Turkish Diaspora as a ‘Building’ or ‘Blocking’ Factor On the Way of the EU?: Lessons for Turkey

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Turkish Diaspora in Europe...

- The history of the modern Turkish Diaspora in Europe goes back to the post-war labour migration.

- The term Diaspora refers to the Anatolian Turks migrated to outside of modern Turkey because of mainly socio-economic reasons.

- Today, more than 4.5 million Turks live in the EU.
  - Diaspora is largely concentrated in Germany (2,300,000), France (423,000), the Netherlands (364,000), Belgium (130,000) and Austria (110,000).
Turkish Diaspora in Europe...

- ‘Building’ social, economic and political bridges between the EU and Turkey, but at the same time, due to ongoing integration problems, it can act as a ‘blocking’ factor for Turkey on the road to EU membership.

- The key aim of this study: to propose alternative government policies to turn the weaknesses of the Turkish Diaspora into strengths for maximizing its economic and non-economic contributions for achieving positive impact on accession process of Turkey into the EU.

- What can be done by the Turkish government to improve integration and development of the Diaspora is the key question of this study.
Content

- Part 1: Short historical background, evolution and characteristics of the Turkish Diaspora.

- Part 2: Bilateral links between the image of Turkey and that of the Turkish Diaspora in EU public opinion.

- Part 3: Critical evaluation of governmental policies on integration of the Turkish Diaspora.

- Part 4: Policy options for the Turkish government to maximize economic and non-economic contributions of the Diaspora to the Turkish membership to the EU.
I. Historical Background, Evolution and Characteristics of Turkish Diaspora
The story goes back to 1960s...

- Bilateral Labour Export Agreements signed with Germany (1961), Netherlands, Belgium and Austria (1964), France (1965) and Sweden (1967) to respond acute labour shortage in industry.

- Recruitment of ‘guest workers’ (Gastarbeiter).

- No particular attention given to integration policy for the “guests”.
The first generation Turkish Diaspora

- Rather homogenous group of male labourers.

- Low standard of educational and professional qualifications and poor language skills

- Faced with marginalization and social integration problems
  - Combined with the failure of the host governments in formulating appropriate integration policies
The second and third generations

- More heterogeneous and better educated
- Taken part in politics at local, national and EU level.
- Self employment and entrepreneurship are rising trends
  - The overall number of Turkish entrepreneurs in the EU has risen to 101,000 in 2006.
  - Investment by Turks in their host economies rose to EUR 10.9 billion.
- Turkish workers adding EUR 80.7 billion to EU GDP.
The second and third generations

- But still have deficiencies in language skills (both in Turkish and host countries language)

- Unemployment problem
  - Rate of unemployment above the EU average: 30% in Germany; 24% in Belgium; and, 15% in the Netherlands
II. The EU’s Image of Turkey and the Turkish Diaspora
To what extent do the characteristics of the Turkish Diaspora mirror the image of Turkey?

- Support for EU membership of Turkey is highly controversial.
- The image of the Diaspora and that of Turkey are linked in the eyes of EU public
Eurobarometer surveys: Key concerns effecting perception of EU public

1. Possibility of migrant influx and increase in unemployment
   - Eurobarometer report published in France in 2005, unemployment (67%), and immigration (11%) stated as most important reasons behind ‘No’ votes to the Constitution

2. Clash of cultural differences
   - Uniqueness of Turkey: Secular and modern state with mainly Muslim population.
   - ‘Alliance’ vs. ‘Clash’
     - Turkey is the co-leader, with Spain, of the ‘Alliance of Civilizations’,
     - serve to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions, and to dilute polarization and extremism
Fluctuating support

- 2006 Spring Eurobarometer survey: Support for enlargement including Turkey decreased after the start of negotiations in 2005.

- Spring 2008 Eurobarometer reveals an increase in support rate in favour of Turkish membership (+ 6%).

- However, Turkey has still the lowest support for the integration in the EU (31% in favour) (according to the most recent 2008 Spring TNS Eurobarometer Survey)

- Clear evidence for need for improve image of Turkey as well as Diaspora.
III. Turkish Governmental Policies towards Turkish Diaspora in the EU
“We asked for workers. We got people instead.”

(Max Frisch)

- 35 governmental programs and 9 development plans implemented in Turkey during the period 1961–2009

- Migration of workers seen as an economic opportunity
  - To mitigate unemployment problems and foreign currency shortages through worker remittances.
  - Sharp decline in remittances directly reflected as lower emphasis on policies for the Diaspora.
Continious discontinuity ...

- Discontinuity in policy management for the problems of the Diaspora

- In some governmental programs, the Diaspora was not mentioned at all.

- Importance of communication and publicity campaign for EU public and mobilization of the Diaspora for the accession process largely ignored

- Most of the difficulties arisen from lack of a single coordinator body for service provision.
A promising attempt but still under the shadow of discontinuity problem...

