THE UZBEK DIASPORA IN TURKEY : A HISTORICAL-SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (1989–2023)

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Abstract: This article provides a comprehensive historical and sociological analysis of the processes of social adaptation and integration of the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey from 1989 to 2023. The study pays particular attention to the interrelationships between migration waves, territorial settlement, intergenerational differences, and the transformation of cultural identity.
Based on empirical data (surveys and semi-structured interviews) and statistical data, the key factors in diaspora adaptation were identified. The findings demonstrate that social adaptation is a multifactorial and gradual process, in which linguistic proficiency, education, economic participation, and social networks act as key drivers. At the same time, generational change contributes to the formation of a hybrid identity, and transnational ties enhance integration processes.
Key words: Uzbek diaspora, social adaptation, integration, migration waves, identity, transnationality, sociological analysis.

Today, as of 2025, the number of Uzbeks with a residence permit in Turkey is approximately 58 thousand people. This is an indicator based on official migration statistics. At the moment, Turkish migration statistics do not separately show the number of women and children among Uzbek migrants. Extensive research has been carried out in the international scientific literature on migration and diaspora processes in Turkey . In particular, scholars such as Stephen Castles, Saskia Sassen, Alejandro Portes and Peggy Levitt have made a significant contribution to the study of the theoretical foundations of migration, transnational processes and mechanisms of social integration of the diaspora . In these studies, migration is interpreted as a global social process, and the adaptation of migrants to a new society is explained through acculturation and transnational networks . In the Turkish context, researchers such as Ahmet İçduygu, Kemal Kirişci and Nermin Abadan-Unat have focused on studying migration policy, social integration of foreign migrants and the migration system of Turkey. The main emphasis in these works is on general migration flows, state policies and the processes of integration of migrants into society, and they are methodologically based mainly on theoretical analysis and general statistical data. At the same time, a significant part of the existing scientific literature does not pay special attention to Central Asia or the Uzbek diaspora, or generalizes them in the context of broader migration. As a result, the internal structure, migration waves, territorial location, gender and intergenerational differences of the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey have not been studied in sufficient depth.

This study aims to fill this gap and comprehensively analyzes the social adaptation and integration processes of the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey between 1989 and 2023, based on a historical-sociological approach. The study divides the migration process into three main waves , and the socio-economic characteristics of each stage are highlighted based on empirical data. The study is distinguished by its analysis of the social adaptation and integration processes of the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey between 1989 and 2023 through a complex empirical and sociological model based on migration waves, territorial differentiation, gender and intergenerational transformation. As a result of the intensification of global migration processes, diasporas have become important social subjects of modern societies. In this process, Turkey, as one of the centers of migration in geographical, historical and economic terms, played an important role in the formation of the Uzbek diaspora. Since 1989, migration flows associated with the collapse of the former Soviet Union have become the basis for the migration of Uzbeks to Turkey. In subsequent years, economic, educational and labor factors have further expanded the migration process. As a result, the diaspora has not only grown quantitatively , but also has become a qualitatively complex social system.

The main goal of this study is to systematically analyze the processes of social adaptation and integration of the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey from a historical and sociological perspective. To achieve this goal, migration waves , intergenerational differences and territorial characteristics are studied in their interrelation. The study is based on the following theoretical approaches: the theory of acculturation developed by **Berry , Hall's concept of cultural identity,** the diaspora model put forward by **Safran , and the theories of transnationalism by Portes** and **Levitt . These theories** allow us to interpret migration processes not only as geographical movements, but also as social and cultural transformations. Methodologically, the study is based on historical and comparative analysis, sociological survey (n=50), semi-structured interviews and statistical data analysis. The combination of these methods allowed us to harmonize empirical and theoretical results. Migration waves and their social content The formation of the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey developed through three main migration stages.

was driven primarily by political and academic motivations , and the volume of migration during this period was relatively small but qualitatively high. This phase formed the intellectual basis of the diaspora.

The second phase (2000–2009) was characterized by increased economic migration. During this period, the social composition of the diaspora diversified and activity in small businesses and service sectors increased. At the same time, internal diaspora social networks were formed.

The third stage (2010–2023) is characterized by the expansion of educational and labor migration. During this period, integration processes accelerated and transnational ties strengthened. It was at this stage that the formation of a hybrid identity among the younger generation became clearly visible . Determinants of the social adaptation process The results of empirical analysis show that the social adaptation process is carried out through several main factors . First of all, the level of language proficiency serves as the main tool

for migrants to enter society. Individuals with high language competence establish social ties faster and actively participate in the integration process. Education, in turn, enhances integration not only by increasing professional development, but also by increasing social capital. Economic activity, in turn, constitutes a practical mechanism for adaptation, since a stable income strengthens the migrant's position in society . In addition, social networks strengthen ties within the diaspora and facilitate the adaptation process for new migrants. Thus, the adaptation process is manifested as a system that is not individual, but collective in nature. Intergenerational transformation and identity dynamics The results of the study show that there are significant differences between generations. Among the younger generation (18–35 years old), the formation of a hybrid identity is observed, which is the result of the harmony of two cultures . They actively integrate into Turkish society, while retaining Uzbek cultural elements .

