Research Article

Diaspora Exclusion in Divided Home States: Israel and Turkey Compared

Jonathan Grossman[1] , Gözde Böcü[2], and Bahar Baser[3]

Abstract

This article examines how home states define and redefine membership within 'their' diaspora and how certain groups and individuals are excluded from this conception through discourse, policy and practice. We argue that ontological security, or the state's need for a stable sense of identity, coherence and continuity, involves a consistent narrative about belonging that is directed at emigrants and their descendants and shapes how states interact with 'their' diasporas. The theoretical literature typically portrayed diaspora engagement in positive and inclusionary terms. Recently, however, scholars have argued that diaspora engagement may also have negative and exclusionary dimensions in the form of marginalisation, securitisation and persecution of specific groups and individuals abroad, as well as the cooptation of other groups. Such practices are likely in the context of divided societies, mirroring domestic modes of exclusion. Our comparative study of Israel and Turkey reveals such exclusionary dynamics based on ethnicity, religion and political inclination, which not only characterise both countries' domestic contexts but also extend to their overseas populations. Our findings suggest that in divided states, where identity struggles and uneven citizenship shape politics and society, diaspora policies claiming to tie emigrants and co-ethnics to the homeland may never achieve full inclusion.

Keywords

diaspora, exclusion, divided societies, Israel, Turkey

Introduction

This article tackles the question of why and how states exclude emigrants and co-ethnics abroad from those imagined transnational communities they define as 'their' diasporas. More specifically, it unpacks how governments portray, construct and treat certain diasporic populations as patriotic and loyal while delegitimizing those who do not conform to this ideal.

[1] The Jacob Robinson Institute for the History of Individual and Collective Rights, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus Campus, Jerusalem, Israel
[2] Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
[3] School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University, Durham, UK

Corresponding Author:
Jonathan Grossman, The Jacob Robinson Institute for the History of Individual and Collective Rights, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus Campus, Jerusalem 9190501, Israel.
Email: jonathan.grossman@mail.huji.ac.il

States implement diaspora governance to maintain connections with dispersed populations, harness their potential contributions to national development and foster a sense of belonging (Délano Alonso & Mylonas, 2019; Gamlen, 2019). Scholars have extensively studied the formulation of diaspora-engagement policies and, to some extent, how host countries respond and interact with them (Baser & Féron, 2022; Böcü, 2022). Still, the literature on the *selective* nature of diaspora-governance policies aimed at creating an imagined transnational community outside the state's borders mainly focuses on those populations the home state wants to include and the reasons for this inclusion. At the same time, the evidence from various cases of state-diaspora relations demonstrates that not all diasporic populations are equally embraced (e.g. Njikang, 2020; Ragazzi, 2017). As Orjuela (2025, 36) argues, 'how states define who belong to their diaspora, and thus who they need to engage, varies'. Unpacking diaspora governance policies is essential for understanding their varied impacts on different diaspora groups abroad.

Joining this literature, we highlight the other side of this coin – why and how states *exclude* specific groups and individuals from – or within – their conception of 'the diaspora'. We do this by adopting an ontological security perspective, merging debates on ontological security with diaspora-governance studies to examine how exclusionary practices shape state-diaspora relations. Moreover, building on Gamlen (2019) and Ragazzi's (2009) work, which considers diaspora governmentality as the structural response to the deterritorialisation of states, we posit that the transnational dimension of identity cultivation and nation-building needs further theorisation. Given the heterogeneity of such overseas communities and their varying ties to the home state, we argue that more attention should be paid to intra-diasporic politics (Adamson, 2019; Délano Alonso and Mylonas, 2019; Mügge, 2010) and the differential treatment of diasporic populations (Böcü & Baser, 2024; Grossman, 2024; Tsourapas, 2015).

Diasporas are commonly understood as *transnational communities of emigrants and their descendants who remain attached to a (real or imagined) homeland and share a collective identity* (Grossman, 2019, p. 1267). While positivist scholars conceptualise diasporas as tangible entities, constructivists focus on the ways actors define, claim and mobilise certain populations as diasporic (Abramson, 2018, 80–81). When studying exclusion, both meanings are important. On the one hand, we ask what drives states to *define* co-ethnics overseas as outsiders. On the other hand, those affected by these measures are *actual groups and individuals*. Some may not identify as diaspora members at all; nonetheless, they may be targeted by exclusionary policies, discourses and practices. Since our focus is on the *home state's* actions and discourse, we also regard such individuals as diasporans.

We therefore define diasporans as *emigrants from the perceived homeland and their descendants, as well as other co-ethnics who self-identify as members of the nation or are targeted by the home state's exclusionary practices*. Since diasporas have different migration histories and trajectories, some diasporic groups have lived for generations outside the place they deem their 'homeland' and are later joined by newer cohorts of emigrants from the actual home state. We count members of all these groups as diasporans, regardless of where they or their ancestors were born or whether they are citizens of the home state. However, those who voluntarily exclude themselves from the home state and are not engaged by it in any meaningful way – for example, the Jewish ultra-Orthodox group *Naturei Karta*, whose members strongly oppose Jewish statehood – are outside our scope.

The article analyzes the contemporary diaspora politics of Israel and Turkey, two divided home states, under the respective leaderships of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. By comparing Israel's and Turkey's definitions of and attitudes towards 'their' diasporas, we show that both states have exported domestic forms of exclusion based on the ethnicity, religion and political inclination of diasporans. Under Netanyahu and his *Likud* party, Israel, despite its declared commitment to all Jewish people, has increasingly sidelined politically liberal and religiously pluralist diasporans (and, as before, either ignored or securitised non-Jewish emigrants). Under the leadership of Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*,

hereafter AKP), Turkey's diaspora governance has similarly neglected, marginalised and even re-pressed diasporans opposing the regime (and, as before, often disregarded non-Turkish and non-Sunni emigrants).

Turkey and Israel are *divided societies* – societies in which internal ideational polarisation due to foundational issues relating to national identity results in conflict over norms and values with implications for domestic politics (Lerner, 2011, pp. 10–12). Our main argument is that in such contexts, domestic exclusionary dynamics shaped by narratives of ontological security – that is, security of 'who we are' – are produced and reproduced in state discourses, policies and practices towards the diaspora, leading to the marginalisation, securitisation, cooptation and even per-secution of groups and individuals. *Marginalisation* happens when states neglect certain dia-sporans or omit them from all or some of their diaspora-engagement interactions while giving preferential treatment to other diasporans. The *securitisation* of diasporans is their construction as a threat to the homeland's national security.[1] When *cooptation* occurs, the state bestows honours, power, privileges and resources upon loyal diasporans, who may be pitted against undesirable diasporans. *Persecution* is the active repression of diasporans, which can take different forms, for example, surveillance, threats and even physical violence. While these mechanisms mostly appear in the transnational repression literature (Glasius, 2024; Tsourapas, 2021), our analysis reveals that non-authoritarian states – or, at the least, states that have not gone fully authoritarian – may also employ them.

