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The Effects of Granting the Right of External Voting to the Diaspora Policies of AKP and CHP

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Abstract

By granting the Turkish diaspora the right to vote in general elections in 2014, Turkish political parties' diaspora policies have gained crucial importance, especially considering that votes from abroad constitute five percent of the total votes. In this study, I will try to answer the question of how granting of the right to vote to citizens abroad affected the main Turkish political parties' (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party– AKP and Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party - CHP) diaspora policies. First of all, I start by introducing the Turkish diaspora. Then, I review the history of the Turkish diaspora's right to vote from abroad. Next, I analyze the parties' election manifestos published before the general elections in 2011, 2015, and 2018. The reason for selecting these specific elections is to reveal the alteration of these two main parties' diaspora policies since the 2011 elections were the last election before the granting to vote externally and 2015 and 2018 were the first two general elections afterward. Within the scope of this literature review and document analysis, the issue is analyzed using two perspectives within the framework of the concepts of external voting, election districts, foreign policy, diaspora institutions, culture and integration, political participation, and education. This study establishes that the provision of external voting rights had a substantial influence on the policies of Turkish political parties towards the diaspora, as evidenced by the significant increase in the number of election manifesto articles and the remarkably diverse promises.

Keywords

External Voting, Turkish
Diaspora, Election
Manifesto, AKP, CHP

Introduction

External voting has been discussed in Turkish politics for over 50 years. Discussions began in 1965 with a law drafted by a parliamentarian (Anaz & Köse, 2020) and finally Turkish citizens abroad were granted the right to vote in the presidential elections in 2014. Since the right to vote was granted to the Turkish diaspora, there have been two presidential

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elections in 2014 and 2018, two general elections in 2015, one more general election in 2018, as well as a referendum in 2017. However, since the two general elections in 2015 occurred approximately three months apart (July 7 and November 1), the Turkish diaspora parts of the two parties' election manifestos' are exactly the same. For practical reasons, in this study I did not examine them separately but accepted them as one.

In this article, I claim that Turkey's two main parties' (AKP and CHP) interest in the Turkish diaspora and its issues increased in a positive way for the Turkish diaspora after being granted the right to vote, and this can be observed in the election manifestos. I limited the examination of election manifestos to only two parties due to their significance in Turkish politics and how they represented the main political spheres for more than 20 years. The AKP has been the ruling party since 2002, and the CHP has been the main opposition party since 2002. For this reason, I limited the examination of the parties' diaspora policies to only two main parties. It is meaningful to study external voting and parties' approaches towards the Turkish diaspora because of the percentage of votes from abroad proportion to the total amount of votes. To put it more clearly, external votes were 5 percent of the total votes in the 2018 presidential and general elections, according to High Election Board (YSK - Yüksek Seçim Kurulu) ([YSK Web Portal, 2018](#)). In the 2014 and 2018 presidential elections, Erdoğan won in the first round only by approximately 2 percent, and the referendum in 2017, was concluded roughly 51 to 48 for acceptance. External voting, which represents 5 percent of the total vote, makes a difference in the Turkish election context. The reason behind selecting the three elections, in 2011, 2015, and 2018, is to reveal the alteration of parties' policies and approaches towards the Turkish diaspora since granting the right to vote from abroad. Turkish citizens could not vote in the 2011 general elections abroad, but it changed in 2012. For the first time, Turkish citizens voted in abroad in the 2014 presidential elections and naturally also in the subsequent elections.

Finally, despite increasing interest and attention towards the diaspora and external voting studies over the last decades, there is no study about the effects of external voting on Turkish party politics. Therefore, this study has unique importance because it demonstrates the alteration of the parties' diaspora policies with the effect of granting external voting rights.

Literature Review

Diaspora

The concept of 'diaspora' has an increasing usage trend, especially in recent decades. Although the term was used to mean 'scatter' in Greek, and was used for Athenians who settled outside of Athens, it has changed over time to express religious communities such as Jewish communities or religious minorities in Europe during the Middle Ages ([Köse,](#)

2021). More recently, the word diaspora has become a popular term to describe a nations' trans-border communities, but diaspora is not the only concept for trans-border communities. 'Transnational communities', 'migrant communities', 'minorities', and 'kin societies' are some of the most significant concepts used to describe trans-border communities (Butler, 2001; De Haas vd., 2019; Dufoix, 2008; as cited in Köse, 2021: p. 67; Sheffer, 2003; Vertovec, 1997). The increase in motives and grounds for international migration caused forced emigration to no longer be the main element of diaspora formation. (Köse, 2021). Despite the fact that the term diaspora is still far from having a definitive definition in the near future, there is no harm to use it for transnational communities such as Turks in abroad, or in other words the Turkish diaspora.

