic sects within Germany. For that reason, they often came under scrutiny, especially by left-wing politicians, for they were seen as a threat to secularism. During the budget debates of 1987, while criticizing the government for not taking a step and merely watching the exploiters of religion abroad, SHP representatives called these unofficial, unsupervised Quran courses the biggest contribution to Turkey's negative image of Turks in Federal Germany. While these points were interrupted and refuted during his speech in the plenary, he expanded the scope of his criticism targeting the activities of different sects:

7-8 year old Turkish children are tried to be educated with Medieval methods with headscarves and caps on, lectern on the floor while teaching Arabic and Quran. These images were often shown in the German media and stimulated great interest in the public. This has become Turkey's image in Federal Germany. Among those who created all these negative developments, together with many former deputies, were Milli Görüş and Süleymanî movements. Besides these, the fact that the second and third generations started to integrate with the German society and that they embraced a more liberal life by breaking away from the feudal family pressure also made Turkish families worried. It led to excessive religious education to prevent this natural tendency in children and young people.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Talat Sargın, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 47'nci Birleşim, 19.12.1985, page 256.

<sup>100</sup> İmren Aykut, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 47'nci Birleşim, 19.12.1985, page 236.

<sup>101</sup> Şeyhmus Bahçeci, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 44'üncü Birleşim, 17.12.1986, page 549.

Such discourse of Islamic threat to secularism, both home and abroad, has marked the debates throughout the 1980s. In a relatively less politicized political atmosphere of the era, the issue has become one that fuelled the ideological difference even further. The state's official response, however, was to recruit more imams and school teachers abroad. The number of imams, which were only 11 in the 1970s, increased to hundreds. At the same time, more than 470 teachers were recruited to teach Turkish language and history, state, and society to Turkish children in Germany alone (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003: 82). As a result, the overseas organisation of the Ministry of National Education substantially grew in this decade. The section below analyses the controversial growth of the Diyanet in the same period following the same logic.

### **5.3.2. Long-Distance Protection from Old to New Threats: From Communism to Radical Islam**

The modern Turkish state has traditionally been proactive in protecting its citizens from what is considered harmful or dangerous. While trying to preserve the state's core values, such as secularism, nationalism, loyalty to national culture and identity, policymakers did not feel hesitant to decide between good and evil on behalf of its citizens. Subsequently, they took necessary measures to guard them against these external threats. Citizens living abroad were not immune from this paternalistic sensitivity that was hitherto shown to the population at home.

In the early years of labour migration, this danger from which to protect diaspora members was the threat of communism. The bonds between homeland and the Turkish citizens in those faraway lands were tried to be enhanced through different channels so that the national identity and belonging were not endangered by harmful ideological currents that might entertain a wave of dissent. When the ideological battle between the east and west gradually came to an end in the 1980s, the threat of communism was not as relevant as before. The

main threat perceived by the state elite shifted from communism to any form of separatist and reactionary movements (Okyay, 2015: 109). In the 1980s, this new danger for the national unity was radical Islamic currents, threatening secularism, one of the most central principles of the republic. The more their numbers increased, the more fragmented they became, hence more vulnerable against external threats in the eyes of the Turkish policymakers. This made the Turkish state more alert and protective of what is considered harmful to national unity. One opposition party member expressed the outcome of such diversification in the repertoire of different profiles and backgrounds within the diaspora.

As of 12 September 1980, according to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Germany, the number of people involved in organized activities with suspicious legitimacy were only 60 thousand; 30 thousand of them right-wing movements, 30 thousand on the left. But today, the politicized religious views appeal to hundreds of thousands of people. A much larger division and fragmentation than the pre-12 September period is experienced by Turkish people abroad. Turkish people need protection. Those who are democratic, secular, tolerant, and pro-freedoms are left vulnerable to the activities of hundreds of different associations today.<sup>102</sup>

There was a clear line of continuity with the discourse of ‘a vulnerable citizen in need of state protection against threats albeit from a distance’. However, regarding this new form of threat, the threat of Islamic currents was not perceived in the same way by the ruling party and opposition. For the former, extending Islamic education and administrative units of Diyanet in Europe was seen as one way of cultivating and further fostering the national identity in line with their eclectic political stance that had sympathetic elements to political Islam. It was the leftist opposition HP (later SHP) that problematized specific ways in which this expansion was taking place. What drew the watchful critics of the opposition was not the expansion of the state version of Islam. Contrarily, expansion of Diyanet’s administrative structure overseas and recruitments of more imams were the types of policy choices approved by the left for it kept

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<sup>102</sup> Aydın Güven Gürkan, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 92’nci Birleşim, 21.04.1987, page 313.

religious services under control and minimized the risk of radicalization through the influence of different sects. However, what was strongly criticized by the opposition parties first and foremost was the breaking of this monopoly enjoyed by Diyanet in Turkey by other Sunni communities.

We have a mosque called 'Hagia Sophia' in Germany, and it is connected to the Diyanet; we raise absolutely no objections about it, whatever necessary is practised there. Prayers are made, people are informed about Islam, about unity and solidarity. But there is another mosque operating under the *Milli Görüş* movement, another one by *Süleymanlılar*, another by *Türk Ocağı*, another under the name of Ömer Faruk who works for Khomeini in Germany. Apart from Hagia Sophia, other mosques whose names I have just mentioned mobilize all their effort to manage in their own way and increase the number of people in their view. It is necessary to explain what they want, how they work, and that in Islam there is only one mosque.<sup>103</sup>

Even though the opposition often addressed such fragmentation, the government's policy was also favouring unity in the face of different currents and hence aimed at the union of religious services under the umbrella of Diyanet. As an extension of Turkish-Islamic synthesis as the backbone of the coup administration and loyally followed by ANAP governments, extending religious services by recruiting a large number of imams were the core aspect of 1980s diaspora policy complementing the education policy in the same vein. In an effort to establish its dominance in the religious domain, Diyanet was authorised to extend its organisation abroad through attachés and religious counsellors in 1984 (Schiffauer, 2007: 13). The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği, DITIB) was established in various host countries throughout the 1980s. The imams, who overall worked at around 775 mosques in Germany alone, were recruited to accommodate the religious needs of the emigrants and to represent the Turkish version of secularism (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003: 82). Thus, religious services were rapidly expanded in Europe, both as a strategy to spread the Turkish state version of Islam and "to reduce the impact of harmful religious movements that have been destructive and divisive

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<sup>103</sup> Arif Toprak *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 92'nci Birleşim, 21.04.1987, page 306.

for years and to strengthen our citizens' loyalty to our country"<sup>104</sup> in the words of the ruling party representative.

#### **5.4. Any Port in a Storm? Saudi-Financed Imams for the Diaspora**

Given the agreement between the government and opposition on using Diyanet as the primary actor for religious services abroad, then we might ask where the disagreement might have come about. What was the cause of fierce government upheaval in the 1980s regarding the conduct of religious services in Europe? A major scandal, at least for the leftist opposition, erupted in 1987 when a renowned investigative journalist revealed the ties between a Saudi NGO and the Turkish government, especially during the reign of the coup government. According to the story, pan Islamic NGO Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami (World Muslim League, referred simply as 'Rabita' by Turkish politicians) whose mission is to promote Islamic values abroad negotiated with the Turkish government to finance the imams sent from Turkey. In a dire economic situation, it turned out from later comments by then government members that the state had little choice but to accept this offer.

Consequently, Rabita paid the salaries of the imams sent by the Turkish state. Even though Rabita initially offered to recruit their own imams for the Turkish community during the early meetings, Turkish officials at the time declined the offer saying that Turkey would accept the proposal if imams were chosen and sent by Diyanet is sent but financed by Rabita. Regardless, the involvement of this organization, which was blamed by Halkçı Parti to be a promoter of sharia, led to a big controversy on a topic that the leftist opposition was considerably sensitive about. Rabita debate has also fuelled a long-standing *irtica* polemic that would come to dominate the Turkish political scene in the 1990s.

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<sup>104</sup> Mehmet Topaç, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 92'nci Birleşim, 21.04.1987, page 309.

The issue was not seen simply as a problem that concerns the diaspora members by the opposition. Calling their activities “an organized propaganda campaign”, leftist politicians saw this as an instance that fundamentally attacked the principles of the republic and the Turkish state. “Far from being a problem that concerns our citizens abroad, it is a grave problem that directly endangers the secular aspect of the republic and its independence” exclaimed the pretext of an investigation committee proposal.

Overall, two separate investigation committee proposals on Rabita’s activities were brought to the parliament agenda by HP in 1987, and both of these debates witnessed some strong confrontation between ANAP and HP, unfolding fundamental differences between their approaches to the principle of secularism and the approach to assume regarding diaspora policy in general.

The first proposal signed by Aydın Güven Gürkan was given with the aim of “determining the measures to be taken for the protection of our citizens abroad from the effects of forces organized against democratic and secular republican principles, and the unity and integrity of the country, as well as to support our citizens financially and morally.”<sup>105</sup> According to the opposition, diaspora members who became an “easy-to-exploit audience” due to their dereliction and isolation fell prey to radical Islamist movements this time. Such involvement of an Islamist NGO with the organization of Turkish civil service was a direct contradiction with the principles of secularism for this organization not only supported sharia but also the leaders of their doctrine were speculated to insult the founding fathers and principles of the Turkish republic. Hence, those responsible for this deal should be held accountable politically, according to the opposition.

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<sup>105</sup> Antalya Milletvekili Aydın Güven Gürkan ve 29 arkadaşının, yurt dışında yerleşmiş bulunan vatandaşlarımızın demokratik ve laik Cumhuriyet ilkelerine ve ülkenin birlik ve bütünlüğüne karşı örgütlenmiş güçlerin etkilerinden korunmaları, maddî ve manevî yönden desteklenmeleri için alınacak tedbirleri tespit etmek amacıyla bir Meclis araştırması açılmasına ilişkin önergesi (10/52)

Then followed a political conflict between ANAP and the leftist opposition. Ruling party ANAP, as the representative of centre-right tradition courting with political Islam, denied the charges and argued instead that though “exceptional and regrettable”<sup>106</sup> Rabıta’s support did not entail a fundamental threat for the founding principles of the republic in any way, nor a threat to the national unity. Besides justifying the financial support from Rabıta by showing economic conditions at the day, ANAP also utilized from this debate to highlight its activities, since the first state-paid imams were only started to be sent in 1985, during their rule.<sup>107</sup>

For the second proposal given by SHP to “investigate domestic and international religious fundamentalist threat targeting our republic”, the debate has deepened even more as parties have elaborated further on their arguments. A DSP member substantiated his party’s position by explaining why Rabıta’s financial support is unacceptable, while also uncovering some links the coup administration had developed with institutionalized Islam. While criticizing, he pointed to the contradiction in the words and deeds of the coup administration.

The official imams of the Republic of Turkey were paid by an organization which has openly declared its hostility to our state, and for three years, the religious officials in Europe received their monthly salaries from this organization. When did it take place? During the coup administration period. In other words, during the years when Atatürk’s name was mentioned the most when we thought that Kemalism was safe. The excuse given is far from acceptable: ‘Radical religious movements were active abroad, so we considered sending religious officials but, we had no money. Thus, we reached an agreement with Rabıta.’ This is absolutely unacceptable.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Devlet Bakanı Hasan Celal Güzel, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 86’ncı Birleşim, 7.4.1987, page 544.

<sup>107</sup> Nuh Mehmet Kaşıkçı, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 86’ncı Birleşim, 7.4.1987, page 555.

<sup>108</sup> Edip Özgenç, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 86’ncı Birleşim, 7.4.1987, page 563.

As was also referred by representative Özgenç, the argument that ‘due to economic conditions, the military government had no choice but accept this offer by the Saudi NGO’ indeed became an oft-repeated justification for the deal between the coup administration and Rabıta. As the party that inherited and continued with this agreement for a few years until 1985, it became the ANAP representative’s responsibility to defend it against criticisms when it was debated in the plenary. First and foremost, the Minister of State in charge of Turkish citizens abroad, Hasan Celal Güzel, rationalized the Saudi financing of Turkish imams in Germany as an outcome resulted from the lack of vision of the previous administrations. According to this line of argument, religious services was the area that this past negligence had affected the most.

Unfortunately, as a state, we could not foresee that the number of those who migrated in the 1960s would reach 2.5 million in total as of today. I am not saying this to accuse any government, but I also need to note that many state services, especially education, have significantly lagged. Religious services are the most noticeable of those.<sup>109</sup>

We see other ANAP MPs giving a similar take during the same session, turning ANAP members’ arguments into a consistent narrative. Accordingly, the narrative holds that governments have neglected the Turks in Europe before the 1980s while provided state services remained considerably insufficient. In time, new problems kept emerging, such as the issue of the second generation, their cultural and intellectual development, as well as xenophobic attacks from groups like neo-Nazis. In the face of these problems, these citizens were left on their own without sufficient care or support from the Turkish state, which gradually incentivized them to establish their own micro-communities such as local, national, religious or sectarian foundations or associations. Through these grassroots communities, the citizens could cherish their cultural, religious or national roots. Hence, sending imams was a must action to keep ties with the citizens, yet in the absence of sufficient financial resources, the state had to

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<sup>109</sup> Devlet Bakanı Hasan Celal Güzel, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 86’ncı Birleşim, 7.4.1987, page 544.

resort to other options. Here we see a brief recap that exemplifies the perspective of ANAP:

Since the 1960s, the social needs of our workers abroad have long been neglected, and they have been left on their own in an alien environment in terms of their religious and educational needs. Especially when the children grow up and the second or even third generations appear, the fear that these children will grow up away from our national culture and education, speaking half Turkish, half-German has made our citizens abroad anxious. The pressure from the neo-Nazis, unemployment resulting from the oil crisis, and the activities of anarchists fleeing abroad have further increased this uneasiness. Our citizens sought their escape in holding on to Turkish nationalism and beliefs more and more. They established associations, opened mosques, opened Quran courses, and insistently asked for imams from their homelands. Unfortunately, the state has turned a blind eye to these demands for a long time, and the first permanent religious official paid by the state could be sent only in 1985, during our time.<sup>110</sup>

According to ANAP's account of the story, the gulf between the burning needs of citizens abroad for religious guidance and the material economic conditions in Turkey made the cooperation with Rabıta an inevitable one. While putting forward this argument, ANAP in a way killed two birds with one stone politically: they both had a chance to criticize the chaotic political and economic environment of the past decade, and through that, by pointing to missing services in the previous era, they could highlight their own achievements such as finally being able to pay for imams. Putting the story as such also enabled the party to portray the agreement with Rabıta as a natural consequence of the previous political mistakes.

Another way of justifying this much-criticized incident was through the means vs. ends argument. ANAP politicians urged leftist critics to focus on the outcome rather than the method employed. In the end, according to this mindset, what mattered was delivering these religious services to those citizens rather than how they were delivered.

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<sup>110</sup> Nuh Mehmet Kaşıkçı, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 86'ncı Birleşim, 7.4.1987, page 555.

In fact, the wrong thing is not sending religious officials by taking money from Rabita, the World Islamic Union, the Belgian Government, and other organizations; but the wrong thing is depriving 2,5 million citizens abroad of religious services.<sup>111</sup>

What was initially criticized by SHP was this very method that the Minister urged the opposition to disregard rather than the outcome. There was an agreement between the ruling party and the opposition about the need for recruiting more religious and education officials abroad so that Turkish citizens do not get radicalized or turn to different religious sects whose activities were not approved or authorized by the Turkish state. State sponsorship of these fundamental services was the desired policy choice for the leftist opposition since it guaranteed a full legitimacy check and control. Thus, rather than the outcome, the method in particular – not using state resources - was fiercely contested by the opposition. Another ANAP MP took ‘the end justifies the means’ argument one step further:

At that time safes of the Central Bank were locked, checks sent by the Central Bank to our ambassadors abroad turned out to be dud cheques, Turkey needed 70 cents, people were desperately queueing up for oil, for gas. Nor was it possible to establish new cadres abroad under these circumstances. The cry of our citizens abroad keeps growing, a generation is about to be ruined. What will you do? To save them from this situation, to reach out to them as a compassionate state, to send them religious officials, you would get money from Belgium, you would get it from associations, you would get it from Rabita.<sup>112</sup>

This mindset, which uses dark images of the past to praise the present, can be regarded as the epitome of a right-populist stance. Here in this particular case, we see similar discourse being used to address the inevitability of the much-criticized involvement of an Islamist foundation in the domestic affairs of Turkey as a secular country. What is more notable is the same MP’s attempt to

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<sup>111</sup> Devlet Bakanı Hasan Celal Güzel, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 86’ncı Birleşim, 7.4.1987, page 545.

<sup>112</sup> Nuh Mehmet Kaşıkçı, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 86’ncı Birleşim, 7.4.1987, page 556

re-define Kemalism to turn the critics' arguments against themselves with a rather idiosyncratic interpretation of the term.

The claim that it is against Kemalism may only be the claim of those who do not know Atatürk. Atatürk set the way and principles for this. When you are short of money, you can get it from anyone, but you will use it for the nation's benefit. When? During the War of Independence. Back then, we were in need, hence asking for Russia's help for weapons and ammunition to save the country.<sup>113</sup>

Likening a war-time need with a chosen cooperation due to economic distress signified one big argument for ANAP: 'desperate times call for desperate measures.' But besides that, the impact of Rabıta debate on the relationship between the government and the opposition in domestic politics was so profound that after a point, even historical symbols and developments began to be included in the discussion to prove a point. The criticism of the opposition based on secularism led ANAP to re-define these very fundamental principles widely embraced by leftist opposition, such as secularism of Kemalism. What this debate proved once again nonetheless was the fact that diaspora-related issues can reinforce already existing fault lines in domestic politics, often fuelling old grievances.

At one point during the session, the debate got quite heated that the prime minister of the coup era government, Bülend Ulusu, asked for the floor to defend his administration's actions responsible for the given agreement. The interesting thing about his speech was its alignment with ANAP's way of defending the incident. Similar to the story narrated by ANAP, he referred to the economic conditions of the day, during which "the country needed even 70 cents", making such a deal an inevitable outcome. Likewise, he referred to the problems of 2 million citizens living in Europe, especially of education and religious services, which remained more and more unresolved in time. Also, the tone of self-criticalness for lacking a broad vision in a sense resembles Hasan Celal Güzel's remarks.

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<sup>113</sup> *ibid*: 557

The fact is that neither those countries nor us could adequately assess the social problems that may arise from sending workers, and that we could not take necessary measures in time. Meanwhile, Rabita's aid, the agreement of which was reached before us, was also used. In particular, I would like to state that it was very dangerous to leave those citizens without religious services and watch divisive and reactionary movements operate freely there. Besides, foreign exchange distress and economic difficulties were not fully resolved at that time.<sup>114</sup>

As a result, in a choice between insufficient religious services and generous support by a Saudi organization, the state chose the latter for it did not want to risk those citizens being left with no Islamic presence in their social environments. Then justifications as such followed in abundance.

Overall, the Rabita incident and the follow-up discussions in the parliament are crucial moments in diaspora relations as they triggered the differences between the ideological stances of the political parties in Turkey. Unlike relatively all-encompassing diaspora issues such as the need for education or social security provision upon which different parties agree, when the matter in question is politically sensitive in domestic politics, such as religion, it also creates disputes on diaspora policy. In that vein, it would not be misleading to characterize this whole debate on Rabita or the conduct of religious services as an instance where domestic policy disputes came to the surface concerning a diaspora-related topic. Hence we see that the ANAP both made a defence on behalf of the coup administration, as well as courting with political Islam, while leftist tradition represented by HP, SHP, and DSP revealed its long-rooted anti-*irtica* reflexes.

Another significant implication of the Rabita debate is that the Turkish state showed its protective reflexes towards its citizens again wherever they were. While the state is prone to protect, the subject which needs the state's protection keeps changing following the political developments of the time. As the state elite redefines the perception of threat, the way and from whom to protect diaspora members also shifts accordingly. In the 1960s and 1970s, when this

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<sup>114</sup> Bülend Ulusu, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 86'ncı Birleşim, 7.4.1987, page 567.

external threat was communism and radical left ideologies in Europe, the state initiated radio and television broadcasts and recruited more state officials to function as a barricade between the citizens and the harmful effects of these ideologies. This time in the 1980s, the remedy was to fight extremism through extending the scope of religious services and enabling a complete state control of religion, hence recruiting more imams. But as the Rabita case has shown, the way chosen to combat undesired influences might incite intense domestic debates that lead to strong disagreements among the parties. What these disagreements reveal, after all, is that certain diaspora policy areas, especially those with sensitive content like religion, might touch Achilles' heel in Turkish politics and deepen already existing divergences.

### **5.5. From 'Workers Abroad' to 'Citizens Abroad': the First Step towards External Voting**

External voting is one of the most important components of diaspora and homeland relations. Not only that it entails a political and emotional bonding between the state and the diaspora members, but it also contributes significantly to the process of becoming a diaspora in an organized sense.

Even though the attempts to enable citizens abroad to participate in the general elections in Turkey go back to the early days of labour migration, the first legislative step for expatriate voting was taken in 1986. New components were added to the voting regulation eventually. Therefore, compared to its broader scope today, the content of the 1986 bill was limited to casting votes at the border polling stations only. While the follow-up bill that came to the parliament's agenda in 1987 brought minor changes to the law, it was not until the mid-1990s that more comprehensive amendments and improvements were made in external voting. However, despite the narrow scope, these two bills brought to the parliament's agenda were the first-ever move to introduce external vote for the diaspora. It was undoubtedly a remarkable one for it slowly but

surely changed the course of homeland-diaspora relations in the following decades.

The parliamentary debates of the bills that changed the electoral system, Law no. 3270 in the year 1986 and Law no. 3377 in 1987, witnessed some interesting discussions from which we can attain different conceptualization of citizenship as elucidated by the parliamentarians, as well as see once again how different domestic political disputes come to the surface through a diaspora-related topic. Moreover, overall the debates and different points highlighted by different parties also offer helpful content for analysing how the right to vote for citizens abroad was contextualized politically in the 1980s and how much importance was attached to expatriate voting at the day by different political traditions.

The first regulation for external voting in 1986 was brought to the parliament as part of more comprehensive legislation that changed the electoral system. As ruling party ANAP started losing its voter base gradually in the second half of the 1980s, Prime Minister Özal wanted to restructure the electoral system in a way to make the first party even more advantageous through new provisions such as rearranging the constituencies, introducing a quota system for MPs and increasing the number of MPs from 400 to 450 (Aydın and Taşkın, 2016: 417). So, external voting was an additional provision added to the proposal that was initially motivated by political calculations for preventing a possible electoral failure.

When different MPs present their proposals on the same or similar issues, these separate proposals can be combined while bringing that given issue to the parliament agenda. That legislative technique was also used for Law 3377. The law came from a joint proposal combining five different proposals given by ANAP and SHP members on similar, cross-cutting issues, i.e., amending the law that regulates the electoral systems. Still, the interesting thing here is that in this merged text 4 of these 5 proposals belonged to SHP, and one was ANAP's,

while MDP, as the third party in the parliament, had no such proposal. Since the content of the joint bill is about the electoral system in general rather than merely the external voting, some of those proposals merged into the joint text did not have any reference to external voting. 2 out of a total number of 5 proposals given by SHP fell into that category. The one proposed by ANAP offered a more comprehensive amendment on the electoral system, in which voters abroad was one of the 32 articles in total. The two remaining proposals given by SHP members regulated merely external voting. By looking at this arithmetic, it would not be misleading to suggest that SHP stood out as one step ahead of ANAP in bringing the issue of external voting into the agenda as far as the legislative activities were concerned. However, it is always essential to keep in mind that only one initiative by ANAP was sufficient to pass any law due to their majority in the parliament.

When we analyse the legislative texts and debates, we see that even though the relevant law was enacted in the mid-1980s, the attempts to put expatriate voting into practice had a relatively long history, almost as old as the labour migration itself. The first legislative proposal on this issue was presented to the parliament by CHP MP Reşit Ülker in 1965. Still, since it was not debated nor approved in the plenary during the legislative term the proposal became obsolete. The proposals on the same topics presented in 1969, 1973, and 1977 by another CHP MP Sabri Tıǧlı had a similar fate. So when the issue was finally taken to the agenda, it was the twelfth one brought to date and the fourth one after 1983<sup>115</sup>. This delay in putting the external voting on the agenda became a subject for criticism by the opposition parties, especially by HP, since they were the ones who consistently pushed for the legislation of the issue. While criticizing this neglect by the ruling party, an MP from SHP even claimed the ownership of the

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<sup>115</sup> Eyüp Aşık, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 84'üncü Birleşim, 26.3.1986, page 552.

bill: “Our bill, which we have a patent, has been added to the relevant sections of the Political Parties Law by ANAP and brought to your attention.”<sup>116</sup>

There was a notable difference between ANAP and HP proposals regarding the voting method for expatriates while participating in homeland elections. SHP’s proposal suggested that voters cast their votes at the embassies or consulates given security concerns. SHP representative Feridun Şakir Ögünç, who himself was a trade unionist and spent some time abroad, stated that he gave the same proposal himself during the coup administration era and that its applicability was comprehensively discussed in the committee with the participation of diplomats. Since it was concluded that such a provision would bring an extra burden to consulates, the proposal had to be shelved<sup>117</sup>.

On the other hand, according to ANAP’s bill, citizens abroad could only vote at the borders 70 days before the actual election day. “With this bill, it is targeted that at least half of the citizens abroad could vote”<sup>118</sup> stated Prime Minister Özal during the plenary debate of the bill, admitting that it was a late step yet brought a partial solution to a significant problem. For SHP, voting not at the consulates but the borders contained both political and security risks. It was feared that the financially capable political parties could bring voters en masse to the border polling stations from the nearby countries to affect the outcome of the elections. Moreover, the opposition held serious concerns as for how to ensure the security of the ballot boxes throughout this 70 day election period. Against such criticism, ANAP member Eyüp Aşık explained why the opposition’s plan was not viable by giving the background information of their cooperation initiatives with other countries.

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<sup>116</sup> Feridun Şakir Ögünç, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 83’üncü Birleşim, 25.3.1986, page 446.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid*: 550

<sup>118</sup> Başbakan Turgut Özal, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 81’inci Birleşim, 19.03.1986, page 325.

For example, in our attempts with Saudi Arabia, they have given the brush-off saying ‘We will not allow voting in our land.’ As a result of our initiatives with Federal Germany, they stated that they would allow voting only in our embassies but not in consulates. As you can imagine, it is not possible for all citizens to vote in the embassies. France said they would help, but some other European countries did not even come close to cooperate.<sup>119</sup>

Given that this issue which is much criticized by the opposition, came to be solved eventually throughout the decades, as citizens abroad can participate in general elections from anywhere in the world, it is an interesting quest to take a look at the historical process that made this new practice possible. Having a comparative outlook between the past, where external voting could be practised with a limited scope, to the present where this right is fully enjoyed can give us a helpful vantage point not only regarding the Turkish context per se but for the debates on the nexus between citizenship rights and spatiality.

Another important point that became subject to vocal criticism by the opposition was the 70-day right to vote given to the citizens abroad, for it was seen as a hastily prepared provision and “full of contradictions.”<sup>120</sup> A year later, the 70-day period was increased to 75 days with the follow-up Law no. 3377 enacted in 1987. The contradiction referred here about this period was the long gap between the actual election day and the time citizens abroad could cast their votes. More than two months before the election, the opposition MPs argued, the voters would possibly know very little about the candidates or the party programmes.

70 days before the elections, no parties make their political campaign, no candidate is selected yet, but citizens who are not registered will vote here while coming and going. How will they vote? Let me tell you: conditioned minds will come and vote. Parties can’t organize abroad, you cannot even make political campaigns during the election time. According to what are these citizens expected to vote?<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Eyüp Aşık, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 81’inci Birleşim, 19.03.1986, page 304.

<sup>120</sup> Ülkü Söylemezoğlu, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 81’inci Birleşim, 19.03.1986, page 309.

<sup>121</sup> Nuri Korkmaz, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 81’inci Birleşim, 19.03.1986, page 311.

Another MP from centre-right party MDP addressed a similar contradiction, arguing that this regulation aims to make citizens abroad vote for popular parties without knowing the candidates.

Candidates are announced 55 days before the election day. What do they bring? They allow voting 70 days before the election. Voting for whom? To a party. So, there are independent candidates according to this Election Law. How will they vote if they want to vote for an independent candidate? It is not written anywhere. So it is full of contradictions.<sup>122</sup>

In addition to being insufficiently planned, the opposition thought this contradictory regulation, being able to vote while no candidate lists are announced, was an intentional move by ANAP driven by political calculations. The logic held that uninformed by the candidates nor by the party programs, voter choice will possibly depend on the popularity of the parties. Consequently, this obligation to vote only for the parties will not allow the full manifestation of the national will at the ballot box.<sup>123</sup> The flaws in the bill addressed by the opposition were recognized by ANAP but were seen as side effects of introducing a challenging practice as external voting for the first time. Prime Minister Özal called the system they brought “not a complete, perfect system but at least for the first time our citizens abroad will be able to vote in the general elections.”<sup>124</sup> Similarly, the chairman of the Constitution Committee asserted that despite its shortcomings, the law would give a clear message to the citizens abroad.

This regulation was introduced to reassure the citizens. What kind of reassurance? It is a provision to assure those who say ‘I live in Germany, I cannot cast my vote even though I come to my home country near the election time.’ Whether there will be benefits or not from this, it is a different debate, but this provision was brought to assure our citizens.”

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<sup>122</sup> Ülkü Söylemezoğlu, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 81’inci Birleşim, 19.03.1986, page 309.

<sup>123</sup> Süleyman Çelebi, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 11’inci Birleşim, 23.05.1987, page 305.

<sup>124</sup> Başbakan Turgut Özal, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 85’inci Birleşim, 27.03.1986, page 40.

We see that the practicality, specifics, or feasibility were considered while preparing this new provision. The motivation was informed by politicians' desire to give a 'We see you, we recognize you' message to the citizens abroad.

Indeed, from the perspective of citizenship, extending voting rights to citizens abroad can be taken as a turning point in Turkey's relationship with its diaspora. It marks a shift in the perception from migrants as remittance-sending 'money-making machines', as discussed in the previous chapter, to the citizenship perspective for migrants who started to be referred to as a community that should enjoy the same rights as those living in the homeland. SHP proposal drew attention to this contradiction, stating that while the number of Turkish citizens abroad reached 2 million 242 thousand as of 1983, and even though every citizen has the right to vote according to the constitution, the citizens abroad have not been able to use these rights to the given date <sup>125</sup>. Minister of Labour of the day Mustafa Kalemlı's words also address a new direction, indicating a shift from economic outlook to citizenship perspective. "As the government, for the first time, we did not call these workers' *gurbetçi*' and again, for the first time, we did not consider these workers as a currency machine. They can send their savings if they want, and not send if they do not wish to."<sup>126</sup> Therefore, this law in particular and the voting rights for diaspora in general marks a significant turning point in diaspora relations, for it signals a transition from approaching diaspora as 'workers abroad' to 'citizens abroad'.

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<sup>125</sup> İstanbul Milletvekili Reşit Ülker ve 20 Arkadaşının Yabancı Ülkelerde Bulunan Türk Yurttaşlarının Oy Kullanmalarını Sağlamak İçin 26.4.1961 Günlü, 298 Sayılı Seçimlerin Temel Hükümleri ve Seçmen Kütüklerine İlişkin Yasanın Değiştirilmesine Dair Yasa önerisi.

<sup>126</sup> Çalışma Bakanı Mustafa Kalemlı, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 47'nci Birleşim, 19.12.1984, page 488.

### 5.5.1. Compulsory Military Service and the Diaspora

Like participating in the elections, military service is considered a fundamental pillar of citizenship in Turkey. Unlike voting, however, it is an obligation to undertake rather than a right to enjoy. When compulsory military service started to pose problems for diaspora members, the issue came to the legislative agenda. The need to pass legislation on military service for diaspora members came out from a practical problem that led to a loss of certain rights for some diaspora members concerning their employment. When (male) citizens abroad reached the age of compulsory military service, they had to return to Turkey temporarily to undertake their 18-month military service. This interruption, albeit temporary, caused these citizens to lose their jobs, which was desired neither for the workers nor for Turkey since it meant a decline in the amount of remittances for the country's economy. To overcome this undesired consequence, a bill introducing certain exemptions for citizens abroad was prepared in March 1980 under the AP government. Accordingly, the duration of military service was reduced to two months in return for a fee, which was declared to be used for defence spending. The aim of the bill was hence twofold: bring an end to the disruption of their employment and to create an extra budget to finance costly military spending.

During the plenary debates of the bill, there was a joint agreement by all parties on the vitality of the legislation, except a few minor dissenting opinions. The criticisms mainly focused on two points, the first of which was the pragmatic motives that guided the bill at the expense of sacrificing the national values. The Senate members, and to a lesser extent the National Assembly members, were vocal about such economic motivations behind the proposal, which was thought to have brought in the guise of convenient solutions for citizens abroad<sup>127</sup>. Since military service had historically been an ethical duty for the Turkish nation, according to these critiques, it was unacceptable for a state to “give up on our

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<sup>127</sup> Şebip Karamullaoglu, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, 47'nci Birleşim, 20.03.1980, page 6.

sacred values to receive more foreign exchange.”<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, the objections raised for the bill were rather minor compared to the overall consensus reached by different parties.

The second criticism was about this provision being against the equality principle of the constitution. Regardless of the reason for such facilitation and albeit limited to two months, bringing an exemption to a specific group of citizens in return for a fee while the rest is obliged to undertake the same service for a much longer period did not only discriminate the rich against the poor, but it also introduced two different practices within a constitutional obligation. While some addressed to inequality aspect of the bill as such, consenting representatives justified this difference of practice on the ground that serving the nation cannot be limited to one category only.

In our country, military service is defined as a national duty, and the Turkish Nation accepts it unconditionally. However, there is not an obligation to perform military service under arms by carrying a gun. Some soldiers work in factories, some provide the army’s arsenal, some provide their clothes, some provide their shoes. That is, even if the entire Turkish nation goes to war, more than half of us have an obligation to work one way or another for the army’s needs. We have put forward this necessity, a situation that can be partially covered by those working abroad, and we have approved this regulation in the committee.<sup>129</sup>

Challenging one fixed conceptualization of citizenship, or one way of serving the nation in the military, it is critical that here the citizenship duties could also be defined in a rather dynamic way, interchangeably with more day-to-day duties within the military that remains behind the scenes. Nonetheless, similar to external voting, the debate on military service is also noteworthy regarding different insights it offers for different conceptualizations of citizenship in Turkey as delineated by various politicians. Given that the military service is

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<sup>128</sup> Galip Kaya, *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 56’ncı Birleşim, 28.02.1980, page 655.

<sup>129</sup> İsmail Çataloğlu, *Cumhuriyet Senatosu Tutanak Dergisi*, 47’nci Birleşim, 20.03.1980, page 10.

commonly approached in a non-political way by most of the parties regardless of their ideology, the low level of resistance to this bill is self-evident in that sense. However, albeit minor, the points raised by the opponents of the bill are also crucial for revealing different outlooks on how citizenship rights and obligations should be practised.

The ballot results for the bill also reflect the consensus expressed during the debates of the bill. Overall, the bill was accepted with 327 for, 26 against, and 8 absentee votes in total. Among those who voted against, 18 were from AP, 6 from CHP, and 3 from MHP. Although there was a consensus among parties and that it was the AP government that brought the bill, against vote cast by individual MPs from AP is critical to note for it shows the expression of dissenting opinions within parties. Even still, the overwhelming majority with which the bill was approved shows that exceptions for military service for the diaspora were a topic welcome by the MPs.

#### **5.6. 'Snob' Overseas Bureaucrats**

Throughout the parliamentary debates on various diaspora-related topics in the 1980s, one theme that frequently comes up is the snob and unfriendly attitude shown by the diplomats to citizens living abroad. Even though the issue itself was not brought to the parliament's agenda separately, the fact that it was referred to by different politicians at different times makes it a topic worthy of attention concerning the later developments.

As a vocal and frequent commentator of various diaspora-related issues, as mentioned in the previous sections, İmren Aykut had things to say also on this much-criticized attitude that the citizens abroad were exposed to by state officials.

Our workers are quite neglected. Our foreign affairs officials do not have a warm and sincere attitude. I have personally witnessed their degrading behaviour many times. Since recruited clerks do not speak foreign languages properly, in addition to their insufficient knowledge on many issues, all the problems had to be left to the hands of Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff, who have a cold, unkind, and snob approach towards citizens. So, these people have been able to solve Turkish workers' problems as much as they were able to solve Turkey's foreign policy problems.<sup>130</sup>

The formal and often unapproachable attitude of the diplomats is commonly known and even sometimes considered as the norm by many. However, for politicians in Turkey, who from the early days of labour immigration onwards had considered themselves the solemn representatives of these citizens, such attitude was unacceptable. As representatives who were frequently voicing problems faced by these citizens, bringing this problem to the attention of other representatives was seen as an essential duty. That is possibly what motivated an Advisory Assembly member during the 1983 budget debates to read a letter sent to him by a worker abroad complaining about double standards shown by the diplomats.

If the attachés who represent us focus on some of our problems, they cannot treat us that unfairly. Even though we have written many times, they did not attend to our problems even once. But when we invite them to cocktail parties, they come with their entourage.<sup>131</sup>

Even though the fundamental responsibility of the diplomats in the foreign missions was not assisting workers abroad by definition, this alleged approach was not tolerable for the politicians either. A ruling party ANAP member refers to a similar attitude he observed personally during his visits abroad.

I have personally encountered how our officials abroad, including our consul general and his deputy, have treated these citizens, how they made them wait

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<sup>130</sup> İmren Aykut, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 49'uncu Birleşim, 19.12.1985, page 235.

<sup>131</sup> Beşir Hamitoğulları, *Danışma Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, 25'inci Birleşim, 26.11.1982, page 462.

outside for hours, how they said ‘Go today, come tomorrow’ to them, what kind of difficulties these citizens were faced with.<sup>132</sup>

As we have seen on different issues from education to social security, MPs from all parties assumed the role of a natural representative for citizens abroad. Even though the source of this very problem was the officials recruited by the state, the fact that it became among the issues dealt with by the citizens made parliamentarians problematize it as well. For the scope of this study, this issue being raised by politicians marks a critical moment since, at a later stage, politicians started to take pride in the approachableness of the state officials and the accessibility of state services abroad.

## **Conclusion**

Both for the Turkish community in Europe and Turkey, the 1980s mark an important period for posing new challenges and witnessing a significant rupture with the previous decades. Starting with the diaspora front, the 1980s became the time when the permanent status of the Turkish community was recognized by all parties; the Turkish government, the migrant-receiving states, and the diaspora members. Accordingly, the new problems faced by the Turkish community, the biggest of which was xenophobia, were a natural consequence of this new realization.

The same recognition shaped the policy responses in different ways in Turkey. Even though the motivation to influence diaspora members with Turkish-Islam synthesis was domestic politics-originated, the realization that the citizens would not return made politicians look for new means to keep them connected with the culture, religion, and language. This explains the dominance of education policy and religious services in the 1980s over other domains.

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<sup>132</sup> Arif Toprak, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 92’nci Birleşim, 21.04.1987, page 307.

If the urge to keep the cultural connection alive was one big pillar of the 1980s diaspora policy, the other extended the scope of citizenship services even further. Initiatives for voting right for expatriates as brought to the parliament was insufficient in content, nevertheless a big step. As far as politics is concerned, the agreement by all parties on the regulations regarding citizenship services is noteworthy. Whether it resulted from the new political atmosphere of the 1980s refined from the 1970s confrontation or not, there were still certain policy areas where the rigid ideological dispute was well and alive. As discussed in the section about Rabita, the debate on Islam exemplified how old fault lines could still work in Turkish politics despite the coup's aim to purify politics from confrontation and how diaspora issues can ignite big debates by touching sensitive points as such.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE DIASPORA IN THE 1990s: TARGETS OF XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS AND HOLDERS OF POLITICAL RIGHTS

The 1990s was the decade of transition and political instability. Leaving behind the political bans and the limiting political environment of the 1980s, now the political arena was fully open for competition. While ANAP gradually lost the political support it enjoyed in the 1980s, the economic liberalization program the party has put into place was working in full swing. Now open to the global markets entirely, the Turkish economy suffered severe economic crashes in the 1990s, which reflected as political instability to the ballot box. Like the 1970s, the 1990s witnessed the endless formation and dissolution of coalition governments, some of which lasted only a few months. Amid the air of political instability, the rise of political Islam and the military's reaction in return came to characterize the decade. In this new episode of civil-military relations, the post-modern coup of 1997 not only brought the end of the coalition government between the Islamist Welfare Party (RP thereafter) and its coalition partner right-wing DYP but also marked the most tumultuous political development in the 1990s.

At the diaspora front, the rise of xenophobic tendencies against the Turkish citizens in Europe and the subsequent attacks that targeted Turkish families, individuals and the businesses became the most significant development. The events were also crucial for shaping Turkey's diaspora-related policymaking

The increasing xenophobia predominantly in Germany affected the diaspora relations and policymaking in two ways. First, most of the parliamentary debates on diaspora during the 1990s centred around this issue. The fact that the Turkish

citizens started to feel more and more vulnerable and unprotected has put citizenship first on the agenda. Second, attacks have considerably influenced the diaspora policymaking in a way that the political participation, both at home and abroad elections, was given an utmost significance in the face of increasing racist tendencies and attacks. In that vein, the racist attacks and two crucial laws on voting rights that came to the Parliament's agenda in the aftermath of these developments constitute the backbone of this chapter.

After a brief note on the shift on the terminology used by the politicians, the chapter continues as follows: an analysis of the debates on xenophobic attacks, amendments of the citizenship law and the attempts to turn the diaspora into an influential political group, debates on the overseas voting practice, political Islam in Europe, a failed attempt to pass social security legislation and its relation with the political dynamics of the day, and an overview of the MPs with a diaspora background.

### **6.1. The Transformation of the Terminology in the 1990s**

During the debates of the bill that amended the election law in 1995, something unusual happened in the plenary. The Deputy Speaker of the Parliament who was chairing the session that day, Mustafa Kalemli, interrupted the speaker and uttered these words:

Honourable representatives, I have a request from the speakers who will take the floor today. Today, I think all of our friends here who will be speaking on this bill will talk about our citizens abroad. These citizens also watch us on TV right now. It is my wish from all of you today: we always refer to them as 'workers' while talking about our citizens abroad, an old-fashioned habit. However, we have employers abroad, we have scientists, we have students, we have civil servants, we have housewives; all of them will use their right to vote. Therefore, I kindly ask my friends who will take the floor today, if they can use the phrase 'our citizens abroad', I think it will make them much happier.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Mustafa Kalemli, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 15'inci Birleşim, 26.10.1995, page 14

This humble request was met with a joint round of applause from all party groups, a sign of common approval. The change within the language was a slow process that could be observed in the politicians' speeches after the 1970s. However, the deputy speaker's interruption as such could be interpreted as a proof that formerly used "workers abroad" idiom became entirely out of date. Now as of the 1990s, they were seen as a community "who were no longer just workers by profession" but rather a group who "opened businesses, became businessmen, became house owners, which makes those countries a second home for them."<sup>134</sup> The new era signalled a period in which the workers' permanent position in host countries came to be accepted by homeland politicians.

This awareness was more than just a change of semantics. The 1990s legislative attempts targeted how to make their lives better in Europe than, for example, how to make their lives better upon their return. Similarly, the emphasis in the motions, speeches and bills shifted from the importance of preserving the Turkish culture in their lives to make their lives better in those countries. The debates, policies, and administrative efforts towards the citizens abroad have shifted from plans on their returns to support for their integration and social mobility abroad (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003: 77). It marks a crucial transformation both in the discourse and action, making the 1990s the decade when the terminology officially changed.

## **6.2. Xenophobic Attacks**

*"No one shall forget that these citizens will not end up being like the Jewish people. They have a strong Turkish state behind them."*<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Mustafa Dağcı, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 21'inci Birleşim, 03.11.1992, page 56

<sup>135</sup> Engin Güner, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 109'ncü Birleşim, 08.6.93, page 191

The most significant development on the diaspora front in the 1990s was the attacks motivated by the xenophobic sentiments targeting the Turkish community. These attacks did not only make racism “the most important issue faced by our people in Europe”<sup>136</sup> but also dominated the debates and significantly influenced the legislative activity in the Turkish Parliament concerning the diaspora.

The common explanation for the attacks holds that following the fall of Berlin Wall and reunion of East and West Germany the German economy came under stress with the growing ranks of unemployed flowing from East Germany. As any anti-migrant tendency usually follows, the frustration created by economic problems and the high unemployment rate had made the Turkish community, as the biggest minority group in Germany, the usual scapegoats of the situation hence the ultimate target of xenophobic sentiments in society. There were series of attacks towards Turkish shops, houses and individuals in the early 1990s in areas with the visible Turkish community. As the air of panic among Turks had increasingly grown, two big attacks within a few months in between made a significant impact not only on the immigrant community but also ignited debates in Turkish politics on the causes and possible remedies to this grave situation. Especially the murder of eight Turkish citizens in the xenophobic attacks of Mölln and Solingen in November 1992 and May 1993 was crucial for turning the problem faced by the diaspora in their host-contexts into a hot political debate in Turkey. What is most discussed was the state’s responsibility for protecting and empowering its overseas citizens (Kadirbeyoğlu 2009: 424). In this sense, the attacks have become a source of political tension between the Turkish and the German governments, making it a remarkable moment within the history of labour migration for a diplomatic spat as such was the first of its kind.

The politicians brought the issue of increasing xenophobia and attacks to the parliament’s agenda through different ways and means such as written questions,

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<sup>136</sup> Kazım Ataoğlu, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 21’inci Birleşim, 03.11.1992, page 68

off-the-agenda speeches, proposals. The proposals presented to Parliament by various parties were merged into a single proposal. Subsequently, it has led to the establishment of an investigation committee to deep dive into the question of racism and other issues faced by Turks. The investigation committee of 1993 was the second with the same attempt after the one established in the 1970s. Distilled from the debates and reports of all of these, what concern the scope of our broader research concerning rising xenophobia is *i)* how the Turkish government reacted to these events and which aspects of it did they point to; *ii)* what kind of political debate the attacks have triggered in domestic politics. Overall, the course of parliamentary debates falls into four categories: blaming the West for hypocrisy, conspiracist outlook to explain the events, the different attitudes assumed by the ruling party and opposition members, and using these events to bring the domestic political disputes into question.

### **6.2.1. The Hypocrisy of the West**

The most commonly given reaction by the government and opposition members alike was the hypocrisy of the Western governments in the area of human rights. The German Government and politicians came under the spotlight in particular with the alleged double standard they show regarding human rights violations in their country and elsewhere. The Turkish parliamentarians argued that while pressuring Turkey on human rights violations in every big and small chance they could find, the German authorities had done little for taking necessary measures against explicit and systematic racist attack targeting the Turkish community.

Referring to the extra sensitivity shown to the Kurdish problem in Turkey by German politicians, an ANAP representative pointed towards the double standard in their commitment to the human rights principle as a universal value. “Unfortunately, German authorities do not show as much sensitivity to Turkish workers who have been living, working and paying taxes in their country for

thirty years as they show to the human rights in the southeast of Turkey.”<sup>137</sup> Indeed as the violence escalated in the southeast of Turkey, more and more critical voices started to be raised in the Western political circles about the human rights violations concerning the Kurdish people and politicians. The attacks motivated by the hostile and racist tendencies in Europe gave Turkish politicians upper hand this time to pressure their European counterparts to take honest measures about the same violations taking place at the heart of Europe. During the debates of starting an investigation committee, a Welfare Party MP similarly addresses to what they define double standard: “While Europe regards itself as the protector of human rights and democracy in the world, on the other hand, it paves the way for racist attacks and xenophobia in its own land by turning a blind eye to inferior treatment to people of different religion, language, race and culture.” Similarly, another MP accused his colleagues who were the member of the human rights committee of having an apologetic behaviour towards the Western politicians: “We did not establish this Human Rights Committee for them to testify in front of foreign parliamentary delegations who constantly come to Turkey to investigate human right issues. We established this committee so that the members could go there, inspect the human rights violations against Turkish people on-site and report them to the Turkish Parliament.”<sup>138</sup>

As the Western countries’ leverage on Turkey became more assertive on the topics of freedom and human rights, calling out these countries for double standards started to be found more often in the discourse of Turkish politicians. Hence, the attacks in Mölln and Solingen were possibly the beginning of this blaming discourse that would come to dominate the Turkish side’s relations with the Western countries in the coming decades: caring too much about human rights violations in Turkey without doing much for right violations there. That is

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<sup>137</sup> Gaffar Yakın, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 17’nci Birleşim, 20.10.1992, page 293

<sup>138</sup> Engin Güner, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 30’uncu Birleşim, 24.11.1992, page 239

why it is possible to see the parallels between this attitude in the 1990s and the frequent emphasis put on racial discrimination and Islamophobia by Turkish politicians throughout the 2000s.

