

## Debating the Dual Citizenship – Integration Nexus in Turkey

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# Debating the Dual Citizenship – Integration Nexus in Turkey

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the institution of dual citizenship outside of the West and focuses on Turkey to assess the possible relationship between dual citizenship and the integration of migrants, drawing on Kymlicka and Norman's (2000) dimensions of citizenship framework, with its tripartite focus on formal status, activity and identity. The research incorporates the perspectives of the three key groups of actors involved in international migration: the host state, the major sending states, and the migrants themselves. Our findings indicate that dual citizenship is neither a barrier to, nor facilitator of, integration in the citizenship dimension of activity in Turkey. Rather, integration — perceived as economic participation by the great majority of the actors — is linked not to dual citizenship per se, but to the acquisition of citizenship in the host country.

**Keywords:** Dual Citizenship, Integration, Immigration, Turkey, Citizenship Dimensions

## Türkiye’de Çifte Vatandaşlık-Entegrasyon İlişkinini Tartışmak

### ÖZET

Bu makale, çifte vatandaşlık literatürünü Batı ekseninin dışında tartışarak Türkiye örneğine odaklanmaktadır. Çifte vatandaşlık ile göçmenlerin entegrasyonu arasındaki olası ilişki, Kymlicka ve Norman'ın (2000) vatandaşlık çerçevesinde resmi statü, faaliyet ve kimlik üzerine oluşturdukları üçlü odak kapsamında değerlendirilmektedir. Araştırma, uluslararası göçün içerdiği üç kilit aktör grubunun perspektiflerini içermektedir: ev sahibi devlet, göçmen gönderen ülkeler ve göçmenlerin kendileri. Bulgularımız, entegrasyon ekseninde, çifte vatandaşlığın Türkiye’de ne engelleyici ne de kolaylaştırıcı olmadığını göstermektedir. Aksine, aktörlerin büyük çoğunluğunun ekonomik katılım olarak algıladığı entegrasyon, çifte vatandaşlık ile değil, ev sahibi ülkede vatandaşlığın kazanılması ile ilişkilendirilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çifte Vatandaşlık, Entegrasyon, Göç, Türkiye, Vatandaşlık Boyutları

## Introduction

After decades of sending citizens abroad, Turkey has recently become a significant migrant-receiving country, which comes in the wake of waves of mass immigration from a range of countries and for diverse reasons<sup>1</sup>. Data from the two relevant agencies in Turkey — the Directorate of General Migration Management (DGMM) and the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) — indicates that the major sending countries are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Macedonia, Russia, Syria, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan<sup>2</sup>. Despite this diversity, it has been mass Syrian migration that has dominated the public debate on migrant integration in the recent past. Proposals to grant Turkish citizenship to Syrian nationals have prompted a fierce public discussion over the question of how new migrants are to be integrated into Turkish society, and these proposals have been met with equally fierce resistance by the public in social and mass media. The large and growing immigrant population in Turkey thus prompts a series of questions regarding citizenship in general, and dual citizenship in particular. As a large group of migrants living in Turkey become potentially eligible — officially and unofficially — to add Turkish citizenship to their existing citizenship status, the question of dual citizenship is thrown into sharp relief. Yet, the question of the relationship between access to this option and migrant integration remains largely unanswered: is granting citizenship a catalyst for integration or is full integration necessary before such a status can even be considered?

This paper takes up the question of the nexus between dual citizenship and the social integration of migrants in the Turkish case. To do so, we draw on Kymlicka and Norman's<sup>3</sup> dimensions of citizenship framework, with its tripartite focus on formal status, activity and identity. The present study concentrates on the second of these — citizenship activity — which Carens<sup>4</sup> notes involves active participation as a crucial dimension of responsible citizenship. This dimension can be further elaborated as what the migrant, in Kostakopoulou's thinking, 'owes' to the host community<sup>5</sup>. Here, citizenship is understood as a mindset — not merely a legal status — that connotes active participation in the political, social, and economic life of the community<sup>6</sup>.

Before proceeding, a brief outline of Turkey's citizenship regime is in order. Dual citizenship was first recognized in Turkish legislation in 1981, largely as a response to the consequences of labor emigration to Europe after the 1960s, whereby a generation of children of Turkish-born parents in European countries had claims to citizenship in two places<sup>7</sup>. Interestingly, without necessitating the renouncement of previous citizenship, dual citizenship was already permitted for aliens at a time when

1 Ahmet İçduygu, "Turkey's Migration Transition and its Implications for the Euro Turkish Transnational Space." *Global Turkey in Europe*, 2014, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/178982> (Accessed 30 May 2019).

2 In this research, we focus on 11 of the 14 countries, where Afghanistan, Libya, and North Macedonia were not included. The reasons are explained in the method section.

3 Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, "Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies: Issues, Contexts, Concepts", Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (eds.), *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 1-41.

4 Joseph Carens, *Culture, Citizenship and Community*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

5 Dora Kostakopoulou, "Why Naturalization?", *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 4, No 1, 2003, pp. 85-115.

6 Van Ricky Oers, *Deserving Citizenship. Citizenship Tests in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom*, Amsterdam, Wolf Legal Publishers, 2013.

