Political Socialisation Patterns of Turkish High Skilled Migrants

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Abstract

Political socialisation has been studied from different perspectives, such as voting behaviour, the impact of social networks, socialisation types and political culture on voting as well as engagement in political life. This article examines the political socialisation patterns and participation of high-skilled Turkish migrants living in different parts of the world. The main purpose is to shed light on the ways in which these migrants participate in Turkish politics; how much they are engaged or interested in Turkish politics; and how their socialisation patterns are formed. The results show that Turkish high-skilled migrants have a strong interest in Turkish politics; however, their political socialisation and engagement, except for voting, is low. In this article, it is pointed out that there is a strong relationship between the level of education and political participation as well as interest in politics. The data (N=350) were collected by an online survey conducted among Turkish migrants, who had at least a university degree and were living abroad at the time of the survey.

Keywords: *political socialisation; political participation; voting behaviour; brain drain; high-skilled Turkish migrants.*

Introduction

The volume of international migration has grown from about 173 million in 2000 to 258 million in 2017. Half of the international migrants are women and their average age is 39 years (UN International Migration Report 2017). Mobility of high-skilled individuals is one subgroup of international migrants. In some earlier studies, it has been contended that the motives for brain drain can be grouped as pecuniary and non-pecuniary (Güngör, Tansel, 2012).

Economic factors, including wage differentials, better salary options and/or extra payment and socio-political factors, such as family considerations, social and political concerns, political integration or disintegration, feeling of uncertainty for the future, political instability, social integration or disintegration, lack of political self-representation, and level of trust may all be considered as migration motivations. Hence, it is important to understand the socio-political nature of the brain drain. The aim of this article is to investigate the socio-political aspects of brain drain and to elaborate on the political socialisation processes of Turkish high-skilled migrants, thereby providing interdisciplinary analysis. Political socialisation refers to political participation, interest and attitudes. Here, it is examined from a dynamic and evolutionist perspective, showing the transformations in political participation, engagement and activity, instead of referring to the institutional perspective of the behaviouralist school. As Anne Muxel (2001: 409-10) has

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contended, understanding socialisation is to understand the socio-political experience of the subject to point out the change and transformation of political trajectory.

Political participation and socialisation are closely linked to international migration. Immigrants' turnout in elections, and political socialisation patterns in relation to their political integration in host countries have frequently been mentioned in the literature (Mencütek, Yılmaz, 2015; Barker, McMillan 2017). White (2017) examined the impact of socialisation in the country of origin on electoral participation in the host country, with a case study of Canadian immigrants. White (2017: 101) elicited that re-socialisation in the host country may have lasting impacts on electoral participation. Assuming the importance of the emigrant's resocialisation, the political socialisation of Turkish high-skilled migrants abroad is examined for this study. Do high-skilled Turkish migrants socialise with other Turks in the host country? How do high-skilled Turkish migrants participate in Turkish politics? How much are they engaged or interested in Turkish politics? In this article, the political socialisation patterns of 350 Turkish high-skilled migrants abroad are examined. Following a discussion of political socialisation, with an emphasis on a French perspective, data and methods are described. The fourth section outlines political socialisation patterns of the respondents and a conclusion is drawn.

Political Socialisation: existence in the political sphere

Political socialisation refers to examining individuals' political knowledge, competence, interest and predispositions acquired through social interactions with family, educators, authorities, friends and media. These political dispositions and knowledge acquired in early life, have an impact on the formation of political attitudes, such as voting behaviour, political participation, opinions about ideologies, political parties and leaders (Sears, Levy, 2003; Hyman, 1969; Easton, Dennis, 1969). Political socialisation studies in France have been especially focused on the voting behaviour and political participation of different generations of a specific country with an emphasis on political interest and capital (Muxel, 2001; Deloye et al., 2002). Another French researcher, Anne Muxel (2009, 2010, 2011), underlined the importance of young generations' voting behaviour as an indicator of democratic participation and political representation. Recent studies have focused frequently on youth political participation in Europe (Eurobarometer Report 375, 2013; Melo, Stockemer, 2014). Some researchers have investigated the differences between generations (Braungart, 1989; Sirinelli, 1989; Mannheim, 1990; Gasset, 1993; Boumaza, 2009; Cartier, Spire, 2011). Family has also appeared as an important factor in political socialisation (See Brim, Wheeler, 1966; Easton, Dennis, 1970; Öztürk, 2002, 2004). Moreover, social and political changes, political culture, mass media and knowledge of politics, have also been found to be influential on political socialisation (See Erzan, Yalın, 2011; Dilber, 2012; Yılmaz, 2013; Balcı, Akar, 2010; Doğan, Göker, 2011).

