State, Nation and Migration Reframed in the Relational Political Field

“There is a difference between ‘Bulgar immigrant’ and ‘immigrant from Bulgaria.’ Bulgar migrants are those who are Bulgars. But we are Turks and also we are Muslims” says 30 year old Meliha.¹ She has been in Istanbul since 2000 with no permanent legal status as one of approximately hundred thousand Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria.² Notwithstanding nuances in their motivations and trajectories of migration, what is common in all immigrant accounts is the liminality they position themselves in, through stories of economic and social discrimination they have used to face in Bulgaria, and through their familial and social ties both with Bulgaria where they would never abandone for good and with Turkey where they would want to live for the rest of their lives. This liminality has been mainly shaped and reinforced through the ways in which the Turkish and Bulgarian states supported or impeded the movement of Turkish minority across borders at certain times.

How do people with political/formal affinity with one state and cultural/informal with another affect the notions of “nation” and “state”? What are their effects on the drawing of state and societal boundaries? By looking at the case of Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria to Turkey, I aim to understand how these multiple relationship between the two states and ethnic Turks -- who are outside the ‘political borders’ of Turkey and ‘societal boundaries’ of Bulgaria—are played out over the years in the (re)framings of nationhood and national membership in law and

¹ Interview conducted with Meliha in November 4, 2007, in Istanbul.
² Their undocumented status makes it hard to predict the exact number of post-1990s migrants from Bulgaria. Yet, according to the estimates of the Balkan Turks Solidarity Association (BTSA) in Istanbul, there were around 70 thousand irregular Turkish migrant from Bulgaria with a precarious legal status as of 2008. This information is retrieved during our informal interview with the general secretary which took place in BTSA Office in Çemberlitaş, Istanbul (in February 2, 2008). 2 years later (in February 2, 2010) the general secretary of the same association said that this groups is around 100-120 thousand people.
in practice. For that matter, I examine the continuities and changes in minority rights in Bulgaria, border regime between Bulgaria and Turkey, and acquisition of citizenship in Turkey. Looking at changes and continuities in migration and citizenship regimes in Turkey from a relational perspective, this paper argues the following: while the relationship between the external homeland and ethnic minorities who try to settle in Turkey is now reframed according to new rules and procedures inspired by international norms or European standards, this ‘de-ethnicized’ image of nationhood is not translated into practice, and the exceptional clauses continue to reproduce the ethnic dimension of this relational field yet in different ways. My examinations of second-hand sources as well as the recent legal document are informed by insights from a long ethnographic study conducted in Istanbul from January 2007 to August 2010. Notwithstanding this fieldwork’s focus on legalization process of post-1990s Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria in Turkey as a bottom-up approach, the analysis here is based more on top-down framings of the citizenship regimes in response to the ongoing migration from Bulgaria to Turkey.

**All Relational Fields are Dynamic**

As opposed to the assumption that state is a distinct entity, Mitchell (1991: 90) argues, the “line between state and society is drawn internally within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain social and political order is maintained.” Since the state is the “effect of practices that make such structures appear to exist” (Mitchell 1991: 94), one cannot attribute essentializing roles to the “state.” In a similar vein, because a modern state is a ‘limited state,’ Migdal says, “if we are to understand the inherent limitations of states we must develop a focus on process….The battering of states by global economic and information systems, by the challenges of supranational organizations like the European Union, by the disintegrative effects of virulent ethnic and tribal forces, all have deeply affected the relationship between states and their populations” (2001: 235-6). Due to this multiplicity of narratives limiting and shaping the state as an “effect”, the transformations in the framing of national citizenship can only be captured by bridging the local and global political dynamics.

---

3 As the focus of this paper is a particular group that transcends nation-state borders, I do not claim to cover citizenship acquisition process for all foreigners in Turkey or Bulgaria’s minority policies for all different minority groups.
Brubaker’s book *Nationalism Reframed* might be considered as an attempt to fill the void Migdal was referring to since he acknowledges the limitations of essentializing the notion of the “nation” as a collectivity and states, and asks “how is nationhood as a political and cultural form institutionalized within and among states?” (1996: 16). We may even argue that Brubaker is taking Mitchell’s suggestion of a historical explanation for “how the modern state has come to have its present appearance,” as he calls for, “discussions of nationness as an event, as something that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops” (Brubaker 1996:19). He suggests using the term “nationalizing” as it implies an on-going process, in this case within the host state which is, like other elements of the field, itself a relational field. Looking at the “New Europe” of the 1990s, Brubaker argues that it is necessary to reorient the study of “nationalism” with a focus on the “triadic nexus” linking national minorities, nationalizing states and external national “homelands.” Brubaker’s relational approach also suggests that these three elements are dynamic rather than static, and that the relationship between the three is a “relation between relational fields” with outcomes that are “contingent and conjuncturally fluctuating, and [the] precarious frames of vision and bases for individuals and collective action” (1996: 19).

Nevertheless Brubaker seems acting against his initial motive to come up with a dynamic approach to “nation,” “nationness,” and “nationhood” in his book where he briefly mentions the Bulgaria-Turkey-ethnic Turks as yet another example of triadic nexus. Brubaker focuses only on the period when both Bulgaria and Turkey emerged as “post-independence nationalisms of nationalizing states” (1996: 84) after the fall of Ottoman, Habsburg and Romanov Empires or Migdal’s third wave of state creation in 20th century. Unfortunately he does not extend his “event” analysis further so as to understand whether or not-- and if yes, in what form-- the “contingent frame of vision” might be re- crystallized in the post-Cold War context. To overcome this risk of freezing the “event” as the marker for all future relations in the relational field, my primary aim is to trace framings of “nation” and “state” as they are renegotiated and/or changed. In other words, instead of comparing snapshots from two different waves of state making, following Mitchell’s suggestion of a historical explanation for the notion of modern

---

4 While Mitchell underlines Anderson’s study of “imagined communities,” Brubaker criticizes what he calls the “developmentalist literature on nationhood and nationalism” by prominent scholars such as Gellner, Anderson, Smith and Hobsbawm for overemphasizing historical evolution to the point of ignoring the notion of “event” constituting the “nation.”

