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THE AWAKENING OF A LATENT DIASPORA: THE POLITICAL MOBILISATION OF FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION TURKISH MIGRANTS IN SWEDEN

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Abstract

This paper explores how political developments in a host country catalyse the awakening of a latent diaspora and lead to the activation of a transnational community that previously consisted of loose and scattered networks. It also draws attention to the generational continuation of identity politics in a diaspora context through analysing a second generation's abrupt interest in homeland politics. By using the Turkish community in Sweden as a case study and by basing its main arguments on extensive research and fieldwork, it suggests that inter-diaspora rivalries and group competition may help to gain a better understanding of the interest that diasporans show in the promotion of homeland politics. It also suggests that although the diasporic discourses are based on contested political issues in their home country, the framing process takes place with regards to the host country context. The paper suggests that there were two significant transformative and triggering factors in Sweden that motivated the Turkish diaspora to actively participate in efforts to affect policy-making mechanisms in Sweden: Kurdish diaspora activism in general and the passage of the Armenian Genocide Bill by the Swedish Parliament on the 11th of March, 2010.

Key words: *Turkish Diaspora, Kurdish Diaspora, Armenian Genocide Bill, Second Generation, Diaspora Mobilization*

Introduction

“We had to respond to the Kurds in some way”, responded one of the Turkish interviewees when I asked the reason behind his interest in Turkish politics, “they are ruining our [Turkish] image here in Sweden.” He was a young Swedish citizen of Turkish origin who was born in the suburbs of Stockholm. He had recently been active in one of the main Turkish organisations and was dynamically participating in discussions on blogs and in chat rooms that were formed to raise awareness against the passage of the Armenian Genocide Bill on 11 March 2010 at the Swedish Parliament. He was also among the participants at the rally, which for the first time gathered approximately three thousand members of the Turkish community in the main square in Stockholm to protest in the name of their homeland.¹ According to him, the image of the Turks in Sweden was “damaged” because of the “Kurdish diaspora lobby against Turkey” and the passage of the Genocide Bill, which “passed due to this lobby”, could be interpreted as the “last straw.” In his words, it was an “eye-opener” for the Turkish community to become part of a counter-political mobilisation process and “act as a diaspora.” He stated, “We have to do something as we are already too late.”

This testimony above was surely not exceptional; on the contrary, this interviewee was one of many second generation Turks who started to show a sudden interest in homeland politics and

¹“İsvç’teki Türkler Soykırım Yasasını Protesto Etti”, *Hurriyet*, 11 March 2010. (Last accessed 23 January 2013). (<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/14180087.asp?gid=200>)

became engaged in political mobilisation efforts in order to affect policy-making mechanisms in Sweden. Since the Swedish Parliament approved a resolution recognising the mass killing of Armenians under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as genocide, there has been a visible increment in Turkish political activism in Sweden. This is a highly contested issue in both Turkey and in the international arena due to the Turkish state's denial to define the atrocities (forced deportations, massacres and disappearances) of 1915 as genocide. This has caused significant nationalistic reactions in Turkey and among Turkish migrant populations in Europe.

Countries such as France, Greece and Belgium have already recognised the atrocities of 1915 as genocide. In Sweden the bill won the support of five of the seven Swedish parliamentary parties, which mainly represented the left side of the political spectrum and was passed after highly contentious debates among parliamentarians before and after the 11th of March.² The fact that the passage of the bill was supported by various Kurdish organisations as well as Kurdish origin members of parliament caused dismay and enhanced the widespread Turkish bitterness towards Kurdish activism in Sweden in general. Some members of the Turkish community in Sweden responded to the decision with a strong sense of frustration, for instance, some Turkish members of the Social Democrat Party, which voted in favor of the passage of the Genocide Bill, resigned en masse in Gothenburg to protest their parties' approach to this sensitive issue.³ What was interesting about these developments was that, strikingly, the second generation's reaction was evidently stronger than the reaction of the first generation.

According to Adamson, "the first step in the creation of a diasporic community is the activation of a transnational constituency from the mass of entangled and messy social networks" (Adamson 2012: 33). At this point, diaspora elites play a big role and channel these scattered small group efforts into one collective narrative. The aim is to create "coherent categories, discourses and symbols that can merge dispersed social networks under a single diasporic category" (Adamson 2012: 33). The push for the creation of a diasporic community usually comes from a critical juncture that occurs in the home country but as will be argued in this paper, sometimes the circumstances in the host country may also catalyse this activation process. Over recent years, despite their intra-group ideological differences, the Turkish transnational community has been slowly but surely forming a diasporic structure that could act as the "Turkish Voice" by bringing together the sporadic and weak networks of various ideological clusters and collecting them under an alliance that aims at "protecting the reputation of Turkey in the eyes of the Swedish public."⁴

Members of the Turkish community who belong to opposite camps in Turkish politics come together to demonstrate against the decision of the Swedish Parliament and form a diasporic space which channels the grievances of the Turkish community into a collective narrative. The reason behind this effort was the accumulated resentment of the Turkish community against Kurdish activism in Sweden, as well as Sweden's welcoming approach towards non-militant Kurdish activism on its soil (Baser 2012). The second generation is particularly active in this newly emerging mobilisation. This is largely due to the political developments in the host country and because they perceive Sweden's approach to Turkey's political matters to be a threat to their own image and status as a minority group in Sweden. Contingent alliances are made between other groups who are considered as "co-ethnics" or "ethnic cousins" such as the Azerbaijanis and the Uyghurs and diasporic battle fronts are being formed which reflect the enmities back in Turkey.

²"Sweden to Recognize the Armenian Genocide", *The Local*, 11 March 2010. (Last accessed 23 January 2013). (<http://www.thelocal.se/25468/20100311/>)

³ "Isvec'teki Turkler Soykirim Yasasini Protesto Etti", *Hurriyet*, 11 March 2010. (Last accessed 23 January 2013). (<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/14180087.asp?gid=200>)

⁴ Interview with the former president of the Turkish Youth Association (TUF), June 2010.

What we can see today is that from a transnational community that had predominantly economic and cultural ties with the homeland, a diaspora with solid political projects is being born.

In this case at hand, the political developments in Sweden have triggered an urge to form a coherent stance, but coincidentally enough, this diasporic awakening coincides with the homeland's new trajectory of strengthening the Turkish diaspora and its co-ethnics abroad. For the last couple of years, the Turkish state, which used to perceive Turkish migrants abroad as "remittance machines" (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003) rather than robust political agents representing Turkey abroad, started formulating strategies to effectively utilise Turkish migrants' transnational potential for its own benefits (Baser 2013). This neo-liberal approach required more contact with the Turkish communities abroad and a specific unit was formed by the Turkish state called the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Kin Communities. Yet, the phenomenon of a diaspora's political activism is far more complicated than a simple response to "homeland calling" (Demmers 2007: 14). One can observe that the interactions between the Turkish diaspora actors have been enhanced over the past few years, but it does not mean that this newly established link between the homeland and the diaspora elites can become an alternative explanation for the diasporic awakening of the Turkish community in Sweden. The centre of gravity of motivations and initiatives for mobilisation still came from the Turkish community in Sweden itself and the new diaspora strategy of the Turkish state officials could only play a complementary role rather than constituting the fundamental explanation behind these recent developments.

