Rights or Identity? Naturalization Processes among “Labor Migrants” in Germany

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The determinants of the decision to naturalize for first and second generation “labor migrants” in Germany are examined. We assume that Turkish migrants’ comparatively high naturalization rate cannot be explained by the legal advantages they gain by naturalizing. We argue instead that naturalization offers an opportunity for individual upward mobility to Turkish migrants who have achieved a high level of individual assimilation. Using data from the GSOEP, we show that individual assimilation does in fact promote naturalization for Turkish migrants, but not for members of other ethnic groups, which generally have higher status within German society.

Nation states still do exist, and citizenship remains the most important form of national belonging, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Because an increasing share of people live outside the country in which they were born, other forms of membership – such as legal and permanent residence – have gained in relative importance (Castles, 1994). Other rights are granted to individuals by supranational institutions (Soysal, 1994). Although these developments have rendered citizenship less exclusive in terms of the rights conferred, it is still the only form of belonging that allows migrants to enjoy the same civil, social, and political protections as “natives.” The lack of voting rights, in particular, increasingly raises issues of political legitimacy and representation in countries where a substantial share of people are legal permanent residents but noncitizens.

Some countries (such as the Netherlands and Sweden) have coped with this problem by granting local voting rights to noncitizens besides liberalizing naturalization law, whereas others (such as Germany) have only made access to citizenship easier. Yet making naturalization easier is not enough to overcome a deficit of democracy stemming from a growing population of “second class citizens”: migrants also have to make use of opportunities to

naturalize. Here, substantial differences between ethnic groups are observed, raising questions about why some migrants are more likely to “change flags” (Portes and Curtis, 1987) than others. Unlike in traditional immigration countries like the United States or Australia, this question has been neglected in the European context and completely ignored in the debate on citizenship in Germany, Europe’s numerically most important country of immigration (Joppke, 1999). Surprisingly, research in this field has focused almost exclusively on the nature and origin of Germany’s restrictive naturalization law itself (Brubaker, 1992; Hoffmann, 1998, 1994; Bauböck, 1997; Thränhardt, 1998).

In this article, we address the issue of varying naturalization rates, in general, and of the naturalization pattern of German immigrants, in particular. Germany is a very suitable context for studying naturalization: almost 10 percent of its residents are presently noncitizens, and its citizenship law has undergone tremendous change during the last decade. A German passport is now substantially easier to obtain than before, but, so far, naturalization has been taken up mostly by ethnic Germans. Naturalization rates of former guestworkers have always been very low, and even after the reforms only a small (though growing) minority of entitled immigrants make use of the new opportunities to naturalize (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Ausländerfragen, 2000:13).

NATURALIZATION IN GERMANY: A PUZZLE

Our starting point is a puzzle obvious to any student of immigrant integration in Germany: the group that lags behind on all measurable dimensions of assimilation – immigrants from Turkey – display the highest rates of naturalization. The naturalization rates of this group increased substantially after naturalization became accessible as an individual option in the early 1990s. Despite differences in the pace of assimilation in different societal spheres – a phenomenon labeled ‘partial’ (Esser, 1980) or ‘uneven’ assimilation (Price, 1969:216) – it is striking that the most poorly assimilated and least accepted migrants, who are well known for having strong emotional attachments to their homeland, are the most willing to integrate legally, even at the cost of giving up their Turkish citizenship. Other groups of so-called “labor migrants” from Greece, Italy, Spain, and the states of the former Yugoslavia show substantially lower naturalization rates.

In this article, we question the widely-held belief that Turkish migrants show a comparatively high naturalization rate because they gain more rights and benefits by naturalizing than do those from other EU states (*see, for*

Figure I. Annual Percentage of Naturalizations by Nationality

Note: Calculations based upon data from the Federal Statistical Office, Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt), Periodical Subject-Matter Series, (Fachserien) 1, R2, 1997-1999.

instance, Hagedorn, 1998:55). This explanation is not just unsatisfactory because it cannot explain the low propensity to naturalize among migrants from the former Yugoslavia. We will also show that the legal advantages gained by non-EU migrants through naturalization are, in fact, too small to account for the substantial difference between groups. An explanation that focuses exclusively on changes in the policy of the country of origin – in the 1990s, Turkey started to allow those migrants who had renounced their Turkish citizenship in order to apply for German passports to apply for readmission – is unsatisfactory as well. Survey results show that Turkish migrants' high willingness to naturalize is not dependent on the possibility of double-citizenship (Diehl and Blohm, 2001:408).

We hypothesize that Turkish migrants are more willing to "change flags" because naturalization offers a means of transferring formal allegiance to a group with higher social status, especially for those who have achieved a high level of individual assimilation.¹ This incentive does not apply to migrants from groups that already have a higher status in Germany, such as Italians,

¹We use the term assimilation in Alba and Nee's sense "as the decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance, of an ethnic/racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it" (1997:863). This does not imply that ethnic groups do not maintain some cultural symbols nor that assimilation is a unilateral process, but mainly that intergroup interactions are no longer asymmetric in nature (*see also* Alba, 1981:135).

Spaniards, Greeks, and people from the former Yugoslavia. Thus, we specifically predict that increasing individual assimilation will function only to increase the propensity to naturalize among Turks, and not other immigrant groups.

We begin by showing that the high naturalization rate of Turkish migrants constitutes a theoretical puzzle in the literature on naturalization. We then elaborate our own theoretical assumptions before moving on to assess the legal advantages of naturalization for different ethnic groups. After describing the database employed in our research, we analyze naturalization patterns empirically using multivariate methods and conclude with a summary and discussion of our principal findings.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: EXPLAINING DIFFERENTIAL NATURALIZATION RATES

An early landmark in naturalization research was published by Bernard in 1936. He made the classical sociological argument that it was not the demographic category of "race" that determined whether migrants naturalized, but what he called "cultural" factors, such as education, occupational status, and income. Since then, numerous articles have been published on this topic, some qualitative (Alvarez, 1987), but most quantitative (Barkan and Khokhlov, 1980; Evans, 1988; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Portes and Mozo, 1985; Portes and Curtis, 1987; Liang, 1994; Aguirre and Saenz, 2001; Yang, 1994a, 1994b; for a review, *see* DeSipio, 1987).

While some recent studies support the argument that socioeconomic adaptation furthers naturalization, there is much contradictory evidence as well. In their study of naturalization, Portes and Curtis (1987:369) showed, for instance, that age, education, occupation, income, and length of residence were not positively related to naturalization (for a similar finding at the aggregate level, *see* Barkan and Khokhlov, 1980). The authors argue that socioeconomic assimilation does not necessarily further naturalization, which follows more from a migrant "taking roots" in the hostland: owning a home was the only variable they found to raise the probability of naturalizing as well as having plans to naturalize. Liang (1994), in contrast, found that home ownership had a negative effect on naturalization. Although he found that higher socioeconomic status did further naturalization, it did so only until the duration of stay reached a certain threshold point (Liang, 1994:432). This finding is in accordance with the results presented by Evans (1988), who stressed the importance of the length of stay for naturalization in Australia.

