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Emotion work, national identity, and Erdoğanism among Turkish immigrants in Germany

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Abstract

Amidst the post-war "economic miracle" (Wirtschaftswunder) in Germany, the government tapped into foreign labor resources, including Turkish "guest workers." Over the years, Turkish immigrants and their descendants have remained central to societal discussions, particularly since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan rose to leadership in Turkey, garnering a devoted voter base among this demographic. Drawing on the concepts of emotional community, feeling rules, and emotion work, I trace how the affinity towards Erdoğan is, in part, fueled by conflicts arising from broader tensions between the German majority and the Turkish-origin community. For many, the allure of "Erdoğanism" lies in its provision of ethno-nationalist solidarity, offering a coping mechanism for enduring societal challenges, even after decades in Germany. Employing narrative analysis, this article delves into how the embrace of "Erdoğanism" appears to serve as a means to suppress feelings of national humiliation and evoke a hubristic sense of national pride.

Keywords: Turkish diaspora; Erdoğanism; emotional community; feeling rules; emotion work

In 2011, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed an audience of nearly 10,000 people of Turkish origin – Turkish as well as German passport-holders – in the German city of Düsseldorf:

> I am here to feel your yearning with you, I am here to enquire about your welfare. I am here to show that you're not alone! … They call you guest workers, foreigners, or German Turks. It doesn't matter what they all call you: You are my fellow citizens, you are my people, you are my friends, you are my brothers and sisters! … I want you to learn German, that your children learn German, they must study, do their master's degrees. I want you to become doctors, professors and politicians in Germany. … Yes, integrate yourselves into German society but don't assimilate yourselves. No one has the right to deprive us of our culture and our identity. (Erdoğan as cited by Gezer and Reimann 2011)

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At the time, the well-publicized speech was much criticized by German politicians. To garner support for the general elections that would be held in just a few months, Erdoğan seemingly pitted the Turkish-origin population against the German state. The timing and content of his speech were clearly strategic, aimed at obtaining the maximum number of votes from the more than 1 million eligible voters living in Germany at the time.[1]

Since 2010, Turkey has changed its approach to the global Turkish diaspora. The government established a new state institution, The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı), with the aim of enhancing Turkey's relations with the Turkish diaspora based on their national and religious unity. Among the goals of this new diaspora politics were the encouragement of people to participate in the societies in which they live without losing their cultural heritage, support to improve the Turkish language skills of foreign-born Turkish youth, and the strengthening of Sunni Muslim teachings and practices. These diaspora politics were a response to a demand. Since the 1990s, people of Turkish origin requested better representation in Turkey and the establishment of institutions abroad to meet the social, cultural, and political needs of the diaspora community. Thus, the shift in the diaspora politics of Turkey in 2010 responded to the material and emotional needs of a vocal portion of the Turkish diaspora and went hand in hand with the discourse of a strong state, represented by Erdoğan (Adar 2019: 6).

The president's address in Düsseldorf was a direct example of this. The German public, however, found the speech alarming. In Germany, "the dominant premise in the public debate has been that [Turkish origin immigrants'] voting in favor of the Justice and Development Party (AKP–Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) and Erdoğan is a sign of 'loyalty to Turkey' – and thus, of failed integration – and an absence of a commitment to democratic values and norms" (Adar 2019: 6). But while the German political debate has been well covered, much less has been said about what Erdoğan's performance in Düsseldorf, and especially what his wish to gather with his Turkish "compatriots" in Germany, meant for the Turkish-origin population.

Currently, Germany is home to more than 3 million people of Turkish origin. The official migration started in 1961, when a Recruitment Agreement concluded between Germany and Turkey facilitated labor migration. The status of the immigrants was supposed to be temporary, an arrangement implied by the expression *Gastarbeiter*, "guest worker." Since then, migration from Turkey has taken new forms, but it was only in the 2000s that the German state adapted to this reality by changing the citizenship laws,[2] officially acknowledging that the

[1]Although Erdoğan announced the good news to the audience in Düsseldorf that they would be able to cast their ballots from Germany in the upcoming elections, the legal regulations were not changed in time for the 2011 vote. Voter turnout was subsequently low. As a result of changes introduced to existing election law in 2008 and subsequent measures taken in 2012, all Turkish citizens over the age of 18 gained the right to vote at ballot boxes stationed in their countries of residence. Even though Turkish citizens living overseas have been able to vote in Turkish elections since 1987, they could only do so at election stations at Turkish airports and border controls. The changes therefore significantly eased the financial and logistical burdens of voting (Adar 2019: 5).

[2]The Citizenship Law of 1999, officially enacted on January 1, 2000, has simplified the process of obtaining German citizenship for individuals born outside of Germany, requiring eight years of legal

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"immigrants" were there to stay. Nevertheless, the "adaptation" and "integration" of this population into German society has persistently been subject to public and political debate (see e.g., Oney 2017).