### **6.2.2. Discrimination at Home, Discrimination Abroad: the Headscarf Issue**

The debates of the racist attacks have witnessed some interesting criticisms raised by the opposition, which craftily linked the domestic issues with the diaspora problems. Throughout the 1990s, the Islamist Welfare Party carried out a fierce and robust opposition in the Parliament as the harshest critic of the governments when it was not part of the coalition government. Some members were not also hesitant to use these events as a means to direct their criticisms on domestic politics to the government. “All these events show that we fail both at home and abroad. What we have is a state that cannot ensure the protection of life and property of its own citizens neither at home nor abroad, and behind all this is a defeat in foreign policy...”<sup>139</sup>

The debates on the topic also helped the sensitive and dividing issues, which would typically pit the government and opposition against each other in domestic politics, to come to the Parliament’s agenda. The headscarf issue was an example of that, where MPs elaborated on the issue as discrimination from within.

Our Muslim children studying in German schools, especially girls, are faced with some legal issues. While German Christian teachers do not object to the headscarves of our children studying at schools, unfortunately, Turkish teachers working in these schools are still bothered by the headscarves of our students and do not let them into the lessons. Despite the German courts’ decision accepting headscarf-wearing at school, the fact that some Turkish teachers are still occupied with the headscarves of our girls indicates the kind of mentality the teachers sent by Ministry of Education have.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Esat Bütün, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 112’nci Birleşim, 15.6.1993, page 401

<sup>140</sup> Kazım Ataoğlu, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 21’inci Birleşim 03.11.1992, page 70

It is crucial to note that there was a common point between the critiques from outside and critiques from within: both the Western states and the Islamist opposition criticized Turkey based on rights and freedoms. However, how they defined these freedoms were far from identical. In the face of these racist attacks, Islamists in the Parliament argued that the Turkish state still had much to do in its backyard to demand human rights for its diaspora in Europe, and headscarf issue was the first to stand on the way that needs a solution.

If you treat your own citizens as second-class or third-class citizens both in the consulates and while entering and leaving the country, if you do not extend his passport saying that his wife wears a headscarf, if you do not register his child's name for you do not approve it, you can by no means talk about human rights.<sup>141</sup>

Those who closely observe the parliamentary debate in the 1990s would notice that the Islamist MPs always had their agenda in mind while talking about any topic, including the xenophobia in Europe. Welfare Party representatives' arguments on this matter overall came down to the conclusion that, unless we solve our own discrimination problems in the homeland, we cannot expect countries to respond to our sensitivities about discrimination. The kind of discrimination here was defined based on religious freedoms as fundamental human rights.

There is an identity crisis in our domestic and foreign policy. Unless we resolve this identity crisis, unless we love and value our people for they are human beings, we cannot expect this from another state. It is not right to expect another state to offer rights to our citizens that we do not offer.<sup>142</sup>

Until the 1990s, most of the diaspora issues except politically controversial ones were discussed with unanimity in the Parliament. In this vein, a grave threat like this would be expected to lead to a similar consensus among different parties. Even though the events were indeed met with a reaction and condemned equally by all parties, the debates on the racist attacks were significant for showing that

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<sup>141</sup> Esat Bütün, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 112'nci Birleşim, 15.6.1993, page 403

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 404

whichever party was in opposition, be it RP, SHP or DYP could insert its own ideological agenda to criticize the government on diaspora related issues.

*“There should be something else behind this”*: Not satisfied with the existing explanations for the attacks, some MPs wanted to move beyond the controversial narratives and thus tended to see it as part of a bigger conspiracy that might have been possibly set against Turkey and Germany. While not denying the responsibility of German politicians in rising xenophobic tendencies, systematic attacks were seen as part of a bigger agenda not only to bring Turkey and Germany against each other but also put Germany in a difficult position at the international front.

Meanwhile, I want to elaborate on an important possibility. In Germany, there is a group of people who are particularly afraid of the progress of Muslim Turks, who represent 60 million. Besides, the same group is also afraid that the Germans will grow stronger. With the aim of playing these two off against each other, the skinheads are probably financed and organized against the Turks. Then, these events are shown as a justification and efforts are made to make Germany look as criminal in international platforms. There is surely an involvement of the third parties in this.” Third countries certainly have a hand in this.<sup>143</sup>

As for whom those third countries were, old grievances and geopolitical mistrusts were brought on to the table again. The countries with which Turkey has historical disputes were seen as usual suspects for masterminding the racist attacks directly or indirectly.

As far as the geopolitics is concerned, Turkey is in a position in which other countries do not like to see Turkey getting stronger in the. The neighbouring countries in the east, west and south who has a close interest in us such as Armenia, Greece, Israel; and those who are rather far away but closely follow us nonetheless such as Anglo-Saxons and Russians want us to be involved in different troubles home and abroad. It is as if they are managed from one centre.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ahmet Remzi Hatip, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 112’nci Birleşim, 15.6.1993, page 386

<sup>144</sup> *ibid*, 386

Not only the historical wounds were opened again concerning these events, but also the hostile sentiments targeting the Turks in Germany were also put in the same baggage with already existing domestic hostilities. PKK's activities in Turkey, which was at its peak at the time, were seen as part of the same attempts to challenge Turkey at the domestic and international fronts. This possibility made the same representative think about the question of for whose benefit these attacks work.

PKK leader Apo gives an interview to a German Magazine called Focus and makes interesting statements. He says he approves and supports the acts of skinheads. Also, he says that he included the Turks in Germany in his target group like the Turks in the southeast of Turkey. So, it means that the enemies of Turkey fuel the incidents both in Germany and the southeast of Turkey.<sup>145</sup>

Throughout the speeches, politicians also made frequent references to deep and strong economic ties between Germany and Turkey in areas such as trade and tourism, the details of which will be discussed in the section below. The fear of harming this connection, thus avoiding a real tension with a significant ally can be addressed as one reason for this pragmatic outlook. Another reason might be the Western-sceptic mindset that comes to surfaces from time to time while debating Turkey's place in its relation with other countries in the international arena. Turkey's already mounting domestic political problems such as terrorism made some politicians see these attacks abroad and terrorism at home as coming from the same place. Regardless of the mentality behind such statements, they are essential for showing that the politicians saw these attacks as multi-layered incidents which need further explanations than what seemed on the surface.

### **6.2.3. Burning the Bridges or Not: Government and Opposition Party Responses**

One significant facet of parliamentary debates on xenophobic attacks was the quest of whom to blame. There were diverging opinions on the extent to which

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<sup>145</sup> *ibid*, 386

the German Government should be held responsible for influencing the offenders and the lack of sufficient measures put into practice. Majority of the MPs contended that racist sentiments were implicitly encouraged by German politicians through their discourse reinforcing racist sentiments and as such, violence became the consequence of this “pseudo racism German politicians have so far incited, either intentionally or unintentionally.”<sup>146</sup> The Chancellor and a leading CDU politician Helmut Kohl was the target criticisms for his anti-immigrant statements as part of his political campaign. An MP from coalition partner DYP was among those who openly criticized him for his part in the events.

Here I want to express with regret that one of the first statements Helmut Kohl made when he came to power was that he wanted to reduce the number of Turks in Germany below one million from 1 million 400 of that day. He clearly showed the Turkish community as a target here. German parties, be them ruling party or opposition, have supported pseudo racism, which has come to open racism as we see it today. The German Government realized the mistake it has made, and the German politicians realized the racism they have cultivated, and are now seeking ways to prevent it.<sup>147</sup>

Following the events, victims’ funerals became a mass commendation of racism with participations of the Turkish politicians and the German public. The absence of Helmut Kohl in the funerals and him later saying that he did not regret his decision led to further reactions by the Turkish parliamentarians. What is more enraging for the opposition was the Turkish Government representatives’ attempts to justify, even whitewash German politicians. A veteran RP representative and the former Labour Minister Şevket Kazan was especially vocal about this situation.

The attitude of the German Chancellor on this issue is not the correct one, it is not a good one, and while the political parties of Germany, the people of Germany, criticize their own Prime Minister, it almost fell upon our

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<sup>146</sup> İrfan Demiralp *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 112’nci Birleşim, 15.6.1993, page 397

<sup>147</sup> *ibid*, 396

administrators to act as the advocate of that German Prime Minister. I found it inappropriate.<sup>148</sup>

The occasional discrepancy observed in the approaches of the Turkish and German side also came under the radar of ANAP representative Engin Güner. He blamed the Turkish Government for trying to portray these attacks as individual cases whereas the German side tends to approach it as systematic violence.

The German President dares to say clearly that these incidents are not individual incidents, but part of a planned action. Despite this, unfortunately, our highest authorities make the mistake of portraying these incidents as ordinary criminal cases that individuals do. How can our authorities fall into this mistake that not even German authorities do?<sup>149</sup>

Indeed, throughout the debates, one can see similar criticisms towards the timidity of the Turkish government representatives in giving a rather harsh political reaction. While parliamentarians mostly acknowledged the German politicians' effort to discuss racism problem openly and taking responsibility, they voiced their discontent of the government's tentativeness in directing more straightforward blame on the German government for their influence and negligence. Following the attacks, a parliamentary delegation organized a field trip to Germany for on-site investigation and to hold meetings with their German counterparts. Şevket Kazan continued his criticisms on the same issue by giving examples from their experiences during their visit to Germany in the aftermath of the attacks.

We act hesitant while we have to hold them accountable. Before we started negotiations there, our foreign mission representative advises me as 'Sir, we refrain from accusing the German Government and avoid blaming the German people while discussing these issues with the authorities, you should pay

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<sup>148</sup> İsmail Cem, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 109'uncu Birleşim, 08.6.1993, page 199

<sup>149</sup> Engin Güner, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 109'uncu Birleşim, 08.6.1993, page 191

attention to this style, too.’ You cannot solve these by sitting there submissively, you have to address the problem.<sup>150</sup>

When we give an ear to the Government representatives, a hint of pragmatist attitude comes out as the possible explanation of such supposed timidity. The Foreign Minister highlighted the profound social, political but most importantly, the economic ties between the Turkish and German governments, which we can interpret as one reason for avoiding confrontation.

Of course it is our duty as a government, as a state to protect our citizens, but while doing so, we should be careful about one more thing: We should not turn this into a problem between the governments because we have to solve this issue together with the German authorities. Our aim is not to burn bridges and bring our citizens here. We have very close relations with Germany. Germany is our biggest trade partner; we hosted 1,2 million German tourists. We also have relations in terms of foreign capital. Therefore, of course, the German authorities must protect the life and property of our citizens there, we have all right to demand this, we must do whatever it takes. Nevertheless, we should not turn this into hostility between the two governments since cooperation is necessary for a solution.<sup>151</sup>

In addition to diplomatic concerns; trade, tourism and the volume of foreign direct investment from Germany were the elements that tie the hands of the Turkish government in giving a harsher response to German counterparts. Economic realities have created the gulf between the government and the opposition’s differing reactions. Besides uttering these concerns, the Foreign Affairs Minister Hikmet Çetin played a role in changing a potentially offensive wording for Germany in the joint declaration signed by all parties after the same debate. The original text started with a statement: “Considering the likelihood of the events to spread to other European countries, the Turkish Parliament invites all European countries, especially the German Government, to take immediate measures to prevent this genocidal movement in the heart of Europe and to

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<sup>150</sup> Şevket Kazan, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 109’uncu Birleşim, 08.6.1993, page 194

<sup>151</sup> Dışişleri Bakanı Hikmet Çetin, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 112’nci Birleşim, 15.6.1993, page 399

ensure the safety of our innocent citizens.” (TBMM, 1993: 408). Following that, the Minister warned the chairman of the debate and asked if it was possible to change the word “genocidal” with “racist”, for the former might cause some grave misunderstandings.<sup>152</sup>

As opposed a rather vehement and unreserved tone appropriated by some opposition members, the government represented the side of common sense and soberness that came with the responsibility of having to pursue diplomatic ties no matter what. Such responsibility prevented them from the possibility of not burning the bridges at once. What is interesting, however, is the gradual disappearance of this timid and diplomatic tone during crisis management in the coming decades, despite a more nuanced and deepened economic ties. What is different between today and the 1990s was the fine line between voicing a reaction and staying within the boundaries of the diplomatically acceptable. Even though the politicians criticized grave events like these, the criticism was not made vehemently, risking all the diplomatic ties. Sustaining other necessary diplomatic channels was maybe considered difficult if the concerns were spoken out too harshly.

#### **6.2.4. Political Rights as a Remedy for the Violence**

In the face of rising xenophobia, politicians started to look for quick ways to stop violence targeting the Turkish citizens. The debates on racist attacks witnessed politicians seeking answers on how to bring a solution to this problem.

Then what can we do? First, we have to solve our part of the dual citizenship issue. Second, we have to provide the right to vote in local elections for our citizens. I never count on concepts such as ‘friendship’ or ‘international friendship’. What kind of friendship is this that those who live there only for

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<sup>152</sup> However, it is important to note that the same minister has also remarks condemning the attacks by addressing German politicians as “How can you see these people, who have been in your country for thirty years and who have made a great contribution to your economy still as foreigners? How can you still call them “foreigners”? How can you not make these people, most of whom will not return, benefit from voting right in a democratic society?”

two months are given right to vote, but those who are there for thirty years are not. Right to vote will solve many things and will give political power to our people.<sup>153</sup>

Here İsmail Cem was referring to the newly signed Maastricht Agreement, through which the EU member state citizens became eligible to vote for the local elections in any EU country they live. The new arrangement created an unfair situation for Turks according to the politicians, mainly because they were not allowed to vote despite living in Germany for more than three decades. While countries like Holland and Sweden allowed residents with an immigrant background to vote in the local elections, German laws were did not allow third country nationals to participate in the elections. What the Turkish politicians should do, according to this narrative, was to push for dual citizenship and make a necessary legislative arrangement that could facilitate diaspora members to become citizens in host countries.

Then what benefits would dual citizenship bring for the diaspora members? According to the SHP MP Ercan Karakaş, attaining German citizenship would be like hitting many birds with one stone.

Why German citizenship? Will the racist attackers look at people's passport? No, but there is a great benefit of naturalization. Then foreigners living in Germany and Turks will have the same rights in the social area, economic area and most importantly, in the political area. For example, we have hundreds of thousands of potential voters in some states. Their votes will determine the state administration. Therefore, they will become a social and political interest group. I think even the far-right parties in the Parliament will not be able to openly be xenophobic then since they will have to consider these people as potential voters.<sup>154</sup>

Since the racist tendency in German society were not seen merely as the consequence of simple discrimination but a myriad form of discrimination, a key to tackling this complex problem was seen as political rights. If citizens could

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<sup>153</sup> İsmail Cem, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 109'uncu Birleşim, 08.6.1993, page 200

<sup>154</sup> Ercan Karakaş, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 109'uncu Birleşim, 08.6.1993, page 206

vote and get elected in the legislative, the violence would not be as severe, the same MP argues. Therefore, Turkish politicians ambition in the 1990s became turning the diaspora into an influential lobbying group in politics. Doing so would not only cease the primitive form of violence towards them but also elevate them to a higher structure in society, in addition to bringing political benefits for Turkey and the diaspora alike. Having taken lessons from this calamity, the next step for the Turkish policymakers was to change the citizenship law to facilitate their naturalization in Germany.

### **6.3. Law No. 4112: A New Citizenship Law or Making a Strong Political Diaspora?**

The attacks took place in Solingen and Mölln were discussed extensively in the Turkish Parliament with two main bottom lines as the outcomes. First, all the parties strongly condemned the attacks, and second, they all commonly addressed voting rights as the most effective and long-term solution for underlying problems of the Turkish citizens abroad. The obstacle on the way for the diaspora members attaining voting rights was dual citizenship, which German laws did not allow. Therefore, what fell upon the Turkish legislators was to pass a law facilitating the renunciation of their Turkish citizenship upon special permission by Turkish authorities. Passing a law as such was not only seen as a key to making their lives easier there on a day-to-day basis but as a smart political move to turn the Turkish immigrants into a Turkish lobby group, hence an influential political diaspora.

Before going into the specifics of this regulation, it is essential to go back to the parliamentary session in which parliamentarians were summoned with a special agenda right after the xenophobic attacks in Solingen, for the core ideas that laid the foundation of dual citizenship were expressed most strongly here. While CHP spokesperson asserted that it took two years to get dual citizenship in Germany, he argued that Turkey should do whatever is necessary on its side to

solve the issue<sup>155</sup>, such as reducing the tie to gain dual citizenship<sup>156</sup>. The SHP representative also argued that obtaining citizenship rights would at least prevent far-right parties from taking a strictly anti-immigrant position, if not entirely cease the attacks. Hence, as long as Germany did not allow dual citizenship, Turkey should actively encourage its citizens to naturalize.<sup>157</sup>

Long before this attempt to facilitate dual citizenship, Turkey's citizenship law was amended in 1981 (Law No. 2383 Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu 1981) to enable naturalization without having to denounce Turkish citizenship. However, this was acceptable as long as the person acquiring second citizenship informed the government (Keyman and İçduygu, 2003), or else the state could strip them off from their Turkish citizenship. However, as different citizenship rules applied in different European countries, it became trickier for Turkish citizens to naturalize without having to give up on their Turkish citizenship. The countries such as Germany, Austria and Denmark was within that group which obliged the renunciation of one's previous citizenship (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2007). Turkish citizens in those countries, however, were reluctant to renounce their citizenship for various reasons.

First of all, there was a belonging aspect. Turkish immigrants in Europe still felt strong emotional bonding with the homeland, and citizenship remained as the symbolic embodiment of this sense of belonging. During the debates of the new citizenship law, a DYP representative addressed such nationalism harboured by Turks as a pride that stands on the way of naturalization:

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<sup>155</sup> İsmail Cem, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 109'uncu Birleşim, 08.6.1993, page 200

<sup>156</sup> Before 2000 Turkish citizens who denounced their Turkish citizenship and attained German citizenship could reapply for Turkish citizenship, albeit bypassing the ban on dual citizenship in the German Citizenship Law (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2007).

<sup>157</sup> Ercan Karakaş, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 109'uncu Birleşim, 08.6.1993, page 206

Even my journalist friends in Germany says ‘I do not want to get German or Dutch citizenship just for the sake of petty benefits. This is a good example of the Turkish people’s sense of nationalism. However, here we have a great responsibility on our shoulders. We are obliged to encourage them for naturalization in the countries they live, especially in Germany, after this law is enacted.’<sup>158</sup>

Similarly, RP representative Abdullah Gül brought up the low numbers of naturalized citizens, while also acknowledging the honouring aspect of it.

Very few Turkish citizens have acquired citizenship of the countries in which they live. It is flattering for showing that indeed our people are full of love for Turkey no matter how far they are. However, we, as the governments, should not abuse their good intentions and find a way to solve it.<sup>159</sup>

Albeit proud of such strong ties with the homeland, the attacks made the Turkish politicians more aware of the merits of naturalization and act more in a pragmatist direction for pushing the citizens into that direction.

The second reason that the number of naturalized citizens remained low was the practical difficulties they faced in the Turkish official records. According to the citizenship law of 1981 that was hitherto in force, when naturalized citizens denounced their Turkish citizenship upon official permission, their civil registry (*nüfus kaydı*) was closed out permanently. Losing access to their records created a situation where these citizens were treated as foreign nationals in their home country during legal undertakings such as buying and selling property, inheritance and residency.<sup>160</sup> As mentioned in the pre-text to Law No. 4112, this practice made the citizens refrain from acquiring the citizenship of another country and therefore waive their rights abroad.

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<sup>158</sup> Fethi Akkoç, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 120’nci Birleşim, 07.6.1995

<sup>159</sup> Abdullah Gül, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 120’nci Birleşim, 07.6.1995, page 91

<sup>160</sup> TBMM, Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanununun Bir Maddesinde Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun Tasarısı ve İçişleri Komisyonları Raporu (1/846) s. sayısı 842, 1995

Due to these two elements, naturalization rates remained relatively low in host-countries (Avcı and Kirişçi, 2008: 136-137). Coupled with the developments that put the citizens into a dire situation, political authorities in Turkey felt the urgent need of finding a way for safeguarding the Turkey-based rights of those who renounced their Turkish citizenship (Kadirbeyoğlu 2009: 424). However, even though the objective behind the law was to eliminate these problems faced on the practical level, the evidence from the legislative texts, plenary minutes and beyond, suggests that the politicians were substantially motivated by turning the Turks abroad into politically influential lobby group. For example, long before the bill came to the Parliament's agenda, Human Rights Watch Committee Report regarding the Mölln attacks in 1992 addressed political participation in host countries as a panacea to the problem. It further showed the early signs of Turkey's ambition to turn the immigrant population into a well-organized lobby group.

Whenever the voting rights of our citizens in Europe came to the agenda, we always have thought about their participation in the Turkish elections. However, almost a million of our citizens are eligible to vote in Europe right now. It is an unignorable number. In this regard, ensuring the voting rights of the Turkish population in Europe will have profound strategic and diplomatic consequences. Especially, suppose the elections where 50 thousand, 100 thousand vote difference in Germany is enough to win the elections. In that case, it will be seen more clearly how important they will become a lobbying group if they vote in the elections there.<sup>161</sup>

Even though the Law No. 4112 aimed to solve practical issues on citizenship services, it was based on this very intention to make them political actors in the societies in which they lived. Two years after Solingen attacks the bill was brought to the agenda in 1995 by the DYP-SHP coalition government. Even the bill's pre-text mentioned the most significant advantage of the law was as "the political influence that our people living in Europe will gain by acquiring the citizenship of that country". Every party spokesperson predominantly

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<sup>161</sup> TBMM İnsan Hakları Komisyonu Başkanlığı Faaliyet Raporu, 1992

emphasized this aspect. The DYP MP identified the millions of Turks living in Europe as the direct representatives of Turkey, hence, a potential lobby group.

With a population of 60 million, Turkey has 3 million representatives abroad. If properly benefited, these citizens can establish a very active lobby for Turkey. There is no issue our citizens abroad cannot overcome as long as they feel the support of the Turkish state.<sup>162</sup>

There was also a criticism directed to past administrations for neglecting the immigrants' electoral participation. RP representative Abdullah Gül referred to diasporas that have profound lobbying potential and that Turkey should go for that direction.

Considering how effective the Greek, Spanish, Armenian and Jewish minorities are in Europe and how much they affect the policies of their countries, the only reason Turkey stayed away from this opportunity is that until now Turkey did not pursue its interests.<sup>163</sup>

ANAP representative argued that when Turks become eligible to vote, parties would focus more on their needs and expectations as a key political group, which would help them to become visible political actors whose voice are heard.

In many German states, 20-25 thousand votes will be enough to determine which party will rule in that state. In a study we conducted in Hamburg we found that if 10 per cent of eligible Turkish voters become German citizens and vote in the local elections, a party that aspires to become part of the federal government will have to compromise with this 10 per cent of our citizens.<sup>164</sup>

The potential weight of the Turkish electorate in national politics and election results was further expressed semi-jokingly by giving examples from Sweden, where Turkish citizens had the right to vote and represent.

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<sup>162</sup> İsmet Attila, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 21'inci Birleşim, 03.11.1992 page 74

<sup>163</sup> Abdullah Gül, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 120'nci Birleşim, 07.6.1995, page 91

<sup>164</sup> Bülent Akarcalı, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 120'nci Birleşim, 07.6.1995, page 90

If their naturalization in European countries, especially in Germany, can be facilitated for the effective use of political power, Turkey will be in a stronger political position. While we were visiting there, they gave us the example of Sweden and said ‘We start our election campaign in Kulu District of Konya.’<sup>165</sup>

In addition to the becoming relevant political actors, there was also a hope that their votes would be game-changing in tight electoral races. Another DYP MP made calculations on the possible electoral contribution the Turks would make, and its impact on the votes of two main competing parties get.

The difference between the vote counts of SPD and the CDU in Germany is 230 thousand. With 230 thousand votes, the ruling party changes. In 1983, the coalition between CDU, CSU and FDP overthrew the 18 year-long SPD and FDP government with 220 thousand vote difference. With this law, if the Turkish worker, plus his wife, plus their adolescent children acquire German citizenship, the Turks will be in a position to determine the winning party.<sup>166</sup>

The core reason for supporting dual citizenship, according to these arguments, was to enable Turkish people living abroad to achieve political rights. The benefits brought by naturalization would be manifold. It would help expatriates ensuring their positions in social and economic life and would make them less prone to hostile attacks. But for the Turkish politicians, the more significant gain was extending the influence of homeland to Europe as the Turkish community gradually have a louder say in local and national politics. Turkey’s political calculation, as we understand from the legislative texts and speeches, was to turn the immigrant population into some kind of a unified and influential diaspora such as Armenians or Jewish examples. Some also argue that apart from such a strong wish to extend Turkey’s reach beyond its borders through expatriates, Turkish political authorities’ ideas reflect a republican understanding of citizenship (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2007: 141). Their objective seems to ensure that the Turkish community attain the same rights enjoyed by the communities of which they became members. When the politicians realized that it could be overcome

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<sup>165</sup> Coşkun Gökalp, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 120’nci Birleşim, 07.6.1995, page 96

<sup>166</sup>Fethi Akkoç, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 120’nci Birleşim, 07.6.1995

with legislation, they drafted a bill to introduce practical solutions to the problems that prevent them from naturalizing.

If we look at the content of the new law that was brought with abovementioned motivations, the new citizenship law that was amended with Law No.4112 introduced a special legal status to Turkish citizens who renounced their citizenship with a Council of Ministers permission to naturalize in countries that did not allow dual citizenship. With this new legal membership status, which was documented by a “pink card”, citizens who denounced their citizenship and their legal heirs could still live, travel, work, buy and sell a property and be eligible for inheritance in Turkey as any citizen of Turkey. Hence, the new law introduced a “quasi-citizen” status in Turkey (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003), where pink cardholders could enjoy almost the same rights as citizens in Turkey except the right to vote in local and national elections.

#### **6.4. Out-Of-Country Voting: To Fear (From Political Islamists) or Not?**

Political representation of diaspora has two faces. One is diaspora’s participation in homeland election, and another is voting in the homeland elections. 1995 witnessed two significant steps taken for both aspects of representation; the first of which was the constitutional amendment, and the second was the Law No. 4125 that changes the current election law. As was discussed in the section above, politicians took legislative initiatives to facilitate naturalization in host countries so that the diaspora could vote and eventually become effective political actors. A second significant development in the same year was the constitutional amendment and the follow-up change of the election law.

Participation in homeland elections incrementally took place with complementary legislative regulations over the years. In the last chapter on the 1980s, I summarized the first legislative attempt taken in 1986 during the Özal era that made out-of-country voting possible. Even though it was seen as the

symbol of emotional bonding with the homeland early on, as the number of Turkish citizens abroad rapidly increased, voting in the Turkish elections became more a representational necessity than an emotional connection with the country. For example, during the debates of the government plans in the Parliament in 1997, the new Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz addressed the low participation rates from abroad as a form of a democratic deficit.

We need to pass the legislation that regulates the voting rights of our citizens abroad. What will happen if we do the elections before we pass this law? What happened in the 1995 election will happen again. 3,5 million voters could not vote then, now 8,5 million voters cannot vote in this election. If 8,5 million voters cannot go to polls, that election will not be democratic. If an election is not democratic, my government will be responsible for it. What I am telling you is that I will not assume such a responsibility.<sup>167</sup>

Politicians often underlined the importance of incorporating as many members of the diaspora as possible to the elections in Turkey. However, the numbers remained relatively low until the 2000s, since the only method employed was voting at the border. The legislative changes on the issue in the 1990s, therefore, was somewhat limited, far from creating a real impact in political participation.

#### **6.4.1. 1995 Constitutional Amendment**

In 1995, there was a comprehensive constitutional amendment, changing the articles on 14 different issues ranging from the number of MPs to the trade unions' activities. Among others, it laid the constitutional foundation of expatriate voting by introducing a clause to the article 67 of the constitution as "the law shall determine applicable measures for Turkish citizens abroad to exercise their right to vote." This broad clause paved the way for introducing

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<sup>167</sup> Başbakan Mesut Yılmaz, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 119'uncu Birleşim, 10.07.1997

more specific legislative regulations enabling in-country voting for the Turkish immigrants abroad.<sup>168</sup>

In general, Islamist Refah Partisi (RP) was the most ardent and pro-active advocate of out-of-country voting. It is not surprising given the fact that the party had the biggest voter base in Europe compared to other political parties in Turkey. Not only political Islamists were the most well-organized political group, but they also had the support of different religious sects and groups, the details of which is discussed in the following sections. Therefore, the new clause in the constitution was also criticized in the same vein by RP members for not being imperative enough. According to the criticisms, the clause loosely regulated the voting by giving the ultimate lawmaking discretion to the bureaucracy. Instead, they argued that a more determined statement such as “will be made” would present a strong will, as well as a clear message to citizens abroad rather than leaving this prospect to a vague possibility<sup>169</sup>.

CHP spokesperson also agreed with the need of changing this clause with a more imperative provision such as “must be done” or “will be done” since the constitution must be directive and set more precise forward-looking goals. Additionally, the same CHP representative called for a separate diaspora constituency given that the total number of Turkish citizens abroad equal to the 10 % of Turkey’s population and that diaspora’s own members should enter to the parliament as their natural representatives<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>168</sup> The general principles for citizens abroad were already laid down in the 1982 Turkish constitution (article 62), which states: “The state shall take the necessary measures to ensure family unity, the education of the children, the cultural needs, and the social security of Turkish nationals working abroad, and shall take the necessary measures to safeguard their ties with the motherland, and to help them on their return home.”

<sup>169</sup> Lütfü Esengün, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 127’nci Birleşim, 22.06.1995 page 297

<sup>170</sup> Ali Dinçer, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 127’nci Birleşim, 22.06.1995 page 301

The ruling party representatives addressed to different country jurisdictions as a hindrance to passing a more imperative clause. Having a more straightforward direction would thus mean an obligation to send Turkish judges to foreign missions as election observers, which would possibly conflict with the host countries' own laws. That is why politicians resorted to broad terms like sovereignty and jurisdiction as the reasons that made more enabling cause unpalatable. Overall, the relevant article gave a constitutional guarantee for out-of-country voting. There was a need for one more specific legislation that created the out-of-country voting more accessible than out-of-country vote.

#### **6.4.2. Law 4125 on Elections, Voters' Registry, and Political Parties**

Despite the constitutional change that allowed changing the electoral system to enable out of country voting, no comprehensive legislation came to the Parliament's agenda to change the existing method of voting at the borders. The absence of such initiative was the main critique of the politicians during parliamentary talks of the draft bill on the election system (Law No. 4125), which came to the parliament three months after the constitutional change.

The draft bill that changed the laws of elections, voters' registry, and political parties was also a broad amendment that also regulated expatriate voting among others. The relevant article held the Supreme Election Board (Yüksek Seçim Kurulu, YSK) responsible for managing and organizing the overseas elections. Apart from bringing YSK into the picture, the new law did not make any further changes in the border ballots method. The pre-text to the bill addressed, in line with the discourse of the ruling party politicians, the legal and factual obstacles for not bringing a solution to this unparticulate voting method. Additionally, setting up polling stations abroad met objections raised primarily by Germany, fearing that protests and fights between rival political groups might erupt (Okuy, 2014). Therefore, in four general elections from 1995 to 2007, the use of border ballot method was justified with the presence of such legal and factual obstacles

(Abadan-Unat et al., 2014) which we can assume as the main reason for significantly low turnout rate.

Opposition parties heavily criticized DYP and the CHP, the two coalition partners behind the constitutional amendment, due to their reluctance in negotiating out-of-country-voting with host governments. They argued that behind such reluctance lies a fear from overseas citizens' influence on domestic politics. It is clearly observable that the most active advocate of expatriate voting and the loudest critic of the government in that matter was the RP throughout the 1990s. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the party did not pass any legislation to make expatriate voting possible during their reign as a major coalition partner. Still, during the debates of the Law No. 4125 Şevket Kazan, a prominent opposition member from Islamist RP and the former Labour Minister, criticized the government for misleading the public by pretending to have changed something, but in the end not precisely doing so. Bringing a constitutional amendment but not taking any further initiatives to facilitate the overseas voting was shown as a sign of such pretention. He insisted that there were other ways to negotiate with the host countries heavily populated by Turks, such as France and Germany, if the aim was genuine. Only through sincere dialogue and hence find a way other than obliging these citizens to vote at the borders<sup>171</sup>.

This alleged inertia to facilitate overseas voting united the opposition once more. DSP leader Ecevit also criticized the government for “de facto preventing our citizens abroad from using their voting right by putting obstacles” despite the constitutional amendment passed three months ago. Just like Şevket Kazan, he emphasized that if the aim was genuine, the government representatives could establish diplomatic relations with the host states to put overseas voting into practice. What held them back according to Ecevit was the fear from the influence that the citizens abroad might have on domestic politics. So, one left party (DSP) was essentially critical of another leftist party, coalition partner

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<sup>171</sup> Şevket Kazan, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 15'inci Birleşim, 26.10.1995 page 13

CHP, for effectively silencing the voice of the youth and preferences of the citizens abroad.

Indeed, the overall profile of the citizens abroad, who strongly held nationalist and religious worldview, indicated a potential voting powerhouse for religious and centre-right parties. That is why, some argue, the attempts to legalize or facilitate overseas voting remained limited. By looking at the 1990s dynamics, Okyay (2015) lists three reasons for such reluctance on the side of the secular incumbent politicians. First, incumbent -secular- politicians were wary of taking effective steps for overseas voting due to the existing demographics and the political inclinations of the citizens abroad. Since they tend to support nationalist and religious parties overwhelmingly, their full participation to the Turkish elections would possibly change the results in favour of these parties. Being aware of these reservations held by seculars, RP member Kazan asserted that, despite all the obstacles the RP voters would come and vote even if they were two thousand kilometres away; or else the party would bring them all to the borders to help them cast their votes, the result of which would disappoint the DYP-CHP coalition.<sup>172</sup>

The second reason for the reluctance was that the parties had not only much weaker overseas organization but also significantly less developed transnational links and a limited support base compared to the RP. Third, the secular establishment, especially the military, was very much aware of the role and weight of political Islam among the expatriates in the 1990s. Hence the inflow of cash or votes from abroad to the RP was a major concern for them, especially at a time when they put all their efforts to undermine political Islam.

Overall, when we look at the parliamentary texts and speeches of the constitutional amendment and the follow-up changing the election systems, it is not far-fetched to suggest that indeed the attempts to extend the franchise were

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<sup>172</sup> Kazım Ataoğlu, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 15'inci Birleşim, 26.10.1995 page 121

limited and that the Islamist RP was the most vocal advocate of it. In fact, no party officially acknowledged such hesitance for overseas voting. Nevertheless, parties who came to power usually addressed Germany's insistent objections as a hurdle and acted somewhat wary of actualizing it. It is also true that political Islam, as the most well-organized political group, had a considerable political appeal among the immigrants. Hence, it would not have been surprising to see RP as the first party among Turks in Europe in the 1990s, had overseas voting been practiced. That is why it is generally argued that most parties, and above all, the CHP maintained their strong resistance against mail ballots (Okyay, 2015: 121). Hence, the argument was the one between that regards the enfranchisement of expatriates a normative necessity, bringing Bauböck's "stakeholder citizenship" to mind, and those who opposed to the idea that citizens abroad, who do not bear the cost of political decisions, may ultimately determine the result of elections (Pogonyi, 2011). In the end, just like the seculars feared, expatriate voters might easily be mobilized by parties who need outside votes to win or want to stay in power.

All in all, the politicians' attempt in the 1990s was confined to between attempts to incorporate the citizenry and their reluctance to actually grant electoral power to them (Okyay, 2015). On the one hand, the state wanted to include all overseas citizens into the demos and ensure their representation in the homeland. Yet, on the other hand, it was slow and somewhat reluctant to take steps that would enable such representation. Overseas citizens had to wait for more than a decade to fully enjoy their voting rights.

### **6.5. Political Islam and Overseas Citizens: Do They Radicalize "When Left Alone"?**

In the section above, the hesitation regarding overseas voting was discussed. What laid behind this hesitation was connected to the political developments in Turkey. The successive electoral victories of the RP and its gradual rise to power

as the main coalition partner in 1996 created a severe threat for the secular state elite. Statements and actions of RP members in that vein implicitly threatening the principles of the secular state also did not help, and accelerated the concerns held by the state elite even more. The accumulation of all these has eventually led up to the February 27 post-modern coup.

Politicians in Turkey had valid causes to be worried about the RP's reach beyond Turkey's borders. The Islamist RP and ICMG (Islamic Community Milli Görüş), its sister organization in Europe, was the most well-organized and politically active group appealing to the citizens abroad. Leading figures within the RP frequently visited IGMG branches for campaigning, while around six million DM was sent to RP's election campaign in 1991 (Amiriaux 2003: 162-163). Given the mid-1990s' political context mentioned above, the state elite approached the links between the RP and the IGMG with suspicion (Okyay, 2015: 120). They were aware not only of the well-established organization of political Islam in Europe but also the role of citizens there in the rise of it. The fact that the majority of the emigrant population harboured nationalist and religious tendencies was the primary concern for policymakers. The materialization of this tendency in the ballot box as overwhelming political support was the feared scenario. As we also saw in the section above, the RP representatives played against that fear by claiming that the party would have no problem in transferring its supporters to the borders, since their electoral base would not mind travelling thousands of kilometres just for casting their votes in the Turkish elections.

The Islamic movement in Europe was not confined to the proxies of the *Milli Görüş* organization only. Other Islamist groups such as the Kaplan community in Germany was also quite active and had considerable support among the emigrants. Though also Islamist, they were more radical in their approach to the Turkish state and aimed to "conduct an Islamic revolution in Turkey along the lines of the Iranian model" (Schiffauer 1999: 4). Deriving its name from its

fundamentalist leader Cemalettin Kaplan, who was also commonly referred to as “Kara Ses” in the Turkish media outlets, the movement became an influential one among the religious citizens in Europe. The sharia threat posed by his movement was frequently mentioned in the parliamentary speeches too.

Many religious officials are sent abroad in order to bring preaching and guidance services to these countries. Some of them come under the service of Cemalettin Kaplan, who is an enemy of the state and our people and described as ‘Kara Ses’ in the press, and they help him to become powerful. As we all know, as a result of their work and organization, he can openly be hostile towards Atatürk and the republic, and pursue ambitions to establish a federal Islamic state.<sup>173</sup>

ICMG, Kaplan community and other big and small religious foundations brought forth the significance of Diyanet for the politicians. They considered Diyanet’s presence as a buffer zone against the danger of the radicalizing influence of underground religious organizations. The representatives of the left parties were the most ardent advocate of Diyanet activities in the fight against Milli Görüş and radical Islamic foundations’ influence. İstemihan Talay from SHP was one of those.

The families of our citizens working in Europe also want to benefit from religious services. It should be seen as a necessity. I want to point out to the people like ‘Kara Ses’, who directly attack Atatürk and our secular republic, and instrumentalize religion for their own benefits. When we leave our citizens alone, there is a danger that they will fall into the hands of these people. In this regard, I think *Diyanet* should undertake useful tasks.<sup>174</sup>

Expansion of state-supported religious services was thus seen as the most efficacious panacea to the rising influence of illegal Islamic foundations. As we have seen in the previous chapter focusing on the 1980s, as part of an attempt to exert state’s control over religious services fully, Diyanet was authorized to extend its organization abroad by recruiting imams and attachés. Within that

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<sup>173</sup> Şahn Ulusoy, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 42’nci Birleşim, 14.12.1992, page 438

<sup>174</sup> İstemihan Talay, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 42’nci Birleşim, 14.12.1992, page 357

framework, the Turkish-Islamic Union(s) for Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği, DITIB) was founded in various European countries throughout the 1980s. Ever since, DITIB incorporated many religious associations, most of which were connected to individual mosques, within its organization. As of 1995, according to the parliamentary investigation committee report of the same year, DITIB controlled around 700 associations in Germany. Far from being limited to the religious services, the role attributed to DITIB was an ideological one as much as an organizational. The same committee reports revealed multiple responsibilities undertaken by Diyanet:

It is a sociological fact that the vacuums left in social events will be attempted to be filled by others. Due to the delay in providing sufficient religious services to our 3 million citizens in Western European countries, especially Germany, extreme groups filled this vacuum and continued their activities until the DIB's Overseas Organization was established. When the staff need of DIB is fully met, the influence of these groups on our citizens will be further reduced. The vast majority of our citizens abroad have already sided with our state and Diyanet. (TBMM, 1995: 15-16)

With its ability to reach to a big audience, DITIB mosques became crucial outlets for disseminating “a moderate Islam acceptable to the Turkish regime” (Ögelman 2003: 166). With the words of Diyanet itself in the parliamentary investigation committee report, foundations within DITIB played a key role in ensuring the unity and solidarity among citizens in Europe and warning them against separatist and destructive groups.<sup>175</sup> However, while this policy was generally supported among the left, there were also those who approached the foundations with reservations. Accordingly, the state should be the main actor rather than the foundations, albeit connected to DITIB.

Over one thousand foundations have been established in Germany. Most of these are associations with religious purposes. Although they are not legally connected to DITIB, there is an organic link between them that comes from their statute. It is clear that neither their organizational model and work nor the

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<sup>175</sup> Yurt Dışında Çalışan İşçilerimizin ve Yurttaşlarımızın Karşılaştıkları İdarî, Mali, Ekonomik, Sosyal ve Kültürel Sorunları Tespit Etmek ve Gerekli Önlemleri Almak Amacıyla Kurulan (10/21,47) Esas Numaralı Meclis Araştırması Komisyonu Raporu, 1995, page 18

way our foreign missions work and organize are sufficient in solving the problems faced by our citizens there. One obvious fact about Germany is that the organization on social affairs is not sufficient. We should make the state the main responsible and effective body, not the mosque foundations. and effective, not mosque associations.<sup>176</sup>

If one fear held by the secular politicians was the prospect of uncontrollability of these foundations by Diyanet, another was the one held by Islamist politicians that the Diyanet cannot represent all foundations alike. The Islamists argued that Diyanet's overseas organization DITIB stood for only one version of Islamic foundations, whereas many of them function independently. Therefore, bringing them all together under the umbrella organization of DITIB was wrong.

The organization operating under the name of DİTİB is a unit that was established at a late stage, and it is wrong for the officials only to take this seriously and ignore others. DTİB uses only the name of Diyanet: it is not official, it is an association like others. Our consulates should not see only DİTİB as legal and legitimate and exclude other associations saying 'you are this, you are that.' They should also benefit from them.<sup>177</sup>

This reproach not only showed that the RP saw many Islamic foundations in Europe as its protégé, but also as an Islamist party contested the role of Diyanet's extension in Europe commonly accepted by different political components in Turkey. It would not be wrong to consider this as a conflict of interest between RP and Diyanet concerning the latter's desire to monopolize the activities of all foundations, since the former wanted to keep Milli Görüş affiliated foundations within its reach. So, the role of DITIB became another issue in which secular and Islamist politicians found themselves against each other.

Overall, by looking at the ascribed role to DITIB by the politicians in Turkey and the RP's aspirations, a bizarre picture emerged regarding political Islam in Europe: We find left parties such as SHP defending the expansion of Diyanet in

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<sup>176</sup> Cemalettin Gürbüz, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 112'nci Birleşim, 15.6.1993, page 393

<sup>177</sup> Ahmet Remzi Hatip, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 112'nci Birleşim, 15.6.1993, page 87

Europe, while Islamist RP became an actor criticizing its role and activities. Against all attempts by the RP, the ever-increasing prominence of Diyanet as an answer to rising radical Islamic influences in Europe as such somewhat resembles the protectionist reactions in the 1970s against the danger of communism and other radical political influences. Like communism back then, underground Islamic groups and foundations were portrayed as a threat against which the citizens should be safeguarded.

Besides all disputes over how to administer religious services, we see the resurgence of the “when left alone” as a common reaction to a perceived threat. Like in the 1960s and 1970s’ debates, the politicians held the idea that without the state protection, the citizens abroad would quickly come under the influence of the adverse of official state ideology. Therefore “when left alone” became an all-encompassing term used for radical left ideologies in the 1960s and 1970s, while in the 1990s it was used for the radical Islamic influence in Europe, which was a salient political threat in domestic Turkish politics at the time. Here in the 1990s, left-leaning MPs used it regarding Milli Görüş and Kaplan community, whereas in the 1960s and 1970s right-wing and nationalist MPs employed the term against radical left ideologies. Regardless of the source of danger, the need to protect remained intact.

#### **6.6. Equal Citizenship Disrupted: Draft Law No. 4230 on Social Security of Citizens Abroad and its Veto by the President**

Similar to the legislation passed in the parliament in 1978 and 1985, the Draft Law no. 4230 also intended to bring a set of new regulations on social security, insurance and pension rights of citizens abroad. The bill stipulated granting retirement rights for those living abroad in return for a monthly premium (*prim*) for 5.000 days. However, different than the similar laws that passed unanimously before, the draft bill brought to the parliament’s agenda in 1997 by RP-DYP coalition had particular clauses regarded as controversial by the opposition,

leading to fierce criticism during its long debates. Subsequently, at the stage of law's presidential approval, President Süleyman Demirel sent the draft law back to the Parliament for reconsideration.

A group of criticisms come to the forefront regarding the draft bill's content. First, it designated a special social security trust fund for overseas (Yurtdışı Sosyal Güvenlik Kasası) within the social security system. The opposition criticized this new fund for introducing a totally new social security regime similar to *Bağ-Kur*, *Emekli Sandığı* and *SSK*, yet lacking all transparency and scrutiny to which the former groups was subject. Second, it was criticized for an article that entailed 20 per cent of the premium income from this new trust fund would be unconditionally transferred to the treasury under the name of "state guarantee share." In other words, the government which was struggling with a dire economic situation expected to have an extra contribution to the state budget from this new regulation without a similar past example. The opposition found this clause dubious and saw it as a way to create an untransparent source of extra budget for government spending immune from accountability. Already dense and polarised political atmosphere accelerated by RP's controversial stance towards secularism made the government highly unpopular among the civilian and military state elite. In addition to low political support from the public, the government's unpopularity can be seen as a contributing element for the fierce opposition to the bill and its eventual rejection by the president.

Another critique was on the flaws in the design of the retirement system. According to the bill, the amount paid to each person as retirement pension would balance out the premium accumulated in the beneficiary's account in 2007, meaning that after 2007 the state would start paying the remaining years' payment from the budget. For the opposition, this was yet another sign that the regulation was short-sighted, bringing immediate but not well-planned solutions to deep problems faced by the government. It was due to the pragmatist outlook that drove the government members to prepare the bill hastily without detailed

assessment, which led to many flaws in its practicability. Another DSP member also criticized the bill for its economic feasibility and accused the government of bringing the law hastily with daily concerns to save the day<sup>178</sup>.

The nature of the draft bill was seen to be creating inequality between citizens home and abroad was the most severely criticized aspect. While citizens in Turkey could claim their retirement rights after paying premiums for at least 25 years, according to the draft bill, citizens abroad could claim their retirement pensions once they reached to 5.000 days' worth of premium payment. CHP representative, who highlighted the contradiction with the existing law in force, claimed that this was directly at odds with the equality principle of the constitution<sup>179</sup>. By looking at this point of criticism which was also addressed throughout the debates by various other representatives, it is possible to observe this bill for the first time proposed a context where the citizens here and there - Turkey and Europe- were not equal. The long-sought equality principle was distorted in favour of the latter. Since the early days of labour migration, politicians of all parties commonly aspired to create an equal citizenship status and bonding for citizens abroad. Such aspiration was practised by gradually granting voting rights, facilitating compulsory military service and extending fundamental citizenship services such as education. More than anything, the reason that the opposition harshly criticized DYP-RP coalition's draft bill was sacrificing this long-cherished sense of equality with short-term political and economic gains. A DSP member addressed such disproportion created by the bill as follows:

Currently, our peasants working in the agricultural sector lack health insurance coverage even though they pay their social security premiums to Bağ-Kur. We know that these citizens also want to be covered by the health insurance by paying an additional premium if necessary and that they want to avoid paying extra for hospitals, doctors and medicine. We see here that the government does

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<sup>178</sup> Zekeriya Temizel, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 61'inci Birleşim, 26.02.1997, page 292

<sup>179</sup> Bekir Kumbul, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 59'uncu Birleşim, 20.02.1997, page 13

not devote any time and attention to such fundamental problems. Today about 40 per cent of our citizens in Turkey do not have health insurance coverage. How can the government introduce draft laws for those who have already retired, while it does not consider measures for these people? Our people thus see what *adil düzen* retirement means.<sup>180</sup>

While referring to RP's *adil düzen* motto that envisages a just order for all with Islamic connotations, the representative points to the unequal situation between the citizens here and there that the law would create in case that the bill was passed. It would not be wrong to identify this draft bill; therefore, as the first instance where a dichotomy between citizens in Turkey vs citizens abroad occurred, wherein the latter is favoured vis-à-vis the former. Against this, opposition members' criticism was against the idea that citizens abroad would be subject to different and somewhat favourable conditions than those in Turkey. Similarly, ANAP member labelled this bill as "a new resource package"<sup>181</sup>, and that the citizens in Turkey should be able to benefit from the same advantages as citizens abroad as a requirement of the equality principle. These equality arguments came down to the conclusion that living abroad and being a part of the diaspora should not necessarily come with a set of privileges different than those at home.