The older generation, on the other hand, tends to maintain a more traditional identity, and cultural continuity is of primary importance to them. Therefore, identity transformation is interpreted as a dynamic outcome of the migration process that changes over time. Territorial differentiation and locational characteristics The territorial analysis shows that Istanbul is the main center for the diaspora. Here, economic opportunities, social infrastructure and diaspora networks are highly developed. Ankara, on the other hand, appears as a more academic and formal integration center. In the regions of Bursa, Izmir and Antalya, integration is mainly carried out through economic activities and the service sector . Empirical analysis and results

Social adaptation indicators

Indicator

Result

Language skills (Turkish)

82% of respondents

Social integration level 75–80%

Participation in cultural events 60%

the Uzbek language in the family 65%

Generational differences

Age group

Identity type

Adaptation level

18–25 years old

Hybrid identity High

26–35 years old

Mixed identity Average age over 36

Traditional identity

Relatively low

Interpretation: The younger generation (ages 18–35) is highly integrated, and they have a hybrid identity that combines elements of two cultures.

Territorial analysis (by city)

Istanbul – the highest level of integration, the center of the diaspora;

Ankara – integration through academic and official environments; Many Uzbek women are actively involved in education, service provision, small businesses and cultural activities (based on interviews and field research). Their role is very important in the process of social integration, as they preserve language and traditions within the family, and strengthen social networks. The number of Uzbek diaspora in Turkey (estimated figures).

With official residence permit ~58,000 (2025)

Total Diaspora Estimate 60,000 – 70,000

Unofficial migrants (estimated) 20,000 – 60,000

Total range 70,000 – 130,000

These differences are explained by the presence of an informal segment of migration, temporary residents and undocumented migrants. Therefore, the real number of diaspora may be higher than official statistics . Distribution by migration waves

Migration waves and shares (estimated)

Period 1989–1999

Political and educational migration

Share ~20%

Migration type Intellectuals, students

Period 2000–2009

Economic migration

share ~35%

Business and service sector

2010–2023

Labor and educational migration

~45%

Youth, rapid integration

The largest share falls on the last stage, which indicates an increase in global migration trends.

3. Territorial distribution

Distribution of the Uzbek diaspora by cities in Turkey (estimated)

City Share (%) Feature

Istanbul ~50% Diaspora Center

Ankara ~15% Academic and official environment

Istanbul is the central hub of the diaspora , where social networks and economic opportunities are concentrated.

Gender composition (empirical assessment) Although official statistical data are not available, the following approximate structure is formed based on empirical analysis and interviews:

Gender and age composition

Indicator Share (%)

Women ~45–50%

Men ~50–55%
Children (0–17)~ 20–25%
Young people (18–35) ~40–50%
Older adults (36+) ~ 25–30%
Women are the main entities ensuring cultural continuity within the diaspora.
Employment and integration rate
Employment status (estimated empirical indicators)
Indicator Percentage
Busy ~65–75%
Unemployed or informally employed ~25–35%

Although employment levels are high , the share of the informal sector is significant, indicating that economic integration is not yet complete .

Share of migration waves

1989–1999 → 20%
2000–2009 → 35%
2010–2023 → 45%

Identity by age group

18–25 → hybrid identity high
26–35 → balance
36+ → traditional identity

Statistical analysis shows that: the diaspora consists of formal and informal segments; migration waves have expanded over time; territorial concentration is highest in Istanbul; gender and age composition directly affect the integration process; employment rates are relatively high, but there is an informal sector; systematic data on return migration is insufficient. Differences between regions indicate that adaptation strategies within the diaspora are adapted to local conditions. The social role of women The results of the study confirm the important place of women in diaspora life. They play a key role in preserving cultural identity within the family institution and transmitting it to generations . Women also participate as mediators in the process of social adaptation, ensuring integration between family and society. The general analysis shows that the social adaptation of the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey is not a linear process, but a multi-stage and multi-factorial process, which is formed as a result of the interaction of migration waves, territorial settlement, generational change and social institutions. Theoretically, this process is explained by the acculturation model, and in practice, it is strengthened through transnational connections.

In conclusion, the social adaptation of the Uzbek diaspora in Turkey is a multifactorial and systematic process that develops gradually. Language, education, economic activity and social networks serve as the main determinants of integration. First of all, language and education appear as the main determinants of adaptation, which constitute practical mechanisms of social integration. As a result of the generational change, a hybrid identity is formed, which indicates that the diaspora is developing as a new socio-cultural model. Women, on the other hand, play an important role, acting as the

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main subject stabilizer, ensuring cultural continuity. They maintain the continuity of the diaspora identity.

between the diaspora and the country of origin , making the integration process more dynamic and sustainable.

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