Reading Erdoğan's speech in light of this background furnishes insights into the emotional resonance of his presence and his speech for the audience. What insights can immigrant experiences offer regarding their emotional connections to both their own community and the receiving society? Do they work on their emotions to reshape the feeling rules of their own emotional community? How do the emotions resulting from their immigrant status influence their political dispositions? Given that many people of Turkish origin have lived in Germany for decades, it is noteworthy that Erdoğan's speech created such a stir. Many believed that the group should feel "like Germans" by now, although official findings have revealed barriers to inclusion. A 2021 report by *The Association for Migration Research* states

> Young generations, whose position in Germany has historically changed from guest worker to foreigner, from there to being labeled with an ethnic identity as 'Turkish' and finally to a 'Muslim,' and thus a religious other, today, in the face of rising racism, experience voluntary withdrawal from German public life over faith-based identities and attitudes. The emergence of the Motherland Turkey with claims of being the savior in this course of isolation deepens this withdrawal by increasing the identity-based political polarization. (Zırh 2021: 19)

I argue that the political support of the Turkish-origin population for Erdoğan can neither be explained in terms of their reluctance to commit to the democratic values and norms of European societies nor in relation to their "failed integration" into German society without taking into account their life narratives and emotions as immigrants. As I will put forward, the allegiance to Erdoğan is, to some extent, fueled by conflicts arising from broader tensions between the German majority and the Turkish-origin community. These tensions reveal how prevailing norms and expectations of the German society are contested by members of the Turkish-origin community at the level of experience and emotions. While the prominent German expectation from the Turkish-origin community is to be pleased and grateful for living in a democratic European country and to engage with the values of it, the narratives of the Turkish community about living in Germany challenge these expectations. Based on interviews, it appears that my interlocutors strongly feel that Germans attempt to belittle, demean, and humiliate them. Conversely, their affinity for Erdoğan is frequently depicted as a defiance against this sense of being relegated to a subordinate position. Supporters of Erdoğan assert that he enables them to feel

residency in the country. One of the law's notable aspects is its provision for dual citizenship, notably benefiting Turkish origin children born in Germany. However, this dual citizenship privilege ceases at age 23, mandating a decision between retaining German citizenship or that of their parents' birth country. Recently, amendments to German citizenship law have reduced the minimum residency requirement for naturalization to five years. A significant revision entails the elimination of the obligation to renounce one's original citizenship when acquiring German citizenship, particularly advantageous for individuals from non-European Union nations, as it enables them to obtain German citizenship while maintaining ties to their countries of origin (see also Zırh 2021).

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pride and a sense of self-worth that they perceived as lacking for years of living in Germany. Therefore, I argue that the embrace of "Erdoğanism" appears to serve as a means to suppress feelings of national humiliation and to evoke a hubristic sense of national pride.

Aim and methods

This article aims to explore the life narratives of the Erdoğan-supporting Turkish-origin population in Germany to capture their emotional motivations in appreciating Erdoğan. For the purpose, I consider the Turkish-origin people voting for Erdoğan as an emotional community (Rosenwein 2002) who construct similar narratives about their experiences as immigrants in Germany and develop their own feeling rules accordingly. To elaborate on their emotions as practices to comply with or contest to the prevailing social norms, I will employ the concepts of feeling rules and emotion work (Hochschild 1979). I contend that feeling rules are not top-down impositions, they involve processes of navigation, negotiation, and/or contestation, all of which necessitate emotion work. Drawing on this conceptual framework in the context of migration, and relying on empirical data collected from observations, in-depth interviews, and focus-group interviews conducted with Erdoğan supporters living in Berlin, Germany, I aim to showcase the interactions between their life narratives, emotions, and political dispositions.

Indeed, Turkish-origin immigrants and their descendants constitute a rather heterogenous group in Europe with respect to their economic, political, cultural, ethnic, and religious dispositions (Kaya and Kentel 2005: 2). Within this heterogeneity, in my fieldwork I specifically focused on first- and second-generation "guest workers" who define themselves as Sunni-Muslim Turks in Germany. This self-definition was a significant determiner in the field because Erdoğan supporters often have a strong sense of religious and ethnic identity, or at least regard themselves as religious and nationalist. Therefore, while selecting the interlocutors, I asked them how they define themselves instead of asking them directly, whether they support Erdoğan or not. My first-generation interlocutors comprised people around their 60s and 70s, who spend most of their days in small-scale cafés run by Turkish-origin owners in historically migrant neighborhoods. These cafés are the places where they socialize, gather with their peers, and exchange daily conversations while drinking Turkish tea or coffee. The second-generation interlocutors comprised the shopkeepers, the staff of small shops, or regulars to these cafés in Berlin. It was striking to see how the first- and second-generation's narratives of identity and emotions overlapped. Most of the experiences they narrated were very similar, as well as the feelings they addressed. While the first generation mostly talked about their work experiences, the second generation's most vivid memories were from their school years or youth. All in all, it was apparent that the first- and second-generation interlocutors of Turkish background constructed an overarching narrative of discrimination and humiliation in Germany. It is also important to note here that because of the spatial conditions of my field, I had difficulties reaching female interlocutors. The cafés and shops I visited were mostly male-dominated. For this very reason, I could conduct interviews with only two

