

THE TURKISH DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ROLE IN PROMOTING TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Although the Turkish-American population in the United States is relatively small compared to other immigrant groups, they are becoming increasingly influential in promoting Turkish interests in their new country. According to the 1990 census, the Turkish population in the US numbers about 100.000, but the real figure is well above official statistics. Turks now constitute a part of almost all major American cities. Despite growing Turkish visibility in American society, however, the Turkish-American population remains largely unknown and undocumented. Questions about their socio-economic status, their integration in American society, their relations with other groups, their organizations, the interest they have in Turkish-American affairs, and, most importantly, the role they play in promoting Turkish culture and Turkish interests in the United States have not yet been examined. The purpose of this paper is thus to provide historical background on Turkish immigration to the US; examine recent trends in the growing Turkish population by using socio-economic and demographic statistics; provide contextual information about their relations with other minorities and local communities; and finally, offer some conclusions and suggestions concerning how the Turkish diaspora in the US can be mobilized in order to improve Turkish-American relations and to better promote Turkish interests in the United States.

KEYWORDS

Turkish Diaspora; Turkish Immigration; Turkish-Americans.

1. Introduction

One of the first representatives of the United States in İstanbul, John Porter Brown, wrote in the mid-19th century that;

Notwithstanding the Ottoman Empire is an European government, and not farther from the center of Europe than St. Petersburg is, still but little is known respecting it to general readers. It has, therefore, been regarded as barbarous government, and containing a people almost beyond the bounds of civilized life. Less correct information is therefore, possessed by Europeans, on the subject of Turkey, than any other country in Europe; -and many of numerous books which yearly appear on Turkey and the Turks, are written for sale, and not for the purpose of imparting facts respecting the government or the people. They are intended to amuse, and not to instruct; to benefit the writer, and not the reader.¹

Despite the fact that Ottoman Empire collapsed and a new modern republican government was established by the great reformist Atatürk in the image of western civilization at the turn of this century, one can still regrettably see that the image of Turks and government of Turkey in the western public opinion including the US has not improved considerably. The vast Turkish Diaspora in the European cities is subject to many attacks by the nationalist groups, Turkey's candidacy to the European Union (EU) is only reluctantly recognized by European leaders after a long delay, and the American Congress from time to time takes up the issue of so-called controversial Armenian genocide, although successive American administrations often repeat that Turkey is one of its strategic partners. Obviously, Turkey suffers from what can be called an image problem abroad and needs to take important steps in changing centuries old prejudices and biases in the minds of western intellectuals and ordinary people alike.

Undoubtedly, in a globalizing world direct, face-to-face communication between the people of different countries serves as a potential force for dismantling ancient prejudices. Beyond the inter-governmental relations, the Turkish Diaspora in the west is a

¹From, C. C. Conn, *John Porter Brown, Father of Turkish-American Relations, an Ohian at the Suplime Port, 1832-1872*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, The Ohio State University, 1973, John P. Brown, "Notes on Ottoman Empire", *Scioto Gazette*, March 24, 1852.

valuable and unignorable power for the purpose of creating a new image of Turks and in improving bilateral relations between Turkey and western capitals. Although a number of studies on Turks recently coming out of academic institutions in Europe, most of which in Germany, very little studies are available on the Turkish Diaspora in the United States.² Perhaps this is because Turkish population in the US has not until recently reached a critical number and is scattered around the vast American cities from New York to Los Angeles.

Although the Turkish-American population in the United States is relatively small compared to other immigrant groups, they are becoming increasingly influential in promoting Turkish interests in their new country. According to the 1990 census, the Turkish population in the US numbers about less than 100,000, but the real figure is well above official statistics. Turks now constitute a part of almost all major American cities. Despite growing Turkish visibility in American society, however, the Turkish American population remains largely unknown and undocumented. Questions about their socio-economic status, their integration in American society, their relations with other groups, their organizations, the interest they have in Turkish American affairs, and most importantly, the roles they play in promoting Turkish culture and Turkish interests in the United States have not yet been examined.

