

Politics, Identity and Civic Engagement: Comparing the Protest Participation of Ukrainian Migrants in the Home and Host Countries

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Abstract

Migrant protest activity has been often analyzed from the perspectives of the protest nature and issues it addressed. A comparison of protest behaviour before and after migration is largely missing. It remains unclear whether people who were actively protesting in their home country continue to be engaged in protests after migration and why. This article addresses this gap in the literature and aims to explain what made the Ukrainian migrants protest before leaving their home country and in Turkey as a host country. The analysis uses individual data from an original survey conducted in May 2023 among 935 Ukrainian migrants living in Turkey. The findings show that there are different migrants who participate in the protests organized in the two countries, and the strongest predictor for political protest is civic engagement. Protest in Ukraine is rooted in the orientation towards domestic politics, while protests abroad are driven by identitarian dimensions.

Keywords: migrants; protests; political participation; home country; Ukraine; Turkey

Introduction

Much of the research about migrant protest activity covered the nature of the protests and the specific issues they address. These protests can be grouped into two main categories: those initiated by actions in the receiving country and those triggered by events in the migrants' countries of origin. The first category often focusses on improving immigration status, opposing deportation policies, bettering living and working conditions, or combating discrimination (Tyler and Marciniak 2013; Bilodeau 2008; Steinhilper 2021). Protests linked to events in the migrants' home countries, such as conflicts, wars, regime changes or environmental disasters, can result in demands for actions or opposition to actions by the migrants' home country leadership (Baser and Féron 2022; Lyon and Uçarer 2004). They may also include protests against actions taken by the host country related to their home country (Ashutosh 2013) or expressions of support for their homeland while protesting acts of violence or injustice by certain countries towards it (Féron and Baser 2023). This category of protests remains the least explored, with existing studies primarily focusing on reactions from the host country or the dynamics of intergroup relations among migrants involved in conflicts in their home country.

We know that in general these protests enable migrants to gain international attention and achieve more effective outcomes compared to protests solely within their home country (Østergaard-Nielsen

2003, 766). They have transformative possibilities and mobilize migrants in trans-border social movements (Ataç, Rygiel, and Stierl 2016). However, a comparison of protest behaviour among individuals before and after migration is largely missing. It remains unclear whether individuals who were actively protesting in their home country continue to engage in protests in the host country after migration. More important, we know little about what drives the protest behaviour of migrants before and after the migration, and the extent to which the drivers overlap.

To address this gap in the literature, our article aims to explain what makes migrants protest in their home and in their host country. In general, understanding migrants' protest behavior is important because it informs about other types of transnational political participation beyond voting. Furthermore, it sheds light about what makes people formulate demands and voice their expectations in two different countries and provides hints about migrants' contentious political action in the future. If the drivers for protest are specific for the home and host country, the results could help predict the mobilizing behavior of those migrants who do not wish to return to their home country. In particular, the findings contribute to the research about migration in times of crisis. It complements previous studies that refer to austerity or war as major crises for the emergence of protests (Topak 2017; Fontanar and Ambrosini 2018) and the literature about how diasporas engage in homeland protests (Lokot and Boichak 2022). This article focuses on the group of Ukrainian migrants in Turkey as the most likely case where different types of protests can occur. On the one hand, Ukraine has a rich history of protests at national level that had peaks such as the Orange Revolution in the mid-2000s or the Euromaidan demonstrations less than one decade later. As such, some of those who migrated from Ukraine in the last three decades participated in protests within the country. On the other hand, after February 2022 there were many rallies and anti-Russian aggression protests throughout Europe. Some participants to these actions were Ukrainians.

The study tests the explanatory power of four variables derived from the literature about protests: interest, trust, and two forms of identity (belonging and cultural preservation). It controls for two sets of controls that are specific to the two types of protests to which we add the usual socio-demographic characteristics: age, gender and education. The analysis uses individual data from an original survey conducted in May 2023 among 935 Ukrainian migrants living in Turkey. We use ordinal logistic regression due to the bivariate nature of the dependent variables, i.e., participation in protests in Ukraine before departure and participation in protests or rallies in Turkey.

The next section reviews the literature and formulates several testable hypotheses. The third section provides information about the methodology. Next, the article presents an overview of the Ukrainian migration waves and several details about the Ukrainian migrants in Turkey. The fifth section includes the main findings of our analysis and interprets the results. The conclusions outline the key findings, discuss their broader implications and refer to further avenues for research.

Theory and Hypotheses

Transnationalism is the prevailing contemporary approach that examines the political activity of migrants, including their involvement in protests. This perspective is founded on the premise that the political engagement of immigrants goes beyond their participation in host countries and encompasses also active engagement in the relationship between migrants and their home countries (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Finn 2020). The transnational activity provides alternative resources that support social mobility and facilitate the acquisition of skills that migrants can apply in their lives in the host countries (Morales and Morariu 2011; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999). Transnational practices can encompass non-political actions, like trips to the home country or remittance of money to relatives, as well as political activities, including electoral activities (external voting), transnational election campaigns, and community engagement such as contributions to homeland projects and advocacy for the home country (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016; Morales and Morariu 2011; Gherghina and Basarabă 2024). Additionally, migrants might take part

in the protests against injustices occurring in their country of origin or participate in demonstrations aimed at its defence (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). Within this framework, migrants' protest activities are defined as "transnational acts of citizenship" (Ashutosh 2013). Therefore, the participation of Ukrainians in protests organized in Turkey in support of their own state will be examined within the framework of transnational practices theory.

