

A FAILED NEGOTIATION?: A CLOSER LOOK ON THE EU-TURKEY DEAL OF 2016



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Abstract

The migration issue has always been on the bilateral agendas for Turkey and the European Union (EU) since the Helsinki Summit in 1999. After Turkey's accession period started to the EU, with the harmonization and Europeanization process, Turkey adapted its migration and asylum policies by standardizing its regulations according to the EU. However, the relations between Turkey and the EU regarding the migration issue, deteriorated due to the Syrian refugee crisis and the uprisings in the Middle East, which led to massive migration flow to both Turkey and the EU. Significantly, in the summer of 2015, when irregular migration's numbers reached almost a million, the EU decided to take action to control migration in external borders; thus, Turkey became an essential partner in governing migration. Ultimately, the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016 was signed in order to guarantee to govern and control migration. However, the process of implementation of this Deal was highly criticized on many levels regarding the bilateral relations and their impact on the refugee crisis. Therefore, this article first aims to explain the historical processes that led to the EU-Turkey Deal of 2016. While pointing out the Deal's purpose and the process onwards, this article aims to evaluate the performance of the Deal by mainly focusing on its failures on many levels.

Keywords: Migration Crisis, The EU and Turkey's Bilateral Relations, The EU-TR Statement

Özet

1999 Helsinki Zirvesi'nden bu yana göç meselesi, Türkiye ve Avrupa Birliği (AB) için her zaman ikili gündemde olmuştur. Türkiye'nin AB'ye katılım sürecinin başlamasının ardından uyum ve Avrupalılaştırma süreci ile birlikte Türkiye, AB'ye uygun şekilde düzenlemelerini standartlaştırarak göç ve iltica politikalarını uyarlamıştır. Ancak Türkiye ile AB ilişkileri özellikle göç alanında, Suriye mülteci krizi ve Orta Doğu'daki ayaklanmalar

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nedeniyle bozulmuş, bu da hem Türkiye'ye hem de AB'ye yoğun bir göç akışına yol açmıştır. Düzensiz göçün neredeyse bir milyona ulaştığı 2015 yazında, AB dış sınırlardaki göçü kontrol altına almak için harekete geçmeye karar vermiş; böylece Türkiye göçün yönetişiminde önemli bir ortak haline gelmiştir. Sonuç olarak, göçü yönetmeyi ve kontrol etmeyi garanti altına almak için 2016 yılında AB-Türkiye Mutabakatı imzalanmıştır. Ancak, bu mutabakatın uygulama süreci, ikili ilişkiler ve bunların mülteci krizi üzerindeki etkileri açısından birçok düzeyde çok eleştirilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu makale öncelikle 2016'daki AB-Türkiye Mutabakatı'na uzanan tarihsel süreçleri açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, Mutabakat'ın amacına ve ilerleyen sürecine işaret ederken, bu mutabakatın performansını ağırlıklı olarak birçok açıdan başarısızlıklarına odaklanarak değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç Krizi, AB-Türkiye İkili İlişkileri, AB-TR Mutabakatı

I. Introduction

To divide the East from the West, Turkey's position would be crucial. The relations of Turkey and the EU, even within this concept, have always been turbulent. Even though Turkey became the bridge between different geographies, the EU's perspective and attitude were critical towards Turkey, and this process is reciprocal. However, Turkey continues to be an essential partner for the EU in many areas; many defined relations as a "troubled love affair" (Benvenuti, 2017, p.1).

