

The Repertoire of Extraterritorial Repression: Diasporas and Home States

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The dynamics of power and resistance increasingly transcend national borders. Whereas the Cold War strategy to restrict cross-border mobility, whether by erecting physical barriers or through fortification and enclosure, still holds to some extent, many authoritarian states are considering other options in light of the high cost of maintaining control over their borders (Tsourapas 2018). Developing diverse forms of transnational authoritarianism, they have become more aggressive in their efforts to hinder diasporas' political engagement. They pursue extraterritorial repression by conducting surveillance through informant networks abroad, threatening and hunting down dissidents, and even holding relatives hostage at home (Cooley and Heathershaw 2017, Glasius 2018).

The 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Kashoggi in Turkey and the poisoning of Russian emigrants in the United Kingdom demonstrates that the targeting of dissidents abroad by authoritarian regimes is a dangerous global phenomenon (Rutzen 2015; Tansey 2016). While this manner of extraterritorial repression is not unprecedented, it has largely remained in the blind spot of scholarly research. On the one hand, diaspora studies overwhelmingly disregard the repressive practices among the home states' diaspora engagement policies. The focus in this field is considerably limited to how the home states "tap" their diasporas overseas as assets in the domains of development and security or "embrace" them in a form of long-distance nationalism (Gamlen 2014, 188). On the other hand, the study of authoritarianism, with more domestic or comparative approaches, overlooks how authoritarian states exert power beyond borders. This "extraterritorial gap" leaves the transnational space of authoritarian governance undertheorized (Dalmasso et al 2018). Emerging scholarship has focused on the repressive tactics devised by contemporary non-democracies to control their diasporas (Cooley & Heathershaw 2017, 191), including interventions on how states seek to control transnational space (Tsourapas 2019), de-territorialized security practices (Moss 2016; Adamson 2018), the exportation of domestic conflicts to abroad (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Baser 2015; Öztürk & Sözeri, 2018), new means of diaspora engagement ((Mencutek & Baser 2018), and new repressive instruments such as social media cyberattacks (Michaelsen 2018).

Adopting the notion of "repertoire," first conceptualized by Charles Tilly (1978), this article engages with the "repertoire of extraterritorial repression," which refers to the diverse skills and tactics comprising the arsenal used by home states to stifle dissent beyond borders. This set of repressive measures is further mobilized to make claims on individuals and

movements in the diaspora. By diverting attention to the repressive side of diaspora engagement, this article argues that home countries also shape the trajectories of their diasporas via repressive policies.

More specifically, it scrutinizes the “global purge” of the Gülen Movement (GM)¹ by the ruling the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) since the 2016 abortive coup, for which the government blamed the GM (Schenkkan 2018). Since the late 1980s, the Turkish state has carried out forms of extraterritorial repression aimed at several other “undesirable” socio-political groups such as Kurds, leftists, and some Islamist groups (Baser 2013; Eccarius-Kelly 2002). Likewise, Turkey’s current repressive practices do not target GM only, but also several opposition figures, including Kurds, liberals, signatories of the Academics for Peace declaration, as well as urban secular Turks, who, discontented with AKP’s “New Turkey,” left the country (Baser et al 2017). Nevertheless, the specific case of the transnational GM underlines one of the most extensive and systematic cases of extraterritorial repression (Taş 2019, 4-6; Watmough and Öztürk 2018). Examining the expansion of Turkey’s transnational authoritarian practices, this paper reflects on how such extraterritorial measures shape the trajectories of GM’s diasporic configurations.

The article begins with a brief overview of AKP-GM relations and their repercussions beyond borders. It then sketches AKP’s diaspora policy and, more specifically, describes the new methodologies designed to oppress the GM members outside Turkey’s borders. After providing a non-exclusive list of Turkey’s repertoire of extraterritorial repression, the next section deals with the impact of this extensive purge and GM’s transnational survival strategies. The article concludes with a short observation linking the case to overall discussions on extraterritorial authoritarianism in the new millennium.