The Turkish Diaspora

The Turkish diaspora is a term that is worth debating. Even though the first Turkish 'diaspora formation' movements may be considered with the border changes that emerged after WW1, such as in Brubaker's 'Accidental Diasporas', and with the emigration of Turkish guest workers beginning in the 1960s European countries, mainly to West Germany, as guest workers, the emigrant Turkish diaspora began to emerge (Adamson, 2019; Brubaker, 2000; Köse, 2021). While some scholars such as İçduygu and Sirkeci (2001), accepted the Turkish population in Western European countries as a diasporic community according to Safran's definition (Sirkeci & İçduygu, 2001), some scholars do not use the term 'Turkish diaspora' (Abadan-Unat, 2017; Gitmez, 2019; as cited in Köse, 2021: p.68; Martin, 1991) but instead utilized different terms such as Euro-Turks (Kaya & Kentel, 2005). In spite of the ambiguity of the concept of Turkish diaspora, there has been an expansion in the usage of the term primarily correlated with labor migration and Cohen's (2008) labor diaspora (Köse, 2021). The uncertainty and vagueness of the meaning of the term Turkish diaspora is caused from the dictionary description of the diaspora as *kopuntu* (fragment) by the Turkish Language Society (TDK- Türk Dil Kurumu) and the relationship with the Jewish Diaspora (Köse, 2021). Yıldız (2019) further criticized the acceptance and usage of the term Turkish diaspora by academics due to its indefiniteness and lack of limitation (Yıldız, 2019).

To define the borders of the Turkish diaspora, I accept Köse's (2021) classification for the Turkish diaspora as two concepts: autochthonous diaspora and emigrant diaspora (Köse, 2021). Autochthonous diaspora, also called "accidental diasporas" by Brubaker (Brubaker, 2000), are developed by border changes instead of emigration in comparison emigrant diaspora, as in the case of the Balkans (Brubaker, 2000; Köse, 2021). The majority of the Turkish diaspora was formed through guest worker programs between some Western European countries, such as Germany, France, and the Netherlands, beginning the 1960s (Köse, 2021). Since this study's focus is on the diaspora's political participation by examining the election manifestos in the context of external voting and most of the

autochthonous Turkish diaspora members do not have Turkish citizenship, I refer to the Turkish diaspora as Köse's emigrant Turkish diaspora in this study.

Political Participation of the Turkish Diaspora

Political participation is a broad concept and has multiple meanings. Most of the use of the concept by academics is limited to voting in elections, for reasonable causes, and I too limit the concept of political participation to only voting in this study by examining external voting and parties' diaspora policies through election manifestos in Turkey's politics.

External Voting

External voting, commonly recognized as overseas voting or expatriate voting, pertains to the act of permitting citizens who reside outside their home country to engage in their homeland's electoral procedures and exercise their right to vote. Over the last several decades, most countries worldwide have granted voting rights to non-resident citizens, which has enfranchised about 200 million emigrants in over 140 countries (Anaz & Köse, 2022; Wellman et al., 2022). External voting originated in the late 19th century when United States and Australian soldiers were granted the right to vote; the practice was later expanded to include other professionals and citizens in home-country elections (Anaz & Köse, 2022). According to Lafleur (2015, p. 6), some scholars have become curious about why external voting has spread globally. They sample different hypotheses established on democratization theories (Lafleur, 2015). These hypotheses go by different names and also have sub-hypotheses that can be grouped into two main categories: the norm internationalization hypothesis and the electoral competition hypothesis (Lafleur, 2015). The norm-internationalization hypothesis proposes that the inclusion of emigrants in the electoral processes of their home countries is due to the emergence of a new global normative standard (Lafleur, 2015). This hypothesis suggests two possible ways in which external voting could have become an international standard. One way is through the top-down process of international diffusion, as suggested by Grace and Lafleur (Grace, 2007; Lafleur, 2013, as cited in 2015, p. 7). Another way is through peer pressure, where pioneering states' adoption of external voting legislation encourages more states to do the same (as cited in Lafleur, 2015, p. 7; Rhodes and Harutyunyan, 2010). When countries with significant diasporas allow their emigrant citizens to vote, it could potentially affect election results. Additionally, including emigrant citizens in elections has economic, as well as political benefits because remittances are crucial to many developing economies (Wellman et al., 2022).

