



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**HOMELAND PERCEPTION AND IDENTITY IN DIASPORA: CASE STUDY OF
KAZAKH DIASPORA IN GERMANY**

MASTER'S THESIS

ASSYLAY IMAGAMBETOVA

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

JANUARY 2024



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ABSTRACT

In contemporary times, the concept of diaspora has gained significant scholarly interest. The concept which dates back to 2500 years refers to a community dispersed from the original homeland, especially as a result of forced traumatic displacement and scattered to different parts of the world while preserving the myth about homeland and collective memory. In the post-modern world the diaspora concept has begun to be engaged new discussions, which turns its relationship with concepts such as identity and belonging. In this regard, the Kazakh diaspora in Germany being examined in this thesis garnered noteworthy scrutiny from an analytical standpoint as a case study due to its multiply scattered nature. The Kazakh diaspora has had a long journey before finally settling in Germany whose ancestors fled the growing oppressive politics of China in East Turkestan from the western province of Xinjiang. After a long and difficult journey through the Himalayas and Tibet, they reached India in 1940s and settled in Turkey in 1950s and further moved to Germany in 1960s. Hence, we are discussing about the existence of unique Kazakh diaspora in the context of four countries, which has formed over time, undergone various transformations from the past to the present day. Diaspora individuals are consistently faced with the challenge of simultaneously existing in distinct home and host society realms and experiencing separate lived experiences. In this regard, it was of great importance to investigate the homeland orientation and a sense of belonging of the Kazakh diaspora living in Germany. For these individuals who have been forced to leave their homeland in the past, the idea of keeping the original culture “alive” is substantial notwithstanding the disconnection from homeland and the influence of globalization. An inquiry that emerges in this particular situation is the way in which the diasporic identities are constructed, practiced perceived, and negotiated. The tension of “living here and but remembering and desiring another place” determines how the identities of diaspora members are constructed. On the other hand, the firsthand encounter with the Kazakh diaspora as transnational community reveals the fragility of the idea that identity should be rooted in one’s solid origins only. The presented study is based on empirical field research attempting to shed light on the various aspects of Kazakh diaspora members’ belonging and homeland orientation, attitudes, discourses and practices related to it that are found in everyday life interactions and analyze how they are transformed over time.

Key words: diaspora, identity, homeland, Kazakh diaspora.

ÖZET

Günümüzde akademik camiada diaspora kavramı bilimsel açıdan önemli bir ilgi kazanmaktadır. Kökeni 2500 yıl öncesine dayanan kavram, özellikle travmatik zoraki bir şekilde anavatanından kopma sonucunda dünyanın farklı yerlerine dağılmış fakat anavatan mitini ve kolektif hafızayı koruyarak yaşamıda devam eden bir topluluğu ifade etmektedir. Postmodern dünyada diaspora kavramı yeni tartışmalara konu olmaya başlamış ve bu durum konseptin kimlik, aidiyet gibi kavramlarla ilişkisini de gündeme getirmektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu tezde incelenen Almanya'daki Kazak diasporası, çoklu yerinden edilme ve göç etme doğası nedeniyle bir vaka olarak analitik açıdan dikkate değer bir incelemeye layık görülmüştür. Kazak diasporası Almanya'ya yerleşmeden önce, ataları Çin'in batıdaki Sincan eyaletindeki Doğu Türkistan'da büyüyen baskıcı Çin politikalarından kaçarak uzun bir yolculuk yaptırmıştır. Himalay ve Tibet dağları üzerinden geçen uzun ve zorlu bir yolculuğun ardından 1940'larda Hindistan'a ulaşp, daha sonra 1950'lerde Türkiye'ye, 1960'larda ise Almanya'ya yerleştiler. Dolayısıyla, geçmişten günümüze çeşitli dönüşümler geçirerek zamanla oluşan dört ülke bağlamında özgün Kazak diasporasının varlığını tartışıyoruz. Diaspora bireyleri, sürekli olarak farklı ev ve ev sahibi toplum alanlarında aynı anda var olma ve ayrı yaşanmış deneyimler deneyimleme zorluğuyla karşı karşıyadır. Bu bakımdan Almanya'da yaşayan Kazak diasporasının vatan yönelimi ve aidiyet duygusunun araştırılması büyük önem arz etmektedir. Geçmişte anavatanlarını terk etmek zorunda kalan bu bireyler için anayurttan kopukluğa ve küreselleşmenin etkisine rağmen özgün kültürün “canlı” tutulması mühim hale gelmektedir. Bu durumda ortaya çıkan bir soru da diasporik kimliklerin nasıl inşa edildiği, algılandığı ve müzakere edildiğidir. “Burada yaşamak ama başka bir yeri hatırlamak ve arzulamak” gerilimi diaspora mensuplarının kimliklerinin nasıl inşa edildiğini belirlemektedir. Öte yandan, ulusötesi bir topluluk olarak Kazak diasporasıyla karşılaşma kimliğin yalnızca kökenlere dayanması gerektiği fikrinin kırılmasını ortaya koymaktadır. Sunulan çalışma, Kazak diaspora üyelerinin aidiyet ve vatan yönelimlerinin çeşitli yönlerine, bununla ilgili günlük yaşam etkileşimlerinde bulunan tutum, söylem ve uygulamalara ışık tutmaya ve bunların zaman içinde nasıl dönüştüğünü analiz etmeye çalışan saha araştırmasına dayanmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: diaspora, kimlik, vatan, Kazak diasporası.

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And lastly, I want to thank my mother for being a constant source of strength in my life and facilitating my triumph over obstacles that I faced while writing this thesis.

ABBREVIATIONS

FEKA- Federation of European Kazakh Associations

FWKK- First World Kurultay of Kazakhs

ODF- Otandastar Diaspora Foundation

WAK- World Association of Kazakhs



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BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of five chapters and a concluding section. In the CHAPTER I of the current thesis we first introduce the topic under study and discuss the general framework of the research, aims and research questions of the study, basic theoretical approach, the methodology and data collection. In CHAPTER II, the research examines three concepts: diaspora, homeland, and identity and the interrelationship between these notions are emphasized. Initially, the concept of “diaspora” is being studied. The diaspora literature is examined in this perspective through the following inquiry: What are the defining characteristics that constitute a certain group as a diaspora? Then, the criteria used in the definitions are analyzed by entering into conceptualization discussions. Subsequently, the concept of homeland and the connection between diaspora and homeland are analyzed, with a focus on the many interpretations associated with it. The third concept explored in this chapter is the notion of identity within the context of diaspora. This portion of the thesis presents many conceptions of identity in diaspora, including the concept of hybrid identity.

In the CHAPTER III the formation of the Kazakh diaspora under study is examined from historical perspective. In this sense, the thesis conducts a comprehensive overview of the historical process of the emergence of the Kazakh diaspora. In order to understand the perception of home and identity of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany, understanding the historical background of the topic of the study was one of the priorities of the thesis. In addition, different migration routes to Germany including long distance nationalism and repertoires of long-distance nationalist activities in Munich by Kazakhs were examined. Further, CHAPTER IV analyzes the homeland perception and identity negotiations of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany by analyzing the field data obtained from the personal, focus group interviews and questionnaire results. Also this chapter touches upon the topics related to the complex nature of defining home in diaspora, return preferences to the homeland of the diaspora members, hybrid identity reflections and interpretations of the identity among different generations of the Kazakh diaspora community in Germany. Chapter V discusses different strategies and practices of the Kazakhs in Germany aimed at of preserving their diaspora identity, how they perceive themselves in relation to the host society and how they negotiate homeland and identity in the digital space. And finally in Chapter VI the concluding remarks regarding the study is provided.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, the concept of diaspora enjoys a certain scientific popularity and acquires a special role in the system of international relations and in the social and political life of the host country and the country of origin. Diaspora has become a stateless political actor and relatively is a modern trend in international relations which is not simply immigrants but rather more complex phenomenon. The dominance of territorial states and nation-states in the last few decades has played an important role in the spread of Diasporas and their becoming of a global reality. The world wars of the 20th century, the disintegration of empires, the retreat of colonial countries and the disappearance of federal states have led to the emergence of new borders and states. Consequently, the phenomenon of increasing numbers of immigrant groups settling in host communities, their establishment as permanent residents and their motivation to preserve their cultural heritage have facilitated the development of community building that transcends national boundaries (Poot, 1995). This situation has led to the emergence of different “exemplary communities of the transnational movement” in almost every region of the world (Brubaker R., 2000; Tololyan, K., 1997). The expansion of transnational diaspora groups has led to an increased scope of their contemplations regarding both their country of origin and their country of residence. States have started to initiate the formulation of diaspora policies, establishment of institutions, and implementation of programs aimed at engaging with diaspora communities residing beyond their territorial boundaries (Collyer, 2013).

Historically, the term diaspora, used to represent the “forced exile” of the Jewish people, is now being considered as dreaming of returning to the home of origin while maintaining the identity in the new homeland (Dufoix, & Rodarmor, 2008, p. 9). However, the perception of homeland in the diaspora is a mythical place desired by the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, although it is possible to visit the geographical region, which is seen as the “place of origin” (Krikorian, 2007, p. 20). In fact, according to the classical approach the concept of diaspora represents a minority group in terms of ethnic origin who migrated from their place of origin or so called “motherland” that preserves and maintains their belonging and loyalty (material and spiritual) with the country of origin. Diaspora emerges as a controversial concept in terms of definition (Brubaker, 2000). It is clear that there has been a transition in time from the classical to the contemporary, from the local to the global, or from the primitive to the modern (Yamashiro,

2013, p. 178). Although diaspora is an ancient term with a history of about 2500 years, the meaning of the term and main criteria making a certain group as a diaspora are still being debated. The wide use of the term of diaspora causes its conceptual boundaries to be blurred and the meaning of diaspora to be questioned which determines the relevance of the topic under study. Therefore in *CHAPTER II* we will delve more into the academic debate on what diaspora is and why they are so difficult to reconcile. Furthermore, the emergence of the concept of diaspora and different classification of traits for diasporic communities, definition of homeland, and the identity formation in diaspora are key parts of the following chapter.

It is challenging and intriguing to conduct conceptual analysis of the homeland in diaspora and difficult to make theoretical conclusions when we consider our case study of Kazakh diaspora in Germany who has a long history of dispersion, trauma and outmigration from their original homeland East Turkestan located in China. Interesting point here is that this dispersion was not carried out suddenly and directly to its destination, but took place in stages over a long 17-year period from 1935 to 1952 and passed through the different geographies like Gansu, Tibet, Taklamakan, India and Pakistan, and its final point was Turkey. As it is known, the formation of nation-states also caused the sociological existence of minorities to be brought to a political and legal basis, and in a sense, the nation-state to form its own “other”. Especially in the first half of the twentieth century, due to geopolitical factors, it has even led to attempts to change it with forced population shifts, that is, to ensure homogeneity by reducing the “others” as much as possible (Chailand, 1985, p. 11). That is what happened to Kazakhs residing in East Turkestan, China. Kazakh exodus out of East Turkestan began in the mid-1930s, and the second wave began after the 1949 Mao Zedong’s revolution because some Kazakhs did not accept the new communist regime in China. Meanwhile the Chinese control in East Turkestan region was strengthened over the local population including Kazakhs. During this period Kazakhs were executed for the pettiest crimes. The lands of local indigenous people were confiscated and given to Chinese immigrants; education and training in their language was limited; taxes were increased. Furthermore, individuals of high social standing were apprehended. As a result, the aforementioned circumstances gave rise to a series of uprisings among the Kazakh population residing in the region. Despite achieving short-term success, the uprisings ultimately succumbed to the Chinese government’s overwhelming numerical superiority and well-equipped forces, hence failing to sustain their momentum in the long run. The circumstances compelled the Kazakhs, a population known for their nomadic way of life, to make the choice

of out-migrating to areas that would afford them the opportunity to reside without constraint and avoid subjugation and mistreatment at the hands of governing bodies (Mendikulova, 1997). The fact that during these two waves of exodus Kazakhs chose Turkey as their final destination is not accidental, but rather a deliberate choice. Because their goal was to create an environment in which they would not feel alienated and their future generations would not lose their national and religious identity (Oraltay, 1976). For these purposes, Turkey which has common roots with the Kazakhs in terms of language, religion, culture and history was probably the uncontested option. However, the journey did not stop here and consequently a new migration route was drawn from Turkey to European countries. Facing economic difficulties in Turkey, Kazakh community there started to look for the new destinations to migrate. As a result of the “Turkish Labor Agreement” signed between Turkey and Germany on October 31, 1961 Kazakhs managed to migrate from Turkey to Germany through official labor migration. Starting from the early 1960s until the end of the 1970s, Kazakhs migrated from Turkey to Germany as well as to Western European countries such as Sweden, France, Austria, Norway, Denmark and Switzerland. Thus, the Kazakh diaspora that started to form in Europe grew even more in terms of numbers as a result of some Kazakhs in Turkey migrating to European countries such as Germany on their own initiative for economic reasons (Kesici, 2014, p. 60). Therefore, *CHAPTER III* concentrates on the history, trauma and loss experienced by Kazakhs during their exodus from East Turkestan to Turkey and finally on their labor immigration to Germany. Learning about the historical background of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany is critical in order to comprehend their current ethnic identity orientations, because communities are frequently linked to their past experiences.

As a whole the Kazakh diaspora throughout its history was formed as a result of forced migration, due to historical, political and religious reasons until the 1990s. With the dissolution of the USSR labor immigration for economic reasons to the countries of Western Europe, America began to. It is estimated that around 5 million Kazakhs reside in different host countries around the world. Every third Kazakh lives outside of Kazakhstan, and they are scattered in over 45 countries around the world. Each of them has a long story of migration, exile and trauma. But in the study, the term “Kazakh diaspora” will be used to refer to the Kazakhs in the world as a whole, while the term “Kazakh diaspora in Germany” or “German Kazakhs” will be used to refer to the Kazakhs from East Turkestan in China who migrated first to Turkey and then from Turkey to Germany.

Associating identity with a specific geography is a behavior seen in most social and transnational minority groups. Therefore, it becomes important for diasporic communities to define both the homeland as a specific geography and the nature of the relationship established with it. Also it has become difficult to reconstruct the supranational sense of belonging with the assumptions about “real identities and to reveal the “pure” identity of individuals in the axis of the globalization. Therefore, each case of diasporas is unique as identity-based actors and it is critical examine their homeland orientation and identity, their transnational social movements and to analyze them within the scope of current theoretical approaches to diaspora. Therefore *CHAPTER IV* will deal with the assessment of Kazakh diaspora’s homeland perception and identity in a sequential manner relying on the empirical data obtained from the field study.

Diaspora residing far from their *patrie* undoubtedly becomes more sensitive relation to the homeland. The diasporic community develops a new life strategy and draws a cultural boundary with the responsibility of creating new ties with homeland and save their diasporic identity. This developed new life strategy and the cultural border for diasporic communities becomes critical in preserving their cultural heritage of the original homeland while living in host society environment. In this regard, *CHAPTER V* will examine diaspora strategies and practices of Kazakhs in Germany aimed at preserving their culture and ethnic identity.

1.2. Aims of the Study and Research Question

Toninato (2009) contends that the classical diaspora paradigm is based on two key tenets: an emphasis on the link between a group and a specific location- a *homeland*, and a dependence on an essentialist *identity* paradigm of the nation-state. If the keyword of *diasporic identity* is considered as “*home*”, it can be also associated with the *identity that desires to return home*. Therefore in this regard we particularly paid a significant academic attention on these two tenets of diaspora- identity and homeland. Furthermore, what makes this case unique and interesting to study as a diaspora case study is: firstly, there is a deep interesting history of exile and traumatic event, dispersion from the homeland; secondly, more countries and geographies are involved; there is not only one home and just host country simply.

While this study aims to enhance the understanding of the concept of homeland in diasporic communities, which refers to a territorial (spatial) reference that is integral to the

formation of cultural identity, it is important to note that “homeland” in diasporic communities is not solely determined by geographical factors, but rather emerges as a result of complex processes. The homeland can sometimes be a real territory or sometimes an area based on social imagination. Based on this, the study will try to find the answers to the following **research questions**:

- What does the term homeland mean for the Kazakh diaspora in Germany? Is it a certain geography, country or just imagined ideological place? Where do they see their homeland?
- How they perceive and define their diaspora identity? Do they have any effort to preserve their identity and culture?
- Whether the members of Kazakh diaspora in Germany consider themselves to belong to the host country or home country?
- Does the diaspora in the country of residence provide a basis for being accepted for the diaspora, or do they feel “othered” and isolate themselves from the host society?

The objective of the current research is to examine East Turkestani Kazakh community in Germany within the framework of the concepts of diaspora, identity, and long-distance diaspora homeland perception, and to question whether the community itself can be regarded as diaspora or not, to challenge the simple usage of the term regarding the Kazakh diaspora abroad both in academia and in daily life, to prove according to which criterion it is called as such. Considering that Altay Kazakhs in Germany have a historical experience of exile and dispersion and other diasporic features, this study will try to explore how their homeland orientation and identity was formulated and reformulated over time and how they define their identity at the present time, factors and structures which shape their identities to analyze the ways in which a diaspora is mobilized, their interaction with the environment, the role of otherness in accessing self-awareness. While reviewing the academic literature it has been observed that majority of the studies were devoted to the experiences of the Jewish and Armenian diasporas as an “ideal diasporas” thus ignoring the experiences of other dispersed communities overall.

1.3. Significance of the Study

In general, Kazakh diaspora in Turkey have received proper coverage in the academic literature mainly by Kazakhstani and Turkish academicians most of whom focused on the migration process and settlement of Altay Kazakhs from East Turkestan to Turkey, and their subsequent life in Turkey. The scholarly study and debate of the Kazakh diaspora lacks the conceptualization of what Kazakh diaspora stands out for and discussion of its boundaries. It has been noted that despite the existence of numerous studies on the Kazakh diaspora in Turkey, perhaps inevitable downside is a neglect of their post-immigration circumstances, their further dispersion to different geographies including their feeling of homeland and identity, as well as their activities subsequent to 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Without underestimating the contribution made by previous studies and accepting that these works offer insightful analyses of Kazakh diaspora formation, we think it would be better to widen the scope of research and shift the primary frame of focus from the past to the ongoing fluid and abstract domain of homeland perception and cultural identity of Kazakh diaspora. On the other hand, the migration of Kazakhs from Turkey to Germany is not investigated properly; especially from the perspective of diaspora studies itself and perception of home and identity are not studied in the existing works. Therefore, this research will try to fill this gap. The main distinction of this this qualitative research from previous ones will be that it will discover a new area of settlement of Kazakh diaspora like Germany and try to provide a better understanding on Kazakh diaspora's homeland perception and their identity formation in Germany. On the other side, it will be a pilot study to first conduct a fieldwork regarding the chosen topic. None of the studies before on Kazakh diaspora gave the attention to the East Kazakhstani community living in Germany, coming originally from China and migrating from Turkey; to their ethnic identifications and homeland orientation; and how macro-processes of the 1990s, more specifically the establishment of independent Kazakhstan as a country on the world map affected them and their identity and homeland perception. Fewer works have addressed similar topics in different geographies like Turkey however they have tended to focus more on the diaspora's past experiences rather than their present circumstances.

Finally, another reason which makes this study significant is that it collects data by using different tools and tries to cover different generations. Equally, by addressing particularly controversial concepts, a contribution will be made to the academic discussions

on what home in diaspora groups is and how identity is constructed in the diaspora. By providing a comprehensive analysis on the homeland perception and diasporic identity of Kazakhs in Germany, this study is aiming to make a contribution to the existing academic debates on conceptualization of the Kazakh diaspora itself. Also, the study of this topic and the results of the findings move the classical and modern academic debate on diaspora forward in different directions and might pave the way to the further scientific research. It is expected that the results of the investigation might challenge the concept of homeland itself.

1.4. Theoretical Approach

Although philosophers have been interested in the essence of the self and personhood since the time of Plato, the notion of identity did not enter the IR until the 1960s. The end of the Cold War, concerns over the fluidity of national boundaries, loyalties, and nationalist sentiments, the phenomenon of globalization weakened the dominant conception of the Westphalian state as fixed entity in international politics. In light of this, the plethora of IR studies in quest of fresh conceptual terminology, have resorted to the idea of “identity” in order to emphasize the socially created nature of the state and the interests it pursues (Berenskoetter, 2017). Due to their inability to adequately incorporate unquantifiable, traditional IR approaches like neorealism and neoliberalism marginalize identities under the *ceteris paribus* of rational choice assumptions and consider identities as assumed and held constant. The occasional interest of traditional rational choice IR theories in identities stems from their approach of turning unquantifiable term such as identity into independent variable. Moreover, in the field of international relations, the predominant school of thought continues to lean toward merging the ideas of state and national identity. It focuses on the role of actor’s interests in shaping their behaviors and neutralizes identities for reasons of parsimony (Tamaki, 2010). In spite of this, diaspora studies have shown that national identity is not only ingrained in the state entity which is geographically defined, but also in the transnational challengers of the state like diaspora communities which is different in terms of the organizational and spatial logic. Diasporas are challenging the conventional definition of the term of “state” as well as its traditional institutions of citizenship and allegiance; thus are ingrained in networks that offer them simultaneous connection to two or more nation states. According to Adamson & Demetriou (2007), nation states are mostly composed of territorialized institutional structures, whereas diasporas are primarily made up of de-

territorialized networks. The evolution of communication and transportation technologies has, without a shadow of a doubt, facilitated the ease and smoothness of this transition (p. 490).

According to the majority of mainstream realist and constructivist academics, states are hitherto perceived as monolith territorial subjects integrated with unitary social identities. Indeed, mainstream constructivists have spent some efforts to deconstruct the state into its myriad of constituent parts which claim that states are projected onto a socially thin anarchic system as separate, homogeneous identities. This territorially defined unitary identity paradigm fails to convey the complexity, variety and diversity of identities in wider social worlds rather than states (Adamson & Demetriou, 2007, p. 516). IR's inclined state-centrism predicated on homogenous and unitary terms rather than diversity and heterogeneity of the social world demonstrated the inability of IR to incorporate such phenomenon like diaspora, the concept of diaspora identity and their state loyalty issues. Whatever the actor designation, traditional IR theories treat actors as *sui generis* rational and unitary, leaving almost no room for identities to be considered. These prevent us from taking historically constructed—and reified—identities seriously, because the theories—both rational choice and post positivist—tend to forget who the performer is. Internal processes, the internal qualities of actors and relationships between the actors all play a part in the consistent formation of identities. Due to the fact that diasporas are located outside of the state but within the people, they place a significant amount of emphasis on their identity; in some cases, this emphasis can even be more than that of individuals located within the state. As a result, diaspora groups are working hard to construct identity in a way that is congruent with their interests. Constructivists believe that social contact is the primary factor in the formation of interests. The liberal view, on the other hand, contends that the state's choices are “identity-based”, which is one of the most essential characteristics of diasporic groups (Shain & Barth, 2003). As a component of a larger international society that function as “non-state” actors in the global system it seems to be a logical to incorporate the diasporas into IR theory. Due to their de-territorialized structure and transnational nature, diasporas and their practices have a great potential for international relations studies to reorient them into the rising in global heterogeneity and variety. The idea of diaspora and diasporic practices raises the new discussion to grasp the links between the nature of transnational identity and the territorially defined system of states and to analyze the shifting spatio-political configuration of identities in the international system (Adamson & Demetriou, 2007).

The rationale behind the rejection in conventional International Relations theories posits that the existence of Hobbesian international anarchy gives rise to similar entities that prioritize their own survival and the pursuit of power maximization. Consequently, since actors are being distinguished solely based on their power capacities, the disparities in their self-perceptions become extrinsic (Tamaki, 2010, p. 20). While both realism and neorealism assume that states predominate in the international system, some realist theorists have tried to use a realist analytic framework to examine the function of diasporas in international politics (Karanou, 2015). On the other hand, the neo-realist and neoliberalist approaches neglect self-understandings of the actors about the environment and themselves, instead focusing on their behavior within certain external constraints by insisting on externalizing identities at any given levels of analysis. In other words, there is a preference for emphasizing exogenous variables such as the anarchical international system, rather than focusing on contingency and subjectivity (Tamaki, 2010, p. 17).

Indeed, the task of elucidating the actions and identities of diasporas solely through the lens of a single theory is a difficult one, given the multifaceted nature of involved factors, motivations and codes of diaspora. As Kenneth Waltz writes, “Theories do construct a reality, but no one can ever say that it is the reality.” (Waltz, 1979, p. 9). There is no holistic approach for conducting research on identity from an IR perspective. While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to analyze all possible theories and techniques, it can be argued that some approaches are better suited than others. In this regard, constructivism and poststructuralism might be considered as relevant theories, since identity is taken more seriously in contemporary IR theories. Addressing the diaspora concept within constructivist and postmodernist frameworks allows for the conceptualization of de-territorialized or transnational identity networks. Hence, while examining the concept of diaspora identity, a theoretical framework drawing from constructivist and poststructuralist/post-modernist perspectives will be employed to elucidate and explain the complexities surrounding identity-related matters. I focus my attention on these two theories because they place the concept of identity as a centerpiece in their theoretical frameworks, distinguishing themselves from the conventional rational choice theories of IR. Post-modernist understanding acknowledges the importance of heterogeneity and diversity, paying better attention on hybridity. However, I am cognizant of the potential challenges that may arise from the terminology employed in both theories. Delineating the boundaries between constructivism and poststructuralism in our case poses a challenge, as these theoretical perspectives exhibit overlapping characteristics.

However, it might be argued that the similarities between constructivism and poststructuralism outweigh their differences, as both theories propose that identities are formed through social interactions. Furthermore, I did not intend to imply that constructivism and postmodernism are the exclusive contemporary theories in IR focusing on identity. Rather for my study, I have recognized these two theories as constituting better benchmarks for the concept of identity in diaspora, for that reason have recourse to them as significant reference for my analysis. Constructivism focuses on the formation of identities through social interactions, whereas poststructuralism emphasizes the perpetual changes and intrinsic instability of identities. We will focus on diaspora identity formation identity and how it is shaped in the context of postmodern frameworks. Nevertheless, rather than trying to apply a certain IR theories to the subject topic of study and check their validity and to explain certain findings with available theories; this study also aims to look at the topic through the lenses of individuals and representatives being studied, their discourses and practices, and to justify this step both logically and then to some extent theoretically.

1.5. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative single case study methodology since it allows conducting a deeper investigation of complex phenomena within some specific context. I apply the following mixed methodology. First, in order to shape conceptual framework, the review and consultation of relevant literature which focuses on the thematic study of the subject matters such as diaspora, homeland in diaspora, diaspora identity will be made. Second, in order to draw the general picture of what the Kazakh diaspora is and how it was formed, I review the body of literature on historical background of the Kazakh Exodus from East Turkestan. Therefore in this part of my study I use the secondary data from academic works of those researchers who already studied this issue. But this study mainly will rely on primary data obtained through a combination of mixed qualitative research methods from field study in Munich involving active participation of the study group. For the findings of my research I use the data which was obtained by participant observation, personal and group interviews, analysis of some personal documents and books (textual, less often visual - photo and video sources). For the exploring of the social construction of the homeland I apply content analysis of the diaspora literature and discourse on the topic by politicians because it is the most suitable technique for conducting qualitative research in construction of the homeland by

actors, also it helps to identify images of homeland in the memory of diaspora members and the portraying techniques of the actors. The major sources of data used in this study mostly consist of field notes, interview notes, and survey findings identified in interviews and other forms of qualitative data gathering. One of the main primary sources of the data used in this study rely on the field notes, interview notes and survey results of the study. For analyzing the obtained data thematic analysis method is used which allows us to organize and categorize data based on the recurrent themes identified during the qualitative data collection process. This paper can be regarded as a pilot study since it is studying the issue of East Turkestani Kazakhs in German context for the first time and which is aimed to open new perspectives and areas of further research.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This research will argue that, like other identities, the diasporic Kazakh identity is not fixed and unyielding, but rather fluid and dynamic, subject to change based on the experiences and perspectives of its members. When discussing its central research questions, the study will also factor in a range of historical, political, and social discourses typical of both the home and host societies. Indeed, the study will try to uncover the components of diaspora identity and homeland orientation that are found in everyday life and analyze how they change over time, which is very important for this research. Therefore, the topic of this study is the diaspora community itself and their members, not as a historically formed community or intellectual chronicle, or cultural tradition, but as a community of members consisting of ordinary people and their opinions and perspectives.

Depending on both generalization and feasibility, this study is limited to German Kazakhs as communities migrating from first East Turkestan and then from Turkey. The field study carried out in Germany between October and December of 2022 provided concrete information about the homeland and identity perception of the Kazakhs living in the Munich and use it as a reference for this study. Hence, this thesis will exercise caution in avoiding generalizations on the prospective outcomes of this research. It is not appropriate to extrapolate and apply the viewpoints expressed by the participants of the selected surveys to a broader population.

CHAPTER II. DIASPORA, IDENTITY AND HOMELAND

Before moving on to the section on the formation of the Kazakh diaspora, in this section, the conceptual discussions of the diaspora concept that have emerged with different experiences will be discussed. As it is seen that diaspora formations have similar experiences, there are also many conflicting processes. It is observed that these differences provide diversity in conceptualizations. In this context, it is thought that in previous studies the essence of the Kazakh diaspora from theoretical perspective of diaspora studies could not be fully disclosed based on different experiences. In this thesis, the concept of diaspora is analyzed in detail in order not to make similar mistakes and some fundamental criteria helping to define the Kazakh diaspora will be revealed. Three fundamental analytical categories such as *diaspora*, *identity* and *homeland* are used in the discussion of ethnic identification and homeland perception of Kazakh diaspora being studied. First and foremost, it is essential to grasp these concepts, get acquainted with its meanings and interpretations since they serve as the main pillars for this study's primary points. The following sections will reveal how these three main concepts have been considered and interpreted by various academics and to a limited extent touch upon the academic debate especially on the concept of diaspora itself.

2.1. The Concept of Diaspora

Since the diaspora is an object of domestic policy and a subject of international relations and a connecting thread between the domestic and foreign policies, in the modern period in political and social science, studies on the concept of the diaspora are of particular interest attracting the attention not only of the academic world, but also of the public discourses. Some diaspora academics describe diaspora as the “paradigmatic other of the nation-state, as challengers of its traditional boundaries, as transnational transporters of cultures, and as manifestations of de-territorialized communities” (Shain & Barth, 2003). Especially in connection with the international political events that took place in the 20th century, the use of this concept has become very common today. Despite the fact that the term diaspora is an ancient word with a history of about 2500 years, its meaning and content is still the subject of vivid discussion in the academy.

“Diaspora”– διασπορά- a word of Greek origin, meaning “scattering”, “dispersion”, “spreading” and was used in ancient Greece to describe the colonies around the Mediterranean, that is, communities in settlements far from the mainland of Athens. Later on it was used to describe scattering of the Jews expelled from Palestine during the time of the Babylonian captivity in 5th century BC due to their forced resettlement in Babylonia after the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II. Gradually with the dominance of nation-states, it has begun to be applied to other religious and ethnic groups that are not in the position of dominant community, exceeding the borders of religious minorities (Dufoix & Rodarmor, 2008, p. 9). The definition made by Simon Dubnov in the 1931 Encyclopedia of Social Science was the turning point in the conceptual development of the term diaspora who was the first to shift the concept’s religious and Jewish emphasis. He defined the diaspora as “a Greek term for a nation or part of a nation separated from its own state or territory and dispersed among other nations but preserving its national culture”. Nonetheless, the Jewish-centered usage of the term dominated from the 2nd century until roughly 1968 (Dufoix & Rodarmor, 2008, p. 17). At the present stage, the phenomenon of “diaspora” acquired a new content, which is due to the expansion of the field of phenomena referred to as diaspora, as well as an increase in the frequency of use of this concept.

The dominance of territorial states and nation-states and ever-improving communication and transportation technology in the last few centuries has played an important role in the enlargement of the meaning of the term diaspora and their becoming of a global reality. Intensifying and diversifying international migrations and multinational states gradually leaving their place to nation states have increased the number of communities named as diaspora even more. As a matter of fact, Cohen also states that the concept of diaspora was once used especially for Jews, rarely Greeks, Armenians and Africans, and today at least thirty different ethnic groups define themselves as diaspora or are defined as diaspora by others (Cohen, 2008, p. 266). Thus, the concept which previously described the forcible dispersal and the estrangement of diasporas in their places of settlement and was mentioned in relation to a limited number of communities, now started to be associated with different cross-border groups such as immigrant, exile, refugee, expatriate, guest workers and other minority groups (Tölölyan, 1991, p. 4). “This has resulted in what one might call a “diaspora” diaspora - a dispersion of the meaning of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space.” (Cohen, 2008, p. 9). Such phenomena only complicate the research task, as they expand the boundaries of the concept and leads to the under-theorization of the

concept. Brubaker argues that “the universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora” (Brubaker, 2005, p.3). Although “diasporas emerge out of the dispersion”, it should be acknowledged that not all dispersion allows us to label certain group as a diaspora which leads us to the next question: *What makes a dispersed group a diaspora?*

On the one hand, we do accept that it is a tall order to find a unique definition and characteristics of diaspora. Nevertheless, one has to start somewhere and try to draw up the boundaries of the concept of diaspora. In this vein, it is essential to ask some questions in pursuit of finding those boundaries. What are the fundamental features defining the diaspora? Cohen compares the concept of diaspora to the Wittgenstein’s rope and recommends re-weaving the fibres that make up this rope (Cohen, 2008, p. 158). So in this regard, we think that investigation of the fibres of the diasporic rope will be of great benefit to our understanding of the current meaning of the concept and academic discussions on it. It is essential to investigate what are the building blocks of the concept of diaspora.

2.2. Characteristics of Diaspora: Is Every Ethnic Group a Diaspora?

Is every exiled ethnic group constitutes a diaspora? To whom, when and under what conditions certain ethnic group or community can be labelled as a diaspora? How we can differentiate the diasporic group from other migrant groups such as immigrants, expats, minority group or transnational communities? So first we will try to find answers to this question and then find the subsequent definition. One of the basic criteria in the definition of diaspora is process of migration itself. According to Sheffer (2003) in all diaspora types, the migration event is a significant factor in determining and making a diaspora possible. However, although every diaspora has a relationship with the act of migration, every immigrant groups is not part of the diaspora (p. 83). The definitions expressed as one the fundamental label of the diaspora is the “dispersal from one place to different places are” is predominant. Some of those who say that this community should be formed by immigration say that this disintegration/migration must be due to necessity, while others say that it does not matter much whether the migration is forced or voluntary. While accepting the phenomenon of migration as the basic criterion of diaspora formation, it is seen that there are different opinions about its nature and reasons. Some notable analysts including Safran (1991), Cohen (2008), and Tölölyan (1991) define diasporas in a descriptive manner, thereby distinguishing them from other categories of persons “on the move”, while others such as

Gilroy (1993), Clifford (1994), and Brubaker (2005) apply the term to the groups (e.g. migrants, exiled groups, refugees, expatriates, tourists, ethnic minorities, sojourner transnationals) as a process (Kalra, et al., 2005, p.3).

Upon examination, it is not accurate to assert that diasporas predominantly are the same with ethnic groups. Nevertheless, it is debatable whether diaspora is an ideal type of ethnic groups or not. While diasporas might be considered to some extent as ethnic groups, the two concepts differ from each other when we take into consideration other basic characteristics that distinguish diaspora from being purely ethnic groups. Diaspora includes an ethnic group, but it is much more than an ethnic group alone. Ethnic group can be defined as a collective community living within a society, having a common imaginary or tangible ancestry, a shared collective memory, and culturally focused on one or more symbolic elements defined as symbols of their unity. Ethnic group members not only have common and distinctive values such as language, culture and religion as a requirement of being objectively “us”, but also have a sense of belonging and a sense of otherness based on their differences (Thompson, 1989). In this sense, diaspora communities exhibit shared characteristics with ethnic groups. In addition to possessing some requisite attributes of an ethnic group, diaspora encompasses a multitude of diverse features being an umbrella concept. Hence, the primary determinant in delineating these two notions lies in the fact that diaspora covers the ethnic group and encompasses a greater range of diverse connotations and attributes (Safran, 2004, p. 12).

If the differences between a diasporic group and an ethnic group are to be deemed, it is imperative to consider the characteristics that elevate a diaspora beyond the confines of a mere ethnic group:

- dispersal to more than one geographical locations from the ancestral homeland and living outside their homeland for at least one or more generations.
- collective trauma and diasporic consciousness.
- common sense of solidarity transcending national borders and a communication network among group members.

When a certain dispersed ethnic groups take a political action, they can create a diasporic consciousness; in this sense, ethnic groups that are living outside of their homeland, especially as a result of exile or involuntary migration, can form the first leg of a diasporic movement. The important factor here is the diasporic consciousness of the group. By focusing on transnational connections and emphasizing the plurality of affiliations and identities, the

diasporic understanding can counteract the immutability of identity demanded by ethnicity. In this sense, while ethnicity makes a person have an identity, it also ensures the continuation of that identity with a sense of belonging. Kalra (2005) express the difference between diaspora and ethnicity as follows:

“Diaspora differs from ethnicity in terms of where it draws our attention. Ethnicity reinstates the nation-state as the legitimate social space in which borders are produced. In some ways, ethnicity is a smaller version of nation. (...) At the same time, the space that allows ethnicity to exist is often determined by the policies and institutional procedures of the nation-state. (...) It seems that diaspora can almost be seen as an oppositional force to ethnicity, as it draws attention away from the single nation-state and towards the potential majority of it. It is in this context that diasporic understanding allows us to survey different kinds of identity formation, as well as of social organization. If there is any single theme that emerges from a study of diaspora, it is that of its multi-locational qualities, or the interaction between homes and abroad which cannot be reduced to one place or another.” (Kalra, et al., 2005, p. 17)

According to Bhabha (1994), diaspora challenges the prevailing assumptions of nation and ethnicity. The term “society” which implies a structured and confined framework, is inadequate for describing these ethnic groups that lack clear boundaries. Indeed, it may be argued that diaspora do not conform to the conventional notion of a restricted, sovereign, unified, homogeneous, fixed, and integrated concept of a nation, as they are not confined inside the limits of a single nation-state. Diaspora may be characterized as groups that are distributed beyond borders, exhibiting heterogeneity and hybridity, while nevertheless maintaining transnational connections. Like any other community, and maybe even more so, diaspora communities are constructed via imagination. The concept of the transnational imagination envisions the diaspora as a form of transborder comradeship (Bhabha, 1994). According to Faist, the concept of a diaspora community may be seen as a genuine *Gemeinschaft*, encompassing many types of relationships that are distinguished by a significant level of personal closeness, emotional depth, moral dedication, social cohesiveness, and temporal continuity (Faist, 1999, p. 10). Diasporas are somewhere in between the nation-states and “travelling cultures”, who physically live in a nation-state, but emotionally are beyond the time and space of the nation-state (Cohen, 1997, pp. 135-136). These basic differences and expressed features of diaspora might be not sufficient to distinguish it from ethnic groups and other transnational communities like immigrants. For this purpose we will consider the academic statements of different diaspora scholars below.

2.3. Different Approaches to Defining Diaspora

As concerns the development of the academic debate on the concept of diaspora, Safran who is one of the most prominent scholars and most referenced authors in the field of diaspora studies is often credited with developing the theoretical understanding of the concept of diaspora. In his ground-breaking article *"Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return"* William Safran (1991) criticised the way in which researchers of ethnicity, nations, and nationalism had previously used the term "diaspora" carelessly and lumped together groups with little in common. He argued for a set of criteria against which communities might be analyzed to determine if they were diasporas in fact, noting the necessity to differentiate diasporas from other similar communities. Safran (1991) defined diasporas as "expatriate minority communities" and listed the six key components of "ideal type" of diaspora as following (pp. 83-84):

Table 1. Common features of diaspora by Safran

1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "centre" to two or more 'peripheral ', or foreign regions;
2) they have a collective memory, point of view or myth about their place of birth, its physical location, history and achievements;
3) they believe that they are not fully accepted and considered impossible in the host society, so they feel semi-isolated and isolated from them;
4) they see their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as a place where they or their descendants can (or need to) return when the conditions are appropriate ;
5) they believe that they must collectively undertake a major lease or restoration of their homeland, its security and prosperity;
6) and they continue to be somehow, individually or indirectly, related to that homeland, and their ethno-communal consciousness and cooperation are significantly determined by the existence of such a relationship.

These criteria of being a diaspora proposed by Safran coincide with the situation of the early Jewish diaspora in the 20th century. On the other hand, it is seen that many groups that call themselves diasporas (Chinese, Mexican, African diasporas) and even the Jewish diaspora do not have some of these characteristics (the thought of returning to the homeland,

the belief that they are not accepted by the host society). Sideri (2008) criticizes Safran for defining the concept of diaspora through trauma, exile, and nostalgia, and claims that trying to define in such way forces us to test the historical context in which diaspora emerged as a theoretical framework; he states that this is an impossible endeavor due to the multiplicity and difference of historical experiences, tendencies, and agendas (pp. 32-47). Not all cases can include the described characteristics above, but it is this wide range of feelings and beliefs that is the defining basis of the diaspora.

One of the leading experts in the field of Diaspora Studies Cohen (2008) claims that Safran's approach towards the diaspora concept and more specifically his homeland stress are profoundly shaped by the experiences and history of the Jewish diaspora. So he highlights the importance of developing a conceptual framework that would encompass both the basic characteristics of the Jewish diaspora and the expansion of the term diaspora, which is used in an increasingly broad sense. In turn Cohen (2008) supplemented Safran's key diaspora criteria and has defined his own determinative "common features" of old and new diasporas as following (p. 161):

Table 2. Common features of diaspora by Cohen

1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2) the expansion from a homeland in search of work/for trade/colonial ambitions;
3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland;
4) an idealization of the homeland; including its location, history, and achievements; an idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5) a return movement or at least a continuing connection with it the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
7) a troubled relationship with host societies; suggesting a lack of acceptance at least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8) a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement;
9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

In an effort to achieve a better consensus, Robin Cohen weighed in on the debate, arguing that two of Safran’s diaspora criteria should be “tweaked” and four new ones added claiming that the first feature should be replaced with that that “dispersal from an original centre is often accompanied by the memory of a single traumatic event that provides the folk memory of the great historical injustice that binds the group” (Cohen, 2008, p. 6). Cohen (2008) believes that diasporic consciousness requires a deep connection to the past and resistance to assimilation fight against becoming fully integrated into mainstream society today and in the future. According to him even after many years, diaspora groups fight assimilation and try to maintain their identities. Moreover, they also want to preserve their connection with their homeland and co-ethnics. In addition, Cohen argues that not all of the diaspora communities possess all these features alone (p.186). Cohen’s categorization is significant in outlining the distinctions between new and old diasporas, which he separates on the basis of the origins of the global economy:

Table 3. Old Diaspora versus New Diaspora

OLD DIASPORA		NEW DIASPORA		
Victim diasporas Jewish, Armenian and African	Imperial diasporas British	Trading diasporas Lebanese, Chinese	Business diasporas such as British	Labour diasporas Irish, Indian, Chinese, Sikh and Turkish

Cohen claims that modern labor diasporas are mostly the result of massive immigration from the periphery to the global and regional centers, driven by the demands of the global economy. Cohen’s definition of diaspora articulates well both the triadic grounds that are common to all diasporas, which are the host state or society, the original homeland, and the diaspora community itself, as well as the interactions that exist between these triadic bases. This definition distinguishes diaspora from any migrant community or ethnic minority.

In contrast to Cohen’s extensive list, James Clifford’s definition of what it means to be a diaspora is quite straightforward: it is something that exists in the minds of people and a feeling of identity of individuals who are away from their place of origin. Identities undergo processes of deterritorialization, construction, and deconstruction. Indeed, it is imperative that the conceptions pertaining to the diasporic reaction to this intricate situation encompass the

essential elements of fluid and flexible identity characteristics. In this regard, postmodernist discourse on diaspora, especially scholars such as James Clifford (1994) presents a counterargument to Safran's criteria for ideal diaspora, critiquing its inadequacy in including some fundamental tenets of diasporic phenomena. He refers to a duality of diasporic individuals' attachments of being simultaneously "home away from home," or "here and there" and suggests that "there is not necessarily a single place or an exclusivist nation. Cultures and identities are therefore seen as mixed and plural and "on the move" " (Clifford (1994, p. 312). According to Clifford (1994), the worldwide social shifts stemming primarily from de-colonization, globalization and immigration are slackening the old version of "centred" diasporas that has been created around the phenomenon of return. He sidesteps the traditional definition of diaspora in order to examine and shed light on contemporary ones. While acknowledging Safran's approach to diaspora characteristic, Clifford finds his representation of the Jewish diaspora as an "ideal type" problematic from analytical point of view. His main point of contention is that diasporas can evolve through time, and in the process they might lose some of the qualities that made them "ideally" suitable to be labelled as a diaspora (p. 306). For this reason, instead of concentrating on an ideal type of diaspora, he recommends to address common criteria of diasporas without essentializing them by asserting that:

"In the late 20th century, all most communities have diasporic dimensions (moments, tactics, practices, articulations). Some are more diasporic than others. I have suggested that it is not possible to define diaspora sharply, either by recourse to essential features or to privative oppositions. But it is possible to perceive a loosely coherent, adaptive constellation of responses to dwelling-in-displacement." (Clifford, 1994, p. 310).

He states that dispersion can be forced or voluntary across or within nation-state boundaries. Orientation to a real or imagined "homeland" is a source of self-esteem, identity and loyalty. It may involve the teleology of return, or a desire to recreate culture in a new location. These links allow diasporic people to construct a home away from the motherland, surrounded by pictures, rhythms, figures, and their local network. Diaspora consciousness demands a link to the homeland while living in the host country (Clifford, 1994, p. 311). Boundary or identity maintenance involves identity preservation, but can also involve boundary erosion through hybridization, creolization and syncretism: "something endlessly hybridized and in process but persistently there - memories and practices of collective identity maintained over long stretches of time" (Clifford, 1994, p. 319). Contrary to Safran, Clifford

(1994) claims that diasporas' transnational relationships need not be described mainly through a physical or symbolic motherland, but rather it is possible that decentered, lateral relationships are just as crucial as those focused on the teleology of return (Clifford, 1994, p. 306). Thereby, Clifford asserts that certain community may be more or less diasporic possessing not all of the Safran's essential six ideal diaspora criteria but some of them advising to avoid attempting to create a strict definition of the term "diaspora", because even the "pure" types of diaspora might be equivocal (Clifford, 1997, p. 249).

The use of the term "diaspora" is not without its share of complications. Diasporas are neither fixed nor unchanging entities; rather, they are dynamic, ever-evolving creations that are still in progress. Within the scope of his article titled "*The 'Diaspora' Diaspora*" Brubaker (2005) put forth an alternative perspective on the concept of diaspora compared to previous scholars. He suggested interpreting it as an "idiom, stance, and claim" instead of considering it in substantialist terms as a limited entity, bounded group or ethno-cultural fact (Brubaker, 2005, p. 1). He argues that many other migrant populations and trans-ethnic and trans-border linguistic categories, global religious communities and even assimilated emigrant groups have been conceptualized as diasporas and the problem with this latitudinarian, "let-a-thousand-diasporas bloom" approach is that the category is being overused to the point of being worthless. Brubaker's insightful contribution cautions against the dilution of distinct diasporic interpretations, asserting that if every group is identified as diasporic, the uniqueness of such identities becomes diminished. He went on to say that, just like the initial phenomenon itself, the diaspora concept had become scattered as well. The most significant aspects of the modern definition of the diaspora concept encompass the experience of a distressing detachment from one's native land and the sense of camaraderie felt with members of the community who have relocated to other nations. In addition to this, diasporas establish a sense of identity that bridges their ethnic background with the ethnic milieu of the host country (Brubaker, 2005, p. 6).

