

ARTICLE

Diaspora Mobilization and Identity Construction of Ukrainian Immigrants in Turkey: “Ukrainians Started to Become More Ukrainian”

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Abstract

The article analyzes the role of Ukrainian associations on construction of immigrant identity in Turkey at the intersection of diaspora politics and diaspora-lived experiences. Ukrainian immigrant associations – whose numbers and members rapidly increased after Russia’s annexation of Crimea – became critical players in immigrants’ ethno-national identity construction. This aligned with the Ukrainian government’s changing diaspora policy and shaped immigrants’ relationship with the homeland. The associations, therefore, facilitated diaspora activism from above and below. These associations are mainly engaged in activities related to the teaching of Ukrainian language, history, and culture so that immigrants can distinguish themselves from Russians and discover their own uniqueness. They also consider the migrant status of Ukrainians in Turkey and develop an awareness of ethno-national identity by negotiating transnational identities.

Keywords: Ukrainian diaspora; immigrant associations; identity construction; Turkey

Introduction

Identity is usually defined as belonging to a nation, an ethnicity, and a culture, focusing on the relationship between *us* and *them* (*other*). Both individual and collective identities are produced and constructed with the effect of a kind of *internal* (attributed by itself) and *external* (imposed by others) dialectics in certain social worlds (Jenkins 1996). In the nation-state model, a person’s identity is characterized by a national identity expressed through the historical and cultural traditions, ethical values, ideals, beliefs, and national sovereignty of her/his country. This identity is reinforced by the laws supporting a particular social and political order (or a system) in a territorial area restricted by borders (Vertovec 2004), and the ones outside the borders are accepted to be different. Since national identity is inextricably linked with the *other*, opposition to the *other* is recognized in most theories as an inherent feature of nationalism. The national self’s search for originality cannot be separated from the others. Indeed, the members of a nation often develop unique qualities to avoid confusion (or combination) with *others* (Triandafyllidou 1998, 596). There is a concern for self-positioning through the discovery of similarities and differences under identity debates, which involve an interest in the questions of what we really are and what we have become (Glick-Schiller 2012; Hall 1990). In a way, this is a practice of grouping¹ and bordering around a particular feature (Brubaker 2002). While explaining the practice of ethnic boundary

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making, Wimmer (2013, 9) states that collective actions and individual acts of connecting and distancing should coincide: “Only when the two schemes coincide, when ways of seeing the world correspond to ways of acting in the world, shall we speak of a social boundary.”

Ethnic identity and national identity claims are closely linked to belief in both common ancestors and common culture (Fenton and May 2002). While ethnic identity largely reflects a sense of “sharedness” regarding ancestry, beliefs, and traditions, national identity is a political claim for representation and collectivity. The nation encompasses a group of people who believe they share ancestors; nationalism expresses identification with and loyalty to that nation. According to Brubaker (2002, 167) ethnicity, race, and nation should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals, but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms. National and ethnic identities can also move beyond the borders of the country through immigrants and transform to diasporic identities that maintain a sense of belonging and a collective representation to their origin groups and homeland. As social collectivity, diasporic ethno-national groups can maintain their collective national, cultural, or religious identity through an internal sense of belonging and connections with a real or imagined homeland. In addition, these groups are committed to their members’ collective interests, often developing internal organizations to facilitate transnational connections (Adamson and Demetriou 2007, 497). Hence, understanding various aspects of diasporic identities is critically important for transnational immigration studies.

Migration is a process that intersects two national areas on different levels and in various forms and brings together immigrants with these different national areas, revealing various networks of relations (Vertovec 1999). Everyday life experiences, realized through real and virtual interactions within the transnational socio-spatial context, often cause immigrants to define themselves with more than one identity (Şimşek 2012, 224). Immigrants, as political actors, can lead structural change from the bottom up in this identity process caused by multidimensional everyday practices (Faist 2010; Smith and Guarnizo 1998). They may assume a transnational identity or define themselves as diasporic to offset the dominant cultural influences of their host society and avoid assimilation (Bradatan et al. 2010, 173). Thus, social, cultural, and economic exchanges involving countries of origin and destination can pave the way for both the reproduction of the origin country’s culture and the development of new identities between immigrants and their next generations.

An important feature of transnational practices is simultaneity (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), which makes individual immigrants members of a larger whole that extends beyond geographical boundaries. In other words, immigrants can simultaneously follow their countries of origin, the countries they live in, and other countries. This simultaneous participation enables the tightening of ties between dispersed people, the transformation of social institutions, and the development of hybrid identities (Mazzucato 2010, 207). Thus, the connections that develop through transnational migration create identities that are fluid, multiple, and emerge in specific situations of interaction (Bradatan et al. 2010, 176).

Diasporic organizations foster emotional attachment through materialistic and symbolic practices. An immigrant’s affiliation with these organizations can help maintain their attachment to the homeland (Orozco 2006). Immigrant associations enable immigrants to follow traces of collective memory of another place and time and form new aspirations and attachment maps. They bring immigrants together, forming a suitable environment to develop diasporic identities (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1989). Sökefeld (2006, 269) states that the formation of diasporas requires mobilizing structures and practices. The associations that correspond to these structures are places where people form networks for collective action and organize various practices that create and maintain community discourses.

These associations’ organizational structures vary depending on immigrants’ relationships with the homeland and its identity politics. Diasporic organizations strengthen the intersection between state-based initiatives (diaspora mobilization from above) and immigrants’ grassroots initiatives

(diaspora mobilization from below) in homeland politics. Through these intersecting efforts, diasporic activism – normally static and slow – can gain momentum and visibility. Unexpected events related to the homeland, such as war, can also work up nationalism, re-activate diasporic organizations, and lead to identity awakenings (see Carment et al. 2021; Nikolko 2019). Sometimes this is a form of activism that takes place during the civil war between ethnic groups within a country (Adamson 2013), and sometimes it can happen when another state invades the migrant's homeland (Deniz and Özgür 2022). In every way, non-state actors have the role to drive diaspora policies and shape the practices of engagement (Alonso and Mylonas 2019).