To gain a deeper understanding of selective engagement and exclusion in diaspora governance, we apply to the Israeli and Turkish cases an ontological security lens (Giddens, 1991; Laing, 1960). As defined by Zarakol (2010, p. 3), 'Ontological security is about having a consistent sense of "self,"' meaning that 'states perform actions in order to underwrite their notions of "who they are."' As the literature shows, both countries produced, over time, narratives that served as sense-making tools, creating self-perceptions about stable selfhood and statehood (Gülseven, 2024, p. 127). Their on-tological security narrative-creation towards their minorities, especially Palestinians and Kurds, is well-studied (Adısönmez, 2021). We argue that both countries have expanded these domestic narrative-building strategies to the transnational space, using diaspora governance as a way of maintaining their ontological security. Through selective engagement and exclusion, they have sought to project a coherent national identity at home and abroad.

Our comparison demonstrates that exclusionary/inclusionary practices in diaspora governance cannot solely be explained from a transnational repression lens, as they also reflect the extension of a home state's quest for ontological security. In both cases, insecurities about the state's core identity, and the exclusion and suppression of certain groups, became common practice domestically *and* transnationally. In other words, both Israel and Turkey use diaspora governance to securitise parts of their diasporas so that the latter's transnational activities do not undermine the domestic social order that holds the state's identity intact. In such contexts, where the state foundation has been based on a struggle over identity – with the majority identity being imposed on minority identities – and where citizenship is never universally extended to all members of society, diaspora outreach that claims to tie citizens and non-citizens to the homeland will never be fully inclusionary. Instead, exclusion is embedded in these states' *modus operandi*.

In the following, we first draw on existing theoretical accounts of states' membership politics membership, diaspora governance and selective treatment to explain their inclusionary and exclu-sionary measures. Next, we outlay our rationale for comparing Israel and Turkey. Third, we discuss the historical and contemporary contexts of ethnic, religious and political divisions in these countries; analyse their diaspora-related statements, policies and practices; and show how, under Netanyahu and Erdoğan, they have embraced and excluded distinct parts of what could be seen as 'their' diasporas in keeping with domestic notions of citizenship and national belonging. Finally, we consolidate our observations in a comparative manner and indicate potential areas for future exploration.

The Transnational Politics of National Membership

State leaders define and redefine membership in the nation by crafting narratives that determine who is inside and outside its boundaries (Smith, 2003). Such narratives of belonging enhance the ontological security of individuals possessing the 'desirable' traits that make them 'insiders' (Skey, 2010), as well as the collective ontological security of states in general (Subotić, 2016). Since different ruling elites have different conceptions of belonging, boundaries may be created even between different citizens of the same state, excluding certain groups or individuals based on such factors as their culture, language or alignment with the state's declared values (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 90). By situating people at different points along a hierarchy of membership, this boundary-making produces 'insiders' and 'outsiders' not only within the nation-state's territory but also transnationally, affecting emigrants and their offspring (Burmeister-Rudolph, 2023).

Migration, in this sense, poses a unique challenge to the nation-state since it breaks traditional bonds between citizenship and territory (Barry, 2006, p. 17). This separation gives rise to 'external politics of belonging' – the way populations living outside the state's jurisdiction claim or are claimed to be members of the state or nation, and the way these claims are disputed (Brubaker, 2010, p. 66). Through discourse, policy and practice, states turn emigrants and their descendants into *diaspora* communities by granting them membership in their political community and seeking their loyalty (Burgess, 2020, pp. 17–18). However, they seldom embrace *all* diasporans. Rather, they define, court and cultivate certain populations as 'the diaspora' while marginalising or confronting others (Ho, 2011).

To enhance diasporans' national attachments and tap their resources, states develop legal, economic, political and cultural diaspora strategies. Kalm (2013, pp. 382–96) views these strategies as 'technologies of citizenship' employed to define diasporans' desirable characteristics and construct 'ideal' and loyal citizens abroad. Whereas Kalm views economic motivations as these strategies' main goal, McIntyre and Gamlen (2019) explore a broader set of drivers. Indeed, some states measure diasporans' national membership by their actual or potential economic contribution. Yet others attach greater importance to ethnic attributes such as language, religion and shared descent or to civic traits such as formal citizenship and participation in the state's political community. These conceptions, which often overlap, affect the way states approach the populations targeted or neglected by their diaspora policies and institutions.

The exclusion of some diasporans may be part of a strategy to include and engage other diasporans. While states may try to win the loyalty of diasporans through a unifying discourse that presents the diaspora as one community with common goals, they may also advance a divisive discourse inciting the 'true' diaspora against other populations whose claims to belonging are framed as illegitimate (Burgess, 2020, p. 25). Such discourses are prevalent in the case of populist leaders, who promote a narrative according to which the previously glorified nation was corrupted by unscrupulous elites, and only 'true' members of the nation – if given power – can make it great again (R. M. Smith, 2020, p. 68). Domestically, these leaders' majoritarian discourses and policies are based on the exclusion and securitisation of 'disloyal' minorities (Varshney, 2021). To garner votes and popular support, they posit not only external but also internal Others as enemies of the nation: Building on their constituents' ontological insecurity 'about the loss of national sovereignty, cultural identity, political relevance, and economic decline', they delegitimise domestic populations and increase internal division (Löfflmann, 2022, pp. 544–47). In a similar vein, leaders can *transnationally* exclude diasporans – who are both 'internal' (for sharing the home state's ethnicity and/or citizenship) and 'Other' (because they have attributes deemed undesirable by the regime). Thus, the 'internal' politics of belonging – the construction of populations inside the state as not fully belonging to it (Brubaker, 2010, p. 66) – informs the 'external' politics of belonging, in which different populations outside the state are included in and excluded from conceptions of the nation (Brubaker, 2010, p. 77).

How are such inclusion and exclusion manifested in state-diaspora relations? Diaspora engagement has been commonly understood as a beneficial measure that increases diasporans' political, economic and social participation in the home state (Gamlen, 2019). By recognising the agency and contribution of diaspora communities and individuals, states aim to capitalise on their skills and resources and 'form them into "ideal citizens" who are responsible and loyal' (Orjuela, 2025, p. 35). But what about those diasporans viewed as undesirable parts of the nation or state? In such cases, home-state leaders may explicitly or implicitly situate diasporans outside the nation's boundaries or at the lowest tiers of the transnational citizenship hierarchy. Thus, they reproduce domestic modes of exclusion, in which certain categories of citizens and residents within the state are omitted from the national narrative, and apply them to overseas populations (Brand, 2010, pp. 86–87).