The purpose of this paper is to begin to answer these questions. First, after providing historical background on Turkish immigration to the US, it will examine recent trends in the growing Turkish population by using socio-economic and demographic statistics published by government agencies. Second, it will use a mail survey of a Turkish community conducted in a Midwest metropolitan area (in Cleveland-Akron, Ohio), which has a

²In addition to Frank Ahmed's well-known book, *Turks in America, The Ottoman Turks' Immigration Experience*, Greenwich, Conn., Columbia International, 1986, the following two recent studies might provide a short but solid background for interested readers. Kemal Karpat, "Turks in America", *Less Annales de l'Autre Islam*, No. 3, 1995, pp. 231-252; Barbara J. Bilge, *Variations in Family Structure and Organization in the Turkish Community of Southeastern Michigan and Adjacent Canada*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, 1985.

population of around five hundred. In addition, interviews with the Turkish community leaders in the region are also used to provide more contextual information about their relations with other minorities and local communities. Finally based on the findings, it will draw some conclusions and suggestions concerning how the Turkish Diaspora in the US can be mobilized in order to improve Turkish-American bilateral relations and to better promote Turkish interests in the United States.

2. The History of Turkish Immigration to the United States

From the last quarter of the 20th century to the World War I, thousands of people (Greeks, Armenians, and many Balkan peoples) escaped from crumbling Ottoman Empire to the United States. Although most of the immigrated people were belonging to Christian subjects of the empire, among them were also a small proportion of Muslims.³ Speaking Turkish, Kurdish, Albanian, or Serbian, Muslims settled in the major American cities "constituting a stigmatized minority."⁴ Since the American statistics did not classify the immigrants by race but country of origin, real number of ethnic Turks who came from Anatolia to the North America is not reliable. According to the official US statistics, in the period from 1820 to 1920, roughly 1,2 million people fled Ottoman lands for settling in the North America. According to Karpat, at least 15 percent of them (200, 000) were Muslims, including 50,000 ethnic Turks. However, because of the fear that they might be discriminated, most of them concealed their true identity and declared themselves as Syrians or Armenians so that they might gain easy access to the US.⁵

Most of the ethnic Turks entered the US before the world war started when American policies were more liberal. Since the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the German side, the US-Turkish diplomatic relations were severed thus halting any immigration from Anatolia. Nevertheless, some considerable number of ethnic Turks and Muslims from Balkans immigrated and settled permanently in the US. After the war, Turkish

³Karpat, "Turks in America.", p. 233.

⁴Bilge, *Variations in Family Structure*, p. 69.

⁵Ibid.

immigration resumed in the 1920s. With the help of American College at Harput (Elazı]] some 10,000 workers went to the US.⁶ After 1925, the US immigration policy changed. A new law enacted by the Congress in 1925 imposed a national quota system. Until its dismantling in 1965, the quota allotted to Turkey just 100 immigrants per year. Moreover, new Turkish government, which lost many of its young and productive population in the wars, discouraged its citizens to leave the country. As a result Turkish immigration to the US in 50 years from 1930s to 1980s was only about 29,000 people, which is a very low figure if we knew that total number in this period was 15 million.

Table 1: Immigrants Admitted to the US by Region and Country of Birth: Turkey

Years	Number	Years	Number
1821-1840	27	1921-1940	34,889
1841-1860	142	1941-1960	4,317
1861-1880	535	1961-1965	4,330
1881-1900	34,207	1966-1975	18,744
1901-1920	291,435	1976-1985	20,865

Source: 1975 *Annual Report: Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976; and 1996 *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1997.

Available sources, although limited, on the socio-economic status and characteristics of the early Turkish community in the US agree that most of them were rural, illiterate, poor and demonstrated a considerable degree of solidarity trying to maintain their traditions.⁷ Sabiha Sertel who studied sociology in America in the early 1920s, for instance, reports that Turks in America consisted of unskilled workers who mostly worked in hard jobs such as in iron factories, leather industry, soap factories and auto-plants.⁸ A recent study on early Turkish immigrant community in the Detroit area documents that most of the immigrants knew no English and were unskilled by the standards of the US labor

⁶Karpat, "Turks in America.", p. 234.

⁷Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi*, 1919-1950, Istanbul, 1969, p. 42.