The Ukrainian diaspora,² as well as its institutions in Turkey, which are the subject of this study, experienced such a mobilization and identity construction after Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014. The Ukrainian ethno-national identity, which comes to the forefront in the identification process, includes the citizenship of the independent Ukrainian state and the lineage-language-culture partnership. In other words, it includes the understanding of nationalism that combines ethnic and civil elements. This form of identity became more and more clear with the ethno-national movements after the Russian occupation of Ukraine. After the Maidan and the events that followed, the importance and content of the Ukrainian national identity, as well as the meaning of belonging to the Ukrainian nation, have changed. This change most vividly manifested in the increased alienation from Russia (even if some Ukrainians are hesitant about this distance), the greater embrace of Ukrainian nationalism as a worldview, and, accordingly, as a historical narrative (Kulyk 2016, 606–607). Thus, the identity construction process of Ukrainians began to take place on an anti-Russian basis and in the form of Ukrainian patriotism linked to the past struggle against the Russian/Soviet Empire. Above all, the conflict in Donbass provided a basis for Ukrainian politicians to implement a new national idea and triggered the separation from Russian culture (Matveeva 2016, 29–30). In this way, Ukraine's dominant identity project combined a civilian membership criterion with a strong ethno-cultural basis (Kulyk 2016, 607).

Ukrainians in Turkey, most of whom are female marriage migrants, also negotiate their Turkish spouse's sociocultural values, norms, and practices alongside their own community of origin (Deniz 2020b). Many want to transfer the Ukrainian language and culture to their multicultural children growing up in Turkey. Ukrainian immigrants must simultaneously cope with identity conflicts in the homeland while constructing a transnational identity for themselves and their children in Turkey. This causes an identity dilemma for Ukrainian immigrants – their social worlds are primarily dominated by Turkish spouses and close relations with Russians, even in the shadow of the worsening Ukraine-Russia relations.

Therefore, this article argues that the Russian and Turkish languages and cultures make the re-identification of Ukrainians and the task of learning, practicing, and maintaining their own language and culture more challenging than elsewhere in the world and that immigrant associations have a very important mission to overcome this dilemma. Ukrainian immigrant associations in Turkey, on the one hand, contribute to the diasporization of the community members, their mobilization against Russia, and the construction of an ethno-national identity based on the developments in the homeland; on the other hand, they try to create a transnational identity within the Turkish society for immigrants and their children. This rare situation adds a different dimension to the functions of immigrant associations and makes it interesting to research the Ukrainian community in Turkey in the context of associations as an intermediate mechanism.

The article analyzes the role of Ukrainian associations on construction of immigrant identity in Turkey at the intersection of diaspora politics and diaspora-lived experiences. With this perspective, this article provides a much-needed analysis that considers bottom-up processes in combination with an analysis of diaspora engagement policies, while much of the literature in this field tends to zoom in on either one or the other.

In this context, this article seeks answers to the following questions: (1) Why are Ukrainian immigrants grouping around ethno-national identification? (2) What kind of dilemmas and strategy changes do they experience in the process of identification? (3) What kind of roles do

Ukrainian immigrant associations play in the diaspora mobilization and identity reconstruction process?

This article proceeds as follows. The next section examines the background context of Ukraine-to-Turkey migration. Research Process and Methodology session follows that part. The findings are split into four parts. The first part – called *Grouping of Ukrainian Immigrants around Ethno-national Identity: “We Are Not Russians, We Are Ukrainians!”* – includes a discussion on how the Ukrainian immigrants tried to distinguish themselves from the Russians. The second part – entitled *Dilemmas in the Identification Process and Change of Strategy: “Are We a Diaspora against Russia or the Ukrainian Diaspora?”* – details the *inadequacy* of forming an identity that centers on the “other,” the dilemmas experienced, and the strategies developed to overcome these problems. The third part – titled *Diaspora Activism Intersecting from Above and Below* – includes how the actions of the Ukrainian state and immigrants intersect and turn into diasporic activities. The fourth part reviews how the migrant associations promote Ukrainian culture in an effort to reconstruct ethno-national identity. The article concludes with final evaluations and recommendations for further research.

Immigration from Ukraine to Turkey and the Ukrainian Presence in Turkey

Immigrant flows from Ukraine to Turkey first occurred during the Ottoman Empire. Tatars from Crimea, which is now Ukrainian territory, were forced to Anatolia (present-day Turkey) and elsewhere after the Russian Empire annexed Crimea in 1783 (Kırımlı 2022). It is estimated that the number of Crimean Tatars who migrated to Ottoman lands between 1783 and 1922 was 1,800,000 (Karpát 1985, 66). Moreover, the migration of Crimean Tatars to Anatolia continued due to famine and exiles during the Soviet Union period. Crimean Tatar immigrants, who are Muslim and accepted as Turkish descendants, became citizens of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey after 1923, based on these identities. However, Tatars (and their descendants) have long seen Crimea as their motherland and presented as a Crimean Tatar diaspora in exile due to forcible displacement (of their ancestors). Therefore, the Tatar diaspora maintains strong ties and connections with Crimea and created diasporic organizations to carry out ethnic identity-oriented activities in Turkey (Aydın 2000). These organizations’ main purpose is to preserve Tatar identity, remember the historical Soviet and Russian invasions, and maintain a homeland policy based in Crimea. Accordingly, the Crimean Tatars, whose political awareness and ethno-national identity were developed in an earlier period, focus on Crimean Tatar identity – not Ukrainian identity – as a whole. While Crimean Tatars have a different ethno-cultural identity, they support immigrants in Turkey who identify as Ukrainians, especially after Russia’s re-annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The second group of migrants from Ukraine to Turkey – and the subjects of this study – consists of more recent people who identify as Ukrainian. The pioneers of this group are women who came to Turkey to work in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In these years, some of the Ukrainian women were shuttle traders, connecting the former Soviet countries to Turkey through economic activities. Ukrainian migrants in Turkey also worked in the tourism and entertainment industries, which needed Russian-speaking workers. Some Ukrainian migrants in Turkey also participated in sex work in the 1990s (Bloch 2011, 504, 511; Gülçür and İlkkaracan 2002, 415). In later years, visa-free short-term mobility increased, and the immigrant profile diversified after multilateral agreements to increase cooperation. Today, Ukrainians study in Turkey through agreements between higher education institutions and participate in many areas of employment (Deniz 2020a). However, the predominant group of immigrants consists of women who marry Turkish men and reside in Turkey on a long-term family residence permit or acquire citizenship through marriage (Deniz 2020b). Some of these women’s elderly parents also move to Turkey (Deniz 2020c). In recent years, men who invested in Turkey to get away from the political instability and conflicts in Ukraine have also joined this movement. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat 2019), the number of Ukrainian immigrants living in Turkey by obtaining short-term residence permit, long-term residence permit, and citizenship status is approximately 64,000

as of the beginning of 2023. This number was 36,000 in 2021. It is clear that the presence of Ukrainians in Turkey has almost doubled in one year. Millions of Ukrainians refugees fleeing Ukraine have been recorded to other countries due to Russia's attempt to invade Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and the ensuing war. Some of them came to Turkey, and the Turkish Minister of Interior announced the number of Ukrainian asylum seekers who came to Turkey as 58,000 as of March 21, 2022 (*BBC News*, March 22, 2022). The Directorate of Migration Management announced the number of Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks who entered Ukraine in the same period, separating them from Ukrainian nationals. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 95,874 Ukrainian refugees were registered in Turkey on January 26, 2023.