Findings are also ambivalent with regard to variables such as sex and intraethnic contact. Yang (1994a:614) found that effects go in different directions for different groups and thus emphasizes "the continuing significance of ethnicity in the naturalization process." Liang (1994:432), in contrast, stressed that "group differences in naturalization tend to diminish to a large extent" if one holds background characteristics constant. Other variables that have proven to play a role in the propensity to naturalize are physical proximity to the homeland and reasons for immigrating. Yang (1994b:458) argues that the likelihood for return migration falls as the distance to the homeland rises, thus explaining the positive relationship between distance and the likelihood of naturalization (Yang, 1994b:473; Yang, 1994a). Aguirre and Saenz (2002) show that the reasons migrants give for immigrating to the United States have an ambivalent impact on their naturalization patterns and are not the most important predictors of naturalization.

The high rate of naturalization among Turkish migrants is puzzling if one takes the findings from the United States or Australia as a starting point. As we show in more detail below, Turkish migrants are less assimilated economically, have lower rates of home ownership, and evince shorter durations of stay than other labor migrants. The only factor predicating a high rate of Turkish naturalization is distance to homeland, but empirical evidence for this relationship is confined to the aggregate level and is thus empirically unreliable and theoretically unsatisfactory. The mechanisms behind this effect remain unclear and could range from less salient return plans to less social control by friends and relatives in the homeland. Given current transportation technologies, moreover, geographic distance has become increasingly less convincing as an explanatory variable. It certainly cannot explain the difference in naturalization between Italians and Turks, since differences in the distance to the homeland are negligible by today's standards.

Thus, it is neither greater geographic distance nor – as we will show below – more legal advantages that renders Turks more willing to naturalize than members of other ethnic groups. This puzzle can only be explained if one appreciates the greater difficulties that Turkish migrants face in trying to integrate socially and economically within German society. Turkish migrants are less well educated than EU and Yugoslav migrants (Alba *et al.*, 1994; Kalter and Granato, 2002); they more frequently have unskilled jobs (Szydluk, 1996; Seifert, 1992, 1991; Bender and Seifert, 2000; Granato and Kalter, 2001); they are less accepted socially and have fewer contact with Germans (Mehrländer *et al.*, 1996); and they experience discrimination more often (Böltken, 2000). As a result, those Turkish migrants who are successful in

accessing the status systems and social networks of German society experience a bigger discontinuity between their individual status and their social identity than migrants from Spain, Italy, Greece, or the former Yugoslavia.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979:40), an individual's "... social identity may be positive or negative according to the evaluations (which tend to be socially consensual, either within or across groups) of those groups that contribute to an individual's social identity." Based on this argument, students of social mobilization have argued that people with a social status they view as inferior have three options: they can try to better the lot of their reference group indirectly through collective action; they can attempt to change the dimension of comparison (for instance, claiming cultural rather than economic superiority); or they can strive to leave their group of origin (*see* Klandermans, 1997; Hechter, 1971; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Wright *et al.*, 1990; Boudon 1980:35). In Germany, different groups of former "guestworkers" differ with respect to their social identity. Unlike Turkish migrants, most groups from the EU and the former Yugoslavia see a possibility for steady upward mobility and social assimilation from generation to generation, even though they may not yet be equal to Germans socioeconomically. The latter holds especially true for Italian children who are substantially less successful in school than German children. They are, however, very well socially integrated (*see* Mehrländer *et al.*, 1996:307). In general, citizens of the EU are becoming increasingly more invisible as foreigners. For them, comparisons with the majority no longer evoke feelings of inferiority. Thus, ethnic group membership has a substantially different meaning than for Turkish migrants.

For the descendants of immigrants from nations in the EU or the former Yugoslavia, ethnic group membership resembles more and more what has been called "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans, 1979; Alba, 1990; Waters, 1990; Hirschman, 1983). Although many third and fourth generation European immigrants in the United States maintain some sort of ethnic identity, this does not indicate an ethnic revival but a new stage in an ongoing process of assimilation. These groups are socioeconomically assimilated, their interethnic interactions are symmetric and nonsegmented (Alba, 1981:136) and, as a result, the ethnic boundaries between them and the majority members lose salience. Migrants can maintain attachments with their group of origin without bearing the social costs associated with membership in a group with an "inferior" status. Under these conditions, belonging to an ethnic group can ultimately become a form of "cultural capital" (*see* Alba, 1990:305; Esser, 1988).

This form of ethnic assimilation is increasingly appropriate as a description for European migrants in Germany. Unlike 40 years ago, their countries of origin are no longer marked by economically induced emigration pressure. Rather, they belong to the same economic and cultural space as Germany. As a result, the possibility of changing formal group membership through naturalization is no longer appealing to these groups. Given the absence of substantial legal advantages to naturalization, their rates will remain low no matter how easy it becomes to “change flags.”

Things look different for migrants from Turkey. Their upward mobility is limited to a small subgroup of individuals and thus resembles what Alba describes as a more individualistic concept of assimilation, which occurs when “. . . an individual moves across an ethnic boundary, transferring allegiance to another group, but without any change of the boundary itself” (Alba, 1981:135). Group boundaries between Germans and Turks are still marked by an asymmetric interaction and, therefore, naturalization constitutes an exit option for Turks who meet the preconditions for individual economic mobility and social integration. For them, naturalization offers a way to bring their formal group belonging into line with their individual “success.” In contrast, for those who are not “qualified” for individual mobility in terms of human, cultural, or social capital, the group of origin remains an important – often the only – source of status and social approval. This fact might also explain why despite comparatively high naturalization rates, many Turkish migrants are still reluctant to give up their citizenship (*see* Diehl and Blohm, 2001).

It is difficult to test this hypothesis directly because it requires observing systematic variation in the social status of Turkish migrants and thus presupposes an internationally comparative study. We do not have such data.² As an alternative, we present indirect evidence for our argument in two steps. First we show that Turkish migrants are not more willing to naturalize because they gain more rights and benefits or because they value these rights and benefits more than other groups. In doing so, we make sure that our puzzle is not merely an artifact of different group compositions with respect to factors affecting naturalization. Second, we show that rising individual assimilation indeed promotes Turks’ willingness to naturalize and that this relationship holds only for them and not for other groups.

²There is, however, evidence that the substantial increase in the naturalization rates of Turkish migrants is not a German phenomenon but takes place in other countries such as the Netherlands, France and Switzerland, too (OECD, 1999:255).