Turkey's relations with the EU, specifically regarding the migration issue, have developed since the Helsinki Summit in 1999. Even though the migration issue was not a top priority during that time, Turkey's cooperation in controlling irregular migration and ending Turkey's transit position was considered a primary framework in the migration issue in 1999. Turkey's attitude towards becoming a member of the EU and its geopolitics and role re-energized the accession period to the EU. With the accession period, the transformation of Turkey's migration and asylum policies commenced as well. With the adaptation of the EU Acquis and harmonization process, Turkey developed a new set of standards related to the EU's standards and regulations. This process is also known as Europeanization. Regarding migration, the EU's perspective was to control migration in external borders. In this perspective, Turkey's position became essential to deal with this issue. Also, considering the time, Turkey historically was a country of emigration; however, Turkey started to become a country of immigration and transit. Thus, the EU seized this transformation and aimed to strengthen

the “Fortress of Europe”¹ while making Turkey “the Gatekeeper of Europe” (Benvenuti, 2017, p.3).

Early relations of Turkey and the EU marked the importance of cooperation in migration while considering the increase in numbers due to the uprisings in the Middle East. Thus, cooperation and partnership have gained significance in terms of constituting a new agenda for Turkey and the EU in migration issues. The Arab Springs and following the Syrian Crisis demonstrated that immediate action should be taken in order to provide migration governance. Therefore, the period after 2013, the negotiations with the EU and Turkey accelerated, and many agreements such as the Readmission Agreement, Joint Action Plans, and especially the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016 were signed to enhance cooperation. However, many intellectuals criticized the impacts of these agreements and specifically the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016 while stating the lack of humanitarian perspectives. Turkey’s position in signing these agreements was to accelerate the accession period, get visa liberalization, and to enhance burden-sharing in the Syrian Crisis. On the other hand, the EU’s purpose was to protect the Fortress of Europe by controlling migration on external borders. In this case, Turkey’s position became to cease migration by making Turkey a buffer zone (Kirişçi, 2015). This situation can be defined as the “Migration Paradox” (Benvenuti, 2017, p.12). Thus, this article will first define the relations of Turkey and the EU regarding the migration issue by pointing out the historical perspectives by seeking out the background of the Action Plan in 2015 due to tragic events in the coastal region of the Mediterranean. Thereafter, this article will analyze the migration crisis and cooperation between the EU and Turkey in the following of the Action Plan in 2015, which led to the negotiation of the Deal. The Action Plan of 2015 was of utmost importance due to the increase in irregular migration and tragic events in the Mediterranean region; therefore, that year marked the re-energizing of the bilateral relations between Turkey and the EU. As a result of these negotiations, in 2016, the EU-Turkey Deal was signed as a response to collaboration over irregular and regular migration. The developments that have led to the signing of this deal will first be examined in this article. Thereafter, the evaluation of the Deal, which is the primary study of this article, will be made by pointing out the failures and the reasons why this Deal is considered as a failure. In this matter, the article will present the implementation process of the Deal in terms of complications

1 “Fortress of Europe” is a concept that is widely used by many scholars. However, in this article, the reference belongs to Benvenuti, thereby Benvenuti’s reference is quoted as it is. (Benvenuti, 2017, p.3, <http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1705.pdf>, Accessed Date: (17.04.2021)).

in Turkish and the EU politics, controlling irregular migration, and making the migration as a bargaining chip in foreign policy negotiations as failures and step-backs. However, to have a brighter sight of the Deal, it is important to seek out and study the scholars' opinions on the EU-Turkey Deal of 2016. Therefore, this article will first present a literature review based on theories -realism, liberalism, and critical study- which explain the Deal's different perspectives.

II. Literature Review

Many intellectuals evaluated the mechanisms of Turkey's relations and the EU in terms of its capability and practice. Regarding the migration perspective, specifically, after the Helsinki Summit, migration governance, controlling irregular migration, and the bilateral approaches by Turkey and the EU became an important study field. Considering this paper's topic, many intellectuals evaluated and criticized the impact of the migration issue on the relations of Turkey and the EU while giving implications to 2016 the EU-Turkey Deal. There are three primary approaches in this perspective: realist approach, critical approach, and liberal approach.

