Problemy Polityki Społecznej. Social Policy Issues 2026, 72(1): 1–19
https://doi.org/10.31971/pps/209710

Submitted: 2024-08-25/Accepted: 2025-08-19

Musa Yavuz Alptekin[1]

ORCID: 0000-0002-6221-7913
Department of Sociology, Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey
Department of Sociology, Journalism and Mass Communications University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

From labour migration to lobbying: the formation of the Turkish diaspora in Germany in six stages

Abstract

In this study, focusing on the concept of diaspora, the transformation of the Turkish population in Germany over 65 years has been analysed. The process, which began with guest labour, has changed and evolved approximately in ten-year intervals, eventually reaching the point of forming a diaspora. Initially, the Turkish community in Germany included merely labour immigrants or guest workers; however, over time, the character of emigration evolved and changed. It was no longer only labour migration, but also international migration, migration as the Other (nationalism), and finally, in the sixth stage, migration as actors of the diaspora. This study, supplemented by Turkish and foreign diaspora research as well as general literature, concludes that the Turks in Germany have evolved from a labour community 65 years ago into a social, economic, cultural, and political entity that has changed, developed, and strengthened. They have reached a position where they can engage in lobbying and ultimately form a diaspora.

Keywords: immigration, diaspora, Turks in Germany, from guest worker to lobbyist, immigrant associations

[1] **Corresponding author:** Musa Yavuz Alptekin, Department of Sociology, Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey, Farabi Street, 61080, Trabzon, Turkey; email: m.yavuz-alptekin@ktu.edu.tr

Introduction

The labour agreement signed on October 30, 1961, between Turkey and Germany is now over 65 years old, and very few of those who went to Germany as workers under this agreement remain with us today. To illustrate the length of time that has passed, it should be noted that the children of those workers from that era are now elderly and retired, while the grandchildren of those workers represent the third generation as adults in middle age. While the labour agreement has made many people happy over more than half a century, it has turned into a bittersweet joy for many others. On the other hand, it has also angered or worried some, particularly, Neo-Nazis and German nationalists.

The long-term and transformative process that began in 1961 with migration from Turkey to Germany, can be analysed in various ways. First and foremost, this migration was not merely a case of labour and workforce migration. Although it began as such, it neither remained that way nor continued uniformly. Over time, it diversified, branched out, and evolved. It is important to note that in 1961 the process of *economic migration* began. Subsequently, the character of migration changed and transformed approximately every decade. For instance, in the 1970s, with the integration of workers' families, a new *social migration* process was initiated. This was followed by *political migrations* with the 1980 military coup. People sought refuge not in just any country but specifically in Germany because, as with family reunification, they had relatives or at least acquaintances there. They went to Germany seeking their help. In the 1990s, a fourth type of migration emerged, which was *security-related migration*. For the same reason, many headed to Germany again. Finally, from the 2000s onwards, *student migration* as a fifth type and *brain drain* as a sixth type of migration also largely directed themselves toward Germany. Over these 65 years, with six different types of migration, Turkish people have travelled to Germany. Among those who went, came, and returned, nearly three million Turkish citizens started living in Germany. Although the process was initiated and triggered by labour migration, it did not remain limited to this aspect for either the Turks or the Germans. It changed, transformed, and has evolved today into a point where it has either voluntarily or involuntarily formed a diaspora.

In this study, the migration of Turks to Germany has been divided into six stages based on labour migration and analysed in six categories according to their functions. These stages, in chronological order, are as follows: the *guest worker* period (1961–1974), the *labour migration* period (1974–1983), the *international migration* period (1983–1989), the *marginalised migration period in the face of Rising Nationalism* (1989–1993), the *marginalised migration through violence* period (1993–2010), and finally, the *intellectual exclusion and diaspora formation* period (2010–2024).[2]

[2] Although this study is based on a literature review, the social events and processes observed by the author during a year-long fieldwork in the cities of Essen and Duisburg, along with the information, documents, and experiences acquired, have enabled the author to formulate a generalisations about these stages and phases that have not yet been covered in the literature.

Immigrant associations

Immigrant associations can be defined as non-profit organisations established by immigrants that operate at all stages of migration and aim primarily to serve the immigrant community. It is stated in the literature that as long as the majority and importance of immigrants in the organisation persist, the organisation will remain an immigrant organisation. That is, if immigrants make up the majority of the members and hold a significant presence in the management board, the organisation continues to be considered an immigrant organisation (Babis, 2016). Of course, it should also be added that the agenda and activities of the association should predominantly focus on issues and activities related to immigrants.