THE TANGIBLE INCENTIVES TO NATURALIZE

Generally speaking, the tangible incentives to naturalize refer to the legal implications this step has for the value of people's resources. More specifically, naturalization can increase or decrease the returns to human, social, and economic capital. The returns on human capital in the form of educational degrees or job experience gained in the host country can, for instance, be affected by naturalization if migrants can gain access to scholarships or jobs in the public sector through citizenship (Yang, 1994b:452). Political knowledge of the host country and civic skills (Brady *et al.*, 1995) are another form of human capital whose value increases through naturalization, as in many countries only citizens can affect outcomes in political decisionmaking and thus use these resources. Social capital, such as having relatives in the homeland, is affected by naturalization since it often enables migrants to sponsor the entry of family members (*see* Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1990). With regard to economic or physical capital, Portes and Curtis argue that persons owning houses have "greater interest in influencing decisions which affect their property" (1987:361; *see also* Liang, 1994:413). The same can be said for economic capital such as a privately owned business. Other sorts of capital have been identified, such as cultural capital (*see* Swidler, 1986); but the three forms of capital mentioned above allow clear predictions about how their value is affected by naturalization.

The actual incentive structure not only depends on the gains but also costs of naturalization. Such costs can emerge before, during and after naturalization. Before people apply for citizenship, they must gather information about where and how to do it. These costs can be expected to be low if migrants have close ties with an immigrant community that provides its members with information on the naturalization process (Yang, 1994b:457). During naturalization, migrants typically have to take a language test, answer questions about the host country's history and society, and declare their loyalty to it, which many migrants find embarrassing and painful (*see* Alvarez, 1987). In countries where double citizenship is not allowed, moreover, migrants have to be released from their homeland's citizenship, which can entail further expenditures of time and money. After naturalization is completed, migrants might encounter ostracism within their own ethnic groups for being disloyal to their countries of origin. With regard to economic and human capital, naturalization does sometimes negatively affect the value of resources acquired in the homeland. In some countries, for instance, naturalized migrants might lose the right to inherit property. In sum, the amount of

these costs is systematically affected by migrants' language skills, the ethnic composition of their network, their social ties with the homeland, and the laws regulating the release from the country of origin's citizenship.

The Situation in Germany

In January 2000, a reformed citizenship law introduced by the coalition of Social Democrats and Greens took effect in Germany. It states that the children of immigrants living in Germany will be granted by birth both German citizenship and that of their parents' country of origin. By the age of 23, each person must choose between either German or "homeland" citizenship. Every child is entitled to citizenship as soon as one parent has lived in Germany for at least eight years and possesses an unlimited permission to stay. The length of stay required for naturalization has also been reduced. Immigrants no longer have to live in Germany for fifteen years to become eligible for citizenship, as was the case before the reform, but for only eight years. Migrants who fulfill these conditions are legally entitled to acquire the German passport. Unless under special circumstances, dual citizenship is not an option in Germany. At this point, the majority of "labor migrants" are entitled to German citizenship.

The institutionally induced costs and benefits of naturalization in Germany are affected by the legal status of labor migrants. The German situation since World War II has been marked by a mixture of fundamentalism and pragmatism: fundamentalism, as citizenship law was for almost a century considered to be a matter of German descent governed by the principle of *jus sanguinis* (Brubaker, 1992); pragmatism, because the actual policies directed at migrants were much less restrictive than official rhetoric (Santel, 1998). The tension between a restrictive naturalization law, on the one hand, and mass immigration, on the other hand, was solved by decoupling substantial and formal citizenship (*see* Castles, 1994). Many social, civil, and even political rights were granted to migrants independently of their citizenship status. Legal migrants in Germany thus gain only a few additional rights through naturalization, most importantly political rights.

The constitutional court declared in 1990 that the participation of immigrants in local elections is unconstitutional (Mitglieder des Bundesverfassungsgerichts, 1991:37). Immigrants from countries that are not EU members do not have the right to take part in elections at all, whereas immigrants from EU member states can participate in municipal and European elections. With regard to other political rights, differences between citizens and noncitizens are rather marginal. Foreigners enjoy rights that are granted to all per-

sons, regardless of citizenship (*e.g.*, freedom from prejudice and discrimination based on descent, belief, or political views; the right to pursue religious beliefs undisturbed; and the right to freedom of speech). Other rights directly influencing participation, such as the right of assembly and the right to establish unions and organizations, are granted by the constitution only to German citizens. Some rights, such as the right to form associations, are not granted directly to non-Germans through the constitution, but by law. Immigrants are, for instance, allowed to declare their opinions in political matters; to take part in demonstrations, strikes, and leaflet actions; to belong to a party or trade union; to take part in the election of occupational organizations, schools and universities; and (in some towns) to play an advisory role in municipal decisionmaking (Bischoff and Teubner, 1992:91).

Most other rights migrants enjoy depend on their legal status.³ Naturalized migrants cannot be expelled from the country, a protection that is often mentioned when it comes to the benefits of naturalization. However, migrants with Permanent Resident Status (*Aufenthaltsberechtigung*) or an Unlimited Residence Permit (*unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis*) can only be expelled in severe cases of criminality or if they are long-term recipients of welfare. Welfare recipients, however, cannot become citizens anyway. Citizenship offers only incremental benefits when it comes to traveling as well: with a *Aufenthaltserlaubnis*, migrants can travel in most EU countries the same as EU citizens. When they leave the country for more than six months, their rights to stay in Germany usually expire, although there is the possibility of declaring one's departure to prevent this consequence. Besides, this regulation does not apply for retired people.

Only German citizens can become public officials in fields related to national sovereignty such as finance and law, and only Germans or EU migrants can become public officials in other areas (the police are an exception). All other jobs, even in the public sector, are open to noncitizens. There are minor differences between the rights of citizens and migrants holding a Work Allowance (*Arbeiterlaubnis*) with regard to the free choice of the work. Nonetheless, migrants who are entitled to citizenship almost always fulfill the requirements for a Work Entitlement (*Arbeitsberechtigung*), which authorizes them to engage in any occupation. Things look similar for foreign entrepreneurs: as long they

³The most secure resident status is the Permanent Resident Status (*Aufenthaltsberechtigung*), followed by the Unlimited Residence Permit (*Unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis*), the Limited Residence Permit (*Aufenthaltserlaubnis*), the Residence Title for Exceptional/Specific Purposes (*Aufenthaltsbefugnis/-bewilligung*), the Toleration (*Duldung*) and the Permission to Reside (*Aufenthaltsgestattung*).

hold Limited Residence Permits they have to ask permission to start businesses, but migrants with Unlimited Residence Permits or a more secure resident status do not. To become self-employed as a dentist, physician, psychotherapist, or psychologist, migrants must be German citizens or EU members, except if they finished high school in Germany or are married to a German or an EU citizen. Spouses of migrants holding limited permission of stay have to wait a year before they can work. But again, for migrants holding Unlimited Residence Permits this is not the case.