Most of Ukrainian immigrants are regular immigrants who can legally establish associations. Ukrainian migrant associations were first established in Turkey in 2009 and rapidly proliferated after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and especially after 2017. As of April 2023, there were 21 Ukrainian migrant associations spread across different cities in Turkey. It has been found that in many countries, migrants tend to organize in regional and ethnic associations that serve as a tool to become a part of transnational exchange relations, and they protect their ethno-national identities through the associations they establish. This already established structure also facilitates governments' access to immigrant support, as it is sensitive to the ups and downs of homeland politics and the prevailing rhetoric of nationalism (Paeregaard 2010, 102). However, the gathering of Ukrainians as actors of community politics in Turkey was delayed, and they were only able to organize with the diaspora policy of the Ukrainian government that changed after 2017 (Deniz and Özgür 2022). As it is known, states give strategic importance to immigrants due to their role in national identity construction and cultural reproduction (King and Melvin 1999), and the existence of a group that protects its own cultural identity and ties with the homeland constitutes a cross-border line of defense (Waterbury 2010, 139). In cases where this line does not occur naturally, supporting the establishment of an intermediate mechanism such as associations allows rapid establishment of the connection between the state and the immigrant (Deniz and Özgür 2022).

The founders and boards of Ukrainian associations generally consist of Ukrainian women who married Turkish citizens. Though everyone is invited to their events (especially Ukrainians and Turks), most members are ethnically Ukrainian. These associations have strengthened community ties by increasing interactions between different Ukrainian migrant groups. Ukrainian immigrants, who gather in physical and virtual places for association events, have rebuilt their ethno-national and transnational identities. Though they previously maintained social relations with Russian immigrant associations in Turkey, Ukrainian associations have now formed closer political relations with Crimean Tatar associations after the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

Research Process and Methodology

The primary data source of this study which was designed as qualitative research are the interviews held with 16 representatives of the Ukrainian associations face-to-face or online in different 10 provinces in Turkey between December 2018 and March 2021. While it was difficult to access associations during the COVID-19 pandemic, we interviewed many participants multiple times and monitored the associations' activities for more than two years.

In this study, 15 of the participants were either married to or divorced from Turkish spouses. All but 3 of the female participants had at least 1 child. Eleven of the participants worked part time or full time in education, translation, foreign trade, tourism, and culture-art. Most participants had lived in Turkey for less than 10 years (though this ranged from 2 to 29 years). Since women, and specifically marriage immigrants, comprise the majority of the Ukrainian diaspora, these participants offered useful insights into the general qualities of the immigrant community. Other diaspora groups included students, retired individuals, businesspeople, and "lifestyle" immigrants.

The interviews were carried out in Turkish and sometimes in English. The preference of interview language is left to the participants. Even if all of the participants do not speak

Ukrainian at the level they know Russian, due to the political problems with Russia, they tried to speak Turkish. Especially in the focus group meetings (4 interviews) attended by more than one representative of the same association, while discussing some questions among themselves in Russian, they gave the answers in Turkish. Only two participants spoke English because they could not speak Turkish enough to express themselves. The associations were very willing to participate in this research. However, participants who were at home with their children during the pandemic struggled to provide the necessary privacy and temporal availability for the interview. For this reason, we interviewed these participants more than once. Apart from this situation, we interviewed some participants, especially those who collect data about diaspora and spread them to diaspora members at least twice for new questions that emerged during the research process. On average, they lasted 65 minutes and featured open-ended questions. We also followed the associations' activities through the Internet and by physically attending some events during the long research period. In addition, we collected data from the Ukrainian immigrant associations' web pages, corresponding Facebook groups, and internet news websites. Descriptive and content analysis was carried out with all the data obtained from different sources. As a result of the analysis, the themes related to the research question were turned into a subtitle in the article.

Grouping of Ukrainian Immigrants around Ethno-National Identity: “We Are Not Russians, We Are Ukrainians!”

National identity discussions in Ukraine, which gained its independence in 1991, going on during the post-30-year-Soviet period and Soviet (and previous) imperial heritage reflect internal demographic divisions and the turbulent course of Ukraine politics and its international relationships since the independence (Barrington 2021, 155). Identity is often formed along three nationalisms: civic national identity, an ethnic Ukrainian-based national identity, and an Eastern Slavic national identity (Shulman 2004). Ukraine was viewed as part of a union under the leadership of Russia, Little Russian, *Russkii Mir*, or *Rossiysky* rather than as a separate nation during Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union (Kuzio 2016, 3–4), and Ukrainians were exposed to *Russification*.³⁴

Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dense Russian population, and the prevalence of the Russian language in Ukraine bound it to the Russian world (O’Loughlin et al. 2016). This attitude and practice prevented the development of a modern Ukraine nation and national identity (Kuzio 2001, 109). In Post-Soviet Ukraine, too, the discrepancy between ethnolinguistic identity and language practice continued as a heritage of Soviet policy. Many people who consider themselves Ukrainian in terms of nationality and whose mother tongue is Ukrainian have primarily continued using mainly Russian in daily life (Kulyk 2018, 132). In addition, Ukrainian-Russian mixed marriages are prevalent in the East and South of the country have kept this practice alive. A similar situation was observed among post-Soviet immigrant communities in Turkey before the annexation of Crimea.

As a matter of fact, more than 100,000 Russians have immigrated to Turkey since the 1990s (Deniz and Özgür 2021). When they established associations right after migrating, they carried out numerous activities and accepted Ukrainians as the main partners in the association’s activities. The reason for this attitude was that they viewed Ukraine as a part of Russia and Ukrainians as a part of Russian society.