5 This relational approach also recalls Elias’s (2000) processual sociology and his emphasis on “structures of change” or “continuity of changes” as the mechanism that maintains what appears as “unity.”
state, and Elias’s stress on the “continuity of change,” I look at the “triadic nexus” in its historicity and try to capture the impact of structural changes on this nexus that is the effect of practices and struggles ever since the third wave of state creation in 20th century.

In this triadic nexus, the role of organizing on the international level has gradually increased. Since the second half of 1990s, for example, Europeanization of citizenship with the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties (Dwyer 2010; Joppke 2010) and admission of the Eastern European countries to the EU first as A8 and then A2 countries have signaled a transformation for what Brubaker called “Old New Europe.” In terms of the relationship between Bulgaria-ethnic Turks-Turkey, the acceleration of the global and local interactions with the end of Cold War seem to stimulate the emergence of a different “frame of vision and base for individual and collective action” through the redefinition of the minority rights in Bulgaria in harmony with the global human rights regime, realignment of the border regime between Bulgaria and Turkey in accordance with the EU Schengen Acquis, or reframing of the citizenship law in Turkey in harmony with the European Convention on Nationality.

This case study shows, considering the Balkans and Eastern Europe after 1990s, Brubaker’s initial question-- “how is nationhood as a political and cultural forminstitutionalized within and among states?” (1996: 16)— can no longer be answered without considering the constitutive role of the EU, international organizations and international regimes which have incrementally become not exogenous factors but endogenous elements reconstituting the positions of the actors in the relational field. Therefore, while sharing Brubaker’s emphasis on the contingent and precarious frames of nationhood and Bourdieu’s notion of the logic of field, I suggest that his formulation of the “relational field” is to be extended so as to incorporate the impact of the EU on the “triadic nexus” and to be deepened so as to understand continuities in these changes. Before illustrating the extension of the “relational relational field” since 1990s, it has to be historically situated so as to capture the changes in the continuing relationship between homeland, minorities and nationalizing states.

6 A field, for Bourdieu is a “network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions” and positions are “objectively defined by their present and potential situation in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc).” (In Bourdieu P. and L. Wacquant (1992) An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology. USA: The University of Chicago Press. p.97)
Migrations from Bulgaria to Turkey at the turn of the century

As one fifth of Turkey’s population is of Balkan origin, Uzgel says, “the Balkans constituted an area of Turkish foreign policy where the government, the military and public opinion stood together” (2002: 68). The Balkan Wars and mass exodus of Muslim refugees with memories of war into Anatolia have all played important roles in the way Turkish state’s position towards the Balkans in general and Bulgaria in particular is shaped. Yet the historical overview of migration from Bulgaria to Turkey shows that its position in the “triadic nexus” has also changed over the years. There have been several big migration waves of the Turkish minority from Bulgaria to Turkey. Yet each wave was triggered not only by certain events in Bulgarian domestic politics but also took different forms according to the diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Turkey.

The first two waves took place during the Russian- Ottoman war of 1877-8 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 from the lost territories of the Ottoman Empire to the heart of the ‘homeland’ (Eminov 1997; Şimşir 1986). By the end of World War I, the 1925 Ankara Agreement between Bulgaria and the newly founded Turkish Republic reaffirmed the minority rights envisaged by the Treaty of Neuilly that Bulgaria signed with the Allied Powers in 1920 and acknowledged Turkey’s responsibility for vigilance of the implementation of minority rights in Bulgaria. This Agreement, based on reciprocity rule, also guaranteed the people’s rights to immigrate, work, to be self-employed and to own property in the other state’s territory, except for land ownership, whereas the real estate owned in the country of emigration were to be left to the use of country of emigration (State Archives 2002: 45). During that time both states agree on facilitating population exchange as part of their nation-building projects. The 1934 Settlement Law of Turkey is one such tool to encourage migration of the Turkish minority that was designated by people as “the ‘return’ of ethnic kin back to their ‘homeland’” (Parla 2006) or “policy of active repatriation” (Höpken 1997). As it is shown below, while this settlement law was amended in 2006, the definition of “immigrant” in this law which refers to “people of Turkish descent and culture” (Türk Soylu) continues to play a role in ethnic Turks’ migration from Bulgaria to Turkey.

On the host state side, except for during the terms of the 1919-1923 Farmers Party of Bulgaria and 1944-1947 National Front governments until the collapse of socialist regime in
1989, the Bulgarian state leaders’ aim to create a homogenous nation-state in terms of language, religion and ethnicity (Dayıoğlu 2005, Neuburger 1997) became a ‘push factor’. In response to the restrictions put on Turkish minority in Bulgaria, such as banning the use Latin scripts in 1934, the Turkish prime minister and the foreign minister visited Bulgaria after which Tsar Boris III lifted the ban in order to maintain good diplomatic relations with Turkey and Bulgaria and re-granted the right to use Latin alphabet in Turkish schools (State Archives 2002: 45). Following Brubaker, Fox (2007) defines Hungary as “kin-state” with respect to ethnic Hungarians abroad due to the institutionalization of transborder political, cultural and economic links between the national homeland and external minorities. Similarly, since those years, Turkish state had increasingly displayed a characteristic of a “kin-state” by interfering in Bulgarian domestic politics.

