

CULTURAL ASSIMILATION IN EUROPE A CASE OF TURKISH MIGRANTS IN GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS

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Abstract

High numbers of Turkish labor migrants arrived in Germany and the Netherlands during the 1960s; this first group is now elderly. The objective of this qualitative study is to examine the social networks and activities of these older Turkish immigrants who have grown mature in Germany and the Netherlands. This essay demonstrates an increasing interest in the value of older people's social capital, which includes their social networks, social support, and social involvement. Their regular social interactions in Germany and the Netherlands are the main subjects of this research. The results show that involvement in organizations, and social After having children and during the post-retirement era, they can re-establish new social roles through clubs and neighborhood social groups. Their regular small groups are excellent sources of mental support. It is claimed that their relatively low human capital influences the homogeneity of their social networks but not the diversity of their social interactions. This essay also emphasizes how Turks have adopted their customs and culture in their daily lives.

Keywords—Assimilation, culture, Turks, Turks in Germany and the Netherlands, immigration

Introduction –

The integration of the community is a vital feature in maintaining peace in the nation-state's diverse society and cultural coexistence. Europe as a continent over the period has seen waves of migrants coming in and residing there. The process of assimilation and accommodation has been going on ever since. However, the current rise in the rise of populism seems to be a threat to the existing heterogeneous society in Europe. With the French Revolution and rise in the process of democratization one can see how Europe has been accommodating and assimilating people of diverse ethnicities and cultures. Today we see that in Europe even though there is tough resistance to many changes. The government incorporates the people in agenda and policy making. The practice of incorporating the people has been there for centuries though there have been contradictions in the techniques of assimilation, Sometimes they make the difference starker than it is, yet over time acceptance has increased.

Migration throughout history has led over the centuries people have migrate for multiple reasons. They travel to distant lands in search of better opportunities. As difficult as the movement is for leaving the place of being more difficult is establishing oneself in the new land. The fall of communism was seen as the victory of democracy and this rise in democracy and democratic institutionalization was seen as the merging of ethnic divides, Europe has always been a forbearer of multiculturalist ideas, however, there has been conflict between the idea and applicability of the thought. Yet, the European Union member states have been proactively working on the integration of the people in the society.

Netherlands and Germany –

In the European continent, the Netherlands and Germany are the two nations in which we see the largest population of Turkish migrants. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Turks have been the largest minority in the Netherlands. There the migration of Turks happened over the economic boom. The Turkish migrants are called “guest workers” in these nations. Yet, the Dutch integration process focused on self-organization and education of Turks in their language. The Netherlands introduced the policy of integration in the 1980s which was based on the support granted to immigrant associations, the respect of cultural and religious identities, and the fight to counter discrimination¹. They had introduced the system of pillarization which means that the Dutch authorities would consult the representatives of the Muslim associations regularly when they made decisions regarding the minorities. The benefits of the system were that the people could live according to their religious and cultural ideology. The Netherlands also started to implement an explicit integration policy in the 1980s. This policy was called “the minorities policy”, which was quite innovative in Europe as it was based on the “recognition of several ethnic minorities”, who were able to develop their institutions in certain domains such as culture, religion, or language. However, over the period with the movement rise in immigration, there is certain conflict regarding the policy and this is challenged. Hence the model of pillarization lost its impact on the secularization of Dutch Society. The Dutch government aimed to provide equal opportunities for minorities and the Dutch people in the multicultural authorities. Since the late 1980’s there has been an emphasis on the integration policy which would focus on learning Dutch and integration into the labor market. Among the scholars, there is also a realization that the first-generation Dutch Turks differ substantially from the second-generation Turks. This change came alongside changes in the policy during the 1990s and 2000s when this “multicultural” approach evolved into a more assimilationist one. Today, at the national level, the coordination of the integration policy is handled by the Integration and Society Department (Integreer en Samenleving) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The main policy tool regarding integration in the Netherlands is the system of “civic integration” (unbarbering)². This system is implemented through several steps. However, Turkish nationals and their partners

¹ Paper on Minorities, September 1983

² Jérémy Mandin, Sonia Hair, Turkish and Chinese Immigration to the Netherlands – Corridor Report, INTERACT RR 2015/16, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute, 2015