The scope to which states permit their non-resident citizens to vote from overseas deviates significantly. This divergence exists across nations and changes over time, as well as within nations depending on the type and timing of the election. In brief, Collyer

(2014, p. 64) summarizes the election systems and external voting practices of countries in 5 groups: (1) countries that do not have elections, (2) countries where people living abroad cannot vote, (3) practices where diaspora members who want to vote have to come to the country, (4) foreign voting countries that have the practice of voting and where the votes cast are transferred to the last constituency in which they were settled or distributed to parties throughout the country, and (5) countries with a constituency practice where the diaspora can elect their own representative (Collyer, 2014: p. 64; Köse, 2020: p. 134).

External voting is a topic that is commonly studied across four key dimensions, including normative political theory (as cited in Anaz & Köse, 2021, p. 183; Gamlen, 2015; Lafleur, 2011), comparative studies (as cited in Anaz & Köse, 2021, p. 183; Farmani and Jafari, 2016; Laguerre, 2013; Rojas, 2004), voting practices (as cited in Anaz & Köse, 2021, p. 183; Brand, 2010), and electoral behaviors (as cited in Anaz & Köse, 2021, p. 183; Jaulin, 2015). In the realm of normative political studies, there are conversations surrounding the authorization or prohibition of overseas citizens to exercise their voting rights (Anaz & Köse, 2021; López-Guerra, 2005). Some argue that external voting can create challenges such as fraud and the cost of the electoral procedure and may endanger the country's sovereignty if the diaspora exceeds the host society's population (Anaz & Köse, 2021; Jaulin, 2015). The topic also generates discussions on citizenship and loyalty to a sovereign state. Some argue that citizens who have a significant stake in their country of origin through family, property, or the hope of returning should have the right to vote from abroad. This is known as stakeholder citizenship (Anaz & Köse, 2021; Baubock, 2006). However, some states exclude citizens who have spent a certain amount of time abroad from voting. In the United Kingdom, for example, citizens are barred from voting in homeland elections after spending 15 years outside the country (Anaz & Köse, 2021). The comparative studies on overseas voting investigate why and how external voting is allowed. Lafleur (2013) identified three reasons for states to allow their citizens to vote from abroad (Anaz & Köse, 2021, p. 183; Lafleur, 2013): emigrants' financial contributions; policies aimed at incorporating overseas citizens to gain their support during political reform and democratic transitions; and finally, when citizens living abroad highlight their ties to their home country, the state is more inclined to grant them voting rights. According to Brand (2014), when the diaspora population reaches a significant point that cannot be ignored by the state, the state is more inclined to institute emigration policies (as cited in Anaz & Köse, 2021, p. 183; Brand, 2014). Additionally, Brand highlights that political parties are more likely to advocate for developing emigration policies if they anticipate that emigrants will support their party over their rivals (as cited in Anaz & Köse, 2021, p. 184; Brand, 2014). In this context, Brand (2010) also posits that external voting is implemented by authoritarian regimes as well as democratic states to address the need for increased political participation, to accommodate

competing elite interests, to maintain the dominant political party's position, and to deter opposition (as cited in Anaz & Köse, 2022, p. 360; Brand, 2010).

Østergaard-Nielsen et al. (2019) examine the factors that impact a political party's stance on voting rights for emigrants (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019). The authors contend that a party's ideology and level of competition within the political landscape are critical drivers in determining its position on the issue (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019). The scholars suggest that a party's stance on immigration is influenced by the societal divide between open and closed systems and the separation of citizens and states (Caramani, 2012; as cited in Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019, p. 378). Left-leaning parties usually support immigrant inclusion, while right-leaning parties prioritize the rights of non-resident emigrant citizens (Odmalm, 2011; Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019). The findings of a study (Turcu & Urbatsch, 2015) revealed that the political orientation of a government has no significant impact on the implementation of external voting rights (as cited in Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019, p. 378; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2015). Additionally, party competition also shapes a party's view on emigrant voting rights, as internal party dynamics can affect migration policies (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019). Further investigation is needed to determine how a party's position on increased emigrant voting rights aligns with its left-right ideology and how it presents its stance, according to the authors (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019).

External Voting in Turkey

Until 1950, Turkey did not have a law regulating the registration or voting from abroad. With the election law of 1950, the registration of those living abroad as voters was included in the law for the first time. According to the election law, people could only vote by coming to the country at that time (Köse, 2020; Milletvekilleri Seçim Kanunu, 1950).