Sökefeld (2006) starts from the same place when he asks how diasporas can form and stay together: "Not all migrants will cohere into communities and not all migrant communities will imagine themselves as transnational, thus it is a fundamental error to allow the use of diaspora as a synonym for all migrants" (p. 267). Sökefeld considers a diaspora as the result of identity building processes, arguing that feelings of belonging, attachment to the homeland, and ideas of a place of origin do not necessarily set up the substance of diasporas like other identity groups. Instead, he approaches to the formation of diasporas as "a special

case of ethnicity” and as discursive constructions of imagined transnationally dispersed communities, uniting segments of people living in territorially separated locations (Sökefeld (2006, p. 268). Both Brubaker’s (2005) and Sökefeld’s (2006) definitions emphasize the need to view diaspora as a dynamic process and project as the result of continuous making and remaking of diaspora with no fixed membership, instead of viewing it as static notion.

Summing up, it is possible to assert that the compatibility between classical and modern usages of the concept diaspora is not always consistent. However, this may also provide a window of opportunity to pose more interesting research questions and do additional examination. Initially, contemporary usages encompass a broad range of dispersal, so obscuring the boundaries between different forms of cross-border mobility. Differentiating between voluntary and involuntary migration, for instance, may be significant for analytical reasons. Various diaspora scholars including Cohen (2008), Brubaker (2005), and Sheffer (2003) have reached a consensus about three fundamental characteristics that a diaspora group ought to possess: dispersal, homeland orientation, and identity or boundary maintenance. Adding to these distinguishing characteristics, in terms of the temporal-historical dimension Butler (2001) puts the “multi-generational” criteria for the diaspora which means that it should exist over at least two generations in order to be labelled as so (p. 192). On the other hand, it is worth noting that both historical and contemporary usages of the term “diasporic groups” highlight the resistance to assimilation of these groups in their respective regions of the settlement. However, recent scholarly discussions have expanded beyond the mere notion of cultural distinctiveness.

As a result, the gaps left open in the application of the definitions to the cases show that it will not be an ideal and comprehensive definition. Every experience can conceptualize itself as an ideal case; so that we see this in the conceptualizations made through the Jewish experience. However, as we saw above, the “existing ones” invalidate these ideal definitions and criteria at many points. Even if there are similarities between them, each diaspora experience should be evaluated individually. As a result, the debate on whether the experiences or formations of other communities can be described as diaspora based on these definitions, which are widely included in the literature, is not fixed and stable in this context.

The most basic question posed in this context – “Is everyone (an ethnic group) living abroad naturally a diaspora?”. As we have observed from the theoretical discussion of the current topic, without a doubt not everyone who claims to be a diaspora actually is. Brubaker (2005) warned that “if everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so” (p.3). However,

it has not been clearly revealed who, when, or under what conditions can be labelled as a diaspora. If we argue that diasporas can be produced and mobilized under specific conditions, we would be on firmer basis: the mould (the opportunity structure) will constrain the extent to which this is possible. The clay (the history and experience of the group in question) will act like sedimented silicate, providing the necessary and basic chemical compound. And the potters (the active political, social and cultural leaders of the putative diaspora) will have to organize effective institutions to create and shape diasporic sentiments and galvanize them to a common purpose (Cohen, 2008, p.15). In this regard, on the one hand the border of the concept of diaspora has to be kept as narrow as possible so that to avoid including all minority communities and ethnic groups; on the other hand, it has to be broad enough so that to incorporate new identities that have been developed in recent times since diasporas are not yet fully formed and are in the process of “becoming,” potentially struggling to belong (Mavroudi, 2019, p. 281). So, it should be stated that even in the literature we cannot find a clear definition of the term “diaspora” which undoubtedly indicates the complexity, ambiguity and versatility of this socio-cultural phenomenon.

2.4. Definition of Homeland in Diaspora Communities

The phenomenon of separation from one’s homeland, whether by forced or voluntary means is intrinsically tied to the concept of the homeland itself which constitutes a significant element in comprehending the behavior, attitudes, and understanding of diasporic populations. The link between the diaspora and the homeland might be conceptualized using the metaphor of a “Solar System” wherein the diaspora is perceived as a peripheral entity connected to and associated with a “center” namely the homeland. If the keyword of diasporic identity is considered as “home”, it can be better expressed as an identity that desires to return home. Diasporic identity is a process that seeks homeland affiliation while rejecting assimilation, transformation, and also disintegration. For diaspora communities, the homeland often functions as a symbol and the source of diasporic identity. Nevertheless, in the absence of a clearly delineated territory of affiliation and an undisclosed understanding of the connection with such a territory, the aforementioned diasporic identity remains enigmatic. In order to eliminate this ambiguity, it becomes necessary to establish a clear definition of the specific location referenced regarding identity.

With Safran’s (1991) approach, the formation of a diaspora is mainly associated with the psychological trauma of dispersion (exile is always inevitable decision) from original

homeland and even more so with the tragedy of forced displacement or exodus. Most often, exodus occurs from a less comfortable environment to more prosperous and contented social, political and economic environment. The ideal homeland and the political attitude towards it can vary greatly, and therefore “return” is understood as the restoration of some lost norm or bringing this norm-image into line with the ideal (narrated) one. Hence, another characteristic feature of the diaspora is born - the belief that its members should collectively serve to restore their original homeland, its prosperity and security. In a number of cases, it is the belief in this mission that ensures the ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity of the diaspora. In fact, relations in the diaspora itself are built around “serving the homeland” without which there is no diaspora itself (Safran, 1991, p. 85).

And here we come to another characteristic of the diaspora phenomenon, which we can call the factor of the dominant society or environment of the diaspora. The theoretical approach to the diaspora assumes that its members do not believe that they are an integral part of the host country and may never be fully accepted by the host community and for this reason at least partially feel their alienation from this society. The feeling of isolation is primarily associated with social factors, especially with discrimination and the reduced status of members of a particular group. This is where another distinguishing feature of the diaspora is born - a romantic (nostalgic) belief in the homeland of their ancestors as a genuine, real (ideal) home and a place where the representatives of the diaspora or their descendants must return sooner or later. Usually there is a rather dramatic collision here (Safran, 1991, p. 85). It is clear that the basic aspects of Safran’s definition center on unresolved issues with the “original homeland”, even if the vast majority of a diaspora population has never set foot in the “original homeland” or is not having a direct and constant relationship with it. Albeit visions and ideas for its future continue to encourage its members to keep working toward their shared goals for the foreseeable future, and the collective memories, history, and myths about it that were passed down by their ancestors may continue to exist and thrive for generations to come.

The homeland also has a central place in Cohen’s (2008) approach which was developed based on Safran’s categorical definition. A salient attribute pertains to the impediment of “return to homeland” - namely, the presence of a challenge, if not an outright prohibition, in settling back to the primordial area of outmigration. The experience of forced exile has a crucial role in fostering a profound yearning for one’s homeland and is important to the comprehension of diaspora (Cohen, 2008). The connection between individuals and

their homeland, as well as with other members of the diasporic community in different locations is established through the presence of self-awareness and a common identity (Butler, 2001). Diaspora members identify themselves, or are identified by others—inside and outside their homeland—as part of the homeland’s national community, and as such are often called upon to participate or are entangled in homeland-related affairs (Cohen, 2008; Safran, 1991). The conditions and future prospects of their homeland have significant importance for members of the diaspora, as they may potentially consider returning to their country of origin in the future.

“Coercion, delimited identity, actively maintaining collective memory, patrolling communal boundaries, contact with each other/kin, contact with the homeland” are represented as constitutive pillars of diaspora (Tölölyan, 1996). Here we come to the next characteristic of the diaspora- the presence and maintenance of a collective memory, idea or myth about the “primary homeland” (“motherland”, etc.) which includes a geographical location, historical memory and heroes, cultural achievements and etc. The idea of the homeland as a collective memory is a created and learned construction which like any collectivist ideology is authoritarian in relation to an individual or each member of the diaspora. For on a personal level, a person’s idea of the homeland is, first of all, his own history, i.e. what he lived and remembers. Thus, in the diaspora there is almost always a collective myth about the homeland which is broadcast through oral memory or texts (literary and bureaucratic) and political propaganda. Every ethnic group needs a certain territory, whether it resides on it or not. A diasporic community who was dispersed from their original homeland and lives far away from this territory develops a collective memory of that place. Smith explains this collective memory as follows:

“The homeland becomes a part of the knowledge of ethnicity and the focus of collective dreams. Conceptions of “heaven” are established with reference to the most beloved qualities of the country. Dreams are made for the revitalization and restoration of the homeland. As in the case of Jews and Armenians in exile even after the centuries of physical disconnection community members identify themselves with their origins in the homeland.” (Smith, 1986, p. 36).

When the emotional connection to the homeland is focused on a tangible physical dwelling, it becomes associated with a particular region or geographic area. The establishment of this connection can also be facilitated through the transmission of personal life experiences, historical accounts, tales, myths, or analogous stories. Diaspora groups may also cultivate considerable homeland loyalties due to the favorable construction and portrayal of their ethnic

ancestry and original homeland. Many individuals of diasporic descent often envision their ancestral homelands from a distance, often in a manner that is idealized, romanticized, and sometimes even legendary. A significant proportion of these favorable depictions stem from the influence of the older generations, whose sentimental idealization of homeland is a consequence of their protracted detachment from their countries of origin. Additional visual representations are derived from the pervasive mass media and popular culture that has assumed a dominant role in shaping distant conceptions of homelands (Cohen, 2008). Even the detachment and inability to return might serve as a potential catalyst for feelings of nostalgia for one's homeland. Often homeland carries a suprarational genealogical significance, commonly referred to as ancestral land which is infused with an emotional dimension (Cohen, 2008, p.3). From a constructionist perspective, the notion of home has become blurred and ambiguous, hence questioning the stability of one's roots and homeland orientation and thus emphasizing the homing desire of diaspora rather than the pursuit of returning to the homeland, which are not always the same situation. Accordingly, longing for home and the concept of home itself has turned into an essence placeless, and yet admittedly lyrical space (Hall, 1990, p. 226).

In Sheffer's definition of ethno-national diaspora, the construction and maintenance of identity as an ethnic-national group and regular relations with the original homeland is more prominent. As like other scholars Sheffer (2003) attaches importance to the restoration and protection of the homeland, however he points out to the continuation of contact with the homeland rather than return; arguing that the return of the diaspora is not realistic even though the issue of 'returning to the homeland is always kept' on their agenda. Similar to the Jewish case, the reclamation of the lands that became a central role in defining a homeland identity did not occur subsequent to the foundation of the state. Despite possessing the necessary resources, the Armenian diaspora refrained from repatriating to Armenia. This assertion also applies to the African diasporas as well. In his definition, Sheffer points to cooperation and unity in cultural, social, economic and political fields by replacing homeland solidarity with national solidarity and common identity (Sheffer, 2003).

Diaspora behavior is a matter of experience. Being "here" and "somewhere else" at the same time; feeling attached to more than one place; features such as experiencing the universal and the particular at the same time and building a new homeland away from the homeland are the basic features of the diaspora consciousness (Kaya, 2000, p. 58). Chambers

defines this consciousness as the state of being “stepping on sides of the border, one foot here and the other always somewhere else” (Chambers, 1993, p. 30).

In contemporary discourse, homeland is not only territorial area but it is now regarded as a conceptual framework that communities can interpret and imbue with varying meanings. Nostrand (2002) provides a definition and analysis of homelands, conceptualizing them as “cultural geographies.” (Nostrand, 2002). It is also argued that homeland possesses a political nature that surpasses their basic geographical existence and these spatial perceptions are influenced by cultural variables (Skrbis, 1999). Sometimes, the image of the homeland developed by diaspora members who have never lived in the homeland, or perhaps have never seen the homeland, is the source of imagination and narratives. The impressions left by the narratives and the images created accordingly guide them about how the diasporic society is positioned, how the narratives settle in their imaginations, and as a result, how they develop their own identities.

Social constructionist perspective had the outcome of prompting a reevaluation and a more nuanced comprehension of changes in the connection between the homeland and the diaspora. Through this process, three primary iterations of homeland have formed, as identified by Cohen (2008): *solid*, *ductile*, and *liquid*. The solid version represents an unwavering and unquestioned desire for a physical homeland. The ductile version, on the other hand, embodies a more intricate and multifaceted understanding of homeland. Lastly, the liquid version reflects a post-modern interpretation of a virtual home (Cohen, 2008, p. 4).

In this particular context “home” would have more than one meaning, particularly when considering communities that have lived in the diaspora for an extended duration. Diasporic identity is closely associated with the concept of belonging both everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Bauman posits that individuals may have a sense of being “at home” in many places, but this sentiment comes at the cost of acknowledging that they will never actually feel completely at home anywhere (Bauman, 2004, p. 49). One perspective posits that home is often perceived as the geographical region of pre-migration, serving as a place of ancestral roots and engendering a profound sense of belonging or emotional connection within the diaspora community. On the other hand, home is where life is happening right now; it is an actual place where people live and interact with one another. Each member of a community, and especially each generation, has a unique relationship to their homeland which is shaped by their unique set of experiences and perspectives. Hence,

home is an intricate, versatile and complex concept for the diasporan communities (Raj, 2014).

Hall's metaphorical insights regarding diaspora, homeland and identity draw up another perspective:

“Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperializing, the hegemonising, form of ethnicity. We have seen the fate of the people of Palestine at the hands of this backward-looking conception of diaspora – and the complicity of the West with it. The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those, which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and difference” (Hall, 1990, p. 235).

In communities living in diaspora, experiences of exile and trauma provide them with a mental burden and a way of “imagination” of its original homeland. Therefore, diasporic identities are actually flexible identities that can be shaped and reshaped over time. In other words: diasporic identities are not only about fixed entity, but also about adaptation and changes as well. Therefore, the “homeland” discussed in this study is considered not only as physical geographical place, but also as an imaginary territory as well.

2.5. Identity Formation in Diaspora

Each study on diaspora makes reference to diasporic identity which binds dispersed diaspora members not only to their homeland but to each other; hence, diaspora identity can be regarded as a fundamental component of the concept itself. The concept of identity originates from *Idem*, a word of Latin origin, meaning “same” which encompasses both elements of resemblance and distinction. To feel a sense of belonging to a certain group or to the ethnic identity, it is necessary for an individual to have a connection with his (ethnic) group. However, for the diaspora the situation is not so simple. In order to be considered as a part of a diaspora community, one must not only be an immigrant in a host society and claim that he/she has a distinct identity, but possess a diasporic consciousness which entails a collective awareness of shared identity and a sense of belonging to a group in common (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 267). Diaspora identity is formed on the basis of feelings of unity and

common diaspora consciousness, but questions on how and why that unity is being shaped, discussed, preserved and re-formed throughout the time is interesting. The subject under scrutiny pertains to the integrity and inclusivity of identity, as perceived by the society in which it is situated. According to Ayhan Kaya, the fundamental characteristic of classical diaspora can be understood in relation to the concept of “otherness”:

“The most basic feature of classical diaspora is that it is perceived as a social category containing homogeneity and cultural boundaries are drawn sharply. This boundary prevents mixing with “others”.

(Kaya, 2000, p. 61).

The occurrence of forced migration resulting in trauma, the establishment of a distinct cultural boundary between the settled community and the persistent idealization of the homeland are one of the prominent features of diaspora identity which is not a natural consequence of mass migration, but rather a constructed phenomenon which both help to bind members together and to separate them from “outsiders”. Moreover, there is a perpetual tension that persists between the identity of diasporic communities and the host society. The rationale behind this phenomenon lies in the inherent inclination of diasporic communities to assert their unique identity in contrast to the dominant culture in the host society albeit having *sui generis* features distinct from the culture in the original homeland (Özkan, 2014, p.110). Within this particular framework, it is accurate to assert that diasporic identities are not inherently fundamental, but rather subject to circumstances, historical context, and characterized by their ever-changing and interactive nature.

The crux of the constructivist perspective on identities resides in its conceptualization of identity as a consequence of social interaction. Wendt suggests that “interests and identities come from somewhere, and that obviously includes society,” as states do not possess a pre-existing set of identities. Socialization, as Wendt claims, plays a significant role in the acquisition of identities, functioning as a causal mechanism for identity learning. In alternative terms, until the other is identified can the self be realized. The ongoing reciprocal interaction between gestures and the construction of identity appears to resemble a self-fulfilling prophecy (Tamaki, 2010, p. 23).

Identity is posited as a construct that humans must actively create rather than passively uncover. The acquisition of anything necessitates its construction or cultivation from a plethora of options and alternatives, and afterwards demands safeguarding and perseverance. The phenomenon of a diaspora community’s disconnection from its original country and

alienation from its original geographical place of origin and cultural context frequently engenders a heightened quest for and negotiation of identity (Mandaville, 2001, p. 172). Diasporic identities possess a dual nature in chorus within local and global context, forming intricate networks of transnational affiliations, incorporating both imagined groups and those met in reality (Brah, 1996). Diasporic identity is formed via the negotiation, collision, and tête-à-tête of cultures and histories; which could be described as a fragmented mode of identification that poses a challenge to conventional categorizations because it is not only national, not genealogical, or not religious only (Kaya, 2015, p.80). This is due to the fact that diasporic identity is not based on a singular ancestral tradition. Instead, it incorporates aspects of each of these classifications, which results in a dynamic interaction among them. Hence, the diaspora concept compels us to investigate the creation of cultural bricolage within the contested domains lying between conceptions that are diametrically opposed to one another, between the past and the present, between the local and the global, and between the notions of “here” and “there” (Boyarin, & Boyarin, 1993).

Diaspora identity with its national, cultural and collective identities (religious, ethnic, or class) is so versatile and complex that it cannot be reduced to a single element. From postmodern perspective, the concept of identity is perceived as being in a constant state of flux and undergoing continuous transformation. According to Cote, within this post-modern context, the maintenance of a solid and stable identity is a challenging endeavor, mostly related to the inherent fluid and mobile characteristics of this era (Cote, 1996, p. 421). The stability and structure of the phenomenon under consideration are contingent upon several factors, including the environment, context, and interpersonal interactions. The complexity and problematic nature of identity have been exacerbated by the process of globalization and migration, as it is no longer a transparent concept and is always in a state of ongoing construction (Hall, 1990, p. 222). This absence of certainty leads us to the difficulty of determining identities. What are the criteria for identifying an identity? To give a simple answer to this question is one of the most ambiguous and perplexing scholarly tasks and it has to be mentioned that there is no unique answer suitable for all diaspora communities (Tamaki, 2010). Bauman argues that in the past it was relatively uncomplicated for individuals to identify their sense of belonging in societies where their identities were not a pre-given entity. Nonetheless, transition from premodern estates to modernity resulted in a shift where people were required to actively engage in the construction of their identities through the performance of various activities during the course of their lives and within the

context of the postmodern era (Bauman, 2004, p. 49). The primordialist premise that ethnic or national identity is inherent or a fact of nature has been subject to criticism. The geographical place of birth is no longer a determining factor in identifying identity which is not a completed reality. In this regard, Maalouf posits (2003): “Identities are not given by birth and they change throughout a people’s lives.” (p. 14). Formation of the identity is influenced by the broader societal and situational factors playing a significant role in shaping the sense of belonging for individuals, especially for those who are living in diaspora. In contemporary society, it is evident that identity is not a static condition or attribute, but rather a dynamic process through which it is formed in a constant dialogue, negotiation wherein individuals engage in the assessment of similarities and differences.

The intricate and multilayered structure of identity serves as a crucial starting point for understanding such dynamic phenomena that manifest in diverse forms within certain temporal, spatial, and discursive contexts (Lähdesmäki, 2014, p. 72). Given that identities are neither fixed nor predetermined, they cannot be seen as distinct affiliations, but rather as constructs that are influenced by various allegiances. Hall (1990) also argues:

“Identities are the matter of “becoming” rather than “being” It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. They come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation.”
(Hall, 1990, p. 225)

Henceforth, in order to analyze one’s identity, individuals must critically inquire into their connections, origins, interactions with others, religious beliefs, customs and various forms of affiliations. Baumann considers identity as a riddle and argues that in order to unravel this riddle, one must critically question and reconsider the definitions of nationality, ethnic identity, ethnicity, and the role of religion as a foundation for culture (Baumann, 1999, p.7). Because “national identity is no longer as rationalist as it pretends to be, ethnic identity is no longer as natural as it appears to be, and religious identity is no longer as eternally unchanging as it is preached to be. All of them are identifications which are reified understanding of culture.” (Baumann, 1999, p.137). Nevertheless, there are presents a plethora of challenging concerns that arise when one attempts to clarify the role and elucidate the correlation between culture and identity. One example of such cultural parameter frequently discussed among constructivist researchers is: Which norms matter and why? When and how do they “shape” identities? Another significant question pertains to the

application of constructivist perspective which frequently obscures the argument that the formation of identity is a dynamic and continuous process. However, this also presents challenging questions regarding the stability or contingency of identities, the manner in which they undergo transformation - whether it is a slow or sudden process, the circumstances under which such transformations take place, and ultimately, how to conceive identity change in the first place? (Berenskoetter, 2017, p. 6).

Diasporic subjects are carriers of a consciousness which provides an awareness of difference. This sense is basic to self-identity for diasporic subjects. It is by recognizing difference, rather than denying it; hence, it is an attempt to be part of a homogeneous whole where diasporic consciousness may emerge. In this context it is true to say that diasporic identities are not essential but rather contingent/historical, dynamic and dialogic in nature (Özkan, 2014, p. 110). In this context, it would be worth to stress attention on discourses and historical memories that have the capacity to establish certain foundations of identity within different contexts. The construction of collective identity involves the reconfiguration of subjectivity to validate the shared experience, inside a tangible and non-subjective framework. In essence, collective identity discourses involve the reinterpretation and reevaluation of many perspectives on a certain collective history through processes such as recalling, remembering, rephrasing, and reshaping. How is the formation of collective history achieved? Indeed, the aforementioned shared experiences hold relevance inasmuch as they are shaped by a discourse rooted on differentiation (Brah, 1996, p.192). Accordingly, here we apply to the post-structuralist approach, more specifically to Foucault's theory of power which claims that different forms of discourse such as visual pictures, painting or sculpture, music, cinematography, and even communication technology generate power. The central notion of difference is intricately linked to the many ways in which the particular discourses of difference are constructed and will invariably be contingent upon the contextual framework (Brah, 1996, p. 212). In order to disentangle these power dynamics, people proclaim their entitlement to be unique and emphasize the individual qualities that define their uniqueness. The aforementioned challenges pertain to the fundamental question of "who we are?" (Foucault, 1982, p.781). According to Foucault, the establishment of personal and collective identities is intricately intertwined with the power structures that individuals and communities resist. The perspective presented is intriguing when examining the process by which a diasporic group constructs its own cultural rules and the underlying motivations for establishing a distinct collective identity (Foucault, 1982). Indeed, in their

daily life diaspora takes a step into formulating a sense of belonging to a common identity not only individually, but also collectively via discourse in the form of recalling and remembering their own diasporic exile history and the construction of collective imaginary symbolism of attachment to their “left behind” homeland.

Brah (1996) posits that “identities assume specific patrons, like in a kaleidoscope, which take into account different combinations of personal, social and historical circumstances” (Brah, 1996, p. 176). The inherent fluidity of the subject matter precludes its categorization inside a singular category. Consequently, individuals have the capacity to relate themselves to more than one group. Therefore, hybridity is a new understanding of identity rather than those fixed identity definitions, especially for those communities living in a “host” environment.

2.6. Identity in the postmodern era and Hybrid Identities

In this age of globalization, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that identity is destined to end up in one particular location or another; either it will return to its origins or it will fade via homogenization and assimilation. Even if members of the diaspora community are fully integrated into the host culture, they retain links with the territories of their forbears and continue to value their own unique identity (Werbner, 2001). Diasporic identity symbolically provides power and opportunity for individuals and societies living in diaspora to overcome the limitations and pressures they encounter in their places of residence. Diaspora members have to harmonize the cultural values they have in their home country with those they have in the host country. This situation let diasporas to keep alive in a dominant society. The extent to which the regime in the new country is open to cultural diversity is a key factor in their ability to preserve their own culture and identity. On the other hand, it attempts to come to terms with the culture they inhabit and keep pace with the political, economic and cultural environment of the host country they live in. Diaspora identity cut across and intersects natural borders and is composed of people who have been dispersed forever from their homelands and would not have an opportunity to be unified in the same old sense. However, the diasporic experience produces culture-bearing communities which multiple cultural identities might coexist. This multiple cultural identity structure is explained with the concept of “hybrid” in some diaspora studies (Hall, 2019) and with the concept of “cultural bricolage” in others (Kaya, 2000). Maintenance of boundary or identity refers to the preservation of one’s identity while also allowing for the possibility of boundary erosion

through processes such as hybridization and creolization. This entails a continuous state of hybridity and ongoing transformation, while still maintaining an enduring presence - the retention of memories and practices that contribute to the preservation of collective identity over extended periods of time in diaspora (Clifford 1994, p. 319). Formation of such hybrid and creolized identity phenomena is particularly prevalent among younger generations of diaspora communities whose main social interaction undertook within diverse cultural contexts (Vertovec, 1999, p. 29).

Opposite to the traditional discourses of diaspora, contemporary diaspora axis emphasizes the “multiple” side of identity, thus redefining identities in this context. The postmodernist understanding of diaspora refers to the heterogeneous structure and multiple identities it contains, and even to the possibility that diasporas affiliated to the same homeland may differ from each other when it comes to the identity. Therefore, this approach is more functional in defining today’s diasporic communities. Modern diaspora approach does not adopt a perspective of choosing one identity, one homeland or one nation. Instead, contemporary diasporic communities reject the dilemmas that force them to either abandon their cultural identity completely or hold on to it forever without any chance of transformation and change (Lipsitz, 1999, p. 126). Diasporic identity does not refer to the complete rejection of the host society’s culture or the maintenance of its original in purity. An important point to emphasize here is that the diaspora experience creates a multiple identity structure and is an absolutely heterogeneous in nature. In this regard, Esman highlights in a best manner how diaspora holds a dual or hybrid identity claiming that:

“In the morning they may participate in a national independence day celebration in their host country, while in the afternoon of the same day they remit funds to a political movement in their home countries.” (Esman, 2009, p. 7)

Bhabha (1994) posits that individuals with hybrid identity often have a partial place in their mind where they integrate elements of two different cultures, therefore engendering a novel sense of identity inside the *Third Space*. In this realm, the Third Space is distinct from the other two while also being a mixture of the both spheres in interaction and mutually affecting each other where negotiation and recreation of identities takes place. Hybrid identities exhibit manifestations of both cultures due to the aforementioned connections, hence enabling individuals to be *in-between* having exposure to and coexisting within both cultural realms; thus living both “*here*” and “*there*”. Bhabha (1994) denies the existence of the “pure culture” as such; instead he claims that every culture as much as every individual

might be characterized as fusion of two or more identities which is hybrid in nature (Bhabha, 1994, p.5). This different locus provides the path for hybrid identity holders to adopt more than a one identity and culture simultaneously and create a new identity for themselves, instead of choosing one. They are able to switch between their identities and shift across context. Thus, *in-betweenness* is something that comes along with living in the *Third Space* where the first and second spaces work together to generate a new third space (Edward, 1996, p.12). It was brought to light before that identities are characterized by their perpetual state of flux and far from being a static. Thus, hybrid identities move fluidly between two distinct spheres, each of which is influenced by the other and recombined with new forms in new practices (Werbner, 2001, p. 135).

Nevertheless, the overriding aspect to consider regarding hybridization is that it does not constitute a fusion or blend, but rather a dialectical articulation. Young (1995) argues that hybridity works both as “organically”, that is, hegemonizing, creating new spaces, structures, scenes, and “intentionally”, that is diasporizing, intervening as a form of subversion, translation, transformation (Young, 1995, p. 20). He also states that:

“Hybridity as in the racial model involves an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism, with the unconscious set against the intentional, the organic against the divisive, the generative against the undermining. Hybridity is itself an example of hybridity, of a doubleness that brings together, fuses, but also maintains separation.”
(Young, 1995, p.20).

To put it in other words, the diaspora needs a physical dwelling and acceptance from the host community on the one hand, as well as a sense of belonging to a collective strong attachment to the original home thus trying to “exist beyond borders” by striving to preserve the authenticity of its diasporic practices while simultaneously adapting to coexist with the “external” host environment (Keri, 2008). For instance, the Kazakh diaspora in Germany did not become like Germans in host society, yet they also differ from both Kazakhs residing in Kazakhstan and in East Turkestan where they are originally from. Thus they possess a distinct identity shaped by the conditions they encounter which will be discussed in Chapter IV and Chapter V.

2.7. Methodological Framework

This study aims to explore Kazakh community and their perception on identity, diaspora and homeland in Germany. To address its main research objectives and to find the answers to its research questions the study uses a qualitative single case study methodology since it allows conducting a deeper investigation of complex phenomena within some specific context. Why it was decided to choose a qualitative methodology for this study? Since I was dealing with the phenomenon like a diaspora, a qualitative approach was needed where it is necessary to understand the nature of a social phenomenon, describe in detail new aspects of already known problems, or reveal hidden subjective meanings or mechanisms of the functioning of some social practices, which could be a bit difficult to investigate only through mass surveys and quantitative data. Because the main objective of this study is not only revealing with which country or culture the Kazakh diaspora members do identify and associate themselves, but to contribute to the diaspora studies literature by discovering some unknown aspects of being a diaspora and in diaspora, identity and homeland perception issues, as well as understanding and explanation of the subjective aspects of their interaction. The specificity of qualitative research in social sciences is that it is aimed at determining causality.

On the other hand, the formation of the cross-border Kazakh society, namely the Kazakh diaspora emerged due to the new historical and political developments formed by forced migration. In this sense, the thesis examines the historical process comprehensively. In order to understand the identity and homeland perception of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany, mapping their migration trajectory and understanding the history of the formation of the Kazakh diaspora is one of the priorities of the thesis. The core of this methodology is that, considering the recurring forms of human interactions, it aims to determine their causalities embedded in the sphere of meaning given to actions by the objects of the research. Therefore I apply the following method.

First, in order to shape theoretical framework, the review and consultation of relevant literature which focuses on the thematic study of the subject matters such as diaspora, homeland in diaspora, diaspora identity will be made. Second, in order to draw the general picture of what the Kazakh diaspora is, I analyze previous researches made on this issue and plunge into history of the formation of Kazakh diaspora. Therefore I use the secondary data from those researchers who already studied this issue. But this study mainly will rely on

primary data obtained through a combination of mixed qualitative research methods involving active participation of the study group. The data will be obtained by participant observation, personal and group interviews, analysis of some personal documents and books (textual, less often visual - photo and video sources). Primary data on respondents' subjective opinions, most often conveyed through lengthy comments, but less frequently by gestures and symbols indicating their ideas, is also utilized. Quantitative data from offline interviews and questionnaires will also serve as an additional source of information, but their analysis will also be carried out on the basis of an analytical approach. The quantitative data will not be analyzed only for the statistics, but also through the analytical disclosure of their subjective meaning. Moreover, content analysis and comprehensive review of the books and autobiographies of some authors like Hasan Oraltay (*Elim Aylap Ötken Ömir- The Life Passed by Mourning the Homeland*) and Abdurahman Çetin (*Ömir Jolımdağı Soñğı Köş- The Last Migration of My Life*) who were among the elder generations experiencing the traumatic migration history starting from East Turkestan to Turkey via Kashmir and Pakistan, followed by migration from Turkey to Germany will be also carried out in this study in order to identify how the diaspora identity and homeland perception is constructed and discussed in such primary data written by the authors.

Single case study is carried out primarily to study the individual aspect of social phenomenon like Kazakh diaspora in Germany- the real life experience of specific people and a specific group in specific circumstances. But through the analysis of the individual case study, broader social problems can also be explored, concerning social groups, movements, or even the concept itself. Also it has become difficult to reconstruct the supranational sense of belonging with the assumptions about “real identities”, which is mainly accepted as the core of ethnic and nation, and to reveal the movements taking place at the global level in the axis of the current understanding of the diaspora concept. Therefore, each case of diasporas is unique as identity-based actors and it is critical to examine their homeland orientation and identity, their transnational social movements and to analyze within the scope of current theoretical approaches to diaspora.

Primary data on chosen case will be gained by using participant observation of the diaspora members in the field and through semi-structured face-to-face and online interviews with the members of diaspora and representatives of diaspora associations and foundations and the interview questions will be asked in an open-ended way, leaving the participants to respond freely and completely in their own words. Interviews might be a limited source of

data as respondents can only talk about their own perceptions and perspectives on what is happening. Their point of view may be distorted due to personal inclinations, anger, embarrassment, political considerations, or simply due to a lack of personal experience and knowledge. In this regard observations provide verification of what is being said in the course of interview. In any scenario, it appears improbable that a comprehension of the formation of Self/Other representations and perception of homeland can be acquired from an external perspective. Scholars consistently employ positivist terminology to conceptualize identity as a variable, and in certain instances, endeavor to treat it as such. However, insofar as an examination of the understanding of identity encompasses an analysis of depictions, significances, and even sentiments, scholars cannot avoid employing an interpretive methodology that enables them to acquire adequate understanding of the significant cultural factors employed in the formation of identity and comprehend its reasons.

The field research was conducted in Munich, Germany. The interview guide will focus on the research areas of interest including homeland orientation of diaspora groups and diaspora identity. In addition, the online surveys via Internet and offline surveys during the field research were conducted.

2.8. Data Collection

The fieldwork was chosen as the main way to obtain the primary data for this research since staying at the field with the diaspora society would allow me to conduct a direct observation of the objects of study and talk to different people thus enabling access to their perspectives in order to better contextualize identity issues and homeland perception of Kazakh diaspora in Germany. Yin (2011) claims that fieldwork used in qualitative research helps to better understand the topic being studied since it implies interacting with a real-world situations and capture real life conditions, embracing the perspective of the people who are part of these conditions and perspectives help to define the subsequent study questions and design (Yin, 2011, p. 109).

The qualitative methods of collecting data such as direct observation and multidimensional in-depth interviews will be used to collect data throughout the fieldwork in order to establish the forms of actions and interactions, relating this to how they are explained and understood by the participants themselves and to analyze the meanings given by them. The study's analytical component involves evidence categorization and coding, with special

emphasis on the linkages and interdependencies between the identified categories. The main focus of the study will be on working with primary data and their correlation with concepts in order to clarify, classify, and comprehend them. In conjunction with field-based data collected from direct field participant observations, semi-structured in-depth personal and group interviews, and field notes, a constant follow-up of the participants' primary resources on digital media such as Facebook groups and forums was carried out during the field study to supplement much of the data collected.

It was decided to choose Munich as a city to carry out fieldwork with Kazakh diaspora in Germany since it provides an interesting ground to study diaspora identity and homeland perception of Kazakhs in Germany. First, Munich is the third-largest city in Germany and it is the second densely populated city after Cologne where Kazakhs from Turkey settled in Germany and created their diaspora community. According to the data taken from the diaspora NGO *Kasachisher Kultur und Völkerverständigung e.V. München* in total 300 Kazakh family live in Munich who migrated from Turkey. The main distinguishing feature of Kazakh diaspora community in Munich from the communities in other cities is that the main diaspora nationalist activities were carried out in Munich where the members of Kazakh diaspora from Turkey worked in Azattyq Radio- Radio Liberty in attempt to fight against communism and retrieve their homeland Kazakhstan from the hands of USSR between 1988 and 1995. I found out that some of the Kazakh diaspora members who worked in Azattyq Radio still were living in Munich so from the methodological perspective for me it was critical to meet those people and conduct an in depth personal interviews with them. Because it would allow me to reveal unknown perspective on the topic of the diaspora identity and homeland perception of Kazakh diaspora in Germany and their diaspora nationalism activities which were not investigated by previous authors who also worked on this topic. On the other side, it would allow me to test one of the Safrans's diaspora criteria (Safran, 1991, p. 83) which claims that the diaspora members must undertake a collective actions to create or restore their homeland, to provide its security and prosperity; and they continue to be somehow, individually or indirectly, related to that homeland, and their ethno-communal consciousness and cooperation are significantly determined by the existence of such a relationship. On the other side, Munich was populated not only with Kazakhs coming from Turkey, but also Kazakhs coming from Kazakhstan who established their own migrant community there. This was interesting to me in terms of evaluating the interaction between

these two groups. But the main focus is made on Kazakh diaspora community who migrated from Turkey.

Entering into the field usually consists of two parts: first, deciding what kind of field work needs to be done and preparing before entering the field, and second, going physically into the field to start collecting data. These two parts are closely interrelated, since negotiations with the participants will allow justifying the rules and conditions for the researcher to stay in the field: how he/she should perform the role of an observer and how this role will be explained to those whom he observes. The nature of the effort to gain access to the field varies depending on the goals of the field work and the likely actual degree of resistance to research. Where the field researcher expects cooperation, acquiring input may be primarily a matter of building a trust. At the other end of the scale are conditions for research in which significant resistance, even hostility, is expected, in which case gaining access becomes a matter of “penetration” (Yin, 2011, p. 110). Since it was clear what kind of field work I was supposed to do and how I will collect the data in the field, the critical point for me was entering the field itself and to obtaining the necessary permissions to conduct my field research (Yin, 2011, p. 109).

The field entry period will probably always remain the first and most difficult stage of field work. This was the time when I had to get used to new conditions as an observer and the diaspora members had to get used to me as well. There are probably two main reasons why entering the field is so important and so difficult at the same time. First, successful entry is a prerequisite for exploration. No entry, no results. Secondly, field entry and data validity are related to each other. The conditions under which entry is made can have important implications for people’s attitudes toward research and their degree of trust to the researcher. While the observer must learn how to behave in the new environment, the participants decide for themselves how they should treat the observer (Steinberg, 2009, p. 153).

The best solution for gaining access to the field as an observer was to use a *Snowball sampling strategy*. Snowball sampling can be particularly efficient in sensitive circumstances due to its reliance on “contacting one participant via the other,” which facilitates the creation of a network of referrals among a closely connected group of individuals (Browne, 2005, p. 50). An effective initial step would entail leveraging by soliciting the engagement of acquaintances and friends, who in turn would mobilize their own social circles to partake in the endeavor. According to Browne, this specific approach circumvents the challenges related to the classification of groups, as it does not need the identification of a particular group but

rather focuses on a set of individuals who have links with one another (Browne, 2005, p. 50). In this particular scenario, leveraging personal networks to enhance population engagement can provide several advantages. Firstly, this would enable me to establish contact with individuals who may be inaccessible and unlikely to respond to solicitations or correspondence from unfamiliar sources. Additionally, the utilization of my own social networks will allow them to access and examine my profile (Browne, 2005, p. 51). And finally, data collection using personal social networks enables the establishment of reliable relationships with the respondents. According to Browne (2005), this approach will provide individuals the opportunity to pose questions to me in a confidential manner regarding the research. Simultaneously, I was able to elucidate the manner in which their private information would be utilized.

As the observer gains a better understanding of the behavior, ideals, anxieties and feelings of the groups being studied in the field, he begins to identify himself with their lives, hopes and tribulations. Such identification may be a natural part and logical consequence of established relationships of trust and reciprocity. Its essence lies in the discovery of a simple fact - how much the researcher has in common with the people he observes. Being from the same ethnicity and sharing to some extent a common past and a common culture with the Kazakh diaspora community whom I observed made it easier for me to have a communication and conversation with the diaspora members in Germany. However, this identification raised its own problems as well. I had to try my best to avoid the bias in the research that I am conducting, at the same time I always had to make feel my respondents that I was not only insider as a Kazakh girl, but also an outsider as a researcher. Therefore, only by using a combination of observations, interviews, and content analysis I was able to cross-check my findings. Each data type has its own advantages and disadvantages. The use of combinations of different data types increases overall validity, since the advantages of one approach may outweigh the disadvantages of another. When I was out in the field, I made an effort to take notes based on my observations and the information I gathered. However, walking around with a notebook and pencil and taking notes continuously and in detail, run the risk of taking long time of the respondents and making them to feel bored. Consequently, while I was observing, I endeavored to take notes of only the most pertinent points and managed to take audio recordings with the permission of participants. Some of the records were transformed into notes and transcripts.

Participant Observation

Participant observation entails the systematic observation and documentation of several elements, including circumstances, events, emotions, physical environments, and behaviors providing researchers with a unique method of data collection. The determination of individuals' actions and beliefs is not just contingent upon their verbal assertions. In contrast, it relies on the first-hand observations to directly see and experience occurrences. This methodology often needs a researcher immersing themselves into the community under investigation, fostering familiarity and acclimation to the researcher's presence (Kumar, 2011, p. 140). This allows a researcher to examine individuals in their natural, unaltered condition without any intentional manipulation. Additionally, it facilitates the establishment of rapport and trust between the researcher and the individuals being studied. This approach is founded on the underlying assumption that, in some contexts, it is most advantageous to closely watch and analyze real-life occurrences. The act of observation allows a researcher to engage in interviews with respondents on the observed reality, understand their underlying causes, and their significance given to the subject (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 470). Since the object of my study was a diaspora community itself, their perceptions and identity issues, participant observation was the noticeable method to initiate the exploration. I participated in three collective gatherings of Kazakh diaspora in Munich. First event took place on 15.10.2022 when I entered the community for the first time. It was a Hatim dedicated to 40 days of Ahmet Uslu's death. As far as I have observed Ahmet Uslu was one of the eldest *aksakal* in the Kazakh community in Munich who had experienced both migration from East Turkestan to Turkey and from Turkey to Germany. This hatim was important in terms of understanding how collective rites and religious rituals are being performed in diaspora which is an essential factor in the maintenance of ethnic identity as well. The second and third collective meetings in which I participated were the celebrations in honor of the birth of a baby which is one of the many traditions of the Kazakh people. The participation in these two events which took place on 5th and 20th of November, 2022 helped me to delve into the details of how certain customs are saved in Kazakh diaspora and how some cultural practiced are being organized, performed and interpreted by the actors. The best way to understand the culture of diaspora was to step into the social frame where the activity was taking place and to experience it first-hand in order to make an observations. I was also able to take some photographs to document my visit as a supplementary material to the research findings. Besides, using participant observation allowed me to observe how the Kazakh diaspora community in Munich conducts

their way of life, to ascertain and comprehend their cultural values and behaviors within a certain context. As an observer researcher, I conducted an immersive field study by residing among the community, closely observing their unaltered behaviors, and actively engaging in the events. As the researcher, I visited and stayed with the community, observed them in their undisturbed state and participated in the festival activities to gain a deeper understanding of cultural identity. My participant observations were also supplemented and followed up by semi-structured in-depth personal and group interviews in the field.

Interviews

Interviews are useful when we want to know and understand something that cannot be directly observed. It is not a matter of whether the information obtained during the interview is more or less accurate than that obtained during direct participant observation. The main problem is related to the fact that we cannot see feelings, thoughts or intentions, just as we cannot observe the behavior of respondents in the past. All this has to be asked. The task of the interviewer is to enable the interlocutor to talk about his inner world, experiences, ideas, perspectives, perceptions and etc. Moreover, interviews are also a limited source of data to use as only one method of obtaining a primary data, as respondents can only talk about their own perceptions and views of what is happening. Their point of view may be distorted due to personal inclinations, emotions, embarrassment, political considerations, or simply due to a lack of personal experience and knowledge. Therefore, observations made previously provide verification of what is said in the course of the interview. On the other hand, the interview allows the researcher to penetrate through the external manifestations of behavior into the consciousness of his discussor. The interviews were done using a combination of individual and group formats, with careful consideration given to gender and age demographics. This approach aimed to ensure that the gathered information accurately reflected the broader local population. 55 people from various groups such as students, workers, businessmen, academicians, pensioners and housewives were involved in semi-structured in depth face-to-face interviews. In particular, the semi-structured type of interview would be a better option for this research since it is a good balance of preparation and flexibility that enables the researcher to strengthen her/his interaction with the respondents he/she is interviewing, in contrast to the structured interview, which is a fairly rigorous type of interview (Boellstorff, 2012, p.71). First of all, I had to get acquainted with my future interviewees with the help of agents who was one of

the community leaders and gain their trust. Then I could get an appointment for the interview. I had to prove that I was not an outsider first.

In total with 25 people individual *personal interviews* were conducted at community members' homes, offices and work places, cafes, restaurants streets and other public places. 7 men and 18 women agreed to be interviewed. In the beginning it was very difficult to access their trust and take their consent. But after a time when people were already accustomed to seeing me in society, they became more relaxed about my research. The longest interview lasted for 12 hours. I got an appointment from one of my respondents in advance. I entered their apartment in the morning and left it at night. I had an opportunity to talk to the whole family members since the interview lasted for the whole day. The personal interviews were mainly carried out in Kazakh and Turkish languages.

For individual in depth interviews, interview questions were prepared in advance so that the interview can go forward smoothly. Since I could not predict answers of the respondents, to some extent I had to improvise some supplementary questions to the initially prepared questions which could enable a deeper understanding of the answers. As a researcher, I endeavored to contemplate the most effective approach for posing sensitive questions to my respondents, with the dual objective of optimizing the attainment of my study objectives and preserving the confidence of the participants, while minimizing any potential discomfort or inconvenience. Upon successfully establishing an environment conducive to trust, my attention shifted towards acquiring pertinent data for the research.

Personal in depth interviews were also supplemented by the *focus group interviews*. Focus groups, indeed, often demonstrate advantages - the speed and relative easiness of obtaining approximately the similar data that a quantitative survey would provide. But a focus group is not a small survey. There is a fundamental difference between these methods of collecting information. It is usually indicated that in quantitative survey this information has a quantitative value, in focus group interview it has qualitative. With focus group, considering it a kind of sample, you can do the similar thing - to identify the similarities and differences in the answers of several people gathered, but reliable conclusions about the general population cannot be made. And reliability and accuracy cannot be determined.

Two group interviews with 22 people and 8 people separately were carried out. *1st interview* took place with young generation Kazakhs between the ages of 18-25. The reason for this was that the second and third generation participants born and raised in Germany had a different diaspora experience than their parents who mainly were born and raised in

Turkey. This group differentiation was necessary to better understand the differences in perception and opinions between the generations in diasporic communities. Moreover, this group interview was realized with the help of one Kazakh girl whom I met during the personal interview of her mother. I have expressed my concern that I had some difficulties in reaching out to the young generation Kazakhs for personal interview. She offered me first to organize collective meeting and have a discussion there. Because it was suitable for everyone in order to save time and it made respondents to feel less stressed. 16 female and 7 male were participated in focus group interview which enabled me to obtain insights that cannot be achieved easily by means of individual interviews, since respondents expressed their opinions openly and it was possible to notice group consent by other participants regarding certain questions.