- Despite no indication in the last governmental program:
  - For the first time in Turkey, a State Minister was appointed (by the Second Erdoğan Government) to coordinate provision of services to the Diaspora.
    - But recently withdrawn from the Cabinet: Another sign of continuous discontinuity ...
  - A Strategy Paper prepared in January 2008 and 70 projects identified.
IV. Policy Options for Turkish Government to Mobilize Turkish Diaspora for EU Accession
Balance in following two-tier policy approach

- Mobilization of the Turkish Diaspora requires
  - 1st pillar: Development of pro-active policy options for *integration of the* Diaspora to the host countries in cooperation with the host governments in the EU
  - 2nd pillar: Development of a *communication strategy* to improve EU public perception of Turkish membership.

- The fundamental starting point: to prioritize *integration & communication* in upcoming governmental programs and development plans.
In the context of integration policy...

*Education (both basic and vocational education; improvement of language skills)*

- Ministry of Education in particular should try to fill the following gaps:
  - Turkish language education for the Diaspora should be part of the *regular* school curricula
  - An electronic monitoring database with number and density of migrant students, drop-outs and success factors should be established,
  - Appointment of teachers of Diaspora origin to the schools for Turkish migrant students should be promoted
  - Cooperation agreements with language institutes, such as the Goethe Institute and Alliance Francaise, should be arranged for improving language skills for those going abroad for family unification.
In the context of integration policy...

*Culture*

- Cooperation with international organisations such as the OECD, UN and the Council of Europe
- More emphasis on the concept of Turkish ‘Europeanness’ under governmental discourse.
- Best practices by the PRA to integrate religious beliefs and cultural differences in host countries should be publicized.
In the context of integration policy...

- The Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism should fund art and culture projects of the NGOs in host countries and in Turkey,
  - covering values, culture and existing modern life rather than tourism

- Civil Society Dialogue Program undertaken by Secretariat General For EU Affairs should fund
  - Intercultural exchanges
  - Capacity development
  - Cooperation projects of the NGOs of the Turkish Diaspora

- Joint projects for the development of intercultural competencies of Diaspora students and NGOs should be guided by the Turkish Centre for EU Education and Youth programs (i.e. Turkish National Agency).
In the context of integration policy...

- More emphasis on civic issues (e.g. dual citizenship, customs and visa regulations, voting)

- Policy options needs to be pursued at EU level
  - Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population
  - Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee
  - The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
  - The Turkey - European Community Joint Parliamentary Committee
  - The Inter-Parliamentary Union
In the context of integration policy...

- The Turkish government should facilitate establishment of **umbrella organisations** for NGOs to provide a coherent view of the Diaspora.

- State Minister responsible for Turkish citizens abroad should be re-appointed in the Cabinet:
  - Ensuring continuity of the previous governmental attempts in Diaspora affairs
  - Adopting a program-based approach using standard evaluation and monitoring practices.

- A working group should be formed under Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) to produce and evaluate socio-economic data on the Diaspora in cooperation with host governments.
In the context of integration policy...

**Development assistance**

- Redefinition of mission and vision of Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA)
  - Targeting social and economic development of the Turkish Diaspora in the EU.

- Opening new coordination offices in Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Austria.

- Sufficient funds should be allocated to bolster social and institutional capacity in these fields:
  - vocational education and employment
  - business / entrepreneurship development
  - improvement of living standards
  - training/assistance program for NGOs and young Turkish Diaspora students
  - support for cooperation between think-thanks, exchange of students and academicians
  - joint conferences and publications
Communication: 2nd step of the two-tier approach.

- Adoption of a formal communication strategy to improve the image of Turkey within the EU.
  - The main international aim of this strategy should be
    - To promote an image of a modern and democratic Turkey in the EU
    - To inform the EU public about Turkey’s progress in the accession process
    - To promote benefits of membership of Turkey

- For development and implementation of the strategy,
  - The newly appointed Chief Negotiator and State Minister should be the political owner
  - Turkish Secretariat General for EU Affairs (EUSG) should be responsible institution
Make diaspora involved in the process...

- In the international publicity/communication campaign, local presence and active involvement of Turkish communities and their NGOs in Europe should be maximized.

- The overall success of the strategy should be followed up by the Turkish government through regular public surveys (also Eurobarometer surveys).
In the final analysis...

- Turkish Diaspora as an economic and political actor can play a key role in bridge-building between Turkey and the EU.

- The Diaspora in the EU with 3,000 NGOs, media, academia, professional and business groups and political actors simply *wait for* pro-active steps from Turkish government.
Turkish membership of the EU club...

... Powerful global message for an improved concept of ‘Europeanness’ based on intercultural dialogue and universal values...
Thank you...

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