First, the realist approach was an exceedingly popular way, which is used by many intellectuals such as Başak Kale (2012 and 2016), Angeliki Dimitriaki (2016), and Doğaçhan Dagi (2020). Regarding the migration issue, its impacts on Turkey and the EU's relations have always been a challenging study area. After the accession period started, many intellectuals believed that the process could develop Turkey and the EU's relations. Thus, especially after the Syrian Crisis, a cooperation and partnership rhetoric by the EU towards Turkey became prominent in bilateral relations, and reciprocal approaches have been obtained on many grounds. The EU's new approach with the Joint Action Plan and the following, the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016, was perceived as a chance to improve Turkey and the EU's deteriorated relations. According to Kale (2016b, p.20), the Deal promises a new chapter in Turkey's relations with the EU regarding enhancing the control and cooperation towards migration; thus, Kale defines the Deal as a cost-benefit action. Also, Dimitriadi (2016) asserts that a necessity for cooperation with Turkey in controlling migration in external borders should be the primary agenda for the EU in migration issue; thus, this Deal could be a new initiative that could lead to further cooperation among Turkey and the EU. Moreover, Doğaçhan Dagi (2020, p.203) defines the situation of the migration issue and asserts the importance and the necessity to act against irregular migration. Dagi (2020, p.204) explains

this situation as “issues of mutual concern” thus, Dagi states the importance of implementing the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016 while explaining that this initiative could lead to further developments among the EU and Turkey.

Secondly, Benvenuti (2017) and Alessandri (2015) focus on the critical perspective of the relations and the Deal between Turkey and the EU. Benvenuti (2017) defines the cost-benefit relations of the Deal, and Benvenuti focuses on the migration paradox perspective. According to Benvenuti (2017, p.13), Turkey’s expectations and the EU’s expectations in terms of reciprocal approaches and the promises in the Deal create a contradiction due to its complexities. Turkey’s expectations, such as visa liberalization and financial aid, were provided due to the Syrian Crisis, which Turkey uses as a bargaining chip (Benvenuti, 2017, p.15). On the other hand, the EU’s expectation to control irregular migration on the external border through the Readmission Agreement with Turkey became another issue in terms of making Turkey a buffer zone for migration. This notion is also stated by Alessandri (2015), where he focuses on the Deal’s draft in 2015 in the Joint Action Plan, and he states that the EU’s aim is to basically create a buffer zone or a border guard in order to keep Europe’s border safe. Thus, the application of the Deal and relations of Turkey and the EU within this perspective was highly criticized.

Lastly, a liberal perspective on the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016 and the migration issue as for agendas for the EU and Turkey was given by Kemal Kirişçi. Kirişçi (2015 and 2016) focuses on the welfare of migrants. Kirişçi (2015, p.1) states that “a genuine spirit of cooperation whereby the welfare of the refugees comes first” must be the primary purpose of forming a deal. However, the issue that “win-win” perspective does not include the welfare of migrants. Instead, the Deal only meets the necessities and interests of the EU and Turkey by creating reciprocal approaches, whereas not focusing on the lives of the migrants. Consequently, this paper’s perspective will analyze the critical and liberal approach while focusing on the migration issue and the 2016 Deal of Turkey and the EU.

III. The Background of the Deal and the Migration Crisis

The summer of 2015 marked the intensifying relations between the EU and Turkey regarding the migration issue. Before 2015, the migration issue was not a top priority between Turkey and the EU. Thus, despite several initiatives in migration governance, such as signing the Readmission Agreement in 2013, cooperation and partnership on migration were not regarded as an

emergency in the first place. Başak Kale (2018) explains why migration was not perceived as a major threat to Turkey and the EU. First, Kale (2018, p.13) explains that the uprisings in the Middle East and the Syrian conflict were perceived as a temporary issue, and seeking international assistance and cooperation, in this case, Turkey's seeking Europe's assistance, would not be essential. On the other hand, Kale (2018, p.7) defines the impact of Ahmet Davutoğlu on Turkish foreign policy in terms of new approaches covering the migration issue. Davutoğlu's aim to pursue a liberal foreign policy brought enhanced cooperation and collaboration with neighboring countries through various mechanisms (Davutoğlu, 2001). Also, Davutoğlu's humanitarian diplomacy and aid to many other countries became a primary agenda for Turkish foreign policy. From these perspectives, Turkey reacted to the Syrian issue by implementing the Open-Door Policy in 2011, resulting in a massive refugee flow to Turkey.