The second group interview was made with the group of 8 Kazakh women in Munich. Why I conducted a group interview with this group? Just from the questions and conversations of several people gathered it was not possible to fulfill the objectives of conducting focus group interview. Nor does it is possible only from discussion as such. Only if there is a group who know each other and has the sense of collective, it is possible to model the studied social action in miniature using this collective as a dynamic micro-model of the target group. What was the difference in group discussions with this focus group? The difference is that people directed their statements not only to me as an interviewer, but to the whole group of people whom they consider themselves “just like me.” Because of this, the contents extracted from the depths of the “I” turn out to be to the collective “we” which was most often not realized by the participants. All of the participants in the group meeting already knew each other and were from the same community, so they felt more relaxed to express their opinion. Very often there is an effect of agreement or disagreement, sometimes sympathy, like-mindedness or solidarity. This very fact of unity is experienced in a highly positive way, and sometimes it opens unexpected sides and perspectives for the researcher. It was possible to notice that while one of the respondents was speaking, some of the other participants nodded their heads, showing their agreement.

My intention in the both of the group interview was to find out what the term homeland mean for the respondents and what they think about their identity and how they perceive it, what kind of difficulties and problems they face regarding these issues. Majority of the participants was sure that the topic being discussed, touched his personal strings, his personal experience, and reacted - according to his sense of self - sincerely and “on his

own”. In the presentation of the research data, I preferred to use the “narratives” of the individuals in original version in order to avoid my intervention as the researcher while writing, and not to give the real names of the interviewees in order to protect their identities.

Questionnaire

Conducting in depth personal and group interviews were very difficult in terms of reaching out to the more people, to organizing time and place and due to the unwillingness of people to respond to the questions. Moreover I had very little time left in order to reach out to the wider population of the community. The main goal was to have more participants and but there was shorter deadlines until I had to leave Munich. Therefore it was decided to prepare standardized structured questionnaire and use this tool to supplement the field data collected during the fieldwork. The questionnaire used in this study was mainly inspired by Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) of Phinney (1992) and was adapted to the current research with some changes made by me. The prepared anonymous questionnaire consisting of 18 questions of open and closed types was distributed during the collective meetings of the Kazakh diaspora community in Munich. As a result 28 respondents of which 17 female and 11 male decided to take part in offline surveying process. On the other hand using the Internet social media the online version of the survey was spread via Facebook and WhatsApp social media network to reach out to more respondents. The questionnaire was transformed to the Google Docs Survey format so that people could access to it with only one click. 25 respondents, more specifically 11 female and 14 male filled out the form. In total 54 respondents between the age of 18-64 participated in this offline and online structured questionnaires.

CHAPTER III. THE KAZAKHS- LONG JOURNEY FROM EAST TURKESTAN TO GERMANY

*Over the Karatau (mountains) come the exiles,
With them comes a lonely camel.
Oh, my homeland, Oh, my homeland.*

*It is hard to lose one's country.
Tears drip from black eyes.
Oh, my homeland, Oh, my homeland.¹*

(The Kazakh folk song "Elim Ai").²

The folk song presented here with English translation effectively captures the painful emotions of loneliness and grief that are commonly associated with the diasporic experience of the Kazakh community. Instances of such evocations are frequently observed. In recent years, the prevailing discourse around diasporas has predominantly focused on the traumatic exile, collective nature, and consequential ramifications. For a diaspora, identity is the "we" identity that was created by remembering the common history and the pain experienced against the negative "other". Michel Bruneau has proposed that the experience of trauma should be included as one of the necessary condition to classify a group as a diasporic, while examining the reasons for departure from their original homeland (Bruneau, 2010). The formation and development of each of these groups were necessarily influenced by the historical circumstances that gave birth, shaped and the particularities of the social and political environment in which they became situated. The diaspora is perpetually engaged in a quest to locate a space in which it may recreate its historical narratives, envision future possibilities, reaffirm its collective identities, uphold traditional customs and practices, and maintain its core set of values.

Since the diaspora is a product of migration, and the migration process itself has its own reasons, history of that exodus has to be investigated as well. In the previous section we have tried to build the theoretical framework of the current study in an attempt to determine

¹ The Kazakh folk song "Elim Ai" is special for those who experienced exile from East Turkestan since they call this exodus the second Aktaban Shubyrindy in Kazakh history. Diaspora members who survived this traumatic dispersion and settled in Germany used to start their program with this song every day while working in Munich based Azattyq Radio (Liberty Radio).

² Hancock-Parmer, M. (2017). The Creation Of Elim-Ai, *Vestnik KazNU*, 86(3), 74-79.

the terms such as diaspora, identity and homeland. And now it would be worth to examine the creation of the Kazakh diaspora term from a historical perspective for a more precise description and analysis of the topic being under study.

The most fundamental historical basis for the formation of diaspora consciousness of Kazakh diaspora under study was the exile and oppression by Chinese dominance in their ancestral homeland experienced in the 20th century. The stage of formation of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany occurred as follows: 1) Kazakh refugees from East Turkestan (Xinjiang) in the 1940-1950s defined themselves as political refugees from the People's Liberation Army of China, which carried the ideas of communism, and in essence - an overt discriminatory policy towards non-Han population in Xinjiang 2) for Kazakh refugees from Xinjiang in the 1940s-1950s, India and Pakistan became countries of first refuge; 3) Turkey became the main recipient country that accepted Kazakh refugees from India and Pakistan in 1952-1958. 4) After resettlement to Turkey, in 1960s some Kazakhs received the status of immigration workers and carried out labor immigration to Germany, thus forming Kazakh diaspora in Germany. In order to get insight into the present state of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany, including their attitude towards their homeland and the challenges they face pertaining to identity, it is imperative to establish a foundational understanding of "What caused Kazakhs to leave their "sacred" homeland?" Therefore this chapter will try to give background information on the origins of Kazakhs, followed by an overview of the Kazakhs' historical past in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and address the issue of the formation of Kazakh diaspora and finally their journey from East Turkestan to India, Pakistan and further to Turkey, and finally how Kazakhs arrived from Turkey to Germany. In order to paint a clear picture of the formation of Kazakh diaspora in Germany, this section first will touch upon on the migration of Kazakhs from China to Turkey and then second from Turkey to Germany.

3.1. Origins of the Kazakhs

Since the focus of this investigation is the Kazakh diaspora's identity and homeland, discussing the Kazakh people's ancestry is a worthwhile place to start. Kazakhs as a nation appeared on the stage of history in the 15th century. However its history dates back to earlier times. Kazakhs are among the Turkic nations who have lived in Central Asia since the time of the Sakas-Scythians. According to the determination of Eberhard, one of the authorities of ancient Turkic history, the *Kazakh* ethnonym is seen as "Ho-sa-k'o" in the V - IX centuries (Eberhard, 1996, p. 152). Many scholars associate the origin of the word "Kazakh" with the

name of the Saka tribe that lived in the 7th -6th centuries BC. So this statement confirms that “Kazakh” comes from a crossed two-part ethnonym “Kas + Sak”, associated with the ancient Saks who became an important component in the ethnic composition of the ancestors of the Kazakh people. Radlov interpreted the word “Kazakh” as “a free, independent person.” (Akiner,1998).

Today, the issue of when the Kazakhs, who live as an independent nation in Central Asia - from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese border, entered the stage of history continues to be debated. The formation of the Kazakh ethnos is divided into several historical periods. The first period falls on the Turkic era, when the Üysin and Khangly tribes mixed with the Huns. There was a process of merger and development of cultures, language formation, and a characteristic appearance took shape. However, as a result of the Mongol invasion, this process was slowed down. In the XIV-XV centuries several khanates existed on the territory of Kazakhstan: Altyn Orda, Ak Orda, Moghulistan, Abulkhair Khanate, Nogai Horde, which were the basis of the ethnic space of Kazakh statehood (Amanzholov, 2005, p. 231). According to the generally accepted view, the Kazakh khanate emerged when Canibek and Kerey sultans, the grandchildren of Urus Han (the khan of the Ak Orda, east of the Golden Horde Empire), who did not recognize the dominance of Abulkhair Khan, the khan of the nomadic Uzbek nation in the Kipchak Steppe, left their homeland in the Aral region to form independent state. In 1465 they out-migrated with tribes and clans to the steppe between the Talas and Chu rivers to live freely (adrift, that is, living a nomadic life in a certain place and without being under government) and established the Kazakh khanate there. The people of this khanate, consisting of different Turkic tribes, were first called “Uzbek-Kazakhs”, and then “Kazakhs” (Kairbekova, 2019, p. 138). The Turkic-speaking nature of these ethno-political communities led to the completion of the process of formation of the Kazakh people. From 1465 to 1847 the Kazakh Khanate underwent a way from emerging as an independent state to becoming a large regional power in Central Asia. The rapidly increasing Kazakh population spread to the borders of today’s Kazakhstan towards the end of the 17th century (Toleubayev, 2010).

Kazakh historians generally consider the Western Türk Khaganate (Göktürk Khaganate of its time) as their first state (Dosymbaeva, 2008). Despite the fact that the founder tribes before the foundation of the Kazakh khanate were part of different states, their communication in only one Turkic language contributed to the development of popular consciousness among the population. Literature indicates that the Kıpçak language has long

prevailed on the territory of Kazakhstan in XIV-XV centuries. On the other hand, studies of anthropological materials prove that the shape and facial features of the people who lived in these places are the same as those of the Kazakhs of the late Middle Ages. These common qualities inherent in the entire population became the main reason for the formation of the Kazakh nation (Kairbekova, 2019). These historical facts, especially Turkic roots of Kazakhs are important historical detail for our upcoming analysis of Kazakh diaspora under study, especially regarding their relations and perception of Turkish people and Turkey as a host country and society. Moreover, historical common past, same linguistic and cultural Turkic roots, common religion also plays significant role in shaping their current perceptions.

At the beginning of the 17th century in Kazakh Khanate prior ulus system was replaced by new zhuz system and all Kazakh lands were divided into three economic and territorial units. The term zhuz refers to the set of tribal communities that self-identify themselves to be part of the integral Kazakh nation and populate a territorially defined space. Kazakh nomadic society consisted of 3 zhuzes: Elder (Uly), Middle (Orta) and Younger (Kishi) (Abil & Kuzembayuly, 2006). Tribal affinities and clan ties have been remaining an integral component of the Central Asian nomadic people's national identity. Nomadic states of Central Asia including former Kazakh Khanate were formed as a kind of tribal nation where instead of vertical socio-economic differentiation was a vertical or horizontal tribalist hierarchy and solidarity. From the standpoint of the systemic-historical approach, it is obvious that the formation of zhuzes is singled out as a part of the process of ethno genesis of the Kazakh people as a whole. The knowledge of his zhuz, ru (clan), tribe and ancestors in seven generations was for every Kazakh a prerequisite for realizing tribal identity and through this the transmission of the Kazakh traditions (Collins, 2006).

3.2. Scattering around the World and the Formation of Kazakh Diaspora

According to Sheffer (2003) in all diaspora types, the migration event is a significant factor in determining and making a diaspora possible (p. 83). The Kazakh diaspora was created by long-distance migrations that were temporary, then turned into permanent ones; with the crossing of external borders, first from Kazakhstan and China to Central Asian states, Afghanistan and Iran, Turkey and then further around the world. The definitions expressed as one the fundamental label of the diaspora is the “dispersal from one place to different places are” is predominant. As it was mentioned before, the Safran's (1991) 1st criteria of ideal diaspora is the “dispersal from a specific original “centre” to two or more “peripheral” or

“foreign regions”. In addition, Cohen (2008) also stressed attention on “dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions”. This opinion was also supported by Clifford (1997) and Brubaker (2005) who highlighted the significance of being separated from original homeland which is more like exile and identified scattering across state borders as one of the constituent components that make up diaspora. So in order to be able to use the term “Kazakh diaspora” in academic meaning, first we have to justify why we can label them as such.

Now let's return to the emergence of the Kazakh diaspora and the wide range of its dispersal around the world. The Kazakh diaspora throughout its history has had a forced character of migration and scattering to more than one geographical place. Not much time after the establishment of the Kazakh Khanate, the massive dispersal and subsequent process of forming the Kazakh diaspora commenced. Historical events that took place in the 16th -19th centuries in Central Asia played a fundamental role in the process of the emergence of the Kazakh diaspora, especially due to the close interdependence of multilateral relations between Kazakh Khanate and China, Kazakh Khanate and Jungaria, Jungaria and Qing China in this period (Kairbekova, 2019). On the other hand, the Kazakh- Jungar wars of the 18th century directly led to the fact that Kazakhs were forced to be scattered to various Central Asian territories (Afghanistan, Badakhshan region of the Pamirs, etc.). Subsequent to the distressing events of 1723, which were precipitated by the Jungarian invasion, the Kazakhs resided as nomadic refugees in these areas for an extended period (Mendikulova, 2006, p. 76).

The Kazakh diaspora throughout its history had a forced migration pattern due to political and religious reasons until the 1960s. In addition, until this period, migrations of Kazakhs to other countries were massive with tribal and clan groups, whereas individual migrations are more typical in the modern era. The Kazakh diaspora was created by migrations over long distances, which had a temporary, then turned into a permanent duration; with the crossing of external borders and being scattered from Kazakhstan and East Turkestan in China to neighboring regions in Central Asia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Iran and then further - around the world (Mendikulova, 1997, p. 27). It is estimated that around 5 million Kazakhs reside in different “host” countries around the world. Approximately one-third of the Kazakh population resides outside of Kazakhstan, with individuals dispersed throughout more than 43 countries globally. The area of their settlement encompasses a diverse range of geographical locations such as Canada, Pakistan, Germany, France, the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and many Middle Eastern

countries. Among host countries, China ranks first in terms of the number of Kazakhs living outside of Kazakhstan, with about 1,500,000 representatives of the Kazakh nationality. Next come Mongolia with 102,000 Kazakhs, Turkey with 20,000 and Iran with about 12,000 representatives of the Kazakh diaspora (Karassayev, 2022, p. 690). Colleen Wood claims that “more than a quarter of the world’s Kazakh population lives beyond Kazakhstan’s borders, as a result of annexed territories and diasporic migration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.”(Wood, 2019). Some Kazakhs found themselves outside of their homeland territory not because of outmigration, but rather owing to historical circumstances that led to the geopolitical divisions of their homeland regions. Those Kazakh communities abroad amounts to around 3.7 million individuals, encompassing Kazakh populations residing in various regions such as Russia, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China, Bayan-Ulgii region of Mongolia and Uzbekistan. Consequently, millions of Kazakhs are now citizens of other countries even if they continue to reside in their historical homeland (Karassayev, 2022, p. 690).

The nature of the reasons for the formation and development of the Kazakh diaspora abroad is mainly associated with political and religious reasons which played a decisive role in many ways contributing to the growth of migratory moods. Those historical factors encompass a series of events that have had a significant role in the emergence and evolution of the Kazakh diaspora like the Jungarian-Kazakh wars during the 18th century, uprisings and conflicts led by the Kazakhs against the autocratic rule of the Russian Tsar in the 18th and 19th centuries, the national liberation movement in Central Asia against Tsarist Russia in 1916, the establishment of Soviet power in Kazakhstan, the implementation of genocidal policies towards the Kazakhs during the collectivization period, the Kazakhs’ resistance against the Chinese communists in Xinjiang between 1930-1950, and the impact of the Second World War. The religious aspect is correlated with challenges encountered in the practicing of Islam, such as the prohibition of the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina during the Tsarist and Soviet eras, as well as by the Chinese authorities. The 20th century in all respects can be called a century of dramatic loss, historical trauma and mass massacre of the Kazakh population, both inside the borders of Kazakhstan and in China. The establishment of Soviet power and the civil war in Kazakhstan were a new impetus for the migration of Kazakhs outside their homeland. Basically, the Kazakhs fled to the east - to China, to the south - to Uzbekistan and further - Afghanistan and Iran. In the spring of 1920, with the liquidation of the Ural Front, the remnants of the White Guards and part of the

Kazakhs of the Younger Zhuz fled to Iran from Trans-Caspia. With the liquidation of the Semirechensky Front, scattered White Guard units and representatives of the propertied strata of the Kazakh, Uyghur and Kyrgyz societies fled to East Turkestan (Xinjiang) joining the ranks of the Turkic people in China. This period is associated with the beginning of the activities of Mustafa Shokay one of the first leaders and creators of the Turkic emigration center in Western Europe in the 1920s-1930s (Abil & Kuzembayuly, 2006, p.).

Another stage which accelerated the formation of the Kazakh diaspora is the Soviet collectivization policy of 1928-1932 in territory Kazakhstan which was in fact the starvation policy and ethnic cleansing which led to the Great Famine of 1932. Estimated 2.5 million Kazakhs or in another words about 70% of the Kazakh population died in the first half of the 20th century aimed at “freeing” and “cleansing” the vast territory from its own Kazakh people. These events led to large-scale casualties, and for many - to the final loss of their homeland (Arkhyamatayeva, 2020, p. 516). Estimated 1 million 30 thousand Kazakhs had to leave their homeland and were scattered to different territories: to China, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Iran and etc. Out of this figure 414 thousand subsequently returned back to Kazakhstan and 616 thousand migrated irrevocably (Arkhyamatayeva, 2020, p. 517). Herbert Franz Schurmann (1962) in his book “The Mongols of Afghanistan” writes: “The majority of Kazakhs in Afghanistan are refugees from the USSR, the bulk of whom lived in the cities of Khanabad and Andkhoy and belonged to the category of urban lumpen proletariat. By 1935, more than 500 Kazakhs lived in Herat in a place called Kazakh-saray. This group of Kazakhs fled from Kyzyl-Rabat, Karakol and Divani Bagh, near the Amu Darya River, during the time of Soviet collectivization.” (Schurmann, 1962, p. 276). By 1978, there were about 20-24 thousand Kazakhs living in Afghanistan, but with the introduction of Soviet troops into this country and the beginning of hostilities, a large group of them left, ended up in refugee camps in Pakistan or immigrated to Turkey in the amount of about 70 families. Then their number increased to 500 families, and at the moment, after repatriation to Kazakhstan 300 families, about 200 families remained in Istanbul. Kazakhs fled from collectivization to Iran as well, where they lived mainly in the northeastern part of the country. In 1968, their number estimated about 400 families (Mendikulova, 1997, p. 263). Thus, as a result of historical events in the past, Kazakhs were dispersed around different geographies, like as expressed by the Kazakh idiom- “*Tarıday şaşılgan Qazağım*” which means “My Kazakhs scattered like millet”. In fact as it was previously discussed in Chapter II that dispersal from original “centre” to two or more peripheral territories and foreign lands is one of the defining criteria

for labeling a certain group as a diaspora (Safran, 1991; Cohen, 2008). After 1991 when Kazakhstan gained independence from USSR in Kazakhstani media and public discourse Kazakh diaspora in the world begun to be held up and admired as models of “genuine” Kazakhs who notwithstanding enduring many difficulties of exile and hardships of living abroad remained loyal to their roots and preserved their culture and identity. This is despite the fact that they were formerly claimed to be as traitors, enemies of the “homeland” and “runaways” by Soviet and Chinese government (Mendikulova, 2014).

The Kazakh diaspora is heterogeneous and diverse, evolved over not a single event or period of time and having distinct formation and development motives, trauma of exodus in each historical era. In this regard, our focus of study the Kazakh exodus from Xinjiang (East Turkestan), China to Turkey is one of the key historical events that gave rise to and shaped the Kazakh diaspora abroad. Prior to delving into the factors that drive the exodus of Kazakhs from East Turkestan, it would be worth to get a comprehensive understanding of their “sacred” original homeland.

3.3. Historical Background of the Kazakhs of East Turkestan (Xinjiang)

The expression “East Turkestan” appears as a geographical designation in the early 19th century in the Asian continent gaining prominence when the western region of Great Turkestan (*Ulu Türkistan*), traditionally regarded as the ancestral homeland of the Turkic people, came under Russian occupation, while the eastern region fell under Chinese control. The geographical area often referred to as East Turkestan despite ethnic divisions and variations in the region has been mainly inhabited by Turkic population (Kapıcı, & Erdoğan, 2018, p. 124). The majority of Kazakh Turks in East Turkistan used to live north of Tiyan Shan Mountain, as well as at the foot of the Altay and Tarbağatay mountains, in Ile (Kulja) provinces. Kazakhs constitute the majority in the Urumçi province, the center of East Turkestan and in Barköl (Kumul province) on the north-eastern foothills of Tiyan Shan Mountain (Oraltay, 1976, p. 23).

Until 1884 the region was named as *Hsi-ju (Xiyu)* by China which means “western region” (Hayit, 1987, p. 174). Nevertheless, in 1884, the Chinese gave to this particular region the new name *Xinjiang* signifying “new land” (Dorais, 2005, p. 4). However, it is important to note that the people of East Turkestan have not historically embraced the designation of Xinjiang. Those lands, which were also the homeland for the Kazakh Turks, as Meryem

Hakim (2010) claims were, at that time, a *terra incognita* being almost unknown in many parts of the world. In this sense, we can say that in the last twenty years of the 19th century, the strategic political powers surrounding Central Asia had reached an agreement with each other by dividing the region apart from the awareness and will of the people living there (Hakim, 2010).

Figure 1. 1905 Map of the Turkestan published in American Encyclopedia.³



During the period in question, the Russian tsarist soldiers undertook a strategic eastward expansion with the aim of annexing the areas belonging to the Central Asian khanates including Kazakh lands. Concurrently, the Manchu rulers of China asserted their authority over the pastoral lands that now comprise Xinjiang. The military intervention by China led to the formal annexation of a territory formerly referred to as Eastern Turkestan into the Qing dynasty's province in 1884. Consequently, this was the first instance in which the area attained the status of a Chinese province. This stage in history is characterized by events related to Russian-Chinese territorial-state delimitation in Central Asia through the signing of a number of important agreements such as: the Beijing Treaty of 1860, the Chuguchak Protocol of 1864, the Khobdin Protocol of 1869, the Tarbagatai Demarcation Protocol of 1870, 1879 Treaty of Livadia, 1881 Treaty of St. Petersburg. As a result of the signing and ratification of the above-mentioned treaties and protocols, the Kazakh territories and the population living on them were forcibly divided between these two states without taking into account their will (Toops, 2000). During the 20th century, the successors of both empires Russia and China maintained their authority over Central Asia, resulting in the division of populations such as the Kazakhs due to the establishment of new international boundaries.

³ Graham, Co. (1905). *Turkestan 1905*. American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection. <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/1584/rec/1>

This division not only separated clans, but also caused individual families to be separated on opposite sides of the Sino-Soviet frontier (Benson & Svanberg, 1998, p. 3).

Hasan Oraltay (2005), one of the prominent leaders of the Kazakh Exodus from Xinjiang who himself witnessed the hardships of migration from his homeland describe it in his book *Elim-aylap Ötken Ömir* (The Life Passed by Mourning the Homeland) as such:

“As it is noted in my father’s tombstone and as well as in my works, we are East Turkestani Kazakhs which is the common homeland of Turkic-speaking people in eastern part of the Great Turkestan region. We are natives of the region which is now a part of the People’s Republic of China. Chinese partition of the region began in Beijing in 1860, continued in St. Petersburg in 1881, and was agreed upon in Shaweshek in 1884. And consequently the locals in the region found themselves living in “Xinjiang” or “new land”. According to historians, especially those from the East Turkestan Kazakhs, it is undeniable that the Altay-Tarbagatai, Ile- Kulzha, Tangirtau (Tian Shan) regions of East Turkestan within the nowadays borders of China has been the homeland of the Kazakh people since ancient times.” (Oraltay, 2005, p. 10).

The demographic composition of Xinjiang/East Turkestan consisted of Uyghur Turks residing in the Tarim and Turpan Basin, Kazakh Turks in the Jungar Basin, and a mixture of Uyghur, Hui, and Kazakh communities in the Ili Valley. The population of the region along with Kazakhs comprises many smaller ethnic groups, such as the Kirgiz, Tajik, Uzbek, Mongols residing in the southern Tenghri Tagh and the Xibo community residing in Ili. Han Chinese were mainly settled in the Ili Valley, Uriimqi, and the Khumul and Turpan Basins (Toops, 2000, p. 158). However, the number of Chinese population in East Turkistan did not surpass 1 million until 1957. According to historical records, subsequent to the specified timeframe, a significant influx of Chinese individuals occurred in East Turkistan, leading to their establishment and settlement in the region. Consequently, the Turkic populace gradually transitioned into a minority within the demographic composition of East Turkistan (Toops, 2000, p. 159). According to the statistical reference, the population of Xinjiang in the period from 1937 to 1943 was reported to be 4,360,020; with Kazakhs comprising around 930,000 of this total. According to the data derived from the All-China Census conducted between 1953 and 1954, it was determined that the population of Kazakhs residing in Xinjiang amounted to 509,000 by the year 1953. As a result, the Kazakh population saw significant losses over a span of 10 years for over 45% of their total population. This unfortunate trend may be viewed

as a continuation of the ethnocide perpetrated against the Kazakh people, albeit now occurring within the borders of China (Mendikulova, 2003, p.54).

Despite the existing body of literature pertaining to the establishment of China's Far West, there is a noticeable dearth of scholarly discourse regarding the Turkic-Islamic characteristics that define the region. Conversely, some scholarly community has acknowledged the Turkic-Islamic characteristics of the region, as evidenced by the works of academics such as Benson (1990), Lias (1956), and Svanberg (1989), Toops (2000), Millward (2004). Xinjiang was officially governed by Republican governors/warlords throughout the period known as the Republican era in China. However, in the 1930s, the Turkish-Islamic Republic of East Turkestan was established in Kashgar which was crushed by the Chinese warlord with Russian support. Again in 1940s another East Turkestan Republic (Three Regions) was formed in Ili. These Three Regions in the north were absorbed into the new People's Republic of China in 1949 (Toops, 2000, p. 158). In fact, the subject matter of this thesis does not pertain to the factual proprietorship of Xinjiang. However, it was necessary to establish a connection between the unresolved historical challenges of the region and the current issues faced by Kazakh diaspora residing outside of that original homeland. Furthermore knowledge of these historical events is crucial in evaluating its effects on the perception of homeland by diaspora itself. The primary inquiry at hand pertains to: "What was a motivation underlying the departure of Kazakhs from East Turkestan, a region that has significant sentimental value and attachment, towards nations situated thousands of kilometers far from their own land?"

3.4. The Kazakh Exodus out of Xinjiang: Road from Altay to Anatolia

The formation of a diaspora is mainly associated with the psychological trauma of dispersion (exile is always inevitable decision) and even more so with the tragedy of forced displacement or exodus. Most often, exodus occurs from a less comfortable environment to more prosperous and contented social, political and economic environment. The historical events that transpired in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) during the period of 1930-1950 hold significant importance in understanding the history and evolution of the Kazakh diaspora on a global scale. The exodus of Kazakhs who faced Chinese pressure in East Turkestan did not occur abruptly or immediately to Turkey, but took place in a series of phases spanning a

considerable duration of 18 years, commencing in 1936 and concluding in 1954. The Kazakh exodus from China to Turkey took place in two waves of outmigration:

1. **1940 1st wave of Kazakh exodus** from East Turkestan under the leadership of Elishan Teyci and Zayip Teyci. The first wave was the result of the migration of Kazakhs from the Barkol, Kumul and Altai regions of East Turkestan and passed through the province of Gansu, Tibet, India and Pakistan, its end point was Turkey.
2. **1950 2nd wave Kazakh Exodus** under the leadership of Alibek Hakim, Hamza Uçar, which began after Mao Zedong's revolution in 1949 because the Kazakhs did not accept the new communist regime in China.

Following the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty and the subsequent rise of the Kuomintang nationalist rule in East Turkestan under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen, Chinese governor-generals Yang Zengxin (1912-28), Jin Shuren (1928-33), Sheng Shicai (1933-44) were designated to reinforce governance and exert more authority over the indigenous minority populace. The period of governance under Governor-Generals Jin Shuren and Sheng Shicai in East Turkestan was characterized by a notably high level of tension, pressure and persecution increased. During this historical era, Kazakhs were executed for the crimes that were considered trivial in nature. The territories belonging to local indigenous people were confiscated and then allocated to Chinese settlers. The educational and training opportunities available for locals were restricted. The taxation imposed on those belonging to the Muslim community experienced an escalation. Prominent leaders within the societal framework were apprehended (Kara, 2019, p. 2). Consequently, the aforementioned circumstances exceeded the limits of tolerance and gave rise to a series of uprisings among the Uyghur and Kazakh populations residing in the region. Kazakhs in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) took part in various uprisings against the Chinese rulers throughout the 1930s and 1940s. They played a particularly significant role in the Ili revolt, which occurred from 1944 and 1949 (Canaltay, 2019, p.25). In general, the desire for religious freedom and nationalist movements against Chinese control in the region may be considered as the primary reasons for uprisings (Winje, 2007).

In Xinjiang the uprisings were an ordinary occurrence during this period. Nearly every revolt against the Chinese authorities culminated in the participants fleeing to other territories inside of the East Turkestan region, in order to avoid being persecuted. As Halife Altay

(2000) claims, during the late 19th century, the Kazakh population residing in the Altay and Tarbagatay regions experienced a rise in persecutions and asset confiscations by Chinese forces. Consequently, they chose to abandon their ancestral lands and embarked on a swift migration towards urban centers such as Kumıl, Barköl, and Mori and subsequently to Gansu (Altay, 2014, p. 6). As these migration movements began to increase over time, in 1889 under the guardianship of Böke Batyr significant cohorts of Kazakhs including 1500 households relocated from Shingil in Altay region to Karatau in Urumqi. Subsequently, in 1901 a total of 500 families settled to the Kumköl and Balgıntau mountains migrating from Aksu. In 1903, after the death of their leader Böke Batyr a number of Kazakhs chose to relocate to Naksha, located in Tibet. This decision was motivated by several factors, including the lack of peaceful conditions provided by China for the Kazakh population in the region, the imposition of burdensome taxes, and the confiscation of their assets (Altay, 2014, pp. 6-7). In 1931, the Kazakhs made efforts to oppose the burdensome taxation and oppressive measures imposed upon them, by forming an alliance with other Turkic communities and engaged in a rebellion:

“... in the south of Xinjiang, the Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, and Hui revolted, and they soon had the whole area under their control. In February 1933 a provisional government was established for the Islamic Eastern Turkestan Republic.”
(Svanberg, 1989, p. 47).

Nevertheless, due to the overwhelming numerical superiority and policies implemented by the Chinese army, the Kazakhs were compelled to flee their lands, resulting in significant casualties (Cagnat & Jan, 1992, p.156). In 1938 Sheng Shicai signed a deal with the Soviet Union meant to foster amicable relations and began the process of “reformation” to exert force on the local population. He imprisoned innocent people including the leaders of locals with accusations like imperialists, enemies of the Soviet Union, rebels, and seditionists; tortured them unprecedentedly, and murdered without questioning in pursuit of instilling fear among the local people and taking them under his control (Canaltay, 2019, p. 69-70). It is estimated that Sheng imprisoned approximately 80 thousand people (Lattimore, 1950, p. 78). Sheng Shicai’s repressive reign was also oriented at the curtailment of Islamic influence and authority by closing islamic places of worship and persecuting religious leaders like imams and mullahs (McLean, 1948, p. 381). This precipitated further uprisings, resulting in the emergence of a formidable coalition of the Turkic and Muslim factions. Nevertheless, the Chinese government had sought support from the Soviet Union in order to suppress the rebel forces, resulting in a pacification of the situation through Soviet participation. By the end of

1938, the rebellions had experienced defeat. Consequently, Soviet Russia acquired further leverage in Xinjiang. The demise of insurgent commanders occurred within correctional facilities, while a substantial number of Kazakh individuals were forcibly relocated to the region of Gansu (Lias, 1956).

The local population harbored apprehensions regarding the potential detrimental effects of communism finding it challenging to place unwavering confidence in the government, notwithstanding the various forms of propaganda disseminated. Despite achieving short-term success, the uprisings ultimately succumbed to the Chinese government's overwhelming numerical superiority and well-equipped forces, hence failing to sustain their momentum in the long run. The circumstances compelled the Kazakhs, a population known for their nomadic way of life, to make the choice of migrating to areas that would afford them the opportunity to reside without constraint and avoid subjugation and mistreatment at the hands of governing bodies.

In this context, in the spring of 1936 a group of Kazakhs who wanted to get rid of the Chinese oppression and become independent under the leadership of Elishan Teyci decided to migrate to Gansu province which was under the rule of Muslims of Chinese origin. The first immigration caravan set out and successfully reached their destination albeit significant challenges related to a confrontation with Chinese forces dispatched by Sheng Shicai. Furthermore, Zayip Teyci led a second span of Kazakhs on their journey from Barköl to Gansu after a span of three months. In addition, despite heavy combat with Chinese forces, the group of Kazakhs led by Huseyin Teyci and Sultan Şerif Teyci was able to reach Gansu in November 1938 (Oraltay, 2005, p. 98). Thus, the long-awaited and joyful meeting between the Altay Kazakhs and their compatriots who had previously relocated occurred. Consequently, Kazakhs from Barköl, Qumul, and Altay regions congregated in Gansu province, having endured various forms of subjugation and assaults perpetrated by Sheng Shicai. Kazakhs stayed there for two years (Kara, 2019, p. 3). However, a conflict with Chinese forces sent by Governor Sheng Shicai made this initial round of exodus difficult. Moreover, due to the intense pressure and political instability imposed by the Chinese Government Kazakhs were unable to remain in Gansu for an extended period of time and having assessed the situation, decided to embark to new way of migration outside the borders of China (Gayretullah, 2017, p.27). Hence began the second stage of Kazakh exodus, the migration from Gansu to India.

Figure 2. Map of the Kazakh exodus from China to Kashmir.



Source: Map made by the author of the thesis based on the historical data from literature review.

In the spring of 1939, under the guidance of Elishan Teyci a group of Kazakh settlers embarked on a way towards India via Tibet. Zayip Teyci and his group decided to migrate to India following Elishan Teyci in September 1939. Local authorities, who oppressed the Kazakhs in Gansu, set out to prevent the outflow of the population from China. Both groups, periodically clashing with Chinese and Tibetan soldiers, eventually met in the Nagchu region of Tibet. In September 1940, 5000 Kazakhs reached to Tibet. Nevertheless, battle-hardened Kazakhs were not consistently able to endure the harsh climatic conditions prevalent in the elevated mountainous area (Gayretullah, 2017, p. 69). To reach India via Tibet, the convoy had to pass the Himalayan Mountains, one of the highest mountains in the world, and the oxygen-free Tibetan Plateaus at high altitudes. Many died from due to extreme cold temperatures and insufficient oxygen levels, among them was Zayip Teyci, the commander of

the second group. After all these difficulties, the caravan of Kazakh settlers reached the border with British India in August 1941 (Canaltay, 2019, p. 72).

While passing through the Tibetan mountains, due to the high altitude, a disease called *is* was seen among people, and many Kazakhs died on the way due to bleeding from the mouth and damage to their lungs. It was not possible to bury the bodies in the mountains, so they were thrown into the crevices in the mountains (Kalkan, 2007). Due to the extreme cold, children were tried to be protected by being carried in chests on camels' backs. Although the convoys were attacked by soldiers from time to time repelled the attacks, some of the children in the boxes could not be saved because the belongings and animals remained in the hands of the attackers. Until they passed through Tibet, the Kazakhs suffered hundreds of casualties due to diseases and attacks carried out by the Tibetans. According to Jadi Shakenuly (2018) at least 6000 Kazakhs died during the migration led by Eliskhan, some groups lost up to 50% of their people (p. 116).

After handing over their weapons to Indian border control they were allowed to enter India in September 1941 and placed in the Muzaffarabad refugee camp, cordoned off on all sides by troops. Following this, 12-year period of difficult camp life began in India where in the new country they faced new problems. Notably, the Kazakh population experienced instances of prejudice inside the confines of the Muzaffarabad refugee camp, which had been designated by the government for their settlement. The camp administration treated them like prisoners, and there were not enough provisions of sustenance, including food, drink, and hygiene goods. To these were added the tropical climate of the region, unusual for the Kazakhs. Epidemics broke out in the camp, due to which about a thousand displaced people died during their stay in camps (Gayretullah, 2017, p. 78). It is estimated that 2000 people died in 1 year due to diseases. Among them was also 35 year-old Elishan Batyr the leader of the group (Shakenuly, 2018, p.117). The leader of the Kashmiri Muslims Mohammed played a crucial role in intervening during this challenging moment by applying to the British authorities and successfully facilitating the relocation of the Kazakh refugee camps from Muzaffarabad to Punjab. In 1942, Kazakhs living in the refugee camps in Muzaffarabad, Punjab and Kashmir were granted refugee status by British administration. They were settled in large numbers in the Bhopal Region resulting in the establishment of a neighborhood known as Kazakabad. The rest of the Kazakhs settled in cities such as Lahore, Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Taxila (Altay, 2014, p.74). Some were settled in the mountains of Kashmir where thousands of Kazakhs also died here in a short period of time. Meanwhile the Kazakh

refugees had neither work nor money. The unusual climate, restrictions on freedom of movement, lack of opportunity to work, lack of knowledge of English and the other local languages aggravated the situation of the Kazakhs (Mendikulova, 1997).

Starting from 1944, Kazakhs began to leave Bhopal in groups and move to Lahore, Delhi and Calcutta. In 1948, a significant population of Kazakhs residing in Delhi and Calcutta were compelled to relocate to Pakistan after the 1947 civil war in India and have spread throughout the country. The Pakistani Government settled the Kazakh refugees in the houses abandoned by the Hindus. While living in Pakistan for 6 years, *the East Turkestani Kazakh Refugees Association* was established in order to better adapt to social life and ensure unity and representation among the Kazakh refugees (Altay, 2014, p.78). The Kazakh refugees tried to get Pakistani citizenship, but their request was declined. Consequently, Kazakhs began contemplating the prospect of relocating to alternative countries, taking into account the fatalities that had occurred due to the substandard living circumstances prevalent in Pakistan. Upon the establishment of the Eastern Turkestani Kazakh Refugees Association, it compiled the list of Kazakhs population residing in various cities of Pakistan which estimated that the initial number of 3039 Kazak refugees who arrived to India in 1941 was reduced to 1400 in 1949 (Svanberg, 1989, p. 52).

The Kazakhs who remained in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) experienced even more sad and tragic events, which forced them, after many years of struggle, to also leave the “golden cradle of their birth” in the 1950s. During the period of 1943-1944, a rebellion arose within the Kazakh community of Altai in Xinjiang which was headed by Osman Batyr and was primarily motivated by the actions taken by Chinese authorities which included the relocation of Chinese settlers to the pastures traditionally used by the Kazakhs, as well as the forced resettlement of the Kazakhs to the southern regions of Xinjiang. Simultaneously, a pervasive wave of repression permeated Xinjiang, rendering it impracticable to disregard its occurrence. Rebels were already widely spread among the Muslim majority and non-Muslim minorities living in Xinjiang to the increasing Han infiltration into the Province who were unable to tolerate the brutal and repressive measures of the Chinese administration anymore (Lias, 1956). In addition to this, the idea of creating an independent state of East Turkestan was very popular at this time in Xinjiang which became the main idea of 1944 Ili Uprising. This multi-ethnic uprising led to the creation of an independent state, the East Turkestan Republic in 1945 with its capital in the city of Inin, i.e. Gulja, bordering with Soviet Kazakhstan. This uprising swept the entire north-west of China and had significant albeit for the Kazakhs tragic

consequences (Svanberg, 1989). As a result of the cooperation between Soviet Russia and China the rebellions were suppressed and existence of the newly established independent East Turkestan state was ended safeguarding the respective interests of both governments (Whiting, 1960, p. 33). In 1949, after the proclamation of the creation of the communist regime of China, The Chinese government took a complete control over East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and subjected the Uyghurs and Kazakhs living there to massacre, calling them enemies of the regime and torturing them to death by leaving them hungry and thirsty in dungeons. Moreover, arounds 15 thousand of Kazakhs of Barkol were killed, captured or dispersed by the Chinese People's Liberation Army. On March 28, 1950, a congress of 1000 Kazakh leaders and elders was held, at which the question of the future fate of the Kazakhs of East Turkestan was discussed: either flee from their homeland, but save the lives of their people, or stay and die in an unequal struggle. The majority decided to leave the "golden cradle of their birth" and move south towards India (Oraltay, 1976, p. 81). Svanberg (1989) describes this second wave of Kazakh Exodus out of Xinjiang as following:

"Kazakhs participating in the resistance against the Communist did not flee until the summer of 1950, when many of them joined a group of Kazakhs in Gaz Kol. Nearly 15,000 Kazakhs are said to have tried to escape to India. During a dramatic flight of nearly 4,000 kilometers the Kazakhs rode over some of the most hazardous regions in the world, i.e. the Lop Nor-desert, the Taklimakan Desert, Tibet, and the Himalayas. Only 350 individuals survived the nearly two year long flight. The rest had been dispersed, frozen or starved to death, imprisoned, or killed in battles" (Svanberg, 1989, p. 52).

Thus, having traversed the elevated terrain of Tibet, encountering with both Tibetan and Chinese troops dispatched to apprehend them along their way, having lost their loved ones due to hunger, cold and battles along the way, the Kazakhs arrived to the Pakistani border at the end of February 1951 under the leadership of Alibek Hakim and Hamza Uçar. This group of Kazakh *muhaçirs* reached the borders of Kashmir in the town of Rudok located directly on the road from Srinagar to Lhacy, on August 18, 1951. However, they were not allowed enter to the territory of Pakistan (Oraltay, 1976). Over the next few weeks in September 1951, other group Kazakhs under the head Huseyin Teyci, Sultan Şerif Teyci and Delilhan Canaltay approached them at the Pakistani border. Not allowed into Pakistan and located a mile from the Kashmir border Kazakh refugees from Xinjiang spent several weeks in this camp. They waited 52 days for permission on the Tibetan side. And as a result, on October 10, 1951, the Kazakhs crossed the border of Pakistan. On the border in the Ladakh vilayet, the Kazakhs were placed in the Sarai Safakadil camp with 350 people according to

Milton J. Clark, who lived for one year among the Kazakh refugees in Srinagar. Unfortunately, today none of the authors can have documentary sources that would accurately indicate the number of Kazakhs of a particular group (Mendikulova, 1997). Thus, the Kazakh muhajirs found long-awaited peace and security in Pakistan.

Constructivists approach has made tremendous progress in understanding how identity and security are related. The assertion that “the issue of identity [...] is inseparable from security” is one consistent thread across this work (Booth 1997, p. 88). This perspective places emphasis on cultural attributes and the need to preserve a stable sense of self, sometimes known as “ontological security. Put differently, an identity perspective generates its own conception of what it means for X to be (secure) and, consequently, what it means for X to survive which might encompass not just physical survival (Berenskoetter, 2017, p. 8). Within the framework of the mass traumatic Kazakh exodus from Xinjiang, the notion of identity was seen by them as a “conceptual refuge aimed at safeguarding their survival and ensuring their continued existence.” The Kazakhs found themselves caught in a dichotomy between a sentimental longing for their own place and the harsh realities and challenges they encountered during this journey.

Having achieved their goal for physical survival, the Kazakh refugees were faced with a new problem. The primary challenge stemmed from their limited familiarity with the culture and languages prevalent in their new environment. So they constantly struggled with the issues of adapting, integrating, and establishing a cohesive sense of identity. Having found peace from oppression, they began to think about the future and wanted to ensure that their descendants did not lose not only their faith, but also their culture, identity and language. With this decision, another stage of Kazakh migration began - the movement of moving to Turkey with common roots, similar language, religion and culture (Çetin, 2022, pp. 63-64). Kara (2019) claims that the decision of Kazakh leaders to select Turkey as their preferred destination was not a random occurrence, but rather a deliberate choice. He asserts that Turkey, due to its shared language, religion, culture, and historical ties, emerged as the only country where the Kazakh people would not perceive themselves as outsiders with conducive environment for the preservation of their national identity over subsequent generations (Kara, 2019, p. 10).

In this regard, the Kazakhs already in 1946 submitted their request for immigration to the Turkish Embassy which was rejected on the grounds that it was not possible to accept new refugees. The Kazaks whose initial immigration proposal did not receive approval from Ismet

Inonu were subsequently granted acceptance by Adnan Menderes upon their second application. On March 13, 1952 with the 3/1495 decision of the Council of Ministers chaired by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes Kazakhs of both exodus groups were accepted to Turkey as resettled refugees (*iskanlı göçmen*). Thus, 1850 Kazakh refugees who were dispersed from China and lived as refugees in India and Pakistan were given the opportunity to settle in Turkey (Kuşçu, 2016, p. 5). From September 1952 to April 1954, Kazakhs began to arrive to Turkey in several groups. A long journey has been covered from Karachi to Basra, then to Baghdad, and from Baghdad to Istanbul. They were first settled in immigrant boarding houses in Istanbul in the Zeytinburnu, Tuzla and Sirkeci districts. Later they settled in the villages of Salihli (Manisa Province), Develi (Kayseri Province), Altay (Nigde Province), Aksaray (Nevşehir Province) and Ismil (Konya Province). Over time, financial difficulties in the countryside forced them to migrate back to Istanbul, to the Zeytinburnu region, the site of their first settlement in Turkey (Kuşçu, 2016, p. 6). The status of resettled refugees, often referred to as *iskan göçmeni*, ensured a range of privileges that were designed to support their integration into the host country. These benefits included a tax exemption period of five years, a two-year exemption from compulsory military service, the allocation of land, provision of housing in designated areas known as *göçmen evleri*, and access to language and vocational training programs. The refugees were promptly granted Turkish citizenship as well (Inan, 2016, p. 20). Furthermore, according to the 1934 Basic Law on Settlement (*İskan Kanunu*), the criteria for accepting immigrants and refugees for residence in Turkey were based on their Turkic origin and affiliation with Turkish culture (“*Türk soyundan ve Türk kültürüne bağlı kisiler*”) (Kuşçu, 2016, p. 5).

Turkey welcomed the nomads from East Turkestan as their fellows and provided the opportunity for children to study in Turkish schools. According to the interview respondents, there was no discrimination, however, in accordance with the law; the Kazakhs took Turkish surnames: “The Kazakhs did not have surnames at that time; they were mainly called by their first name and the name of their grandfather as a surname. My father, for example, was given his last name by his school teacher.” As a result, members of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany bear Turkish, rather than Kazakh, names and surnames.

Following the settlement to Turkey, Kazakhs started to be engaged in various occupations, including the production of leather goods remembering the skills in running a traditional nomadic economy which were subsequently sold as a means of sustaining their livelihoods. Furthermore, immigrant households introduced vocational training, including

language acquisition, as well as carpentry, weaving, carpeting, and sewing-embroidery, with the aim of facilitating the adaptation of refugees into Turkish society (Svanberg, 1989, p.84). Over time, the socio-economic and cultural circumstances of former Kazakh refugees residing in Turkey saw a slow but sure improvement, leading to their eventual integration as full-fledged members of Turkish society.

The exact initial number of Kazakhs who moved from the foothills of the Altay Mountains in beyond the borders of China remains unknown. In different sources various estimates have been proposed, with figures ranging from 18,000 to 50,000. The number of those who survived and successfully reached to Turkey is only 1,852 people. This means that only 1 out of every 10 Kazakhs was able to achieve their goal under the most optimistic estimate. This traumatic Kazakh exodus driven by their aspirations for freedom, the preservation of the Kazakh identity and maintenance of religion, resulted in the sacrifice of tens of thousands of Kazakh lives. Thus, the exodus of the Kazakhs from their native Xinjiang, which they often call as East Turkestan, to the borders of India and Pakistan ended, but their suffering in a foreign land did not end. Cohen (2008) made a classification about diasporas and divided them into five different classes: Victim, Labor, Colonial, Commercial and Stateless. Victim diasporas are mostly associated with communities that had to leave their homeland as a result of traumatic events. And if earlier the problem of traumatic dispersion was spoken of in relation to Jewish, Armenian and African Diasporas, who was classified as *victim diasporas* and had numerous diaspora communities in various countries of the world, now it is clear that Kazakhs, whose fate went through the tragic cataclysms of the 20th century, are added to this list.