When these pioneers immigrated to Turkey, they were still under the influence of the Soviet Union and did not witness the process of Ukraine becoming a nation state. In fact, it became quite difficult to differentiate between a Russian and Ukrainian under these conditions. When it comes to close relationships between different population groups for many years, “the uncertainty of borders separating one ethnic group from the others” becomes strong (Cohen 2004, 89). Emphasizing similarities rather than differences between Ukrainians and Russians until the war made borders between the two groups unclear. The best example of this is Russian-Ukrainian joint culture festivals in Antalya until 2015, where Russian and Ukrainian immigrants are densely populated. In

these festivals, cultural qualities and practices were presented as a common Russian-Ukrainian culture. As a result, for both the immigrants attending these festivals (and their children) and Turks who assumed that whoever spoke Russian is Russian, a Ukrainian was a Russian. A Ukrainian immigrant association president who married a Turk reiterated this uncertainty between Russians and Ukrainians:

Even my husband's family think that a Russian and a Ukrainian are the same. People do not know who Ukrainians are... Completely different, for example, language is quite different, culture is different, dishes are different, but we are overshadowed by them (Russians). (A.9)

Ukrainian government's suspending Ukraine's negotiations with the European Union due to Russian pressure, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the upheavals in eastern Ukraine, where there is a large population of ethnic Russians and violent military conflicts (Clem 2017), flamed nationalism ideas among Ukrainians living abroad and caused them to become active declaring mobilization (Carment et al. 2021; Nikolko 2019). Two associations presidents explained the impact of Ukraine-Russia conflict on Ukrainians as such:

As you know there is a war going on in eastern Ukraine now and our members are very nationalistic as they come from the east, they react more to what Russia is doing. (A.7)

Now this community is in pain, Russian soldiers are killing Ukrainians. I mean there is a martyr every day... Russians, after all, they are enemies... There are people from Eastern Ukraine in our chorus. Russians have bombed people there, they shot people with tanks. Frankly, they don't want to see a Russian psychologically. (A.12)

Events like the Euromaidan and the Ukraine-Russia war increased individuals' self-identification with and loyalty to the state of Ukraine. Attitudes and behavioral tendencies affirmed a strong commitment to national symbols and a readiness to defend their country (Kulyk 2019, 167). Regional differences in Ukraine notwithstanding, Euromaidan and Russian military aggression awoke similar reactions throughout the country and helped to unite the national community (Kuzyk 2019; Stebelsky 2018). In this way, Ukrainian identity became more nationalistic, and the feeling of attachment to Ukraine became more explicit and more inclusive of national elements (Kozachenko 2018; Kulyk 2017). The traumatic events in the homeland had a fundamental impact on the Ukrainian national project and generated significant feelings of apprehension and attachment among Ukrainians abroad (Kozachenko 2018, 90).

During this period, Ukrainian immigrants in Turkey started forming a diaspora and members began constructing a national identity by reconciling civic identity and ethnic identity. The Ukraine-Russia crisis opened painful memories of previous traumatic events. Ukrainian immigrants in Turkey felt a need to defend the homeland by establishing associations and creating a crystallized and polarized diasporic group willing to maintain Ukrainian culture. The immigrants understood that for Ukraine to persist, there needed to be Ukrainians:

For example, my friend used to speak in Russian before Maidan events and the war. Though they were Ukrainians, the parents spoke in Russian, too, but after the war broke out, her/his consciousness changed. S/he explained: "I have made a decision; I will speak in Ukrainian from now on"... I think Ukrainians have started to become more Ukrainians. We have started to say, "*We are not Russians, we are Ukrainians.*" We have started to emphasize this. (A.6)

This shows that a new irreversible period has begun in terms of Ukrainian identity with the fractured changing conditions:

We considered them as brothers. For now, I don't think that there will be a return to this. If a person stabs you in the back, that person cannot be a brother anymore. Our stance is clear: We are the children of Ukraine. (A.16)

The Ukraine-Russia war led to an increase in social distance between two immigrant groups in Turkey and ethno-national identification deepened Ukrainian-Russian differentiation in time. As one association president argued:

I came to Antalya in 2009. There was one association, but there was no war then. There was a Russian association as well; we used to conduct activities together. Ukrainian people came to Russian festivals and Russians came to Ukrainian festivals. However, with the war everything changed, it became different. Of course, after our government officially declared Russia an enemy, we cannot have any relationship with them. (A.12)

As these and some other participants have emphasized, after the Ukrainian government has pointed to Russia as the enemy, the Ukrainian diaspora in Turkey has labeled as all-Russian those inside and outside Russia who support the aggressive policies of the Russian state. Therefore, the participants exclude Russian-oriented Ukrainian citizens from this context. Since it is difficult to distinguish the supporters of Russian government policy in this climate, diaspora members have been cautious in their relations with people of Russian ethnic identity outside Ukraine and distanced themselves from them – such that Ukrainian immigrants who used to conduct joint activities under Russian associations roof did not include Russia among “Ukraine’s Friends” in Ukraine’s independence-day activities in 2020. The Ukrainian immigrants have started to establish their own organizations due to the increasing political reaction to Russia and their own identity awakening. Although there was only one Ukrainian immigrant association in Turkey until 2017, new associations were established in a short time, which resulted in their number reaching 21 today. Two association presidents explained the Ukrainian migrants’ ethno-national identity awakening and their devotion to their homeland:

When Euromaidan started in Ukraine in 2013, not only in Turkey but all around the world, there was an unbelievable uprising and an awakening in terms of identity... In many cities, not just in my city, in other cities, too, diaspora became active. There was no organization previously, there was no need, either... Then, we said OK... let's make this (association) official. (A.2)

As you know, our country, Ukraine, is having a hard time politically. There are serious issues with Russia. Therefore, people feel a bit more responsible about this issue, i.e., they want to be attached to the country more. That's then, we started to meet with our friends and organize activities more. (A.3)

While the Ukrainian immigrant associations were being founded, the Ukrainian diasporic institutions in countries such as Canada and the USA were contacted, taken example of, followed, and similar activities were started. This accelerated the diasporization of Ukrainians in Turkey and their connection to the Ukrainian diasporas in other countries. The first Ukrainian association established in Turkey became a member of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC), which is the representative of Ukrainians in the Diaspora and the international coordination branch after five years of monitoring. This representation has encouraged initiatives such as supporting the homeland, strengthening their position in Turkish society, and promoting the homeland to them by joining a global diaspora support network. Thus, UWC became a model for the self-confidence and revival of the Ukrainian diaspora in Turkey and the organization of immigrant associations. Following the events of the Ukrainian World Congress, Ukrainian associations in Turkey have

created their own social media accounts by adopting the “high tech-high touch” approach of the new generation diasporas. Secondly, associations started to be inspired by the events of UWC for their activities and organized similar ones (Deniz and Özgür 2022, 251–252).