are exempted from the civic integration exam. Another civic integration exam is compulsory for migrants who have settled in the Netherlands. As stated on the Dutch government's website: "Once migrants have settled in the Netherlands, they are legally required to integrate into Dutch society."³ There has been integration of the people on a large scale yet growth in populism and growing discomfort on the level of ethnic integration. The case is quite similar in Germany too yet the Netherlands has been more accepting towards the Turkish people. Turks are the largest ethnic minority group in Germany, numbering nearly three million residents; only approximately 246,000 of them hold German citizenship.⁴ In Germany, the Turkish community is well integrated through various channels. Germany has about 10% of the immigrant community and this community is well established by the presence of immigration organizations. These Immigration organizations have crucial influence on the host country. They have established Turkish community organizations that are transnational, having contacts with political representatives in both Turkey and Germany. Therefore, they act as a 'bridge' between Turkey and Germany, and regarding Turkey-EU relations. The German public and its politicians have mostly viewed Turkey's EU membership through the lens of the Turkish immigration experience in Germany (Humphrey, 2009: 142)⁵. On 30 October 1961, the bilateral agreement on the recruitment of Turkish migrant workers was signed between Germany and Turkey. And so, in the German discourse German discourse, they were usually referred to as 'Gastarbeiter' (guest-worker) or 'Auslander' (foreigner). With the constant presence in the country for so many years now the Turkish immigrants in Germany no longer wish to be called immigrants as many are German citizens or have permanent resident status. Therefore, they are referred to as 'German-Turks'. Most German political parties are receptive to the participation of German Turks, especially the SPD and the Greens. German-Turk politicians like Cem Özdemir, who has participated in local and federal German politics, express their opinions about immigrant rights, integration, and foreign policy (Ögelman et al., 2002: 155)⁶

For the process of integration, there have been changes in the constitution of Germany for the acquisition of citizenship that is from *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*. *Jus sanguinis* refers to the acquisition of citizenship through descent meaning Children, regardless of where they are born, acquire at birth the citizenship of a parent. *Jus soli* is the doctrine that children acquire the citizenship of the country in which they are born. Each country legislates its requirements for citizenship.⁷ Hence, there has been quite a deliberation on the grounds of citizenship as having a

³ <http://www.government.nl/issues/integration/integration-in-the-netherlands> [Accessed 20 May 2014]

⁴ Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2016 [Population with Migration Background – Results of the Micro census of 2016], FEDERAL OFFICE OF STATISTICS 63 (2016) https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/Migrationshintergrund2010220167004.pdf;jsessionid=0646332EA70C5CB98688BB718A6C657.cae1?__blob=publicationFile [hereinafter Migration].

⁵ Humphrey, M. (2009) Securitisation and domestication of diaspora Muslims and Islam: Turkish immigrants in Germany and Australia, *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 11/2, 136-154

⁶ Ögelman, Nedim, et al. "Immigrant Cohesion and Political Access in Influencing Foreign Policy." *SAIS Review (1989-2003)*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2002, pp. 145–165. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26996417. Accessed 10 May 2021.

⁷ McFadden, Susan Willis. "German Citizenship Law and the Turkish Diaspora." *German Law Journal*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2019, pp. 72–88., doi:10.1017/glj.2019.7.

cordial relationship with the Turkish leadership. In these countries civil societies play a crucial role in bringing the needs of the immigrants into the public discourse, in every nation civil society works differently, in Germany, immigrant organizations have defended immigrant rights vis-à-vis German political parties and local and federal German state authorities. As a result, Germany's institutions have gradually begun to take these organizations seriously and consider them as representative and consultative bodies in immigrant issues (Yurdakul, 2006: 436)⁸. These immigrants who have the potential to be future citizens need to apply both access and cohesion, which are crucial factors in understanding the influence of the immigrant community on policymaking at the national level. Immigrants have the potential to influence their host country's policies, including its foreign policy⁹. Turkish community organizations in Germany can play a crucial role both in integrating Germany's Turkish immigrants and contributing to solving the sociocultural and economic problems of the Turkish community. Turkish community organizations in Germany are highly polarized ideologically, which makes it hard for them to act together for common goals.

So, we come to realize that integration is a long-drawn process, and every nation-state has its policies and agendas for incorporating the people into the societal structure. And the nation is built by people with similar cultural and ideological beliefs. And coming off the other isn't seen as much of a threat until their beliefs are being challenged and the policies agenda is giving them leverage. And there is a shift from a homogenous society to a heterogeneous one. In both the Netherlands and Germany we see the policies incorporating the Turks in the system both socially and economically. However, in the backdrop of the international political scenario these others are seen as a threat to the nation-state's structure. Therefore, we see development in border securitization rather than making them more permeable.

The discourses on difference

This essay discusses the current integration, identity, and cohesion struggles faced by Muslims in Western Europe and how they affect ties between Muslims and Europeans. Islam has in many ways always been a component of Europe, and in some ways, Europe's existence is due in large part to Islam. These two great civilizations have experienced periods of interaction, communication, and coexistence, but there have also been times when both parties have engaged in demonization, stigmatization, and vilification. However, the focus of this study is on the post-war migration, settlement, and adaptation of Muslims to Western European nation-states, as well as the issues that this raises. To save non-Muslims from damnation, Salafi Muslims in Germany started a Qur'an giveaway program in April 2012. Soon after, public discussions about more extensive Muslim transgressions in Europe started to surface in the national media. More