The exclusion may take the form of *marginalisation*, when leaders completely ignore certain emigrants and their descendants or treat them as lesser members of the nation, for example, by stigmatising emigrants as defectors who betray national values (Solari, 2014); denouncing them as inauthentic nationals (Quinsaat, 2024, pp. 153–54); leaving them out of official celebrations of 'the diaspora' (Burmeister-Rudolph, 2023); or denying them such rights as access to state resources, immigration to the home state, participation in its political process or assistance in their current countries, which diasporic 'insiders' may enjoy (Burmeister-Rudolph, 2023; Kovács, 2020). When such exclusions involve *cooptation*, states adopt a dual approach towards their expatriate populations, endeavouring to incorporate and legitimise some diasporans while simultaneously excluding and regarding others as adversaries (Glasius, 2024; Orjuela, 2025).

Home-state leaders may also *securitise* diasporans, framing them as enemies of the state and a threat to its national security (Abramson, 2018, 80–83). This may lead to their *persecution*, for example, by threatening, arresting or even assassinating them. Such practices, however, are relatively rare and characterise mostly (but not only) authoritarian states (Glasius, 2024; Tsourapas, 2021). Moreover, emigrants' descendants are generally more integrated into their adopted countries and often hold their citizenship, making them less vulnerable to persecution. Instead of persecuting them, home states often opt for marginalisation, omitting them from their diaspora-oriented discourse and engagement (Arkilic & To, 2024, 14; Wackenhut & Orjuela, 2023, p. 153).

Identity-Based Drivers of Diaspora Exclusion: Ethnicity, Religion and Politics

Our review of the existing literature identified ethnicity, religion and political inclination, which are prominent markers of identity politics, as the main bases for the exclusion of diasporans in divided home states (Figure 1). These are not the only causes of diaspora exclusion. Economic status and social class, for example, may intersect with other identity markers, leading to exclusion (Böcü & Panwar, 2022; Braun, 2017; Burmeister-Rudolph, 2023). However, since identity-based attributes are the most salient ones in constructing narratives of belonging and ontological security, our analysis focuses on them. These drivers are not necessarily categorical and all-encompassing. In keeping with the state's conception of national belonging, some diasporans may be seen as potential members of the nation because of their ethnicity or formal citizenship status but excluded from 'ideal' membership because of undesirable traits, such as their political identity. States may still engage such diasporans, perhaps ambivalently, for specific purposes, such as extracting their financial contributions, while excluding them from other realms, such as political participation.

Ethnicity. Home states fostering ethnocultural nationalism may include in their discourse and policies emigrants and their descendants of certain ethnic groups while ignoring others (Koinova & Tsourapas, 2018, p. 313). In this way, members of the titulary group are conceptualised as part of the diaspora, whereas members of other groups are not. Croatia, for example, has excluded Serbian emigrants in this way (Ragazzi, 2017; chap. 6). Such ethnicity-based exclusions are often apparent in home-state return
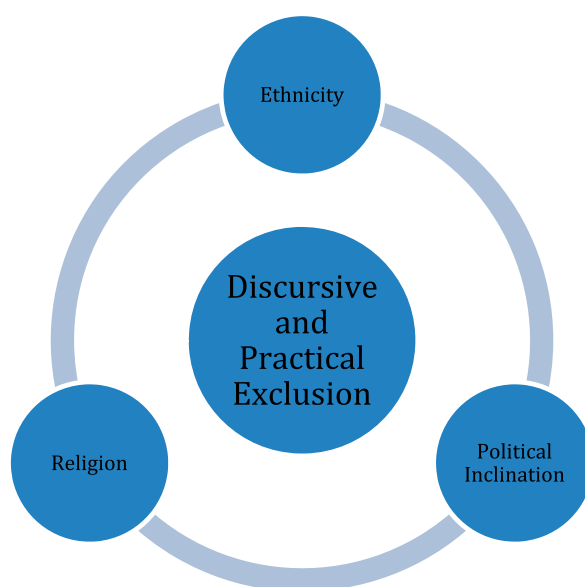
Figure 1. Identity-based exclusion of diasporans in divided societies.

migration policies (Rohtmets, 2012). Governments may actively encourage the immigration of titulary-group members to increase this group's demographics at the expense of other populations (Tsuda, 2010).

Religion. Religion can also play an important part in the inclusion and exclusion of diasporans. Some states include in their construction of the nation, and therefore the diaspora, solely emigrants and co-ethnics belonging to their predominant religion. For instance, the Irish diaspora's popular narrative is largely a Catholic story and tends to ignore the experiences of non-Catholic Irish emigrants (Delaney, 2006, p. 44). India's diaspora-engagement policies have targeted mainly Hindus while excluding – and in some instances oppressing – Muslims and other religious minorities (Böcü & Panwar, 2022, pp. 173–74).

Political Inclination. Home-state governments and leaders also exclude diasporans based on their political alignment, constructing those who support the regime's interests as loyal members of the nation and those opposing them as 'outsiders' (Shain, 1989, p. 165). This exclusion usually comes to the fore when diasporans actively confront the home-state government. During Duvalier's authoritarian rule in Haiti, political exiles were labelled 'enemies of the nation' and Haitian residents were discouraged from maintaining contact with them (Schiller & Fouron, 2001, 111). Political exiles from Communist Cuba suffered a similar treatment for many years (Eckstein, 2009, pp. 129–30). Diasporans associated with a rival or outlawed political party may equally face exclusion, as illustrated by Iraqi emigrants who used to support the Baath party and were hindered from returning to post-Baathist Iraq even if they had left the party decades before (Kadhum, 2019, p. 169).

Political exclusion and inclusion of diasporas often go hand in hand through cooptation: when some segments of the diaspora confront the home state's regime, the latter may try to empower more loyal diasporic groups (Burgess, 2020, p. 29) or mobilise them against the diasporic opposition, using divide-and-rule tactics (Arkilic & To, 2024; Orjuela, 2025). President Rodrigo Duterte of the

Philippines, for example, pitted loyalist diasporans in the United States against dissident emigrants, claiming that the latter had lost their Filipino essence and become 'American', thereby rendering their criticism of his regime illegitimate (Quinsaat, 2024, pp. 153–54). Rwandan President Paul Kagame similarly warned 'loyal' diasporans against émigrés doing 'a disservice to their motherland and their fellow countrymen and women' (Turner, 2013, pp. 277–78). Ethnic and religious minorities may also be coopted in this way, both domestically and transnationally. China, for example, had traditionally focused its outreach efforts on ethnic Han diasporans. More recently, however, it began to target certain emigrants who hailed from ethnic and religious minorities but supported the Chinese regime, in an attempt to increase Beijing's soft power abroad and offset political opposition in these diasporans' areas of origin (Ho, 2020, 6–7, 10).

