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Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian Nationalists Mobilisations in France: between Conflicts and Integration in the Host Country

Rémi Carcèlès

► **To cite this version:**

Rémi Carcèlès. Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian Nationalists Mobilisations in France: between Conflicts and Integration in the Host Country. Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN) World Convention 2021, May 2021, New York, United States. halshs-04215791

HAL Id: halshs-04215791

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-04215791v1>

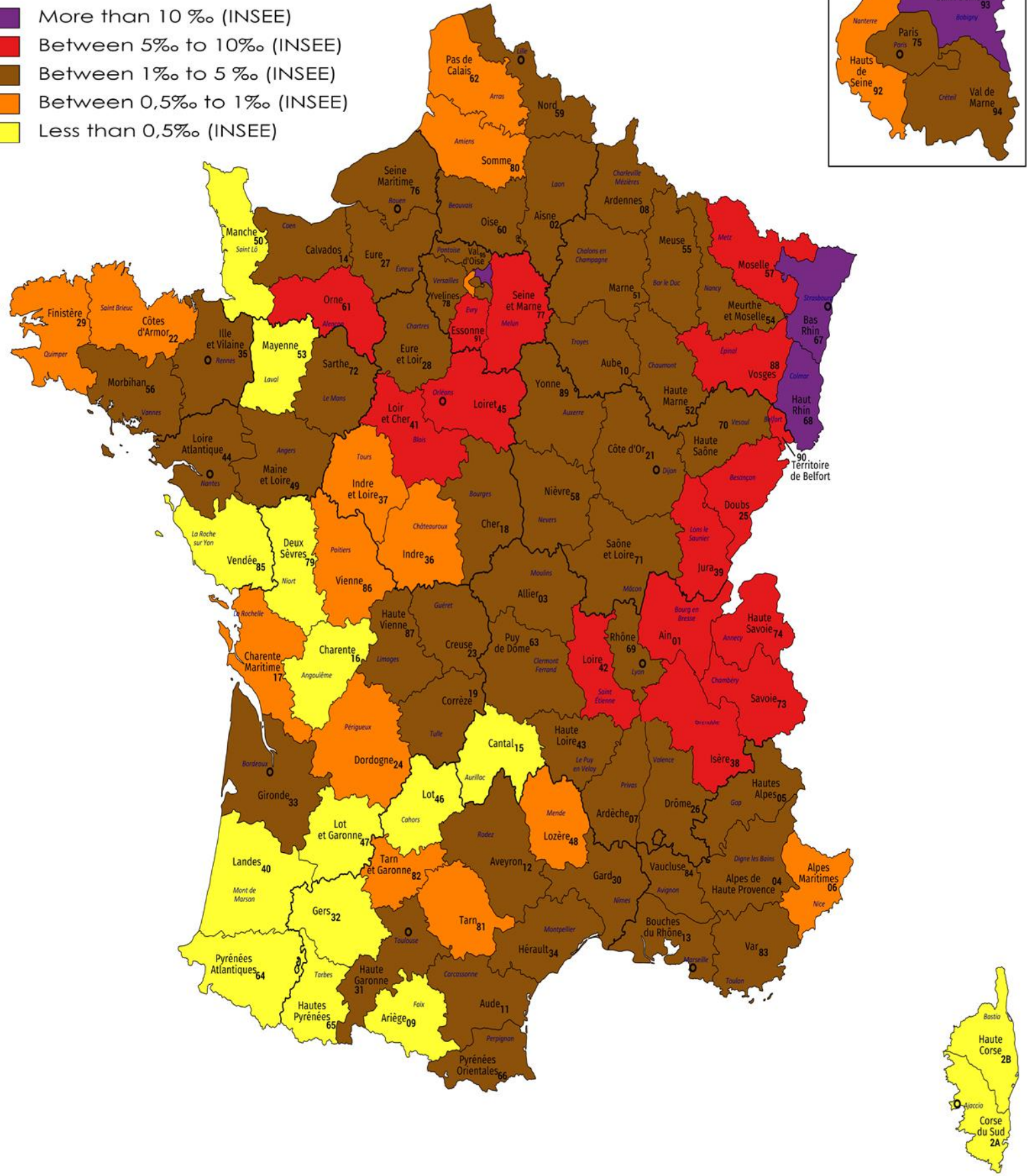
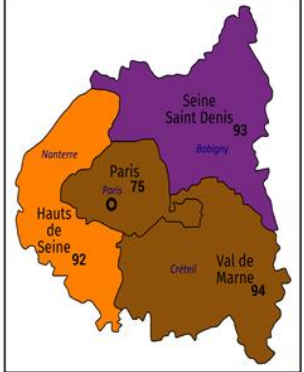
Submitted on 22 Sep 2023

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Proportion of Turkish citizens by French metropolitan departments in 2015 (Rémi Carcélès)

- More than 10 % (INSEE)
- Between 5% to 10% (INSEE)
- Between 1% to 5 % (INSEE)
- Between 0,5% to 1% (INSEE)
- Less than 0,5% (INSEE)



Acknowledgements : The author wants to thank the MESOPOLHIS Mediterranean Center of

Sociology, Political Science and History of Aix-Marseille University which paid for the suscription to the ASN21 World Convention for which this paper was first wrote, and all the relatives who corrected it.

Funding : The author is a PhD student paid by the French Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation through Aix-Marseille University and the Mediterranean Center of Sociology, Political Science and History (MESOPOLHIS) which specifically paid for the author participation to the ASN21 World Convention, for which this paper was first wrote.

Disclosures : Rémi Carcéls is employed by the French Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation through Aix-Marseille University and the Mediterranean Center of Sociology, Political Science and History (MESOPOLHIS).

Author details : Rémi Carcéls (remi.carceles@gmail.com | <https://www.linkedin.com/in/r%C3%A9mi-carc%C3%A9l%C3%A8s-03bb7a159/>) is a French PhD Student at Aix-Marseille University for the Mediterranean Center of Sociology, Political Science and History (MESOPOLHIS), 31 Avenue Jean Dalmas, 13100 Aix-en-Provence, France, + 33 4 42 16 95 46.

Abstract : This article aims to understand how, using different forms of organisation (diplomatic, migratory, mediatic, political, cultural and economics networks) the leaders of Kurdish, Turkish and Armenian causes have managed to transpose their conflict inside states like France whose have no primitive links with the events in debate. The hypothesis of the author is that this transposition could be explained in part by the construction of transnational network of demand, which can be historically and sociologically deconstruct ; but also by the existence of political or economic migrant population that stays politically links with their country of origin despite being established abroad for decades. This transfer of the political spectrum from the country of origin to the host societies of those migrant populations interrogate both the sociology of activism and social movements. It also drives us to interrogate the integration process of those expatriates and the host of their political demand in our societies, which can finally explain the success of such transnational political causes, ask by the following question : how a political cause is transposed beyond national frontiers ?

Key-words : transnationalism, migrations studies, activism from abroad, French-Turkish relationship, sociology of social movements.

Word Count : 14 992.

Biographical note : PhD student in political sciences working on “The Transposition of National Conflicts in Migratory Context, by the Study of Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian case in France”, after two master's degree in which I started to study the Turkish community in France from the point of view of his mobilisation for the government of Erdogan (2019), and the Kurdish activist community in the area of Marseille (2020). This article was wrote after several months in Valence, French middle town between Marseille and Lyon, where the author studied the large Armenian community living there in order to make the link between his two precedent master thesis.

Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian Nationalists Mobilisations in France: between Conflicts and
Integration in the Host Country

Introduction : Elected for the first time in 2017 after a presidential campaign in which he distinguished himself from his main competitors by not venturing into debates related to nationalism and identity, Emmanuel Macron is now caught up in this hot topic. Like his predecessors, his re-election campaign was strongly marked by debates about nationalism, which appears more than ever to be the primary central debate in the French political landscape. Like François Hollande's identity-based proposal to revise the Constitution to allow the loss of French nationality for binational terrorists, in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo and Bataclan attacks in 2015¹, his successor was also already hunting in conservative territory two years before the end of his first term with the law on "separatism". This legislative proposal was thought to be a way to rise above the pandemic-related news for the government and to launch the race to the Elysée for its current tenant. Health restrictions challenging liberalism at the global level and the polls announcing a solid comeback of Marine Le Pen and the potentiel threat of Eric Zemmour, the current President seems indeed obliged to align himself with the international ideological evolution (Bieber, 2018) in order to consider a re-election not seen in France since 2002. Intervening only a few days before a new wave of terrorist attacks on the territory - the beheading of a professor near Paris and the knife attacks at the Cathedral of Nice - the speech presenting the main lines of the project to fight against separatism points in particular to a foreign actor whose influence is supposed to be harmful within the Islam of France : Turkey. At the heart of the problem, the head of State pointed out many Ankara officials in French mosques and schools, in the name of France's educational and religious sovereignty on its own territory². If only a few hundred individuals are concerned by this speech, the French administration is especially worried about the audience reached by those Turkish officials. After years of growing tensions between France and Turkey, the beginning of which could be dated to President Sarkozy's categorical refusal to see this country join the European Union, the escalation seems to have recently escalated with this project.