The attitude of the state matched up with this period and made it easy for immigrants to get attached not only to one another but also to their homelands.⁵ While there are still regional, ethnic, and linguistic differences, there have been changes in ethno-national identifications, linguistic practices, and the preferences of the state about its linguistic policy (Barrington 2021, 159). All of these have been considered as deRussification, a popular alienation from Russianness, and thus, Ukraine has become more Ukrainian (Arel 2018, 189). The Ukraine-Russia war has proven that Ukraine’s national identity (both ethnic and civic) is stronger than was popularly assumed (Goble 2016, 37). In other words, “contrary to Russia’s expectations, military intervention into Ukraine only strengthened the Ukrainian civic nation. Studies demonstrate that since 2014 there is a growing trend that the vast majority of Ukrainians identify themselves, first and foremost, as Ukrainian citizens” (Haran et al. 2019, 684). Even so, Ukrainians have a high opinion of *Ethnic Ukrainians* and *Ukrainian Citizens* as the most important individual identity (Sasse and Lackner 2019). Therefore, the Ukrainian identity, in addition to ethnic origin and cultural affinity, demonstrates a hybrid ethno-national identity quality becoming increasingly important and including a national, civic loyalty element (Kulyk 2018, 135). As a reflection of this, even the immigrants in Turkey with Russian origins ethnically started to construct a civic Ukrainian national identity:

It didn’t really matter to be Russian or Ukrainian until 2014. Now nearly many people have at least a political identity. There are the ones who accept that they are Russian origin, but they also say that they are Ukrainian citizens and want to keep their Ukrainian identity. My origin could be anything; Azerbaijani or Jewish, it doesn’t matter. What is important here is commitment to the state and I see that people build a political identity.” (A.2)

Other events have also contributed to the Ukrainian migrants’ separation process from Russians. For example, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine formalized a split with the Moscow Patriarchate with a decree signed by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of İstanbul in 2018. The signing ceremony featured high-ranking Ukrainian state officials, the president of Ukrainian World Congress, and the presidents of Ukrainian associations in Turkey. It was welcomed both in Ukraine and in the diaspora and was interpreted as a step toward ending Russian domination and recognizing sovereign Ukrainian identity.

These findings correspond with evidence presented throughout the literature on how the war escalated Ukrainians’ alienation from and hostility to Russia and a commitment to Ukraine, even among Russian speakers (Cheskin and Kachuyevski 2019; Kulyk 2016). Ukrainian migrants living in Turkey first tried to shape their identities by focusing on the differences between Russians and themselves. Their identification process centered the “other.” This positioning, on the one hand, is based on the discovery of split cultural qualities of the two societies; on the other hand, it is based on the repossession of the elements thought to be captured by the other party:

Naturally we have a common history, but we are different. Our languages, cuisine, geographies, and views are different. Ukrainians survive everywhere. One seed is enough to set up a life. Russians cannot do this. They want someone to do everything for them. For example, we know what hunger is. Holodomor is in our memories, and we live with it. Russians are imperialists. They stole our history, food, and lives. The spirit of Ukraine is free. We are going to speak in Ukrainian and teach our culture to our children to prevent the same thing from happening again. (A.13)

The emphasis on independence and democracy through comparison with Russians, indeed once again, is a crucial element in the identity construction:

Ukrainians are quite democratic and they like freedom very much. They don't want to be under pressure. We resisted because for us community comes before the state. What matters is how the community decides and what they want. Democracy is quite important in Ukraine. What the community choose goes, but it is not the case in Russia. There is a totalitarian regime and a dictator in Russia. (A.7)

In this process, the Ukrainian diaspora in Turkey has strategically cooperated and developed solidarity with the Crimean Tatar diaspora, which has different goals but shares anti-Russian sentiments.

Establishing relations with the Crimean Tatars, who have sympathy from the Turkish people and state, made the Ukrainian diaspora more visible and increased its organizational capacities:

We were participating in protest rallies together with the Crimean Tatars. At that time, we were weak in terms of organization. It was not possible for us to prepare a rally from scratch. There must be an organization for the application of a large rally, Crimean Tatar associations are already very strong in this regard. We were just going. (MA.2)

Dilemmas in the Identification Process and Change of Strategy: “Are We a Diaspora against Russia or the Ukrainian Diaspora?”

The view that there could be no diasporic construction without a Ukrainian identity that immigrants adopt made “weak identity issue” a primary focal point for migrant organizations. The first step of identification for Ukrainian immigrants in Turkey was differentiating themselves from Russians. The disappointment caused by the lack of a clear approach against the war by the Russians who live in Turkey is effective in this step. For this reason, the emphasis on the collective culture of the two groups in the past years has been abandoned, and the distinctive features of Ukrainian culture have begun to be revealed. However, the drawbacks of seeing the Russians as the “other” have been noticed, especially since some migrants were born into Ukrainian-Russian mixed marriages. These mixed family backgrounds caused dilemmas for ethno-national identification and prevented a strong Ukrainian expression:

My mum is Russian, and my dad is Ukrainian. How can I differentiate? I know Ukrainian because I come from Lugansk, but I speak in Russian. I grew up like this. I cannot discriminate. (A.1)

Even immigrants without a Russian-origin parent had difficulties negotiating their Ukrainian identity. Some hailed from eastern and southern Ukraine (where the Russian impact is intensive) or other Russian-speaking communities. Others had close Russian friends:

In our country most of the Ukrainians speak Russian. When abroad, they start to create an environment with Russians, Belarusians and others speaking Russian and make friends with them. In such a case, they are ashamed of speaking Ukrainian. Most people don't want to say that they are Ukrainians. When they say that they are Russians and speak Russian, for some reason, they feel more secure. That is, they live like Russians. They don't feel enough Ukrainians and they don't want to use Ukrainian. (A.3)

Despite increasing Ukrainian nationalism due to the war, immigrant associations softened this identification discourse, as friendships built before the war presented a problem for their ethno-national identity. Rather, aspects unique to Ukraine, not the differences from Russians, were centered. This prevented arguments with Russians and left the door open to rebuilding better relationships between Russia and Ukraine in the future as well. This approach also matched the

Ukrainian government's national identity policy. Traces of this discourse change were evident in some association presidents' narratives:

Are we a diaspora against Russia or a Ukrainian diaspora? I mean naturally some things against Russia could be done, but, eventually, we are doing something for ourselves, and we can say that the things done for Ukrainian culture and identity is more. (A.2)

The recent identity awakening among Ukrainian immigrants in Turkey also helped them understand the risk of losing their self-identities in Turkish society. Indeed, most of the Ukrainian immigrants were women married to Turks. These women and, especially, their Turkish-Ukrainian children feel the intense effects of Turkish culture. This differentiates Ukrainians in Turkey from Ukrainian diasporas in other countries:

In Canada and the USA, everybody is Ukrainian in a family. One's both grandmother, and mother and father are Ukrainians. They went there as a family. A Ukrainian got married to a Ukrainian and it goes on like this. Children certainly speak Ukrainian. It is not like this here. In our family, only the woman is Ukrainian. Fathers are dominant. (A.7)