7 Rona Aybay, *Vatandaşlık Hukuku*. Istanbul, Aybay Yayınları, 2001. Zeynep Kadirbeyoğlu, "National Transnationalism: Dual Citizenship in Turkey," Thomas Faist (ed.), *Dual Citizenship in Europe: From Nationhood to Societal Integration*, Aldershot UK, Ashgate, 2007.

Turkish citizens were not allowed to acquire dual citizenship without informing the authorities<sup>8</sup>. Turkey's 2009 Citizenship Law, however, made dual citizenship more difficult for immigrants, setting up the possibility that citizens of several countries (not explicitly mentioned in the legislation) applying for Turkish citizenship would be compelled to potentially renounce their original citizenship. For this reason, the current practice in Turkey remains vague and unclear about precisely who among the alien residents of Turkey can and cannot acquire dual citizenship.

This study approaches this topic in a triadic structure by examining the three groups of actors involved in international migration: the host state (Turkey), the sending states (of which we examine 11), and the migrants themselves. Within this framework, sending states can be classified according to the legal regime in place that deals with dual citizenship. Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Ukraine all ban dual citizenship (i.e., to gain Turkish citizenship, these nationals must renounce their original status). Turkmenistan, Germany, Georgia and Syria all allow dual citizenship in some circumstances. Bulgaria and Iraq place no restrictions on their nationals acquiring a second nationality. It should be noted that the empirical findings from our in-depth interviews reveal that sending state officials frequently turn a blind eye toward the existence of dual citizens in cases where dual citizenship is prohibited under their national legal systems. Only two countries among the major sending countries to Turkey — Russia and Turkmenistan — actively treat dual citizenship as a legal problem and require the renunciation of the original citizenship upon the acquisition of foreign citizenship. Thus, in practice — given the large numbers of nationals from states that officially prohibit dual citizenship that are residing in Turkey — it is generally accepted as a *fait accompli* by the representatives of those countries.

## Method

As mentioned, this study adopts an approach that incorporates the analysis of the migrants themselves in addition to analysis of the legal regimes governing dual citizenship in the host and sending countries. This is because our focus is on integration of migrants, and thus, on the activity dimension of citizenship. Despite several attempts, we were unable to obtain data on the number of citizenship applications in Turkey. As an alternative, we sought data on the countries of origin of foreign nationals holding residence permits. This information was retrieved from the official website of the DGMM.<sup>9</sup> Since non-citizens are not the sole focus of this research and migrants who have already received Turkish citizenship are also included, data from the TUIK<sup>10</sup> on the origin countries was also sought. Statistics on foreign-born residents in Turkey (regardless of their residence status) were merged with the data obtained from the DGMM. From the combined data, the following list (in alphabetical order) of countries with the highest number of nationals living in Turkey was derived: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Macedonia, Russia, Syria, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The researchers were not able, however, to locate any permanent migrants of Afghan, Libyan or Macedonian origin residing in İstanbul and so these three countries were excluded from the study. The term of migrants is used inclusively, so that refugees are considered migrants as

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8 Bilgin Tiryakioğlu, "Dual Citizenship and its Consequences in Turkish Law," *Ankara Law Review*, Vol. 3, No 1, 2006, pp. 1-16.

9 <http://www.goc.gov.tr/> (Accessed 25 September 2019)

10 <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/> (Accessed 25 September 2019)

well. Nevertheless, while the issue of mass migration of Syrian refugees has certainly captured the public debate, it should be noted that the research covers participants who have settled in Turkey for a variety of reasons, not merely those seeking international protection.

We conducted a total of 88 interviews: seven were with bureaucrats (from Turkey whose official posts have them involved in different phases of the citizenship acquisition process), nine with consular representatives, and 72 with migrants (22 male and 50 female). Of those 72 migrants, the breakdown of country of origin is as follows: Azerbaijan (six migrants), Bulgaria (seven), Georgia (five), Germany (four), Iran (nine), Iraq (seven), Russia (seven), Syria (12), Turkmenistan (six), Ukraine (four) and Uzbekistan (five). Most of the migrants settled in Turkey after the 2000s for reasons of employment, education, marriage and protection.

Labor migrants comprise the largest group among the participants we interviewed for the study, made up mostly of migrants from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Russia, Turkmenistan and Ukraine. The second largest category — migrants who have sought protection or have fled conflict, violence or insecurity — hail from Syria and Iraq. The next main group are those who have come to Turkey for education, mostly ethnically Turkish migrants from Bulgaria and some Iranian nationals. Finally, there is a small group of foreign nationals who have settled in Turkey to marry Turkish citizens — this group mostly comprises nationals of Russia, Germany and Azerbaijan. Of the 72 migrants we interviewed for the study, 22 are currently dual citizens (i.e., naturalized Turkish citizens who retain the nationality of their country-of-origin).