AKP-GM Relations at Home and Abroad

In the beginning, AKP represented hope for Turkey’s democratisation (Insel, 2003). Even though there was some suspicion of its journey (Haynes 2010), AKP gained the support of both the mass public and the liberal socio-political intelligentsia for the expected democratic gains of European Union (EU) harmonization process, particularly in the areas of human rights and civilian control of the military. What was framed as democratisation, however, required a bitter fight against the Kemalist establishment and its military-dominated tutelage system. In this power politics, AKP and GM, despite their different religious lineages, established an unconventional, informal coalition against their common enemy (Öztürk 2019, 89). With this coalition, AKP consolidated its electoral base and gained a strong ally, while GM members rose to powerful bureaucratic positions and expanded their activities abroad.

However, this “strategic alliance” continued with hidden (2010-13) and overt (2013-16) confrontation periods (Taş 2018a, 397-402) as a result of interest-based conflicts, and fundamental disagreements regarding vital issues in Turkey between President Recep Tayyip

¹ While the Gülen Movement is labelled as Fethullah Gülen Terror Organization (FETÖ) by the Turkish state since mid-2015, GM is referred to by its members as *Hizmet* (Service). These two opposite emic and etic depictions – *Hizmet* and FETÖ – reflect the highly polarized and politicized context that also informs scholarly work on the subject. To maintain academic neutrality and critical distance, this article refrains from such value-laden tags and instead employs a neutral term: GM.

Erdoğan and Fethullah Gülen. While AKP tried to neutralize the influence of GM within the state apparatus, GM tried to discredit AKP's legitimacy at home and abroad through its media and civil society organs. Without a doubt, this conflict has affected not only Turkey's multi-layered power play, but also its diaspora politics as well. By instrumentalizing the threat of GM, Erdoğan controlled the party mechanism and transformed it into a personal political apparatus. GM has thus transfigured itself into a socio-political organism that has found itself while coping with a strong political leader. The growing crisis reached a new level after an abrupt event: the 15 July 2016 bloody coup attempt, for which the Turkish state blames Gülen and his followers (Taş 2018b, 5-7). In the aftermath of the 15 July, Erdoğan changed the political system to an *a la turca* presidency and declared himself to be the leader capable of spiriting away Turkey's "enemies" (Ceran, 2019, 180), including GM. This carried the struggle beyond the borders of Turkey since most of GM members tried to avoid the national purge. Erdoğan and Turkey's reach, however, superseded the national and GM members found themselves in a transnational purge.

Turkey's Diaspora Engagement Under AKP Rule

Even though Turkey has been a sending state since the late Ottoman period (Icduygu 1996, 257), the emigration of Kurds, Alevis, and other opposition groups since the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century marked the emergence of new diaspora issues, such as transnationalisation and the import of domestic conflicts (Feron 2013), as well as the transfer of clandestine political resistance networks (Eccarius-Kelly 2002). In addition, the Turkish state's contentious relations with its oppositional diasporic communities have been the subject of various extraterritorial authoritarian methods, such as kidnaping and assassination (Adamson 2013).

In 2002, AKP came to power and aimed at transforming Turkey's diaspora policy from the onset of its rule. On the one hand, it began to revive some of the existing transnational state apparatuses such as the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) (Ozturk 2016). On the other hand, it established new institutions of diaspora engagement, such as the Yunus Emre Institutes and the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities, which could serve diaspora members within a harmony of civil society, private sector, and the state (Baser 2014). The new diaspora management, all fitting within the frames of public diplomacy and soft power, nurtured a kind of long-distance nationalism (Aydin 2016) and Islamic culture. Although the multiplication of instruments and intensification of activities in AKP's diaspora management may be regarded as an improvement for the Turkish state, it could not be considered as a full success story because of its ambivalent and overarching structure. The majority of these institutions and policies served and were conducted with pro-AKP groups and unconventional and informal coalition partners of the AKP governments such as the GM. In stark contrast, following AKP's increasingly authoritarian policies since the 2013 Gezi Protests, the subsequent AKP-GM conflict, and the ensuing 2016 abortive coup, the AKP governments have begun to use its old and new diaspora tools to oppress GM in diaspora. Albeit a predictable outcome, it is their companionship that not only strengthened AKP power but also made AKP, cognizant of most of the GM activities at home and abroad, the most capable actor to pursue that kind of repression.