In the United States, the expanded right to petition for relatives living outside the host country is one of the most important benefits of citizenship (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990:98), German citizenship does not expand this right. Except for very severe cases (*Härtefälle*), citizens can only sponsor spouses and minor children – just as migrants with permission to stay – although only citizens can sponsor these close relatives while receiving welfare.

This brief summary shows that the legal benefits migrants earn by naturalizing are negligible. The only real benefit is to participate in local, state, and federal elections (for non-EU migrants), or (for EU migrants) the right to participate in federal and state elections. Thus, political skills and knowledge are one of the few resources migrants can in fact make better use of as citizens. Other resources are only marginally enhanced by the acquisition of citizenship, if at all. The value of social capital in the homeland remains completely unaffected by naturalizing, as family reunion is limited for Turkish migrants even after they naturalize. Naturalization does offer protection from eviction, but migrants threatened by it are not entitled to naturalize anyway. Especially for non-EU migrants, naturalization offers better employment opportunities for people interested in becoming public officials. This might be a further incentive to naturalize for the better educated migrants who want to become teachers, for example. As we show below, however, the number of migrants who are educationally qualified for these jobs is still very low.

There are differences with regard to the costs that ethnic groups encounter upon being released from homeland citizenship. Naturalization, for instance, is far more expensive for migrants from Bosnia and Croatia than for those from Turkey. However, in a survey conducted by the commissioner for foreigners (*Ausländerbeauftragter*), only 1 percent of the 1,700 migrants interviewed mentioned these costs as playing a decisive role in their naturalization decision (www.einbuengerung.niedersachsen.de/Infos/presseinfo.htm). Naturalization requires signing a written declaration of loyalty to the constitution and (unless the migrant attended a German school) the passing of a language

test. Most migrants who are eligible for citizenship do have the necessary language skills.

In order to prove that differences in the tangible costs and benefits related to naturalization do not account for interethnic variance in rates, it is not enough to show that both are rather small. Since costs and benefits are a function of the legal context, on the one hand, and migrants' own resources, on the other hand, we have to demonstrate in addition that Turkish migrants and other ethnic groups do not vary significantly with respect to the individual background characteristics. This exercise requires more detailed analyses of group-specific naturalization patterns. To set the stage for this task, in the next section we provide a brief overview of the data and the operational definitions used to derive our results.

DATA AND MEASUREMENTS

Our data are drawn from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) conducted by the German Institute for Economy (DIW: Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaft) annually since 1984 (*see* SOEP Group, 2001). To be included in the sample, interviewees had to live together in one household with a German or an immigrant head of household and had to be at least 16 years old at the time of the survey. In addition, immigrants had to be 'guestworkers' who had migrated to Germany during the period of labor recruitment. For this reason, only those households having a Turkish, Spanish, Greek, "Yugoslav" or Italian head were interviewed. The GSOEP survey thus does not represent the ethnic origins of all foreigners in Germany. However, labor migrants comprise, in numerical terms, the largest nationalities in the immigrant population. Our analysis is based on the fifteenth wave of the GSOEP – those who were interviewed in 1998.

Compared to other countries where naturalization has been studied (such as the United States and Australia), data on migrants' political integration are still hard to obtain for Germany and suffer chronically from small sample sizes. Relatively few migrants naturalize every year, so we cannot only focus on the determinants of actual naturalization. We also consider the intention to naturalize, which is measured in the GSOEP by the question: "Do you intend to become a German citizen within the next two years?" The response categories were "yes, definitely"; "yes, probably"; "probably not"; "definitely not." Naturalized migrants are no longer part of the migrant sample but of the German sample and thus no longer answer questions about their history of migration and integration and their attitudes towards politics

and naturalization. Nonetheless, they can be identified and compared with non-naturalized migrants using the panel wave prior to their naturalization.

In order to test empirically whether migrants' differential likelihood to naturalize is caused by differences in the tangible costs and benefits we need suitable indicators. The GSOEP contains proxies for most personal resources that are affected by naturalization. Economic capital is measured in terms of home or business ownership (indicating naturalization-related gains in the form of being able to influence political decisions affecting one's property). Human capital is measured by a question asking in which country they completed their education and what degree they attained (a higher German degree indicating naturalization-related gains in the form of getting better access to jobs). Even though human capital in the form of political skills is not measured directly, degree of political interest is assessed (indicating naturalization-related gains in the form of opportunities for political participation). Social capital in the homeland is also measured since migrants were asked about relatives living abroad (indicating naturalization-related gains in the form of better opportunities for family reunion). Since naturalized migrants in Germany do not gain opportunities for family reunion compared to legal residents, however, we will not consider social capital as an incentive to naturalize but rather as a factor inhibiting naturalization.

Things are less straightforward with regard to variables influencing the costs of naturalization. As argued above, information costs are a function of migrants' ethnic ties in the host country, as contact with naturalized co-ethnics makes access to information on the naturalization process easier. But this mechanism can only be assumed to function if the naturalization rate of an ethnic group is rather high. Since naturalized migrants are still a minority in all groups under consideration and there is not much variance with respect to this cost, we ignore this factor in our analyses.

Among the social costs of naturalization, we assume that ethnic ties only increase the costs of applying for citizenship if migrants have close contact with their co-ethnics and if the latter share a negative attitude towards naturalization. Since different migrants groups' attitudes toward giving up the citizenship of the homeland is not measured in the GSOEP we cannot investigate this effect empirically. However, the GSOEP does contain information on respondents' ethnic ties with relatives in the homeland, which can be assumed to be rather negatively related to migrants' willingness to naturalize – unless they want their relatives to join them and naturalization enables them to sponsor their kin, which is not the case in Germany.

After assessing how potential benefits affect different groups' propensities to naturalize, we develop other empirical evidence for the second part of our argument – that Turkish migrants' high naturalization rate is caused by those persons who have achieved individual assimilation and to whom naturalization offers an opportunity to formally change their group belonging. In order to differentiate between these two possible causes of naturalization (quest for tangible benefits versus quest for status) not only analytically but also empirically, we have to use indicators of individual assimilation that are unrelated to the tangible benefits of naturalization. Education, for instance, does not meet this criterion. Although it is an indicator for individual assimilation, its benefits would also be enhanced by naturalization by opening up access to jobs in the public sector. Therefore, we measure increasing individual assimilation using the following two indicators: the language migrants speak at home (German instead of the homeland language) and the ethnic composition of their network (only ethnic versus at least one German friend among three best friends). The former indicates degree of cultural assimilation, while the latter indicates extent of social assimilation.