Immigrant organisations exist are diversified. Basch (1987) divides immigrant organisations into nine categories: 1) charities, 2) sports and social clubs, 3) welfare organisations, 4) professional associations, 5) educational and cultural clubs, 6) political clubs, 7) performing arts cultural clubs, 8) women's groups, 9) umbrella organisations. Moya (2005), on the other hand, categorises organisations into six distinct headings: 1) secret, 2) credit, 3) mutual aid associations, 4) religious, 5) homeland, 6) political groups. In contrast to Basch and Moya, Layton-Henry (1990) classifies immigrant organisations based on their primary orientation, identifying three specific types related to:

1. The homeland
2. The new country
3. Both countries.

Immigrant associations are non-profit civil society organisations. Non-profit organisations play a significant role in providing social services, legal advocacy, and policy advocacy to immigrant communities, as well as enriching their religious, cultural, and recreational activities. Academics working on immigrant associations have started to notice how community-based organisations, especially in the US and Europe since the 1960s, sometimes function like a "shadow state" through bilateral agreements with governments or local authorities, or provide security net services through private funding (Bloemraad et al., 2022).

Religious differences between immigrant groups and the host country's population lead to the establishment of religious institutions where religious ceremonies for immigrants are held (Moya, 2005; Rex, 1987). A good example of this is Muslim new arrivals in Christian countries; for instance, the 40 mosques established by Turkish immigrants in Berlin (Gitmez & Wildert, 1987) and 38 mosques serving a Pakistani population of 45,000 in Birmingham, United Kingdom (Layton-Henry, 1990, 94–96). According to research by DeSantis and Benkin (1980), religious organisations played a central role in the initial settlement of Lithuanian Jews and Christians in Chicago. The prevalence of religious associations can also be seen as reflecting the importance of religion in the group identity of immigrants (Moya, 1998).

Harris (1998) and Moya (2005) have raised the issue of whether religious associations should be considered real voluntary associations. The reason for this is the "restrictions and prohibitions" on the actions of members. According to them, this situation differs from the operating system of secular organisations. In secular

associations, volunteering is essential, whereas it is thought that this principle is limited in religious organisations. In this case, although religious associations are immigrant organisations, it is not very possible to regard them as true Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The role of immigrant associations in the formation of diaspora has always been a subject of interest. According to academics and researchers who have studied this issue, immigrant associations have formed alliances with local political parties and commercial unions, which has promoted citizenship duties, rights, and achievements in various areas, especially voting rights. They have mobilised the community to support or oppose various policies, ranging from immigration laws to native language classes, and ethnic culinary habits (Schneider, 2001; Marinari, 2020).

Immigration's institutionalisation: diaspora

The term "diaspora" has Greek origins *diasperien*, which is derived from dia- meaning "through" or "across," and *sperien* meaning "to scatter" or "to sow". The Greeks initially used the term "diaspora" to refer to migration, colonisation, and colonies. The concept of diaspora gained a new semantic meaning when the Romans used it in 586 BCE to refer to the Hebrews following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple walls. In modern times, based on this historical context, the term has become a permanent concept used to describe people who have "lost their homeland and are subjected to ethnic violence" (Gilroy, 1994; Clifford, 1994).

The systematic definition of the diaspora concept emerged in the 1990s. Leading experts in the field, such as William Safran (1991, 83–84), Stuart Hall (1994), James Clifford (1994, 1997), and Robin Cohen (1996, 514), have explained the origins of diaspora within the framework of three to six similar fundamental characteristics. These characteristics can be summarised as follows:

1. Dispersal from the centre country to peripheral countries due to abnormal (traumatic) reasons.
2. The belief that genuine acceptance will not be achieved in the host country.
3. The formation of a strong social group or ethnic consciousness and a sense of shared destiny.
4. The preservation of homeland-centred social relations and cultural traits.
5. Close relations and solidarity with other compatriots dispersed from the same centre.
6. The maintenance and glorification of the homeland idea and the idealisation of returning to the homeland.

Among these six prerequisites identified for the diaspora, the second characteristic is the most prominent and strongly applicable to Turks in Germany. The formation of a diaspora status for a migrant community depends on the framing of the other characteristics and the substantiation of this characteristic. The rest will depend on the transformation of static conditions into dynamic ones over time.