The current paper seeks to provide a deeper understanding of these newly embraced political mobilisation efforts of the Turkish transnational community in Sweden. The main questions asked here can be listed as the following: What triggers an interest in diaspora mobilisation in the hostland? Why and how do the second generation employ "transnational identity politics as a policy tool" (Shain & Barth 2003)? First, the paper addresses how political developments in a host country affect a transnational migrant community, which can lead to the formation of a diaspora that actively mobilises for policy change in the host country. Second, it explores the generational continuation in a diaspora context through a second generation's interest in mobilising for homeland politics. It argues that although the diasporic discourses of the Turkish community are based on contested political issues in their home country, the frames they use for their discourses are related to the host country's context and the awakening process occurs due to the political state of affairs in Sweden. The aim is not to profoundly analyse the long-standing issues revolving around the Turkish-Kurdish Question or the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, but instead to use these empirical findings to better understand the mobilisation processes of diasporas, the generational-continuation of diasporic activism and the intra-group rivalries and contingent alliances among diaspora groups in a given hostland.

The focus on the Turkish diaspora activism is important in the sense that there is insufficient academic work on the Turkish community and its engagement with Turkish politics so far, apart from that of a few authors who worked on the media practices (Altug 2006) and organisational behaviour (Akis & Kalaylioglu 2010) of the Turkish migrants in Stockholm. Other Turkish migrant groups in Germany or the Netherlands have been largely investigated but the Turks in Sweden remain an unexplored topic for researchers. Analysing the Swedish case shows that home states unevenly distribute their attention to their constituencies abroad and the diasporisation process of an ethnic community occurs asynchronously in each hostland context depending on various factors, such as the existence of diaspora elites, the composition of migrants, the hostland's political environment as well as the home state's reach to those communities.

Theoretical Approaches to Diaspora and Mobilisation for Homeland Politics

Over the last few decades, diasporas have become one of the most popular subjects among scholars and there is a growing literature analysing the role of diaspora groups as non-state actors. Broadly defined as migrant communities dispersed outside a homeland's borders, which keep certain social, economic and political attachments to the homeland and mobilise under a collective identity which is either ideological, ethnic or religious: diaspora groups all around the world are attracting the attention of numerous scholars, specialists, journalists and policy-makers. Many authors argue that the opportunities facilitated by globalisation enable diasporas to directly influence their homelands, as well as to lobby the host country governments for their homeland's benefit (Shain & Barth 2003, Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, Lyons & Mandaville 2010a, Adamson 2012) and they try to further understand the galvanising factors behind their mobilisation.

Existing studies usually focus on the experience of the first generation and their attachments to their homeland to explain the causes of diaspora mobilisation for a collective aim. From this perspective, a diaspora's connection to their homeland is their principle motivation for political action, both in their hostland and transnationally. Diaspora mobilisation practices such as voting abroad, sending remittances or promoting homeland politics (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, Nell 2008) are cited as examples to demonstrate its importance. Surely, diaspora-homeland relations are an incontestable part of the diaspora mobilisation process; however, the promotion of homeland related issues does not solely explain why interest in diaspora formation within a transnational community is triggered. Some authors also point to the hostland context to analyse the impact of the hostland's political environment on the evolution of diasporic identities. Many authors argue that the scope of the political transnationalism practiced by diaspora groups depends on the transnational opportunity structures (Ögelman et al. 2002, Koopmans and Statham 2001, Nell 2008). An abundance of research is available on the experiences of exclusion, segregation, limited economic, political and social opportunities as well as how they strengthen a transnational migrant community's retention of their ethnic ties. The emphasis on the host country's context usually revolves around integration issues, which are useful but limited in explaining diasporic identity formation. Diaspora mobilisation and their related political aims are more complex than they appear and are affected by a combination of exogenous and endogenous factors that need further attention by scholars. More precisely, "diasporans' intervention in matters concerning the homeland depends on interests and obligations rooted in the host society as well as the homeland" (Brinkerhoff 2009: 7). While having strong ties to their homeland is one of the main components in the definition of a diaspora, it does not mean that diasporas are neutral to the political developments in their hostland.

Research in diaspora studies often emphasises a specific framework in homeland-diaspora relations that depicts diasporas as groups dedicating their time and energy solely to benefit the homeland, undermining the fact that the promotion of the homeland's interests sometimes coincides with the interests of the diaspora groups. This approach, which perceives the diaspora as an altruistic entity, is highly prominent in current studies. For example, the work of Saideman et al. (2011: 6-13) summarises the current perspectives on the motivational and capacity theories of mobilisation and finds in both theories that the homeland is central and diasporas are perceived as romantic pursuers of long-distance nationalism, or tools of their home states. They are accepted as individual actors in some cases, but use this energy on homeland interests, assuming they have no interests of their own. For example, how diasporas form a counter-stance against other rival groups within a given context is largely neglected in the literature. By criticising this approach, Saideman et al. argue that diasporas may function in a similar way as interest groups, such as making a material and non-material "cost-benefit mobilizational calculus" before they act on a certain issue. In other words, the idea behind diaspora mobilisation cannot solely be explained by "emotional fulfilment" (Sheffer 2003). Kenny further suggests, "support for diasporan nationalism

is strategically adopted by particular groups within the immigrant community as a means of generating support for their own local goals in the host society.” He argues that once these elite groups are absent, it is hard to find support for homeland related political issues and/or mobilisation levels are much lower (Kenny 1998:1). In parallel to these arguments, this paper contends that it should not be taken for granted that diasporas prioritise their homeland’s agenda first and a diaspora’s own interests and its status within the host country are also to be considered part of the puzzle.

Understanding the Peculiarities of Diaspora Mobilisation

Some argue that the emergence of diaspora groups can be explained by an essentialist point of view, as a natural and automatic result of migration, exile or dispersion. However, this perspective ignores the mobilisation factor in the diasporisation process and runs the “risk of moving towards essentialising diaspora as an ethnic label rather than a framework of analysis” (Butler 2001). This paper, in accordance with Fiona Adamson (2008:7), builds on the constructivist approach, which perceives diasporic identity as a social construction of transnational networks and identities. Not all the members of an ethnic and religious community in a hostland constitute a diaspora. Diasporic identity is formed as a result of a combination of experiences both in the homeland and hostland. Based on this approach, diaspora is not simply a dispersed ethnic group but rather an identity constructed by the mobilisation efforts of certain elites in the hostland context. Political engagement also constitutes one of the central characteristics of a diaspora group. As Lyons and Mandaville (2010b: 126) argue, diasporas are not “given, pre-existing social actors” but instead they are “generated by politics”. Not every migrant who retains a sense-of-belonging to the homeland is a member of the diaspora, therefore “diasporas include only those who are mobilised to engage in homeland political processes.”

