

THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS ON POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE BRITISH CITIZENS OF TURKEY-ORIGIN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Selçuk AYDIN*

Abstract

In this research, we analyze the political participation and representation of the “British Citizens of Turkey-Origin” (BCTO) in the United Kingdom (UK) politics. The BCTO refers to ethno-religious communities from Turkey including Turkish and Kurdish ethnicities with different backgrounds i.e Alevi, Sunni, Secular, Conservative, Nationalist and Leftist, and the Turkish Cypriots that have social/historical link with the Republic of Turkey. In this study, the concepts of nation and citizenship in the political sphere of the UK considering the immigrant population, specifically in the case of BCTO are discussed. Benefiting from the institutional method, the formal and informal institutions in the UK on shaping the political conditions and behaviours of the BCTO are examined including the institutions belong to the BCTO as well. However, it is concluded that BCTO does not represent a politically unified community and, from a institutional approach, the UK system has obstacles that stands in the way of improving BCTO's political representation. Lastly, even though BCTO is politically underrepresented due to the weakness of the politically unified community and insufficient political institutionalisation of the BCTO, certain sub-groups within the BCTO separately indicate a higher level of political involvement.

Keywords: *Migrant Political Involvement, Formal and Informal Institutions, Minority Representation, Political Participation of Turkey-Origin British Citizens, Demographic Transformation*

BİRLEŞİK KRALLIK'TAKİ TÜRKİYE KÖKENLİ İNGİLİZ VATANDAŞLARININ SİYASETE KATILIMINDA KURUMLARIN ROLÜ

Özet

Bu araştırmada, Birleşik Krallık (İngiltere) siyasetinde “Türkiye Kökenli İngiliz Vatandaşlarının” (BCTO) siyasi katılımı ve temsili incelenmiştir. BCTO,

* Dr., Giresun Üniversitesi, İ.İ.B.F., Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü,
selcuk.aydin@giresun.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6435-1932>.

Türkiye'den Türk ve Kürt etnik kimlikleriyle beraber Alevi, Sünni, Laik, Muhafazakar, Milliyetçi ve Sol kökenli toplulukları ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile sosyal/tarihi bağı olan Kıbrıslı Türkleri ifade eder. Bu çalışmada, göçmen nüfusa ilişkin Birleşik Krallık'ın siyasi alanındaki ulus ve vatandaşlık kavramları, özellikle BCTO örneğinde tartışılmaktadır. Kurumsal teoriden faydalanarak, BCTO'nin siyasi koşullarının ve davranışlarının şekillenmesinde İngiltere'deki resmi ve informal kurumlar, BCTO'nin kurumları da dahil olmak üzere incelenmektedir. BCTO'nin siyasi olarak yeknesak bir topluluğu temsil etmediği, ve kurumsal yaklaşımdan bakıldığında Birleşik Krallık kurumlarının ve sisteminin BCTO'nin siyasi temsilini iyileştirmenin önünde engelleri olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Buna ek olarak, siyasi olarak parçalı topluluğun zayıflığı, BCTO'nin yetersiz siyasi kurumsallaşması nedeniyle BCTO'nun temsiliyeti yeterli seviyede olmasa da, BCTO içindeki bazı alt gruplar ayrı ayrı daha yüksek düzeyde siyasi katılım ve temsiliyet göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Göçmen Siyasi Katılımı, Resmi ve İnfomal Kurumlar, Azınlık Temsili, Türkiye Kökenli İngiliz Vatandaşlarının Siyasi Katılımı, Demografik Dönüşüm*

Introduction: The Era of Migration and the UK

Human movement has triggered substantial changes throughout history, particularly in migrant-receiving countries, transforming nation structures and political institutions. These countries' demographic transformations raise challenges about the current nation-state model. One of the most significant results of immigration, according to Kaufmann (2004), is that it has undermined the ethnic-religious and cultural-based Western nation-states over the last 50 years. Along with the shift in global view brought about by declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which pushed many countries to adopt a citizen-centered approach to their state-individual relationships, migration undoubtedly played a role in this transformation. In the migration age, Soysal (1994:2) conceptualizes the institutional shift of state formation and apparatus toward a citizen-based vision rather than retaining a state based on a particular ethnicity, culture, or nation. Furthermore, migration has resulted in the creation of new state entities, such as migration and integration management directorates and ministries (Demig Policy, 2019:47; Owen et al., 2019:3). When we consider these developments in the UK case, starting with the British Nationality Act of 1948, which granted full citizenship rights to British subjects from all imperial territories, each migration flow resulted in institutional changes in the country, the most recent of which is the country's policies toward EU citizens following Brexit (British Nationality Act, 1948).

Despite the fact that most migrants were considered "guest workers" throughout the colonial era's major waves of immigration, the majority of them settled permanently. As a result, the concept of "guest workers" morphed into "citizens," who became political, social, and economic actors with full legal rights (Bauböck, 2006:128). This transition can be classified as a turning point in the history of modern nation-states. It resulted in new political outcomes as a result of immigrant-background citizens' involvement, ranging

from influencing electoral outcomes to advocating for problems relating to migrants to be featured on the political agenda.

The United Kingdom (UK) is made up of a diverse range of ethnic, religious, and sectarian groups, and this diversity is celebrated as part of what makes the country "British." As Bruce (2004:103-110) points out, prior to the huge migration from the colonies, the most inclusive identity was created through Protestantism, which included different ethnicities as (English, Scottish, Welsh – but excluded Irish Catholics). Britishness was contextualized beyond the membership of the above ethnic, religious, and cultural identities, particularly post WWII migration, and expanded to the legal-based citizenship identity as including different backgrounds of British citizens (Heath & Tilley, 2005:17).

Liberal policies toward immigration from former colonies and pleasant naturalization processes for migrant residents demonstrate the UK's inclusion of all sorts of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious affiliations. According to one viewpoint, the United Kingdom is one of the "places where the world is gathered in a country" (Thomson, 2006:2).