First phase: 1961–1974 "guest worker"

On October 30, 1961, a labour agreement was signed between Turkey and Germany. Although the term "Guest Worker" (*Gastarbeiter*) is mentioned in the text of this agreement, it is clear that this term lacks a legal basis and does not have legal applications; it is essentially a political concept. No country would bring people from another country to work in the most physically demanding, arduous, dangerous, and low-prestige jobs with low wages, and then, after achieving the required productivity, simply say, "We are done with you, you may leave now". Such a practice has no place in the democratic world or modern law. Therefore, it is a misguided approach to assume that the concept of "guest worker" implies that Turks in Germany should return when their "time is up" and that this is the natural course of events. The term "guest worker" is a political concept and appears to have been used in the media to reassure the German society of that time.

During this period, German political parties, politicians, and elites addressed their economic problems with Turkish labour and aimed to reassure the public with the concept of "Gastarbeiter", achieving their goals for 20–30 years. However, after such a period of time, it became clear that the political promises had no legal foundation, leading to what could be described as "murmurings" among particularly nationalistic segments of the German population. Castles and Miller (2008, 100) make an interesting observation on this issue: "German policies envisioned migrant workers as temporary labour units that could be hired, utilized, and dismissed at the employers' discretion". However, even if they are migrants, fulfilling people's legal rights may not be as easy as creating political concepts. The "guest worker Turks" in Germany are a practical manifestation of this difficulty.

From the early 19th century, the British transported tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of Chinese labourers to their colony, Malaysia, to work in tin mines. These workers did not return to China; instead, they became permanent residents of Malaysia and, with 24% of the population, now control more than half of the contemporary Malaysian economy of 28 million (for detailed information, see: Alptekin, 2015). In contrast, for the past 30–40 years in Germany, a 3% migrant population has stirred significant controversy among Neo-Nazis and German nationalist groups. Moreover, this 3% migrant population has, in a sense, "paid its dues" and deserves gratitude and recognition. Yet, the reality is quite the opposite. In such an environment, it is inconceivable to imagine Turks in Germany having a quarter of the population or managing roughly half of the economy as is the case in Malaysia. It is clear that the German state and German democracy have much to learn from the hospitality shown in Malaysia. In this sense, Western modernity and democracy can be said to lag behind even traditional Eastern practices.

Second phase: 1973–1983 "labour migration"

By the 12th year of labour migration to Germany, on November 23, 1973, Germany enacted the *Anwerbestopp* law, signalling the halt of labour recruitment from countries

outside the European Community. With this law, the German government required Turks to choose between returning to their home country or staying permanently in Germany (Piest, 2000, cited in Adıgüzel 2004, 91). After this date, the number of Turkish workers coming to Germany decreased sharply: from 9,412 during the six years between 1974 and 1980 to just 674 during the nine years between 1981 and 1990 (Yılmaz, 2023). This indicates a significant halt in Germany's recruitment of workers from Turkey. Another implication of this law was the end of the "guest worker" era and the beginning of the "labour migration" era for Turks in Germany. Consequently, while the number of Turkish workers in Germany remained stable from this point on, the population continued to grow due to family reunification. Indeed, this period also marked a transition from a Turkish labour population in Germany to a Turkish community with diversified and completed social components.

Third Phase: 1983–1989 "international migration"

At the end of 1973, the German government not only halted the recruitment of workers from outside the European Community but also, 10 years later in 1983, introduced the Return Promotion Law (*Rückkehrförderungsgesetz*). This law officially offered 10,500 Marks to workers who agreed to return to their home country and was implemented for 11 months. This measure was the result of a socio-political demand and created a chain reaction, leading to a negative social wave. For instance, writings such as "Türken raus" (Turks out) began to appear on the walls of neighbourhoods with a Turkish presence (Danış et al., 2021, 14). Due to that some Turks started to consider and ultimately decided to migrate. With the introduction of compensations, early retirement payments, and similar incentives, this promotion program, which could amount to up to 30–40 thousand Marks, resulted in the definitive return of about 300,000 Turkish and a total of 500,000 foreign nationals from Germany to their home countries (Abadan-Unat, 2015; Toksöz, 2006; Ersun et al., 1996; for detailed discussion, see: Doğan, 2001). The enactment and application of this law mark the transition from the second phase to the third phase for Turks in Germany starting in 1983, moving from the *labour migration* phase to the *international migration* phase.