Based on the argument that diasporas are *not* a natural outcome of migration but are political entities, one should ask the question: “*Why does a diaspora discourse arise among a certain group of people?*” (Sökefeld 2006). Many explain the motivations for diaspora mobilisation by referencing an experience of traumatic dispersal or exile (Jewish and Armenian examples are the most common). However, this definition excludes many other migrant groups which act as a diaspora or define themselves as such. How, then, can we explain the diasporic mobilisation of the transnational migrant communities who migrated for purely economic reasons? According to Kenny, “In most cases support for homeland nationalism may be a social norm, but it requires at most no-cost lip service support. Successful nationalist mobilisation entails arriving at a situation in which the issue of the homeland is seen by at least some immigrants as a high priority issue requiring high-cost active support” (Kenny 1998: 1). What then causes this behavioral shift? Safran (2007) argues that, “diaspora consciousness may be revived after a special event, such as a revolutionary struggle or a tragic experience that brings back the importance of the kinship connection”. Demmers (2007:8) adds to the discussion the phenomenon of a “diasporic turn,” which transnational community members might experience after specific events that trigger diaspora identification. These kinds of arguments help us to understand why a transnational community might over time give birth to a diasporic segment. However, there is a tendency to assume that this shift followed by diaspora formation will occur due to critical developments or changes only in the homeland. Several examples exist along these lines, such as the Croatian Diaspora’s reaction to the disintegration of Yugoslavia or the support of Kosovo Albanians from former Yugoslavia in the struggle for Greater Albania (Faist 2004: 349).

This paper argues that diaspora mobilisation can also occur as a result of certain political developments in the hostland, such as changes in the bilateral relations between the homeland and hostland political actors or a sudden divergence in a hostland's foreign policy priorities towards the homeland. These events can induce significant changes in how a transnational community shapes its political stance towards homeland politics within the political and social contexts of a hostland. They can pave the way for a loosely bonded transnational community to combine scattered actions into a unified and solid act. In some cases, diaspora groups may feel that their status as an ethnic minority in the host society is threatened and then, seek assistance from homeland actors in reaction to these changes. As Kenny suggests, members of a transnational community may mobilise for homeland related issues, not through failing to integrate into the host society or because they have emotional attachments to their ancestral land but because promoting homeland interests will also advance their position in the host country (Kenny 1998: 3). Their motivations may arise from "social reinforcement or pride" (Brinkerhoff 2008: 243) or their material and non-material interests as a collective group within the hostland. Diaspora mobilisation should not be solely associated with the "homeland calling." In today's world the reverse is possible; diasporisation of a transnational community may cause a "diaspora calling" situation. For example, the diaspora elites could actively seek synchronisation on particular issues with the homeland discourses, policies and politics in order to have more say in their hostland political spheres.

Homeland nostalgia is not the sole catalyst for transnational communities to mobilise as diaspora groups. Interest-based politics and rational anticipation could also explain why certain groups transform into collectively-organised, politically-active networks. Especially when there is competition between several ethnic groups in the homeland, cost-benefit calculations and concerns about their status in the hostland become much more prominent for the diaspora elites. Political or social tensions in the homeland can be imported to the host country's context and from time to time surface rivalries among groups within the hostland may arise. Achieving a certain position in the eyes of the host society may trigger competition and tension between two adversary diaspora groups. If one group enjoys less media attention or believes its discursive opportunities are more limited due to the host country's support of the other group(s), then it could be motivated to take action. In the case of state-linked diaspora groups, the elites may seek assistance from homeland actors to better influence hostland politics. They may also synchronise their own narratives with the pre-existing homeland discourses on a certain issue. For these groups, building an alliance with the homeland is not a precondition for mobilisation. They may act on their own, with or without seeking the material and non-material support of their homeland, on issues relating to homeland politics. In these cases, contingent alliances between diaspora elites and homeland actors are conceivable. In other cases involving stateless diasporas, the elites of these groups might adjust their actions according to the given situation to focus more on affecting policy change in the host country or in building alliances with NGOs and civil society organisations.

Mobilisation of the Second Generation for Homeland Politics

There is still a huge gap in terms of understanding how diasporas mobilise and how the generational continuation of political activism takes place. Scholars are not in agreement about whether the second generation has as strong transnational ties as the first generation. Authors such as Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that the second generation has fewer ties with the homeland and that those transnational ties are a "one-generation phenomenon." Other authors argue that the second generation maintains ties with the homeland of their parents; however this attachment cannot solely be measured by statistics, such as remittances or frequency of visits to the homeland (Levitt et al. 2002). Today, more and more scholars argue that some

second generation members maintain a sense of belonging towards their country of residence, despite being unable to speak the native language, having never visited that “imagined” homeland, and having no intention to move there.

Glick-Schiller (2004: 578) argues that the offspring of migrants, even those who have obtained citizenship in their new country of residence, may embrace long-distance nationalism as a response to the racism and negative stereotyping that they encounter in the hostland. She offers the example of Turkish youths whose families have resided in a country for several generations and yet are denied full citizenship rights and, thus, need to look for a homeland transnationally. However, experiences of exclusion in the host country cannot solely explain diasporic mobilisation among the second generation members of the community. As Perlmann (2002: 218-219) argues: “the answer can hardly be that the host society is uniformly hostile.” It is important to look at the positive incentives and opportunities that the host societies provide for the following generations. For instance, multicultural policies and encouraging diversity could be one of the main reasons that the second generation establishes symbolic ties with their ancestor’s homeland.

Most importantly is the fact that the second generation establishes transnational networks and practices yet their repertoires of action are not always identical to the actions and strategies of the first generations. As Lyons and Mandaville (2010b: 137) state, “loyalties can remain high across generations whereas the most important frames shift.” The following generations have different attitudes towards homeland issues due to their socialisation in the host country and their symbolic ties to their ancestors’ homeland. Therefore, they frame their dissent or endorsement of particular issues differently to prior generations.

Data Gathering and Fieldwork in Sweden

The paper focuses on those Turks who have an interest in and influence upon homeland politics. To borrow Brubaker’s terms, only the members of the Turkish transnational community who take a “stance” or have a “claim” (Brubaker 2005) about the political issues in Turkey were included in the sample. The interviewees were active in protest events or other types of political demonstrations and actions, constantly followed the political developments in Turkey and tried to get involved in the political projects constructed by the diaspora elites. Rather than reifying a whole ethnic group and homogenising them to one cluster of a diaspora community, the diaspora is accepted as a subset of a transnational community (Baubock 2010) that is formed outside the borders of a defined or imagined homeland and whose members sustain attachments to the homeland economically, culturally and politically and as a result feel part of a collective movement that has solid political engagements to the homeland (Lyons & Mandaville 2010a). The diaspora is not taken for granted as being representative of a whole ethnic group but instead diaspora is perceived as a combination of various individuals and groups who *claim to represent* a certain ethnic group.

While selecting the interviewees, Shain and Barth’s (2003: 452) categorisation of diaspora members into three groups was highly useful:

- a) “*Core members* are the organizing elites, intensively active in diasporic affairs and in a position to appeal for mobilization of the larger diaspora.
- b) *Passive members* are likely to be available for mobilization when the active leadership calls upon them.
- c) *Silent members* are a larger pool of people who are generally uninvolved in diasporic affairs but who may mobilize in times of crises.”

