PArtecipazione e COnflitto
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco
ISSN: 1972-7623 (print version)
ISSN: 2035-6609 (electronic version)
PACO, Issue 15(2) 2022: 444-465
DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v15i2p444

Published 15 July, 2022

RESEARCH ARTICLE

TURKEY AS THE 'LIBERATOR' OF MUSLIMS IN EUROPE: THE CIRCULATION OF ISLAMOPHOBIA AS A POLITICAL REMITTANCE

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ABSTRACT: This article investigates how the fight against Islamophobia both clarifies and shapes the contours of Turkey's diaspora policy. It relies on the literature on political remittances and its value to diaspora studies by highlighting to what extent and how the commitment to tackling Islamophobia plays a role in Turkey's attempt to strengthen the link with 'its' diaspora. In this process, attention is devoted to how Turkish state institutions like the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) have framed Islamophobia as a religion-based problem and an "anti-Islamic project". In so doing, they bolster a dichotomic narrative between secular Europe and Muslim migrants. The empirical discussion also reveals the international dimension of the fight against Islamophobia and examines the Turkish government's motivation to proclaim itself the defender of (Turkish) Muslim communities in Europe. Thus, the official narrative that overlooks any systemic discriminations Turkish minorities are experiencing in everyday life has promoted a tutelary representation that might reinforce a paternalistic view of the diasporas as victims who need saving.

KEYWORDS: Diaspora Policy, Islamophobia, Muslims in Europe, Political Remittances, Turkey

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1. Introduction

On 12 May 2021, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that "the virus of Islamophobia, which is as dangerous as the coronavirus, is spreading rapidly, especially in European countries". Erdoğan defined the situation in Europe as "posing a serious security risk for Muslims living there", adding that the continent "is increasingly turning into an open-air prison for our brothers and sisters"[1]. Over the past decade, Turkey's concern for Muslim communities living in Western European countries has largely included fighting against Islamophobia. Defined as "indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims" (Bleich 2011:1582), Islamophobia has permeated Turkey's public agenda, including government discourse, media, diplomatic meetings,[2] academic conferences and publications by think tanks. Moreover, the commitment to tackling Islamophobia has been integrated into a broader redefinition of diaspora policy and a new foreign policy outlook. A vast scholarship has focused on how Turkey's diaspora policies have expanded and what this says about the Turkish state's attempts to consolidate the link with emigrant communities in Europe (Amiraux 2002; Ünver 2013; Aksel 2014; Öktem 2014; Benhaïm and Öktem, 2015; Mencutek and Baser 2018; Adamson 2019; Çevik, 2019; Maritato 2020; Baser and Öztürk, 2020). Less attention has been devoted to how, amid the flourishing of diaspora institutions, old transnational actors like the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) have engaged in framing Islamophobia as a religion-based problem and an "anti-Islamic project"[3] and allowed the concept to be understood in terms of Turkish diaspora policies. This article investigates how 'Islamophobia' and the fight against it illustrate and shape the contours of Turkey's diaspora policy.

The circulation of Islamophobia is not neutral. The concept "originated as a political term and is still frequently deployed for political ends" (Bleich 2011:1593) and is rooted in a dichotomic vision between Islam and "Europe", religion and secular society, which is problematic on different levels. Firstly, as scholars have emphasized, this narrative mirrors the Islamophobic one (Kaya 2018) and contributes to the victimization of immigrant communities in the West (Abbas 2012; Pratt 2015). Adar and Yenigün enhance this reflection by looking at the extent to which and how Turkey's public diplomacy goes beyond the governance of the "domestic abroad" (Varadarajan 2010) and targets gaining global recognition as the leader of the Muslim world and patron of the global Muslim population. To this end, as the authors affirm, Islamophobia is one of the issues that have circulated the most between Turkey and (Turkish-origin)[4] Muslim communities living in Europe (Adar and Yenigün 2019). While attentively assessing the forms and

[1] "'Virus' of Islamophobia making Europe a prison for Muslims: Turkish president" https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/virus-of-islamophobia-making-europe-a-prison-for-muslims-turkish-president/2239354 (Consulted 12 May 2021).

[2] One example is the "Emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)" held in Istanbul on 22 March 2019 to discuss the terrorist attack on two mosques in New Zealand. The meeting came at the request of the Republic of Turkey "to raise awareness of the threat posed by Islamophobia and countering all forms and manifestations of terrorism, as well as the efforts made to protect and support Muslim communities throughout the world". See: www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=20712&t_ref=11748&lan=en (Consulted 16 February 2021).

[3] Statement by Diyanet President Ali Erbaş at the Conference on Religious Services for Communities Living Abroad, 2-5 July 2019. https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/diyanet-isleri-baskani-yurt-disi-din-hizmetleri-konferansinda-konustu-islamofobi-insan-haklari-sorunudur (Consulted 2 September 2019).

[4] Unless noted otherwise, the terms "Turkish communities" and "Turkish diaspora" in this article are not meant to refer to ethnic belonging.

meaning of this circulation, it is important to notice that, within the broader Turkish diaspora policy, the attempt to reach a pan-Muslim audience is currently not a central concern for at least two reasons. On the one hand, unlike what appears in official discourses, Turkey competes with other transnational actors and sending states for the same goal. On the other hand, the concrete policies directed at the diaspora mainly involve Turkish diaspora as it pertains to the *lingua franca* (Turkish) and the socio-historical references (related to Turkey and the Ottoman space) that are employed. Secondly, this narrative presenting Turkey as a "saviour" and "liberator" of oppressed Muslim communities who are victims and unable to speak for themselves resonates with what Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) criticizes about the orientalist perception of Muslim women who "need saving". We could ask: Do Muslim communities in Europe really need saving? Do they need Turkey (or any other country) to be saved from Islamophobia? And what kind of power relations are constructed if the orientalist and neo-colonial repertoires are re-actualized to engage with a diaspora that "needs to be saved"?

Within this framework, the circulation of Islamophobia helps to understand political remittances as an integral part of diaspora policy. The literature on political remittances originates from Levitt's definition of social remittances to indicate how, in addition to money, ideas, practices, skills, identities, and social capital also circulate between sending and receiving communities (Levitt 1998:926). Levitt defines three types of social remittances – "normative structures" (ideas, values and beliefs), "system of practice" and "social capital" – and elucidates how the transmission occurs between individuals, within organizations or through informally organized groups and social networks connected to formal organizations (1998:933-6). This scholarship has theorized that, unlike economic remittances directed at sending states, the circulation of political ideologies and practices is multidirectional and multipolar (Goldring 2004:805). The focus on social remittances illustrates how individuals who build lives across distinct geographic spaces also translate and spread ideas and perceptions from one context to another (Lacroix, Levitt and Vari-Lavoisier, 2016:2). Building on this previous research, Krawatzek and Müller-Funk advance the concept of "political remittances" regarding the intent to consider the act of transferring political principles, vocabulary and practices between two or more places that migrants and their descendants share a connection with (2020:1004).