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women. Thus, the narratives in this article comprise mostly male voices and experiences.[3] I contacted all the interlocutors either through key persons or the snowball technique. In total, I conducted 11 in-depth and 2 focus-group interviews. The focus-group interviews were composed of four people each who also participated in one-on-one in-depth interviews (all male). I use pseudonyms for all interlocutors (see Supplementary Table 1).

To gain a deeper insight into the links between my interlocutors' experiences as immigrants, their interpretations of those experiences, and their emotional attachment to and appreciation of Erdoğan, I will apply narrative analysis (Riessman 2005; Shenhav 2006; Somers 1994; Stanley 2010). Narrative is, in its simplest form, a story, a vehicle through which people develop knowledge about themselves and the world they live in. It shapes agency, goals, actions, perceptions, and experiences. People construct their identities by placing themselves in a narrative and act through the stories they create about themselves and the world. Narratives help people to make sense of their lifelong experiences and to express the emotions generated through the interpretations of these experiences. Thus, narrative analysis, when applied to individuals and communities, can reveal the dynamics of social change and the motives underlying collective inclinations and actions. The methodology relies on emphasizing the role of time, contextualizing narratives within broader frameworks, and forging links between individuals and societal dynamics. The focus in narrative analysis is not on fidelity to truth within narratives, but on how the relationship between past, present, and future is established through them (Riessman 2005; Shenhav 2006; Somers 1994; Stanley 2010). Drawing on these premises, I will regard my interlocutors' experiences and expressions of emotions as *narratives* that are individually and collectively constructed to put their life stories into a frame they find meaningful.

Migration, emotions, and the Turkish-origin population as an emotional community

Migration processes and migrant life experiences offer a rich field for research on emotions. Migrant family and group relationships, their cross-border links with homelands, and their connections with the receiving societies are key issues that a focus on emotions could enrich (Boccagni and Baldassar 2015: 73–74). The experience of migration itself is a catalyzer of change in the emotional lives of immigrants. The mobility of people causes emotions to be mobile and subject to change as well (Svašek 2010: 867). Times of transition often trigger concerns about the prevailing feeling rules within a community. Individuals tend to perceive these rules most acutely when transitioning between different cultures or roles. It is during these intercultural phases that people often feel conflicted with the former or new feeling rules (Hochschild 1983: 75). As collective social agreements about how to suppress, reinforce, or regulate emotions, feeling rules are inherent in daily life interactions and subject to questionings, contestations, and changes.

Migration-specific encounters may move certain emotions and experiences: "Adjustment, settlement, nostalgia, a shattered sense of belonging, renewal,

[3]The gender dimension of this research is a topic worth of further investigation.

loss, discrimination, abrupt endings, new beginnings and new opportunities [are] all potent sources of emotions" for immigrant communities (Skrbiš 2008: 236). Yet, neither "immigrants" nor "emotions" are fixed categories of analysis. People constantly shape and reshape their subjectivities by engaging with past, present, and future situations (Svašek 2010: 868). For instance, an immigrant community that does not feel welcomed in the receiving society may cling more to its own culture, people, and identity. Immigrants' life experiences may reshape their preconceived notions of national identity and feelings of belonging. This process leads to the formation of emotional communities with new feeling rules.

To explore the emotional challenges, feeling rules, and experiences of people of Turkish background in Germany, I suggest conceptualizing my interlocutors as members of an emotional community. According to Barbara H. Rosenwein (2002), an emotional community is a social group whose members adhere to the same valuations of emotions and their expressions. Considering a group an emotional community helps to uncover the systems of feeling, "the emotions that they value, devalue, or ignore; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore" (Rosenwein 2010: 11). Rosenwein's notion is quite compatible with Arlie R. Hochschild's concepts of feeling rules and emotion work. According to Hochschild (1983), feeling rules are the guides of emotion work. They establish a sense of entitlement or obligation, which leads to emotional exchanges. People tend to evoke a feeling they wish they had, and block or weaken a feeling they wish they did not have. Thus, feeling rules govern how we evaluate our own emotions and how others perceive our emotional displays, and these rules differ across communities, influencing the emotion work required within each (Hochschild 1983: 43–57). Members of an emotional community often work "on inducing or inhibiting feelings so as to render them 'appropriate' to a situation" (Hochschild 1979: 551). Social factors are key influences on how members of an emotional community try to manage their feelings. The management requires constant emotion work in an attempt to change a feeling in degree or quality. To trace this process in my interlocutors, I will rely on what Hochschild (1979: 561) presents as "two broad types of emotion work": evocation and suppression. Evocative emotion work focuses on a *desirable* feeling that is initially absent in a person or a group, while suppressive emotion work focuses on an *undesired* feeling that is initially present in a person or a group (Hochschild 1979: 561). To see how emotion work operates, evocation and suppression will be my main conceptual tools while analyzing the life narratives of my interlocutors and their emotional attachment to Erdoğan.