A contrary approach emphasizes particular British state and social traditions, culture, and values, and expects newcomers to internalize them in an assimilationist manner, limiting the concept of the British nation. While presented as British national principles, despite the fact that they are universal ideals, this strategy leads to institutional and social isolation in the country (Copsey & Richardson, 2015:23; Margulies, 2015:71). Despite their modest number, a third group defines being English as being "White" and born and raised in England, and sees it as an integral aspect of the British identity (Jowell & others, 2000:169). Othering, excluding, and promoting racism towards non-English people are all consequences of limiting Englishness by race.

The political participation and representation of migrant-background citizens of the UK are among the major questions of debates in the British political arena surrounding immigrants. Our research will contribute to this debate by concentrating on the British Citizens of Turkey Origin (BCTO), a large community in the UK whose role in British politics has received less scholarly attention. BCTO study largely focused on Kurdish politics (Baser, 2011; Demir, 2017; Eccarius-Kelly, 2010:33; Ugurlu, 2014:12) or separately Turkish, Cyprus, or Alevi politics (Kucukcan, 1996 and 2004:84; Bernard, 2004:9; stergaard, 2003; Bilecen, 2015:52). This demonstrates the importance of this study's focus on the BCTO as a whole and their comparison within it. This article is divided into five sections: the BCTO migration process and demography, institutional conditions in the UK and BCTO, the representation of BCTO in the UK political institutions, the informal institutional conditions of BCTO and BCTO organizations and foundations.

1. MIGRATION PROCESS AND DEMOGRAPHY OF THE UK: THE CASE OF BRITISH CITIZENS OF TURKEY-ORIGIN

The United Kingdom experienced enormous migration from its former colonies such as Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in the early twentieth century, which accelerated with the post-World War II labor demand (Vertovec, 2007:1028). Since the 1970s, the number of immigrants from Europe and the Middle East has also increased (Vertovec, 2007:1030). The number of non-British citizens living in the UK increased from 2 million in 1993 to 5.7 million in 2015. Furthermore, the proportion of foreign-born people in the total population of the UK climbed from 9% in 2004 to 13.8 percent in 2018 (Migration Observatory, n.d.).

The growing number of people born outside but residing in the UK provides the most illustrative image of migrants settling in the Kingdom. This figure rises even more when the generations born in the UK are included. The number of foreign-born people in the UK climbed from 5.3 million in 2004 to nearly 9.3 million in 2018 (Migration Observatory, n.d.). As a result of the movement of individuals from many parts of the world and from various ethnic, cultural, and religious groupings, a diverse society has been formed.

Ethnic minorities in the UK are sometimes referred to as "Black and Ethnic Minority (BEM)" communities since they are defined by the White race (Heath et al., 2013). The majority of BEM communities are centered in England, where they account for 16% of the population (Uberoi & Lees, 2020:3). London is home to a varied, multi-ethnic, and religious society, with migrants accounting for 36% of the population (ONS, 2018). The Turkish-speaking population is just behind the largest minority communities of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi in terms of 'ethnic minorities' (King&Thomson, 2008:7). BCTO plays a vital role in this setting, even if it is not as visible as other migrant-background communities.

The story of immigration begins with Turkish Cypriots in the early half of the twentieth century. The Turkish Cypriots' migration movements are a result of the colonial links between Cyprus and the UK, as they were awarded citizenship privileges upon arriving. Along with the employment opportunities in the UK, political tensions in Cyprus in the 1950s between the Greek and Turkish areas of the island were a driving force (Eskioglu, 2019:7). As a result, Turkish Cypriots in the UK have a sizable population and can be considered the first wave of BCTO migration.

Migration from Turkey to the UK began significantly later than WWII (Akgunduz, 2008:6). Unlike Germany, France, and the Netherlands, the UK did not have an agreement with Turkey on labor migration. Despite this, due of the visa exemption between the two nations in the 1970s, there was a lot of labor migration from Turkey to the UK. Due to political concerns in Turkey, such as confrontations between the political left and right in the 1970s, the 1980 coup d'état, and tensions in Kurdish-populated areas in the 1990s, immigration and asylum-seeking increased (Thomson, 2006:12).

Furthermore, this migration grew with the reunification of families and marriages from Turkey.

Because the UK is home to prestigious higher education institutions as well as worldwide conglomerates, another influx of migrants arrived as students and white colors and stayed. The Ankara Agreement (1963), a special trade agreement between Turkey and the UK, has enticed Turkish professionals and business people to migrate to the United Kingdom, resulting in an increase in the BCTO community. Migrants with the Ankara Agreement were entitled to obtain a commercial visa, establish firms in the UK, and apply for citizenship after a five-year stay. Even though the Ankara Agreement's provision for getting citizenship expired with Brexit and later completely removing the agreement, it encouraged many competent Turkish residents to migrate. As a result, unlike on the European continent, Turkey-origin migrants in the United Kingdom have a significant number of highly educated individuals with business entrepreneurship backgrounds.

In the UK, the number of the BCTO population is controversial to be between 150.000 and 500.000. According to a report by the House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee (UK Parliament Publications), stating "it is [BCTO population] considered to be around 500,000." (What Do They Know, n.d.). Sirkeci (2017: 10), however, estimated the BCTO population to be between 200.000 and 250.000, based on British official figures. Furthermore, according to 2011 data from Turkey's official organisation, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), the BCTO population in the UK is between 180.000 and 250.000. On the other hand, the BCTO population is estimated to be roughly 150.000 people, based on data obtained by the UK's Office of National Statistics on claimed ethnicity, home language, and birth country. Although multiple sources give varying population statistics, this study recommends using the official BCTO data for political analysis, which is roughly 200 thousand people.