3.5. Migration from Turkey to Germany and Establishment of Kazakh Diaspora in Germany

Despite the fact that Kazakhs started to integrate into Turkish society and found in Turkey long long security for their survival, difficult socio-economic conditions compelled some groups of Kazakh diaspora in Turkey to search new destinations to migrate. During the 1960s, economic crisis and unemployment arising from the rapid change in the socio-economic structure in Turkey will arouse a great desire in Kazakh refugees in Turkey along with local Turkish people to migrate to countries with high welfare levels. This period was marked by a significant emigration of workers to Western European countries in Turkey. The government itself adopted Turkey's First Five-Year Development Plan which encouraged the

promoting labor immigration starting from the 1960s. The rationale behind this policy was not solely based on the potential reduction of unemployment, but also on the aim to expose them to Western technology, engineering, and culture, thereby enhancing their skills for future utilization within Turkey. Additionally, this policy aimed to contribute to the overall improvement of the country's balance of payments through the acquisition of foreign remittances from Turkish immigrants (Karpaz, 2003). For this reason, the next stage in the spread of the Kazakh diaspora was labor immigration to Western European countries. Thus Kazakhs living in Turkey began their path of labor immigration.

In opposition to the perspective that economic interests may be isolated from identity assertions, an alternative standpoint posits that the pursuit of accumulating wealth is inherently linked to a conceptualization of value, the interpretation of which can be argued to be a socially constructed phenomenon intertwined with notions of an idealized existence and the identification with particular social standings. The examination of an identity viewpoint becomes particularly evident when considering the purported “core interest” of survival. In the 1960s, the main purpose of Kazakh immigrants who migrated to European countries as a part of Turkish labor force was to stay abroad for a while and “to earn as much as possible, save as much as possible and return back.” This had to be done in order to support the poor socio-economic conditions of their families, as well as to save money to establish a business when they would return to Turkey and invest capital in leather production and significantly improve the living conditions of their families.

Starting from the early 1960s until the end of the 1970s, Kazakhs emigrated from Turkey to Germany as well as to Western European countries such as Sweden, England, France, Netherlands, Austria, Norway, Denmark and Switzerland. Thus, the Kazakh diaspora that began to form in Europe grew even more in terms of numbers as a result of immigration for “forced” economic reasons. Kazakh immigration to Western European countries as a part of Turkish labor migration started with the “Turkish Labor Agreement” signed between Turkey and Germany on October 31, 1961 (Kesici, 2014). Germany experienced a significant process of industrialization following the end of the Second World War. Initially, it endeavored to address the employment gap. Skilled and unskilled labor forces from Mediterranean countries such as the Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey has been utilized to address the employment deficit in Germany's burgeoning industrial sector. *Deutsche Verbindungsstelle* (German Liaison Office) was officially established in Istanbul and thus the process of a structurally organized Turkish labor migration to Germany was initiated. Initially

guest workers from Turkey were allowed citizens to enter West Germany on temporary labor contracts lasting for one or two years. (İçduygu, 2012, p. 12).

Kazakh immigrants passing through recruitment points in Istanbul were headed to Cologne, then to West Berlin, as well as to some of the industrial cities in the Ruhr Valley, to Munich, Stuttgart and other parts of Germany. In 1962, the initial wave of Kazakh individuals arrived in Munich as contracted Turkish laborers or guest workers and afterwards settled there permanently (Çetin, 2022). Abdurrahman Çetin who has experienced exodus from East Turkestan by himself and after settling to Turkey later migrated to Germany from Turkey as a guest worker, describes the arrival of Kazakh guest worker from Turkey to Germany in his book *“The Last Migration in My Life”* as following:

“The train to Germany arrived and stopped at Sirkeci station. We checked in ahead of time, showed our two dollars, and boarded to the train. I had a friend with me named Mehmet, we were both Kazakh. Brother and sister and a few other brothers came to see off us and that’s all we saw. After a few hours, the German train started to move, some laughed, some cried, we also had tears in our eyes when we saw those who did not leave... The train departed from Istanbul on October 7, 1963, passing via Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Romania and it lasted for three days without any scheduled stops. The train arrived in München Hauptbahnhof, the central station of Munich, on October 10 at around 8:00 AM. A crowd of workers who got off the train...No one knows anyone. The entire group was transported to the large hall located beneath the train station and were distributed our meals. After making us wait for a long time, the individuals in charge proceeded to announce our names, they grouped 20-30 people and handed us over to the people of the company that came to pick us up. They also put us back on the train, heading towards the city where we are going to work and leave.”

(Çetin, 2022, p.100).

“I was born in Turkey. When I was at school, my father used to make leather gloves and sell them at the bazaar. As children, we all helped our parents. After eighth grade, I moved to Istanbul to earn money. And when many Turks started to go to Germany for work my parents and many Kazakh other families came to Germany as well in 1976.”

(Interviewee, 62 year old male)

At that time, the overwhelming majority of Kazakh workers were men, and most of them met their shelter needs in barracks called *“Heime”* for 4, 6 and 8 people. The *gastarbeiter* Kazakhs endured challenging living circumstances due to both their hard

working conditions and the war-remnant barracks they resided in. Kazakhs along with Turkish workers were brought to Europe to be employed in dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs, mostly in the industrial, construction and mining sectors, and were employed in unskilled manual labor. During that period, the Kazakh guest workers had little interaction with the local community, mostly restricted to work-related engagements and rare circumstances. In the first years of migration, it was not taken into consideration whether the Kazakhs, who were accepted as labor force, knew the local language or not; being healthy and strong was enough. Their existence mostly revolved around their working life and the places they stayed:

“When we started working from Monday, they added me to the fifteen Turkish men who came with me, along with ten Italians, fifteen Yugoslavs, and twenty-five Germans. They took us all in a car and brought to a ravine at the foot of a mountain. All those who drive cranes and machines for transporting stones were Germans, and those who dig and knead concrete, lift stones and do other heavy work were immigrants. Whether it is winter or summer, there was a situation where the city will not be visible for five or six months until the road is finished. Anyway, one day a week, the Germans who had a shop in the neighborhood used to bring and sell us food and drink, and we were making a living...”

(Interviewee, 70 year-old male).

Following the first phase of immigration which was mostly characterized by the employment of male laborers, a shift in recruiting females occurred subsequent to the year 1968. The marriage of especially first generation Kazakh males in Germany with Kazakh brides from Turkey has also steadily increased the number of Kazakhs migrating to European countries and enabled the growth of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany.

Along with permanently settling to Germany Kazakh immigrants were maintaining regular contacts and communication with their relatives and with those who stayed in Turkey and were supporting transnational ties with Turkey. Almost all Kazakhs in Germany used to periodically travel to Turkey for holidays and annual vacations, to attend wedding and commemoration ceremonies, participate in different group rituals or in reaction to the illness or death of a family members and relatives. Moreover, Kazakhs in Germany used to bring the body of the deceased to Turkey for burial to Salihli, Altay köy, İstanbul or to the place where the person previously lived in Turkey (Kazakhs still maintain this tendency). Moreover, guest worker Kazakhs were engaged in the practice of sending remittances, acquiring residential properties and parcels of land, and making financial investments.

Kazakh immigrants residing in an urbanized setting and having acquired financial resources and spent a considerable duration in Germany frequently aspired to enhance their societal standing and ameliorate their living circumstances. The remittances transferred by Kazakh immigrants from Germany to Turkey was mainly invested in real estate: they bought and built houses in Kazakkent, Safraköy, Küçükçekmece. Kazakhs who immigrated to Germany in search of work wanted to provide themselves with shelter upon returning to Turkey a few years later. However, the plan to return back to Turkey was always postponed to another spring. Meanwhile, relatives who remained in Turkey moved into the houses of Kazakh immigrants which freed them from rent, regular payments related to the migration to such large cities as Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara. During that period, the socio-economic problems and political instability in Turkey and the fact that the economic situations of those who had gone before had changed significantly would cause an increase in the number of people who wanted to immigrate to Germany. And the dream of improving living conditions aroused the desire of many people to become workers in European countries.

As a result, the duration of their temporary residence in Germany was extended, and the subsequent return migration was very limited. By 1973 Germany began to tighten restrictions on the entry of immigrants (due to the economic crises of the 1970s) and was expecting foreign workers to return to their countries, the guest workers including Kazakhs began to reunite with their families and bring their wives and children along with them in order to better gain a foothold in their new place of residence. 42 year-old men share the settlement story of his family from Turkey to Germany as following:

“My grandad died during the Big Exodus and so my dad was made an orphan when they were fleeing our homeland East Turkestan. My dad with the big group of Kazakh was also settled to Istanbul. Actually I was born in Zeytinburnu (Istanbul), but when I was very little my parents decided to move further to Germany in search of better life opportunities for our family. First they came here without kids, and then when I was 2 year old I was brought to Germany. So my entire life was spent here.”

Reasons such as the socio-economic negativities experienced by the returnees in Turkey and the lack of savings required to live and start a business in Turkey were effective in the permanent settlement of Kazakhs in Germany. As Abadan-Unat (2006) states, in the 1970s, as guest workers began to become permanent workers, Germany who signed bilateral agreements with Turkey signed a series of social security agreements as well. With these agreements, Turkish workers would receive birth and child allowance, unemployment and

retirement rights, and would be covered by social insurance in case of health care, work accidents, disability and death (Abadan-Unat, 2006, p. 63). Consequently, the unemployment and health insurance, social aid and education facilities provided by the social security laws implemented in Germany are among the effective reasons for the permanent stay of Turkish Kazakhs in Germany. In addition, through the migration networks established between Turkey and European countries, relatives or other relatives of those who had gone before embarked on a migration journey in order to get a share of the high prosperity that Europe promised at that time, either by going as tourists and not returning.

It should be noted that at the initial stage, one of the main difficulties for Kazakh immigrants in Germany was lack of local languages, high workload, and financial difficulties associated with attaining education. Hence, representatives of the older generation of Kazakh immigrants in Germany frequently were engaged in hard, non-prestigious occupations, exerting relentless efforts across several employment settings, in a determined pursuit to accumulate the necessary financial resources and provide their children with access to further education. In due course 2nd generation Kazakhs began to increase their social and educational status and transition from the role of guest laborers to a higher socio-economic stratum known as “white-collar” workers, denoting individuals engaged in professional employment. As migration became permanent, new generations participated more intensively in the education process of the host country.

Kazakhs who moved and settled to Germany in the mid-1960s as part of Turkish labor immigration currently reside in cities like Munich, Cologne, Hamburg, Berlin, Heidelberg, Mainz, Frankfurt am Main and etc. Diaspora Kazakhs in Europe, including Germany, have never constituted a majority in the areas where they lived, thus being an ethnic minority, they did not and do not have significant weight in the political structure of the country of residence. Despite lacking political influence in host countries, their survival and successful adaptation within foreign cultural environments can be attributed to their proficient communication, organizational and adaptive skills, as well as their utilization of traditional nomadic knowledge. Additionally, their ability to seamlessly transition into new economic systems further exemplifies their adaptability. It is worth mentioning that Kazakh labor immigrants who relocated to Western Europe during the period of 1960s-1980s acquiring citizenship continue to reside in the host countries. They only visit Turkey during their holidays and vacations. While the first generation mostly worked in heavy work, after the second and third generations, Kazakhs started to open their eyes to the world. This occurrence

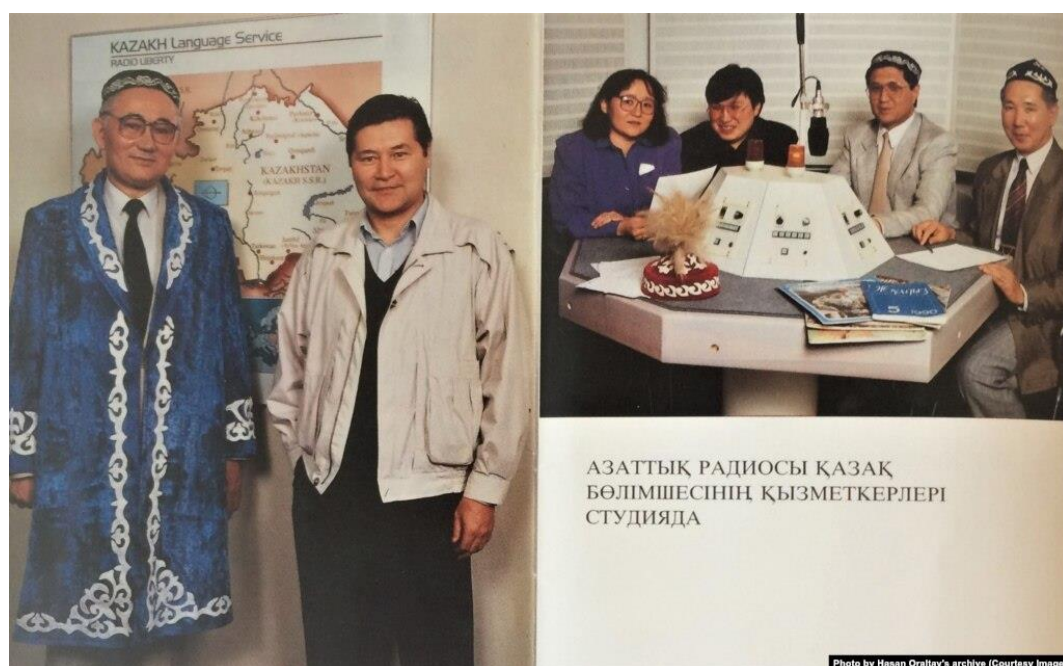
may be seen as more evidence of the remarkable adaptation capacity displayed by individuals who were formerly nomadic, but due to circumstances, transitioned into roles as laborers, craftsmen, and subsequently, in further generations became employees in public establishments, financial institutions, hotel complexes and even co-owners or proprietors of enterprises of varying scale. It seems that the above mentioned long journey of Kazakhs from East Turkestan to Germany and their migrant and diaspora experiences allows us to classify them as a mobile diaspora, although they do not have political influence in the recipient countries, but due to their high communicative, organizational and adaptive abilities and the use of traditional knowledge, who managed to survive in a foreign cultural environment mobilely trying to adapt to the new economic system but at the same time longing for homeland and having a diaspora consciousness which will be discussed in the following sub-chapter about diaspora nationalism of Kazakhs in Germany.

3.6. Emergence of Long Distance Diaspora Nationalism: Azattyq Radio

In addition to the presence of guest worker Kazakhs in Germany, Munich also had a distinct cohort of Kazakhs who actively were engaged in long distance transnational nationalist activities. The concept of diaspora long distance nationalism developed by Benedict Anderson (2006) appears in the explanation of the diasporas playing an active role regarding the politics of the homeland and argues that nationalism is not limited only to the local and might continue in the transnational area, causing communities to participate in the economic, political and cultural discussions regarding the homeland (Başer, 2013, p. 75). This notion, categorized as a different type of nationalism as a common cognitive attitude of diaspora members constitutes the common point of diasporas that do not live in their homeland but keep the ideals of their native land alive from afar (Glick-Schiller, 2004, p. 570). The establishment of the Turkestan editorial office in Germany which included a Kazakh branch within Radio Liberty dates back to 1953, and it has been actively engaged in the broadcasting of the circumstances faced by the nations ensnared within the Soviet Union. The radio, once known as *Radio Azat etu* which literally means *liberating*, had a subsequent name alteration to *Radio Azattyq (liberty)*. The first location of radio's headquarters was in Munich, West Germany. The composition of personnel within the Kazakh department of Radio Azattyq in Munich exhibited a notable degree of diversity. The first group of Kazakhs was those who went to the front in the ranks of the Soviet army during the Second World War, captured by Nazi Germany, and then who decided to make a conscious decision to

engage in fighting against communism and the Soviet regime. Another is those who fled the persecution of the communist regime in China eventually migrating to Turkey, and then moving to Germany with the intention of pursuing employment opportunities within the Radio Azattyq. According to the information attained from my interviewees, these two groups of Kazakhs were geographically from distinct “homelands” like Kazakhstan and East Turkestan but both of them were calling themselves *Turkestanis in Emigration* and were pursuing the same goal of fighting for the national liberation of the Kazakh people against the violent system that rules their homelands. So it was a kind of long distance anti-colonial diaspora nationalism that aimed at independence of homeland with the idea of liberating it and getting rid of imperialism. The extent of diasporan involvement in homeland related issues is influenced by several aspects, like the homeland as either real or symbolic, as well as its political status as either independent or under foreign governance. For instance, diasporas whose homeland is being under foreign control tend to exhibit heightened levels of engagement, particularly in contexts where there exists a persistent endeavor for independence or more self-governance (Baser & Swain 2010, pp. 38-42). Furthermore, it should be noted that not all individuals within a diasporic community actively engage in long distance diaspora nationalism and political activism regarding matters pertaining to their homeland. Typically, core members are comprised of the organizational elites, whereas passive members assume an active role solely upon being summoned by the core members (Shain & Barth, 2003, p. 452).

Figure 3. The office of Radio Liberty in Munich (Germany).



Hasan Oraltay, director of the Kazakh department of Radio Liberty (left) and journalist Mukabay Engin, Nurkamal Pinar, Abdulkayyum Kesici.

Source: Photo from Hasan Oraltay's archive.

During the fieldwork data collection in Munich, several interviews were conducted with Kazakh diaspora activists from Turkey who previously worked in Radio Azattyq, in order to have good insight into the path of nationalist activities of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany. The main objective of conducting these interviews was to gather pertinent information that would aid in providing a comprehensive understanding of the creation of Kazakh diaspora elite in Munich and activities carried out by the Kazakh department of Radio. One of my respondents shared his story of moving to Munich and his experiences while working in Azattyq as such:

“On 9th January 1980 at the age of 28 I moved to Germany. The main reason of my migration from Turkey to Germany was my new job position at the Kazakh Department of the Radio of Liberty (Azattyk Radiosy). Actually one year earlier I came to Munich for the job interview at the same radio. I still do recall the moment when I presented my first article written in Kazakh language to Jaken Aga from Kazakhstan (editor at Azattyq Radio in Munich at that time) who was surprised that I was able to write a good quality paper in Kazakh language despite the fact that all of my educational background was in Turkish. So I had started reading books and newspapers in Kazakh language day and night. Actually I learned a Cyrillic alphabet by myself when I was a teenager. Also I used to get some newspapers from Kazakh USSR as well. So I was aware of the events happening in Kazakhstan. Even though I was against communism, one thing united us- it was being Kazakh. None of the political problems was an obstacle for us. When it came to protecting the interest of Kazakhs, everyone who calls themselves as Kazakh would forget about everything. So for me it was a great honor to work in Radio Liberty with Kazakhs not only from Turkey but from Soviet Kazakhstan as well. Same roots, same language and same history were reuniting us to pursue a common goal of liberating our occupied homeland...”

(Interviewee, 61 year-old male).

In fact, nationalism is most evident when the cultural underpinnings of nationalism coalesce around a shared language and historical narrative, and when these elements evoke a deep sense of emotional patriotism that is fostered via educational means (Hayes, 2016). In contemporary times, despite the erosion of transformative identities and powerful nations, the enduring presence of nationalism may be sustained within the realm of the “commons” even across vast geographical distances (Smith, 1992, p. 10).

According to Hobsbawm, the elite play a significant role on the formation of nationalism within ethnic communities and nationalism may be attributed to the process of social engineering (Hobsbawm, & Terence, 1983, p. 1). Kazakh diaspora national movement was known in Europe mainly due to the efforts of the *Promethee* of Kazakhs from Turkey-Hasan Oraltay who sought to elucidate the national tragedies of Kazakhs to a global audience. Being the son of Alibek Hakim who shouldered the legendary struggle for national liberation movement in East Turkestan and finally led Kazakhs to the freedom in Turkey, Hasan Oraltay continued this struggle from India to Turkey, from Turkey to Europe, from Europe back to Central Asia, working with and for diverse print and media organizations, headlining always his Kazak people's strive for independence, religious and national autonomy. As an émigré nationalist, Hasan Oraltay most significantly chose not only to spread and cover the events happening in Kazakhstan in the conditions of informationally self-isolated context of Kazakh USSR and model anti-colonial nationalism, but also to sustain the continuity of the Kazakh nationalist movement by reviving, motivating, and activating the diaspora intellectuals in Germany. The concept of *Turkestan* as a unifying homeland for all Turks was a recurring theme in the literary works of Hasan Oraltay (1976, 2005). He provided a definition of Turkestan as the geographical region encompassing the "land of Turkics" situated in the central part of Asia, which had been partitioned by Russian and Chinese imperial powers. And in the preface of his first book "*Kazakh Turks of Eastern Turkestan on the Way to Freedom*" Hasan Oraltay (1976) clearly puts forward that the struggle for freedom, the struggle for the homeland and nation were his sacred duties. Through his memoirs and books Hasan Oraltay aimed to transmit the painful exodus out of homeland, the trauma caused by Chinese and Soviet colonization, fill the gap in protecting the national interests of Kazakhs abroad. Simultaneously, he tried to maintain the memories of the traumatic experience of being scattered and not allow this memories being faded from the mind of diaspora. Memory, one of the most important aspects of nationalism from a distance, plays an important role in both awakening diaspora consciousness and keeping it alive, and therefore has influence on diaspora identity through remembrance. Consequently, the utilization of memories, symbols, and myths served as the foundational elements in the formation of Kazakh collective identity abroad. This phenomenon leads us to another diaspora criteria of Safran (1991) who put forward that diaspora should have a collective memory or point of view about their original homeland, its physical location, history and achievements (p.85).

Indeed, it could be asserted that the diaspora nationalists residing outside their country of origin exhibit a level of passion comparable to any other nationalists in their fervor. The concept of diaspora should not be equated with the state of homelessness. The diaspora emerges from a state of mind rooted in a developed consciousness of “home” rather than a lack thereof. The nature of diaspora nationalism inherently centers its discourse around the “sacred” homeland, thereby serving as a fundamental characteristic of diaspora itself (Tutku, 2000, p. 32). In this regard Radio Azattyq in Germany for Turkestanis in Emigration was acting as an instrument of political activism and here Kazakhs coming from Soviet Kazakhstan and East Turkestan generated a common identity on the basis of ethnicity and one common goal of reviving the national struggle and to raise awareness and homeland consciousness. Especially Kazakh diaspora nationalists in Munich were engaged in awareness raising activities targeted at dissemination of information and raising the actual problems of Kazakhs under the communist regime. To give an example, Radio Azattyk was the first to announce to the whole world about the huge uprising of Kazakh youth against the Soviet regime in December 1986. Subsequently, Hasan Oralay collected and published a range of materials and articles sourced from Western publications pertaining to the 1986 December revolt of the Kazakh youth and gave his own assessment of the uprising in Soviet Kazakhstan. It is especially worth noting his role in the dissemination of objective information regarding the subsequent 1986 repressions.

The phenomenon of distant nationalism in the diaspora, especially for the diaspora that does not have a nation-state in its homeland, manifests itself with the construction of a new state and the following debates and discussion regarding the homeland affairs afterwards. Following the breakup of the USSR in 1991 and the subsequent independence of Kazakhstan, the establishment of social ties with the homeland became feasible. The crumble of the Iron Curtain eliminated any substantial barriers between the homeland and Kazakh diaspora community in the world. Diaspora nationalism of the Kazakh elite in Germany has shifted from the struggle for the independence of *Heimatland* into the restoration of the ties with homeland which was not possible for a long period of time during the exile. The connection to the homeland that was mainly imagined and limited was switched to the real transnational ties with Kazakhstan and became a potential reality of attaching solely to the homeland. In this regard, it may be argued that nationalism is shaped by spatial and temporal factors, and its content is transformed by a continuous process of change according to the context. Consequently, the diaspora nationalism of the Kazakh diaspora elite underwent a process of

reconstruction, shifting from anti-colonial nationalism toward “making Kazakhstan Kazakh again”. Kazakh nationalists in Munich envisioned themselves within the historical context of ancient Kazakh lands and perceived both the homeland Kazakhstan and their fellow Kazakhs who were geographically separated as being estranged from one another in reality. The Kazakhs of Soviet Kazakhstan, despite sharing a common ethnic background with their counterparts in Germany and Turkey, were often labeled as “communist educated (minded)” Kazakhs. Consequently, their expression of Kazakh identity faced criticism. The Turkish Kazakhs have expressed a perception of themselves as being more culturally authentic and essential compared to their counterparts in the Kazakh USSR. They attribute this belief to the perceived inability of the latter group to safeguard their language and customs under the Soviet Union. Thus, when impossible transnational ties with homeland were possible with the split of the USSR, the diaspora nationalists encountered a society that differed from their desired, longed and imagined homeland. The émigré Kazakhs of Azattyq assert that they had felt like they were awakened from a long dream, when they first met Kazakhs in post-soviet Kazakhstan. And on the other hand, the Kazakh diaspora abroad had challenges in fully embracing a “pure Kazakh culture” from their recently founded motherland, since many believed that their existing culture were not pure enough, but influenced from Russian culture. Conversely it was very challenging task to recognize an “original” Kazakh culture and identity purest in assumptions and neither the Kazakh diaspora abroad nor the Kazakh community in country of origin was bearing an authentic “pure” Kazakh identity. Identity is mainly considered as something living and historically changing which is neither static nor pure. Even though in that sense Kazakh diaspora abroad, was claimed as having preserved many authentic elements of especially pre-modern Kazakh culture as frozen, it was difficult to claim for purity and originality, since it was also influenced by the surrounding cultural context in Germany and Turkey constantly being reproduced and heterogeneous. The impact of the host state (in our case host states) in which diaspora reside should not be underestimated in which diaspora members develop different ways of life and culture, identity different from their homeland community. So for diaspora nationalists importing the Kazakh culture from Kazakhstan or adjusting to the Turkish or German culture both did not seem as viable options. Subsequently, there had to be an alternative solution, wherein the diasporic experience existence itself played a pivotal role in reshaping the Kazakh identity within the German setting.

The diaspora elite in Munich under the leadership of Hasan Oraltay has become an important support of the reviving and revitalizing of the Kazakh national identity in homeland Kazakhstan. Hutchinson, argues that “the primary aim of cultural nationalists is to revive what they regard as a distinctive and primordial collective personality which has a name, unique origins, history, culture, homeland, and social and political practices” (Hutchinson, 1999, p. 394). In 1995 when the central office of Radio Azattyq was transferring from Munich to Prague, in his farewell speech to the new employees of Azattyq Radio who came from Kazakhstan Hasan Oraltay :

“The first issue I would like to entrust to you is that every year we should commemorate the birth and death of Mustafa Çokay. In this way, convey to the listeners how he served to the Kazakh nation, his struggle for independence, and the ideal he wanted to realize, and place it in their minds. The second issue is East Turkestan. It is your duty to remind your audience at every opportunity of the struggle under the leadership of Osman Batur, the blood shed for our nation and the lives sacrificed for independence. Do not forget the date when the Alash Orda Government was established in Kazakhstan. All the intellectuals and politicians under the leadership of Alihan Bökeyhan, who struggled to establish the independent Kazakh State at that time and lost their lives for this cause. Make news programs about the issue at every opportunity. December (Jeltoksan) and the struggle of Kazakh youth for independence is an important event took place in the history of the Kazakhs. Azattyk Radio Kazakh Department should never forget such important days. Every event is important for our Kazakh people. Let the historical events and the heroes of these events never be forgotten and kept alive. We have to do these for the historical consciousness, national identity and national awareness of future generations. This is my last trust, my will and my personal request to you” he said. (Aktailak, et. al, 2019).

From the above mentioned speech we can state that this phenomenon might be attributed to the observations made by Safran (1991) and Cohen (2008), who emphasize that the dispersal or expansion of the diaspora from the original homeland frequently takes place in response to “traumatic” experiences or historical events and the diasporic identity is constructed based on the concept of “exilic memory.” The diasporic experience tends to prioritize the collective memory associated with past forced dispersion from homeland, traumatic historical events. Actions of remembering are a defining feature of diaspora’s collective memory (Chiang, 2010). Diasporic memory does not just rely on poetic, sentimental, or mythological narratives, but is distinguished by the deliberate choice of what should be remembered and recalled (Byrne, 2010). Thus, the traumatic historical events in homeland, dispersion and scattering, struggle for independence is a memory that Kazakh

diaspora elite use to collectively remember and recall as well as consider an essential part of reproducing and uniting their diaspora identity. Indeed, collective memory reflects the ideas of diaspora about what unites them. Halbwachs believes that collective memory is a special form of “presence of the past” which is formed and lives in the depths of social institutions and groups (Llobera, 1995).⁴ Therefore, keeping alive the collective memory regarding the homeland established by the diaspora requires constant practices of remembering. Exile inevitably shapes and constructs the identity of diasporic characters.

In post-soviet era Kazakh diaspora nationalist elite in Germany began directing their attention towards the present and tangible circumstances of their started to focus on the real and current situation of their “new” homeland Kazakhstan including the status of Kazakh language as main attribute of ethnic symbolism in Kazakhstan, the policy of Kazakhization, socio-economic development of the country, democracy and political problems were viewed as concrete realities. The reconstruction and promotion of Kazakh national identity in the “new” homeland Kazakhstan was also complicated due to the multi-ethnic structure of Kazakhstan with 132 ethnicities and a new doctrine of “Kazakhstani Nation” which was mainly opposed by Kazakh diaspora elite in Germany who claimed that Kazakhstan is the original homeland of the Kazakhs and only of Kazakhs. For instance, one of the Kazakh diaspora activists in Munich Ömirhan Altın shows his disagreement with the multinational policy of Kazakhstan in his Facebook account as following:

“Unfortunately, today the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Berlin, like during the colonialist Soviet regime, published a post under the pretext of “Languages Day in Kazakhstan” and announced that “this holiday is very important for our multi-ethnic country, where representatives of more than 100 ethnic groups live. But the main owner of the holy Kazakh state was founded by our deceased ancestors for centuries, shedding blood and giving their lives. It is some kind of reviving the same stinking of Soviet ideology! This is the usual arrogance, dishonor, national betrayal!”

In summary, the research findings from interviews show that the Kazakh diaspora elite employed a strategic approach in self-identifying themselves as Kazakh nationalists and instrumentally utilized the concept of homeland as a fundamental element of their ethnic and national identity. This approach aimed to revitalize and construct a sense of common national identity within the diaspora community and the newly established independent Kazakh community. The influx of novel knowledge and frequent travels to Kazakhstan has facilitated

⁴ Cited in Llobera, J. R. (1995). Halbwachs, Nora and “history” versus “collective memory”: a research note. *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes*, 1, 35–44.

the development of social connections between the diaspora and their country of origin. In this way, the Kazakh diaspora nationalist movement in Germany more specifically in Munich basically remained as an elite movement, and it was unable to reach broader population at the grassroots level and properly mobilize activate them. Comparing to the Jewish and Armenian diasporas diaspora Kazakhs have never constituted a majority in the areas where they lived, thereby being an ethnic minority, did not and do not have significant weight in the political structure of the host country. On the other hand, it is worth to mention that diaspora nationalists in Munich faced a significant challenge in terms of lacking robust global umbrella organizations that could effectively coordinate intergroup political activities and serve as an international platform for advocating the Kazakh cause. These political organizations are essential for facilitating organizational development and identity formation within the diaspora. Despite this limitation, the diaspora nationalists in Munich made efforts to coordinate their activities and raise awareness of their issues on the international stage. Moreover, as Gellner (1983) claims, the presence of an umbrella organization and an international platform are not the primary criteria for defining a diaspora. These factors pertain to the political dimensions of a diaspora, which may or may not be present (Gellner, 1983, p.108).

CHAPTER IV. HOMELAND AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION IN KAZAKH DIASPORA

Chapter IV will present the empirical analyses obtained from a comprehensive field research conducted with the Kazakh diaspora community in Munich, Germany. The main focus of the Chapter IV will be on findings of the empirical data and involves analytical discussions of the study. This study involved semi-structured personal and group interviews, questionnaire, and participant observation. The findings from this study will complement the theoretical discussions presented in Chapter II. The focus is also on examining different age groups in terms of their perception of homeland and ethnic identity. The primary purpose of this chapter is to investigate how Kazakhs in Germany describe their homeland and to learn how they identify themselves in relation to concept like identity and perceive it.

4.1. Diaspora- Homeland Nexus: the Kazakh Community in Munich and their Perception of Homeland

As previously mentioned in the preceding sections of this thesis, Safran (1991) defines the diaspora as a community that has experienced forced dispersion from its original historical homeland and maintained consciousness and loyalty to its homeland and living with the idea of the prosperity of the homeland and eventual return (p.85). According to Lahneman's conceptualization, the current understanding of diaspora acknowledges the distinctiveness of diaspora through shared ethnicity and identity and maintenance of a certain level of attachment to its ancestral homeland (Lahneman, 2005, p.1). However, Ayhan Kaya (2000) refers to the modern diaspora as social groups that have moved away from the myth of return and made new lands their homeland (Kaya, 2000, p. 62). And then subsequent questions arise: What is homeland? Can the subjective experience of a diaspora be solely ascribed to a singular ancestral homeland? Is it conceivable for there to be a plurality of homelands like in our case study where the initial place of displacement, original homeland is East Turkestan, first host state is Turkey, second host state is Germany and homeland in the form of nation-state representing Kazakhs in international arena is Kazakhstan? As the ability to visit homeland and communication opportunities with it was (re)established, some confusion arose about where the "homeland" is actually for East Turkestani Kazakh diaspora in Germany. This situation has become more complicated especially when the homeland ceased to be imaginary and instead became concrete place.

As per Walters (1923), the diaspora concept encompasses many, multifocal, and socially constructed notions of home, so circumventing notions of permanence, limitation, and sentimental exclusivity that are typically associated with the term home (Walters, 1923). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the phenomenon of scattering gives rise to a profound division in the realm of domesticity. The concept of home in diaspora might manifest a dual ontology wherein the diasporic subject is perceived to possess a simultaneous orientation towards both a historical cultural identity and the host society (Ashcroft, 1995, p. 425). The impact of globalizing discourse on the concept of homeland reveals the tension that arises between the homeland and diasporic individuals, particularly in the context of a diverse and hybrid global society. In addition, the term “homeland” can refer to more than just a person’s nation of origin in some contexts. For instance, the Kazakh diaspora under the investigation challenges the concept of territoriality due to its association with more than one geographical location like East Turkestan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Germany. Therefore it would be worth to critically examine the dominant metaphors used to describe individuals or communities in the diaspora within such specific situations. The deity Janus, originating from Greek mythology, embodies a distinctive temporal duality as symbolized by its gaze which is perpetually directed both forward and backward. This representation signifies the simultaneous orientation towards both the future and the past. This metaphor presents a captivating analogy for groups in exile, such as diaspora. However, it is crucial to assess the effectiveness of this metaphor considering the prevalence of hybridity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity within the circumstances of diasporic communities and individuals. In our case, future might be attributed to Germany as a host state and Kazakhstan as an independent state representing Kazakh diaspora, past could be ascribed to East Turkestan which is the initial place of migration and Turkey which hosted the Kazakh diaspora for a long time before migrating to Germany given that transnational ties of Kazakh diaspora in Germany is still active with Turkey.

So, what does the term homeland actually mean for diaspora communities and to where the homeland refers to? Esman (1986) emphasizes that “the concept of homeland does not necessarily have to be a country, and that a set of ideological ideas and beliefs which are at least as important as a homeland in a geographical sense can also serve as a homeland for the diaspora.” (Esman, 1986). The homeland, as a reference point, can sometimes be a real territory and sometimes an area based on subjective imagination. Diaspora communities rely on imagination in their relations with the homeland. They create it in their minds by dreaming

it. “Myths about the homeland, which continue from generation to generation, are reprocessed by the diaspora subjects, enabling the creation of “imaginary homelands”.” (Kaya, 2001, p. 5).

A similar situation is encountered in the Kazakh diaspora. It is evident that Kazakhs, like to other diaspora communities, have mythologized the homeland from which they were forcibly dispersed. The respondents who interviewed in Munich were asked: “Where is the homeland?” The responses provided by individuals who identify East Turkestan as their place of origin have been observed to possess significant analytical value when examined. Interviewees have a collective memory and myth about the homeland. The myth about a common origin is frequently associated with specific territories, whilst idealized and acknowledged notions of the “homeland” are created and affirmed. For example, one of the interviewees described the homeland with the following words:

“East Turkestan is the homeland of the Turkic world, which lived within the framework of the ancient Turkic idea of “eternal country”. I have known my homeland from that portrait I saw hanging in our living room since I was a child. My homeland is such a beautiful place. It is a place where a clean mountain river flows, with lush green forests and honeydew, at the foot of the Altay Mountains.”

(Interviewee, 42 year old male)

The intriguing aspect of this respondent’s discourse is his ability to evoke a fervent sentiment of affiliation towards a remote original homeland by means of imaginative expression and myth about the original homeland. As Cohen (2008) claims, the notion of a common ancestry serves to establish and validate a diasporic consciousness. The older and respected a myth is, the more valuable it becomes as a method of creating distance from other ethnic groups and projecting a sense of distinctiveness (Cohen, 2008, p. 165). The individual in question, although of Kazakh origin being born in Turkey and having grown up in Germany, exhibits a notable degree of attachment towards East Turkestan from thousand miles away in Munich. This connection is also substantiated by the individual’s presentation of evidence highlighting his affiliation with the Kazakh-Turkic belonging.

Kurtoğlu elucidates the notion of imagination in the subsequent manner: “When we leave a place, what we develop about the place and its people is the imagination. To put it in the context of Brah’s conceptualization, the feeling of “belonging” to a place and its subjective meanings emerge as an unintended consequence of migrating from one place to another. In this case, geographical space becomes a personally imaginary phenomenon.”

(Kurtoğlu, 2005, p. 4). One of my respondents from German Kazakh diaspora community in Munich also shared a view which supports this argument:

“Our parents told us that in the 1940s, Kazakhs moved from East Turkestan through Tibet to Pakistan and further to Turkey. My family moved from Turkey to Germany in 1976 when was 5 years old. I was raised in a German environment and have been spending my entire life here. But when someone talks about Kazakhstan, I imagine the endless steppes... Somewhere I come from and belong to...These imaginations warm the soul. I miss Kazakhstan even though I have never ever been there. These are the native lands of our ancestors. So the image of our relatives who was scattered out of there is always in my memory. ”

(Interviewee, 41 year-old female).

From this qualitative data we have obtained it is possible to analyze that the idea of the homeland as a part of collective memory is a created and learned construct in relation to an individual or each member of the Kazakh diaspora. For on a personal level, a person's idea of his homeland is, first of all, his own history, i.e. what he lived and remembers. In the diaspora there is almost always a collective myth about the homeland, which is transmitted through oral memory, narratives or texts. Despite the frequent discrepancy with individual experience (the older the diaspora, the greater this discrepancy), this collective myth is constantly supported, widely shared and therefore can exist for a long time, finding its adherents in each new generation. In addition to this, the respondent's description of the homeland as a fairy-tale place parallels with the diaspora literature. A poem written by Halifa Altay (2014) reflects shades of longing for the “sacred” homeland Altay:

Monologue of Halifa Altay

*My homeland saw exile in the doomsday -
Settled in Altay, East Turkestan.
The mountain estuary listened to
My newborn cry for the first time,
My widowed mother tried to mature.
Even if my umbilical cord is cut in the Altay region,
I suffered every day in search of my homeland.
I wandered the world as an orphan,
I was in Shanghai, Gansu, Pakistan.
In the scorching heat of India,
And settled to Turkey.*

*But was not interested in foreign lands never,
There was always a dream in my heart.
My ancestors called me to my place of birth...*

(Altay, 2014, p.185)

(Translated from the Kazakh language by the author of the thesis).

From the above verses of Halifa Altay we can see how the memory of the homeland Altay located in East Turkestan is alive in the folk art and literature, which also aims at constructing a strong sense of symbolic attachment to the homeland. Altay Mountains is regarded as a homeland where they were all originated with the expression of the emotional bonds to there. In the diaspora literature of the Kazakhs there are plenty of poems about homeland with similar semantic meaning one of which is written by Şirzat Doğru:

Epic of longing

*I miss my golden Altay homeland.
I lost you long ago.
When I grew up and came to my senses,
I look for you,
When will I reach you?
My Altay, my gold Altay, my gold mine,
My parents were born and raised in you.
You rocked their cradle in the kind, open field.
Ken Altay, I remember my homeland,
Today I am a young child who grew up.
Even if we don't see you, we mourn you
I can sing about you all the time.*

(cited in Çetin, 2022, p.231)

(Translated from the Kazakh language by the author of the thesis).

As it can be observed during the period of exile, a very small yet highly engaged group of Kazakh elites constructed vivid and compelling representations of the homeland East Turkestan that had been relinquished. The lyrics exhibit a clear manifestation of homeland imagery, which encompasses the aspirations for both longing for homeland and return to the

homeland. However, the actuality of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany diverged significantly from that perception. Rather than actively promoting the revival of a lost homeland and advocating for repatriation, their efforts mostly focused on preserving the historical narrative of Kazakh exodus from East Turkestan via the utilization of ethnic and national symbols of the Kazakhs. In this context, we see the contrasting characteristics of the different slayers within the same diaspora community.

During the period of the Cold War, Kazakhs living in Germany encountered significant barriers to visit their ancestral homeland in Kazakhstan within the Soviet Union or East Turkestan in China. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the lifting of the Iron Curtain, a significant geopolitical event that affected the whole world, Kazakh diaspora abroad were granted the opportunity to go to or return to their newly established homeland Kazakhstan. At this point, having the opportunity to return to the homeland marked a significant milestone in the development of diasporic consciousness among the Kazakh diaspora. The homeland, which has been kept alive as a utopian and imagined phenomenon since the exodus until that moment, has been materialized into a tangible location that can be visited, and the connections established with the homeland have enabled the emergence of diaspora consciousness. The establishment of Kazakhstan as an independent state in 1991 resulted in the shift of the perception of the homeland by the Kazakh diaspora in Germany who acknowledged this historical event with a great joy and started to perceive it as their own land of origin, underwent a transformation in their societal standing, subsequently becoming recognized as the Kazakh or Kazakhstani diaspora residing in Germany. As Benson and Svanberg (1998) put it: "...the Republic of Kazakhstan, which, for the first time in 300 years, offers Kazaks dispersed throughout the world an independent, Kazak-administered homeland" (p. 197). Consequently, the global diaspora of Kazakhs not only had the chance to accept their recently established nation-state as their new homeland, but also experienced alterations in their social practices. Furthermore, at this timeframe, they established institutions wherein the utilization of the Kazakh appellation was favored above that of Eastern Turkestani. Kazakhs in Germany were no longer stateless East Turkestani settlers, Kazakh refugees, or the Kazakh minority, but have been redefined as the Kazakh diaspora. They began to adopt an official flag of Kazakhstan as representative of their identity, and began to identify themselves as being from Kazakhstan when asked about their place of origin:

"I would like our children and grandchildren not to forget their roots and language. Before the independence of Kazakhstan, we were often confused with Chinese which was really annoying for us. We have always been proud that we

are Kazakhs. In the future, among our grandchildren will be those who will represent Kazakhstan in Europe. And we will strive to ensure that they proudly raise the Kazakh flag.”

(Interviewee, 62 year-old male).

Even though the emergence of the independent nation-state attracts some of the diaspora members, it rarely causes the return of all diaspora members or to the end of diaspora existence completely. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is likely to enhance their sense of loyalty to the newly established state and might perhaps serve as an indication of a shift towards the establishment of a new diasporic framework. Political, economic and cultural ties take place between the established nation-state and the diaspora, and potentially resulting in outcomes that cultivate a sense of mutual belonging for both sides (Dieckhoff, 2017). During the period spanning from 1980 to 1990, there was an emergence of interactions with the Kazakh diaspora in Germany and Kazakhstan. A group of Kazakh individuals from Germany embarked on a journey to Almaty, where they were afforded the chance to witness their “newly established homeland” firsthand. Conversely, China has implemented a shift in its foreign policy, granting permission for individuals of Kazakh origin residing in Turkey and Germany to engage in visits with their relatives residing in East Turkestan. Exploiting the prevailing circumstances, Kazakh diaspora members in Turkey and Germany embarked on visits to their place of birth and upbringing in East Turkestan. The individuals paid a visit to their relatives as well who stayed “on the other side of the border” (Baigabylov, 2019, p. 8).

In the 1950s, upon settling to Turkey after a long traumatic journey of Kazakh exodus from East Turkestan there existed a discourse surrounding East Turkestani identity and East Turkestan as a homeland of Kazakhs in Turkey and Germany. Since the reason for migration out of homeland was mainly due to the Chinese oppression against Turkic and Islamic origins of locals including Kazakhs, Kazakhs at that time exhibited a preference for self-identification as “Turkic,” “East Turkestani,” or “Muslim.” However, the circumstances underwent a transformation upon Kazakhstan’s attainment of independence. In contemporary times, Kazakhs residing in Germany, despite their ancestral homeland is geographically located in Xinjiang/China have been actively fostering robust connections with Kazakhstan. This observation highlights the notion that the idea of homeland is a socially constructed phenomenon rather than a static concept. Consequently, it possesses a high degree of adaptability, making it susceptible to variations and subject to diverse interpretations, constructions and re- constructions over time. Besides within the present discourse, it is

discernible how the portrayal of Kazakhstan is being tried to deliberately be constructed as the singular and exclusive homeland and nation for all dispersed Kazakhs by Kazakhstani policy. The establishment of the Kazakhstani state marked the emergence of a Kazakh diaspora as well. Prior to attaining independence, Kazakh communities residing in other nations were considered minority groups. However, with the attainment of Kazakhstani sovereignty, these communities were recognized as constituting a diaspora. Consequently, this phenomenon had a profound impact on the process of self-identification, especially in relation to ethnic identity among numerous Kazakhs residing beyond the borders of Kazakhstan in the efforts of reinventing their identity. In this way, homeland became a reality which was once an imaginary and fantastic entity.

Whether people or communities in diaspora acknowledge their homeland or not, they tend to envision the presence of that motherland. This act of imagination shows that the homeland actually emerged not with the relevant piece of land, but in line with the mental processes experienced regarding that territory. The statement of our respondent reflects the ways of belonging to the imagined homeland through nostalgia and memory:

“Even though I was born and raised in Germany, I have never forgotten my love for Kazakhstan. Occasionally, a photograph capturing the natural landscapes of Kazakhstan or the aroma emanating from Kazakh cuisine evokes a nostalgic journey into the past. Kazakhstan continues to be an integral part of my identity. No matter how far we live from Kazakhstan, we will never forget where we are from and who we are. We are proud to be Kazakhs.”

(Interviewee, 27 year-old male).

Furthermore, these statements of our respondent also illustrate how Kazakhs diaspora members residing in Germany redirected their attention from their original homeland, East Turkestan, towards the newly-formed Republic of Kazakhstan.