Both the families of the immigrants in their country of origins and the new ones they establish in the receiving country are of mixed structure. Since this structural situation caused divisions among Ukrainian immigrants, the associations decided that it would be more rational to focus on immigrant children. With this strategy, the associations' activities help children to construct a hyphenated (Turkish-Ukrainian) identity in a transnational space and implicitly prevented the assimilation of women immigrants. As one participant explains:

Perhaps there are different views in adults. There are the ones with Russian origin. I don't want to discuss this any longer. However, children are Turks and Ukrainians, so we need to explain Ukrainian identity to children. Therefore, we should have activities accordingly. Our activities will always increase, but we have started with children and will continue with women. (A.11)

This new strategy reduced anti-Russian opposition in the construction of ethno-national identity, centered Ukrainian culture and identity, and contributed to the construction of transnational identities. Thus, the associations helped the immigrants to overcome the identity dilemma they fell into with the change of strategy:

We have been like the same nation for a long time. There were differences; the language was different, the place was different, but Russian is spoken in my family, the alphabet is the same. I don't separate myself from the Russian language. We speak Russian, for example, Russian literature... I write poems in Russian. I mean it is an inseparable issue, but I am Ukrainian. I always emphasize this. (A.4)

The new approach highlighted the distinctness of Ukrainianism and addressed immigrants' practical needs. Immigrants could continue using their skills (like the Russian language) while simultaneously emphasizing their Ukrainian identities. The Ukrainian Embassy supported this strategy, as it paved the way for migrants to more easily define themselves as a diaspora:

I know Ukrainian, but the language I speak is Russian. I grew up like this. There was a meeting of diasporas. When our ambassador first attended the meeting, I was asked to speak. I was afraid to speak because I speak in Russian. The ambassador said "Don't worry. For us, one language is one person. You can speak in any language." (A.1)

The immigrant associations' flexible and pragmatic approach also affected their relationship with other local Russian-speaking immigrants. While the Ukrainian immigrants and other post-Soviet community member immigrants attended activities held by the Russian associations, an independent Ukrainian association has become a new gathering area:

Personally, I am well-known here. Ukrainian, Russian, and Kirgiz citizens come to me. I cannot send back people who come to me under the Ukrainian flag. That person comes here knowing whose door s/he is knocking at. (A.1)

This situation has led to both a change in Russians' recognition of Ukrainian existence and Ukrainians' acquiring status this way. It is known that Russian dominant discourse is produced by attributing the values such as "pride" and "profit" to the Russian language that was overlaid with establishing and perpetuating power relations (Ryazanova-Clarke 2017). For this reason, although the continuation of the use of Russian by Ukrainians seems to contribute to this discourse, they have instrumentalized the use of language in order to widen their influence in the current conditions. As a result, the benefits of the immigrant associations' strategy have been confirmed in practice. Since the new form of the ethno-cultural identification discourse of the Ukrainian diaspora in Turkey has accelerated integration, the variety of the participants of activities about the introduction of the culture forming the Ukrainian identity has increased as well. According to the association presidents, they now have more than 3,000 members and an increasing number of volunteers in many cities. The observations we made in the city halls and open-air concert locations during Ukrainian events also supported this claim.

Diaspora Activism Intersecting from Above and Below

After independence, the Ukrainian government intensified its relations with the former Ukrainian diaspora, which is an economically and politically powerful community worldwide. However, the Russia-Ukraine War led to the further development of the diaspora-state relationship (Gulina 2020). Ukraine intensified its efforts to contact and support Ukrainians abroad to respond to their cultural, educational, linguistic, and diverse needs through various ministries and institutions. In this way, the government has sought to voluntarily entice transnationally dispersed Ukrainians into a web of rights and obligations by directing them to behaviors that optimize the externalities of migration. In this context, the Ukrainian embassy and consulates in Turkey supported the establishment and prevalence of immigrant associations. Afterward, they directed the organized Ukrainians under associations to the diaspora mobilization in a short time (Deniz and Özgür 2022). The Ukrainian government significantly contributed to the migrant associations by providing support in areas such as project-based financial resource allocation and creating other resources, organizing events, providing venues, and finding sponsors. Most importantly, they offered moral support and encouragement to unify and mobilize scattered Ukrainian immigrants under the umbrella of the association.

Previously, Ukrainian immigrants in Turkey established intense social relations with other Russian-speaking groups (especially Russians) and did not see themselves as a diasporic community. Turkish society did not make a great pressure on Ukrainians or directly encouraged their cultural existence as a migration policy, so immigrants were not motivated to foreground their Ukrainian national identity for many years. However, the Ukraine-Russia Crisis (February 2014–February 2015), which took place after Ukraine's attempts to integrate into the European Union were reversed, had wide repercussions throughout all Ukrainian communities around the world. Since the crisis, diaspora mobilization has become an important factor for developing an international agenda on Ukraine and an effective mechanism for quick response to changing situations (Nikolko, 2019: 1873). Ukraine's new, more nationalistic administration also motivated this shift. As the head of a Ukrainian immigrant association in Turkey put it,

Ukraine became a little more active after the war. At the same time, slightly different people got into power: more patriotic, and more active. (MA.2)

The crisis fostered an awareness of national identity among Ukrainian immigrants in Turkey and pushed many Ukrainians to reconnect with their roots (Deniz and Özgür, 2022). Traumatic events in the homeland fueled the immigrants' desires to rebuild a Ukrainian identity with civic and ethno-cultural elements. This increased the immigrants' dynamism and unexpectedly initiated a diaspora mobilization:

The diaspora has become active in many cities. The war became a trigger, it triggered people to unite, people started to put forward their goals: helping the soldiers, protesting Russia. (MA.2)

On the other hand, Ukrainian women migrants' desires to keep their culture of origin alive and to raise bicultural children also contributed to this dynamism. Therefore, the diasporic activism of the Ukrainian government (from above) intersected with Ukrainian immigrants' desires (from below). The Ukrainian migrant associations made this intersection possible.

The Role of Migrant Associations in Diaspora Activism

Ukrainian immigrant associations have taken an active role in contributing to the construction of national and transnational/diasporic identity. They balance the cultural dominance of the host society while mobilizing the diaspora against Russia's aggressive actions. The associations' rational strategy provides multi-faceted benefits for Ukrainian immigrants (and their children) to learn, practice, and protect their culture by discovering their own uniqueness, determining the borders with Russian culture, and reducing the effects of Turkish culture. In this context, the associations intensified their teaching of Ukrainian language and national history to keep the collective memory and culture alive. They also organized peaceful actions for the defense of the homeland, attracting the attention and support of the Turkish people and the Crimean Tatar diaspora.