The second wave of migration occurred in 1950 and 1951 when the collectivization of land and “Communist nationalism” of the 1940s was met with resistance on the part of Muslim population. This process also nourished the group solidarity and ethnicization of their Muslim identity, and it gradually increased emigration to the “Turkish homeland” (Eminov 1997; Höpken 1997). As Neuburger (1997: 5) shows, Bulgarian government eventually shifted its minority policy from integration to expulsion and, in 1950, delivered a note to the Turkish government that 250,000 immigrants were going to be sent to Turkey in three months. Yet only around 150,000 could immigrate until Turkey closed its borders due to, as some scholars depict, uncontrollable border crossings of the “unwanted immigrants” in 1951 such as Pomaks and Roma people (Eminov 1997; Tuğlaci 1984). Though not overtly stated in these studies, it is implied that Turkish state have made distinction between ethnic Turks and Pomaks and Roma people who are also Muslim minorities and potential emigrants.  

After 1950-51 emigrations, until Zhivkov’s visit to Turkey in 1969 and the treaty came into force to unite separated families, the freedom of movement was severely restricted in Bulgaria as part of a common Soviet-Bloc policy (Eminov 1997; Şimşir 1986; Poulton 1997). Initially 30,000 people arrived in Turkey as part of family reunification agreement and this wave continued until 1978 (Tuğlaci 1984). The Turkish occupation in Cyprus in 1974 also triggered a

---

7 As Dayıoğlu argues while Pomaks used to define themselves as Turkish especially in towns where Bulgarians are in majority, as a protection shield against Bulgarians, Turkish state did more overtly apply discrimination against Pomaks later by not giving any reaction to the name-changing campaign against Pomaks in 1971-1941 as opposed to its active role to stop a similar campaign against Turks in 1984 (Dayıoğlu 2005: 69).
territorial and social concern in Bulgaria which, as Dayıoğlu (2005: 378) underlines, has then become a recurring issue in Bulgarian domestic politics and mentioned for example during protests against the government decision in 29 December 1989 to restore minority rights in Bulgaria. Similarly Neuburger (1997: 6) says, since then Bulgarian government has increasingly put pressure on Turkish minority by claiming that “they were Turkified Bulgarians not Turks.”

The last and most massive wave of immigration took place in 1989, when 300,000 fled to Turkey towards the end of the infamous forced assimilation campaign launched under Zhivkov’s leadership in 1984. Forcibly changing Turkish names into Bulgarian ones was part of this campaign to prove that, in Zhivkov’s words, “There are no Turks in Bulgaria” (Neuburger 1997: 6). As opposed to passive foreign policy that Turkey has followed in the region during the Cold War (Bora 1997; Dayıoğlu 2005), Turkey this time took a more assertive role in order to draw outside world’s attention to and stop ongoing discrimination in Bulgaria. Yet this position did not last long. Soon after the regime change in Bulgaria, Turkish state leaders have again developed friendly relations, as part of the Turkish foreign policy to maintain the status quo in nationalizing states where ethnic Turks live (Dayıoğlu 2005: 490). Out of the 300,000 people that fled to Turkey in 1989, nearly a third decided to return soon after the regime change in Bulgaria in 1990 (Apap et al 2004; Vasileva 1992). Nevertheless our ethno graphic study on post-1990s immigrants show that, many among those who returned during the first year of emigration continued to come to Turkey either as circular immigrants or to resettle permanently especially since the second half of 1990s. More surprisingly, in contrast to the pre-1990 immigrants who were considered “immigrant” according to the Settlement Law and automatically granted citizenship as ‘ethnic kin,’ the post-1990s ethnic Turks have been subjected to different and constantly changing visa regimes. How did the position held by ethnic Turks in the relational field change? Can we explain this change with Brubaker’s triadic nexus?

As the remainder of this paper shows, from 1990s onwards, the ethnic Turks position in Bulgaria -- as the nationalizing state -- and in Turkey -- as the national homeland -- has increasingly been shaped not only in this triadic nexus but more so in response to the economic restructuring in the region, Bulgaria’s political integration with the West and Europeanization

---

8 For a reliable statistics on emigration of Turks from Bulgaria from 1978 to 1992, please see the table piled by Eminov (1997) in Appendix I.
process in both Turkey and Bulgaria. In other words, international actors outside Brubaker’s “triadic nexus” also have crucial implications for how nationhood is imagined and practiced in both nationalizing state and national homelands.

The Extended Relational Field of the Post-1990s

To explain changes in Turkey’s position towards migration in post-1990s, İçduygu (2007) classifies the immigration and asylum policies of Turkey into three periods; pre-1994 period of “ignorance,” 1994-2001 period of transition to international norms (to manage the mass influx of asylum seekers from Iraq and other countries) and post-2001 period of “EU-ization.” Similarly, while each migration wave from Bulgaria to Turkey has been shaped according to the relational positions held by ethnic Turks, Turkish and Bulgarian states, looking at these three elements alone does not suffice to explain the post-1990s migration from Bulgaria to Turkey. Here it is necessary to underline that even the 1989 migration did not result solely because of the interactions within this triadic nexus. Even at that time transnational non-governmental actors and the increased scrutiny of Western organizations such as Amnesty International played a constitutive role on the Turkish government’s decision to open its borders to its ‘ethnic kin’ (Parla 2007; Vasileva 1992) and also on the decision of the joint committee of political parties in Bulgaria to reverse the 1984 assimilationist decree (Neuburger 1997).

After the regime change in Bulgaria in 1990, state leaders realized that respect for minority rights as well as human rights are prerequisites for Bulgaria to connect with the international organizations of the West (Dayıoğlu 2005; Neuburger 1997). Positive actions for ethnic Turks’ minority rights in Bulgaria were stimulated also by Turkey’s “peaceful foreign policy” in the Balkans which aims only at watching over the rights of its ethnic kin across its borders and not to challenge the status quo (Dayıoğlu 2005). On the other hand, this subjective position is shaped in a multilateral context, such as US’s support for Turkey’s relations with the Balkan states in general (Uzgel 2002). When we look at relations between Bulgaria and Turkey in particular, we see that Turkey has supported NATO membership of Bulgaria and Romania (Uzgel 2002:76) and also signed a Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration and Security with Bulgaria in 1992 (Dayıoğlu 2005:492). While Bulgaria also became a member of Council of Europe and signed European Convention on Human Rights in 1992, it also followed a rational
foreign policy and developed economic relations with Turkey especially after 1997. As a result, as of 1999, Turkey is the third biggest market for Bulgarian exports and its eighth biggest supplier of imports (Üzgel 2002: 78).