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As it is stated above, before 2015, the migration issue was not a top priority between Turkey and the EU. Turkey's new foreign policy under Ahmet Davutoğlu paved an unprecedented approach to humanitarian crises. Davutoğlu's humanitarian foreign diplomacy became the primary political agenda regarding the humanitarian crises; therefore, Turkey applied an Open-Door Policy to the Syrian Crisis following the Arab Spring. Many scholars claim that the situation in the Middle East would not take so long; therefore, Turkey did not expect that many refugees -currently 3.6 Million Syrians reside in Turkey- (UNHCR, 2021).

The summer of 2015, however, changed the political agendas of Turkey and the EU. Almost 850.000 people tried to cross European shores through Turkey (IOM, 2016), and this has become a major crisis for both the EU and Turkey. Many European countries, specifically Germany, asserted the importance of cooperation with Turkey in controlling irregular migration and ending the transit position of Turkey in irregular migration. Thus, Germany and many European countries took initiatives with Turkey by asserting the partnership position of Turkey. The year 2015 marked the revival of re-opening the discussion of Turkey's accession period to the EU. During that time, many EU state actors, politics, and important figures visited Turkey and tried to come up with a plan to control irregular migration. Consequently, the Joint Action Plan in 2015 was drafted, and it asserted the importance of cooperation, collaboration, and partnership in irregular migration governance and border management. According to the Joint Action Plan in 2015, Turkey's recognition as a safe country in combatting irregular migration and enhancing cooperation and collaboration re-ignited the relations of Turkey and the

EU by opening new chapters in the EU Acquis in 2015. Therefore, the assertion of importance in Turkey's recognition as a safe country and Turkey's position as a partner in combatting irregular migration and humanitarian crisis has become a major political agenda which induced many official visits from the EU and member states' political leaders. In 2015, Germany had the highest number of arrivals that was caused by irregular migration; therefore, during the initial negotiations, Germany's top priority was to negotiate the current situation of the irregular migration, thus creating a safety procedure that would decline these numbers. In that matter, Angela Merkel visited Turkey on 18 October 2015 conjunction with the agreement on the Joint Action Plan on 15 October 2015, which was launched on 29 November 2015. The Joint Action Plan, aiming to deduce the underlying reasons why irregular migration increased, thus implementing measures to combat further movements, laid the groundwork for the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016. Turkey's bilateral relations with the EU, on account of the fact of the irregular migration movements, re-ignited and thus opening a new blank page for collaboration and cooperation. The Joint Action Plan was substantially significant, especially for the EU. As for the EU perspective, Turkey was highly criticized for not handling the situation properly (Kale, 2016b, p.1), which caused irregular migration to increase to these numbers and thus, the implementation of the Readmission Agreement became crucial in order to combat the irregular migration movements. On the other hand, from Turkey's perspective, visa liberalization and financial aid through international solidarity and burden sharing became important assets to discuss the migration issue. For many intellectuals, this period was perceived as a chance to re-energize the deteriorated relations between the EU and Turkey. Thus, the revival of Turkey and the EU relations through the Joint Action Plan was implemented with the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016. However, as it would be discussed further in this article, due to many other complications between Turkey and the EU, and internal problems regarding Turkey and the EU as well, stymied the re-ignition of the bilateral relations.