After more than 60 years of migration, there is an extensive literature on people of Turkish origin in Germany. A remarkable number of these studies center around subjects such as transnationality and citizenship, the legal, political, social, and economic status of immigrants, ethnic and generational distinctions, national identity and belonging, Islam and integration, education, socialization, politicization, and gender and labor (Abadan-Unat 2011; Kaya 2007, 2009, 2019; Kaya and Kentel 2005; Soysal 2003, 2004; Yurdakul 2009). Focusing specifically on emotions of people of Turkish origin in Germany could facilitate a deeper exploration of the life narratives of my interlocutors, thereby illuminating the links between their migrant experiences and political dispositions. As I will show, my interlocutors'

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migration background and national identity intersect in complex ways to generate their emotional attachment to Erdoğan. Their perceptions of self in the context of this intersection determine how they narrate and interpret their experiences and how they express their support and admiration of Erdoğan as an emotionally informed political disposition.

"Is it about politics?" Pre-interview encounters and positioning

Yvonne Albrecht (2016) argues that the prevalent approach to immigrants' emotions takes a pathologizing stance that frames subjects in terms of victimhood and does not attribute agency to their choices. For her, immigrants cannot be merely considered victims of circumstances. On the contrary, they interact with their environment in various ways to tackle the uncertainties and insecurities they face. Immigrants should therefore be "brought into focus as subjects of their own narratives: 'This way, it is possible to recognize the actors and narrators as individuals who shape transitions themselves instead of constructing them as executors of cultural logic or victims of their presumed conflicts'" (Albrecht 2016: 28). Such an approach can illuminate immigrants' engagements and disengagements, attractions and repulsions – all of which reinforce or attenuate the existing feeling rules and require emotion work.

In the beginning, I had difficulties accessing the field and persuading members of the Turkish community to take part in interviews. I asked them to talk about their migration experiences and how they relate to Turkey and Turkish politics at present. Although I am from Turkey, I was met with a certain distance, even suspicion. It was mainly due to my status as a "new" type of immigrant, whose social status as a researcher sounded "foreign" to them.[4] Nevertheless, after gaining the trust of key persons, the interlocutors began to show an interest in my topic and wanted to learn beforehand the questions I was planning to ask. During these dialogs, what struck me most was the recurring question: "Is it about politics?"

I started pondering over this recurring pattern of reluctance among my interlocutors to discuss politics or disclose their political views. Gradually, it became apparent that they viewed discussing politics with a stranger as potentially risky for themselves. They were well aware that supporting the AKP or Erdoğan was frowned upon and criticized within Germany. Thus, from the very beginning of my field research, I identified a sense of insecurity as a significant emotion that my interlocutors share. By listening to their life narratives, I became more aware of their causes. The hesitation of my interlocutors to discuss politics was rooted in a sense of insecurity triggered by exposure to affective stereotyping within the receiving society. As Tamar Blickstein (2019: 155) observes, affective stereotypes regarding marginalized groups can have tangible repercussions on their daily lives and

[4]Migration from Turkey to Germany has taken a new form especially during the 2010s. Due to Erdoğan's increasingly authoritarian rule and weakening of democracy in the country, Turkey's secular, liberal, well-educated middle class professionals have started to migrate to Germany. They differ significantly from the former immigrant community regarding their class, educational background, and political dispositions (Erensoy 2023: 23) that erodes the sense of familiarity between the two groups of immigrants although they are both from Turkey.

political agency. Apparently, the interlocutors had learned to manage their emotional expressions about politics by judging their appropriateness to the context they lived in. Therefore, I propose interpreting my interlocutors' reluctance to engage in political discussions as a deliberate defensive strategy, which seems to be a prevailing feeling rule within their community. As active agents in their own lives, they make conscious choices and employ strategies to safeguard themselves against the structural and emotional challenges they continually confront.