When a cultural identity is displaced, identification with the homeland and a strong psychological bond are developed by its bearers. The homeland becomes a distant place existing in the memories, the source of collective myths and represents a conception of paradise for the diaspora community. In order for societies/individuals living in the diaspora to feel attached to their homeland, it is necessary to first recognize the homeland and create some images that will reinforce this attachment. According to Portes and Rumbaut, when older individuals or parents engage in discussions with their children on their country of origin, including its geographical and historical aspects, it fosters a strong connection between the second and subsequent generations and their homeland (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Another respondent of our interviews recognizes Kazakhstan as her homeland. To the

question “You grew up abroad, which country do you recognize as homeland? Is possible to miss your homeland even before seeing it?” she responded in the following way:

“I think that our love for the homeland is imbued with nostalgia for our ancestors. Yes, we saw Kazakhstan later. However, we grew up hearing stories about the homeland from childhood. We put it in the bottom of our hearts that there are people of our ancestors in a faraway from us in the steppes of Kazakhstan. We could not study the history and language of Kazakhstan in Europe. However, if we came across a small piece of information about our country, we would read it several times. We used to miss Kazakhstan without seeing it...”

(Interviewee, 33 year-old female).

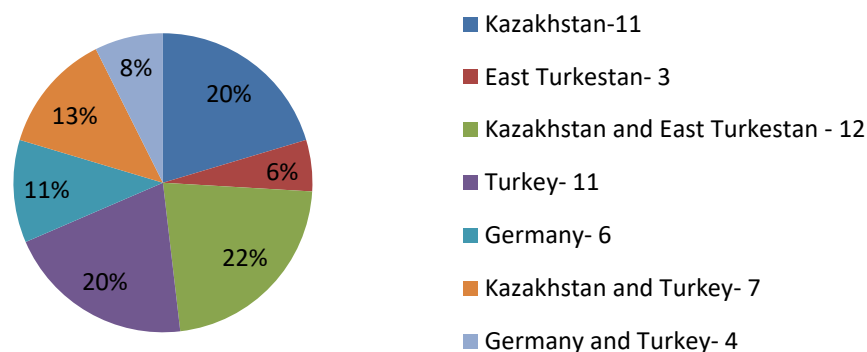
During the course of the interviews, some of the respondents put forward very interesting viewpoints. The assertion was made that the division of Kazakhstan and East Turkestan would be inappropriate, since they consider the Kazakh world as a cohesive entity:

“I cannot make a differentiation between East Turkestan and Kazakhstan. We know that at some period of history Kazakh were living in Altay Mountains freely and there were no border between Kazakhstan and China, and Kazakhs used to live their free nomadic life visiting relatives on both sides of the Altay. Thanks God one part of our homeland is free now from Russian occupation, but other half is under Chinese colonization. Even though the geographical border is dividing our homelands, I consider East Turkestan as our sacred ancestral land. Kazakhstan is also my homeland. I wish to see the days like in the past when the Kazakhs on both sides will be reunited...”

(Interviewee, 57 year-old male).

The concept of home within the framework of diaspora is complex, sophisticated, and diversified, embracing a wide array of experiences related to finding a sense of belonging and homing. The intricate interplay between diasporas and their native place of origin is marked by a profound sense of ambivalence, as the diasporic subject finds themselves caught in a perpetual state of negotiations, torn between the allure of their “adopted” homeland and the enduring ties to their ancestral roots. The results of the survey conducted in Munich with the Kazakh diaspora members living in Germany have proved this statement. Our 54 participants of the survey were asked: “Which country you mainly identify as Homeland?”. The results were as following:

Table 4. Homeland perception of the respondents of the questionnaire:



Upon examining the *Table 4*, it is evident that the proportion of individuals who solely consider Kazakhstan as their homeland is 11 of total 54 respondents, representing 20% of the total rate. When it comes to East Turkestan, this figure drops to 3 individuals out of the total 54 people which make up the 6 % of the total number. On the other hand, we see that 12 individuals or 22% of the total participants perceive both Kazakhstan and East Turkestan as their country of origin. Moreover, Turkey has an important place in German Kazakhs diaspora's perception of home: the rate of those who consider Turkey as homeland is 20% or 11 individuals of total 54 participants. The rate of those who express themselves with dual perceptions of homeland is 21%, more specifically 13% of the participants or 7 individuals consider Kazakhstan and Turkey as their home country, while another 8% of the respondents or 4 individuals perceive Germany and Turkey as their homeland. On the other hand, it is natural that some of the Kazakh diaspora members, who are born, raised, lived, studied and worked in Germany for entire their lives feel close to Germany, in addition to those who name as homeland Kazakhstan, East Turkestan and Turkey. In this regard, the number of individuals who identify Germany as a homeland is 6 which make up 11% of the total participants. In addition to this, in our interviews with Kazakhs living in Germany, one of the interviewees expressed his understanding of the homeland by saying "*doğduğun değil, doyduğun yer vatanın*" (it is not where you are born, but where you are fed is homeland) which is a sign that some of the diaspora members tend to identify Germany as their homeland. When we look at those who reveal the double bond of belonging, we see that Kazakhstan is given priority over other countries. A total of 35% of respondents highlighted to Kazakhstan when choosing dual homeland.

4.2. Complex Negotiation of the “Home” in Kazakh Diaspora

Regarding the concept of home, the present study revealed that the participants of the interviews drew a clear differentiation between the concepts of homeland and fatherland. The majority of respondents expressed identification with Kazakhstan as their fatherland (*atayurt*) and Turkey as their motherland (*anavatan*) which has shown the hybrid nature of their homeland perception. With the exception of a limited number of participants, East Turkestan as a country of origin was notably limited from discussions, particularly among the younger generation. On the other hand, it seems that for Kazakh diaspora who exiled East Turkestan under traumatic circumstances the possibility for a nostalgic return to the homeland is still complicated by anti-communist sentiments, and current persecution and repression of Turkic ethnicities including Kazakhs in Xinjiang. East Turkestan holds significant importance and carries great meaning for the elder generations who call it *jer* (homeland). The language provided in Kuşçu's article succinctly captures the Kazakh's perspective on their homeland, delineating Eastern Turkestan as the ancestral country, Kazakhstan as the historical homeland, and Turkey as the motherland (Kuşçu, 2016, p. 392). In this regard, it is possible to observe that for the Kazakh diaspora in Germany Turkey has shifted from being a host state to becoming another home state. And now Germany is perceived as a host state by the Kazakh diaspora. The border between “us” and “others” is clearer in relation to Germany and German community which is different compared to Turkey, for instance. Kazakhs tend to perceive Turkey and Turkish community more close to them and perceive as from “us” rather than “others”.

As stated by Clifford, when we consider the Jews who were exiled from Spain after 1492 experienced a different orientation towards the original homeland and return desire in relation to it. These sentiments were not limited solely to the territories they regarded as sacred and original homeland, but also extended to other regions where they resided and underwent historical processes such as Spain or Turkey where they were dispersed. This aspect explains the ambivalence in the Jewish or African experiences regarding physical return and loyalty to the homeland (Clifford, 1994, p. 306). The Kazakh diaspora under study has also similar experience who were scattered from East Turkestan in China, passed through India and Pakistan, were accepted as a refugees by Turkey and settled there, further migrated from Turkey to Germany. Therefore in this study, the phenomenon of orientation and loyalty to the homeland occupies a more important place than the myth of return. The study revealed

that the vast majority of interview respondents have a sense of belonging to Kazakhstan, while also acknowledging their enduring connection to Turkey. The recollection of the historical events persists inside their collective diaspora consciousness living with a feeling of being in-between. A little bit of Kazakhstan and a little bit of Turkey. Sometimes respondents are faced with a decision-making challenge as they are unable to make a choice between Kazakhstan/East Turkestan and Turkey. The two concepts do not always have to be mutually incompatible. The concept of diaspora may be seen as an outgrowth of the original homeland, imbued with memories of a different location as well. The collective memories related to ancestral homeland East Turkestan contribute to the diaspora's self-perception as a distinct community, this make their diaspora experience different from other nations and force to isolate themselves and save from being disappeared in the host environment, but sometimes they draw the distinctive line between themselves and other Kazakhs who did not experience the same traumatic events albeit being from the same nation. The function of diaspora is to challenge and oppose the all-encompassing narratives of nation, nation-states and geographical boundaries. Individuals are typically affiliated with a certain nation, residence, or geographical location, so establishing a sense of belonging to "one or the other". In this context diaspora is affiliated with both country of origin and adopted host state/states, including birthplace and the state in which they currently reside, encompassing both present location and past ancestral roots (Gillespie, et. al, 1999).

At the beginning of this sub-chapter we have posed the issue of whether the subjective experience of a diaspora be solely attributed to a singular ancestral homeland? Or if is it possible that there might be plurality of homelands like in our case? In addition to the above mentioned questionnaire results, the field data obtained via the personal interviews with the Kazakh diaspora community members in Munich has yielded intriguing insights from an analytical standpoint. For instance, one of my 30 year-old interviewee who belongs to the second generation Kazakhs identified his homeland affiliation as Kazakhstan, Turkey, Germany at the same time and he claims that he does not want to leave Germany since he was born and raised here, but at the same time feels attachment to Kazakhstan as an ancestral homeland, and to Turkey as a homeland of their parents which gave a refuge to their ancestors and "raised" his parents. The extent to which the second generation diaspora members maintain robust transnational connections with homeland comparable to those of the first generation is interesting question. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001), the extent of transnational connections between the second generation and their country of origin may be

limited and transient. However, the second generation exhibits a strong sense of loyalty and connection to their parents' homeland attachment. They have a profound appreciation for their past, which is mostly transmitted via the sharing of experiences by the first generation, who play a crucial role in this process (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Another 28 year-old female respondent from second generation diaspora members claimed that she labels Kazakhstan as her first homeland, Turkey as a second and Germany as a third homeland which provides support for Brah's theory of the "multi-placidness of home in the imaginary of people in the diaspora" (Brah, 1996, p. 197). In addition to this, we received a similar answer from another 33 year-old male respondent who answered the question which country he calls his homeland as: "*Alle*" (all of them meaning East Turkestan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Germany). So this multifaceted nature of the notion of home can also be better explained by employing the heterotopias approach of Foucault who approached to the concept of home in the same vein as Clifford (1997) who places a focus on the "multi-placidness of home" for transnational and diasporic communities. According to Foucault (1984), heterotopias are places that "are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. He posits that "the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (p. 47).

On the other hand, the younger generation diaspora Kazakhs in Germany encounters a persistent state of conflict between the concept of home and the absence of a home which can fully make them "feel like home", forces them to create more nuanced, multifaceted identities and affiliations. The diasporic cultural identity of Kazakh youth is derived from their perpetual pursuit of a sense of belonging and place of origin. Some of the Kazakh diasporic individuals perceive home as the space that is unattainable for them to return or attach. One of our interviewees who are a second generation Kazakh diaspora member in Germany expresses this situation as follows:

"I lived my whole life in Germany. But I do not feel like I belong fully to Germany, nor fully to Kazakhstan, East Turkestan or Turkey. I think I will experience exile in all four countries. I prefer to live in Germany due to better economic situation and some social rights here I have, but I do not feel like I belong fully to here. I feel that I am different and that I am a Kazakh. But if I go to Kazakhstan or East Turkestan, I am not sure how easily I can say that because I am not aware how it is like to live there. We only go to Turkey to visit our family and relatives. But in Turkey also I do not feel like home or I belong there since I look different from them. Turkish people think that I am Japanese, Korean or Chinese and when I speak Turkish with locals they understand that I am a

foreigner from my German accent. I love every country I mentioned, but I do not know exactly where I belong...”

(Interviewee, 35 year-old female)

The potential consequences arise when younger generations born and raised in the country of residence might lack the ability to engage in retrospective reflection of original homeland, if this looking back may pertain to a geographical location in Germany that holds personal significance from their upbringing, rather than a broader reference to an ancestral origin. The concept of home itself undergoes a constant transformation, resulting in a room that lacks a distinct location yet possessed a poetic quality. This is the manner in which Brah articulated his perspective:

“Where is home? On the one hand, ‘home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day...all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations.”

(Brah, 1996, p. 192)

As we have already noticed analyzing the concept of home in diasporic context is not a simple task as it seems to be. The concept of home is seen as a mythical place of longing for those in the diaspora, representing a place that cannot be returned to, even if the geographical origin can be visited. Diasporas may not always necessitate homelands in a strict territorial sense, although they typically incorporate a flexible notion of “home” in their collective myths or ambitions. Undoubtedly, a homeland possesses an inherent emotional intensity and a sentimental depth in diaspora (Cohen, 2008, p. 103). What is more, the perception of one’s homeland among diaspora individuals may differ based on their personal experiences which may not align with the perception of those who in the same diaspora community. These experiences are shaped by social factors as well which is a natural consequence for diasporic communities. On the other hand, the definition of diaspora based on an unavoidable connection to the ancestral homeland has some shortcomings. It relies on a simplistic categorization of an ideal homeland versus a hostland, which overlooks the dynamic and adaptable nature of the diasporas and the vibrant transnational environments in which they emerge and develop their identity. The sentimental ties to the homeland may

transcend mere significance and instead manifest as repetitive and clichéd expressions of idealized categorizations. In order to analyze such challenging dynamics, diaspora studies will need to move beyond theorizing how diasporic identities are constructed and instead it should ask how are these diasporic identities practiced, lived and experienced (Brazier & Mannur, 2008, p. 9). As a result, the term “home” came to be more broadly understood to refer to the place of origin, host state, a local, national, or transnational location, an imagined virtual community, or a matrix of known experiences and intimate social relations; thus “*home is not just a place to return to*”, but rather “*home is where the heart is*” (Cohen, 2009, p. 3).

4.3. Myth of Return to the Homeland

Returning or desire for returning to the homeland is considered as one of the important criterion for diasporas by classical diaspora theorists as we have observed in conceptual analysis. However, the theoretical assumption does not always coincide with the practical analysis as well. Among these criteria, it can be seen that the desire to return to the homeland is not valid for all diasporas. If we look at the Jewish and Armenian examples we see that even after the reestablishment of independent state in the world map, mass return migration of Jewish and Armenian diaspora members to their historical homeland did not take place. Even when we consider the Jewish diaspora as an ideal type diaspora model, in Safran’s later works we notice that he underlines “the return paradigm for Jews was often an eschatological or utopian reflection against an existing dystopia” (Clifford, 1994, p.306). In addition to this, Brah (1996) also put forward the quite peculiar understanding of a “homing desire” which is distinct from a desire for returning to the “homeland” and argues that: “Not all diasporas inscribe homing desire through a wish to return to a place of origin” (Brah, 1996, p. 193).

Clifford’s views come to the fore regarding what the desire to return theoretically means within the framework of the specified criteria for diaspora or whether this criterion is indispensable when defining diaspora. Clifford (1994) mentions that instead of the desire for return to the original homeland, for defining diaspora exile, common suffering, adaptation or resistance to the dominant society that shape diasporic consciousness are important. In this context, in Butler’s (2001) statement, the issue of return is explained as a concept used to build the connection with the homeland rather than physical return and its orientation. According to Anderson (1991), despite the presence of a physical homeland that may not be conducive to their return, or even a lack of will to return, the concept of diasporic identity and

being a part of it serves as a unifying force among those residing in the host society (p. 5). Within the scope of views on the homeland, it is seen that the ideal of the homeland is not completely rejected within the diaspora. However, rather than a real physical return, it seems that the homeland ideal has become an ideal that is often designed and never achieved.

Initially the decision made by the second generation East Turkestani Kazakhs in Turkey to migrate to Germany was primarily driven by the desire to accumulate savings, secure their own and their families' socio-economic well-being, enhance their professional expertise, and attain economic stability. However, as time progressed, Germany gradually transformed to some extent into a new "home" for those individuals who prioritized long-term settlement over temporary residency. But still the question of "home seeking" was always on agenda. Within the concept of diaspora the notion of "home" can extend beyond national borders. This is due to the fact that diaspora is not necessarily confined by strict geographical boundaries. Diasporic individuals often experience a persistent sense of unease stemming from the tension between their place of origin and their current location, prompting them to establish their own "Third Space" or distinct spatial realm. Kazakh community in Munich which is under study is an instance of how the Kazakh in Germany form their familiar space to make themselves feel *home away from home* and create a sense of belonging at where they are. Experiencing a sense of displacement for diaspora inside host society environment often prompts them to seek for a place where their diasporic identity may find a sense of belonging, a stable socio-political, cultural, and sometimes ideological space that can be identified as a home. The diasporic self is subject to a range of intricate and diverse experiences that encompass both feelings of inclusion and exclusion. The concept of home is far more intricate than classical approaches on diasporas that rely on the influence of "nostalgic desire for return to that ancestral home". The meaning and connotation of homeland may change from one person to another. While it may be a romantic nostalgic place for some, it might function as a mental shelter for the others. This pertains to the intricate emotional challenges surrounding the societal control of "belonging" (Tsagarousianou, 2004, p 52).

The reestablishment of Kazakhstan as an independent state has sparked a contentious debate akin to the situations faced by Jews and Armenians, about the existence of a viable homeland to which diaspora desires to return, thus leading to deliberations on the potential termination of the diaspora. Indeed, the state known as Kazakhstan exists; nevertheless, it is a severely truncated land- historical place of their departure is not located in Kazakhstan but in China. As we have previously observed it is claimed that diaspora should have a desire to

return to the original homeland, but where should they desire return to like in our case? To the initial place of displacement and dispersion in East Turkestan, China? Or to the state that have been reestablished as an independent political entity in international arena like Kazakhstan? How we can identify it?

And here it is necessary to emphasize the role of the national state with its ethnocentric programs for the cross-border recruitment of national “co-ethnics” which are formed on the basis of the idealized concept of “return to Fatherland.” The roots and the national policy of repatriation of Kazakhstan plays a significant role in the mobilization and organization of transnational resettlement of the Kazakh diaspora abroad, creating comprehensive programs to attract long distance co-ethnics as a new fellow citizens. Typically, such programs are based on primordialist concepts of ethnicity, the principle of the immutability of this category and the “mythologization” of the concept of homeland. Generally evaluating, it can be seen that with the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union some of the Kazakh diaspora members living abroad made efforts to return to the “novel” homeland. The issue of repatriation for Kazakhstan has risen to the fore since 1991 when Kazakhstan has implemented a proactive approach towards its diaspora, drawing inspiration from the experiences of Germany and Israel who adopted a descent-based definition of citizenship, *jus sanguinis* for their diaspora. In this regard, the Kazakhstani authorities have sought to utilize its diaspora not for advancing their foreign policy goals overseas, but rather for addressing the country’s demographic and nation-building challenges in favor of the titular nation- Kazakhs. So Kazakhstan has implemented a strategy that encourages Kazakhs worldwide to return to their ancestral homeland (Kuzembayeva et al., 2014, p. 25). In this context, it is known that the first diaspora returns to the homeland were made to Kazakhstan in the early 1990s. Based on the statistics obtained from the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Kazakhstan, it can be shown that a total of 1,123,200 individuals of ethnic Kazakh origin had repatriated to the country between 1991 and 2023. When we look at the countries of departure we mainly see geographically neighboring countries to Kazakhstan. For instance, the majority of repatriates 61.5% come from Uzbekistan, 14.3% are from China, 9.3% from Mongolia, 6.8% from Turkmenistan, 4.6% from Russia. Only little percent of 3.5% are coming from other far countries such as Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan (Khaldarova, 2019). Although these mass migrations to the homeland excited and made the Kazakhs hopeful about returning to the homeland after the Cold War, the continuation of these migrations did not occur to the desired

extent. To a greater extent, the decrease in the number of repatriates depended on the unstable economic situation of Kazakhstan during the 1990s and the lack of a reliable and well-developed legislative framework protecting the rights of repatriates, especially in the first years of sovereignty (Mendikulova, 1997). In this context, it is seen that the Kazakhs are not united in desire for returning to their homeland as a whole diaspora. According to Sheffer (2003), there are economic, political and social reasons behind the failure to fully implement the return to the homeland within the diaspora. The fact that those living in the diaspora are in a better economic position than in the homeland may cause difficulties for those who return to the homeland, such as the inability of the diaspora members to integrate into the home country's system (Sheffer, 2003). According to the data attained from the personal and group interviews with Kazakh diaspora members living in Munich, the prominent reasons for diaspora members in Germany who do not want to return to their homeland are: political situation in East Turkestan (China), economic situation in Kazakhstan, social ties in the host society, education of the younger generation, language barrier in Kazakhstan, and ease of supporting transnational ties with the homeland via digital space. As a matter of fact, "since the Kazakhs are well integrated into the socio-economic system in Germany where they are residing, returning to the homeland Kazakhstan is a difficult situation for the diaspora as it will create economic differences between the homeland and the host country" respondents claim. However, these concerns are not exclusive and specific to the Kazakh diaspora abroad, but similar phenomena can be observed in other diasporas as well like in Circassian diaspora in Turkey (Kaya, 2014). The desire of Kazakhs residing in the host country to return to their homeland is influenced by several variables, including their economic experience and profession in the host country, as well as the economic conditions in their homeland being comparatively unfavorable.

Regarding this matter, the findings of the questionnaire conducted with 54 participants from Kazakh diaspora community in Munich have shown that the diaspora members exhibit a very diverse vision of the issue of returning to their ancestral homeland. *Table 5* below illustrates the distribution of the answers to the question "Do you think that you might migrate to Kazakhstan one day if the conditions there would be better? ". It shows that 44% of the total N=54 surveyed within the scope of the research have no plans to return to their homeland even if conditions would get better. In this regard, 95% of the respondents who answered "No" are the individuals between the age of 18-34 who are 2nd and 3rd generation Kazakhs in Germany. On the other hand, another 19 % of the respondents between the age of

42-64 revealed their desire to go back to their “ancestral homeland” Kazakhstan if the conditions there would be better. In addition to this, 37% of the surveyed individuals although not being completely sure, certainly consider the possibility of returning one day.

Table 5. Do you think that you might migrate to Kazakhstan one day if the conditions there would be better?

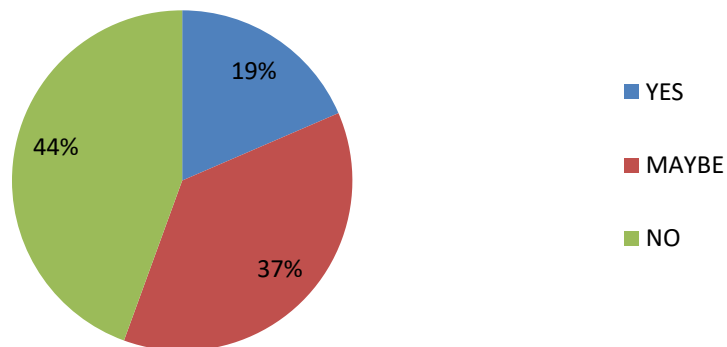
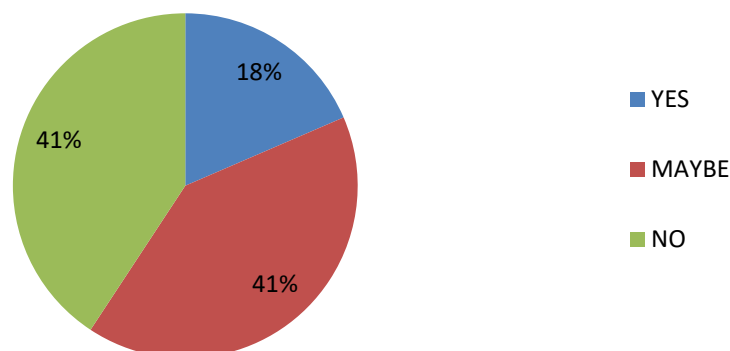


Table 6. Do you think that you might migrate to East Turkestan one day if the conditions there would be better?



In addition to this, the interviewees were queried about their preference for permanent relocation to either Kazakhstan or East Turkestan. The responses to the question “Do you think that you might migrate to East Turkestan one day if the conditions there would be better?” are presented in *Table 6* which demonstrates the distribution of the aforementioned responses. From the given responses it is clear that even if the situation improves, 41 % of the 54 respondents who were questioned as part of the study project have no intention of going back to their country of origin East Turkestan. In this regard, the persons who are of the

second or third generation of Kazakhs living in Germany make up 97% of the respondents who gave the “No” response. These individuals are between the ages of 18 and 34. On the other hand, another 18% of the respondents between the ages of 42 and 64 expressed their intention to return to East Turkestan which they consider to be their “ancestral homeland,” if the situation there will be proper. In addition to this, 41 % of the people who were polled indicate that they are definitely considering the prospect of going back to East Turkestan at some point in the future, even though they are not entirely certain.

According to the data derived from the personal and group interviews with the respondents, while Kazakhs residing in Germany occasionally participate in European marches denouncing the discriminatory actions of the Chinese government towards Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, there is no significant inclination within the community to relocate, reside, study, invest, or establish businesses in East Turkestan. It is seen that the diaspora’s desire to return cannot turn into physical return, as the security of the Kazakhs who are considering returning to China will be threatened in the region where possible discrimination and oppression may occur. The lack of trust on the part of the Chinese side paves the way for more keeping aloof by Kazakhs in Germany when it comes to the issue of returning to real ancestral homeland. China has been the determining state regarding the political factors affecting the return of the Kazakhs to their homeland. In addition, the fact that Kazakhs living in Germany have broader political rights and freedoms than Kazakhs in China are factors that negatively affect the return of Kazakhs to their homeland, East Turkestan.

As Cohen (2008) claims, as a result of the increased opportunities for travel in the contemporary era and the substantial disparity between the lifestyles that are preferred in the diaspora and those that are less favorable at home, diasporas have been able to maintain their connections to their homelands through the use of virtual recreations of their homes and visits on an irregular basis, rather than through the process of returning to their homelands (Cohen, 2008, p. 166). This theoretical statement was also supported by our empirical data attained from the personal interviews:

“We are used to Germany’s living standards. In order for me to return to Kazakhstan or East Turkestan, there must be the same standards there as in Germany. For example, Kazakhstan does not have the same high socio-economic standards and is far behind Germany. Maybe it could be possible for us to migrate to our historical homeland if all of this gets fixed. But there is another issue. We also do not know what life is like there. Since I was born and raised in Germany, it seems to me that it would be difficult for me to go there, settle down and continue my life. My Kazakh language skills are not very good either. Even

though I feel close to Kazakhs, going there and settling down is not as easy as one might think. It is like starting life over again...”

(Interviewee, 42 year-old male).

In this sense, the return for the Kazakh diaspora to their homeland is not a returning to their “real original” homeland as it is cited in some literature, but a migration to a new place they have never experienced before. As we can see, for some Kazakh diaspora members return is defined by its uncertainties and difficulties and is perceived as to leave the family, known daily life and opportunities behind in the host country rather than reuniting with the romanticized homeland. Furthermore, the process of returning to the ancestral homeland has become increasingly dubious due to the extensive renovation of the home environment, which has altered it to the point that it is not familiar to the diaspora members. The homeland is no longer the same as it was left by their ancestors and may not always align with the narrated “idealized” home they envisioned. There is a *cul-de-sac* and no “returning home”.

The lack of desire of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany to repatriate to their homeland is also influenced by several social factors including educational opportunities, linguistic barriers, and family, kinship ties in the host society, social environment. At this point, the fact that some Kazakhs living in Germany have almost no one they know in Kazakhstan makes their homeland an unknown and foreign place for Kazakhs in Germany. On the other hand, the Kazakh language spoken by those living in the diaspora differs due to the influence of German and Turkish, and this causes a major communication problem. Furthermore, in addition to the above mentioned reasons the disparities in mindset between the diaspora and the homeland communities makes the homeland not a longed place for return, but renders it a foreign environment for diaspora members.

It is seen that transportation opportunities developed within the scope of social reasons affect the desire to return to the homeland. In this context, Kazakhs were afforded the privilege of unhindered travel to their “novel” homeland Kazakhstan, devoid of visa requirements across all means of transportation. The removal of political barriers to entry into the homeland and improved transportation infrastructure has rendered the homeland more accessible to Kazakhs who possess a curiosity about their own land. However, the ease of commuting has had an adverse effect on their inclination to return to their motherland. The primary factor contributing to this phenomenon is the perception of the motherland as a destination that is readily accessible, as opposed to being an unseen, inaccessible location. All of these factors contribute to a diminished inclination of Kazakh diaspora in Germany

(especially among younger generation) to return to the homeland. Based on the aforementioned assessments, the adverse consequences stemming from economic and social reasons regarding to the repatriation shed light on the assertion that the notion of returning to the homeland cannot be deemed reliable criteria for the Kazakh diaspora.

The aforementioned circumstance leads to Kazakhs being exposed to an unfamiliar milieu, even upon their return to the homeland. Although to some extent theoretically returning to the homeland is considered a criterion of diaspora, for the Kazakhs living in Germany, the homeland appears as a myth that strengthens diasporic consciousness. Therefore, defining the homeland is not just about defining certain geography, but has a number of cultural dimensions (including national heroes, stories and legends) as well. Homeland is a phenomenon that almost every society has or believes to have, as the territory where common memories, friendship bonds and ideals of freedom are produced or associated.

Nevertheless, there are also some diaspora individuals who preferred to return to and settle down in new homeland- Kazakhstan. The most prominent reasons for diaspora members who want to make or made a return stem from a sense of ideological devotion and the fact that return is seen as a struggle for existence in the host land and acceptance in the homeland:

“Actually I was born in Istanbul. My parents are Kazakhs who are born and raised in Turkey. When I was two years old, my family and I moved to Munich, Germany. I lived in Germany for almost thirty years. It's been a while since I permanently moved to Kazakhstan and settled here. No one invited me here, this is my decision. I came here to work in IT sphere to found my own entrepreneurship. Both in Turkey and in Germany, I always had to prove that I knew the language of that country well enough. It is important that you prove to them that you are sufficiently “Turkish” or “German”. In such moments “Who am I really” I thought involuntarily. Because no matter how much I speak the local language well enough and know the traditions of that country very well, I was always a “a Central Asian man” for the Turks, and just an “Asian guy” for the Germans. Therefore, I wanted to know my origin and roots. I returned to my homeland because I wanted to feel like a Kazakh. I want my future children to stay here and grow up speaking Kazakh in a Kazakh environment. Everyone is looking for what they need. Right now it is important for me to recognize my national background. That’s why I came here. In addition, I want to show and teach Kazakh youth the experience I have gained up to this age in Europe. I want to serve my homeland honestly.”

-Hearing your words “I have returned to my roots” attracted my attention, can you really feel comfortable among the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, even if you have

only visited Kazakhstan a few times over the years and do not know the Kazakh language well?

“-Even though I don’t speak Kazakh fluently, I feel comfortable here. The reason for this is the same national identity. This is unknown to you Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan, but it is a wonderful thing for us. In Germany, including Munich, you have to constantly prove that you belong to that German environment. You must stick to their culture, assimilate and speak only German. On the one hand, it is right, but on the other hand, it is exhausting sometimes. But the situation is different in the homeland. It is wonderful to walk in your own environment, in your own land, in the company of your co-ethnics.”

(Interviewee, 34 year-old male).

The respondent further emphasized that his understanding of the assumed “homeland” and his emotional attachment to it have mostly been shaped via personal and unique family narratives as well. Upon his arrival to Kazakhstan for the first time, he experienced a sense of familiarity with the country like he already “knew” Kazakhstan. The emotional, even visceral tie that exists between the diaspora and the homeland is ultimately what binds them together. To use a phrase from Ghosh (1989), the relationship can be described as an epic one (p. 76).

According to Clifford (1994), the worldwide social shifts stemming primarily from decolonization, globalization and immigration are slackening the old version of “centered” diasporas that has been created around the phenomenon of return (Clifford, 1994, p. 306). Today we are dealing with different forms of return: both classic repatriations and new forms of “meaningful movement”, which create not only a platform for the expression of nostalgic images of a return to roots and the reproduction of the category of ethnicity, but also social fields for transnational cosmopolitan interaction. “Return” today for the Kazakh diaspora in Germany implies not only the conservative idea of repatriation, but also the practice of travel within the framework of nostalgic tourism to the homeland, temporary work contracts, and transnational social projects at the level of Kazakhstani governmental and non-governmental organizations, with the arrivals and departures being influenced by both physical and virtual as well as emotional mobility. The idea and practice of visits within the framework of “diaspora tourism” shape the motives for “temporary return” among representatives of the second and third generations of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany. For the Kazakh diaspora community visiting Kazakhstan became some sort of imposed pilgrimage to the ancestral homeland. Some members of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany come to Kazakhstan as seasonal tourists to see the new capital Astana, visit sacred city of Turkestan and the Yassawi

mausoleum, others bring and take away family heirlooms as part of a return ritual or, for example, a handful of soil from Kazakhstan. There are also those who, being entrepreneurs or students, temporarily move from Europe to Kazakhstan in order to open a business or get an education within the governmental programs.

In parallel with the developments in the world, the transnational era between Kazakhstan and the Kazakh diaspora abroad has started with the diversification, easier and cheaper transportation and communication. Consequently, the Kazakh diaspora was afforded numerous opportunities to make short-term “return visits” to their homeland. The diaspora realized that return does not only refer to “packing all the suitcases and leaving”; but also touristic visits and occasional visits to the homeland can also be considered as a form of reuniting with the homeland. In this regard one of our interviewees shared with her story of visiting Kazakhstan for the first time. As we can notice from the below statements of our respondent, the feeling of being disconnected from their “own people” and the challenge of identifying with the society in the host state generate a persistent need to return to one’s “lost roots”:

“Although there are many Kazakhs living in Germany and Turkey, you still feel differently. In order to understand the Kazakh environment and culture, you really need to go to Kazakhstan. In order to know where you come from and your roots, you need to go to your ancestors. When our elders, the last generation who came to Anatolia 70 years ago, meet in Istanbul, you can see what a real Kazakh is like. Outside, there are various events that unite Kazakhs, which inspires us, but I can’t say that I can fully recognize Kazakh culture there. Kazakhs living in Europe as “Europeans” gather there. However, I notice that Kazakhs are surprised when they see each other. When I went to Kazakhstan, I felt like one of the happiest people in the world. This was the best vacation of my life. I went to many places, traveled to many countries, but everything is different in Kazakhstan. You won’t see as many Kazakhs in Europe like in Kazakhstan naturally. When I felt that I was among Kazakhs, I felt like I was in my own home. Even though I was born and raised in another country, I felt that I was a part of the masses walking on the street of the city where I was. People there made me to feel that I am not a stranger, even though they met me for the first time. During those eight days, I really enjoyed the local people, the food, the music, everything. We lack that kind of atmosphere in Germany.”

(Interviewee, 32 year-old female)

When considering the data attained from the fieldwork with the Kazakh diaspora in Germany, it is obvious that modern forms of “return” to the ancestral home includes wide

series of motivations ranging from non-desire to repatriate to the homeland to long and short-term “return visits” or even sometimes till permanent (re)settlement to the historical homeland. Considering diasporic identities as an ongoing endeavor, it implies that each generation of diasporic heritage forms different connections to original homeland, resulting in the creation of new transnational and local social environments which is not always defined by their attachment to their origins or their longing for a permanent return to their homeland. Return has changed shape in the modern period which was previously unthinkable due to the closed borders during the USSR period and the departure arrivals are based on both physical and virtual and emotional mobility. Movements in space can include both periodic tourist pilgrimages “to the roots” and temporary investments and creative projects to create a “prosperous homeland”. Thus, these above mentioned examples of a new form of “return” of the diaspora and a new practice of diaspora interaction with the “homeland” demonstrate that today representatives of the second and third generations of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany are more likely to have different ideas, motives and views on returning to their homeland. Like Oxfeld and Long (2004) claimed, in diaspora returning does not just refer to resettling in ancestral homeland for the permanent means and completely severing ties with the host state, on the other hand the dream of return, visiting country of origin intermittently is also a means of returning to it (Oxfeld & Long, 2004, p. 4).

4.4. Diaspora- identity nexus: the Kazakh community in Munich and their perception of identity.

Diaspora individuals are consistently faced with the challenge of simultaneously existing in distinct home and host society realms and experiencing separate lived experiences. They are compelled to maintain a delicate equilibrium between these two realms, which becomes increasingly arduous when the divergence between them intensifies. An inquiry that emerges in this particular situation is the way in which the diasporic identities are constructed, practiced and negotiated. In the contemporary globalized society, the notion of identity serves to convey a fluid, multifaceted, and diverse social reality. The increasing essence of coexistence and interaction among different identities within transnational context for diaspora has given rise to ductile, multiple, and intricate forms of identity. The issue is further compounded by the diaspora experience and its manifold ramifications (Brinkerhoff, 2006, p. 32). The firsthand encounter with diaspora as transnational community reveals the fragility of the idea that identity should be rooted in

one's solid origins only. On the other hand, diasporic identities consistently generate and replicate themselves in new ways through migration routes while simultaneously perpetuating the unending will to get back to their "lost origins". Stuart Hall posits that diasporic identities arise from the interplay between affiliation with the original homeland and ethnic culture, a distinct story of dispersion, the inter-group unity among diaspora members, and the actual environment and experiences in the host society (Hall, 1990, p. 394). For these individuals who have been forced to leave their homeland in the past, the idea of keeping the original culture "alive" notwithstanding the disconnection from homeland becomes substantial. Distinct diasporic group members frequently have a sense of connection with each other based on a common ethnic name, lineage, historical background, religious beliefs, values, cultural practices, customs and norms which construct a sense of collective identity. All these components, to varying degrees, emphasize and support a sense of unity and solidarity among members of the diaspora community, reinforced by their inherent myths, traditions and shared memory and is typically seen as pertaining to family and spanning across several generations. The content, significance, and scope of this sense of belonging - along with the attributes it pertains to - are all susceptible to ongoing societal fluctuations. Applying the principles of constructivism to the study of diaspora identity, we can come to the conclusion that these different aspects intersect, interrelate and crisscross within an individual's life and in social interactions (Anthias, 1998). As Brah (1996) contends, "The identity of the diasporic imagined community [...] is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively" (Brah, 1996, p.183).

Identity construction processes never occur outside the socio-political and cultural sphere; they always require the existence of "other", since "other" is opposed to an image of "self". This opposition gives the person the opportunity to reveal his own identity against the identity of the "other" (Alfonso, et al., 2016, p.7). Identity requires a relationship with the different in order to exist, and transforms difference into otherness in order to guarantee its own existence (Sheffer, 2003, p. 5). So in our case the Kazakh diaspora identity is constructed through primarily everyday social interactions in family and then within the Kazakh community members which create dichotomies such as "We - Kazakhs" and "They - Other":

"I feel myself more close to Kazakhs and identify myself as Kazakh only. Why? Since my childhood, I grew up aware of being *Ausländer* (a foreigner) in a German society. Since I was often exposed to exclusion and marginalization by

my German peers during my middle school and high school years, I always lived knowing that I was different from them. On the other hand, even though I knew Turkish language, I did not feel accepted by Turkish children as well when I was little. They often used to trifle with me calling Japanese. I also think that the fact that my parents always reminded us of where we came from and who we are actually also contributed significantly to growing up knowing that I was a Kazakh...”

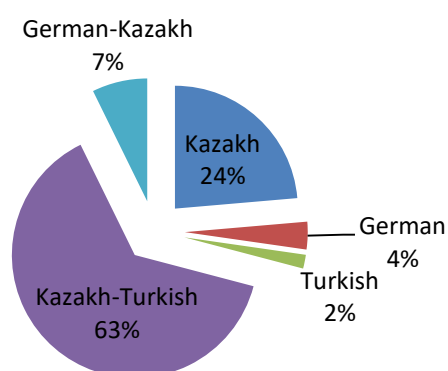
(Interviewee, 36 year-old male)

As we can see from the above statements of the respondent, behind personal ethnic identity lies a cognitive-affective system of “being accepted” built on elements that rely on each other and are closely interconnected. The level of emotional identification creates for a person a feeling of closeness with a certain diaspora, the ethnic of origin, in accordance with the definition of its members. It is from this emotional basis that different points of view, motivations, values and ideologies are acquired regarding identity. In this sense, Kazakhs in Germany as like other diaspora communities are definitely allied to self-questioning their own identity stimulated by the conations of living in pluralist society (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999, p. 19). This questioning is, of course, one of the basic criteria in the formation of diaspora. Because the politics in host states which we call the “melting pot” tends to melt the individual who does not question his identity and make him/her of “from them” (Kalra, et al., 2005, p. 46). The tension of “living here and remembering/but desiring another place” determines how the identities of diaspora members are constructed. In this sense, the diaspora consciousness allows diaspora to maintain their diasporic identity, reminding them of their cultural belonging and self. And the diasporic subjects are the carriers of that state of consciousness that enables them to see their difference from “others” (Kalra, et al., 2005, p. 30).

In this regard, it is crucial to note that identity is not an independent reference point for the diasporic individuals, but rather a component of the complex and overlapping identity patterns which consist of different layers. Ethnic identity continues to be one of the most important forms of the group identity, which provides and nourishes the experience of a sense of origins and roots and one’s attachment to them, giving a sense of the unity within diasporic group. As social unit, ethnic identity is based on “perceived qualities of sameness as a result of which people that associate themselves, or are associated by others, with particular groups or categories on the basis of some common features” (Caplan, 2004, p. 6). Diasporic communities consist of people who simultaneously have different layers of identity and

perceptions of it. In this sense, an intersectional view that considers the many aspects of diaspora identity is essential for comprehending the processes of community formation within the diaspora (Brah, 1996, pp. 10–15). For this reason, within the scope of our fieldwork conducted in Munich we have decided to learn what the members of the Kazakh diaspora community in Germany think about their diasporic ethnic identity, how they perceive and define it. In pursuit of this goal, we asked the questions to our respondents in our questionnaire regarding their identity:

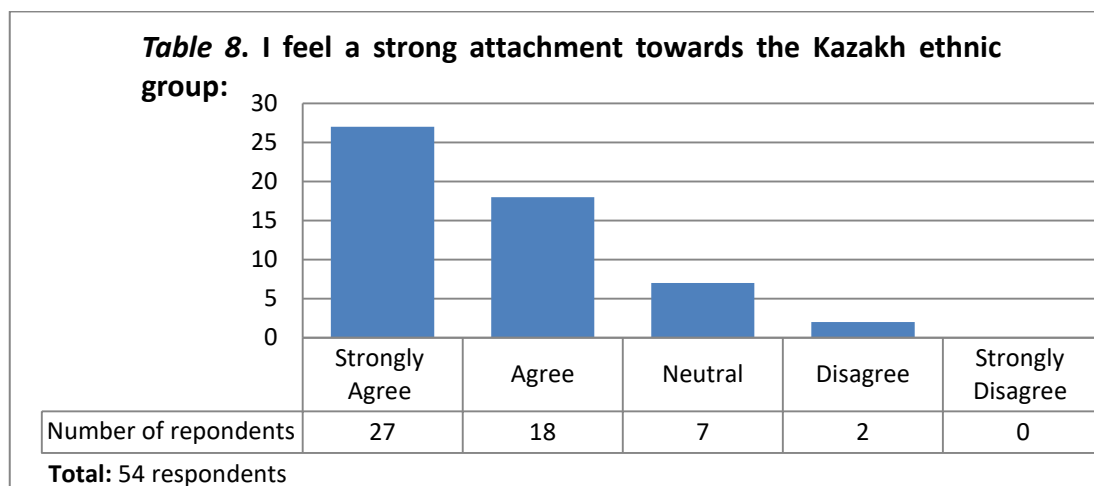
Table 7. In terms of ethnic group I identify myself mostly as:



As it can be observed from the information presented in the *Table 7*, our initial objective was to ascertain the manner in which people describe themselves in relation to their ethnic identity. When identifying themselves in terms of ethnicity, 63 % or 35 of 54 respondents mainly chose the option Kazakh-Turkish which we can analyze as hybrid identity. The second most common chosen option was Kazakh which constitutes 24 % of the total respondents (N=54) which was equal to 13 individuals being surveyed. Regarding the hybrid identity option of German-Kazakh, this choice was significantly less prevalent compared to Kazakh-Turkish and represents only 7% of the total 54 respondents or in other words 4 individuals from 3rd generation Kazakh diaspora member in Germany. Full assimilation into the host country's population is uncommon, with just 4% of the polled persons identifying themselves as German, which corresponds to a mere 2 replies. And lastly just 1 individual, comprising a mere 2% of the participants in the study, identifies himself ethnically as Turkish.

In addition to this, we wanted to determine the degree to which participants felt a sense of affinity towards their ethnic background in such context of hybridity and diversity.

To feel a sense of belonging to a certain group or to develop an ethnic identity, it is necessary for the individual to have a connection with his/her ethnic group. Therefore, we posed an extra question asking if they felt strong attachment towards Kazakhs or not. *Table 8* clearly demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of our survey participants have a profound sense of connection to their ethnic background.

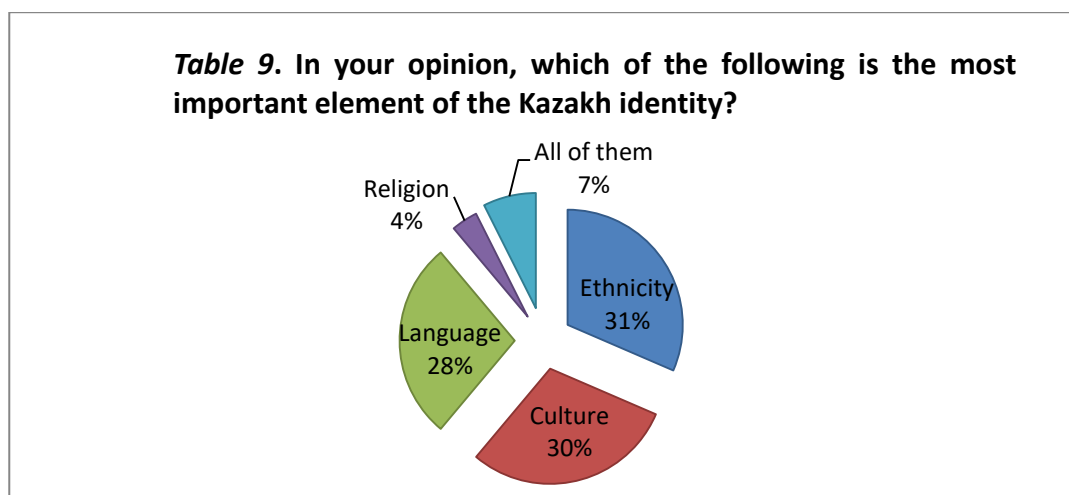


More specifically, 50% or 27 of 54 respondents “strongly agree” and another 33% which is 18 individuals “agree” with the statement about. Furthermore, 7 out of 54 persons polled had “neutral” or in other words, indifferent sentiment towards the significance of their ethnic group affiliation and having a strong connection to it, representing 13% of the total responses. Finally, there were 2 individuals (3, 7 % of the total respondents) who “disagreed” with the above assertion. So we can notice that depending on the context, there might be a shift in how diaspora perceives their identity. As Bailey and Hall claims, “identities can, therefore, be contradictory and are always situational.” (cited in Hall & Gay, 1996, p.91).

When discussing their ethnic group, heritage, customs, traditions, exilic experience, cuisine, and physical features interviewed individuals tended to have a heightened sense of their Kazakh identity and highlight their “otherness” which demonstrates that their identity perception is malleable depending on the context. In the context of diaspora identity, common features like beliefs, values, habits, customs, norms, a common language, religion, history, geography, kinship, and common biological/physical characteristics refer to shared cultural attributes. Furthermore, the degree of importance assigned to them is not uniform for all the members of the diaspora community.