Turkey's Repertoire of Extraterritorial Repression: Vertical and Horizontal Expansion

Even though Turkey's extraterritorial authoritarian tendencies did not begin under AKP rule, one might claim it has peaked in its transnational fight against GM. More specifically, after the 2016 abortive coup, Turkish authorities initiated an extensive systematic global purge to suppress and root out all diasporic Gülenist formations (Schenkkan 2018). In this all-out war, the state has multiplied its actors, hinting at the vertical expansion of extraterritorial repression: **a)** National Intelligence Organisation (*Milli İstihbarat Teskilati*, MIT); **b)** transnational state apparatuses such as embassies, *Diyanet* and DITIB (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs); **c)** government organised non-governmental organizations (GONGO) and think-tanks such as SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (*Siyaset Ekonomi ve Toplum Arastirmalari Vakfi*); and, **d)** pro-AKP diaspora groups, associations, and members. In this regard, Turkish Intelligence has been carrying out different types of operation on the basis of a new law,² which gives MIT the right to launch overseas operations against enemies of state. To that end, MIT is reported to have employed 800 operatives and 6000 informants in Western Europe alone (Hamberger 2016). Likewise, other transnational apparatuses, most notably *Diyanet*, have been conducting espionage outside their legal boundaries and collecting intelligence on Gülenists (Lıcalı 2016). Beside extending the role of Turkish Intelligence and other bureaucratic or state-affiliated transnational institutions, the utmost important aspect of AKP's diaspora management is its mobilization and incorporation of non-state actors, as well as recruiting their support and participation in its authoritarian policies. These vary from ordinary diaspora members spying on Gülenist suspects in their neighbourhood or mosque congregation to pro-government violent gangs intimidating Gülen followers. As Adamson argues, diasporic non-state groups may also employ illiberal practices featuring everyday forms of authoritarianism, such as pressure for ideological conformity or discouraging opposition (2019).

This vertical expansion parallels a horizontal expansion in the repertoire of Turkey's extraterritorial repression, referring to the intensification and multiplication of instruments used for that purpose. These activities include **a)** abduction and extradition; **b)** confiscation; **c)** targeted violence; **d)** surveillance and profiling; **e)** negation and exclusion; **f)** negative propaganda; and, **g)** the intimidation of relatives in the home country.

Abduction and extradition: The Turkish Police Department demanded that Interpol issue a "red notice" for 60 thousand Gülenists and other opponents abroad; however, Interpol decided refused (*Yeni Şafak* 2017). The Turkish state then opted for overseas intelligence operations and exerting pressure on foreign countries to return targeted Gülenists to Turkey. In the first three years following the 2016 coup attempt, Turkish pressure has led to the extradition of 107 Gülenist suspects from countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Bulgaria, Pakistan, and Sudan (Karadağ 2019). The most notorious case among them is Kosovo, where six Turkish nationals with work and residence permits were arrested after an MIT operation in Pristina and delivered to Turkey via private plane in March 2018. While President Erdoğan's spokesperson Ibrahim Kalın argued that the event in Kosovo took place within the framework of an agreement on the return of criminals, the Kosovo parliamentary commission investigating this deportation found it was in breach of national law and procedures. Ultimately, the Kosovo security chief and interior minister were sacked (*Abval News* 2018). Similarly, the European Court of Human Rights found