In 1987, the right to vote at customs was legalized as an additional option, however, it is debatable whether this method can be considered as external voting (Köse, 2020). Those who wanted to vote in the ballot boxes established at customs gates had to be living abroad for more than six months and not have a voter registration in Turkey at the same time (Arkilic, 2021; Köse, 2020). Those who were registered in the electoral register, although they lived abroad, were not entitled to vote at customs gates. In short, from 1987 to 2011, the Turkish diaspora voted at customs gates (Köse, 2020; Anaz & Köse, 2020). During this period, some of the voters came to the customs gates just to vote, while the majority of those who voted at the customs gates, came to Turkey for reasons such as work, vacation, or family visits if their arrival date coincided with a general election or a referendum (Köse, 2020). Despite living in abroad, voters who registered in an electoral roll in Turkey could not vote during this period. In addition, the fact that citizens can vote on the condition of coming to the customs gates, starting 75 days before the elections, only partially meets the criteria for voting abroad. According to Köse

(2020, p. 136), whom I agree with on this issue, this practice cannot be considered external voting, but as voting for those who live abroad (Köse, 2020).

In spite of the modifications in the Elections and Electoral Register in 2008 and 2012, due to decisions of both the Constitutional Court and YSK made it impossible to vote in the 2011 elections (Kadirbeyoğlu & Okyay, 2015). The Constitutional Court ruled that the change in the law violates the secrecy of voting (Kadirbeyoğlu & Okyay, 2015; Anaz & Köse, 2020) because it provides a provision for postal voting. Moreover, the law amendment made in 2012 was aimed at eliminating the administrative and legal gaps in voting abroad and to maximize participation in the elections (Kadirbeyoğlu & Okyay, 2015; Anaz & Köse, 2020). With this law amendment (2012), there was no obstacle for the YSK to provide the opportunity for external voters to vote abroad and in the 2014 presidential elections, ballot boxes were established abroad for the first time (Kadirbeyoğlu & Okyay, 2015; Anaz & Köse, 2020).

The fact that the Turkish diaspora started to use its right to vote abroad in 2014 has brought the homeland-diaspora relationship to the political, as well as socio-cultural and economic plane. Voters abroad, with the possibility of voting in the nearest town in the country where they live, without having to travel to their homeland, participated more than anticipated and there was an increased turnout in the 2014-2018 elections.

Anaz and Köse (2022) proposed that Turkey's external voting can be explained through four stages (Anaz & Köse, 2022). The first stage involves changes to voter registration requirements after the introduction of a multiparty system in 1945 (Anaz & Köse, 2022). During the second stage in the period of Turgut Özal's efforts to establish civilian authority in 1987, Turkish citizens were permitted to cast their votes at customs gates. The third stage saw a constitutional amendment in 1995 that removed disputes and expanded democratic rights and freedoms, and the fourth stage coincided with Turkey's efforts to promote democracy, human rights, and accession talks with the European Union, with the implementation of the 2008 and 2012 amendments to the Electoral Act (Anaz & Köse, 2022). Anaz and Köse (2022) further predict a fifth stage that would involve the introduction of a special electoral district for the Turkish diaspora (Anaz & Köse, 2022). Furthermore, Şahin-Mencütek and Erdoğan (2015) analyze the Turkish external voting system and postulated that the process reflects the desire of home states to nurture loyalty and maintain connections with citizens and co-ethnics residing overseas. The authors further noted that migrants from Turkey have been active in advocating for voting rights, and the ruling party may have utilized the external voting system to increase the chances of securing a majority vote for their presidential candidate (as cited in Anaz & Köse, 2022, p. 360; Şahin-Mencütek & Erdoğan, 2016). In response to the authors, Anaz and Köse criticize Şahin-Mencütek and Erdoğan (2016) for not comprehending Turkey's diaspora engagement policies; and they even argue that the AKP's

diaspora policies were successful parallel to their general policies during the early years of power (Anaz & Köse, 2021).