The term British Citizens of Turkey-Origin is preferred in this work to highlight the naturalized population compared to the term "Turkish-speaking communities", and their ties to Turkey through a common homeland, culture, and communication language. Despite their historical bonds, Turks, Kurds, and Cypriots, as well as Alevis, leftists, rightists, conservatives, and seculars, lack political cohesion among the BCTO. Their involvement in UK politics was influenced by their experiences in the UK as well as the influence of their Turkish identities. As a result, BCTO should not be regarded as a single political party.

2. THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF THE UK AND BCTO

The attitude and policy regarding immigrants are ultimately determined by the institutional settings of host countries. As a result, the host countries' institutional conditions shape the politicization and political position of

immigrants. According to Koopman's (2005:11) comparative research of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, the institutional conditions of migrant-receiving nations are the most important agents of social and political developments relating to immigrants. Furthermore, comparative studies of the same nations of origin in different countries discovered that migrant reactions changed from one host country to the next due to institutional differences in each. Odmalm (2005), who researched Turkey-origin people in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany in the setting of political institutions, discovered disparities in political participation habits in those countries.

Despite the United Kingdom's heterogeneous social structure, with minorities accounting for 13.6 percent of the total population, the extent to which immigrant populations are integrated into state institutions is a critical subject (ONS, 2011). Immigrants can work as officials in the UK's public institutions, according to UK legislation. The United Kingdom offers employee background statistics that show how bureaucratic and political organizations are multi-cultural. According to 2008 data, people from minorities make up 8.4% of the central government and 5.4 percent of official institutions. In addition, 8.9% of the UK's business life is made up of minorities who have an impact on the country's economy. However, the rate decreases to 6.4% when looked into the higher positions in the private market, 3.6% in the central government, and 3.4% in local institutions (Maravić, Peters, & Schröter, 2013:159). Although British citizens with immigrant backgrounds have the possibility to work in the bureaucracy, statistics suggest that immigrants are more extensively involved in the private sector than in the public sector. Aside from the low proportion of employees in official institutions, the number of senior bureaucrats is much lower.

The most notable subject for immigrants' involvement in British society is the UK's education and foreign policy. Education has long been a component of British society, in addition to being a centre for intellectual and educational institutions with its longstanding universities. While the world's average literacy rate was 12% in 1820, it was believed that 53% of individuals in the United Kingdom could read and write. In the United Kingdom, 99 percent of the population was literate in 2013 (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2018:14). The UK has a higher tertiary education (post-high school) population than the rest of the OECD. After high school, nearly half of 25-34-year-olds in the UK received an education degree, compared to 40% in OECD countries. Furthermore, one out of every three adults aged 55 to 64 has a college diploma or higher (OECD, 2014). In addition to the established educational institutions, intellectual and cultural interaction between host and migrant populations is encouraged which shapes the relations between the UK and migrant origin countries. Because of its colonial background, the United Kingdom maintained tight bilateral ties with countries. Furthermore, as a destination for migrants from all over the world, the UK's foreign policy has always addressed the nations from which immigrants came. However, not

many immigrant populations share common values and find a place in the UK's education and foreign policy.

The BCTO, like the other migrant groups, benefits from the opportunity provided by good relations between the UK and Turkey, particularly in the field of education. The London Turkish Education Consultancy (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Londra Eğitim Müşavirliği) provides Turkish language education in the United Kingdom, as well as free cultural events. These activities may help in the preservation of BCTO identity codes and the introduction of their culture to the wider British society. Being acknowledged by the host community helps minorities integrate and avoid marginalization by reducing identity conflicts and assisting them with integration. Furthermore, joint events such as the Tatlıdil Forums bring together well-known academics and policymakers from both nations to collaborate on global issues and bilateral relations (Turkish British Tatlıdil, n.d.). BCTO members are also involved in diplomacy; Cyprus-born Alper Mehmet was sent to Iceland in 2004 as one of the first ambassadors of migrant ethnic background (together with Anwar Choudhury) (Halil, 2004:9). It is also worth noting that, in terms of foreign policy, the relationship between Turkey and the United Kingdom was in its "golden age" during the AK Party era, as articulated by former Prime Minister David Cameron (Hurriyet, 2021; Örmeci, 2016), and the positive alliance looks set to continue even after Brexit (Erbay, 2019:22). This bilateral relationship between Turkey and the United Kingdom makes it easier for Turkey originated people in general to participate actively in the United Kingdom's education and foreign policy.

Even if there are some examples of migrant descendants working in foreign affairs, where their background and language abilities would be thought to be useful, the representation remains low. While immigrant-born UK citizens account for 6.4 percent of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's workforce, key posts such as ambassadors and policymakers have a percentage of less than 1%. (Halil, 2004). The Foreign & Commonwealth Office can profit from and increase its inclusion by tapping into the human capital of minority-background UK nationals, the second generation in the UK, or those who immigrated from colonial countries. Nonetheless, for a variety of reasons particularly the legacy of the nation state formation, immigrant-origin UK citizens continue to have trouble finding work in the UK's foreign affairs.

It is insufficient to examine merely the environment of the UK's formal institutions in order to comprehend the institutional structure, as social institutions play an important role as well. In the UK, as in other European countries, society and governmental institutions regard common principles as "British values" and feel the right to compel people of foreign backgrounds to adopt them. Furthermore, a law introduced in 2002 requires immigrants applying for citizenship to complete a cultural and values exam called "Life in the UK" (Life in the UK Tests, n.d.) and attend specified ceremonies, which

became effective with the 2005 decision (Schain, 2010:213). The new citizenship procedure has been criticized for being formed by particular social norms attributed to the entire British population, which act as an othering factor towards Muslim migrants. Framing such principles is problematic because it considers the UK population as a monolith, undermines diversity, treats native British people as homogeneous groups, and ignores heterogeneity within the UK community. As a result, BCTO's political activity as a migrant group in the country is influenced by the institutional framework. In terms of foreign policy and education, BCTO has no fundamental difficulties with the UK institutional system. However, social and bureaucratic institutions have obstacles for the BCTO, like many other communities, to be active in politics and policymaking process.

3. THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE UK AND BCTO REPRESENTATION

The Monarchy, House of Lords, House of Commons (Parliament), and Municipalities are all important institutions in the British political and administrative structure. Political parties play the most important role in politics in this system, including policies toward immigrants in the country. Political parties control parliaments and municipalities, with few independent candidates. Furthermore, the majority of the House of Lords (about 70%) is made up of members nominated by political parties and confirmed by the Queen symbolically. According to their number of MPs, voting rates, and powers, the Conservative Party and Labour Party are the most powerful political parties, followed by the Scottish National Party, Liberal Democrats, Democratic Unity Party, and UKIP (UK Independence Party). Labour Party, Scottish National Party, and Lib-Dem are the parties that are more accessible by immigrants in the country. While there are some anti-immigration politicians in the Conservative Party, there are also some MPs of immigrant heritage. For example, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, a Conservative Party minister, was the first Muslim to serve in the British cabinet. UKIP is the most radical of these parties, espousing anti-immigrant policies and racial rhetoric.

While the extreme right, populist, and neoliberal political parties gained popularity in Europe, the Labour and Conservative parties continued to dominate the British political landscape, with the latter representing the right and the former representing the left. According to Reeves (1983:88), social divisions in the United Kingdom are founded on the traditional political-economic framework, which maintains the power of the two most powerful parties. Both of these parties have maintained a certain level of contact with residents of various ethnic backgrounds in the United Kingdom. Within the historical and traditional context of the UK, Reeves says that the Conservative Party's anti-immigrant rhetoric, while maintaining positive relations with colonial nations, is a product of the imperialist view. According to Hooghe and Marks (2017:12), British politics is an outlier among other European

countries, where the traditional left and right parties are losing ground and the political landscape is being shaped and influenced by economic crises, globalization, immigrants, and terrorism, making nationalist and globalist parties more powerful. This argument was demonstrated in the May 2017 French Presidential Election, when the mainstream classic left and right lost power, and the extreme right-wing Le-Pen and the globalist Macron were the two most popular candidates. However, the traditional UK political parties, particularly Labour and Conservative, continue their power to be the dominant rivals in the political arena.

3.1. House of Lords

The House of Lords has 800 members. The Conservatives are the most powerful party in the House of Lords, with 30 percent of the seats as of November 2019. Crossbenchers (those who are not affiliated with a political party) make up 24%, while Labour Party members make up 23% of the House of Lords (Goddard, 2019: 28).

Every year, the House of Lords produces a report on the statistical (House of Lords Statistics, n.d.) and demographic (UK Parliament Research Briefings, n.d.) data of its members. Despite the fact that members of the House of Lords are not required to disclose their ethnic and religious backgrounds, in 2019 (Purvis, 2019), 6% of the House of Lords had a minority ethnic origin, compared to composing 13.6 percent of the UK population. It should be noted that 13 members with minority backgrounds were appointed after 2000, bringing the proportion of minorities to a higher level than in previous times. With her BCTO background, Baroness Meral Hussein-Ece of Cyprus-origin has been a member of the House of Lords since 2010. She first entered politics in 1994 as a member of the Labour Party's Hackney Municipal Assembly, eventually switching to the Liberal Democrats. Meral Hussein-Ece was a municipal councilor in Islington, where she was born and raised for many years, and served as a minority adviser to former Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg. Meral Hussein-Ece is a model name not just for BCTO but also for all UK minorities because she is a woman (the proportion of women in the House of Lords is as low as 22 percent.) and a defender of minority rights.

3.2. House of Common (Parliament)

The parliamentary system governs the United Kingdom, and the House of Commons is at the heart of legislation and government, making it the country's most important institution. The United Kingdom is divided into 650 electoral districts known as constituencies (Parliamentary constituencies, n.d.). England has 533 constituencies, Scotland 59, Wales 40, and Northern Ireland has 18. Every Member of Parliament (MP) is elected by and represents an average of 70,000 people in each constituency (UK Parliament, Parliamentary Constituencies, n.d.). In this system, regardless of a political

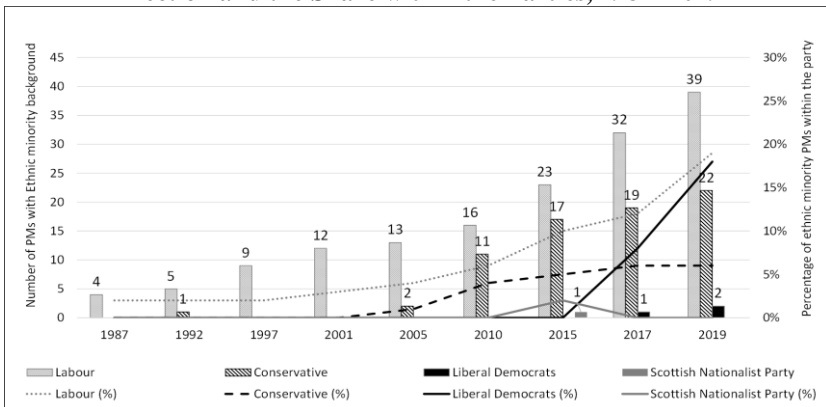
party's overall vote percentage across the country, the constituency outcome is the most important determinant of its strength in parliament.

In the 2015 elections, the Conservative Party received 36.8% of the votes, giving them 330 seats in parliament, as 51% of the total. The Conservative Party's vote grew to 42.3 percent in 2017, however their seats reduced to 317, giving them less than half of the parliament's seats. Because of the unrest following the Brexit referendum in 2016, another election was held in 2019, with the Conservative Party winning. Their overall vote grew to 43.6 percent, but it had a greater impact on the parliament, which now has 365 seats, accounting for 56.2 percent of the total.