> I live here for 42 years now. I worked non-stop. Germany victimized us in many senses. We had no place to complain or no one to ask for back-up. If my state [Turkey] had protected us like a mother, like a father, we wouldn't have felt like that. (Bayram)

> I do not trust most of the people here. I witnessed much unfairness. When you work especially in a foreign country, you see that everyone has a second face. I lost my trust in people after I moved here. (Murat)

It was notable to see that the primary cause of their insecurity was not only the perceived "inappropriateness" of their political dispositions considering the larger society, but also feelings of worthlessness, disappointment, loneliness, and a loss of trust in others. As is acknowledged, transnational migration necessitates individuals leaving behind familiar environments and entering new life realms, a fundamental process that compels immigrants to grapple with notions of belonging. "In such cases, many of the bases of social togetherness have to be learned anew, as one can no longer interact in a self-evident, unreflected way on the basis of shared codes and routines" (Röttger-Rössler 2018: 244). Immigrants' accustomed feeling rules, which guide their experiences in their country of origin, may not align with those of the receiving country. Moreover, attempting to comprehend and adapt to the knowledge, practices, feeling rules, and behavioral patterns of the new life context often demands significant effort. This experience inherently generates a sense of ontological insecurity.

National humiliation

Being aware that my interlocutors wanted to avoid talking about politics, I began the interviews by asking them about their experiences as immigrants living in Germany. At some point, a narrative of humiliation became an overarching lens on which they retrospectively based their life stories. Especially while talking about past experiences, the interlocutors relied heavily on a narrative of humiliation, not only as an individual experience but also as a collective one, linking the degrading attitudes that German institutions and society had shown towards them with their national and religious identity as Turkish-Muslims. This overarching narrative was a sign that they shared common perceptions regarding the negative feelings of German majority toward them. It led my interlocutors to form their own emotional community mainly deriving from the perceived experiences of humiliation in a foreign country.

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One of my interlocutors, İlhan, was five years old when his parents migrated to Berlin in 1971 as "guest workers." I asked him about the challenges he experienced "integrating" into German society. He told me he experienced insults already in primary school, as well as later in the workplace and in his social life. İlhan described feeling like a "foreigner" as soon as he started school as he could not speak German initially. In addition to formal education – which he had to leave before high school to work – İlhan encountered discriminatory attitudes at the workplaces, too: "people were murmuring about me when I entered the canteen." He noted that, in the 1980s, Turks were heavily discriminated against in Germany. It was common to see the phrase "*Türken raus*!" ("Turks out!") graffitied on walls. As a young man, he wanted to go to discos with his friends, but they were questioned about why they wanted to enter – an experience of rejection he attributed to being Turkish. İlhan reported that at the time, Turks living in Germany were generally humiliated and oppressed by the German majority, which was, for him, the reason they isolated themselves from the rest of the society – self-isolation or belonging to a "parallel society" (*Parallelgesellschaft*) is a common charge in German public discourse against groups with migration backgrounds.

> I spent most of my life in Kreuzberg. Kreuzberg was terrible back then. They placed us there and at some point they started to complain "Turks cannot integrate, Turks cannot adapt." You force all of us to live there and then you complain! For instance, when I got my passport here, I remember there was a red stamp on a page. Turks or foreigners were not allowed to move to certain districts in the city. Indeed, they did not like us and we felt it deeply. I remember they were addressing me as "hey Kanake! [ethnic slur]" in the 80s and 90s. (İlhan)

In İlhan's narrative, it is evident that the sense of being humiliated as a Turk haunted him in every sphere of his public life. He experienced becoming the object of negative stereotyping at the hands of Germans. As a reaction to these attitudes, and to overcome feelings of humiliation, he formed a social circle entirely consisting of Turks living in Kreuzberg. Outside of his Turkish bubble, he was constantly reminded of his identity and felt vulnerable and inferior. Being aware of the negative stereotyping and perceptions of Germans towards Turks, he became more and more distanced from the wider society; it was also an effort that allowed him to suppress feelings of inferiority. One of the most striking parts of his narrative is the memory of an insult Germans used to communicate their repulsion towards the migrant community. İlhan recalls: "They were calling us [Turks] 'garlic eaters.' Now they all eat garlic as they know it is healthy!" Through such exchanges, people of Turkish origin were shown not only that they were perceived as different, but also that German society felt negatively towards them.

İlhan's experience in Germany is not exceptional. In each of the interviews I conducted, the narrative of humiliation went hand in hand with the question of belonging, and was a leitmotif in the life stories of first- and second-generation immigrants, whether explicitly or implicitly.

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> Today, xenophobia is not as strong as it was in the past. But you can still feel that they humiliate you. Do you know what I tell to my relatives when I go to Turkey for vacation? "Think about Syrians in Turkey, how you perceive them is how we are still perceived in Germany." (Yusuf)

Based on Yusuf's narration, it is relevant to elaborate on what humiliation, *as a feeling, does* to a person or a group. The emergence of the sense of humiliation relies on encounters and arises as a result of the suppression, exclusion, and weakening of a person or a group. Humiliation is especially powerful when it occurs in public, in front of witnesses. It is something done to a person or a group, which renders that person or group as a passive but *conscious recipient* of the humiliating attitude. Due to this consciousness, humiliation creates an intense sense of defect in the subject's self-perception (Mendible 2005: 1).