¹ Wilsher, Kim. "Hollande drops plan to revoke citizenship of dual-national terrorists", *The Guardian*, March 30 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/30/francois-hollande-drops-plan-to-revoke-citizenship-of-dual-national-terrorists> (Accessed April 14 2021)

² "French government unveils new law tackling islamist extremism", *France 24*, December 9 2020. <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20201209-macron-seeks-cabinet-backing-for-new-law-tackling-islamist-extremism> (Accessed April 14 2021)

The already tense relations between Emmanuel Macron and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reached their peak last November, when the Turkish President asked his French counterpart to "get treated" and called him "mentally ill", after the presentation of the projet to structure the Islam of France. A diplomatic point of no return which led Paris to recall its ambassador³, for the first time since the creation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and which illustrates the nationalist joust that the two Presidents are engaged in, in a potentially common strategy to make electors forget their current difficulties. By positioning himself as the leading European bulwark against the authoritarian and threatening discourse of his Turkish counterpart, Emmanuel Macron has adopted a nationalist and security-oriented stance. Which is supposed to allow him to reinforce his authority after five years in office characterized by a succession of crisis over which he has had little control⁴. A strategy that could be compared to the one of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose power is increasingly crystallizing on an ultra-nationalist positioning following the difficulties accumulated in the economy, which was initially his strength⁵. However, if Turkish policy has often been analyzed negatively by the French political class through the war in Syria and the rapprochement with Russia contrary to the values of NATO ; French policy has also been for some years at the heart of the political discourse of the AKP government. Officials in Ankara has not hesitated indeed to denounce police violence at the time of the Yellow Vests⁶, the official commemoration of the Armenian genocide⁷ or the pro-Kurdish positioning of French diplomacy⁸. These last two subjects therefore appear as vectors of historical tensions between Paris and Ankara, whose evolution can be read through the prism of political mobilizations of these claims in the French "activist space" (Mathieu, 2007).

Recognized by the Parliament in 2001, and officially commemorated since 2018, the Armenian genocide has become a reason for tension between France and Turkey. However, it is in the same time a model of "successful" (Mattina, 2016) social movement for other claims imported from abroad ; such as those of the Kurds, which have found an increasing echo in Europe since the 1990's (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003 & 2005) and a new audience after the battle of Kobane in 2014. The

³ "France recalls Turkey envoy after Erdogan says Macron needs mental check", *BBC*, October 25 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54678826> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴ Yellow Vests and other large social mobilisations occupied the French 'activist space' (Mathieu, 2007) before the pandemic.

⁵ Hawthorne, Emily. "Turkey's Economic Weakness Fuels a Slow-Burning Political Crisis", *Stratfor*, February 17 2020. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/turkeys-economic-weakness-fuels-slow-burning-political-crisis-akp-erdogan> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁶ "Yellow Vests : Erdogan and Trump pile in on Macron", *France 24*, December 9 2018. <https://www.france24.com/en/20181209-france-yellow-vests-erdogan-trump-protest-tax-macron-climate-change> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁷ "Turkey condemns French declaration of Armenian genocide commemoration day", *Reuters*, February 6 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-armenia-genocide-turkey-idUSKCN1PV0SX> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁸ Parente, Taise. "Tensions rise between Turkey and France over Kurds", *RFI*, March 30 2018. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20180330-tensions-rise-between-turkey-and-france-over-kurds> (Accessed April 14 2021)

associations at the origin of these demonstrations across the French territory are particularly inspired by the transformation of the Armenian activism model, from a set of actions identified nationally as terrorist in the 1970s-1980s to the one of a lobby⁹ close to power 40 years later. Often linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Kurdish organizations abroad have to deal with the "terrorist" label applied to their activities by the United States and the European Union at Turkey's request, and seek to shed it by adopting a strategy of legitimization whose evolution can be compared to the one of Armenians in France. Based on the observation of a rapprochement between those two types of mobilizations on the ground, the objective of this article is to analyze it both from the ideological and organizational point of view, but also from the perspective of the development of mobilizations in relation to their common adversary on this same French militant space, namely Turkish nationalism.

The arrival of Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish populations in France

The Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish populations arrived in France, and more widely in Europe, at different times and in various ways throughout the 20th century. The first ones have mainly fled the original traumatic event of the 1915 genocide which pushed them to take the road of exile, often through Syria and Lebanon ruled under French mandates in the aftermath of the First World War. While the other two were led in their great majority to settle in metropolitan France in the mid-1960s following an agreement to send labor forces from Anatolia to several Western European States experiencing full economic boom (Gokalp, 1973). Two eras and, above all, two different origins of migration that necessarily imply profound differences in the migratory experience. Thus, the deployment of Armenians across the French territory since their landing in Marseille in the 1920s is often shown as a model of integration in the host country (Govciyan, 2009), through the emphasis placed on celebrities from this community and now part of the national imagination: such as the singer Charles Aznavour or the resistant Missak Manoukian. In the same way, the implementation of institutions in charge of transcribing the historical and cultural heritage of this population highlights it in the public space at the local and national levels : names of squares and streets referring to Armenia ; recognition, commemoration and teaching of the genocide of 1915 ; opening of museums dedicated to the Armenian memory ; partnerships between elected officials and associations leaders from this community ... With all those measures, the Armenian diaspora in France is considered as a "winner" (Mattina, 2016) of the national integration system for migrants.

⁹ "Armenian lobbying activity in France records progress over past years", *ArmenPress*, July 14 2017. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/898688/armenian-lobbying-activity-in-france-records-progress-over-past-years.html> (Accessed April 14 2021)

On the contrary, the Turkish and Kurdish populations that came from the southeastern regions of Anatolia to join the French employment pools in the mid-1960s arrived for economic, not political, reasons, just as they did at the beginning, for a temporary period. Sent by Ankara to meet European labor needs and to open up a still underdeveloped national job market, those expatriate workers did not originally aim at settling in Western Europe, but only to earn a good enough living there to provide for their families or even their villages in their regions of origin (De Tapia, 2002). Often living in small groups from the same expatriation territories, those workers initially had no more desire to mix than the French society has to integrate them. Their objective was most of the time to limit their expenses as much as possible in order to send most of their salary to their relatives back home (De Tapia, 1996). Overcoming as best they could the difficulties linked to migration by recreating among themselves home atmosphere, most of them were not even brought to confront the French society whose morals as well as language were far from what they had always known until now (Petek-Salom, 1992).

And if the first places of socialization emerged at the beginning of the 1970s with the slowdown of the economic activity, and thus of employment, in Europe at the time, they were often held by Turkish immigrants themselves who had been able to reinvest their capital in the development of the first network of "ethnic" businesses (Petek-Salom, 1998) : cafes, restaurants, grocery stores or "bazaars" intended to keep the "suitcase business" (Gangloff & Pérouse, 2001) going when they returned to Turkey, those new meeting places helping to reinforce an *entre-soi* based on the transposition of the initial way of life abroad. The end of the post-WW2 economic miracle in Western Europe and of the "*Trentes Glorieuses*"¹⁰ in France nevertheless came at the same time as the consolidation of political unrest in the country of origin. The early 1970s in Turkey are indeed marked in particular by the 1971 coup which prevented economic development and thus led some migrants to consider extending their stay abroad. The family reunification mechanism introduced in France in this decade also allowed them to bring their wives and children to the host societies (Petek-Salom, 1998), in parallel with a new wave of political refugees fleeing the return of the military to power, who joined the economic expatriates of the previous decade.

The development of nationalist activism from abroad

This renewal and increase of the number of people from Turkey in France became then synonymous

¹⁰ Literally "The Glorious Thirty", a period of economic boom and full employment characterizing France and other Western European countries after the WW2 and until the oil crises of the 1970's.

with greater integration in the host societies, as illustrated by the implementation of educational policies for the children of immigrants with the Teaching of Languages and Cultures of Origin (ELCO : *Enseignements des Langues et Cultures d'Origines*) courses. But this openness and this recognition of migrants' cultural diversity also resulted in the premises of the distinction of a Kurdish component within this population. The 1971 coup effectively pushed militants into exile - some of whom were threatened for their activism aimed at improving the situation of the Kurds in Turkey - and their arrival in Europe as refugees allowed this militancy to be rebuilt from abroad (Nell, 2008). The majority of the Turkish population came from the main Kurdish settlements in South-East Anatolia (Ertel, 2009), and a significant proportion of the people who emigrated for work during the following decade were themselves concerned about this struggle for identity. The "entrepreneurs" (Becker, 1985) of this cause found then a fertile ground compatible with their demands towards Europe. Often based on a Marxist and/or socialist ideological background, those speeches also benefited in France from an audience particularly receptive to "third world" struggles since May 68, and it was therefore not surprising to see a part of the intellectual, cultural or even political elite acting as relays for the struggle of these militants in exile (Nezan, 1988).

This first wave of mobilizations was reinforced by the widening of the right of association to the foreigners in 1981 with the arrival to power of François Mitterrand, and thus saw cultural associations as well as political parties claiming their "*kurdicité*"¹¹ (Rigoni, 1998) blooming near the main centers of settlement of these populations. Reinforced by an umpteenth coup at the beginning of the same decade, the Kurdish militant community in exile saw its political struggle for the recognition of cultural diversity triumphed in France with the Palme d'Or being attributed to the director Yilmaz Guney at the Cannes Festival in 1982¹² and the creation of the Kurdish Institute of Paris in 1983. Faced with this transnational mobilization, which was illustrated in Turkey by the emergence of the PKK and the return to the armed struggle in opposition to the central State, the new military junta in power decided to take the situation in hand by investing in a policy of control of its nationals abroad.

From cultural recognition to the transposition of armed struggle

This strategy was based on the bilateral teaching policy of the ELCO, which saw the countries of origin of the main immigrant populations in France sending teachers to the children of their expatriates to teach them their languages and culture of origin (Petek, 2004), but also by the

¹¹ The "kurdicity" (*kurdayetî* in kurmanji) is the claim of a Kurdish ethnic and cultural particularity, that often appears on interviews or research papers about the Kurdish identity.