This article is situated at the intersection of the vast literature on Turkey's diaspora policy and the scholarship that investigates political remittances. It draws on and contributes in an original way to the debate over how Turkish state agencies and actors project themselves outside the borders and frame 'the fight against Islamophobia' to bind the state to a diasporic population.

The next section presents how the fight against Islamophobia has affected Turkey's diaspora policy. The second section grounds this research in the theoretical discussion on political remittances and discusses how they contribute to diaspora studies. Then, the methodological design and data collection are introduced. The fifth section analyses how the fight against Islamophobia is framed and understood as anti-Islam through Turkish diaspora policy. The final section focuses specifically on the circulation of Islamophobia between Turkey and (Turkish) Muslim communities living in the West within the framework of an expansionist diaspora policy. The commitment of Turkey as a "protector" of Muslim interests in the West has heightened the sense of victimization, which tends to neglect the systemic discrimination that Turkish minorities experience in everyday life.

2. Assessing the fight against Islamophobia in Turkey's diaspora policy

The literature examining the Turkish state's longstanding engagement with emigrants agrees on the post-1980 period as a major policy change. In 1981, dual citizenship was allowed, and family unity, education and culture were considered new challenges to stable links with the homeland. In the 1990s, emigrants' political and social engagement with Turkey were enhanced, which, as Aksel rightly affirms, was in line with the emergence of a rhetoric of diaspora to describe Turkish citizens abroad (Aksel 2014:203-8). However, as Mencutek and Baser clearly emphasise, it was under the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) that dormant diasporas transformed into influential ones. According to the authors, this policy has been implemented on various levels from education, cultural centers and language courses to trade relations and citizenship policies (2018:93-4). The AKP diaspora policy has been systemic and involved the ways how state agencies and diaspora institutions operate abroad while redefining how diaspora communities relate politically, socially and economically to Turkey. Diaspora policies expanded, and consulate services adopted a more "empathetic angle" (Öktem 2014:7) in relation to migrants' associations: In 2014, Turkish citizens living abroad were allowed to cast their votes from abroad, and a plethora of diaspora institutions and government-organized non-governmental organization (GONGOs) strengthened the link between the Turkish state and its diaspora. The budgets of the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon İdaresi Başkanlığı*, TİKA), which have been engaged in the international arena for the past few decades, have recently skyrocketed (Öztürk and Sözeri 2018; Öztürk 2016). New institutions like the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (*Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı*, YTB) have also been established. Since 2010, the YTB has sought to build social, cultural and economic relations with kin and co-ethnic communities, (former) citizens abroad and foreign students to propagate an ethnic-religious conception of nationhood. As Mencutek and Baser affirm, this strategy has been based on the desire to defend emigrants' rights and to prevent them from experiencing discrimination, racism and Islamophobia in the EU (2018:95-6). The reference to Islamophobia on the YTB's agenda makes clear that Turkey's intent to patronize and protect its citizens abroad, including kin communities, is intrinsically related to the country's image of itself as a global actor. According to Adamson, "the population in Europe which was a legacy of previous Turkish state domestic policies of post-imperial nation-building, economic development and domestic political repression and marginalization, was now being courted as a desirable constituency to enhance Turkish state power" (Adamson 2019:225).

While this literature has noted the persistence of a discourse on the fight against Islamophobia in Turkey's expanding diaspora policy, there has been little examination of how the focus on this issue has contributed to strengthening the link between Turkey and "its" communities in Europe. Since the 1997 Runnymede Trust report entitled "Islamophobia: A Challenges for us all"[5], Islamophobia, understood as an unfounded hostility, "dread or hatred of Islam", has risen to prominence to indicate unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, as well as the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs. More recently, in European countries, the term reflects the discourse by right-wing political parties

[5] The report is available online: www.runnymedetrust.org/companies/17/74/Islamophobia-A-Challenge-for-Us-All.html (Consulted 2 April 2021).

promoting the idea that Europe is in peril because of Islamification and the increase in size of Muslim communities. This narrative suggests to Europeans that there is an unbridgeable civilizational divide because of the growing presence of visible symbols of Islam (mosques, minarets, headscarves, burqas) and security fears following the terrorist attacks carried out in the name of Islam (Taras 2013:419). The increase in discriminations and acts of violence against Muslims and foreigners living in Europe have contributed to put Islamophobia in the spotlights and led to formal actions taken by European institutions[6].

In 1999, Halliday warned about the risk of becoming fossilized on Islam as a monocausal explanation. The author emphasizes how the term Islamophobia obfuscates other divisions of ethnicity which matter as much and often more than a shared religious identity both in Muslim societies and in emigration. The claim of a shared Muslim identity is therefore a distortion if this is meant to imply the primacy of such an identity or a common interpretation of that tradition (Halliday 1999:896). Drawing on this approach, a scholarship has shed light on the systemic discriminations relating to migration policies in so-called destination countries (Taras 2012; Kazi 2014; 2018; Allen 2010; Sunier 2016; Proglio and Faloppa 2020) Islamophobia as a form of structural racism is not only socially and politically constructed and propagated, but also a contested and politicized concept, and the nuances of its definition change depending on the context in which it is employed.

In this contribution, the definition of Islamophobia is not taken for granted. On the contrary, concept production and Turkey's strategy of framing the fight against Islamophobia as a diaspora policy are also objects of the investigation. Besides the will to rise as the leader of the global ummah (Adar and Yenigün 2019), the "Islamophobia" frame reproduces and indulges conformism and authority within the diaspora communities. According to Halliday, the use of the term Islamophobia may convey misleading associations: The term may reproduce a distorted view of Islam as a homogenous entity, which not only obscures diversity but also plays into the hands of those within the Muslim communities who wish to impose their own selective interpretation of the tradition (1999:898). In the case of Turkey, the commitment to fighting Islamophobia while governing the diaspora through a logic of care and control has occurred within the framework of democratic backsliding (Baser and Ozturk 2020; Yabanci 2021). Yabanci examines how "diasporic civic space" as an intermediary arena entrenches authoritarian practices "at home" by taking into account the Union of European Turkish Democrat (UETD) (renamed the Union of International Democrats, UID, in 2018), a civil society organization with organic ties to the AKP that has increasingly seized the civic space among the Turkish diaspora through nationalist and civilizationist frames (Yabanci 2021:141)[7]. This move has been condemned as external interference by Germany and the Netherlands.