Importantly, ethnicity, religion and politics often intersect (Todd, 2010). Exclusionary practices drawing on such intersections within the home state can be projected onto the diaspora. Iraq, for instance, excludes Sunni diasporans, ostensibly for being Baath party loyalists, regardless of whether they actually support that party (Kadhum, 2019, pp. 168–69). India's attempts to curtail Sikh diasporic activism are another example of excluding diasporans along ethno-national, religious and political lines all at once (Shahed, 2019). As shown below, these intersections characterised exclusionary measures in Israel and Turkey.

Case Selection and Data Analysis

To understand the dynamics of diaspora exclusion, we use the method of structured, focused comparison, which enables us to draw theoretical insights (George & Bennett, 2005, chap. 3). Israel and Turkey have been the subjects of numerous comparative studies focussing on different aspects of state identity, conflict resolution and ontological security, as well as their agency in world politics (e.g. Adısönmez, 2021; Akkoyunlu & Sarfati, 2024; Ariely, 2021; Ceylan, 2021; Rogenhofer & Panievsky, 2020). While differing in terms of population size, regime type, majority religion, economic development and international power (Akkoyunlu & Sarfati, 2024), they share similar diaspora-governance trajectories. As Abramson (2018, pp. 19–20) explains, both Israel and Turkey claim co-ethnics abroad who are neither emigrants nor citizens (Jewish and ethnic Turk diaspora communities, respectively) as part of the nation; and in recent decades, both countries have been engaging in diaspora governance by creating policies and institutions aimed at influencing co-ethnics' identities and loyalties overseas.

In addition, the shared characteristic of having a divided society has similar implications in terms of state-diaspora relations and diaspora exclusion for the two cases. Despite their many differences, modern Israel and Turkey were established after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire by a specific ethno-national-religious group but contained significant minorities (Golan-Nadir, 2022, p. 10). This resulted in the emergence of a dominant majority (Jews and Turks) and a large minority (Arabs and Kurds), with strained relations and a history of violent conflict, leading to divided societies (Peleg & Waxman, 2007). In the political sphere, both countries have been dominated in the twentieth-first century by right-wing populist leaders – Netanyahu and Erdoğan – who tried to maximise their power through anti-democratic populist measures (Rogenhofer & Panievsky, 2020, p. 1395). In both political systems, religious parties have been increasingly amassing power since the late 20th century (Tepe, 2005, p. 288).

Following other studies leveraging this comparative logic for the two cases, our aim is to contribute to theory building for further understanding the complexities of exclusionary diaspora governance by divided home states. This comparative logic is grounded in observable commonalities between the two cases: Israel's and Turkey's relations with and approaches to their diasporas have been moulded by domestic ethnic, religious and political cleavages and conflicts over the dominant identity of state and society – a typical characteristic of divided home states. In both cases, we observe a dual approach

to diaspora governance, which entails empowering supportive groups to the regime, while excluding and securitising dissenting elements.

The nature of this exclusion, however, varies between the two cases in keeping with the differences between them. As Peleg and Waxman (2007, p. 432) note, Israel is an 'ethnic state' whose policies explicitly and officially promote the Jewish majority's interests and do not consider non-Jews as members of the nation. Conversely, Turkey is a 'civic state' that denies minorities collective rights but allows them full individual rights and seeks to assimilate them into the nation.[2] This distinction, as will be shown, has shaped the two states' dynamics of diaspora inclusion and exclusion. Israel's diaspora governance policies are deeply intertwined with its identity as a Jewish state, which by nature marginalises non-Jewish populations. Turkey's diaspora governance policies not only reflect its Turkish and increasingly Sunni Muslim majority identity but also allow for a limited inclusion of politically loyal diasporans from other groups. Comparing these two cases enhances our understanding of the exclusionary mechanisms in diaspora governance and the selective treatment of diasporas.

Our findings are based on the qualitative content analysis of primary and secondary sources, which were used eclectically to make sense of and reconstruct diaspora exclusion discourse, policy and practice by the two states. On the one hand, we relied on official policy documents, public statements and press releases of state institutions and other state-related actors and entities, as well as press sources. To maximise insights, we also drew from existing studies of state-diaspora relations and diaspora governance for each case. In the Turkish case, where diaspora exclusion has been going on for at least two decades, we extensively utilised published sources by historians and social scientists, as well as illustrative press sources. For Israel, where diaspora exclusion intensified in the 2010s upon Netanyahu's return to power, fewer existing studies were available; therefore, we mostly relied on primary sources. To unpack mechanisms of identity-based exclusion in the diaspora, all available sources were triangulated to gain a comprehensive understanding of the cases (Kapiszewski et al., 2015, pp. 154–160, 380–382; Kuorikoski & Marchionni, 2016). Each case was qualitatively analysed to detect emerging themes and patterns of identity-based diaspora exclusion.

Creating the 'Ideal Citizen' Abroad in Comparative Perspective

Divided Home States and Diaspora Governance in Israel and Turkey

To understand the two countries' exclusionary diaspora governance, it is imperative to examine how ethnicity, religion and politics shaped their political history, ontological security and construction of 'ideal' citizenship.

At the core of Israeli citizenship is the tension between guaranteeing equal rights to all citizens and ensuring Israel's existence as a Jewish *and* democratic state (Eisenstadt, 2008, p. 209). In practice, this means that the maintenance of Israel's Jewish character takes precedence over equal rights (Jamal, 2007, p. 478). This centrality of ethno-national ideas has been manifested, for example, in immigration and naturalisation laws that favour Jewish immigrants and their relatives while making it increasingly difficult for Arabs and Palestinians to immigrate and naturalise, including through family reunion (Shapira, 2019). Ethnic exclusion within Israel is likewise targeting primarily Arab citizens. In 2018, the controversial Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People further enshrined Jewish supremacy in Israeli citizenship, marginalising Muslim and Christian citizens, and even Druze citizens who are generally more integrated into society (Zeedan, 2020). In terms of religion, Jewish Orthodox institutions dominate many areas of Israel's society. State-sanctioned Jewish marriage and burial, for example, are only accessible to people who are Jewish according to religious law (Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 146–52). The Orthodox monopoly over religious affairs – in a country that has no

separation of Church and State – entails the exclusion of non-Orthodox Jewish denominations, such as the Reform and Conservative movements, whose institutions are constantly discriminated against (Ben-Lulu, 2022, p. 1257).

Similar patterns of inclusion and exclusion characterise modern Turkey. Since its foundation, the main pillars of citizenship have been based on a homogenous state structure combined with Republicanism and Secularism. Although all citizens were expected to adopt a Turkish identity regardless of their ethnicity or religion (Kadirbeyoglu, 2007), Muslims were largely understood as part of the Turkish nation, while non-Muslim populations were placed outside of it (Içduygu et al., 2008). Over time, citizenship evolved within the pillars of a Turkish umbrella identity structuring relations with and politics towards ethnic and religious minorities. The most pivotal contestation of this identity came from the Kurdish independence movement and its armed struggle against the Turkish state. Relations between religion and the state have similarly been complex and dynamic. Despite the constitution's secularist principles, the role of religion in society has remained significant (Keyman, 2007). Alevis, as a separate sect of Islam, have been excluded from the Sunni majority's dominant narratives of national identity and faced social, cultural and religious challenges (Mutluer, 2014, 2016).