The president joined the orchestra of critics and returned the bill to the parliament for reconsideration. The text substantiating the arguments for disapproval was, in a sense, the reflection of the main points frequently repeated in the plenary debates by the opposition. Echoing the opposition representatives' arguments in the parliament, the president's advice to reconsider and re-debate the bill also highlighted the disparity between here and there. It stated that: "While workers in Turkey retire after working for 20-25 years and paying a premium much higher than the amount stipulated in this law, those who leave abroad become entitled to retirement without 5.000 working days condition and

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<sup>180</sup> Mehmet Yaşar Ünal, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 68'inci Birleşim, 13.03.1997 page 487

<sup>181</sup> Recep Mızrak, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 61'inci Birleşim, 26.02.1997, page 285

with less payment.” The text further concluded that a close analysis of the draft bill found a violation of the constitutional principle of equality without there being a common public good to sacrifice this principle. The perks were thus seen as a set of privileges provided to the diaspora members different than the treatment to which citizens in Turkey were subject.

Pinpointing to a precise reason for such strong opposition and de facto rejection by the president would remain in the realm of speculation. It might indeed be the unfeasible content that will be discussed below, or already tumultuous political atmosphere of February 1997, during which the debate took place, as possible explanations of strong criticism against the bill and its eventual rejection. Regardless of the cause, the bill did never come to the parliament’s agenda for a second debate and after the president’s advice for reconsideration and it became obsolete.

President’s veto of the bill was also remarkable on another level. Such veto was rare. It is important for showing how controversial the bill was seen not by the opposition parties alone but by the presidents who had an above-politics position in the 1990s. Especially considering that initiatives concerning the common problems faced by the diaspora, including their social security rights in Turkey, hardly met any opposition shows the intensity of the political atmosphere of the day. Moreover, it also points to a rarely observed disagreement-creating potential of diaspora issues among different political blocs.

The rejection of the bill by the president also showed that laws that answer a diaspora problem did not always have to bear above-politics position and be accepted by parties in every political spectrum. Though it is hard to speculate whether the motive of the bill was mobilizing the diaspora and gain political support, or indeed an urge to create an extra budget for the struggling government, it would not be misleading to assert that if passed, diaspora members would have found themselves in a privileged position for the first time

as a result, in terms of receiving different citizenship perks than those in the homeland. Still, it is crucial not to miss the political conjuncture of the day as a possible cause of the heavy criticism independent from the draft bill's content. One might rightly ask if the bill's fate would have been different had the debates not taken place in the February 27 process, which is one of the most tumultuous episodes in the Turkish political history. There were undoubtedly technical sides to the bill that was contradicting with the regulations in place. However, it is still vital to consider the political context as a cause that made such fierce opposition possible.

### **6.7. MPs with a Diaspora Background and Their Legislative Activities**

As the number of the Turkish community living in Europe increased and the overall profile became more and more diversified, we started to see politicians in the Turkish Parliament with a diaspora background. In the 1970s, we saw examples of parliamentarians who had spent some time abroad for different reasons before their service. For instance, Gani Aşık, who was a theologian, became a CHP MP after serving as a religious affairs attaché in Germany. However, the first time in the 1990s, MPs having migration background were elected for the Turkish Parliament. Osman Yumakoğulları can be noted as the most prominent of them. Although born and raised in Turkey, he spent long years in Germany while being actively involved in the Turkish community and Islamic civil society activities. He was the founding director of Islamic Milli Görüş Community in Europe. He was elected as an Istanbul MP from the Welfare Party in 1995.

When we look at the legislative activities of the RP MP Osman Yumakoğulları, immigration and diaspora-related issues made the majority of his legislative activities. During three years of his incumbency in the 20<sup>th</sup> legislative term, between 1996-1999, he took the floor four times in total, three of which was on bills directly or indirectly related to citizens abroad. Likewise, all three written

questions he posed to different ministries – Justice, Interior and Defence - were about the status of the those who renounced their Turkish citizenship upon special permission.

Another important name in the 1990s with a considerable diaspora experience was SHP representative Ercan Karakaş. Though born and raised in Turkey too, he studied and spent nearly twenty years in Germany, being actively involved in left politics during his time there. Following his return to Turkey, he worked in different ranks within SHP and was elected as an MP in 1991.

Compared to Yumakoğulları, he had a more active presence in the Turkish Parliament, also working on a more diverse range of topics comparatively, rather than focusing on diaspora matters. His legislative activity can be noted as focusing on issues such as human rights, freedom of speech, leftist movement in Turkey, terrorism in the southeast of Turkey, general foreign policy issues such as relations with the EU. Nevertheless, when there was a particular agenda concerning the diaspora, such as the debates on whether or not to initiate an investigation committee on the problems faced by the citizens in Europe, he acted as SHP's go-to MP to talk on these issues to take the floor representing his party. Also, he consistently posed written questions to the relevant ministries regarding the citizens abroad, especially in his second term during the 20<sup>th</sup> legislative term, on issues varying from dual citizenship to voting rights in Turkey.

Overall, early signs in the 1990s indicated that politicians who previously had connections with the Turkish community in Europe considered themselves as the natural representatives of the immigrant community in Europe. Their legislative activities gravitated towards the problems faced by diaspora members. However, while there were convergences between both MPs focus, such as the status of dual citizenship holders, it would be fair to argue that the SHP MP Karakaş

submerged his part's leftist agenda somewhat more on his diaspora-related legislative activity than RP MP Yumakoğulları.

## **Conclusion**

Since the onset of immigration to Europe, the 1990s turned out to be the period in which citizen's permanent settlement in Europe became uncontested. Everything that followed in diaspora policymaking – new laws, policy directions and the politicians' discourse- was shaped against this backdrop. A brief review of the diaspora policies preceding the 1990s shows us that the politicians were rather keen on preserving the cultural connections as a way of protection. In the 1990s, however, the type of protection they endured has changed its characteristics. The attempts to extend Turkish radio broadcasts to or send more teachers and imams, for example, have gradually turned into an effort to make political subjects out of citizens in Europe.

1990s were also crucial for showing that developments taking place in the host country contexts could have a direct impact on the parliamentary agenda related to the diaspora. The xenophobic attacks were the most important example for showing how their lives and experiences in host countries might affect homeland diaspora legislation. The fact that discrimination and eventual racist attacks accelerated the dual citizenship regulation can be addressed as evidence of that correlation. Additionally, the degree of government and the opposition's reactions against diaspora-related developments can also differ significantly. It is reasonable to think that the government might opt for giving a milder response in order not to burn the bridges once and for all with the fellow host-country government, while the opposition is relatively better situated for giving a more vocal reaction.

The third lesson to be derived from the 1990s is that the state's protective tendencies have come to the surface with different guises. Homeland politicians

often use opposing sub-groups such as “enemy emigrants” and “friendly communities” to categorize their overseas populations (Ragazzi, 2009: 386). Since the early years of migration to Europe, the Turkish state and the politicians have used a similar framework to identify its citizens in Europe. In the 1960s and 1970s, “enemy emigrants” were the communists and radical leftists whose ideas might potentially inflict the “friendly communities”. In the 1980s and 1990s, the dangerous group became the reactionary and separatist Islamist movements for threatening the fundamental republican principles. In that sense, the focus of the threat perception changed, while the divisive discourse and protective tendency remained the same.

Another observation from the 1990s is that the social movements or political tendencies that could not find a room for manoeuvre for itself in Turkey due repressive political atmosphere become more likely to move beyond the borders and flourish among the expatriates. Radical left, Kurdish movement and political Islam can be cited as prominent examples. Owing to the liberal environment for rights and freedoms in the West, these movements find outlets to express themselves and attract supporters relatively easily. The state officials feared from communist influence in the 1960s and 1970s, and the rise of radical Islam in the 1980s and 1990s. As the next chapters on the 2000s will also show, it can be identified as a recurring pattern in Turkey’s diaspora relations, as a result of which Turkey assumes the protective attitude mentioned in the last paragraph. Another outcome of that pattern is the outbreak of diplomatic crises with the host country governments, which have usually occurred from Turkey’s desire to control and repress these tendencies beyond its borders too.

One final note to mention regarding the 1990s is that, as the bill on social security showed, the fate of diaspora legislation can be affected by domestic political context. Fiercer the relationship between the government and the opposition, within or beyond the parliament, more likely that legislation will receive harsher criticisms or rejection. Though already implausible content of the

social security bill brought by RP-DYP coalition should also be noted, we have good reasons to think that the tense political atmosphere of the February 27 process might have contributed to the rejection of the bill by President Demirel.

## CHAPTER 7

### FROM CITIZENS ABROAD TO “THE DIASPORA”: POLICIES AND DEBATES SHAPING DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT IN THE 2000s

The 2000s marks a turning point for Turkey’s relations with its diaspora. The country showed a growing interest in citizens abroad and their organizations as it started implementing consistent diaspora engagement policies (Şahin-Mencütek and Başer, 2017: 3). The last two decades can thus be accepted as a period in which Turkey’s relations with citizens abroad became “the diaspora policy”.

A series of legislative initiatives have been launched in this period, leading to important transformations from expanding political rights to institutional arrangements. Post-2000s is also categorized in the literature as a time in which the community of migrant workers were transformed into global Turkish diaspora” (Okuy, 2015: 132). Like the previous ones, this chapter will also discuss the main themes that came out from parliamentary debates in the 2000s and analyse the implications in the light of diaspora-homeland relations.

In that regard, diaspora-related legislative developments can be analysed in two categories as (i) policy-related developments (e.g. founding a diaspora institution, voting abroad) and (ii) politics-related developments (e.g. Islamophobia, tension with host countries, the new opposition abroad after the coup attempt) which shaped the diaspora policy in the 2000s. The parliament’s activities will hence be elaborated from this broader framework.

While debating these points in the following sections, I will argue that what makes this period substantially different from others is that the ruling party's domestic political agenda got intertwined with the diaspora policy. This is what

we see in occasions like diplomatic crises during election times, Islamophobia and the diaspora policy's rearticulation in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt. Therefore, the evidence as such supports the scholarly arguments that the main feature of this period was the formation of a Muslim (and Turkish) diaspora (Adar, 2019) and that diaspora was seen by the Ak Party as a supporting element for domestic political and economic developments (Arkılıç, 2021).

There is a caveat concerning the methodology of this chapter. In line with the growing digitalization of documents in general and the Parliament's changing documentation policy in particular, more and more legislative processes are documented and shared with the public more transparently. This means more data than the previous decades for the scope of this study. The abundance does not only come from plenary debates but various other legislative documents such as committee minutes, press releases by MPs and reports issued by different committees with a different focus. In the previous four decades until the 2000s, only a handful of laws or legislative procedures took place that changed diaspora relations. In the aftermath of the 2000s, this dynamic has accelerated rapidly, producing more legislative documentation than ever. In that regard, it was methodologically crucial to focus fundamentally on laws, legislative debates and reports that had a vital impact on Turkey's diaspora relations. So, due to methodological concerns, I have done a selective reading by narrowing down the legislative activities to the most significant legislative developments regarding the diaspora.

The sections in this rather long chapter are as follows: First, I will look at the works of the first diaspora-related legislative process, the investigation committee in the 2000s. Then I will focus on the legislative process that laid the foundation of YTB, the first-ever diaspora institution. As the second most significant development, the process leading up to the expansion of voting rights will be discussed in length. The eventful process in the wake of expatriate voting will also be touched upon after that. In the following section, I will discuss the

implications of the 2016 coup attempts for diaspora relations. The sections after that will discuss thematic areas (Islamophobia, debates on the women in the diaspora and the Human Rights Committee's diaspora agenda). I will finalize the chapter by looking at the works of the MPs coming from the diaspora background.

### **7.1. Parliamentary Investigation Committee in 2003**

The first significant legislative attempt in the 2000s regarding the diaspora came in 2003 with the parliamentary investigation committee. Like its predecessors in 1977 (both in the National Assembly and the Senate) and 1995, it aimed to “inquire into citizens’ problems abroad and identify the measures to be taken.” In that regard, the 2003 committee was the fourth of its kind in Parliamentary history.

Before embarking on the committee debates’ highlights, it is necessary to note the parliamentary arithmetic of the day. In the 2002 general elections, only two parties, Ak Party and CHP could pass the 10 % electoral threshold, practically introducing a two-party system for four years. The Ak Party, which had only been formed in August 2001, won the election after receiving 34,3 % of the votes. This electoral victory gave the party 363 seats out of 550, an overwhelming parliamentary majority. The second party CHP gained 178 seats with 19.38% of the popular vote. According to the results, nearly half of the electorate could not be in parliament. Nonetheless, the 2002 parliamentary composition was unique for producing Turkey’s first single-party government since 1987 and the first two-party parliament since 1961.

Within this parliamentary context, the group proposal to establish a yet-another investigation committee on the diaspora issues were given separately by both parties but later were merged into a single proposal.

### **7.1.1. “Being An Employee is Not a Destiny”: Political Economy as an Enduring Perspective**

During the debates setting up the committee, both Ak Party and CHP representatives underlined the profound socioeconomic change the citizens abroad had undergone. In their words, the population’s characteristics have changed as they were turning from a group of workers into employment-creating and investment-making entrepreneurs. CHP deputy and Turkey’s former ambassador to Germany Onur Öymen pointed to that significant shift.

Dear friends, it would be misleading to consider Turks abroad just as workers. Turkish entrepreneurs abroad undertake a crucial task; they have reached a very advanced level. The number of those in the European Union alone increased from 56.500 in 1996 to 82.300 by the end of 2002. It is estimated that in 2010, 100 thousand Turkish companies will operate in Germany alone. Our companies’ turnover in Europe increased from 21 billion euros to 35 billion euros between 1996 and 2002 .<sup>182</sup>

Politicians thus tended to portray citizens abroad as of 2003 no longer as passive subjects in the labour market who lived under unfavourable conditions but rather as strong economic agents with significant contributions to the host country’s economy. Such empowered immigrant image was also used in by AK Party parliament group head of the day Eyüp Fatsa, who also comes from an immigrant background himself.

More than 80 thousand people have become employers. They went as workers, but saw that being an employee is not a destiny and became employers in the countries they live. The employment these 80 thousand create is 420 thousand, and the financial turnover is approximately 35 billion euros. They make serious contributions to the economy of their country. In fact, with their identity as businessmen, these people receive the highest honours by ranking high in the lists and become economic subjects.

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<sup>182</sup> Onur Öymen, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 98’incii Birleşim, 08.06.2004, page 33

The new way “the workers abroad” were identified in the 2000s showed a stark contrast with the 1960s and the 1970s. The economic perspective still predominant, the perception of a long-sufferer, hardworking worker, who closed the foreign trade deficit in the 1970s had gradually evolved into the one who reaped the benefits of his years-long hard work and became an employer in a foreign land. One way or another, one of the most highlighted characteristics of the citizens abroad in the early 2000s was still their economic contribution.

Another critical highlighted during the committee report discussions was the civil society groups included in the committee activities in Europe. The opposition party refused to join the committee trips to Europe claiming that some organizations invited to the Europe meetings were illegal establishments carrying out unconstitutional activities. While the deputies did not name a specific civil society organization that held the party back from joining the visits, we understand from the CHP spokesperson’s talk that allegedly radical Islamist organization was the primary concern.

By all means, we know that some of our organizations have activities abroad that push the limits of our Constitution. In particular, some organizations do not comply with the principle of secularism or do not comply with our Constitution’s other basic principles. State officials certainly must warn them. Our citizens abroad are required to comply with our Constitution and fundamental laws, the same way that all our citizens in Turkey are.<sup>183</sup>

While these statements point to a continuation of duties and obligations attached to Turkish citizenship, it also signifies that being outside the republic’s territories did not necessarily mean that the republic’s fundamental principles would cease to be binding. In another respect, there is a noticeable similarity between the complaints of the 1980s and 1990s raised by left or centre-of-left parties against the Welfare Party officials’ activities in Europe, for allegedly flirting with the unconstitutional Islamic groups. Comparable to two decades ago, CHP deputies were concerned about the affinity between these groups and the AK Party.

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<sup>183</sup> Onur Öymen, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 66’ncü Birleşim, 15.4.2003, page 27

Against such allegations, Ak Party representatives stated that during the. The chairman of the investigation committee insisted that the committee had been embracing different groups in its work.

During these trips, we went to mosques; we also went to taverns, bars and discos that are visited frequently by the Turkish youth. We wanted to listen to everyone. Not only wanting to listen everyone but also as a parliamentary group on behalf of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and on behalf of the nation, we said ‘We came to see you, come around and tell us what you are doing, what your problems are, what your suggestions are for our country and what we can do for you.’<sup>184</sup>

In addition to the committee chairman, the Ak Party group head and the co-signatory of the investigation committee Eyüp Fatsa defended the organizations on the list by asserting that the mentioned civil society groups were by no means forbidden or illegal organizations, but were only warned by German authorities “for violating the Constitution from time to time, for pushing the lines and limits of the Constitution”.<sup>185</sup> The moral of this long-held debate between CHP and AK Party is the ever-changing definition of who the terrorists or illegal entities are, both home and abroad. For parties on both sides of the political spectrum, the definition of which group of citizens is acceptable and not alternates in time. The same also holds for the diaspora members. For example, while these reactionary or radical Islamic foundations, with whom even the negotiations were out of the question, can be seen as harmful and unacceptable by CHP along with PKK-affiliated organizations, for Ak Party or their Islamist predecessors only latter is seen as terrorists. Later, following the coup attempt in 2016, the harmful or the terrorist was redefined once again. Still, one can talk about continuity in different parties’ approach to diaspora from the lens of who the acceptable or non-acceptable citizens are.

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<sup>184</sup> Mustafa Bař, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 98’inci Birleřim, 08.06.2004, page 51

<sup>185</sup> Eyüp Fatsa, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 98’inci Birleřim, 08.06.2004, page 39

In that regard, it would not be misleading to suggest that a line of continuity exists in the diaspora politics since the 1960s in terms of continually defining and re-defining the divide between “friendly communities” vs “enemy emigrants”, as conceptualized by Ragazzi (2009: 386). As could be observed frequently in the debates and the final report of the 2003 committee, the criteria for being included in diaspora opening is “non-affiliation to terrorism”. However, measures to define these terrorists are usually altered or redefined following the ideological stance of who controls the government in Turkey. Such emphasis non-affiliation to terrorist groups also materialized in the “suggestions” section of the final committee report: “Regardless of which country they live, every individual bound to the Republic of Turkey through the bond of citizenship and not affiliated to terror is very important and valuable for our state.”<sup>186</sup> These words uttered also lays out the conditionality for the inclusiveness of the diaspora policy: not being a part of the “enemy communities” in Ragazzi’s words.

Overall, the themes discussed above defined the works and debates of the 2003 investigation committee, which was the fourth of its sort since the onset of migration. In later years of the 2000s however, even though more investigation committees were established on the diaspora issues, they remained somewhat thematic. These later committees' scope continued to be on more specific topics such as Islamophobia or the problems faced by women and families abroad, making the focus of the 2003 investigation committee relatively broad.

## **7.2. The First-Ever Diaspora Institution: the Establishment of YTB**

Different political parties had long voiced the need for a separate diaspora body to oversee all aspects of Turkey’s relations with its populations abroad. After the realization that the populations abroad were permanent in host countries, the idea

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<sup>186</sup> Yurt Dışında Yaşayan Vatandaşların Sorunlarının Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Önlemlerin Belirlenmesi Amacıyla Kurulan 10/8, 48 sayılı Komisyon Raporu, 2003, page 146

to bring all state services together under an umbrella organization was a favoured opinion within politics and the bureaucracy. However, the 2003 investigation committee report put such will into motion by stating it as a concrete policy proposal: “There is a need for an institution to coordinate all foreign affairs-related official bodies.”<sup>187</sup> Hence, the establishment of the Presidency for Turks abroad and Related Communities in 2010 (hereafter YTB) was a defining moment marking Turkey’s diaspora relations' institutionalisation. Here in this section, I will look into the main themes and discussion points in the parliamentary debates of the law that established the Presidency.

The bill came as a draft law to the Parliament’s agenda, meaning that similar proposals given by different party members were merged into a single bill, and the Ak Party deputies proposed it as an Ak Party group proposal. In substance, the draft law had three objectives: to work on citizens abroad, to build economic and social relations with the kin communities, and to ensure coordination of incoming international students. Turks abroad were one of these three main pillars. The Presidency was designed as an Ankara-based organization with no diplomatic missions aboard.

Before analyzing the speeches over the draft bill, it is essential to note the parliamentary arithmetic of the day. Four political parties had seats in the parliament during 23<sup>rd</sup> term, the ruling Ak Party as the biggest group, CHP as the main opposition and MHP as an opposition party and BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) group composed MPs who entered the parliament as independent candidates yet formed a party group in the parliament once they were elected.

The bill was discussed and approved in two sessions in total. While analyzing the draft bill's plenary debates, it is clearly seen that diversity of opinions on the

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<sup>187</sup> Yurt Dışında Yaşayan Vatandaşların Sorunlarının Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Önlemlerin Belirlenmesi Amacıyla Kurulan 10/8, 48 sayılı Komisyon Raporu, 2003, page 146

bill is very representative of the divisions in the parliament and different approaches to diaspora policy assumed by different parties. In fact, in many ways, the debates somewhat summarize the overall party position in post-2000 diaspora policy. MHP supported the bill but highlighted the kinship aspect of the new institution. As a result, the party proposed a more comprehensive policy framework for a more nuanced emphasis on the Turkic world. While also endorsing the idea, CHP questions the extent to which the Presidency is autonomous and asked why the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was bypassed, hinting towards a possible future political influence. The party representatives also criticize the government's approach in diaspora policy for not being inclusionary enough. Lastly, BDP did not approve the naming of the Presidency for it failed to reflect Turkey's diversity. I would like to explain the dynamics of each position as extracted from the debates.

Even though every political party agreed on the necessity of a separate institution authorized to deal with diaspora policy, the bill was contested in different ways by opposition parties. The name proposed by MHP in a separate bill was Turkic World Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk Dünyası İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Başkanlığı*). During the debates, MHP spokesperson Mehmet Şandır maintained that the presidency's key objective was to unite the Turkic world, rather than a broad focus on diaspora in Europe.

Although it is stated in the draft law that such a structure has been established for these three purposes, the truth of it is that a coordination board and a presidency has been established to coordinate relations with the Turkic world (...) What is needed, necessary, useful and right thing to do is to establish a presidency, in fact, a ministry for the Turkic world.<sup>188</sup>

It might not come as a surprise that as a nationalist party that defines the Turkishness ethnically by including the Turkic communities in the former Soviet countries, what MHP expects from a diaspora institution with "Turks abroad" in its title is simply this: to focus on the issues of the Turkic world. Such perception

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<sup>188</sup> Mehmet Şandır, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 76'ncı Birleşim, 23.3.2010, page 425

takes the diaspora policy away from a predefined ground and moves it to a somewhat shaky one in which the concept can be filled with any ideological priorities. Borrowing from Wendt's famous punchline that elegantly summarizes the constructivist international relations perspective (Wendt, 1995), a diaspora institution then becomes what political parties make out of it.

In Şandır's words, YTB becomes "what you make out of it", which makes the continuous use of "Turkic world" more a manifestation of whom the state should reach with its diaspora policy than a simple blunder. Then we have valid reasons to see diaspora policy as an arena over which political parties try to exert their influence on which populations to reach and serve. "We do not need to bury our heads into the sand, we have an enormous Turkic world ahead of us", Şandır further continued and prioritized the Turkic world in his speech over Turkish citizens abroad, which the Presidency fundamentally aims to reach. Nevertheless, he announced his party's support for the draft bill.

CHP was also supportive of the idea behind the Presidency. The party spokesperson declared that he met the bill with "with great enthusiasm, with great hope, with great excitement."<sup>189</sup> However, one point of criticism by CHP was the promise on the institution's autonomy, for the possible upshot of the term implied: did that also mean autonomy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? If so, this could also mean the Presidency operating under the Prime Minister as an agent that promotes the government's agenda abroad. The prospect of the government dictating its ideology over citizens abroad was an early sign of discontent over what might happen in diaspora policy.

The criticism coming from BDP, whose members are mostly of Kurdish origin, revived the controversial debates on citizenship. While addressing a different type of diversity lacking within the institution's DNA, party members rejected the narrow definition of Turkishness put forward by YTB, arguing that it falls

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<sup>189</sup> Onur Öymen, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 76'ncı Birleşim, 23.3.2010 page 428

short of including Turkey's diversity. In particular, what really criticized was "the institutionalization through ethnic identity", while the party acknowledged the problems faced by citizens abroad and a need to find a solution for them. Starting from the name, BDP deputies found the institution suspiciously discriminatory by design. According to the spokesperson, the heterogeneous character of Turkey as a multicultural society was absent in the bill.

While naming it as 'Presidency of Turks', an institutional setting was put forward by ignoring the fact that there are citizens of the Republic of Turkey abroad who are Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Yazidis, Armenians, Circassians, Laz and from similar communities. 'Kinship' (*soydaş*) and 'kinship groups' (*soydaş gruplar*) used in the pre-text to the law and many articles of the law draft are racist and nationalist expressions, and should not be used in democratic Turkey's foreign relations. While we try to refer only to Azerbaijanis and Turkmens when we say "relative communities" (*akraba topluluklar*), aren't Kurds, Gagauz, Syriacs, Arabs our relatives?<sup>190</sup>

This direct reproach to the institution's form and content manifested the gulf between the understanding of citizenship on both sides. A dialogue that followed this statement witnessed an even more interesting debate in that regard. What followed after a CHP deputy's interference to Tuncel as "They are Turkish, too" can summarize opposing positions in the long-time discussion over the divide between citizenship and Turkishness. After another prominent BDP representative, Sırrı Sakık replied to the CHP MP saying "Why are you bothered by ethnic background, social democrat?" Tuncel continued her speech with the following lines:

We see ourselves as Kurds, as citizens of the Republic of Turkey, not as Turks." Therefore, the way Kurdish deputies perceived the newly established institution as the "an effort of the state to revive the Turanism ideal, which is the outcome of the official ideology of the state Turkish-Islamic synthesis."<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Sebahat Tuncel, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 76. Birleşim 23.3.2010, page 434-35

<sup>191</sup> Sebahat Tuncel *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 76. Birleşim 23.3.2010, page 435

Against BDP's criticism on YTB's exclusionist character and the party's request to change the name, the Minister responded by saying that an agreement regarding the name of the institution was reached after long debates and it is already inclusive since this is an institution to appeal whoever is a Turkish citizen."<sup>192</sup> The minister's points also unfolded a long-held discussion about the connection between citizenship and ethnicity.

For those who do not see themselves as citizens of the Republic of Turkey or lacks such a bond, it is an institution they should not even be concerned about. Therefore, it is not the outcome of a divisive idea. On the contrary, our friends' work is an outcome of a unifying idea, and I can say that such an agreement was reached.<sup>193</sup>

A similar criticism over the lack of diversity in the foundation of YTB came from CHP. Far from being homogenous, the profile of citizens abroad has been exceptionally rich in harbouring different ethnic and religious groups. Within this structure, Kurds and Alevis have considerable weight and influence on civil society organizations in many countries in Europe. One of the CHP representatives points to such diversity and the failure of Ak Party policymakers to engage with different civil society organizations represented by non-Sunni and non-Turkish citizens within the diaspora community<sup>194</sup>. It is essential to note that the same issue, excluding some groups while engaging with the diaspora, was raised regarding the 2003 investigation committee's activities. Such criticism that the diaspora policy is not inclusive enough for dismissing segments of the diaspora based on sectarian differences is the one that CHP often expresses in different platforms and thematic contexts. Later, I will touch upon a similar hint of discontent grew within CHP while discussing the role and activities of

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<sup>192</sup> Devlet Bakanı Faruk Çelik, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 77. Birleşim 24.3.2010, page 546

<sup>193</sup> Devlet Bakanı Faruk Çelik, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 77. Birleşim 24.3.2010, page 547

<sup>194</sup> Selçuk Ayhan, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 77. Birleşim 24.3.2010, page 556

Diyanet in Europe. It would not be wrong to suggest that this criticism is one of the main pillars of CHP as a position in the field of diaspora policy.

The ruling party politicians occasionally talked about the ambition to turn this vast number of citizens in Europe into an influential lobbying group. Similar wishes were uttered in the 1990s during the debate of expatriate voting legislation. This time the same vision was reiterated as politicians hoped that YTB would open up a way for a strong lobby group in Europe.

There are so many Turkish citizens all around the world, we have our kin communities, a vast hinterland, a great historical past, but we still do not have a strong lobbying organization, we could not manage to create one. There is a Greek lobby, Armenian lobby, the Jewish lobby in the United States. I believe that with the help of our citizens abroad, YTB will have a significant influence on the creation of a lobby for the Republic of Turkey in these countries.<sup>195</sup>

Lastly, I find it necessary to address the opposition parties' consistent attitude and discourse that often emerges in diaspora debates, especially after the 2000s. When there is an attempt to extend state services to citizens abroad or inquire about their issues, the opposition commonly addresses the domestic realm. The Turkish citizens face more burning problems in Turkey, it is argued, for instance, and they need more urgent attention rather than focusing on those abroad. The debates on YTB also unfolded such recurring criticism: how fair it was to channel that many resources or focus in that matter, into citizens abroad while citizens in the country have numerous problems. It follows the idea that the citizens in Turkey have to live with mounting issues every day in different regions. The example of such standpoint could be found in the same debates when Kurdish MP Sırrı Sakık complained that much more was done for those abroad “while there is not even a small step taken for our people here” while drawing attention to the economic and infrastructure problems that the people in his constituency faced. The implication is the one in which as if the government finds itself in a situation to prioritize the needs of one (citizens there) over the

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<sup>195</sup> Mehmet Çerçi, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 77. Birleşim 24.3.2010, page 591

other (citizens here). The more evolved version will be touched upon in the section I analyze the debates of the specialized committee on women's problems in later 2010s. However, it is a noteworthy point to conceptually distinguish between the weight of citizens here and there, as was put forward Waldinger (2008).

### **7.3. “Wherever Our Population Is, There We Will Have Our Influence Too”: Legislation of Out-Of-Country Voting**

Expatriate voting is possibly the most crucial aspect of diaspora-homeland relations. In Turkey, citizens abroad gained the right to vote in homeland elections for the first time in 1987, though it was limited to voting at the customs. The first real steps for voting abroad was taken in 1995, following a constitutional amendment. Even though the new article in the constitution allowed Turkish citizens abroad to vote, the additional electoral legislation for determining applicable measures for its implementation did not follow suit immediately. It was not until the late 2000s that comprehensive legislation was made to enable out-of-country voting. The timing of the regulation is considered crucial for coinciding with a new period in diaspora relations in which deep-rooted security concerns and economic expectations vis-à-vis the diaspora were slowly replaced with a new understanding based on dialogue and democratization (Anaz and Köse, 2020: 73).

In the reign of Ak Party governments, the first legislative attempt to enable out-of-country voting came in 2008. The Law on Elections and Electoral Register were amended in 2008 (Law no. 5749) to enable citizens abroad to vote in the countries they live in for general elections, presidential elections, and referendums in Turkey. In addition to the border ballots method used since 1987, the bill introduced three different voting methods by mail, electronic voting and voting at the consulates. Before the 2011 general elections, there were ongoing negotiations between the Turkish and German government officials to implement

voting at the diplomatic missions (Abadan-Unat et al., 2014: 4), which was referred as a hurdle by the Turkish politicians in the 1990s. However, the Supreme Election Board's decision in 2011 (no. 120), which addressed the insufficiently prepared infrastructure, virtually ruled out that possibility for the 2011 elections.

With the purpose of overcoming that impediment, a final amendment (Law no. 6304) to Electoral Law came to the Parliament's agenda in May 2012, which legally opened up the way for the current system in use. The bill regulated methods of external voting and created an overseas electoral district board as part of Ankara. In this section, I will analyze the main themes prominently highlighted, and the party positions assumed during the debates of these draft bills of 2008 and 2012.

While parties changed their opinions depending on when they were the government or the opposition party, Anaz and Köse (2020: 74) argues that in 2008 for the first time their positions aligned and all parties commonly agreed on the draft bill. In order to signify the importance given to overseas voting by his party, the Minister of State and veteran politician Cemil Çiçek described the bill as “political, moral and conscientious obligation.”<sup>196</sup> However, as for the timing of the bill, some attribute special meaning to the particular time in which the proposal was brought to the Parliament's agenda. For instance, Okyay argues that after the 2007 referendum, Erdoğan sought additional support for his voter base and looked no further than Western Europe as a new constituency with potential voter powerhouse. The close ties Ak Party had with European Milli Görüş tradition played an essential role in Erdoğan's calculation to expand his constituency. As overseas votes were assumed to be predominantly conservative-leaning, Oktay argues that the Ak Party expected overall positive returns for itself and disadvantageous results for other parties, particularly for the CHP.

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<sup>196</sup> Devlet Bakanı Cemil Çiçek, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 76. Birleşim 12.03.2008, page 364

However, by looking at the debates of the bill alone, or the overall political context of the day might come too far-fetched to suggest that the crucial motivation behind the bill was Ak Party's electoral calculations. The evidence from the debates on overseas voting suggests that all parties gave substantial support to out-of-country voting despite their varying reservations, including CHP. The assertion that overseas voting was seen as a way to gain broader voter support was also disputed by the former President of YTB, who was actively involved in every step of the bill's enactment, from its preparation to legislation. In my talk with him, he argued that the reason that out-of-country voting regulation was shelved too long was mainly the bureaucratic inertia or the reservations caused by not knowing what kind of new workload this new regulation would bring.

I see it as a bureaucratic reaction. While preparing this draft bill, we did not get the support of different ministries. When we sent the regulation to them, their reply was generally 'why is there a need for such a thing.' Even Ministry of Foreign Affairs bureaucrats asked us if there were other examples of it in the world. (The delay) is about the bureaucracy or the actors implementing the process, such as YSK, not taking ownership of the issue. It is definitely not politically driven. I do not think these things are politically motivated; I wish they were. I wish those who oppose also opposed with political motivations, and those who take ownership would do it deliberately.

He also recalled CHP's full support during the committee debates of the bill, which claims that the regulation was fundamentally driven by a political agenda an unsupported one.

However, during the plenary debates of the bill, it is possible to see the opposition parties criticizing the bill's content for different reasons. DTP refused Ak Party's claim that the bill was a good example of the participatory democracy attempt within the democratization process started by Ak Party. The party's criticism was mainly because of the 10 % election threshold introduced by the 1982 Constitution and had long been justified on the basis of political stability. While primarily benefiting big parties such as ANAP in the 1980s and AK Party

in 2000s, the threshold has put the small or geographically concentrated pro-Kurdish parties in an unequivocally disadvantageous position. In order to circumvent the threshold, these parties (DTP and BDP respectively) competed in the general elections with independent candidates and formed their party groups in the Parliament once their candidates were elected. However, the given draft bill allowed to vote only for political parties, not the independent candidates. Pointing to such dilemma caused by this provision and the electoral threshold, the DTP spokesperson referred to the bill as a measure directly targeting the party and its potential voters abroad.

First of all, allowing only political parties but not independent candidates to be voted is directly against the Constitution's principle of equality. It is a method that leaves voters without any choice and restricts the right to choose. It is also against the principles of freedom of choice and equality of votes. On the other hand, it plays a role in the election results that exclude the people's will, the voters, and changes the election results unfairly. However, the right to vote means the electorates could vote for the party or person they want.<sup>197</sup>

Thus, DTP's emphasis was on the undemocratic side of the bill despite AK Party's claim that it was part of its democratization attempts through politically incorporating hitherto excluded expatriates. Another deputy from DTP portrayed the bill as a pure contradiction to the general political practices pursued by the Ak Party.

You will keep the 10 per cent threshold, you will prevent people's free will from being reflected in the Parliament, only two of the forty-odd parties will be in the Parliament with a representation far above the votes they receive in the 2002 elections, the authoritarian leadership will prevail, the same leader will continue to be the chairman of the parties for forty years, there will be no primary elections, you will appoint the candidates despite the people's will, then you will come out here and try to change this so-called anti-democratic situation with this draft bill.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Şerafettin Halis, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 76. Birleşim 12.03.2008, page 361

<sup>198</sup> Hasip Kaplan, *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, 77'nci Birleşim 13.08. 2008, page 456

This criticism raised by Hasip Kaplan is essential also for showing another reminder of a typical approach in diaspora politics, which I have also mentioned in the section above on YTB. When there is a diaspora-related parliamentary agenda, more often than not the opposition MPs approach the issue in hand almost like trivial matters when the country faces more burning domestic issues. Accordingly, the pro-Kurdish DTP representatives argued that before Turkey solves its domestic problems in its backyard, it will fail to democratize the representation system by merely extending the electoral franchise. I will touch upon to a similar tendency again while talking about the Parliament's focus on other thematic issues, such as Islamophobia and Turkish women and families' problems in Europe.

One explanation for not allowing the overseas electorate to vote for independent candidates is Ak Party's reluctance, which stems from the possible impact of the strong Kurdish electoral base in Western European countries on the election results. Okyay suggests that Ak Party enables overseas enfranchising as long as it keeps its position as the absolute winner of such incorporation (Okyay, 2015: 144). However, this assertion could also be reconsidered in the light of the remarks made by the former President of YTB in my talk with him, during which he said most of what seems politically-driven initiatives were in fact outcome of bureaucratic aversion. Given the practical inconvenience of voting for independent candidates overseas, Mr Köse's explanations as an experienced bureaucrat seem rather convincing.

Concerning expatriate voting, a group of MPs addressed the absence of overseas electoral district in the legislative regulation despite the overseas enfranchise. In 2012, BDP representative Ertuğrul Kürkcü was one of those who voiced such discontent. He also criticized the way politicians perceived overseas electorate while arguing that the ruling party sees the voters abroad the same way they see the domestic voters.

I think we all saw that these voters were only viewed as passive voting machines when the legislation was made because while there are numerous talks of them voting in the elections, there is not a single provision for them to be elected. In fact, when I examined the committee reports in detail, I could not see any sign that our citizens abroad were asked how they wanted to participate in elections. I can only say that they are considered passive voting machines and that is what is inscribed in the spirit of this law.<sup>199</sup>

The parallelism between the narrative of citizens abroad as “voting machines” here and workers as “foreign exchange machines” in the 1970s is noteworthy. Such similarity in the tone of the speeches demonstrates the transformation in the role and place of the Turkish diaspora as seen by the representatives.

MHP deputy, who also raised the need of an overseas electoral district, argued that this regulation could not be called fully democratic without establishing a separate diaspora constituency. Voting methods peculiar to the overseas ballot, such as complicated mathematical ways in which the votes are calculated and distributed, and the electorate not knowing whom they vote for were listed by the MP as practices that are directly at odds with the Turkish electoral system. He concluded by saying that voting rights for the expatriate are not a favour granted by Turkish politicians but a constitutional right, the same way that citizens enjoy it in Turkey.<sup>200</sup>

Another salient take from MHP came from another MP during the debates of 2008 regulation. Resembling the party’s position while establishing the Presidency for Turks abroad, the way MHP representative elaborated on expatriate voting legislation was another form of populist rhetoric with the emphasis on uniting and guiding them through the common denominator of Turkishness. He asserted that enabling out-of-country voting would be an opportunity for Turks abroad to vote for a government that would lead Turkey to

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<sup>199</sup> Ertuğrul Kürkcü, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 104. Birleşim 09.05.2012, page 922

<sup>200</sup> Hasan Hüseyin Türkoğlu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 104’üncü Birleşim, 09.05.2012, page 887

the leadership position through the country's centenary.<sup>201</sup> In that regard, participating in homeland elections in countries they reside would have twofold functions: it would ascribe these citizens a patriotic duty to have a say in country's politics and give Turkey leverage over the population abroad. The latter can be extracted in the MP's final remarks where he said: "wherever our population is, there we will have our influence too."<sup>202</sup> Hence, it is not misleading to suggest that expatriate voting bore different ideals and expectations for different parties.

Old fears and hesitations were also at play in the context of overseas voting, too. In principle, CHP was "in favour of voting of compatriots abroad freely to decide on the political power in Turkey." However, the party members believed that the secret vote principle would be jeopardized with the mail-in ballot method in the bill, hence putting the supposedly free voter "under the domination and oppression of some groups."<sup>203</sup> An experienced diplomat Onur Öymen voiced these possibilities.

There will be no secret voting in the mail-in ballot, and everyone knows that. Call it peer pressure, societal pressure, pressure from associations, pressure from communities (*cemaatler*), for one reason or another our citizens will not be able to vote with their free will. Maybe this will benefit one party today, another party tomorrow, but this is a wrong method. The right method is casting a vote at the ballot box.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Rıdvan Yalçın, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 77'inci Birleşim 13.3.2009, page 448

<sup>202</sup> The spokesperson makes a pun here, since the words 'population' (nüfus) and 'influence/power' (nüfuz) are almost identical words.

<sup>203</sup> Hakkı Süha Okay, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 77. Birleşim 13.03.2009, page 483

<sup>204</sup> Onur Öymen, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 77. Birleşim, 13.03.2009, page 486

What Onur Öymen attempted to warn against implicitly was made more concrete with another CHP representative Turgut Dibek. He unfolded what or whom actually CHP was against with mail-in-ballot method.

We want our citizens to cast their vote freely with their free will without any pressure. However, there are illegal organizations in Europe that want to abolish the fundamental principles of the republic. They organize massive events and fill large stadiums. Maybe some of you remember, these groups held many meetings in Germany targeting the integrity of our country under the name of so-called ‘Federal Islamic State.’ The adoption and the protection of the Constitution’s fundamental principles are not something that only Turkey applies to citizens living in Turkey. Turkish citizens everywhere should act in accordance with our Constitution even if they live abroad.<sup>205</sup>

Given that the Constitutional Court eventually cancelled the mail-in ballot provision upon CHP’s appeal, this strong emphasis on the clause seems obsolete today. However, such insistence on the insecurity of this method unfolds a long-held caution against “bad influences” i.e. radical left in the 1970s, Islamic associations in the 1990s and so forth. Emphasis on Islamic associations demonstrates the security reflexes held by CHP against the influence of these groups on the Turkish community in Europe. I have touched upon the same emphasis and tone in the speeches of the 1980s or 1990s. This continuity demonstrates an underlying consistency towards a long-distance protective behaviour of the Turkish politicians towards citizens abroad. Having said that, the argument that CHP’s actual hesitation in the guise of security concern was essentially the electoral calculations might be misleading. There is not enough evidence from the parliamentary speeches to support the claim that overseas voter profile, on which the Ak Party based its expectation for positive returns, was the actual reason behind CHP’s reservations on external voting (Okuy, 2015: 142). On the contrary, many CHP deputies gave highly supportive remarks about external voting on many occasions. After all, the words by former YTB President during our talk might be enlightening to explain the reason behind such aversion: bureaucratic reflexes do not like the new regulations, the implications

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<sup>205</sup> Turgut Dibek, *Tutanak Dergisi* 77. Birleşim, 13.03.2009, page 475-76

of which are unforeseeable, and that bureaucracy is the source of information and influence for the politicians.

As this section demonstrated, the parliamentary debate of the out-of-country voting witnessed a rich discussion. Overall, there was a consensus on the necessity of the regulations within the bill. Despite all the objections outlined above, both the 2008 and 2012 draft bills passed without changes due to the Ak Party's government's parliamentary majority. CHP appealed to the Constitutional Court for the annulment of the mail-in ballot clause that vehemently disagreed, as a result of which the Court accepted CHP's appeal and revoked the clause.

The first election following the legislative changes was the 2010 constitutional referendum. However, the Supreme Election Council (YSK) advised against setting up ballot boxes abroad addressing insufficient infrastructure in the face of high voter turnout as the reason. The same practice continued in the 2011 general elections, too. The first real practice of out-of-country voting took place in August 2014 presidential elections, which was also the first presidential election in Turkey's political history. During the 2014 presidential elections, Turkish citizens abroad voted for the first time at the ballot boxes set up in their country of residence. The participation to June 2015 general elections, November 2015 snap elections, April 2017 constitutional referendum and lastly the June 2018 presidential and parliamentary elections have continued to increase exponentially in each election, mainly due to the increased number of polling stations established in each consulate, in contrast to a few polling stations set up nationwide before. Therefore, after its legislation, the voting rights of citizens abroad have been put to the test very often. Yanařmayan and Kařlı argue that this increasing voter turnout in each election reconceptualizes the understanding of citizenship by both blurring the distinction between internal and external citizens in terms of their political participation and by taking political divisions along party lines to an extra-territorial level (Yanařmayan and

Kaşlı, 2019: 29). Indeed, ever since voting abroad was facilitated through a series of legislative changes, one ultimate consequence in terms of Turkey's relations with its diaspora has been the political divide exacerbated by voting practice. The following sections analyzes political divisions within the diaspora fuelled during elections.

#### **7.4. Between the “Western Hypocrisy” and the “Government’s Hypocrisy”: Crises and Divisions Stirred By Out-Of-Country Voting**

*“If what Germany and the Netherlands did (to our ministers) is Nazism, then what is it that Ak Party has done to its citizens for years?”<sup>206</sup>*

The legislation and the eventual practice of out-of-country voting was a significant milestone in the half-a-century history of diaspora relations. Since the legislation of out-of-country vote in 2012, participation in Turkish elections from Europe has incrementally increased by every election. Owing to the additional regulations following the 2014 presidential referendum, which facilitated voting in consulates instead of a few designated polling stations all across the country, voting from abroad become a more and more widespread practice. The table below shows this increases interest demonstrated by the diaspora to Turkish elections and the main beneficiaries of expatriate voting.

**Table 1.** Participation in Turkish elections from abroad

<b>Date &amp; Election</b>	<b>Number of Voters</b>	<b>Turnout %</b>	<b>Winner</b>
2018 Presidential	1.358.584	44,62 %	60,24 % - Erdoğan
2018 Parliamentary	1.358.372	44,62 %	51,73 % - Ak Party
2017 Referendum	1.325.682	44,60 %	59,46 % - Yes
2015 Snap Election	1.159.871	40,01 %	56,38 % - Ak Party
2015 Parliamentary	931.646	32,50 %	50,37 % - Ak Party
2014 Presidency	232.795	8,37 %	62,30 % - Erdoğan

Source: The Supreme Election Council (YSK)<sup>207</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Veli Ağbaba, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 82'nci Birleşim, 15.03.2017, page 37

As can be seen, the most recent elections witnessed a record number of electoral participation from the diaspora, which is also considered high compared to diaspora participation in homeland elections globally (Köse, 2020). More remarkably, while participation rate has steadily increased in each election, Ak Party has been the undisputed winner of the out-of-country voting, so much so that the ratio of votes abroad received by the party has far exceeded its average votes in Turkey. However, the overwhelming support the Ak Party and Erdoğan had from the expatriates made a significant impact on the relationship between Turkey and the host countries in Europe. Ever since the 2014 Presidential Election, the first time out-of-country voting was put to the test, the relations between Western governments and Turkey have been significantly strained. While the governments in the West saw this popularity as problematic for integration and allegiance of immigrants (Mencütek, 2015), Erdoğan's harsh tone while criticizing the West did not help to deescalate the tension. This section will look at the implications of both diaspora participation in Turkish elections – parliamentary, presidential and referendums – and the subsequent crises it triggered in Turkish politics. By analysing legislative speeches, I aim to understand the underlying perspectives that shaped the ruling and opposition party positions while debating expatriate voting.

From the outset, external voting led to growing concerns about public security and allegiance of immigrants in major host countries (Şahin Mencütek, 2015: 145). Expansion of electoral franchise has ultimately raised two main concerns for host country governments. The first was the manifestation of already existing grievances and divisions within the citizens of Turkish origin during election campaigns. The confrontation between the Turkish and Kurdish groups have long been an underlying problem. While there were floating images of Turkish citizens voting at local consulates and embassies around Europe on the one hand, there were scenes of protests by Kurdish groups connected to Turkey on the other hand as the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state escalated

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<sup>207</sup> <https://ysk.gov.tr/tr/secim-arsivi/2612>

(Adamson, 2019: 2). Beyond this long-lasting conflict, the targeting of allegedly FETÖ-affiliated people, businesses and schools after the post-2016 coup attempt caused similar concerns for the host country public and politicians.