Nevertheless, even after the regime change, ethnic Turks of Bulgaria continued to leave, this time due to 25% unemployment rate among Turkish minority compared to general unemployment rate of 14% (Dayıoğlu 2005: 471). As Poulton (1997: 209) shows, in early 1990, Turkish embassy in Sofia was giving out some 6000 visas a month. Yet, in line with its “peaceful foreign policy” aimed at maintaining the status quo, in October 1992 Turkey announced stricter immigration measures, such as giving shorter visas or visas only for one family member at a time to prevent permanent settlement in Turkey (Dayıoğlu 2005; Poulton 1997). Nevertheless, due to high unemployment that, as Dayıoğlu says (2005: 472), also triggered anti-Turkish sentiments in places like the Rhodopes, people have continued to emigrate clandestinely on tourist visas.10

After the introduction of the flexible visa regime in 2001, people, composed of transit immigrants to Europe, from Afghanistan to African countries and the circular immigrants from neighboring countries, from Iraq to former-USSR countries, began to enter on tourist visas to work in the informal sector (Apap et al 2004; Akalın 2007; Danış 2006, 2007; Eder 2007; Erder and Kaşka 2003; İçduygu 2003, 2005; Kaşka 2006; Kirişci 2007; Keough 2004; Yıldız 2007; Yükseler and Brewer 2011; Yükseler 2004).11 Due to all these structural reasons and the well-established ties between Bulgaria and Turkey, the number of transborder movements from Bulgaria has also increased from about 140,000 (in 1996), 380,000 (in 2000) and to 1.3 million out of 6 million entries in 2004 from former Soviet republics, Balkan and Middle Eastern countries (Kirişci 2005). Turkey’s lifting of visa requirements for Bulgarian nationals was also entailed as part of Turkey’s adjustment to the EU decision, in 2001, to remove Bulgaria from EU negative visa list12 that requires visa to enter the Schengen Area (Apap et al 2004; Dayıoğlu

10 Our interlocutors had talked in detail about this process, which continued until the introduction of sticker visa in 2001, as part of either their own experience or a family member’s or an acquaintance’s story of migration.

11 According to the data compiled by İçduygu in 2007, total figure for transit immigrants who either entered or exited Turkey illegally between 1995 and 2006 stands only at 616,527 which might be taken as an indication of the cyclical nature of illegal immigration that results neither in full illegality nor full regularization (Kaşlı and Parla 2009).

12 Bulgaria was in the negative list of the EU, as a high risk country of illegal immigration originating from and transiting through Bulgaria, since its membership application in 1995 until its adjustment with the Schengen acquis in terms of security measures in 2001. Information retrieved from: http://permanentresidence.eu/residence-citizenship-EU/visa-requirements-for-non-eu-nationals/
Therefore, this removal signals that the movement across borders between Bulgaria and Turkey, which was previously shaped mainly as part of bilateral relations has now increasingly been shaped in relation to the EU accession process and the regional dynamics.

Lifting of visa in 2001 paved the way for legalization of those who had entered the country through ‘legal’ (on a tourist visa) and ‘illegal’ means (through smuggling) and overstayed during the strict visa regime of late 1990s (Kaşlı and Parla 2009). The procedure applied from 2001 to 2007 permitted Bulgarian citizens—thus ethnic Turks of Bulgaria—to stay in Turkey as tourists on easily renewable visa waivers valid for three months. Nevertheless, in May 2007, a new visa agreement between Turkey and Bulgaria also came into force, as part of the ongoing harmonization with the Schengen acquis on both sides of the border. The ‘flexible’ 2001-2007 period came to an end with 2007 agreement that now permits Bulgarian passport holders to stay only for a maximum of ninety days in every six months while making border crossings easier for some Turkish passport holders, like businessmen, by not requiring transit visa to reach the Schengen area. In other words, as Bulgaria and Turkey, get closer to the EU, the legal conditions for cross-border movement from Bulgaria to Turkey seem to be shaped as part of their “EU-ization” process. Yet, for ethnic Turks who are Bulgarian citizens, harmonization with the Schengen visa regime changed the border between Bulgaria and Turkey first to a more permeable one in 2001 and eventually to a stricter one in 2007.

The EU process has had an impact not only on the border-crossings between Turkey and Bulgaria. By stimulating the institutionalization of democratic regime in Bulgaria and the ‘de-ethnicization’ of national citizenship in Turkey, the EU-ization further affected the position of each element of the “triadic nexus” in relation to one another. Recalling Brubaker’s emphasis that each element is a dynamic field in and of itself, the domestic politics of both the nationalizing state and the external homeland have also been transformed with the ‘EU-ization’ of the relational field in which ethnic Turks’ position has also been altered. Nevertheless the decisions taken by state leaders have triggered seemingly contradictory practices.

As it is discussed below, both Bulgaria and Turkey have aligned with certain EU requirements on paper. However, in practice, discrimination against Turkish minority has not yet

---

13 Ahmet Içduygu gives the example of six Gulf countries for whom Turkey then introduced visa requirements because their citizens were subject to visa requirements in the EU. Citizens of Azerbaijan too were subject to visa requirement as part of Turkey’s alignment with the EU negative visa list (Içduygu 2007:211).
disappeared in Bulgaria while in Turkey ethnic Turks are protected by exceptional rules depending on the will of political leaders. Such practices can only be captured by a close-up ethnographic research tracing the discrepancies between the law and its application, especially in Turkey as the “external homeland” as much as ethnic Turks’ individual perceptions and experiences of political incorporation (in Bulgaria) and legal incorporation (in Turkey).