The sample consisted of core and passive members of the Turkish diaspora in Sweden. Those who are assimilated into Swedish society or show no interest in homeland politics were not interviewed. Therefore, this paper does not represent the entire Turkish origin population in Sweden, but, rather, tries to present a comprehensive study about first and second generation Turks who have a politicised ethnic consciousness and are transnationally part of a broader ideological or political collective movement. The interviewees were members of the Turkish community who act as lobby groups, engage in political mobilisation efforts and seek to affect policy-making and carry their causes to the political platforms in Sweden.

The findings are based on an ethnographic research study which combines methods such as direct and participant observation, semi-structured group and individual interviews, as well as casual conversations. Various webpages of diaspora organisations, documents, leaflets and other social media sources were also utilised to gather more information. The participants were reached through migrant organisations, blogs, discussion forums and protest events. Among the interviewees were public intellectuals, authors, politicians, bloggers, organisation leaders and members. For the purposes of this study, 30 Turkish participants who were born in Sweden (all were born after 1975) and 20 Turkish first generation participants were interviewed over a total period of six months between 2008 and 2011 in several cities in Sweden including Stockholm, Malmö, Uppsala and Gothenburg.⁵

Turkish Transnational Community in Sweden

Apart from a number of leftist activists that fled Turkey for political reasons in the 1970s and 80s, Turkish migration to Sweden was the result of labour migration in the 1960s, and these labour migrants came predominantly from a specific region which made them a relatively homogenous group compared to Turkish migrant communities in other European countries. The majority of these immigrants came from a small district called Kulu (Konya) and they were of peasant origin, with a low educational background.⁶ The sense of belonging and the loyalties they harbor also revolve around this regional identity, as family ties and regional attachments are particularly strong (Westin 2003: 991).

Currently, the number of Turkish citizens residing in Sweden is estimated to be 100,000.⁷ Large flows of Turkish migration happened between 1966 and 1973, until Sweden closed its doors to labor migrants (Akin 2006: 33). The composition of migrants shifted with the arrival of asylum-seekers (mostly Assyrians and Kurds) who came to Sweden after the 1971 military intervention in Turkey. Another wave of migration began after the military coup in 1980 and on this occasion the asylum-seekers were mostly of Kurdish origin as the on-going Kurdish conflict in Turkey between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) paved the way for more migration flows of Kurdish refugees and asylum seekers to Sweden.

The composition of migrants and their profiles reflect the organisational structure of the Turkish groups in Sweden. Unlike other groups from Turkey such as Kurds and Assyrians which were politically active and mobilised in a sustained manner, the Turkish organisations have, until very

⁵The interviews were conducted in Sweden as part of the author's PhD research at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, between 2008 and 2012. The article was written during her employment as a postdoctoral fellow, and member of the ERC Project "Diasporas and Contested Sovereignty" at the University of Warwick between 2012 and 2013.

⁶ Kurdish groups were among the immigrants from Kulu. Today, some define themselves as Turkish and take part in the activities of the Turkish community, while others have rediscovered their Kurdish identity and joined the Kurdish political movement.

⁷The Ministry of Labor and Social Security Official Website. (Last accessed 30 May 2012) http://www.csgeb.gov.tr/csgebPortal/diyih.portal?page=yv&id=1#_ftn8

recently, distanced themselves from political action and focused solely on migration related issues and the preservation of Turkish culture. The organisations serve as hometown associations, which enable Turkish people to gather and interact without a specific political agenda. Most of the associations define their agenda as more Sweden-oriented rather than Turkey-oriented.⁸ The main organisations were founded to act as a bridge between the Swedish policy makers and the rivalries between them are also contextual towards their situation in Sweden rather than ideological or religious divisions imported from Turkey (Akis & Kalaylioglu 2010). The first Turkish organisation, Turkiska Riksförbundet (TRF), assumed a leading role among the Turkish population for two decades. During the 1990s, second generation Turks who wanted to surpass the TRF directive and follow a more ‘integration-oriented’ and ‘Sweden-oriented’ agenda formed a second Turkish umbrella organization called Svensk-Turkiska Riksförbundet (STRF). This organisation also followed a non-partisan program and, until very recently, refrained from Turkish politics in order to focus on the social situation of Turkish migrants in Sweden. The STRF also cooperated with a youth association called Turkiska Ungdomsförbundet (TUF). Besides these three umbrella organisations, Turkiska Student och Akademiker Föreningen (TSAF) is another youth association that recently became active among university students.

The vast majority of the Turkish community members were from a conservative background and inclined to support parties with nationalist agendas, however their party loyalties did not result in a mobilised network in Sweden.⁹ As Akis and Kalaylioglu (2010: 13) observed, “in respect of their political interests, Turkish associations in Sweden display a considerably different character in comparison to other Turkish associations in Europe” where “the associational life of Turks has taken shape in line with the basic political divisions and ideological fault lines of Turkish politics”. Instead in Sweden, “political divisions were not decisive in the development of Turkish associations.” These organisations support different Swedish parties and their activities vary; yet, when it comes to issues regarding homeland politics, they usually present a united front during protests and campaigns which are about ‘condemning terrorism’, ‘supporting the territorial integrity of Turkey’ or ‘protecting the image of Turkey in Sweden’ and they claim to represent a collective “Turkish Voice” in these matters.

Diaspora groups are not homogenous entities, therefore surely they consist of various groups that pursue different agendas or have diverse interests. Turkish diaspora also suffers from intra-group rivalries and ideological or religious divides. During the recent Gezi protests in Turkey, it was evident that there are tensions within the Turkish community in terms of supporting or criticising the Turkish government¹⁰, yet when it comes to targeting policy change in Sweden, different Turkish diaspora members with diverse interests could come together. In other words, the divisions are not sharp enough to divide them on the matters related to the well being of the Turkish community in Sweden or the image of Turkey in international and Swedish platforms. Another reason is that there are no actively mass-mobilised political groups who can be perceived as the branches of political movements in Turkey. For example, movements such as the ultra-nationalist Grey Wolves¹¹ are large migrant networks in Germany with connections to political parties in Turkey. However, there are no groups (except for small associations which have no

⁸ Interview with the president of the Turkish association (STRF) and with the former president of the Turkish Youth Association (TUF), June 2010.

⁹ Interview with the president of the Turkish association (STRF), June 2010.

¹⁰ Author’s observation of chat rooms and Turkish associations’ webpage discussions during and after the Gezi Events in Turkey between June and December 2013.

¹¹ The Grey Wolves are the youth branch of an ultra-nationalist political party, MHP, in Turkey. They are mobilized in several European countries and are occasionally involved in fights with Turkish leftist groups, PKK (Kurdistan Worker’s Party) followers or neo-Nazis.

significant mass support) that could be counted as satellite institutions of these movements in Sweden. The political activism of Turkish leftist groups could be sporadically observed until the end of the 1980s (Akis & Kalaylioglu 2010: 14, Altug 2006) but this is not the case today and they do not have a strong foothold in Turkey.