The second concern held by host countries, which received more attention in the Parliament was related to the election rallies organized in Europe. As Europe slowly became an electoral powerhouse for the Ak Party, the party officials embarked on new plans to organize election rallies in countries heavily populated by Turks. However, it was far from a welcomed move for the governments in Europe. The diaspora rallies organized primarily by the AK Party have become a source of suspicion and frustration in Europe, especially following the 2017 referendum that changed the parliamentary system with presidentialism (Arkılıç, 2020: 17). The uneasiness reached its peak in March 2017, when first Germany and Austria, and then the Netherlands blocked Turkey's ministers from visiting the country to address the Turkish voters. The tension turned into a diplomatic crisis with the Netherlands when the country eventually deported Turkish Minister of Family Affairs upon her insistence join an election meeting. The situation rapidly escalated when Erdoğan harsh criticized these countries with somewhat undiplomatic statements, such as calling these countries "Nazi remnants and fascists" (BBC, 2017).

By analysing the parliamentary debates in the light of these crises, it is possible to see a mixed and multi-layered reaction from different party representatives. Around the time the tension intensified, in March 2017 when Germany, Austria and the Netherlands cancelled the election rallies one by one, the plenary debates of the early to mid-month became dominated by the topic. Significant points raised by both ruling and opposition party members. Ak Party deputies, who held the governments in the West accountable and vehemently criticized them, argued that it was hypocrisy in its purest sense. A day after the deportation of the Turkish minister from the Netherlands, an Ak Party representative stated

that the events revealed the double standard the West disguised under the name of human rights.

Those who host all anti-Turkey terrorist under the guise of ‘democracy and freedom of expression’ showed their true colours. Europe has witnessed a night of shame. While all this was happening, the decision of the European Court of Justice on wearing headscarves at work was a crucial example of the West’s real intent.<sup>208</sup>

While condemning the event with a strong language, Ak Party position was the one to use the Western governments’ attitude to point the finger to the double standards they thought the West applies to Turks or Muslims in general. This instrumental perspective, which often reveals itself in the anti-Western discourse intrinsic in the Islamist conservative tradition in Turkey, was used to address human rights violations within Europe, despite Europe’s constant preaching to Turkey on those issues. What is more noteworthy here, however, is the attempt to merge this particular event with a broader issue that the Ak Party have traditionally seen as the biggest human right violation, the headscarf ban. In that regard, it would not be misleading to suggest that the headscarf ban has functioned as a satellite both in domestic and international politics for Ak Party according to which all human rights violations was assessed and reoriented. The statement by the representative reinstates this general stance. Furthermore, the fact that the Family Minister who was exposed to such treatment by the Netherlands wore headscarf also gave a symbolic reaffirmation to Ak Party’s such discourse. More on the Ak Party’s sensitivity on headscarf issue vis-à-vis other right violations will be discussed in the section on Islamophobia.

If we look at the opposition’s stance, it can be argued that the early reaction given by the opposition parties, especially CHP, was supportive of the government. The party considered the Western governments’ attitude as a disrespectful act against the Turkish state, rather than the Ak Party government

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<sup>208</sup> MÜCAHİT DURMUŞOĞLU. *Tutanak Dergisi*, 82’nci Birleşim, 15.03.2017, page 19

per se. Just at the onset of events, the parliamentary group leader Özgür Özel expressed the party's criticism of Germany.

We find it unacceptable that the freedom of expression of a minister representing Turkey, regardless of their opinions, is arbitrarily restricted by German authorities. In this regard, while reminding Germany of various statements they made on freedom of expression in Turkey, we would like to express that we find de facto censorship for a minister of the Republic of Turkey unacceptable as the Republican People's Party.<sup>209</sup>

Given the CHP's occasional endorsement of Ak Party policies and proposals, especially on foreign policy issues, this declaration of support by CHP might not come as a surprise. After all, CHP's perspective is the one that sets the Republic of Turkey as a whole on the international stage independent from the political power that temporarily governs it. CHP's reaction to this event was also motivated by this tendency to view it as an offence committed against the Republic's minister.

However, there was a limit to this endorsement. CHP's criticism came from the same vein, from the belief that the Ak Party, with its electoral calculations, had put the Turkish state in such a degrading position on the world stage. Moreover, just like the Ak Party used it to point to what they see as Western hypocrisy, CHP used the state officials complaints to address the Ak Party's hypocrisy instead. For the opposition, the Western governments' restrictions on Ak Party's election propaganda on their soil and Ak Party's subsequent complaints unfolds an absurdity because the more extreme version of the West's restrictive attitude became a mundane Ak Party policy in every sphere of life in Turkey. Many examples can be shown from the plenary debates about such finger-pointing. For example, when the Turkish Justice Minister criticized Germany for restricting the freedom of assembly, CHP deputy accused him of being blind to Turkey's bitter realities and sarcastically asked if the minister was living in a different country.

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<sup>209</sup> Özgür Özel, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 02.03.2017, page 94

When Germany withdrew the approval for the rally, the Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdağ uttered these words: ‘The European Convention on Human Rights guarantees the right of assembly, and freedom of expression is a fundamental right within this scope. You do not allow people to express themselves at a designated place. Is it possible to talk about democracy in a country where public gatherings are prohibited?’ Do you not know that many journalists have been arrested in this country because of their reports, many academics have been expelled from universities because of a statement they signed, many television channels and newspapers opposing your government were closed, public gatherings were banned, posters were removed by the police? Are you talking about another Turkey?<sup>210</sup>

With the outbreak of the diplomatic crisis, once again, Turkey witnessed its diaspora policy being intertwined with domestic politics. Indeed, in recent years Turkey has been locking up journalists and human rights activists while expelling various professionals from their posts such as judges, academics and civil servants for their alleged links with terrorist organizations. When the definition of terror and terrorism was made loosely as such, hence the scope and number of groups affected by the government’s assault on civil society have remarkably expanded. The governments in the West, as well as institutions such as the European Union, have been a vocal critic of such offence on many occasions. When the Ak Party became a victim of similar restrictions it had been applying home for years, it then had the opportunity to use it as a stick against the Western governments, who have been consistently criticizing it. Ak Party’s emphasis on these values – freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, the rule of law – was thus interpreted by the opposition as the rediscovery of these values driven by opportunism.

Those who criticize Germany and the Netherlands for being undemocratic are by no means credible since thousand times more of what the Netherlands and Germany did (to the ministers) is done to the opponents in Turkey. While the government follows this strategy, it constantly exploits people’s national sentiments and attempts to get votes from here. We are pleased that they remember democracy, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and press, but

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<sup>210</sup> Nihat Yeşil, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 80. Birleşim, 09.03.2017, page 30

while you bash Germany and the Netherlands, look no further than Silivri<sup>211</sup> to remember democracy.<sup>212</sup>

Additionally, mounting evidence showing that the opposition's 'no' propaganda rallies were exposed to similar restrictions around that time (campaign buses blocked, bookings for hall meetings cancelled, TV propaganda clips not broadcasted etc.) facilitated the use of this "double standard" discourse by the opposition. CHP's another parliamentary group leader addressed the paradox caused by obstructing attitude towards those who make election propaganda against the presidential referendum as "similar to the Dutch attitude towards Turkish ministers."<sup>213</sup> Another MP stated the limits to which their condemnation applied.

We strongly condemn Germany's political attitude towards our ministers. It is unacceptable. However, those who accuse Germany do not hear or see what happened to those who said no in the referendum in their own country and that they were declared to be terrorists.<sup>214</sup>

The crises with the host countries in Europe can be considered an indirect outcome of the Ak party's diaspora policy. Yet, unlike many other diaspora policy areas such as out-of-country voting or citizenship services or, the Ak Party could not get the full backing of the opposition which have been the case in many other diaspora policy areas. Instead, the opposition used this diaspora-related outcome as a way to address domestic issues.

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<sup>211</sup> A district in İstanbul, also home to the largest prison in Turkey accomodating many political prisoners, too.

<sup>212</sup> Barış Yarkadaş *Tutanak Dergisi*, 81. Birleşim, 14.03.2017, page 79

<sup>213</sup> Engin Altay, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 82'nci Birleşim 15.03.2017 page 25

<sup>214</sup> Serkan Topal, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 80. Birleşim, 9 mart 2017 page 57

Another point of criticism was the strategy of gaining votes through victimization. Ak Party is often criticized for capitalizing on the artificially created crisis situations as a result of which it plays the victim. By entertaining the sentiments of sympathy in society, opponents suggest that this method has become a winning strategy. Ak Party's overseas propaganda experience was also elaborated in this vein in the Parliament following the diplomatic spat. The outspoken CHP representative Veli Ağbaba interpreted these events as an opportunist manoeuvre and argued that the Ak Party stirred the tension on purpose to create a situation as such.

We strongly condemn all of these (events) and find them unacceptable. Undoubtedly, the ruling party takes advantage of this and use it for 'yes' propaganda. Some MPs even say the 'yes' votes have increased thanks to these events. Nobody cares if Turkey was humiliated, treated as a 5<sup>th</sup> class country. For the first time in our history, our ministers are deported, the prime minister and ministers are not wanted in European countries. What for? For the sake of 'yes' propaganda, for the presidential system. The Ak Party could not find victimhood it needed in Turkey. This political movement, which feeds on victimization in every election, is now trying to import victimization, looking for victimization outside. Europe, the Netherlands came to its rescue.<sup>215</sup>

Triggering a crisis in Europe is also criticized for potentially jeopardizing Turkish diaspora's status in the countries they live. CHP party group leader blames the Ak Party for undermining the diaspora policy and further accelerating the hostile discourse at the expense of those citizens' stakes there. Hence, the perception of Turkish citizens as a problem-creating group as a result of these events are heavily criticized by the main opposition party.

At what cost is this game played? At the expense of the daily lives of our citizens in the Netherlands, at the expense of paralyzing their lives, at the expense of dual citizenship rights of our citizens, at the expense of making Turks perceived as a problematic group in the Netherlands and the European Union countries.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Veli Ağbaba, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 82. Birleşim, 15.03.2017 page 35

<sup>216</sup> Engin Altay, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 82. Birleşim 15.03.2017 page 58

Another CHP representative also touched upon the jeopardizing impact of the government officials's statement to the level of damaging their neighbourly relations.

Some statements made in the domestic political conjuncture here might create an atmosphere of tension for our citizens living there. Whatever happens in domestic politics, there may be elections, daily, routine political statements, we may have occasional tensions with certain countries, but a language that affects the peace and security, especially the neighbourly relations of our citizens living abroad should not be used here.<sup>217</sup>

In sum, the findings from the parliamentary debates suggest that the diplomatic spat between Turkey and the host countries in Europe has two contending implications. On the one hand, the ruling Ak Party governments instrumentalized the attitude towards government ministers to address the “Western double standards” on democracy and freedom of expression (i.e. not allowing the Turkish ministers to organize meetings while preaching to Turkey about freedom of expression). On the other hand, the opposition used these events to address the “government's hypocrisy” for completely ignoring the severe human right violations in the domestic realm while criticizing the West's attitude. Overall, out-of-country voting has revealed the deep-rooted grievances and fault lines within Turkish politics.

Another significant repercussion of the crisis incited by out-of-country voting is for the status of the diaspora in host countries. Although participation in Turkish elections, nor diaspora rallies is nothing new, its potential implications have grown since expatriate voting became a more common practice. In particular, diaspora's active and sometimes passionate engagement in homeland politics, as demonstrated by Turkish citizens' protests following the minister's deportation, comes at direct odds with the host states expectations that the immigrants fully integrate (Mügge et al., 2019). Far from deepening the integration, it raises

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<sup>217</sup> Sibel özdemir 22 şubat 2018 Kadın Erkek Fırsat Eşitliği Komisyonu Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşı Olan ve Vatandaşlıktan İzinle Çıkış Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunları ve Çözüm Önerileri Konulu Alt Komisyon, page 7

questions on the threats posed by dual national/political loyalty, especially on a homeland that is considered increasingly authoritarian.

### **7.5. Enemies Inside, Enemies Outside: Post- 2016 “Whim of the Regime” and Negative Diaspora Engagement Policy**

The fallout between the ruling Ak Party and its former ally Gülen Movement (referred widely as a terrorist organization FETÖ) caused by the power struggle between the two camps resulted in a brutal fight, which led to the 2016 failed coup (Taş, 2017). What followed was a post-coup purge in public administration, academia, judiciary and media wherein Ak Party targeted FETÖ-affiliated individuals and organizations.

While turning domestic politics upside down, Turkey’s fight against FETÖ moved beyond its borders. The fact that many individuals from the Gülen movement fled Turkey and sought asylum in Europe created an ongoing tension between Turkey and several European countries. The tumultuous political atmosphere at home thus once again affected diaspora policy. Seeing FETÖ affiliated individuals as the main enemy of the state, the ruling party’s relations with diaspora members and organization whom it regarded as FETÖ members have soured (Arkilic, 2020). Turkey’s policy of purging and intimidating Gülenists abroad ranged from confiscating passports to capturing suspects overseas. The new negative diaspora engagement shaped by the post-coup concerns did not remain limited to this emergency policy set under Turkey’s jurisdiction. In its bilateral relations with the West, the Turkish Government has also demanded the closure of FETÖ-linked schools and extradition or arrest of affiliated members from European policymakers. This assertive attitude towards western governments created uneasiness for being interpreted both as meddling with internal affairs and using overseas Turks to advance partisan interests.

Hence, tackling the opposition beyond borders have gained a new transnational character after the coup attempt. The period witnessed a transformation from discursively condemning dissidents' activities abroad to proactively working to eradicate dissident activities. By looking at the post-coup negative diaspora engagement from a Foucauldian perspective, the Gülen movement was framed as “undesired diaspora”, for which a set of tactics and strategies were developed to govern (Angey, 2018: 55). The eventual fragmentation of opposition abroad hence diversified the ways in which the government shaped diaspora policy.

### **7.5.1. Post-2016 and the New Opposition Abroad**

The Turkish state's relations with the dissident groups within the diaspora have historically been problematic. Neglecting cultural and political differences among citizens abroad, selectively interacting with diaspora organizations, and alienating groups such as Alevis or Kurds while trying to reach conservative Turks have been some of the main critiques against the state's diaspora engagement policies (Mencütek and Başer, 2018: 10). The failed coup attempt took it one step further and created another opposition group abroad in addition to the already existing ones.

In the parliamentary debates, it is possible to see the perception of old and new dissidents getting intertwined. The dialogue in the KEFEK (Committee on Equal Opportunity for Women and Men) between an Ak Party MP and a bureaucrat guest in the first meeting following the failed coup attempt is revealing to show both this confusion and an intrinsic understanding in the ruling party that “the malicious opposition is sheltered and in European soil.” When the guest bureaucrat's answer referred to the activities of PKK as a reply to Ak Party MP's question whether or not pro-government citizens were discriminated against because of their political opinions, what followed by the same MP well summarizes the changing character of the overseas opposition.

I wanted to make such a distinction because of this: FETÖ members in these countries are people with a seemingly conservative identity. I specifically asked this because we see that everyone against Erdoğan receive a different sort of protection after July 15 period. Your answer was referring to a conservative identity after July 2015; that identity became a heterogenous one that cannot be defined as a single body.<sup>218</sup>

As the ruling party politicians strived to make a conceptual clarification as to whom the opposition is, there was an air of confusion stemming from the conservative character of the FETÖ-affiliated new dissidents abroad. The portrayal of the opposition abroad was hence delineated as follows: a group of people who openly pursues anti-Turkey activities – or more recently anti-Erdoğan in that matter – and get not only credit by merely doing so from the host country governments, but more importantly, receive shelter and protection for these activities. In the 1990s, PKK affiliated groups and certain Kurdish organizations became the target of the state’s reaction to the West. After the coup attempt, as a new group with totally different identities from the previous dissident groups – conservative, devout and former ally – started to add up, confusion as to how to frame this new group emerged. In that regard, though it is possible to speak about a continuous line in the transnational character of dealing with the opposition abroad, it has taken a more proactive path in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt. Moreover, the boundaries of opposition became increasingly vague while the definition became contradictory, as the Ak Party governments started to put their opponents into the same baggage.

### **7.5.2. Diyanet – Once Again – as the Focus of Controversy**

While the most pro-active diaspora engagement period can be addressed as the Ak Party era, the aftermath of the post-coup attempt emerges as a period when this pro-activism took an interventionist form. The government has actively worked to criminalize FETÖ-linked citizens and entities by issuing arrest

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<sup>218</sup> Ayşe Sula Köseoğlu 8 Aralık 2016 Kadın Erkek Fırsat Eşitliği Komisyonu Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşı Olan ve Vatandaşlıktan İzinle Çıkış Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunları ve Çözüm Önerileri Konulu Alt Komisyon, page 13

warrants, involving in espionage activities, seizing passports, and so on, which were interpreted as meddling in domestic affairs by Western policymakers. Diyanet's overseas organization has once again become the centre of controversy after being charged as a mechanism for intervention or "Turkish influence" on citizens in Europe.

The Diyanet has been a key diaspora institution operating in a transnational social field with the acceptance of receiving states (Bruce, 2020: 1168). However, the activities of Diyanet and its affiliated body in Europe DİTİB (Diyanet İşleri Türk-İslam Birliği–Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs) came under the spotlight in the wake of the coup attempt. Diyanet imams abroad were charged for carrying out surveillance activities for the Turkish government targeting Gülen movement supporters, causing considerable attention in the media and creating tensions with Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. Parliamentary scrutiny was initiated in the Dutch and German parliaments to investigate the claim and the scope of spying allegations.

The shadow cast over Diyanet has created another episode of heated debates in the Turkish Parliament. Similar to the situation after the Minister's deportation from the Netherlands, the opposition became agitated for Turkey's worsening image due to the government's mismanagement of the post-coup period abroad. Numerous opposition members drafted written questions inquiring the scope of Ak Party's involvement in Diyanet's alleged involvement in the espionage charges in Europe. For example, a CHP MP Bakan brought the issue to the parliament debates as written and oral questions. While calling it "a crime to ask imams, who could act as a peace envoy and spread Anatolian humanism to Europe, to be spies" he asked the extent to which Diyanet and DİTİB were institutionally linked and whether Diyanet imams were ordered to report the opponents of Ak Parti and Erdoğan in Europe."<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> term written question no. 7/10903

Nonetheless, the query on DİTİB's role, status and activities is not anything new. In fact, even long before the coup attempt, the position of DİTİB has been controversial and questioned in host societies. Correspondingly, some MPs have inquired into the DİTİB's position in Europe over the years. In 2010, a written question drafted by CHP MP spoke expressed discontent over dividing activities of government-backed foundations, which functioned under the auspices of DİTİB and Milli Görüş, while these foundations were charged for abusing the religious beliefs of citizens abroad in the same written question.<sup>220</sup> Therefore, it was not only European countries who were unhappy about the ways the Ak Party government instrumentalized DİTİB for its own political purposes. The parliamentary opposition in Turkey raised similar points over the years, ranging from the opaque management of religious foundations run by DİTİB to the government's relations with it. After the coup attempt, these concerns only aggravated.

In the same way, the activities of UETD (Union of European Turkish Democrats), an Ak Party-backed lobbying organization in Europe was met with similar suspicion by host country governments and opposition parties in Turkey. Though established long before the coup attempt, the organization worked to lobby for the Ak Party governments' political aims and convince Turks in Europe for these aims (Deutsche Welle, 2014). The fact that these aims were increasingly regarded as controversial by host countries after the coup attempt made UETD's status questioned. HDP representative and a diaspora member Ziya Pir held the Ak Party government for using UETD in Europe, which he believed to have obstructed the Turkish citizens' engagement to host societies<sup>221</sup>. There was a realization that underground or overground, the activities carried out by government-backed organizations such as DİTİB, TİKA, or Yunus Emre Institute creates considerable suspicion in host countries. Against this backlash,

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<sup>220</sup> 24th term Written question no. 7/10864

<sup>221</sup> Ziya Pir, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 33. Birleşim 07.12.2016, page 446

strengthening independent civil society organisations or lobbies to work on Turkey's behalf and exert Turkey's influence and arguments was put forward by a nationalist party MP.<sup>222</sup>

Overall, the failed coup attempt was a turning point in Turkey's diaspora policy, like it is for Turkish political history. In the wake of the coup attempt, the divide between domestic-diasporic politics was set aside, and the Turkish state started to see its citizens abroad as friends or enemies of the state (Yanařmayan and Kařlı, 2019: 28). Similar to the post-1980 practices of citizenship in the form of seizing passports, withdrawal of citizenship or issuing of arrest warrants, post-2016 coup period diaspora policy has witnessed negative diaspora engagement. Even though such negative engagement with citizens abroad might seem in direct contrast with the Ak Party's positive diaspora agenda, overall diaspora engagement practices such as the exclusion of Kurdish or Alevi diasporic organizations from the official diaspora policy makes it a continuous line rather than a rupture from the past (Yanařmayan and Kařlı, 2019: 31). Therefore, the limits of the political membership, i.e. who among the diasporic community is included or excluded as a citizen, decided upon what Dalmasso et al. (2017) call the "whim of the regime". On a more micro level, by borrowing from the Foucauldian perspective, it would not be misleading to argue that the underlying motive shaping the post-coup purges at home and abroad and succeeding diaspora policy was to forge diaspora members as loyal and disciplined subjects (Maritato, 2020: 2).

As far as the parliamentary reaction to the post-coup period's implications concerned, it is plausible to suggest that there has been a strong statist impulse to tell the story from the Turkish side and persuade the international audience, which is evident in the collective thinking on the new strategy to counter anti-Turkey sentiments occurred in the West following the coup attempt. Even

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<sup>222</sup> Nuri okutan 8 aralık 2016 Kadın Erkek Fırsat Eřitlięi Komisyonu Yurtdiřında Yařayan Türk Vatandařı Olan ve Vatandařlıktan İzinle ıkmiř Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunları ve özüm Önerileri Konulu Alt Komisyon, page 18

though there is an implicit acceptance on the level of human rights abuses and unlawful practices, which discredited Turkey largely in the international arena, a strong wish to explain to the outside world the factual basis of these practices is noticeable in the parliamentary discussion.

## **7.6. The Ultimate Form of Hate Crime: the (Over) Representation of Islamophobia in the Parliament in Diaspora Context**

*“You often refer to Islamophobia. While we were listening to our citizens there, we did not receive such strict emphasis on Islamophobia. They rather complained to us about their individual, routine, day-to-day problems than Islamophobia.”<sup>223</sup>*

Among many issues related to the diaspora in Europe, Islamophobia has come to the forefront as an oft-repeated topic by Turkish politicians. Especially the ruling Ak Party members in recent years have made the issue a prominent one during the legislative process.

The common use of Islamophobia refers to rising anti-Islamic tendencies that culminated in the Western world, especially after 9/11. For conservative circles in Turkey, and for Ak Party politicians in particular, the term has provided a useful reference point while criticizing the West. The concept also functioned as an intellectual framework for the government’s foreign policy discourse. Diaspora politics hence became the main area in which the term was repeatedly used in Turkey’s relations with Europe during the Ak Party period.

Over the years, many developments in the West have fed into the rise of the concept in the Muslim world. For instance, in Germany, a country hosting the biggest Turkish population outside Turkey, more and more anti-Muslim hate

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<sup>223</sup> Sibel özdemir 22 şubat 2018 Kadın Erkek Fırsat Eşitliği Komisyonu Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşı Olan ve Vatandaşlıktan İzinle Çıkış Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunları ve Çözüm Önerileri Konulu Alt Komisyon, page 7

crimes were recorded each year. Turks found themselves as the target of attacks on their mosques and small businesses such as Turkish grocery stores and restaurants. The political environment in the West did not help this trend to cease either. Over the past two decades, Europe witnessed the sharp rise of the far-right and anti-immigrant populist parties, which negatively impacted the Turkish community in Europe (Vermeulen 2018). Consequently, the Turkish governments pursued more pro-active diaspora policies, raising its voice louder on the issue than before.

It is possible to see an incremental use of the term in parliament over the years. While there is no reference to Islamophobia in plenary speeches during the 22<sup>nd</sup> legislative term between 2002-2007, it is used two times in the 23<sup>rd</sup> term (2007-2011), 13 times in the 24<sup>th</sup> term (2011-2015), and 23 times during the 26<sup>th</sup> legislative term (2015-2018). A specialized sub-committee to investigate Islamophobia in Europe was also initiated under the Human Rights Watch Committee. By looking at this trend alone, it is possible to see that Islamophobia increasingly became a popular topic and a crucial political position for the government.

The vitality of the issue for the Ak Party manifested itself more profoundly in the committee work. Apart from frequent references during plenary and committee debates by the ruling party representatives, a sub-committee under the standing Human Rights Watch Committee was established in the 26<sup>th</sup> term and held seven meetings in total between 2016-2018<sup>224</sup> to discuss the issue extensively. The fact that Islamophobia was chosen as a focus area by the Human Rights Committee, among other compelling problems at a time when severe human rights violations were loudly criticized in an outside Turkey, as well as placing Turkey at historically low levels in relevant indexes shows the significance given to the issue by the ruling party politicians.

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<sup>224</sup> Another sub-committee with the same name was re-launched in February 2021.

Giving Islamophobia a theoretical ground, hence a universal legitimation and recognition was another endeavour sought by the ruling party elite. Edward Said's influential work *Orientalism* provided a useful intellectual framework to analyse growing Islamophobic sentiments in Europe (Arkılıç, 2020). The need for using universally valid language made policymakers appeal to voicing their complaints and criticism against Islamophobia predominantly in the context of rights and justice. Akin to the rhetoric of 'hypocrisy of the West' that is often used in different contexts outlined in the previous sections, the growing Islamophobic tendencies in the West were also debated along the same lines. Despite being the paragon of freedom of speech, the European countries failed to combat Islamophobia; the argument usually went on. Also, similar to the language and stance appropriated in the 1990s regarding xenophobia in Europe, there has been a general inclination to frame Islamophobia as a discriminative practice, which is also a threat against freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

The degree to which the Ak Party officials took the issue seriously is evident in the way they elaborated on the term. The chairman of the Human Rights Sub-Committee defined it as "one of the biggest crimes against humanity"<sup>225</sup>. Thus, the ruling party members referred to Islamophobia primarily as a violation of human rights more than anything. While the elements of such perspective can be found in the rhetoric of many Ak Party representatives speaking about Islamophobia, I believe that the lines below by an academic MP Talip Küçükcan are very representative of the dominant mindset that attempts to frame Islamophobia in universal terms as a human rights problem.

I am one of those who believe that it is necessary to build a broad human rights rhetoric in current anti-Islam debates. Yes, there is anti-Islamism, maybe there is also hostility towards Islam and religion. But while talking about it, I think it is necessary to construct it with a higher language, such as 'hate language' and 'hate crimes', and bring this universal language to the level of these works. Then I think it would be easier for us to communicate and discuss this issue

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<sup>225</sup> İnsan Hakları Alt Komisyonu, 20 October 2016, page 1

with our interlocutors. The language through which we can reach to our interlocutors is the universal legal language, the language of rights related to citizenship, the issue of human rights, the fight against discrimination and hate speech.<sup>226</sup>

Thus, it can also be the case that the use of a universal language was crucial for bringing the issue to the attention of the international audience. This point of view uttered by Küçükcan above was often put in practice by other MPs as well in parliamentary speeches. For instance, an Ak Party MP who took the floor on the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination did not leave Islamophobia unmentioned in this context.

Racism, which has caused humanity the greatest pains throughout history, is a disease against which we all should all fight. Islamophobia and xenophobia rising in Europe today continue to hurt more and more people every day.<sup>227</sup>

The way the MP above approached the issue marks an understanding that perceives Islamophobia as the current phase that racism and xenophobic tendencies reached in the historical process. Therefore, it is fair to suggest that in the glossary of the Ak Party, or the followers of political Islam tradition in general, Islamophobia also unfolds an inherent contradiction between the acts and values of the West. One MP talks about the presence of two Europes in that regard.

On the one hand, there is a Europe that always canonizes civilizational values, not seeing them as a means for its political interests and strives for a civilized world. On the other hand, there is a Europe that encounters cultural racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia and gives credit to them.<sup>228</sup>

Apart from signalling a twofold character of the West, the quote illustrates the view of Islamophobia as part of a whole, a whole made of burning problems

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<sup>226</sup> Talip Küçükcan, 14 Şubat 2018 tarihli komisyon, page 6

<sup>227</sup> Muhammed Murtaza Yetiş, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 80'inci Birleşim, 20.3.2012, page595

<sup>228</sup> Mehmet Naci Bostancı, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 27'nci Birleşim. 25.11.2016, page 1000

such as racism and xenophobia. So, the strong emphasis on Islamophobia works in both ways for the Ak Party. While it is a current facet of xenophobia from which the Turkish community have long suffered since the 1990s on the one hand, on the other hand it offers another avenue through which the government have a chance to criticize its European counterparts for negligence, applying double standards and not doing enough to tackle it. Furthermore, it is seen as the ultimate form the hate crime currently has taken. In other words, it is possible to identify a very selective reading of what hate crime and speech implies.

The frequent use of the term as a medium to criticize the West receives the biggest critique from a former Ak Party member, who is also a politician with a diaspora background himself. In my informal talk with Mustafa Yeneroğlu, who resigned from the Ak Party in October 2019 after serving as an MP since 2015 and joined the newly established DEVA in 2020, he voiced the most vocal criticism I have thus far come across while researching this topic. He strongly criticized the government for instrumentalizing Islamophobia. When I asked his opinion about Islamophobia becoming a central diaspora policy rhetoric in the last years, he answered by saying that “Because it is free!”

His criticism regarding Islamophobia was directed on two points. First, he charged the current government for paying lip service: seeming to fight Islamophobia but, in reality, not doing anything more than being loud about it. Instead, if the government was sincere in its problematization of the issue, it could have mobilized its capabilities put an actual fight against Islamophobia, such as dedicating specialized personnel or researchers from the ranks of Diyanet, a designated religious institution which was allocated more than 100 million euros from the public budget. His second criticism is more profound.

Individuals who criticize Islamophobia should fight for a pluralistic society and show extraordinary sensitivity for fundamental rights. When the states that oppress fundamental rights and impose a uniform understanding on society in their own country bring up Islamophobia or discrimination against their own communities abroad under the name of pluralism, it has no resonance. Nobody

takes this seriously. Turkey does not have the seriousness and sincerity to speak about this issue. The reason it comes up so often is that it is free-of-charge to be loud about it.

In the absence of any other excuses to criticize the West based on human rights and the rule of law, according to Yeneroğlu, Islamophobia becomes the only weapon the government can use against the West for it lacks any other justifiable cause when the government gets increasingly undemocratic in domestic politics. From a different angle, Yeneroğlu's arguments align with the opposition's recurring criticism on diaspora policy, suggesting that Turkey has so much to sort out in its domestic politics before showing interest in human rights violations in other countries, albeit in countries populated mostly by Turks.

A critique from the opposition party CHP focuses on another aspect, though. While talking on his private bill on criminalizing hate speech, CHP representative Aykan Erdemir suggests that the concept cannot be reduced merely to Islamophobia, which is essentially the government's position.

The laws on hate crime in Turkey are usually perceived as Islamophobia law and that it could be reduced to Islamophobia. Undoubtedly, Islamophobia is one of the negative processes that becomes a source for hate crimes, like anti-Semitism, but a holistic law on hate crimes cannot be reduced merely to Islamophobia.<sup>229</sup>

As a politician whose legislative –and academic- focus is on hate speech and hate crimes, the MP places Islamophobia more as a small part within the broader scope of hate crimes than the ultimate hate speech/crime like approached by the ruling party.

As evident in Erdemir's objections to merely focusing on Islamophobia, CHP tends to see it as part of a broader hate speech problem. CHP proposed multiple draft bills on the same topic to the Parliament to investigate hate crimes with the aim of “identifying the impacts of the racist rhetoric rising in Europe, hate

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<sup>229</sup> Aykan Erdemir, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 68. Birleşim, 20.02.2013, page 863

crimes and discriminatory policies in practice on the republic of Turkey citizens living in European countries and measures to be taken.” Hence, as an opposition party CHP also often attempted to bring the issue to Parliament. Yet, different from the ruling party, the party approached the issue more from the perspective of discrimination than discrimination based on religion per se. Hence the reference to Islamophobia in the same proposals was as follows: “The picture that emerged from the last elections in European countries reveals that the far-right parties and extreme nationalism that followed the racist, discriminatory and anti-Islamist (Islamophobia) politics that started in the 1980s have gained more power.”<sup>230</sup> Thus, in contrast to the Ak Party’s use of Islamophobia as a systematic human rights violation in Europe, CHP refers to it as a by-product of rising right-wing populism in Europe.

### **7.6.1. Turkish Identity vs Islamic Identity**

From the debates, it is possible to see the confusion on the defining element of discrimination in the west: was it against the Turks or Muslims? Or in particular, to what degree should religious identity should be taken together with national identity. The issue raised by CHP representatives can be considered an attempt to separate national/ethnic (Turkishness/Turkish) identity from the expatriates' religious (Islamic) identity.

An interesting discussion emerged from a question prominent CHP MP Mahmut Tanal asked the head of YTB on how much of the discrimination in Europe was anti-Turkish and how much of it was anti-Islamic. He particularly questioned whether or not Turks and other Muslim groups, such as Arabs or Maghrebis, were considered to be in the same group and treated accordingly. He argued that the latter group's perception has led to the unfavourable attitude the Turkish

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<sup>230</sup> Bursa Milletvekili Aykan Erdemir ve 21 milletvekilinin, Avrupa’da yükselen ırkçı söylemler, nefret suçları ve uygulanan ayrımcı politikaların Avrupa ülkelerinde yaşayan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti yurttaşları üzerinde yarattığı ve yaratacağı sorunların araştırılarak alınması gereken önlemlerin belirlenmesi amacıyla Meclis araştırması açılmasına ilişkin önergesi (10/1256)

community receives. Therefore, there is a clear line of distinction between the Turkish identity and the other Muslim identities, i.e. Arab identity.

So, when we look at the example of a job application, here the woman has a foreign name and not wearing a hijab, and in the second image, she has a Turkish name and wears a hijab. The woman is the same, but the ratio of hearing back from the application is quite low when she applies with a headscarf. So, in terms of the difference, are we going to discuss only with reference to anti-Turkishness or anti-Islam?<sup>231</sup>

The categorical difference is drawn by the MP between the elements of Turkish and the Muslim identities emphasizes the significance attributed to the national identity of the Turks, coming beyond any other common identity element. This demarcation moves the emphasis away from Islamophobia, so long as the Turks receive discriminatory or unfair treatment because of their national identity rather than the religious one.

Same sensitivities came to the surface again while discussing the pressures regarding halal food in Europe. In reply to an example cited in a bureaucrat's presentation about the restrictions on halal butchers, the same MP objected to the example by asserting that the halal slaughter is usually a cultural problem of Gulf countries, which is linked more to the money relations of big businesses. Hence, it was not seen as a problem concerning Turks per se, for it was more related to a religious practice than a national one. The committee chairman's response was as follows:

There is also an anti-Turkishness, but we are talking about anti-Islamism (Islamophobia), which also exists. Yet, it seems more like Islamophobia than hostility towards Turks. Even so, when you say "Turk" in many parts of Europe, what comes to mind is a Muslim. Therefore, there is multifaceted discrimination.

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<sup>231</sup> Mahmut Tanal 20 Ekim 2016 tarihli komisyon, page 6

The statements by an Ak Party MP with a diaspora background also addresses a similar distinction between what he called as Islamophobia and “Turkophobia” so to say. As an answer to my question on Ak Party’s pronounced emphasis on Islamophobia in diaspora policy agenda, he pointed to the prevalence of a similar phenomenon as spoken out by CHP.

In addition to Islamophobia, I think it is essential to see the presence of Turkophobia (anti-Turkish sentiments) in Europe. I remember a saying by Alija Izetbegović. He said: ‘Serbs used to call us Turks because we are Muslim. Whoever was a Muslim in Bosnia was a Turk.’ Therefore, it is difficult to explain the hostile sentiments in Europe on the rational ground.

### **7.6.2. ‘Hypocrisy’ Debate Revisited: Blindfolded to Injustices at Home?**

Another interesting note from the opposition is addressing the double standard on the government’s Islamophobia rhetoric. While acute human rights abuses that took place in the domestic sphere, the opposition finds it unfair to point the finger at Europe before looking at similar violations in Turkey’s backyard. While the bureaucrat guest of the session, the head of YTB, was presenting Islamophobic cases from Europe, such as far-right politician Marie Le Pen’s proposal to ban halal food in secondary schools, Mahmut Tanal points out what he sees as a double standard. As an ardent advocate of human rights in Turkey with a specific focus on prison conditions, he suggests that the pious prisoners such as recently imprisoned Gülen movement followers are similarly the victim of illiberal policies in Turkey, let alone those in France.

You say so, but right now, the Quran is not let through in prisons in Turkey. We are talking about Turkey. Now we are discussing the situation in France, but please be fair while criticizing others. Quran is not let in prisons right now in Turkey.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> It should be noted that this committee meeting takes place three months following July 15 coup attempt, after which many Gülen movement-affiliated people were put in jail in mass numbers.

Similar to the debates addressed in the previous section of this chapter, pointing to the double standard of the government's diaspora policy has become a recurring topic in the parliamentary debates. Another example of the "in your backyard" kind of critique, which reminds Yeneroğlu's points, came from opposition HDP representative during committee meetings.

The most important reason for Turkey's failure to assert serious claims on Islamophobia on international platforms is that Turkey lacks any legislation that covers Islamophobia, hate crimes, xenophobia or anti-Semitism, except the infamous penal code that starts as 'public incitement of hatred and hostility', which is completely misinterpreted. You can go back and lobby in Europe on Islamophobia only when you have legislation here on hate crime, from Islamophobia to xenophobia or racism.<sup>233</sup>

Overall, while no party questioned the presence or relevance of Islamophobia (or Turkophobia in that matter) in Europe, the degree to which political parties problematized the issue differed.

For this thesis's scope, however, I see two contending implications of Islamophobia debates in the parliament. First, it is a representational issue. By bringing the concept of Islamophobia somewhat more often than other burning diaspora issues, the ruling party makes what Saward calls as 'representative claim' (2006). Accordingly, the Ak Party assumes that one of the most underlying problems faced by citizens abroad is discrimination based on religion or national identity. In that regard, Islamophobia is prioritized over other issues. The continuous emphasis on Islamophobia can therefore be analysed as a process of claim-making on behalf of the represented's interests and perspectives in Saward's terms.

The second point is about Islamophobia functioning as a tool to connect domestic and foreign policy priorities. The government's anti-Western rhetoric as a domestic political pillar needs avenues to manifest itself occasionally.

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<sup>233</sup> Ayhan Bilgen, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 27.10.2016, page 16

Islamophobia functions as one of these instruments, as was also hinted at by Yeneroğlu. In relations with the Western countries, it is often used as foreign policy leverage against the European countries in times of tension.

In terms of the relationship between the government and opposition, the debate on Islamophobia reveals domestic fault lines, too. The opposition parties criticized the government's selective reading of hate speech and interpreting it fundamentally as Islamophobia. Besides, they used it as a means to address domestic human rights violations and accused the government of applying double standards.

### **7.7. Domestic and Diaspora Sensitivities Intertwined: Insights into the Works of KEFEK<sup>234</sup>**

One distinct pattern in the 2000s diaspora policy is that the parliamentary committees became more active than ever in focusing on specialized issue areas related to the diaspora. Islamophobia was one example, as was touched upon in the previous section. The situation of women abroad did not go unnoticed either. Under the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men (KEFEK), a specialized sub-committee to investigate the “problems faced by women and families abroad, who denounced Turkish citizenship with special permission” was established and worked for approximately two years between 2016-18 during the 26<sup>th</sup> legislative term. The sub-committee's departure point was the idea that “there are more obstacles for women to overcome who have foreign status in the society they live.”<sup>235</sup> In that regard, in order to find a solution to the “problems and discriminatory practices faced especially our women who live abroad and maintain their ties with their homeland”, the

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<sup>234</sup> “KEFEK” stands for the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men, a standing committee in the Turkish Parliament established with a law in 2009.

<sup>235</sup> Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşı Olan ve Vatandaşlıktan İzinle Çıkmış Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunları ve Çözümü Önerileri Konulu Komisyon Raporu, page i

committee worked together with various ministries and public bodies, as well as academia and NGOs who work on women issues. The cooperation took place specifically in the fields of legal, demographic, social, familial challenges. The committee also organized work trips to Germany, France and the Netherlands and met stakeholders, NGO and citizen representatives.

In this section, I would like to summarise the works and implications of this sub-committee. KEFEK is one of the standing committees within the Turkish Parliament, yet the committee's interest in women and families abroad is something new. Since I observed that the committee debates might offer a rich ground to identify key differences among political parties on how women were placed in society with the projection on women abroad, I found it essential to include this section in diaspora debates of the 2000s. I believe the main arguments in this committee are also quite representative of the main fault lines within Turkish politics in the last two decades.

The early debates of whether or not to establish this committee witnessed disagreements between the ruling and opposition party MPs. The opposition objected to the sub-committee for two reasons. First, they argued that as a specialized committee on women, KEFEK's main responsibility was to focus on the problems faced by women in Turkey, which are already manifold, ranging from domestic violence to lack of equal opportunities in social and economic life. Second, the opposition MPs opposed the emphasis on family and values attached to the family by the Ak Party and MHP, arguing that women should be considered independently from a family structure. And lastly, another underlying pattern in the committee debates worthwhile mentioning has been the transnationalization of domestic political priorities regarding women.

The first disagreement came from the opposition parties' view that the women in Turkey already have burning issues and questions surrounding their lives. Hence, focusing on the problems women living "there", albeit Turkish, would be a vain

attempt while millions of women were suffering from way worse conditions “here”. A prominent female MP from CHP summarized their standpoints as follows:

In problematic areas for women, be it national or international, no women’s problem is less significant than the other. Of course, our citizens abroad have problems; but I think these are not the problems that concern our committee. The issues stated in this preamble are the problems of families abroad, which means it should be the concern of the Foreign Affairs Committee, not for us as KEFEK members. Europe is far ahead of us in terms of gender discrimination and femicide numbers. What we say is that the real problem is in Turkey, in the patriarchal structure of Turkey.<sup>236</sup>

Apart from drawing a jurisdictional line for KEFEK by addressing another committee within the Parliament, the MP’s objection for the sub-committee hints towards an understanding that KEFEK’s concern should be domestic issues rather than those outside Turkey. While not underestimating the significance of problems faced by women abroad, the urgency of the situation in Turkey was put in perspective in comparative terms with Europe, where the committee intends to focus. In that regard, the sub-committee should prioritize domestic citizens over the others; it is argued.

Yüceer was not alone in voicing such disagreement. Another committee member from CHP also pointed to the same problem while at the same time arguing that Turkey has a lot more to do in its own land for women before embarking on overseas activities.

In the preamble, the problems are listed: active participation in political life, divorces, problems related to the citizenship, xenophobia, access to religious services, preserving the connection with the homeland, implementing comprehensive social, economic and health policies, improving the current situation of families abroad... I still insist that these should not be the priority of our committee. We have more fundamental issues to make our priority. The main issues we should focus on are self-evident when you just look at the

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<sup>236</sup> Candan Yüceer, KEFEK, 27 Ocak 2016, page 14

streets. When we look at this street, the main areas that this Commission should deal with are clearly seen.<sup>237</sup>

The opposition's criticisms resonate with a recurrent theme in diaspora policy, which was also mentioned in different contexts in the previous sections: that Turkey should mind its 'backyard' first. The woman issue was no exception to the list of priorities that the governments should start making according to the opposition. Hence, it might initially seem like the opposition finds itself in a position to prioritize domestic over diaspora issues, which is the case in the issues surrounding women. In reality, however, the opposition's criticisms were rather multi-layered than simply this objection, which is evident in the content of its further criticism as will be seen.

The ruling Ak Party representative's response to "this is not our issue" sort of criticism characterised them as citizens regardless of their country of residence. The argument with which the sub-committee chairwoman justified the choice of focus demonstrates a peculiar understanding of citizenship and political representation. She suggested that especially after the electoral franchise was extended to citizens abroad, it has become necessary to express their demands from homeland governments more profoundly, and this committee aimed to "fulfil this need and requests waiting to be resolved from citizens abroad."<sup>238</sup> While the stress upon "the national will" reflects the ruling party's populist undertones prevailing every so often in domestic politics, it also addresses "stakeholder citizenship" understanding as was conceptualized by Bauböck (2006). Accordingly, since diaspora members are now also voters just like those at home, the Parliament should thus be more sensitive towards their needs as overseas voters. So, we understand that more widespread participation in the Turkish election played a crucial role in expanding legislative activities regarding citizens abroad, including the establishment of the given committee.

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<sup>237</sup> Sibel Özdemir, KEFEK, 27 Ocak 2016, page 27

<sup>238</sup> KEFEK 6.1.2016

Especially the remarks by the sub-committee chairwoman present a novel understanding of diaspora and citizenship.

We have a responsibility when a Turkish citizen faces a problem, no matter where in the world, and asks for a solution to this problem related to their country. In that regard, we will look at what we can do through legislative changes to solve or facilitate these issues they faced.<sup>239</sup>

Therefore, through stakeholder citizenship understanding, legislative mechanisms are mobilized by the ruling party for diaspora members. After all, the Ak Party's endeavour to serve the diaspora's needs is reasonable given the fact that the party receives the majority of the diaspora votes, high above its average percentage in Turkey, as was highlighted earlier in this chapter. The remarks above, which bears somewhat populist elements, also illustrates a case for Saward's "representative claim". Therefore, the KEFEK members consider themselves the de facto representatives of the overseas -female- electorate. The stress on "wherever in the world" also shows an extraterritorial understanding of citizenship, meaning a national bond that moves beyond the territorial boundaries.

Yet overall, arguments voiced by the opposition follows a somewhat similar logic I have touched upon in the previous sections: why do we focus on the diaspora while citizens in Turkey have mounting problems in the given area. Criticisms along the same lines were also expressed in issues such as Islamophobia or restrictions of election rallies by the European governments. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that such "what aboutism" have come to dominate the relations between the ruling party and the opposition in many areas of the diaspora policy.

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<sup>239</sup> Tülay Kaynarca, 5 Mayıs 2016 Kadın Erkek Fırsat Eşitliği Komisyonu Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşı Olan ve Vatandaşlıktan İzinle Çıkış Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunları ve Çözüm Önerileri Konulu Alt Komisyon, page 3

### **7.7.1. Woman or Family?**

The first criticism from the opposition was about the necessity of launching such a committee. However, a better look at the content of such objections shows that what the opposition rejects, in essence, was something more than meets the eye: the characterization of women merely within the boundaries of the family. The opposition parties HDP and CHP often reiterate this viewpoint takes a woman as an independent entity beyond family on different occasions in the parliament, but it became the most underlying critique for this committee.

The committee's very inception is reflective of the ruling party position on issues concerning women in general. A closer look at the preamble would reveal the basis of the opposition's critique. Problematic issue areas intended to be resolved were listed as follows:

Ensuring societal integration and effective political participation of citizens who participate in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the society; protecting the cultural identity of families against assimilation policies, fighting against xenophobia, discrimination and Islamophobia, access to religious services, unemployment, and other issues related to divorce, education of women, men, children, youth and families.

The issues related not only to the family but also to the cultural or political issues that substantially reflect the Ak Party's general sensitivities, like Islamophobia, were primarily included as the committee's main focus areas, as could be seen above. Besides, though the sub-committee was established under the standing committee on women, the emphasis was primarily on family, as was often voiced and criticized by the opposition. MPs from conservative nationalist MHP can also be observed echoing the Ak Party's position while stating the committee's main aim as "identifying the problems of our citizens abroad

concerning the equality of woman and man and ensuring that we address these problems based on family.”<sup>240</sup>

The opposition parties of the committee, CHP and HDP, consistently objected to the central place given to family and related values as the focus of the committee. They insisted that a woman, be it married or single, should be taken as an individual, independently of the family. A CHP representative in the committee pointed towards the heterogeneous character of the women living abroad as opposed to the homogeneous one as tried to be pushed by the government with the emphasis on the family.

If this committee is established to investigate and resolve the problems of women living there, regardless of their marital status, whether they are married or not, whether they are a family member or not, it is ok. But when you say ‘family’, I think it is wrong to see a woman only as a family member. Because there are not only women who have started a family there. There are also women who have never married, separated from their spouses or lost their husbands, there are also women who live alone or with their children or their own families.<sup>241</sup>

Another opposition member of the committee, Filiz Kerestecioğlu from HDP, addresses another kind of heterogeneity concerning the issues faced by women abroad, which is overshadowed by the usage of the term “family”.