Both Israel and Turkey have experienced deepening political divisions since their foundation. In Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel's occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories and Jewish settlement in these territories are significant sources of contention (Shapira, 2012, p. 473). In the 2010s and 2020s, populist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu manipulated and exacerbated the political rift by offering economic and other benefits to allies while framing political opponents as traitors supporting Israel's enemies (Rogenhofer & Panievsky, 2020, pp. 1398-99). Netanyahu's sixth government, which assumed power in December 2022, has been the most polarising to date, relying on the support of ultra-Orthodox parties, as well as openly racist, xenophobic and anti-LGBTQ politicians. Since early 2023, it has been using its parliamentary majority to overhaul Israel's judicial system, debilitate the courts and remove checks and balances on the executive's power (Gidron, 2023).

Turkey's major political cleavages similarly pertain to the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, leading to fluctuations between formal inclusion and exclusion. On some occasions, Ankara allowed Kurds more political participation; but when deemed necessary due to the state's security needs, it imposed formal limitations on their citizenship. Since the 2015 collapse of the Turkish-Kurdish peace process, violence resumed (Casier et al., 2011; Küçük, 2019). Political divisions are also related to religion. In recent years, debates surrounding the balance between secularism and Islam have resurged. Political shifts have led to a more pronounced expression of Islamic identity, raising questions about how religion should influence state affairs and policies (Yavuz & Öztürk, 2019). This ongoing tension between secular principles and the societal significance of religion continues to shape Turkey's socio-political landscape. Polarisation has further risen following the 2016 failed coup attempt.

In both states, these ethnic, religious and political divisions have affected not only domestic inclusion and exclusion dynamics but also transnational ones. Both governments have invested considerable resources in diaspora-outreach programs and institutions. Israel's survival and development depended for many years on assistance from the Jewish diaspora, most notably in the United States, which has been essential to Israel's security because of its economic assistance, influence on Washington's foreign policy and political advocacy (Medem-Friedman, 2018, pp. 196–203). Other diaspora communities have also provided Israel with crucial material, political, intellectual and human resources (Ben-Moshe, 2009). Since the early 2010s, Jerusalem's diaspora outreach targets not only 'veteran' Jewish diasporans but also Israeli emigrants, who had previously been looked upon unfavourably but are now embraced as an emerging powerful diaspora community (Grossman, 2024).

Similarly, since the advent of guestworker migration in the 1960s and 1970s, Turkey has perceived its diasporans, particularly in Western Europe, as a potential resource for economic development. Throughout the 1980s, Ankara acknowledged the need to engage co-ethnics abroad politically, devising outreach policies to project Turkish nationalism onto them and shape their diasporic identity and politics (Aksel, 2019; Şenay, 2012). In the 1980s and 1990s, security concerns over political opposition and the spillover of homeland ethnic conflicts further affected these policies (Baser & Park, 2016). In the early 2000s, Turkey's engagement with its largest diaspora in Germany resulted in attempts to influence foreign policy and leverage Turkish immigrant communities as a soft-power tool. As migration waves from Turkey continue (Maritato et al., 2021), diaspora engagement becomes increasingly significant for yielding political, economic, social and intellectual benefits for the state (Aksel, 2019).

As we show next, despite the two states' investment in their overseas populations, their discourses, policies and practices do not equally target all diasporans. Leaders and policymakers in both Israel and Turkey have transnationalised these countries' domestic divisions and conceptions of 'ideal' citizens by including certain diasporans while excluding others. This selective approach reflects broader concerns about ontological security, as home states seek to maintain a coherent national identity and reinforce a sense of continuity in the face of perceived threats at home and abroad.

Israel's Diaspora Exclusion

Jewish ethnicity is crucial to the definition of Israeli national membership, both at home and abroad. Non-Jewish emigrants, particularly Arab ones, are excluded from Israel's diaspora outreach and absent from official emigrant-related narratives, statements and publications. For example, the website of the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism underscores its goal of 'strengthening Jewish identity and the connection to the State of Israel in the Diaspora'.[3] Likewise, 'Israeli Houses' – government-sponsored cultural centres operating in cities with a substantial Israeli community – seek to 'preserve the link for Israelis with the State of Israel through events and gatherings that allow them to express their Israeli identity, in a Hebrew-speaking environment, and to experience Israel's public holidays and religious festivals'.[4] Notably, 'Israeli identity' is constructed here around Israel's Jewish and Zionist national holidays, as well as the Jewish majority's Hebrew language. Curiously, whereas Israel excludes its non-Jewish overseas citizens abroad, its Ministry of Diaspora Affairs sought to incorporate non-Arab communities abroad 'with a kinship to the Jewish people' (mostly Christians claiming to descend from Jews) and facilitate their conversion to Judaism and immigration, as had already been done with non-Jewish indigenous groups from such countries as Ethiopia and India.[5]

Unlike the return migration of Jewish emigrants, which is a professed goal of the Israeli state (Shpaizman, 2014), the return of Arab emigrants is seldom discussed by Israeli policymakers.[6] When it does, it may be securitised. On the day of the 2015 national election, for example, around 5000 Israeli Arab students living in Jordan and the West Bank travelled to Israel to vote. Tapping his political base's ontological insecurity, Netanyahu reacted by issuing a viral Facebook video, in which he declared that 'Arab voters are heading to the polling stations in droves', presumably bussed by Left-wing NGOs.[7] As the Likud's resounding victory in that election suggests, framing Israeli citizens exercising their democratic rights as a national security threat proved successful in rallying Jewish nationalists and bringing them to the polls.

Israel's exclusion of non-Jewish emigrants does not mean that it embraces all Jews abroad. Even Jewish diasporans who identify as pro-Israeli are increasingly excluded, mirroring the growing polarisation within Israel's Jewish society. Under Netanyahu's governments, more and more such diasporans have found themselves outside the 'right' contours of national belonging. Some types of exclusion are related to religion. Jewish Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox parties have become

Netanyahu's staunch political allies and enjoy much leverage in his coalitions. Consequently, Reform and Conservative communities, which constitute the most salient Jewish denominations in the United States, are increasingly marginalised in Israel's discourse and policy. This exclusion did not start with Netanyahu (Kaufman, 1996, p. 242), but his administrations further alienated progressive communities through such measures as barring women's prayer at the Western Wall and supporting Orthodox monopoly over conversions to Judaism (Bayme, 2019, p. 162). During the 2010s, members of Netanyahu's coalition publicly denounced non-Orthodox Jews as false Jews (Abu, 2022) and the participation of Orthodox Jews in pro-Israeli events in the United States increased at the expense of Reforms and Conservatives, mirroring the government's growing animosity toward these denominations (Bayme, 2019, p. 165). In 2021–2022, a short-lived 'change government' coalition of anti-Netanyahu parties across the aisle endeavoured to reintegrate Reforms and Conservatives into its diasporic narrative; Naftali Bennett, who headed this government's first phase, met the Israeli and North American leaders of these movements after years of mutual boycott under Netanyahu.[8] However, Netanyahu's 2022 electoral victory soured relations once again.