While the Turkish community remained detached from active engagement in homeland politics and kept a low-profile for a couple of decades, Kurdish diaspora members were very active in establishing associations and speaking out about matters related to the Kurdish situation in Turkey. In the early 1980s, an umbrella organisation for all Kurdish organisations was formed and officially recognised by the Swedish government. Sweden has been very supportive towards the cultivation of the Kurdish identity by supporting civil society organisations and other similar migrant associations. Sweden tends to host a comparatively well-educated Kurdish intelligentsia consisting of journalists, authors, academics, artists and directors. It became a safe haven for Kurds who fled oppression in Turkey. This gave them the opportunity to cultivate their culture through the preservation of their traditions and the survival of their mother tongue, which was potentially endangered in Turkey. Van Bruinessen (1999:10) emphasises that Kurdish writers found Sweden “a much more stimulating environment for developing Kurdish into a modern literary language than they would have found back in Turkey, even if the language had not been banned there.” The Swedish government has also financed the publication of books in Kurdish and, in the early 1980s; it was the only country that offered such opportunities for the Kurdish cause. The Kurdish elite lobbied Swedish political parties on the issues related to the Kurds in Turkey and the Middle East. Kurdish diaspora is highly visible in the Swedish media and there are a significant number of Kurdish origin politicians in Sweden who carry the Kurdish issue to Swedish political platforms (Baser 2012).

Kurdish activism in Sweden greatly agitated some members of the Turkish community, leading to reactionary responses through time.¹² Although no violence was recorded between the two communities, such as the street fights that occurred between Turkish and Kurdish nationalist groups in Germany (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003), there was apparent tension and growing social distance between the two communities. This dissociation also reflected on the social, economic, political and media practices of migrants from Turkey and the escalation of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict in Turkey had repercussions on the diaspora spaces (Altug 2006, Baser 2012). In the following pages, the reasons behind the activation of a diasporic identity among the Turkish community in Sweden are analysed with the aim of understanding the sudden interest in the promotion of homeland related politics. With the assumption that diasporic identities can remain active and dormant according to political and social circumstances as well as individual reasons and can be revived again under various circumstances, in Sweden two transformative and triggering factors can be observed: Kurdish diaspora activism and the passage of the Armenian Genocide Bill at the Swedish Parliament. The first factor is a more sustained one which galvanised interest in homeland politics gradually and the latter became the triggering event which catalysed activation and combined the scattered networks together.

Kurdish Activism as a Transformative Factor

Saideman et al. (2011: 14) suggest that “we should expect greater diaspora activism if there is significant political competition within the diaspora organization(s).” Diasporas make cost-benefit calculations and mobilise to ameliorate their perceived status within a given hostland. If there are

¹² Interview with the president of the Turkish association (STRF) and with the former president of the Turkish Youth Association (TUF), June 2010.

pre-existing tensions between two diaspora groups imported from the homeland, it is possible that the two groups will monitor each other's political movements in the host country to maintain the upper hand in discourses related to contested issues. Competition with other groups may indeed cause a behavioral shift and awaken interest and will to mobilise and affect policy-making mechanisms and the diaspora groups "stop seeing the issue of homeland as a low priority" (Kenny 1998: 1).

Certainly each member of the Turkish migrant community had a political stance, supported a political party/figure back in Turkey and had an individual interpretation of the state of affairs both in Sweden and Turkey. However, the proliferation of these political stances in a collective manner coincides with the ascending Kurdish activism in Sweden that started in the 1980s. Based on the participant observations as well as testimonies given in the interviews, it can be said that the Turkish community's mobilisation developed to protect the "Turkish image" in the face of a (perceived) threat by other ethnically politicised groups in the host country. Mobilisation was gradual and born as a response to a specific situation in Sweden when the Turkish elite recognised that they were losing a *discursive battle* over the Kurdish issue. The second generation interviewee accounts in particular reveal that mobilisation for homeland related political issues only started being discussed in migrant organisations during the last decade. According to the majority of the interviewees, the reason they became interested in promoting homeland politics was that they gradually developed a reflexive nationalist discourse because "when Turks were silent, Kurds seized the opportunity to raise their voice." Putting homeland politics on the agenda is strongly related to the Turkish community feeling neglected by the Swedish authorities and their need to intervene in a "worsening situation," in the words of one interviewee.

During the course of the interviews, the majority of Turkish respondents listed similar grievances: "the Swedish state is partial when it comes to the Kurdish question and supports the Kurds by all means"; "whatever the Turks have to say about the Kurdish question is badly received"; "Turks are disappointed by the Swedes' behaviour and feel discriminated"; and "the Turks feel the need to be involved in politics at an organisational level only because the Swedish state takes sides in this conflict." Their assertions regarding the existence of the "Kurdish lobby" and its alliance with other groups pushed them into a reactionary and politicised restructuring of their associations. Almost all of the participants had an openly negative stance towards the PKK and agreed that, although the PKK is on the terror list in EU countries, Sweden has a loosely tolerant policy towards it. Many others also mentioned that they feel frustrated in Sweden with regards to the Kurdish question, stating that they have no chance of "defending Turkey or themselves" because they are labelled as the "bad guys" by the Swedish authorities and Swedish society. They also stated that the Swedish authorities and media silenced their voices and they are not given sufficient opportunity to express themselves.

Another fieldwork observation was that although the participants were economically and socially well integrated within Swedish society, they strove to be more active than their parents in terms of influencing the Swedish decision-making processes regarding Turkish political issues. This is not because they are more radical than their parents in terms of interpreting homeland politics but instead it is because they relate these issues to Swedish politics and their reactions are framed in the Swedish context rather than the Turkish one. To the second generation, Kurdish activism as well as the passage of the Genocide Bill is not interpreted as Turkish politics but it is a domestic issue that they need to deal with in Sweden. The second generation members act because these developments affect their lives in Sweden. The following testimony demonstrates that the homeland issues became a high priority for them not due to their interest in a policy change in

Turkey but because of their concerns about their own status vis-à-vis the other ethnic minority groups in Sweden:

Every day they were protesting in Sergels Torg¹³[...] When we passed by, we saw it[...] and we thought: what would the Swedes think about us, the Turks? We had to show them we were not as bad as the Kurds were trying to show us to be.

Another testimony from a TUF member also shows that the Turkish community acted like a typical dormant state-linked diaspora until a political juncture in Sweden which galvanized an interest in counter-mobilisation:

At first I thought we did not have to organise ourselves against the Kurds [...] we are brothers. It is just a handful of extremists engaging in separatist propaganda. I told myself, we have our state, army, intelligence service, and embassy in Sweden [...] it is not our job to respond to these Kurds. But after the Genocide Bill, I changed my mind. I realised that we are on our own and we will have to bear the consequences if we do not act.