Of the 50 participants without Turkish citizenship, over half (26 migrants) have regular residence permits. Among the remaining 24 non-citizens, 12 hold temporary identity cards provided to Syrian nationals, five have student visas, four are in Turkey on tourist visas and three migrants possess work permits. Within the group of 50 non-citizens, 10 were at the time of the research at various stages of applying for Turkish citizenship. Out of the 40 participants without citizenship and not actively applying for it, over half (22) indicated a keen interest in acquiring Turkish citizenship. Among the 18 migrants who expressed to us that they would not seek Turkish citizenship, nine said that this was because of the dual citizenship laws of their origin country.

The research was limited by several challenges. The first was reaching relevant state officials — both in Turkey and among the various sending countries. Some officers — within both the Turkish state administration and in those of sending countries — were reluctant to participate, possibly because their institutions were unwilling to provide the necessary information. The limited number of interviews with state representatives that resulted means the findings among these participants do not generalize as well as we would have liked. Concerning interviews with migrants, the skew in the sample toward women and certain nationalities presents another limitation in the ability to generalize the findings. In this case as well, the distribution in the sample was conditioned by the availability of willing participants.

The article proceeds as follows. The first part revisits the literature on the activity dimension of citizenship and integration, the subsequent three sections present the empirical findings on economic, political and participation aspects, followed by a conclusion that presents the asymmetric understanding among the different actors on each aspect.

## **Immigrant Integration and the Activity Dimension of Citizenship**

In the context of international migration, the activity dimension of citizenship can be described as what a migrant “owes” to the host community and consists of participation in the political, social, and economic life of the community<sup>11</sup>. Here, whether acquisition of citizenship is the facilitator or catalyst of the integration process is a crucial question, one that tends to divide analysis and commentary in two. On the one hand, the pragmatic, instrumentalist view sees citizenship itself as a means to integration. The contrasting perspective — often held by states themselves — understands citizenship to be a “reward” for having completed integration, which must therefore be achieved before such a status will be granted. The perspective adopted by any given actor tends to depend on the definition of “integration” that he or she embraces<sup>12</sup>.

Integration is generally understood as the process through which immigrants are accepted into society, both as individuals and at the group level<sup>13</sup>. If integration is defined in terms of exclusive loyalty to a single state and community (i.e., the host one), integration becomes a zero-sum game — an immigrant is either in or out, depending on his or her performance, with no intermediate conditions<sup>14</sup>. When integration is defined along these lines, citizenship can only be granted after the migrant has demonstrated a high degree of successful participation in the economic, social, and cultural spheres of society<sup>15</sup> or in other words, after having “performed deservingness”<sup>16</sup>. Because of the need for evidence to evaluate immigrants’ completed integration into the host society, strict language and other requirements are employed as a precondition for acquiring residence permits and citizenship<sup>17</sup>.

In contrast, when integration is defined as a mutual and dynamic process, full political inclusion and participation of migrants in the decision-making process become crucial<sup>18</sup>. Here, political participation is seen as a tool for migrants to change the distribution of resources and opportunities and to challenge adverse policies<sup>19</sup>. From this point of view, more stringent criteria for inclusion — such as the renunciation of the original nationality and the requirement of citizenship tests — are often seen as ineffective in their stated aims of excluding migrants who are not genuinely interested in host country citizenship<sup>20</sup>. First, they target those already willing to acquire citizenship<sup>21</sup>. Second, they cannot guarantee that migrants have truly abandoned their “original” loyalties and culture and thus cannot assuage the concern among skeptics that migrants endanger the integrity and homogeneity

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11 Kostakopoulou, “Why Naturalization?” Oers, *Deserving Citizenship*.

12 Jürgen Gerdes, et al., “We Are All ‘Republican’ Now: The Politics of Dual Citizenship in Germany,” Thomas Faist (ed.), *Dual Citizenship in Europe*, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, 2007, pp. 45-76.

13 Rinus Penninx, “Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State,” Migration Policy Institute, 2003, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/integration-role-communities-institutions-and-state> (Accessed 30 May 2019).

14 Thomas Faist and Jürgen Gerdes, “Dual Citizenship in an Age of Mobility,” Migration Policy Institute, 2008, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/dual-citizenship-age-mobility> (Accessed 30 May 2019).

15 Gerdes, et al. “We Are All ‘Republican’ Now”.

16 Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas, “Deservingness Frames on Citizenship: Residence, Performance and Vulnerability,” INTEGRIM Third Annual Conference, Istanbul, 2015.

17 Faist and Gerdes, “Dual Citizenship in an Age of Mobility”.

18 Ibid.

19 David Martin, “Introduction: The Trend Toward Dual Nationality,” David Martin and Key Hailbronner, *Rights and Duties of Dual Nationals*, The Hague, Kluwer Law International, 2003, pp. 3-18.

20 Devorah Kalekin-Fishman and Pirkko Pitkänen, *Multiple State Membership and Citizenship In The Era of Transnational Migration*, Rotterdam and Taipei, Sense, 2007.

21 Martin, “Introduction”.

of the nation<sup>22</sup>. Third, if citizenship criteria are too demanding, they may discourage applications for naturalization and hamper migrants' integration efforts<sup>23</sup>. Seen from this perspective, standing against dual citizenship because it degrades the traditional institution of citizenship is not realistic.