⁸Ibid., p. 42.

market they were to encounter.⁹ Before the World War I, Detroit hosted the largest Ottoman Muslim community in the US, including 2000 Turks. According to a recent document uncovered by the author in the Ohio state archives, there were about 500 Turkish immigrants working in Cleveland, Ohio, in the same years.¹⁰ The document provides information that supports the findings of the other studies cited above. Also New York city almanac of 1938 reports that Turks in the city numbered 30,000 in 1930.¹¹

Many of the early Turkish immigrants, however, did not intent to settle in the United States but wanted to accumulate some wealth to have a more luxurious life after returning to their native country. According to Karpát, at least one third of the Christians and more than half of the Muslim immigrants from Ottoman territories returned to their homelands.¹² Thus many Turks went back home after the new Turkish Republic in Anatolia established. In the 1970s, Bilge was able to find only two dozens of old Turkish immigrants out of 2000 in Detroit area.¹³ The document in Ohio archives reports that only 100 Turks (out of 500) left in Cleveland in the 1940s. One important reason forcing Turks to return their native lands was the lack of suitable women to marry in America. Other studies also agree that a high majority of the early Turks in America were single men without family. These conservative and traditional Anatolian men found it inappropriate to wed an "unbeliever" American woman. If somebody had dared to marry a non-Muslim woman, he had to be left alone.¹⁴ Another reason was the lack of social organizations and a network to integrate the immigrants to the new society.

⁹Bilge, p. 73

¹⁰Writers' Program (Ohio): "Turks", in *The Peoples of Cleveland Ethnic Group Histories Manuscript, 1939-1942*, pp. 237-240. Ohio State Archives and Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

¹¹*New York Panorama: A Comprehensive View of the Metropolis*, New York City, NY: Random House, , 1938, p. 117.

¹²Karpát, "Turks in America", p. 234.

¹³Barbara Bilge, "Turkish-American Patterns of Intermarriages", in Barbara C. Aswad and Barbara Bilge (eds.), *Family and Gender among American Muslims*, Philadelphia, PA, Temple University Press, 1996, p. 65.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

In contrast to other Ottoman subjects such as Syrians, Greeks and Armenians (all Christians), who easily managed to adjust the new life styles and found their cultural centers and local networks, Turkish immigrants failed to create long standing social organizations to help future Turkish immigrants to integrate into the American society. Several factors explain the failure of Turkish immigrants to establish a durable ethnic community. Many Muslim Turks lacked a sense of community and cultural affinity with the US. As Karpat stated, "they looked upon America as a culturally alien land where they had been driven by sheer necessity and where they wanted to stay as little time as possible."¹⁵ Moreover, because of their association with the last traditional Islamic state to threaten the bastions of the Western Christendom, "Turks were the most feared and despised of all the Muslims."¹⁶ Turks' already bad image was magnified with the stories carried by non-Muslim minorities of the Ottoman Empire who were constantly flowing to the US cities. Because of lack of enlightened leadership or perhaps due to the hostile environment, Turks in America remained as passive and silent immigrant group. As Halman emphasized, they had more interest in preserving their cultural traditions than participating in American life.¹⁷

Despite this judgment, however, early Turkish Diaspora in America did create some organizations and involved in community affairs, even sometimes taking initiatives to promote Turkish interests in the US. They, for instance, organized Turkish Aid Society (*Türk Teavün Cemiyeti*) centered in New York but had branches in Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, and other places where Turks lived. In 1922, the first branch of the Red Crescent (*Hilal-i Ahmer*) in the US was opened by the Turkish community in Detroit.¹⁸ These aid societies were helping funerals and collecting money for the community affairs. Turks in America, for instance, collected a considerable amount of money in support for the Turkish Nationalist struggle in the 1920s.¹⁹ Again when a major

¹⁵Karpat, "Turks in America", p. 236.

¹⁶Bilge, p. 56.

¹⁷Talat S. Halman, "Turks", in Thernstorm, Stephen (ed.). *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980, pp. 992-996.

¹⁸Bilge, p. 56.