These reactions against Kurdish activism did not unite the Turkish community instantly but laid the foundation for an established diasporic structure. More and more Turkish members started writing blogs on a regular basis dealing with the issues related to Kurdish activism in Sweden and their support for “terrorist groups” in Turkey. Increasingly, one could see commentaries in numerous newspaper articles related to Turkey, condemning Sweden for “letting the Kurdish diaspora show open support for the PKK” which was considered as a “terrorist organisation.” The chat rooms of websites that publish articles about the political conundrum in Turkey became a venue for Turkish and Kurdish politically active youth to have virtual fights and provocations. For instance, one of the most famous blogs is called “The Anatolian Voice” which was founded by a second generation Turk with the motto of “a reaction to the incitement campaign against Turkey.”¹⁴ These individual attempts did not have a big impact on how Swedish policy makers perceived Turkish unease about what is going on in Sweden but they surely helped to show the Turkish community that these are not solely individual grievances but that there are many people out there who share similar views about the Kurdish diaspora activism. Diaspora nationalism started spreading within the Turkish community as a reactionary response to their perceived pecking order of ethnic groups in Sweden.

Therefore, these reactions signal the initial motivations that raised interest in homeland politics. They began importing official homeland discourses to the hostland political sphere and strengthening ties with the Turkish state and its political actors. In 2007, various Turkish organisations lead by TRF and TUF organised a meeting, which was titled “No to Terror!” and there were more than a thousand people gathered in Stockholm to protest against the Kurdish organisation PKK and its actions in Turkey.¹⁵ With the responses to Kurdish activism the first sparks of the diaspora mobilisation process were born. These meetings gained continuous

¹³ Sergels Torg is the central public square in Stockholm, Sweden, where many different groups organise protests.

¹⁴ www.anatolianvoice.blogspot.co.uk

¹⁵ “Isvec ve Avusturya’da Terore Hayir Yuruyusu”, *Milli Gazete*, 29 October 2007. (Last accessed December 2013).

(http://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/Isvec_ve_Avusturya39da_terore_hayir39_yuruyusu/59631#.UtVKchbbdUQ).

momentum and were repeated almost every year. Another “anti-PKK” meeting was organised in 2011 by the main Turkish umbrella organisations.¹⁶

The Armenian Genocide Bill as a Triggering Event

The interviewee accounts indicate that the real push to mobilise was the Genocide Bill of 2010, which came as a shock to the Turkish community. They believe it stigmatised the Turkish community in Sweden and worried about its consequences. For example, the Turkish community raised concerns about the genocide-related issues being taught in schools in history classes and memorials in remembrance of the genocide being erected in Sweden. They found this to be an “unfair” representation of the Turkish community. Even though the members of the Turkish community had different opinions about the Armenian Genocide, the majority of the members united around one idea; “the decision of the parliament was discriminatory.” There are diaspora members who admit that the genocide occurred, but they disagreed with the Swedish Parliament’s role in condemning Turkey. There are others who deny the existence of Armenian Genocide and blame foreign powers for generating a “lie” to damage Turkey’s reputation. Finally, there are groups who think that both the Armenians and Turks committed crimes against each other and only historians can decide their fate. There are diverse perspectives about what happened in 1915, but what united and eventually mobilised the Turkish-Swedes were their common concerns regarding the consequences of this bill for their status in Sweden.

The Genocide Bill also increased antagonism towards the Kurdish diaspora as the majority of the interviewees claimed that the bill was passed because the Kurdish diaspora lobbied for it. It is true that several Kurdish groups supported the passage of the bill by holding demonstrations before and after the process as well as by publishing declarations in favor of it. Moreover, several politicians from Kurdish backgrounds gave speeches in the Swedish Parliament regarding this issue. These acts were proof for the Turkish community that a “Kurdish lobby” had played a significant role. The Turkish association leaders and their members felt a sense of isolation throughout the entire process of passing the Genocide Bill. It was also apparent that diaspora nationalism was evolving rapidly, particularly among the Turkish youth. During the interviews, I asked why they perceived the Genocide Bill to be the ‘last straw’ considering that Kurdish activism had always existed in Sweden. Several interviewees argued that the Genocide Bill was the first time that the Swedish state had been openly involved in a contentious issue among supposedly antagonistic ethnic groups and showed its bias “officially.” Their answers revealed that the Turkish reaction was in response to a long-held complaint about Sweden’s attitude towards Turkish politics and was very much contextual.

The initial reaction to the genocide resolution was an attempt to prevent it, later followed by protests and petitions. Before the vote in the parliament, some Turkish groups came together to form a small organisation called “Fakta forum Turkiet.”¹⁷ Their aim was to inform the Swedish public about Turkish history and politics, from their perspective, in order to “correct” current information about Turkey circulating the Swedish public and media. To support their claims they referenced the official Turkish discourse, which consisted of Turkish and foreign scholars’ works that deny the existence of genocide and several websites that belong to the Foreign Ministry of Turkey. The seminar organized by STRF with the participation of Prof. Justin McCarthy who argues that the atrocities of 1915 was not a genocide and who is frequently referred to in Turkish

¹⁶ “Isvec’teki Turkler Teroru Protesto Etti”, *Sabah*, 28 August 2011. (Last accessed December 2013). (<http://www.sabah.com.tr/Gundem/2011/08/28/isvecteki-turkler-teroru-protesto-etti>).

¹⁷“Fakta Forum Turkiet Toplantı Cagrisi”. (Last accessed 23 January 2013). http://www.tuf.nu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1263&Itemid=9999999&lang=tr

official discourses is an important example which shows that the diaspora discourse was being synchronised with the homeland's official narrative of this highly sensitive issue. They issued a press release in February 2010 stating that the decision as to whether the 1915 events were an act of genocide should be the responsibility of historians – and not parliamentarians. They also noted that the Social Democrats' decision would cause political division among migrant communities from Turkey.¹⁸ Additionally, some organisation members sent emails to the Social Democrat Party members, which included the reactions and concerns of the Turkish community in Sweden.¹⁹

Shortly after the resolution was passed, the Swedish Turkish Workers Federation, the Swedish-Turkish Federation, the Swedish Turkish Youth Federation, the Kemalist Thought Association and the Turkish Women's Association organised a joint protest in Sergels Torg to condemn the parliament's decision. It was one of the few occasions when Turkish associations gathered more than 3,000 people together for a protest. The Turkish association members carried banners accusing Sweden of "being unfair towards Turks" or "distorting historical facts for political reasons." The Turkish elite who spoke at the protest highlighted the "unfairness" of the resolution for the Turkish community, the worsening relations between Armenia and Turkey, and the discriminatory consequences for the next generation. These protest events were mainly organised by the diaspora elites and not by the Turkish Embassy or any other official party. According to the leader of STRF, the embassy did not actively get involved in any stage of these events but they could feel its moral support. When asked about the importation of the official discourse in order to represent the Turkish discourse, he responded that these methods had been chosen not because the embassy projected it on them but because it was "practical."

The TUF published an article on the Turkish community's concerns about the resolution itself and the monuments possibly being erected in recognition of the resolution where Turkish, Kurdish or Assyrian people live. Most of the people who were interviewed for the article were disturbed by the decision and said that the monuments would only increase tension between ethnic groups.²⁰ One of the leaders of the Turkish association said:

They will raise monuments throughout Sweden, put this in the school books - our children will have to study it at school. Then they will come home and ask if our ancestors had committed such a crime. We don't want this to happen. It is a problem for us, for young people and for our future children.