> [H]umiliation works by distinguishing radically between those who are in and those who are out: we are us, you are different and count for less. Whoever degrades, disrespects, or attacks someone because of their ethnicity aims to exclude them from his own community and demonstrate his superior status. (Frevert 2020: 13)

Acts of humiliation may be considered acts of profound disrespect and always involve an attack on the victim's honor. Those who are humiliated are likely to have difficulties in restoring their sense of self and realizing their right to be respected (Frevert 2020: 3–12). Perceiving oneself as being unjustly degraded, ridiculed, or denied leads to a decrease in self-esteem and more importantly, to a perception of threat to the core of identity. The perception of threat appears to be a feeling rule amongst the Turkish-origin community in Germany, which also explains why my interlocutors were initially reluctant to talk about their political dispositions with me.

The question here is, what is the consequence of feeling humiliation collectively for an immigrant community? Indeed, personal or individual humiliation is generally less likely to have political repercussions. But if collective identity of a group is framed as a matter of public concern, and if the prejudices and degrading attitudes towards the group's identity become accepted by a notable segment of the society, it is likely that acts of humiliation will have political consequences (Masterson 2020).

> I am a Turkish citizen. I pay taxes to the German state for 30 years. And I don't have the right to vote here. There are Bulgarians or Romanians who can vote [in district and municipal elections]. I have never got social aid from the state. I always worked. But because the Bulgarians are considered European citizens, they have many more rights than me here. I think this is unfair. I really feel this is unfair. (İbrahim)

As in İbrahim's telling, there were several instances in which a narrative of collective humiliation seemed to shape and strengthen my interlocutors' feeling rules around their national identity. They had constructed exaggerated, nationalism-driven

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feeling rules within their emotional community, such as an unconditional love and longing for Turkey, and a strong commitment to preservation and glorification of their religious and national identity. Salman Akhtar (1995: 1063) describes this inclination to adhere to one's own culture and identity as *ethnocentric withdrawal*. Individuals or groups who withdraw on an ethnic basis are likely to associate only with homoethnic groups. For the Turkish-origin people in Germany, efforts to suppress the feeling of humiliation resulted in the formation of an emotional community based on Turkish national identity. The people I interviewed seemingly espoused glorifying discourses about their country of origin to suppress how they felt in Germany and to evoke a more positive feeling about their identity. As a matter of fact, all of my interlocutors held Turkish nationalism as a natural part of their identity. Moreover, the "naturalness" of this nationalism was a sign that their ethnocentric withdrawal from German society was basically an emotional withdrawal: they withdrew from where they felt denied.

To sum up, first- and second-generation immigrants in Germany often narrated their past experiences through a lens of humiliation, linking it to their collective identity as Muslim Turks. They perceived a shared sense of degradation from the German majority, which led them to shape their own emotional community. The perception of humiliation led to a distancing from the wider society, driven by efforts to suppress feelings of inferiority and to evoke exaggerated nationalist sentiments and a deep attachment to Turkey. The glorification of their national identity seemed to serve as a coping mechanism to counteract their negative experiences in Germany.

National identity and ethnocentric withdrawal

My field research revealed how a sense of insecurity and humiliation led the interlocutors to engage in suppressive emotion work: they could only evoke pride by embracing their culture of origin to enhance their sense of belonging. It was a main topic they seemed to like talking about and expressing their feelings around. Migrating to Germany from mostly rural areas of Turkey and building a new life in a foreign country was challenging enough. To make matters worse, they were made to feel that their national identity and culture were not welcome. This pushed my interlocutors to cling tightly to their roots; their experiences of social exclusion and the coupled loss of ontological security strengthened their emotional bonds to the home country (Röttger-Rössler 2018: 249).

Upon inquiring about their emotional connection to Turkey, the majority of my interlocutors expressed a deep sense of pride in their roots and maintained a strong Turkish identity, despite having spent the majority of their lives in Germany and harboring no plans of returning. This was indeed an effort to evoke a desirable feeling of belonging embellished with pride while suppressing the undesirable feelings of degradation and humiliation. I contend that the inclination towards collective withdrawal and isolation is a form of suppressive emotion work to compensate for the lack of self-worth. This, in turn, led to a sublimation of the self through the embrace of national identity, which the interlocutors demonstrated by forging connections with nationalist symbols and deliberately instilling this particular sense of belonging in their children:

> Thankfully, my children are proud to be Turks. They know their roots. I am proud to be Turkish as well. I have lived here for 50 years now and they still say "Na ja, das ist Türkisch!" [Well, this is Turkish!] I cannot stand this attitude. (İlhan)