Within the framework of transnationalism, significant attention is given to the individual's pre-migration political engagement. Unlike the theory of exposure, which views immigrants as nearly starting from scratch in a new receiving country, the transferability theory recognizes the relevance of immigrants' past experiences and argues that these experiences can be effectively applied and utilized in their new host society (Bueker 2005; White et al. 2008; Bilodeau 2008). Moreover, the connection between pre-migration experiences and protest participation is evident, as research suggests that migrants who did not engage in protests in their home country may also be less inclined to do so in their host country (Bilodeau 2008).

The resource model of political participation posits that people do not participate: "because they can't, because they don't want to, or because nobody asked" (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995). In the case of migrants, they lack resources but are also often not allowed, particularly to take part in conventional forms of political participation such as voting. Unlike some EU countries where migrants with residence permits can vote in local elections, in Turkey, this is only permitted for naturalized citizens. Consequently, the range of opportunities for political participation narrows for them, and non-conventional forms like protests and demonstrations practically become one of the few available means of political activity at their disposal. Political interest is one of the most common drivers for political participation (Tsuda 2012): people who are interested in the political process are more inclined to engage in it because they believe there is something at stake for them. This variable has been relevant to the political participation of migrants (Lafleur and Chelius 2011; Gherghina and Basarabă 2024). If migrants lack interest in politics, it is unlikely that they will participate in protests, which are considered a political act demanding substantial resources such as time, energy, and effort. Additionally, migrants already face greater financial instability (De Rooij 2012; Bilodeau 2008). Interest in the politics of the home country increases the likelihood of participation in the politics of the host country (Wals 2011). Therefore, our first hypothesis posits that an interest in the politics of the home country can explain participation in protests:

H1: Migrants with high interest in the politics of Ukraine are more likely to participate in protests both in Ukraine and in Turkey.

The effects of political trust on political participation have been often investigated. Previous studies revealed two possibilities. On the one hand, trust and a positive attitude towards the political system have effect on political participation (Almond and Verba 1963). Political trust has more impact on the type of political participation (Levi and Stoker 2000; De Rooij 2012). Those who trust the political institutions participate in conventional forms of participation such as voting that is conducive to the election of representatives for public office. Similarly, people who trust political institutions participate in pro-government rallies to illustrate their support for institutional activity (Susánszky, Kopper, and Tóth 2016). On the other hand, political distrust acts as a catalyst for political participation of a non-conventional nature such as protests. Distrust can motivate citizens to act against the political institutions. For example, people protest against the government as a result of their distrust in its ability to address problems or handle situations (Lindvall 2011). In brief, different types of protests – against and in favor of the government – are driven by different levels of political trust.

Many migrants have both the home and host country as points of reference and we have different expectations regarding the effect of trust on the participation in protests in the home and host countries. We expect that political distrust could push them to protest against the government when they lived in their home country and political trust could drive their engagement in demonstrations in their host country meant to show support for their home government. In the case of Ukrainians

abroad, we also call these pro-government demonstrations protests, because they took the form of protest against the Russian attack.

H2a: Migrants who distrust the Ukrainian political institutions are more likely to participate in protests in Ukraine.

H2b: Migrants who trust the Ukrainian political institutions are more likely to participate in protests in Turkey.

Identity is an important component of political participation and of migrant groups. A recent analysis of migrant political participation presents four groups of basic theories of political participation: social capital, which revolves around the concepts of social and political trust; group consciousness, where the primary focus is on collective identity; civic voluntarism, which emphasizes the role of individual motivation and voluntary actions based on interest in civic activities and politics; and mobilization theory, which focuses on agents who engage people in politics (Giugni and Grasso 2020, 7). Both sociologists and social psychologists have emphasized the importance of group identity for the emergence of protest movements and the mobilization of their strength. The stronger a person identifies with a particular group, the more willing they are to defend its interests. Researchers note that identification with a group is an important factor motivating people to engage in protests in support of that particular group (Klandermans 2014; Stekelenburg 2013).

The link between protests and identity became particularly evident in Ukraine during and after the Euromaidan. One significant consequence of the Euromaidan was the strengthening of national identity compared to other territorial or ethnic identities (Kozachenko 2018; Kuzio 2016; Lokot and Boichak 2022). If we consider the classic understanding of nationalism as civic and ethnic (Kohn 2005; Ozkirimli 2010), where the former refers to the mechanism of inclusion in the nation based on citizenship, and the latter requires ethnic origin for inclusion in the nation, we can say that the mass mobilization of people in 2013-2014 made a substantial contribution to an even greater shift towards civic identity. The strengthening of national identity and a sense of patriotism led to greater societal cohesion around the idea of building democracy in contrast to Russian autocracy.

These identity transformations occurred not only within Ukraine but also affected the diaspora. The Euromaidan events prompted Ukrainian diaspora communities to undergo a process of reevaluating and reshaping their sense of national identity (Kozachenko 2018; Lokot and Boichak 2022). The mobilization experienced during the protests significantly contributed to a spectrum of identities, ranging from conservative ethnonationalist outlooks to more inclusive 'civic' identities that seek to embrace Ukraine's ethnic and linguistic diversity within the diaspora context.

