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Return Migration of Qualified Turkish Migrants from Germany and the US

Meltem Yılmaz Şener

Abstract: This study investigates the return migration of Turkish qualified migrants to Turkey from Germany and the US. Depending on a qualitative research which included 80 in-depth interviews with returnees, it comparatively explores their reasons for return, level of re-adaption to Turkey after return, ongoing connections with Germany/the US, and intentions to re-migrate. The analysis indicates that cultural, familial, and emotional reasons were more influential in their return than economic or professional ones. Additionally, discrimination is a major reason behind return from Germany, but not from the US. Our study shows that returnees face serious difficulties in re-adaptation and reverse culture-shock after their return. Also, they have low levels of ongoing connections with the host country, other than their personal connections. Finally, most returnees from Germany talked about their stay in Turkey as permanent, while returnees from the US were more open to re-migrating. Our study shows that when migrants see international migration as a positive experience, return migration does not necessarily constitute the end of the migration cycle; they become open to repeating the experience of migration.

Keywords: Return migration, qualified migrant, Turkish, Germany, the US, re-migration.

Öz: Bu çalışma, nitelikli Türk göçmenlerin Almanya ve Amerika'dan Türkiye'ye geriye göç deneyimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Geriye dönen 80 kişiyle yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelerden oluşan bu niteliksel araştırmada, bu kişilerin geriye dönme nedenleri, dönüşten sonra Türkiye'ye adaptasyonları, Almanya ve Amerika'yla devam eden bağlantıları ve tekrar göç etme niyetleri araştırılmaktadır. Mülakat analizlerine göre, geriye dönüş kararının verilmesinde, kültürel, ailevi ve duygusal sebepler, ekonomik ya da kariyerle bağlantılı sebeplere göre çok daha etkili olmuştur. Bunlara ek olarak, ayrımcılığa uğramak Almanya'dan dönenler tarafından önemli bir geriye dönme nedeni olarak belirtilirken Amerika'dan dönüşte etkili olmamıştır. Araştırmamıza göre, geriye göç gerçekleştiren kişilerin önemli bir bölümü, döndükten sonra ciddi adaptasyon sorunları ve tersine kültür şoku yaşamaktadır. Ayrıca, dönüş sonrası, geçmişte yaşadıkları ülkeler olan Almanya ve Amerika'yla kişisel bağlantıları dışında çok sınırlı bağlantıları kalmaktadır. Son olarak, Almanya'dan dönenlerin büyük bölümü Türkiye'ye dönüşlerini kesin dönüş olarak düşünürken Amerika'dan dönenler tekrar göç etme fikrine sıcak bakmaktadır. Araştırmamıza göre, göçmenler uluslararası göçü olumlu bir deneyim olarak yaşadıklarında, o deneyimi tekrarlamaya çok daha açık hale gelmektedir; bu durumda geriye göç mutlaka, göç sürecinin tamamlanmasına karşılık gelmemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Geriye göç, nitelikli göçmen, Türk, Almanya, Amerika, tekrar göç.

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Dr., İstanbul Bilgi University. meltem.sener@bilgi.edu.tr

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Introduction

As Gmelch (1980) argued in his widely-quoted article on return migration, the perspective which considers international migration as a once-and-only phenomenon dominated migration studies for a long time. This description was mostly based on the nineteenth century transatlantic experience, with large groups of migrants leaving Europe and Asia to America. The general assumption was that most of these migrants never returned to their home countries. Because of this belief, social researchers ignored those migrants who went back to their countries after staying in the host country for a while. This neglect of return migration continues today to a certain extent, both in academic studies and also in data gathered by policy makers. Although many countries collect data on the numbers of incoming migrants, there is very limited data gathering on the numbers of returnees. Constant and Massey (2002) stated that the US, for instance, does not keep any statistics on emigration, although estimates indicate that emigration from the US during 1960s was approximately one-third of immigration, with higher rates among recent migrants.

Why do migrants return to their home countries? Return migration is a complicated process which is influenced by several factors simultaneously, and the motivations behind returning may vary from one social group to another. There are some important studies which present different categorizations for reasons of returning. King (2000) suggests that we can talk about four categories of reasons of return, which are social, economic, political, and familial reasons. In an earlier study, in his case study of return migration from the US to Southern Italy, Cerase (1974) talked about four main types of return migration, which are the return of failure, return of conservatism, return of innovation, and return of retirement. We can argue that depending on the context and socio-economic background of the migrants, different factors and reasons may dominate. For instance, in Cerase's work, his focus is on migrants from Southern Italy who originated in rural communities, but who lived in urban centers during the period of migration, and most of them worked in unskilled jobs in the US. We can argue that reasons behind their return may not necessarily be the same for a group which, for instance, is highly educated, has an urban background, and works in professional jobs. The focus of this study is such an urban, educated, and professional group.

This is a study which aims to compare the return migration experiences of qualified Turkish migrants who lived in Germany and the US. The research is structured around four major questions:

1) What are their reasons for returning to Turkey?
2) To what extent and in what ways have they re-adapted to Turkey after their return?
3) Do they still have connections with the host country (Germany or the US) after their return?
4) Do they consider their return permanent, or are they considering to re-migrate to the host country or to another country?