¹² For the movie *Yol*, "the road", filmed in Turkish and Kurdish, it tells the daily life of five Turkish and Kurdish prisoners during their leave.

development of a whole network of diplomatic offices, always with the same aim of sending civil servants as close as possible to the immigrant populations (De Tapia, 2004). The arrival of preachers, also civil servants of the Turkish state, who came to respond to the needs of emigrants to pray in their language of origin (Weibel, 1992) soon reinforced teachers and staff of diplomatic corps, whereas the few mosques present on French territory were almost all intended for populations of Maghrebian origin practicing in Arabic.

This re-deployment of the Turkish state to its citizens with the aim to extend the political control of the population put in place by the military junta also followed a wave of attacks directly targeting Turkish interests abroad, and in particular on French soil, perpetrated by the Armenian Secret Liberation Army (ASALA). This violent Armenian political grouping founded in 1975, which sought to force Ankara and the international community to recognize the responsibility of the Ottoman Empire and its heirs in the genocide of 1915, directly targeted Turkish consulates or national companies such as Turkish Airlines. For instance, an attack at Orly airport killed eight people the 15th July of 1983. Considering the armed struggle as the only way to make the voice of the victims of the diaspora heard, sixty years after the events (Gunter, 1986), the group ended up being considered as terrorist by States such as France. Despite its attachment to the Armenian cause, the french government accepted indeed to align itself with the Turkish position following the multiplication of collateral victims. From then on, Turkish ultra-nationalism could also be transposed internationally, with the establishment of branches of political parties opposed to the Kurdish far-left abroad, whose speeches were also relayed by the new diplomatic network established by the junta and consolidated by its successor, the future President Turgut Özal, who made the reconstruction of pan-Turkish nationalism the basis of his wish to make Turkey shine again on the international scene (Laciner, 2004).

Weakened by this return of Turkish power beyond its borders, Kurdish and Armenian activism had to reinvent themselves in order to see their claims being relegitimized in the host societies of its dispersed populations. The Armenian and Kurdish movements were indeed both marked by the stigma of the export of their armed struggles at that time, whether through the actions of the ASALA for the former, or the PKK for the latter ; with the Armenian formation being suspected of having trained the Kurdish one in the use of weapons¹³, and while the latter was suspected of threatening all the other Kurdish organizations in exile through a wave of inter-associative assassinations across

¹³ "The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia : A continuing International Threat", *Central Intelligence Agency*, January 1984

Europe¹⁴. Moreover, both organizations, one and the other formed on a Marxist ideological basis, suffered from losing their aura with the end of the Cold War when the Soviet tutelary power was crumbling. Therefore, the renewal of support for these causes were not often the result of those organizations acting as vanguard at the time, but came from outside their boundaries of action. Since it was first of all from Iraq, and more precisely from all these northern regions populated by majority Kurdish populations that allowed to remobilize some of them, through an international mobilization against the crimes of Saddam Hussein's regime. A campaign notably lead by two French public personalities of first plan with Danielle Mitterrand¹⁵ and Bernard Kouchner¹⁶.

Evolution of the political discourses supporting Armenian and Kurdish mobilizations in France

The First Lady and the most famous of the "French doctors" (Taithe, 2006) effectively united their networks to bring the Kurdish question to the forefront of the stage, through intellectual, political and humanitarian mobilizations of great magnitude which, for the first time, brought the Kurdish struggle beyond the borders of Turkey, to the French public of the time. Campaigning for the reception of a new generation of Kurdish political refugees until then crammed into makeshift camps on the Turkish-Iraqi border, the wife of the President of the Republic also travelled several times to northern Iraq to meet with the Barzanis in order to support the Kurdish nationalist struggle of the country (Joly, 2014) ; while the founder of *Médecins Sans Frontières* and future Minister of Foreign and European Affairs established for his part friendly ties with the future President of the Republic of Iraq, another leader of the local Kurdish community, Jalal Talabani¹⁷. An evolution of the targeted public and receptacle of mobilizations for the international Kurdish cause which allowed at that time to renew both the Kurdish populations in exile on the French territory. With the introduction of an Iraqi component protected by the top of the State (Mohseni, 2002), an associative networks far from the dissensions provoked by the emergence of the PKK in the previous years, accompanied this development. The Marxist ideology being at the time in the hollow of the wave, it was from then on a discourse more related to Human rights which gradually imposed itself to act as relay for the Kurdish claims abroad.

¹⁴Raufeur, Xavier. "Le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan : activité en Europe". <http://www.xavier-raufeur.com/archives/mcc/html/archives/ne/ne13/ne1310.html> (Accessed April 14 2021)

¹⁵ Wife of the French President François Mitterrand, which was in charge from 1981 to 1995.

¹⁶ Founder of the NGO *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders) and *Médecins du Monde* (Doctors of the World), before to start a political career as Minister of Health under Mitterrand Presidency and Minister of Foreign and European Affaires at the start of Nicolas Sarkozy's Presidency.

¹⁷ Bonzon, Ariane. "Les Kurdes, la constance de Kouchner", *Slate*, October 15 2010. <http://www.slate.fr/story/28643/kouchner-kurdes> (Accessed April 14 2021)

A few months later, the Armenian diaspora was itself renewed by the emergence within it of a new nationality, with the implosion of the USSR, an independent Armenian State in the Caucasus reappeared for the first time in almost a century. Proclaimed on the September 21st 1991, the Republic of Armenia renewed the transnational cause of its nationals who both mobilized to guarantee its borders at the time of its creation, then were led to welcome the first migrants in exile from this State. Indeed, from its birth, this new Caucasian State had to face a territorial conflict with another ex-Soviet province, Azerbaijan. The two new territories were fighting over the still smoldering ruins of communism for control of the mountainous region of Nagorno-Karabakh, considered historically Armenian by Yerevan, but located within the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan. Taking advantage of the prevailing chaos, and the recomposition of the former Soviet provinces, the young Armenian State was able to mobilize its troops to militarily occupy this region which it called Artsakh and of which it also proclaimed independence within the Azeri borders. Yerevan counting furthermore on the media, financial and even military support of a whole part of the diaspora (Dumont, 2013) which did not hesitate to mobilize its resources, even its children, to go and fight in the name of the re-conquest of a "Greater Armenia".

But if members of the diaspora returned to their ancestors' land to engage in combat, local populations did not hesitate to take the opposite route to flee the violence and poverty reinforced by swelling the ranks of exiles. Indeed, a whole new generation of Armenians chose exile to Europe, and hoped to take advantage of the integration of their predecessors to find political and financial stability abroad. Except that the welcome was not necessarily the one hoped by those migrants from the Soviet space who suffered from deep cultural differences with their cousins exiled for three or four generations, and having become full-fledged Western citizens, who, moreover, did not necessarily always understand their departure from an independent Armenia which they themselves had always dreamed of. Thus a gap was created between the descendants of 1920s and the new arrivals of the 1990s, which pushed to the reorganization of national activism, whose claims focused henceforth as much on the question of the genocide of the ancestors as on the development of the new State. This evolution was to be reinforced as the initial struggle for memory had been rewarded from the 1980s onwards, with the multiplication of international positions on the subject at the time : including the adoption of a resolution stating the April 24th a national day of commemoration by the United States House of Representatives in 1985, the publication of a UN report qualifying the 1915 massacres as genocide the same year, the recognition of the genocide by the European Parliament in 1987, by the Russian Duma in 1995, by the Vatican in 2000, and finally by France in 2001. The reward for decades of efforts and mobilizations in this direction was the opening of a political window of opportunity where memorial issues appeared as central to many national debates.

Jacques Chirac's France was not spared at the beginning of the millennium, at a time when the recognition of the role of the State and its agents in the extermination of the Jews during the Second World War made it possible to discuss other comparable events in History, such as slavery and the genocide of 1915 (Michel, 2011). If the French's state responsibility was not engaged in those ethnic-based massacres, the recognition of the application of the term of genocide allowed the "Human right's country" to improve its image, by repositioning itself at the forefront of a question already widely debated in other countries. The Turkish State denial (Zarakol, 2010) and its re-emerging diplomatic network did not allow the parliamentarians to be silenced - some of whom being themselves from the Armenian diaspora - or counting on an important electoral support relative to this community. A real Armenian "lobby" (Zarifian, 2014) seemed indeed to have been formed in those years, making it possible to forget the violent image of the struggle of ASALA, while relying on the militant networks of individuals who sometimes came from this initial movement. The "model" integration of the Armenians in France also saw the children of the fourth generation reached prominence positions opening the doors to political careers such as the future Minister Patrick Devedjan, or at least allowing them to act as real voices tanks both at the local and national levels.