[6] In 2018, the EU Parliament published the study "Equality and the Fight against Racism and Xenophobia", which underlines that the proportion of Muslims who feel discriminated against because of their beliefs or religious practices has increased from 12% in 2010 to 25% in 2016 (see www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/615660/EPRS_STU(2018)615660_EN.pdf). On 19 December 2019, on the initiative of the European Commission, experts from civil society and scholars gathered in Brussels and condemned that the number of cases of hate, violence and discrimination against Muslims is on the rise in Europe. Please see: https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=50085 (Consulted 18 March 2021). In February 2021, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a Report on "Countering Islamophobia/Anti-Muslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief". The report is available online: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/HatredAndDiscrimination.aspx (Consulted 18 March 2021).

[7] After a decade of strategic alliance with the AKP which assured the Gülen movement's massive penetration in state agencies and public sector, the collapse of the political alliance with the AKP in 2013 has continued to reverberates

3. The contribution of political remittances to diaspora studies: Theoretical premises

The literature that examines the role of sending states in diaspora making and of diaspora institutions in diaspora governance (Fitzgerald 2008; Varadarajan 2010; Gamlen, 2014; Gamlen, Cummings, and Vaaler 2017; Adamson 2019) emphasises how the circulation of ideas shapes the link between diaspora communities and home states. The term social remittances was coined by Levitt to indicate "local-level migration-driven form of cultural diffusion", including "ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities." (1998:926-7). Normative structures and systems of practice and social capital are transmitted between individuals and within organizations and informally organized groups. In 2010, Levitt and Lamba-Nieves revisited this concept to add that people's experiences before migrating influence their activities in the destination countries and that social remittances may be individual and/or collective. According to the authors, migrants' exchange of ideas and behaviours is multidirectional and involves both the individuals' family members and collective organizations practices (2011). More recently, scholars have emphasised that social remittances result from the interaction between migrants and the transnational environment and contribute to a change of identity and senses of the sense of belonging (Lacroix, Levitt, and Vari-Lavoisier 2016; Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou 2017). Stemming from this scholarship, the literature on political remittances investigates the political dimension of social remittances and sheds light on how and why particular political ideas and strategies travel. The circulation of people is intimately connected to the circulation of political ideas, practices, projects and values. (Boccagni, Lafleur, and Levitt 2016:2-3). In this vein, the literature on political remittances points out that within the transnational social fields, there is an active circulation of political ideas and values, as well as identities and allegiances. Thus, the notion of circulation is thus at the core of the analysis of the spread of various political frames across borders. In this vein, Krawatzek and Müller-Funk define "political remittances" as "[t]he act of transferring political principles, vocabulary and practices between two or more places, which migrants and their descendants share a connection with" (2020:1004). They distinguish three types of political remittances: The first refers to political principles – norms for the functioning of political institutions, the place of religious institutions in politics, perceptions of corruption, transparency and the levels of political participation. The second kind of political remittances involves the transmitted political vocabulary: the transfer of political terms, symbols and slogans, as well as the specific framing of political messages. Finally, political remittances result from those political practices that include knowledge about political participation, mobilization techniques, political leadership and political communication. These three components may intertwine on the ground and all contribute to influencing the narratives of belonging in places of destination and origins (ibid.1005-12). Thus, political remittances contribute to diaspora and political transnationalism studies regarding three main issues: how the circulation of political remittances triggers political practices, how political remittances influence narratives of belonging and which role states play in the elaboration and circulation of political remittances. The innovative contribution of these scholars is their constructivist

across the diaspora. The AKP has accused the movement of being a terroristic organization and the mastermind behind the 2016 attempted coup and proceeded to purge Gülen members from their posts also by sezing and re-branding those former Gülen's international network of schools and philantropic activities.

approach, which stems from the argument that diasporas are the products of transnational mobilization activities conducted by political entrepreneurs engaged in strategic social identity construction (Adamson 2012:25). Political remittances directly involve both the migrants' communities and states, including a plurality of actors circulating political ideas and practices at different levels.

Although states and state agencies can influence the content of political remittances through diaspora institutions (Gamlen, Cummings, and Vaaler 2017; Gamlen 2014) and the implementation of immigration, integration, emigration or diaspora policies, they are not the sole points of reference (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2020:1004). According to Müller-Funk, political remittances are part of diasporic politics. They are multidirectional and highly influenced by the context in which migrants live and lived before migrating (Müller-Funk 2018:252). The author emphasizes the multidirectional character of political remittances, whose circulation is not only from receiving to sending countries (which, by contrast, is the case with economic remittances), and their neutrality and ambivalence, which promote an abandonment of a critical and optimistic definition of the presumptive democratic and liberal effects. Therefore, the impact of the transmission of political remittances can be different: It can influence conventional forms of political participation, lead to public attitudes aimed at reform, replicate and strengthen political cleavages or protect the status quo. As flows of political ideas, political behaviours and identities between the communities of both receiving and sending countries, political remittances are fluid and influence the construction of identity (Müller-Funk 2018:256-7). Scholars consider how political junctures, transformative or critical events in home and host society impact migrant networks and help to redefine the diaspora's boundaries of belonging (Ragazzi 2009). In this respect, as Krawatzek and Müller-Funk affirm, political remittances are not the mere protest behaviour of a diaspora community or the electoral participation of citizens living abroad. On the contrary, political principles, vocabulary and practices received from a different place may trigger political acts (2020:1010). The authors define four paramount features of circulation: 1) Political remittances are remoulded in the context of migration and can influence the political behaviour, mobilizations and narratives of belonging in places of destination and origins. 2) Unlike economic remittances, which circulate from the diaspora to the origin states, political remittances are multidirectional flows of ideas, vocabulary and practices influenced by the conditions at the sending and receiving places. 3) The content of these political remittances is influenced by the states and state-like agencies' policies directed towards immigration, "integration" and the diaspora. 4) The process of transmitting political remittances reveals the power relations underlying such transfers and the efficacy of the tools that actors have at their disposal to further their own interests (ibid:1010).

Recently, Piper and Rother analysed political remittances by taking into account a meso-level approch that considers those collective political organizations engaged in developing and advocating a rights-based approach to migration governance at various institutional levels: national, regional and global (2020:1059). According to the authors, migrant rights activism around the world emanates from multilevel networking efforts and contributes to the creation of transnational political spaces. Retracing how both political conjunctures in countries of origin and personal experience in the destination countries influence the mobilization of migrants abroad who are shaping their narratives of belonging, Müller-Funk writes that political remittances underline the "potentially multidirectional flows of principles, vocabulary and practices taking place in transnational social fields, of which diaspora activists are a part" (Müller-Funk 2020:1113). How political terms, symbols and slogans are framed is as crucial as the impact of this circulation. This article contributes to the literature on political remittances as it includes the political use of religion on the list of values, ideas and practices that circulate between sending states and diaspora communities.