Fluidity of Turkish high-skilled migrants

There is a growing literature on the Turkish diaspora in terms of political engagement and participation of Turks living abroad (Ragazzi, 2014; Erdoğan 2015, 2013; Arkilic, 2016; Aydin, 2016, 2014; Sirkeci, 2016; Sirkeci et al., 2016; Argun, 2003; Faist, 2000; Mencütek, 2015; Mencütek, Başer, 2018). However, high-skilled migrants and brain drain have been relatively understudied and often with an economic emphasis (see, Tansel and Güngör, 2003; Güngör and Tansel, 2012; Gökbayrak, 2009). Hence, the socio-political reasons that influence the mobility of high-skilled migrants have largely been overlooked.

The terms brain drain has been used since the 1960s (Commander et al., 2004: 235). Turkish brain drain studies have focused on the case of specific countries, such as the United States (Şimsek, 2011) and Germany (Süoğlu, 2012; Sunata, 2005, 2011, 2014), where there has been a high flow of immigration from Turkey. These authors have examined the reasons behind brain drain, the push and pull factors, the causes of return decisions of high-skilled immigrants to Turkey (Güngör and Tansel, 2005) and the importance of pecuniary factors of brain drain, such as wage differentials, better salary options, or extra payment opportunities (Güngör and Tansel, 2012: 209). In earlier studies, the migration of qualified workers as doctors and engineers was examined (Başaran, 1972). Studies in the last two decades, referring to the term high-skilled migration rather than brain drain (Gökbayrak, 2009; Güngör and Tansel, 2012; Özçürümez and Yetkin, 2016; Acar, 2017) have focused on the mobility of students and university professors (Güngör and Tansel, 2005; Altaş, Sağırlı and Giray, 2006; Cansız, 2006; Deviren, 2015).

The main reasons for brain drain are the high salary expectations, better working conditions, economic stability, and a better future for children. However, a few studies (Docquier, 2006: 6; Güngör and Tansel, 2012: 210; Güngör and Tansel, 2008: 3072; Carlin, Erdal, 2014: 5; Jałowiecki and Gorzelak, 2004: 300-01; Docquier et al., 2007) have shown that socio-political causes, including ethnic wars, political instability and the rise of radicalism as well as socio-economic reasons have been stimulating brain drain, thus having an impact on return motivations. Highly skilled people are seemingly more sensitive to the socio-political transformation of their countries. The most recent statistics by the Turkish Statistics Institution indicated a 42.5% increase in emigration from Turkey compared with previous year (TUIK, 2017). This may enhance a growing Turkish diaspora lobbying and thus result in growing political engagement in homeland politics (Mencütek and Baser, 2018: 100).

Data and Methods

For this study, data collected through an online survey of 350 high-skilled Turkish migrants living outside Turkey were drawn upon. The majority of respondents were female (61.48%) and they mostly resided in the United Kingdom (22.57%), Belgium (17.24%), Canada (15.36%), the United States (10.97%), France (7.52%), Austria (5.02%), UAE (4.70%), and Germany (3.76%). 52.65% of respondents were born between 1980-1989 and 21.21% between 1990-1999. Hence, they were mostly relatively young and either in education or professionals: 48.86% were between 25-34 years old, 32.95% were 35-44 years old and 11.36% were 45-54 years old. This highly educated group may have a different take on Turkish politics than the guest workers of the 1960s. That is, their political engagement, participation and socialisation may differ from older generations.

The themes covered in the questionnaire were focused on migration motivations, use of media, interest in political life in Turkey, the socialisation processes with other Turks, participation in diaspora associations, and demographic backgrounds. The snowball sampling method was used to reach respondents due to the absence of a population register for the target group as well as the limited resources available. Studies (Atkinson and Flint, 2001) have shown the snowball sampling is advantageous and can be a useful tool in order to reach people from the same social network. However, the disadvantages of non-random sampling that may contain sampling bias should never be disregarded. Knowing the sample-related limitations, generalisations are avoided here and readers are urged to be cautious regarding the interpretation the findings.

From high political participation to low socialisation: denial or socio-politically constructed rejection?

Studies on brain drain had mostly mentioned the emigration motivation, pecuniary factors behind this emigration and return intentions of emigrants. The collected data from Turkish high-skilled migrants was aimed at discovering their political attitudes, participation and activities in associations, political socialisation patterns in the home country, as they are not eligible citizen in the host country. Percentages deriving from the data will show these features and will help to argue the weak participation tendency of Turkish high-skilled migrants in socio-political activities. The analysis focus on the following issues: (1) generational background such as father and mother's job and education level; (2) political participation; (3) political socialisation; and (4) activity in associations as well as socialisation with other Turks.