In sum, the second perspective sees dual citizenship as a powerful means to facilitate and promote migrant integration, primarily in the area of economic participation through unrestricted access to the labor market and better employability, full protection against expulsion, access to public employment, and decreased administrative difficulties<sup>24</sup>. In contrast to those who believe that integration should be attained prior to citizenship, proponents of dual citizenship see effective economic participation as flowing from citizenship<sup>25</sup>. State acceptance of dual citizenship thus serves to decrease disparities in rights and opportunities between resident immigrants and the general population<sup>26</sup>.

## Activity Dimension I: Economic Participation

The first dimension of citizenship activity is in the economic life of the host country. Sending state officials expressed a range of opinions on migrant economic participation in Turkey. Consular representatives from Bulgaria, Georgia, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Russia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan all noted the difficulty their nationals face in acquiring work permits in Turkey. This challenge is presented as a major barrier to migrant participation in Turkey's workforce. Concerning economic participation, the Iraqi consulate stated: "all Iraqis are employed in Turkey, either regularly, or irregularly, out of necessity"<sup>27</sup>. Secondly, most consular officials believe that only well-established businessmen can readily access work permits, meaning that a migrant's financial situation is the sole criterion. The third most frequently cited opinion among sending state officials is that professional occupations are only accessible to Turkish citizens; thus, nationals wishing to pursue a career in their accredited profession are forced to apply for citizenship if they have long-term plans in Turkey. The German consular official noted this problem for professional/highly skilled migrants when he described residency in Turkey as a "pause to life and career"<sup>28</sup>. Except for the Iraqi and Georgian officials, none of the consular officials expressed much concern about their nationals' economic situation in Turkey. In the case of Iraq, the official explained that Iraq encourages its nationals to integrate economically into Turkey since "there is not much in Iraq to return to"<sup>29</sup>. In the Georgian case, the consular official underlined that Tbilisi has a special fund set aside that allows them to offer financial assistance to Georgian citizens in Turkey when they have severe economic difficulties and

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22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Faist and Gerdes, "Dual Citizenship in an Age of Mobility". Thomas Liebig and Friederike Von Haaren, "Citizenship and the Socioeconomic Integration of Immigrants and Their Children," *Naturalisation: A Passport for the Better Integration of Immigrants?* Paris, OECD, 2011, pp. 23-57. Maarten P. Vink, "Immigrant Integration and Access to Citizenship in the European Union: The Role of Origin Countries," INTERACT, Researching Third Country Nationals' Integration as a Three-way Process - Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of Integration Research Report Position Paper, 2013.

25 Gerdes, et al. "We Are All 'Republican' Now".

26 Faist and Gerdes, "Dual Citizenship in an Age of Mobility".

27 Interview with the Iraqi Consulate, 16 May 2016.

28 Interview with the German Consulate, 3 May 2016.

29 Interview with the Iraqi Consulate, 16 May 2016.

need financial resources<sup>30</sup>. Except for these two cases, the consular officials we interviewed gave the impression that their nationals' participation in the economic life of Turkey is not is not a particular concern or focus.

In response to the question of whether dual citizenship acts as a barrier against or catalyst of integration, most consular officials respond that citizenship is a requirement for migrants who plan to remain long-term, since economic participation without citizenship is extremely difficult. Interestingly, whether a migrant holds only Turkish citizenship or dual citizenship with the origin country is not considered to be a major factor in terms of migrants' economic participation in Turkey. Even though possible multiple citizenship does not have an impact on integration, holding Turkish citizenship is clearly perceived as a catalyst for — rather than a barrier to — integration from the perspective of sending states. Hence, it is not dual citizenship per se, but rather the acquisition of Turkish citizenship that is seen as the critical determinant of economic integration from the perspective of sending states.

Economic participation is deemed crucial by the host state, Turkey, as reflected in the elemental demand that migrants “be able to stand on their feet through honest work”<sup>31</sup>. Here, paying taxes to the Turkish state is described as the key determinant of what constitutes “honest work”<sup>32</sup>. The state makes a clear distinction between the welfare responsibilities it has towards citizens vs non-citizens. Migrants, accordingly, should already be self-sufficient if they plan to reside in Turkey — the state foresees no role for itself in ensuring migrants can participate economically. Those who have already been granted citizenship are treated as equally as Turkish nationals in terms of access to state services to find suitable work. While the state clearly eschews all responsibility for assisting migrants — citizens or otherwise — to integrate economically, it is equally true that migrants struggle to meet the requirement of paying taxes needed to acquire a residence permit or citizenship.

To illustrate this point, the Head of the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Office of Turkey stated that for a migrant “to be rewarded with citizenship, the migrant needs to be already integrated in Turkey”<sup>33</sup>. In other words, the migrant should be financially secure in line with Article 11 of the Citizenship Law of 2009, which expects citizenship applicants to be economically self-sufficient<sup>34</sup>. He also stated that “as long as a migrant is living in Turkey, the fact that the migrant holds dual citizenship with the origin country does not matter”<sup>35</sup>. With the understanding that asking migrants to give up their original citizenship is an outdated security measure, this top official stated the view that “dual citizenship motivates migrants to work harder in Turkey”<sup>36</sup>. Thus, from this officer's perspective, while Turkish citizenship is held as a reward of successful integration, dual citizenship is also considered a catalyst for integration in Turkey because it motivates migrants' future economic participation.