4. Methodological premises and data collection

Because of its longstanding and changing diaspora policy, Turkey serves as a crucial field of interest to study how political ideas are produced and spread to strengthen the link with Turkish communities abroad. The transnational activism aimed at caring for and controlling the diaspora is underpinned by a discursive apparatus of ideas and values that help to forge the country as a "strategic selective sending state" offering partial privileges and services to emigrants and to encourage long-distance membership (Boccagni, Lafleur, and Levitt 2016:3). The work is inspired by the constructivist approach to defining social problems (Spector and Kitsuse 1987; Rochefort and Cobb 1994ab), which examines whether and how ideas access the political sphere. The construction of political ideas and the production of socio-political problems has characterized the "turn to ideas" registered since the 1990s has been a major boon to scholars interested in agendas building. Spector and Kitsuse reject the idea that social problems exist as objective conditions: "The notion that social problems are a kind of condition must be abandoned in favour of a conception of them as a kind of activity" (1987:23). Defining the agenda-setting model, Rochefort and Cobb underline the importance of the language: "action and words influence and even stand for each other as embodiments of the ideas, arguments, convictions, demands and perceived realities that direct the public enterprise" (Rochefort and Cobb 1994a:27). This approach makes it possible to analyse how the fight against Islamophobia has made it onto the Turkish agenda and subsequently spread to the diaspora. However, it may run the risk of overrating the top-down constructivist approach behind the production and diffusion of political ideas to the detriment of bottom-up influences on the agenda building.

In the light of these premises, this article is rooted in reports and publications on Islamophobia delivered by the General Department of International Relations, which falls under the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) (*Dış İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü*), as well as the proceedings of conferences organized to train religious officers on the issue. Moreover, Islamophobia was the topic of the TV programme "Islamophobia Industry" (*Islamofobi Endüstrisi*) broadcast between 2018 and 2019 on the Diyanet TV channel (TRT Diyanet).[8] Every week, the program hosted religious experts who discussed issues relating to Islamophobia. In 2017, Diyanet's magazine "*Aylik*" (Monthly) dedicated a special issue to "Islamophobia, the industry of fear". The magazine – distributed in Turkey's Diyanet mosques and mufti offices[9] – was one of the first publications to collect contributions from Diyanet officers on the issue. In addition to the vast material available on Diyanet's media channels, the research also draws on the "Islamophobia in Europe" reports published since 2015 by the pro-government think tank Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (*Siyaset Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı*, SETA), 10 of which aim to raise awareness about the growing racism and anti-Islamic sentiment in different fields, including media and politics. It draws on a discourse analysis of the written material that has made it possible to isolate the "fight against Islamophobia" as a frame and to illuminate the related concepts and meanings. Four main frames relating to Islamophobia

[8] The 19 episodes of the TV program "*Islamofobi Endüstrisi*" (Islamophobia Industry) are available online: https://www.diyanet.tv/islamofobi-endustrisi (consulted 18 March 2021).

[9] The magazine is available online: www2.diyanet.gov.tr/DiniYay%C4%B1nlarGenelMudurlugu/DergiDokumanlar/Aylik/2017/aylik_mayis_2017.pdf (Consulted 20 March 2021).

[10] Since 2015, the pro-government Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (*Siyaset Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı*, SETA) has published reports on Islamophobia in Europe. Opinions and reports in English: https://www.setav.org/en/tag/islamophobia/ (Consulted 10 February 2021).

have been isolated: (1) as a psychological attitude (2) as an anti-Islam project, (3) as it relates to international politics and (4) as targeting Muslim communities in Europe.

In the following sections, Islamophobia will be analysed as an anti-Islam attitude that results in discrimination against Muslims. As for the TV programmes, video transcripts of specific episodes have been included in the textual corpus of data. During this research, it was possible to retrace the routes of circulation and assess how often ideas circulate with people between the diaspora communities and the country of origin.[11] The names of officials, scholars and experts who contribute to the framing of Islamophobia as an anti-Islam project overlap with those who have advocated anti-discrimination policies at EU institutions, authored reports and publications, disseminated data in Turkish media and academic symposia and promoted lobbying activity at the EU institutions. An example is the case of Enes Bayraklı, director of the Brussels-based SETA Center of European Studies and anchor man of the TV program "Industry of Islamophobia" on the Diyanet TV channel (TRT Diyanet), is also editor (with Farid Hafez) of SETA's yearly reports on Islamophobia in Europe. In the USA, the Bridge Initiative at Georgetown University disseminates research, offers analysis and commentary on contemporary issues and has a large repository of educational resources to inform the general public about Islamophobia. Therefore, it is important to question the multiple levels of this discourse and the impact of a circulation of people together with political principles, ideas, vocabulary and practices through a network of academic institutions, state agencies and think tanks. The data collected refer to the period between 2015 and 2020. In this timeframe, the pro-AKP think tank SETA started publishing the annual "Islamophobia in Europe" reports and the Turkish Diyanet launched its strategy against Islamophobia which includes publications, the training of religious officers and other projects for the diaspora. Moreover, between 2017 and 2019, during observations and interviews with women officers employed in Austria's Diyanet mosques (in Vienna), many of my interlocutors (both Diyanet women preachers Qur'an teachers and women attending the sessions) referred to Islamophobia as a problem affecting the community. They also spoke of personal experiences with discrimination. The transcripts of these conversations were included in the material. In the light of the rise in Islamophobic attacks and discriminations related to racist and xenophobic attitudes, my positionality in the field was at times complex vis-à-vis the adopted methodology and especially regarding the construction of the fight against Islamophobia as a political frame. While the increase in Islamophobic attacks, anti-migrant discourse and discriminations in European countries has been denounced by various scholars and international institutions, the strategic use of the fight against Islamophobia by third states like Turkey has been less examined. However, by proclaiming itself the defender of Turkish Muslim communities in Europe, the Turkish government victimizes them and risks moving the problem away from the arena where it should be most hotly debated: the destination countries. The fight against Islamophobia as a political remittance is defined and employed as an integral part of the diaspora policy to strengthen the diaspora's loyalty to the Turkish government while essentializing national and religious belongings (Hashas 2018).

[11] "*Islamofobi Endüstrisi*" (Islamophobia Industry), broadcast on the Turkish Diyanet's TV channel (TRT Diyanet), has the same title as a book authored by Nathan Lean, "The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims" (Lean 2012), translated into Turkish and published in 2015 by the Diyanet press.

5. The production and circulation of Islamophobia between Turkey and 'its' diaspora

The activity of issue framing and problem definition is anything but marginal as it pertains to the core of the public and political agenda (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988; Spector and Kitsuse 1987). To consider the framing of Islamophobia as an issue means paying attention to the storylines and symbolic devices that political actors use to manipulate so-called issue characteristics, all while making it seem that they are simply describing facts. This occurs via a "systematic process by which political actors struggle to control interpretations and images of difficulties" (Stone 1989:282). The elaboration of common sense is an essential feature of the construction of social problems: According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), this process occurs when a dominant cause and a predominant definition start to be widely related to an issue.

The Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) is one of the actors who are the most engaged in framing the concept of Islamophobia and understanding it through the Turkish diaspora policy. The state agency, established in 1924, has boosted its international mission since the 1980s when the sending of imams to the diaspora increased from a sporadic and ad hoc event to permanent pastoral services aimed at reaching Turkish Muslim communities living abroad (Çitak 2013; 2018; Bruce 2012; 2019; Öztürk and Sözeri 2018; Maritato 2020; 2018). In the past 40 years, Diyanet's grip on international affairs has turned this longstanding Turkish institution in Europe into a transnational actor and a key diaspora institution (Yurdakul and Yükleyen 2009; Akgönül 2018; Öktem 2012). Although the Turkish state's "strategy of maintenance" (Amiraux 2002) vis-à-vis emigrant communities dates to the 1980s and reflects the desire to control the activities of political and religious opposition abroad, the activities of Diyanet Foundations in Europe have recently expanded in scope and scale. In the past three decades, an increasing number of imams and preachers have been trained by Diyanet to serve Turkish Muslim communities living in Europe for a maximum period of five years. Thus, the circulation of narratives and projects focusing on Islamophobia should be included in the broader circulation of religious officers between Turkey and Europe (Bruce 2019). In the same years, restrictions on the regulation of Islam in Europe occurred as Western European countries are less prone to accept assistance from foreign bodies and have enacted laws and measures to 'nationalize' and regulate the practices of Islam (Çitak 2018).

Diyanet's commitment to defining Islamophobia was made official in 2016 when a "strategy to combat Islamophobia" was drafted and a dissemination strategy was implemented to reach Muslim communities living abroad.[12] This strategy has been implemented on two levels: abroad and in Turkey. In addition to the Diyanet foundations in Europe, Diyanet inaugurated the Diyanet Center of America in Maryland in 2016 with the stated intention to not only provide religious services but also "contribute greatly by changing the negative perceptions of Islam as well as generating authentic Islamic knowledge".[13] In Turkey, while conferences and symposia on Islamophobia have been organized to train religious officers to be sent to Western countries, Diyanet has issued publications and broadcast TV and radio programmes to raise awareness of Islamophobia.

[12] Between 22 and 25 May 2017, the "Common strategies against Islamophobia" conference gathered religious officials from different countries, including religious advisers who work as representatives of Diyanet, religious attaches and coordinators of religious services. https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2017/05/13/turkeys-diyanet-launches-initiative-to-fight-islamophobia-in-europe (Last consulted March 23 2021).

[13] https://www.dailysabah.com/feature/2016/04/12/diyanet-center-of-america-an-epicenter-in-the-fight-against-islamophobia (Consulted March 23 2021).

Attitudinal Islamophobia and the "Good Muslim" archetype

While delving into this material, the first frame refers to Islamophobia from a historical perspective of Islam in Europe: Unlike the current situation, the history of Islam on the Iberian Peninsula and in Sicily is depicted not only as "compatible" with European societies but also as a European experience. This historical co-existence is also combined with the history of Islam, in particular the early years of Islam's spread in Mecca and Medina, to emphasize that Islam is a "religion of peace" and that, different from what happened in Europe, Islamic rule tolerated different points of view.[14] At the training programme for newly appointed religious officers to be sent abroad, Diyanet President Ali Erbaş recently retraced the institution's 40-year engagement to reach Turkish nationals living in Western countries and stressed the officers' important role in "guiding people on religious, social and cultural issues". Erbaş emphasized how the activities that religious officers carry out abroad are in keeping with the first years of Islamic preaching when the "people of Medina helped to spread Islam in Yathrib", thus stressing how their work is in line with Islamic tradition. The officers who serve Turkish communities abroad are tasked with increasing morality among young generations, have exemplary conduct and help to turn the mosques into "temples of knowledge".[15] This approach to Islamophobia is ultimately personal as it emphasizes the (mostly irrational) fear and hatred of differences and considers interfaith dialogue a potential solution to explain the "real nature" of Islam. Islamophobia is defined as generated by a passive defensive reaction against something that is "unknown" or perceived as not fully intelligible. During the already mentioned conference organized for newly appointed Diyanet officers preparing to be sent abroad, Ali Erbaş also emphasized that "Western countries create an artificial perception of an existing enemy for them, and this perception causes Islamophobic incidents". Hence the need to "introduce these countries to Islam in the right way by transferring knowledge gained in Turkey".[16] To combat the misperception of and ignorance about the "real nature" of Islam, Muslims in the West should engage individually and always be "good examples" in society rather than collectively. In an interview, Halife Keskin, who in 2016 led the Diyanet's Foreign Relations Department, defines Islamophobia as a psychological fear leading to hostile behaviour and discrimination towards Muslims and provides the following example of discrimination: "We've heard many cases of a young boy called Mohammed who wanted to be called Igor so that he wouldn't face discrimination. This situation is very sad." Between 2017 and 2019, while conducting fieldwork in the women's sections at the mosques of the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) in Vienna, the women attending the sessions and the Diyanet preachers used the term "Islamophobia" while referring to various episodes of discrimination that they were facing. This term was used to indicate the prejudices and verbal violence linked to the visibility of the headscarf in public spaces, neighbours' unfriendly demeanour as soon as they have moved into a new apartment block, or how their children have experienced marginalization at school. These anecdotes, which were related to me in passing during conversations following religious seminars at the mosques, not only reflected the massive circulation of the term "Islamophobia" between Turkey and 'its' diaspora communities.

[14] TRT Diyanet *Islamofobi Endüstrisi*, III episode 2019, https://www.diyanet.tv/islamofobi-endustrisi/video/islamofobi-endustrisi--3-bolum.

[15] Ali Erbas speech "İslamofobi'ye karşı İslam'ı doğru tanıtmalıyız" (You must present Islam in a correct way to combat Islamophobia) delivered on 3 March 2021, https://disiliskiler.diyanet.gov.tr/Detay/435/%E2%80%9Cislamofobi%E2%80%99ye-kar%C5%9F%C4%B1-islam%E2%80%99%C4%B1-do%C4%9Frutan%C4%B1tmal%C4%B1y%C4%B1z%E2%80%9D.

[16] Ibid.

They also reveal how Diyanet's strategy to tackle discrimination is based on a strong commitment to the communities abroad to "provide them with rightful information on Islam and how to practice it in the right way, enhance social activities and spiritual guidance."[17]

This aspect is crucial and calls into question a significant element in the narrative about Islamophobia: Muslims are portrayed as compatible with the existing order and context without questioning the inequalities upon which that order is built. While referring to respectability politics, Nazia Kazi affirms that the idea of a "Good Muslim" archetype implies no challenges to the status quo nor the conditions generating discriminations. As Muslims can be integrated into mainstream society, Islamophobia is perceived as barely attitudinal: The prejudices and perceptions that people have about Muslims (e.g. that Muslim women are oppressed) remain in people's minds.