The remainder of this paper analyzes tries to disclose how the “limited states” negotiate with local and global forces in constituting its “nationhood.” These discrepancies would show the way the state leaders, as the embodiment of limited state, adapt new “frames of vision” in the relational field while they still hold the ultimate power to determine the contours of national membership that had historically developed out of the triadic nexus. Although the image of state would make one think that each element’s position and their perceptions of the other have changed together with the incorporation of new elements in the relational field such as the EU, a closer look at the political actions make it apparent that practice is “pitted against the image” with the ultimate aim to maintain positions held in the triadic nexus intact.

**Image-Practice Paradox in the Relational Field**

The pull of the ‘West,’ its institutions (the EU, NATO, the Council of Europe and the OSCE) and the motivation to be member these institutions have promoted the establishment of “civic states” in post-communist Europe (Dayıoğlu 2005). During the transition to democracy in Bulgaria also state leaders realized that respect for minority rights as well as human rights are prerequisites for Bulgaria to connect with the West and be a member of international organizations such as the EU (Dayıoğlu 2005; Neuburger 1997). Yet this process paved the way for political channels of both Turkish voice and anti-Turkish sentiments which, for Neuburger, is a reflection of “the prevalent homage to human rights and democracy as well as a soul-searching in the Chaos of Post-Communist disorder” (1997: 7). While Dayıoğlu (2005: 370)

---

14 1993te bg’de yapilan bi arastirmaya gore bulgar halkinin %73u turkiyeyi bir tehdit olarak goruyormus (dayioglu 491) soyfa belgesi olarak anilan guven paketi imzalanmis ozal donminde aralik 1991 ve 6mayis 1992de dosluk, isbirligi ve guvenlik antlasmasi imzalanmistir. bu sekilde de iliskilerin gelismesi için onemli bir zemin yaratilmistir (492) tr surekli balkanlardaki devletlere onlarin toprak butunlugune saygili oldugu mesaji vermistir ve sadece International law ile korununa azinlik haklarini gozetecini belirtmistir. basin orta “turkiyenin Balkan ve kafkas politikasi” 272-274.
explains the political instability in Bulgarian domestic politics with lack of a legacy of multiparty democracy, lack of ideology and a macro social project among political parties, Neuburger (1997: 8) underlines that anti-Turkish sentiments, especially reactions against the removal of assimilationist decree, also set the tone of “Bulgaro-Turkish national relations.”

Immediately after transition to multiparty system, Movement for Rights and Freedom (HÖH) was founded by Ahmet Doğan and his comrades who were imprisoned during the name-changing and assimilation campaign and released after the fall of Zhivkov government in December 1989. The leaders turned BTMKH (Right and Freedoms Movement of Turks and Muslims in Bulgaria) into a political party and renamed it as HÖH in March 1990. Dayıoğlu (2005: 421) argues that the primary aim of HÖH has been to contribute to the unity of the Bulgarian people. For that matter, Dayıoğlu says, the radical Turkish nationalists, like those who wanted to wave Turkish flag in party meeting, were expelled from the party organization. Yet, as Neuburger (1997:9) underlines, the constitutional restrictions on formation of “ethnic parties” also stimulated HÖH to base its politics on human rights for all minorities while consisting mainly of Turkish and/or Muslim leadership and constituency.

While HÖH has been in the parliament since the first free and multiparty elections in June 1990, it finally took part in a coalition government with the old King II. Simeon’s NDSV (II. Simeon National Movement) after June 2001 elections. This coalition was of crucial importance in the history of the Balkans and Europe not only because a former king was now an elected prime minister but also because an ethnic minority was part of the government (Dayıoğlu 2005: 369). HÖH also played an important role in presidential election by supporting BSP’s candidate Piranov in November 2001. HÖH again took part in the coalition government with BSP and NDSV after general 2005 election. Integration with the West has gained momentum during these two coalition governmets, as Bulgaria became a NATO member in 2004 and an EU member in 2007. Since 2005 the radical nationalist party ATAKA also emerged as a political

---

15 In the first free and multiparty elections in June 1990, HÖH got 23 seats out of 400 and then it got 24 seats out of 240 in 1991 when the elections were to be newed. As a key party in the parliament, HÖH acted together with BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party), against the incumbent DGB’s (Union of Democratic Power) economic program that foresees Bulgaria’s adjustment to the IMF rule. After 1997 election DGB government took important steps in NATO membership and debates about EU membership.

16 HÖH MPs were nominated as wise ministries of defense, economy, finance, regional development and environment and ministries of disaster as well as agriculture and forestry (Dayıoğlu 2005: 439).

17 HÖH has been the third party both in 2005 and 2009 general elections, 2007 European Parliament elections and got 6 municipality in 2007 local elections.
voice against ethnic Turks’ presence in the last two coalition governments.\footnote{18} In the last general election in 2009, ATAKA became the 4th biggest party after HÖH and the main supporter of the GERB (Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria) government. ATAKA’s success was a representation of “anti-Turkish sentiments,” in Neuberger’s words, that has been translated into political channels with the democratic transition.

As Neuberger (1997: 11) argues, the drastic economic and political changes in 1990 created a backlash against the democratically elected governments since 1991 due to its “foreignness” as connected with “corruption by ‘alien’ elements, both Western and Turkish.” This tension stimulated discrimination further especially in places such as the Rhodopes which was heavily hit by the economic crisis. Although interests of all minorities have seemed to be represented by HÖH at a national level politically, migration to the “external homeland” Turkey became a way out for ethnic Turks to survive the economic hardships that political representation was unable to solve. Turkish state too seemed concerned with Turkish minorities problems while at the same time maintaining its “peaceful foreign policy” –that is keeping the ethnic minorities where they were born in. For that matter, the political leaders in Turkey encouraged Turkish businessmen to invest in places where mostly Turkish minorities live, as in the Turkish glass factory opened in Eski Cuma in 2003 (Dayıoğlu 2005: 475). Turkish investments in Bulgaria has steadily increased ever since.\footnote{19} As in Çağlar’s (2006) case study of Turkish businesses and entrepreneurs active between the industrial district of Bozlu in Turkey and Berlin in Germany, Turkish economic investment in Bulgaria too explicates the “changing state-space relations” of the last decades that are framed in close relation to neoliberal globalization.