Since national identity is a crucial element in protests in both home and host countries, we expect that those who participated in protests both in Ukraine and Turkey tend to have a stronger sense of national identity. They more often identify themselves primarily as Ukrainian citizens, take more pride in their Ukrainian citizenship, and feel a stronger connection to Ukrainian society. Conversely, individuals who did not participate in protests in either country are likely to have a lower level of identification with Ukrainian society, exhibit a more neutral attitude toward Ukrainian citizenship, and feel less integrated into Ukrainian society. Following these arguments, we expect that:

H3: Migrants who feel that they belong to the Ukrainian society are more likely to participate politically in protests in both countries.

H4: Migrants who feel that the preservation of Ukrainian cultural identity is crucial are more likely to participate politically in both countries.

Control variables

In addition to these main effects, we control for several variables that could potentially influence the protest participation. We use different control for the protests in the home and in the host

country. For participation in the home country, we control for voting in Ukrainian elections, life satisfaction, area of residence and civic engagement. The first control variable pertains to conventional forms of political participation, such as voting in elections. Highly politically engaged individuals often regard both voting and protests as complementary means to amplify their voices and influence political outcomes. Schussman (2005, 1090) shows that voting in elections has a positive and significant effect on the likelihood of engaging in protests. Second, the grievance theory suggests that negative living conditions and dissatisfaction motivate protest activity (Wilkes 2004). Some researchers challenge this link, noting that contented individuals are more likely to vote and those who are less satisfied are less inclined to participate in both protests and elections (Flavin and Keane 2012). The third control variable is the area of residence and distinguishes between the urban and the rural. We expect people who live in major cities to be more inclined to protest since many protests happen in cities. The fourth control is the membership in civil society organizations. Earlier research shows a connection between civic engagement and political participation (Giugni and Grasso 2020; Schussman 2005; Putnam 1993; Gherghina 2016). In particular, NGOs play a significant role in stimulating protests in countries with weak democracies, where distrust and skepticism towards political institutions prevail (Boulding 2010, 465).

The controls for participation in protests in Turkey are travel to home country, length of stay, language knowledge, and membership in civil society organizations. First, there is a positive impact of visits to home countries on conventional transnational activities (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016). Since in our case the transnational protest activities are to support the home country, the number of visits in Ukraine could influence the likelihood of participation. Second, previous studies indicate that the length of stay influences transnational activity (Morales and Morariu 2011; White et al. 2008; Gherghina and Basarabă 2024). This usually happens because migrants gradually attain economic stability and the necessary resources for political participation (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Ahmadov and Sasse 2016). Third, language proficiency could impact on political participation in the host country since language is essential to understand the functioning of its political system (Dollmann 2022; De Rooij 2012; Morales and Morariu 2011). Fourth, for the reasons explained above, we control for the effect of membership in organizations on protest participation also in the host countries. We add age, gender and education as controls for participation in both protests in home and host country. The socio-demographic characteristics have been traditionally considered as influencing participation (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995).

Research Design

This study uses individual data from an online survey conducted in May 2023 among the first-generation Ukrainian migrants in Turkey. The latter is a country of residence for many diaspora groups due to its cultural, geographic and social characteristics (Abdi and Galal 2024). The dataset includes 935 respondents, out of which more than 95% were ethnic Ukrainians, who provided complete answers out of a total of 1,267 participants who started the survey. The survey abandon was random, there were no specific questions to trigger it. The survey used maximum variation sampling because representative sampling is impossible. As illustrated in the following section, there is no clear information about the Ukrainian migrants in Turkey, which means that the characteristics of the entire population is unknown. Purposive sampling is often used to study populations where formal access to complete lists of members is not possible. This type of sampling is used to increase the variation on several key variables for research (Emmel 2013). In our case, we maximized the variation in terms of migrants' age, education, gender, area of residence, area of origin in Ukraine, marital status and migration wave. Although the findings cannot be generalized to a broader population, the insights are valuable for the Ukrainian diaspora in Turkey, which is internally diverse, that cannot be studied otherwise.

The respondents were neither pre-selected nor part of a pool of available individuals. The questionnaire was available in three languages: Ukrainian, Russian, and Turkish. Approximately half of the questions used the wording of international surveys such as European Social Survey or Eurobarometer. The other half includes original questions, which follow the standards of survey questions. A small pilot-study was conducted prior to fielding, to ensure questionnaire validity. The average completion time was 18 minutes. Invitations to participate were disseminated through various channels, including formal and informal groups of pages of diaspora organizations, diplomatic missions, local influencers, volunteers and various pages on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. In spite of its disadvantages related to the access of respondents to devices and Internet or survey fraud, the use of social media to collect data provides the possibility to reach groups that are often under-represented in traditional research (Moreno et al. 2013). This is also the case of Ukrainian migrants who can hardly be reached differently.

Variable measurement and method

The dependent variables of this study are the participation in protests in the home (Ukraine) and host (Turkey) country. They are measured dichotomously – coded 0 for “no” and 1 for “yes” – using the following two questions: “Did you participate in rallies or protests when you lived in Ukraine?” and “Did you participate in rallies or protests in support of Ukraine in Turkey?”. Political interest (H1) is measured with the standard question about the degree of interest in Ukrainian politics. Trust in Ukrainian political institutions (H2a and H2b) is measured using similar response options to the question “To what extent do you trust the state authorities of Ukraine?”. Belonging to the home society (H3) is measured with the help of the following question: “To what extent do you feel part of Ukrainian society?”. This correlates highly (coefficient higher than 0.75) with the question about national identity and national pride so we included only one in the analysis. The answers to all these questions are recorded on a four-point scale that ranges between not at all (1) and very much (4). The preservation of cultural identity (H4) is a dichotomous variable that is coded 0 for negative answer and 1 for the positive answer to the following question: “Is the preservation of your cultural identity relevant to you?”