As a conclusion, fifty percent of approximately 3 million registered voters cast their votes in ballot boxes set up in 60 countries and at Turkey's customs gates. This high and increasing participation rate is important in terms of expressing the importance that the Turkish diaspora attaches to political participation in the homeland.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to explore and illustrate how granting rights to vote abroad to the Turkish diaspora affected the two main parties' diaspora policies and promises; for this reason, I examined the political parties' election manifestos to understand and reveal their diaspora policies' evolution since granting external voting rights. For this research, I examined two the main parties in Turkish politics' election manifestos, namely the AKP and CHP, and their election manifestos for three general elections in 2011, 2015, and 2018. There are two reasons behind selecting the AKP and CHP to analyze. First, these parties have been the ruling party and the main opposition party since 2002; and second, these two parties have a leading role within the presidential system, which leads to political conjuncture to the two parties, coalitions, alliances, or blocs. Furthermore, I picked these particular three elections in order to reveal the evolution; in other words, I examined their last general election manifestos before granting the right to vote abroad, which was the 2011 general election, and the first and the second general elections after external voting was granted in the general elections in 2015 and 2018. There were two general elections in 2015 but both political parties' manifestos about the Turkish diaspora were precisely the same, so there is no need to examine them separately.

Every document that contains text could function as a source for qualitative analysis (Morgan, 2022; as cited in Patton, 2014: p. 64), and is called document analysis. The election manifestos were voluntarily prepared and published by these Turkish political parties without any mandatory legal obligations. I obtained the election manifestos through the parties' web sites (AK PARTİ | Dosya Arşivi, 2011; Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, 2011). Within the framework of these general election manifestos of the AKP and CHP, I utilize two perspectives to examine them. I compare the quantitative aspect of the election manifestos over the elections. In other words, I extract the parties' every promise, declaration, and statement about the Turkish diaspora as an article to reveal their interest evolution over the selected elections using a quantitative perspective. Additionally, I examine the contents of the election manifestos under the subheadings of foreign policy, diaspora institutions, culture and integration, political participation, and education, respectively in order to reveal the alteration of the political parties' diaspora policies through the content of the manifestos over the three selected elections.

Findings

In this study, as mentioned above, I analyze the general election manifestos of the two main parties in Turkish politics from two different perspectives. First, I use a general perspective consisting of the article counts in the parties' election manifestos and under which headings they declared their promises for these three elections. In the second part, I compare the parties' promises and statements over three elections using content analysis. These elections are the last election before granting external voting rights and the first two elections after, in order to reveal the effect of granting external voting rights on the parties' diaspora policies. Furthermore, this study may be beneficial to debates [such as (Anaz & Köse, 2021)] about the possible effects of making an electoral district abroad.

General Perspective

In the 2011 general elections when external voting did not exist, the CHP had only one article in their election manifesto about the Turkish diaspora; while the AKP had six articles under the headings of 'Our Foreign Policy' and 'Relations with European Union (EU)'.

In the 2015 general elections, the first general election after the right of external voting was granted to the Turkish diaspora, the CHP increased the number of articles about the Turkish diaspora in their election manifestos from one to 19 under a specific heading for the Turkish diaspora called 'Our People Abroad' and some other related headings including, 'Entrepreneurship Ecosystem/Corporate Ecosystem', 'Higher Education System', and 'System of Political Parties'. The AKP, in their election manifestos, increased the number of articles about the Turkish diaspora from seven to 27 under a specific heading, called 'Our Citizens Living Abroad and Related Communities' and divided this heading to two parts called, 'What we did?' and 'What will we do?'.

Lastly, in the 2018 general elections both parties increased the number of articles in their election manifestos. On the CHP side, the number rose from 19 to 24 under a specific heading called 'Our People Abroad' and other two headings called 'Foreign Policy: Stability and Reputation' and 'Diplomatic Initiatives'. On the AKP side, the increase was higher from 27 to 64 articles about the Turkish Diaspora under a specific heading called 'Our Citizens Living Abroad' and grouped the heading again into two called, 'What we did?' and 'What will we do?'.

Content Examination

Foreign Policy

To begin with the CHP, there was no article about the Turkish diaspora in the context of foreign policy in their 2011 election manifesto. However, in the 2015 election, the CHP manifested that they would try every diplomatic way to support those who have

issues obtaining dual citizenship and the security of life and property of people of Turkish origin through diplomatic initiatives. In the general election in 2018, CHP kept the same articles about dual citizenship and security of life in the context of foreign policy, that they first declared in 2015. In addition, the CHP also mentioned the Turkish diaspora in three points. First, the CHP argued that the ruling party AKP's polarization policies also affected the Turkish diaspora. Second, the CHP revealed that they see the Turkish diaspora as the honorary representative of Turkey and an integral part of public diplomacy. Third, the CHP will use the support of its citizens in the process of EU membership.