In addition to the Turkish state leaders’ political support for the political opening in Bulgaria and economic investments to secure presence of Turkish minority in the region, changing visa and immigration policies also helped to contain cross-border movement. As Parla and I (2009) illustrate based on post-1990s immigrant’s own accounts of legal incorporation, first under a strict visa regime throughout 1990s, then a more flexible one from 2001 to 2007 and again a stricter one since 2007, post-1990s immigrants could not settle in Turkey legally.

\footnote{18} The protests against HÖH was mentioned in one of the mainstream papers in Turkey. \url{http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/07/27/guncel/agun.html}
\footnote{19} Recently, Turkish president Abdullah Gül has visited a Turkish company’s metro construction site in Sofia, attended the Turkey-Bulgaria Business forum with Bulgarian President Parvanov, and called on Bulgarian companies to invest in Turkey. More information is available at: \url{http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/80278/turkiyebulgarian-ticaret-hacminde-ilk-hedef-5-milyar-dolar.html}
Especially since the stricter visa regime was introduced in 2007, the post-1990s Turkish immigrants, who are only Bulgarian citizens, have been looking for various ways to get permanent legal status. Turkey excluded Bulgaria from the list of “A-Group” countries whose citizens are allowed to apply long term renewable residence permit by claiming sufficient financial resources for their stay in Turkey. Except the student visa, Bulgarian citizens are allowed to acquire a renewable residency on the way to citizenship either through marriage or through a renewable work permit. Yet these two routes generally could not be used by the post-1990s immigrants who are “employable” mostly in the informal labor market\(^{20}\) or who are staying on a residence permit valid only for accompanying their children studying in Turkey. Their precarious status is also perpetuated by the Turkish state leaders who instrumentally used immigrants’ il/legalitity in order to secure HÖH’s political power in Bulgaria. Since 2001 the political leaders in Turkey have repeatedly announced “amnesties” for undocumented immigrants so that they can go and vote in elections in Bulgaria with no concerns about the fines they were otherwise supposed to pay for the period they overstayed in Turkey (Kaşlı and Parla 2009). Therefore these political decisions seem to be the only available option for Turkish migrants from Bulgaria who want to work and live in Turkey.

These arbitrary ministerial decrees, which in fact has a pattern for being released each time right before elections in Bulgaria, seem also have a powerful impact on Bulgarian domestic politics. In that sense, it can be argued that Turkish state not only supports democratization of Bulgaria but also takes active role in its domestic politics via the Turkish minority who are willing to live, work and/or settle in Turkey. While HÖH’s votes has diminished between 1994 and 2001, it increased its political power from 2001 to 2005 and maintained its presence in Bulgarian politics ever since. Dayıoğlu talks about three main reasons for the decline of HÖH’s votes. In addition to the romours of corruption in HÖH and its negligence to the economic problems that especially Turkish minorities were facing, the increasing undocumented migration to Turkey especially after 1992 also had a crucial impact on the voter turnouts among ethnic Turks (Dayıoğlu 2005: 430). While, for 1994 election, only 2700 out of 50,000 Bulgarian citizens voted in the Bulgarian embassies in Turkey, the number of votes – either in embassies or by crossing the border-- increased from 6000 in 1997 to 36,000 in 2001 election and to 43,600

\(^{20}\) (due to the reluctance of employers to go through the bureaucracy of work permit application even though it is possible for certain sectors, such as domestic work, based on the Law on concerning Work Permits for Foreigners enacted in 2003)
in 2005 election. Here Dayıoğlu underlines the role that HÖH MPs, Turkish state, immigrant associations and local government representatives in Turkey played in mobilizing Bulgarian citizens to go to Bulgaria for voting or providing free transportation to the ballot boxes for dual citizens to vote in Turkey (2005: 441). To Dayıoğlu’s surprise (2005: 452), the total number of votes collected from the Bulgarian citizens in Turkey in 2005 election was exactly like HÖH leader Ahmet Doğan estimated before the election. While this precision is a good example of Turkey’s support for the Turkish minorities’ interests in Bulgarian politics, what is missing in Dayıoğlu’s account is the way voting rights of so called “undocumented” or “irregular” Bulgarian Turks were instrumentally used by the political leaders in the Turkish context.

**plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?**

During our ethnographic fieldwork, we listened to accounts of previous experiences of few immigrants who had been to Bulgaria for voting in 2005 and we had the chance to observe our informants’ experiences of amnesties released right before October 2007 local election and July 2009 general election in Bulgaria. Due to their irregular status, none of them were willing to go to vote in the elections until they heard from other immigrants about free and supposedly renewable residence permit that the Foreigner’s Department provided upon the decision of the Cabinet. As the number of undocumented Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria increased, political leaders repeatedly used such ad hoc decrees to “legalize” them. Yet, once these residence permits were expired, these supposedly “renewable” permits were not allowed to be renewed – either in 2007 or 2009 -- and the immigrants lapsed into illegality (Kasli and Parla 2009).