This is ‘equality of opportunity committee’ that I think should be ‘equality between men and women.’ But we always bring things up from the family perspective and within the family context. For example, I know that especially young women living abroad face severe problems with violence and try to escape from their families. I haven’t heard anything about this violence in the text that was just read. There are only very general words there, such as family structure, education and so on.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Nuri Okutan, 1 Mart 2016, Kadın Erkek Fırsat Eşitliği Komisyonu Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşı Olan ve Vatandaşlıktan İzinle Çıkış Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunları ve Çözüm Önerileri Konulu Alt Komisyon, page 28

<sup>241</sup> Burcu Köksal, 6 Ocak 2016 KEFEK, page 18

<sup>242</sup> Filiz Kerestecioğlu Demir, 6 Ocak 2016, KEFEK, page 17

Arguing that the glorified term ‘family’ might sometimes be the source of the problem rather than an all-encompassing solution, the MP criticized the uniform understanding that shapes the working of the committee. Another HDP representative also complained about the superior role attributed to the family above women during the session, where the committee's final report was discussed. She also expressed her disappointment about the difference between her expectations from the committee and the actual outcome.

The committee title includes the phrase ‘the problems of women abroad’. We hoped indeed the problem of women living abroad would be analysed and the results would be shared, but when we look at the works of the committee and the presentation we just received, we are disappointed. The debate was mostly about the family. However, there are serious problems faced by women due to their identity as women. Domestic violence and the fact that women’s migration essentially made the second generations deepens the integration problem for women there. In this respect, we believe that this committee should focus on women and investigate women’s issues and identity.<sup>243</sup>

Raising her objections to the strong emphasis on family at the same presentation, CHP member of the committee Candan Yüceer also warned against the possibility that overshooting the problem would lead to misidentifying the solutions too, especially at a time when burgeoning issues surround women.

We saw that the emphasis on ‘protecting the family integrity’ too often in the Minister’s presentation. Of course, protecting family integrity is very important and precious. Family is essential to us; if we confine the problems faced by women merely to ‘protecting the family integrity’, then I think we will miss the real problem of women and, of course, the solutions, too.<sup>244</sup>

Taken together, overall criticisms show that the opposition meets at the common ground with the same arguments. However, more worthy of attention in this context is the ruling party’s stance on women. As a matter of fact, the strong emphasis on family connotations while speaking on women in KEFEK is not

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<sup>243</sup> Dilan Dirayet Taşdemir, 31 Ağustos 2018, KEFEK, page 20

<sup>244</sup> Candan Yüceer, 31 Ağustos 2018 KEFEK, page 22

anything new, nor are the criticisms directed at it. The Ak Party's perspective on women, more increasingly so in recent years, have been shaped with reference to her role within the family. It is possible to find abundant examples of various high-level government officials, including Erdoğan more often than others, emphasizing a woman's role as a mother and as part of a family than as an individual.

Moreover, such an outlook has long been reflected in the institutional restructuring, too. Even though a separate minister was assigned the task of implementing policies on issues surrounding women, even the title of the minister 'woman' was adjoined with 'family'; the Minister of State Responsible for Women and Family Affairs. The 'women' was eventually removed from the title of the post, and an independent ministry status was issued in 2011 under the name 'Ministry of Family and Social Policy, preceding the final version of 2018, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. Hence, the ruling party's - somewhat coherent- perception of women should be taken in its totality while analysing the opposition's criticisms.

Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, a closer look at KEFEK's debates would easily reveal this pattern of ruling party politicians' tendency to refer to women with family values and the opposition's insistence that woman identity have multiple forms. Hence, the diaspora policy emerges as only one area through which this conflict is manifested.

### **7.7.2. Transnationalization of Domestic Political Priorities**

One of the most worthwhile implications of KEFEK's work on women abroad is the sub-committee's role in revealing the nexus between domestic policy priorities and the diaspora policy area. The committee debates witnessed the Ak Party members cherry-picking certain issue areas in domestic policy and problematizing them as a diaspora issue. Two main topics come to the forefront

in that regard; the headscarf ban and Islamophobia. In both problems, we see the Ak Party MPs identifying discrimination against women of Turkish origin in Europe by primarily putting forward these two problems. While asking questions to the bureaucrat guest of the session, the Ak Party MP Salih Çetinkaya highlights the pressure on headscarf-wearing in Europe.

“The issue regarding the employment of women over 18... After 2006, maybe because of Islamophobia, restrictions on women with headscarves started. There is a serious problem there. It actually turned the existing equality into inequality. For example, I hear about women with headscarves do not get internships in pharmacies or anywhere like that or that they cannot find the opportunity to work in most government institutions. This stands as a serious problem.”<sup>245</sup>

The remarks are interesting for reflecting the priorities of political Islam tradition in Turkey currently embodied by the Ak Party. Notwithstanding the high relevance of the problem, the fact that it was brought up in a context where women’s issues were the foremost focus shows that the ruling party still considers the headscarf issue one of the ultimate problems women face here or there. Another relevant example is the remarks by a French guest of the committee included in the final committee report, in which he noted that “the rights of Muslim women in France can be limited just because they wear a headscarf and they might be subjected to ill-treatment from time to time.” The inclusion of these comments in the official committee report is crucial for it addresses the similarities between the soundbites in domestic and diaspora areas. The headscarf ban has long dominated the Turkish political scene. The events of the 1990s leading up to the 1997 post-modern coup and the events in the wake of it have possibly cultivated one of the deepest fault lines in Turkish politics. The frequent stress on the headscarf issue can thus be seen as the outcome of this period, through which political Islam tradition in Turkey was almost traumatized to the level that their experience of discrimination was mainly shaped in that same experience. As far as the diaspora policy is concerned, the resurfacing of the same rhetoric when it comes to citizens abroad shows that the diaspora

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<sup>245</sup> 1.3.2016 KEFEK

agenda and domestic agenda might sometimes intersect, or the latter might occasionally transform into the former. Hence, the perspective on discrimination in Turkey was, in a way, imported to the diaspora context while the MP quoted above made his remarks about headscarf in Europe. Besides the constant emphasis on family, this perspective more or less determined the activities of the committee.

Another example of the selective reading of diaspora problems in alignment with domestic priorities is the emphasis put on Islamophobia in the same committee. However, rather than the frequent references by the MPs per se, it was the choice of NGOs or guests in work trips to Europe echoing the government position in domestic politics such as Islamophobia or religion-based discrimination. For instance, we can give the example of a France visit to illustrate the selectivity of NGOs and how the insights voiced in the committee meeting by the French guest overlap with domestic policy priorities of the Ak Party. In the committee report, the highlight of the committee visit to France was summarized as follows:

The problems experienced by Muslims living in France can essentially be approached from two perspectives, Kbibeç stated, the first of which is the problems arising from the role of women in Islam and in terms of the equality between men and women, and the second is due to the Islamophobic approach that prevails in the French approach to Muslim women.<sup>246</sup>

It would be completely misleading to suggest that the committee only included the type of organizations resembling the ruling party mouthpiece, given that other social issues were also widely discussed in the committee. However, it is possible to see an inclination towards making a particular choice of invited institutions or guest speakers in the committee works. This, in turn, gives the government position a boost and an endorsement to a certain degree on the committee floor by independent, non-profit organizations. In the case of KEFEK, confirmation of the ruling party stance comes in the context of religion-based

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<sup>246</sup> Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşı Olan ve Vatandaşlıktan İzinle Çıkmış Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri Konulu Komisyon Raporu, page 115

discrimination against women in Europe. The issue voiced by the French pro-religious freedoms foundation representative matches the ruling party discourse on diaspora policy. Therefore, it would not be wrong to suggest that the committee also functioned to establish a transnational link between the Ak Party's position in domestic politics and what the party thinks is the problem primarily experienced by women in Europe. However, this does not by any means suggest that other social issues were excluded or ignored. Far from doing so, a range of problems was touched upon in the committee debates, such as the lack of women representation in decision-making mechanisms, the legal difficulties women face through a divorce, and other miscellaneous issues like education, culture and violence. Nevertheless, this still does not cancel out the possibility that the committee work, especially abroad, have served the ruling party to establish transnational links for its domestic policy priorities concerning women.

### **7.7.3. Is Diaspora Policy Non-Political?**

In diaspora debates, there is another (historically) recurring theme, or an argument as one might as well put it, that comes to the surface every so often, which is the message that diaspora is a policy area that is above-politics (*siyasetüstü*). Even though the non-politicalness claim can be made more confidently for the early decades of diaspora engagement during which there was not systematic diaspora policy, it can also be identified as a recurrent theme with reference to specific topics in contemporary times when diaspora policy got somewhat more politicized. Some of the statements made in KEFEK's sub-committee raises the question of whether diaspora policies on women can be thought of as above-politics.

In the final session of the committee, one of the most active participants of sub-committee meetings Sibel Özdemir of CHP, added her closing remarks saying that the committee's collaborative effort had been above-politics.

Our idea was to listen to the problems of all segments of people living there without any discrimination and to find solutions to these problems with the Parliament's will. We really carried out our work with this sensitivity. We did a kind of above-political (*siyasetüstü*) work. For this reason, I withdrew my dissenting opinion from the final report upon the addition of my views and suggestions in the draft.<sup>247</sup>

As an opposition member, the MP saw the inclusion of her opinions and suggestions in the report as a constructive gesture and withdrew her dissenting opinions. For the representative, this reconciliatory act alone has been a sign that certain issue areas such as the problem faced by women are and should be immune to everyday political conflicts. Especially diaspora policy emerges as an area in which this discourse seems more often than others. Her further remarks substantiate this point: "Our work in this committee was above-politics because our citizens there are above-politics for all of us." Though these remarks might not make it sufficient to declare diaspora politics as an area free from political conflicts, the women issues itself might offer one of the examples of cooperation-accommodating areas within the broader scope of diaspora policy. However, differing ideological standpoints on women's role and place might make such disagreement-free policymaking somewhat more complicated.

Overall, we can concur from the sub-committee work is that the debates on women reflect the domestic political outlook or preferences of the ruling party. This holds valid both for the understanding that addresses family when "woman" is denoted and the issues regarding the headscarf or Islamophobia. In that regard, the diaspora policy outlook becomes a mere reflection of domestic political priorities.

Another noteworthy implication is what this sub-committee debates have in common with other diaspora-related topics discussed so far, such as Islamophobia, blocking electoral rallies or various other discriminative practices

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<sup>247</sup> Sibel Özdemir, 20 Şubat 2018, Kadın Erkek Fırsat Eşitliği Komisyonu Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşı Olan ve Vatandaşlıktan İzinle Çıkış Kadınların ve Ailelerin Sorunları ve Çözüm Önerileri Konulu Alt Komisyon, page 5

in Europe targeting Turks: during the debates of each, the opposition points out to the same unlawful practices put in place by the government in the domestic realm. In that regard, diaspora debates in KEFEK can be seen as part of a larger pattern, especially after the first decade of the 2000s, which is essentially characterized by the parliamentary opposition's challenge to the ruling party's criticisms of the Western governments. The opposition often argues that the government should stop carrying out undemocratic acts at home before making the anti-Western rhetoric based on their unlawful acts its main diaspora policy element. Hence, drawing attention to the alarming femicide or domestic violence statistics as more urgent issues than the problems of women abroad can be interpreted in the light of this "double standard" rhetoric of the opposition.

#### **7.8. Human Rights Committee's Diaspora Focus**

Since the second half of the 2000s, the Human Rights Watch Committee consistently published country reports with a growing interest in the problems of citizens abroad. In addition to individual reports focusing on human rights violations in European countries mainly populated by Turkish citizens, the committee also issued reports on thematic issues such as the "Investigation Report on the Activities of Youth Welfare Offices for Children of Turkish Origin in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium" (2013) or the report on "Racist and Xenophobic Attacks in Europe against People of Turkish Origin in Europe" (2014). The Human Rights Committee reports on problematic issues in Europe, which were mostly issued in the 23<sup>rd</sup> legislative term (2007-2011), deserve particular attention since it signals a separate and systematic legislative effort on the diaspora.

The reports separately were written on the situation in France, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, and Germany offer detailed accounts of day-to-day problems of the citizens with Turkish origins, ranging from the youth welfare offices to Islamophobia. In fact, the period that marks the early use of the term

Islamophobia in the legislative texts can be addressed when the committee issues country reports. Besides more practical issues mentioned, broader political issues such as religious discrimination and Islamophobia find themselves a place in these country reports.

In the same period, the reports were published, the committee also frequently visited European countries populated by Turks within the scope of human rights investigations. During the work trips, politicians could have an on-site investigation in locations such as prisons or youth centres. More importantly, they could also have a mutual exchange with the stakeholders, political counterparts and diaspora representatives. Here is also a frequent reference to the prison visits in every country. For instance, the committee's annual report in 2007-2008 talks about a Germany visit to discuss the new immigration law that would jeopardize the conditions for the Turkish citizen, which was on the agenda by that time. Hence, the Turkish lawmakers started lobbying against the new law, which, for example, introduced new language requirements on newlywed partners who plan to immigrate. The committee reports summarize the process as follows:

With the enactment of the law, petitions of complaints started to be received by the Human Rights Watch Committee. On September 12, 2007, the Turkish community representatives in Germany visited our committee and drew attention to the human rights violations to be created.<sup>248</sup>

The committee members met their German counterparts during the trip and, in a way, gave their legislative effort for the diaspora a transnational character by trying to convince German politicians to withdraw the clauses that would negatively affect the Turkish diaspora. The Turkish lawmakers' attempts, in a way, echoes the opinions expressed by the sub-committee head of KEFEK. She also asserted that diaspora members are also citizens who deserve the focus and service of the Turkish Parliament representatives. In that regard, the works of the

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<sup>248</sup> İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu 23. Dönem 1. ve 2. Yasama Yılı Faaliyet Raporu

Human Rights Committee focusing on diaspora problems also exemplify this understanding of stakeholder citizenship. Different from the justification of the KEFEK chairwoman that reminds the critics of recently enacted diaspora voting, by the times these overseas legislative activities took place, out-of-country voting regulation was not passed, nor was expatriate voting enjoyed as a common practice. Hence, the Turkish lawmakers' overseas activities -through reports, country visits for lobbying and so forth- can be seen as part of an understanding of citizenship they have, through which they see themselves as de facto representatives of the citizens abroad regardless of the voters received from abroad.

Moreover, by looking at the focus of the reports, it would not be misleading to suggest that the given era marks a period when frequently appealed concepts like Islamophobia just started to become common. The close reading of the Human Rights Committee documents in the late 2000s also shows that the committee received many (complaint) letters from citizens abroad<sup>249</sup>. This alone demonstrates that the understanding of representation was somewhat mutual: while the MPs in the Turkish Parliament deemed themselves to be natural representatives of the citizens abroad, the citizens likewise considered the Turkish politicians their de facto representatives. In fact, far from being a new practice, the letter-sending to the lawmakers seated in the Turkish Parliament is as old as the history of labour migration itself. Recalling the plenary debates of the 1970s, many MPs who took the floor during the 1970s on citizens abroad talked about the letters they received from then guest workers in Europe. In that regard, it is possible to speak of a reciprocal relationship between the representative and the represented. Even though many of them are reasonably well integrated into the social and political lives in their country of residence when faced with political challenges, they can still seek help from politicians in Turkey. Therefore, one explanation for the fact that the MPs in Turkey see

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<sup>249</sup> TBMM İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu Fransa İnceleme Raporu, 2009

themselves as their natural representative is the demand coming from Europe. Letters are important indicators for such mutual connection.

The question of why populations abroad still seek Turkish politicians help despite a reasonable level of social and political integration is beyond the scope of this study and asks for a detailed analysis. However, with the findings at hand, it is plausible to suggest that the interest, demand from citizens in Europe is one possible cause that the political connections between citizens abroad and Turkish politicians endured and that the latter became responsive to their needs and demands.

Overall, the Human Rights Committee's works focusing on citizens abroad confirm my argument that Turkish politicians consider many of the issues faced by Turkish citizens abroad as a human rights problem, and they closely watched these problems.

### **7.9. “As Your Brother Who Lived Abroad for Years”’: MPs with a Diaspora Background and Their Activities**

As diaspora engagement policy became more visible in the Parliament, the number of representatives from diaspora also grew by number. While there were only a handful of names in the past decades combined, after the 2000s, diaspora MPs became more common for each party. This section will analyze the legislative activities of MPs with diaspora background and what it tells us for diaspora representation in the Turkish Parliament.

In the 2000s, it is seen that the Ak Party hosts the highest number of diaspora MPs in total. While these MPs mostly come from religious grassroots organizations in Europe, they become more active representatives in times of diaspora-related development, such as labour agreement anniversaries or diplomatic crises between their home and host countries.

For example, take Zafer Sırakaya, who is a 27<sup>th</sup> term MP with a diaspora background. A closer look at his legislative activities shows that he indeed spoke about either the history of labour migration or the policies related to the diaspora in all his legislative speeches. For example, while objecting to a “*gurbetçi*”<sup>250</sup> remarks by an opposition MP on Turks abroad, he differentiates himself as an individual who comes from a diaspora background and has genuine experience of being a diaspora member.

“I define myself as a citizen who has lived and grown up abroad, I define myself as a European Turk. I would also like to express once again that we are completely far from the descriptions such as *gurbetçi* or seasonal workers and that our citizens living abroad strongly reject these definitions.”<sup>251</sup>

Speaking on behalf of the represented, Sırakaya puts “representative claim” in Saward’s terms into action. However, one does not need to analyse his legislative activities to conclude that he deems himself the diaspora’s de facto representative. During the very start of my informal talk with him, he declared himself to be a diaspora representative and intend to serve directly for diaspora members' interests with his legislative acts. His legislative efforts validate this point. All five off-the-agenda speeches were on Euro Turks' issues (anniversary of the labour agreement, and the widespread problems they faced such as Islamophobia, xenophobic attacks and headscarf ban). In the speeches he made during budget meetings, during which the MPs often take the floor on their specialized issues, he talked about the budget of the diaspora institution YTB. Additionally, whenever an opposition MP raised a diaspora-related issue from a critical perspective, he was the one in his party who took the initiative and responded most of the time with remarks such as “as someone coming from,

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<sup>250</sup> A term widely used in daily language to describe immigrant Turkish citizens living abroad. However, the term is increasingly getting out of use for having a condescending connotation.

<sup>251</sup> Zafer Sırakaya, Plan ve Bütçe Komisyonu, 10 Haziran 2020

having lived.” Therefore, he took ownership of his diaspora experience during legislative debates too.

While arguing that his party served the most in the history of diaspora-homeland relations, he often criticized the previous era governments for being wary of taking necessary steps in order not to fall out with the host governments and keep the status quo.

At that time, citizens abroad became also the victim of unfair politics, which was alienated from the community. Especially until the Ak Party rule, all the problems of Turks abroad were ignored, and the governments remained passive with the concern that ‘we should not be at odds with the Western governments. This common attitude has come to an end with the significance attributed to Turks abroad and our President’s personal effort.’<sup>252</sup>

During my talk with him, the MP reiterated this point and criticized previous governments for being passive while tackling the issues faced by Turks abroad. According to him, the most significant change in diaspora policy in the Ak Party era was the state becoming a pro-active actor fostering a transition from “what they can do for us” to “what we can do for them.” According to him, the change was possible because Turkey realized the potential for citizens abroad to function as a soft power for itself.

Another noteworthy point I could obtain from Sirakaya’s parliamentary speeches was his frequent appeal to “the hypocrisy of the West” rhetoric. Albeit often found in the government’s discourse, the anti-Western rhetoric is somewhat more interesting when it comes from an MP who spent years in Europe as a citizen and a resident in Europe. The speeches in which he highlights the negativities of his experience starting with notes such as “European countries and societies that claim to be the centre of civilization”<sup>253</sup> and points out to the

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<sup>252</sup> Zafer Sirakaya, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 13. Birleşim, 1 Kasım 2018

<sup>253</sup> Zafer Sirakaya, *Tutanak Dergisi*, 84. Birleşim, 28 Mayıs 2019

double standard of the West is not uncommon. Even though it can easily be inferred from his legislative activities and speeches that he is a diaspora MP and serves for the diaspora only, it is not difficult to see that both the issues he voice and the way these issues are voiced strongly reflect his party's domestic political priorities.

Another name that should be analysed is Mustafa Yenerođlu, who can be considered the pioneer of diaspora representation in the Turkish Parliament. Besides his plenary and committee speeches on diaspora-related topics, he issued various legislative statements ranging from press releases as a Human Rights Committee Chair to private members' bills on issues such as elections in various host countries, political and social challenges facing the Turkish community and relevant political developments. In general, he can be considered as "the diaspora MP", who has undertaken the utmost legislative work for the diaspora. During my talk with him, he also confirmed that he became a parliamentarian to serve as a diaspora, similar to Rep. Sırakaya.

In the 26<sup>th</sup> term during his tenure as the Human Rights Committee Chair, his broader legislative works focus on topics such as freedom of expression, violation of fundamental rights and other related developments. However, I observed that, like Sırakaya, he took the floor when the diaspora-related issues came to the agenda, such as the budget of YTB, or likewise responded to inquiries and criticisms on relevant topics. Though he was re-elected in the 27<sup>th</sup> legislative term, he resigned from the Ak Party during his second term and joined the newly established DEVA.

During this period, the only private member's bill he drafted was directly on a diaspora issue, proposing the constitution's amendment to enable overseas constituency<sup>254</sup>. He effectively used the Parliament's oversight mechanisms to investigate diaspora issues too. 9 out of 20 written questions he drafted in the

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<sup>254</sup> 2/2392 Türk Vatandaşlık Kanununda Deđişiklik Yapılması Hakkında Kanun Teklifi

27<sup>th</sup> term was posed to 9 different ministries investigated how many personnel was appointed from that particular ministry for diaspora affairs. Apart from this interrogation on the diaspora's bureaucratic structure, on different parliamentary platforms (plenary and committee speeches, press releases as the head of the human rights committee), he is the one that brings diaspora-related topics to the agenda the most. In total, 21 of his press releases as the Human Rights Committee Chair were about different issues related to the diaspora members' lives. These cover, but not limited to, call to citizens in Austria to vote in the upcoming elections, the anniversary of the guest labourer agreement with Germany, the attacks against Muslims in the Netherlands and the decline of the integration policies in the newly formed cabinet, police violence against Turks in Germany, the anniversary of Mölln attacks, military service for diaspora members, anti-Islamic attacks on mosques in various European countries in general. As the diverse areas of focus demonstrate, the highlighted issues were mostly on the lives of the diaspora and the problems they faced there, but also on their ties with Turkey, such as problems in the customs, military service or voting abroad.

Despite his initial specialization on the diaspora as such, his recent focus in DEVA as the Deputy Head of the Party responsible for legal affairs instead shifted towards topics such as the rule of law and violation of rights and freedoms in Turkey. During my talk with him, he explained this new shifted focus as an inevitable outcome of the severity of the situation in Turkey.

Diaspora can become a separate policy area for countries which sorted out most of their big problems. When I first came to Turkey as an MP in June 2015, I believed that Turkey was at that level, that it was ready to have a separate diaspora policy area. I came here as a diaspora MP to represent the diaspora and bring solutions to their problems. But the situation in Turkey is so severe that now I have to focus on more fundamental areas such as the rule of law and human rights.

It is nonetheless striking that a politician, a self-acclaimed diaspora representative, reshuffles his political priorities as a requirement of his home country's political realities despite his original intentions. It also makes one question whether indeed diaspora representation is for countries with no substantial issues to deal with.

HDP is another political home to politicians with a diaspora background. The Kurdish movement's strong presence and organizational network in Europe can potentially explain the party's dominance in diaspora representation along with the Ak Party. When we look at the general focus areas of the party's diaspora representative, we see that the issues they touch upon completely align with their party programme and politics. More than 60 written questions drafted by Feleknas Uca, a former European Parliament member, cover various issues ranging from the imprisoned party members to the latest health updates of Öcalan during the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> term (2015-2018 and 2018-present respectively). Since her legislative activities mostly revolved around the situation of Yazidis, as the groups she comes from, rather than the diaspora, it is possible to suggest that her ethnic background has been quite influential in her legislative activities. For example, 5 of her written questions and 3 out of 4 speeches in the plenary focused on or somewhat referred to the Yazidi situation amid the Syrian crisis. The Kurdish issue and especially the problems of Kurdish women were other noticeable highlights in her parliamentary profile.

The Turkish Parliament hosted another MP with a Yazidi background Ali Atalan during the 26<sup>th</sup> term (2015-2018), who was also involved in local politics in Germany. Like Feleknas Uca, who also consistently brought the Yazidi situation to the Turkish Parliament's agenda, Ali Atalan's legislative activities were also overwhelmingly about Yazidis, mostly about those who had to fled their lands during the Syrian war and lived under unfavourable conditions in refugee camps. For instance, the private member's bill he proposed was about introducing a Yazidi genocide day and commemorating it annually. As far as his written

questions were concerned, even though the focus of the written questions varied, those concerning Yazidis are noticeably high among other issues (10 out of 97 total written questions). At the same time, the rest covers subjects ranging from the problems faced in his constituency Mardin to miscellaneous human rights violations in the region. Unlike his other Yazidi counterpart in the parliament, one of his questions was somewhat about the diaspora, inquiring about the influence of Erdoğan in Europe. Citing German politicians claim that Erdoğan established a paramilitary support unit in Germany, he asked about the connection between Ak Party and the UETD, a pro-Ak Party civil society organization lobbying in Europe.

Additionally, he investigated the claims that Ak Party MP Metin Külünk assisted the underground mafia-like organization called “Almanyalı Osmanlılar” (German Ottomans)<sup>255</sup>. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' response stated that these baseless and false claims were part of a “consistent smear campaign against our country.” His contribution to plenary work was no different from his oversight activities. Even though he spoke on the bills on various topics, he somehow linked his speeches to the Yazidis' plight by starting many sentences with “as a Yazidi MP” when he took the floor.

Another HDP MP coming from a diaspora background was Ziya Pir. He also actively participated in local politics in his country of residence Germany before becoming an MP in Turkey during the 26<sup>th</sup> term (2015-2018). Yet, unlike his other two co-party fellow MPs, he did not come from a Yazidi background but was Kurdish. Also, unlike the other two examples from HDP, it is possible to suggest that he acted more as a diaspora representative. Out of the 3 draft bills he proposed, 2 were on issues concerning the citizens abroad, about their social security and citizenship rights, respectively. His written questions were mostly about the problems in his constituency Diyarbakır, prison conditions and the

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<sup>255</sup> 26. Dönem 3. Yasama Yılı 7/24299 no.lu soru önergesi

treatment of imprisoned citizens, and DİTİB's supposedly suspicious activities in Europe.

Furthermore, if we take the budget meetings at a particular time when MPs have a chance to speak on their area of interest or expertise, Pir's focus was always on YTB -diaspora institution- during budget meetings. His constant choice of speaking on YTB's budget every year can be taken as a sign that he was the diaspora MP or had the expertise or interest to talk on diaspora issues within his party. He himself makes it clear by saying that he talks on the YTB budget "as a Diyarbakır deputy who lived in Europe for 36 years."

Even though the Ak Party's interest in diaspora representation is relatively recent, the party had deputies with diaspora background in previous legislative terms too. In the 24<sup>th</sup> term (2011-2015), Tülin Erkal filled this role. In general, ruling party members are less active in their legislative efforts than their opposition party counterparts since the executive held by their party does policymaking already. Tülin Erkal Kara was no exception to that. Albeit limited, her legislative activities nonetheless demonstrate that she also saw herself as an MP that advocates the diaspora's issues. Like other MPs with diaspora background, she also started most of her speeches with statements owning her diaspora past such as "as your sister who was born and raised abroad." When there was a motion from the opposition concerning citizens abroad, she was the one from the Ak Party to take the floor to respond, similar to the role undertaken by Zafer Sırakaya now. All of her three plenary speeches in total were dedicated to citizens abroad or was given in response to in diaspora context. Later, her efforts were rewarded with the ambassador title. She was recruited as Turkey's ambassador to Macedonia and currently holds this position. A similar career path could be seen for another Ak Party MP, Fazilet Dağcı Çıgılık, who served as an Ak Party deputy in the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> terms and eventually was promoted by the President as ambassador to Luxembourg. The 2 out of 7 her plenary speeches were on the situation of the Turks abroad and policies developed for them. The

rest of the speeches were briefs on diplomatic meetings she participated in abroad. Therefore, the Ak Party's early diaspora MPs (the late 2000s to mid-2010s) were not as pro-active as the late diaspora MPs the party had (post-2015). CHP's diaspora deputy served in the Parliament during the 22<sup>nd</sup> term. Coming from an Alevi background, Gülçiçek spent many years in Germany actively engaged in Alevi civil society foundations. Consequently, his parliamentary activities centred on religious freedom, more specifically on Alevi houses of worship and problems faced by Alevi citizens in Turkey and abroad. Quite many of his written questions cover issues such as Turkey's action against Islamist fundamentalists in Europe, the situation of Alevis in Europe, religious education given to Turkish citizens in Europe and their social security status in Turkey. Additionally, he consistently followed up with the voting rights of citizens in Europe. In fact, the interest he has shown in expatriate voting partially invalidates the claim that was touched upon in the previous sections, which argued that CHP has always been involuntary on enacting an expatriate voting regulation due to diaspora's overall tendency to vote for political Islam. As a diaspora member who became a representative, it is clear that Gülçiçek considered voting right as a natural right that should be granted to citizens abroad, regardless of what the overwhelming majority would vote for. Also, he is the first signatory of a proposal to initiate an investigation committee on citizens abroad, which eventually turned into a committee in 2003. Given the fact that proposing to start an investigation committee is a sign of interest in a particular area in the parliamentary work, it would not be misleading to consider him as an MP who dedicated a considerable amount of work to diaspora issues. In addition to his emphasis on expatriate voting, his plenary speeches were mostly on diaspora-related issues. Like other diaspora MPs, he was the one to take to the floor to respond whenever a diaspora-related issue was discussed, which can be interpreted as a given MP's ownership of a given subject in legislative practice in

Turkey. He penned his experience as a legislator in a memoir titled “My Struggle Across Borders”,<sup>256</sup> signifying his political activities in Turkey and Germany.

In conclusion, the overall works of the MPs with diaspora background offers mixed evidence. There is not a direct correlation between coming from a diaspora background and putting diaspora issues first. It varies comparatively. While Zafer Sirakaya’s all legislative activities are on diaspora’s issues, his former co-party member Mustafa Yeneroğlu has been equally active on diaspora issues. But in addition to his diaspora engagement works, he was also a vocal defender of other problems such as human rights or education.

However, the overall picture gets more complex when we include diaspora MPs with a minority ethnic background, such as Kurdish or Yazidi. In that regard, their legislative activities can be put into two different categories. The first is related to their ethnic identity. As far as the cause for migration is concerned, they constitute a separate arm of the Turkey-connected diaspora groups. Different from the abovementioned MPs, the reason their past generations immigrated is mostly due to political reasons. Consequently, contrary to Ak Party’s diaspora MPs, they are more likely to defend the issues of the ethnic minority which they are a part of more predominantly than the diaspora in Germany or the host countries where they come from. By looking at the limited composition they have in the Turkish parliament, it is seen that their ethnic background’s influence is much more visible on their legislative work than their diaspora experience. In other words, the intensity with which they perform their legislative functions signals the fact that they represent the ethnic minority they come from rather than the diaspora communities they come from in Europe.

Second, the legislative activities of diaspora MPs with minority background are not limited to advocating the rights of the ethnic community they come from. Like the Ak Party’s diaspora MPs, they also worked as their party’s ideological

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<sup>256</sup> Ali Rıza Gülçiçek, *Sınırları Aşan Mücadelem*, 2018, İstanbul

agents by fostering their party's specific agendas. For example, in addition to drafting several written questions about the Yazdi community, Feleknas Uca also used many other legislative channels to address the prison conditions or inquiring Öcalan's health<sup>257</sup>, just as any other HDP MP. Likewise, the Ak Party's diaspora MP Zafer Sirakaya showed a similar dual agenda by both bringing diaspora issues into the Parliament's attention, by also praising or thanking Erdoğan for his service in almost every speech, just like his many other fellow Ak Party MPs.

In that regard, it can be concluded that the MPs with diaspora background usually have dual legislative agenda, the one on their migration experience – be it the diaspora or the ethnic minority they come from – and another is the broader political agendas that align with their parties' position.

## **Conclusion**

The 2000s marks the most active diaspora-engagement period. First and foremost, the use of diaspora can be seen as a milestone on its own. It is also the period in which the term “diaspora” was started to be used for the first time to identify the citizens abroad. This concept, previously used for the émigré population of non-Muslim ethnic groups, has evolved into the one that is more commonly used by the state elite, implying the pro-active policies enacted for populations abroad. Therefore in policy-making, the Turkish diaspora found itself a more common use, signifying anyone who originated from Anatolia, regardless of religious or ethnic background (Öktem 2014: 8).

Overall, the chapter argued that two things had characterized the diaspora policy in this past two decades; the acts (the concrete policies for citizens abroad) and intentions (the ideological backdrop that shaped these policies and overall discourse on the diaspora).

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<sup>257</sup> 27. Dönem, 3. Yasama yılı, 7/28617 nlu soru önergesi

The first category includes developments that institutionalized diaspora-homeland relations. The most fundamental of these is the legislation on the first-ever diaspora institution YTB and out-of-country voting. Both initiatives have substantially changed the direction of diaspora policy and the degree to which citizens abroad (politically) connect with homeland Turkey. They also have shown Turkey's persistent efforts to establish a diaspora as a lobbying power in Europe. Further legislative efforts have cultivated this interest. For example, the investigation committee that came in the early years of Ak Party governments, opening up more space for politicians with diaspora background, establishing specialized parliamentary committees on topics such as the problems of women and families abroad under KEFEK, Islamophobia in Europe under Human Rights Committee and reports issued for each country can be shown as the signs of Turkish representatives' deepened interest on the diaspora.

The second category is the predominant ideological standpoint that shaped the content and main themes of the 2000s diaspora policy. This chapter argued that these oft-spoken themes and priorities, the fundamental of which can be pointed to as Islamophobia, were often the mirror image of domestic political developments and preferences. For example, the debates in KEFEK essentially reflected both parties' views on the domestic political realm. The Ak Party members gave constant references to family while speaking of women, whereas the opposition strictly rejected the idea. It was interesting to observe that the diaspora policy realm can host similar arguments political level. Likewise, frequent emphasis on Islamophobia regarding citizens abroad can be considered an extension of the growing influence of Islamic/conservative ideology that dominates the Ak Party's political agenda. Therefore, on many occasions, the period has witnessed the convergence of domestic political priorities of the ruling party and its approach and rhetoric towards citizens abroad. The understanding that confined freedom of expression to the boundaries of religious freedoms or headscarf issue often came to the surface while debating different issues within diaspora policy. Given that these are also the main ideological

standpoints of the ruling party in domestic politics, it is not misleading to suggest that the government mashed its domestic political preferences with the diaspora policy.

Furthermore, the potential of domestic political dynamics to determine diaspora relations and policy became more crystal clear, especially in the wake of the failed coup attempt. In moments such as diplomatic spats with European countries in election times, the espionage charges, Diyanet's increasingly politicized role in Europe and the claims that it functions like an army of the government previously non-political diaspora policy got further politicized. Some scholars see it as a consequence of the replacement of Kemalism with Sunni Islam in domestic politics. For example, it is argued that secularist tones in the Kemalist conception of nationhood were replaced with a Sunni-Islamic narrative with the introduction of a neo-Ottoman foreign policy agenda between 2009 and 2014 (İçduygu and Aksel, 2013; Okyay 2015). This domestic change has ultimately transformed state-diaspora relations in return.

Having said that, the differences between parties on diaspora issues also became more visible in this new era. This is not to say policies, such as establishing YTB or expatriate voting, were not commonly agreed upon by all parties. Contrarily, as committee and plenary debates demonstrated, these and many more legislation proposed by the Ak Party were supported by opposition party members. However, significant divisions were observed between the ruling party and opposition with arguments such as YTB promoted a peculiar form of nationhood and religion or the role undertaken by DİTİB. Similarly, greater differences manifested themselves in the perception of what needs a more urgent solution or the definition of problems in the first place. The disagreements in KEFEK is one example.

But what characterized the opposition parties primary discontent more acutely was the “hypocrisy” or “double standard” rhetoric they used against the

government's position on diaspora engagement. On many issues, the opposition criticized the government for showing less sensitivity on the same issue towards citizens in Turkey than citizens abroad, in a way "not minding its domestic area" in the first place. For instance, when the governments criticized the West for banning election rallies in Europe and restricted freedom of assembly, the opposition parties pointed towards violations made at home. When the ruling party officials complained about different forms of Islamophobia in Europe and the Turkish citizens' restricted freedoms, the opposition members addressed the severe form of human rights violations in Turkey and blamed the government for having double standards towards its citizens here and there. Lastly, when the Ak Party group proposed certain diaspora-related agenda, such as investigating their X or Y problems, the opposition showed the domestic realm again by arguing that mounting problems await for citizens here already. Hence, diaspora policy revealed a disagreement on what should be the priorities between "here" and "there", as well as forcing the government to take a holistic approach in terms of rights and freedoms.

The theoretical framework that often came out from the use of parliamentary channels has been Saward's concept "representative claim". I argued that both in diaspora-related policy-making and the MPs insistent focus on themes such as Islamophobia, who makes an ideal citizen, the role of women etc., there is a continuous claim-making on behalf of the represented citizens. This process works when the representatives seated in the Turkish Parliament bring specific issues more often or in a more pronounced way than others. They, for example, have a certain idea of what the problems held by women abroad are. Or likewise, they overrepresent what they think their overwhelming issues are, as in the case of Islamophobia. The politicians hence undertook their legislative activities first by thinking that they are the natural representatives of citizens abroad, and second by assuming what the burning problems of citizens abroad are.

All in all, the 2000s diaspora debates in the Turkish Parliament offers a rich ground for analysing many aspects of contemporary Turkish politics. It is an understudied, hence a refreshing area to see the dynamics between the ruling party and opposition within the parliament when supposedly non-political diaspora issues come to the agenda. Additionally, it is also telling for their different domestic sensitivities revealed on diaspora ground.

## CHAPTER 8

### ANALYSIS IN THE LIGHT OF RESEARCH FINDINGS: WHAT DO LEGISLATIVE DEBATES TELL US ABOUT DIASPORA REPRESENTATION AND DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT?

#### 8.1. What Kind of Representation Was It?

Although the first time legislation for external voting dates back to 1987, it was not until the mid-2010s that the overwhelming participation in Turkish elections from abroad was achieved thanks to the institutional developments that made out-of-country voting possible. Therefore, a theoretical gap occurs that legitimizes raising the following question: who do the MPs represent when they bring diaspora-related issues to the parliament's agenda, and through which understanding of representation. Typically, MPs seated in the Turkish Parliament do not only represent their constituency and the issues attached to it but also oftentimes voices various issues that fall into his party's political position. Diaspora-related issues are no exception to that. Hence, in the light of the theoretical debates, when the issues of the Turkish diaspora is brought to the attention of the Turkish parliament, usually it is through the understanding of surrogate representation, which denotes representing voters from the outside electoral district, or those with whom a representative does not have an electoral relationship (Mansbridge 2003; Urbinati and Warren 2008). Even though Europe was not an overseas electoral district, the MPs seated in Ankara brought their issues to the Parliament's attention and functioned as surrogate representatives despite the absence of a direct electoral relationship.

Secondly, what the MPs in the Turkish Parliament did all along, before and after electoral enfranchise, was constant claim-making on diaspora's interests, wants

and needs. That is to say, I argue that Saward's (2006) widely acknowledged "representative claim" framework sheds light on diaspora representation in the Turkish Parliament. It is especially useful in relation to my initial question, "why and how they deemed themselves as the representatives of the diaspora." From this perspective, discourses are central features of representation. When applied to the diaspora representation framework, acting for citizens abroad involves claiming to represent diaspora and framing issues as being of vital significance to the diaspora. From the onset of labour migration to the present day, the deputies had assumed themselves as the political representative of diaspora members, even when they were not directly elected representatives of citizens abroad in practice. The MPs have continuously made claims about the issues of priority for the diaspora. While these issues tended to be rather technical initially, such as compulsory military service, the capacity of the consular services or minor issues like passport fees<sup>258</sup>, the representative claims became more crystalized around political issues. The representation as claim-making culminated following the enfranchisement of citizens abroad, during which diaspora problems were defined predominantly in the axis of Islamophobia, restrictions on their religious freedoms or the discrimination they face due to their ethnicity/nationality and religion.

Here I deem it necessary to review the type of diaspora representation that took place in each decade, and six-decade long history of diaspora representation in the Turkish Parliament

### **8.1.1. Representation in the 1960s**

All parliamentary initiatives in the 1960s were centred around the anticipated return of the workers. The aim and the content of the draft bills, issues addressed and discussed, and the concerns voices were all shaped by the commonly held

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<sup>258</sup> It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the majority private member's bill proposed to the Parliament has been on the exemption of citizens abroad from paying passport fees while renewing them.

assumption that, after working in Europe for a few years in the countries migrated, the workers would finally return to their homelands. Hence, in this period, an understanding of political representation that emphasized issues regarding the workers' ties with Turkey became prominent. For example, the law on the continuation of workers' social security rights in Turkey, or the bill on making use of workers' remittances can be demonstrated as examples of this common expectation.

First, the focus was on day-to-day problems. This ranged from even seemingly trivial issues from the food they eat in their cafeterias that did not meet halal criteria to their living conditions in "Heim", the dormitory-like place they stayed collectively. Second, in addition to these somewhat daily problems in the workers' lives, the MPs primarily addressed political issues too, which can be roughly characterized as identity and belonging, in addition to ideological propaganda they were feared to be exposed. However, even while talking about political issues, politicians set forth from the firm assumption that the workers would return rather than settling down in the decades to come.

As an offshoot of the workers' anticipated return and economic contribution, the legislative initiatives mainly were taken to facilitate their lives after their return. The bill on property ownership through easy credit can be shown as an example of such attempts. The idea was that issuing credit to workers' families would help them buy properties in Turkey so that the money they sent would be purposefully used both for the country and for them since they would have shelter upon their return. This shows that the political representation of the diaspora in the 1960s included both the acknowledgement of the problems faced by the workers on a daily basis in host countries and the steps taken to make their life easier when they returned.

The idea of workers not returning but instead settling in the countries they work permanently was usually referred to as a worst-case scenario by many MPs in the

1960s. We could even observe that many opposition members warned the ruling party against the possibility of permanent settlement and invited them to take necessary measures in this regard. In return, ruling party representatives made statements in a rather nationalist tone and asserted that it was wrong to think of such an option since the Turkish workers belonged not to where they worked but where they were born and culturally connected to.

The way in which the workers abroad were represented and discursively constructed in the Turkish Parliament throughout the 1960s can be identified in two ways. First, as individuals who would significantly contribute to their country's development with their know-how; and second, as hard-working, money-earning and remittance sending individuals. Both approaches were shaped through an economic perspective in the 1960s. The firm belief in their return was why politicians expected the workers to bring back technical development and direct investment, which is addressed by Brinkerhoff (2008) as one reason for countries' structural dependence on their diaspora. We see politicians constantly referring to the added value the workers would get in the form of technical knowledge, expertise and copying positive social skills of Germans, that is, their work ethic and discipline. The MPs hoped that the workers would bring these material and soft skills to Turkey one day.

In addition to the economic perspective towards workers, the problem of their families and children in Turkey was also addressed as an urgent social issue. As evident in the approach regarding women, the MPs deemed themselves as the guardian of moral and family values. Furthermore, by also attributing voluntary ambassador role to the Turks in Europe, they also take the guardianship of their behaviour in host countries. In the 1960s, such concern to preserve Turkey's good image via workers in Europe was clearly noticeable, which also ascribed them the duty of representing Turkey.

In general, regardless of the context, or the topic, it is possible to observe a genuine concern for finding solutions to the problems they faced or were bound to face in Turkey when they return. This solution-based attitude is evident in the MPs attempts to solve material problems here and there, as well as in their attempts to solve their more psychological, spiritual, peace and satisfaction problems. Some MPs also noted their genuine concerns about the possibility that, having used to the living standards in Europe, the conditions in Turkey might make workers dissatisfied. In response to that scenario, the MPs discuss a practical solution, such as making them entrepreneurs in the industries through a partnership model.

What I earlier called “protective behaviour” have also started to manifest itself even in the 1960s. For instance, the bill in 1964 aimed at issuing advantageous credit to workers for their property ownership in Turkey. The lawmakers wanted to use their remittances on advantageous terms for workers, their families and the country. As such, they characterized workers as individuals lacking the means to make the best use of money, as they were using their money to buy and send consumer goods to Turkey rather than saving them. That can be regarded as part of protectionism, unfolded in three fundamental ways: legal, moral, ideological protection. Politicians intended to legally protect citizens by extending citizenship services through a designated directory under the Ministry of Labour to safeguard their labour rights, morally protect them by appointing imams to preserve the Turkish and Islamic identity against the Christian propaganda and ideologically protect them from the threat of communism by keeping them near through radio broadcasts in Turkish.

The last significant point to note about the first decade of labour migration is that the politicians started their trips to Europe populated by Turkish workers to investigate their problems as early as 1967. These field trips gained an almost de facto character in the coming decades by becoming a common parliamentary investigation method.

To sum up, two conclusions can be derived from the representation form in the 1960s. First, the general political approach was to define workers in economic terms. Second, the MPs adopted a solution-based approach, meaning that they were genuinely motivated to solve the real problems they faced, both in host countries and in Turkey upon their return. The scale of problems to be solved varied from very minor and technical issues – such as living standards or the quality of their residences or meals – to the possibility of their dissatisfaction with Turkey’s life standards when they are back or their access to religious services to protect their national and religious belonging. While politicians were not able to change the structural issues of Turkey overnight that awaits workers back home, such as unemployment, they showed an active engagement with all the issues they could possibly solve from Ankara.

### **8.1.2. Representation in the 1970s**

The global economic downturn caused by the oil crisis changed the course of how diaspora issues were discussed. As the Turkish economy’s survival became more dependent on the workers’ remittances, the economic character of the workers in the parliamentary debates gained more prominence. As a result, the MPs increasingly tended to see legislative activity and worker-related laws passed in the parliament as a prize for the workers’ effort and heavy sacrifices they pay. In other words, representation of the diaspora grew into a reciprocal relationship between politicians and the workers abroad.

Because their stay gained a rather permanent character in the 1970s with family migration, the legislative regulations aimed at capacity building for state services abroad, rather than regulating their expected return as in the 1960s. For instance, to overcome different social security regimes between host countries and Turkey, a law was passed to regulate workers' retirement and pension rights, an emergent need of the day. Overall, the characteristics of the legislative initiative were indeed tackling issues of vital significance to workers in a beneficial way.

The political chaos atmosphere of the 1970s, characterized by the short-lived coalition governments that were constantly formed and dissolved, also brought about the use of diaspora politics as a means of opposition within the parliament. In that regard, what fundamentally differentiated the 1970s from the 1960s has been the politicization of diaspora issues through which parties criticize each other's policies. Rather than merely focusing on the issues in hand as in the 1960s, parties adopted an accusatory tone towards each other. The lines between what is a state policy and what is a party politics got blurred. For instance, the ministers of ever-changing coalition governments were blamed by opposition party MPs to impose their political agenda on the workers in Europe. Similarly, the growing economic importance of workers has led opposition parties to accuse the ruling party of viewing workers as mere means of money. Overall, parties used various issues regarding workers as a platform to voice their political critique against each other.

The political parties' use of diaspora-related issues as a means to criticize each other, however, does not entail that the content of policies was at the centre of the conflict. Instead, parties held them in charge for what is done and what is not done for the workers abroad amid a heated political atmosphere. For other issues that concerned the overall wellbeing of the workers abroad, such as their children's social security rights or language education, the consensual attitude among different parties prevailed. Especially the latter, the neglected second generation, became a significant cause for concern by all parties alike. The MPs dedicated the majority of the diaspora-related debates to how the education of the new generation could be resolved. Parties often inserted their ideological perspective to this concern too. For instance, the Islamist MSP'S representative voiced his concerns about the children of workers not learning their religion, mother tongue or national history under the host country's official curriculum. In a way, the MP put his own representative claim about the scope of the education problem of the new generation by outlining it as the lack of national history, language and religion in it. Likewise, CHP representatives pointed to the same

problem but by addressing the absence of Atatürk in their education curriculum, for instance.

The protective behaviour of the politicians has also continued. This time in the 1970s, ideological protection became more prominent in the face of others. As leftist movements, especially communism or radical left, became stronger ideologies with a considerable influence on social movements in Europe, as well as in Turkey, the politicians' emphasis on the need to protect workers from the threat of communism has become more vocal. The workers in Europe were often portrayed as dependent individuals whose undereducated Anatolian backgrounds make them easy targets for ideological propaganda. They hence need the Turkish state's protection not to be easily influenced by divisive ideologies to which they are continuously exposed. Since they were still represented as part of the nation, a possible intrusion was seen as a threat to national unity and political integrity. They were considered the victims of advanced freedoms in Europe, hence needed to be protected by the Turkish state so that they would be treated if they still lived in Turkey.