To continue with the AKP, only one article about the Turkish diaspora in the context of foreign policy was found in the 2011 general election manifesto, which states that the relationship with the EU would positively affect the Turkish diaspora. The 2015 election manifesto of the AKP stated that protecting the interests of the Turkish diaspora, developing their language and cultural accumulation, and taking their services abroad permanently and healthily are the main element of their foreign policy approach. Lastly, in the 2018 general election manifesto, the AKP stated that one of the main foreign policy responsibilities is protecting the bond of the Turkish diaspora with its homeland and the presence of the Turkish diaspora. They also declared that they see the Turkish diaspora as a key part of inter-communal relations.

Diaspora Institutions

According to Gamlen (2019, p. 493), the concept of 'diaspora institutions' is defined as 'formal state offices in executive or legislative branches of government dedicated to the affairs of emigrants and their descendants' (Gamlen, 2014; as cited in Gamlen *vd.*, 2019: p. 493; Newland and Agunias, 2013). In context of this definition, the CHP did not have articles in their any of their three election manifestos; on the contrary, the AKP had articles in all three election manifestos.

The AKP, as a ruling party in 2010 during the founding process of the Turks in Abroad Presidency (Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı - YTB), had an article that states that the YTB aims to meet the needs of Turkish diaspora's members and to find solutions to their problems, in the 2011 general election manifesto. The AKP, in their 2015 general election manifesto, mentioned that the YTB began to function in order to handle the Turkish diaspora's problems and financially support them under the headings, 'What did we do?' In the manifesto of the 2018 general election, the AKP stated that YTB would function as a coordinative actor in Turkey's diaspora policy and promised to establish a permanent specialization commission in the Turkish Grand National Assembly with the name, Commission for Turks Abroad. Lastly, the CHP stated, in their 2018 election manifesto that they would ensure that the YTB would be equidistant to all NGOs and that the support given by the YTB would be distributed fairly.

Culture and Integration

The CHP did not have an article about culture and integration in the 2011 general election manifesto and the AKP had only one article that states citizens who live abroad should integrate and should not be assimilated. In the 2015 CHP general election manifesto, they declared that they would find ‘International Youth Centers’, which would function to increase the role for cultural interaction of youth living abroad. The AKP, in the 2015 general election, had a wide variety of articles about culture and integration under both headings. Turkish language and education are a matter that the AKP frequently mentioned in these articles, such as supporting NGOs and foundations for Turkish education and improving services to protect the Turkish and culture. The AKP also, for the first time, mentioned the problems faced by the Turkish diaspora when reintegrating into Turkey in their 2015 manifesto. The AKP emphasized that they published books to support the Turkish diaspora’s culture in this manifesto.

Political Participation

Despite the AKP’s unsuccessful attempts to grant external voting, it was not possible to vote abroad in the Turkish elections in 2011. Naturally, the 2011 general election declarations of the AKP and CHP do not contain any articles regarding external voting or electoral districts. Nevertheless, the presence of articles about the political participation of the Turkish diaspora in the 2015 general election manifestos of the AKP and CHP can be observed, despite the fact that their statements are quite different. On one hand, the AKP stressed that they were the ones who granted the right to vote abroad, which they think strengthens the Turkish diaspora’s relationship with their homeland. On the other hand, the CHP promised, for the first time as a political party, an electoral district for the Turkish diaspora. According to the CHP’s manifesto for the 2015 general election, the CHP defends the electoral district to effectively carry citizens’ problems abroad to the consideration of Turkey. More specifically, the CHP declared that they would allocate 10 representatives and a representative for every 300,000 members of the Turkish diaspora. In the 2018 general election manifestos, there were no significant differences for both parties. While the AKP stressed, additionally, that they provided the right to vote in ballot boxes abroad in more than 50 countries in the last elections as a government; on the other side, the CHP restated precisely the same promises about the abroad electoral district that they made in the 2015 election.

Education

Both political parties did not declare anything about the Turkish diaspora related to education in the 2011 general election manifestos. Nonetheless, the CHP promised that youth abroad could continue their education in Turkey without extending their education period, and the appointment that people of Turkish origin in Europe need would be given priority, in the 2015 general election. On the AKP side, in their 2015 general

election manifesto, the party pointed out that they would improve the services for Turkish language for the Turkish diaspora.