The conceptualization of a group with a specific diasporic identity does not mean that all members of the diaspora group share the same views about the diasporic identity. It

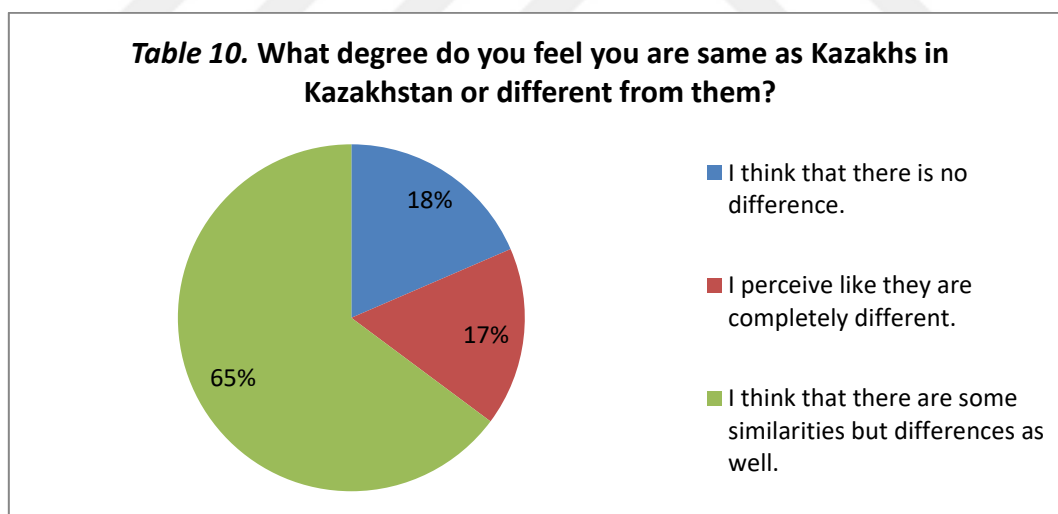
is more accurate to say that the most important element of the diasporic identity is always being perceived differently and negotiated by diaspora individuals. Regarding this matter, we endeavored to comprehend what is the most important element of Kazakh identity for our 54 respondents. The findings are displayed in the table below:



As it was revealed in the *Table 9*, the perception regarding the primary component of the Kazakh identity varies across individuals of the diaspora. Mainly, ethnicity (31 % of the respondents which equals to 17 individuals), culture (30 % of the respondents which equals to 16 individuals) and language (28 % of the respondents which equals to 15 individuals) are considered to be one of the most important elements of the Kazakh identity. Only 2 polled individuals (4 % of the total respondents N=54) believes that religion is the most significant element of the Kazakh identity while other 4 individuals (7 % of the total polled N=54) perceives that all of the mentioned elements constitutes the main building blocks of the Kazakh identity. Being Kazakh is subject to different interpretations among various members of the same diaspora, influenced by their own experiences and views. Being Kazakh might mean “being born as Kazakh” or significant religious overtones for certain individuals, while for some it may involve fluency in the Kazakh language or for others a connection to traditional Kazakh culture, customs and practices.

Based on the idea of “us and others” ethnic identity construction, it seems logical that different Kazakhs or Kazakh communities should be united and mutually positioned by the feeling of “us”, being located in the common space of “us”. Nevertheless, this is not guaranteed. Along with ethnic identity, there are also other types of group affiliation that are no less significant in the sense of regulating people’s sense of belonging. Consequently, a Kazakh in Germany might not share the sense of “us” with Kazakh community in homeland

with a different society that is not native enough to him in its value-semantic field, not sharing everyday, tangible social realities with him/her, and thus feeling alienation towards a compatriots during the interaction and communication. We are, of course, not talking about abandoning the national or ethnic basis, since its vital necessity comes from the internal imperative to have roots and sources. The point is that ethnic identity is not always necessarily enough in our case to establish effective engagement for real communication with residents of Kazakhstan or compatriots from other Kazakh communities, a sense of closeness and mutual preferences. For instance, several respondents from first generation Kazakh in Germany expressed their belief that they saw themselves as the example of “pure” and “genuine” Kazakhs in comparison to Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. This is because they believe that they were free from the influence of the communist ideology of both the Russian and Chinese regimes “thanks to their ancestors who brought them to the free world”. Hence, the Kazakhs from both realms have consistently contested, interrogated, and cast doubt upon each other’s Kazakh identity. Regarding this matter, in order to understand this issue more deeply, we have polled the participants of our questionnaire where we asked respondents to what extent they felt similar or different to Kazakhs in Kazakhstan:



As it can be observed from the findings presented in the *Table 10*, the great majority of our respondents do not see themselves as being precisely the same as Kazakhs in Kazakhstan except 18 % or 10 individuals out of 54 respondents who believe that there is no difference between them and Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. On the contrary, 17 % of the total respondents (N=54) which is equal to 9 individuals perceive Kazakhs in Kazakhstan as they are completely different from them. Lastly, 35 out of 54 respondents (or 65% of the total)

believe that Kazakhs in Kazakhstan have certain commonalities with them but also have some different characteristics. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that diasporic individuals have a greater sense of similarity and sameness in a setting that is both familiar and predictable to them. Conversely, anything that is unknown and not sufficiently familiar might elicit a sense of obscurity and avoidance. For a Kazakh from the diaspora, image of the homeland and its inhabitants is a construct, although with positive connotations, however accompanied with uncertainty when compared to their own diasporic community residing in current place of residence. So, “us-them” is not a static structure, but a dynamic relationship constantly revised by and which can be changed depending on the context. There are certain differences and nuances in the planes of actual and imaginary reality. For instance, real communication (specific communication with a compatriot back home) can test this sense of “us”, emphasizing differences and identifying barriers to communication and the accompanying inconveniences.

4.5. Different Interpretations of Identity by Different Generations

On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account the possible identity perception problems that may arise between younger and older members of diaspora communities. There may be significant differences between the perspectives of the first generation born in the homeland and migrated to the host state and the perspectives of the second, third generation born in the host state. It is well researched that various generations exhibit distinct relations when it comes to ethnicity and ethnic identities. Isajiw suggests that the first generation is more inclined to emphasize their ethnic identity, but the second generation places comparatively less significance on their ethnic identity, also arguing that the preservation of ethnic identity throughout generations can lead to varied consequences (Isajiw, 1993). The young diaspora individuals’ identity is largely affected by the tense relations between the cultural conservatism that represents the values of their family and the elements of adaptation to the society they live in. New generations are undergoing a process of socialization within a multicultural setting, where they are exposed to the impact more than one culture. During the initial stage of the socialization process, the cultural influence of the parents plays a significant role on younger generation inside the household setting. To a large extent, the basic references of identity are formed in this period. In the second stage, children or young people are exposed to German culture through their educational and social surroundings. Young people, faced with different options, often have to make some choices between “home

culture” and “host culture” (Boekestijn, 1988). In this case, young people may constantly feel themselves in an atmosphere of “tension” or “identity crisis”. One of our respondents who is from third-generation member of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany, articulated this situation in the following way:

“Our parents give more significance to living as Kazakh, speak better Kazakh than we and feel more attachment to Kazakhness than we do. But when it comes to me, sometimes it is very difficult for me to identify myself as Kazakh, Turkish or German. I do not also know how to figure out who I am actually. Wherever I go I feel that sense of being “outside”. In Germany I am not German enough because I look Asian, in Turkey I am not Turkish enough, and in Kazakhstan I will also be a stranger since I cannot speak Kazakh even though I look Kazakh. So I do not know where I really belong to. I feel myself like homeless.”

(Interviewee, 25 year-old female).

In this sense, Maalouf (2006) tries to reveal the complex and difficult structure of the immigrant identity: “The situation is even more delicate on the other side of the Rhine. Thinking about a Turk born almost 30 years ago near Frankfurt, and who has always lived in Germany, and who speaks and writes the German language better than the language of his Fathers. To his adopted society, he is not German, to his society of birth; he is no longer really Turkish. Common sense dictates that he could claim to belong to both cultures. But nothing in the law or in the mentality of either allows him to assume in harmony his combined identity.” (Maalouf, 2006, p.11).

In addition to posing the questions regarding the difficulties of negotiating the identity in diasporic context in our personal and group interviews, it was decided to learn the opinions of the Kazakh diaspora members in Germany in anonymous ways via survey. In this regard, it would be worth to present the results obtained from the questionnaire that aimed to uncover the complexity and challenges experienced by members of the Kazakh diaspora in relation to issues of belonging:

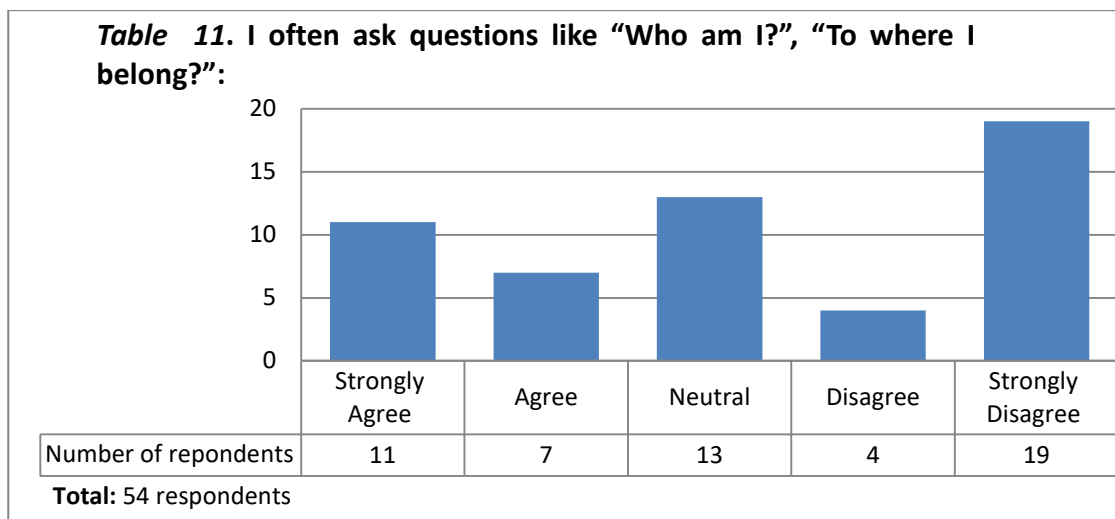


Table 11 clearly demonstrates the attitude of the Kazakh diaspora members to the issue of identity questioning and “identity crisis”. Analyzing in general, it can be asserted that the vast majority of the diaspora member does not problem of difficulty in identifying themselves which constitutes 66,6 % of the total respondents who either “Strongly disagree”, “Disagree” or are “Neutral” to the above statement. However, if we analyze the data according to the age difference of the respondents, we can notice that rest 33, 4 % of the respondents who “Strongly agreed” and “Agreed” with the above statements are from the second and third generation Kazakh youths which demonstrates the difference of age perspective on the issue.

As evidenced, a diasporic community has the capacity to possess distinct and manifold identities. The medley of Kazakh ethnic origin, traditions, attachment to the past accompanied with Turkish and German social practices exemplify the adaptable character of the diasporic identity. Identities possess a fluid nature, characterized by a perpetual state of flux and the accumulation of many elements. The diasporic hybrid identity serves as a means of self-preservation, preventing both forgetting its original cultural heritage and being assimilated in the host society and adapting to the host state in order not to be discriminated. Conversely, it facilitated the preservation of their distinct cultural heritage, collective memory and traditions. The Kazakh people while being in Turkish and German host societies as apart of diasporic experience have gone through acculturation albeit have accepted their cultural distinctiveness. The individuals willingly engaged in the process of acculturation, which facilitated their integration into German society. Nevertheless, the Kazakh diaspora members in question did not relinquish their ethnic identities; rather, they amalgamated their Kazakh, Turkish, German identities within the framework of the Third Space.

The identity perception of Kazakhs in Germany may vary from generation to generation. While frequently the prominent emphasis in the expression of the first generation is on longing for home culture, the second generation points to the state of “in-betweenness”. The younger generation Kazakhs in Germany might be characterized as being “caught between three cultures yet belonging to neither” who forms their identity within a social context where they must navigate the effects of Kazakh, Turkish and German cultures. Kazakh youngsters living in Germany, similar to other diasporic young individuals, have a tendency to form a *bricolage* of identities and cultures, while also maintaining a strong connection to their ethnic and cultural heritage. Moreover, first-generation immigrants of Kazakh origin did not try to become a part of Germany where they came for many years ago, due to the reasons mentioned above that migration was not intended to be permanent at the initial stage, and they accepted their position of guest workers despite their low status. They did not aspire to any social role; instead they struggled to exist with their own identities with which they defined themselves. For this reason, they did not have any problems such as communication with German society, integration, identity or cultural recognition. However, the situation is slightly different for second and third generation Kazakhs in Germany. Although the first generation went through a traditional, religious socialization process, it is possible to say that the socialization experience of the second and third generation, who grew up in Germany, differed to a certain extent because they both studied in Germany and were greatly influenced by the local culture as well. Unlike the first generation, the second and third generation started to compare their situation with the same age group locals in German society where they were born and raised. The real change is the emphasis on multiculturalism, which has been evident since the third generation. It is seen that transitions and cultural hybridizations have increased since the third generation, and the Kazakh diaspora has begun to position itself differently in German society compared to the first and second generations. According to the data obtained during the group interview with Kazakh youth in Munich, especially the third generation Kazakh diaspora members in Germany have German citizenship, feel ethnically like Kazakh, to some extent culturally have influence of the Turkish culture along with Kazakh, try to practice Islam but at the same time support secularism in different combinations. Despite all the problems this phenomenon involves, these identities are nourished by different cultural references and create a distinct hybrid identity. Regarding the interplay between “home culture” and “outside culture”, it can be clearly said that the attitudes of young Kazakh individuals in Germany may generally be

characterized as neither fully adhering to cultural conservatism nor completely embracing assimilation. There is an idea in identity negotiations of younger Kazakhs which manifests itself in the expression “integrating to German society by preserving their own culture”. On the other hand, this expression of the young people may also be interpreted as a sign that they want to “not be restricted from outside” and to “live their culture as freely as possible” according to their own desires. Interestingly, the new generation of young Kazakh generation in Germany is struggling to be equal with the Germans on a common ground, and they do this by expressing their differences and distinct identities. So, in a way, they are attempting to integrate their distinctions and differences into their German citizenship and German community membership. The most interesting component of this process is the utilization of the German language as a mother tongue. In their day-to-day lives, the Kazakh youth in Germany of the second and third generations are more proficient in German which has a more important place in their daily lives than Kazakh language. While in some cases Turkish appears as the second language spoken, an element of cultural richness, in some cases we can say that German is adopted as the only language.

The pathways pursued by the new generation Kazakhs in Germany in their quest to establish their identity within the cosmopolitan milieu they are living in exhibit considerable diversity. Some of the young individuals may be contemplating the appropriateness of actively engaging in the social milieu of Germany. Another adolescent may seek to address this issue by tapping into the ethnic and cultural assets inherited from their parents in their country of origin, while deliberately diminishing their ties to German culture. Some individuals want to integrate into German society by actively engaging in social activities of the diaspora community, whilst others prefer to have intercultural interactions with individuals from diverse social and national origins. Nevertheless, several young individuals explicitly identify themselves using ethnic categorizations and then act in accordance with those identities. There is no doubt that this change created by the third generation has increased the negotiating power of this generation in terms of their inclusion in the areas of social life as natural parts of the social, political, cultural and economic system of the host society.

4.6. Kazakh Diaspora and Hybrid Identity

Prior to conducting the questionnaire with the Kazakh diaspora members in Munich it was expected that the vast majority of the respondents being surveyed might identify themselves as Kazakh in terms of ethnic identity. Nevertheless, throughout our fieldwork, we have encountered unexpected results that proved to be intriguing for the analyzing the attained data. The poll results of the Kazakh diaspora members in Munich proved the statement of Vertovec and Cohen (1999) who argues that the concept of diaspora is often characterized by a dual and paradoxical nature and consists of constantly shifting representations that provide an illusory sense of unity for a group of flexible identities (p. 18). From the perspective of classical diaspora theorization, it might be expected from the Kazakh diaspora that they should possess attachment only to their Kazakh origins and that due to their exilic experience, remain committed only to their “Kazakhness”. However, in empirical terms the perspective of postmodern diaspora understanding proves to be more practical in our case study of Kazakhs from East Turkestan living in Germany. Our example demonstrates that in line with diaspora consciousness of being Kazakh, their past diasporic experiences in Turkey continues to have a substantial influence on shaping their contemporary diasporic identity perception having also appropriated their commitment to Turkish roots despite living in Germany for around 50 years. For the majority of Kazakhs in Germany who came from Turkey, identifying as both Kazakh and Turkish is basically non-contradictory. The ideology of *Türkism* (Türkçülük) encompasses the elements of the Kazakh diaspora identity that were acquired during the times of exile. In this sense, hybridity is a camouflage against being stuck in the middle. Adopting the perspective that Kazakhs and Turkish belong to the same “Turkic world” offers a convenient and simpler approach for the Kazakh diaspora to elucidate their hybrid identity. Hence, the intergroup dynamics across borders provide insights into the reformation, negotiation and deconstruction of the Kazakh diaspora community’s identity in Germany. Furthermore, based on the data obtained from the individual and groups interviews, it could be asserted that this phenomenon might be attributed to the prevailing sentiment of appreciation among the Kazakhs in Germany towards Turkey. This gratitude stems from the historical experience of Kazakhs seeking shelter in Turkey, as their ancestors chose Turkey as a “safe haven” after enduring traumatic experience in China and facing challenging circumstances in India and Pakistan as a consequence of scattering from homeland. This shows us how past is still shaping the present of Kazakhs in Germany and encourages us to

resort to Stuart Hall's perspective on identity. As Hall (1990) contends, identity equally belongs to both the future and the past. In his concept of being, he emphasizes the similarities among a group of people on the basis of their shared cultural values and historical experience. Both, being and becoming jointly influence in the formation of identity. He explains: "...Within the terms of this definition, our identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us being "one people" " (Hall, 1990, p. 225). In this regard, it is valid to claim that diasporic identities are not fundamentally essential, but rather influenced by circumstances, historical context, and defined by their dynamic and interconnected nature. Diasporic identity is formed via the negotiation, collision, and tête-à-tête of cultures and histories; which could be described as a fragmented mode of identification that poses a challenge to conventional categorizations (Kaya, 2015, p.80). This is due to the fact that diasporic identity is not based on a singular ancestral tradition. Instead, it incorporates aspects of each of these classifications, which results in a dynamic interaction among them.

The claim that identity is singular and indivisible is a *fait accompli* of modernity. A diaspora member may experience an ebb and flow between his/her own cultural identity and the identity of the host society or societies in multiply scattered diasporic groups like Kazakhs under study. It no longer has a completely old or new identity. But a process towards acquiring a hybrid identity between the old and the new emerges. The postmodern approach suggests that identity has a plural, complex and constantly changing structure (Martin, 1995). According to Grossberg's proposition, the poststructuralist perspective entails the deconstruction of structural unity and identity, hence giving rise to the intricate nature, contradictions, and fragmentation associated with diversity. Hence, individuals belonging to ethnic communities have the ability to establish their own identities somewhere "in between" (Grossberg, 1986). While we can see that identity is not singular even in the simplest cases, how is it possible to say that the identities of people who move through different places, especially as a result of the dispersion and settlement in different host culture/cultures outside their homeland, remain singular? In this sense, unique experience of traumatic dispersal from homeland East Turkestan and subsequent settlement in Turkey- that is what make the Kazakh diaspora in Germany under study different from Kazakhs in Kazakhstan or from other Kazakh diaspora community in different location.

During the interviews with Kazakhs in Munich, it was often noted that while discussing identity they consistently underline the tight relationship between Kazakhs and

Turks. Participants who indicated that they felt close to both cultures stated that they grew up with both cultures and that it was difficult for them to differentiate. Stating that they encounter elements from both Kazakh and Turkish cultures every day, these participants said that their identities are close to both cultures. This situation emerges at the point that all participants are accustomed to both sides, can adapt to both cultures and do not experience any difficulties in this regard. They also emphasized that Kazakhs and Turks are brothers, and there is often more similarity between Kazakh and Turkish culture rather than the differences which makes them to feel more comfortable with hybridity placing greater emphasis on the same Turkic roots, common culture, language and religion. They now identify themselves as Kazak Türkü (Kazakh-Turkish) stressing on their Turkic background while also incorporating new characteristics from their adoption of a dual or multiple allegiances beyond the boundaries of a single nation-state. As it was observed, the Kazakh diaspora residing in Munich, where my research was conducted, have blended some norms and customs from Turkish culture, adopted some daily life habits from German society in addition to carrying on their own.

As an example of hybridity, it is important to mention that Kazakhs residing in Germany are mostly trilingual: they use Kazakh, Turkish, and German languages in their daily lives. But the use of languages depends on age groups. The older generation (70-85) considers Kazakh as their native language and cultivates its knowledge among the entire diaspora. Representatives of this generation of the diaspora were born on the territory of East Turkestan or in India, Pakistan during the exodus, and this factor probably influenced their linguistic identification. Kazakhs born in Turkey consider Turkish and Kazakh as their native languages (in that order) this applies to the middle generation (50-60 year olds). This generation knows the Kazakh language, communicates with each other in it, but when communicating with younger representatives of the diaspora, they most often speak Turkish. The frequent use of the Turkish language is related to the fact that the majority of the second generation of Kazakhs were born and raised in Turkey, received their education in Turkey and mainly grew up in a Turkish-speaking environment. According to the interview respondents, the reason why they did not teach their children the Kazakh language was that they themselves knew it only at the everyday level, which they received from the parents of native Kazakh speakers. Since they did not know how to write in Kazakh and the grammar of the Kazakh language itself, many parents decided to teach their children the language that they themselves spoke perfectly. The generation born in Germany uses the Kazakh language to a

lesser extent and uses more local German. On the other hand, it is seen that the spoken language developed by Kazakh youth living in Germany has creolizing language features:

“In fact, when we were little, our native language was Kazakh. We used to speak only Kazakh at home. Then we learned Turkish. Because all relatives of my parents live in Turkey, we speak Turkish more with them during our summer vacations there. Then, before entering school we learned German. Without knowing German, you cannot go to school. Thus, because Turkish and German were used a lot, the Kazakh language continued to be forgotten. Although I understand Kazakh now, I cannot speak fluently. But now I have started writing and speaking in Kazakh again with my efforts.”

(Interviewee, 27 year-old male)

Consequently, the identities of interviewed individuals are not singular but rather encompass various allegiances. This scenario evokes Buckingham’s assertion that the concept of identity is enigmatic and elusive. According to him: “identities are not the fixed markers people assume them to be, but are instead dynamically constructed in the moment.” (Buckingham, 2008, p. 1). Moreover, Kazakh diaspora members who are born and raised in Germany claim that to some extent they feel that they inherited some aspects of German culture as well. Accordingly, possession of several identities affords individuals the prospect of having a sense of belonging to both Kazakh and Turkish culture while living in German society. So diaspora members endeavor to integrate their multiple identities and coexist inside the realm known as the *Third Space*. The state of being in the Third Space is indicative of a lack of a singular, fixed identity, but rather a flexible identity that allows individuals to simultaneously participate in both Kazakh, Turkish and German cultures which facilitates the interaction of these different cultures and go-between them. Therefore, as the environment shifts, it might alter diaspora individual’s perception of the identity.

During the interviews another point that was apparent in the respondents’ comments is that while they acknowledge that their lifestyles and cultural practices have undergone certain changes within the context of living in a diaspora for about 70 years, and they feel disconnected from the lives in original homeland after moving to Turkey and subsequently to Germany, they refute the notion that they have been “Turkified” or “Westernized”. To give an example, when during the personal interviews I posed the question: “Do you believe that you are more “Turkified” compared to Kazakhs in Kazakhstan after a long time living in Turkey?” the respondent proceeded to provide further explanation:

“Yes, we are highly influenced by Turkish culture since the half of my life was spent in Turkey. I was born and raised there; therefore I speak Turkish better than Kazakh. Turkish is the only language in which I can express myself for hundred percent. But I think that being influenced by Turkish culture is not betrayal in relation to our Kazakh origin and identity since Turkish language and culture are not an alien to us, Kazakhs. After all, our Kazakh origin is undeniable. I think that it is better being Turkified Kazakhs in comparison to Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan who are Russified. At least we have not lost our religious values like Russified Kazakhs in Kazakhstan.”

(Interviewee, year-old female)

In the complex milieu where cultures are displaced and individuals reside within permeable borders, the respondent declined to categorize their hybrid cultural customs as “Turkification”. The behaviors contribute to a continual negotiation of cultural hybridity, as individuals reconcile their memories and experiences from their past and present, as well as their experiences from other locations like Turkey. On the other hand, during the interviews when the participants were asked to define what degree they feel close themselves towards Germans it was revealed that some of the respondents tended to give answers different from their stances towards Turks consistently highlighting the distinctions between being “us-Kazakh” and “them Germans”. Boekestijn argues that diasporic communities have a quandary in balancing their integration into the host society culture and their will to maintain their own original identity (Boekestijn, 1988). According to Boekestijn (1988), the intensity of this dilemma is contingent upon the disparity between the culture of origin and the host culture. As the cultural gap widens, the dilemma becomes more pronounced (p. 87). So unlike in the case of common Turkic background, when it comes to Germany as a host society, the individuals being interviewed deliberately or unintentionally draw some kind of border between the “West” and the “East”, Muslims and Christians, “Kazakhs” and “Germans”, and envisioning the limits and internal consistency of their cultural identities.

To sum up, it could be concluded that identities in diaspora are inherently non-unified and are not single in nature but rather emerge via several constructions that occur within diverse discourses, practices, and negotiations, typically characterized by intersections and antagonisms. Diasporic identity is often arising from two or more different cultures that come together and blend resulting in the hybridized identity which Kazakhs in Germany could not also avoid who mainly identify themselves as Kazakh-Turkish. As Gilroy (1993) said, hybridity is one of the convenient concepts that can be used for diasporic identities.

Moreover, residing in cultural borderlands, Kazakh diaspora community is mainly not willing to assimilate into mainstream German or European culture. Their understanding of themselves, their native cultures, and their fellow people in Kazakhstan is complicated by conflicting ideas as well. Moreover, it is important to note that living in a diaspora does not imply a uniform and undifferentiated perception of the identity, nor does it suggest that all individuals within these groups exhibit identical behaviors and thought patterns. In this sense, the justification for embracing differences is reinforced by the different results of the survey and interview data obtained during the fieldwork with the Kazakh diaspora members in Munich. The members of the diaspora also vary from one other in terms of their personal perspectives and perception. Furthermore, depending on the age and generation the negotiation of the diasporic identity also varies. Consequently, identities have a fractured nature rather than being unitary. Hence, it can be deduced that differentiation, uniqueness, and temporality at the same time serve as the fundamental elements in the formation of diasporic identity. Consequently, the concept of identity might be characterized as both visional and fictitious and lacking in entirety, perpetually undergoing negotiation.

CHAPTER V. STRATEGIES AND TOOLS OF PRESERVING DIASPORA IDENTITY IN KAZAKHS OF GERMANY

Social borders serve as intangible barriers established by a certain group to safeguard themselves against assimilation within the framework of diasporic existence. The presence of a barrier between the diaspora and the host community enables the diaspora to maintain its own identity without becoming assimilated. This boundary also has an impact on the establishment and long-term survival of the diaspora (Brubaker, 2005, p. 6). Nevertheless, this does not imply the preservation of an unchanging static identity in diaspora community. Prior to the 20th century, diaspora populations could either be separated from the local host population due to the introversion, or, they were becoming more isolated as a result of being excluded. This created a continuous cycle of isolation and introversion. In the post-modern world, it is not feasible to uphold a wholly essentialist diasporic identity. On the other hand, diasporic communities like Kazakhs in Germany notwithstanding these circumstances, tend to develop strategies on behalf of preserving their identity and culture. So for expanding on the topic of diaspora identity and homeland deeper, this chapter will examine the importance of collective memory and kinship relations on construction of diaspora identity among Kazakhs, the role of festivals in reinforcing ethnic identity, the perception of the host environment by the diaspora members, and finally on negotiating homeland and identity in the digital space.

From the field data, it has become clear that even in the face of dilemma of adapting or assimilating into the dominant culture in the host society, the Kazakh community in Germany tries to preserve characteristics from their own cultural background. The process of preserving ethnic identity among the Kazakh diaspora in Germany is characterized by several criteria: marriage and family, kinship relations, collective memory of the past, rituals and religion, social relations, and diaspora organizations. Kazakhs residing in Germany and across Europe are endeavoring to gather more frequently and coordinate collaborative cultural and sport events, therefore exemplifying the overarching objective of the Kazakh diaspora to uphold their ethnic heritage. It is also usual for Kazakhs living in Germany to establish common settlement areas or to live close to each other in order to save the sense of togetherness and unity. New generations have the opportunity to receive the knowledge and culture of their family and cultural roots in this environment. In this situation, we are discussing about the preservation of the mindset of the Kazakh diaspora. Due to being geographically distant from their ancestral homeland, many individuals within this diaspora

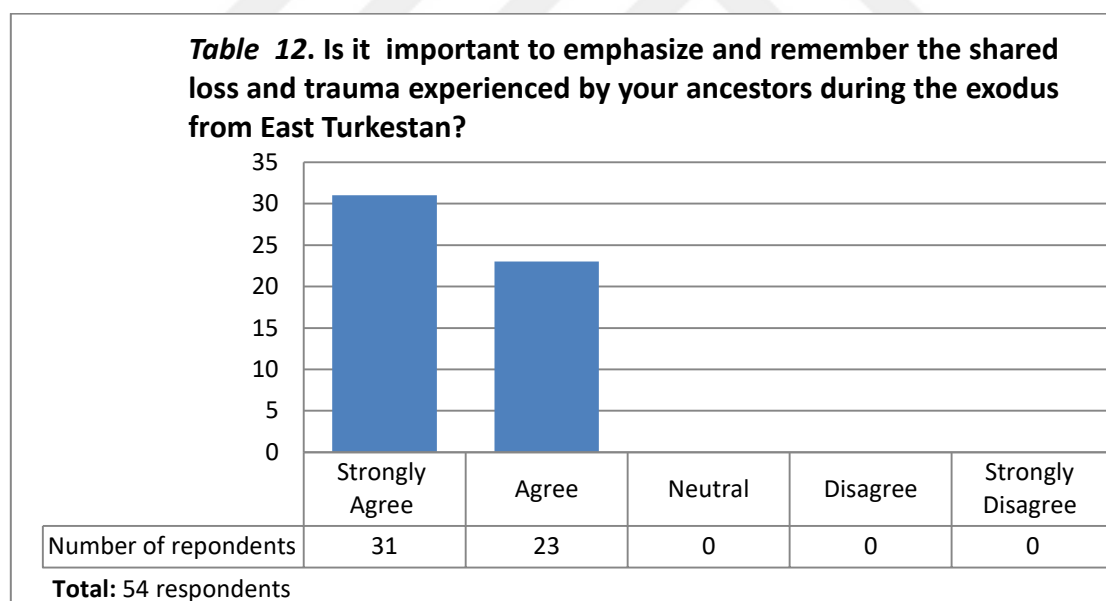
face the risk of assimilating into their host countries. In this context, the Kazakhs' understanding of integration instead of assimilation in Germany includes living according to the rules of German society, being able to communicate in German language and being a "model citizen" and not a problematic immigrant. In this case, it can be said that Kazakhs think that they can integrate into German society without living like Germans and not giving up their own identity and by preserving the continuity of their original culture.

5.1. Constructing and Preserving Identity through Collective Memory

Collective memory and historical awareness have an important role in the preservation of the diaspora identity which heavily impacts on the transmission of memories from generation to generation. Certain diasporic experiences evoke recollections of their counterparts' past experiences in the original homeland. The act of memorizing and recollecting such historical events serves to strengthen diaspora members' habitual patterns of living, while also serving as a reminder to those inside the diaspora of their state of dispersal or being a diaspora. In this sense, trauma can become a source of identity even for those who have not experienced it directly, as they can form indirect knowledge about past events. This can enable the integration of collective memories with personal family histories since traumatic events that become increasingly distant in time are relived at both the community and individual/family levels (Wertsch, & Roediger, 2008). The painful nature of the migration has left a lasting impact on the collective memory of Kazakhs, influencing and guiding the decision-making processes and self-perception of many individuals to this day. The aforementioned phenomenon may be observed and encountered through dialogues, encompassing not just interactions with senior members of the community, but also with younger cohorts who lack direct experience of the exodus. Nonetheless, their understanding of this historical events and traumatic exodus from homeland is substantial due to the dissemination of narratives throughout the community. The collective history of migration has assumed a crucial role in preserving the Kazakh identity among the Kazakh community residing in Germany.

Based on this, during the interviews and surveys, a special attention was paid to the role of the main historical events in the identity of members of the Kazakh diaspora, more specifically the traumatic history of moving from China to Turkey, which is considered a determining historical event for the Kazakh diaspora. Some of the interviewees stated that

they mainly attained historical information from their grandfathers, grandmothers or parents, and also researched to it on the internet. Intergenerational transmission is heavily oriented toward preserving the past in the present, so that foundational identity narratives, such as selected traumas and narratives of loss, continue to unite and mobilize the diaspora. The significance of the collective memory is especially notable for the Kazakhs who were exiled from East Turkestan similar to other diasporic communities left deep scars in the collective memories of the Kazakhs. In contemporary conditions when younger generation Kazakh diaspora members were born and raised in Germany, who know German better than Kazakh language and consider it as their native language, speak Turkish within the family environment, when traditions and customs are gradually fading outside the boundaries of their historical homeland and in the context of globalization, it is collective memory that can act as a binding basis for Kazakh diaspora in Germany with such heterogeneous in generations nature. In our questionnaire there was a question regarding the significance given to the shared loss and experienced trauma and in order to understand if it had been sustained in their collective memory which has shown the following results:



As we can see from the results of the questionnaire presented in *Table 12*, 31 of 54 participants of the questionnaire give an extraordinary importance to the shared loss and trauma experienced during the Kazakh exodus from the original homeland East Turkestan by highlighting it with “Strongly Agree” while 23 of the 54 participants chose to “Agree” with the above statement which shows the lasting impact of the past trauma of exodus on the collective memory of the current diaspora members of the Kazakh origin in Germany. This

coincides with the diaspora criteria of Safran (1991) and Cohen (2008) who gave a specific importance to the presence of a collective memory of the homeland and shared trauma and loss to label a certain group as a diaspora.

In addition to this, during the personal interviews the attention was focused on what people belonging to the same diaspora community remember about the traumatic historical experiences related to the exodus, how they interpret them, how a common understanding of these episodes of the past is perceived by individuals of the Kazakh diaspora. Drawing on a theoretical framework, the question of how new generations who did not experience the traumatic dispersion from homeland at firsthand view these critical events as “trauma” was explored:

“My grandmother was born in East Turkestan and she used to tell me their story of departure from our homeland. She told me that during turbulent days of passing via Tibet and Himalaya mountains, they fell ill with mountain fever what they called *ys*; at least four or five members of some families used to die, and there were times when the whole family was gone. I cannot even imagine how really catastrophic was their condition. Everyone was sick. They did not know what to do in the high mountains. Even so, they tried to melt the ice, washed, shrouded the deceased, performed the funeral prayer and buried the dead. Sometimes they had to leave the body of the deceased with dirt on their faces in mountain peaks due the hardness of the stones on the mountain and inability to dig the ground. What can you find if you do not have anything to eat and water to drink even for the animals carrying your luggage and sick people? Even a healthy person had shortness of breath and could barely walk. They had to drink urine of the children to save their lives from fever. It is unbelievable how much they had to sacrifice and stand for in order to save us...”

(Interviewee, 25 year-old female)

The vast majority of the interviewees stated that they shared various content about important dates related to migration through their social media accounts. For instance, celebrating a “founding anniversaries of the East Turkestan Republics on November 12, 1933 and 1944” might be seen pretty frequently on the Internet. Apart from that, the Kazakhs in Germany attach great significance to the admission of their ancestors to Turkey as refugees from East Turkestan on March 12, 1952 which takes very important place in their collective memory. As an illustration, one of the respondents articulated their perception of this historical event using the subsequent verbiage:

“As it is known, Kazakh Turks were admitted to Turkey on March 13, 1952, with the decision taken by the Council of Ministers under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. For this reason, Kazakh Turks are grateful to Adnan Menderes and to the entire Turkish people. We remember with mercy our ancestors who brought us to these days through these difficult paths, and we bow down in their presence. May their souls rest in peace. Alhamdulillah, how lucky we are that we are the children of such noble ancestors!”

(Interviewee, 56 year-old male)

For the Kazakhs who were exiled from East Turkestan, this date is a special day that includes meanings such as social mourning, trauma, remembering what was lost and commemorating the victims. As we can see from the above statement of the respondent, the historical events in the past become central to the diaspora group's identity and unite its members through feelings of pride, humiliation or grief. As Assmann & Czaplicka (1995) state, interpreting and remembering historical events involves relating them to these collectively shared referents from the past. In this way, collective memories help the diaspora to come together through an “imprecise process of imagination.” (p. 128). In the case of the Kazakh diaspora and its connection to traumatic memories of the past, in the “presence of the past” can be observed a mentality of victimization and survival against omnipresent threats that permeates the concept of diaspora identity, evaluation of historical events.

When the interviewees were asked what motivated them to share the content regarding the exodus of Kazakhs from East Turkestan, they answered: “I want other people to know our history”, “I want our traumatic past not be forgotten by our children, so I want to raise awareness and remind them who we are actually”, “We should not forget how our ancestors sacrificed themselves to save us and bring us to the free world”. The significance of diaspora identity may diminish if the narratives surrounding the trauma and loss of the exodus cease to hold relevance. This is due to the fact that according to the oral histories of Kazakhs, the primary motivation behind their outmigration from the original homeland was to preserve their ethnic and religious identity. Back in 1940s there was a prevailing concern among Kazakhs that the Chinese government might potentially curtail their religious and ethnic identities as it was stated in the Chapter III. One viable approach to maintaining a consistent practice of Kazakh cultural identity necessitated involuntary departure from their ancestral homeland to the “free world”, although at the cost of several sacrifices. The act of sacrificing the lives of the beloved ones and leaders of the community resulted in a heightened sense of solidarity among people inside the group. Consequently, the commemoration of the victims of

the Chinese oppression and traumatic exodus holds a prominent place in Kazakh diaspora community in Germany. These ceremonies serve as forums for the Kazakh community to congregate and be reminded of their distinctive history of migration.

The Kazakh diaspora under consideration, as one of the victim diasporas, has been largely founded on narratives centered around tragic historical events. Older generation Kazakhs often try to preserve these foundational narratives as a way of transmitting on and maintaining identity for future generations and fostering a sense of connection to their roots and heritage:

“None of us will live are forever. We are the generation that connects the youth with the past. If not us, who will tell them about the sad events of the past? Our descendants must remember the tragic days of the past so that we do not disappear as Kazakhs in a foreign country.”

(Interviewee, 79 year old female)

The discussions during the interviews has shown that how Chinese oppressive politics towards local Kazakhs in East Turkestan and subsequent forced outmigration from original homeland, trauma of exodus in the long journey via Tibet, Taklamakan, India, Pakistan and especially settlement to Turkey as refugees occupies an important place in the collective memory of the Kazakh community in Germany. While engaging in discussions with both older community members and younger generation Kazakhs it was clear that although they have not personally experienced the exodus from homeland, they possess sufficient knowledge about it due to the narratives shared within the community. Furthermore, it remains a significant factor in influencing the formation and preservation of their diasporic identity.

The collective memory of the new generation diaspora Kazakhs in Germany differs from the past experience of the older generations. Because they grew up at a time when a sovereign national state already existed on the world map, which could be considered as a (potential) historical homeland, since in 1991 in connection with the collapse of the USSR, Kazakhstan became an independent state and began to exist on the world map. In addition, this generation of diaspora is mostly too young to remember the traumatic past of their ancestors who wandered from East Turkestan to Turkey through Tibet, Pakistan, India and then to Germany, and saw it from afar, so must rely on the transmission of memories and mediated representations from generation to generation to understand its meaning. Consequently, it finds itself engaged in a paradoxical relationship: the past, in a sense, shapes the present, yet the future of the diaspora largely depends on how new generations interact

with the first two temporal segments. This raises the question of whether or not the new generations of the Kazakh diaspora can “move forward” reframe or even alter the traumatic narratives that have long been considered foundational to the diaspora’s identity. Hence, the significance of collective diaspora memory in preserving group identity becomes evident for the Kazakh diaspora members in Germany.

5.2. Rituals as a Cultural Space to Transmit the Kazakh Identity

The continuity of diasporic identities is closely related to the social practices that members carry out in the society they live in. Practice is the most important field of activity for diaspora members to maintain their cultural identities by being passed down through generations. In this context the significance of the rituals as a social practice in the diasporic experience is unavoidable. Rituals prioritize historical significance and unwavering devotion to the past, showcasing solid commitment to one’s ancestry and homeland. Butler emphasizes a significant requirement for the continuation of diasporas as the organizing of their rituals and the preservation of their traditions (Butler, 2001, p. 192). In this regard, during the participant observation of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany as a part of the field research in Munich it was witnessed that the Kazakhs still try to practice their rituals in significant life periods like birth, marriage, and death, as well as in accordance with the annual events. The impact of the rituals extends beyond the boundaries in time/space and continues to shape the community’s collective experience, owing to the unique significance they bestow upon on it. As it was observed, Kazakhs not only regularly meet with each other for Kazakh rituals only in Munich, but also visit each other for collective celebrations or rituals, for example, on the occasion of the birth of a child or the death of someone, and can come especially for this from Berlin, Cologne or from neighboring France for instance.

First collective gathering in which I participated was the 40 days funeral ritual for the deceased. The Kazakh funeral rituals take place on 3, 7, 40, 100 days and year after the death (Ohayon, 2023, p. 91). Participant observation of the Kazakhs in Munich has shown that feasts and rituals are highly organized activities that hold deep importance for Kazakh diaspora members and the space where Kazakh diaspora’s collective characteristics are more acutely manifested. Sharing the costs of a funeral, welcoming guests, and grieving as a family is a sign of high nobility for Kazakhs. Close relatives of the deceased greet guests who have arrived to express condolences. The relatives of the deceased slaughter cattle and give the

konakasy, a special dinner in honor of the deceased. Also at the end of the ritual, it was seen that the relatives of the deceased were handing out a piece of cloth called *zhyrtys* and is being distributed to the guests. In Kazakh traditions *zhyrtys* is distributed only if a person over 60 years of age dies, as a sign that everyone who receives a piece of cloth will reach the same age. The *zhyrtys* ritual still remains relevant. In this regard, rituals serve as cultural spaces that maintain and perpetuate acculturation, preserving and showcasing the religious and cultural identities of the Kazakh diaspora within the framework of continuity of the cultural codes. Sometimes ritual area is also some kind of the reflection of the homeland for the diaspora community, both spatially and culturally.

The second collective ritual in which I participated in Munich was *besik toy* a celebration dedicated to the birth of a child. A special Kazakh celebration *besik toy* is given to the laying down the baby into the cradle. “Besik” or “cradle” is sacred and valuable to every Kazakh family. The closest relatives on both sides are usually invited to this celebration. They bring gifts for mother and baby, and relatives of the both sides also exchange gifts. The eldest and wisest woman, most often the grandmother, places the child in the cradle. Towards the end of the celebration the tradition of *shashu* is performed when relatives of the child are showering guests with candies and coins during joyful moments. Guests must collect the scattered sweets which have a deep meaning- if you pick up a *shashu*, it means there will be such joy in your home as well. Kazakhs believe that this is a good omen and that the positive energy of a joyful event is transmitted through the *shashu*. Afterwards, lullabies are sung, danced and entertained. In these rituals, historical depth and loyalty to the past are emphasized and unshakable loyalty to the origins and homeland is demonstrated.

In this regard, rituals that keep images of the past and practices reminiscent of the past alive include both the effort to keep every detail the same and the selection and modification of some old or newly produced behaviors. Therefore, in the context of continuity, ritual can be considered as a “form of remembering” that refers to the past with constantly repeated behaviors and keeps the cultural memory alive. The process of transmitting culture to future generations will manifest as repetition, as long as rituals ensure the preservation of information that safeguards the identity of a certain society.

Figure 4. Kazakh cradle Besik put during the celebration of Besik Toy in Munich



Source: Author.

The interconnection between homeland culture and diaspora might be a sign of connectedness with their ethnic past. The enduring presence of the imagined community and homeland inside the collective consciousness is sustained by the observance of rituals, traditions, and customs. Consequently, subsequent generations remain connected to their diasporic and transnational identity, ensuring its perpetuation (Cohen, 2008). For example, our participants of the interviews expressed their relation to Kazakh culture and traditions using the following words:

“We still try to preserve and support all Kazakh traditions. For example, we prepare Kazakh national dishes. I mainly cook kozhe, boursak, beshparmak from Kazakh cuisine. And we have many traditional Kazakh items in the living room - kamchy, dombra, chapan, taqiya. We celebrate Kazakh national holidays like Oaza Ait, Kurban Ait, Nauryz. During traditional holidays we rent a hall here in Munich and gather to celebrate together. During the Nauryz holiday, children in traditional Kazakh outfits dance “Kara Zhorga” on stage and sing national songs. Many are surprised by the beauty of our nation and are interested in our traditions.”

(Interviewee, 54 year-old female)

“Both my parents tried to bring us up in a Kazakh environment, in an environment where Kazakh culture is often promoted. They even strictly monitored our emphasis on Kazakh culture and traditions. I remember, when I was little, my mother used to take me to dombra lessons. And my sister used to dance “Kara zhorga”. Thus, we did not separate from our Kazakhness. Here

every Kazakh knows that adults must be respected and they have a place of honor at the table. We take blessings from the elders and stay loyal to our traditions. It is important for us to preserve culture and traditions.”

(Interviewee, 28 year-old male)

Figure 5. “Little Kazakh corner” in the home of Kazakhs in Munich



Source: Author.

In this context, the above-mentioned elements of the Kazakh culture like national dishes, items, traditional symbols, musical instruments, and dance are a way for Kazakhs in Germany to satisfy their sense of community, keep alive the images of the past and practices reminiscent of the past and to express their cultural identities in various ways, to increase diaspora self-consciousness among the members of it. According to the responders, it is quite difficult to envision any Kazakh celebration in Germany without Kara Jorga dance. At weddings, Kazakhs engage in dancing as a means of experiencing pleasure and celebrating the union of the bride and groom. Conversely, in public ceremonies and festivals, Kara zhorga serves as a form of expressing Kazakh cultural identity. One of our respondents also noted the impact of the national symbols to his diasporic consciousness with the following expression:

“My parents used to put the Kazakh national symbolic things and souvenirs that they brought from Kazakhstan in a visible place, emphasizing their connection to our heritage. They would deliberately hang various pictures related to the Kazakh

our culture and national instruments on the wall at home. For example, now I have a dombra hanging in my private room. Raised in such an environment, we grew up with the consciousness of being Kazakh from our childhood.”

(Interviewee, 31 year old male).

While conducting fieldwork in Munich, it was observed that the majority of Kazakhs in the German diaspora maintain Kazakh national symbols in their homes, such as portraits of the Altay Mountains, Kazakh souvenirs, home decorations, and musical instruments like dombyra. These items hold symbolic significance for them and serve as a means of connecting with their cultural heritage and attachment to the past.