The certain regions are dominated by the population of the ethnic minorities in the UK which easily allows people from ethnic minorities to run for office and be elected in the certain areas. Ethnic minorities account for 9.6% of MPs in the current parliament (2020). This is a huge growth since 1992, when it was merely 1% (Uberoi & Lees, 2020). Nevertheless, if the House had mirrored the ethnic make-up of the population (13.8 percent ethnic minority), there would have been around 90 minority-background parliamentarians instead of just 63 (Uberoi & Lees, 2020: 7).

When it comes to the backgrounds of politicians, the political parties differ dramatically. The Labour Party has been the most open political party to ethnic minorities, as shown in the chart below. Furthermore, minorities have a higher presence in the Labour Party than they do in the UK. This is also due to the Labour Party's decades-long engagement with migrants at the local level; ethnic minority communities overwhelmingly favor the Labour Party (Garbaye, 2002:559). The chart also shows how ethnic minority background MPs have increased across political parties in the UK parliament (Uberoi & Lees, 2020:3).

Figure 1. Ethnic Minority MPs Elected by Party and General Election and the Share within the Parties, 1987- 2019



Because the BCTO is more concentrated in particular regions, such as Hackney, Enfield, and Islington, it is theoretically simpler to represent them in parliament under this constituency arrangement. Despite the fact that BCTO

did not send any MPs to parliament until 2019, Feryal Demirci-Clark became the first MP from BCTO background in the Labour Party's Enfield North constituency in the 2019 election. In her debut statement in parliament, she freely revealed her Turkish, Kurdish, and Alevi ancestry (BBC, 2020). Furthermore, three other candidates from the BCTO were also running in the 2019 elections: Turkish-origin Neva Sadikoglu-Navaky from the Conservative Party in Garston and Halewood, Cypriot-origin Gonul Daniels from the Conservative Party in Edmonton, and Kurdish-origin Ibrahim Dogus from the Labour Party in West Bromwich East (Yetkinoglu, 2019: 28).

It's worth noting that Boris Johnson, the Conservative Party's former Mayor of London and current Prime Minister, has Turkish ancestors who migrated during the Ottoman period; the father of Timur Aker from the UKIP is also from Turkish background. However, neither of them has any contact with the BCTO community, and they are well-known anti-immigrant politicians.

Despite the fact that 45.3 percent of London's eligible population did not vote in the 2019 elections, compared to 32.7 percent across the UK, BCTO constituencies have a greater voter turnout (Electoral Reform Society, n.b.; House of Commons Library, 2020). Despite the fact that 45.3 percent of London's eligible population did not vote in the 2019 elections, compared to 32.7 percent across the UK, BCTO constituencies have a greater voter turnout (Electoral Reform Society, n.b.; House of Commons Library, 2020). According to the Electoral Reform Society, the non-voting citizens rate in the 2019 election was 26.7 percent in Hackney South & Shoreditch, 29.7 percent in Hackney North & Stoke Newington, 35 percent in Edmonton, 35.7 percent in Islington North, and finally 48.2 percent in Enfield North. Furthermore, the Labour Party wins in all these constituencies having 73.3 percent in Hackney South & Shoreditch, 70.3 percent in Hackney North & Stoke Newington, 65 percent in Edmonton, 64.3 percent in Islington North, 51.8 percent in Enfield North, and 48.5 percent in Enfield Southgate (BBC, 2020b).

Given the importance of the UK Government and Parliament being in the center of politics, the UK Parliament is open to citizen petition campaigns via the parliament website. At 10,000 signatures, the petitions on the UK Government and Parliament site gets a response from the government, and at 100,000 signatures, the topic is considered for a debate in the parliament. While no BCTO petitions reached these numbers, there are indirect concerns that the BCTO is interested in, such as halal foods in schools (Petitions, 2016) and permitting loudspeakers to be used to call for prayer in UK mosques (Petitions, 2016b), or making Eid a national holiday (Petitions, 2016c). Turkey's political issues, such as Armenian (Petitions, 2017), Cyprus (Petitions, 2016d), and Kurdish (Petitions, 2016e), have been opened to petitions with less than 1000 signatories. The BCTO community, on the other hand, was able to gain seats in parliament through their recognized All-Party Parliamentary Groups, which are informal cross-party groups run by members

of the Commons and Lords that focus on specific issues such as Islamophobia or countries with which the UK has diplomatic relations. Alevi have their own APPG, as well as another APPG called "Kurdistan in Turkey and Syria," in addition to an APPG for Turkey ("Register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups," 2020). This also explains the divisions within the BCTO group, as well as the lower number of signatures on petitions for certain issues resulting from these divisions.

3.3. Local Governments

Mayors and municipal councils in the United Kingdom are in charge of local government functions. There are 201 district councils, 27 county councils, 55 unitary councils, 32 London Boroughs, 36 Metropolitan Boroughs, and 32 London Boroughs. There are 18,100 municipal councillors in all. Local government elections are held at least every four years, but not all polls are held at the same time (www.gov.uk, n.d.). According to 2018 data, 54% of all councillors are Conservative, 28% are Labour, 2% are Liberal Democrats, 0.3 percent are UKIP, 0.3 percent are independent, and 15% are unaffiliated. The rate of ethnic minority background is comparatively low in local governments, with only 4% of councillors defining themselves as non-White, with only a tiny change from 2014 (Local Government Association, 2018).

Members of municipal councils in the United Kingdom are also observed in this study using the websites of local municipalities. There were no BCTO councillors in the constituencies outside of London until May 2017, despite the fact that there are considerable number of BCTO councillors in London's municipality. Second, compared to their compatriots BCTO, Turkish Cypriots are well-established in their home regions and politicized like ordinary British citizens. Their political leanings, which are primarily Conservative and Labour, reflect the broader political leanings of the municipal council they represent. When Kurdish councillors are examined and compared to prior periods, however, a gradual increase in the level of representation is observed. Some BCTO Kurds emphasize their Kurdish identity as a political identity. Because of the ethno-politicized Kurds who arrived in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many of these citizens have developed a sense of collective ethnic identification (Demir, 2017: 13). The high level of representation in UK politics of these Kurds in comparison to other migrant background British citizens is a direct result of their ethnic politicization. This politicized posture endures, notably within the Labour Party, and party members continue to engage in political activities in their respective districts. Another factor for the Kurds' increasing political involvement is that they are registering as Labour Party members and running campaigns for the party.