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IV. The EU-Turkey Deal of 2016

The migration crisis in 2015 re-energized the cooperation and collaboration between Turkey and the EU. Realizing the migration crisis in Turkey and the EU opened a new chapter for bilateral relations. In October 2015, the Commission presented the EU-Turkey Joint Action plan implemented on 18 March 2016 as the EU-Turkey Statement-Deal. The Deal aimed to provide

better services and living conditions to Syrian refugees while tackling the human smuggling network, which increased irregular migration and reducing deaths at sea. From the EU perspective, the Deal's implementation required immediate action and the full implementation of the Readmission Agreement which had been signed on 16 December 2013 in order to guarantee the return of non-EU nationals to transit -in this case, Turkey- country. Readmission agreement was in force due to disagreement over Turkey's visa liberalization (Demirsu & Cihangir-Tetik, 2019, p.13), which technically caused illegal and irregular immigration crossing over the borders of the EU and Turkey as well. Therefore, for Turkey, the Deal was an important chance to obtain visa liberalization in return for full implementation of Readmission Agreements. Over time, Turkish officials criticized the EU for not providing visa liberalization even though all candidate countries obtained visa liberalization except Turkey. Thus, this Deal became a crucial chance to receive the member and partnership status for Turkey.

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According to Lehner (2018), the Joint Action Plan aimed to connect the commitments of Turkey in decreasing the number of refugees arriving in Greece through the Aegean Sea by providing financial and technical assistance together with political concessions of visa dialogue and the accession negotiations, which was stalled for so long. As it was stated, the Joint Action Plan set the groundwork for the EU-TR Statement in 2016. With two meetings on 7 March and 18 March 2016, the EU and Turkey agreed on many commitments which would decide the collaboration and cooperation that could enhance bilateral relations. As for the Statement, it first asserted that as from 20 March 2016, all new irregular arrivals crossing from Turkey into Greek Islands would be returned to Turkey, and the cost of return arrangements would be covered by the EU. Further, the 72 Criteria for accession to the EU was re-opened for Turkey. The EU conditionality was asserted for Turkey, and in exchange, Turkey would take back all migrants arriving on Greece's shores after 20 March (European Council, 2016). In this matter, for each Syrian refugee who is returned to Turkey from Greece, another Syrian would be resettled from Turkey to the EU countries. In the selection process of these refugees, the priority was given to those who did not try to cross irregularly to the EU borders. So as to proceed with this process smoothly, Turkey agreed upon boosting measures to prevent new sea and land routes for irregular crossings, and in this matter, Turkey agreed upon cooperating with its neighboring states to provide these measures. For further collaboration, when irregular arrivals have sustainably been controlled, the EU member states agreed upon activating a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme

that would contribute on a voluntary basis, which could enhance humanitarian aid and assist to the humanitarian Crisis and decreasing irregular migration crossings (European Council, 2016).

On the other hand, the Statement paved a new way for political and economic concessions for the EU and Turkey. As it is stated above, the Deal had a significant role for Turkey in achieving visa liberalization. For quite a time, Turkey criticized the EU for not 'keeping their promises' in providing visa liberalization, which the EU provided for each candidate country. Therefore, in this Statement, in order to gain trust and enhance cooperation, the EU agreed to accelerate the visa liberalization roadmap with the participation of member states with the aim of lifting visa requirements for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016, in exchange for taking necessary steps to fulfill the requirements by Turkey. For the political concession perspective, this roadmap carried a quite importance for Turkey. Also, for the economic concession the EU, in cooperation with Turkey, would further accelerate the disbursement of financial aid. In this matter, the EU leaders agreed to open the 17th chapter to assist Turkey financially. In the first phase, the EU agreed to allocate 3 billion Euros to Turkey under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and also ensuring the funding of further projects up to the end of 2016. The EU would also mobilize additional funding for the Facility for Refugees of 3 billion Euros up to the end of 2018 by making the total amount of 6 billion Euros (European Council, 2016). Furthermore, from the beginning of Turkey's accession period, the Customs Union agreement had an important role for Turkey in relations with the EU. Therefore, with the Deal Turkey, and the EU would cooperate on the ongoing work on upgrading the Customs Union.