The first generation of Turks who went to Germany referred to themselves as "Gurbetçi" (a term meaning an expatriate or someone living away from their homeland), while the German press and government described foreign workers as "Gastarbeiter" (guest workers) until the 1980s. The relatives they left behind in Turkey labelled them as "Almancı" (a term for someone who is associated with Germany). As the return of foreign workers, particularly Turkish workers, to their home countries was delayed, the term "Mitarbeiter" (colleague) was adopted when it became clear that they would stay in Germany permanently. After the reunification of East and West Germany, Turks were referred to as "Ausländer" (foreigners) by some segments of the German population. Subsequently, some Germans used the term "Migranten" (migrants) for Turks, while others preferred "Deutscher mit Migrationshintergrund" (German with a migration background). Finally, a very small number of Germans used the term "Mitbürger" (fellow citizens) for Turks who had obtained citizenship (Başkurt,

2009, 84; Akkaya, 2006, 29). The lack of a standardised term for Turks reflects the various naming conventions that emerged during different periods and among different political groups. Additionally, the terminology has shown dynamism based on the changing economic, social, and cultural capital of both Turks and Germans.

This third phase, known as *international migration*, represents the third stage experienced by Turks who initially went to Germany as *guest workers*, following the labour migration phase. Unlike the previous stages, it did not last long. The term that perhaps best characterises the social situation of Turks in Germany during this period is "discontinuity" in the context of change and transformation. Local, national, international, and global developments have affected the situation of Turks in Germany, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, but always strongly. Indeed, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked the beginning of a new political and social era, not only for global, European, and German politics but also for the Turkish community in Germany.

Fourth phase: 1989–1993 "the Otherness of rising German nationalism"

Like many forms of nationalism, contemporary German nationalism has gained momentum through the concept of the "Other". While nationalism globally often defines itself in opposition to an "Other", in German society, this dynamic is particularly pronounced and concrete. Germany is considered one of the countries with high levels of homogeneity, similar to Iceland, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark (Benedikter, 2014). Although long-standing social and cultural homogeneity can be seen as an advantage for states, in the age of global migrations, it can also provide a cultural basis for xenophobia. When evaluated over time, the homogeneity that was once an advantage in pre-modern eras has become a disadvantage in the modern world, where migration and migrants are a global reality. This cultural heritage can contribute to the development of negative contemporary nationalism. Thus, for contemporary (post-World War II) German nationalism, the "Other" it defines itself against is generally foreigners, but specifically and predominantly Turks.

The fall of the Berlin Wall facilitated the reunification of two distinct worlds, with far-reaching social implications beyond the mere removal of a physical barrier spanning 155 kilometres. However, once the physical barrier was removed, the transition was not seamless. Forty-five years of social, economic, cultural, and political differences required time to address the issue. These differences have not yet been fully resolved. The disparities between East and West Germany have produced more problems than initially anticipated. In fact, the East German society has often blamed migrants, specifically Turks, for their comparatively lower share of development, economic growth, welfare, globalisation, democracy, and high living standards compared to West Germany. Governments and bureaucracies that failed to establish a balanced social welfare system seemed to welcome this tendency, as it masked their failures. It was never genuinely criticised or judged at the level of intellectuals and policymakers. Governments, bureaucrats, and administrative elites that brought in "guest workers" to meet the demands of industrialists, businessmen, and economic leaders in the 1960s,

instead of taking responsibility for the issues their policies created, chose to remain silent as society targeted the same migrants. Foreigners, migrants, and "Others" have consistently served as scapegoats for governments, managers, and elites throughout history. Machiavellian pragmatism continues to prevail in contemporary governance and management practices. Simultaneously, the media, which is the tool of these hegemonic groups, continues to stigmatise immigrants, leading to the reproduction, distribution and strengthening of othering (Kehya, 2022).

Due to these profound impacts and analyses, a few intellectuals and thinkers in Germany opposed the reunification of East and West Germany with such writers as Günter Grass and academics and philosophers as Jürgen Habermas among them. Their primary concern was that the traces of the Berlin Wall, as previously mentioned, would not be erased quickly and that the peace and prosperity achieved would be lost (Abadan-Unat, 2015, 269). Indeed, the 35-year period that has elapsed has vindicated these few intellectuals and thinkers. The reunification, carried out with the apparent aim of projecting an image of a "united, large, and powerful Germany" and gaining psychological superiority, has never truly resolved the real problems it created. The costs have been levied on foreigners, migrants, Muslims, and ultimately, Turks. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of the two Germanys, there has been a rise in exclusionary and negative nationalism in Germany. Hate speech against foreigners has increased, and physical attacks and acts of violence against migrants, particularly Turks, have become more frequent and severe than ever before.