The impact of the BCTO in the councils of Hackney, Haringey, Enfield, and Islington - where the BCTO inhabitants dwell – increased when London Boroughs and adjacent councils were researched. The BCTO, for example,

has five members on the Haringey Council out of 57 (Minutes Haringey, n.d.). In addition, there are also BCTO councillors in the councils of Edmonton, Camden, Wandsworth, Mole Valley, Bexley, Havering, Hillingdon, and North Yorkshire.

The 2016 vote on the United Kingdom's membership in the European Union, dubbed "Brexit," became the focal point of all political debates and fault lines in the United Kingdom. Ethnic minorities and migrant background communities, particularly BCTO, were the focus of Brexit discussions and were targeted by UKIP and pro-Brexit Conservative politicians' referendum propaganda. Even the BCTO was mentioned in the UK political arena during election campaigns, as UKIP delivered hostile and prejudiced remarks characterizing Turkey's EU membership as a "Turkish invasion" (Austin & Parker, 2005:82). The emergence of Islamophobic discourse and its enforcement through the current substance of the naturalization process, sentiments toward Turkey, and the reflection of nationalist ideas in domestic politics intensified prejudice and hampered the BCTO's political presence.

The underrepresentation of migrant-background British people in politics, as well as the BCTO, is the result of a long-standing political system enmeshed with assimilationist beliefs. This has created inconvenient political atmosphere for the ethnic minorities and migrant-background populations. Furthermore, the Conservative Party has been in power in the United Kingdom since 2010. It is not as open to ethnic minority representation as the Labour Party, which makes active participation in politics and representation difficult for minority group members.

4. THE INFORMAL INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS OF BCTO

To determine the amount of BCTO's political activity, it is required to assess the informal institutional conditions of the organization. In this regard, the economic position, degree of education, and BCTO's splintered background are all relevant factors in understanding the politicization process.

BCTO is made up of people from many ethnic and geographical backgrounds, including Turks, Kurds, and Cypriot Turks, as well as other complimentary identities such as Alevi, Sunni, secular, and conservative, all of which are equally important in shaping BCTO's political activity. The BCTO's formal and social institutions, which often function as autonomous communities, can be used to observe the variations between these identities.

The BCTO does not account for any specific socioeconomic or political group, prompting a focus on the BCTO's socioeconomic and political subdivisions. The BCTO's economic structure changed through time; they began as factory workers, particularly in the textile industry during the 1980s and 1990s (Atay, 1994: 6). Following the decline of factories and the textile sector, BCTO's economic activity and income varied throughout the next few decades. BCTO's economic activity and income have switched to gastronomy

(restaurants, especially doner/kebab), grocery, taxi driving, hairdressing, and construction. BCTOs who have formed their own enterprises in these industries are in a better financial position than those who previously worked in these fields.

The majority of the BCTO is in the ethnic-economy industry, which targets the BCTO populace through dominance in specific industries by certain social groups and their tight economic ties. While the normal working week in the UK is 36-40 hours, and working more than 48 hours is not legal, the BCTO work far longer in the ethnic economy since they are tiny companies owned by a few people, such as family members or relatives (Sirkeci, 2017:9). It is argued that the BCTO's lengthy and demanding work schedules prohibit them from keeping up with politics, which has a negative impact on their political participation. The Turks of Cyprus are more adapted to the British economy, owing to their Commonwealth status and lengthier stay in the UK, making them an outlier among others.

Political engagement and representation are heavily influenced by educational level. As previously said, the average level of education in the United Kingdom is high, and this is mirrored in the majority of politicians. However, in comparison to other migrant communities in the UK, the BCTO has a lower education rate (Algan, Dustmann, Glitz & Manning, 2010). New generations are born into family companies, obstructing the path to a career through schooling. Furthermore, the BCTOs are challenged by the UK's exorbitant college prices, which discourage them from pursuing higher education.

In the context of immigrants, another key issue is the prejudice that Muslims face in the workplace. According to a research carried out by City Research Online, University of London, Muslim-named people are disadvantageous in the employment market, particularly for high-skilled positions (Thurman et al., 2016). These constraints pushes younger BCTOs to start their own businesses rather than work in a professional capacity, and they diminish the value of education among BCTO members. Studies show that education increases political participation, although it may not predict political representation (Helliwell & Putnam, 2007: 3). There are a large number of BCTO migrants with a high level of education who are uninterested in representation. They only interact with the BCTO community on rare occasions, and when they do, it is for cultural reasons rather than political ones.

The conditions of political engagement among migrants are determined by the historical and contextual creation of political tradition. The bulk of politicians of immigrant descent are at least second generation. In this regard, Cypriots have an edge over Turks and Kurds in terms of political representation because they have a longer history in the UK.

The BCTO's adaption to British political culture is the other side of the coin. The military coup in 1980 played a crucial influence in the asylum-seeking of secular leftist activists in the UK, especially Kurdish nationalists.

This explains why the majority of the BCTO's political representatives come from a secular background (Sirkeci, 2017:104). Furthermore, since Turkey's founding as a nation-state, Kurdish and Alevi identities have been marginalized. Perhaps their exposure to repression made them more politically aware than (Sunni) Turks in the UK. While Muslim politicians exist in the UK, the conservative BCTO is uninterested in politics. The conservative BCTO might have found satisfaction in the already-acquired religious rights of the South-Asian migrants. Rather, upon arrival, the motivated socialist-background BCTO members got engaged with the socio-political arena through union activity, opening opportunities for their political activism. The BCTO's sub-communities' political engagement is influenced by informal institutional constraints.