Two main objectives of emigration of Turkish high-skilled migrants are education (40.1%) and work (25.5%); hence, the gap of the sample is 29-38, which is coherent with the main reasons of immigration. Educational and professional reasons constitute the main motivation for living abroad. Regarding the occupational status of Turkish high-skilled migrants, engineers have a significant place with 24.5%, followed by academics (9.8%), students (7.3%) and IT specialists (5.4%).

As the sample comprises high-skilled migrants, 39.78% have a bachelor degree, 43.01% a masters degree and 12.19% a PhD. 72.04% of the population are active in professional life, 10% work in the public sector and 27.96% do not work. 29.03% of these migrants' mothers graduated from high school and 39.43% had a university degree, whilst 52.71% of fathers had a university degree, which reflects the gender inequality of the Turkish education system. Job distribution revealed that mothers are housewives (30.56%), retired (11.90%) or teachers (13.89%), and fathers are retired (18.18%), engineers (15.18%), working in commerce (14.62%) or teachers (5.14%). High-skilled migrants living abroad have inherited academic capital from their parents and they have to be differentiated from 2nd or 3rd generation Turkish worker migrants, who came in the 1960s in terms of their social attributions and education backgrounds.

The first point of the analysis aims to show the political participation patterns of Turkish high-skilled migrants. There are around 3.047 million Turkish voters registered abroad (YSK, 2018) and their participation in the general election on June 7th, 2015, was 32.5% (Mencütek, Yılmaz, 2015: 8). The reason of this high participation rate is that the compulsory appointment system for voting from embassies had been dismissed and all Turkish citizens, who had the right to vote, which was around one million, had voted. The highest rate was that of Germany, at 33.9%, which rose to 40.4% in the November 2015 general election. In the April 2017 referendum about the presidential system, the number of voters totalled 1.4 million and "Yes" votes reached their peak, standing at 77% in Belgium, 73% in Austria, and 70% in the Netherlands. However, "No" votes were mostly registered in the Czech Republic, with 87%, Spain, at 86% and the United States, with 83%. The total percentage of "Yes" votes from abroad was 59.05%, while "No" votes stood at 40.95% (Euronews, 13.06.2018). During the latest presidential and parliamentary elections held on June 24th, 2018, turnout rose to 1.35 million (44.62%) and official figures indicated that around 60.24% of Turkish voters registered abroad voted for Recep Tayyip Erdogan as President (YSK, 2018). As Mencütek and Yılmaz (2015) demonstrated, voting abroad has become an important part of diaspora politics as a requirement of emigration and as inclusive citizen policies of home country.

To consider or compare the level of democratisation, voting may be an indicator of political participation and also political interest. Despite a low turnout in Europe, the turnout of Turkish people living in Turkey and abroad has always been at a high level, of around 87%. Even if this

sample is not satisfied at all with the functioning of democracy in Turkey (83.9%); uncertain about Turkey's political future (82.6%); and finds Turkey's economic growth unstable (80.7%), it indicates that political developments in Turkey are very (46.77%) or quite (37.42%) important for them. Therefore, Turkish high-skilled migrants, who are very interested in Turkey's political actuality, vote in Turkey's elections (92.88%). The major factor that influenced the sample's voting behaviour during Turkey's elections was the ideology of the party or candidate (49.82%), thus indicating that voting behaviour is not necessarily shaped by political campaigns, leadership, or future projects; however, deep rooted ideologies and political camps have been forming the voting preferences of the high-skilled and well-educated Turkish electorate because they do not prefer to work in electoral campaign (69.49%) and are interested in ideologies instead of the efficacity of political campaign, party program or candidate it-self.

Political socialisation, as a concept and as a manner, cannot be separated from political participation due to its impact on the formation of political identity (Muxel, 2001: 424). In particular during election periods, citizens are more likely to be open to political information and to become more engaged in politics. However, high-skilled migrants' political behavior does not shaped by any strong political attachment to the party, without any militancy or participation to a donation campaign which explain a rather superficial relation with the politics of homeland. The very low percentages of political interest and engagement demonstrate that many of the participants politically express themselves only through voting. That is, even though they had high political interest (83.8%) and voting (92.7%), they were not very engaged in political life. Whilst most (66.91%) of the respondents read election manifestos, the majority did not wish to work on an electoral campaign (69.06%); donate to any candidate during electoral campaign (70%); or were a member of a political party (94.68%). The high level of interest but low level of socialisation can be observed in following findings: Turkish high-skilled migrants find Turkish politics very (46.38%) or quite (37.50%) important to them; however, they mostly follow what happen in Turkey a few times every day (38.14%), or once a day (27.84%). They follow Turkey's agenda through social media networks (48.80%) and newspapers' online websites (41.92%) and 50,86% by Turkish and foreign social media tools and newspapers websites. These results reveal the intensive use of social media by the young generation of high-skilled Turkish migrants and their linguistic knowledge, which helps them to double check the news from foreign and national newspapers.