Islamophobia as an Anti-Islam project

A second and related frame employed to describe Islamophobia refers to a well-determined action that in Diyanet publications is defined as "part of an anti-Islam project, a discrimination and a violation of human rights perpetrated against Muslim minorities in the West" (Okur 2017:19). Within this framework, the references to an irrational fear are considered an "excuse [for] and to mitigate the discrimination and oppression Muslims are subjected to" (ibid.). Given this context, in Diyanet publications the term "anti-Muslim" is presented as more appropriate. The Turkish Diyanet's narrative insists on explaining the rise in Islamophobia in Europe a simply an "Islam-related affair".

The essentialized definition of Turkish communities living abroad as Sunni Muslims also reflects the intent to essentialize migrants' Muslim identity, which has been primarily defined in religious terms. In Diyanet's discourse, the crystallization of a dichotomous discourse within migrant communities is in opposition to a modern, cultural and "European Islam" open to secular thought (Karim 2017; Ramadan 2013; Tibi 2008), which is branded as prone to assimilation. On his talk show "Industry of Islamophobia", Enes Bayraklı, who anchors the TV programme on the Diyanet TV channel (TRT Diyanet), clearly condemns the narrative of European Islam: "Those who talk about 'European Islam' are *charlatans*. I know, one day they organized a conference in Germany, and they served alcohol and pork meat!" The other guests, Mümin Şener, at the time director of the Diyanet Department of Turks Abroad, and Kadir Canatan, a theologian at the Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, further emphasized their positions against the notion of having a European Islam, defining it as Europe's attempt to "manipulate Islam". Kadir Canatan affirms this point:

> "We don't agree [with the European Islam narrative] for two reasons: The first is that Europe wants a 'European Islam'; the second is that, in so doing, Islam and integration would be defined as two close entities, in other words, that only a European Islam conforms to Europe. […] Secular people and theologians appear on television and ask for an intellectual profile for the imams (like in Austria, where imams must know German), but this is a way to manipulate Islam while assimilating it."[18]

[17] Halife Keskin interviewed on the Diyanet TV program "Analysis of Religious News". https://www.diyanet.tv/dini-haber-analiz/video/dini-haber-analiz-08-04-2016. Translation is mine.

[18] TRT Diyanet *Islamofobi Endüstrisi*, XVI episode 2019, www.diyanet.tv/islamofobiendustrisi/video/islamofobi-endustrisi--16-bolum.

In the same episode, Mümin Şener expanded on the deterioration of the relationship between Turkey and the EU:

> "There is negative propaganda against the activities of Diyanet and of Turkey in Europe. There is a 'Turcophobia'! […] Europe wants to reduce the activities of Diyanet and asks for a reform of Islam as was the case with Protestantism. Europe wants Turkish people in Europe to follow a secular Islam."[19]

The Turkish government's commitment to framing and diffusing the notion of Islamophobia resonates and reproduces the AKP's "Local/homegrown and National" (*Yerli ve Milli*) rhetoric (Mutluer 2018) for the diaspora communities that need protection from those European countries' attempts at assimilation that could undermine their authenticity. How do diaspora communities internalize a sense of "victimization"? And which political effects might this have? Would it push the diaspora community to look inward within the protective fences of the community, thus reinforcing loyalty and mobilization in support of the state of origin?

A vast scholarship has already scrutinized the blurred boundaries between Turkey's religious and foreign policy, as well as the constellation of institutions through which the Turkish state is strengthening the relationship with 'its' diaspora (Aksel 2014; Öktem 2014; Mencutek and Baser 2018; Maritato 2020). Although the literature on diaspora institutions has emphasized how the state intervenes in shaping migrants' loyalty and sense of belonging (Gamlen, Cummings, and Vaaler 2017; Varadarajan 2010), a focus on political remittances makes it possible to consider how migrants' practices can be shaped by factors relating to the specificities of both the messengers and the receivers of remittances, as well as the relative space linking them and the composite nature of remittances (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2020:1016).

Turkey's commitment against the rise of Islamophobia should be assessed not only in a climate of the terror attacks by a so-called Islamic State against infidels in Europe (and in Turkey, too) but also in the context of the rise to power of right-wing nationalist parties in many European countries. The implementation of policies excluding foreigners and promoting ethnic-national access to welfare reinvigorates the old polarization between the "West" and the "East", which has characterised the conservative rhetoric of the Turkish far right since the 1950s (Aytürk 2014; Bora 2018). Scholars have investigated the short- and long-term effects of the expansion of Turkey's diaspora policy on Turkish communities living abroad and emphasise the polarisation strategies aimed at dividing those segments of the diaspora loyal to the government. However, Turkey's diaspora policy has also triggered reactions from Europe. The fight against Islamophobia in Europe is part of a long-lasting debate on European countries' attempt to "nationalize" Islam and carve it into a desirable "good" religion rather than a "bad", radical Islam (Çitak 2018; 2013; 2010). Turkish intervention under the banner of Islamophobia situates the issue on an international level, but it employs a narrative which largely focuses on Islam and overlooks any intersectional analysis including factors like gender, migratory background, different social and cultural capital or the precarity of working conditions. Islam is presented as the essential and causal factor (Stone 1989:232) to determine discrimination against Turkish communities living abroad. The paradox of a

[19] Ibid.

narrative which is uniquely based on religion, is that it stems from the same narrative of Islamophobic movements, which views the migratory background in conjunction with Islam (Kaya 2018:35).[20]

6. Combatting Islamophobia: Turkey as the "saviour" for Muslims in Europe

Islamophobia is also systemic and based on different power and domination. Powerful states created the conditions for Islamophobia by legitimizing daily acts of discrimination like profiling (Kazi 2018). According to Deepa Kumar, to reduce anti-Muslim racism to 'religious animus' or a fear of Muslims, as the term Islamophobia implies, misses the bigger picture of structural racism. A structural approach to Islamophobia defines it as a practice strictly bound to social process, institutions, government policies and ideologies. Structural Islamophobia involves not only the discourses employed to othering and to exclude Muslims as a group but also how certain groups strategically employ such constructed differences to secure power. Colonization and imperialism created the conditions for anti-Muslim racism in its multiple manifestations of hate crimes and/or micro-aggressions, daily acts of humiliation, or exclusion from social life. Islamophobia sustains empire (Kumar 2021:22). Similar to Islamophobia, the fight against Islamophobia also has to be assessed in its international dimension.