Most recently, however, the political leaders have made a different move right before June 2011 elections in Turkey and also before the coming presidential and local elections in Bulgaria. A new candidate for the incumbent party AKP from Izmir-- one of the main cities in Turkey where Balkan immigrants were settled and the Balkan immigration association is relatively strong-- made an announcement via email-lists of the Balkan associations. He declared that, in response to association’s demand, the prime minister sent directives to the population

---

21 In 2007, the amnesty covered ethnic Turks of Kosovo as well as Bulgaria who are also “of Turkish descent and culture” (Türk Soylu). As the Kosova declared its independence in February 2008, this decision was interpreted by Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria as well as Balkan associations as an attempt to ease irregular immigrants go back to Kosovo without having to pay fines.
directorates to grant citizenship for all Bulgarian Turks provided that they have been living in Turkey before January 2011 with an either valid or expired residence permit. After this announcement was made— one day before the election in June 12—our informants began collecting the necessary documents, submitted their applications and started waiting to hear from the population directorate’s call for interview date. In our informal meeting with the General Secretary of Balkan Immigrants Solidarity Association in Izmir (Izmir Bal-Göç), I was informed that the decision to release this amnesty was based on previous consultations between several MPs and and the association leaders and along the lines of suggestions that Izmir Bal-Göç had already presented to the same ruling party AKP in early 2000s. For that reason, the General Secretary says, the timing of this amnesty suggests that legalization and incorporation of immigrants always rest on on political rather than legal grounds.

Looking at the informal cooperation between the ethnic Turks’ political representatives in Bulgaria, the immigrant associations and political leaders in Turkey help us see how the minority rights in Bulgaria have been shaped as byproducts of the relationship between these elements in the relational field. On the one hand, incorporation of Western values in Bulgaria, such as representative democracy, and its membership in the Council of Europe and the EU paved the way for the development of the rights of Turks and other minorities in Bulgaria. On the other hand, while Turkey itself supported Bulgaria’s integration with the West, it also increasingly involved in Bulgarian domestic politics by instrumentally using Turkish immigrants’ ‘irregularity’ to thus extend and reproduce its political sovereignty beyond state borders (Kaşlı and Parla 2009).

Looking from a migrants-perspective, Turkey’s own process of alignment with the EU acquis, through changes in the Citizenship Law and visa policies, produce even more controversial implications for the framing of citizenship, and in that sense the framing of nationhood in Turkey and its position as the “external homeland.” The overtly ethnic tone of the Turkish citizenship law is fine-tuned with this recent change in 2009 according to the European Convention on Nationality (ECN). Nevertheless, some exceptional clauses were still kept to be applied together with the current settlement law that still privileges people of “Turkish descent.

22 The applicants were informed that the document proving their “Turkishness” would be obtained from the Balkan immigrants associations or from Bulgarian official authorities.
23 This interview took place in Izmir in August 26, 2011.
and culture” (Türk Soylu). These exceptional clauses serve as a “legal” basis for political decisions such as the one made by prime minister in June 2011. In order to understand the reasons for change in the law and continuity in the exceptions to the law in practice, it is necessary to look at how the citizenship and nationhood in Turkey have historically been framed and reframed.

Until the citizenship law of the Republic was accepted in 1928, “Turkish people” was defined in 1921 and 1924 constitutions irrespective of race and religion. 1928 Citizenship Law however was based on both and jus soli and jus sanguinis underlining ethnicity and religion (Kadirbeyoğlu 2007; Soyarık-Şentürk 2005). Additionally 1934 Law on Settlement brought religion at the forefront by defining the status of immigrant and refugee status (münferit göçmen) for people “of Turkish descent and culture” (Türk Soylu) as different from the general category of ‘foreigner.’ Based on these citizenship and settlement laws, Turkish state granted the right to settlement to the Sunni Muslims of the Balkans and Caucasia and neglecting the Christian Orthodox Gagauz Turks and Shi’a Azeris (Kirişci 2000, 2007; Kümbetoğlu 1997). Although 1934 Settlement Law was amended in 2006, it still maintains its ethno-religious bias by guaranteeing “immigrant” status for those who are Türk Soylu, and thus paving the way for the ethnic Turks migration from Bulgaria to Turkey.

The citizenship law was modified in 1964 in order to align it with the 1961 constitution which had embraced universal standards of citizenship and human rights (Soyarık-Şentürk 2005). While 1964 Turkish Citizenship Law allowed naturalization after five years of uninterrupted residence or three years of marriage with a Turkish citizen, it was still based on ethno-centric criteria in terms of acquisition of citizenship by birth. 1964 Turkish Citizenship Law has been modified several times until the most recent change in 2009. As Kadirbeyoğlu claims, “citizenship policies of Turkey were civic-republican in nature…. but were flexible enough to accomodate the consequences of an ethno-cultural approach” (2007: 130), thus it has a dual characteristic. As shown by Kadirbeyoğlu’s analysis on dual citizenship, its bias towards its

---

24 At this point, it is not possible to make bold statements about political motives behind the decision taken by Turkish prime minister before elections in June 2011. After looking at the future voting patterns of these new citizens, one might claim that post-1990s immigrants were seen as potential voters for not only HÖH in Bulgaria but also the incumbent party in Turkey. Yet it is still not wrong to claim that the decision to give citizenship to post-1990s immigrants is a political one as it requires political will to authorize state departments to apply exceptions to the new Citizenship Law.

ethno-cultural character was reproduced through applications like ‘pink card’ for guest workers. 1995 amendment introduced the pink card application which offered a privileged non-citizen status to people like guest workers or refugees living abroad and never intended to include the non-Muslim minorities (Kadirbeyoğlu 2007: 136). While this privileged non-citizen status was aim at solving the social and political rights of Turkish people living abroad, such practices also complement Turkey’s external homeland policy to protect Turkish interests in countries where ethnic Turks live.

Here it seems necessary to remember İçduygu’s periodization of the immigration policies in Turkey as they are also related to Turkey’s framing of citizenship. While the period from 1994 to 2001 was defined by a transition to international norms, post-2001 was the period of “EU-ization” when Turkey declared its intention to introduce major changes to its immigration and asylum policies, as part of the pre-accession requirements of the EU. In addition to signing related UN Conventions, such as UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (İçduygu 2007) which the EU-ization process prescribes, the new Law on Work Permits for Foreigners came into force in 2003. While the old Settlement law maintained with only minor changes in 2006, the Citizenship Law was changed in 2009, and recently in January 2011, the draft bill called “Aliens and International Protection” was prepared as a joint Law for Foreigners, Refugee Protection and Regulations for Administration of Migration.