¹⁹Sertel, *Roman Gibi*, p. 45.

earthquake destroyed lives of the thousands of people in Erzincan in the late 1930s, the Turkish Diaspora sent out a 25000 dollars for the victims in the homeland. According to a New York City Almanac, the Turkish Aid Society in the 1930s, also published a monthly bulletin. During the same years, Syrians had three Arabic dailies and a semi-monthly magazine while Armenians had one daily newspaper, and two weeklies, which were propagating nationalist and anti-Turkish ideas.²⁰

In the early years of the Turkish Republic, Turks took great pride in the international recognition of new republic in Anatolia. They always celebrated the national holidays such as Independence Day. The visit of *Gülcehal* vessel to the US in 1923 was welcomed by a big crowd of Turks from all over the US turning the visit to a national event.²¹ It seemed that with a new spirit at the home, the Turks in America became more active. In support of the new Republican government in Turkey, Turks in America with the sponsorship of Turkish Welfare Association in New York prepared a six page memorandum addressed to the US administration and Congress leaders, titled *To the Leaders of the Country of the Free: A Brief from the Turks in America*. The brief dated to 1924 appeals to the congressmen to ratify "The Treaty of Amity and Commerce" signed in Lausanne between the US government and the new Ankara government in Turkey.²² The content of the letter refutes the Greek and Armenian allegations and argues that Turkish-American relations should be re-established on the basis of mutual interest. It refers to the fact that Turks in America are law-abiding and tax paying citizens, that they involve in very little criminal activities, and that the new democratic government in Turkey deserves to be praised and supported by peace loving American government. It is not clear whether they also organized a concerted effort to persuade individual members of the Congress, because the Lausanne treaty was not ratified until 1927, when an entirely new treaty of trade was signed between the two countries; nevertheless, this could be considered the first lobbying attempt in modern sense

²⁰*New York Panorama*, pp. 116-117.

²¹Sertel, p. 43.

²²Turkish Welfare Association, Inc., *To the Leaders of the Country of the Free: A brief from the Turks in America*. New York, Turkish Welfare Association, no date. P?

by then a small Turkish community in the US on behalf of the newly established Republican government in Turkey.

3. Changing Characteristics of Turkish Population in the US Since the Second World War

After the Second World War, in the wake of improving Turkish-American relations and with the dismantling of quota system in 1965, a new wave of Turkish immigration started. In contrast to many immigrants who came to the US because of religious or political oppressions, the main reason for many Turks was economic and educational opportunities.²³ For instance starting with 1969, hundreds of Turkish tailors came to US, many located in Rochester, New York, where they opened a school and built a mosque creating a true Turkish community.²⁴ Similarly, some people from Yaşlıdere (Giresun) area immigrated to US and Canada settled in scattered areas of New York, New Jersey and Toronto. According to 1990 census statistics, New York was the leading state with about 20,000 Turkish population, followed by California (13, 000), New Jersey (7,519), Florida (5,809), Texas (3,273), Illinois (2, 778), Virginia (2,673), Pennsylvania (2,430), Maryland (2,366), Massachusetts (2,336), and Ohio (2147). Even in Alaska there were 66 Turks.²⁵

Table 2: Immigrants from Turkey, 1987-1997

1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
1,596	1,642	2,007	2,468	2,528	2,488	2,204	1,840	2,947	3,657	3,145

Source: *1996 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1997.

²³D. Altschiller, "Turks", in J. Galens, A. Sheets, R. V. Young (eds.), *Gale Encyclopedia of Multicultural America*, Vol. 2, Detroit, MI, Gale Research, 1995, pp. 1364-1368.

²⁴Karpat, "Turks in America", p. 250; Bilge, p. 56.

²⁵*1996 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1997.

In the last decade of the 20th century the number of both legal and illegal immigrants from Turkey steadily increased. Thus, although statistics show that from 1987-1997, 2000 to 3000 Turks have immigrated each year to the US legally, the unknown number of illegal immigrants should also be taken into account (see Table 2). In recent years, for example, growing Turkish community captured the attention of *The New York Times*, which carried special reports on Turks in New York. An underground network of Turks can be found in the major American cities including New York, New Jersey, Texas, Chicago, and Virginia. Typically many Turks enter the US legally at the first place with tourist visas and student exchange visas but after a while they become illegal immigrants when their visas expired. In addition, number of Turks come to US illegally each year, quite a lot of them by escaping from the ships visiting New York harbor. According to 1997 Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) report some 5 million illegal immigrants were working in America, half of them being Mexicans, but there must be some Turks as well. Many Turks initially find jobs in informal sectors in restaurants, gasoline stations, truck industry, and in other service jobs.²⁶ In two adjacent states, New Jersey and New York, Turks are increasingly taking over gas stations. In Long Island, for instance, Turks own more than 150 of them.²⁷ Although Turks have not created strong local organizations, they tend to use local stores and coffee houses as social clubs creating a network from ear to ear.²⁸ Perhaps there is no "little Turkey" yet, one can find in Brooklyn, Sunnyside, in Long Island (NY), and in Paterson (NJ) an embryonic form of Turkish community in America. One can predict that growing economic crises and political instability in Turkey may push more Turks to the US in coming years.