The EU-Turkey deal firstly, was perceived as a chance for bilateral relations. Fortress Europe was kept safe while Turkey is obtaining financial aid and visa liberalization. By opening up new chapters, the Deal was expected to re-energize the accession process. However, the implementation of the Deal was highly criticized due to its failures. In the post-deal era, the stated objectives of re-energizing the EU-Turkey accession talks have not been materialized, and not a single chapter has been opened in the accession negotiations (Dagi, 2020, p. 209). The reasons include that for the EU perspective, the coup attempts in 2016 in Turkey, major corruption scandals, and democratic criticism in Turkey were perceived as a negative approach; thus, the promises such as accession period and visa liberalization were delayed by the EU officials. On the other hand, Turkey criticized the EU's promises on delayed financial aid and the failure to grant the visa liberalization.

Furthermore, the Deal caused many step backs for Turkey and the EU. The EU withdrew the negotiated talks for the visa liberalization in targeted time, June 2016. The EU's rhetoric on Turkey, which urges Turkey to adopt further measures to prevent corruption and align its legislation with EU standards (Aydemir & Keskin, 2017, p.1461), and revise its anti-terror legislation was given as a pretext by the EU. On the other hand, Ankara threatened the EU several times to withdraw from the Deal unless the EU fulfills its promises. In this sense, Turkey suspended the Readmission Agreement in 2019 and opened its borders with Greece in 2020. Consequently, the Deal was supposed to be ground for cooperation and collaboration for the EU and Turkey; instead, the Deal was perceived as a failure in terms of its implementation and practice, which will be discussed in the next part of this article.

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V. Failed Negotiation: A Closer Look on the EU-Turkey Statement of 2016

The EU-Turkey Statement of 2016 aimed to enhance cooperation and collaboration while re-energizing Turkey's accession process to the EU and to give a humanitarian response to the Crisis in the Aegean and Mediterranean region. Its comprehensiveness in terms of political, economic, and social concessions, has incorporated a diverse approach to the migration crisis and bilateral relations of Turkey and the EU. However, the post-Deal era demonstrated that although the Deal has consisted of a comprehensive approach, its impact and success were highly criticized. Therefore, the Deal can be considered as a failure on account of three different perspectives in terms of its implementation and promises, its impact on declining irregular migration, and generating migration as a bargaining tool in policy areas.

The first perspective focuses on the implementation of the Deal, which was highly criticized by many scholars and politics. Ineli-Ciger and Ulusoy (2020, p.115) describe the failure of the implementation process, which stems from 'the authorship problem'. Ineli-Ciger and Ulusoy (2020, p.116) suggest that the ambiguous authorship problem of the Statement arises from the nature of the Deal, by explaining that the Deal's objectives were long before decided in 2015 in Berlin in the Commission meeting. By means, the bargaining period was carried out by the participants, not by the authors. Turkey, in this sense, was not considered as an author of this Deal, instead, Turkey was expected to follow the consensus of this Deal. Therefore, in this matter, the EU as the author of this Statement, the Deal allowed the EU not to be held responsible for any complications that might arise out of international

law and human right breaches. Therefore, the EU practically would be out of context in any international law breaches that would cause humanitarian crisis or complexities. In this sense, supposedly, the Deal would enhance cooperation, collaboration, and therefore would enhance burden-sharing and solidarity. The Deal, in this matter, becomes another tool for externalization of the EU policies under Europeanization, which is commonly used by the EU authorities to implement such standards and measures. Consequently, it is obvious that Turkey's position in this Deal has become ambiguous, thus creating problems for implementing the Deal's important stipulations.