As for political exclusion, Jerusalem has long opposed Jewish organisations abroad that criticised its policies and actions towards the Palestinians (e.g. Wertheimer, 1996, 405–6). Under Netanyahu, the exclusion of leftist diaspora groups has become more intensive and overt, reflecting the deepening political rift and delegitimisation of the Left within Israel. Many liberal diasporans, including pro-Israeli ones, were appalled by Netanyahu's staunch alliance with the US Republican Party. Netanyahu's 2015 speech at the US Congress, in which he claimed to represent 'the entire Jewish people' while chastising the Barack Obama administration for signing a nuclear deal with Iran, drew harsh criticism from Jewish Democratic voters and congress members alongside praises from Jewish Republicans.[9] His close relationship with President Donald Trump, who said that Jews who voted for the Democratic Party (as most US Jews did) were 'disloyal' and 'don't care about Israel',[10] became another source of tension,[11] exacerbating existing cleavages within the US Jewish community (H. Yavuz & Akif Okur, 2018).

Netanyahu and his allies not only sidelined but also actively disparaged and securitised diasporans who contested their policies. Since the 2010s, right-wing Israeli politicians have been denouncing left-wing diaspora organisations as anti-Israeli (Abramson, 2018, 88–89). One prominent example is the New Israel Fund (NIF), a Jewish philanthropy established in the United States that donates money to Israeli civil society organisations, including ones that document Israeli violations of human rights in the Occupied Territories. Netanyahu claimed that the NIF was a foreign organisation funded by 'sources that are hostile to Israel' and that 'The overall objective of NIF is to erase the Jewish character of Israel'. His government used legislation to constrain the activities of such entities (Katz & Benjamin, 2021, 8–11), while Jewish critics of the government and anti-occupation activists have been increasingly detained and questioned in Israel's Ben-Gurion airport.[12]

For many moderate Jews and Israelis abroad, including mainstream apolitical organisations known as staunch supporters of Israel, Netanyahu's sixth government and its onslaught on Israel's judiciary were an anathema. In February 2023, the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), the largest US Jewish organisation, issued an open letter warning that 'a dramatic change to the Israeli system of governance will have far-reaching consequences in North America, both within the Jewish community and in the broader society'.[13] Netanyahu's government, in turn, increasingly excluded liberal diasporans. For instance, in March 2023, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, a Jewish supremacist who had been formerly convicted of racism and support for terrorism, defunded a violence reduction program that was partly run by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), blaming this large humanitarian and apolitical organisation of being 'leftist' and stirring uproar in Israel and the diaspora.[14] In July 2023, Foreign Minister Eli Cohen reportedly considered appointing Israeli-born businessman Joe Zevuloni, a Miami-based Trump hardliner and 2020 election denier, as a special envoy to the United States.[15] Netanyahu's Minister of Diaspora Affairs Amichai Chikli became

particularly notorious for attacking and antagonising liberal diasporans. Upon entering his new office in 2023, Chikli suspended the funding of a joint venture encouraging professional cooperation between US and Israeli Jews because a liberal diaspora foundation supported it.[16] In a meeting with US Jewish congressional Democrats, Chikli outraged his interlocutors by declaring that he was 'not woke'.[17]

Israel's securitisation and persecution of anti-Netanyahu diasporans was not limited to Arab emigrants. During a June 2023 social media clash, for example, Diaspora Minister Chikli labelled J Street, a pro-Israeli leftist Jewish advocacy group, as 'a hostile organisation that harms the interests of the state of Israel'.[18] In September 2023, embarking on a trip to the United Nations General Assembly, Netanyahu told the press that Jewish and Israeli diasporans and Israeli residents who were organising massive demonstrations against his government in New York would be 'joining forces with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organisation], with Iran, and with others'.[19] In March 2024, an Israeli-born US citizen who participated in the transnational protest movement received intimidating phone calls and text messages from Israel's internal security service, warning him not to disclose the whereabouts of Netanyahu and his family.[20] As discussed next, we identify similar dynamics of exclusion in Turkey's diaspora governance under the AKP.

Turkey's Diaspora Exclusion

Turkey's diaspora governance can be understood as a strategy for pursuing ontological security by projecting a stable and coherent national identity abroad, aligned with the political and ideological priorities of the current government. While this approach predates Erdoğan, it has reached unprecedented levels under his AKP government, which has significantly expanded Turkey's diaspora-engagement policies worldwide. These policies built upon existing frameworks for governing Turkish citizens and their descendants abroad but also transformed state-led approaches by actively shaping, encouraging and intervening in diaspora mobilisation. The AKP's agenda and motivations became deeply embedded in the institutionalisation of diaspora governance, marking a clear departure from the policies of previous Turkish regimes.

In 2010, Turkey founded the Presidency on Turks Abroad and Relative Communities (*Yurtdisi Turkler Baskanligi*, YTB) – a state institution directly tied to the President's office. As indicated by YTB's president, the agency's motto, 'wherever there is a Turk, we will be there', continues to shape Turkey's diaspora outreach (Aksel, 2019; Çevik, 2019, p. 58; Mencutek & Baser, 2018). As in Israel, Turkey's narratives, policies and actions selectively favour certain groups while disregarding or even discriminating against other populations. Thus, diasporans who do not fall into the ethnic 'Turk' category or do not identify with the current regime are excluded from state-led diaspora engagement both at the discursive and practical levels. As stated in the foundational motto of YTB, preserving the Turkish diaspora's identity and culture – particularly its mother tongue – strengthening patriotism and enhancing its economic, social, cultural and legal standing in countries of residence form the core principles of YTB's diaspora policy. Enhancing Turkey's minority languages and cultures are not part of the immediate agenda of the YTB.[21]

The AKP's approach to diaspora governance primarily focused on acknowledging the diaspora's leverage on political processes. Recognising the diaspora's agency as part of the AKP's strategy to achieve its political goals at home and abroad, policymakers strengthened relations with pro-regime diasporic groups and rekindled interest in Turkish/Sunni identities in diasporic landscapes. While setting diaspora-governance strategies, they reformed certain institutions and introduced new policies, which benefited all Turkish citizens and their descendants outside Turkey. Since 2010, the AKP has spearheaded a reorganisation of Turkey's diaspora engagement, promoting more participatory forms of outreach, such as the implementation of external voting procedures (Aksel, 2019; Yabanci, 2021).