İlhan's angry reaction to years-long discrimination he was exposed to, and his emphasis on Turkishness reveals that he found emotional refuge in leaning on his national identity as a source of self-worth and pride – feelings that were initially absent. This emotion work for compensation revealed itself most clearly in most of my interlocutors' daily practices:

> I generally watch Turkish TV channels. I watch TV series such as "Great Seljuks."[5] I still live in Turkey in my soul. In my car I have a sound system and when I get in the car, only Turkish radios play. (Yusuf)

> I raised my children with our own culture. I always spoke Turkish at home. Elhamdülillah, we are Muslims. I brought my children to a mosque here, for them to read the Kur'an. I am Turkish. My children are Turkish. We have an identity. I raised them like this, thanks [to] God. (Ali)

Yusuf and Ali's insistence on feeling and living as Turks is an example of how they were shaping the feeling rules of their own emotional community via reproducing daily practices based on their national identity. "Feeling Turkish" required such practices as speaking Turkish at home, spending annual holidays in Turkey, making an effort to pass the Turkish culture on to younger generations, and maintaining some distance from the values and feeling rules of mainstream German society, which they deemed foreign or unfamiliar.

> I raised my children as Turks. Why? They promised their father as he warned them, "You are Turks, you are Muslims, you are not German, don't submit to Germans." I am thankful to God that they are married with Turkish women and men, and they are happy. (Nuran)

In Nuran's narrative, ethnocentric and emotional withdrawal is framed as an effort to protect and nourish one's own identity and culture against the threat of assimilation. I propose reading this as a response to a perceived threat to the core of their national identity, along with the awareness of humiliation which is implicated in Nuran's choice of word: "submission." I came to understand that most of the narratives of my interlocutors were formed around a tension between integration and assimilation, which led them to preserve and regard their national identity as a source of self-worth.

All in all, it became evident that ethnocentric withdrawal drove my interlocutors to engage in suppressive and evocative emotion work, seeking refuge in their

[5]"Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu," ("Awakening: Great Seljuk"), which ran from 2020 to 2021, is a series about a Sunni-Muslim dynasty that ruled parts of Central Asia and the Middle East from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries.

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Turkish roots to bolster their sense of belonging and pride. Their strong attachment to Turkish identity revealed itself in employing daily practices and instilling cultural heritage in their children as a means of nourishing self-worth and resisting assimilation.

National pride

Towards the end of the interviews, I specifically asked my interlocutors about Erdoğan's two-decade-long rule. As I already mentioned, they were initially reluctant to speak about Turkish politics and the AKP government as a way to protect themselves from being frowned upon. But after our long conversations, they started to feel more comfortable and confident and openly expressed their admiration for Erdoğan. In their narratives of emotional attachment to him, it was obvious that they could strongly evoke the desired feeling of pride thanks to Erdoğan's leadership. I detected recurring patterns tightly linked to the emotion work they undertook to overcome humiliation. One of my interlocutors summed it up:

> Imagine three boys in a playground. They are constantly beaten by the other boys. One day, an elderly guy shows up and tells them that they shouldn't worry about being beaten by their peers anymore. Since he is and will be there to protect them. That is the reason why I appreciate Erdoğan. (Osman)

The main reason for my interlocutors' admiration of Erdoğan is apparent in this metaphor. The imagination of Erdoğan as a protective big brother also reveals the extent to which Erdoğanism overlaps with masculinity and patriarchal feeling rules. As a result of decades of feeling humiliated, most of my male interlocutors regard Erdoğan as a protector, a "savior" of their national pride. They appreciate his strength, decisiveness, and persistence, and that he changes how others think and feel about Turkish identity: in international politics, Turkey is no longer scorned, but feared. This shift in the feelings of others towards Turkish identity satisfies their desire to feel strong and proud. Thus, the most prevalent reason for my interlocutors' admiration of Erdoğan seems to be related to his image on the world stage:

> Before Erdoğan, nobody in the world knew who the prime minister or president of Turkey was. But now, he is known by everyone in every country. He is one of the most prominent leaders in the world. I swear he is a very strong leader, I love him. I tell it to my German friends as well. I ask them: 'Why doesn't the European Union want Erdoğan?' It's because he is such a strong leader, and if they accept him, he will be in charge of many things and they are afraid of this. They fear that he will govern the whole of Europe, as there is no leader like him in the west. They don't want him to get stronger. They don't want to see Turkey flourishing. (Yusuf)

Yusuf's narrative contains many references to the evocation of national pride. Erdoğan's visibility, prominence, and influence in global politics make my interlocutors proud. They equate him with the Turkish nation, and the country

appears as a strong and influential global player under his leadership. They feel that under Erdoğan's presidency, political leaders and countries across the world have started to take Turkey more seriously. These expressions of national superiority include an explicit anti-Western stance in which the West is perceived as a threat, a general discourse on exogenous forces, and the belief in Turkey's potential to rule the world. All of these claims are linked to Erdoğan's nationalistic political discourse and actions and revolve around an enduring sense of omnipotence and pride.