The new citizenship law aimed at eliminating clauses in violation of the ECN which came into force in March 2000. In the legal grounds section of its draft bill prepared by the Prime Ministry, it is stated that it has increasingly been common practice in the EU to refer to this convention for country evaluations during admission process. The ECN forbids discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race and color, national or ethnic origin for rules pertaining to citizenship and thus requires states to review their naturalization process and residency requirements accordingly. The political leaders seem to have considered the ECN principles to a great extent while preparing in the new citizenship law, as the length of residency requirement seems now to apply to everyone equally. According to the temporary clause attached to the new law, the former procedure that requires only two years of residency for Türk Soylu foreigners would be valid until December 31, 2010 and from then onwards 5 years residency requirement would apply everyone irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. Nevertheless, despite this

---

26 For details of this draft bill please see http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/docs/kkgm/kanuntasarilari/101-1195.doc
transitionary clause that signals a (gradual) ‘de-ethnicization’ in law, the privileged status of “immigrant” for people of Turkish descent and culture is still kept in tact under the “exceptional cases” section of the new law.

In both the old version (article 7) and the new version (article 12) defining the “exceptional cases,” it is stated that such cases are made by the Cabinet upon the proposal of the Ministry of Interior. While the number of exceptions defined in the new version is reduced from six to three clauses in the article 12 of the new law, the scope of the new version is left even vaguer, thus wider, than the old version. While the new version appears to be de-ethnicized as the phrase “those who are Türk Soylu, their partner and adult children” is replaced with “those who are accepted as immigrant,” the way “immigrant” is defined is still left to the interpretation of political leaders, namely the Ministry of Interior and the Cabinet. Like the new settlement law of 2006 which reaffirmed the exceptional “immigration” status for people who are Türk Soylu, the new citizenship law in fact did not change the notion of nationhood in Turkey either while it gives the image of aligning with the European criteria of non-discrimination.

In other words, while the relationship between the external homeland and ethnic minorities who try to settle in Turkey is now reframed according to new rules and procedures inspired by international norms or European standards, this ‘de-ethnicized’ image of nationhood is not translated into practice as the exceptional clauses continue to reproduce the ethnic dimension of this relational field. As in the example of announcement made in June 2011, ethnic Turks of Bulgaria were finally granted the right to citizenship only because the political leaders agreed to apply an exception to the new citizenship law’s five years of uninterrupted residency rule that, according to the temporary clause of the citizenship law, was supposed to be applied from January 2011 onwards.

In sum, there are several controversial practices at work here. In Bulgarian domestic politics, although ethnic Turks now have a political voice in the parliament, they can stand against Bulgarian nationalism only with the support of the Turkish state. In Turkish domestic politics, ethnic Turks are still privileged, though this time not by rules but by exceptions to the rules. These seemingly contradictory practices show us two things. Firstly, the EU and its norms emerge as another element of the relational field and the formerly triadic nexus has increasingly been shaped in response to Bulgaria’s and Turkey’s alignment with the EU for the last two decades. Secondly, this new and extended relational field is a more complex one which
stimulates the political leaders --of the nationalizing state, ethnic minority and the external homeland-- to develop new tools to maintain their notions of nationhood intact while adjusting their images to the new rules of the game.

Conclusion

In this paper, I focus on the political field in which notions of “nation” and national citizenship are framed and used by “states” that are not distinct entities but interconnected fields shaped in response to local and global forces. I look at a single group in two states where they hold a minority and majority position. My historically informed analysis shows that the migrations of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey depended on the dynamics of the triadic nexus during the Cold war. Yet for the last two decades, these elements have incrementally acted upon a new and wider relational political field where domestic and international forces have played more prominent roles. Following Bourdieu’s notion of the logic of field, in this paper, the relational positions -- taken by the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria, Turkish and Bulgarian states -- are situated in a wider landscape which constitutes these actors’ responses in conjunction with the political and economic transformations at a macro level. More specifically, it is argued that the EU-ization process in both Bulgaria and Turkey has to be taken as an integral part of the new political configuration.

Sassen (2002: 287) argues that “denationalization” of citizenship means constitutionalization of human rights regime and rights of foreign actors so that the global becomes embedded in the national. In the case of Turkey, as Icduygu (2007: 216) states, these changes that “EU-ization process” have brought are not transformation but “absorption which refers to non-fundamental changes but accommodation of new values and practices.” Our case study shows that during this process of harmonization with international and EU norms, the images of the states were reframed through increasing minority representation in Bulgaria as well as through changes in the immigration and citizenship policies in Turkey. Yet the practices of elections processes in Bulgaria, the ethnic Turks’ citizenship acquisition in Turkey as well as border crossings between Bulgaria and Turkey imply continuities in this change.

Whereas certain political practices mentioned here -- such as arbitrary implementations of exceptions embedded in the law and informal cooperations among political actors of ethnic
minority in Bulgaria and leaders in Turkey -- worked to maintain the position of Turkish state as the external homeland in another form, they have also created a new image of the state in harmony with the international norms of its day. Yet, following Basson who argues seemingly policies of nationhood in fact constitute one another, I finally claim, looking at the extended relational political field with a historical perspective makes it easier to capture how and why such seemingly contradictory practices are, in Migdal’s words, pitted against the new images of the states. As our case study also shows, what might occur as a paradox of image and practice of the state is yet another manifestation of possible inconsistencies embedded in what appears as a “state” position which is only an “effect” of multiple narratives and practices.

Appendix 1

Table: Emigration of Turks from Bulgaria, 1878-1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Interval</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1878-1912</td>
<td>3500000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923-1933</td>
<td>101507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-1939</td>
<td>97181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-1949</td>
<td>21353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-1951</td>
<td>154198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-1968</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-1978</td>
<td>114356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-1988</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-1992</td>
<td>321800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1160614</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