The GSOEP contains additional information about standard socio-demographic traits that we control in our analyses. These include marital status, age and duration of stay, and the existence of children in the household. An important intermediate variable is the intention to stay in Germany. If migrants plan to remigrate in the near future, they might not be interested in the positive impact naturalization has on their resources. Fortunately, migrants are asked in the GSOEP whether they plan to remigrate or not.

Table 1 overviews the operationalization of our key theoretical concepts. We will restrict our empirical analysis to migrants from Turkey and Yugoslavia and its successor states, as very few labor migrants from other EU countries intend to naturalize. Of the 599 EU migrants in the fifteenth GSOEP, only four people naturalized recently and only twelve intend to do so within the next two years. Turkish migrants and those from Yugoslavia and its successor states, however, are suitable groups for testing our hypothesis. These groups vary with regard to their level of group assimilation as well as their naturalization rates. The latter are also high enough to allow for a systematic analysis of the determinants of the decision to become a citizen. Although there are differences between migrants from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Yugoslavia, and the GSOEP actually allows to differentiate between these subgroups since 1998, case numbers are too small to sustain an analysis by subgroup. We will therefore compare Turkish migrants and migrants from former Yugoslavia in our

TABLE 1
FACTORS USED TO PREDICT THE DECISION TO NATURALIZE

Category and Variable	Definition
Indicators for the tangible gains and costs of naturalization	
Returns on economic capital	
Home ownership	Home ownership in the host country (yes versus no)
Business ownership	Business owned in the host country (yes versus no)
Returns on human capital	
Education	School visit in host country (yes versus no)
Political skills	Political interest (very much/much interest versus not so much/no interest)
Social costs	
Relatives in the homeland	Existence of relatives living abroad (yes versus no)
Indicators for individual assimilation	
Cultural assimilation	Language migrants speak at home (only native language versus at least partly German)
Social assimilation	Existence of German friends (only ethnic friends versus at least one German friend among three best friends)
Control variables	
Age	Years since date of birth
Sex	Male versus female
Marital status	Married and cohabiting versus others
Education in homeland	School visit in homeland (yes versus no)
Duration of stay	Year born – year of immigration

analyses, and gather additional support for our argument by looking at internal differences between the Yugoslav subgroups afterwards.

Finally, in order to investigate the decisionmaking process that might or might not lead to naturalization, we only look at those migrants who are actually eligible for naturalization. As mentioned above, migrants who have been living in Germany for at least eight years and are not on welfare are entitled to naturalize. We also exclude those migrants who do not speak any German, since German language skills are a precondition to pass the test. Migrants with rather poor language skills are included in our analyses because the test is not particularly hard, so that migrants who speak some German have a chance of passing it, especially after some preparation. The actual difficulty of the test varies by state, which would render the decision of who has “sufficient” language skills difficult. Overall, 78.7 percent of all Turks and 79.3 percent of all (first and second generation)⁴ Yugoslav migrants interviewed in the SOEP fulfill these criteria and are thus eligible for inclusion in our naturalization model.

BIVARIATE FINDINGS

We begin by eliminating two alternative explanations for the high propensity

⁴Second generation migrants are those who were born in Germany or immigrated before age six.

of Turkish migrants to naturalize. We show first that this phenomenon is no mere effect of the group's composition with respect to variables related to naturalization. Next, we demonstrate that Turkish migrants do not react differently to the same naturalization-related gains as Yugoslavs for some arbitrary reason. Owing to their similar migration backgrounds, Turkish and Yugoslav migrants do not differ much in terms of their sociodemographic composition. Immigration from both countries took place mainly from the 1960s to the early 1970s and was caused by labor shortages in the booming German economy. While it was planned as a temporary immigration by German authorities as well as by the migrants themselves, many guestworkers ended up staying in Germany (*see* Thränhardt, 1988). At this point, most plan to stay permanently in this country.

Most first generation labor migrants finished some sort of basic education in the homeland, and the children they brought with them or who were born after migrating completed their education in Germany. About half (Turks) to two thirds (Yugoslavs) of the migrants under consideration went to school in their homeland, and about one out of three migrants completed some education in Germany. With regard to political interest, the groups do not differ substantially: less than one fifth of either group is interested in politics. Similarly, about 14 percent to 18 percent (Turks and Yugoslavs, respectively) own houses in Germany. The number of business owners is too small to investigate the influence of business ownership on the propensity to naturalize. We therefore do not consider this variable further.

The groups differ substantially with regard to assimilation indicators. Only 12 percent of all Yugoslavs but about one third of Turkish migrants speak mostly their country of origin's language at home. In addition, more than 60 percent of the migrants from Yugoslavia have German friends, but only slightly more than 40 percent of all Turkish migrants do so. Duration of stay also differs substantially between groups. The share of those who were born in Germany is about one quarter for both groups, but Turks have a larger share living in Germany 1–25 years compared with Yugoslavs (45% and 22.2% respectively) and a smaller share living in Germany for more than 25 years (28.8% versus 52.3%). This contrast reflects the still ongoing family reunion of Turkish migrants. Likewise, more Turks than Yugoslavs have children in Germany (60.9% versus 28.4%) and more Turks than Yugoslavs are married and younger, even though the groups are similar with respect to sex composition. Table 2 provides an overview about these differences.

We are now in a position to take a first look at the bivariate relationship between the variables under consideration and the plan to naturalize. Table 3

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF TURKISH AND YUGOSLAV MIGRANTS ELIGIBLE FOR NATURALIZATION OR
ALREADY NATURALIZED BY INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (ROW PERCENT)

Education in Germany				German Friends ^a				
	none	some	N		yes	no	N	
Yugosl.	70.4	29.6	304	Yugosl.	63.1	36.9	268	
Turks	65.5	34.5	565	Turks	42.6	57.4	484	
Education in homeland ^a				Home ownership				
	none	some	N		yes	no	N	
Yugosl.	35.3	64.7	306	Yugosl.	18.3	81.7	306	
Turks	45.3	54.7	565	Turks	14.2	85.8	565	
Language spoken at home ^a				Sex				
	German/				female	male	N	
	both	native lang.	N	Yugosl.	50.3	49.7	306	
Yugosl.	88.0	12.0	300	Turks	45.1	54.9	565	
Turks	67.1	32.9	559	Relatives abroad				
Marital status ^a					yes	no	N	
	married	not married	N	Yugosl.	79.3	20.7	271	
Yugosl.	65.7	34.3	306	Turks	76.7	23.3	502	
Turks	73.1	26.9	565	Plan to stay				
Duration of stay ^a					yes	no	N	
	born in G.	1-25 yrs.	>25 yrs.	N	Yugosl.	61.7	38.3	298
Yugosl.	25.5	22.2	52.3	306	Turks	60.1	39.9	554
Turks	26.2	45.0	28.8	565	Children in household ^a			
Political interest					yes	no	N	
	yes	no	N	Yugosl.	28.4	71.6	306	
Yugosl.	19.3	80.7	306	Turks	60.9	39.1	565	
Turks	16.2	83.8	563					
Age ^a								
	18-25 yrs.	26-35 yrs.	36-45 yrs.	46-55 yrs.	>55 yrs.		N	
Yugosl.	21.2	12.1	8.8	36.3	21.6		306	
Turks	24.4	30.6	13.5	14.2	17.3		565	

Note: ^aPearson's Chi-Square test shows significant differences ($p < .05$).

shows the naturalization status and the attitudes about naturalization for migrants from Turkey and from Yugoslavia.