⁸ Yurdakul, G. (April 2006). State, political parties and immigrant elites: Turkish immigrant associations in Berlin, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32/3, 435-453

⁹ Ögelman, Nedim, et al. "Immigrant Cohesion and Political Access in Influencing Foreign Policy." *SAIS Review* (1989-2003), vol. 22, no. 2, 2002, pp. 145-165. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26996417. Accessed 10 May 2021.

attention was paid to the Turks in particular, who number 3 million and make up two-thirds of Germany's Muslim population, according to the Federal Migration and Refugees Office. Der Spiegel, a renowned news publication, suggested in its article published on August 17, 2012, why Turkish Muslims this time avoided the reaction against Islamist radicalism: Turks residing in Europe long to integrate and feel at home in Germany despite being proud Muslims. The incompatibility of Islam and Western ideals has long been emphasized by migration scholars, who have painted European Turks as another Muslim group that has resisted assimilation. This theory is challenged by localizing Islam, which explains why Turks in Europe feel at home. Several Turkish Sunni organizations in Germany and the Netherlands are compared, their interpretations of Islam are reimagined, and it is claimed that Islam's internal diversity has persisted in the European setting. Localizing Islam adopts a novel viewpoint by approaching the issue of integration from the standpoint of the community and as one that involves dialectical processes among stakeholders. It effectively refutes accepted beliefs about the establishment of Turkish communities and the capacity of various Islamic organizations to assert their power among their adherents in Germany and the Netherlands. Muslims face a particularly difficult situation about how Islam and its adherents are portrayed in various media, which is frequently referred to as a form of Islamophobia or more simply anti-Muslim racism. Since the events of 9/11, these representations have become even more pernicious, and the other is frequently presented in more violent and conflictual terms. There are issues not only with popular culture but also with many other institutions and ways of doing things, like the academy and how it disseminates information. In addition, prevalent among lawmakers, as well as among journalists, novelists, poets, and journalists. There is a clear "us" versus "them" split, and a moderate Muslim is perceived as a Muslim who is more acceptable to the West. The phrase "good Muslims are with us," bad Muslims are against us" is a paraphrase of a statement made by Prime Minister Tony Blair shortly following the 7/7 crisis. The structures that have been established over the years have kept power in the hands of the West, resulting in a wealth inequality ingrained in societies that are defined as completely distinct. Chauvinism and prejudice are present in a deeply offensive way. There is a sharp contrast between the hubris and blatant arrogance of Western powers and their strategies toward the Muslim world. evident. The negative portrayal of Islam is made worse by several groups that use covert methods to obfuscate an already deformed image. While there may be a real-world "war on terror," well-organized groups are also waging a virtual "war on terror" to further demonize Islam for a variety of political and ideological reasons. In Western Europe, multiculturalism has developed in its current form as a result of the post-war dynamics of emigration and integration of different ethnic minority groups. It has worked to give the best possible service throughout its growth. recognizing differences and how they can be expressed in public and private settings, including the acceptance of halal food requirements and Islamic marriage contracts as well as the freedom to exercise one's religion in public. In some ways, the growth of certain forms of benevolent multiculturalism has provided opportunities for different expressions of Islamism to stay hidden until various crises have arisen, especially after the Rushdie Affair. Certain Muslim groups have been led to think that there is a

"war on Islam" by the West's aggressive foreign policies and ineffective integration policies, which is not helped by a variety of ongoing negative media and political conversations. It is crucial to comprehend historical and contemporary dynamics to comprehend the nature of extremism among various Muslim groups. These dynamics are exacerbated by Muslims' concurrent lack of confidence and self-esteem, who are further marginalized by the predominant corporate military-industrial, ideological, and political concerns that envelop various groups throughout society.

Conclusion

However, localizing Islam has several problems with its methodology, ideas, and organization. First of all, the boundaries of comparative research are not clearly defined. The introduction takes into account the larger Muslim population in Europe (i.e. However, the subsequent papers only cover Turkish communities in Germany and the Netherlands, unlike Arabs in France and Indo-Pakistanis in Britain. Thus, the assimilationist policies of France and the cosmopolitan initiatives of Britain are not discussed about Turkish immigration to these nations. Localizing Islam adopts a novel viewpoint by approaching the issue of integration from the standpoint of the community and as one that involves dialectical processes among stakeholders. It effectively refutes accepted beliefs. the development of Turkish communities and the capacity of various Islamic organizations to assert their religious dominance among their adherent populations in Germany and the Netherlands. Being a Muslim in Europe is a double-edged sword for Turks: their faith makes them vulnerable to prejudice and rejection, but the European context also gives them the freedom to organize and function in ways that are not feasible in the Turkish or Arab worlds. The abundance of rival groups, however, looms due to sectarian divisions large, which separate them and reduce their ability to present a unified front when addressing their societal grievances.

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