On the other hand, in the post-deal era, the stated objective of re-energizing the EU-Turkey accession talks has not been provided, and as a matter of fact, not a single new chapter has been opened in the accession negotiations in the post-deal era (Dagi, 2020, p.209). On the other hand, the political concession that was stated in the Deal was forgotten as well. The promise of visa liberalization for Turkish citizens has become another failure that was promised in the Deal. The unwillingness of the EU officials was mainly based on Turkey's internal issues such as anti-democratization -scandals, media restrictions, and AKP's rhetoric on the EU-, terrorism, and also coup attempt in 2016. In fact, the post-Deal era, in terms of its implementation process, demonstrated the different layers and perspectives of the EU and Turkey's bilateral relations. The complexities between the EU and Turkey undermined the Deal's implementation, which further caused the Deal to be considered a failure.

Secondly, the Deal's main objective was to combat irregular migration. In fact, while observing the numbers, when it was compared to the numbers in 2015, statistics have shown that there is an inclination towards a decline in numbers. According to UNCHR (2015), 799 persons had died or gone missing at sea while trying to reach the Greek territories. In comparison, this was 174 in 2018 and 70 in 2019. In 2019, 59726 irregular land arrivals and 14887 irregular sea arrivals to Greece were recorded (Ineli-Ciger & Ulusoy, 2020, p.116). Although it is clear that the Statement played a role in declining these numbers, the extend and its impact to which it has contributed to the decrease in the number of irregular arrivals to Greece is not clear (Spijkerboer, 2016). According to the Deal, under the Readmission Agreements, for each Syrian refugee who arrives in Greece's shores, the EU would resettle another Syrian refugee from Turkey to the member states. However, deportations from Greece to Turkey have remained significantly lower than expected (Dagi, 2020, p.205). According to the Commission (2020), under the agreement, 2130 migrants were returned between March 2016 and January

2018 while the Turkish government maintained that only 1884 people had been sent back to Turkey, including 357 Syrians (Euractiv, 2019). On the other hand, Ineli and Ulusoy (2020, p.117) discuss that the decline in irregular migration might be caused by the changing migration routes, border control in Western Balkan route, increased surveillances and new methods in borders, right to work given to Syrians in Turkey in 2016, and media campaigns (Spijkerboer, 2016). Therefore, the decline in irregular migration numbers, unlike what it was perceived, is caused by different variations regarding the political, economic, and social developments, which demonstrates that the Deal's impact in diminishing numbers is as opposed to popular belief.

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The third perspective focuses on the Statement's making migrants a bargaining tool for policy areas. The EU-Turkey Deal was drafted to provide better services and living conditions to Syrian refugees while enhancing the cooperation and collaboration between Turkey and the EU. In the meantime, it aimed to tackle the human smuggling and irregular migration by ending Turkey's transit position. However, the Deal transformed the nature of the EU-Turkey relations into a strategic partnership while putting aside accession perspective in practice, contrary to what it was claimed. Yet, more importantly, the Deal demonstrated a different perspective regarding the humanitarian aspect. Turkey's preliminary convergence to the Syrian Crisis was to open its border and gave humanitarian assistance. The important notion asserted by Davutoğlu was to provide humanitarian diplomacy to neighboring countries, and Turkey played its part.

However, in time, migration became a bargaining chip for Turkey to obtain leverage over the EU in terms of keeping the EU out of confrontation (Benvenuti, 2017). The post-deal era marked the rhetoric of certain officials. For example, Turkish president Erdogan asserted that Turkey could open its borders and release the migrants to Europe unless the EU fulfills its promises. Eventually, on 28 February 2020, Turkey opened its border to Greece by allowing the refugees to cross to Europe. Some even argued that the EU-Turkey Deal reversed the conditionality principle in its relations with the EU by giving Turkey the "strategic upper hand" (Dagi, 2020). Thus, Turkey benefitted from the strategic upper hand by making the migration a bargaining chip to avoid the EU confrontation in many other areas such as the East Mediterranean and Cyprus.