Teaching and Promotion of the Ukrainian Language

Ukrainian migrant associations in Turkey consider the use of Ukrainian language by more immigrants as the most important component of identity construction with reference to the Ukrainian poet Lina Kostenko's words: "Nations do not die of heart attack, first their languages go, first they keep quiet." They connect immigrants to free online Ukrainian language courses and coordinate Saturday school for children.⁶ They bring a part of education materials of their own courses from Ukraine with the support of the embassy and sponsors. They also bring education materials from Ukraine, with support from the embassy and sponsors and open libraries in some association buildings for easy access to Ukrainian language materials and resources.

The associations place special importance on ensuring that children growing up in Turkey learn their mother tongue. They seek to re-balance the dominance of the Turkish language in everyday life and the dominance of Russian in some households. As one participant states,

We wanted to do activities on education because our biggest problem is the families whose speak Turkish with kids. Ukraine language is not known. Or in some families Russian is spoken. People want their mother tongue to be spoken not Russian recently. That's why; we thought that we should give the priority to this. (A.2)

The associations also produced children's books with pictures drawn by children in Ukraine and Turkey. These books helped strengthen the Ukrainian part of Turkish-Ukrainian children's dual identities:

We have prepared a book: Ukrainian Folk Tales. Children in Turkey and Ukraine did this. They drew and we wrote tales to these drawings. (A.7)

We want our children to learn our language here as they usually speak Turkish. We want them to know the language in our homeland. Ukrainian is not known at all. We should not lose our culture. This is very important. If children do not know the culture, we forget it. This is like a tree. If you cut it, it dies. (A.16)

Associations also sought to popularize Ukrainian in everyday life. For this purpose, they always announce activities on the internet platforms in two languages (Turkish and Ukrainian) and submitted Ukrainian voice overs for major Turkish museums' tourist audio guides:

They have done something called an audio guide. Ukrainian dubbing is being done in world famous museums here. I did the translation of the one in Ephesus voluntarily. (A.8)

The Rediscovery of Ukrainian History

The Ukrainian associations create activities on Ukrainian history because both the diaspora and the Turks they married have limited information about Ukrainian history, which adversely affects immigrants' identification process. The most important of these events is the commemoration of *Holodomor*,⁷ a tipping point in Ukrainian history.

Within this context, the associations remember the traumatic event and organize a variety of activities to keep its memory alive. For example, the film *Bitter Harvest*, which depicts the Holodomor, was released in some cities with Turkish subtitles in 2017. Besides, they hold panel discussions explaining Holodomor and invite Ukrainian experts from different countries and hold exhibitions as well.⁸ Thus, as Nikolko (2019, 1881) points out, "The Holodomor has not only united separate Ukrainian diasporas (European and North American together with Australian), but it has also made their organizations very influential in political terms in their host states."

The associations also teach recent history to awaken identity awareness among the immigrants. For example, association buildings hold exhibits showcasing photographs and life stories of the soldiers who died during the annexation of Crimea. The associations also bring the children who lost their fathers in the war to Turkey for a holiday through sponsors. This strengthens the bond between the diaspora and "orphans of the nation," and consequently, Ukraine and Ukrainian identity.

Furthermore, the associations promoted activities that enable Ukrainians in Turkey to meet with members of other Ukrainian diasporas. The community also celebrates special days for Ukrainians such as Flag Day, Independence Day, and St. Nicholas Day. Besides, Turkish books explaining Ukrainian history are jointly written by the Turkish and Ukrainian academicians in Turkey (Aydingün and Aydingün 2020). In this way, the national identity is helped to root historically. Children growing up under the influence of Turkish and born in mixed marriages in Turkey are targeted to read these resources as well.

The associations also correct myths about Ukraine in Turkish popular culture and social media. For example, they emphasize that a popular character (Hürrem Sultan/ Roxelana)⁹ in the Turkish TV series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Magnificent Century) is Ukrainian, not Russian as is often depicted.¹⁰ Ownership over the character of Hürrem Sultan – the official wife of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent – is crucial in revealing Ukraine's role in Turkish history. Some associations even conducted archival research. They found Ukrainian graves that were constructed in the 1920s and shared this knowledge with the diaspora.

Paying Attention to Ukrainian Material Culture

Ukrainian immigrant associations in Turkey attach significant importance to two basic material culture items: cuisine and clothes. The associations promote Ukrainian cuisine while also asserting

ownership over traditional dishes. They first identified which Ukrainian dishes are popularly considered Russian on widely accessible media platforms before demanding corrections:

In Wikipedia, borscht soup, actually Ukrainian origin, is claimed to be a Russian soup. It was not right. We got in touch with Wikipedia Turkey and pointed out that it is a Ukrainian soup. (A.5)

Apart from these correction attempts, the associations also advise Ukrainians in Turkey on how to cook Ukrainian dishes in their homes, promote dishes at cultural festivals, and celebrate dishes that are consumed on specific cultural days:

We have our traditional days. For example, there is a butter week called Maslena in winter. We make a lot of pancakes. We have Vareneki, pasty with fruit. We make them. We meet at picnics. There are Turkish spouses and children there. We have them eat these dishes. In a way, we introduce them. (A.8)

Importance is also attached to developing the material culture of clothes, especially the *vyshyvanka* (an embroidered shirt) and the *vinok* (Ukrainian wreath). These national garments have become international symbols of Ukraine and May 21st is celebrated as Vyshyvanka Day. The President of Ukraine and his wife sent gifts to countries including Turkey in remembrance of the day, and the associations shared this in their social media accounts. The message attached to the gifts is as follows:

Vyshyvanka is an original code of our ethnic group with talismans and symbols encrypted in original ornaments. We sincerely want to share with you a piece of Ukrainian history and authenticity.

Moreover, the representatives of associations and their children wear *vyshyvanka* and *vinok* in their daily lives and at their activities to encourage diaspora members to do the same. These items originally had to be purchased in Ukraine or sewn by Turkish dressmakers for a fee. However, the products are now more accessible because Turkish clothing manufacturers have begun producing items with similar patterns. The associations teach courses on manufacturing cultural clothes and accessories. Women gathering for this in immigrant associations embroider *vyshyvanka* together to strengthen community attachment and national identity creating a collective product:

About embroidery we already have a Vyshyvanka Day. Last year we embroidered a union towel. Everybody embroidered a part, and then we combined them. We go out wearing the shirts we embroidered. (A.8)

Keeping the Collective Memory of Ukraine Alive: Cultural-Artistic Activities

Cultural-artistic activities are important for identity construction as they help keep the collective memory alive and allow for the expression of identity. Therefore, the associations established a choir to perform Ukrainian songs during their activities and they even attend the events organized by Turks. They also invite artists to hold exhibitions, musicians to give concerts, and authors from Ukraine to hold reading days. The associations record all these activities and share them on social media to ensure that everyone in the immigrant community can be included in the collective memory-making.