Apart from unskilled illegal immigrants, the post-World War II Turkish community in the US generally consists of affluent and

²⁶N. Tokatlı, *Imported, Informalized and Place-Bound Labor: Turkish Immigrant Community in Paterson, New Jersey*, Unpublished Ph.D.dissertation, Rutgers State University of New Jersey-New Brunswick, 1991, p. 6.

²⁷C. Singer, "Turkish Immigrants Strike Gold at Gas Stations", *The New York Times*, February 17, 1991.

²⁸P. Belluck, "In the Queens Mosaic, A Turkish Inlay; Community Takes Roots in Sunnyside", *The New York Times*, April 2, 1996.

highly educated people (brain drain community) including many engineers, doctors and other professionals. Unlike the early Turkish immigrants, the more recent immigrants have a high rate of literacy, and their return rate is very low. Both Halman and Karpat agree that the median income level of current Turkish community is relatively high.²⁹ These professionals constitute the nucleus of the Turkish community in the US. They organize meetings, promote Turkish interests, and actively involve in encountering any attacks directed against Turks and Turkey. Among the leading umbrella organization is ATAA, Assembly of Turkish American Associations, consisting of 54 independent organizations established by local Turkish communities in various cities in the US. Many of them maintain their web sites and each have members not more than 500. The major newspaper published by Turks now is biweekly *The Turkish Times* published by ATAA in Washington, DC.

A new active group promoting Turkish interests is Turkish Students Associations at various American universities. Approximately 10,000 Turkish students were studying in various higher education institutions in the US in 1998-1999.³⁰ 30% of all the students were studying engineering, 20 % business and the rest are in social sciences, mathematics, and computer departments. In 1999, there were 825 Turkish professors in the US higher educational institutions. (Dipnot verebilir misin?) Recently, local Turkish student associations were incorporated under the ATSA-Assembly of Turkish American Associations. Students actively involve in community affairs by organizing meetings and advocating Turkish interests at the local levels. With the advance of internet technology, which is widely used for communication and dissemination of information, Turkish communities in the US now are much more connected.

Besides, every year tens of thousands of Turkish citizens visit the United States. Now, Turkish Airlines has regular daily flights to three major American cities, namely New York, Chicago and Miami. In the fiscal year of 1997, for example, 64,000 Turkish citizens entered the US with various types of visas. In fact non-

²⁹Halman, "Turks", p. 994; Karpat, "Turks in America", p. 249.

³⁰Aydın Candabak, Aydın. "ABD'de Okuyan Gençlerimiz", *Hürriyet*, May 22, 2000.

immigrant visitors from Turkey have been a steady increase in the last decade. The number was only 16,000 in 1985, which was more than doubled to 34,000 in 1990, and reached to 46,000 and 54,000 in 1995 and 1996, respectively.³¹ Some unknown number of them stayed over after their visas expire, thus becoming members of five million illegal or "out of status" immigrant population in the US.

As can be seen from the Table 2 above Turkish population in the US is growing faster than before. In the Fiscal Year of 1997 alone, some 4,569 people from Turkey became legal immigrants in the US including the US State Department's Diversity Visa program (with a quota of a little more than 1,000 people a year), and 1,241 Turkish citizens naturalized to the US citizenship in the same year (see Table 3). Most of the immigrants were immediate relatives of the American citizens (1,947), others were either based on family preferences (524), employment based preferences (445), or benefited from Diversity Visa program (1425).

Table 3: Turkish Citizens Naturalized to the United States Citizenship (1988-97)

1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
1,242	1,085	1,214	1,349	1,124	1,229	1,655	1,559	1,885	1,341

Source: 1996 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1997.

Available statistical data on the socio-economic characteristics of recent Turkish immigrants support the observation of many scholars cited in previous pages. In table 4, occupational status of Turkish immigrants in the fiscal year 1997 is presented. Among those who declared having an occupation professional, technical and managerial skills lead in the list followed by support persons, craft and repair workers, and general laborers. The post-war trend of "brain-drain" seems to be continuing. The unskilled immigrants, most probably consist of those who were lucky in green card lotteries.