Voting in Ukrainian elections is a dichotomous variable that is coded 1 for a positive answer to the question “Did you vote in the last presidential elections in Ukraine in 2019?” and 0 otherwise. Life satisfaction is measured with the help of the question “Were you satisfied with your life in Ukraine before moving to Turkey?”. The available answers were coded on a four-point ordinal scale between not at all (1) and very much (4). Area of residence gauges the type of locality in which the migrants lived in Ukraine prior to their departure. It is coded ascendingly on a three-point scale: village (1), town (2) and city (3). Civic engagement in Ukraine is a dichotomous variable that gauges membership in civil society organizations, which is coded as 0 for no and 1 for yes when answering the question “Were you a member or an activist of any civil society organization in Ukraine?”.

Travel to home country is measured on a four-scale (0 for not at all and 4 for frequently) to the question “How often did you travel to Ukraine before 24 February 2022?”. The length of stay is an ordinal variable that gauges the year of migration to Turkey. Language knowledge is a self-assessment that is recorded on a four-point scale between very poor (1) and very good (4) to the following question: “How would you rate your level of Turkish language proficiency?”. Civic engagement in Turkey is a dichotomous variable (0 for no and 1 for yes) measured with the help of the question “Have you ever been a member or activist of any civil society organization in Turkey (except for Ukrainian diaspora organizations)?”. Age is an interval variable operationalized as year of birth, gender is a dichotomous variable (0 for female and 1 for male), and education is measured as the last degree obtained from primary school (1) to PhD (6). The sample includes considerably more female participants due to the limited migration of men from Ukraine after the start of the war in February 2022 (Appendix 1).

The empirical analysis includes binary logistic regression due to the measurement of the dependent variables. We run two models for both types of protests: one with the main effects and another with control variables (Appendix 2). We had theoretical reasons to expect correlation between several independent variables, e.g., length of stay and language knowledge. We tested for multicollinearity and the results indicate no highly correlated predictors: the highest value is 0.55 between these two variables. All the “DK/NR” answers were removed from the analysis.

The Ukrainian Community in Turkey: An Overview

The Ukrainian community in Turkey includes mainly people who migrated from Ukraine after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the establishment of an independent Ukraine. According to the Law 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (2013) foreigners in Turkey are able to apply for the following legal statuses: Short Term Residence Permit (tourism, property owners), Family Residence Permit, Humanitarian Residence Permit, International Protection. In addition, there are individuals who have undergone the naturalization process and acquired citizenship, as well as irregular migrants, who have not obtained a specific legal status after the expiration of the permitted 90-day period of stay in the country under a visa-free regime.

While the initial wave of migration from Ukraine to Turkey began as early as the 1990s, it witnessed a substantial surge in numbers during the years 2014–2016, primarily attributed to the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Nevertheless, the most significant catalyst for this migratory trend occurred on February 24, 2022, when the Russian Federation launched a military invasion of Ukraine, targeting both military personnel and civilians. As a result of the war, a significant number of refugees have sought safety in neighbouring countries. Despite the absence of a land border between Turkey and Ukraine, their proximity across the Black Sea, along with their established cultural and business relations, have positioned Turkey as one of the destinations for Ukrainian refugees.

According to data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute, in 2022, a total of 32,465 Ukrainian citizens arrived in Turkey. This marked a significant increase compared to the years 2016 and 2021, during which this figure fluctuated within the range of 4,000 to 8,500 individuals¹. According to data from the Presidency of Migration Management, as of October 2023, there are 38,281 Ukrainians with a residence permit in Turkey (“Residence Permits” 2023), and an additional 7,131 have applied for international protection (“International Protection” 2022)². It is important to note that this number has been on a declining trajectory. For instance, as of May 2023, the number of individuals with residence was 42,258. Such a reduction can also be attributed to emigration from Turkey due to its complex economic and political situation. Many individuals who had been residing in Turkey prior to the onset of the war opted to take advantage of immigration programs for Ukrainians in Canada or European countries.

Due to the unavailability of comprehensive statistics encompassing holders of all statuses from official Turkish sources, it was estimated that the Ukrainian community in Turkey consisted of approximately 50,000 individuals (“Українська Громада в Туреччині” 2022). The most challenging aspects of this calculation pertain to the assessment of naturalized citizens and irregular migrants.³ According to the assessment provided by the Head of the Consular Section at the Embassy of Ukraine in Turkey, this figure is estimated to be within the range of 15,000 to 20,000 citizens. Taking into account the approximate number of naturalized citizens, it can be estimated that there is a total of 65,000–70,000 Ukrainians in Turkey.

Most Ukrainians (70%) are concentrated in the three largest cities of Turkey: Istanbul, Antalya, and Ankara. Before the war, the Ukrainian community in Turkey predominantly consisted of young and middle-aged women who had either entered into marriages or long-term relationships with Turkish citizens, subsequently relocating to live with them. Approximately 15% possessed work permits, with the majority of Ukrainians employed in the tourism industry. Around half of all residence permits were short-term and issued for various reasons, primarily as tourists. These

reasons could include a desire to live by the seaside, particularly among freelancers, romantic relationships, or unskilled work for which the employer did not wish to obtain a special permit for a foreigner (“Статистика Українців у Туреччині” 2020).