Furthermore, as the political environment in Turkey became increasingly confrontational, this ideological clash was also infiltrated by the Turkish workers in Europe. Therefore, it is possible to see MPs in Ankara warning each other to pay their best effort not to let this divisive atmosphere not export the divisive atmosphere to Europe. For example, especially the issue of establishing "*ülkü ocakları*" in Europe made many deputies uneasy about the possibility of polarization taking root among Turks in Europe.

The 1970s also marks a time when parliamentary oversight mechanisms started to be used for workers abroad. Two investigative committees were established in 1977, both in the National Assembly and Senate, to look into the problems faced by workers abroad and their families. They have constituted the first examples of the other two forthcoming investigation committees in 1993 and 2003.

Nonetheless, establishing the committees in the 1970s is essential for showing the legislature's willingness to deep-dive into the scope of problems faced by the workers in Europe.

In conclusion, it would not be misleading to assert that the solution-based approach adopted by politicians in the 1960s has continued in the Parliament. Just like the first decade of labour migration, it can be said that politicians in the 1970s attempted to understand what the solution to the problems of workers and their families could be and to develop a legislative framework accordingly. In the 1970s, the problems still revolved around issues surrounding their lives, such as working conditions, education of their children, consular services, or vocational education.

### **8.1.3. Representation in the 1980s**

The 1980s can be seen as when policymakers started to realize that the workers in Europe would not return but settle down in host countries with their families in return. This has affected the political representation of the diaspora mainly in two ways. First, having realized that the workers in Europe were there permanently, politicians in Ankara put a number of regulations on their agenda that would facilitate the workers' lives in host countries. In other words, political representation focused more on issues regarding their lives there than projecting new policies on their return. For example, dual citizenship regulation or the first-ever legislation on overseas voting can be shown to indicate this new direction in representation. Second, education and religion became a more urgent issue after realising that the workers' families and their children, who were referred to as the second generation, faced the danger of losing their cultural identity. Especially the education of the second generation gained new momentum with a more nuanced emphasis on religion and national identity. Specifically, the idea of educating the children of workers became more politicized in line with the

new ideological atmosphere of Turkey, as the post-coup governments intended to transfer Turkish-Islamic synthesis to overseas citizens.

The education of the second generation in Europe was approached with the utmost urgency by the Turkish MPs. Many MPs voiced their concerns about the new generation that started to emerge, who could speak neither languages properly and had difficulties adapting to host country culture. Education has always been a policy priority, but in the 1980s, teachers in great numbers were appointed to Europe. Additionally, parties disagreed on the ways in which the education policy was going to be shaped. While conservative parties advocated religious education by appointing more imams and organizing Quran courses as a panacea to the identity dilemma faced by children, the representatives from the leftist HP (later SHP) pled for stricter monitoring of the unauthorized religious organizations' activities. In other words, the domestic divide in how religious services and education should be delivered were transferred to the diaspora area. The formation and spread of many religious communities, sects, and radical Islamic groups beyond official Islam represented by Diyanet have led to concerns among progressive opposition members, which was voiced within and outside the debates on education. The opposition mainly criticized the ANAP government for tolerating these newly emerging movements and not taking necessary measures to challenge them. In addition, it has often been emphasized that the increasing influence of groups that interpret Islam differently and somewhat more radically, such as Kaplancı or Süleymancı, also harm the image of Turks in host countries.

Another novel aspect of the 1980s was the redefinition of threat perception and the subsequent shift in the target of protective behaviour. While the MPs addressed the threat of communism and radical left ideologies from which to protect citizens, in the 1980s, the emphasis in the Parliament was mainly on the radical Islamic movements in Europe, which potentially take citizens under the influence. Milli Görüş in Europe, for instance, came under the radar of Turkish

politicians for the first time and referred to as a dangerous organization for national unity. Other communities and sects who allegedly acted in accordance with other Islamic interpretations were especially opposed by the left parties, while the government was criticized for turning a blind eye to increasing divergence and groupness.

The Rabita issue was the culmination of the political reaction shown to the politicization of religious services and their use for political purposes. The payment of the salaries of Diyanet imams by the Saudis was seen by SHP representatives not only as an assault that took place in the diaspora realm and merely against citizens abroad but more as an act endangering Turkey's independence and founding secularism. Therefore, the Rabita issue was also discussed in the Parliament within the context of protection, while this time, the focus was on protecting them from foreign radical Islamic influences. In the face of this fierce opposition reaction, ANAP representatives portrayed Saudi help as an inevitable outcome of Turkey's dire economic conditions on the one hand and the fundamental obligation to deliver religious services abroad.

The 1980s marks a significant era in diaspora representation also because of the first-ever legislation of voting abroad. It has fundamentally changed the way diaspora is approached since it signals a time that they were treated as part of the nation by extending fundamental citizenship rights to non-resident citizens. As a result, Turkey's population abroad had started to be widely represented as "citizens abroad" rather than the previous "workers abroad".

Overall, shaping diaspora members to fit the ideal citizen definition marked the parliamentary debates in the 1980s. Within that framework, religious education and religious services became the topics that were highlighted most prominently. Therefore, in the 1980s, political representation was characterized by pre-definition of what diaspora's needs and wants are in accordance with the conservative ideological climate of the day. Furthermore, the early steps were

taken to approach diaspora members as right-holder, non-resident citizens with the albeit non-inclusive overseas voting legislation.

#### **8.1.4. Representation in the 1990s**

In the 1990s, the Turkish population who had stayed in Europe for more than thirty years have started to diversify and show distinct features among each other for the first time. They ceased to be just a population of Turkish workers abroad and began to have different qualities and characters. Among them occurred a middle class, a politically motivated group and diverse ethnic and religious groupings. On top of that, through this transformative process that started in the 1980s and culminated in the 1990s, their needs, as well as the reflections of these on Turkey, began to differ, significantly affecting the debates in the Parliament and changing the characteristics of political representation.

Second, due to differentiation in the population, political disagreement over the problems of diaspora among different parties has also started. Similar to the 1970s, the ruling party have constantly alternated in the 1990s between SHP, CHP, DYP and ANAP. Therefore, the difference of opinion between the parties on diaspora issues was caused by different ways of approaching diaspora's problems by different parties rather than differences resulting from ruling-opposition party changes. As a result, all parties started to evaluate diaspora-related issues with their own particular political lenses.

As for the political disagreements on diaspora issues, we first encounter different interpretations of xenophobic attacks against Turkish citizens. For instance, while ANAP representatives pointed to the Western hypocrisy unfolded by the attacks (i.e. failing to protect the Turkish minority's human rights while urging for human rights in Turkey), a Refah Partisi representative established parallelism between the German state's discrimination against the Turkish population and the discrimination against the citizens with a headscarf in Turkey.

As a matter of fact, in the 1990s, we see the first examples of a long-lasting tendency of the political Islamists in Turkey to define human rights or discrimination quintessentially with reference to religious freedoms in general and headscarf issue in particular. They commonly refer to it as an “identity crisis” and the backbone of various contemporary issues surrounding Turkey.

Another instance through which political differences within the diaspora and in the Turkish parliament unfolded was the issue of political Islam and Islamic movements in Europe, which had been one of the hot topics that dominated the parliamentary debates in the 1990s. While CHP pressed for more Diyanet presence and control to offset various Islamic organizations in Europe, as a party with strong links to these organizations and the protégé of Milli Görüş in Europe, Refah Partisi strictly opposed the illegalization of Islamic movements in Europe. In fact, it would not be misleading to think of these somewhat controversial debates that took place in the Turkish Parliament on political Islam in Europe as an inevitable consequence of growing political fractions among citizens abroad and its reflection on political representation in Turkey. After all, political Islam, one of Turkey's oldest and deep-rooted political movements, became increasingly widespread among citizens in Europe. In particular, as the population in Europe gradually moved beyond its homogeneous feature as a group of “workers abroad” and eventually showed social, economic and political differences from within, different political movements emerged from this whole. The Political Islam movement in Turkey was thus considered as the representative of the Milli Görüş in Europe and political Islamists in general.

Nonetheless, what overwhelmingly dominated the parliamentary debates in the 1990s have been the xenophobic attacks mainly in Germany targeting Turkish citizens. As the number and intensity of the attacks have increased, politicians in Ankara became heavily preoccupied with the question of how to protect these citizens from these attacks. Hence, parliamentary debates were centred around the idea of empowering diaspora members in the countries they live in as the

most effective panacea. Protecting and empowering them was approached with a sense of responsibility by politicians. While MPs extensively elaborated on how to protect citizens from these racist attacks, they commonly agreed on the option of making them active participants in the political life in the host countries to ensure that their voices are heard.

Ankara's response to xenophobic violence in Europe addressed political rights as a remedy for racist violence. Therefore, necessary legislative arrangements were made in Turkey to make their electoral participation possible in the host countries, mainly in Germany, so that citizens abroad do not appear in the news as the target of hostile sentiments but as influential political actors. By becoming citizens, Turks in Germany could vote and have a say in their constituencies, as well as having the opportunity to be elected officials. In fact, the latter was the most desired development for Turkish politicians due to a commonly held belief that the increase in the number of politicians of Turkish origin would gradually establish a Turkish lobby. This meant that citizens abroad would become a force that would potentially penetrate Turkey's agenda into Europe and would promote Turkey's interests in the West. As far as diaspora representation concerned, this pragmatist intention demonstrates a transformation from a solution-based understanding of representation that sought to solve problems faced by the diaspora into the one that sees them as useful actors in Europe for specific issues in Turkey's political agenda.

The most important and perhaps the only political step Turkey could take to help overseas citizens become a part of the European political life was to legislate a regulation that would make it easier for expatriates to renounce citizenship. Because most countries in Europe, especially Germany, did not allow dual citizenship, people of Turkish origin had to give up on their Turkish citizenship. As a country that legalized dual nationality in 1981, if Turkey granted citizenship-like rights to its citizens who wanted to renounce their citizenship

through a new scheme or protected their citizenship rights as they were, there would be no obstacle to naturalize for citizens abroad.

Therefore, in the wake of xenophobic attacks, the Turkish Parliament enacted a new law that regulated the denunciation of citizenship with special permission by the Turkish state. Many calculations played a role in the debates of this swift legislative response. The MPs in Ankara thought that given the number of Turkish citizens in Germany, they would have a defining impact on the results of the elections if they could vote. Hence, a problem they faced paved the way for a process that makes citizens abroad an organized diaspora or lobby group. Here again, it is possible to argue that the political representation in Turkey was oriented towards devising quick policy responses towards problems faced by citizens abroad.

Another implication of the attacks was the reaction given by Turkish politicians that blame the Western countries inability to protect the Turkish minority and their hypocrisy on human rights, which revealed itself through these attacks. The German government, in particular, became the centre of Turkish anger for preaching Turkey on human rights on the one hand and allowing extremists in their country or doing little to prevent their action. This political reaction can be considered a result of the protectionist approach of the representatives in Turkey, who intend to consider solutions to the problems faced by the diaspora collaboratively with the host country governments.

In sum, the 1990s marks a crucial turning point in diaspora representation since diaspora issues ceased to have a technical character that required practical solutions by Turkish lawmakers. Instead, the problems faced by citizens abroad started to have a social and political character such as integration, discrimination, electoral participation and political differences from within. The implications of such diversification within the political and social profile of diaspora members were subsequently observed in the Turkish Parliament, as representatives tended

to approach the same problems differently in accordance with their political lenses. This, in return, has transformed Turkey's policy toolkits to answer these problems, politicizing the way these problems were debated in Parliament.

#### **8.1.5. Representation in the 2000s**

The 2000s marked the most significant period for diaspora representation for not only the out-of-country voting was fully enabled, but more importantly for the frequency and the weight of diaspora-related issues in the Turkish Parliament's agenda. The common narrative in the 2000s on citizens abroad was the one in which they were portrayed as neglected and forgotten citizens for decades, who had to solve their problems by organizing within themselves without much involvement of the Turkish state. This has changed after the Ak Party came to power and took various initiatives to support diaspora politically and institutionally according to the same narrative. Overall, in the 2000s, the discourse on the long negligence of the diaspora and their reinvention as active citizens come to the forefront.

The issue of Islamophobia has become the most prominent topic in the context of diaspora-related issues, especially after the 2010s. In comparison to various other topics in the lives of diaspora members, Ak Party MPs approached the issues that can be categorized under the umbrella of Islamophobia in Europe with utmost significance. The MPs often highlighted the assault on religious freedoms in Europe, which they referred to as the ultimate sign of rising Islamophobic tendencies. To exemplify the exceptional attention given to the topic, the works of the Human Rights Committee can be pointed, since the committee chose to focus on Islamophobia as one of the sub-committee topics during the 26<sup>th</sup> legislative term. This choice in the field of human rights, the area where Turkey faces the most problems in its domestic politics, shows how much the ruling party prioritized the issue leaving aside many possible issue areas within Turkey. What is more noteworthy is that, while such strong emphasis is ultimately placed

on Islamophobia, usually no reference has been made to a study, relevant research, or data on how intensely this problem is felt by the citizens abroad and how often they are exposed to Islamophobic attitude. It is similarly not mentioned whether the most burning problems of citizens are essentially Islamophobia or where Islamophobia stands vis-à-vis other significant problems faced among the Turkish community in general.

Looking at the way in which Islamophobia is often brought to the Parliament's attention, it is commonly observed that the issue is usually discussed in the wake of any high-impact attack or after an incident targeting Turks or Muslims, or some parliamentarians mention the issue with reference to their exchanges during their overseas trips. However, the overall profile of citizens abroad is as diverse as the sociological structure of Turkey. While the relevancy and urgency of Islamophobia are commonly acknowledged, it is fair to think that for particular communities or individuals within this multicultural demographic structure in Europe, Islamophobia does not have a top priority in their list of urgent issues. Nevertheless, looking at the way the issue occupies a place in the Turkish Parliament, it is possible to see that in the last decade, Islamophobia has received utmost emphasis almost in every diaspora context. In this regard, it would not be wrong to talk about the prevalence of the "overrepresentation of Islamophobia". Furthermore, it also well illustrates a claim-making on behalf of citizens in Europe, rather than looking into the actual issues these citizens might be facing with. A similar tendency to overrepresenting particular issues vis-à-vis others or claim-making on behalf of the diaspora can be widely seen regarding the headscarf issue. On various committee and plenary meetings headscarf ban was also broadly referred to as it constitutes the most significant human rights violation to which citizens in Europe were exposed. This aspect is what basically differentiates 21<sup>st</sup>-century diaspora representation from the previous four decades.

To further illustrate the Ak Party's tendency to highlight the party's standpoint on domestic political matters through diaspora-related issues and the implicit claim that these raised issues represent the diaspora's problems, it is helpful to note Ertuğrul Kürkcü's criticisms on external voting legislation in 2012. He argued that the Ak Party brought this regulation to the Parliament not because it is demanded by citizens abroad but more because the Ak Party saw them as "passive voting machines" (see page 153). Leaving aside the political aspect of such criticism, it is crucial for showing the gap between the issues insistently underlined and claimed to belong to the diaspora by politicians in Ankara and the policies that the diaspora members actually want from politicians in Ankara.

The 2000s is also a significant turning point for approaching citizens abroad in economic terms. Though not entirely abandoned, the economy-dominated perspective has gradually shifted into the one in which politicians' expectations in the 1960s regarding the workers' economic contribution to Turkey as bringing money, know-how and development was gradually replaced with the emphasis on their economic contributions to their host countries in the 2000s. In the discourse of politicians, citizens in Europe continued to be represented as economically viable individuals, but their economic traits unfolded not in or for Turkey in the 21st century, but for the countries they lived in the form taxes they pay, jobs they create and their entrepreneurial spirit. The 2000s was the time in which Turkey hugely benefited from them politically more than economically.

That political benefit manifested itself most visibly in the reality of external voting, which had a profound impact on parliament-diaspora relations. Though the diaspora's increasing electoral participation did not substantially impact the political representation of the diaspora in Turkey, its characteristics significantly changed the relationship between politicians in Turkey and diaspora members. Europe has now become an immense voter powerhouse and gained a great potential for electoral support with an almost constituency-like significance. Therefore, politicians wanted to address directly and interact with citizens in

Europe one-on-one to get their votes and pursue electoral campaigns there. When increasing political tension and sharp political language typical in Turkish elections was exported to the diaspora sphere, a problematic triad relationship has emerged in the nexus of the Turkish state, host country and the diaspora members.

Another impact of external voting on homeland political representation is that the MPs now considered themselves as the natural representatives of the diaspora as they directly receive their votes. For example, it will be helpful to recall the discussions in KEFEK in this regard. Against the criticism by CHP and HDP members of the committee that was focusing on issues of women abroad is not urgent given that the women in Turkey already have plenty of problems, the Committee Chair of the Ak Party defended the initiative for sub-committee on women abroad, arguing that politicians in Turkey are responsible towards citizens abroad especially since they vote in the Turkish elections. Therefore, it can be asserted that after citizens abroad participate in the Turkish elections in mass numbers, the MPs in Turkey endeavoured to make their issues more visible in the Turkish Parliament. Notwithstanding, one thing that did not change while representing them was politicians' perception of their issues, instead of substantiating their representative activity to a broader analysis of how they might want to be represented in Turkey.

Each party defined the diaspora and their needs according to where they stand politically. The 2000s was a time when these inter-party nuances were revealed via the discussions of diaspora-related topics. For example, MHP defined the diaspora as an exclusively Turkish community and pointed to the significance of unifying cultural elements in diaspora services. Pro-Kurdish parties BDP and HDP (respectively) exemplified another case for an exclusive diaspora representation by elevating the political language and objectives pursued in Turkey to the diaspora sphere and, consequently, diaspora policies for failing to be inclusive and reflecting the diversity of the diaspora. Pro-Kurdish parties

reinstated the objections and criticisms it voiced in domestic politics in the same way on diaspora topics too. For example, party representatives' objections to various aspects of overseas voting legislation were parallel to their concerns on Turkey's electoral system, revolving around issues such as electoral threshold, limited choices with which the electorate is left and anti-democratic practices in elections in general. Similar to the previous decades, CHP has often delineated citizens in Europe under the threat of reactionary organizations that target national integrity and secularism principle in Turkey. What we can infer from this overall picture is that, while the Ak Party capitalizes on diaspora-related issues to create itself a platform to deliver its political messages to a domestic and international audience, opposition parties like CHP uses the same issues to monitor and limit the controversial policy outcomes of the governments. For instance, various written and oral questions issued by CHP representatives regarding the role and activities of DİTİB and Diyanet in Europe can also be considered as the reinforcement of their political position at home affairs, such as advocating the role of religious services within the boundaries of secularism principle than promoting governments' views at home and abroad or causing further social division.

The Turkish politicians' frequent claims that Europe has "embraced" the offshoot of terrorists in Turkey is relatively a new occurrence that started in the 1990s. But never before the 2000s that these allegations led to numerous diplomatic crises between Turkey and various host countries, significantly affecting the Turkish diaspora's position in those countries they reside in and place them at the centre of dual loyalty debates. Especially since the second half of the 2010s, in the discourse of politicians, Europe was portrayed as a place where anti-Turkey lobby made by various dissident movements are tolerated and even supported by the Western countries. They consistently blamed the European politicians for turning a blind eye on the proxies of terrorist organizations in Turkey under the guise of democracy and freedom of expression while preaching Turkey on these values at the same time. This shift in the

politicians' attitude shows that, rather than representing the diaspora politically in Turkey, Turkish politicians have increasingly utilized from diaspora area for their political discourses. But at the same time, just as shown on the issues of Islamophobia and headscarf, Europe is often depicted as a place where freedoms are restricted by politicians without basing their claims on research or a poll. This reaction is understandable to some extent, given that Europe takes ownership and defends values of freedom of expression and human rights and criticize them for violating these. However, looking at it from the perspective of diaspora engagement and especially diaspora representation, portraying host countries as places in which human rights violations are abundant and the diaspora as the casual victim of these abuses, it can be seen that the need to deliver a political message influences diaspora representation more than representing the actual problems of the diaspora.

Overall, the primary outcome of the diaspora's political representation has been that, while diaspora became a coherent policy area in this period, the politicians often instrumentalized diaspora topics to underline their domestic political agendas. Since Ak Party also controls the executive, the overlap between the party's agenda and the diaspora agenda could be seen more accurately. As discussed in the chapter focusing on the 2000s, diaspora policy started to be determined in accordance with the Ak Party governments' domestic political priorities. On the representation side, however, the politicians usually defined the problems of diaspora members as what they thought their problems were, rather than what their actual problems might be. Subsequently, their definition of diaspora problems was mainly determined by the urge to reinstate the representatives' political ideologies.

## **8.2. Changing Parameters in Diaspora's Homeland Political Representation**

Having reviewed varying types and degrees of diaspora representation throughout the decades, it is essential to compare different parameters of

diaspora representation in different periods and lay out continuities and ruptures. Here are the main highlights regarding the changes in the form and content of diaspora representation.

### **8.2.1. From Solution-Based Approach to Self-Prescription of Problems and Solutions**

The diaspora representation in the 1960s and 1970s reveals that in this early period understanding the core of the problems and solving them was the ultimate priority of the politicians. Hence, the political representation of the diaspora focused on a rather practical and technical side of the issues. In general, this solution-based approach prevailed in diaspora representation in the first two decades, although the emphasis shifted towards the need to protect them ideologically in the highly polarized political atmosphere of the 1970s. As religious and national aspects of the Turkish identity gained more prominence with the impact of the post-1980 coup ideological environment, this nationalist and religious consciousness was tried to be injected into the citizens abroad. In the 1990s, as the need for political rights to vote and be elected arose, the MPs in Ankara took necessary political steps to fulfil this urgent need of the diaspora.

When we reach the 2000s, the parameters of representing the diaspora has gradually transformed towards the one in which politicians have become more concerned with defining what their problems are than asking or inquiring into the issues. This is when Saward's "representative claim" framework becomes the most explanatory for diaspora representation in Turkey. The act of representing a community is already claim-making in itself. The politicians in Turkey, especially the ruling Ak Party representatives, take this act of claim-making one step further, and by pre-defining diaspora issues, they expressed their own political opinions and imperatives through diaspora-related subjects. The strong emphasis made on Islamophobia, debates on religious freedoms in Europe, headscarf issue or women's rights have all epitomized this tendency to use

diaspora politics as a platform for voicing their political positions with the claim of representing diaspora's problems. The claim to mean diaspora's problems in line with the party's ideological position also functions both to consolidate the domestic audience and to deliver foreign policy messages to the international audience. This creates a fundamentally different kind of representation than the early period, in which bringing solutions to diaspora issues were more at stake.

Such a glimpse over the decades in a comparative way likewise reveals that the themes underlined have also changed in accordance with the economic, social or political needs of the day for Turkey. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, Turkey needed remittances, so the parliamentary debates on the diaspora revolved around economic subjects such as making use of their investments in Turkey or their prospective contribution to industrial development in Turkey. This technical focus has shifted more towards politics in the 1980s and 1990s and from politics to culture and ideology in the 2000s. For instance, in the early times, the expected function of Diyanet imams recruited in Europe was to help and guide the Turkish Muslim community in Europe to fulfil their religious duties such as leading the prayers, organizing the funeral-related tasks, and enlighten them with religious doctrines in general. These functions have now morphed into social and political ones. The core function of Diyanet imams in Europe are still undertaking religious practices but political duties such as facilitating the organization of the Turkish Muslim community in Europe and delivering political messages to the diaspora members on the merits of cultural and religious identity.

All in all, the centre of gravity in diaspora representation has gradually shifted from a solution-based approach to the instrumental one, through which the politicians delivered their domestic political messages by means of diaspora issues. What I have underlined throughout the thesis as the protective impulse for the diaspora has prevailed throughout the decades, but under the Ak Party rule, it

manifested itself in the representatives' self-identification of problems that the diaspora.

### **8.2.2. Did External Voting Change Diaspora Representation?**

If we look at whether or not enfranchising citizens abroad have changed the understanding and practice of representation, it is difficult to identify a direct correlation since the representatives in Turkey had already brought the issues related to the diaspora frequently long before voting rights were granted for the first time (1986) and practised on a mass scale (2014). As discussed before, this form of diaspora representation took place sometimes with stress upon cultural elements (language, religion, education), sometimes on political issues through advocating the rights violations (xenophobic attacks, lack of political rights, Islamophobia, headscarf ban). Therefore, the right to vote in the Turkish elections and the increasing use of this right by citizens abroad did not lead to a direct change in the way in which political representation took place. However, it changed two things.

First, after 2014, when the diaspora started to vote for the Turkish elections from the consulates, parliamentarians legitimized bringing up various diaspora-related issues with receiving their votes, hence having to voice their problems. This reference to the ballot box in raising diaspora issues was not there before. The MPs did not necessarily advocate their issues more because now diaspora was also an electorate group, but instead, they could justify the discussion of particular issues (see KEFEK, headscarf issues, Islamophobia sub-committee), addressing their electoral participation and their own position as being their representatives.

The second thing that has changed after the electoral franchise was the type of connection between the Turkish politicians and the diaspora. After the electoral franchise was granted, diaspora members were seen as more than just receivers

of state services but as an electorate group whose choice in the ballot box can define the outcome. As Europe gained a constituency level status with more than a million voters, making special political campaigns, going and explaining party programs and delivering their tailormade electoral promises became a necessity. As political parties, especially the ruling Ak Party rearticulated their approach towards diaspora, shaping it in a more political way, the new strategy has ultimately caused troubles with the host states. What we saw, especially during the 2017 Presidential Referendum campaigns in Europe that led up to the diplomatic crisis, has essentially emerged from this new role gained by the diaspora, who went and cast their ballot in mass numbers in Turkish elections thus whose vote was needed to win the tight electoral races in Turkey. Consequently, though external voting did not directly affect the quality of the diaspora representation, it did change and politicized the characteristic of the politicians' relationship with the diaspora, especially the host-home country relations, making it somewhat like a two-way relationship based on the trade-off.

### **8.2.3. Authoritarianism and Religious Diaspora Policies**

One of the most interesting outcomes that emerged regarding the representation of diaspora-related issues is the similarity between the post-2010s and the 1980s post-coup era. Between these two periods, it is possible to identify stark resemblances in terms of defining the issues faced by the diaspora on behalf of them in a top-down manner by politicians rather than a need-based definition, which entails inquiring into the question of what diaspora actually might need.

As pointed out in the section that explains diaspora representation in the 1980s, the dominant tendency was the urge to shape overseas citizens in line with the ruling conservative and nationalist ideology, which made religious services and education the most crucial policy areas in diaspora relations. Conversely, what we observe in the 1960s and 1970s common in all parties was that the MPs in Ankara were rather concerned with what could be the diaspora's needs, wants

and what kind of solutions needed to tackle these issues. However, in the post-coup political environment of the 1980s, the military and state elite, and later political representatives identified what is needed by citizens abroad, which was actualized as education cultivate national identity and religious services to cultivate Islamic identity, both of which were very much parallel to the social and political life in the 1980s Turkey. In other words, the foundations of pre-defining what is essential for the diaspora and what their needs are by the statesmen and politicians in Turkey were laid in the 1980s. While such will to form the diaspora can be in a way seen as a representative claim, this claim-making is not directly shaped by the concern of what the diaspora's actual needs could be, but rather determined through domestic political priorities of the ruling elite in accordance with the ideological atmosphere of the day.

This bears crucial similarities with diaspora representation after 2010, a period that is generally characterized by many as the time when Turkey increasingly became an authoritarian state with a substantial impact on political, social and economic life. In both periods, the government employed authoritarian tools in various policy areas, while at the same time, the diaspora policy mainly was articulated through the extensive use of religious services. Looking at these similar trends in the convergence between the regime type and diaspora strategy in place, it would not be misleading to reach the following conclusion: During relatively democratic times in which the political environment is rather competitive and minimum democracy criteria are met in social and political life, diaspora representation is characterized by the representatives' will to identify and respond to problems faced by citizens abroad. Contrarily, in times when the form of government gravitates towards authoritarian practices, like in the 1980s post-coup period and the second half of 2010s, diaspora representation centres around politicians' assumption of what diaspora members' problems are. Consequently, authoritarian times witnesses a type of diaspora representation that intends to shape diaspora according to domestic political priorities of the government. In both periods, this political priority has occurred as the use of

Islamic motives on diaspora members. This leads us to conclude that in times of increasing authoritarianism, just like any other issue area, diaspora policy in general and what is needed by the diaspora, in particular, is also defined in a top-down manner reflecting the prevailing political logic. In the case of the 1980s and 2010s, what drove this logic was the conservative Islamist outlook that put too much emphasis on education and religious services in diaspora services.

### **8.3. Continuities and Ruptures in Diaspora Engagement Strategy: Protective Impulse As the Defining State Attitude**

Studies usually looked at Turkey's diaspora relations by dividing it into two separate units as pre and post-Ak Party periods, without necessarily enunciating such division. This common viewpoint essentially presents the following picture: In the pre-Ak Party period, usually referred to as the Kemalist era (Okyay, 2015), the governments were relatively disinterested in citizens abroad. Or rather, the state officials' interest was limited to the emigrants' potential economic contribution to the homeland. In the words of many MPs, as outlined in the previous chapters, emigrants were approached as "foreign exchange machines" and argued to have been largely neglected.

In contrast, the post-2000s was widely narrated in the literature as a period in which citizens abroad were approached not merely as economic agents but attempted and constructed more as political agents. Politicians in Turkey gradually discovered their political potential as an electorate, a lobbying group, and a possible bridge between the EU and Turkey at the height of the EU accession process (Kaya and Kentel, 2005). Furthermore, this new pragmatic outlook was also underpinned by the proliferation of diaspora initiatives and institutions under the Ak Party governments, which in themselves were seen as the proofs of proactive diaspora engagement.

I argue that the studies based on this methodological divide between passive and active diaspora engagement periods or those who point to a transformation between an economy-dominated approach to a politics-dominated perspective are to some extent contestable. While acknowledging the grounds for such separation on many levels, the evidence from my research gives mixed results, indicating that such established narrative might come as unidirectional and simplistic to explain complex dynamics driving the homeland-diaspora relations. Instead, I suggest that there was a remarkable continuity in the state attitude regarding the diaspora from the 1960s onwards, overarching different governments or the ruling ideologies, which I identify as the protective impulse towards citizens abroad. What Mügge (2012: 33) refer to as “interest in the wellbeing of citizens” from the onset of migration and I identify as “protectionist impulse” or “behaviour” manifested itself through different ways and instances.

For instance, in the 1960s or 1970s, regardless of the party's ideology in power in tumultuous times, there has always been an urge to protect citizens from “something” that was deemed malign or harmful by the state elite. That “something” was the threat of communism or radical left ideologies at the height of the Cold War in the 1960s and 1970s. It is understandable given Turkey’s position as a Western ally against the Soviets in what was back then called “the free world”. As could be seen clearly from the words of MPs taking the floor during various debates, the first and dominant reaction towards citizens abroad was to prevent them from Soviet-influenced radical leftist groups. The means to achieve them were mainly the TRT broadcasts and recruiting Turkish language teachers so that the workers are not culturally assimilated and politically radicalized. When we come to the 1980s and 1990s, this grave threat from which the Turkish state should protect its overseas citizens was the reactionary tendencies, in other words, radical Islamic movements influential in Europe at the time. This time Diyanet became a crucial actor in counteracting rising reactionary and Islamist groups such as Kaplan and Milli Görüş movements, and instead spread the Turkish state’s post-coup official ideology, Turkish-Islamic

synthesis through the imams it recruits. The infamous Rabita incident in the 1980s shows how far the governments, military or civilian alike, could go to protect Turkish nationals from what they consider dangerous.

Now through the 2000s, this protectionist attitude reveals itself in numerous official diaspora engagement strategies. For example, take the YTB's activities in Europe or the growing importance of UETD (an Ak Party-affiliated lobby group/NGO) in permeating the Ak Party's political influence over citizens in Europe. The main priority of the Ak Party governments, which are implemented through the medium of these institutions and organizations, has been to address and protect the diaspora members from rising Islamophobia, which some Ak Party officials referred as "one of the biggest crimes against humanity" (see Chapter 7, page 190). Overall, religious-based discrimination in social and political life embodied in Islamophobia, as well as new immigration laws in Germany and respective host societies that would put diaspora in a disadvantageous position have been other related elements from which to protect citizens abroad.

Therefore, a glimpse through the decades in my research demonstrated that the overseas citizens were not forgotten as commonly stated by some politicians and scholars. The politicians seated in the Turkish Parliament have always tried to protect (former) nationals or citizens from what they thought they be socially, politically and culturally dangerous and harmful. Even in the period when the Turkish politicians approached emigrants as economic agents, the underlying reaction has been taking precautionary steps by exporting the national culture or religion, be it in the form of using official state broadcasting services for citizens in Europe in the 1970s or mobilizing them politically by holding electoral rallies for national elections currently.

However, like many scholars commonly argue, the 2000s are indeed different from the previous decades in diaspora engagement, which my research also

indicated. What we see differently in the Ak Party era diaspora engagement is the institutionalization of this protective outlook. The increased institutional capacity evident in the mushrooming of Yunus Emre Institutes, YTB's network and activities, and more accessible and diversified consular services helped the state conduct its protectionist approach more systematically and visibly. It could be such visibility in the 2000s that made scholars focus more on the last two decades and underestimate the continuity in state behaviour, as I argue.

In sum, overviewing Turkey's nearly six decades of political engagement with its diaspora, Turkey can indeed be seen as a country that has always tried to keep its population close and selectively manage what they can and cannot do (Mügge, 2012). Politicians did not want emigrants to assimilate (since the 1960s), they wanted them to practice religion under the Diyanet's mandate, so they recruited imams (1980s), they wanted them to be politically active in host countries, hence passed laws to facilitate their naturalization and political participation (1990s), they did not want the Turkish kids to be raised by Christian foster parents and established parliamentary committees to investigate the depths of this problem (1990s, and 2000s) and finally they wanted to protect them from xenophobia and Islamophobia (1990s and 2000s) by investigating the scope of these issues on the parliament. Even though the common approach in the literature is to focus primarily on the last two decades, my research has indicated that protectionist reflexes of Turkish politicians have always been an intrinsic part of diaspora engagement, as the examples above reveal.

#### **8.4. The Constellation of Citizenship: Ideal Citizen vs Enemy Emigrants**

Turkey's longstanding protectionist impulse on diaspora, which started to institutionalize in the last two decades, can be explained by the development of citizenship conception in Turkey. One of the main results that came from this research is that the Turkish state officials treated their citizens abroad as a community connected to Turkey through citizenship ties. To put it differently,

diaspora members were exposed to the same citizenship practices that the Turkish citizens in Turkey received in terms of being included or excluded. In this regard, citizenship conceptions and practices experienced in Turkey has been exported to transnational space.

Approaching emigrants on the basis of citizenship ties came with divisive effects. Citizenship, which is by definition a boundary-drawing and dividing practice, entails incorporating some into the group while excluding others. Intertwined with the protective behaviour, one of the key aspects that showed consistency in diaspora politics since the 1960s has been the divide forged between ideal citizens and enemy community, from which to shield diaspora members. Ragazzi's framework is highly relevant to explain the rhetoric and activities of the MPs in this regard (2009: 386). As discussed in Chapter 2, drawing on Foucault's governmentality framework, Ragazzi described diaspora policy as categorizing and classifying citizens as "friendly communities" and "enemy emigrants", which are constructed in opposition to one another. While governments deploy various institutions for friendly communities, such as language and cultural centres or religious institutions, they develop different strategies for enemy emigrants like Yugoslavia and China did by classifying them distinctly as "overseas Chinese citizens" or "Yugoslav enemy migration".

The Turkish politicians' discursive construction of diaspora members can be thought along similar lines. The way FETÖ-affiliated exiles or Kurdish movement members were referred to is a relatively recent example. Both in my talks with the MPs from diaspora background or in between the lines of parliamentary speeches, there is a constant reference to a red line being affiliated with terrorism or terrorist organizations. Here it might be helpful to recall the debates of the 2003 parliamentary investigation committee on citizens abroad (see chapter 7, page 161). CHP did not attend the committee's field trips in Europe to protest the choice of NGOs to meet to exchange ideas, which also included some Islamist groups. The Committee's chair and Ak Party members

defend themselves by asserting that they would see or talk to any group in Europe as long as they distanced themselves from terrorist organizations, namely PKK. When I asked the MPs with diaspora background about how inclusive they thought the state's diaspora services were, they commonly claimed that their policy was to embrace any citizen or establishment who were not affiliated with terrorism. It is understandable given Turkey's decades-long struggle against terrorism on its soil. Yet, when terrorism and terrorist became loosely defined concepts over recent years, it has consequently become an umbrella term with which different anti-government groups could be filled. And this exclusionary boundary-drawing process works in diaspora engagement policies too.

As mentioned in the previous section, the fault lines that ignited protective tendencies (communism, extremism, Islamism etc.) also reinforced the categorization between an ideal citizen and an undesired, harmful one. Following Ragazzi's framework, in the 1960s and 1970s, the ideal citizen abroad was a remittance-sending worker who defies extremist influences, who would gain necessary skills and potentially contribute to Turkey's social and economic development upon return. In the 1980s, the loyalty to home country gained more prominence in the aftermath of the coup. As their permanent settlement was gradually recognized in the 1990s, Turkish politicians opposed assimilation but promoted a balanced version of integration that entailed participation in political life, through which the friendly or ideal emigrants would function as a bridge between Turkey and the host countries. And finally, the Ak Party governments established or consolidated diaspora institutions such as DİTİB to act upon diaspora members as ideal citizen subjects in line with its conservative ideology. The parliamentary debates, especially in KEFEK, the constant emphasis on Islamophobia in the second half of the 2010s and changing diaspora relations after the 2016 coup attempt can be read in the light of this broader framework that approaches diaspora engagement as an ideal citizen-subject making process (Lerner, 2007; Ragazzi, 2009; Bahçecik, 2020).

Despite changing contextual priorities, such as the EU bid making diaspora a significant lobby potential, diaspora members becoming politicians would make Turkey's voice heard better, or the remittances. However, it would not be misleading to see them as, as I said, contextual, meaning that they played into as accompanying elements to the permanent citizenship perception. At the very core of it, diaspora members, I conclude, were not reached for any other way than being (former) Turkish citizens and their descendants. Citizenship tie is the most decisive element that propels and characterize Turkey's more than half a century-long diaspora engagement.

### **8.5. Mapping the Diaspora Policy: Does It Fall into the Domestic or Foreign Policy Realm?**

There is one point at which burgeoning studies on the last two decades of diaspora engagement seem to agree. Many scholars argue that (e.g. Aydın, 2014; Mencütek and Başer, 2018; Akçapar and Aksel, 2017) the changes that took place in diaspora engagement policy is an offshoot of the transformation in foreign policy. It is widely argued that in this changing dynamics within foreign policy under the Ak Party governments, diaspora engagement strategy has become a part of a broader proactive and pro-Islamist foreign policy framework. For instance, diaspora institutions and policies they produced became tools for the Ak Party governments' active public diplomacy and instruments to disseminate Turkey's influence as it tries to reinvent itself as the new leader of the Muslim world. However, while partially agreeing with this narrative, the five decades-long legislative material I have studied in my research, including the Ak Party period, points to a conclusion that diaspora policy changes occurred in tandem with domestic political changes, more so during the Ak Party period than any other era. Hence, I argue that the diaspora policy functioned as yet another field in domestic politics more than a tool for foreign policy since it utterly reflected domestic political preferences of the Ak Party.

Having noted that, the impact of foreign policy vision is undeniable. For instance, it is impossible to distinguish the establishment or the activities of diaspora institutions from the overall Islamist/conservative outlook that came to dominate foreign policy discourse during the Ak Party era. However, the more conservative and Islamic the Ak Party's social and political vision got in domestic politics, the more conservative or pro-Islamic hints its diaspora vision became. Take the Ak Party's position on women in society, which was strictly considered to belong to the family life. In the diaspora sphere, when we look at the debates of KEFEK's sub-committee on women abroad, for example (Chapter 7, see pages 153-164), we see the direct rendition of the same outlook in domestic policy in diaspora policy. Despite all warnings by the opposition for not approaching women as mothers or idealizing their natural place as a family, the Ak Parti and MHP members of the sub-committee focused on the problems faced by families in Europe in a committee titled Equal Opportunities for Women. This is very much in line with the domestic outlook that dominated the social policy perspective in Turkey in recent years.

Moreover, while debating diaspora-related issues, the perception of what constitutes a human right violation is also the equivalent of the perspective in place in domestic politics. Recalling the sub-committee of the human rights committee focusing on Islamophobia in Europe (Chapter 7, see pages 160-166), human rights violations in Europe was predominantly defined in relation to religious freedoms by the Ak Parti members of the committee. One particular topic that often receives equal attention at home, the headscarf issue, was brought to the committee's attention more often than various other forms of rights violations experienced by citizens abroad. The MPs or invited guests from universities and NGOs often addressed examples in which headscarf-wearing women often faced difficulties finding a job or workplace discrimination. This nuanced emphasis on the headscarf as the ultimate form of human rights violation considerably aligns with the party's perception of human rights violation often voiced in domestic politics. The political Islam's longstanding

sensitivity on the headscarf, which turned it into a major discourse for the Ak Party, is thus transported to the transnational space and was located into the diaspora area.

### **8.6. How Politicized is Diaspora Policy: Interactions between Ruling and Opposition Parties**

One of the early aims of this thesis was also to inquire into the dynamics between the government, the ruling party and the opposition. One of my fundamental reasons to look at the parliament in the diaspora context was also to look into the dynamics between the ruling and the opposition parties since I seconded with the “growing understanding that the sending state is not a unitary actor.” (Koinova and Tsourapas, 2018). While we can undoubtedly talk about a diaspora policy of a sending state per se, as this study has indicated, it is far from being unitary and immune from conflict. The parliamentary debates have demonstrated that diaspora-related issues can in fact become an intra-party conflict within the parliament as political parties’ position on the same topic varies greatly. Hence, in line with the recent trends in the literature that incorporates different domestic political actors into the study of diaspora policy (Burgess, 2018; Wellman, 2021; Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei, 2019), as well as relying on my observation in diverging political positions during diaspora-related debates in the Turkish Parliament, I sought to take the parliament as a heterogeneous actor contributing to diaspora policymaking.

I found out regarding the opposition that, especially in recent times, diaspora issues became a venue through which the opposition parties can voice their overall discontent about the government policies, hence targeting and criticising the government’s stance. The parliamentary debates of the 1970s have proven this observation the best (see chapter 4). The tumultuous and tense political environment, which was evident in stark rivalries and among all parties and constant formation and dissolution of coalition governments frequently, could

be sensed in the debates regarding the diaspora too. Parties turned the diaspora policy into an arena for the blame game, like any other issue area at the time, and it created a vicious cycle in which the opposition parties criticized the ruling parties and vice versa. For instance, the establishment of *Ülkü Ocakları* in Europe in the 1970s created a fury in the Parliament. The left-wing parties blamed MHP to infiltrate hostility and militarism among citizens abroad. Moreover, since the parties controlling different ministries changed too often due to different parties forming coalition governments, the parties blamed each other for trying to insert their political influence and control particular ministries, including the Ministry of Labour, which was in charge of citizens abroad. CHP blamed MSP, which held Ministry of Labour for a short while, for trying to Islamise citizens abroad, while MSP blamed CHP for filling the ministry cadres with its staff in the previous years.

In the 1980s, contestation in diaspora realm was not as fierce as the previous decade. All political sides were commonly concerned about the situation of second generation immigrant, who had troubles in reaching education in host countries. In the 1990s, political differences among parties became more crystallized. The opposition parties criticized the government for giving in to the Western governments in their human-rights critics on Turkey, whereas these countries turn a blind eye to the similar crimes against Turkish citizens. Another area that divided the parties were the headscarf issue. Deputies from the RP elevated the issue to the diaspora level by blaming the government for discriminating against their own citizens abroad on the basis of religion and headscarf, just like they did it in Turkey.

Contemporary diaspora-related debates can be thought of in a similar vein. As I mentioned above, since diaspora issues have been turned into a domestic policy issue by the Ak Party or handled in parallel with the Party's position in domestic politics, the opposition parties consequently started using diaspora issues to criticize the general politics of the ruling party. For instance, in the aftermath of

the diplomatic spat with Germany and the Netherlands, opposition representatives commonly criticized the ruling party not only for jeopardizing the situation of expatriates in their host countries but also use them pragmatically for their electoral calculations. There was a common tendency among critical MPs to interpret this “manufactured” crisis as part of the Ak Party’s usual victimizing attitude that won them many electoral victories in the past. What is worse, they argued, was using supposedly non-political diaspora field for party politics (electoral rally), the result of which humiliated the Turkish republic via the maltreatment to the institutions and citizens. All in all, diaspora politics continued to be a contested political sphere.

In more recent times, it can be seen that the CHP’s objections are raised regarding the type of identity promoted for the diaspora in Europe by the Ak Parti governments (see Chapter 7, page 193-195). It is possible to observe that, especially on specific agendas such as Islamophobia or discrimination based on religion, which are the issues that the Ak Party politicians notably focus on, the CHP representatives differ significantly from the AK Party members by putting the Turkish identity before the Islamic identity. Accordingly, it is possible to identify the discomfort of the CHP members, for example, because the Turks are seen in the same category as Moroccans or other Muslim groups in Europe, and they are mistaken with them. That is possibly why some MPs suggest identifying it as anti-Turkish racism than anti-Muslim racism.

On the other hand, the issues that HDP is discontent with are the overall dominance of Turkishness at the institutional and political level in diaspora engagement. Therefore, HDP argues that diaspora services are far from being inclusive and hence falls short of meeting the ethnic and cultural diversity that comprises the diaspora in Europe. Such objection should be considered within the Kurdish political movements’ powerful network and presence in the diaspora. Together with political Islamists, HDP and the Kurdish movement has the most substantial grassroots political organization in Europe, making its voter

base the second biggest in Europe after the Ak Party. Hence, the Party's objection is usually directed at the exclusionary aspect of diaspora services by overemphasising Turkishness despite the strong Kurdish presence in the diaspora. During the debates of the YTB, for instance, the Party's criticism of the title of the organization having *Türkler* rather than more inclusive *Türkiyeliler* can be pointed as one such example. This aspect of a diaspora engagement strategy is somewhat understandable given the fact that the establishment embodied in the Ak Party and MHP coalition portray HDP and its affiliated networks in Europe as PKK/YPG proxy.

Nevertheless, when we come to the regulations that commonly benefit diaspora members or enhance their ties with Turkey, we see less of the conflictual political atmosphere that in the Parliament among parties, which has gradually become more common in time. These are the issues that can be categorized as above politics or non-political uniting different parties in the parliament. With minor exceptions, the law establishing the YTB can be addressed as one example of the consensus witnessed among the parties. The external voting legislation or rather technical laws that regulate citizenship services such as passport fees, compulsory military service for expatriates or social security regulations are likewise similar non-political areas that receive the support of all different parties in the parliament.

A final remark should be noted regarding why institutionalization of diaspora engagement came relatively late despite more than half a century-long migration history. By looking at the domestic political dynamics since the onset of migration, it would not be misleading to argue that the establishment of diaspora institutions was far from possible in an unstable political atmosphere. Coalition governments were formed and crumbled in periods measurable in months. As a policy area that might come "luxurious" for a country with fundamental issues

awaiting to be solved like Turkey<sup>259</sup>, diaspora engagement has thus had its share from an unstable political atmosphere that did not allow long-term policy projections. Constructing a coherent diaspora strategy ultimately requires stable institutions that produce a set of policies and dedicated to following it as a strategy.

Notwithstanding the content –Islamist, selective, protective, nationalist, promoting a particular form of Turkish and Islamic identity, etc.– diaspora institutions can be considered a by-product of single-party governments. Hence, it is not surprising that the YTB was established in 2010, the 8<sup>th</sup> year into the Ak Party era. Therefore, it can be concluded that single-party governments, that is, a ruling party having enough time and jurisdiction to implement its ideology and policies, has undoubtedly facilitated the development of a coherent diaspora engagement framework and policies.

### **8.7. Legislative – Executive Nexus in Diaspora Representation**

It is essential to ask what governmental system in Turkey and its implications (strong executive and weak legislative) means for Turkey’s diaspora engagement. The overall outcome of my research indicates that the Turkish Parliament’s significance in diaspora policymaking lies less on its role in shaping policies than revealing different party positions and constitute a setting to develop a coherent outlook on diaspora-related issues. Though it would be simplistic to reduce the Parliament’s contribution to diaspora policy merely acting as an advisory body, the policy-wise contribution was limited since the relevant bills were drafted mainly by the ministries and brought to the parliament as a government bill (*kanun teklifi*), not as private member’s bill (*kanun tasarısı*).

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<sup>259</sup> Both Representative Yeneroğlu and former head of YTB Köse referred to diaspora politics along similar lines, concluding that it is a policy area for countries that already settled its rather burning issues.