The turning-point of the millenium: from the arrestation of Öcalan to the election of Erdoğan

Simultaneously, the Human rights turn of the Kurdish cause initiated by the Iraqi component finally extended to the whole transnational Kurdish movement during the 1990's (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003) as shown by the mobilizations following the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2005). Initially provoking a wave of self-mutilation by demonstrators multiplying hunger strikes and immolations for showing their distress (Grojean, 2006), the mobilization for the release and especially for the fair trial of the founder of the PKK gradually put violence aside to focus on more conventional methods as networks of foreign lawyers mobilized to ensure the proper conduct of the trial, where the main accused and his lawyers were constantly threatened with public lynching. The French activists met for interviews, who went to the trial first as international observers, described themselves as coming from the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* (Human Rights League), the French Communist Party (*Parti Communiste Français*) or the NGO *Avocats Sans Frontières* (Lawyers Without Borders), and were not motivated by the pro-Kurdish demands as such at the beginning, but they were to be led to became more deeply involved following their multiple trips to the trial. Witnessing each time the repression suffered by the local Kurdish political parties or even simple cultural associations, those French activists gradually used their skills and their activist networks to publicly denounce what they considered to be unacceptable abuses on the part of a State at the time in the midst of negotiations to

join the European Union. If the arbitrary arrests of pro-Kurdish elected officials or the violent repression of the Newroz participants¹⁸ were at the heart of their claims before the French and European authorities, it was first of all on the initial Öcalan case that they obtained victory. The Turkish government deciding precisely to abolish the death penalty a few months before his replacement by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by a certain Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Elected on a wish to consolidate the premises of the Islamo-nationalist synthesis initiated by the late Turgut Özal and the rapprochement with the EU, the latter also had to attract the good graces of the military apparatus threatening at any moment to eject him from power for infringing upon Kemalism (Morris, 2005). Brussels was then identified as the perfect tool to reduce the influence of the military on the national political scene, and at the same time allowing Turkey to continue to pursue its dream of a new power. And to please the European Commission, the new Prime Minister endeavoured to implement an unhoped-for opening to the Kurdish minority, which seems to us all the more astonishing today. It was effectively based both on recognition of its cultural and linguistic differentiation, and on the implementation of the process of peaceful negotiations with the Kurdish guerrilla group and its leader, who was now incarcerated for life on the prison-island of Imrali (Grojean, 2009). A Turkish-Kurdish dialogue almost unheard of since the proclamation of the Republic by Atatürk in 1923 which also pushed the PKK itself to moderation and internal ideological reinvention in the early 2000s (Grojean, 2014) : the Marxist-Leninist dialectic, even Stalinist with the cult of personality, evolving from then on towards a new political narrative much more tinged with ecology, feminism, and the invention of a new political model called "democratic confederalism" (Grojean, 2017).

The paternity of which can be analyzed as much in this *Détente* of the civil war of the 2000s, as in the thorough reading of the works of the theoretician Murray Bookchin, which "Apo"¹⁹ read in details throughout his incarceration. The transnational Kurdish cause seemed to be moving away from the nationalist claims that have been out of fashion since the 1970s and 1980s, as part of the new international ideological paradigm of alter-globalism, which was in full expansion at the beginning of the new millennium. This trend was also apparent during interviews with French supporters of the Kurdish cause at the time, who, following their activism in the context of the trial, organized themselves across the country within a National Coordination of Kurdistan Solidarity (CNSK : *Coordination Nationale Solidarité Kurdistan*) ; itself tinged with alter-globalism, and supposed to federate support for Kurdish demands in the country, in collaboration with associations of Kurdish

¹⁸ Kurdish and Persian New Year's celebrations, traditionally at the end of March.

¹⁹ Nickname of Abdullah Öcalan, which can be translate by "uncle" in kurmanji.

expatriates, mainly close to the PKK.

At the same time, and still within the framework of the Turkish accession process to the EU, an unprecedented rapprochement between Ankara and Yerevan also seemed to be in the air, especially with the invitation of the Armenian President by his Turkish counterpart to come and take part alongside him, and in the stands, in a qualifying soccer match for the 2010 World Cup, opposing the two countries. A hand extended which unfortunately was not followed by effect after the re-freezing of Turkish-European relations with the French presidency of the EU in 2008, by a freshly elected Nicolas Sarkozy, after an electoral campaign based in particular on the denial of the European character of Turkey, and thus putting an end to Ankara's willingness to open up to democracy. Rejected by the Europeans and strengthened after his re-election, the government of Erdoğan and the new President Abdullah Gül, reoriented its policy on a national-conservative line which aimed this time to win the support of the military deep state, historically opposed to the Kurdish or Armenian claims (Yilmaz, 2017).

A strategic reversal that translated into the cessation of dialogue with the EU, but also with Yerevan and Öcalan, as illustrated in particular by the resumption of hostilities in southeastern Anatolia and thus the end of the truce between the PKK and the Turkish army. This return of muscle in domestic politics was also observed in foreign affairs, with the affirmation of the Turkish model as a re-emerging diplomatic power at both the regional and international levels. While Ankara was reducing its partnership with the West, it wished in return to assert its position in the Middle East. An ambition backed through the consolidation of dialogue with the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), managed by the Barzani clan, which historically disputed the leadership of the Kurdish cause with the PKK and Öcalan (Charountaki, 2012). This desire to weaken enemies from within through foreign policy was also expressed through the gradual return of nationalism and Islamism to the center of the AKP's discourse. Scorned by the EU member States' refusal to accept its candidacy, the ruling party reacted by putting forward its own model of civilization, now opposed to Western standards, which were then in full decline due to the economic and political crisis that was just beginning to take hold through the rise of populism and identity-based debates.

A gap into which Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey gradually fell, insisting on its own economic growth and the success of its democratic model, making Islam a different tool able to govern in good relationship with international standards. While at the same time debates on immigration, integration and secularism were already raging in Nicolas Sarkozy's France, the new Turkish model that had appeared at its peak in the early 2000s appealed its soft power among the descendants of Turkish immigrants. And even more broadly, with French immigrants of North African and African origins,

who identified the AKP government as a model of political success that met their criteria as well as those of the international community at the time²⁰. The AKP and its leader, who was then only Prime Minister, did not hide their faith or their background, whose roots could be found in religious teaching. They also seduced a whole section of French youth who had been schooled in Human rights, by positioning themselves at the forefront of support to Palestin. A winning strategy at a time when Muslims in France were already being singled out by an increasingly large section of the political class, and when any national opposition to Israel was often accused of being anti-Semitic. Taking advantage of the ideological and economic crisis that saw the Republic "retreating" within some of its own borders, according to the French governments, the Turkish political example took advantage of its soft power (Cevik, 2019) to establish itself little by little in these abandoned territories, through an ambitious educational, associative, cultural, religious and political strategy.

The crisis of French nationalism and the re-development of a Turkish global model

Since that time, it has in fact been the school of the Republic that is criticized in France for having lost ground, and it is therefore not surprising to observe competing political discourses developing. The ELCO program created in the mid-1970s to promote the integration of the children of immigrants into their parents' host society by providing them with a part of their education on their roots (De Tapia, 2015), is in fact being criticized 40 years later for its contribution to the "communitarian"²¹ drift of which those second or third generations resulting from economic migration are accused. In the case of the civil servants sent by Turkey, testimonies are beginning to emerge highlighting elements that do not correspond to the values of the French national novel, on subjects as diverse as creationism, secularism or the denial of the Armenian genocide²². Some Turkish teachers are even accused of having no pedagogical training but sometimes religious, or even police-related, who without even speaking French would make their teaching hours real moments of religious proselytizing or ideological propaganda undermining the rest of the "republican" program²³.

In the same vein, while France was at this time fully engaged in a public debate regarding the wearing

²⁰ Bonzon Ariane. "Pourquoi Erdoğan séduit tant de jeunes musulmans franco-maghrébins", *Slate*, June 19 2018. www.slate.fr/story/163169/nombreux-jeunes-musulmans-franco-maghrébins-erdogan-leader-juste (Accessed April 14 2021)

²¹ Petreault, Clément. "Communautarisme : Macron chasse Erdogan de l'école de la République", *Le Point*, February 19 2020. https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/communautarisme-macron-chasse-erdogan-de-l-ecole-de-la-republique-19-02-2020-2363395_20.php (Accessed April 14 2021)

²² De Seze, Cécile. "Fin de l'enseignement des langues étrangères : pourquoi ça coince avec la Turquie", *L'Express*, February 20 2020. https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/europe/fin-de-l-enseignement-des-langues-etrangeres-pourquoi-ca-coince-avec-la-turquie_2118728.html (Accessed April 14 2021)

²³ Interview realized with a French inspector of the Turkish learnings for the Education Nationale in 2019.

of the veil in the public space, and its prohibition has been made mandatory for civil servants or in schools, Prime Minister Erdoğan did not hesitate to return to these issues in Turkey by allowing students to display it in universities, and even political figures to wear it in Parliament, as his own wife does on a daily basis. Contradictory developments in these two countries yet officially secular, which will once again come to improve the image of the Turkish leader with the main populations concerned in France²⁴, who also saw projects of private schools financed by Turkey to be set up in their country, where they would be allowed to practice their faith while benefiting from a standardized education²⁵. An attraction that could also be explained by the good international reputation of these institutions, which at the time were part of the network of the preacher Fetullah Gülen, who was still an ally of the AKP, insofar as they shared the same ambition to spread a nationalist and religious model that met international standards. Several Gülenist establishments for students from kindergarten to high school emerged in the vicinity of the main centers of settlement of populations of Turkish origin in France, near Paris or Strasbourg²⁶.

The differences between French and Turkish secularism as vectors of "separatism"

But Turkish influence in the religious sphere did not spread in France only through education, since, as we have seen previously, Turkish preachers who were also civil servants from Ankara were also present alongside teachers from the 1980s onwards, and across Europe. The Office of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), put directly under the Turkish Prime Minister's authority, opened a European branch in Cologne at that time, the Turkish Islamic Union of Religious Affairs (DITIB : *Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği*) to coordinate the State's transnational religious policy towards its citizens. A transposition of a device which illustrates the difference between Turkish and French secularism, where the objective is not to separate the State matters from faith, but at the opposite to put the practice of worship under the direct supervision of the State in order to ensure its control and its conformity to the standards of the Republic of Atatürk (Akgönül, 2006). It was therefore in this context that the creation of this European antenna must be understood while the military has regained power in Ankara for trying to control political debates (Bruce, 2012), already worsened by the re-emergence of an Islam-politics contesting the heritage of Mustafa Kemal in the same way as the Kurdish movement.