In both groups, only a minority plans to naturalize and an even smaller share has already obtained citizenship. Those migrants who report having no intention to naturalize are the biggest subgroup in both nationalities. Turks substantially more often plan to apply for German citizenship than Yugoslavs (15% versus 8.8%) and also show a slightly higher share of individuals who have already naturalized (6.4% versus 5.4%).

In both groups, naturalization seems to be positively correlated with similar background factors. Those who are already naturalized or plan to do so soon have a duration of stay of less than 25 years (which is probably an age effect), have completed some education in Germany, have no relatives in the homeland, are not married, speak at least some German at home, and plan to stay in Germany permanently. More than a fifth of all Turkish migrants who

TABLE 3
NATURALIZATION STATUS AND INTENTIONS BY SELECTED INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (ROW PERCENT)
ELIGIBLE MIGRANTS FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND TURKEY

	naturalized		Do you intend to become a German citizen within the next two years?		yes, definitely		yes, probably		probably not		certainly not		N	
	Y	T	Y	T	Y	T	Y	T	Y	T	Y	T	Y	T
Length of residence ^{a,b}														
1-25	9.1	7.9	10.6	15.9	9.1	20.2	33.3	28.2	37.9	27.8	66	252		
>25	2.6	4.3	4.5	8.0	9.6	13.0	35.3	24.1	48.1	50.6	156	162		
native born	8.0	6.3	16.0	22.2	14.7	30.6	34.7	25.7	26.7	15.3	75	144		
Education in homeland ^{a,b}														
yes	3.6	7.2	5.7	14.7	7.8	16.7	34.4	24.5	48.4	36.9	192	306		
no	8.6	5.6	14.3	15.9	16.2	25.8	35.2	28.6	25.7	24.2	105	252		
Education in Germany ^{a,b}														
yes	9.2	8.2	16.1	18.6	16.1	25.3	29.9	26.3	28.7	21.6	87	194		
no	2.9	5.5	5.8	13.5	8.7	18.4	37.0	26.4	45.7	36.3	208	364		
Lang. spoken at home ^{a,b}														
partly/mostly G.	5.7	5.9	8.8	21.5	11.9	25.8	37.2	25.5	36.4	21.2	261	372		
native lang. only	2.8	7.1	8.3	2.7	2.8	10.9	16.7	27.7	69.4	51.6	36	184		
Marital status ^{a,b}														
not married	9.6	7.9	12.5	19.2	11.5	25.2	31.7	28.5	34.6	19.2	104	151		
married	3.1	5.9	6.7	13.8	10.4	19.2	36.3	25.6	43.5	35.6	193	407		
Political interest ^b														
yes	10.5	11.0	12.3	23.1	15.8	23.1	22.8	17.6	38.6	25.3	57	91		
no	4.2	5.6	7.9	13.8	9.6	20.4	37.5	27.7	40.8	32.5	240	465		
Relatives in homeland ^{a,b}														
yes	3.8	8.4	6.7	11.7	11.9	20.1	36.2	26.4	41.4	33.4	210	383		
no	15.1	3.5	11.3	26.3	9.4	15.8	20.8	24.6	43.4	29.8	53	114		
Sex														
female	7.4	6.7	10.1	14.3	8.7	18.3	30.9	25.8	43.0	34.9	149	252		
male	3.4	6.2	7.4	16.0	12.8	22.9	38.5	26.8	37.8	28.1	148	306		
Home owner														
yes	9.1	2.5	12.7	20.0	12.7	18.8	29.1	33.8	36.4	25.0	55	80		
no	4.5	7.1	7.9	14.4	10.3	21.1	36.0	25.1	41.3	32.2	242	478		

TABLE 3 (CONTINUED)
NATURALIZATION STATUS AND INTENTIONS BY SELECTED INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (ROW PERCENT)
ELIGIBLE MIGRANTS FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND TURKEY

	naturalized		Do you intend to become a German citizen within the next two years?								N	
	Y	T	yes, definitely Y	T	yes, probably Y	T	probably not Y	T	certainly not Y	T	Y	T
German friends ^b												
yes	7.4	10.2	8.6	19.9	13.5	22.8	33.7	24.8	36.8	22.3	163	206
no	4.1	5.5	5.2	11.3	8.2	16.8	32.0	27.4	50.5	39.1	97	274
Plan to stay ^{a,b}												
yes	8.2	6.9	12.6	20.5	14.3	23.0	29.7	28.1	35.2	21.5	182	331
no	0.9	5.5	2.6	7.7	5.3	17.7	42.1	24.1	49.1	45.0	114	220
Children in household ^b												
yes	7.1	7.7	9.5	16.6	7.1	21.7	36.9	28.2	39.3	25.8	84	337
no	4.7	4.5	8.5	13.1	12.2	19.5	33.8	23.5	40.8	39.4	213	221
Total	5.4	6.5	8.8	15.2	10.8	20.8	34.7	26.3	40.4	31.8	297	558

Notes: ^aSignificant (p<.05) for Yugoslav migrants.

^bSignificant (p<.05) for Turkish migrants.

were born in Germany or lived there for up to 25 years, who are interested in politics, and who do not have relatives in the homeland intend to naturalize within the next two years. None of the subgroups of Yugoslav migrants shows such a high intention to apply for citizenship in the near future.

The most obvious difference between the two groups concerns the impact of German friends. Having German friends seems to increase interest in naturalization especially among Turks: almost one third of those Turks who have German friends are already naturalized or have definite plans to do so within two years. There is no significant correlation between the ethnic composition of the social network and naturalization for migrants from Yugoslavia. Political interest only has a statistically significant effect on the naturalization behavior of Turks, although the tendency does seem to be in the same direction for both groups: politically interested migrants are more likely to naturalize than those who are not interested in politics.