In addition to this, participants were queried about their perceptions of German and Kazakh cultures during the interview. The participants' feedback indicated a prevailing perception of German culture as “cold”. There is a possibility to discuss a consensus among the participants that German culture is perceived as more emotionally distant. In contrast, the opposite statements are made for Kazakh culture which was characterized as “warm”. Furthermore, it has been asserted that Germans exhibit more distant familial relationships compared to Kazakhs which will be further discussed in the next sub-chapter.

5.3. Tribal Identity Practices and Ethnic Marriage

The primary manifestation of preserving the Kazakh identity and cultural values among Kazakhs in Germany is seen in their familial and kinship relations. The presence of a family institution is evident, as by the preservation of marriage and child-rearing practices. Family traditions in Kazakh diaspora have many unique features in terms of naming their descendants, in the status of a person according to his age, as well as in the principles of raising children. Raising children and various rituals associated with the growing up of a child have a religious nature, and here one can feel the symbiosis of Muslim and nomadic traditions. Family relationships are built on a special hierarchy, and much attention is paid to family ties, which also manifest itself in belonging to a particular clan.

First of all, it is worth noting the principle of “*Jeti ata*” (translated from Kazakh as “seven fathers”) which formed the institution of family ties. Genealogy had a vital role in shaping the Kazakhs' group identity, given its nomadic heritage. Schatz (2004) elucidates that when nomads used to gather on the steppe after exchanging greetings, they commonly would ask about their clan affiliation with the question “*Qay Elsiz?*” (To which clan do you belong

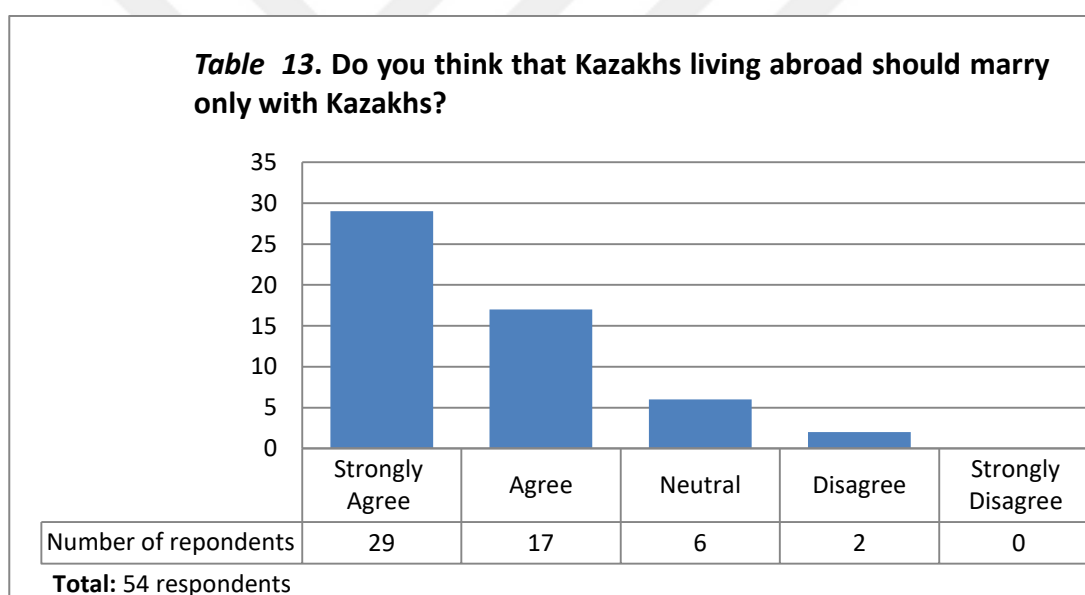
to?). The response was framed by retelling lineage of 7 generation ancestors (Schatz, 2004, p. 28). The *ru* (clan) system existed historically even before the process of formation of the Kazakh identity which still continues to exist today as sub-identities of the Kazakh identity both in Kazakhs in Kazakhstan and abroad. Tribal affinities and clan ties have been remaining an integral component of the Kazakh diaspora's ethnic identity. The knowledge of someone's *ru* (clan), tribe and ancestors in seven generations has been for every Kazakh a prerequisite for realizing tribal identity and through this the transmission of the Kazakh traditions. *Jeti ata* traditions distinguish the Kazakhs from other communities (Arġınbayev, 1996, p. 21). A person who does not know his seven ancestors is seen as not noble (*Jeti atasın bilmegen jetesiz*) (Nazarbayev, 1999, p. 28). Belonging to a certain clan unequivocally illustrates the significance of genealogy in enabling Kazakhs to assert their ethnic identity. Not having a clan is synonymous with not being a Kazakh. That is why belonging to one of the clan is considered to be a backbone of Kazakh ethnicity and serves as an additional means of confirming an individual's Kazakh identity (Muldagaliyeva, 2015, p. 81). During the fieldwork it was learned that Kazakh diaspora members in Germany whose ancestors were dispersed from East Turkestan mainly belonged to the Kazakh clans from *Orta zhuz* such as *Nayman*, *Uaq* and *Kerey*. Each *Nayman* or *Kerey* clan also consists of sub-clans which was mentioned by the reporter as belonging them to the sub-clans such as *Abaq*, *Molky*, *Jadik*, *Jantekey*, *Iteli*, *Chakabay*, *Tasbike* and etc. On the other hand, kinship refers to a set of customs and practice that govern the behavior and social interactions of individuals belonging to the Kazakh community. Clan system has demonstrated its effectiveness throughout the years, and even in the German host society context, it continues to unite the Kazakh community. Common behavioral traits observed within tribal systems include a strong sense of togetherness, adherence to certain marriage norms, and the practice of commemorating ancestors who experienced exile from homeland. As per the tribal script, being a Kazakh entails providing assistance to other clansmen at times of both happiness and hardship.

Even now, regardless of place of residence- at home or abroad, it is customary for every Kazakh individual to possess the ability to enumerate their own ancestral lineage up to the seventh generation (known as *Jeti ata*), together with their clan belonging (*ru*). This genealogical custom is considered to be an important Kazakh identity marker and one of the indicators of the "Kazakhness" of Kazakhs. Moreover, the ancestry of Kazakhs has a significant role in governing their social conduct. The reason for this is, first of all, each person is considered close relatives up to seven grandfathers. Secondly, in Kazakh traditions

marriage between relatives up to seven generations is prohibited. This is why people used to ask about their clan and family name when they met each other and every Kazakh is considered to know his ancestry. From a young age, special attention is paid to introducing to the child his/ her cousins, relatives, cognates, ancestors, clansmen and etc. So the oral tradition of (re)telling genealogy continues to persist alongside the written practice among the Kazakhs of Germany to this day. The role of kinship in preserving and perpetuating the sense of “Kazakhness” among the Kazakhs in Germany is evident, hence contributing to the preservation of the larger Kazakh ethnic identity within the context of living as diaspora in the host society environment.

As it was obvious from the personal interviews with participants, elderly members of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany are concerned about preserving the Kazakh national heritage and identity of the younger generation and the extent to which the latter will be able to pass on their culture to future generations. Integration is welcomed, but assimilation is categorically rejected by them. It was stated that maintaining a vibrant Kazakh diaspora for several generations was largely achieved through joint efforts to unite young people and mono-ethnic marriages between European Kazakhs and Kazakhs from Turkey. In this regard, in the ethnic diaspora’s survival strategy as a minority in host environment ethnic marriages obviously play a key role. As the interviewees claim, when Kazakhs first settled to Turkey and further to Germany, Kazakh young people were not allowed to marry their daughters outside of Kazakhs in order to protect their identity. Generally evaluating, in the Kazakh diaspora, the older generation does not welcome interethnic marriages. Kazakhs mostly prioritize marrying individuals of Kazakh ethnic due to shared ancestral roots, which as they claim, results in enhanced compatibility and marital resilience. Such an ethno-differentiating role, manifested in family and marital relations, is played by self-awareness which gives Kazakhs the opportunity to try to isolate themselves from other ethnic groups in a foreign environment and emphasize their connection or belonging to the Kazakh ethnic group. It seems that another important reason for not welcoming mixed marriages is the religious factor, which is highly developed among German Kazakhs. In addition to the fact that members of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany give priority to people from their own ethnic group in choosing spouses, it is important to note that marriages between close relatives are strictly forbidden up to seventh degree of consanguinity and are not approved. The principle of endogamy and the avoidance of marriages between close relatives are the key factors that shape the determining elements of their identity.

In relation to the issue of the marriage practices of the Kazakhs in Germany, we are also able to present current present patterns of ethnic homogeneity or heterogeneity within the representatives of the Kazakh diaspora in Munich as a result of the fact that we have polled respondents in our questionnaire from which ethnic background they choose spouses. *Table 13* below reveals that the overwhelming majority of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany continue to choose partners of the same ethnic background for marriage. More specifcally, 53.7% of the total 54 respondent of the survey which equals to 29 individuals attach enormous importance to the ethnic marriages with Kazakhs among the Kazakhs living abroad while 17 individuals making up 31,5 % of the polled also place significance on national marriages with Kazakhs only. On the other hand, 6 individuals have a “neutral” stance towards marrying only with the Kazakhs while another 2 respondents “disagree” with the obligation of the marriage being solely based on ethnic identity.



Several respondents highlighted the similar expression that Kazakhs in Germany communicate well with each other and invite Kazakhs to their weddings where single Kazakh youth have an opportunity to meet a future spouse. Also it was stated that their parents say that “Kazakhs should marry only with Kazakhs”. One of the respondents stated: “When our ancestors were dispersed and exiled from our homeland East Turkestan to preserve their ethnic identity, to their clan and nation, they married exclusively with Kazakhs. Therefore, we are often reminded that we should choose only Kazakh as spouses.” Interethnic marriages were uncommon among the the first and second generation Kazakhs while they started to be slightly occurred more often among the third generation Kazakhs who mainly started to marry

Turks in Germany. Representatives of the young Kazakh diaspora adhere to a completely different point of view for whom ethno-national motives are not as important as for their elders. The youth of Germany are naturally also influenced by European trends and social interactions. According to some respondents, the primary reason why young Kazakhs in Germany do not find it strange to marry someone from different ethnic is that due to the small number of Kazakhs in Munich, everyone knows each other and feels like relatives since being raised up from the childhood together. Nevertheless, almost all of the Kazakh youth in Germany do not prefer to marry someone who is not from the same Muslim religious affiliation. One of our 27 year-old female respondent emphasized that her primary criterion for a potential spouse is that he should be a Muslim, regardless of his nationality being Kazakh or not. Nevertheless she claims that her parents would prefer to see only Kazakh as her partner. Moreover, marriage with Turks is not also considered as something impossible by younger generation Kazakhs. Because it is believed that there is not much difference between marrying a Turk and marrying a Kazakh. Most of the young Kazakh participants expressed this situation. The main reason for this is that Kazakhs and Turks are not seen as ethnically as different by them.

Hence, the elder generation of Kazakhs endeavors to acquaint their grown offspring with one another and avoids marrying their daughters off to individuals from other ethnic backgrounds. German Kazakhs have the belief that by doing this, they will safeguard their ethno-cultural heritage. In light of this circumstance, Kazakhs residing in Germany endeavor to develop a cohesive bond with Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Europe. Transnational marriages with Kazakhs from Kazakhstan or Turkey are widely accepted and routinely conducted. In this regard, although a significant portion of Kazakhs do not have a negative attitude towards other ethnic groups, the situation is different when it comes to marriage. In this context, we can state that marriages among the Kazakh community in Germany are mostly internal marriages. Although they have easily adapted culturally to the host society they live in, Kazakhs are relatively conservative in marriages. Kazakhs who are living far from their homeland wish to maintain their diaspora identity through such exclusive Kazakh ethnic marriages.

In conclusion, it is possible to assert that there are meaningful relationships between identity and the practices that serve to sustain and maintain diasporic identity. The data collected during the fieldwork in Munich suggests that the Kazakh diaspora in Germany actively strives to preserve the distinctive aspects of their cultural heritage and ethnic identity

using different strategies despite the challenges of living in the dominant culture of the host country. Several factors, including collective memory of the past, familial links, ethnic marriage regulations, social relations are the defining characteristics of the process of sustaining ethnic identity among the Kazakh diaspora in Germany. As stated by Wenger (1999), the concept of identity refers to the manner in which individuals articulate their own history and sense of self within the context of the society, on the other hand practice serves as a means by which individuals demonstrate their connectivity with the collective historical and social resources that are shared within their community (p. 5).

5.4. Kurultay: the Role of Festival in Reinforcing the Kazakh Identity

Diaspora employs some strategies to preserve their cultural heritage and foster their sense of belonging to their country of origin which sometimes may include intimate cultural gatherings, festivals, and celebrations. Festivals have a crucial role in connecting diaspora individuals to their communities and fostering a strong sense of group identification. They also serve as a vital means of transmitting cultural legacy. Consequently, festivals expand beyond the local area, attracting a broader and more varied range of participants, fostering cultural interconnectedness and a feeling of belonging. Following their participation in such activities, the diaspora is afforded the chance to establish connections with their co-ethnics forge new friendships, enhance relationships with their compatriots from other communities (Kahuno, 2017, p. 41). In this context, holding regular Kurultays ⁵ is a prominent practice observed annually by thousands of Kazakhs, not only from Germany but also from other European countries. For the last 20 years, members of the Kazakh diaspora in Europe living far from their historical homeland have been regularly organizing the Kurultay (gathering) of the Kazakhs of Europe where hundreds of Kazakhs from different countries of Europe meet each other, especially it enables young Kazakhs born and raised in foreign countries to meet and mingle with each other and experience the sense of collective meeting of Kazakhs. Kurultay of European Kazakhs is held every year in different cities of Europe and plays an important role in maintaining and strengthening the transnational relations. Each of the European cities where Kazakhs from Turkey live in large numbers has its own association or Kazakh cultural center which is in turn, are part of the Federation of European Kazakh Associations (FEKA) founded in 2009 and located in Munich, Germany. FEKA acts as an umbrella organization for a total of 10 Kazakh associations in Europe from Austria, Denmark,

⁵ *Kurultay is a national congress (meeting) among the Mongolian and Turkic peoples.*

France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and etc. (Kesici, 2014, p. 60). As it was stated by interview participants, at Kazakh Kurultay you can meet not only European Kazakhs whose ancestors are from East Turkestan and settled in Turkey in the mid-20th century, but also those who recently migrated from Kazakhstan. In addition, the European Kazakhs Kurultay is held with the participation of the head of world Kazakh diaspora foundation “Otandastar” headquartered in Astana, the representatives of the World Kazakhs Association headquartered in Almaty, Kazakhstani government representatives, well-known names of Kazakhstani science, literature and art circles, media and music, dance groups (Mendikulova, 2014).

At Kurultay it is possible to meet the representatives of diaspora from every generation: from elderly individuals, longing for their homeland to adolescents who want to establish connections with their historical homeland. Abdulkayum Kesici the Chairman of the FEKA whom I met in Munich highlighted the following: “Young people should integrate here into the host society, learn German, get a good education and get to know German culture. However, at the same time, they must preserve our Kazakh culture and not to forget their Kazakh roots”. He calls young Kazakh diaspora members in Europe “Euro-Kazakhs” and claims that they are highly educated, multilingual and mobile between countries and cultures therefore regarding them it is possible to use the term of “Euro-Kazakh” identity which is practiced in such Kurultays. Furthermore, Abdurahman Doğudurak the Chairman of the Kazakh association in Munich noted that their main goal in organizing Kurultays is to give young ethnic Kazakhs in Europe the opportunity to get to know each other, establish and strengthen new connections. Moreover, “One of the goals of the kurultay we organize some specific events for young people is to meet and find their future life partner as well” he added with smile.

Such gatherings are of great importance for Kazakhs living far from their homeland. This is an opportunity to meet and communicate with their co-ethnics, practice Kazakh culture and language, and of course not to forget their roots. Moreover, Kurultay is a platform where Kazakhs have the opportunity to raise and discuss crucial matters of the diaspora living abroad such as national identity and traditions, customs, values, the preservation of Kazakh national culture, the education, support and development of the Kazakh language abroad, the consolidation of the foreign Kazakh diaspora, the creation of conditions for the development of close contacts with compatriots living in Europe, education of Kazakh youth in their

homeland and etc. For this purpose, special round table meetings are held within the framework of the Kurultay programs.

Since 2002, Kurultays have been held in many locations around Europe, including Paris, Munich, Cologne, London and etc. In 2023 between 26-28 May the Kurultay of the European took place in Germany which was attended by more than two thousand Kazakhs. In particular, it was attended by the heads of more than 20 Kazakh organizations from 15 European countries, Advisor of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Malik Otarbayev, President of the “Otandastar” Diaspora Foundation (ODF) Abzal Saparbekuly and representatives of the Kazakh diasporas in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, Finland, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Great Britain and representatives of the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Germany (Naimanbayeva, 2023).

The duration of a Kurultai typically spans for three or four days. As highlighted by the Kazakhs in Munich, the inaugural day of the Kurultay often starts with commemorating the victims of the Great Kazakh Exodus from East Turkestan who lost their lives from Chinese troops or from the disasters on Himalayan, Tibetan slopes and the desert of Taklamakan on their journey for the “free world” and reciting Quran-Hatim in honor of them. During such commemoration rituals, Kazakhs reflect on their diaspora history, establish a connection with their past, and transfer knowledge about their ancestors to the future generation. Hence, it is contended here that the act of commemorating the martyrs (şehit) of the dispersion plays active role in the restoration of social cohesion and the delineation of ethnic identity. As stated by Assman & Czaplicka, the reason why collective memory comes to the fore is that ancestors who have been exposed to heavy disasters and traumatic events in the past and lost their lives (Assman & Czaplicka, 1995, p.17). It is in this context that the power of collective memory in diaspora reveals itself. The act of remembering and not allowing to forget the traumatic past by keeping the pain “alive”. Such collective memory of Kazakhs in Europe plays a crucial role in preserving Kazakh diasporic awareness and promoting community cohesion through the transmission of knowledge between generations.

Commemorating rituals in Kurultay is being followed by round table where Kazakh diaspora community leaders convene to discuss the challenges faced by the Kazakh diaspora in Europe with the governmental officials who came from Kazakhstan. Speaking at the Kurultay, Abzal Saparbekuly, the President of the ODF who is the linking figure between Kazakh diaspora abroad and Kazakhstan, focused on the importance of such Kurultays with the following statement:

“Holding kurultays among the Kazakhs of Europe, which began in the nineties of the last century, has become a tradition today. While abroad, you do everything possible to preserve our national values. We appreciate this very much. We are with you all the time. Always ready to provide support”.

(Otandastar, 2023).

In this context, we can observe that Kazakhstan is increasingly developing policies, building institutions and implementing programs in order to portray and construct Kazakhstan as the homeland representing Kazakhs in the world in the eyes of Kazakh diasporas abroad, reinforce the Kazakh national identity, to reach their diasporas outside its borders. The homeland's affirming and all-encompassing communication reconstructs the formerly stateless identities of the diaspora and enhances their sense of self-esteem. The growing involvement of the home state Kazakhstan with the diaspora also strengthens them by serving as a reminder that the motherland is prepared to provide assistance to its compatriots residing outside. These messages redirect the homeland affiliation towards Kazakhstan.

Festivals promote ethnic comprehension and so contribute to the recollection of the diaspora history and preservation of national traditions. Besides, diaspora share also include elements such as language, common symbols, religion, shared ideas, habits, conventions, historical events, rituals, values, worldviews, common ancestry, and geographic location of the homeland. Although it may be more challenging to practice these elements in diaspora members' daily lives, they become very noticeable and possible during festivals. During the festival, one straightforward and precise activity is to identify cultural icons, such as local cuisine, traditional attire, music, and dance that represent the community. Through festivals participants of it demonstrate their cultural values and people put greater effort into expressing and presenting their ethnic identity to themselves and to others (Kahunu, 2017, p. 41). In this regard, every Kurultay of European Kazakhs consists of a different sports and cultural program: a football tournament, a marathon, national entertainment programs for children, an exhibition of applied arts, a concert, a youth conference and other cultural events. In Kurultays it is also possible to try Kazakh traditional dishes. For representatives of the Kazakh diaspora living abroad, this is a special event.

During a span of Kurultay days, there held a series of events including concerts, cultural events where Kazakhstani state-sponsored singers and, musicians, traditional music ensembles, dancing troupes, and solo artists performs on the stage. During the kurultay there is an opportunity to indulge in a variety of Kazakh foods and drinks including kymyz produced in Germany. There is also a painting exhibition, and an art exhibition and fair of

featuring craftsmen from Kazakhstan where it is possible to see and buy items crafted from felt and leather, as well as traditional Kazakh clothing, accessories, jewelry, souvenirs, and other goods.

Figure 6. Kazakhs in 2023 Kurultay in Cologne.



Source: Photos from the personal archive of Kazakhs in Munich.

During the festival, a sequence of football matches also takes place with various Kazakh football teams representing their respective diaspora communities from different European countries and cities. According to Unutulmaz (2018), sports tend to be a public platform for the minority groups in the host society like diaspora to actively shape their cultural identities. Sports have been utilized by many social groups, especially minorities, to create, express, and maintain a unique ethnic and cultural identity (Unutulmaz, 2018, p. 182).

In this regard, Kazakh diaspora in Germany also in Europe use football as a tool for gathering together the “compatriots” and constructing collective identity and sense of

“togetherness”. As it was stated by one of the respondents, despite being opponents on the football field with Kazakh players from different countries, when the match finishes, off the field they are “kandas” (kinsman). Having gotten to know each other, they exchange phone numbers, establish connections, and build contacts. “Such sport events especially raise the spirit of our unity” he claims. In this regard, Sport is often seen as the most comprehensive tool with the ability to establish and maintain a feeling of identity and belonging that is essential for community making (Unutulmaz, 2018, p.183-184).

It should be noted that over the last three decades, Kazakhstan has entered a new phase in its relationship with its diaspora community which is evident by a series of initiatives to expand the Astana’s influence over its diaspora and the promotion of a more inclusive discourse addressing Kazakhs compatriots abroad. Special diaspora organizations have been created like ODF playing a key role in the diaspora affairs of Kazakhstan. In addition to the Kurultays in Europe, World Kurultay of Kazakhs is being held in Kazakhstan in which ethnic Kazakhs from different countries participate. On September 29, 1992 which became a historical date for the fate of the entire Kazakh diaspora, the opening of the First World Kurultay of Kazakhs (FWKK) took place, almost a year after Kazakhstan gained independence (Mendikulova, 2014). According to Kuscu Bonnenfant (2012), the FWKK was characterized by a festival atmosphere and was depicted as a joyful celebration of the newly established homeland in Kazakh-language media. It was during the FWKK that the ex-President of the country Nazarbayev addressed all Kazakhs living in more than 50 countries of the world with a call to return to their historical homeland - Kazakhstan (Kuscu Bonnenfant, 2012, p. 32). The result of the FWKK was the creation of the World Association of Kazakhs (WAK) geared on the construction and management of a more ambitious diaspora strategy. Nazarbayev’s main task was to establish connections with Kazakhs living abroad, address national and cultural issues, as well as attract Kazakhs for investing in newly founded homeland (Kuscu Bonnenfant, 2012).

The diaspora policies of Kazakhstan was not just directed towards naming it as homeland, but rather was engaged in shaping it through the discourses and actions of the political and cultural elite. In this regard, it would be worth to pay attention to the 2017 speech of the former President of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev at the 5th World Kurultay of Kazakhs in Astana:

“Dear compatriots! No matter where you are from, there is only one historical homeland for all Kazakhs in the world, and it is Kazakhstan where every handful of the soil is sacred! The last 20th century was full of doom and very difficult

years for Kazakhs. We have seen hardships that no human has experienced; there is no darkness that Kazakhs have not seen...Today's meeting is mainly attended by the young generation. I would like to thank their parents and ancestors who did not allow their children to forget their roots, that they are Kazakhs, preserve their ancestral traditions, and not forget their mother tongue. Even if they live abroad all their lives, our brothers and sisters should recognize their historical homeland. We did not forget to support our compatriots abroad during the years of Independence. The door of Kazakhstan is always open, wide open, to every Kazakh who is longing for his country, his land."

(Nazarbayev, 2017).

This statement reveals Kazakhstan's growing interest in its expatriates living abroad. Such rhetoric of the leader of Kazakhstan did not go unnoticed. It was received with great enthusiasm by the Kazakh diaspora as the respondents in Munich stated. Like Brubaker (1996) emphasizes, "Homelands are constructed through political action not given by the facts of ethnic demography" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 58). Similarly, the Kazakhstani leader used a rhetoric that portrayed the exodus of the Kazakh diaspora from their homeland as a result of traumatic events and victimization thus touching upon their collective memory. In this regard, Kurultay also served as a platform by using the political discourse to appeal to the Kazakh diaspora abroad and construct Kazakhstan as the "one and only homeland" where all Kazakhs longing for homeland can return. In this regard, it could be argued that Kurultays is the space where Kazakh diaspora members are involved the process of constructing, negotiating, interpreting and re-interpreting their identity and homeland perception.

To sum up, it can be concluded that festivals like Kurultay function as a space that fulfills the need for belonging and "helps in the formation of personal and collective identities having the potential to cultivate or enhance a feeling of affiliation with a certain location or homeland" (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013, 213). It is crucial, particularly when transnational groups such as diaspora face challenges in preserving their identity in the context of the host community and encounter various forms of difficulties in practicing homeland culture due to the lack of space where they can experience and practice it (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013). In this way, the efforts of diaspora in organizing and in participating in such festivals like Kurultay is "a confirmation of people's coming together for the purposes of social cohesion, to showcase one shared culture and demonstrate a sense of belonging in the community" (Kahuno, 2017, 41).

5.5. Outsider or Insider? Being not German in “das Volk” society

One salient concern pertaining to the diaspora identity is around the emergence of identity issues resulting from the acceptance by the host society which sometimes presents challenges in the processes of identity development. Diasporic communities have a quandary in balancing their integration into the host society culture and their will to maintain their own original identity (Boekstijn, 1988). And here we come to another characteristic of the diaspora phenomenon, which we can call the factor of the dominant society or the environment of the diaspora. The academic literature on diaspora suggests that its members do not believe that they are an integral part and may never be able to be fully accepted by the society of residence and for this reason they at least partially feel alienated from this society (Safran, 1991; Cohen, 2008). The feeling of alienation is primarily associated with social factors, especially with discrimination, racism and the diminished status of members of a particular group. The factor of alienation might be related to the cultural differences, linguistic barrier, a phenotypic (racial) difference, religious difference and etc. But even successful social integration and a favorable (or neutral) socio-political environment cannot eliminate the feeling of alienation for the diaspora.

According to the fieldwork data conducted in Munich, the vast majority of the interviewees stated that they had been either excluded or discriminated and faced racism because of being a foreigner, a Kazakh, an Asian or Muslim in Germany at some point in their lives:

“In the context of my daily encounters in Germany, I am occasionally reminded of my Kazakh identity due to being Asian. This is evident, for instance, when I encounter individuals on the street who, in a triumphant manner, vocalize derogatory phrases such as “Ching Chang Chong” while simultaneously pulling the outer corners of their eyes upwards using their forefingers. Additionally, it is common for local Germans to express skepticism regarding my level of “Germanness,” a sentiment that many non-white individuals residing in Europe can attest to.”

(Interviewee, 30 year-old female).

“I have consistently had a sense of distinctiveness inside my German social circle implying that I did not belong to their group. I saw a sense of exclusion, as if I will never be able to merge into their group.”

(Interviewee, 21 year-old male).

“One night, while I was walking down the street, a group of German youngsters tried to beat me up. The reason was just because I was a foreigner and Asian in appearance. They asked me: “What are you doing here? Go back to your home!”. I am often exposed to racism at my workplace as well. No matter how perfect I speak German and try to act like a German, they always make me feel like I am a foreigner and they are the host. For example, my German colleagues do not call me by name, they use nicknames and make fun of me. I am very disturbed by this. I also find it disingenuous. I feel myself like a second class citizen even though in my passport it is written “Deutsch”...”

(Interviewee, 29 year-old male).

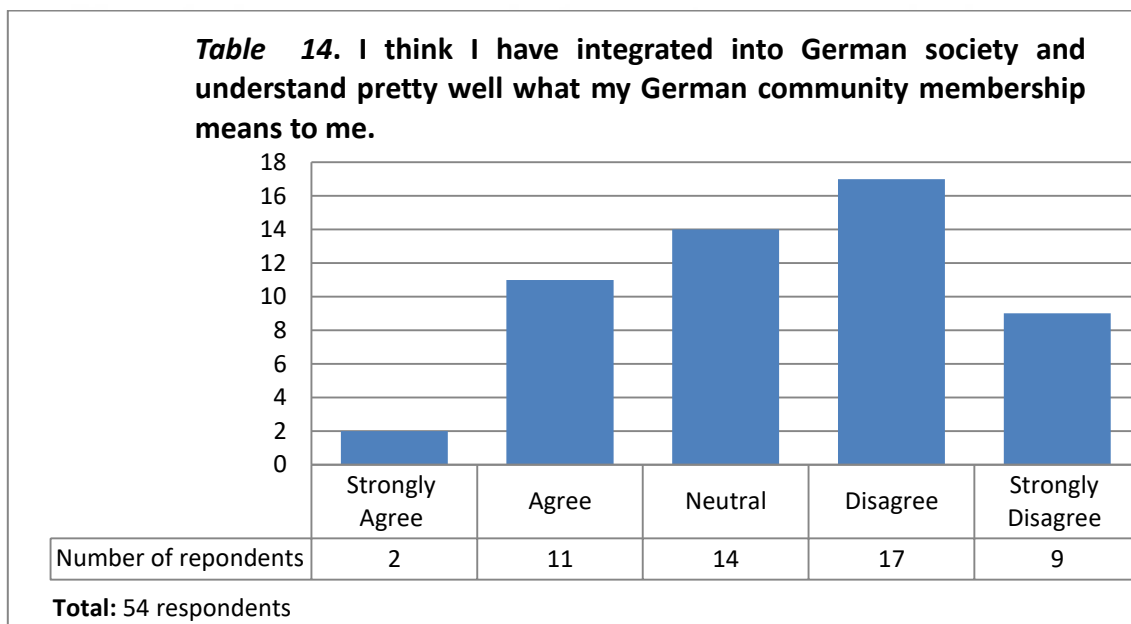
In alignment with the aforementioned experiences, a considerable number of our study participants expressed recollections pertaining to instances of racism or xenophobia in Germany. These cases provide as evident illustrations of the presence of racism, whether in a direct or indirect manner, inside the everyday life and in the public sphere and in the institutional context in Germany. Describing the complex nature of being an “*Ausländer*” (outsider) in German society and trying to find the ways to escape being labelled as such is an extremely difficult task. The aforementioned individuals have conveyed a feeling of estrangement from the dominant culture of the society in which they were born and raised. Several additional individuals associated this marginalization with racism, xenophobia, and other types of social exclusion that they experience in Germany. The concept of “guest worker” (*Gastarbeiter*) which was first used instead of foreigner in political and social literature in Germany created an understanding that offers a non-negative impression of impartiality towards foreigners in the perception of the temporarily of the stay, but when the duration of the stay began to extend, the questions like “Why don’t they go back?” were raised. The persistence of such concerns on the table for almost half a century has caused this perception to become unfavorable. These occasional incidents reinforce a sense of exclusion for diaspora members, immigrants, other minority groups and marginalize them within society.

Despite the liberal-democratic constitutional settlement that followed World War II, Germany is still perceived as a traditional ethno-cultural nation which resorts to an understanding of “Germanness” based on origins and the concept of political citizenship is believed to be excessively focused on the exclusionary blood ties of “*das Volk*” (the German people). Despite the fact that German identity is rooted in the process of constructing a nation-state, the entryway to the German Parliament, known as the Bundestag, is inscribed in capital letters with the phrase “*Dem Deutschen Volk*” which translates to “to the German

nation” (Vick, 2003, p. 241). This point leads us to question how to define being German or Germaneness since diaspora members experience the burden of conforming to a “German identity” that is rooted in German values rather than a multicultural identity. The “*Leitkultur*” (Leading culture) thesis put forward by Friedrich Merz, the former general secretary of the Christian Democratic Party in Germany, can be read in this context. According to this thesis, German culture is being threatened by the “disruptor minorities”. There is something in German culture and social interaction that unites people despite all their differences and foreigners have to accept this commonality, adopt the German “leading culture”. Consequently, the prevailing perspective among the German majority is that foreigners should adapt to German culture, reflecting a cultural assimilation standpoint stemming from this comprehension (Favel, 2001, p. 61). Merz’s statement is being the clearest example that foreigners in Germany are seen as a “threat” to the existing order and culture, and that it also finds support in intellectual circles (Bhabha, 2000, p. 112). Such perception of the dominance of a single culture in German society has an impact on discussions about cultural identity and what it means to be German. In this context, multiculturalism is now seen as an ideology that opposes the “leading culture” concept. However, the question that has not been answered so far in multiculturalism discussions is how to overcome the notion of seeing one’s own culture as superior which exists within racism. Multiculturalism debates in Germany are problematic because the boundaries of differences are determined by hegemonic debates, just like the boundaries of social rights (Agamben, 2004, p.22). A multi-cultural society can be considered realistic in an environment where the cultures of minorities gain equal and equivalent legitimacy to the culture of the majority, and accordingly, the culture of the minority and the “other” can be seen as belonging to the society by the majority. In the light of the discussion, it is worth noting that in 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel made a speech acknowledging that Germany had completely failed in its attempts to establish a multicultural society. Germany did not have the intention of becoming a multicultural society, but the decision to invite a labor force led to the immigration of the foreigners from different parts of the world (Spiegel, 2010). Schiffauer highlights that status of Germany a country of immigration is denied by the German society which resulting in those with a migrant background still being “associated with rather than integrated into German society” (Schiffauer, 2004, p. 95).

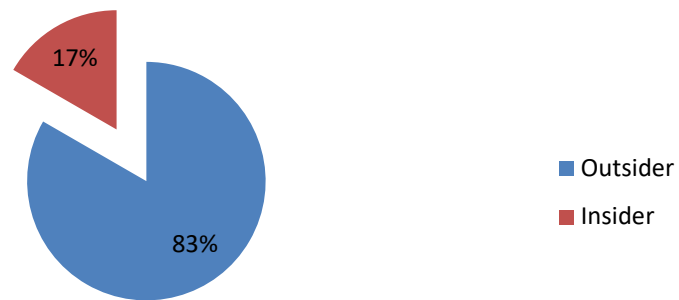
Diasporic identity is formed via interactions with the dominant culture. The attitude of the host society or majority group towards a “foreigner” has a significant influence in the

process of forming the identity of diasporic communities, as well as influencing their perception of “self”. In this regard, as a part of our field study in Munich we wanted to learn whether the Kazakh diaspora in Germany whose ancestors came as refugees to Turkey first and subsequently as guest workers to Germany believe that they are fully accepted in the host German society or not and whether they feel partly alienated and isolated from the dominant society or not. As we can see from the *Table 14* below only 24 % of the total participants (N=54) believe that they are integrated into German society and know what their German community membership means to them. On the contrary, 76 % of the total participants (N=54) hold the belief that they lack integration into German society and are uncertain about the significance of their membership in the German community.



Although the majority of Kazakhs born in Germany possess fluency in German and have studied and/or worked productively in the host state, having spent a significant portion if not all of their lives there, but still encounter substantial barriers to experiencing a sense of inclusion within German society and German community membership.

Table 15. How do you perceive the surrounding society where you are living now? Do you feel that you are considered as an “outsider” or “insider” ?



According to our questionnaire results presented in the *Table 15*, 83% (45 individuals) of the participants (N=54) reported feeling a lack of acceptance from the host community and being categorized as “outsiders.” The prevailing sentiment among the participants, where they perceive themselves as “outsiders” in German society, indicates that the Kazakh diaspora in Germany fulfills the third characteristic of Safran’s (1991) “ideal” diaspora. This characteristic entails the diasporic community’s belief that they are not fully embraced or accepted by the host society. On the other hand, 9 individuals about 17% of the total polled (N=54), expressed a sense of being an “insider and integration within German society.

Regarding this problem of belonging in Germany, one of our interview respondents shared with us her concerns of is being not being a German despite being born and raised there:

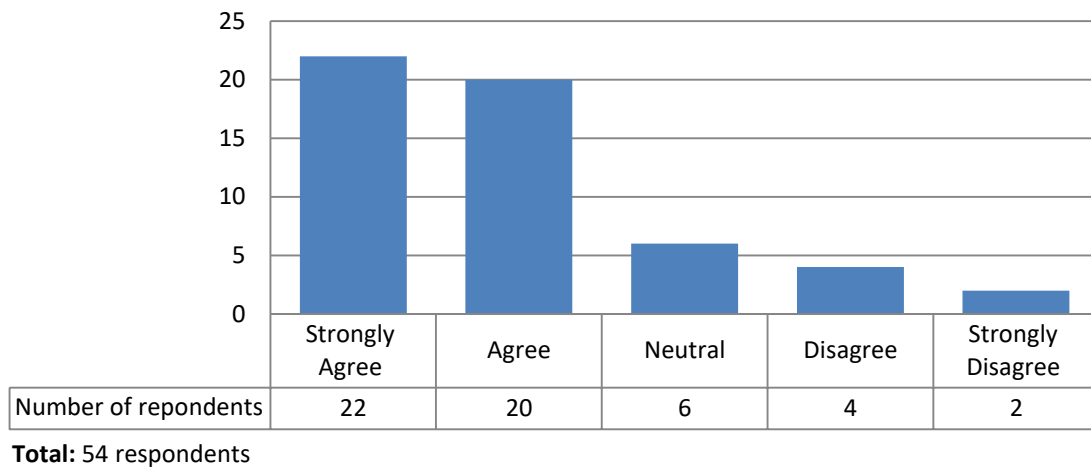
“...Since I am an Asian with almond-shaped eyes, practicing Islam and speaking German as native and on the other hand communicating with my family members in Turkish, with German passport people are largely curious about “Who I am actually”. In response to the frequently persistent, repetitious, and vexing query regarding my origins, I have consistently recounted the following narrative: “I was born in Germany, yet my lineage traces back to East Turkestan in China. Due to circumstances necessitating their departure from our native land, my ancestors embarked on a journey that took them through India and Pakistan, subsequently leading them to Turkey, and ultimately culminating in their settlement in Germany.” I need always such concise representation of myself for the sake of convenience. Having been raised as an outsider in this place, once you get that label, it essentially becomes permanent. This makes me to feel that full integration into German society will not be possible regardless of the pragmatic efforts I exert.”

(Interviewee, 25 year-old female)

This case demonstrates that the locals' persistent and repetitive interest about the origins of diaspora members in Germany has become a significant factor in the feeling of non-acceptance within the host community. This, in turn, affects how Kazakhs negotiate their identity and integration into the mainstream culture. The participant has harbor doubts about the feasibility of achieving complete integration into German society. Based on the interview, it can be argued that there is a focus on recognizing and acknowledging ethnic and cultural-religious distinctions. In addition to this, the respondent also highlighted that those who do not look like Germans (in her case being Kazakh with Asian race) will always be outsiders and will be stigmatized as "those who do not belong" to the majority. In this context, we acknowledge that physical characteristics play a crucial role in delineating ethnic identity boundaries due to their tangible and conspicuous nature, which allows them to be readily utilized as symbolic representations. Additionally, they serve as indicators of ethnic identification. On some circumstances, facial features sometimes might be not sufficient "to be German enough". Therefore, the concept of recognition raises another subject for scrutiny, namely physical features related to racial differences. The individual who encounters such hurdles in their personal life and subsequently in their public life experiences significant challenges in terms of integration and adaptation. Hence, the integration process is not just dependent on time, but also involves the foreigner is seen and perceived by the host society members on the one hand, and subsequently diaspora individuals constructing their own self-perception on the other hand. In this regard, the immigrant in the hostland experiences a "double otherness" because he/she is not "concretely present" in the home country and at the same time "abstractly absent" in the receiving country (Khidon, 2020, p. 71).

According to the data attained from the personal interviews, most Germans prefer to enter into an intimate social relationship with those they consider "like themselves" in their workplaces and other areas of daily social life. This introversion in social life and the demand to exclude those from other cultures makes the "foreigner" to feel more isolated and feel comfortable with the people from the same ethnic group or with other foreigners. Regarding this matter, we have inquired in our survey if our participants encounter instances of racism in their day-to-day lives in Germany or not:

Table 16. I face racism here in Germany because of my ethnic, religious or cultural identity or being Asian.



The diagram presented in *Table 16* depicts the perception of racism in Germany among members of the Kazakh diaspora residing in Munich. Merely 11% of the total participants (N= 54) reported that they have never experienced racism in their lifetime in which 2 individuals “strongly disagreed” and 4 individuals “disagreed” with the statement above regarding the racism. On the other hand, another 11% of the polled (6 people) decided to stay “neutral” to the issue of racism. And finally the vast majority of the population (78%) acknowledges the existence of racism as a reality in their daily lives. Individuals who experience racism are directly impacted when they are categorized as “other” based on their skin color or hair, their name, their cultural, ethnic, religious, or national backgrounds. This leads to the formation of the “us” solidarity among the members of the Kazakh diaspora that comes with sharing experiences of being excluded or suppressed which also strengthens the feeling of “being together”.

To gain a deeper understanding of the subjective encounters associated with racism, the participants of the personal interviews were posed the following inquiry: “Have you ever encountered racism? And if so, how and in which circumstances?” As informed by one interviewee, Kazakhs particularly in the initial stage of the Covid-19 pandemic were consistently viewed as probable transmitters of the virus due to their Asian ethnicity. This perception of threat led to the increase in discriminatory incidents against Kazakhs during the outbreak, surpassing any other points in time. Following the onset of the Covid-19, in Germany Kazakhs who are assumed to be Asian have reported experiencing an upsurge in

anti-Asian hate. *Ausländer* (foreigner) Kazakhs who had not attracted attention until that time with their Asian identities, suddenly turned into “threat” in the eyes of the majority.

The findings of the field study in Munich indicate that racism is a significant societal issue that impacts a considerable number of the Kazakh diaspora members in Germany, and it is evident via several manifestations. Some of the participants confirmed that they did not experience “active racism”, but rather “passive racism” and there is an institutional racism in Germany as well as subtle racism on a daily basis. During the group interviews with younger generation Kazakhs it has been noted that in addition to those who directly encounter instances of racism, there is also a prevalence of individuals in Germany who indirectly experience such occurrences. The participants expressed that racism exist inside living spaces, educational institutions, professional or social environments. It was claimed that Kazakh youth frequently encounters problems of isolation, intolerance, recognition and insufficient awareness within the educational environment. One of the 16 year-old female respondents of the school age with whose family I have conducted interview stated that the German educational system exhibits cultural prejudice and bias towards Germans compared to immigrants, sorting students into segregated performance tracks. As it was stated, immigrant children may sometimes encounter instances of unfair grading, and are frequently destined for failure. After finishing *Grundschule* (primary school) most of them are attending the least prestigious *Hauptschule* secondary school while entering *Gymnasium* which is the most prestigious one is almost an uphill battle. To verify the accuracy of this assertion, we have examined the statistical data pertaining to the matter. As Loewenberg (2006) states, Migrant children in Germany have a much higher attendance rate at *Hauptschule* compared to children from the same socioeconomic background. Although there have been some improvements, migrant children face a lack of representation in the most prestigious *Gymnasiums*. As he claims, the German education system is ineffective in addressing the challenges faced by students who are disadvantaged and marginalized due to their background, such as being ethnic or religious minorities (Loewenberg, 2006). This is perceived by some of the respondents as a fundamental issue in a society that still lacks acceptance towards the diaspora members as foreigners in the host society.

Furthermore, empirical data from the fieldwork suggests that younger generation diaspora members admit instances of racism more often in comparison to the elder generation who is inclined to articulate and conceptualize racism in a more explicit and tangible manner compared to the older generation. El-Mafalaani (2018) argues that racism does not occur

suddenly with the formation of new generations, but rather elucidates this phenomenon through the utilization of “the table metaphor”. He posits that “2nd generation in the host society aspire to occupy a seat at “this metaphorical table” and even want to be the decision maker about what is happening at the table compared to the 1st first generation who had no claims at the social level. They are happy to be in Germany and have been placed by the dominant society on the floor or smaller tables rather than the table. Second generation exhibit higher levels of social cohesiveness are due to the better knowledge of German compared to their predecessors and consider themselves as part of the host society. Thus, this generation demands a good seat at the table and at the same time wants a piece of the pie.” (El-Mafaalani, 2018, p. 78). In addition to this, the second and third generation Kazakhs are now taking an active role in empowering themselves via the digital media tools. They discuss their own encounters and perspectives on issues of racism, exclusion, and diversity in Germany. Put simply, Kazakh youth have an active role in interpreting the significance of their lives, navigating their cultural identities, and finding methods to harmonize their parental culture with the culture of the society in which they reside. Moreover, they showcase their commitment to acknowledging diversity and promoting social equality by expressing their own experiences via social media.

To summarize this part of the thesis, it can be claimed that mainly Kazakhs in Munich perceive themselves as “outsider” in the German host society and racism is an experience that is present in the daily life for the vast majority of the Kazakh diaspora members in Germany. During the interviews it was recorded that some Kazakhs experience direct instances of racism while others indirectly were affected by racism.

5.6. Negotiating Homeland and Identity in the Digital Space

The identity of diaspora communities transcends national borders and today, diaspora has gained another dimension due to the effects of globalization and acceleration in technology and the concept of “digital diaspora” has emerged. Digital diaspora is diaspora community that continues its interaction and communication through new technologies in the cyberspace to participate in online interactions of the community. Virtual diaspora is the real diaspora gaining a virtual dimension and being maintained in this area (Axel, 2004). Therefore, this process also enabled the reformulation of the diaspora identities in the virtual environment. For this reason, it was decided to include to our study online fieldwork as well which was very critical for us in order to understand how the Kazakh diaspora community

create a virtual transnational space, their relationships to their homeland, analyze identity construction of the Kazakh diaspora in digital space and explore modes of representing identity in cyberspace. Consequently, it was decided to conduct a virtual fieldwork in addition to the offline fieldwork in Munich which primarily included the observation and analyses of the online diaspora context and content-focused studies of their digital platforms and reading of the selected virtual texts. The virtual communities of the diaspora is considered as a collection of images and texts, hence, the virtual research primarily revolves around the examination of Facebook pages, discussion groups, and blogs of the Kazakh diaspora community in Germany, including their textual and visual content. These studies are grounded in discursive or rhetorical analyses of the content that the diaspora members uploaded in the digital space.

According to Cover (2015), during the 1990s and 2000s, in the nascent stages of the Internet, the concept of online identity was often perceived as artificial or detached from our authentic and physical selves. In contrast, in contemporary times it may be argued that the notion of identity is consistently present in the digital realm (Cover, 2015, p.11). This phenomenon occurs due to the fact that individuals continue to leave traces of their personal information on social networks, even when they are not actively engaged with digital devices. These traces play a significant role in shaping many aspects of our identity (Cover, 2015, p. 10). In essence, the majority of the actions and perceptions of an individual are actively manifested and readily discernible inside the realm of contemporary social media platforms. In contemporary times, it is of utmost importance to consider the manifold ramifications associated with the concept of online identity.