Islamophobia and the building of Turkey's international "image"

The former president of Diyanet, Mehmet Görmez, points to September 11 as the turning point for Islam and Muslims, the watershed event that made Islam perceived not as a religion but as a cluster of fear on which to create an entire industry of fear. The latter is also defined as a reaction of "Western countries" afraid of losing their status following years of "invasions, colonies, tyranny, injustice and cruelty". According to Görmez:

> "Islamophobia is never independent from international politics, economics, relations of interest, claims of superiority and goals of global hegemony. […] It is necessary to ask the question whether terrorist organizations such as DAESH, Boko-Haram, al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda serve Muslims or Islamophobia. It is clear that such terrorist organizations serve Islamophobia. Islamophobia is a very useful instrument in all respects for those who are fed with fear." (2017:4-5)

The international and transnational dimension is also at the core of the 2019 SETA Report on Islamophobia in Europe[21] which was presented with a video conference by Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez

[20] On 25 February 2021, the Sabancı University Istanbul Policy Center, IPC, and the Media Outlet Medyascope organized the webinar "*Avrupa'da İslamofobi ve İslami radikalleşme*" (Islamophobia and Islamic radicalization in Europe). The invited scholars, Ayhan Kaya and Istar Gözaydın, discussed the multifaceted aspects related to the term Islamophobia and their implications to radicalization. https://medyascope.tv/2021/02/25/nasil-bir-dunya-nasil-bir-turkiye-51-avrupada-islamofobi-ve-islami-radikallesme-prof-dr-istar-gozaydin-ve-prof-dr-ayhan-kaya-ile-soylesi/ (Consulted 19 March 2021).

[21] The reports are edited by Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez with added support from country experts and scholars. All reports are available online: https://www.setav.org/en/seta-to-publish-report-to-point-out-growing-anti-islam-sentiment/.

(the editors of the report), Burhanettin Duran (general director of SETA), Fahrettin Altun (head of the Presidency of Communication)[22] and a group of experts and scholars who had contributed to the countries' profiles. Besides general remarks on the report, the presentation also underlined the strong ties that make it possible to assess how the standardised circulation of the fight against Islamophobia between a Brussels-based think tank and Turkey's state agencies occurs. According to Duran, "We are living in a time of Islamophobia. […] The far-right comments on Muslim immigration, but this is not exclusive to the far right: Extremist ideology is part of the West. […] The EU governments should act against this rising threat, which is also played by the media."[23] Similarly, Farid Hafez presents Islamophobia as "anti-Muslim sentiment in [a hegemonic] Europe" and affirms that the "phantasm of Islamization of society" is shared by both far-right and mainstream parties.

However, it is in the keynote speech by Fahrettin Altun that it becomes evident how Islamophobia-related issues, diaspora policies, anti-imperialism and Turkey's domestic and foreign policies coalesce into rhetoric in which Turkey and Turkish communities abroad are described as being threatened and constantly under attack. To introduce the context, Altun refers to Europe's colonial past: "Europe has colonized distant lands to enrich itself, […] the deadliest ideologies flourished in Europe and allowed atrocities to be committed." While condemning an ever-worsening situation because of the frequency of attacks on community centres and mosques, he also adds that "atrocities generate fear in Muslims, and only a few of them are reported to the authorities". Besides Europe's imperialist and colonial past, Altun also condemns European media outlets for their complicity in the rise of anti-Muslim behaviour resulting from the "constant glorification of far-left terrorists", ignoring that "they are foreigners joining the terrorists of the PKK too". In a conference on Islamophobia in Europe, the discussion expanded to point the finger at those European media that are allegedly devoting time "only to Europeans foreign fighters who joined Daesh. But *Antifa* also exploits anti-Muslim behaviour, and these acts go unpunished. And this is a concern for the government of Turkey."[24] This keynote points to another important element that requires further research: The Turkish government expresses its "concern" that the media in Europe devote attention to foreigners who have fought Daesh as this is considered potential "anti-Muslim" behaviour.

The strategy of mixing the ongoing securitization of Islam in many Western European countries, the rise in Islamophobic acts and Turkey's positive *image*[25] in the international realm should be carefully addressed. The "Türkiye brand" is also employed when addressing Islamophobia: "Mosques are under attack in Europe", Altun asserts in the video conference. "We restore churches and synagogues in Turkey, paying attention to all celebrations […] We preserve our heritage!"[26] The fight against Islamophobia shapes diaspora

[22] The Presidency of Communications of the Republic of Turkey was established by presidential decree in 2018 and is under the direct control of the Presidential Office.

[23] https://www.setav.org/en/events/web-opening-panel-presentation-of-the-european-islamophobia-report-2019/ (Consulted 18 March 2021).

[24] Italics are mine.

[25] Here, the term "image" is linked to the brandization of Turkey's foreign image by the Directorate of Communication. The Directorate seeks to "empower the Türkiye brand", and its vision is: "To establish profound and multilateral relations with the national and international public opinions, decision makers and media; to ensure a qualified representation of Türkiye in all fields applying all communication tools and methods and to empower the Türkiye brand" accordingly. See: www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/vizyon-misyon (Last consulted 8 April 2021).

[26] Ibid.

policy and aims to cement the link with the diaspora community while also contributing to the brandization of Turkey's foreign image.

Do (Turkish) Muslim communities in Europe need Turkey to save them?

In the past five years, the Turkish government has propagated the image of Turkey as the "saviour" and protector of Muslim communities in Europe. This narrative is defined as counter-hegemonic, as it seeks to oppose the "hegemonic industry of Islamophobia" – the racist and discriminatory attitude of far-right parties whose support is largely built on denigrating Muslim minorities. Against this backdrop, the idea that Muslim communities "need saving" should be critically assessed as it may cast light on what Nazia Kazi defines as a sense of domination disguised as liberation.[27] Affirming that "Liberalism in service to empire became a shield behind which racism was hidden ", Kumar underlines how liberal rights–oriented discourse in the aftermath of the 9/11 mostly focused on women's rights and democracy to obscure the US administration's imperial ambitions (2021:20). This liberal Islamophobia has been strengthened by the orientalist construction of "Muslim women" as victims, passive and submissive vis-à-vis to a hypermasculine state and society. Feminist scholars have criticized the imperialist and colonial rhetoric of "the West" as the protector of oppressed Muslim women who "need to be saved" and denounced the definition of a homogenous Muslim world in which there is no space for internal heterogeneity in terms of nationality, class, ethnicity and women's agency (Ahmed 1992; Abu-Lughod 2002; Mernissi 1987). Although Turkey defines itself as a humanitarian sponsor of human rights and commits to protecting "Muslims living in the West" from Western imperialism, its position paradoxically re-actualises a neo-colonial and Orientalist repertoire.