Fifth phase: 1993–2010 "Solingen massacre and exclusionary migration through violence"

In the years following the reunification of East and West Germany, nationalism rose noticeably, but this was not the only development. Acts of violence, murders, and arson targeting foreigners, migrants, and specifically Turks became increasingly prominent, with the 1993 Solingen massacre marking a significant turning point. In Germany, one can talk about a pre-Solingen and post-Solingen era for migrants. However, the organised and planned attacks triggered by racist and xenophobic groups had clear precursors before Solingen. In 1992, the home of the Arslan family in Mölln was set on fire, resulting in the deaths of three people. About a year later, the Solingen massacre, which can be seen as a significant turning point, the home of the Genç family was torched, resulting in the deaths of five Turks. The largest arson attack occurred in 2008, when an arson fire in Ludwigshafen claimed the lives of nine Turks. These mentioned incidents represent the most significant and organised attacks after the reunification. According to official records from Turkey, between 1988 and 2012, a total of 24 Turks lost their lives due to racist attacks in Germany (Grand National Assembly of Turkey [TBMM] 2012, cited in Kahraman, 2018).

According to a more comprehensive official record, as of 2019, there have been 100 physical attacks against Turks in Germany. These attacks include 41 on mosques, 24 on individuals, 20 on shops, four on vehicles, three on associations, three on cemeteries, three on residences, one on diplomatic missions and one on educational institutions

(YTB, 2020, 16). Additionally, there have been 83 recorded instances of hate speech and verbal threats against Turks up to that year. Among these incidents, the Solingen massacre stands out as particularly significant and represents a turning point. Following this organised and planned attack, which resulted in substantial loss of lives, a strong public awareness emerged within the Turkish community in Germany. Turks came to realise that they could not exist as individuals in this country but needed to act collectively. However, they struggled to define exactly what this collective action should look like. The counteraction, driven by the intensity of the violence, led to the development of a more security-oriented reflex. While collective consciousness supported this reflex, an intellectual response, by its nature and in an analytical sense, was similarly triggered by the situation.

Sixth phase: 2010–2024 "Thilo Sarrazin and the emergence of diaspora reflexes against intellectual exclusion"

In 2010, Thilo Sarrazin (2010), a board member of the German central bank, published a book titled *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany Does Away with Itself). Over the past 14 years, it has gone through more than 20 editions and has consistently ranked among the bestsellers. Moreover, it has become the greatest bestseller in Germany since World War II. The main theme of this book is Germany's immigration policy and, in this context, the presence of Turks in the country. Sarrazin argues in his book that the Turkish presence in Germany poses a significant threat to the country's existence and its healthy development.

Thilo Sarrazin's book and ideas have been referenced in nearly every report, study, and news article about Turks published after 2010. In the report titled "Turkish-German relations: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow on the 50th anniversary of Turkish migration to Germany", published by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, it is emphasised that discussions centred around Sarrazin's views on the presence of Turks have disturbed the Turkish community. According to this research, 38% of academics and students living in Germany and educated there have begun to consider returning to Turkey (Soysal, 2011, 93–94). Of course, not all individuals with this mindset will realise this intention, and perhaps only a few will be able to act on it. The crucial point is not the actual return of migrants to their country of origin, but rather the perception of discomfort and unrest experienced by migrants in the host country. This sense of discomfort and unrest can provide the necessary psychological conditions for a migrant group in a country to form a diaspora. Even half of a 38% educated and skilled immigrant population could potentially provide the leadership and organisation required to form a diaspora. The situation of Turks in Germany after Sarrazin's publication precisely indicates this dynamic. Moreover, when we look at the issue from the perspective of television and cinema, according to a study, the representational tendencies in visual culture regarding immigrants are dominant as rule breakers, criminals, those who are reluctant and resistant to integration in Germany, and perpetrators of their own archaic traditions, devoid of their socio-economic and political dimensions (Kehya, 2025, 4).

According to research conducted by SEK-POL and the Data4U Initiative, 62% of Turks living in Germany who followed the Sarrazin debate perceive these discussions as a personal insult or attack. Additionally, 66.6% of the Turkish participants in the same research indicated dissatisfaction with how the German media handled the debate (Data4U, 2010). These findings reveal that two-thirds of Turks in Germany have been negatively affected by the Sarrazin case and view themselves as members of an excluded community. In such a process, an immigrant may come to the conclusion that they can no longer exist individually in the host country. For the average member of this community, the most logical and practical outcome of this collective psychology is to organise and act as a community. When it comes to immigrants, the host country's official institutions prefer individuals to act independently. However, paradoxically, the immigrant community is often pushed by conservative segments of the host country to come together as a community, form civil society organisations, establish associations, and act collectively. In this sense, internal dynamics encourage individual action, while external dynamics often compel collective action. Similarly, official bodies encourage individual behaviour, while social dynamics push towards communal behaviour.