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30 Interview with the Georgian Consulate, 10 May 2016.

31 Interview with the Head Officer of the Citizenship Commission Services, 19 September 2016.

32 Interview with the Head Officer of the Department of Citizenship Acquisition, 8 September 2016.

Interview with the Head Officer of the Citizenship Commission Services, 19 September 2016.

Interview with the Head of Population and Citizenship Services, 4 October 2016.

33 Interview with the Head of the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Office of Turkey, 13 December 2016.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

The third group of actors in our research — migrants — universally consider economic participation as the most critical issue for settlement in Turkey. They generally expressed the view that economic participation is undercut without Turkish citizenship. This has a severe impact on migrant welfare, with one participant noting “a vicious cycle in which no one gives a non-citizen a job and one cannot apply for citizenship unless he has a job”<sup>37</sup>. Hence, citizenship signifies complete settlement in Turkey through economic participation, and integration is understood directly to be participation in economic life, overshadowing the other aspects of the activity dimension.

Overall, in-depth interviews with citizens and non-citizens in this study reveal that economic participation in Turkey is the key reason to acquire citizenship. The most frequently mentioned reason to acquire citizenship in Turkey is to end the obligation to work in unqualified or irregular jobs due to the reluctance of employers to take on the burden of applying for work permits and employ non-citizens. Here, Syrian nationals — who face many economic problems due to irregular work and are frequently not paid their salaries — consider citizenship as a means to ensure they receive what they are owed by their employers. The next most cited reason migrants offer for acquiring citizenship is the right it grants to work in one’s profession in Turkey, which is especially the case for lawyers<sup>38</sup> and architects<sup>39</sup>. Finally, access to banking services, such as credit cards and bank loans, and starting a business without needing a local partner are other frequently mentioned reasons migrants give for pursuing Turkish citizenship.

Moreover, newly graduated foreign students fear that they will be bound to work in unqualified jobs despite their university degree or that they will be forced to return to their homelands when they face a problem with their residence permit, even after years of working in unqualified jobs that do not match their education in Turkey. To illustrate, Ayten (31), a Turkish woman from Bulgaria who came to Turkey 11 years ago as a student, regrets her migration to Turkey. Despite her university degree, she is forced to work irregularly for less than minimum wage and without insurance, and after more than a decade in Turkey, is still unable to apply for Turkish citizenship. She explained,

“It caused a loss of my self-confidence. I do not feel worthy as a human being and it is as if my life has been wasted in Turkey because of this citizenship issue. If I could go back in time, I would go to Europe. I came here because culturally this should be our homeland. I felt nothing here but a second-class human. I am second-class in Bulgaria because I am a minority. I am second-class in Turkey because they treat me so, because I am not a citizen. Where can the Turks of Bulgaria feel really at home?”<sup>40</sup>.

In a context where living without citizenship has detrimental impacts on quality of life, holding Turkish citizenship is thought to save one from irregular employment or a way to practice one’s profession. Nevertheless, even though Turkish citizenship significantly eases economic participation, the majority of migrants — including dual citizens — involved in the study, do not attach any extra economic benefit to dual citizenship.

In relation to dual citizenship, only a handful of migrants, all of whom are dual citizens, mention the possibility of dual retirement pensions as the sole economic advantage of this institution. Even

37 Ersin, male, 28, Turk from Bulgaria.

38 Natalie, female, 36, Russia.

39 Henrik, male, 38, Germany.

40 Ayten, female, 31, Turk from Bulgaria.

though a great majority of migrants clearly state that they will not receive dual retirement pensions in the future, receiving their retirement pension from Turkey is still considered advantageous, especially if they wish to return to their country of origin in the future. In this regard, a Turkish migrant from Bulgaria sees the most positive outcome of dual citizenship as the retirement pension from Turkey, which would be sufficient to allow him to spend his retirement years in Bulgaria without any financial worries, even though he will not receive any pension from Bulgaria.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, a Crimean migrant states that the retirement pension from Turkey may even allow her to purchase real estate in Ukraine, paving the way for high living standards in her retirement years<sup>42</sup>. However, apart from the advantage of dual retirement pensions for a handful of migrants, dual citizenship is not considered to be a specifically advantageous legal status in terms of economic participation.

Regarding the question of whether dual citizenship acts as a barrier to integration or as a catalyst for it, none of the migrants who received citizenship in Turkey could relate to the difficulty of integration to dual citizenship. Instead, all dual citizens and migrants interested in Turkish citizenship highlighted that they were already forced to make full efforts to integrate in Turkey through the labor market. The general understanding is that their integration into Turkish society, considered mostly in terms of participation in economic terms, is obligatory. To illustrate, a Turkish-speaking migrant from Bulgaria stated: “I do not think dual citizenship is a barrier to integration. I did my best to adapt here, work, and be self-sufficient even though I could never know for sure whether I would be given citizenship”<sup>43</sup>.