Eventually, the EU-Turkey Deal and its onwards, due to its complexities on specific issues and failures, were highly criticized. Kemal Kirişçi (2015) asserted that the Deal should be focusing on the welfare of refugees by creating the best conditions for the refugees. However, the Deal demonstrated a

different perspective while the EU focused on border management and the full implementation of the Readmission Agreement in order to keep irregular migrants out of Europe, and Turkey focused on obtaining visa liberalization and financial aid. Thus, the Deal sparked criticism among civil society and international human rights organizations due to its perspective, which lacked to point out refugees' welfare.

VI. Conclusion

Due to its geographical position, Turkey is involved in migration governance at internal and external levels. For many years, Turkey has been a host country for many migration movements. Significantly, based on a new political countenance, Turkey has applied an open policy for many refugees and asylum seekers, which eventually marked Turkey as a favorable destination country. Therefore, the situation of Turkey and its inclusion in migration movements have become a substantial political agenda for the EU as well. Since Helsinki Summit in 1999, Turkey and the EU have aimed to enhance their bilateral relations at multi-layered levels through the implementation of many agreements and promising to promote cooperation, collaboration, and solidarity. In this sense, the migration governance, due to the increase in international migration and refugees, which stem from different variations, has remarked a new preface in the EU-Turkey relations.

Migration governance has implied promoting cooperation and solidarity in the bilateral relations of the EU and Turkey. Within this sense, for many years, Turkey and the EU have developed specific approaches, such as multilateral agreements and partnerships, in order to develop migration governance. However, significantly before 2015, the migration issue was not considered as a top priority political agenda for both the EU and Turkey due to its comprehensiveness. Specifically, before the Arab Spring, the migration movements' numbers were not massive; therefore, the inclusion of this agenda into bilateral relations has gained importance relatively after 2015. However, the migration crisis between the EU and Turkey has become a significant issue after the summer of 2015 due to massive irregular migration movements to Europe through Turkey. In this matter, to enhance the cooperation and collaboration in migration governance, the EU and Turkey came up with a strategic partnership with Joint Action Plan while drafting the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016. The plan aimed to re-energize the strategic partnership while promising better standards for both refugees, Turkey, and the EU. However, due to its practices and highlights, the Deal was highly criticized, and for many,

it was considered as a failure due to its emphasis pointing out the EU and Turkey's interests rather than refugees' welfare.

Considering the Deal's impact on the EU and Turkey relations, its comprehensiveness and progress are quite controversial. For many scholars, the Deal was supposed to be a blank page for the bilateral relations of Turkey and the EU. For many years, due to certain complications in the relations, Turkey's relations with the EU have been deteriorating while putting many obstacles to jeopardize the progress of these relations. Therefore, the Deal was seen as a new way to enhance partnership, perhaps to open a new way for Turkey to become a full member of the EU. However, on the contrary, the post-deal era has shown otherwise.

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Five years passed since the agreement of the Statement between the EU and Turkey. For many scholars, the impact of the Deal regarding its objectives is not considered as successful rather, it is considered as a failure by many scholars as it was stated above. It is a fact that after the Statement has been implemented, there has been an inclination towards a decline in irregular migration. However, many scholars suggest that the decline has not stemmed from the Deal rather different applications by the EU and Turkey as well. Also, the Deal's primary objective was to hamper the irregular migration, yet still, there are thousands of people who are trying to cross the border irregularly by constituting Turkey and Greece as buffer zones. On the other hand, from the political and economic perspective, the promises and collaborations seem to unravel. Visa liberalization for Turkey has still not been provided by the EU, and the financial aid that supposedly should have been given in 2018, ultimately provided in 2020. Therefore, the post Deal era demonstrated that the complications, the nature of the Deal, and the bilateral relations between Turkey and the EU induced the Deal to be considered as a failure.

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