³¹1997 Statistical Yearbook, p. 147.

Table 4: Turkish Immigrants by Major Occupation Group in the Fiscal Year 1997

Occupation Categories	Number of People
Professional, technical	500
Executive, administrative and managerial	196
Sales	63
Administrative support	106
Precision production, craft and repair	151
Operator fabricator and laborer	94
Farming, fishing and forestry	17
Service	273
No occupation	1,745
Total	3145

Source: *1996 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1997.

In order to reach more reliable conclusions about the socio-economic status of Turkish Diaspora in the US, however, further survey data and case studies are necessary. Thus in the following pages, we will focus on a flourishing Turkish community in midwest metropolitan (Cleveland-Akron) area.

4. The Sample

Survey data on the Turkish immigrants in America is not available. Since Turks in America live in various parts of vast American geography, designing a survey study aiming to represent whole Turkish population in the US will not be feasible. Hence, this article drew the sample from Turkish immigrant population who live within the greater Cleveland-Akron metropolitan area in Ohio. During my six-year stay in the area as a graduate student between 1994-2000, I met many of the members of the community in national and religious holidays and TASNO (Turkish American Society of Northeastern Ohio) meetings. According to Mehmet Gencer, president of the (TASNO), Turkish population in the area is about 500. There are three major universities (Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland State University and Akron University) in the area, each hosting about 30 graduate students from Turkey. As touched on previously, the document I obtained from Ohio State Archives shows that in Cleveland alone Turkish

immigrants reached to 468 people in the early 1920s. They opened a branch of Turkish Aid Society in the city and operated at least two Turkish coffee houses functioning as social clubs for the community. However, later on many of them either returned home or moved out other cities dwindling the society each year. Nobody in the community knew whether any member of the old community survived in the region or any of them buried in the city cemeteries.

The new community consists of "brain drain" population from Turkey who settled in the area in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of them are highly educated professionals. There are doctors working in the Cleveland Clinic Hospitals (one of the leading health institutions in the US that is visited by many Turkish leading figures each year), some are engineers who also work in NASA's local research center and in the local companies. The TASNO actively involves in local community affairs: Members organize Sunday schools for teaching Turkish language and culture, the TASNO sponsored folklore team participate in local occasions such as at international dinners. President Gencer is also a well-known figure in the community who represents Turks in the Cleveland World Council, which regularly organizes conferences and meetings in the city. After August 17 earthquake of 1999 in Turkey, the TASNO led a massive aid drive in the city, which collected more than 100,000 dollars and other materials that were personally delivered to the victims in Turkey by a task-force team organized by the Turkish community.

5. Data Gathering Method

The primary method of gathering data for this study has been survey method and in-depth interviews with leading figures in the Turkish immigrant society. Instead of conducting a face-to-face interviews, the questionnaire distributed through internet. Also, many Turks were contacted by hand-delivering the questionnaires. The survey intended to explore how the Turkish immigrants were getting on with American society, what were their socio-cultural characteristics, what was the level of their relations with their homeland, to what extend they were interested in Turk-American affairs, and what they did to promote Turkish interests in their new country. The questionnaire was distributed twice through the

TASNO's e-mail list, which was the main medium of communication for the Turkish community. There were 175 e-mail addresses in the list, which sometimes included two or more addresses from the same family members. The participants were requested to fill out only one questionnaire from each household. Consequently, 33 people filled out and returned the questionnaires via email, fax, or by handing in personally. The answers were coded and entered into spreadsheet electronic data files and analyzed.

6. Analysis

Socio-economic characteristics of the sample population provided evidence that a majority of the Turkish community in the area were consist of relatively younger generation (median age group = 46), with only a quarter was 45 years and older. The longest staying person in the community was 32 years and mean year of stay was 13 years indicating relatively new nature of Turkish immigrants in the region.