Sökefeld (2006:275) argues that critical events in the home or host country are a necessary condition for diaspora mobilisation but they do not evoke diasporic consciousness all at once. As he states, "Events are only critical when they are perceived and framed in a particular way. Actors are needed to articulate that such events require new forms of action, discourse and ways of conceptualising the world." It is usually the elites who initiate such actions, as is the case for the Turkish community in Sweden. Immediately following the passing of the Genocide Bill, the diaspora elite developed new strategies to accelerate the mobilisation process and to turn "all the spontaneous reactions into one collective action", as one of the interviewees described. Many interviewees from different organisations highlighted their focus on the following aims: a) forming special lobby groups to support Turkish interests and to ameliorate the image of Turkey

¹⁸ Yeni Birlik Magazines can be reached via this link: <http://www.trf.nu/yenibirlik/>

¹⁹ Vizyon Magazine, Speech of the leader of the Turkish Association in Gothenburg.

²⁰ "Sozde Soykirim Anitlari Yolda, Turkler Tepkili" http://www.tuf.nu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1498&Itemid=1203 (Last accessed 23 January 2013).

in the eyes of the Swedish public and parliament, b) convincing young people (in particular) to learn about Turkish politics by organising seminars, inviting scholars from Turkey to speak, providing workshops on Turkey for Swedish politicians and scholars etc., c) maintaining close relations with the Swedish political parties and being actively involved in Swedish politics and, lastly, d) inviting Turkish authorities into the process and striving for greater cooperation between Turkey and Sweden to benefit the Turkish community in Sweden. As one association member stated:

This all happened because we remained silent. We didn't see what was coming. Now, all we need to do is to start from scratch. As the Turkish Youth in Sweden, we need to inform ourselves about Turkish politics in order to be able to respond to others when necessary. We will work on mobilising the young people first.

Another one agreed:

We cannot ignore the fact that the image of Turkey becomes our image here. We cannot just say I don't care. Whatever happens in Turkey comes and finds us here in Sweden.

The participants also commented on their engagement with Swedish political parties. For instance, almost all of them said they would never vote for the Leftist Party, as it is very partial in its support of the Kurdish community in Sweden. They were also reticent about the Social Democrats, which, for years, had the support of Turkish migrants. The interviewees said that after the Genocide Bill had been passed, the Social Democrats should "forget about Turkish votes" because this action had ignored the Turkish community in Sweden. Another participant from the TUF indicated that no party in Sweden "likes" Turkish people and as a Swedish citizen of Turkish origin, she feels underrepresented in Sweden. Because members of the Turkish community felt isolated by left-wing parties who voted in favor of the Bill, they sought an unofficial tacit alliance with the center-right Moderate Party, which criticised the bill and commented adversely on the passing of the Bill. Turkish associations organised petitions and campaigns to condemn the parliamentary decision but also to persuade the Turkish community to vote for the Moderate Party. Facebook and YouTube were utilised to encourage votes for the Moderate Party for the national elections that were held on 19th September 2010. Group emails were also sent to inform people about the voting process and about the importance of opposing the leftist block. Not only did the Turkish diaspora elite encourage an alliance with the Moderate Party in order to counter-balance Kurdish diaspora activism and the support it receives from left wing parties, but also the Moderate Party began acknowledging the "Turkish Voice" and the Turkish diaspora as a monolithic body and started addressing them as such. For instance, for the 2010 elections, the Moderate Party prepared postcards that were sent to Turkish voters with the following messages: "*Show your reaction to the leftist block which declared you as genocide perpetrators. Vote for the Moderate Party!*" or "*End this dirty game! Vote for the Moderate Party who supports the Turks*" (Baser 2013:269). Even this changing attitude of a political party demonstrates that the perception of the Turkish community as an awakening diaspora was widening to the political circles in Sweden. As shown, the Genocide Bill remarks on the burgeoning of diasporic activities as well as the changing perceptions and self-perceptions of the Turkish community in a Swedish context.

Was it a one-off reaction?

Almost four years since the Genocide Bill was passed, there have been significant developments in Turkish diasporic spaces related to homeland and hostland politics. First, clear signs of political mobilisation are evident: new websites, blogs, and Facebook pages exist encouraging Turks to

unite in the transnational cyber space as well as actual protest events, seminars and parliamentary visits. New online newspapers have been established by second-generation diaspora members to draw attention to politics in Turkey. For example, TUF members established a website called *gazete.se*²¹ to inform Swedish society, as well as the Turkish community in Sweden, about controversial politics in Turkey. On their website, their stated aim is “to provide news in a balanced way and to pay attention to news and topics that may not be given adequate coverage in the traditional media.” Headlines have included “The Cyprus Question”, “The Kurdish Question”, “The Occupation of Azerbaijan”, and “What happened in Anatolia in 1915”, etc. The links have been prepared in a question-answer format, which coincides with the official Turkish discourse on these issues. *Harbi Gazete*, which is published by Turkish diaspora members in Sweden, added a separate section to its website under the title of “Genocide” where they regularly publish articles that are related to what they call “so-called Armenian Genocide” and how Sweden and other European countries approach this issue.²² Young Turks published articles on TRF’s website, calling for members of the Turkish community to “unite” and “surmount” the legacy of this event.²³

In addition to online social networking, Turkish migrant organisations, in collaboration with young Turkish activists, have organised several lobbying trips to Brussels and Turkey. In their opinion, Turkish membership to the EU is the key to solving the many problems that Turkey faces today. Therefore, a small committee consisting of 25 individuals organised a trip to the European Parliament in Brussels to lobby for Turkish membership to the EU.²⁴ The diaspora newspapers and websites highlight the Turkish community’s efforts in Sweden to ameliorate the image of Turkey in Sweden and Europe.

Conferences have been jointly organised by Azeri and Turkish associations in order to form a strategy of counter-mobilising against the antagonistic diaspora groups. On the anniversary of the Genocide Bill’s ratification, twelve Turkish associations, in collaboration with the Azeri, Uygur and Kazak associations in Sweden, organised a protest in Stockholm. The protestors laid a black wreath, as a sign of their discontent, and presented a letter to the Swedish parliament. The members of the associations not only complained about the worsening image of the Turks but they also referred to the image of Muslims.²⁵ During the protests, the leader of TRF, the biggest Turkish umbrella organisation in Sweden stated the following: “It is difficult to fight with a Christian issue in a Christian country. This is how most Christian countries including Sweden perceive the Armenian issue”.²⁶ This brought a different dimension to the discussions around the status of Turks within the Swedish society. Their protest, as part of the diasporic narrative, combined their dissent about the worsening image of the Turkish community in Sweden with the generally worsening image of Muslims. Protesting on the anniversary of the passing of the Bill became an annual event for various Turkish organisations in Sweden and in 2013 there was a

²¹ “Vad hände 1915?” <http://gazete.se/index/index.php/Fragor-Svar/vad-haende-1915.html> (Last accessed 23 January 2013).