In the September 5, 2010, issue of Hürriyet newspaper, an article titled "Germany stands by its Turks" reported that although German authorities and intellectuals reacted to Thilo Sarrazin and expressed support for Turks, the widespread popularity of Sarrazin's book indicated that it deeply hurt immigrants, especially young Turks who considered themselves integrated. According to the report, Turkish youth in Germany felt that "no matter what I do, German society does not see me as one of their own". The article concluded: "The support Sarrazin received from the grassroots has rekindled feelings of exclusion among immigrants and somewhat hindered the integration process" (Özcan, 2010). This observation is particularly noteworthy. The support for Sarrazin has generated a sense of exclusion within the Turkish community. Indeed, research by Hoffman, Makovsky, and Werz (2020, 17) found that Turks in Germany felt the most excluded compared to participants from France, Austria, and the Netherlands. Such a social psychology and environment could motivate a migrant community to make a decision and take action towards becoming a diaspora.

A migrant community may show a will to establish a diaspora under two conditions. The first occurs when the community feels wronged in their country of origin. In such cases, they form a diaspora in their new location as a response to the injustices they experienced at home. The second situation arises when migrants face injustices, discrimination, and exclusion in their new country. In this case, they may also develop a will to establish a diaspora as a reaction to new environment. Examples of the first type include Palestinians, Crimean Tatars, and Meskhetian Turks, who created diasporas due to their experiences in their countries of origin. The second type includes Turks in Germany, Indians dispersed across various countries, and similar migrant workers. The first group represents *victim diasporas*, while the second group represents *labour diasporas* (Cohen, 1997, 179). Host countries generally view and sometimes positively engage with the first type of diaspora, often seeing it as a tool for international relations. Conversely, the second type is more positively regarded and supported by the country of origin, which seeks to use this diaspora for its own political and strategic purposes.

These data indicate that a migrant group in a country has moved beyond the stages of guest work, guest worker status, migration, and even international migration, and has become a significantly distanced and marginalised community. For Turks in Germany, this transition has been fully realised. A migrant community in such a situation has two options: gradually withdraw from the host country or remain in the country but resolve to establish a diaspora and act collectively rather than individually. Turks in Germany tested the first option between 2007 and 2013, when the Turkish economy was relatively strong, and applied it on a micro level. However, the majority chose to stay in Germany. During this period, the proportion of Turks returning to Turkey was very small, and a significant number of those who returned eventually came back to Germany (Karaca & Yurttaş, 2021, 1766; Küçük & Karaca, 2022; Suğanlı, 2003, 25). Scientific studies on return migration from the 1960s to 2007 have shown that those who returned to Turkey faced various problems, similar to those who stayed in Germany (Alptekin, 2019). Therefore, the decision of Turks in Germany to remain and resolve to establish a diaspora, particularly after the Sarrazin controversy that erupted in 2010, was well-founded. This determination is backed by 50 years of challenging experience and a development trajectory spanning six stages.

In this context, becoming a diaspora is neither a positive nor a negative situation but rather a necessity. The decision or feeling of being compelled to form a diaspora is not objective but rather subjective. Similarly, this communal determination and will are not endogenous but rather exogenous. There is no objective, clear, and defined prerequisites for forming a diaspora. This state of determination and will is more about social psychological conditions and represents a social equation reestablished in each unique host and migrant community context. Each culture, education level, and social and economic capital level will manifest this equation in different ways.

Today's Turkish residents in Germany view their ancestors—those who came to Germany two or three generations ago—as having endured extremely harsh conditions and being subjected to demanding and often exploitative labour, leading to a life marked by chronic illnesses and an early death (Kartal & Alptekin, 2015, 599; Suğanlı, 2003, 27). These experiences have led the current generation of Turks in Germany to feel that the country owes them a debt. They argue that their fathers and grandfathers were subjected to difficult working conditions and left to their fate. A community with such sentiments may be less inclined to integrate into the host society or to make sacrifices for the country. This feeling of injustice and neglect can contribute to higher rates of unemployment benefits among Turks in Germany compared to the general population.

Civil society organisations as carriers of diasporas and the anatomy of Turkish associations in Germany

Civil society organisations are systems that aim to protect individuals from state and private sector institutions, which, due to their size, often make direct interaction with individuals difficult. These organisations replace the mechanical solidarity of

traditional communities in urbanised, industrialised societies where divisions of labour, professions, and certain levels of education are established.