² In 2014, with Law 2937, the State Intelligence Service (*Devlet İstihbarat Hizmetleri*) and the Turkish intelligence agency, MIT, were given the power to conduct overseas operations. For details on the law, see; <http://www.mit.gov.tr/2937.html>, last accessed 24 August 2019.

the arrest and extradition of five Gülenist school teachers from Moldova to Turkey as an extra-legal transfer circumventing all guarantees offered by domestic and international law (ECHR 2019). In the case of Malaysia, three men accused of ties to GM were abducted through an intelligence operation in 2017. On 28 May 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Committee asked Turkey to release the suspects and pay compensation for their arbitrary detention (2019).

Confiscation: With GM known to hold a global education network spanning more than 1,000 schools in nearly 160 countries, AKP moved to coopt or destroy the movement's transnational infrastructure. In 2016, the government instituted a new transnational apparatus, the Maarif Foundation, with a clear mission to take over the educational institutions run by GM. Turkey has confiscated and handed over nearly 200 Gülenist overseas schools to the Maarif Foundation with official representation in 52 countries (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2019).

Targeted Violence: Turkey's extraterritorial repression against the Gülenists has not reached acts of murder like the allegedly MIT-related 2013 killing of three Kurdish women activists in Paris. Nevertheless, state officials and pro-AKP groups deliberately targeted Gülenists in diaspora, leading to several cases of lynching, as well as vandalizing of Gülenist institutions. These attempts range from the attack on a cultural centre in Rotterdam to the beating of a Gülen-affiliate, Yavuz Koca, by Turkish consular officials in Essen in 2017 (Ipanews 2017). One should also add numerous cases of harassment, death threats, blacklists of Gülen-affiliated businesses, and calls to boycott their products and services (Carrel and Shalal 2016). In this regard, the Turkish government also appears to have supported some gangs, such as *Osmanen Germania* in Germany, which has been threatening opposition figures and groups (*Spiegel Online* 2017). Such instances of lynching or threats send the message that there is no safe harbour for Gülenists, as Ozan Ceyhan, a Turkish-born former German MEP wrote on social media: "Gülenists in Germany will have many sleepless nights" (De la Baume and Paravicini 2016).

Surveillance and Profiling: In late 2016 and 2017, *Diyanet* and its imams in foreign countries came to the agenda of international policy makers and media due to its covert intelligence activities targeting suspected followers of the GM. A German investigation revealed *Diyanet* imams gathering intelligence and profiling their congregation across countries from continental Europe to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2017). Six Turkish imams, for instance, have been withdrawn from Germany upon spying allegations (Kazim 2017). Even though German prosecutors dropped the probe, the authorities in some countries, such as Belgium and the Netherlands announced they would take legal and political actions to curb *Diyanet's* intelligence activities (*Deutsche Welle* 2017). Beyond these espionage activities of Turkey's transnational state apparatuses, Turkey has extended the spying activities into the level of the ordinary pro-AKP diaspora members. For instance, Turkish Intelligence developed a smart phone application, which can be used to reveal GM members to Ankara, for mostly Turkish diaspora members in Germany. In 2019, the existence of this application was revealed in a report of Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV). The same report also alleged that some pro-AKP diaspora organizations were collecting intelligence in the service of MIT (*Intelnews* 2019). More broadly, digital surveillance of dissidents and activists through email intrusions, hacking, and regular monitoring of social media posts has reinforced authoritarian information control beyond borders (Michaelson 2018). While the scope and success of such practices are unknown, they suggest the import of domestic conflict in the form of extraterritorial repression.

Negation and Exclusion: Not only before the coup attempt, but even right after the 17-25 December 2013 corruption investigations in Turkey, Turkish foreign representative offices (embassies and consulates) as gatekeepers have denied GM affiliates fundamental services while facilitating their return for the purpose of repression at home. After the coup attempt, the Turkish Foreign Ministry officially defined GM as a terror organization on its website and positioned itself as a *Krieger* against the GM.³ In parallel, other Turkish transnational state apparatuses and almost all non-GM Turkish diaspora organizations and associations have cut their services, as well as collaboration or cooperation with Gülenists due to GM's new negative reputation.