There were two main waves of Ukrainians who fled the war looking for protection in Turkey. First, there were the families of Turkish citizens who were living in Ukraine. During the first days of war, the Turkish authorities organized evacuation buses which have transferred not only the Turkish citizens and their families but also relatives of Ukrainians who have gained Turkish citizenship in Turkey and the Crimean Tatar families, an indigenous people of Ukraine who have Turkish origins. When Russia occupied some of the Southern and Eastern regions, the Turkish authorities organized via the territory of Russian Federation evacuation transfers of Meskhetian (Ahıska) Turks (“Ukrayna’dan Tahliye Edilen Ahıska Türkleri’nin Yedinci Kafilesi Elazığ’da” 2022). Turkey used a similar approach back in 2015 when approximately 3,000 people of Turkish Meskhetian descent were evacuated as a result of the ongoing war in Donbas lunched by Russia in 2014 (201/7668 Sayılı Bakanlar Kurulu Kararı 2015).

A second wave included vulnerable groups such as women, children and elderly who came to Ukrainian relatives or acquaintances. Another group in this wave included wealthy families (excluding the adult male members) who had properties on the coastal areas of Turkey or businesspeople who wanted to transfer their production to more secure locations. The latter group included adult males. Many families, especially from the occupied territories, considered Turkey only as a transit zone, planning to move to third countries, primarily Canada and Western Europe. Therefore, many have decided not to obtain a legal status and are effectively staying in Turkey as irregular migrants.

Although half of the Ukrainian community in Turkey arrived following the full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian community had already established a fairly extensive network of organizations prior to the onset of the conflict. The first Ukrainian organizations emerged in Istanbul and Antalya in 2008 and 2009, but the institutionalization of the Ukrainian community in Turkey began in 2017, with the formation of six organizations in major cities. Currently, there are 23 registered Ukrainian organizations in 14 different cities in Turkey. As Deniz and Özgür (2022) stressed, the development of official organizations served as a catalyst for the transformation of the migrant community into a diaspora. The initial formation of diaspora can be attributed to two main factors: an increased demand for Ukrainian identity as a result of the unlawful Russian annexation and occupation of Crimea, as well as the commencement of Russian aggression in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Additionally, the state’s interest in supporting connections with Ukrainian expatriates played a pivotal role. Another wave of diaspora formation was triggered by the war in Ukraine, with the establishment of five organizations in 2022. Some of these organizations actively involved displaced individuals, and one organization specifically focused on caring for orphaned children who were brought from Ukraine in the wake of the conflict. Diaspora organizations serve as significant actors involved in the socialization and integration of newly arrived migrants into Turkish society. This became especially evident when the influx of refugees began, and these organizations were among the first to organize assistance for the newcomers. The refugee flow acted as a capacity-building factor for these associations, including the recruitment of new volunteers.

In general, the diaspora organizations in Turkey have limited avenues for influencing the country’s politics, especially when compared to the Ukrainian diaspora in countries like the United States or Canada. There are several key factors contributing to this limited influence. Firstly, the relatively short period of existence and the significant percentage of individuals within the Ukrainian community who do not possess Turkish citizenship pose challenges in how they are perceived by the state. A significant portion of the community is regarded as migrants rather than members of Turkish society.

Only the naturalized citizens have the right to vote and run as candidates in elections. The relatively accessible avenue for political participation for Ukrainians in Turkey is the involvement in rallies and gatherings. Since 2014, the Crimean Tatar diaspora in Turkey has organized protests

against Russia's occupation of Crimea. The Ukrainian activists have started attending these rallies, and, for instance, in Ankara they served as a platform to connect and interact. After the war in Ukraine started in 2022, the diaspora organizations in Turkey began organizing rallies against the Russian aggression. These rallies took place in nearly all Turkish cities where Ukrainian diaspora organizations operate (Budnyk 2022).

In addition to the survey questionnaire, we conducted semi-structured interviews in June 2023 with key organizers of the Ukrainian protests in Ankara (in person), Antalya and Istanbul (over phone). The interviews provided insights into the political participation and community organization of the Ukrainian diaspora, allowing participants to freely share their experiences and perspectives. To protect the ethical integrity of the research, participants' anonymity has been maintained, and their insights have been synthesized to avoid direct attribution without consent. This approach has enriched the article by offering a more grounded understanding of Turkey's approach to the Ukrainian community and its activism.

Turkey, as an increasingly authoritarian state, has generally shown little tolerance for protests, with the number of legal strikes and demonstrations significantly decreasing over the years. The number of legal strikes in Turkey has plummeted since the mid-1990s (Birelma, Işıklı, and Sert 2024). This decline was further exacerbated by the AKP government, which banned nearly all legal strikes during the 2010s. The Freedom House index identifies Turkey as "not free" and highlights a continuous decline in the country's democratic freedoms over the last decade. Turkey ranks among the top five countries worldwide with the most significant decline in freedom, dropping 27 points (Gorokhovskaia and Grothe 2024).

This deepening authoritarianism has created both institutional barriers and a climate of fear for protest organizers. As rally organizers from Istanbul, Ankara and Antalya noted, many members of the Ukrainian community avoid participating in protests due to fears of arrest and deportation. Additionally, the Turkish family structure plays a significant role in discouraging participation, as protests in Turkey are often associated with danger, direct confrontation with the police, and potential persecution.