When thinking about organised societies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or associations come to mind. The concept of association involves a demographic that has realised it cannot sustain its individuality, identity, and socio-cultural values by living solely on an individual level. This demographic decides to live collectively and with community awareness, engages in solidarity at an advanced and intellectual level, and demonstrates a will to live not only biologically but also sociologically. Beyond that, it entails a determination to establish a "strategic national sociology" suitable for the place and time conditions of the "foreign land" in which they live.

According to average sources, there are approximately 2,000 to 4,000 Turkish associations in Germany (Koç, 2012). Despite Turks representing 20% of the foreign/immigrant population in Germany (Destatis, 2015), they own 60% of the associations established by foreigners (Hunger, 2005). This ratio indicates that Turks are the most willing and capable group among foreigners in Germany to form a diaspora. A significant portion of Turkish associations in Germany consists of mosque associations, with some sources citing this figure as 20% (Hunger, 2005). This might lead to the assumption that mosque associations are passive and incapable of engaging in civil society activities. However, two important points should not be overlooked.

Firstly, mosque associations in Germany differ from those in Turkey. They often function more as cultural and youth centres, offering a range of services including sports activities. Secondly, while mosque associations were very active during the initial wave of migration, many of the newly established associations in recent years are more secular, intellectual, and advanced, and are better suited for establishing a diaspora. Therefore, Turks in Germany are now primarily establishing associations focused on education, culture, arts, health, women, media, business, professional organisations, and lobbying, rather than just mosque associations, regional associations, and charities targeting lower socioeconomic groups.[3]

As the focus of new-generation associations shifts away from traditional forms, the organised society in Germany is rapidly evolving towards a diaspora model from the perspective of Turks. Turkish Germans are transitioning from a traditional, religious social structure to a modern and secular form of solidarity. This process does not occur as a direct transition from the first to the second form but involves an intermediate phase of individualisation, cosmopolitanism, dispersion, and fragmentation. Research shows that approximately two-thirds of Turks in Germany are members of at least one association and thus participate in activities, pay dues, or are in some way affiliated (TAM, 2005). Another institutional study estimates this number to be 300,000 (Religionswissenschaftlicher Medien- und Informationsdienst e.V. [REMID], n.d.). While the first figure might seem exaggerated, the second might be slightly underestimated. On the other hand, viewing membership as a measure of affiliation and normal dues payment rather than active participation (Kocagöz, 2018) is more

[3] The author's field research in Germany included direct contact with associations in Duisburg. One of the associations the author interacted with and met the administrators of is named explicitly as the "Lobby Association".

realistic. Thus, averaging the two estimates, it can be said that approximately 1 million out of the 2.7 million Turkish-origin population in Germany are members of Turkish associations, meaning they are "affiliated" with Turkish NGOs. While it is difficult to provide an exact number for active participation, it can be stated that a small portion of the affiliated population is actively involved, and this is potentially sufficient for leadership, representation, and organisation.

Discussion

What quantitative and qualitative characteristics are necessary for a migrant community to establish a diaspora in a country? While there is no definitive and clear answer to this question, studies on diaspora communities can provide some insights. For example, how important is population size in forming a diaspora? Data from various levels suggests that the population size does play a significant role. The case of Armenians in France is illustrative in this regard. According to Yepremyan and Tavitian (2017), there are only 500,000 Armenians living in France, yet France is known to have the second strongest Armenian diaspora following the United States. This data suggests that the Turkish community in Germany may have an excess rather than a deficiency in population size needed to form a diaspora in this country. Thus, moving from the idea that the Turkish community in Germany has sufficient population size, it is useful to examine their adequacy in other areas.

As expected, after ensuring sufficient population size to form a diaspora, the next criteria to be examined are qualitative aspects and organisational level. In terms of qualitative factors, key indicators include education level, professions, and economic power. Sources have noted that the Turkish community in Germany has achieved relatively high success in education (Acar, 2018). The Turks in Germany also appear to have made considerable progress in acquiring professions. According to the research by Şen, Ulusoy, and Şentürk (2007, 44), Turkish entrepreneurs in Germany have an average age of 37.2, an average residency duration of 24.5 years, with 24.6% being women, 46.5% holding German citizenship, and, most importantly, 70% possessing a professional diploma. These data can be considered a noteworthy development and progress for a community that initially went to a country as "workers". The same research (2007, 19) also found that the average net monthly household income for Turks in Germany is 1950 Euros, which is a significant and relatively high amount.