Nowadays diaspora members can easily maintain connections with their homeland through various means such as mobile phones, internet access, video communication, and through “virtual travel” to the homeland by the means of internet. This transnational digital social space is considered to be the primary environment in diaspora might feel a sense of belonging both to “here” and “there” in between (Tölölyan, 2012). In the modern era, the globalization and advancements in technology facilitated the establishment of a bridge between the Kazakh diaspora and home country- Kazakhstan. Due to the advent of social media and the internet, individuals are able to maintain communication with Kazakh individuals throughout the globe, facilitating the social interaction between diaspora members in the host state and compatriots in the homeland meeting in the “third space”. This phenomenon underscores the capacity of the digital space to provide opportunity for the

“virtual return” to the homeland instead of the physical one for diasporic communities like Kazakh in Germany.

The internet is increasingly being adopted by diaspora communities as a tool for accessing knowledge about their origins and homeland. In order to grasp the core of this discussion and to obtain a contextualized understanding of this topic, we inquired our respondents in our survey about their utilization of the Internet for conducting research on their ethnic background and homeland. As it can be seen from the *Table 17* and *Table 18*, the internet serves as a valuable source of information for Kazakh diaspora individuals in Germany for different generations of the community. It provides them with extensive knowledge about Kazakhstan and East Turkestan, including their history, traditions, and culture who have never been there before.

Table 17. I have often made a search in the internet and talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group:

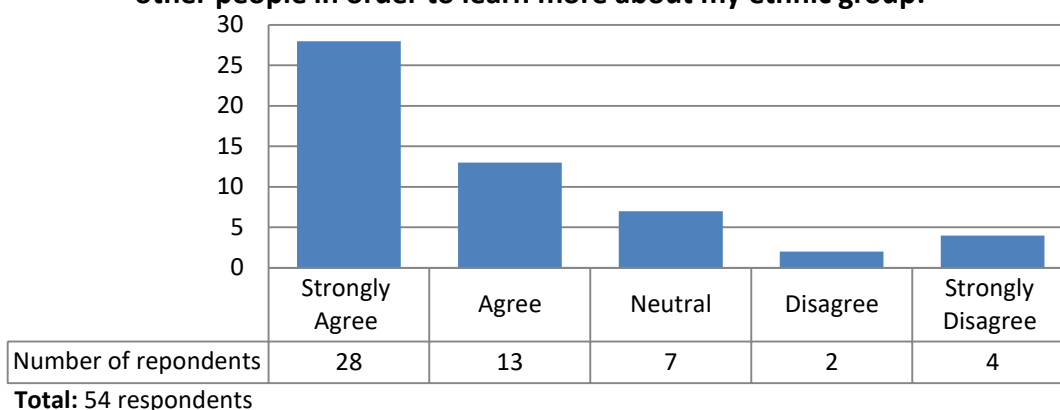
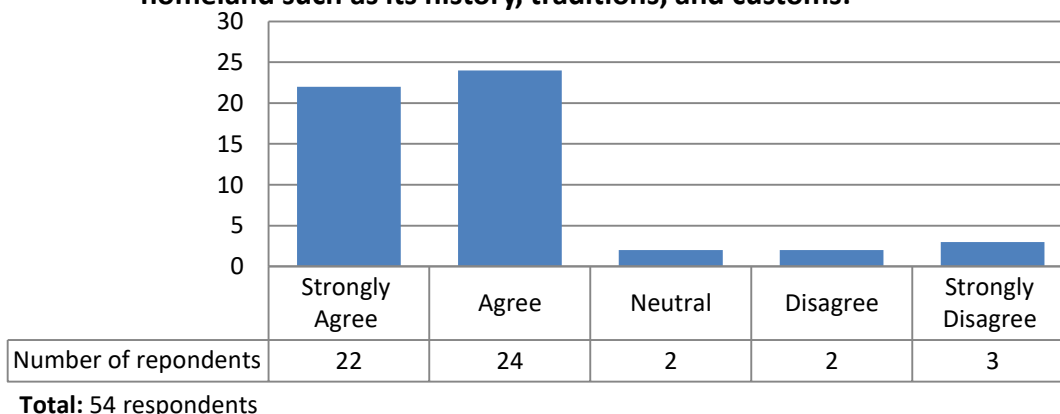


Table 18. I have spent time trying to find out more about my homeland such as its history, traditions, and customs:



Additionally, it creates a sense of connection to their ancestors' homeland, giving them a feeling of proximity to their roots. The advancements in digital communication, cyber interactions with the compatriot in homeland, and transportation technology have led to a revival of cultural characteristics and representations of the Kazakhs in Germany, including food, traditional dances, music, language proficiency, and more. Subsequently, these images and characteristics are employed in the process of reconstructing diasporic identities. The internet revolution has emerged as a significant medium for diasporic groups to reconstruct or even redefine their lost traditions, language, culture, and most importantly, their distinct identity separate from the majority environment in the host state. During this process, ethnic identities gained prominence facilitated by the flow of images through cyber media.

Social media platforms have facilitated extensive connectivity among individuals of Kazakh origin around the globe, surpassing previous expectations. The global Kazakh diaspora does not require the assistance of a mediator to maintain a connection with their cultural heritage anymore. Sufficient information about Kazakh people and their historical background may be obtained by perusing Instagram or Facebook sites including diverse content on this subject matter. Modern opportunities of social media bring together Kazakh diaspora members with distant Kazakh communities in Turkey and Kazakhstan, also in East Turkestan. This state of unity is becoming stronger with daily digital interactions of these virtual community members which changes and transforms the practices socialization of the Kazakh diaspora community. The technical advancements have facilitated the ability of diaspora to transcend geographical boundaries, hence enabling them to establish a dual presence in both their current location and their ancestral homeland. This phenomenon has given rise to the emergence of novel transnational spaces that these communities may "live in". One of our interviewees in Munich said: "Maybe we cannot save our Kazakhness through social media, but we can be together through social media." With his words, he explains how digital platforms offer a means for providing opportunities to foster a sense of togetherness among diaspora individuals. Another respondent of our personal interview also added: "I found many of my relatives in East Turkestan and Kazakhstan through social media with whom our ancestors have lost contacts since the *Big Migration* (meaning Kazakh exodus from East Turkestan to Turkey). With the words "Finding our lost relatives is now easier than before", she explains how digital tools play a role in finding family members dispersed to different places and how diaspora members can find each other thanks to this tool, despite all these years. Cyberspace enables them to overcome all the limitations created by space and to

be together again in an “online homeland” (an imagined virtual homeland). In this way, diaspora has the opportunity to create/experience togetherness again as community members who are geographically dispersed around the globe convene inside a virtual realm that surpasses the confines of physical reality. In this context, it is plausible to draw a comparable deduction regarding the imagined homeland. There is a potential for diaspora members to convene in a virtual environment space, therefore transcending physical boundaries and together pursuing their aspirations for a virtual homeland.

Based on the information given by the interviewer, it is possible to say that these common online platforms were previously used as a tool for Kazakhs to bring them together and provide information flow, but today, as this tool transforms, it provides new opportunities for its users, thus leading to a more effective and powerful use of the internet for the diaspora. Diaspora members engage in detailed discussions on many topics regardless of their geographical locations. Therefore, internet communication plays a role in the de-territorialization of diasporic groups. During the field data collection Munich we have conducted an interview with the administrator of the “Münih Kazak ortamı” Facebook group who has shared with us the following regarding the digital mobilization of the Kazakh diaspora:

“I opened this group on Facebook, firstly, to bring together and address our Kazakhs living in Germany, and secondly, to show our presence here to Kazakhs living all over the world. The page started to grow over time. In this way, even though we cannot come together very often in daily life due to workload, we can at least come together more easily on social media. We provide the opportunity to reach each other more easily and share different content; reorganize the socio-cultural interactions with each other over time and space.”

In this way, these online forums provide Kazakh diaspora members a dedicated platform for fostering ethnic community cohesion, where they can engage without perceiving themselves as a minority group. It provides a secure environment for them to reflect on their experiences and navigate discussions on identity, also as a platform to share the information about the group events for the diaspora members as it was stated by the admin of the same Facebook group: “This year we have a big program planned, we will celebrate Nauryz festival here in Germany. Kazakhs from Switzerland, Finland, Turkey, Denmark and other countries will come here. We try to invite as many guests as possible, so we send out a large newsletter on Facebook groups and forums of Kazakhs and in various chats on social media”.

During the interviews, it was learned that younger generation Kazakh diaspora members use Instagram and WhatsApp more widely in comparison to Facebook. All of the young people interviewed stated that they were Instagram and WhatsApp users and that they joined at least one WhatsApp group related to the Kazakh identity for a different reason (dance, language, social activities, etc.). In addition to being important channels for reporting social events among Kazakh youth, these WhatsApp groups play an important role in maintaining a stronger network with smaller groups of young Kazakh in Munich. Data from the interviews showed that WhatsApp groups had more interaction than other social media tools. An interviewed Kazakh young man who is active in the community said: “I use WhatsApp when inviting youth to a certain event. Also I consider WhatsApp to be a stronger network and it is possible to say that the relationships established there have a similar effect to face-to-face communication.” Based on what the interviewer said, we can say that digital communication in groups makes diaspora members more interactive. In addition to this, according to the information from the group interviews with the Kazakh youth in Munich if the older generation prefers to come together by meeting each other and communicate in this way, younger generation diaspora members prefer to come together on social media, especially following each other on Instagram and staying up to date in this way. Thus younger generation has shifted from offline meetings to everyday online interactions as a means for being together as a diaspora community and is likely to use digital technologies rather than community organizations for the group mobilization thus generating new patterns of socialization and collective identification.

Diaspora communities including Kazakhs in Germany have derived several benefits from the utilization of the Internet. Primarily, the internet facilitates diaspora organizations in expanding their reach to a broader audience, hence fostering heightened awareness within local and global community regarding the issues on their agenda. By using these platforms, individuals belonging to diaspora communities are now able to engage in the exchange of information, stay updated on relevant events, and facilitate coordination with greater ease. The internet possesses the potential to shift diaspora individuals from a state of passivity to more active engagement among grassroots members since in the digital space the anonymity allows users to freely express their opinions and share their experiences without the same level of restraint found in other social settings. Online diaspora forums offer an inclusive and participatory venue for participants to engage in the democratic discourse and discussions pertaining to a diverse array of topics. For instance, on the forums diaspora members

demonstrate mutual support and enhance their sense of affiliation with their ethnic group. Consequently, this has an impact on how people express themselves in their daily lives. These online platforms provide greater engagement of diaspora individuals in matters pertaining to their home country, hence promoting their active involvement in areas of interest. They contribute to the transformation of homeland concerns from being just a priority for the diaspora elite to being a concern for all members. For instance, during the content analyses of the Facebook forums of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany it was revealed 2022 January mass protests and civil unrest in Kazakhstan pushed Munich Kazakh diaspora leaders there was also to speak to the audiences of Kazakhs regarding the homeland affairs:

“ To our citizens!

The situation in Kazakhstan has deteriorated, and even it can be seen that the situation has become very complicated. So not to regret the consequences of the situation tomorrow, here is what we would like to say to our brothers and sisters in Kazakhstan:

1. Citizens who have gone on strike, I hope that you will present your demands in a legal and peaceful manner and deliver them to the appropriate places. Please keep your civility, Kazakh moral qualities, do not go beyond the limits, do not engage in hooliganism, do not beat anyone, do not damage public and state buildings and property, do not damage the property and world of citizens, do not allow those who go to such events.

2. And our request to the government; I hope it will not be allowed to use extreme, indiscriminate force, beatings, chasing and harassment by the security forces against the citizens who went on protest strikes. I hope that the government will take into account the issues that prompted these protest strikes and rallies, the demands and wishes raised in them, and consider concrete solutions.

Our country would benefit from this if we reach a mutual understanding and resolve the issues peacefully.

Dear compatriots, let us remember this. All Kazakhs on earth have a common historical homeland. It is Kazakhstan! Therefore, both the independence of Kazakhstan and the Kazakh state are very dear and valuable to Kazakhs abroad as well. Because it did not come easily, it was not created easily. We hope that the above-mentioned tension and situation will not harm these qualities and cause us undue regret.

God bless our country!”

(Kesici, 2022).

We can observe that transnational contacts via digital tools encompass re-embedding endeavors that facilitate diaspora members in reestablishing connections with local structures and organizations in their home country, even in the absence of the diaspora members’ physical presence in homeland. In addition to this, the main diaspora organization of the

Kazakh Diaspora in Cologne also shared similar official statement regarding the 2022 unrest in Kazakhstan on their social media accounts. The content of the post is as following:

“Appeal to the Kazakh people,

Our people are going through a very difficult situation now, the fate of our homeland is at the tip of the needle. Therefore, we invite all of you to come to your senses, make informed decisions and come to a conclusion. We invite you to remain calm and preserve the integrity and unity of our country. All Kazakhs in the world have only one homeland: it is Kazakhstan. Therefore, every citizen should now contribute to the restoration of peace in the country. Even though we are abroad, we are praying for our country with tears in our hearts.

This is all we can do for now. We are with our people! May our country be safe and our land intact. If we are united, we will be a great force.

May the Kazakh nation live forever!

Köln Kazakh Cultural Center”.

(Köln Kazak Medeniyet Ortalgı, 2022)

Such posts about the homeland circulated on social media serve more than just reading information about it from anywhere. Texts shared in this way enter into the circulation, spark discussions among the diaspora members and become an extension of daily life discussions regarding the homeland, and a specific place for the diaspora to express themselves regarding the homeland affairs related issues. In this way, users shrink the distance between them and homeland with the likes or comments they receive while sharing and circulating content. Thus, digital space has the potential to reduce the spatial gap between the diaspora community's present location and their homeland.

The recurrent expressions of an envisioned community, a collective culture, or a common homeland on the forums may be regarded as instances of consolidation, which play a crucial role in the formation of virtual diaspora communities. From analyzing the content on the official Facebook account of the Cologne Kazakh Kultural Association, it was discovered that the Kazakh diaspora community in Cologne utilized digital media to mobilize and provide assistance to their home country, Kazakhstan, in combating Covid-19 by sending humanitarian aid to Kazakhstan:

“Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We would like to share last information on the campaign “Let us Be a Breath” that we started: 4 breathing apparatus, 5 humidifier devices, 3000 Masks, 1000 Doctors' special gloves, cartons of herbal medicine, and the last remaining financial support is sent it to a charity organization in Kazakhstan to be spent as needed. Our heart is with our people in Kazakhstan. We would like to thank the members of the Cologne Kazakh Association and our Kazakh friends around

Cologne who rushed with all their might. May God be pleased with us all! May God return it to you with the same amount! We end this campaign here. Stay healthy with prayers.

(Köln Kazak Medeniyet Ortallığı, 2020).

In this way, as seen from the aforementioned case the internet and social media networks contribute to mobilization of the diaspora in the virtual space by facilitating shared identity, problem framing on homeland related issues, and building solidarity among the group.

Bernal (2006) posits that the internet serves as a transnational platform wherein diaspora communities engage in the production and discourse of narratives pertaining to the history, culture of their country of origin, and identity related topics (p. 161). There is a lack of scholarly research that comparatively analyzes how Diasporas utilize the Internet to establish virtual communities for the purpose of exploring their identities and deliberating on their agendas in relation to their countries of origin (Brinkerhoff, 2006). In our case study it was revealed that the Internet is progressively becoming a pivotal tool for the Kazakh diaspora in Germany enabling them to effectively navigate their sense of belonging and maintain their ties connections with the cultural heritage of Kazakhs. For instance, in Facebook there is a digital group named *Kazak Müziğine Gönül Verenler* (literally means *Those Who Are in Love with Kazakh Music*) moderated by Kazakh diaspora member from Netherlands Cafer Taşdemir. This virtual Facebook community has around 7600 online members including not only Kazakh diaspora members from Germany, France, Netherlands but also from Turkey, Kazakhstan and other European countries. The main distinguishing feature of the members are that they are originally from East Turkestan, had been living in Turkey for some time and now currently reside outside of both East Turkestan and Kazakhstan. So the common language used in the digital space is Turkish since they mainly speak different languages of the host state in addition to Turkish. On the other hand, primarily, despite not using Kazakh language as a common language to communicate with each other, the members of this group possess a strong sense of belonging that extends beyond the borders of the nation states. During talks, they consistently make connections between themselves and their original homelands East Turkestan and Kazakhstan which shows the hybrid nature of the Kazakh diaspora in our case. By being a member in such thematic group in Facebook which is dedicated to the discovering of Kazakh music enables members of the Kazakh diaspora to engage in sharing Kazakh music by artists from

Kazakhstan, gain access to media content originating from their homeland, and exchange online videos with other diaspora members and ethnic compatriots residing both in their home country and abroad. It is understood that Facebook makes it possible, especially for diasporic communities like Kazakhs in Europe, to create a virtual community, to come together in cyberspace for the common interests like Kazakh music and thus be connected to their culture and identity. Such digital environments, particularly the virtual connections established by diaspora community members online, facilitate the dissemination of content regarding their culture among them. Hence, such virtual community may be seen as an ideal alternative to the geographically based community, serving as an online environment for common cultural activities that emerge in the absence of offline means of communication and physical venues.

The increasing popularity and widespread accessibility of the internet and social media platforms have notably facilitated the utilization of these resources by members of diaspora, hence enabling them to leverage these possibilities to their advantage. As we know the concept of identities is characterized as social constructs, in this regard it would be worth to emphasize the influential role of ethnic media in the process of shaping and developing diaspora members' sense of identity. The ethnic digital media channels serve as a mechanism for socialization, fostering a feeling of cultural coherence. According to our responder, that is the statement being made in this regard:

“We get to know young musicians and artists in Kazakhstan through social media and get acquainted about modern Kazakh art. For instance I have discovered on YouTube the Kazakhstani music channel called *GakkuTV* where I stay constantly up to date with new musical releases from Kazakhstan. My favorite music group is *Ninety One* who make really great music like a Korean K-pop. They call it Q-Pop meaning Qazaq Pop Music. By listening the songs in Kazakh language I feel myself like (re)attached to my roots. It is so great that we have our own modern music and by learning the lyrics of their song, I have significantly improved my Kazakh language skills.”

(Interviewee, 24 year-old female)

As we can see from the above example the utilization of digital media platforms has led to a transformation in individuals' methods of constructing their identities, particularly in the context of diaspora communities' maintaining social connections over vast distances. According to Denis and Paulos (2011), the construction of ethnic identity is influenced by the digital information produced and consumed by ethnic minorities on the Internet (p. 497). As Shohat & Stam (1996) contend, media serve as a means of strengthening identity for communities facing challenges related to being displaced from their geographical location and

feeling culturally disconnected (p. 151). Members of the Kazakh diaspora residing in Germany lack convenient access to a diverse range of Kazakh-language television and radio programs. Nevertheless, Internet connectivity is widely accessible, serving as the primary means for obtaining ethnic cultural and informational content via digital tools for the Kazakh diaspora members like it was indicated in the statement of our interviewee.

Furthermore, throughout my examination and analysis of Kazakh diaspora groups on social media platforms, I endeavored to comprehend the manifestation of typical behaviors in the virtual realm. Through the analysis, it was discovered many unique expressions of identity that are prevalent among the Kazakh diasporic community. These manifestations serve as a means of mediating the complex dynamics of long distance conceptions of the identity by individuals living in distant location from the homeland. In the study of the digital platforms the social media accounts of the target participants were considered through passive observation, and it was found that the interviewees shared photos and videos in Kazakh national dressings on their personal pages or in diaspora community online platforms, shared also content such as Kazakh foods and flags, used Kazakh-specific symbols.

Connerton (2007) evaluates the individuals' wearing patterns as element of memory. Hence, it is important to see the dressing patterns disseminated on social media platforms, which are unique to a particular culture, as significant components of commemoration and remembrance. Kazakh diaspora communities in Germany including Kazakhs in Munich, Cologne, Berlin who were examined through the means of virtual tools tend to share photos where they wear Kazakh national dressings like *shapan*, *taqiya* by men, *kamzol* by women. In this way, community members attract and connect to each other through virtual networks and make a visual connection to community through a digital photograph.

Within the scope of the personal interviews, it was questioned whether there are common symbols for the members of the Kazakh diaspora and, if so, how they are used for. While answering this question, the interviewees stated that many Kazakhs use various symbols on their social media accounts and that these symbols make it easier to recognize them. The statement of the interviewer: "Most of the Kazakhs write on the bio of their pages "Kazakh". They usually put Kazakh, Turkish and German flags in the profile description. This way we can get to know each other easily. In such a way it is recognizable on social media. Or, if his/her social media account is open, it can be seen from his face," help us understand how common symbols and icons for Kazakh youth find a place in social media. When asked whether these indicators are effective in approving or rejecting friend requests on

social media accounts, the same interviewee responded: “Yes, it is important, I add the person if he/she is a Kazakh.” The respondent said that he followed other Kazakhs in Kazakhstan or abroad, but could not chat with them because they did not speak a common language. This situation shows that the language barrier is still a significant obstacle for Kazakh youth to communicate with community members living in other countries despite the fact that digital tools helps them to cross territorial barriers.

In this way, with the Internet de-territorializing space, digital technology and apps have emerged as a means of connecting “scattered” diaspora individuals together and transforming their relationship both with the past and the future. It offers a common framework for identities that are not solely based on traditional geographical boundaries and the limitations of nation-states. The shift from tradition understanding of diaspora to virtual diasporas facilitated the preservation of national identity within communities and fostered feeling of “togetherness” with other members of the diaspora and facilitated connections with compatriots in homeland. Virtual environments, particularly the virtual relationships established by diaspora community members online, facilitate the exchange of information and contribute significantly to the preservation of unity and the enhancement of a diaspora’s collective identity. From the responses provided to the interview questions mentioned earlier, it is evident that digital space serves as a medium for Kazakh diaspora members to acquire information about their homeland and ethnic identity, to freely express their ideas about the homeland, space of daily negotiations of boundaries and also as a place to come together. Furthermore, this online space is dynamic, evolving, recurring which provide the Kazakh diaspora new resources for the creation of imagined selves and communities. Various factors, such as the dissemination of viral content and the exchange of ideas across international boundaries, expression of the identity via common symbols in the digital space can contribute to the accumulation of progressive forces that validate and invigorate diaspora identities, rendering them more fluid and adaptable. The Internet serves as a medium to bridge geographical gaps and enable seamless communication between those living in diaspora and their homeland. Accordingly, for the modern diaspora communities like Kazakhs in Germany leading a dual existence “here” and “there” in two realms is far easier than it was in previous century.

6.1. CONCLUSION

With the concept of diaspora gaining increasing importance today, studies on diaspora in the academic field are also increasingly diverse. Firstly, the theoretical background of diaspora studies which have started to gain importance since the second half of the 20th century, has been limited to the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian diaspora. In this context, diasporas can be understood as distinct and scattered groups or entities united by shared traditions, histories, ethnicities, nationalities, and faiths, all revolving around a common homeland (Safran, 1991; Cohen 2008; Sheffer 2003). Consequently, some parameters like forced migration, exile, trauma, myth about homeland, desire to return have been tried to be determined theoretically in defining a certain society who have migrated to a host state as a diaspora. Thus, from traditional perspective a diaspora is a culturally distinctive community based on the idea of a common homeland and the collective consciousness, group solidarity and demonstrated attitude towards the homeland built on this basis. If there are no such characteristics, then there is no diaspora. In other words, the diaspora is a style of life behavior, and not a rigid demographic and especially ethnic reality, and thus this phenomenon differs from the rest of other routine migration. Traditional definitions of diaspora mostly revolve around the establishment of borders, encompassing aspects such as homeland, identity and community. These definitions emphasize the origins and connection to the motherland. On the other hand, diasporas can be comprehended as conceptualized, fabricated, and adaptable in the sense that diasporic existences and identities are perceived to be in constant motion, and surpassing boundaries, borders, and the nation-state.

The initial stage of the formation of the Kazakh diaspora under study was characterized with the painful ordeal of the forcibly dispersal from original homeland East Turkestan located within the borders of nowadays China. The ancestors of the Kazakhs residing in Germany were compelled to leave their homeland due to the historical and political situation that transpired in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) during the period of 1930-1950 which was described in Chapter III. The exodus of Kazakhs who faced Chinese pressure in East Turkestan did not occur abruptly or immediately to Turkey, but took place in a series of phases spanning a considerable duration of 18 years, commencing in 1936 and concluding in 1954. In 1940s these Kazakhs in two waves of migration sought refuge initially in India, Pakistan and subsequently were accepted as “resettlement refugees” (iskan göçmeni) to

Turkey in 1952. Despite the fact that Kazakhs started to integrate into Turkish society and found in Turkey long longing security for their survival, difficult socio-economic conditions compelled some groups of Kazakh diaspora in Turkey to search new destinations to migrate. By 1961, Germany's economy, which had recovered from the aftermath of World War II, was thriving and faced a pressing demand for labor force. After the labor force agreement was signed between Turkey and Germany in 1961, intense mass migration took place from Turkey to Germany. In this regard, diaspora Kazakhs in Turkey participated in this initiative with the aim of improving their economic prospects. In 1962, the initial wave of Kazakh individuals arrived in Munich as contracted Turkish laborers or guest workers and afterwards settled there permanently. In addition to the presence of guest worker Kazakhs in Germany, Munich also had a distinct cohort of Kazakhs holding who actively were engaged in long distance transnational nationalist activities aimed at the idea of liberating homeland.

There were six key criteria in Safran's (1991) definition of the "ideal diaspora" centering on Jews. I think Safran's classification is quite relevant to the Kazakh diaspora being examined under this study:

1. They have been scattered from the original homeland to two or more distant territories.
2. Maintain a collective memory of the past traumatic dispersion from the homeland and the myth about it.
3. They hold the belief that they are not fully accepted by the host community, resulting in a sense of partial isolation from it.
4. They jointly engage in collectively undertaking actions directed towards helping their compatriots in the homeland Kazakhstan.
5. They persist in maintaining a connection, whether it is through personal or indirect means, to their homeland Kazakhstan.

In the light of the parameters determined in the academic field, the Kazakh community in Germany has the characteristics of a diaspora, meeting criteria such as forced migration, exile, homeland myth, common historical and cultural consciousness, and maintenance of relations with the homeland. The definition of "victim diaspora" coined by Cohen also applies to the forcibly displaced Kazakhs due to Chinese political persecution and oppression. Thus, the classification that mainly includes Jews, Armenians, and Africans may easily accommodate East Turkestani Kazakhs as well. When it comes to the issue of returning to the homeland, it becomes clear that the criterion of return to the homeland is not valid for the

Kazakh diaspora. Regarding this matter, some scholars specializing in diaspora studies have raised concerns about William Safran's definition of diaspora which centers on the idea of returning to the original homeland. Contrarily, Brah (1996) suggests a "homing desire" that is different from the desire for a "homeland" since not all diasporas have a desire to "return". In this context, the concept of home in our study can be evaluated as a mythical place of longing for those in the diaspora, representing a place that cannot be returned to, even if the geographical origin can be visited. Diasporas may not always necessitate homelands in a strict territorial sense, although they typically incorporate a flexible notion of "home" in their collective myths or ambitions. Undoubtedly, a homeland possesses an inherent emotional intensity and a sentimental depth in diaspora.

While returning to the both East Turkestan and Kazakhstan was not possible for the Kazakhs during the Cold War period due to the balance of power in the international arena, the opportunity to return to the newly formed homeland of Kazakhstan was provided after the 1990s. The imaginary homeland of the previous period ceased to be "imaginary" and became "real". Considering theoretically, mass returns from the diaspora to the homeland should be seen within the scope of providing the necessary opportunities in accordance with the return to the homeland criterion of the diaspora, however the return settlement of the Kazakhs to the homeland remained very weak. Although the prevailing sentiment of Kazakhs in Germany about returning to their home country is unfavorable, there are specific factors contributing to this circumstance. Within this framework, it has been ascertained that Kazakhs in Germany exhibit a lack of desire to repatriate to Kazakhstan or East Turkestan, mostly owing to political, economic, and social factors, including language barriers, educational opportunities, familial ties, and the prevailing social milieu in the host state. However, the primary transformation occurred in the shift of the orientation and focus on the homeland. Prior to 1991 when Kazakhstan gained independence from the USSR, Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) was at the main focus of the Kazakhs as the ancestral country from where the majority of Kazakhs in Turkey and Europe came. After 1990s the Kazakhs in Germany started to establish more close transnational ties with Kazakhstan. The ideal of return and the issues of the reconstruction of the homeland manifest themselves much more today, albeit with conjecturally varying intensity and different forms of the return like diasporic tourism or temporary return visits to Kazakhstan. In this regard, constructivist perspective on the homeland is crucial for comprehending such shift of focus from one location towards another and ongoing formation and reformation of the diaspora community's connections to a specific

territory or a nation-state (Brah 1996; Clifford 1997). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the example of the Kazakhs in Germany does not diminish the enduring emotional and imagined connections that mobile individuals have with East Turkestan. The significance of these connections is further emphasized by the experience of living in transnational social environments especially in the era of practicing those connections in the digital space. The example of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany demonstrates that the concept of “homeland” which is a crucial aspect of diasporic identity may undergo transformation as time progresses. This validates that, similar to other forms of identities, diasporic identity is not also static and should not be seen as a confined entity. In this context, identities are perceived as being adaptable, versatile, and subject to change, always evolving and developing.

For the multiply dispersed diaspora like Kazakhs from East Turkestan living currently in Germany as a diaspora community, determining the exact location of their homeland can be challenging, and the notion of homeland itself is slippery and difficult to define. The heterogeneity of the diasporic group implies that diasporic individuals will exhibit diverse forms and levels of connection with their country of origin. During the field research the Kazakh diaspora members in Munich questioned in this study provided different, complex, sometimes contradictory, or at most paradoxical descriptions of their perceptions of home and diaspora identity and their experiences both “here” and “there” and sometimes “in-betweenness”. Their responses exhibit a heightened degree of cultural intricacy, along with uncertainties and perplexities that they frequently encounter. In this regard, Brah (1996) contends that “home” might not be only found in a single specific place, but could be in many places, crossing geographical, cultural boundaries. He suggests that it is still possible for diasporic individuals who live in different places to feel at home “here” and be rooted “there” in this context (Brah, 1996, p. 197).

Postmodernists (Brah, 1996; Hall, 1990; Bhabha, 2000, Klara, 2004) analyze and break down the conventional binary notion of the home and host nation, viewing the diaspora as a blend of cultures that exists in the “Third Space” who hold plural identities negotiated differently through time and space. The diaspora members are always engaged in negotiating the cultural traditions of both their home country and the country they have migrated to. In our specific case of Kazakhs in Germany we have observed that they are not devoid of their cultural heritage which they share with their forefathers and originate from a certain cultural background. Their collective historical background and shared cultural norms from their homeland shape their sense of identity. Simultaneously, their current denials and engagements

with host cultural customs and individuals of Germany and Turkey consistently shape their personal perspectives as well. Due to their three-cultural links (Kazakh, Turkish, German), the diaspora identity of the Kazakhs in Germany encompasses many aspects and adaptability, navigating within the diaspora's third space. These findings indicate that diasporas interact beyond the boundaries of nation-states, challenging the primordial interpretation of the nation-state by forming relationships and a sense of belonging that transcend national identities (Soysal, 1998). Nevertheless, diasporas are still connected to specific locations, and the presence of nation-states continues to exert an impact on those individuals inside the diaspora. Therefore, as Werbner has noted: "diasporas, it seems, are both ethnic-parochial and cosmopolitan" (Werbner, 2002, p. 120).

The Kazakh diaspora in Germany under study appears to have forged a distinct sense of identity and belonging, rather than simply assimilating or blending into the host society environment. In fact, this development of a unique identity leads to the emergence of diasporic groups that adopt a distinct collective structure that is not entirely reliant on either the home country or the host country. Throughout this study, it has been shown that diasporic identities are always being negotiated, shaped and reshaped. By considering the diaspora identity as a framework of social human interactions, negotiations, individual decisions, and values rather than as a solid unchanging entity, it becomes evident that the identification of Kazakhs in Germany underwent transformations over time in response to local, national, and global circumstances. Specifically, their instance demonstrates that even a fundamental aspect of the concept of diaspora such as identity, is not fixed and can undergo transformation over time. In this case, diaspora identity is addressed in a more critical manner. Because identity is a dynamic phenomenon which is constantly being formed, renewed, and changed even when we are talking about it now. Diaspora identities constantly reproduce themselves over and over again through this difference and transformation. The notion of identity gets increasingly complex when examined in its solitary form. Hence, while addressing identity, it is crucial to highlight its complex and context-dependent nature. Our identities serve as a "bus stop" in the narrative of our daily lives which exists within the realm of "home" and "host" environment. Furthermore, it is imperative that we do not remain immobile at any one location. Identity defines our sense of "self"; however it does not preclude us from transcending our inherent nature. Limiting identification solely to ethnic identity results in the reduction of diversity to uniformity, this can be seen as a process of standardization or homogenization.

The presence of a barrier between the Kazakh diaspora and the host German community enables Kazakhs in Germany to maintain its own identity without becoming assimilated. This boundary also has an impact on the establishment and long-term survival of the diaspora. This developed new life strategy and the cultural border for diasporic communities might vary depending on with which culture and when the contact is being made and the attitude of the host society towards them. For example, if the diasporic society encounters culture that is different from their own and not accepted and excluded by the host society, it exhibits a more coherent behavior towards its own culture, and becomes “othered” and eccentric due to the cultural boundaries it draws sharply. The same can be said in relation to the Kazakh diaspora in Germany towards the German society. Conversely, the cultural border becomes more “flexible” and “faint” if the diasporic community interacts with a culture is by which it is mainly being accepted that is more similar to its own culture. That is the case while considering in the relation of Kazakh diaspora in Germany towards Turkish culture and Turkey overall. However, it is important to note that diaspora is always characterized by the revelation of its definite borders under all circumstances whether those borders are sharp or blurry.

Cohen (2008) emphasised that a certain amount of time must elapse before we can definitively determine if a migrating population can be classified as a diaspora. Put simply, labelling a certain group as a diaspora does not occur immediately upon arrival to the host state. In order for a diasporic consciousness to be activated or maintained, there must be a significant attachment to the past or a resistance to assimilation in the present and future (p. 166). The Kazakh diaspora in Germany has experienced of the state of being unrooted from their ancestral homeland for almost eight decades. Over the course of more than 50 years, it is evident that the Kazakhs residing in Germany have undergone many societal changes as like their homeland(s). So despite such rapid changes, within the context of this study it is found that the Kazakh diaspora in Germany still actively tries to preserve its diaspora identity and the unique elements of their Kazakh cultural heritage via various techniques, despite the difficulties posed by residing in the prevailing culture of the host nation. The process of preserving ethnic identity among the Kazakh diaspora in Germany is characterized by several strategies such as the collective memory of the past, tribal identity, familial connections, ethnic marriages and social contacts, preserving and practicing rituals which is a way for individuals to show their connection to the shared historical and social resources of their community. The Kazakhs preserved in their collective memory the aspects that they deemed

most appropriate for embodying and expressing Kazakh identity. On the other hand, the Kazakh diaspora's involvement in organizing and participating in festivals such as annual Kurultays serves as a validation of their collective efforts to promote social togetherness, exhibit a common culture, and establish a sense of community belonging. Such collective gatherings conducted by Kazakhs in Germany serve as a platform for social interactions and should be seen as a space where Kazakh culture is continuously preserved and perpetuated. Kurultay also functioned as a forum to utilize political discourse in order to attract the Kazakh diaspora living abroad and establish Kazakhstan as the exclusive homeland where all Kazakhs yearning for their motherland may come back to. Furthermore, it is evident that Kazakhstan via its diaspora politics one example of which is Kurultay actively endeavors to influence the ethnic identities of Kazakhs residing in foreign countries like Germany. Kurultays provide a platform for Kazakh diaspora members to actively engage in the construction, negotiation, interpretation, and reinterpretation of their identity and vision of their motherland. Moreover, the transnational connections established between Kazakhstan and Kazakh diaspora abroad by the means of diaspora tourism, educational initiatives, vacation projects, economic collaborations, and intermarriage relations between Kazakhs abroad and in Kazakhstan will persistently influence the perception of home for the Kazakh community residing in Germany and their self-belonging. Nevertheless, in the era of digital opportunities the Kazakh diaspora abroad does not require the assistance of a mediator in the form of home state to shape its identity and maintain a connection with their cultural heritage anymore. Modern opportunities of social media bring together Kazakh diaspora members with distant Kazakh communities in Turkey and Kazakhstan, also in East Turkestan which play a crucial role in maintaining unity and strengthening the collective identity of the Kazakh diaspora. This state of unity is becoming stronger with daily digital interactions of these virtual community members and the technical advancements have facilitated the ability of diaspora to transcend geographical boundaries, hence enabling them to establish a dual presence in both their current location "here" and their ancestral homeland "there".

6.2. Contribution to the Classical versus Modern Diaspora Debate

This study is built on the main pillars of the diaspora concept such as homeland and identity in order to take place in the existing academic debate between classical and modern debates of the diaspora theory. In pursuit of this purpose this research analyzes the case of the Kazakh diaspora in Germany. This study claims that addressing the concept of Kazakh

diaspora without academically proving that it complies with the diaspora criteria and not conceptualizing the Kazakh diaspora based on its historical experiences and current homeland orientation and identity negotiations prevents a holistic and correct understanding of the Kazakh diaspora. From the perspective of classical diaspora understanding we can label the Kazakhs in Germany under study who were forced to leave their homeland East Turkestan under tragic circumstances and overcoming long distances including Gansu, Tibet, Kashmir, India, and Pakistan before successfully settling in Turkey, and then in Germany as a diaspora community. In the light of the parameters determined in the academic field, the Kazakh community in Germany has the characteristics of a diaspora, meeting classical criteria such as forced dispersal from its place of origin to different geographies, exile, collective trauma and diaspora consciousness, homeland myth, and maintenance of relations with the homeland, common sense of solidarity transcending national borders and a communication network among group members. The definition of “victim diaspora” coined by Cohen (2008) also applies to the forcibly displaced Kazakhs. Thus, the classification that mainly includes Jews, Armenians, and Africans may easily accommodate East Turkestani Kazakhs as well.

The main objective of this study was to understand the homeland orientation and identity perceptions of the Kazakhs in Germany. Upon analyzing the data from field research, we discovered that the fundamental principles of the traditional diaspora theory are unable to elucidate the empirical evidence in our study. From the case of Kazakhs in Germany we have observed that homeland in diaspora does not simple refer to the one geographical place of origin only and that diasporas may not always necessitate homelands in a strict territorial sense, although they typically incorporate a flexible notion of “home” in their collective myths or ambitions. However, the classical interpretation of diaspora which relies on an inescapable link to the original homeland has several limitations. It is based on a naive classification of an ideal homeland versus a hostland, which fails to consider the dynamic and flexible nature of diasporas living in transnational space and the lively hostland environment in which they live and form their identity. In contrast to classical discussions on diaspora, the contemporary diaspora framework highlights the aspect of “multiplicity” in identity, hence redefining identities within this particular setting. In this regard we find useful the postmodernist interpretation of diaspora for interpreting the study results which pertains to the diverse composition and the presence of numerous identities within diaspora. Furthermore, it acknowledges the potential for diasporas associated with the same country to exhibit variations in terms of identity which best suits the results of the survey and personal interview

notes presented in Chapter IV. This study revealed that the concept of home within the framework of diaspora is complex, sophisticated, and diversified, embracing a wide array of experiences related to finding a sense of belonging and homing and it is not possible to talk about the . The intricate interplay between diasporas and their native place of origin is marked by a profound sense of ambivalence, as the diasporic subject finds themselves caught in a perpetual state of negotiations, torn between the allure of their “adopted” homeland and the enduring ties to their ancestral roots. What is more, the perception of one’s homeland among diaspora individuals may differ based on their personal experiences which may not align with the perception of those who in the same diaspora community. On the other hand, we have observed that diasporic identity is often arising from two or more different cultures that come together and blend resulting in the hybridized identity which Kazakhs in Germany could not also avoid who mainly identify themselves as Kazakh-Turkish. Hence, this modern approach is more effective in delineating contemporary diasporic groups including Kazakhs since it does not embrace the notion of selecting a singular identity, country, or nation. Contemporary diasporic groups, in contrast, refuse to accept the predicaments that compel them to either fully forsake their cultural identity or cling to it indefinitely without any opportunity for evolution and modification. Diasporic identity does not entail the outright rejection of the culture of the host society or the uncompromising preservation of its original form. It is crucial to highlight that the diaspora experience results in a complex identity structure and is inherently diverse.

We would like to argue that diaspora should not be simply expected to bear the characteristics of an ethnic group or to bear a pure culture or identity of the homeland. Yes, diaspora does consist of certain ethnic group, but it is much more than an ethnic group alone. Nevertheless, it is debatable whether diaspora is an ideal type of ethnic groups or not. The specific traumatic experience of being scattered to different parts of homeland and the efforts to preserve its identity, collective memory and culture while living in host state is what makes diaspora different from simply being an ethnic group from home abroad or immigrant community in the host state. Using certain classical criteria of being diaspora would be useful in this regard which would allow us to avoid a “diaspora” diaspora - a dispersion of the meaning of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space. On the other hand, we should also bear in mind that living in a diaspora or as a diaspora does not imply a uniform and undifferentiated perception of the homeland and identity, nor does it suggest that the diaspora will be staying the same attached only to their “solid origins”. In this sense, it is not

possible to talk about a fixed concept of identity. Having past historical experiences of trauma and dispersion from the homeland does not mean that the identity of the diasporic community will remain fixed as it was in the past. In fact, considering the changes and transformations it has undergone throughout history, it is possible to say that it may undergo a series of transformations in the future as well. Consequently, the concept of identity in diaspora might be characterized as both visional and fictitious and lacking in entirety, perpetually undergoing negotiation. Opposite to the classical understanding the concept of the diaspora such prism of looking at the identity might be less common and more troubling. However, from classical perspective it is necessary to ask the question of how the formation of this identity can be understood if it is accepted that it progresses from a fixed root that is flat and not fragile?

Although the idea of identity in diaspora is sometimes unclear, it is nonetheless regarded as a fundamental aspect of diaspora studies. For the majority of researchers, this does not include incorporating the notion into the established body of study by integrating it into typical analytical frameworks. Instead, it appears that their motivation to adopt an identity viewpoint has driven researchers to create a new set of conceptual tools. These tools allow us to perceive and understand occurrences that were previously unnoticed. Therefore, rather than perceiving the notion of identity as a variable, it is more aptly comprehended as an “eye opener” that reorganizes the way we think of the certain concept. In order to view identities as dynamic and evolving, it is necessary to analyze critically the efforts to define the identity of a certain diasporic group as “a whole” and remain receptive to approaches that enable adaptable and indefinite identities that are situated and rooted. It is crucial to focus on the emotional and physical individuals who form diasporas, as well as their methods of collaboration, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Additionally, we should examine how they establish and sever connections with the homeland and across borders, and the diverse and complex ways in which they define their identities and sense of belonging. The complexity of negotiations is undoubtedly heightened by the factors of time and space, as well as the continuous and active performance and reconstitution of identities, perceptions, and actions in discrete yet interconnected locations. While space, location, and time are important in discussion in relation to the Kazakh diaspora under study, there is a clear need for more conceptualization and research that uncovers other details even more prominently and in more inventive ways. I propose for other researchers interested in Kazakh diaspora to conduct an extensive study on a broader demographic of diaspora members, including Kazakhs residing in other cities of Germany like Berlin, Munich and Cologne. This research should aim to

compare and analyse the diverse experiences of these individuals, in order to gain insights into how these experiences influence their sense of belonging to the diaspora and their perceptions of home and identity.

I am hoping that this research effort and thesis will offer significant insights and make a valuable contribution to the scholarly discourse on diaspora.



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APPENDIX I

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. Name your own ethnic (national) group, the one you identify most closely with? Do you identify and position yourself as a Kazakh, Turkish, German or in-between?
3. What are the factors that make you identify yourself as Kazakh/Turkish, or German?
4. How did you preserve you ethnic identity when you were living in Germany?
5. What is the definition of homeland for you? Do you associate it with only one geographical place or country?
6. What is the relationship between being a Kazakh and being a Turk? Does your previous life in Turkey create a hybrid (mix between two cultures) and diaspora identity?
7. Can you tell me about your arrival to Germany? How and when did you decide to leave Turkey and settle in Germany? What was the main reason?
8. How would you describe your major differences between your and locals' culture and identity?
9. How do you perceive the surrounding culture and society where you are living now? Do you think and feel that you are considered as an "outsider" (foreigner) or "insider"?
10. Have you ever encountered racism in Germany? And if so how and in which circumstances?
11. What differences do you perceive between life in Germany and life in Kazakhstan in terms of culture, society, daily and working life?
12. In your opinion which culture do you have more in mind? Kazakh/Turkish/East Turkestani?
13. Do you feel more comfortable among Kazakhs than other ethnic groups?
14. How would you define East Turkestan? And how strong your self-identification with East Turkestan?
15. How would you define Turkey? And how strong your self-identification with Kazakhstan?

16. How would you define Kazakhstan? And how strong your self-identification with Kazakhstan?
17. Do you have any desire to move to East Turkestan?
18. How often you engage in collective meetings of Kazakhs who live in Germany?
19. Do Kazakh diaspora in Germany have any digital space where you can discuss your issues and help each other?
20. In which language you prefer to get information (for TV, newspaper, radio, magazine, Internet and social media?)



APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: Male/ Female

3. Mother Tongue: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: *Please respond to items based on the following scale. Circle the option that corresponds to how you feel under each statement.*

1. In terms of ethnic (national) group I identify myself mostly as:

Kazakh / Turkish / Kazakh-Turkish / German / German-Kazakh /German-Turkish

*if your answer is different please write it here.....

2. I feel a strong attachment towards the Kazakh ethnic group.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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3. Which country you mainly identify as Homeland? (you can choose more than one)

☐ Kazakhstan ☐ East Turkestan ☐ Turkey ☐ Germany ☐ Other

4. I have done things and have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic background, such as its history, traditions, and customs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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5. In your opinion, which of the following is the most important element of Kazakh identity?

☐ Ethnicity ☐ Language ☐ Culture ☐ Religion ☐ All of them ☐ Other

6. I often ask questions like “Who am I?” “To where I belong?”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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7. I have often made a search in the internet and talked to other people in order to learn more

about my ethnic group.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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8. I have spent time trying to find out more about my homeland on Internet such as its history, traditions, and customs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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9. Is it important to emphasize and remember the shared loss and trauma experienced by your ancestors during the exodus from East Turkestan?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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10. I understand pretty well what my German community membership means to me.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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11. How do you perceive the surrounding culture and society where you are living now? Do you think and feel that you are considered as an “outsider” (foreigner) or “insider”?

☐ Outsider

☐ Insider

12. I face racism here in Germany because of my ethnic, religious or cultural identity or being Asian.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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13. I feel more comfortable with the members of my own ethnicity.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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14. I communicate mainly with my family members in (language):

Kazakh

Turkish

German

15. Do you think that Kazakhs living abroad should marry only with Kazakhs?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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16. What degree do you feel you are same as Kazakhs in Kazakhstan or different from them?

☐ I think that there is no difference.

☐ I perceive like they are completely different.

☐ I think that there are some similarities but differences as well.

17. Do you think that you might migrate to Kazakhstan one day if the conditions there would be better?

☐ YES

☐ No

☐ Maybe

18. Do you think that you might migrate to East Turkestan one day if the conditions there would be better?

☐ YES

☐ No

☐ Maybe