²⁴ Bonzon, Ariane. "Pourquoi Erdoğan séduit tant de jeunes musulmans franco-maghrébins", *Slate*, June 19 2018. www.slate.fr/story/163169/nombreux-jeunes-musulmans-franco-maghrebins-erdogan-leader-juste (Accessed April 14 2021)

²⁵ Krempp, Guillaume & BAGCI, Buket. "En Alsace, la réforme Blanquer fait les affaires d'Erdogan", *Rue 89 Strasbourg*, January 13 2020. <https://www.rue89strasbourg.com/alsace-reforme-blanquer-fait-affaires-erdogan-166460> (Accessed April 14 2021)

²⁶ Oberti, Charlotte. "Ecole Gülen en France : "On n'est ni une secte, ni des intégristes", *France 24*, January 10 2014. <https://www.france24.com/fr/20140110-ecole-guelen-france-secte-integristes-mouvement-education-turquie> (Accessed April 14 2021)

By extending their action to the Turkish transnational space (Kastoryano, 2010), which they knew to be the haven of certain political exiles in order to continue to spread their ideas, the ambition of the putschists was thus to counter the growing influence of a non-conformist Turkish Islam among its émigrés (Manço, 2012). Indeed, the 1971 coup not only pushed the extreme left to leave Turkey, but also supporters of the main leader of Turkish political Islam in the second half of the 20th century, the future Prime Minister and mentor of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Necmettin Erbakan. The latter took advantage of his ban from participating in the Turkish political debate to seduce emigrants in need of a reference figure, who often found a basis for socialization in religious practice. Founded in 1969, at the dawn of the coup, the religious organization Millî Görüş (literally "national vision") initially served as a receptacle for the ideas of its founder, allowing him to bypass the censorship against his various attempts at political organization. It thus laid its foundations in Europe, in Cologne too, from where it also intended to develop a network of places of worship for emigrants wishing to take communion in their mother tongue, a decade before the central State which was hunting him (Weibel, 1992).

With this primacy, the organization relied on a network of associations already well established at the time of the Diyanet's arrival on its territory in order to limit its influence (Lemmen, 2000). Taking advantage of the opening of the right of association to foreigners in 1981, Millî Görüş circumvented the strict French legislation on places of worship in order to develop its influence through the creation of various "Franco-Turkish cultural centers" already located as close as possible to the places where people of Turkish origin settled in France: Alsace-Lorraine, Île-de-France, and Rhône-Alpes. These two competing networks, DITIB - Millî Görüş, eventually merged with the arrival to power of the AKP and its leader in 2002, since Erdoğan himself came from this movement in the same way as the main leaders of the party, who gradually took over the Özalpian project of Turkish soft-power to benefit from the hitherto non-statutory influence of the religious Islamist network in Europe.

A strategy that recalls the alliance with the Gülen networks at the same time, from the educational framework to the worship one, which allows the new Turkish power to rely on a real web of influence in States like Germany (Faist, 2008) but also France, where we find once again this desire to develop activities as close as possible to the places of settlement of Turkish immigrants (here counted by INSEE in 2015), and their descendants.

Proportion of Turkish citizens by French metropolitan departments in 2015, map realized by the author, based on the statistics of the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE)

From the mosques to the ballot boxes

And it is precisely on those same territories that we find the last stage of the implantation of expatriate Turkish nationalism in France: a political dimension that is expressed directly through the existence of partisan organizations directly linked to the AKP, and whose objective is to spread its ideology through the ballot boxes. Those political parties were first initiated within the same original matrix in the form of a European lobby, named the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD or *Avrupalı Türk Demokratlar Birliği* in Turkish) and created in 2004, whose objective is to relay the efforts made by the new Turkish government of the AKP to meet the requirements of the accession process to the European Union. Present in the main host countries of Turkish nationals on the continent (Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, England ...) this association is in fact an umbrella organization, which federates the militants of Erdogan's party abroad, encouraging them to create local branches to disseminate the discourse imposed by Ankara as close as possible to the emigrant populations. Conceived in 2003 during a German tour between Berlin, Munich, Stuttgart and Cologne of the AKP vice-president in charge of foreign relations, it was first of all in this country which welcomes the most Turks of the continent that a first local party appeared in charge of adapting the discourse of the mother organization to this national context. The Alliance for Innovation and Justice (*Bündnis für Innovation und Gerechtigkeit*, BIG) competing for the first time in the regional elections of 2010 then served as a model for other similar parties in the societies covered by the UETD. France was thus once again at the heart of Erdogan's nationalist strategy, as the following excerpt from his speech in Paris in 2010 proves :

"Do it, brother, do it. Do it, don't hold back. Use this right to vote and to be elected that France gives you. It is a great wealth, know how to appreciate its value. If you trust your Prime Minister, I say to you: do it. Holding a French passport does not mean losing your identity. Neither your Turkish identity, nor your Kurdish identity will disappear, nor your Roma identity. Do not fall into such false things. This is an additional possibility that is given to you, it is a precious opportunity, appreciate it to its true value. Why don't you increase the number of those in this community who will go to the European Parliament? Why don't you want the number of Fatma, Ayse, Hasan, Mehmet, Ahmet to increase in this Parliament? Take this step forward. Look, you are not taking these steps but others are taking them for you. Be united, one voice, powerful and vigorous. By taking these steps, I am convinced that you will gain a lot for my country." (Debarre & Petek, 2019)

A rally organized by the UETD as part of a broad campaign of meetings between representatives of the AKP and Turkish voters abroad. This European tour highlighted the potential reservoir of votes that represented for them this population to which Erdogan and his people came to address directly in Germany (Berlin, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt), France (Lyon, Metz, Paris, Strasbourg), Netherlands (Rotterdam, The Hague), Belgium (Brussels) but also in Switzerland and Austria. As a result, the opposition parties to the AKP have themselves tried to exist on this international scene by organizing their own European meetings according to an ambition to mobilize the transnational community that was already used by the Islamist parties of Erdogan and even by the ultra-nationalists of the MHP in the 1980s (Antakyali, 1992). Beyond those religious and nationalist networks, which were already well established as we saw earlier, we also find the Kemalist CHP as the main opposition party, but also the pro-Kurdish HDP, whose representatives will intervene several times in France in the early 2010s.

However, the partisan strategy of the party in power is twofold, with a desire both to capture the majority of votes of these voters abroad - particularly in the context of the opening of polling stations in consulates from the 2014 presidential election - but also the ambition to have an influence on the politics of the countries where those expatriates settle, through the creation of parties abroad. The objective here is to show a double external support for the AKP, both concerning Turkey and the countries that host those voters. This period of explicit dissemination of Erdogan's discourse across Europe came at a time when his image as a democrat was beginning to crumble seen from abroad, especially following the repression of the Gezi Park protests in 2013. In response, a large-scale counter-demonstration was organized by the UETD in Dusseldorf, to show expatriates' support for the government, united under the non-ironic slogan of "Respect for Democracy"²⁷.

Likewise, militant antennas relaying Turkish nationalism also had time to develop on the other side of the Rhine, in France. The UETD has been present there since 2005, at the initiative of a certain Ahmet Ogras, then a representative of the DITIB, who became President of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM : *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*) in 2017. Known in 2012 for having organized a rally of 15,000 people in Paris against the recognition of the Armenian genocide by the French State, we also found him as the origin of Erdoğan's participation in those famous meetings at Lyon and Strasbourg²⁸. A closeness between the UETD and the highest echelons of the AKP which

²⁷ "Union in Germany to hold rally in support of Turkish gov't", *Anadolu Agency*, June 27 2013. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/archive/union-in-germany-to-hold-rally-in-support-of-turkish-govt/235890> (Accessed April 14 2021)

²⁸ "Des milliers de manifestants à Paris contre le texte sur le génocide arménien", *AFP*, April 12 2021. https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/01/21/des-milliers-de-manifestants-a-paris-contre-le-texte-sur-le-genocide-armenien_1632896_3224.html (Accessed April 14 2021)

was also observed in the creation of a new partisan organization acting as an antenna at the same time : the Equality & Justice Party (PEJ : *Parti Egalité et Justice*). Appeared for the 2017 legislative elections, with 52 candidates running in as many constituencies (out of 577), this micro-party did not explicitly display its link with Turkey. Even though its founders came from this immigration and the associative fabric created by Ankara that was intended for it.

The leaders of this new party have indeed started their militant career within an officially cultural association created in 1989 thanks to the support of Millî Görüş: the Council of the Pluri-Cultural Youth (COJEP : *Conseil de la Jeunesse Pluriculturelle*). Initially founded to engage on issues related to religion, racism, integration, education and more broadly to citizenship - which represent so many challenges for part of the Franco-Turkish youth - the organization saw itself entrusted with a new role with the arrival to power of the AKP in 2002. A period that corresponds to the rapprochement with the Millî Görüş network and ambition in Europe. The COJEP became then the Council for Justice, Equality and Peace (*Conseil pour la Justice, la Paix et l'Egalité*) representing the interests of the descendants of Turkish immigration on the continent to the European institutions in Strasbourg. An evolution enabled thanks to the financing of Ankara, which makes it a lobby comparable to that of the UETD. More than representation, this association's objective seems to be to present itself as a reservoir of potential votes to local elected officials, whom it approaches at each election to trade the support of these young people in exchange for a good place on the various candidate lists. During the municipal elections in Strasbourg in 2008 and 2014²⁹ preceding the creation of the PEJ, its future leaders were thus present with the main candidates and thus managed to obtain seats as municipal councilors and deputy mayors, allowing them to have a direct influence on the political life of the city, the central area of Turkish settlement in France. Those elected officials have taken positions on political issues directly related to Turkish nationalism, for example on the Armenian genocide or secularism, even though those subjects are not usually the responsibility of municipal services.

