



Diaspora Politics of the Turkish-speaking communities in the United Kingdom

Mustafa akmak
Turkey Institute Reports
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He received his bachelor's degree from Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey and Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands, on sociology.

Mustafa Çakmak is currently conducting his Ph.D research on the Turkish-speaking community in the UK. Migration, diaspora, identity and cultural studies are among his research interests.

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Foreword



I am delighted to present the Turkey Institute's fourth publication, written by Mustafa Cakmak and focused on the diaspora politics of the Turkish-speaking community in the United Kingdom. The Turkey Institute offers high-quality analysis of the Turkish society and state, with special emphasis on domestic and foreign policy and the economy. It provides objective updates and organises high-level discussions on current issues, especially in relation to democratic governance, human rights, the rule of law, and constitutional reform. As a part of that mission, the Turkey Institute produces analytical papers to inform readers on pertinent issues in Turkey.

This report analyses the current diaspora politics of the Turkish-speaking communities in the United Kingdom within historical context. In the first part, it gives a historical account of Turkish-speaking communities in the United Kingdom. The report classifies organisations formed by Turkish-speaking people in the UK as 'nationalist,' 'left-wing,' and 'political Islamist.' Then it looks closely at the community-formation processes of these groups with their political activities (campaigns, boycotts, rallies, marches, and demonstrations) and examines their motives.

In the second part, the report scrutinises the political activities and motivations of the Turkish state, and particularly of the ruling AKP, vis-à-vis Turkish-speaking people in the UK. To do so, it particularly benefits from the concept of long-distance nationalism.

The report underlines that alongside legal political activities, there are illegal activities by the Turkish state which target dissidents of the regime abroad often through the means of labelling people by creating lists, sometimes kidnapping individuals, and even assassinating Turkish-/Kurdish-origin political dissidents living abroad, resulting in the generation of fear among diaspora.

Good readings,

Turkey Institute

Executive Summary



The Turkish-speaking communities in the United Kingdom are religiously, ethnically and ideologically a diverse group. The historical background of the migration from Cyprus and Turkey to the UK needs to be understood to discuss the communities' contemporary position.

The report considers the diaspora politics in two dimensions. The first dimension covers the communities' political activities in the UK towards their home countries. This includes long-distance nationalism, left wing politics and diasporic political activities of Kurdish nationalists, Turkish ultra-nationalists and political Islamists from voting to lobbying.

The second dimension focuses on the Turkish state's 'long arm' in the UK and how it shapes the diaspora politics. The long arm of the Turkish regime includes both legal activities and alleged state-sponsored illegal activities targeting the dissidents in the UK via state institutions, non-governmental organisations and state-funded non-governmental organisations.

The report suggest that in order to keep the social cohesion within the Turkish-speaking communities in the UK, there is an urgent need for the Turkish government to stop polarising the communities by using hateful discourse, scapegoating and point targeting certain fragments within the communities and provoking the diaspora community against the government of host countries.

Diaspora Politics of the Turkish-speaking communities in the United Kingdom

1. INTRODUCTION

This report discusses the primary motivations behind the diaspora politics of the Turkish-speaking communities in the United Kingdom towards their home countries and the Turkish state's interference in and involvement with the Turkish-speaking communities in the UK. Analysis, discussions, and recommendations in this report are based on empirical data that the author gathered through ten months of ethnographic field research between September 2015 and July 2016 for his Ph.D. research at Keele University. For this purpose, he visited community centres, associations, and religious centres of the Turkish-speaking communities in London as well as making one visit to the Consulate General of Turkey in London, recorded anecdotes and conducted a total of twenty-eight interviews. The twenty-eight interviewees were members of the Turkish-speaking communities, community leaders, activists and volunteers of civil society: thirteen men and fifteen women who represent a cross-section of ethnic, religious, generational, age and occupational diversity. In addition, he interviewed thirteen political scientists, activists, dismissed academics, and journalists for this report between July 2016 and October 2017. These thirteen interviews were held in London, Brighton, Birmingham, Leicester, and Manchester and focused on developments among the community in the period following the failed coup of July 15, 2016. Nine of those interviewed were direct

victims of the Turkish government's purge in the aftermath of the coup attempt: they were dismissed from their jobs, or the newspapers or universities where they worked were shut down by decree.

This report starts with the historical background and formation of the community in the UK and then discusses diaspora politics in two dimensions. The first dimension gives an overview of the concept of long-distance nationalism and the major political groups within the politically active groups in the community. It discusses the motivations and political activities of these groups as well as their transnational links with Turkey or Cyprus. It also examines the voting behaviours of the Turkish-speaking communities in the UK in Turkey's general elections.

The second dimension is the Turkish state's involvement and interference with the Turkish-speaking communities in the UK and the report analyses the 'long arm' of the Turkish state in the UK in the sense of how the Turkish government's domestic political and religious agenda is shaping the diaspora politics of the Turkish-speaking communities in the UK. The state's involvement has manifested itself in two particular ways: first, there are the legal activities of Turkish political parties, such as organising rallies and meetings where politicians address and mobilise their supporters in the UK; second, there are reports of state-sponsored illegal activities that are allegedly linked to the Turkish state targeting dissidents in the UK through a number of means, not least by mobilising pro-government diaspora