Diaspora-making as a state-led project.

Turkey's expansive diaspora strategy and its implications for emigrant and kin populations

Asli Okyay
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Abstract

States' efforts to create, expand or mobilise extraterritorial populations of emigrant or kin origin have been largely dealt by separate strands of scholarship. This thesis aims to bridge these two strands and offer a broader understanding of home-states' role in diaspora-making by analysing why and how Turkey has evolved into a hybrid origin-reference state claiming and engaging an expansive diaspora composed of emigrants and a broad set of kin populations defined beyond co-ethnicity.

The empirical analysis traces the state's transformation through focusing on its categorisation and identification practices and policy-discourse repertoire oriented towards these different types of transborder populations over the last two decades. It argues that the ways in which the state identified and targeted both emigrants and external kin groups changed as a function of the interaction between: i) economic liberalisation and outward economic expansion, ii) shifts in the state's foreign political and identitarian positioning vis-à-vis the West and its non-Western neighbourhood and iii) differing elite-sponsored conceptions of nationhood and narratives of nationalism. These interacting underlying factors have led the home-state to gradually expand the scope and diversify the composition of its transborder membership universe, while simultaneously engage in practices of selection and hierarchisation within its broad diaspora based on its changing definitions of ideal emigrants and external kin.

This thesis also scrutinises the implications of changing rationalities and modalities of the state's diaspora making for the targeted populations. Empirical examination of the cases of the Turkey-origin emigrant population in Germany and the co-ethnic minority in Bulgaria demonstrates that the home-state, through its varying definition, (sub)categorisation, and engagement efforts, significantly impacts the diasporic membership claims and practices of both emigrants and co-ethnics. State-led diaspora-making has (re)structuring effects particularly on intra-minority dynamics as well as different sections' stances towards and relations with the home-state.
Bio
Asli Selin Okyay is a research associate at the BORDERLANDS project hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, and a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute. Her Ph.D. thesis, supervised by Professor Rainer Bauböck, analyses diaspora politics, focusing on the case Turkey's diaspora-making and engagement project directed at transborder populations and its implications for targeted migrant and non-migrant populations. Her research at the BORDERLANDS project focuses on the relations between the European Union and Turkey in the realms of migration and border management. She holds an M.Phil in Migration Studies from University of Oxford (2009), an M.A. (2007) and a B.A. (2005) in Political Science and International Relations from Bogazici University, Istanbul.