In 2017, when it was transposed to the national level under its new name of Party Equality & Justice, the movement that emerged from COJEP then began to see an opposition from structured traditional parties. During the legislative elections of June 2017, it was first of all the Communist Party that sounded the alarm, through the voice of its national secretary Pierre Laurent, who in a letter addressed to the Ministry of the Interior and co-signed by a socialist deputy from Alsace, denounced an attempt by Erdogan to interfere in the election³⁰. Taken up by the media, this accusation led to journalistic

²⁹ Bonzon, Arianne. "Municipales: les Franco-Turcs de Strasbourg font-ils de l'entrisme électoral ?", *Slate*, March 23 2014, consulté en ligne le 15 juillet 2019. <http://www.slate.fr/france/84909/municipales-strasbourg-liste-turcs> (Accessed April 14 2021)

³⁰ Boichot, Loris. "Législatives : la Turquie d'Erdogan s'invite-t-elle dans les urnes ?", *Le Figaro*, June 7 2016.

investigations on the program and the candidates of the new party, at the end of which the proposals contrary to French secularism³¹ were yet as underlined than the links with the parties in power in Turkey³². But if the Ankara regime was already identified as taking an authoritarian drift, its relations with France were not yet as degraded as today.

The late identification of a Turkish-lead threat in the French political-landscape

The strengthening of nationalist speeches on both sides of the continent really began to poison the relationship from 2013. While this year was marked by the events of the Gezi Spring which weakened the democratic posture of Erdoğan in Turkey, the authoritarian drift of the Ankara regime spend blood for the first time in January, with the murder of three Kurdish activists in the heart of Paris. On January 9th, Sakine Cansiz, co-founder of the PKK exiled in France since 1998 ; Fidan Doğan, nicknamed Rojbîn and representative of the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK : *Kongra Netewî ya Kurdistan*) since 2002; and Leyla Söylemez, a young member of the Kurdistan Information Center (*Centre d'Information du Kurdistan*), were murdered in the offices of their association in the heart of the capital.

The representatives of the socialist government, historically close to Kurdish exiles in France, quickly arrived at the scene alongside the mayor of Paris and promised to shed light on the killing's circumstances. The main suspect, Omer Güney, himself a member of the association as a driver of the leaders, was quickly arrested after his identification on the surveillance cameras, and the hypothesis of his links with the Turkish secret service (MIT) appeared directly³³. Hundreds of photos of the activities and archives of the association were indeed found on her phone, while a telephone recording leaked to the press of her conversation with members of the governmental intelligence agency. While the investigation had been entrusted to an anti-terrorist judge, part of the magistrate's investigation file was stolen from her home, and an attempt to escape by the suspect failed. However, a few weeks before his trial, he was diagnosed with an incurable brain tumor and died in the following days, leading to the abandonment of the case by the justice system, due to a lack of evidence.

<https://www.lefigaro.fr/elections/legislatives/2017/06/07/38001-20170607ARTFIG00287-legislatives-la-turquie-d-erdogan-s-invite-t-elle-dans-les-urnes.php> (Accessed April 14 2021)

³¹ Thomasson, Marie. "Ce parti islamiste turc qui se présente aux législatives ... en France", *Le Point*, June 7 2016. https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/ce-parti-islamiste-turc-qui-se-presente-aux-legislatives-en-france-07-06-2017-2133429_20.php (Accessed April 14 2021)

³² Belaich, Charlotte. "La Turquie s'invite-t-elle dans les législatives par le biais de candidats ?", *Libération*, June 3 2017. https://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/06/03/la-turquie-s-invite-t-elle-dans-les-legislatives-par-le-biais-de-candidats_1572537 (Accessed April 14 2021)

³³ VINOUCUR, Nicholas. "Insight : French investigation into Kurdish murders eyes Turkey connections", *Reuters*, October 23 2013. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-kurds-insight-idUSBRE99M03Q20131023> (Accessed April 14 2021)

A likely political assassination carried out by a foreign power on French soil has nevertheless recently reappeared in the media, as new evidence has surfaced in both the Turkish media and the European courts. After Turkish agents captured by the PKK had first acknowledged their involvement in the case³⁴, it was recently a high-ranking officer who bragged about it on national television, and then a Belgian investigation regarding a foiled assassination attempt with a similar modus operandi against Kurdish leaders in Brussels³⁵ that led a new French anti-terrorist judge to reopen the investigation. A return of this case in courts was also explained by the constant mobilization of Kurdish associations in exile on the issue, as evidenced by the demonstrations mixing tributes and protests every year in the main locations of the militants across France the day of the murder. In 2021, despite the pandemic, several thousand demonstrators gathered alongside elected representatives of the Republic in Paris, and several hundred in Marseille and Rennes³⁶.

Against the Turkish separatism, the legitimization of the Kurdish claims

The regularity and even the development of the claims linked to this affair illustrate the new legitimacy of the pro-Kurdish movement since that time, and allow an analysis of this dynamic under the angle of a "reverse stigma" (Goffman, 1963). Formerly labeled as violent because of its repertoire of actions in the Middle East as well as in Europe, the transnational Kurdish cause, represented mainly by the PKK and its branches on the two continents, seems to have been working on the construction of a victorious and pro-gesture image aiming to make it appear no longer aggressive. A strategy whose birth could surely be dated from the time of the arrest of its leader Öcalan, and his change of ideology dictated from the prison of Imrali, but whose effects really began to be felt in the mid-2010s. If these assassinations made a part of the French and European militant space aware that the Kurds of the PKK were victims of State violence, it was above all another form of violence that affected Europe and made the general public aware of the struggle led by its fighters in the Middle East.

Two years after the murder at the Kurdistan Information Center, Paris was indeed the scene of new bloody shootings in these streets, against the editorial office of Charlie Hebdo and the Kosher supermarket in January, then against the Bataclan and the terraces of the 11th district in November.

³⁴ "France reopens probe into killing of 3 Kurdish activists", *AFP*, May 15 2019. <https://www.france24.com/en/20190515-france-reopens-probe-killing-3-kurdish-activists> (Accessed April 14 2021)

³⁵ Azadi, Maxime. "The Turkish death squad in Europe and its connections", *ANF*, March 27 2021. <https://anfenglish.com/news/the-turkish-death-squad-in-europe-and-its-connections-50930> (Accessed April 14 2021)

³⁶ "Manifestations en France huit ans après l'assassinat de trois militantes kurdes", *Le Monde*, January 9 2021. https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/01/09/manifestations-en-france-huit-ans-apres-l-assassinat-de-trois-militantes-kurdes_6065750_3224.html (Accessed April 14 2021)

This time, French citizens were directly targeted by the terrorists whose murders were immediately claimed by Daech, a terrorist organization that had been known for only a few months in France, following a battle that was extensively reported in the local media : Kobane. The Syrian conflict, whose events were regularly at the center of the French news following with attention the exactions of the regime of Bashar al-Assad, indeed saw at the time the media coverage being transformed by the appearance of this new self-proclaimed jihadist belligerents to whom it appeared that only the relatively unknown Kurdish militias of the north of the country opposed (Chaliand, 2015). Quickly compared to the myth of David versus Goliath (Franceschi, 2015), and built as a battle against fanatical obscurantism, the confrontation immediately saw a real surge of sympathy toward the besieged, for whom international aid was blocked by Turkey, not allowing the delivery of weapons or food to these Kurds affiliated with the Syrian branch of the PKK.

The debate on the merits of a possible Western intervention in the conflict, which until now had focused on the possibility of bombing or sending soldiers against the regime in Damascus, transformed into a large-scale mobilization in support of this line of resistance. Kobané indeed threatened at any moment to break down in the face of the forces of Daech, whose hateful discourse was compared at the time to the one of Al-Qaeda. Relying on this surge of sympathy and counting on the attachment of the French and more generally of the Europeans to "universal" values as Human Rights³⁷, the exiled networks of the PKK all over the continent mobilized from then on their troops to make their cause, their ideology and their fight known to a historically receptive Western audience, which began identifying Erdoğan's Turkey as the oppressor of this people who fought against a terrorism that ended up spreading blood in Europe.

Throughout 2015, while the resentment and the will to fight of the French were strongly shared feelings following the attacks against their compatriots, a consensus on the "heroic"³⁸ role played by the Kurds directly against the terrorists seemed to take shape. Political and intellectual personalities were more and more numerous to take a stand on this subject by legitimizing the aid finally sent by France and its allies to the militias of Kobane, who, strengthened by this new international support, were able to progressively regain ground over the whole of northern Syria in order to set up a new political model which will be presented as a real "utopia" (Grojean, 2017) by the militants close to the cause: Rojava.