As the final part of the analysis, the aim was to elicit their level of participation in diaspora associations and socialisation with other Turks. Effective and solid ties with the home country have been created by organisational life and migrant identities have been differentiated (Jacobs et al., 2006). Results represent the characteristics of high-skilled migrants, who prefer to keep a distance from Turkish associations. The participants responded that they talked two or three times a week about Turkey's agenda with their entourage (32.64%) or two or three times a month (16.84%), which indicates a non-frequent socialisation pattern. Moreover, these high-skilled Turkish migrants socialise with other Turks two or three times a week (24.05%), two or three times a month (16.84%) or once a week (16.15%). In addition to the low degree of socialisation, the findings regarding active participation in diaspora associations show that this is very weak: 80.34% are not members of any association related to Turkey. They also did partially (44.67%) or never (41.24%) participate to receptions or invitations related to Turkey. Participation in diaspora associations creates an important public sphere for emigrants and contributes to the growth of Turkish diaspora and transnational Turkish identity (Akçapar, 2010: 182); however, young generation of high-skilled Turkish migrants does not generate a complex socialisation pattern but they are giving a reaction to downgrading homeland politics. Socialisation patterns may be different across different groups of

migrants and given the small sample size as well as the sampling method employed for this study, generalisations about political socialisation or political participation of high-skilled migrants are to be avoided.

Conclusion

This article had the objective of investigating two major concepts that have not received much attention in the political science literature: political socialisation and brain drain, within the specific case of Turkish high-skilled migrants. The research comprised an online survey conducted in March 2018, just before the Turkish presidential and general elections, amongst 350 Turkish high-skilled migrants living in different countries. The small sample of the study has not the objective to represent all Turks abroad; however, it aims, with again some limitations as well, to pick a small sample of high-skilled Turkish migrants. Participants to the survey were 25-35 years old, with a residential length abroad from five to ten years and holding a resident or work permit. They have only the right to vote in the elections of the country of origin, that is, they are not eligible citizens in the host country.

For this reason, the aim has been to present their socialisation in the political system of the country of origin to present their political participation in Turkish politics and diaspora associations, to understand their future electoral participation in the host country. The following results have been derived from this study: Turkish high-skilled migrants have very high interest in Turkish politics and agenda, as they follow Turkish actuality through social media and online newspapers. Moreover, they participate in elections, which indicates that they prefer conventional political participation; however, their political engagement has not been generated as a partisanship. They are not involved in political campaigns nor do they support political parties or candidates with donations.

Moreover, they also present low level socialisation and participation in association activities. That is, despite there being a large network of formal and informal organisations that connect members of the Turkish diaspora, the high skilled Turkish people who participated in the survey did not have a significant socialisation engagement with other Turks abroad. They are not influenced by political campaigns, hence their political predispositions have been made by deep-rooted ideologies, which may be related to the transmission of cultural capital from their parents (48% of their mother and 62% of their father have undergraduate and graduate degree). Even if there is a generational transmission of cultural capital and high turnout in Turkish elections, the highly educated Turkish Y generation living abroad think that they are not represented politically, which may explain their lack of engagement in other political activities. High political interest going hand in hand with limited participation in diaspora associations as well as low political engagement, which could be explained by denial, a rejection of or protest against homeland politics. As a result, this new generation of high-skilled Turkish migrants is rejecting being a part of the politics of their country of origin and this rejection may be the result of the current socio-political context. In order to pursue high interest and engagement of young populations in political life, it is important for Turkish and foreign policymakers and academics to develop sociological and political knowledge about high-skilled emigrants abroad. The results of this study have the aim to give way to future researches on emigrants' electoral participation, especially on Turkish high-skilled migrants' electoral participation in the host country.
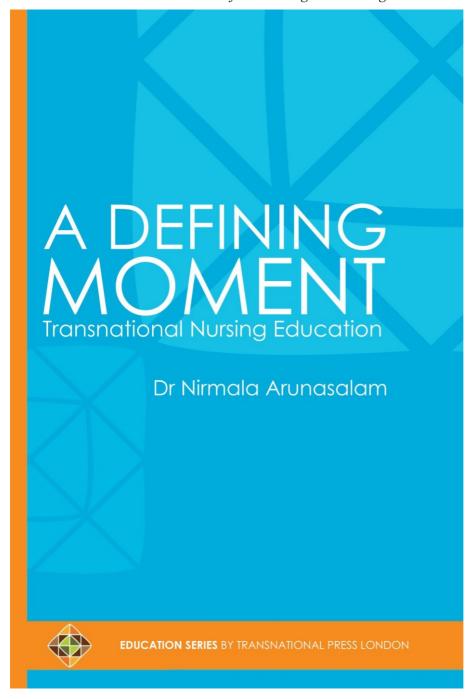
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