In sum, our bivariate analyses provide partial and preliminary support for our hypothesis. Turks and Yugoslavs seem to react quite similarly to the naturalization-related gains. In both groups, education and (even though only marginally statistically significant for Yugoslavs) political interest further naturalization. The latter result can be easily explained by the fact that both groups gain access to full voting rights after becoming citizens. On the contrary, owning a house does not affect either Turkish or Yugoslav decisions to naturalize. There is also evidence that having German friends and thus being socially assimilated promotes naturalization only for Turkish migrants. Contrary to expectations, however, the same relationship does not hold for the other indicator of assimilation: speaking German furthers the naturalization of Yugoslav and Turkish migrants alike. Since variables such as having children, education and the ethnic composition of the network are closely related to each other, we now turn to a multivariate logistic regression model to assess the "pure" effects of the variables under consideration.

MULTIVARIATE FINDINGS

In order to conserve degrees of freedom in the multivariate analyses, we code our dependent variable as follows: we assess how likely it is that a person is already naturalized or has a definite plan to do so versus the likelihood that he or she has probably or definitely no plan to naturalize. We know that this is not unproblematic since there is evidence that naturalization intentions and actual naturalizations are influenced at least partially by different factors (Portes and Curtis, 1987). Fortunately, the intention to naturalize was mea-

sured in the GSOEP by asking migrants whether or not they definitely plan to apply for citizenship within a relatively short period of two years. The validity of this measurement can thus be expected to be rather high. In fact, 91 percent of those migrants who report to be naturalized in the 1998 wave of the GSOEP had reported in the 1996 wave that they definitely plan to naturalize within the next two years. Since the naturalization process is quite long (especially the process of being released from one's old citizenship) and the response category "application submitted" does not exist in the questionnaire of the GSOEP, we cannot validate the answers in the other direction. We exclude from the analysis those migrants who reported that they would probably naturalize within the next two years.

As independent variables we include again indicators for the tangible gains and costs related to naturalization (political interest, education in Germany, home ownership, relatives in the homeland), along with indicators of

TABLE 4
LOGIT MODEL PREDICTING THE PROBABILITY OF NATURALIZATION FOR
TURKISH AND YUGOSLAV IMMIGRANTS

	Dependent Variable:			
	Definite Plan to Naturalize or Already Naturalized Versus Others			
	(No = 0, Yes = 1)			
	Yugoslavs: N=227		Turks: N=381	
	<i>B</i>	sig.	<i>B</i>	sig.
Sex: Female	0.78	(.12)	.42	(.14)
Age	-0.04	(.22)	-0.02	(.15)
Married	-0.51	(.34)	-0.15	(.66)
Length of stay				
1-25	1.31	(.06)	-0.50	(.22)
>25	0.68	(.38)	-0.99	(.07)
<i>born in Germany</i>				
Education in Germany				
yes	1.27	(.14)	-0.16	(.58)
no				
Education in Homeland				
yes	-0.09	(.90)	0.67	(.06)
no				
Language spoken at home				
Mostly or partly German	-0.55	(.46)	1.08	(.00)
<i>Mostly native language</i>				
Children in Household	-0.42	(.42)	0.60	(.06)
German Friends	-0.08	(.88)	0.60	(.03)
Relatives in Homeland	-0.02	(.97)	-0.49	(.10)
Interest in Politics	1.01	(.08)	0.90	(.01)
House Ownership	1.28	(.02)	0.19	(.59)
Intention to Stay in Germany	2.52	(.00)	0.87	(.00)
Constant	-3.20	(.08)	-1.71	(.03)
Chi ² df	52.40	14	86.60	14
Pseudo R ²	.28	.19		

Note: Reference categories in italics.

individual assimilation that are unrelated to the benefits of naturalization (language spoken at home and having German friends) as well as controls for age, sex, children, education in homeland, marital status and duration of stay, and the intention to stay in Germany, into our analysis. The findings are shown in Table 4.

Results show that both groups react similarly and in expected ways to the tangible incentives to naturalize. Both Turks and Yugoslavs tend to naturalize if they intend to stay in Germany and if they are interested in politics (although the latter effect is again only marginally statistically significant for Yugoslavs). Although home ownership also has a positive effect, it is only significant for Yugoslav migrants. As expected, education in Germany does not speed up naturalization. On the whole, the indicators of tangible naturalization-related gains cannot explain which migrants naturalize and which do not.

Only migrants from Yugoslavia are more likely to naturalize if they (again marginally significant) have a duration of stay in Germany up to 25 years. In the bivariate case, Yugoslav migrants who were born in Germany had a stronger interest in naturalizing – just as Turkish migrants did. We now see that Yugoslav migrants with a duration of stay of 1–25 years have the highest propensity to naturalize when other variables are controlled. Owing to data limitations, this effect should be interpreted with caution though, since it is associated with a relatively small number of foreign-born Yugoslav migrants who have attained education in Germany and have a high naturalization intention. This group is also responsible for the positive (though not statistically significant) effect of education in Germany on the Yugoslav propensity to naturalize. Unlike Yugoslavs, Turkish migrants who completed school in the homeland are more likely to acquire German citizenship. A closer look at the data shows that this effect is mainly caused by migrants who have a higher education in Turkey. Having children increases the likelihood of naturalizing only for Turkish migrants.

The effect of education for Turkish migrants vanishes in the multivariate case as soon as contact with Germans is included in the analysis. Thus Turkish migrants who achieved their education in Germany have a higher naturalization rate only because they are more likely to have German friends. As expected, the indicators for individual assimilation are positively related to the likelihood to naturalize only for Turkish migrants: Turks who speak at least some German at home and have at least one German friend are substantially more likely to naturalize than migrants who speak only Turkish at home and have only Turkish friends. The naturalization of Yugoslavs is unaf-

fects by these factors, lending strong support to our theoretical argument: if Turkish assimilation in Germany increases and their contact with the ethnic network loosens, then their naturalization speeds up. Yugoslav migrants, however, do not change their naturalization behavior when this sort of individual adaptation occurs. The fact that relatives in the homeland only keep Turkish migrants from naturalizing points in the same direction. For both groups, the intention to stay in Germany plays an extremely important role in the decision to naturalize, which can be easily explained. The gains of naturalizing only count if a person plans to stay permanently in the host country. In addition, the disapproval of homeland relatives for abandoning homeland citizenship is likely to play a more important role if a migrant plans to return.

Ultimately, between-group differences in the likelihood of naturalizing should disappear if one takes into account the differential effect of assimilation on the decision to naturalize. As a last step, therefore, we estimate a pooled logistic regression model for Turkish and Yugoslav migrants together with a dummy variable for group membership (model 1). Model 2 is a reduced-form model found best to fit the data after multiple successive runs. In model 3 we test whether or not Turkish migrants still have a significantly higher naturalization rate after taking into account that individual assimilation has a different impact on the likelihood to naturalize in both groups by including an interaction term for nationality and language spoken at home. The following results should only be considered preliminary, as the case numbers are unfortunately quite small, and the interaction effects have thus to be interpreted with caution.