As a matter of fact, I also asked my interlocutors about the current situation in Turkey, including the economic crisis, high inflation rates, the problem of governance, and Erdoğan's increasingly anti-democratic rule. They all tended to agree that there were problems, yet they did not attribute these to Erdoğan's leadership:

> Ok, I admit that he has some faults, but he cannot catch up with every problem. He is a lonely man. (Yusuf)

> We should admit the fact that he is a strong leader, his stance is so strong. I believe that with his leadership, the world started to take Turkey more seriously in some issues. Erdoğan is taken seriously in Syria, in Russia, in everywhere. He can sit at every table for international issues, he talks on behalf of us. Before him, no one took Turkey seriously. But now, Turkey has a word to say and the world listens to what Erdoğan says. (Serhat)

According to Jessica L. Tracy and Richard W. Robins (2007), there are two facets to the feeling of pride: authentic pride and hubristic pride. Authentic pride stems from the specific individual or collective accomplishments of a person or a group, and it is accompanied by a genuine feeling of self-worth. Hubristic pride, in contrast, is only loosely tied to actual achievements. Further, it is associated with an urge to suppress a sense of inferiority and to compensate for a fragile self-esteem by appealing to exaggerated expressions and feelings about a person's or group's identity (Tracy and Robins 2007: 506–507). It seems that my interlocutors' narratives about their admiration of Erdoğan fit the model of hubristic pride and stem from exposure to (or the perception of) humiliation.

Overall, despite their initial reluctance, the interlocutors openly expressed their admiration for Erdoğan, portraying him as a protector of their national pride and a symbol of strength on the global stage. Their narratives also highlight the overlap between Erdoğanism and patriarchal feeling rules to be strong, decisive, heroic, and respected. While acknowledging issues such as economic crisis and anti-democratic tendencies in the country, the interlocutors attributed these defects to external factors rather than Erdoğan's leadership, reflecting a form of hubristic pride rooted in the desire to compensate for feelings of inferiority and assert national superiority.

Conclusion

Considering the speech by Erdoğan quoted at the beginning of this article and the "failed integration" discussions it incited in Germany, I have argued that the

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political support of the Turkish-origin population for Erdoğan cannot be solely attributed to their supposed reluctance to embrace democratic values of Germany or their "failed integration" into German society. As Elie Katzenson (2015: 37–38) argues, so-called "failed integration" of the Turkish-origin population in Germany is a consequence of Germany's decades-long "guest worker" approach that resulted in a segregational model in which immigrants are expected to disregard or downplay their former identity and adopt the political, social, and cultural traits of their new place of residence. Nevertheless, this explanation alone does not help to fully capture the complexity and depth of the experiential and emotional resonances of this model in Turkish-origin community in Germany. To facilitate a more thorough analysis, I considered Turkish-origin people who support Erdoğan as an emotional community. This conception helped me to examine how these individuals construct common narratives about their immigrant experiences in Germany and develop their own feeling rules by suppressing the undesired feelings of insecurity and humiliation and evoking the desired ones such as self-worth and pride. To be more precise, insecurities resulting from the interlocutors' immigrant status and the unwelcoming attitude of the German majority led them to experience humiliation as a community. This experience turned out to be a common narrative of collective humiliation. To cope with the feeling, the interlocutors engaged in evocative emotion work, championing their national identity as a source of self-worth and pride. Erdoğan's leadership has enhanced this tendency and prompted an emotional shift from national humiliation to national pride. Drawing on nationalistic images of Turkey's glorious, imperial past, the interlocutors also tended to equate Erdoğan with the Turkish nation as a whole – an equivalence that Erdoğan actively fosters. This tendency has also resulted in the framing of Erdoğan as a messianic character, capable of easing the pains of the nation – regardless of his potential faults and deficiencies.

In this article, I aimed to bring immigrants of Turkish origin in Germany to focus, as subjects of their own narratives. I showed how the broader tensions between the immigrant community and the receiving society impacted their ways of living and feeling in the intersection of migration background and national identity. Love and longing for Turkey, isolation from the wider society and a strong commitment to preservation of their culture of origin were the most salient feeling rules they constructed. Within this framework, the phenomenon of Erdoğanism emerged as a potent manifestation of their unwavering commitment to their roots. Recent political developments have shown that authoritarian leaders can take advantage of feelings such as insecurity and humiliation to effectively appeal to certain segments of the electorate. However, I believe, it is crucial to delve into the experiential and emotional origins of what are commonly labeled as "right-wing tendencies" in particular groups. This understanding is vital not only for grasping the potent intersubjective factors that influence the political leanings of ordinary people but also for exposing and challenging the underlying conditions that encourage these tendencies to emerge.

Supplementary material. To view supplementary material for this article, please visit https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2024.30

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