In the aftermath of the deadly terrorist attack on 15 March 2019 that killed 51 people at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, Turkey arranged an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. At the meeting, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan not only defined Islamophobia as "the new anti-Semitism" and "a crime against humanity" but also criticized European states for not acting against Islamophobia, saying: "if we [the Muslim world] do not raise our voice, Western states would never get out of their comfort zone".[28]

Moreover, although both reports and publications underline that Muslim women wearing a headscarf are more affected by discriminations and attacks, the narrative is largely produced and diffused by men: either experts or religious scholars. Moreover, when the fight against discrimination against Muslim communities in the diaspora is presented as either a concession made by the "host country" in return for emigrants' acceptance of laws and regulations or as the result of the intercession of a country that gives voice to their demands, Muslims' subjectivity is overlooked. In both cases, the diaspora communities might be trapped in their condition of being victims of discrimination.

The effects of a narrative in which Europe and Islam are described as irreconcilable have recently been criticized by Muslim intellectuals in Europe, whose reformist and liberal approaches have been vehemently opposed by Diyanet and the Turkish state diaspora institution for being "against Islam". In 2019, some of

[27] Please see the extract of Nazia Kazi's presentation "Islamophobia, Islamophobia, and the Good Muslim/Bad Muslim Impasse" http://m.bianet.org/english/politics/195991-studying-islamophobia-has-been-a-way-for-me-to-make-sense-of-domination presented at İstanbul Zaim University in İstanbul, April 2018.

[28] The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) emergency meeting was held on 22 March 2019. Erdogan's speech is available online: www.trtworld.com/turkey/erdogancalls-for-fight-on-islamophobia-as-on-anti-semitism-25176 (Consulted on 10 March 2021).

these scholars penned a letter to the European Commission to denounce the funding of a pro-government Turkish think tank (SETA) to publish a report on Islamophobia in Europe. In this report, the voices of Muslim activists who are critical, deliberately distance themselves from Islamic associations and promote more reformist interpretations are listed among those who increase Islamophobia and racism against Muslims.[29]

This aspect is often underestimated but should be attentively assessed and related to the same circulation and definition of the fight against Islamophobia as a priority in Turkey's agenda. In 2019, the two scholars who edited the report on Islamophobia in Europe published a book on Islamophobia in Muslim societies. They contend that the problem of Islamophobia is not exclusively a Western issue but a global phenomenon that lies in secularism and, thus, also affects Muslim societies (Bayraklı and Hafez 2018). Future research should make a distinction between, on the one hand, the fight against Islamophobia as a fight against discrimination, and on the other hand, the nurturing of old and new forms of domination vis-à-vis origin states that self-define as "saviours" of Muslim communities in the West.

7. Concluding remarks

How sending states have implemented diaspora policies and boosted the creation of diaspora institutions is a major area of interest in diaspora studies. Work in this area has focused on the strategies and techniques used to govern the diaspora and has helped to identify various forms of caring for and controlling emigrants communities, as well as states' attempts to foster loyalty and exert control beyond their territory. Diaspora-driven mobilizations in reaction to sending states' policies have also constituted a vast scholarship on how polarizing discourses and political values circulate between home countries and the multifaceted diasporic civic space. The literature on political remittances has shown how political values, ideas and practices circulate between sending states and diaspora communities and how this circulation is bidirectional. This article focused on the case of the Turkish diaspora in Europe and contends that, to strengthen the link with diaspora communities, the Turkish state resorts not only to diaspora institutions and agencies but also to a set of political values, vocabularies and ideas that circulate within the diaspora. Islamophobia – and the fight against Islamophobia – is one of these political remittances employed as an integral part of diaspora policies.

Four main remarks emerge from this work on how (the fight against) Islamophobia has contributed to Turkey's goal of binding the state to diaspora communities. First, the fight against Islamophobia has been framed as an issue and reached Turkey's domestic and foreign policy agenda –for example, via institutions like the (Diyanet), which is actively engaged through its network of foundations abroad. The Diyanet has elaborated a twofold narrative on Islamophobia as both an attitude – a psychological phobia rooted in ignorance and prejudice – and a deliberate anti-Islam project targeting Muslims in Europe. This narrative is propagated by the Diyanet's religious officers serving the diaspora, as well as via TV channels and official publications. Second, to frame Islamophobia as anti-Islam also implies a monocausal explanation of the phenomenon that underestimates both the systemic conditions of discrimination that migrants are subjected to and the impact of factors like class, sex, education and employment. Furthermore, this leads to a depiction

[29] The report refers to Necla Kelek e Seyran Ates, who founded the Ibn Rushd-Goethe mosque in Berlin. The effects of the propagation of the Islamophobia debate in destination countries is of significant relevance, and further research should be encouraged in this regard. Göpffarth and Özyürek's recent article emphasizes that Muslim-background intellectuals are crucial to novel forms of far-right German identity construction (2021).

of the diaspora as essentialized in its religious dimension and victims of Europe's assimilationist tendencies. Combatting Islamophobia is deeply intertwined with Turkey's current engagement vis-à-vis the diaspora communities. The two processes are simultaneous and mutually shaped: The diaspora is re-imagined and mobilized as Islamic entities that form part of the Muslim bloc. This aspect is crucial and encourages study of not only the terms and tropes constituting this narrative but also the impact that the circulation of this discourse has on the diaspora communities. Third, Islamophobia relates to a larger "transnationalization of Turkey", a set of processes and practices that produce, distribute and re-imagine Turkishness and Turkey beyond its current borders. This current process has led to a reconfiguration of the diaspora as a "domestic abroad". The forms of this engagement mark a discontinuity if compared with the strategy of maintenance vis-à-vis diaspora communities implemented in the 1980s and 1990s. At that time, Islamist, Kurdish and left-wing organizations in Western Europe were opposed to and monitored by the Turkish state. However, those practices and strategies that characterised religious and political engagement from abroad had major repercussions on Turkish politics and triggered a fertile circulation of social and political remittances. The self-defined role as protector of a global *ummah* (or at least of the Turkish Sunni Muslim communities) is situated within the framework of the AKP's reimagination of Turkey's international "image". Finally, this study shows that while strengthening a paternalistic link with the diaspora, the states of origin also contribute to fostering an exclusive belonging that might downsize those cultural and social contaminations that pave the way for hybrid and complex identities and a demand for full participation in society. Furthermore, victimization aimed at tightening a dichotomous and exclusive identity without problematizing the intersectionality that fosters systemic discrimination against Muslims might reinforce processes of co-radicalization and symbiotic relationships between Islamophobic and the xenophobic far-right and Islamist groups (Kaya 2018; Pratt 2015; Abbas 2012).

Turkey's commitment to tackling Islamophobia in Europe also raises further questions that go beyond the Turkish case. To what extent and how does the discourse on Islamophobia act as a tool for diaspora mobilization? And how would it shape the narrative of belonging? This study warns against the binary logic of viewing Muslim communities as being co-opted by either home states offering protection or destination countries and invites the reader to disentangle the systemic discrimination of anti-Muslim racism.

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