The AKP, in their 2018 general election manifesto, gave a wide variety of promises and stressed its past accomplishments. To mention the AKP's promises, first, they promised to increase quotas in universities and state positions for members of the Turkish diaspora. Second, they provided incentives for universities to open new campuses abroad. Thirdly and most importantly, the AKP promised to employ teachers for the Turkish diaspora from diaspora members. Fourth, they promised to open new research centers that focus their studies on the Turkish diaspora. To mention the AKP's past works according to the 2018 manifesto; the AKP provided free education and internship opportunities, prepared master programs, and appointed more than two thousand teachers and religion officers. On the other hand, the CHP had four articles related to education for the Turkish diaspora, such as ensuring university equivalence for people who have received their diplomas abroad, giving priority to trainers abroad from the Turkish diaspora in appointments, appointing education attachés and teachers for the needed areas, Ensuring that people who started their education abroad and wish to continue their education in Turkey are able to do so without losing a year.

Analysis

In this chapter, I analyze the election manifestos of the two main political parties in Turkey across three general elections, with a specific focus on their promises and statements related to the Turkish diaspora. The first section presents the general perspective, comparing the number of articles in each party's manifesto that discuss the diaspora and identifying the headings under which these promises are made. The second section, titled content examination, delves deeper into the parties' promises and statements over the three elections, exploring their views on foreign policy, education, culture and integration, and diaspora institutions.

Starting with the general perspective, during the 2011 general elections, the CHP included only one article in their manifesto addressing the Turkish diaspora, whereas the AKP had six articles dedicated to the topic, categorized under 'Our Foreign Policy' and 'Relations with the European Union'. In the 2015 general elections, which were the first to permit external voting, both political parties significantly augmented the number of articles addressing the diaspora in their manifestos. The CHP's count surged from one to 19, and the AKP's increased from seven to 27. Subsequently, in the 2018 general elections, both parties further amplified the number of articles related to the diaspora in their manifestos. The CHP's count increased to 24, and AKP's increased to 64. It can be inferred from the aforementioned alteration that the hypothesis positing an enhanced concern among political parties for the Turkish diaspora was bolstered with the extension of external voting rights, thereby attesting to the parties' increased focus on the diaspora. The

investigation of the election manifestos from the general perspective in the first section reveals that the AKP included a more significant number of articles related to the Turkish diaspora than the CHP. This could be attributed to the AKP's strategic emphasis on its past accomplishments, as evidenced by the 'What did we do' section in its manifesto.

The second section portrays the transitions of the two main political parties' diaspora policies, the CHP and AKP, regarding four topics related to the Turkish diaspora: foreign policy, diaspora institutions, culture and integration, and political participation. This section scans the election manifestos of the parties in the 2011, 2015, and 2018 general elections and notes the evolution of their stances on each topic.

Mentioning the Turkish diaspora in their election manifesto in the context of *foreign policy* is clear evidence that indicates the parties' instrumentalized approach to the diaspora, particularly the articles from both parties that see the Turkish diaspora as a critical figure in the EU process. Nonetheless, in 2018, despite the AKP's positive approach towards the diaspora with the promise of "one of the main foreign policy responsibilities is protecting the bond of the Turkish diaspora with its homeland and presence the Turkish diaspora"; the AKP instrumentalized the diaspora in the 2018 manifesto by declaring that "they see the Turkish diaspora as a key part of inter-communal relations". In short, granting the right to vote to the diaspora conveyed the AKP to declare articles that were subjectifying the Turkish diaspora, despite still stated instrumentalizing articles. Over time, the CHP increasingly recognized the significance of the Turkish diaspora in the realm of foreign policy, as evidenced by the party's inclusion of diaspora-related issues in its election manifestos. However, it could be argued that the party's view of the diaspora remains instrumentalist, as its manifestos continue to emphasize the diaspora's role in Turkey's EU membership process.

The changing positions of the AKP and CHP on *political participation* for the Turkish diaspora in the 2011, 2015, and 2018 general elections were fruitful in observing the effects of granting external voting rights. While neither party mentioned external voting in the 2011 election declarations, both included articles about the political participation of the Turkish diaspora in the 2015 election. The AKP emphasized granting the right to vote abroad, and the CHP promised to create electoral districts for the diaspora to represent their issues in Turkey. The 2018 manifestos did not show significant changes for the parties, with the AKP highlighting their provision of voting in ballot boxes in many countries, and the CHP reiterating their promise to create electoral districts. In short, the CHP's main proposal for political participation was the creation of electoral districts for the diaspora, and this can be accepted as a positive impact for external voting. The AKP was consistent, stressing its role in granting the right to vote abroad.

Despite the absence of any mention of *education* for the Turkish diaspora in the manifestos of the AKP and CHP during the 2011 general election, both parties included

promises relating to education for the diaspora in their 2015 manifestos, which may have been influenced by external voting. This trend continued in the 2018 manifestos, with both parties placing an even greater emphasis on education.