³⁷ Attal, Sylvain. "De quoi Kobané est-elle le nom ?", *France 24*, October 9 2014. <https://www.france24.com/fr/20141009-kobane-turquie-syrie-kurdes-etats-unis-pkk-organisation-etat-islamique-ei-assad-irak-erdogan-sylvain-attal> (Accessed April 14 2021)

³⁸ Serwud, Dora. "Les héros de Kobané", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February-March 2020. <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/mav/169/SERWUD/61258> (Accessed April 14 2021)

Applying the new ideological principles developed by Apo from Imrali, this territory self-administered by the Kurds mixed within it military, feminist, ecological, agricultural, cultural, linguistic and political projects which together form the concept of "democratic confederalism" (Matin, 2019) in replacement to references to Marxism in the PKK doctrine. Often compared to the libertarian project of the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War³⁹, or to the alter-globalist model of Chiapas in Mexico (Léonard, 2016), Rojava in turn attracted "International Brigades"⁴⁰ wanting to put their ideology into practice or taking up arms to defend this territory. And the French were not left out⁴¹, young activists from the far-left as well as journalists and researchers in search of thrills, the Kurdish province of Syria remaining at the heart of the news after Kobane, while relations with Turkey continued to distend. Indeed, following the failed coup attempt in 2016, Erdoğan's purges within the civil service were multiplying, in the name of the hunt for Gülenists traitors⁴², which also ended up being exported abroad⁴³ through educational institutions or associations managed by the network, as well as through the voluntary or involuntary exile of civil servants fearing imprisonment in their turn. Criticizing the European heads of state for not having expressed direct support in the face of the attempted putsch of which he was the victim⁴⁴, the President of the Turkish Republic no longer hesitated to be more and more aggressive towards the West. Since then, he has threatened the European Union to break off the political agreement on the management of Syrian migrants⁴⁵, and has drawn closer to Russia on a number of issues, for example through the purchase of anti-aircraft missiles, which provoked the ire of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)⁴⁶.

End of a decade marked by the growing tensions between Paris and Ankara

³⁹ Jaafari, Shirin. "For some Americans, the conflict in Syria is the Spanish Civil War of our time", *The World*, September 13 2017. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-09-13/some-americans-conflict-syria-spanish-civil-war-our-time> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴⁰ Otten, Cathy. "War with Isis : The 'international brigade' of foreign fighters joining up to help Kurdish Peshmerga tackle Islamists", *The Independent*, July 6 2015. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/war-isis-international-brigade-foreign-fighters-joining-help-kurdish-peshmerga-tackle-islamists-10367544.html> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴¹ Alonso, Pierre. "Ces combattants francophones revenus de Syrie et solidaires des Kurdes", *Libération*, October 11 2019. https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2019/10/11/ces-combattants-francophones-revenus-de-syrie-et-solidaires-des-kurdes_1756924/ (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴² Sezgin, Ismail. "Turkish witch-hunt against the Gulen movement lacks one thing : Evidence", *Middle East Eye*, August 19 2016. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/node/55763> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴³ Schenkkan, Nate. "The Remarkable Scale of Turkey's Global Purge", *Foreign Affairs*, January 29 2018. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2018-01-29/remarkable-scale-turkeys-global-purge> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴⁴ Karadeniz, Tulay & Pamuk, Humeyra. "Turkey's Erdogan slams West for failure to show solidarity over coup attempt", *Reuters*, July 29 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-idUSKCN10912T> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴⁵ Timur, Safak & Nordland, Rod. "Erdogan Threatens to Let Migrant Flood Into Europe Resume", *New York Times*, November 25 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/25/world/europe/turkey-recep-tayyip-erdogan-migrants-european-union.html> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴⁶ Knight, Ben. "Turkey needles NATO by buying Russian weapons", *DW*, September 13 2017. <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-needles-nato-by-buying-russian-weapons/a-40475465> (Accessed April 14 2021)

While Turkey's place in this international alliance is beginning to be questioned, relations with Europe continue to deteriorate, particularly after banning AKP meetings in several countries⁴⁷ such as the Netherlands and Germany, which led the Turkish head of state to call his German counterpart a Nazi⁴⁸. Elected partly on a project to revive the place of France in the European project in 2017, Macron soon became the new "Turk's head"⁴⁹ of Ankara by placing himself as the new strong man of the European Union. From his campaign for the presidential elections, and while he kept his distance from the nationalist discourse carried by his main opponent Marine Le Pen, the future head of state attracted the wrath of Turkey by promising to establish an official day of commemoration of the Armenian genocide, every April 24⁵⁰. A promise kept in 2018, which pushed the AKP government to refer itself to the crimes conducted by France in Algeria until the decolonization in 1962⁵¹, including at a NATO meeting that saw the French representative left the assembly in reaction to Turkish relativism⁵². The following year, it was the arrest of an academic teaching mathematics in Lyon, Tuna Altinel, while on vacation in Turkey that once again set the world on fire between the two nations. Accused by Ankara of having participated in a meeting of a local Kurdish association, in the presence of a deputy of the opposition to the AKP, the mathematician was accused of "terrorist complicity" by the judges in charge of the 2016 purges. Recognized for his excellence in his field of expertise, the scientist has benefited for two years from an unflinching mobilization of local Kurdish associations, as well as of the entire national scientific community often relayed by French officials. Finally judged innocent in 2020, the refusal of the justice to give him back his passport, and thus to let him return to France⁵³, made this case a new characteristic pillar of the Kurdish movement which is more and more established in the French militant space.

Always regularly mobilized on the events relating to the evolution of the situation in Rojava, the

⁴⁷ Bozgaca, Tugba & Christia, Fotini. "Turkish referendum rallies in Europe made headlines. Did they affect election results ?", *Washington Post*, May 6 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/05/06/turkish-referendum-rallies-in-europe-made-headlines-did-they-affect-election-results/> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴⁸ "Turkey's Erdogan decries Merkel over 'Nazi measures' as row thunders on", *DW*, March 19 2017. <https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-erdogan-decries-merkel-over-nazi-measures-as-row-thunders-on/a-38015707> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁴⁹ "Tête de Turc" is a French common expression to design the punchbag of someone else.

⁵⁰ "Macron promet l'inscription au calendrier de la commémoration du génocide arménien", *AFP*, January 13 2018. https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2018/01/31/macron-promet-l-inscription-au-calendrier-de-la-commemoration-du-genocide-armenien_5249433_823448.html (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁵¹ Louadj, Kamal. "Erdogan parle à nouveau du "génocide français en Algérie", une déclaration appropriée ?", *Sputnik*, February 12 2021. <https://fr.sputniknews.com/afrique/202102121045214370-erdogan-parle-a-nouveau-du-genocide-francais-en-algerie-une-declaration-appropriee-/> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁵² "Turkish minister, French lawmaker clash over Armenia 'genocide' day", *France 24*, April 12 2019. <https://www.france24.com/en/20190412-turkish-minister-french-lawmaker-clash-over-armenia-genocide-day> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁵³ "Turkish professor of French university stranded in Istanbul after passport confiscated", *Ahval News*, March 30 2021. <https://ahvalnews.com/academics-peace/turkish-professor-french-university-stranded-istanbul-after-passport-confiscated> (Accessed April 14 2021)

Kurdish cause does not forget its other demands. Whether they are related to the liberation of Öcalan ; to the removal of the PKK from the list of terrorist organizations ; through the reopening of the trial of those who ordered the assassination of its citizens ; or to the frequent arrests of those in charge of the different associative branches of the militant network, as recently in Marseille⁵⁴. A multiplication of claims which can be explained as much by the political situation, as by the widening of the audience and the supports it allows. Indeed, legitimized by their action in Syria as much as by the authoritarian drift of the Turkish Presidency - from whom they say they are the first victims and which poisons the relations between Paris and Ankara - the Kurdish militants are now supported by a whole part of the French political and intellectual elite. The far-left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon⁵⁵ as well as the public intellectual Bernard Henri-Lévy⁵⁶ participate more or less closely to their actions, and push them to claim the officialization of their new legitimacy which is regularly threatened by the Franco-Turkish cooperation in the field of security. This leads to associative leaders being arrested on French territory and on Turkey's request in the name of the fight against terrorism. Getting closer and closer to the Armenian lobby which has reached a more advanced stage of legitimization since its establishment in France with the commemoration of the genocide, the objective seems to be to capitalize on the deeply negative image of the Turkish political power in the country, to be recognized as a credible opposition and no longer a terrorist one. A challenge that seems possible at a time when an ultra-nationalist Turkish political movement such as the Grey Wolves has been officially dismantled by the French government⁵⁷, and when the leaders of the Kurdish cause in exile have appeared among the personalities supporting the Armenian diaspora at the time of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh⁵⁸.

Particularly mobilizing for the French political class always anxious to capture the Armenian vote and the personalities who come from it, this territorial confrontation in the Caucasus ended with an Azeri victory which can be explained by the military support received from Turkey whose increasingly wide interventionism appears to be a new threat to European and French interests. If numerous demonstrations of Franco-Armenians took place across the country to denounce the inaction of the State to come to the aid of Yerevan⁵⁹ when Ankara did not hesitate to send drones as

⁵⁴ "Protest against criminalization of Kurds in Marseille", *ANF*, March 24 2021. <https://anfenglish.com/news/protest-against-criminalization-of-kurds-in-marseille-50874> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁵⁵ "J-L Mélenchon dénonce la persécution des Kurdes en France", *Kurdistan au féminin*, March 24 2021. <https://kurdistan-au-feminin.fr/2021/03/24/j-l-melenchon-denonce-la-persecution-des-kurdes-en-france/> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁵⁶ "Bernard-Neri Levy : why doesn't the West care about Kurdish independence ?", *I24 News*, September 27 2017. <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/156478-170927-bernard-henri-levy-why-doesn-t-the-west-care-about-kurdish-independence> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁵⁷ MacDonald, Alex. "Who are the Grey Wolves and why is France banning them ?", *Middle East Eye*, November 7 2020. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/grey-wolves-france> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁵⁸ "Appel pour la libération des prisonniers de guerre arméniens", *Le Point*, March 15 2021. https://www.lepoint.fr/debats/appel-pour-la-liberation-des-prisonniers-de-guerre-armeniens-15-03-2021-2417764_2.php (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁵⁹ Louis, Lisa. "Armenians in France plead for Nagorno-Karabakh intervention", *DW*, October 22 2020.

well as men to Baku, the Turkish nationalists established in France did not hesitate either to organize violent counter-demonstrations against this community and its local political supporters⁶⁰. A new transposition of Erdoğan's aggressive policy beyond his borders while President Macron and his Minister of the Interior were presenting their draft law against separatism. More than ever identified as a threat in the new nationalist discourse of the French government, the ultra-nationalism of the AKP is strengthened within its borders but at the same time reinforces the audience and the rapprochement of historical enemies as Kurds and Armenians⁶¹, who no longer hesitate to come together to make common cause abroad. The alliance of progressives, committed to the politics of memory and inclusion, that the ruling party feared at home with the emergence of the HDP⁶², is now occurring abroad, where it is legitimized despite its initiators being under arrest in Turkey.