²² *Harbi Gazete*, (last accessed 23 December 2013). (<http://www.harbigazete.com/haberler/soykirim/>)

²³ “Sorunlarımızın Ustesinden Gelmenin Tek Yolu Birlik Olmak”, TRF website, (last accessed 13 January 2014). (<http://www.trf.nu/sorunlarımızin-ustesinden-gelmenin-tek-yolu-birlik-olmak.html>)

²⁴ “İsveçli Türkler Avrupa Parlamentosu’nda Türkiye’nin önemini anlattılar” http://www.tuf.nu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1728&Itemid=1203 (last accessed 23 January 2013).

²⁵ “İsveç Meclisi Siyah Çelenkle Protesto Edildi” <http://www.trf.nu/isvec-meclisisiyah-celenkle-protesto-edildi.html> (last accessed 23 January 2013).

²⁶ “Turkish Diaspora Accuses Sweden of Double Standards.” (Last accessed 23 December 2013). (<http://news.az/articles/11350>)

protest in front of Riksdag²⁷, thus it seems like these reactionary mobilisations will take a sustained and systematic form in the coming years.

Interactions with Turkey and Turkish Political Actors

In the literature, there are numerous examples of homeland governments that are interested in creating a diaspora abroad as leverage in hostland policy-making processes. Therefore, diasporas are not simply a product of hostland elites but can be the result of homeland government efforts (Bauböck 2010: 316) and homeland political actors might expect diaspora groups to lobby host country governments for their “cause” (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003: 211). The literature on homeland-diaspora relations touched on the homeland’s involvement in diasporisation, however, there is still a huge gap regarding how the homeland decides to mobilise which diaspora group in a certain hostland. As Harutyunyan (2012: 7) suggested: “the diaspora-homeland relationship is often seen from the perspective of the so-called Solar System, where the diaspora is viewed as a periphery connected and belonging to one center, namely the homeland.” Yet the following questions remain: Which diaspora groups attract more attention from homeland actors? Does it relate to territorial proximity or bilateral relations between the homeland and the hostland? It is not within the scope of this paper to answer these questions. However, the case of the Turkish community in Sweden clearly shows that some diaspora groups attract more attention from homeland actors than others. For a very long time, the Turkish community in Sweden remained outside the scope of the Turkish state’s diaspora formation project. Compared to other countries, such as Germany or the Netherlands where many homeland political actors actively seek to build transnational networks, we see the Turkish migrants in Sweden suffering from the uneven distribution of attention of the Turkish policy makers (Baser 2013).

The leading members of TUF and STRF mentioned that the consulate had a passive policy with the Turkish community that started with the first wave of migration to Sweden. They felt that Turkey abandoned them in Sweden and the embassy did not work to sustain a strong connection. Some members expected the first mobilisation initiatives to come from the embassy, while others argue that the organisations should take the lead. However, drawing from the interviewee accounts, it is clear that especially during the last decade, relations between the Turkish community and the Turkish Embassy improved. There were also several significant official visits from Turkey. The Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdoğan, visited Sweden in 2008 and held meetings with the leaders of Turkish associations. In his speech, Erdoğan emphasised the Swedish-Turks’ duty to be involved in Turkish politics because they had been granted voting rights in Turkey.²⁸ This kind of encouragement increased after the genocide resolution and continues today. The vast majority of the interviewees repeated their expectation of continued Turkish state support and contact with Turkish authorities regarding their lobbying activities. Organisations such as STRF and TUF also visited Ankara to strengthen relations and to offer suggestions about how to lobby in Sweden. The Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and the Minister responsible for Turks abroad, Faruk Çelik, met with those groups to discuss how to better organise the Swedish-Turks in support of Turkey’s accession to EU membership and other political issues.²⁹ When President Abdullah Gul visited Sweden, he made a speech addressing the Turkish migrants in Sweden. Referring to the Genocide Bill, he ordered the Turkish diaspora members to take a more active role in Sweden with regards to homeland-related politics:

²⁷ “Isvec Ucuncu Kez Protesto Edildi”, Harbi Gazete. (Last accessed 23 December 2013). (<http://www.harbigazete.com/haber/795/isvec-3-kez-protesto-edildi.html>)

²⁸ “Stockholm’de 23 Nisan Kutlamasi” http://www.kuluhaber.net/haber_detay.asp?haberID=170 (Last accessed 23 January 2013).

²⁹ Vizyon Magazine, page 24.

“You should act like ambassadors of your motherland, Turkey, which you should represent here in the best way. You should protect and defend Turkey’s image, as there could be anti-Turkish propaganda. Turkey’s realities are much more different from such propaganda indeed.”³⁰

However, these initiatives have not yet met the expectations of the Turkish community. Newly achieved, closer cooperation does not mean that the Turkish state suddenly turned the immigrant organisations in Sweden into proxy actors in the hostland. Diasporisation projects by the homeland actors require further effort to achieve such a dramatic change. In reality, it will be difficult for the homeland political actors to diffuse into the already existing organisational structures. Therefore, the current mobilisation in Sweden is a call for collaboration from the diaspora elites to the homeland actors and it might lead to a reciprocal bonding between the homeland and the diaspora. It is important to note that the vast majority of diaspora elite members expressed their aim to build contingent alliances on certain issues, rather than taking direction from the Turkish Embassy or homeland actors. The leaders of both STRF and TRF emphasised seeking “partners not patrons”.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was two-fold: to enhance our theoretical knowledge on how latent diasporas turn into active diasporas, while at the same time contributing to empirical knowledge on the Turkish political mobilisation in Sweden. It argued that diasporic awareness can be triggered by political developments in the host country, despite the issues possibly relating to homeland politics. The second-generation members of the transnational community can be affected by these developments, which could make them the forerunners of diasporic mobilisation. Especially at times, when their interests are at stake, they may align themselves with home state institutions or import discourses from home country policy makers. Their political actions do not always focus on policy change in their home country but they may use homeland related politics in the host country to influence host country politics.

Diasporic awareness does not evolve overnight but is the result of the accumulation of grievances and common interests over time. This in combination with the elite members’ strategies can bring a community together for a collective aim. In the Sweden case, the reactions of the Swedish-Turkish community were not against the Kurdish movement in Turkey per se, but to losing a discursive battle against the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden. In the same way Turkish reactions to the Genocide Bill were not against the Armenian claims per se but mostly against the loss of prestige in the eyes of Swedish society. What concerned the Turkish first and second generations more was the consequences of this bill for their community and what it indicated about their status in comparison to other ethnic communities in Sweden. The passing of the Genocide Bill had a more enduring impact on the Turkish community because the Turkish community felt targeted and stigmatised by the parliament’s decision. It marked community members seeing the issue of homeland politics as high priority for the first time. Consequently, it strengthened the Turkish community’s pre-existing connection with Turkey. The Turkish community in Sweden presents several noticeable trends in displaying diasporic behavior, such as having stronger ties with the Turkish Embassy and other political actors, forming lobbying strategies, and elite members’ efforts to mobilise young people within the Turkish community. Diaspora nationalism is on the

³⁰ Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Official Webpage. (Last accessed December 2013). (<http://www.tccb.gov.tr/news/397/85377/gul-pays-the-first-state-visit-from-turkey-to-sweden.html>).

rise and it is the second generation who are taking the lead in converting a Turkish transnational migrant community into an active Turkish diaspora.

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