The attitudes of local authorities towards rallies and the organizations conducting them varied from province to province. For instance, in Antalya, local authorities were accommodating and readily engaged with the Ukrainian community, allowing all planned rallies to proceed. In contrast, in Ankara, obtaining permits was notably more challenging and time-consuming, and by the middle of 2022, the authorities ceased to grant permits for any events organized by Ukrainians, including cultural ones, citing a neutral government stance on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. In Istanbul, despite initial difficulties in obtaining permits, participants were able to conduct additional small-scale rallies without loudspeakers in front of the Consulate of the Russian Federation during the first two months. For the first 11 months following the war's commencement, rallies in Istanbul were organized daily, and permits were obtained through personal contacts between the organizers and local authorities. However, this situation underwent changes due to domestic and other foreign policy developments, coupled with increased security measures in Turkey, leading to a reduction in the number of rallies. Nevertheless, organizers of Istanbul rallies consistently mentioned the pressure and harassment exerted by representatives of Russian diplomatic missions who attempted to intimidate participants and organizers, including through legal actions in courts.

Understanding Protest Participation Among Ukrainian Migrants

A large share of the surveyed migrants participated to protests either in Ukraine or in Turkey. Figure 1 illustrates that almost half of them attended protests in Ukraine prior to leaving their country. Almost 60% of the respondents attended at least one protest or rally in their host country. The correlation coefficient between the answers is 0.29. This indicates that some people have similar behavior in both types of protests – either attended both or did not attend any – but most

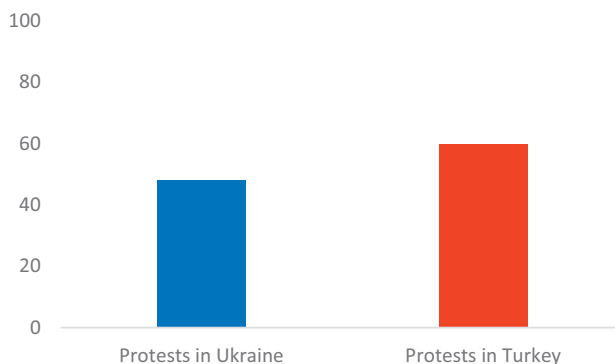


Figure 1. The Percentages of Ukrainian Migrants Participating in Protests (N-935).

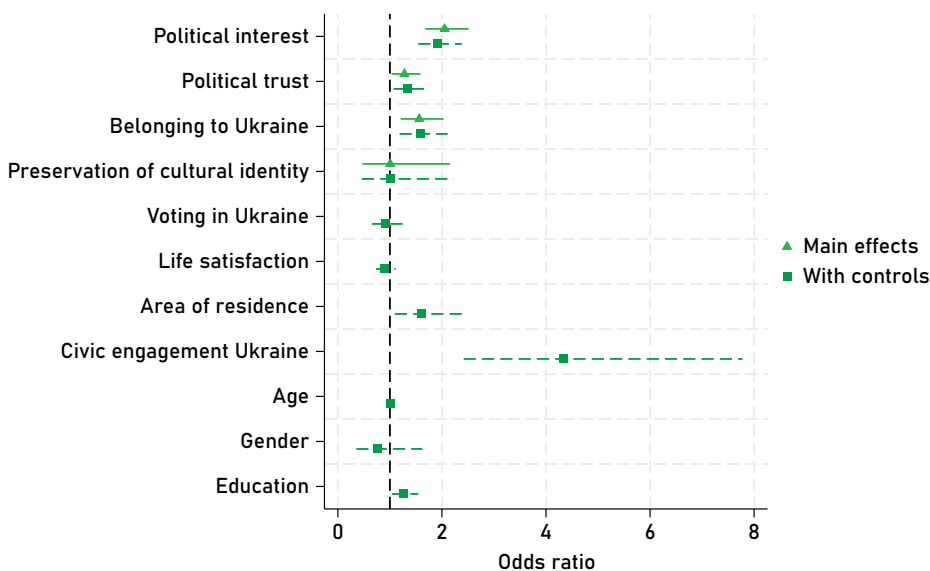


Figure 2. The Effects on Protest Participation in Ukraine.

respondents participated to only one: in Ukraine or in Turkey. Such a high level of protest activism is in line with recent arguments in the literature about migrant protests as a new form of activism on the global political stage through which participation is no longer confined to the nation-state (Caraus 2018).

Figure 2 depicts visually the effects on protest participation in Ukraine prior to migration. Among the main effects, we find empirical support for two out of the four hypotheses. The migrants with high political trust (H1) and those with a strong feeling of belonging to the Ukrainian society are more likely to participate in protests. These effects hold also when controlling for several other variables. For one of the hypotheses, the evidence goes against the theoretical expectation. We find that migrants with a high level of trust in the Ukrainian authorities protested more than those who distrusted the authorities. One possible explanation for this result is that more people participate in protests when they consider that the state authorities, which are often targeted by protests, can implement their requests. The preservation of cultural identity has no effect on the propensity to protest before leaving Ukraine. As long as the protests did not have identity-related claims, the absence of such a relationship is natural.