Conclusion : Recent academic debates emphasize that nation-states should be replaced at the core of migration studies, not only from the point of view of the receiving-states of immigrants but also from the sending-states of emigrants (Icduygu & Aksel, 2015). As them, the ambition of this article is then to analyse the migration coming from Anatolia to Europe since the 1960's as a key to understand the political evolution of host societies like France but also of the origin countries. Which is mostly Turkey whether we study Armenians, Kurds or Turks transnationalism. Indeed, the three expatriate's populations I focused on this article can all be considered as diverse parts of a bigger Turkish diasporas continuum (Adamson, 2018) to the extent that Armenians, Kurds or Turks who are now living overseas are mainly abroad because of the political evolution of Turkey, because of which their journey started. Since the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, the Turkish state had been deeply shaped by internal or international population shifting (Icduygu & Aksel, 2015). Turkey was originally even founded on such displacement, with the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire that creates itself the first Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish and also Greek diasporas with the draw of new national frontiers not taking into consideration the identity mix of these populations across the sultanate territory (Adamson, 2018). Notably in its biggest cities like Constantinople, Izmir, Thessaloniki, Damascus or Beirut. From then, despite the new Turkish nationalist discourse that the Republic founder Mustafa Kemal "Atatürk" promoted for shaping the union of all the ethnic and

<https://www.dw.com/en/armenians-in-france-plead-for-nagorno-karabakh-intervention/a-55335674> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁶⁰ Skopeliti, Clea. "Video shows Turkish and Azeri nationals 'looking for Armenians' in France", *The Independent*, October 29 2020. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turks-azeris-lyon-france-armenians-vienne-video-b1422175.html> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁶¹ Geerdink, Frédérique. "Kurds in Turkey atone for their role in the Armenian genocide", *The World*, <https://www.pri.org/stories/kurds-turkey-atone-their-role-armenian-genocide> (Accessed April 14 2021)

⁶² McKernan, Bethan. "Turkey : the rise and fall of the Kurdish party that threatened Erdoğan", *The Guardian*, December 27 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/27/as-erdogan-tightens-grip-on-power-last-opposition-politicians-resist-brutal-purge> (Accessed April 14 2021)

religious component composing its new country, Turkey is inhabited by people that do not all recognize themselves as Turks. A disunity that has survived to the various generations who lived migrations, first from the most rural and remoted areas of Anatolia to the new local metropolis in formation and after from Turkey to Europe, or the rest of the world.

Or, diaspora are built – consciously or not – by their sending states, and that in the same time those countries of origin evolved due to the existence of an important part of their population living abroad as a community (Adamson, 2018). The evolution of the Turkish official position about the migration of its citizens illustrates the understanding of this trend by those in power in Ankara : from a desire to see their expats coming back to Turkey for helping the country to a wish to see them becoming a part of their host society in away that could reinforce the state position in it (Icduygu & Aksel, 2015). A deep change that started in the 1980's, after the military coup, when the junta decided to reduce political opposition to the unity of Turkish citizens both at home and abroad, by sending imams and teachers responsible for re-disseminating the nationalist-kemalist dogma to the expats, in order to manage the diasporas. This ambition is confirmed after the departure of the military in power, with the addendum of a new article in the Constitution proclaiming that "the Government takes measures to ensure family unity of the Turkish citizens working in foreign countries, to educate their children, to meet their cultural needs and to provide social security, to protect their link to the motherland and to facilitate their coming back" (Mügge, 2012). A will of control firstly well received by host countries like France, where the question of the integration of these population start to emerge at the same time, when an important part of the people came for work decided to stay with their families. The Turkish state proposal to take care of some of the religious and educative activities of its emigrants representing one less "burden" for its French counterpart. It's in this context that the bilateral agreements as the Teaching of languages and cultures of origin (ELCO) and the development of the Turkish lead network of mosques and "cultural center" through the expatriate branch of the Diyanet, that are today pointed out by the French government, emerged. As it was assumed in a speech of the former Turkish President Abdullah Gül from the AKP, in Netherlands, "Turks should achieve higher positions" abroad, "but without assimilation; they should maintain their own cultural and religious values" (Mügge, 2012). A difficult position for host societies that has been repeated by then Prime Minister Erdoğan during his 2010 rally in Paris.

Through this kind of diaspora management strategies, homestates can have both positive and negatives effects for their citizens abroad (Baser & Öztürk, 2020). In one hand, it strenghtens their ties with their country and origin but in the other one, it weakens their facility to integrate in their host country. Being used for soft-power and public diplomacy to support the influence of Turkish

government influence abroad, the expatriates appear as ambassadors in their homestate or the one of their (grand)parents, but in the same time as potential traitors in the society where they live, when the tensions between the two states they are part of are rising. A process of weaponization of the diaspora by the homestate (Baser & Öztürk, 2020), that could be use as a tool for dissidents and host country against the home country, as this article underlines. Indeed diasporas dynamics also teach us a lot about the evolution of the societies that host them and therefore can help us to understand the political dynamics of such countries and their own relationships with the sending states. By presenting here the historical development of the French-Turkish connection through the stance of the bilateral administration of Anatolian migration in France, and its limits, since the 1960's, I wanted to illustrate how the recent deterioration of this diplomatic link has permitted to reinforce the Armenian and Kurdish diasporic mobilization in the French activist space. From then on, if it has also been proved by scholars that diasporas can have an impact on their homeland politics (Lafleur, 2014), and that, in the same time, homeland politics have an impact on diasporas (Kastoryano, 2006) - just as much as diasporas can have on host countries, as this article wish to illustrate - then diasporas can be considered as an intermediary between nations of origin and establishment. The expansion of the audience for Armenian and Kurdish transnational claims in France could be seen both as a way for the French governments to condemn his Turkish counterparts on its authoritarian drift, and at the same time, to strenghten its own international position by letting historical opposition to Ankara deepened their positions on its territory.

This hypothesis of an intermediary position place the migrants as tools who are used by countries on both size of the transnational space (Kastoryano, 2010), according to the message they want to send to the states at the other side. For example, the Kurdish organizations linked with the PKK that have thrived in France since the 1980's regularly see some of their members arrested by the French anti-terrorist police when Paris want to appease the tensions with the Turkish government. It has often been the case during the mandate of Nicolas Sarkozy from 2007 to 2012 after his presidential campaign lead on the refusal of the Turkish integration in the European Union. And in 2021 it was also the case when the premises of the Democratic Center of Kurdistan in Marseille have been searched by the local police and its leaders arrested, after a call of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Emmanuel Macron to pacify the relationship between the two countries. From the other side of the Mediterranean Sea and a few months before, the scholars sent by France to the French-speaking Galatasaray University of Istanbul had been notified by the academic administration that, for the first time, their visas would not be reconducted if they couldn't prove that they were fluent in Turkish. In both cases, foreigners were targeted by the states to send diplomatic messages, more or less assumed as such. Henceforth, the immigrant organizational landscape from Turkey in France isn't truly

“mirroring” (Mügge, 2012) political organizations and parties in their origin country. It is as much defined by this point than by the activist space (Mathieu, 2007) of the society in which it has been transposed, and by the relationship of this society with Turkey. If it is correct to state that we find both branches of the PKK and the Turkish state, alongside relay of the AKP and mobilizations for or against the 1915 genocide, in France, nevertheless they don't have exactly the same influence or even the same claims abroad and in Turkey. If we consider that the policy choices made by Turkey toward its emigrants in Europe have originally all the same base (Mügge, 2012), then this demonstration can then be applied to the others principal societies of settlement for the Turkish diasporas on the continent.

As we know the number of immigrants are still growing up around the world, and particularly from the Middle-East to Europe : if the Syrian conflict seems to reach an end lately, reducing the number of departure from this country, the return of the Talibans to Kabul represent a new source of worries for the "Global North" (Baser & Halperin, 2019) countries which have already shown their lack of hosting willingness for the next generation of refugees. Or, as people flee their homecountry, existing or future diasporas will continue to grow, and transnational ties will continue to consolidate with the constant development of new tools of communications. Then, the different question this article aims at analyzing are now more than ever important to understand the links and relationship between the countries from where people flee or dream of. Moreover, if authoritarianism makes its return in multiple Middle-Eastern and North African countries after a decade that started with the great hope raised by the Arab Springs, nationalism is also rising in the Global North from United States to Europe. Individuals from both sides of the world, and travelling from one to the other, are then stuck between homestates and host societies that will continue to see them as threats or assets for their own political agenda, and then try to use them as "foreign policy tools" (Baser & Halperin, 2019) to back their national or international ambitions. If this article aims at introducing the evolution of Turkish diasporas continuum in France for the last sixty years, it's then to have an overview of their dynamics and influences during an important electoral period both in France (2022) and Turkey (2023) that could have affect deeply their functioning and even existence, as the future outcomes of the conflicts in Syria and Caucasus. Because, in the case of diasporas, "low politics" - as expatriate or integration policy - become "high politics" with diplomatic stakes between home and host countries (Koinova & Tsourapas, 2018).

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