Table 5: Demographics of the Sample Population Drawn from Turkish Community in Cleveland-Akron, Ohio, USA (N=33)

Years of stay in the US	in %
5 years or less	24
6 years to 10 years	30
11 to 25 years	24
26 years and more	22
Age groups	
18 to 25 years	6
26 to 35 years	46
36 to 45 years	21
45 to 55 years	12
55 and older	15
Gender	
Male	73
Female	27
Education	
Middle School or lower	3
High School	12
University	3
Graduate degree	82

The educational level of sample provided further evidence for the argument that recent Turkish immigrant group mostly composed of highly educated sectors of the society, which was an indication of continuing "brain-drain" from Turkey. Although admittedly there might be a bias toward highly educated groups in the sample because it was taken via email communication, it does not change the fact that Turks in America now constitute highly literate, well educated, and highly skilled labor force.

Table 6: Motivation for Immigration, Spoken Language, and Employment Status

Primary Reason for Coming to the US	in %
For education	84
For starting a business in America	6
For finding a better job	6
For other reasons	9
Language is usually spoken at home	
English	34
Turkish	66
Employment Status	
Holding a professional job	67
Holding an office job	9
Businessman	3
Manual worker	6
Student	12
Frequency of visits to Turkey	
More than one in a year	9
Once a year	33
Every other year	45
Every three year or less	12
How long will you stay in the US	
I intent to live in the US for rest of my life	21
I intent to return Turkey after a while	36
Depends on circumstances	39

The data in the Table 6 bear out the judgment of Artsciller, Karpat, and Bilge (cited above) that the main reason for many Turks for coming to US was economic and educational opportunity. In the sample, 84 percent came for education and 67

percent work in professional jobs. Most Turks maintain close contacts with their homeland by visiting once a year (33%) or every other year (45%). Deeply ingrained patriotic feelings toward mainland seems to be very strong among the respondents, because only a mere 21 percent intent to settle in the US and spend the rest of their lives there. This rate come close to early immigrants' experience from Turkey, a great majority of whom returned their country after making enough money.

The Turkish Diaspora in America is very much attentive to the political developments in the homeland. A great majority of respondents (85%) closely follow political developments in Turkey; sports is also a unifying and binding factor among the Turkish community. Many respondents attend "some or all" the community-organized meetings at the local level.

When asked "if any issue arises against the interest of Turkey or Turkish community in the United States (such as Armenian genocide allegations, or Cyprus issue), how do you react", the most common way they employ is talking people around them (Table 7). They also write letters to politicians or share their opinions via internet. In fact using internet is now so commonly employed that any new development is immediately spread out by news lists, and is intensely debated. Many Turks seem to identify themselves with white Americans (42%), but some find themselves closer to Hispanics, Pakistanis, Asian immigrants, Arabs and even Greeks. Most respondents (78%) did not feel discriminated in any way in America, which shows that they are well integrated to the mainstream American life.

Table 7: Community Involvement, Integration to the Society and Interest in Turkish American affairs

	in %
What kinds of news are you most interested in Turkey	
Political developments	85
Sport	9
Not at all	6
How often do you attend local community meetings	
I attend all of them	6
I attend most of them	21
I attend some of them	39
I attend at least once a year	12
Never have time to attend	15
How do you react to attacks against the Turkey or Turkish you interests in the US	
I call or write a letter to politicians	18
I share my ideas in local or national newspapers	9
I share my opinions with others via internet	15
I call or talk to people around me	33
I contact to Turkish community leaders	6
Which ethnic/religious group do you feel closer in US	
White Americans	42
African-Americans	6
Hispanics	12
Asian Americans	6
Pakistanis	6
Arabic people	6
Jews	3
Grecks	6
Have you ever been discriminated being a Turk in America	
Yes	12
No	78

7. Conclusion

Although the history of Turkish immigration to America dates back to early 20th century, many of the early immigrants returned Turkey after the war of independence won by the nationalist government in the early 1920s. The pioneers of Turks in the new world failed to create long standing institutions and cultural centers partly because of their disadvantaged position in an alien country and in an hostile environment in the face of highly

mobilized rival ethnic minorities, such as Greeks, Armenians, etc. The newly arrived immigrants, mostly rural and illiterate, also lacked an intelligentsia who would lead the masses in their new adventure in America.

It was only the 1970s that the new "brain-drain" Turkish community, well-educated and self-confident, successfully integrated into the American society and paved the way for establishing a strong Turkish community and a vocal-voice for promoting Turkish interests in this highly influential nation. Today in almost any major American city, Turks are present and constitute a part of local populations adding a flavor to American communities. The next step that should be taken by Turks is to further involve in American political process and prove their abilities in American political life.