Negative propaganda: In addition to the forceful measures employed by AKP to intimidate Gülenist diasporans, it also actively pursued a campaign securitizing and defaming GM. Institutional outposts, such as embassies and consulates have promoted and defended AKP policies more forcefully after the 2016 abortive coup. While several pro-AKP civil society associations took a leading role in this negative propaganda and lobbying, some of their activities were carried out in close cooperation with Turkish state authorities. Among these associations, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (*Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı*, SETA) is the most prominent actor with its large international organisational capacity and large researcher staff, organising conferences in politically important metropolises, such as Brussels, London, and Washington DC, as well as publishing extensive reports on GM activities abroad.⁴

Intimidation of Relatives at Home Country: Contemporary non-democracies aim to neutralize dissent abroad or pressure activists to return home by threatening their significant others in the home country (Moss 2016, 482). While Turkey's post-coup purge largely relied on collective punishment and guilt by association (European Commission 2016, 9), this also covered the detention of the relatives of Gülenists abroad. In the famous case of Enes Kanter, NBA player and a self-admitted Gülenist, for instance, Kanter's family home was raided, his dentist was imprisoned, and the government even arrested a man after his child took a photograph with Kanter (Whiteside 2019).

The Making and Re-Making of the Gülenist Diaspora

In the aftermath of the 2016 abortive coup, the Turkish state carried out a massive crackdown of GM, detaining at least 160,000 people, of which over 77,000 were formally arrested for alleged terror links (Taş 2018b). With even more Gülenists fired from their jobs and thousands of affiliated schools and firms seized by the state, Gülenists themselves admit that the movement has no future in Turkey (Ashdown 2018). Given the dire circumstances in the home country, Fethullah Gülen encouraged his followers to leave Turkey and unite under the umbrella of 'Hizmet Diaspora' (Kızılkoyun 2016). Either through regular or irregular means, many Gülenists have been fleeing at any cost, seeking asylum in Europe. According to Eurostat figures, the

³ For details, see the official web-site of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/feto.tr.mfa>, last accessed 24 August 2019.

⁴ For the SETA report on Gülenists in the UK, see; https://setav.org/assets/uploads/2018/03/R104_FetoUK.pdf, last accessed 25 August 2019. For the SETA report on the Gülenist in Germany, see; <https://www.setav.org/rapor-almanyada-feto-yapilanmasi-ve-almanyanin-feto-politikasi/>, last accessed 25 August 2019.

number of first-time asylum seekers from Turkey increased five-fold in the European Union, from 4,165 such applications in 2015 to 21,955 in 2018 – leading to a total of 42,530 applications since the 2016 coup attempt – with the of majority of applicants coming from GM (Figure 1). The Movement has established solidarity networks such as the Berlin-based Refugee Support Action (*Aktion für Flüchtlingshilfe*) to help newcomers get settled and find language courses and jobs.