For migrants, another critical factor in forming a diaspora in the host country is the establishment of associations and engagement in civil society activities. Several studies have been conducted on this topic (Adıgüzel, 2004; Ertürk, 2012; Kocagöz, 2018; Alptekin, 2024). It has been observed that Turks, who initially focused on creating religious-ideological associations, mosques, and hometown associations as extensions of Turkey during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, began to establish more independent and context-specific associations from the 1990s onward. These new associations focus on education, culture, health, art, sports, women's issues, professions, and direct lobbying. In the first 30 years, Turks engaged in conservative actions primarily aimed

at preserving their religion and culture. Over the subsequent 30 years, they shifted their focus to contemporary social issues and began forming civil society organisations (CSOs) with various social functions. This qualitative transformation has enabled Turks in Germany to raise their demands more effectively with local and national governments and even to exert pressure on institutions and governments on certain issues.

When all data is comprehensively evaluated, it can be concluded that Turks in Germany have developed the quantitative and qualitative characteristics necessary to form a diaspora in the country. Although the level of influence may vary, it can be said that Turks have indeed established a diaspora in Germany, whose existence can be acknowledged.

Conclusion

Approximately half of the 6 million Turkish nationals living abroad reside in Germany, with the rest dispersed across many other countries. Therefore, the largest and most substantial Turkish population is in Germany. It represents not only the most significant demographic group but also the strongest economic segment among the Turks living abroad. In addition to the demographic and economic factors previously discussed, social development and social capital should also be considered the third dimension. In terms of organisational and lobbying activities, Turks in Germany represent the most dynamic diaspora population abroad. Given this information, it can be asserted that if Turks living abroad cannot establish a diaspora in Germany, they are unlikely to succeed in any other country. Indeed, after 65 years and at the end of the sixth phase, Turks in Germany have managed to form a diaspora organisation, albeit in a nascent state. This includes lobbying associations, politicians and bureaucrats in government positions, economically influential industrialists and businessmen, well-known public figures, internationally renowned scientists, and highly educated elites.

The phase of *guest worker* migration, which began in 1961, transitioned into the *labour migration* phase in 1974. From this point onward, the German government officially halted the recruitment of guest workers. Subsequently, family reunification led to the migration of workers' families to Germany. In 1983, the introduction of the Incentive for Return Act marked the beginning of a third phase, which can be described as *international migration* for Turks in Germany. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of Germany led to a rise in German nationalism, positioning Turks in the fourth phase as the *Other of German nationalism*. During this period, ideological and fanatical exclusion and targeting of Turks became prevalent. This phase transitioned into the fifth phase of *exclusion through physical violence*, marked by the 1993 Solingen massacre, where Turks faced exclusion and othering through physical attacks. Finally, with the publication of Thilo Sarrazin's book from 2010, intellectual exclusion against Turks emerged. Over the past 14 years, Turks in Germany have entered the sixth phase, which can be termed as the *emergence phase of the Turkish diaspora* in Germany. In this phase, Turks have engaged in lobbying through civil society organisations and similar formations to respond to this latest form of exclusion.

Each phase represents a significant transformation in legal, social, cultural, and civil society aspects of life.

In diaspora theories, the precondition of "believing that one will never be fully accepted in the host country" has become highly relevant for Turks in Germany. This relevance did not emerge overnight but is the result of a process that has unfolded over time. The study outlines this process in six phases, with the rise of nationalism following the reunification of Germany, the Solingen massacre, and the publication and widespread sale of Thilo Sarrazin's book being identified as the three most significant developments. As a result of these events and after a 60-year process, Turks in Germany have come to the conclusion that they will never be fully accepted by Germans. This realisation has led them to return from a period of "potentially" individual living to an organised and collective living style. However, this return to collective life is not the same as it was in earlier periods. Initially, community life was characterised by traditional communal living; after phases of individualisation, atomisation, and cosmopolitan living, the reformation into a collective was driven not by external force but by an intellectual, rational, and modern community formation through NGOs. This final formation has laid the foundation for the diaspora.

As previously mentioned, for Turks in Germany, creating a diaspora has become a necessity rather than a choice. Economic, social, and political conditions over the past thirty to 40 years have made this necessary. The ability of Turks in Germany to establish a diaspora can serve as a valuable example and model for other migrant worker communities. Peaceful diasporas have always maintained a positive image worldwide. As a labour diaspora that has reached this point despite challenging conditions, Turks have much to contribute to this image. There is a significant global effort to address the issues faced by migrants and to develop sustainable solutions. The Turkish labour diaspora in Germany has the potential to offer various contributions to this effort.

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