However, by looking at the proliferation of diaspora initiatives in the Parliament, especially in recent years, one can conclude that the deliberative atmosphere in the Parliament has been crucial for understanding different dynamics beneath the diaspora vision. The growing interest in diaspora related issues in the Parliament evident in the increasing number and diversified profile of deputies who propose laws on diaspora-related issues, ask written and oral questions, and speak on various aspects of the issue contributed significantly to the deepening of the diaspora agenda in Turkey. Moreover, for the most part, the most vivid discussions I could observe – and hugely benefited from the reports- were from the committees established in the last 2-3 legislative terms, such as the sub-committee of KEFEK, Human Rights Committee’s sub-committee on Islamophobia in Europe, or investigation committees on the problems faced by citizens abroad. There are also various plenary speeches on special days, anniversaries or commemorations, such as the anniversary of labour migration agreements with respective countries or neo-Nazi killings. Hence, since my research did not only focus on policy analysis but instead attempted to identify (a) the transformation in political approach to the diaspora, (b) the differences in political positions among parties on diaspora issues in the Parliament, the accumulation of these legislative materials presented me with a fruitful ground for the discussion of my main interests.

Therefore, my overall conclusion is that the Parliament’s influence on diaspora engagement policymaking is limited apart from showing interest and willingness on diaspora members, giving a message to the public that attention is given to their issues, and initiating different mechanisms, such as investigation or sub-committees, which serve for the deepening of the diaspora focus. For the scope of my focus, the parliamentary material was immensely useful to see different political approaches to various aspects of the diaspora and identify the possible drives behind these different political attitudes. Yet, at the end of the day, the lion’s share in establishing diaspora policies ultimately lies in the executive branch.

## **8.8. Diyanet and the Transformation of its Role**

Diyanet has been one of the key diaspora institutions throughout more than five decades-long history of diaspora engagement. Its roles and activities were also widely studied by scholars, and overall, it would not be misleading to characterize Diyanet services as an area where the diaspora is perceived merely as a passive recipient of the sending state's discourses and practices (Maritato, 2020: 8). In the 1980s, it had a crucial function for disseminating the official Turkish version of Islam blended with nationalism (Turkish Islamic synthesis of the post-1980 coup period). At the same time, it is now claimed to be the mouthpiece of the ruling Ak Party in Europe and spread its influence in the diaspora.

In the early years of labour migration, along with teachers, Diyanet imams were often referred to by the MPs as the key actors to preserve the Turkish culture and customs among workers in Europe. In the 1960s and 1970s, right and left-wing parties alike could be seen attributing utmost importance to the role of imams to help expatriates not to assimilate and lose their religion (see chapter 3 and 4), which was seen as the ultimate tie that unites them with their homeland along with the language. In that regard, Diyanet has become the most concrete embodiment of the aforementioned protective behaviour that has shaped the relations between the diaspora and the Turkish politicians.

However, in diaspora engagement history, Diyanet's activities in Europe became a centre of controversy in the Parliament twice. The first was in the mid-1980s (see chapter 5, pages 107-114), during the early months of the first ANAP government following the 1980s coup. A scandal erupted when renowned investigative journalist Uğur Mumcu revealed the Saudi involvement in the

financing of the recruited Diyanet imams' salaries<sup>260</sup>. Helpless by the economic downturn, it turned out that the military government had to accept the offer by the Saudi NGO Rabita, whose aim is to spread the Islamic doctrine through soft power, to remunerate the wages of imams. The incident's aftershock in the Parliament created a vivid debate in the Parliament not only about the role of Diyanet in Europe, which all parties supported, but more of a foreign country trying to insert its influence through a Turkish state institution.

The second time Diyanet's role became controversial both in the domestic and international arena is relatively recent. Unlike previous times, Diyanet activities were contested and inquired by the opposition parties following the widespread allegations that it became a transnational policy tool under the ever-increasingly authoritarian Ak Party governments. Especially after the coup attempt, Diyanet allegedly became the centre of espionage claims, with the so-called "spying imams" of Diyanet in Europe (*casus imamlar*) informing Ankara against dissident or FETÖ-affiliated diaspora members. This has not only stirred a fierce reaction in the host country governments as it was interpreted as an intervention to their domestic affairs but also aggravated the parliamentary opposition for belittling the country by using state institutions like a party organ (see chapter 7, page 182).

Given the recurring debates on Diyanet, it is not wrong to pinpoint it as one of the key diaspora institutions. Early on, parliamentarians belonging to different parties seemed to agree on the vitality of its role in buffering the Turkish community from getting radicalized under the possible influence of non-Turkish Islamic elements. Diyanet was seen as promoting a moderate interpretation of Islam controlled by the Turkish state for politicians in the right and left-wing of the political spectrum. For a long time, it went in accordance with the Diyanet's role in Turkey. However, as I have argued above, all political developments in

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<sup>260</sup> For a thorough understanding of the Rabita incident and its implications in politics and media in 1984, Uğur Mumcu's own recount of the event collected in a book titled *Rabita* is a very helpful and intriguing resource, see Uğur Mumcu, *Rabita*, um:ag, 2018.

the domestic sphere have one way or another, been reflected on to the diaspora relations. As Diyanet gradually became politicized in Turkey under the Ak Party governments, which has become more visible through widespread practices such as Friday khutbahs/sermons (Ongur, 2020), so did its activities in Europe. It is currently seen by many European governments and the public as a sub-branch of the Ak Party, diffusing political influence and mobilizing the expatriates. This has made its role more controversial in the eyes of the parties in Parliament.

### **8.9. Do Diaspora MPs Represent the Diaspora?**

Though expatriates do not have their directly elected representative in the Turkish Parliament, an increasing number of diaspora members with Turkish and Kurdish background in Europe are elected in general elections and become MPs in the Turkish Parliament. However, as this present study has shown, representatives with a migration background are far from a 2000s phenomenon. Yet, their numbers have exponentially grown over the years.

Even in the relatively early period of labour migration, there have always been a group of MPs who brought diaspora-related issues to the Parliament's attention more often than others. In the 1970s, the earliest example we can show is Gani Aşık from CHP. As a former mufti, having worked in Germany as a religious services attaché, he presented private members' bills on issues concerning workers abroad and regularly spoke about their problems. In that regard, we can cite him as the earliest mouthpiece of diaspora issues in the Turkish Parliament.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, a cluster of MPs started to emerge who did not necessarily have a migration background but consistently brought these issues related to workers abroad to the Parliament's agenda and actively took legislative initiatives for them. For example, İmren Aykut in the 1980s and Mustafa Kalemli in the 1990s were the most active MPs on diaspora issues and thus can be cited here for exemplifying pro-active legislative behaviour on diaspora.

Necessary here is to mention that as the common feature, both names have served as the Minister of Labour in separate times, which was back then the ministry in charge of relations with citizens abroad.

In later times, we start to see the first examples of MPs who have a genuine diaspora experience. Osman Yumakoğlu is one name we can point to as a politically active diaspora member who was eventually elected as Istanbul deputy in the 1995 and 1999 elections. He was an influential figure within the Milli Görüş community in Europe, which had had the strongest Turkey-related organizational network in Europe. Consequently, his legislative activities reflected his experience as a politically motivated diaspora member. Likewise, Ercan Karakaş was another name in the 1990s that undertook legislative activities as representatives with a migration experience. All in all, Yumakoğlu acted more as a diaspora representative than Karakaş, though the latter's legislative profile was more active than the former (see Chapter 6, pages 154-156).

In the 2000s, many MPs from a diaspora background became deputies in the Turkish Parliament for various constituencies. From the 2000s onwards alone (between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> terms), the number of MPs from diaspora backgrounds tripled the total number of MPs with migration background until that time and reached 10<sup>261</sup>. Mostly elected from the Ak Party, these MPs have been significant political actors in making diaspora-related issues more visible in the parliament. However, the ever-increasing number of representatives from migration background raises questions whether such increase is reflected in substantive representation in a genuine sense. In other words, it is legitimate to

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<sup>261</sup> These MPs are as chronologically as follows: **Ali Rıza Gülçiçek – CHP**, 22<sup>nd</sup> term (2002-2007), **Eyüp Fatsa – Ak Parti**, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> terms (2002-2007, 2007-2011), **Fazilet Dağcı Çıglık – Ak Parti**, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> terms (2007-2011, 2011-2015), **Tülin Erkal Kara – AK Parti**, 24<sup>th</sup> term (2011-2015), **Mustafa Yeneroğlu – Ak Parti** 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> terms (2015-2018, 2018-present from DEVA), **Feleknas Uca – HDP**, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> terms (2015-2018, 2018-present), **Ziya Pir – HDP**, 26<sup>th</sup> term (2015-2018), **Ali Atalan – HDP**, 26<sup>th</sup> term (2015-2018), **Zafer Sırakaya – Ak Parti**, 27<sup>th</sup> term (2018-present), **Cemal Çetin – MHP**, 27<sup>th</sup> term (2018-present).

ask whether coming from the diaspora, albeit limited in proportion to the overall number of deputies, entails acting as a diaspora MP per se or not. Since I have provided a detailed analysis of these MPs legislative activities in Chapter 7 (see pages 166-174), underlining the same points would be a repetition. However, what we can infer from the findings of my research suggest that while MPs with a diaspora background are noticeably more sensitive towards diaspora-related issues in general (i.e. the social, economic and political problems faced by citizens in host countries as well as in their homeland), MPs with an ethnic minority background (Kurdish, Yazidi) have an agenda heavily emphasizing the political problems of their ethnic group, rather than the diaspora per se. Overall, they tend to act within the party discipline in voicing political issues in line with their party position. In that sense, they are just one of their party representative. Yet, they generally go one step further regarding diaspora issues by taking the floor on special occasions or days, as well as being actively involved in committees in connection with diaspora issues.

The overall works of the MPs with diaspora background presents mixed evidence. It can be argued that no direct connection can be established between coming from a diaspora background and putting diaspora issues first in legislative activities. For instance, while Zafer Sırakaya's all legislative efforts are on diaspora's issues, his former co-party member Mustafa Yeneroğlu, who has also been equally active on diaspora issues, also acted as a vocal defender of human rights-related issues in Turkey. In other words, diaspora MPs might have various other political "baggage" than merely doing politics focusing on their diaspora experience. Moreover, as evident in the interviews, most often their life experiences in Europe -discrimination, otherness, or respect for human rights- translates into a political motivation in Turkey and determine the course of their political actions.

However, the picture gets more complex when we include diaspora MPs with a minority ethnic background, such as Kurdish or Yazidi. In that regard, their

legislative activities can be put into two different categories. The first is related to their ethnic identity. As far as the cause for migration is concerned, they constitute a separate arm of the Turkey-connected diaspora groups. Different from the abovementioned MPs, the reason their past generations immigrated is mostly due to political reasons. Consequently, contrary to Ak Party's diaspora MPs, they are more likely to defend the issues of the ethnic minority, which they are a part of more predominantly than the diaspora they come from. By looking at the limited composition they have in the Turkish Parliament, it is seen that their ethnic background's influence is much more visible in their legislative work than their diaspora experience. In other words, the intensity with which they perform their legislative functions signals the fact that they represent the ethnic minority they come from rather than the diaspora communities they come from in Europe.

Second, the legislative activities of diaspora MPs with minority backgrounds are not limited to advocating the rights of the ethnic community they come from. Like the Ak Party's diaspora MPs, they also worked as their party's ideological agents by fostering their party's specific agendas. For example, in addition to drafting several written questions about the Yazdi community, Feleknas Uca also used many other legislative channels to address the prison conditions or inquiring Öcalan's health , just as any other HDP MP. Likewise, the Ak Party's diaspora MP Zafer Sırakaya showed a similar dual agenda by both bringing diaspora issues into the Parliament's attention, by also praising or thanking Erdoğan for his service in almost every speech, just like his many other fellow Ak Party MPs. In that regard, it can be concluded that the MPs with diaspora backgrounds usually have dual legislative agenda, the one on their migration experience – be it the diaspora or the ethnic minority they come from – and another is the broader political agendas that align with their parties' position.

Another noteworthy outcome of the study is that all these MPs were actively involved in politics in host countries. Some of them, such as Feleknas Uca and

Ali Atalan from pro-Kurdish HDP, became politicians at the local/state level in Germany. Uca has eventually become an MEP from the European United Left Group before her term in the Turkish Parliament. Similarly, though they have not become part of institutional politics, both Ak Party deputies, Sırakaya and Yeneroğlu, have actively been involved in the works of conservative/Islamic civil society organizations UETD and Milli Görüş, respectively. Gülçiçek (CHP) and Çetin (MHP) also stands out as diaspora politicians who brought their years-long civil society engagement to the Turkish Parliament. For example, as an Alevi MP, the majority of Gülçiçek's legislative activity focused on Alevi rights or other Alevi-related issues in and outside Turkey. He has been a life-long Alevi rights activist in Europe, making his political adventure in Turkey shaped around Alevi issues. Similarly, Çetin from MHP has politically been active in Turkish federations in Europe, which is linked with grey wolves. His views expressed during our talk and his legislative activity reveals that his formation as a nationalist in Europe has been influential in his political activities in Turkey. Therefore, almost all diaspora MPs' legislative activity has essentially focused on the same topics they specialized in Europe.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

The thesis set forth to answer two questions: a) How has Turkey's diaspora been represented in the Turkish Parliament since the early 1960s and how this representation has changed over time, b) how have the positions of domestic political actors and of political parties within the converged and diverged while diaspora was represented. In order to answer the first question, I aimed to connect diaspora and representation literatures and argued that establishing a dialogue between these two strands is insufficient alone to grasp the comprehensive nature of the home country representation of diasporas. Instead, it is necessary to look at the influence of country of origin over the diaspora, and particularly of the role played by domestic political actors such as political parties in the diaspora approach, and how this approach transforms itself in tandem with the developments in home and host countries. Turkey is the country of origin for one of the world's biggest and most politically salient diasporas. In that regard, it is legitimate to think that the study significantly contributes to our understanding of both diaspora studies policy and representation in terms of home country political representation as an often neglected area, based on the diaspora representation in the Parliament of one of the most crucial migrant-sending country like Turkey.

As far as the first question is concerned, the study looked at the diaspora representation in Turkey from the lens of "representation as claim-making", a framework put forward by Saward (2006, 2010). The main argument of the dissertation was, therefore, since the beginning of labour migration, the issues voiced by the MPs in the Turkish parliament claimed to refer to the wants, needs and issues of Turkey's diaspora in Europe. Therefore, diaspora representation in

the Turkish Parliament took place within the boundaries of representative claim-making. The MPs in Ankara have assumed themselves as the legitimate representatives of diaspora members, even though they do not necessarily represent a diaspora constituency, which is thus far non-existent. While issues represented had a rather technical character early on, the representative claims have gradually been more on political issues. I argued that the representation as claim-making has peaked after the full practice of out-of-country voting in 2014. To exemplify, according to my observations, the debates in KEFEK have witnessed one of the most salient examples of claim-making as a representative performance. For instance, for the Ak Party MPs, women's issues were overwhelmingly seen as attached to family. Conversely, opposition MPs of CHP and HDP opposed such representation of women arguing that women are first and foremost individuals without necessarily needing their roles of motherhood or as part of a family to make them complete. However, by putting forward family-related matters such as foster family problems in Europe, or legal issues surrounding divorce, thus portraying Turkish women in Europe in a particular way and defining their issues like this and that, they put their claim on what represents them the best. Similarly, I am inclined to see the AK Party members' approach to Islamophobia in a similar vein, since that and related topics (i.e. religion-based discrimination) found more ground in the parliament than other possible topics diaspora members face daily, hence became more visible than others.

Apart from representative claim-making, regarding the question "why the Turkish state in general and the Turkish parliamentarians, in particular, have been involved in diaspora engagement all along", the research indicated similar outcomes with that of other migrant-sending countries with hybrid or authoritarian regimes. The structural dependence of some states' on remittances is usually referred to as a significant reason for so many sending states are engaged with their diaspora (e.g. Itzigsohn, 2000). It partially explains Turkey's long involvement with its diaspora. The 1960s and 1970s were the periods

during which remittances functioned as lifeline support for the Turkish economy (Artukoğlu, 2005). However, I have pointed out that the impact of remittance on the economy diminished in time. Furthermore, even at the time of their vital importance for the economy, remittances alone cannot be indicated as the reason why the Turkish politicians took political initiatives for their well-being in host countries, as well as in Turkey. The compassion prevailing in the discourse of politicians in the 1960s 1970s is sufficient to disprove this contention (see chapters 3 and 4). The understanding of citizenship ties regardless of the territorial connection, as discussed above, was rather decisive in the Turkish politicians' interest in engaging with the diaspora. Hence, it is more plausible to explain the prolonged interest more in relation to the "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson, 1998) than the expected economic contribution of the expatriates.

As far as the second question regarding the intra-party relations in the Turkish Parliament on diaspora issues are concerned, the study set off with the assumption that the sending states are not unitary actors (Koinova and Tsourapas, 2018). While we can undoubtedly talk about a diaspora policy of a sending state per se, as this study has shown, it is far from being unitary and immune from political disagreement. The parliamentary debates have demonstrated that diaspora-related issues can in fact become an intra-party conflict within the parliament as political parties' position on the same topic varies greatly. It is possible to observe that, especially on specific agendas such as Islamophobia or discrimination based on religion, which are the issues that the Ak Party politicians notably focus on, the CHP representatives differ significantly from the AK Party members by putting the Turkish identity before the Islamic identity. Nonetheless, one can distinguish legal/technical regulations (social security, health, citizenship services) from political ones (electoral rallies abroad, ideological components in diaspora outreach etc.), where the former is more likely to pass with consensus, whereas we can expect more diverse opinions along different party lines, hence disagreement.

Another central argument of the dissertation was while representing the diaspora through constant claim-making, the main impetus behind representatives as policymakers were protective behaviour. Having analysed six-decades long diaspora debates in the Parliament, I have come to the conclusion that politicians have always tried to protect citizens abroad from what they deemed was ideologically, morally or culturally harmful. This “harmful” was defined in relation to communism, radical left, Islamic extremism, Kurdish extremism, racist attacks, and the proxies of terrorist organizations within and outside Turkey such as PKK, YPG or FETÖ. The ruling parties or ideologies in the domestic political setting have changed from time to time. What remained constant has been the political motive to protect diaspora members from threats, which are defined dynamically, and mould them into the acceptable citizen ideal. This strategy is not much different from the political project to create an ideal and acceptable Turkish citizen within Turkey. A discussion on how Turkey has defined and historically acted upon citizenship bonds is beyond the scope of this thesis<sup>262</sup>. However, the outcome that emerged in this research points out that the approach that defines citizenship ties in Turkey towards Turkish citizens (protective, top-down, commanding) was moved to the transnational arena and applied to emigrant populations too.

I have comprehensively discussed the existing accounts on Turkey’s diaspora engagement strategy and what different scholars had to say about the changes that occurred in diaspora policy. An ever-increasing number of studies seem to agree that, especially under the Ak Party governments, diaspora policy was employed to bolster Turkey’s ambitious neo-Ottoman policy vision. While partially agreeing with this contention, my study has shown that in addition to functioning as a useful foreign policy tool, diaspora policy also plays into domestic political dynamics, which is substantially overlooked in the literature. I

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<sup>262</sup> For a thorough historical analysis of the Turkish state’s perception and creation of “acceptable” or “ideal” citizens from 1908 onwards, see (Üstel, 2016); for an analysis on the creation of the Turkish national identity as a citizenship project, see (Kadioğlu, 1996, 2007).

have argued that the political discourse behind diaspora politics develops in tandem with the dominant domestic political outlook of the ruling parties. What many diaspora scholars refer to as “the new diaspora policy” is also heavily determined by the cultural, ideological, political stance of the ruling party in domestic politics. Especially in connection with the protective state attitude discussed above, I have further argued that the diaspora strategy (whom or what to protect citizens from, which policy to legislate primarily) is determined concurrently with the domestic political priorities or developments.

As Arkılıç (2020) argued, international and transnational developments such as the EU accession bid and the growing significance of emigrants in Europe for Turkish politics are unquestionably explanatory frameworks for Turkey’s diaspora engagement. However, it is the domestic political outlook that influences the way in which diaspora engagement policies are shaped. Even though this outlook does not translate into concrete policies, it nonetheless affects different aspects of diaspora engagement. In the case of the Parliament’s engagement, the MP’s approach to women and families in Europe during the KEFEK debates did not materialize as concrete policies that treat women as part of a family rather than individuals. However, it did affect the selection of invited NGOs, whose voice was heard more than others, the issues emphasized in committee activities in Europe etc.

The hints of an increasingly conservative domestic political scene can be observed in diaspora policy too, which is yet another indicator of domestic-diaspora politics symbiosis. In the last decade or so, various areas ranging from gender policies to education, culture and multiple sub-units within the social policy came under the dominance of the conservative Islamic framework of the Ak Party governments. My findings suggest that the ideological atmosphere, which currently shapes social, political and cultural spheres in Turkey, is exported to the transnational sphere as a diaspora policy. In other words, unlike previous eras during which diaspora policy was run more like a general state

policy, under the Ak Party period, the formation of diaspora policy became more akin to a domestic policy area such as education or social policy. While acknowledging the importance of diaspora engagement strategies as a valuable foreign policy tool, it is necessary to see that diaspora policy's dynamics are deeply rooted in the domestic realm. The direction it will take is heavily determined by the domestic political paradigm of the ruling party, such as conservatism and occasional anti-Westernism, as well as its perception of what constitutes human rights violations or what being a woman means.

Furthermore, on diaspora policy, as far as Turkey's motivation to establish such a broad diaspora policy network was also explained throughout the thesis. In this regard, Brand's research on North African countries is also explanatory for Turkey's diaspora engagement. Brand (2006) argues that what lies beneath those countries' interest in their diaspora is the wish to demonstrate an ethic of care for non-resident citizens, which provides the state with greater sovereign legitimacy. So, assessing the Turkish parliamentarians' involvement with reference to this framework might be helpful to understand the motives of decades-long diaspora engagement. What I have observed commonly throughout five decades-long of diaspora engagement of the parliamentarians is the mix of the citizenship-based approach and what Brand identifies as the will to give ethical care intertwined together. Slogan-like words often uttered, such as "Wherever our population is, there we will have our influence" (see Chapter 7, page 173), epitomizes this novel mixture of long-distance nationalism, a wish to give ethical care to non-resident citizens and a citizenship-based understanding of national unity.

Another noteworthy development in diaspora representation came with the increase in the number of representatives in the Turkish Parliament who comes from a diaspora background. Although there were MPs in the Turkish Parliament with a diaspora experience in the 1990s, it became more systematic in the 2000s as all parties represented in the Turkish parliament does have or have had an MP with a diaspora background with the Ak Party and HDP leading the numbers.

Though it is plausible to argue that these numbers do not suffice to change the quality of diaspora representation in the Turkish Parliament, it is indisputable that these MPs coming from the diaspora have managed to make diaspora-related issues more visible on the parliamentary agenda in recent years while paving the way for a rich political debate on different aspects of diaspora politics in the legislature. However, the noticeable trend here is that while the Ak Party's diaspora representatives often highlighted the issues faced by diaspora members in Europe, what HDP's diaspora representatives brought to the Parliament's agenda were not the issues of the communities they come from in Germany, but of the ethnic group they were part of. This is most noticeable in the case of Yazidi MPs of HDP, both of whom had lived in Germany before being elected as an MP but predominantly addressed the plight of Yazidis during the Syrian War. Notwithstanding the absence of a diaspora constituency, the reason that the MPs with a migration background act as diaspora representatives by predominantly highlighting diaspora-related issues can be explained with the shared experiences, which is a strengthening element for surrogate representation. Having resided abroad, these MPs often develop not only a particular sensitivity towards a shared diaspora experience but also a particular responsibility to represent the interests and perspectives of their fellow communities (Mansbridge 2003; Urbinati and Warren 2008).

Overall, the increase in the number of representatives in the Turkish Parliament who comes from a diaspora background should be noted. Although there were MPs in the Turkish Parliament with a diaspora experience in the 1990s, it became more systematic in the 2000s as all parties represented in the Turkish parliament does have or have had an MP with a diaspora background with the Ak Party and HDP leading the numbers. Though it is plausible to argue that these numbers do not suffice to change the quality of diaspora representation in the Turkish Parliament, it is indisputable that these MPs coming from the diaspora have managed to make diaspora-related issues more visible on the parliamentary agenda in recent years while paving the way for a rich political

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Having summarized the main findings of the research, it is essential to ask how this study can function as a compass for future researchers in similar fields and what can be expected from the future of Turkey's diaspora representation and engagement.

One crucial future development regarding diaspora representation would be a special representation for overseas citizens in the Turkish Parliament directly elected by diaspora members. Turkey still does not have a separate overseas constituency. Instead, as summarized in the dissertation, voters abroad vote for a party or a candidate in the Turkish elections when they cast their votes, and later on, the overseas ballots are distributed in proportion to the size of homeland constituencies. There is increasing lobbying attempts by a small number of MPs in the Parliament, such as Yeneroğlu and Sirakaya, as well as by NGOs such as GAV, which operate in the field of migration and diaspora. The head of that NGO, who is also the former President of YTB, reiterated the significance of having a separate diaspora constituency to fulfil their complete democratic participation in Turkish politics during my talk with him, in addition to the abovementioned MPs. Indeed, any legislative steps taken in this direction would put Turkey's diaspora representation and engagement into an entirely new course that is only experienced by 13 countries in the world currently (Collyer and Vathi, 2007).

In this study, my main puzzle was the question of why and how representatives in Turkey have been feeling responsible for and responsive towards the needs of citizens abroad, despite the absence of a direct electoral link. It would be interesting to twist the focus on citizens abroad and ask the same for them in prospective studies in the future: why and how expatriates enthusiastically vote for home country elections where they no longer reside or why voting for homeland elections are of vital importance for diaspora members, given the overwhelming participation rates. After all, expatriates do not vote for a candidate to represent themselves and the stakes are not as high for them as it is for resident citizens. A study design similar to the one conducted by Boccagni (2011) can be a useful frame of reference, in which he inquires voting motivations for Ecuadorian expatriates living in Italy. A “one-shot” style research, in his words, can be applied to the Turkish electorate in Europe on election days with interviews right after voting. Similar studies at the exit polls can be held to compare the motivations of politicians in Turkey to represent the diaspora in Europe and the motivations in the diaspora to vote in the Turkish elections.

Considering diaspora studies and legislative studies as two separate fields in the literature, this study had its feet on both camps. I have based this research on a qualitative method combining archive research and discourse analysis. I have underpinned the archival materials with the talks I had with some of the MPs, who came from a diaspora background and whose ideas I thought have mattered for the scope of this thesis. A similar endeavour can look into the way more voluminous parliamentary through a quantitative analysis. Therefore, if this present study were to be developed, another significant area of focus would be the use of vast parliamentary material. Qualitative and quantitative studies on parliamentary mechanisms in Turkey are surprisingly limited. There has been a recent increase in such interest, especially in studies that employ quantitative methods to place the Turkish Parliament in the study of legislatures (Bulut, 2017, 2020; Bektaş and İşsever-Ekinci, 2019), all of which are valuable contributions

to the critical assessment on the role and implications of the Turkish Parliament's works and procedures. Having worked with six-decades long parliamentary data has shown me just how large the parliamentary data can get and how many different studies can branch out from this large dataset. Many studies can substantiate these different parliamentary mechanisms and procedures, from written/oral questions to private members' bills, from interruptions to motions from committees to various stages of the plenary. Focusing on various aspects of the Turkish Parliament as a unique one will make an invaluable contribution to legislative and parliamentary studies at the global level.

On the other hand, such a solemn focus on the legislative body might lead to what might instinctively seem like a limit of the study. The scope of this thesis was deliberately limited to the legislature, for it stayed absent from the scholarly attention. One of the main problems I faced while researching my topic was the blurred lines between the legislative and executive bodies in policymaking as an intrinsic aspect of the policy procedure in Turkey. I wanted to see the transformation in the state's approach to the diaspora, for which I had to look at the policy shifts. Yet, I set forth intending to focus merely on the parliamentary side of diaspora policy engagement strategies. My idea was that as the main law-making body, an ultimate arena to discern political nuances among parties, parliament alone could offer very helpful insights into the different dynamics that are in play within diaspora engagement. However, since policymaking is predominantly driven by the ministries in Turkey, the Parliament's role might sometimes become somewhat minor, if not totally absent. It is more so during single-party governments. Additionally, due to the Turkish political system that gives the ruling party the upper hand in agenda-setting and controlling the parliamentary procedures, it became extra challenging to distinguish what can be considered a legislative process or executive initiative.

Such dominance is evidently reflected in the literature too. The vast amount of scholarly work on Turkey's diaspora engagement looks at the policy framework, with a few exceptions that focus on parliamentary committees and minutes as data (Okuy, 2015; Köse, 2020; Artan, 2009). Concurrent with the dominance of the executive over the legislative in the Turkish system, it became a difficult endeavour not to divert my focus to policy only, which is predominantly the outcome of the executive procedures

On a seemingly minor and different note, there is a big absence in the literature on the role and functions of investigation committees in the Turkish context. I drew this conclusion by looking at the limited impact, if any, of the parliamentary/legislative activities on overall diaspora policy. And since parliamentary investigation committees are the biggest avenues that do at least "something" for the diaspora or seeming to do so within parliamentary context, we need to know that function these investigation committees do bear in the first place. Are they mediums through which the MPs send messages to the electorate, or to the general public? Do they serve for the ruling party to absorb the reactions of the opposition parties on highly debated/heated issues such as violence against women or animal rights? Or should we accept them simply as a message on the side of the elected officials as their genuine interest shown to an issue-specific are by the parliamentarians? All these and further questions need thorough research on the scope of investigation committee activities in the Turkish parliamentary context. Studying the diaspora in a parliamentary setting has led to these questions, in terms of diaspora-related legislative activities, which is the primary focus of this thesis, investigation committee activities occur as one of the most consistent legislative function employed.

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## APPENDICES

### A. CURRICULUM VITAE

AYSE YEDEKÇİ-SCHELHAAS

RESUME

#### WORK EXPERIENCE

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**Parliamentary Reporter** Minutes Services Department, Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ankara **06/2012 - 12/2019**

**Research Assistant** Bilkent University Department of International Relations, Ankara **09/2009 – 09/2011**

#### EDUCATION

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**PhD in Political Science - Middle East Technical University, Ankara**

**08/2021**

**MSc in International Political Economy - London School of Economics and Political Science, London**

**09/2016**

**MA in International Relations - Bilkent University, Ankara**

**09/2012**

**BSc in Political Science - Middle East Technical University, Ankara**

**06/2009**

#### LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Turkish (native)  
English (full working proficiency)  
Dutch (B1)  
Italian (A1)

## **ACHIEVEMENTS**

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2015-2016	European Commission Jean Monnet Scholarship Award
2009-2013	Bilkent University MA Tuition Scholarship
2009-2012	Bilkent University MA Achievement Scholarship

## **PAPERS PRESENTED AT CONFERENCES**

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- “Wherever our population is, there we will have our influence too”: continuities and discontinuities of the Turkish representatives’ discourses on the diaspora in Europe, July 7-9 2021 Luxembourg, IMISCOE Annual Conference (online)
- “Do Diaspora Members Represent the Diaspora in the Turkish Parliament?”, 1-2 July 2021, ECPR Standing Group on Parliaments Conference, Paris (online)
- “Application of Automatic Speech Recognition System in the Turkish Parliament: A Survey on Users’ Experience” presented at IPRS Meeting, 10-12 October 2017 in Istanbul
- “The post-reporting services at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in the Information Age” presented at 50th INTERSTENO Congress, July 18-25, 2015, in Budapest
- “The limits of the applicability of new technologies to parliamentary reporting services: the case of Turkish Parliament” presented at 48th INTERSTENO Congress, July 12-19, 2013 in Ghent

## **CERTIFICATES AND TRAININGS**

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July 2021 (online).	Data Science Summer School, Hertie School Data Science Lab
November 2020 (online)	Building Disinformation Resilience in Turkey, NATO
February 2019	The Development of Diaspora Policies, Migration Research Institute, Ankara

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## B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

### Giriş

Türkiye'nin Avrupa'daki diasporasıyla ilgili konular işçi göçünün başladığı 1961 yılından bu yana çeşitli siyasi partiler ve milletvekilleri tarafından sürekli olarak TBMM gündemine taşınmıştır. Diasporaya ve sorunlarına yönelik süregelen bu siyasi ilgi Türkiye'nin işçi göçünün ilk aşamalarından itibaren yurt dışındaki vatandaşlarının iyilik ve refahını gözettiğinin bir göstergesi olarak görülebilecek olsa da (Mügge, 2012: 33), özellikle son yirmi yılda diasporaya yönelik atılan siyasi adımların kapsamlılığı geçmiş dönemlere kıyasla farklı bir döneme işaret etmektedir (Aydın, 2014; Öktem, 2014). Türkiye'nin yurt dışındaki vatandaşlarına yönelik bu yeni yaklaşımın farklı unsurları literatürde yurt dışından seçimlere katılımdan (Şahin-Mencütek ve Erdoğan, 2016; Abadan-Unat, 2014) diasporayla ilişkilerin kurumsallaşmasına dek geniş bir yelpazede incelenmiştir (Aydın, 2014, Öktem, 2014). “Yeni” diaspora açılımını inceleyen literatürdeki bu yaklaşım, yurt dışından seçimlere katılımı, Diyanet'in DİTİB üzerinden yurt dışında kurduğu geniş ağı veya Yunus Emre Enstitüleri, YTB (Yurt Dışı Türkler Başkanlığı) gibi yeni diaspora kurumlarını 2000'lerin ikinci yarısında ortaya çıkan yemlenmiş dış politika vizyonunun bir parçası olarak yorumlamaktadır (Aksel, 2014; Akçapar ve Aksel, 2017).

Bu girişimlerin diaspora siyasetinin çeşitlenmesi ve genişlemesine katkıları yadsınamayacak kadar büyük ölçek de olsa da, diaspora siyaseti üzerine odaklanan akademik yazın genellikle TBMM'nin diaspora ile ilişkilerde oynadığı rolü göz ardı etmiştir. Oysaki Avrupa ülkeleriyle işçi anlaşmalarının yapıldığı 1961'den itibaren yurt dışı vatandaşlarla ilgili pasaport harçlarından siyasi katılımına kadar geniş spektrumda konular milletvekilleri tarafından Meclisin çeşitli yasama ve denetim mekanizmaları aracılığıyla (kanun teklifleri, meclis araştırması önermeleri, yazılı ve sözlü soru önermeleri) Meclis gündemine

taşınmıştır. Yurt dışından Türkiye'deki seçimlere katılmayı bir hayli önceleyen bu tip bir siyasi temsil literatürde kendisine yer bulamamış, diaspora veya siyasi temsile odaklanan çalışmalar tarafından büyük ölçüde es geçilmiştir.

Bu boşluğu doldurmak amacıyla bu çalışma, siyasi temsilin merkezi ve yasa yapma organı olarak TBMM'nin Türkiye'nin Avrupa'daki diasporayla kurduğu ilişkideki katkısına ve diasporanın TBMM'de 1961-2020 yılları arasında nasıl temsil edildiğine odaklanmıştır. Vatandaşlar arasında tarihsel olarak saygın bir yere sahip olan TBMM, diaspora kurumlarının kurucu kanunlarının geçtiği ve diasporayla ilgili zengin tartışmalara ev sahipliği yapan bir durak olarak yurt dışı vatandaşlarla gelişen kurumsal ve siyasi ilişkilerin gelişmesinde önemli rol oynamıştır. Türkiye'ye odaklanan diaspora literatüründe her ne kadar Meclis tutanaklarına değinen birkaç çalışma mevcutsa da (Okyay, 2015; Artan, 2009; Köse, 2020), genel olarak TBMM'nin, özelde ise milletvekillerinin diasporaya yönelik yaklaşımı ve kümülatif çalışmalarını siyasi temsil bağlamında sorunsallaştıran herhangi bir akademik çalışmadan bahsetmek mümkün değildir. Dolayısıyla, odağına TBMM ve diasporayı alan ve bu şekilde literatürdeki mevcut bu boşluğu hem diaspora hem de siyasal temsil literatürleri arasında bir diyalog kurarak kapatmayı amaçlayan bu tez öncelikle şu soruyu sormaktadır:

*Araştırma sorusu 1: Türkiye'nin Avrupa'daki diasporası işçi göçünün başladığı 1960'lardan bugüne TBMM'deki farklı siyasi partiler tarafından nasıl temsil edilmiştir?*

Milletvekilleri erken dönemlerden itibaren yurt dışındaki vatandaşların sorunlarıyla oldukça ilgili olsalar bu siyasi ilgiyi 1960'lardan 2020'lere kadar tutarlı bir bütün olarak değerlendirmek yanıltıcı olacaktır. Koalisyonların, hükümetlerin ve hatta hükümet sistemlerinin sık sık değiştiği bir ülke olan Türkiye, tarihsel olarak siyasi istikrara sahip olmaktan oldukça uzak olagelmiştir. Bu nedenle çalışmada diasporanın siyasi temsili değişen siyasi değişkenlere bağlı olarak süreklilik ve kopuş perspektifinden çalışılmıştır. Dönemlere göre değişen

hakim ideolojiler, iktidar-muhalefet partileri arasındaki ilişkiler, farklı hükümetlerin ve dönemlerin sosyo-politik ve kültürel öncelikleri gibi iç siyasi dinamikleri çalışmamın merkezine alan bu tez, temel olarak diasporada gerçekleşen kademeli dönüşümün altında yatan siyasi dönüm noktalarına ve fikirlere ayrıca odaklanmıştır.

İç siyaset parametrelerini çalışmanın merkezine koymak, öncelikle iç siyaseti oluşturan farklı bileşenleri ayrı ayrı incelemeyi gerektirmektedir. Parlamento bağlamında bu bileşen nihai olarak yasama organı bünyesindeki siyasi partiler arası ilişkilerdir. Gerek iktidar gerekse muhalefet partilerinin diasporaya yönelik tutumları, geliştirdikleri söylem ve siyaset biçimi önemli ölçüde partilerin ideolojik konumlarından belirlenmiştir. Diasporaya ilişkin konular üzerinde kimi zaman tüm partiler uzlaşmaya varmış, bazen de konuların doğası gereği Türk siyasetine içkin fay hatlarını açığa çıkarmıştır. Örneğin bazı siyasi partiler, Avrupa'daki siyasal İslam'ı desteklenmesi gereken bir sivil toplum hareketi olarak görürken, diğer partiler konuyu yurt dışındaki vatandaşların korunması gereken potansiyel bir tehdit olarak değerlendirdi. Bu nedenle, çalışmamın bir diğer ana odak noktası, diaspora konuları bağlamında ortaya konan bu iç siyasi nüanslar olarak belirlenmiştir. Buna göre ikinci soru şu şekilde formüle edilmiştir:

*Araştırma sorusu 2: Farklı dönemlerde diasporayla ilgili meselelere siyasi partilerin yaklaşımı nasıl şekillenmiştir ve diasporaya ilişkin konular iktidar-muhalefet partileri arasındaki ilişkileri nasıl etkilemiştir?*

Diasporayla ilişkiler konusuyla ilgilenen akademik yazında iç siyasi dinamikleri dikkate alan çalışmaların sayısı her ne kadar artmış olsa da (Peltoniemi, 2016; Østergaard-Nielsen ve Camattari, 2020; Wellman, 2021; Burgess, 2018), bu çalışma merkezine parlamentoyu oturtarak siyasi partilerin muhalefet ve iktidarda konumlanmalarına göre diaspora meselelerine yönelik yaklaşımlarının ne şekilde değiştiğine bakmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu sorulara odaklanırken çalışma iki farklı literatür yararlanacaktır: siyasi temsil (*political representation*) ve göç/diaspora çalışmaları. Siyaset biliminin bu ayrı alt alanları arasında bir diyalog kurmayı amaçlayan bu çalışma hem Meclislerin diaspora siyasetindeki rolüne yakından bakacak hem de diasporanın Meclisteki farklı fraksiyonlar tarafından nasıl karakterize edildiğini inceleyecektir. Siyasi temsil alanında çalışan pek çok isim genellikle Pitkin (1967) tarafından geliştirilen biçimsel (formal), sembolik (symbolic), betimleyici (descriptive) ve asli (substantive) temsil çerçevesinden yola çıkarak yola çıkmıştır. Bu kavramlardan sonuncusu olan ve “temsil edilenin çıkarı doğrultusunda hareket etmek” olarak tanımlanan asli temsil, bu dört kavram içinde demokrasi teorisyenleri tarafından üzerinde en fazla durulan ve geliştirilen yaklaşım olagelmıştır. Bu tez de özellikle Mansbridge (2003) ve Saward (2010) tarafından ortaya atılan, sırasıyla “ikame temsil” ve “temsil iddiası” olarak adlandırılan kavramların ışığında diaspora temsilini anlamaya çalışmıştır.

Saward tarafından ortaya atılan “temsil iddiası” (*representative claim*) kavramı siyasi temsilin keyfi ve değişebilen, dinamik yapısına vurgu yapmasıyla ilgili literatürde yeni bir sayfa açmıştır. “Temsil iddiası” kavramı, siyasetçilerin temsil ettiği kitlenin ihtiyaçlarının ne olduğunun, siyasetçiden neler beklediklerinin ve nasıl temsil edilmeyi istediklerinin bizzat siyasetçi tarafından tanımlanıp, siyasi faaliyetlerin buna göre şekillenmesini ifade eder. Buna göre tez, altmış yıllık diaspora temsil tarihini “temsil iddiası” kavramı perspektifinden okumuş ve seçilenlerin diasporanın istek, beklenti ve temsil edilme şeklini bizzat Ankara’daki siyasetçilerin tanımladığı bir çerçeveden analiz etmiştir. Bu üstten tanımlama, tıpkı diasporanın Ankara’dan temsil edilmesi gibi, arada doğrudan bir seçmen-seçilen ilişkisinin olmadığı bir bağlamda daha açık bir şekilde görülebilir. Her ne kadar yurt dışı vatandaşlar zamanla seçmene dönüşmüş ve Türkiye’deki seçilmiş siyasetçilerin belirlenmesine katkı vermiş olsalar da, Türkiye’de hala bir diaspora seçim bölgesinin bulunmaması ve yurt dışı seçmenin bizzat kendini temsil eden milletvekili tarafından temsil edilmek yerine yurt dışı oyların farklı seçim bölgelerine orantısız şekilde dağıtılması bu

doğrudan siyasi temsil bağıını ortadan kaldırmaktadır. Seçim bölgesine dayalı olmayan bu temsil şekli de Mansbridge'in (2003) "ikame temsil" diye çevirebileceğimi "*surrogate representation*" kavramıyla açıklanmıştır. Doğrudan seçmen-seçilen ilişkisinin olmadığı, bir başka deyişle bu ilişkinin seçim bölgesi tarafından belirlenmediği, seçmenin hangi adaya oy verdiğini bilmediği fakat seçmenin sorunlarının bölge temsilcisi olmaksızın belirli konulara yönelik hassasiyet geliştirmiş milletvekilleri tarafından dile getirildiği bir düzeni ifade eden bu kavram, kağıt üzerinde diasporayı temsil etmeyen fakat diaspora sorunlarını sistematik şekilde Meclis gündemine getiren TBMM mensubu milletvekillerini kapsayan bir temsil anlayışını ifade eder şekilde çalışma boyunca kullanılmıştır.

## **Metodoloji**

Çalışmanın TBMM'nin ve bünyesindeki siyasetçilerin diaspora ile kurduğu ilişkinin yanı sıra, diasporanın Türkiye'deki siyasi temsilinin zaman içinde nasıl bir değişime uğradığı ana sorusu etrafında şekillendiği yukarıda belirtilmişti. Bu bağlamda, Mecliste geçen tartışmaları analiz edebileceğimiz yegâne belgeler olan Meclis tutanakları ile yasama ve denetime ilişkin diğer belgeler tezin ana araştırma materyalini oluşturmaktadır. Avrupa'ya işçi göçünün başladığı 1961'den 2020'ye kadar geçen yaklaşık altmış yıllık zaman zarfında TBMM'de diasporayla ilgili geçen siyasi tartışmaların seyrini tespit etmek için genel kurul ve komisyon tutanakları, kanun teklifleri, yazılı ve sözlü soru önermeleri gibi belgeler taranarak, diasporayla ilgili tartışmaların hangi bağlamda gerçekleştiği analiz edilmiştir. Dolayısıyla bu araştırma detaylı bir arşiv çalışması olarak kabul edilebilir.

Parlamentoda farklı dönemler içinde diasporaya yönelik yaklaşımdaki devamlılık ve dönüşümleri anlayabilmek için Fairclough (2010) tarafından da belirtildiği gibi, söylemi varlıklar arasındaki sosyal ilişkiler ağı olarak gören eleştirel söylem analizi yöntemine başvurulmuştur. Meclis tutanakları ayrıntılı bir şekilde söylem

analizine tabi tutulmuş, yıllar içinde diaspora alanında dönüşen siyasi yaklaşım siyasetçilerin söylemindeki ana unsurlara bakılarak anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Yasama metinlerinin farklı siyasi pozisyonları anlama ve teşhis etmede oldukça kritik bir öneme sahip olduğu göz önüne bulundurulduğunda (Lauderdale ve Herzog, 2016; Proksch ve Slapin, 2010), diaspora politikası alanındaki birbiriyle çatışan siyasi duruşları analiz etmek için de Meclis tutanaklarına başvurmanın şimdiye dek ihmal edilmiş, fakat oldukça önemli bir metot olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır.

TBMM tutanakları ve diğer yasama belgelerine erişim büyük oranda dijitalleştirildiğinden, özellikle genel kurul tutanaklarına erişim oldukça kolay şekilde gerçekleştirilebilmektedir. Ancak komisyon tutanakları 2011 yılından sonra arşivlenmeye başladığı için, çalışmada 24'üncü Dönemden komisyon tutanakları dahil edilebilmiştir. Tutanakların nasıl bir sistematige göre tarandığından kısaca bahsedecek olursak, Avrupa'ya göçün başladığı ilk yıllardan, diaspora ilişkilerinin yavaş yavaş kurumsallaşmaya başladığı 1980-1990'lara kadar her yılın bütçe görüşmelerindeki ilgili bakanlığın bütçe tartışmaları ayrıntılı şekilde incelenmiştir. Genel olarak bütçe görüşmelerine geçmiş yılın muhasebesinin yapıldığı, gelecek yıl(lar)ın da siyasi panoramasının çıkarıldığı ve zengin içerikli siyasi tartışmalara sahne olan özel bir dönem olarak yaklaşırsak, diaspora alanında da partilerin pozisyonlarını kavrayabileceğimiz bir yasama unsuru olarak görmek yanlış olmaz. Bu sebeple, özel anahtar kelime araması ("yurt dışı", "gurbetçi" "Avrupa'daki Türkler/işçiler" vb.), ve diasporayla ilişkileri doğrudan ilgilendiren kanunların görüşmeleri dışında (sosyal güvenlik, YTB'nin kurulması, yurt dışı vatandaşlara oy hakkı sağlayan Anayasa değişiklikleri vb.), bütçe görüşmelerinin komisyon ve Genel Kurul aşamasındaki ilgili bakanlık ve kurumların (YTB, Çalışma Bakanlığı, Diyanet, Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı) üzerinde geçen tartışmalar ayrıntılı şekilde incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak bu tez metodolojik açıdan arşiv çalışmasına dayanan ve Meclis tutanaklarının eleştirel söylem analizi yöntemi ile incelendiği kapsamlı bir arşiv çalışması olarak değerlendirilebilir.

## **Dönemlere göre TBMM’de diaspora temsili**

1961’de başlayan yurt dışı işçi göçünün Meclisteki tartışmalara yansması uzun sürmedi. 1960’ların başından itibaren yurt dışına göçen işçilere ilişkin çeşitli konular farklı partiye mensup milletvekilleri tarafından çeşitli vesilelerle gündeme getirildi.