5. THE ORGANISATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS OF BCTO

In the United Kingdom, the BCTO has founded numerous organizations and foundations in the fields of economics, culture, education, religion, and media. The majority of BCTO's organizations and foundations began as community organizations in Turkey, while there are a number of additional efforts based in the UK.

Researchers have been interested in the UK-Turkey relationship, and it is worth emphasizing the scholarly foundations focusing on Turkey. BCTO and British academic groups such as BATAS (The British Association for Turkish Area Studies) and Research Turkey organize conferences and seminars in universities with limited budgets. There is also the Kurdish Studies Centre at Exeter University and the Contemporary Turkey Studies section at the London School of Economics, in addition to these organizations. Furthermore, top institutions in the UK, like SOAS, King's College London, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and Durham, offer strong regional studies and political science departments with a focus on Middle Eastern and Turkish affairs. Also, Turkish student organisations in universities organize activities in academic contexts that boost the BCTO's visibility on matters that concern Turkey and UK politics. Another organization that organizes activities to foster integration in the UK for Turkish migrants is the TURKEN foundation, which mostly sponsors Turkey-origin post-graduate students in the UK.

5.1. Political Organisations

The political research institutions stand out when looking at the institutions that contributed to the BCTO's political presence. To reach society, these organizations typically publish reports and hold meetings and conferences. Although these organizations' work may contain some references to UK-related political issues, the majority of the issues are concerned with Turkey. The CEFTUS (Centre for Turkey Studies), which was founded in 2011 and has been operating since then, is one of the most well-known

organizations due to the conferences and meetings it has hosted in the UK Parliament. The center produces studies and educational programs on Turkey, as well as social events such as the British Kebab Awards. The CEFTUS team includes people from many backgrounds, including Ibrahim Dogus, a Kurdish-origin director who was nominated as a Labour Party MP candidate in the last two elections and is now the mayor of Lambeth.

The Centre for Kurdish Progress, which was also formed by Dogus, is another active organization strongly affiliated to the CEFTUS. This organization, like CEFTUS, has a team that includes Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn as well as non-BCTO members (Advisory Board, n.d.). The Kurds in Syria, Iraq, and Iran, as well as the Kurds in Turkey, are on this organization's agenda. These organizations are very critical of Turkey and focus on the Kurdish issue in the context of Turkey rather than the UK. The political dispute between the ethnopolitical Kurds and the Turks has a part in the BCTO's political decisions in the UK, as the founders of these organizations have close ties to the Labour Party.

Another political organization, the UID (Union of International Democrats), was created by conservative groups from Turkey and is engaged in politics. It was founded in Germany in 2004 as UETD (Union of European Turkish Democrats), and it formed a branch in the UK in 2011, after which it changed its name to UID in 2018. Many conferences and sessions addressing the BCTO have been arranged by the UID, including hearings at the UK Parliament. The UID is strongly linked to Turkish and British politics, allowing them to take meaningful measures in the political arena, such as raising political awareness and engaging locals. In terms of UK politics, followers of the Lib-Dem, Labour, and Conservative parties are common in this organization, as they are in other organizations.

The UK National Outlook Islamic Community, which is linked with the Islamic political party led by Necmettin Erbakan and his adherents, is another organization. The Turkey-based National Outlook, which has been working in the UK since 1994, has a significantly longer history and is more rooted on the European continent. The National Outlook Islamic Community in the UK is part of the European Islamic Community National Outlook, which is situated in Germany. Other Turkish-populated European countries are more engaged in the movement. Although it has attempted to play a more active role in recent years in the UK, its operations are centered on education and culture rather than politics.

Organizations have also been formed to advocate worldwide recognition and advocacy for Cypriot Turks. The Council of Turkish Cypriot Associations (CTCA UK) is the most important, as it is the umbrella organization for several other Cypriot-origin organizations. CTCA UK mostly organizes events for Cypriot Turks. Embargoed, Turk 1 Association, North London Turkish Islamic Foundation, and Cyprus Foundations Platform, on the other hand, are active participants in political discussions. In addition to these organizations, Mete Coban's My Life My Say initiative, which is based

in Cyprus, is one of the most well-known youth organizations in the UK, with a target market that extends beyond BCTO. In addition, Coban is a Labour Party councillor. In comparison to other Turkish migrants, Cypriot-origins have more or less the same political views as ordinary British citizens.

5.2. Cultural and Religious Foundations

Cultural and religious organizations are also at the forefront besides the political organizations. The first generation of the BCTO struggled to build a feeling of community due to a lack of cultural and religious organizations; nevertheless, there are now numerous active organizations (Atay, 1994:7). These religious institutions serve the BCTO community in a variety of ways, including providing worship spaces and promoting social, cultural, and educational services. Despite having no substantial ties to any political party, these organizations are participating in the process of claiming religious traditions and community acceptance. The BCTO has made more than 40 mosques and cemevis (Alevi congregational places), with 21 of them in London (Costu, 2018: 40).

To grasp the social dynamics of BCTO in the UK, it is worthwhile to quickly note the active groupings within these organizations. According to Sirkeci et al. (2017), the Sunni BCTO is made up of Sufi and religious groups from Turkey and Cyprus, political-religious movements, and official mosques and platforms from Turkey (The UK Diyanet Foundation).