## **Activity Dimension II: Social Participation**

Looking at the three groups of actors, there is no consensus on the relationship between dual citizenship and integration — apart from the shared opinion that economic participation lies at the core of integration. As far as social participation is concerned, the impact of dual citizenship yield rather different results.

The representatives of sending states involved in the research do not consider social participation to be an important element of migrants’ integration in Turkey. Here, the only consulates to stress the social aspect of migrants’ residency in Turkey were those of Iran, Bulgaria and Germany. The Iranian consular official emphasized that Turkey’s cultural proximity to Iran and the high number of Iranian nationals who reside in Turkey for long periods mean Iranian migrants have no difficulty integrating culturally. Likewise, the Bulgarian consulate underlined that Turkey is seen as a motherland to ethnically Turkish migrants from Bulgaria and their Turkish ethnicity facilitates social integration, as it is “only Turks who move to Turkey from Bulgaria”<sup>44</sup>. The German consular officials, however, emphasize that social integration in Turkey requires citizenship because without citizenship, German “migrants only lead a half-life due to everyday challenges in Turkey without citizenship”<sup>45</sup>. Except for these three cases, the consulates of major sending countries in Turkey do not consider social participation as a crucial aspect of activity.

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41 Ahmet, male, 26, Bulgarian–Turkish dual citizen.

42 Zahreh, female, 28, Crimean Tatar.

43 Reyhan, male, 26, Turk from Bulgaria.

44 Interview with the Bulgarian Consulate, 17 May 2016.

45 Interview with the German Consulate, 3 May 2016.

Turning to the view of the host (i.e., Turkish) state, in-depth interviews with officials demonstrate that social participation is seen as synonymous with “respecting the laws” and “acting in line with Turkish culture”<sup>46</sup>. Considering the vagueness of these terms, one can draw the conclusion that unless a migrant is in serious breach of the law, his or her social participation is pretty much taken as given. This indicates that this dimension is not regarded as a critical element of citizenship. In this regard, Turkish officials do not consider dual citizenship to affect the social participation aspect of citizenship activity in the context of migrant integration.

With regards to migrant opinions and practices, social participation is deemed as the second most problematic aspect in the activity dimension. For non-citizens, daily limitations described as “not terribly big problems but the small things that make you unhappy overall”<sup>47</sup> are coupled with uncertainty about the future and the challenge of unemployment. Celil, an Azeri migrant from Iran, explained that his son’s exclusion from the local soccer team and his wife being denied access to the municipality’s free trips due to lack of Turkish citizenship were seemingly minor experiences that caused deep unhappiness in the family. In parallel, an Iraqi Turkmen recounts that before acquiring citizenship, she faced constant difficulties ranging from yearly school registration, buying a phone card and receiving library books to opening a bank account. She had to explain her non-citizen status on a daily basis to people, including the registration clerk at the local gym<sup>48</sup>. In light of these migrant statements, one can conclude that being a non-citizen seems to severely disrupt social participation in Turkey.

In this respect, the particular case of Syrian nationals should be highlighted. The most frequent reason for Syrian migrants’ interest in Turkish citizenship is to ensure that their children gain the right to receive education and do not face discrimination at school. The statement below demonstrates the degree of discrimination Syrian migrants currently face in social life:

“I would of course get Turkish citizenship if they gave it. Why not? Then [with citizenship] the woman I talked to in the hospital for my baby’s operation would not have shouted at me in front of a crowd of people because I asked too many questions about the operation. If the hospital’s secretary treats me like this, the people on the streets would spit on me in public. If I had citizenship, we would have equality, and no one would treat me like this. We live in a shantytown and pay double [the rent Turkish residents pay]. I will be the first to return to Syria when things settle, and I will do so without even looking back”<sup>49</sup>.

Similarly, in relation to discrimination in social life in Turkey, another participant noted:

“Lack of citizenship is a problem for the children. My son is very hardworking, he studies all the time and really is a good boy. But when he raises his hand in class, the teacher does not let him speak. He raises his hand and the teacher ignores him. If the teacher acts like that, how will the other people react? The teacher only cares about the Turkish children. Even if we were to

46 Interview with the Head Officer of the Department of Citizenship Acquisition, 8 September 2016.

Interview with the Head Officer of the Citizenship Commission Services, 19 September 2016

Interview with the Head of the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Office of Turkey, 13 December 2016.

47 Celil, male, 41, Iranian–Turkish dual citizen.

48 Sara, female, 26, Iraqi–Turkish dual citizen.

49 Döne, female, 26, Syrian.

get citizenship I doubt this would change. Once a Syrian, always a Syrian [to the local Turkish people]. I am pessimistic after all the mistreatment here. I will always want to return to Syria. We were all equals there.”<sup>50</sup>

As these findings indicate, not holding citizenship in Turkey can have detrimental impacts on migrants’ quality of life in terms of social participation in Turkey. Life without Turkish citizenship creates “feelings of otherness and in-betweenness” which leads to “depression because of the simple but suffocating challenges continuously faced in everyday life”<sup>51</sup>. As an Assyrian migrant from Iran sadly recounts:

“This citizenship issue cost me my life in Turkey. If I had been given citizenship soon after my entrance, I would have had a good, stable job here. So many years have passed for nothing. I was an ambitious person when I first came to Turkey. I was a young nurse and I had hoped that I would advance in my profession. This was never realized. Instead, I just became a translator for Iranians. This way, my citizenship problems and residence status shaped my whole life.”<sup>52</sup>

Another migrant holding a residence permit reveals how her identity as a human rights activist is constrained and her character has forcibly changed as a result of being a non-citizen in Turkey:

“I am no longer an activist in Turkey as I was in Iran. I cannot call myself an activist because I am silent about so many things now. The terrible things I witness here done to the Syrians... If I were in Iran, I would shout at people [who violate others’ rights]. But here, I may also be discriminated against because I am the other. As the other, it is not easy to defend others. If I were a citizen, it would be different.”<sup>53</sup>

That said, positive impacts of citizenship on social participation are also evident. As one Iraqi Turkmen stated:

“The day I received citizenship was an amazing day to remember. I recall gazing at my identity card like it was the photograph of a lover. Turkish citizenship means a lot to me; it is very valuable considering all the problems I faced when I did not have it. I waited for it ever since I went to school. I walked a different type of walk [once I became a citizen]. When people asked me why I was walking as if I owned the world, I laughed and said: “I am a Turkish citizen now”. Everybody noticed the change in my character and how I became self-confident. I am like every other person in Turkey now”<sup>54</sup>.

Despite the emphasis on the positive impacts of receiving Turkish citizenship on social participation, none of the dual citizens mentioned the impacts of dual citizenship on social integration. Possibly because dual citizens do not consider returning to their country of origin, dual citizenship is not perceived as conducive to social participation in Turkey. The only social aspect of dual citizenship that comes through in migrant statements is the fact that social prestige attaches to dual citizenship in the society. On this score, opinions differ based on the country of origin. To illustrate, regardless of Azeri origin, Iranian–Turkish dual citizens often find themselves being held in higher regard

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50 Lina, female, 28, Syrian.

51 Sara, female, 26, Iraqi–Turkish dual citizen.

52 Katrin, female, 38, Iranian–Turkish dual citizen.

53 Mona, female, 30, Iranian.

54 Sara, female, 26, Iraqi–Turkish dual citizen.

than Iranian citizens without dual citizenship. That said, an Iranian–Turkish dual citizen, Menekşe (38), noted that she feels less esteemed than regular Turkish citizens because citizenship by birth is more respectable than citizenship by naturalization. She elaborates this feeling in linkage to the discrimination her seven-year old son faces at primary school due to being “labeled a foreigner”. Even though her son speaks fluent Turkish and has Turkish citizenship through descent from his Turkish father, he is subject to discrimination because he was born in Iran to an Iranian mother. In parallel, Iraqi–Turkish dual citizens perceive themselves as better placed than regular Iraqi Turks. Since Iraqi citizenship is not perceived to be an asset, they believe that the advantage comes from the Turkish citizenship due to better chances of international mobility.

Bulgarian–Turkish dual citizens consider their citizenship status to be more prestigious than both regular Bulgarian and Turkish citizens. Compared to Bulgarian citizens, their living standards are higher in Turkey, which is “a country with a developed economy and better employment opportunities and with visa-free access to 70 countries”<sup>55</sup>. Compared to Turkish citizens, Turks from Bulgaria feel more advantaged due to Bulgaria’s EU membership, which allows visa-free mobility across Europe. As one participant noted:

“If we think of it realistically and strategically, I think my situation is better than yours because you, as a Turk, cannot go anywhere without a visa and you have to wait and pay a lot. For me, I can travel easily wherever I want. But at the same time, I am doing much better in Turkey than I would in Bulgaria because the life conditions here are much better than Bulgaria where it is really hard to make a living. In that sense, I am much better off than both Turks and Bulgarians, because I get to use the best sides of each citizenship.”<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the state of dual citizenship in this community is described as “living away from the economic problems in Bulgaria while not losing the Europeanness brought from Bulgaria”<sup>57</sup>. Here, a Bulgarian citizen placed himself “at the same level with Germans or the French”<sup>58</sup>. Hence, while the acquisition of Turkish citizenship is considered to have major positive impacts on social participation, the only relevant attribute attached to dual citizenship is the social prestige it offers.

### Activity Dimension III: Political Participation

In-depth interviews with sending state officials demonstrate that they do not consider the aspect of political participation in citizenship to be important for integration. The host country perspective, however, shows that Turkish officials consider political participation neither as a right, or an element of integration, but instead a duty.

At the individual level, access to political participation remains as a non-issue, due to the challenges migrants face concerning their economic and social participation, which both heavily overshadow political participation. Therefore, in the domain of political participation, dual citizenship is neither a hindrance to nor a catalyst for integration. However, two distinctions should be made:

55 Asım, male, 29, Bulgarian–Turkish dual citizen.

56 Sabri, male, 25, Turk from Bulgaria.

57 Ahmet, male, 27, Bulgarian–Turkish dual citizen.

58 Reyhan, male, 26, Turk from Bulgaria.

First, migrants who are part of a Turkish minority in their origin country — namely, ethnically Turkish migrants from Bulgaria, Iraqi Turkmens and Azeri migrants from Iran — plus Russian and German nationals, regardless of their citizenship status, are politically active migrant communities. For these migrants, voting in elections, which legally requires citizenship, clearly constitutes a critical aspect of integration. Among Iraqi Turkmens and Turkish migrants from Bulgaria, not only voting, but also active participation in migrant associations, is widespread.