Göçün ilk on yılını kapsayan 1960’lardaki Meclis tartışmalarına baktığımızda, erken yıllarda milletvekillerinin daha çok işçilerin Avrupa ülkelerindeki yaşamlarına ilişkin pratik unsurlara yönelik kaygılarının gündeme getirildiğini görüyoruz. Örneğin, işçilerin konakladıkları “heim” adı verilen toplu yurtların standartlarından, helal gıdaya erişimine kadar bir takım lojistik ve kültürel meseleler 1960’lardaki Meclis tartışmalarının genel seyrini oluşturmuştur. Fakat önemle dikkat çekilmesi gereken nokta, milletvekillerinin gündeme getirdikleri konu ve bağlam ne olursa olsun, işçilerin eninde sonunda ana yurda dönüş yapacağı ön kabulüyle hareket etmeleri idi. Erken dönemlerde çıkarılan yasalarda da bu ön kabulün yansımalarını görmek mümkün. Örneğin, yurt dışındaki işçilerle ilgili ilk sistematik yasal düzenleme olarak kabul edebileceğimiz 1964 tarihli Yurt Dışında Çalışan İşçilere Konut ve Küçük Sanat Kredisi Açılması ve Ödünç Para Verilmesi Hakkında Kanun, yurt dışına çalışma amaçlı giden işçilere avantajlı koşullarla kredi verilmesi suretiyle onlara Türkiye’de ev edindirerek döndüklerinde karşılaştıkları muhtemel konut sıkıntısını çözmeyi amaçlamaktaydı. Gündeme getirilen bu tip yasama inisiyatiflerinin yanı sıra, kürsüye çıkan hemen her milletvekilinin konuşmasındaki alt metnin işçilerin yurda dönüşlerinde karşılaştıkları hayatın sosyal, ekonomik veya kültürel boyutuyla ilgili olduğunu söylemek yanıltıcı olmaz.

Genel olarak 1960’larda işçilere yönelik ortak siyasi yaklaşımın işçileri ekonomik özenler olarak kurgulayan bir anlayıştan belirlendiğini söyleyebiliriz. Türkiye’nin dış ödemeler dengesindeki açıklığın ciddi boyutlarda olduğu bu

dönemde işçilerin dövizle yapacağı birikimler siyasetçiler tarafından ülke ekonomisi için büyük bir fırsat olarak görülmüş, yukarıda bahsedilen kanunda olduğu gibi, bu birikimlerin farklı şekillerde ekonomiye entegre edilmesi için büyük çaba sarf edilmiştir. İşçileri ekonomik özneler olarak kurgulayan bu hâkim yaklaşım yalnızca biriken dövizlerin kullanılması beklentisiyle salt ekonomik katkı bakımından değil, işçilerin Avrupa ülkelerinde edindikleri teknik uzmanlık ve tecrübeyle kesin dönüş sonrası Türkiye'nin ekonomik kalkınmasında rol oynama beklentisiyle de açığa çıkmıştır. Yurt dışına çalışma amaçlı giden işlere yüklenen, muhtemelen de dönemin hâkim ekonomik yaklaşımından esinlenen bu kalkınmacı misyonun nüvelerini hemen her parti milletvekilinin söylemlerinde bulmak mümkündür. Dolayısıyla göçün erken yıllarında ekonomik perspektifin TBMM'nin ve siyasi temsilcilerin yurt dışındaki vatandaşlarla ilişkilerinde hâkim yaklaşım olduğunu söylemek mümkündür.

Kültürel olarak ise yurt dışındaki vatandaşların asimilasyona maruz kalması korkusu ve bunun karşısında milli kimliğin korunmasına yönelik vurgu ve çabalar 1960'lardaki Meclis tartışmalarına yansıyan bir diğer başat unsur olarak görülebilir. Soğuk Savaş döneminin çift kutuplu dünyasında işçileri sol ideolojik propagandadan korumak yurt dışı vatandaşlara yönelik ana devlet politikası haline gelmiştir. Örneğin Almanya'da dinlenebilen Macaristan radyolarından komünizm propagandası yapılıyor olması, bunun karşısında korumasız olan Türk işçilerin bu propagandadan etkilenip ideolojik ve milli kimliğini kaybetmesi endişesi, Mecliste en az işçilerin ekonomik katkısı kadar dile getirilmiştir. Gerçekleşmesi muhtemel aşırı sol veya komünist propagandaya karşı milletvekillerinin işaret ettikleri mücadele yöntemi ise TRT yayınlarını yurt dışında daha kapsamlı ve etkin hale getirilmesi, milli kimlik bilincini aşılacağına inanılan öğretmen ve din görevlilerinin daha fazla sayıda Avrupa ülkelerinde görevlendirilmesi gibi kültürel siyasi araçlar olarak düşünülmüştür. Dolayısıyla, 1960'lar daha sonraki yıllarda da diaspora alanında ana devlet politikası haline gelecek korumacılığın kültürel ve siyasi boyutlarıyla açığa

çıkıldığı bir dönem olarak görülebilir. Fakat bu dönemi şekillendiren ana yaklaşımın, işçilerin Avrupa’da kalma sürecinin geçici olacağı, belirli bir dönem orada çalıştıktan sonra ülkeye dönecekleri varsayımı olduğu söylenebilir.

1970’lerde yurt dışında yaşayan vatandaşların TBMM’de temsiline gelindiğinde, dönemin sert ve çekişmeli siyasi atmosferi yurt dışı işçilere ilişkin tartışmalara da bire bir yansımış, yurt dışı işçiler konusunda 1960’ların görece uzlaşmacı ortamından uzaklaşıldığı bir dönemde partiler birbirlerine farklı saiklerle karşılıklı olarak sert eleştirilerde bulunmuşlardır. Yurt dışı vatandaşlar gibi genel olarak partilerin üzerinde uzlaşmaya vardığı bir konunun neden derin siyasi çekişmeye konu olduğunu anlamak için 1970’lerin siyasi atmosferini hatırlamakta yarar var. Bilindiği gibi 1970’lerde çoğu koalisyon olan sayısız hükümet kurulmuş ve dağılmış, kurulan en uzun hükümetin süresi aylarla ölçülmüştür. Erbakanlı Milli Selamet Partisi, Demirelli Adalet Partisi, Türkeşli Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi ve Ecevit liderliğindeki Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi kurulan çeşitli koalisyon hükümetlerinde zaman zaman iktidar olurken muhalefet oldukları dönemlerde de birbirlerine ciddi suçlamalar ve eleştiriler yöneltmişlerdir.

Sokak hareketleriyle de şiddetlenen ideolojik kamplaşmanın doruğa çıktığı 1970’lerde partiler arası siyasi atışma ve rekabet yurt dışı işçiler konusunda farklı şekillerde açığa çıkmıştır. Örneğin, CHP’li temsilciler 1970’lerin sonunda iktidar ortağı olan ve yurt dışı işçilerle ilgili koordinasyonu da yürüten Çalışma Bakanlığının verildiği Milli Selamet Partisini ve Bakan Şevket Kazan’ı defaatle Meclis kürsüsünde eleştirmişler, yurt dışındaki işçilerle gerçekleştirdikleri organizasyonda siyasi propagandası yaptığı, bu organizasyonlar sırasında Erbakanlı broşür ve takvimler dağıttığı ve dolayısıyla devlet adamı kimliğinden çok parti mensupluğunu öne çıkardığı yönünde suçlamalar yöneltmişlerdir. Keza, Çalışma Bakanlığının CHP tarafından yönetildiği bir başka koalisyon hükümeti döneminde ise bu defa MSP’li vekiller Meclis kürsüsünde CHP’yi “kendi adamlarını Bakanlık kadrolarına yerleştirmek” ve böylece vasıfsız

personel eliyle yurt dışındaki işçilerin sorunlarını çözememekle itham etmişlerdir. Bu ve benzeri karşılıklı suçlamalar 1970'lerdeki Meclis tartışmalarına damga vurmuş, diasporayla alakalı meseleler de bu tezde incelenen başka hiçbir dönemde emsali görülmemiş bir siyasi gerginliğin konusu olmuştur. Bu açıdan, çalışma 1970'leri iç siyasetteki mevcut koşulların ve partiler arasındaki ilişkilerin niteliğinin diaspora gibi görece siyaset üstü kalan bir alanı politize edebildiğini göstermesi açısından önemli bir dönem olarak ele almıştır. Bir başka deyişle, 1970'lerde diaspora siyaseti de diğer herhangi bir siyasa alanının olabileceği gibi (sağlık, eğitim, kültür politikaları gibi) yüksek gerilimli siyasi ortamın içinde partilerin birbirlerini eleştirme aracı olarak kullandığı konularından biri olagelmıştır.

Yurt dışı işçiler üzerindeki siyasi ihtilafın dışında, 1970'ler yurt dışı işçilerle ilişkilerin ilk defa kurumsallaşmaya başladığı dönem olarak da kabul edilebilir. İşçilerin Almanya, Fransa, Hollanda gibi ülkelerde kaldıkları süreyle orantılı şekilde artan sorunları, Türkiye tarafından bu sorunlara daha etraflıca çözüm getirme ihtiyacını doğurmuştu. İşçilerle ilgili meselelere daha kapsamlı şekilde eğilmek amacıyla 1972 yılında 1579 numaralı Kanun ile Çalışma Bakanlığına bağlı Yurt Dışı İşçi Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü kurulmuştur. Yine aynı dönemde Mecliste görüşüldükten sonra yasalaşan 2147 sayılı Yurt Dışında Çalışan Türk Vatandaşlarının Yurt Dışında Çalışma Sürelerinin Sosyal Güvenlikleri Bakımından Değerlendirilmesi Hakkında Kanun da yurt dışı işçilerin ana vatanla ilişkilerinin düzenlenmesinde önemli bir durak olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Her iki kanunun Meclis görüşmeleri sırasında partiler bir kez daha yurt dışı işçilere yönelik siyasi duruşlarını dile getirme olanağı bulmuş, altı çizilen konular genel olarak işçilerin karşılaştıkları kültürel ve sosyal sorunlar olmuştur. Tıpkı 1960'larda olduğu gibi işçilerin karşı karşıya olduğu düşünülen komünizm tehdidi ve bununla nasıl mücadele edileceği parti ayırt etmeksizin milletvekillerinin üzerinde ısrarla durdukları konu olmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra işçi

çocuklarının eğitiminde karşılaşılan sorunlar veya iki dile ve kültüre de hakim ol(a)mayan yeni bir neslin ortaya çıkabileceği endişesi 1970'lerin Meclis tartışmalarına hakim olan temaların başında gelmiştir. Ayrıca hem 1960'larda hem de bu dönemde ara ara bahsedilse de dikkat çekici olan bir diğer konu da çeşitli milletvekillerinin yurt dışına çalışmaya giden kadın işçilerden bahsediş şeklindedir. Ailelerini arkalarında bırakıp giden kadın işçilerin ahlaklılığı sorunsallaştırılmış, kadın veya erkek fark etmeksizin farklı partilere mensup çeşitli milletvekilleri tarafından ilgili bakanlar bu durumu araştırmaya, gerekirse kadın işçilerin Türkiye'ye dönmesini sağlamaya davet edilmişlerdir. Bu da dönemin kadını ahlak merkezli bir çerçeveye oturtan ve kadının konumunu politize eden anlayışı yurt dışı işçiler üzerinden açığa çıkması bakımından üzerinde durulmuştur.

1970'lerde TBMM'nin diaspora ilişkisi konusundaki bir diğer önemli gelişme hem Millet Meclisi hem de Senatoda yurt dışı işçilerin sorunlarını araştırmaya ve alınacak çözüm önerilerini belirlemeye yönelik araştırma komisyonları kurulması olmuştur. Her iki mecliste de 1978 yılında kurulan bu komisyonlarda işçilerin sorunları ayrıntılı şekilde ele alınırken, milletvekilleri tarafından öne çıkarılan temalar yine yukarıda belirtilen din, dil, kültür, ideolojik etki gibi sosyal ve kültürel meseleler olmuştur. 1970'lerde işçilerin ülkeye geri dönüşüne halen kesin gözle bakıldığından, işçilerin hem buldukları ülkelerde hem de Türkiye'de siyasi hayata katılımı veya siyasi haklarını kullanmaları milletvekilleri tarafından henüz sistematik şekilde gündeme getirilmemiştir.

1980'lerde diasporayla gelişen ilişkilere bakıldığında, yine geçmiş dönemden farklı yeni konu başlıklarının Meclis kürsüsünde tartışılmaya başlandığı görülür. 1980'deki askeri darbeden sonraki üç yıllık askeri rejimin akabinde demokratik seçimlerle iktidara gelen ANAP hükümetlerinin diaspora yönelik siyasi inisiyatifleri, işçilerin artık buldukları ülkelerde kalıcı olmaya başladıkları gerçeği tarafından şekillenmiştir. Değişen diaspora vizyonunun yurt dışı vatandaşlar ve diaspora tarihi açısından en önemli sonucu, yurt dışında yaşayan

vatandaşların Türkiye’deki seçimlerde oy verme haklarının sağlanması olmuştur. 1986 ve 1987’de atılan iki önemli yasal adımla Meclisten geçen yurt dışından seçimlere katılma düzenlemesi yalnızca gümrüklerde oy kullanmaya izin vermesi bakımından her ne kadar kapsamı dar olsa da diaspora literatüründe “yurt dışından oy kullanma” (external/overseas voting) olarak geçen ve ana vatanın diasporayla ilişkilerindeki en önemli boyutlardan biri olan siyasal hak kullanımını hayata geçirdiği için oldukça önemli bir dönüm noktasını teşkil eder. Dolayısıyla 1986 yılındaki 3270 ve 1987’deki 3377 numaralı kanunlar sonraki yıllarda kapsamı giderek genişletilecek yurt dışından oy kullanma pratiğinin ilk adımı olmuştur. Bu anlamda çalışma, bu önemli yasama faaliyetini ve 1980’leri hem yurt dışındaki vatandaşların buldukları ülkelerde kalıcı olacaklarının siyasetçiler tarafından anlaşıldığı bir dönemeç olarak hem de “yurt dışı işçiler”in “yurt dışındaki vatandaşlar” a dönüşme sürecinin başlangıcı olarak karakterize etmiştir. İşçilikten vatandaşlığa evrilmenin başladığı bu süreçte de diaspora üyelerine artık siyasiler nezdinde yurt ekonomisine katkılarıyla değerlendirilen ekonomik öznelere değil siyasi öznelere olarak yaklaşılmaya başlamıştır. Diğer süreçlerin yanı sıra bu dönüşüm milletvekilleri söylemlerine “yurt dışındaki Türk işçiler”den “yurt dışında yaşayan vatandaşlarımız” a evrilme olarak yansımıştır.

Yurt dışına göç eden vatandaşların buldukları ülkelerde kalıcı olduklarının 1980’lere gelindiğinde yavaş yavaş idrak edilmesinin yankıları yaşadıkları ülkelerin toplumsal yapısında da olumsuz şekilde gözlemlenmeye başlandı. Başta Almanya olmak üzere çeşitli Avrupa ülkelerinde baş gösteren ve 1990larda zirveye çıkacak yabancı düşmanlığının ilk nüveleri 1980lerde görülmeye başlanmış, bu durum da Türkiye’de diaspora bağlamında gerçekleşen tartışmalara yansımıştır. Artan xenofobik eğilimlere karşı Türk siyasetçileri yurt dışı vatandaşlara karşı korumacı söylemlerde bulunurken, karşı taraf hükümetlerini Türkleri hedef alan muhtelif ırkçı saldırılara sessiz kalmakla eleştirmişlerdir.

Bunun dışında, 1980'lerin Meclis tartışmalarına yansıyan bir diğer konu da Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya artan iltica başvurularıdır. 1980'lere kadar temel olarak işçi göçü şeklinde gerçekleşen dış göç, askeri darbe sonrası farklı etnik ve dini gruplar ile çeşitli muhalif gruplar başta olmak üzere, ülkedeki tek tipçi ve baskıcı ortamdaki kaçan çok sayıda vatandaşın Avrupa'nın çeşitli ülkelerine giderek siyasi iltica başvurularında bulunmalarıyla birlikte siyasi bir karakter kazanmıştır. Böylece o döneme kadar hemen hemen tek tip yapıya sahip olan Türk diasporası 1980'lerden itibaren Kürt, Alevi, Süryani, İslamcı veya sol muhalif gibi farklı grupların eklenmesiyle demografik ve sosyolojik olarak daha katmanlı, girift bir yapıya sahip olmuştur. Bu gelişmenin hem milli birlik ve bütünlüğü hem de ülkenin dışarıdaki imajını oldukça önemseyen Türk siyasetçilerini tedirgin ettiğini söylemek yanlış olmaz. Ayrıca diasporanın 1980'lerde göstermeye başladığı bu türden bir çeşitlenme ve farklılaşma, diasporayı "makbul vatandaş" (Üstel, 2004) ve ideal olmayan vatandaş ayrımının yapıldığı bir alan olarak kurgulayan siyasi anlayışın başlangıcı olarak da kabul edilebilir.

Diaspora içerisinde siyasetçiler tarafından tehlikeli addedilen unsurların artması, devletin diasporaya yönelik takındığı ana yaklaşım olan korumacı tavrı tekrar devreye sokmuş, fakat bu defa vatandaşın korunması gereken hedef değişmiştir. 1960'lar ve 1970'ler boyunca radikal sol veya komünizm olarak sınırları çizilen ortak tehlike, 1980'lere gelindiğinde Avrupa'da bulunan radikal İslami hareketler olarak karşımıza çıkmıştır. Vatandaşların başta basında "Karases" olarak da anılan Cemalettin Kaplan önderliğindeki Kaplancı hareket olmak üzere gerek İran, gerek Suudi Arabistan, gerekse de Türkiye menşeli İslami hareketlerin peşinden sürüklenmesinden endişelenen siyasetçiler, Mecliste farklı çözüm önerileri üzerinde tartışmışlar, sonuç olarak da Avrupa'ya daha fazla Diyanet imamı gönderme ve eğitim müfredatını tıpkı Türkiye'de olduğu gibi darbe sonrası Türk-İslam ideolojisine yakınsayan içerikle pekiştirme yoluna gitmişlerdir. Gerçekten de bu dönem milletvekilleri tarafından üzerinde en sıklıkla ve endişeyle durulan konu artık orada kalıcı olacağı anlaşılan yeni neslin

eđitim sorunu olmuřtur. Milli ve dini kimliklerini, aidiyetlerini kaybetmesinden korkulan ikinci nesil iin din ve eđitim politikaları 1980’lerde en ok ne ıkan politika aracı olarak karřımıza ıkmaktadır.

Dnemin Meclis tutanaklarında yurt dıřındaki vatandařlarla alakalı en arpıcı ve ilgi ekici tartıřma, dnemin nl arařtırmacı gazetecisi Uđur Mumcu tarafından ortaya ıkarılan Rabıta skandalıyla gerekleřmiřtir. Buna gre, Rabıta adındaki Suudi Arabistan menēeili yardım kuruluřunun, yumuřak g olarak İslami đretileri ve pratikleri yaymak amacıyla aralarında Trkiye’nin de dahil olduđu bir ok Mslman lkeye parasal yardımda bulunduđu, Trkiye’nin de finansal zorluklarla bođuřtuđu bir dnemde Rabıta’nın sunduđu para yardımını yurt dıřına gnderilen imamları finanse etme kullandıđı ortaya ıkmıřtır. Skandalın patlak vermesiyle muhalefet milletvekillerinin Meclis gndemine getirdiđi ve 1980’lerin ortalarında yođun tartıřmalara konu olan bu meseleye, diasporayla iliřkilerde devletin din hizmetlerini hangi kořullar altında olursa olsun bařat bir politika aracı olarak kullanmakta kararlı olduđunu gstermesi bakımından alıřmada nemle dikkat ekilmiřtir.

Tıpkı 1970’ler gibi devamlı kurulup dađılan koalisyon hkmetlerine sahne olan 1990’lara gelindiđinde ise iřilerin artık vatandařlara dnřtđnn iyice tescillendiđini sylemek yanılıcı olmaz. Meclis tutanaklarında “iři”, “gurbeti” gibi kavramlar kullanıldıđında milletvekillerinin birbirlerini uyardıklarını, ve genel olarak “yurt dıřındaki vatandařlarımız” jargonunun daha hakim olarak kullanılmaya bařlandıđını grmek de ayrıca mmkn. Dolayısıyla bu dnemde vatandařların buldukları lkelerde kalıcı oldukları yalnızca genel kabul grmekle kalmadı, siyasetiler yurt dıřı vatandařlık messesesini nasıl kurumsallařtırabilecekleri zerine ciddi alıřmalar yrttler.

Dneme damga vuran en byk geliřme řphesiz artan ırk saldırılar oldu. 1992’de Mlln’de, 1993’te Solingen’de Trk ailelere ynelik gerekleřtirilen ırk saldırıların Trk kamuoyunda ve siyasetileri arasında, yurt dıřındaki Trk

vatandaşların yaşadıkları toplumlardaki konumlarını düzenlemeye yönelik bir uyanışa yol açması bakımından bir dönüm noktası olduğunu söylemek yanlış olmaz.

Avrupa'daki vatandaşları hedef alan ırkçı saldırılar Türkiye'deki siyasi tartışmalara farklı şekillerde yansımıştır. İlk öne çıkan, saldırıların gerçekleştiği Batı ülkelerini insan hakları ihlalleri konusunda çifte standartlara sahip olmakla eleştiren yaklaşım olmuştur. Saldırlardan sonra Meclis kürsüsüne çıkan birçok milletvekili Avrupa ülkelerini Türkiye'ye insan hakları dersi verirken kendi topraklarında gerçekleşen insan hakları ihlallerine sessiz kalmakla itham etmiş ve ırkçı eğilimleri bu türden bir çifte standart çerçevesinden eleştirmişlerdir. İkinci olarak, Avrupa'daki yabancı düşmanlığı tartışılırken Türkiye'nin iç siyasetine ilişkin belli başlı sorunlar da tartışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Örneğin, özellikle Refah Partisine mensup milletvekilleri Batı'daki Türk vatandaşlarına yönelik ayrımcılığı tartışırken Türkiye'nin de bu konuda sicilinin temiz olmadığını özellikle başörtülü kadınlara yönelik kamusal alanda gösterilen ayrımcılık üzerinden gündeme getirmişlerdir. Dolayısıyla ırkçı saldırıların Türkiye'deki siyasi tartışmalardaki izdüşümü, zaman zaman iç siyasete içkin sorunlarla diaspora konularının iç içe geçmesi şeklinde gerçekleşmiştir.

Artan ırkçı saldırılar karşısında Türkiye'nin neler yapabileceği sorusu üzerine gelişen tartışmalarda esasında somut politika sonuçlarını doğurmuştur. Sorunun nasıl aşılabileceği, en azından bu durum üzerine Türkiye'nin devlet olarak ne yapabileceği sorusunu uzun uzadıya Meclis kürsüsünde tartışan siyasetçiler cevabı Avrupa'daki vatandaşların siyasi haklarının genişletilmesinde ve onların siyasi birer birey olarak temsil mekanizmalarında yer almalarında, kendi sorunlarını siyasi kanallardan dile getirmelerinde bulmuşlardır. Bu konuda da Türkiye'nin yapması gereken yurt dışındaki vatandaşların buldukları ülke vatandaşlığına geçişlerini kolaylaştırmak, böylece siyasi temsil mekanizmalarında seslerini daha çok duyurmalarına yardımcı olmak olarak görülmüştür. Dolayısıyla yurt dışında yaşayan vatandaşların, çift vatandaşlığa

müsaade etmeyen Almanya, Avusturya gibi ülkelerin vatandaşlığına geçerek siyasi hayatta aktif yer almaları, TBMM’de mevcut bulunan tüm partilerin destek verdiği bir fikir olarak ortaya atılmıştır.

Bunu takip eden süreçte Türk Vatandaşlık Kanunu’nda izinle vatandaşlıktan çıkmayı düzenleyen 4112 numaralı Kanun 1995 yılında Meclisten geçmiş, izinle vatandaşlıktan çıkanlar için getirilen “Mavi Kart” düzenlemesiyle yurt dışında yaşayanlar Türkiye’deki vatandaşlık haklarından büyük oranda yararlanmaya devam etmişlerdir. Böylece yurt dışında yaşayan vatandaşların ana vatanla kurduğu duygusal bağın, buldukları ülkelerin vatandaşlığına geçmemeyi seçerek siyasi hayata katılmalarına engel olmasının önüne geçilmiş, resmî olarak Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşı olmadan da temel vatandaşlık haklarına erişim sağlanmıştır.

Türkiye’deki siyasetçilerin Vatandaşlık Kanunu’nda yapılan değişiklik sonrası Avrupa’da yaşayan Türklerin aktif olarak siyasi hayata katılması yönündeki beklentilerinin yanı sıra, Türkiye için siyasal lobi şeklinde çalışma beklentisi olduğundan da bahsedilebilir. Kanun görüşmeleri sırasında birçok milletvekili uluslararası konularda Türkiye’nin tezlerini dile getiren ve savunan, Avrupa kamuoyuna Türkiye’yi anlatan ve tanıtan bir lobi misyonu yüklediklerini de görmek mümkün. Özellikle 2000’lerin ilk yıllarında Avrupa Birliğine adaylık sürecinin resmîyet kazanması ve AB üyeliğinin ciddi bir olasılık olarak karşımıza çıktığı günlerde Avrupalı Türklerden, Türkiye’nin AB üyeliği için lobicilik faaliyeti yürütmesi yönünde beklentiler hem siyasiler tarafından hem de günün akademik tartışmaları tarafından sıklıkla dile getirilmiştir. Bu anlamda, tezde 1990’lar ve erken 2000’ler diasporanın siyasi yönünün ekonomik yönüne baskın çıktığı bir dönem olarak ele alınmıştır. Bundan sonrasında gerçekleşen diasporalaşma sürecinde de siyasal boyut diasporanın tamamen hakim karakteri olarak karşımıza çıkacaktır.

1990'lara dair üzerinde durulması gereken bir diğer nokta, göçün başladığı tarihten beri süren tehdit algısı ve korumacılık güdüsünün nesnesinin artık büyük oranda Avrupa'daki (radikal) İslami hareketler kaymış olduğudur. Göçün erken yıllarından beri var olagelen devletin yurt dışı vatandaşları tehdit olarak gördüğü unsurlardan koruma isteği ve bunun üzerine geliştirdiği politika araçları 1990'larda Kaplancıları, kısmen de Avrupa'daki Millî Görüş hareketine yönelik geliştirilmiştir. O dönemde Refah Partisi tarafından Mecliste temsil edilen siyasal İslami hareket, Avrupa'daki Türk topluluk arasında en güçlü siyasi hareketti. Türkiye'de İslami partilerin merkez ve sol partilerle 1990'larda yaşadığı çalkantılı ilişkiler düşünüldüğünde, seküler merkez partileri için Avrupa'daki Millî Görüş sempatanlarının sayıca çokluğu ve finansal olarak da güçlü konumda olmaları Türkiye'de endişe yaratıyordu. Hatta kimi araştırmacılar yurt dışından oy kullanmanın uzun süre yasalaşmamasını merkez partilerin Avrupa'da yoğun olan siyasal İslam taraftarlarının Türkiye'de seçim sonuçlarını değiştirebilecek tercihlerde bulunma ihtimalinden korkmalarına bağlamışlardır (Okuy, 2015). Her ne kadar ispatlanabilirliği tartışılır olsa da 1990'ların Meclis tartışmalarında gördüğümüz, birçok milletvekilinin yükselen İslami akımlardan endişeli olduğu, buna karşılık bu akımların radikalleşmesinin engellenmesinde Diyanete büyük önem attıklaridir. Dolayısıyla tezin işaret ettiği sonuçlardan birisi de Diyanetin siyasetçiler tarafından uzun süredir diaspora siyasetinin en etkin aracı olarak kullanılıyor olduğudur.

Eğer 1980 ve 1990'ları yurt dışı işçiliğin yurt dışı vatandaşlığa evrildiği süreç olarak tanımlarsak, 2000'leri de yurt dışı vatandaşlık statüsünün diasporalaştığı bir dönem olarak tanımlamak yanlış olmaz. Türkiye'nin 2000'lerde yurt dışındaki vatandaşlarıyla kurduğu ilişki de bu diasporalaşma sürecine bağlı olarak daha sistematik, daha kurumsal ve daha çok diaspora-ana vatan ilişkisi çerçevesinde gelişmiştir.

“Diasporalaşma” diye adlandırdığımız süreci getiren aşamalara baktığımızda, ilk ve en önemli adım olarak kurumsallaşmayı görmek mümkün. Bu döneme kadar

yurt dışındaki vatandaşların Türkiye'yle olan ilişkileri 1970'lerde kuruluşuna yer verdiğimiz Çalışma Bakanlığında bir alt biri olan Yurt Dışı İşçi Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü eliyle yürütülüyordu. Ancak bir taraftan da “yurt dışı işçi”likten de “vatandaş”lığa, hatta diasporaya geçiş süreci devam ederken bir bakanlığın alt biriminin alt yapısının, sayısı milyonları bulan bir topluluğun ihtiyaçlarını karşılamadaki yetersizliği Türkiye'nin politika yapıcıları tarafından da takdir ediliyordu. Bu yüzden de uzun süredir gerekliliği farklı siyasetçiler tarafından dile getirilen, salt diasporadan sorumlu ayrı bir kurum olan Yurt Dışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı 2010 yılında Meclisten geçen kanunla kurulmuş oldu.

Tezde, YTB'nin kuruluş aşaması esnasında Meclis kürsüsünde her siyasi parti temsilcisinin dile getirdiği görüşlerin üzerinde, farklı siyasi pozisyonların diasporayla ilişkilere yönelik yaklaşımlarını yansıttığı düşünülerek ayrıca durulmuştur. Buna göre, hemen her parti tasarımı desteklemekle birlikte, Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi kurumun kapsamının Türk dünyasını da merkeze alacak şekilde genişletilme gerektiğini, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi ise YTB'nin hükümetin siyasi ajandasını yurt dışı vatandaşlar arasında yayabileceği yönünde çekincesini ortaya koymuştur. Kanunun görüşüldüğü dönemde Kürt siyasi hareketini temsil eden BDP temsilcileri, kurumun isminin bile kapsayıcı olmaktan uzak olduğu, bunun da devletin resmî diaspora siyasetini yansıttığını dile getirmişlerdir. Diasporanın salt etnik Türk ve Sünni Müslümanlardan oluşan yekpare bir bütün olmadığını, Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya göç eden Kürt, Süryani, Arap gibi etnik kimliklerden veya Alevilik gibi farklı mezheplerden oluştuğunu, bunların da diasporanın önemli bir kesimini oluşturduğunu savunmuşlardır. BDP'nin temsilcileri buna karşılık devletin diasporaya Sünni Türklerden oluşan bir topluluk olarak siyasa ürettiğini, kurulan yeni kurumun da bu baskın anlayışın yansıması olduğu görüşünü savunmuşlardır. Dolayısıyla kurumun adında “Türkler” yerine “Türkiyeliler” ibaresi bulunmasının daha kapsayıcı olacağı belirtilmiştir. Sonuç olarak YTB'nin kuruluş sürecindeki tartışmalara

daha detaylı bakıldığında her partinin kendi siyasi ajandasını diaspora üzerinden dercettiği görülür.

2000'lerde gerçekleşen ve diaspora tarihinin kuşkusuz en önemli gelişmelerinden olan yurt dışından (konsolosluklarda) oy kullanım hakkının yurt dışındaki vatandaşlara tanınması, Türkiye'nin Avrupa'daki diasporayla kurduğu ilişki biçimini kökünden değiştirmiştir. Meclisten 2008 yılında geçen 5749 sayılı ve 2012 yılında geçen 6304 sayılı kanunlarla Seçim Kanunu'nda yapılan değişikliklerle, 2000'lere kadar yalnızca gümrüklerde kullanılabilen oyların artık konsolosluklarda kullanılabilmesinin yolunu açmış, bu da seçim sathını Türkiye'nin sınırları dışına taşımıştır.

Bu gelişmenin ilerleyen yıllarda gözlemlenecek olan siyasi sonuçlarına bakmadan önce, partilerin yurt dışından seçimlere katılma konusunda Mecliste gösterdikleri söylemlere dikkat çekecek olursak kanun tasarılarına her partinin destek çıktığını görmek mümkündür. Yurt dışındaki seçmen grubunun seneler içinde milyonlara ulaştığı düşünüldüğünde, bu inisiyatif tüm siyasi parti temsilcileri tarafından kaçınılmaz bir adım olarak görülmüştür. Yalnızca 2008'deki kanun tasarısındaki mektupla oy kullanma hükmü oyun gizliliği ve güvenliğine tehdit oluşturduğundan CHP tarafından Anayasa Mahkemesine götürülmüş ve madde Anayasa Mahkemesi tarafından iptal edilmiştir.

İlk zamanlarda kapsamı oldukça sınırlı kalan düzenlemenin yarattığı sınırlı sayıdaki oy kullanma merkezlerine gitmek için kilometrelerce yol gitmek veya randevuyla oy kullanımı gibi çeşitli pratik zorluklar nedeniyle seçimlere katılım oranları oy kullanabilecek nüfusa oranla oldukça sınırlı kalmıştır. Kapsamın genişletildiği 2012 tarihli kanunu takip eden seçimlerdeki oy kullanma oranları aşağıdaki tabloda görülebilir.

Tablo 1: Yıllara göre Türkiye’deki seçimlere yurt dışından katılım ve seçmen tercihleri

<b>Tarih &amp; Seçim</b>	<b>Seçmen Sayısı</b>	<b>Katılım %</b>	<b>Kazanan</b>
2018 Başkanlık	1.358.584	44,62 %	60,24 % - Erdoğan
2018 Parlamento	1.358.372	44,62 %	51,73 % - Ak Parti
2017 Referandum	1.325.682	44,60 %	59,46 % - Evet
2015 Erken Seçim	1.159.871	40,01 %	56,38 % - Ak Parti
2015 Parlamento	931.646	32,50 %	50,37 % - Ak Parti
2014 Cumhurbaşkanlığı	232.795	8,37 %	62,30 % - Erdoğan

Kaynak: Yüksek Seçim Kurulu (YSK)<sup>263</sup>

Yurt dışından seçimlere katılımın ilk kez uygulandığı 2014 Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçiminden 2018 yılındaki Başkanlık ve Parlamento seçimlerine kadar geçen dört yıl içerisinde diasporanın seçimlere gösterdiği ilgi her bir seçimde katlanarak artmış, son seçimde yüzde 50’nin üzerine çıkarak dünyadaki diasporanın seçimlere katılım ortalamasından bir hayli yüksek bir seyir izlemiştir. Diasporanın Türkiye seçimlerine gösterdiği bu artan ilgi, Türkiye’deki siyasetçiler için diaspora oylarının önemini artırmış, Avrupa’yı seçim kampanyalarının kapsamına dahil etmiştir. Bu da kaçınılmaz olarak zaten halihazırda Türkiye’deki iktidara karşı oldukça eleştirel olan Avrupa ülkelerinin hükümetleriyle Türkiye arasında diplomatik kriz seviyesine varan gerginliklere yol açmıştır. Türkiye seçimlerine artan katılım ve özellikle Batı tarafından otoriterlikle eleştirilen Ak Parti hükümetlerine her seçimde artarak gelen siyasi destek ev sahibi ülkelere çifte aidiyet ve entegrasyon tartışmasını tekrar alevlendirmiştir. Avrupa Türklerinin entegrasyonunun başarılı olup olmadığı, diasporanın ev sahibi ülkelere vatandaşlık bağının ötesinde bir aidiyetinin olup olmadığı konuları uzun süre gerek akademik camiada gerekse kamuoyunda siyasetçiler ve basın tarafından uzun süre tartışılmıştır.

<sup>263</sup> <https://ysk.gov.tr/tr/secim-arsivi/2612>

Bu tartışmaların zirve yaptığı dönem olarak 2017’de Hollanda’yla yaşanan diplomatik krizi ve sonrasında izleyen süreci örnek gösterebiliriz. Türkiye’deki başkanlık sistemi referandumu ve Hollanda’nın genel seçimlerinin birbiriyle çakıştığı Mart-Nisan 2017 döneminde Türk bakanların Avrupa’da yapmak istedikleri seçim kampanyalarına ev sahibi ülke hükümetleri tarafından karşı çıkılıp en son Aile Bakanı “istenmeyen kişi” ilan edildiğinde yalnızca Türkiye’nin Avrupa’yla halihazırda gergin olan ilişkileri yeni bir kriz boyutuna ulaşmamış, aynı zamanda bu gelişmeler Türkiye’nin diasporayla kurduğu ilişkilerin tarihinde bir dönüm noktası olmuştur.

Bu gelişmelerin Meclisteki tartışmalara muhalefet-iktidar arsandaki ilişkilerin daha da gerginleşmesi olarak yansımıştır. Her ne kadar olayın hemen akabinde muhalefet temsilcileri tarafından verilen tepkiler kötü muameleye maruz kalanın bakan nezdinde Türkiye Cumhuriyeti devleti olduğu eleştirisiyle Hollanda’ya tepki göstermek şeklinde gelişse de ilerleyen zamanlarda iktidar partisi mensuplarının bu olayı düşünce özgürlüğüne saldırı şeklinde eleştirmesi iç siyasetteki tartışmaların da seyrini değiştirmiştir. Meclis tutanaklarına baktığımızda birçok milletvekilinin iktidar partisini bu olaydan oy devşirmeye çalışmakla, ev sahibi ülkelerde yaşayan diaspora mensuplarının huzurunu tehdit etmekle eleştirdiğini görüyoruz.

Fakat çalışma açısından en dikkate değer nokta, diğer birçok bağlamda da ortaya çıkan Ak Partinin Batı ülkelerini düşünce ve ifade özgürlüğü gibi konularda çifte standartla hareket etmesine yönelik suçlamasına karşılık, muhalefetin Türkiye’nin içinde yaşanan çok daha ağır hak ihlallerine dikkat çektiğidir. Gerçekten de, iktidar partisinin özellikle 2010’lardan sonra daha sarı ve sık şekilde ortaya çıkan, 2016’daki darbe girişiminden sonra da zirveye çıkan Batı karşıtı söylemi özellikle diasporaya yönelik konular üzerinden ifade olanağı bulunca, Mecliste karşılaştığımız tablo genellikle muhalefetin iktidarı aynı saiklerle, yani düşünce ve ifade özgürlüğü veya toplanma özgürlüğünü Türkiye’de en çok tehdit eden aktör olmakla eleştirmesi şeklinde karşımıza

çıkıyor. Örneğin birçok HDP ve CHP milletvekilinin Hollanda'yla yaşanan gerilim sonrasında Ak Parti'yi benzer bir şekilde muhalefetin seçim propagandasını engellemeye çalışmakla veya kendisine muhalif her kesimin özgürlüklerini kısıtlamakla eleştirdiğini görüyoruz. Bu da yine bizi diaspora meselelerinin 2000'li yıllarda iç siyasetteki gelişmelerle iç içe tartışıldığını, diaspora meselelerinde öne çıkan tartışmaların iç siyasetteki pozisyonların izdüşümü olduğu sonucuna çıkarıyor.

2000'lerde bu denli baskın gözlemlenen Batı karşıtı söylemin en net şekilde ortaya çıktığı alansa iktidar partisinin İslamofobi'ye yaptığı vurgu olmuştur. Batı'da genel olarak Müslüman göçmenlerin, özel olarak da Türklerin maruz kaldığı İslamofobik tutum 2000'lerde diasporayla ilgili neredeyse en temel konu haline gelirken milletvekilleri tarafından konuya Batıda gerçekleşen en temel insan hakları ihlali olarak yaklaşmıştır. İslamofobi meselesi diaspora konularıyla ilgili söz alan hemen her Ak Partili milletvekili tarafından gündeme getirilirken evrensel bir kavram olan ayrımcılığın genellikle Avrupa'da baş örtüsü üzerinden yapılan ayrımcılıkla, ifade özgürlüğünü de inanç ve ibadet özgürlüğü şeklinde yorumlandığı, bunun iç siyasi ideolojik tutumdan beslendiği, diasporaya da bu iç siyasi ideolojik lenslerden bakıldığı tartışılmıştır. Bu tek yanlı tutum da muhalefetin tıpkı diğer meselelerde olduğu gibi iç siyasette muhaliflere yönelik baskıcı ve ayrımcı tutum takınıp Avrupa ülkelerinden kendi vatandaşlarımıza yönelik demokratik tavır sergilemelerini beklemek anlamına geldiği için çifte standartlı olmakla eleştirilmiştir. Dolayısıyla tezin de ana sorunsalını oluşturan diasporanın TBMM'de nasıl temsil edildiği konusuna referansla cevap verilecek olursa, İslamofobi'nin 2000'li yıllarda iktidar partisi tarafından Avrupa'daki diasporanın en önemli meselesi olarak temsil edildiği tartışılmıştır. Yalnız dikkat çekilmesi gereken son bir husus da İslamofobi konusunu tartışırken Ak Partili milletvekillerinin konuyu evrensel kavramlara vurgu yaparak tanımlama, İslamofobi'yi insan hakları zemininde tartışma isteği olduğudur. Hatta bazı milletvekillerinin İslamofobi'yi "insanlığa karşı işlenmiş

en büyük suç” şeklinde tanımladığı düşünüldüğünde, tartışmayı evrensel değerler ışığında meşrulaştırma isteğinin oldukça güçlü olduğu görülür.

2016’daki darbe girişimi sonrası Avrupa’ya Türkiye’den başlayan yeni göç dalgası muhalif bir yeni nesil diasporayı doğurmuştur. Ak Parti Hükümetlerinin, literatürde “ulus ötesi baskı/otoriterlik” şeklinde adlandırılan kategoriye de uyacak şekilde, yurt dışındaki Gülen hareketi mensuplarının ülkeye çeşitli yollarla geri getirip yargı önüne çıkarma çabaları, bunun da devletin tüm kurumlarını harekete geçirerek gerçekleştirilmesi çeşitli Avrupa hükümetleri nezdinde Türkiye’nin kendi toprakları üzerinde casusluk faaliyeti içinde bulunduğu şeklinde bir algıyı ve huzursuzluğu doğurdu. Bu huzursuzluğun en direkt öznesi olarak Diyanet ve DİTİB suçlamaların odağı haline gelmişlerdir. Avrupa kamuoyunda Diyanetin yurt dışında bulunan imamları diasporadaki Gülen mensubu vatandaşları devlete bildirdiği iddiası özellikle Almanya, Hollanda, Fransa gibi ülkelerde siyasi düzeyde tartışılmıştır. Meclisteki muhalefet partileri de iktidar partisini devlet kurumlarını günlük siyasi hesaplara alet ederek ülkenin uluslararası alanda saygınlığını yitirmelerine yol açtığı için ağır şekilde eleştirmişlerdir. Tezde detaylıca incelenen bu durumun genel olarak bizi götürdüğü sonuçsa, Diyanetin tıpkı 1980’lerde ve 1990’larda olduğu gibi bir kez daha diaspora siyasetindeki tartışmaların ortasına oturduğu, fakat bu defa rolünün daha politize şekilde ortaya çıkararak partileri birleştirmek yerine ayrıştırdığı olmuştur.

2000’lere gelindiğinde belirgin olarak ortaya çıkan bir diğer gelişme de TBMM’de bulunan diaspora kökenli milletvekillerinin sayısında gözlenen artıştır. Her ne kadar ilk örnekleri 19990’larda görülse de, günümüze gelindiğinde Mecliste artan sayıda diaspora milletvekilinin bulunduğunu ve her partide en az bir milletvekilinin diasporada arasında yaşama tecrübesine sahip bir isimden oluştuğunu görmek mümkün. Fakat genel olarak parti dağılımına baktığımızda, daha önce de Avrupa’daki en köklü ve yaygın siyasi hareketler olduğunu belirttiğimiz siyasal İslam ve Kürt siyasal hareketini temsil eden

partiler sayıca en fazla diasporadan milletvekili bulunduran partiler olarak ortaya çıkıyor. Bu milletvekillerinin yasama faaliyetlerine baktığımızda da, gerçekten diasporaya ilişkin meseleleri diğer milletvekillerine kıyasla daha yoğun bir çabayla gündeme getirmeye çalıştıkları görülüyor. “Diaspora milletvekili” şeklinde bir kategori de tanımlamak istersek kuşkusuz Mustafa Yeneroğlu, Zafer Sırakaya gibi milletvekilleri hem diasporadan gelip hem de yasama faaliyetlerinde diasporayla ilgili konuların ağırlığı açısından öne çıkıyorlar.

Tablo 2: Dönemlere göre diaspora kökenli milletvekilleri

<b>Milletvekili</b>	<b>Dönem</b>
Ercan Karakaş (CHP)	1991-1999
Osman Yumakoğulları (FP)	1996-2002
Eyüp Fatsa (Ak Parti)	1999-2007
Ali Rıza Gülçiçek (CHP)	2002-2007
Fazilet Dağcı Çılgık (Ak Parti)	2007-2015
Tülin Erkal Kara (Ak Parti)	2011-2015
Ali Atalan (HDP)	2015-2018
Ziya Pir (HDP)	2015-2018
Feleknas Uca (HDP)	2015-şu anda
Mustafa Yeneroğlu (Ak Parti, DEVA)	2015-şu anda
Zafer Sırakaya (Ak Parti)	2018-şu anda
Cemal Çetin (MHP)	2018-şu anda

## Sonuç

Tüm bu dönemler incelendiğinde tezde ortaya sürülen ana argüman, diasporanın siyasi temsil şeklinin altmış yıllık dönem içerisinde ciddi niteliksel değişime uğradığı olmuştur. Tezin temel sorusu diaspora temsilinin zaman içerisinde nasıl bir değişime uğradığıydı. Buna göre, 1960'lar ve 1970'lerdeki diaspora temsiline bakıldığında, bu erken dönemde siyasetçilerin nihai önceliğinin, yurt dışındaki işçilerin karşı karşıya oldukları anlama ve çözme odaklı oldukları sonucu çıkarılabilir. Dolayısıyla, tezin temel argümanlarından biri, erken dönemlerde siyasi temsilin diasporaya ait meselelerin pratik ve teknik yönüne odaklandığıdır.

Her ne kadar vurgu 1970'lerin kutuplaşmanın hâkim olduğu siyasi atmosferde diaspora üyelerini aşırı bulunan ideolojik öğelerden korumaya kaysa da genel olarak, bu çözüm temelli yaklaşım, ilk yirmi yılda diaspora temsilinde hakim oldu. 1980 darbesi sonrasındaki ideolojik ortamın etkisiyle Türk kimliğinin dini ve milli boyutları daha fazla ön plana çıkarken, iç politikada hâkim olan milliyetçi ve kimlikçi tutum yurt dışındaki vatandaşlara yönelik de benimsenmiştir. 1990'lı yıllarda diasporanın hem ev sahibi ülkelerde hem Türkiye'de siyasi temsili bir ihtiyaç olarak ortaya çıkınca Ankara'daki milletvekilleri de buna yönelik yasal adımları atmakta gecikmediler.

2000'li yıllara geldiğimizde ise diasporayı temsil etme parametreleri yavaş yavaş siyasetçilerin, diasporanın sorunlarının ne olduğunu sorgulamalarından ziyade, sorunları kendilerinin tanımladığı bir siyasi sürece dönüştü. Bu geçiş de anlamak için Saward'ın “temsil iddiası” (*representative claim*) kavramı en açıklayıcı çerçeveyi sunmaktadır. Bir topluluğu temsil etme eylemi zaten başlı başına bir iddiadır. Türkiye'deki siyasetçiler, özellikle de iktidardaki Ak Parti temsilcilerinin, bu “temsil iddiası” eylemini bir adım öteye taşıyarak, diaspora konularını kendileri önden tanımlayıp, kendi siyasi tutum ve perspektiflerini diaspora ile ilgili konular üzerinden dile getirdikleri tartışılmıştır. Özellikle İslamofobi, Avrupa'da din özgürlüğünün durumu ve başörtüsü konularına yapılan güçlü vurguda ortaya çıkan bu temsil iddiası, tezi aynı zamanda siyasetçilerin diaspora alanını kendi siyasi konumlarını tekrardan ortaya koymak için bir platform olarak kullandığı sonucuna götürdü. Partiler ideolojik konumlarıyla paralel şekilde gerçekleştirdikleri “temsil etme iddiası” hem içerideki kitleyi konsolide etme hem de dış politika mesajlarını uluslararası topluma ulaştırma işlevi görmüştür. Bunun da diasporanın sorunlarına pratik çözümler getirmeye yönelik olan erken dönemden farklı bir temsil türü yarattığı tartışılmıştır.

Farklı dönemleri karşılaştıran çalışmada her dönemde öne çıkan temanın Türkiye'nin o günkü ekonomik, sosyal veya siyasi ihtiyaçlarına göre şekillendiği

de ortaya çıkmıştır. Örneğin, 1960'larda ve 1970'lerde Türkiye'nin işçi dövizlerine olan ihtiyacından dolayı diaspora üzerindeki Meclis tartışmalar genel olarak işçilerin ülke ekonomisine ve kalkınmasına katkıları etrafında şekilleniyordu. Görece teknik diyebileceğimiz bu ağırlık merkezi 1980'lerde ve 1990'larda seçimlere katılım ve vatandaşlık düzenlemeleriyle daha siyasi boyuta, 2000'lerde ise siyasetten kültürel ve ideolojik söyleme bürünmüştür. Sonuç olarak, diaspora temsilinin odağı, çözüme dayalı bir yaklaşımdan giderek politikacıların diaspora meseleleri aracılığıyla iç siyasi mesajlarını ilettiği araçsal bir yaklaşıma doğru kaymıştır.

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