For the area of culture-art to become more visible and leave a lasting mark, some city parks are named after Ukrainian artists and their sculptures, and knowledge about them are placed in these places. In Antalya, a park was opened in remembrance of the famous Ukrainian humanist poet and artist Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861). Ukrainian and Turkish politicians, representatives, and

members of the Ukrainian diaspora attended the opening. This initiative was also promoted on the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada's social media accounts and motivated associations in other cities to pursue park naming programs (Ukrainian World Congress 2020). Association representatives noted that most municipalities in Turkey have a positive attitude toward these initiatives and have even suggested options for these parks.

Conclusion

The formation of Ukrainian diaspora in Turkey under the leadership of the immigrant associations developed as a reaction to the Ukraine-Russia war unlike former Ukrainian diasporas. The community imagination of Ukrainian immigrants, who continued their close relationships with Russians until the war, was triggered after the war and it resulted in the mobilization of the community. This mobilization and identification moved Ukrainians away from Russians to a great extent and paved the way for joint action by connecting them to the great Ukrainian diaspora, albeit with delay.

This article reveals how Ukrainian immigrants differentiated themselves from Russians individually and institutionally after the Ukraine-Russia war and how they have started constructing their ethno-national identities with the help of the associations highlighting their cultural authenticity. Within this context, the Ukrainian immigrant associations in Turkey were established with a diasporic trait and took on the responsibility of constructing Ukrainian identity among the immigrants (and children of Turkish and Ukrainian parents).

During the process of Ukrainian immigrants' becoming a diaspora and constructing their own ethno-national identities, the immigrant associations tried to distinguish their Ukrainian identity by positioning Russians as others. However, the identity construction took place in a dilemma due to Ukrainian-Russian mixed ethnic composition of the parents of immigrants and their Russian-speaking friends. Immigrant associations thus changed their identity strategy due to this dilemma. Emphasizing the unique aspects of Ukrainian culture rather than Ukrainian-Russian differences is the new strategy, and they are teaching the Ukrainian language and popularizing its usage. Immigrant associations also kept collective memory alive by teaching history, commemorating traumatic events, and holding cultural-artistic activities to inform Ukrainian identification. On the other hand, they also discovered the assimilation risk in Turkish society. In other words, although the Ukraine-Russia crisis and Russophobia have triggered and accelerated the push for identification, the process revealed underlying concerns about the assimilation of the community members in Turkish society, which has converted this process to a more comprehensive identity awakening. Thus, it is quite interesting that children born out of Turkish-Ukrainian mixed marriages and Ukrainian marriage immigrants go through the process of ethno-national identity construction together and are creating their identity with a transnational context.

As a result, with the change in the diaspora policy of the Ukrainian state, diaspora activism from above to below has increased. Immigrants also needed a space to channel their growing concerns about Ukraine. At this point, Ukrainian immigrant associations became intermediary mechanisms, combining diaspora activism and enabling intersecting governmental and grassroots initiatives. This rapid, systematic, and widespread awakening was fully revealed during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. After the occupation, the associations helped resettle those who escaped the war and came to Turkey. The associations also made statements defending their motherland against Russia, organized support concerts, events and protests, and collected donations for Ukraine. Ukrainian immigrants invited Turks to participate in these efforts and brought their children to witness the situation. The associations strengthened their institutional infrastructure and position in the diaspora. The occupation of the homeland revealed the importance of ethno-national identity, the defense of this identity, and the value of institutionalization. At the same time, the Russian invasion has clearly shown that it will be difficult to create an immigration-based identity such as diasporic or transnational without negotiating the ethnic-national identity of immigrants. Further research is (clearly) needed to understand developments in the Ukrainian diaspora after the 2022 occupation.

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Notes

- 1 “Ethnicity is simply a convenient – though in certain respects misleading – rubric under which to group phenomena that, on the one hand, are highly disparate and, on the other, have a great deal in common with phenomena that are not ordinarily subsumed under the rubric of ethnicity” (Brubaker 2002, 186).
- 2 Migration from Ukraine to different countries such as Canada, North and South America, Australia, and European countries has been taking place for over one hundred years. These mobilities include political refugees and displaced groups as well as those involved in the labor movement. They were organized shortly after they migrated; established deep-rooted and geographically distributed institutions (Nikolko 2019). In this process, Ukrainian migrants defined themselves as diaspora and placed this discourse in the community, but the identification of immigrants in Turkey as part of this large community has no historical parallelism, as will be discussed in this article.
- 3 In the eastern part of the Ukraine, the non-Russians tend to have a higher Russification rates than in the western Ukraine (Dostál and Knippenberg 1979).
- 4 The Russification of Ukraine includes a series of law, decree, and other actions undertaken by the Russian Empire and later Soviet authorities to strengthen Russian national, political, and linguistic positions in Ukraine.
- 5 The Ukrainian diaspora has played an important role in Ukraine’s political, economic, and social development, especially since its independence in 1991. Ukrainian immigrants in Western Europe and North America worked on multiple fronts to assist with the country’s democratization and nation-building (Korzh et al. 2020). The diaspora also supported social movements in Ukraine (Cipko 2016; Kovalchuk and Korzh 2019).
- 6 Ukraine regulated the status of Ukrainians abroad with a law enacted in 2004 (The Law on the Status of Foreign Ukrainians, March 4, 2004 No. 1582-IV) (Shevel 2010, 161–162). The Ukrainian government started to organize various cooperation programs for Ukrainians abroad, established diasporic institutions at the national level and supported the diaspora (Gulina 2020). Saturday schools are part of that collaboration.
- 7 The Holodomor was a famine in 1932 and 1933. The Ukrainian diaspora holds the former Soviet regime responsible and considers Russification policies to be intentional attempts to physically and culturally erase Ukrainians as an ethno-cultural group (i.e., genocide).
- 8 Source: <https://www.ukr-ayna.com/?s=Holodomor> (Accessed November 15, 2021.)
- 9 Russians living in Turkey produce a magazine called *Roxalana* – an attempt to own the character.
- 10 This TV series attracted over 50 million viewers from 70 countries. It is one of the most-viewed soap-operas in the world.

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