However, other diaspora governance policies have created boundaries between 'desirable' and 'undesirable' diasporans. The symbolic and institutional construction of the YTB as a state agency centring on 'Turks abroad' reflected the ethnicity-centred core of Ankara's understanding of transnational citizenship. Turkey's definition of diaspora was stretched to target also Muslim populations around the world, Turkic populations from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan and residents of former Ottoman territories extending to the Balkans. In YTB's narrative, these populations are defined as 'brothers'.[22] In practice, diaspora-engagement programs have further manifested this preference for Sunni-Turkish identity, while there has been almost no reference to the Kurdish, Alevite, Jewish or Christian-Armenian identities in YTB's official discourse, and major events and programs have been pivoted towards the majority Muslim-Sunni and Turkish-identifying parts of the diaspora (Böcü & Baser, 2024; Öktem, 2014). For example, YTB-run youth camps are specifically geared to promote Turkishness and its founding myths, which are highly contested by certain ethnic groups (Böcü and Baser, 2022).

As in Israel, Ankara's use of exclusionary practices in the diaspora is not a new phenomenon. During the 1970s and 1980s, leftist, Alevite and Kurdish diasporic groups were largely securitised (Mencutek & Baser, 2018) as part of Turkey's communist-threat discourse (Aksel, 2019; Arkilic, 2022). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) has been pivotal in promoting liberal Islam in the diaspora, systematically excluding more religious and radical streams of Islam (Şenay, 2012). Within this securitisation framework, Ankara attempted to curb the activities of 'undesirable' citizens and stigmatise their mobilisation domestically and transnationally. Turkey continued to exclude dissident diaspora voices in the 1990s and 2000s, as national discourses portrayed ethnic and religious groups such as Kurds and Alevites as a threat to the nation or its societal stability and cohesion. These perceptions resulted in substantial surveillance and counter-mobilisation of diasporic 'outsiders' (Baser & Park, 2016; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). This exclusionary trend, rooted in an ontological security approach, continues today, volatile and constantly shifting, depending on who comes to power and governs the state. What is distinctive about diaspora engagement under the AKP, however, is the establishment of a systematic and institutionalised governance policy, with the state taking an active role in shaping diasporic landscapes. Beyond merely encouraging and motivating mobilisation, the AKP government has directly intervened by organising counter-narratives against dissidents more assertively. Since the foundation of the YTB, the state's presence in diaspora spaces has become highly visible, positioning itself as a key actor that not only influences debates but also sets new agendas.

Since the 2010s, democratic decline has become a norm in Turkey, and the AKP has advanced further exclusionary practices. Kemalist approaches were replaced with more conservative foundational myths combining Turkish nationalism and Sunni Islam. This discourse empowered Muslim diaspora organisations at the expense of secular ones, whose acknowledgement by Ankara has been significantly diminished (Arkilic, 2022; Maritato, 2018). This was illustrated by the downplaying of important secular celebrations such as *Zafer Bayrami* (Victory Day) in Turkish embassies or the lack of engagement with Kemalist diaspora organisations who now independently commemorate Atatürk and Kemalism's foundational myths (Şenay, 2021). Given the AKP's homogenising religious outlook, the state has largely excluded Alevi diaspora organisations, perceiving them as a threat to the Sunni majority. However, to eliminate Alevi religious claims at home and abroad, Ankara has also tried to coopt select Alevi diasporic spaces. For instance, the YTB has initiated alternative events to craft an 'acceptable' form of Alevism, which is understood to be within Sunni Islam and, therefore, palatable to the regime. Such a YTB conference, organised to discuss and engage Alevism in Europe, excluded large Alevi organisations in the continent and was harshly criticised for appropriating the Alevi cause (see Özkul, 2019). Similarly, the YTB has appropriated key Alevi religious celebrations in the diaspora, surpassing major Alevi organisations.[23]

As in Israel, some actions of the regime not only sidelined but also actually securitised dissident groups in the diaspora (Yilmaz et al., 2023). Safeguarding the national narrative meant defending the state's ontological security outside its borders. By responding to dissident diaspora activities, state-sponsored diaspora organisations strove to neutralise narratives that threatened Turkey's self-perception (under the AKP regime) and global legitimacy. In particular, in pivotal moments of consolidating the regime's power – for example, during elections – the ruling party transnationalised its pro-regime propaganda and stirred controversies in host countries (Baser & Féron, 2022; Yabanci, 2021). Politicians' speeches deepened existing cleavages among Turkey's divergent diasporic groups, as 'ideal' citizens were celebrated while dissidents were stigmatised.[24] Loyalist diaspora organisations were also mobilised to generate counter-narratives in response to the activism of dissident diaspora groups, such as those formed by Kurdish or anti-AKP factions. Taboo subjects in Turkey's national narrative, such as the recognition of the Armenian genocide, which challenges the Turkish state's foundational narratives, became a significant focus for Turkish diaspora groups. For instance, activities organised by the Armenian diaspora, including commemoration events, were met with counter-mobilisation and protests led by pro-AKP diaspora organisations.[25]

Turkey's democratic backsliding in the 2010s, which intensified following the 2016 abortive coup attempt against Erdoğan, exacerbated relations between dissident diasporans and Turkish policymakers. The AKP responded to the coup attempt with increased securitisation at home and abroad, further polarising the population along ethnic, religious and political lines.[26] Whereas dissident groups were discursively excluded based on their religion, ethnicity and ideology, which often intersected, their securitisation had tangible consequences for certain groups. The YTB's excessive celebration and commemoration of the 2016 events, held across different diaspora communities, directly targeted the Gülen movement abroad (see Öztürk & Taş, 2020).[27] Events organised for diaspora members usually disseminated ideological messages in line with the AKP's agenda worldwide and drew boundaries between 'friends' and 'enemies' of the Turkish state. Politicians' speeches at those events referred to Turkey's alleged enemies abroad. For instance, in August 2016, YTB has published a report introducing the Gülen movement as a terrorist organisation, which it translated into 21 languages.[28] Through this approach, Ankara once again extends its national identity transnationally, portraying a secure and unified state narrative that often overlooks the diversity and complexity of its population (Kasbarian, 2018; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003).