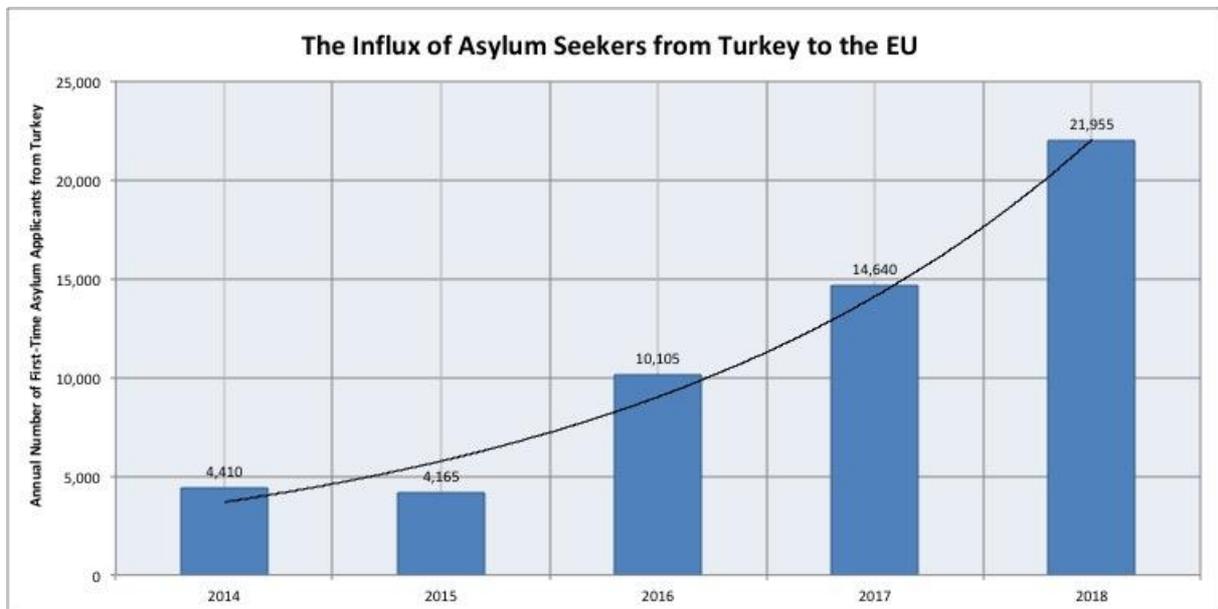


Figure 1: Second Author's own illustration, based on Eurostat data [<http://bit.ly/2vK3gWI>]

Nevertheless, as Moss points out, emigration does not necessarily entail a full exit from authoritarianism (2016, 481). AKP's extraterritorial repression affected GM's trajectory in several ways. The persecution at home and abroad, including the confiscation of hundreds of schools and nearly a thousand firms, cut off the Movement's financial resources, which had previously been used to subsidize its overseas activities. With this diminished cash flow and new burden of helping its members in exile, GM ceased many of its transnational operations and downsized its institutional structure significantly (Sadar 2018). With AKP's active engagement with the Turkish diaspora and intense propaganda, the Movement's support base also shrank significantly. In Germany, for instance, the estimated number of Gülen sympathizers dropped from 100,000–150,000 to 60,000–80,000 people, and several schools and tutoring centers were shut down (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2017; Karakoyun 2018: 36).

Moreover, whereas GM was more present in the Global South, the vulnerability of these countries to AKP's pressure impelled GM to invest more in democratic European countries with relative protection beyond the Turkish state's reach. Germany, with a total of 21,440 first-time applicants between August 2016 and December 2018, is the top destination in which Turkey citizens seek asylum most (Figure 2). Many Gülenists see Germany as their 'new hub' (Köhne and Siefert 2018). According to the dataset provided by the United Nations Refugee Agency, covering the same period, the main non-European host countries are again democratic powerful countries such as the United States (2,988 applicants), Canada (3,521 applicants), Japan (1,932 applicants), and Australia (448 applicants).