Although the 2011 general election manifesto of the CHP lacked an article on *culture and integration*, the AKP only had one. However, in the 2015 general election, the CHP pledged to establish “International Youth Centers” to boost cultural interaction among the diaspora youth. The AKP’s 2015 manifesto contained numerous articles on culture and integration, with a focus on Turkish language and education, supporting NGOs and foundations for Turkish education, and addressing the reintegration problems of the Turkish diaspora. Therefore, it can be concluded that the introduction of external voting had a positive impact on parties’ interest and policy towards the diaspora, particularly in the realm of culture and integration.

The election manifestos of the two main political parties are thoroughly scrutinized from the two perspectives, revealing that both parties have shown increased interest and they have diversified their attention towards the Turkish diaspora. Moreover, the inspection of the election manifestos demonstrates that both parties have increased their focus on the Turkish diaspora in successive general elections.

Conclusion

In this article, three general elections in Turkey are examined: the last election without external voting and the first two general elections after the external suffrage was granted to citizens living abroad. In the last general elections, the rate of the external voters to total votes formed five percent of the total votes, which is quite substantial and could have affected the results of the elections, as leading to the second round in the presidential elections. According to Turkey’s governmental system, both general elections and presidential elections happen at the same time. Therefore, parties and their presidential candidate synchronize their campaigns. Turkey, as a presidential system, is reasonably fit for the two-candidate or two-party election process, and in these contexts, every vote matters for the political parties.

There has been a growing focus on the diaspora and external voting, yet there has been a notable lack of research on the impact of external voting on Turkish party politics. Thus, this study has significant importance, as it sheds light on how the parties’ diaspora policies have evolved in response to granting external voting rights. The research findings illustrate substantial changes in the parties’ manifestos, particularly regarding education, culture, and integration, indicating a positive impact of external voting on party policies. By addressing this research gap, the study enhances our understanding of the role of external voting in shaping diaspora policies and its impact on party politics in Turkey. In this study, I argue that granting external voting rights increased the two main parties’

interest in the Turkish diaspora's problems and expectations, and directed the two political parties to develop diaspora policies.

Consequently, both the AKP and CHP increased their focus on the Turkish diaspora. In their 2018 general election manifesto, the AKP had 63 articles about the diaspora, a significant increase from the 7 in the 2011 manifesto, despite much of it being about past accomplishments. This illustrates the AKP's efforts to capture the attention of the Turkish diaspora. Similarly, the CHP's articles about the diaspora increased from one in the 2011 manifesto to 24 in the 2018 manifesto, and they have promised to make an electoral district abroad since the 2015 elections. Before the external voting rights were granted in the 2011 elections, the CHP rarely mentioned the diaspora in their manifestos. However, after the triggering effect of granting external voting rights, the CHP began to make promises about the diaspora in a reasonable portion of their election manifesto, even proposing an electoral district. This demonstrates the significant impact of external voting on Turkish parties' diaspora policies.

In conclusion, the findings of this study offer a valuable contribution to the ongoing debates surrounding the creation of an electoral district for Turkish citizens residing overseas in the context of Turkish politics. By highlighting the positive influence of granting external voting rights on the diaspora policies of the two major political parties in Turkey, this research provides a deeper understanding of the potential advantages and drawbacks of establishing an electoral district for the Turkish diaspora. An electoral district abroad is a separate district established to enable citizens living outside their home country to participate in their country's electoral process. This approach is becoming increasingly common, allowing diaspora communities to have a say in their home country's politics. Countries like France, Italy, and Portugal have established electoral districts for their diaspora communities. Supporters argue that creating an electoral district for the Turkish diaspora could improve political representation and engagement and strengthen ties between the diaspora and the homeland (Anaz & Köse, 2021; Laguerre, 2013). However, the suggestion raises challenges, such as the potential for fraud and logistical issues (Anaz & Köse, 2021). The decision to establish an electoral district for the Turkish diaspora is still a matter of debate in Turkey.

Finally, this study's findings have the potential to inform policymakers and scholars about the effects of external voting on diaspora political participation and its potential impact on Turkish politics. Additionally, this research provides a basis for further exploration of the relationship between external voting and diaspora policies in Turkish politics. This research highlights the positive influence of external voting rights on the diaspora policies of the two main political parties in Turkey, which could be useful for policymakers and scholars interested in external voting and party politics.

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