Sheikh Nazim Al-Haqqani Dergahi, a Naqshbandi Sufi tradition center, was created in 1972 and has been active ever since, with members from all over the world, including Turkish, Kurdish, Pakistani, Indian, British, and other Europeans. However, after Sheikh Nazim's death in 2014, the number of activities – and members - has declined. Also, in 1977, Ramazan Guney, a businessman close to Sheikh Nazim, founded the UK Turkish Islamic Trust, which was centered on Shaklewell Mosque. The London Turkish Islamic Foundation was founded in 1976 by Turkish Cypriots, but since the following decades it has been dominated by persons of Turkey-origin. It is the first institution founded by the BCTO, according to the Charity Commission of the United Kingdom (Sirkeci et al., 2016). It was not affiliated with any political organisation until the 1990s, but since 1993, the active members have had Turkish nationalist aspirations. As a result, it joined the Turkish Federation of Germany, which serves as the umbrella organization for Turkish nationalists in Europe. In addition to these, the Cyprus Islamic Association brings individuals together to meet their religious requirements. These organizations show that the Cypriots, as the earliest arrivals, have played an active role in religious institutions (Costu & Turan, 2009: 11).

The UK Turkish Islamic Foundation / Aziziye Mosque was founded in 1979 and is the first organization founded by people of Turkey-origin to serve the religious, cultural, and social needs of the community. The foundation's board of directors follows the Naqshbandi branch of Ismail Aga (Mahmud

Ustaosmanoglu), while the mosque's imam is nominated by Turkey's General Directorate of Religious Affairs. The UK Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre Trust, which is also origination from Turkey, was created in 1984 by Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan's disciples and provides extensive religious and cultural activities for the community. Turkey Religious Affairs in the UK, in addition to these civic-based organizations, plays an active role in the country. The Turkish Religious Foundation of the United Kingdom (ITDV) was founded in 2001 and collaborates with a number of organizations. They are active in religious services, as well as education and cultural events. They are also in charge of pilgrimage tours and burial ceremonies.

Since the Alevis — a religion group named after Prophet Muhammed's son-in-law Ali – migrated primarily in the 1980s and 1990s, the history of their organizations dates from that time period. The UK Alevi Cultural Centre and Cemevi was founded in 1993 by Turkey's Alevis with the goal of preserving Alevi identity, origin, and culture, as well as offering education and socialization opportunities for their group. It serves both Turkish and Kurdish Alevis. It is also member of the Britain Alevi Federation, which has 20 members under its umbrella. In terms of politics, the center is involved in advocacy efforts such as the official recognition of Alevis as a faith organization. Furthermore, Alevi populations have traditionally been more politically active, maybe as a result of their experiences in Turkey when they lacked formal status. Alevi institutions interact with British political parties, especially the Labour Party.

Organizations such as the Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre, bring the community together in addition to religious communities like Day-Mer. It is not only gives legal advice to the BCTO, but it also actively participates in UK politics, lobbying for school lunch continuity and defending NHS workers' rights during the epidemic in close conjunction with labor unions.

Yunus Emre Institute is a cultural organization in the United Kingdom that was founded for Turkey-UK cultural interaction and promotion of Turkish culture in the UK which is affiliated with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It does not have a political role, despite assisting the BCTO with UK know-hows for their integration into British society.

Hometown organizations arose in the UK as a result of the massive immigration of the BCTO from various locations. Immigrants from Pekun in Gumushane, the Pazarcik district of Kahramanmaras, or Limassol in Cyprus, for example, are well-known hometown organizations in the United Kingdom. Rather than engaging in politics, these local organizations are motivated to provide community support and to conserve local relationships and traditions wherever they exist in the UK.

Concerning the BCTO, organizations and foundations have a role in encouraging political tendencies, participation, and representation. Political organizations are highly politicized because their activities are targeted towards policymakers in the UK. Their coverage on Turkey is primarily from

the perspective of the United Kingdom's foreign policy. BCTO's cultural and religious organizations are mostly concerned with community members, and most of them are less politicized. While offering a sense of belonging, cultural and religious groups also maintain the capacity for collective action and claim-making, such as raising requests for religious rights and exemptions, but only when and to a limited extent because they are community-driven.

Conclusion

To portray the current picture, the political tendencies and involvement of the BCTO in UK politics were analyzed both in the context of the UK's and the BCTO's institutional conditions. In this context, electoral participation in residential areas where the BCTO community is concentrated is at lower proportion compared with the population. This can be evaluated in terms of the UK's social and bureaucratic settings, as well as the BCTO's social structure. For instance, we believe that the strategy of presenting the universal ideals as British national principles has resulted into institutional and social isolation in the country. We also underlined that the social and bureaucratic institutions have obstacles for the BCTO, like many other communities, to be active in politics and policymaking process. As a result, minorities in spite of making close to fourteen percent of the total population, the extent to which immigrant populations are integrated into state institutions shows a lower number.

Another main underlined assertion of this article is the issue of overall political representation of immigrant background citizens in the UK which is lower comparing to the native people. The underrepresentation of migrant-background British people, as well as the BCTO, is the result of a long-standing political system enmeshed with assimilationist policies which has created undesired circumstances for the ethnic minorities and migrant-background populations. The gradual growth in political representation rates, on the other hand, is a reflection of positive achievements in the UK's and BCTO's integration processes as institutional circumstances for allowing more political space. However, the growth of anti-immigrant rhetoric, xenophobia, and Islamophobia around the world challenges BCTO's political presence in the UK. It is described that how the anti-immigrant stance in the UK is influenced by the general trend all over Europe and that even the politicians with Turkish descent are ironically anti-immigrants themselves.

In addition, the BCTOs' institutional environment, social, cultural, and economic structure all play a role in political involvement and representation. The BCTO resides in certain regions and operates within the ethnic-economy that develops in specific industries, restricting the amount of time and network required for political activity. The household and ethnic-economy tradition coupling with other factors such as the structural and social obstacles make it even more difficult for migrants, especially BCTO, to have the luxury of getting more involved in politics and enhance their political representativity.

Despite the fact that BCTO's enterprises are comparable, disparities in goals and interests, as well as the organization's fragile political background, preclude BCTO from acting together politically. Finally, another issue of underrepresentation is that the BCTO's adaptation to the political culture of the United Kingdom is still underway.

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