As opposed to the Israeli case, cleavages between different ethnic groups abroad are not easily discernable in the Turkish case due to the intersectionality of grievances and group identities. Contingent alliances among different segments of Turkey's diasporas emerged as a response to Turkey's top-down diaspora cultivation. For instance, leftist diaspora organisations collaborated with Kurdish ones to protest against human rights violations in Turkey (Baser & Park, 2016). Symbolic exclusionary methods also turned into measures of transnational repression in some cases, especially after 2016. Ankara tried to diminish the influence of such dissident diasporans by increasing visible methods of transnational repression at both the discursive and practical levels. Policymakers' rhetoric towards them – and especially that of President Erdoğan's – was often negative, depicting them as a fifth column undermining state interests (Yabanci, 2021; Yanasmayan & Kaşlı, 2019). Those who did not show obedience to Turkey's new rulers were monitored, stigmatised and sometimes persecuted. For instance, diaspora members who criticised the president online were questioned at the airport when they entered the country. Other extreme measures of transnational repression were directed against supporters of the Gülen movement and Kurdish activists, including issuing red notices through Interpol and urging host countries to extradite people wanted in Turkey (Aggestam et al., 2023). According to allegations, the *Diyanet* was used as a transnational state apparatus to monitor dissidents abroad (Baser & Ozturk, 2020). Thus, Turkey's domestic conflicts revealed themselves in diasporic spaces as contentions escalated at home.

Conclusion

As more states engage with emigrants and their descendants (Arkilic & To, 2024; Gamlen, 2019; Švedkauskas, 2024), there is an emergent need to unpack the variegated nature of diaspora governance. In this article, we provided a comparative analysis of two divided home states – Israel and Turkey – and their exclusion of certain diasporic groups and individuals. Through this comparison, we showed that despite differences in regime type, state structure, political system and national myth, these countries' relations with overseas populations had been characterised by both inclusion and exclusion. Ethno-national, religious and political polarisation and divisions at home were projected onto the transnational sphere, shaping the modes, channels and content of state-led diaspora engagement. Thus, domestic inclusion and exclusion dynamics that determine who does and does not belong to the polity are reflected in state discourse, policy and practice towards emigrants and co-ethnics abroad.

Building on our comparative perspective, an ontological security lens illuminates diaspora governance in states like Israel and Turkey as an extension of their quest for a stable national identity. As our comparison demonstrates, the need for a coherent and continuous sense of self has been a driving force behind the two states' emphasis on desirable and ideal diasporic subjects who reinforce domestic identity narratives. By cultivating a transnational community that reflects the preferred ethnic, religious and political order, these states maintain a consistent image of the nation both at home and abroad, in line with their leaders' populist approaches to domestic and foreign policy agendas. However, diasporans who do not align with this ideal become existential 'others', threatening the state's ontological security and prompting exclusion. These dynamics underscore how divided societies with deep internal cleavages project their insecurities transnationally, shaping diaspora policies that not only serve practical governance goals but also symbolically reinforce the purported nation's core identity. Our analysis thus reveals that state-led diaspora policies are not merely about political engagement but also about constructing a sense of ontological security through a transnational affirmation of the state's values and boundaries.

In the case of Israel's and Turkey's diaspora engagement, we found a clear hierarchy of ethnic, religious and political identities, in which domestic asymmetrical relationships among different groups at home are reproduced transnationally. In Netanyahu's Israel, a preference for ethnically Jewish, religiously Orthodox (or, at the least, not Reform or Conservative) and politically right-wing diasporans was increasingly discernible. Similar dynamics exist in Turkey, where the AKP has driven the construction of a new majority that draws upon ethnically Turkish, religiously Sunni-Muslim and politically right-wing citizens who are strategically and symbolically engaged. However, while Israel, as an 'ethnic state', excludes all diasporans who are not ethnically and religiously Jewish by marginalising or securitising them, Turkey, as a 'civic state', attempts to cultivate and coopt some politically 'acceptable' diasporans who are not Turkish and Sunni, as it does domestically.

This difference attests to the importance of domestic conceptions of citizenship and national belonging to diaspora inclusion and exclusion. To govern diasporas, home-state leaders delineate the imagined borders of nationhood and citizenship as an extension of how belonging is constructed inside the state. The conceptualisation of who constitutes 'the diaspora' is intricately tied to domestic social constructions of the ideal citizen and political community member. At the discursive level, home-state leaders craft a narrative that defines the nation's boundaries at home and abroad, selectively including some groups while excluding others. This selective approach, evident in policies institutionalising diaspora governance (e.g. Orjuela, 2025; Ragazzi, 2017), is motivated by various spatial, temporal and political factors intertwined with the domestic political environment. Both cases underscore the volatility of home states' definitions of ideal citizens, shaped by the agendas of incumbent parties and rulers that dictate the boundaries of engagement, inclusion and future prospects.

Such discourses may have tangible outcomes, such as the persecution of anti-government activists abroad.

This article focused on the actions of state actors vis-à-vis diasporans. Further theorising the ways diasporans respond to such discourses and practices, and the impact these dynamics may have on political, legal, economic and social interactions *within* the diaspora, can broaden our understanding of diaspora inclusion and exclusion. Beyond our analytical focus on the comparative dimensions of ethnicity, religion and politics and our geographical focus on the Middle East, future research should ask how such traits as gender, race, class or sexual orientation factor into the inclusion and exclusion of diasporans and consider cases in other regions. Finally, since this article focused on the exclusionary dynamics of *divided* home states, it would be interesting to analyse diaspora exclusion in more nationally, religiously and politically heterogeneous states. We showed that a state's exclusion of certain groups within its borders is likely to be reproduced in its relations with overseas citizens and co-ethnics. This, however, does not mean that states that have greater domestic cohesion would never exclude certain groups or individuals from the conceptualisation of 'their' diaspora. The conditions for such exclusion remain to be identified.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Jonathan Grossman ![ORCID] https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7244-2498

Notes

1. The securitisation of diasporas can also have more inclusionary meanings, such as framing diasporans as security assets or populations needing protection (Abramson, 2024).
2. As mentioned above, compared to Israel, Turkey can be considered as a civic state since its constitution defines citizenship, rather than ethnic or religious identity, as the basis of belonging to the state. However, the concept of 'Turkishness' has historically dominated the national identity, often marginalising non-Turkish ethnic groups. Also, although Turkey is constitutionally secular, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) is a state institution that promotes Sunni Islam, which can alienate non-Sunni Muslim communities and non-Muslim minorities (Mutluer, 2014). The state's handling of minority groups often highlights a tension between its civic aspirations and practices shaped by ethnic and religious majoritarianism (see Lord, 2018).
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6. This observation is based on an examination of Israeli parliamentary discussions on emigration and emigrants from 1977 to 2023. See Grossman, 2024, online appendix.

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Author Biographies

Jonathan Grossman is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Jacob Robinson Institute for the History of Individual and Collective Rights, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He teaches at the Hebrew University's Department of International Relations.

Gözde Böcü earned her Ph.D. from the department of Political Science in the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on democracy, migration and digital politics.

Bahar Baser is a Professor in Politics and International Relations in the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University.