Among the controls, the membership in organizations is a strong predictor for the participation in protests. This is intuitive since protests are often organized by the civil society. Those respondents who are part of a civil society organization have more access to information about protests, are more socialized with collective action and thus engage more with protests. Those respondents who lived in large urban areas participated more in protests compared to the respondents from small towns or rural areas. One possible explanation is the existence of a larger social network – through which they could receive information about protests – and the proximity to the protest since many of these took place in the large cities. Education has a positive effect on the participation to protests, which can be explained through a higher access to resources, including information relevant to politics, and development of cognitive skills (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). More educated people also cultivate political interest (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), which is reflected in a correlation of 0.18, statistically significant between education and interest in politics among our respondents. None of the other controls – voting in Ukraine, life satisfaction, age or gender – make an impact on the participation to protests.

Figure 3 illustrates the effects on protest participation in Turkey. We find empirical evidence for one hypothesis. The feeling of belonging to the Ukrainian society (H3) has a positive effect on the participation to protest. Political interest (H1) and political trust (H2b) do not impact the participation to protests, while the preservation of cultural identity (H4) goes in the opposite direction than the theoretical expectation; this happens only in the model with the main effects because in the model with controls it has no impact on protest participation. According to these results, the migrants who do not believe the preservation of Ukrainian cultural identity is important participated in protests more often than the other migrants. One possible explanation for this finding is that protests were separated from cultural identity. For example, they can be associated with political, economic or security issues, especially after the start of the war in 2022, rather than issues related to culture.

The importance of ties with the home country in shaping the protest behavior in the host country among the Ukrainian migrants is strengthened by the finding that those who travelled more often to Ukraine are more active in terms of protests. The strongest determinant of protest behavior is the same as in the model for protests in Ukraine: the civic engagement. Those migrants who are members of organizations in Turkey, other than those of Ukrainians, have a probability that is four times higher to participate in protests compared to the migrants who are not members of civil

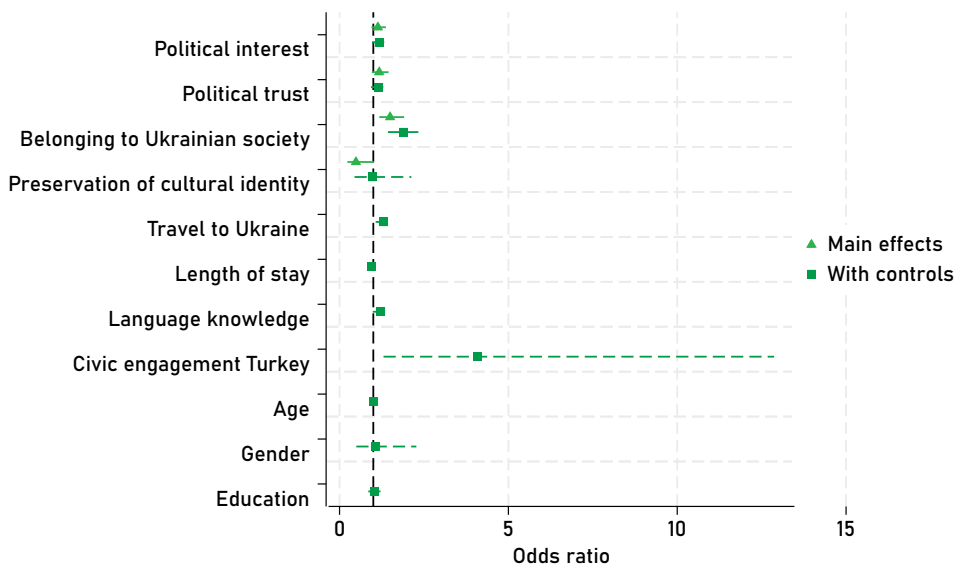


Figure 3. The Effects on Protest Participation in Turkey.

society organizations. This can be explained through the same mechanisms as before: many protests are organized by civil society and thus members gain access to information or are socialized with collective behavior. The length of stay has a small negative effect, which means that the migrants who arrived more recently to Turkey are slightly more active than those who arrived a long time ago. This finding was somewhat intuitive because some of those who arrived recently are part of the war refugees and thus the propensity to engage in pro-Ukraine rallies abroad is high (Voytiv 2024). Among the remaining controls that have no effect, it is worth noting that the language knowledge is not an impediment for protest participation. One possible reason for this result is that the protests are often organized by Ukrainians and the knowledge of Turkish is not an issue.

Conclusions

This article aimed to identify what makes the Ukrainian migrants living in Turkey migrants protest in their home country prior to migration and in their host country. Our analysis used individual-level data from a survey in which many respondents were active in terms of protests. There are four main findings. First, those migrants who protest at home and abroad are largely different. There are several Ukrainian migrants who had a similar behavior – either protested or abstained in both places – but many of them engaged only in protests at home or in the host country. This result is not surprising since the purpose of protests was different: those in Ukraine were often oriented against the state authorities and seeking to improve the quality of democracy, while many of those organized in Turkey were rallied in support of Ukraine or against the Russian attack. Second, civic engagement is a strong determinant for the participation in protests in both places. This is in line with previous findings about the importance of membership in civil society organizations for political participation including for migrants (Giugni and Grasso 2020; Schussman 2005; Putnam 1993; Gherghina 2016). It strengthens the idea that protests are coordinated by civil society organizations and active involvement in such organizations fosters political participation.

Third, the feeling of belonging to the Ukrainian society is the only hypothesized effect that favors the participation in the protests organized in both the home and host country. This dimension of identity is not accompanied by the cultural preservation, which shows that for many respondents the protests have different purposes, which are anchored more in the political, economic or security realities. Finally, political interest and trust have effects on the participation of protest in the home country but have no impact for the protests organized in Turkey. One of the reasons is that the goals of protests in Ukraine were related much more to domestic politics compared to the rallies in Turkey that focused on the international and security dimensions.