The second distinction concerns the settlement periods of international migrants. Unlike the migrants who plan to return to their homelands in the future — and thus do not mind the challenges of life without citizenship despite the long years they spend in Turkey — migrants who plan to spend their entire lives in the country described the lack of Turkish citizenship as a difficult situation to be in, since no long-term plans can be made while there is the risk of residence permits being cancelled. Due to frequent legal changes and the uncertainty of this process, many migrants agree that Turkey is reluctant to host permanent migrants. This negative opinion is also strengthened due to experiences with state officers who “look down at [migrant] residents as second-class people because they are not citizens”<sup>59</sup>. Hence, the first feeling associated with lack of citizenship in Turkey appears to be a strong sense of insecurity and “constant anxiety”<sup>60</sup>. Migrants’ statements demonstrate the security challenges at present that preclude the possibility of visible political participation:

“Turkey does not willingly accept migrants. It does not act like a migrant-receiving country. It is neither safe nor steady for a migrant. One change in the law and you are out the door. One change in the law, then your whole life direction changes. I do not feel secure here. This is why I cannot make any long-term plans. But I know I am not able to go back to Iran because I was an activist. I know I should be looking for a third country.”<sup>61</sup>

Likewise, another participant noted:

“In Turkey, you can never be completely at peace if you do not have citizenship. There is no guarantee of anything. You may find yourself out the door after policy changes. Plus, my life is here with my children. I cannot risk such things. Once there was a problem and I had to wait for 11 months for the renewal of the residence permit. Can you imagine? How could I not apply for citizenship? I was forced to apply for citizenship.”<sup>62</sup>

It should be noted that it is not only non-citizens who feel major stress due to lack of citizenship and thus may not be interested in political participation, but also dual citizens who are generally disinterested in political participation in Turkey.

In sum, while non-citizens, who are under a great deal of economic and often social stress, lack the resources or wherewithal for political participation, dual citizens are generally not interested in becoming involved politically.

One visible element in relation to politics found in this research regards the exit option provided by dual citizenship. For several migrants from Iran, dual citizenship is regarded as a safety net in the Middle East due to “political problems, wars, and clashes and because everyone may need

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59 Ömer, male, 26, Iraqi Turkmen.

60 Iris, female, 51, German.

61 Mona, female, 30, Iranian.

62 Diyar, male, 44, Iraqi-Turkish dual citizen.

a second place to escape to”<sup>63</sup>. Similarly, an Iranian national willing to pursue Turkish citizenship perceives dual citizenship as critical for human rights activists in the region as an easy exit to escape from state pressure<sup>64</sup>. Here, state pressure is reported as coming from both sides — Iran and Turkey — and hence, the exit option applies in both directions. Still, the finding that dual citizenship represents an exit option in the face of state pressure may signal a hindrance to integration for only a very small minority among migrants.

## Conclusions: Diverging Perspectives

What we observe in this research are several important points of variation in the activity dimension of citizenship as it pertains to integration across the three groups of actors analyzed. The host state of Turkey views migrant activity through the lens of criteria to be fulfilled before citizenship can even be entertained. In other words, migrants should already have indicated full economic and social integration — they should already be economically self-sufficient and act in line with the Turkish culture — before the question of citizenship arises. Both sending states and migrants come at the matter from the other end — citizenship is a fundamental prerequisite for any kind of meaningful economic and social participation in Turkey. Hence, the first disparity surfaces with regards to the perception of citizenship as the prize or tool for integration.

The second divergence concerning the activity dimension of citizenship concerns the differing weights placed by the groups on economic, social and political participation. While the general tendency of all three actors is to see integration as synonymous with economic participation, migrants — both those who have acquired dual citizenship and those that have not — still consider social participation to be crucial. Furthermore, the fact that political participation remains a virtual non-issue for the great majority of migrants demonstrates the unevenness between the different modes of migrant activity.

The final divergence regarding dual citizenship activity comes into view with regards to the dual citizenship institution. Even though both sending states and migrants accept that Turkish citizenship is obligatory for integration—a concept dominated by economic participation—it appears that only the host state of Turkey, based on the interview with the Head of General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Office of Turkey, that links dual citizenship with integration as a catalyst and specifically an element that enhances full participation in the economic life of the country. Hence, the core question of this article — i.e., how dual citizenship operates in the scope of integration — is only valid from the host state perspective. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that dual citizenship is neither a barrier to, nor facilitator of, integration in the citizenship dimension of activity in Turkey. Integration, perceived as economic participation by the great majority of the actors, is instead linked to acquisition of citizenship, not dual citizenship.

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63 Menekşe, female, 38, Iranian–Turkish dual citizen.

64 Mona, female, 30, Iranian.