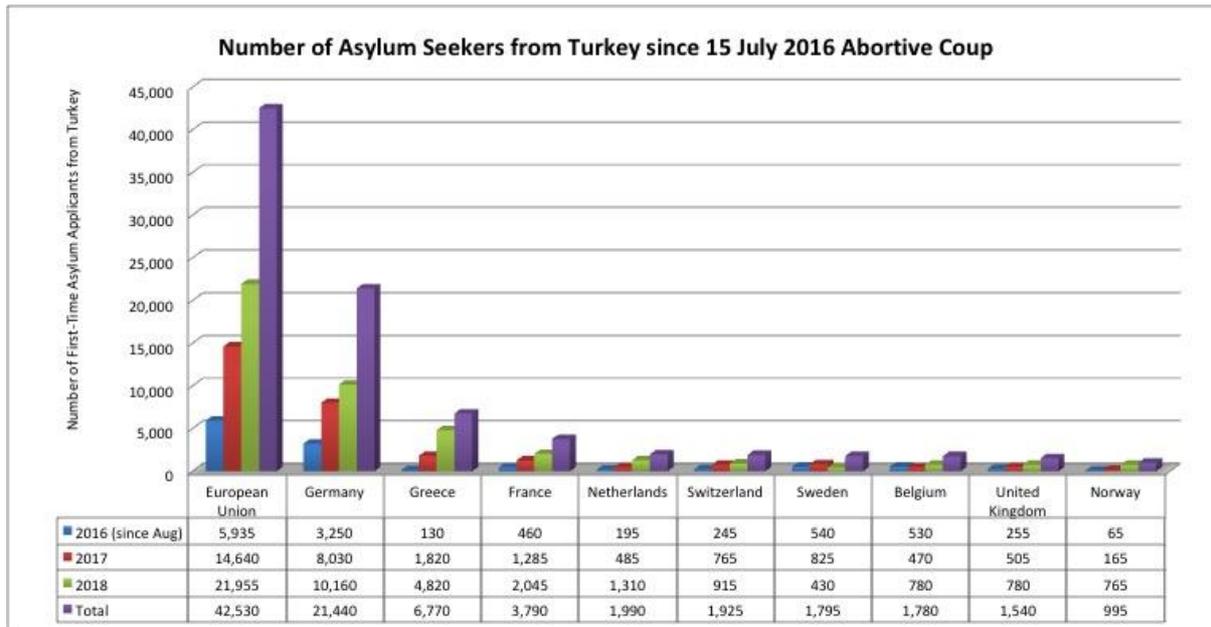


Figure 2: Second Author's own illustration, based on Eurostat data [<http://bit.ly/2vK3gWI>]

AKP's active diaspora policy has had divergent effects on the Turkish diaspora and host countries. On the one hand, it left GM totally isolated from Turkish migrant communities, either because they share AKP's view on the Movement or fear being affiliated with GM and its ensuing risks of repression. This isolation and polarization not only exacerbate the intra-diaspora conflicts, but also limits the options for GM and impels it to integrate better into the new setting. On the other hand, contrary to what AKP hoped for, cases of extraterritorial repression strengthen GM's victim status from the perspective of host countries, attributing greater legitimacy for its public presence (Taş 2019). GM has already thrived on the tide of widespread anti-Erdoğan sentiments in the West, yet the intimidation and pressure of Gülenist diasporans enable the Movement to hide its earlier wrongdoings from the spotlight despite the abundance of circulating criticisms against it.

Conclusion

Whereas politically engaged opposition diasporas seek ways to bring political change to their homeland, states invest more in their diasporic communities so as to incorporate them in their domestic projects. With the transnationalization of political activism, suppression of dissent at home is an insufficient solution for non-democratic regimes' survival or stability. In the case of AKP-GM conflict, Erdoğan was well aware that domestic suppression was not enough to decapitate GM, but he had to cut all the veins of this transnational movement. For this purpose, he waged a massive campaign, expanding its extraterritorial repression vertically (multiplying the actors and institutions) and horizontally (intensifying and multiplying the instruments).

Repertoires are not static, but in constant formation in the diverse forms of repression. AKP not only remodelled its already existing institutions (e.g. granting Turkish Intelligence the right to carry out overseas operations), but also invented new ones such as the Maarif Foundation, specifically designed to take up the role of the GM's educational network. Beside this dexterity, just as transnational activists learn from each other, authoritarian states imitate each

other, leading to the diffusion of extraterritorial repressive policies. Further research needs to be done to explore how the repertoire of extraterritorial repression are re-shaped and circulated.

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