The implications of this analysis go beyond the case study covered here. It makes two main contributions to the broader literature. Theoretically, it shows that the migrants' protest behavior is embedded in a complex system of causes that differs between the home and host country. Although much of the protest participation is driven by civic engagement, specific individual characteristics shape migrants' propensity to engage in protests. Some of these characteristics are rooted in the orientation towards domestic politics in the case of protests in the home country and have an identitarian dimension of political participation for the protests organized in the host country. Empirically, this study illustrates that identity and civic engagement drive migrants' participation to protests in all circumstances. The home country protesters are animated by political interest and support for domestic political institutions. Such profiles indicate that protest is not a random action of people who feel alienated from the political system. Moreover, the socio-demographic characteristics, including language knowledge of the host country, are rarely important for participation in protests; education is the only one with some influence on protests in the home country. This means that much of the acquired characteristics are rarely a function of access to resources.

These are at least two possible ways in which this study could serve as point of departure for future analyses. One of these could unpack the causal relationship between political attitudes, civic engagement and protests to understand how these effects happen. A qualitative analysis could be a

fruitful direction for research, with semi-structured interviews or focus groups explaining how the willingness to participate in protests occurs. Such a qualitative endeavor could also ask for the importance of social media in the process of mobilization since previous studies showed that it can have an influence on protest behavior (Froio and Romero-Vidal 2023). Another avenue for research could compare and contrast Turkey's different approaches to migrants based on ethnic origin. This could engage with the debates in the literature about policy making and how these could shape migrants' political behavior in a host country.

Disclosure. None.

Notes

- 1 The number of Ukrainians holding residence permits in Turkey exhibited variations between 2014 and 2020, with figures oscillating between 14,000 and 17,000. Similarly, the population of naturalized Ukrainian citizens, for which official statistical data is lacking, was estimated to be approximately within the same range. ("Статистика Українців у Туреччині" 2020).
- 2 The majority of individuals who arrived in Turkey obtained short-term residence permits on tourist grounds. The number of those who arrived after the onset of the war and obtained international protection status is significantly lower. This can be attributed to restrictions on internal mobility, exit bans from the country, and the obligation to visit the migration service monthly for fingerprinting purposes. ("Activity Report on Humanitarian Assistance Provided towards Ukrainians in Türkiye" 2022, 5).
- 3 The Turkish Statistical Institute, in response to our request, refrains from disclosing the number of naturalized citizens with reference to the Turkish Personal Data Protection Law.

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Appendix 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables Included in the Analysis

| | Mean | Std. dev. | Min. | Max. | N |
|------------------------------------|-------|-----------|------|------|-----|
| Participation in protests Ukraine | 0.48 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | 935 |
| Participation in protests Turkey | 0.60 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | 935 |
| Political interest | 3.05 | 0.80 | 1 | 4 | 887 |
| Political trust | 2.48 | 0.73 | 1 | 4 | 785 |
| Belonging to the Ukrainian society | 3.64 | 0.61 | 1 | 4 | 901 |
| Preservation of cultural identity | 0.04 | 0.20 | 0 | 1 | 935 |
| Voting in Ukraine | 0.51 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | 935 |
| Life satisfaction | 3.27 | 0.85 | 1 | 4 | 854 |
| Area of residence | 2.86 | 0.43 | 1 | 3 | 935 |
| Civic engagement Ukraine | 0.12 | 0.32 | 1 | 4 | 935 |
| Travel to Ukraine | 2.43 | 1.00 | 1 | 4 | 935 |
| Length of stay | 27.21 | 5.42 | 3 | 33 | 924 |
| Language knowledge | 2.88 | 0.94 | 1 | 4 | 913 |
| Civic engagement Turkey | 0.04 | 0.18 | 0 | 1 | 935 |
| Age | 46.02 | 8,72 | 18 | 68 | 928 |
| Gender | 0.25 | 0.22 | 0 | 1 | 927 |
| Education | 4.49 | 0.88 | 1 | 6 | 928 |

Appendix 2: The Ordinal Regression Analyses

| | Protests in Ukraine | | Protests in Turkey | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Main effects | With controls | Main effects | With controls |
| Political interest | 2.05** | 1.92** | 1.14 | 1.18 |
| Political trust | 1.28* | 1.34** | 1.18 | 1.17 |
| Belonging to the Ukrainian society | 1.57** | 1.58** | 1.50** | 1.89** |
| Preservation of cultural identity | 1.00 | 1.01 | 0.49* | 0.97 |
| Voting in Ukraine | | 0.92 | | |
| Life satisfaction | | 0.90 | | |
| Area of residence | | 1.61** | | |
| Civic engagement Ukraine | | 4.34** | | |
| Travel to Ukraine | | | | 1.31** |
| Length of stay | | | | 0.95* |
| Language knowledge | | | | 1.22 |
| Civic engagement Turkey | | | | 4.09* |
| Age | | 1.00 | | 1.00 |
| Gender | | 0.76 | | 1.06 |
| Education | | 1.27* | | 1.03 |
| N | 761 | 730 | 761 | 748 |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.08 | 0.12 | 0.03 | 0.09 |
| Log likelihood | -485.07 | -446.21 | -498.20 | -457.87 |

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