The results confirm our argument in two important points. As expected, nationality has a strong effect in the pooled model: Turkish migrants are much more likely than Yugoslav migrants to naturalize. However, as soon as we insert the interaction into the model, the effect of nationality is reversed – even though far from being statistically significant. The interaction effect, as well as the increase in the model's fit, is statistically significant on the .10 level ($\chi^2 = 2.9$ with $df = 1$). This suggests that if Turkish migrants speak German at home they have a much higher likelihood of naturalizing than others (higher than Turkish migrants who speak Turkish at home and Yugoslav migrants independent of the language they speak at home). Migrants who are interested in politics and who intend to stay in Germany forever are significantly more likely to have an intention to naturalize than others. We did not include an interaction term for friends and nationality in our model since this

TABLE 5
LOGIT MODEL WITH INTERACTION EFFECTS PREDICTING THE PROBABILITY OF NATURALIZATION FOR
TURKISH AND YUGOSLAV IMMIGRANTS

	Dependent Variable:					
	Definite Plan to Naturalize or Already Naturalized versus Others					
	(No = 0, Yes = 1)					
	Model 1 N = 608		Model 2 N = 610		Model 3 N = 610	
	β	sig.	β	sig.	β	sig.
Sex: Female	.43	(.06)				
Age	-.03	(.03)	-.04	(.00)	-.04	(.00)
Married	-.22	(.42)				
Length of stay						
1-25	-.16	(.63)				
>25	-.64	(.13)				
<i>born in Germany</i>						
Education in Germany						
yes	.06	(.83)				
no						
Education in Homeland						
yes	.49	(.10)				
no						
Language spoken at home						
Mostly or partly German	.80	(.00)	.71	(.01)	-.29	(.62)
<i>Mostly native language</i>						
Children in Household	.43	(.09)				
German Friends	.48	(.04)	.37	(.09)	.37	(.09)
Relatives in Homeland	-.42	(.09)				
Interest in Politics	.97	(.00)	.84	(.00)	.83	(.00)
House Ownership	.44	(.13)				
Intention to Stay in Germany	1.07	(.00)	1.12	(.00)	1.09	(.00)
Nationality						
Turkish	.94	(.00)	.91	(.00)	-.16	(.79)
<i>Yugoslav</i>						
Language at home *Nationality					1.20	(.07)
Constant	-2.84	(.00)	-1.69	(.00)	-.72	(.33)
Chi ² df	134.2	15	119.3	6	122.2	7
Pseudo R ²	.21		.18		.19	

Note: Reference categories in italics.

effect proved to be only marginally statistically significant and did not increase the model's goodness of fit. Contrary to our expectations, we found a positive main effect for having German friends.

These models can be used to generate predicted probabilities of naturalization for several subgroups of German migrants.⁵ A 30-year-old Turk who has German friends, intends to stay in Germany permanently, is interested in politics, and speaks German at home has a 44 percent likelihood of being naturalized or intending to do so within two years; the same person has only a likeli-

⁵For calculating the individual probability to naturalize of several subgroups based on the regression coefficients, we used the following formula: $p_{\text{nat}} = 1 - (1 / 1 + \exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \dots + \beta_n x_n))$.

hood of 24 percent if he does not speak German at home. The figures are – *ceteris paribus* – 22 percent versus 27 percent respectively for Yugoslav migrants.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We could show that Turkish migrants do not have a higher propensity to naturalize because they gain more rights by doing so or because they value these gains more than other ethnic groups. Rather, their likelihood of “changing flags” increases sharply if their individual assimilation progresses and their contact with the ethnic enclave loosens. For migrants from former Yugoslavia, however, naturalization rates are rather low and unrelated to their cultural and social assimilation. This contrast provides strong evidence for our argument that naturalization is an attractive option for assimilated Turks because it enables them to bring legal group belonging into accordance with their achieved individual social status. In a country such as Germany, where migrants enjoy almost the same rights as legal residents, status inconsistency seems to play a much more important role in the decision to “change flags” than the rather meager legal incentives to become a citizen.

For migrants from EU countries who lack this motivation, naturalization is a rather meaningless thing to do because their ethnic group membership is no longer a source of discrimination and feelings of inferiority. The same mechanism – though less strong – seems to slow down the naturalization process of migrants from former Yugoslavia, a group that encounters the same legal advantages of naturalization as migrants from Turkey.

Because of data limitations, we could not differentiate between migrants from different successor states of Yugoslavia in our analyses. If our argument is right, however, there should be substantial differences between these groups: migrants from Bosnia belong to a state devastated by a war and they encounter similar difficulties of acceptance as Turkish migrants. For them, ethnic group membership certainly cannot be assumed to be merely a form of cultural capital. Consistent with this line of reasoning, if one looks at the naturalization rates of different migrants from Yugoslavia, Bosnians display the highest rate of all (*see* Figure II). This is especially astonishing since, for Bosnians, the costs of being released from their “old” citizenship are exceptionally high. Alternatively, this effect could be caused by the fact that, given the problems in the homeland, Bosnians have comparatively little interest in remigration.

In order to investigate this effect in more detail, we would need a bigger sample of migrants from Yugoslavia so that we could run our analyses for

Figure II. Annual Percentage of Naturalizations: Turks and Migrants from Yugoslavia and its Successor States

Source: Calculations based upon data from the Federal Statistical Office, Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt), Periodical Subject-Matter Series, (Fachserien) 1, R2, 1997-1999.

each group separately. Our comparison of Turkish and Yugoslav migrants would be expected to yield even more pronounced effects if Bosnians were excluded from the sample.

The next step in research might be to test the argument outlined here by analyzing the naturalization patterns for different ethnic groups in different national contexts. Based upon our findings, more general hypotheses about how the social status of an ethnic group influences naturalization behavior could be formulated. Taking the interplay between individual and group assimilation into account might help to explain many contradictory findings with regard to the effect of assimilation on naturalization. We argue that even when migrants earn only few legal advantages by acquiring citizenship, naturalization rates will be high among individuals who belong to a group with a low social status but who have achieved a high level of individual assimilation. However, individual assimilation should not elevate the propensity to naturalize if members of an ethnicity do not consider their group-belonging to be a source of discrimination and feelings of inferiority. For refugees, naturalization should also be high if the group as a whole displays a high level of assimilation, since it is unlikely that they will see their ethnic group membership as a sort of cultural capital or a mere symbolic belonging.

Despite the data limitations we confronted, we have been able to adduce evidence for our hypotheses by analyzing the naturalization rates of

Turkish and Yugoslav migrants in Germany. The high rate of naturalization of the very group that is often considered to be the least willing to integrate into the German society teaches one essential lesson on naturalization: in the absence of substantial legal advantages, naturalization does offer an important opportunity to abandon the status of being a "foreigner" – at least legally. This, however, seems to appeal only to those migrants who are not allowed to forget about this position in their everyday lives.

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