While giving answers to these questions, we will also look at the differences between these two groups of returnees, those who returned from Germany and the US, in terms of these four dimensions (reasons for return, re-adaptation, connections with the host country, intentions to re-migrate). We will also explain the reasons behind these differences by describing what the contexts of Germany and the US offered to these migrants, and in what ways their experiences were different in these two countries. For our research, we chose to focus on qualified migrants, who had high levels of cultural capital in the form of educational credentials at the time of their migration. In the debates on development, the migration of educated, qualified people from underdeveloped to developed countries has been considered a *brain drain*, and the negative consequences of this kind of emigration for the underdeveloped countries have largely been discussed (Adams, 1968; Fortney, 1970; Portes, 1976; Commander et al., 2004; Beine et al., 2008). However, some more recent studies also point out the contributions those qualified migrants can make to their home countries if they return. There is increasing agreement that emigration of qualified people may not only have negative consequences for their home countries. After getting further education and professional experience in developed countries, they can potentially put their newly-gained cultural and social capitals into use in their own countries if they choose to go back. Therefore, in addition to the more negative term *brain drain*, new terms that have more positive connotations, such as *brain gain*, *brain circulation*, and *brain exchange* have started to be used in the more recent literature (Straubhaar, 2000; Findlay, 2002; Saxenian, 2005; Chacko, 2007; Beine et al., 2011). Overall, doing research on qualified migrants and their return has important implications for the debates on development. This is also the main reason why we chose to focus on qualified migrants in this study.

"Guest Worker in Germany" Versus "Brain Drain to the US"

Starting from 1950s until 1970s, millions of immigrants went to Germany as "guest workers" to reduce the labor shortage at the time. Guest worker agreements were signed with several countries, including Italy in 1955, Spain and Greece in 1960, Turkey in 1961, Portugal in 1964, and former Yugoslavia in 1968 (Constant & Massey, 2002, pp. 5-6). In a different way from the US, migrants were initially accepted to Germany on a short-term basis, according to a rotation principle. Workers were expected to return to their home countries after short periods of employment abroad. However, as the employers wanted to keep those workers who had already become accustomed to the work, and the workers wanted to stay for longer periods, the rotation principle did not really work in practice (Abadan-Unat, 2011). Few migrants returned, and many of them were re-employed.

The bilateral guest worker agreement that Turkey signed with Germany was in line with the First Five Year Development Plan (1962-1967) of Turkey. According to this Development Plan, "the export of surplus labor power" was considered as a constituent of Turkey's development policy. In addition to the agreement with Germany, other bilateral agreements were signed with Austria, Netherlands, and Belgium in 1964, France in 1965, Sweden and Australia in 1967, and less comprehensive agreements with the UK in 1961, Switzerland in 1971, Denmark in 1973, and Norway in 1981 (İçduygu & Sert, 2016). Although all of these countries received Turkish worker migrants during 1960s and 1970s, Germany had been the country that attracted the highest number of Turks, with a total of 171,016 Turkish workers in 1968/1969 and 373,000 in 1970/71 working in Germany, making up more than 80% of the total number of workers in Europe for both periods (Abadan-Unat, 1993, pp. 308-309). With few migrants returning to Turkey and continued migration, the number of Turkish people living in Germany increased. Even after the oil crisis and economic stagnation in 1974 when Western European governments stopped accepting new foreign workers, the number of Turkish migrants in Germany still increased due to family reunification and family migration. As Icduygu (2012) summarizes, from the early 1960s to mid-1990s, there were three major reasons behind the growth of the Turkish population in Europe: 1) Turkish workers were staying for longer periods than what had been originally planned, and they were also bringing their spouses and children; 2) there were increasing applications from asylum seekers; 3) after family reunification, large numbers of Turkish children were born in Europe. Although Turkish migration to Europe in general and Germany in particular declined after mid-1990s, there is a significant number

of Turkish or Turkish-descent people living in Germany. As a consequence of this large-scale presence, Turkish migration to Germany has been a subject of ongoing debates in policy and academic circles. However, discussion of Turkish migration has always been with reference to the guest worker. Not much has been written or discussed about the qualified Turkish migrants who went to Germany.

Another aspect of Turkish migration to Germany that hasn't been sufficiently explored, partly because of lack of data, is return migration. In fact, return migration was the expected result of Turkish migration to Germany because of the guest-worker agreements and the rotation principle. However, as mentioned before, many workers did not return, or they stayed for much longer time periods. Especially during the first half of the 1960s, there was a small number of returns. Only after 1970s, larger numbers of Turkish migrants who were living in countries like Germany returned to Turkey permanently. Gitmez (1983) states that around 190,000 Turkish migrants returned between 1974 and 1977, and another 200,000 returned between 1978 and 1983. In 1983-84, there was a sudden increase in return migration, which was mainly motivated by German return incentives. Martin (1991) argues that these return incentives had been influential in the return of over 100,000 Turkish workers and their dependents back to Turkey. According to Icduygu and Sert (2016), there has been a steady level of returns from Germany especially after the 1980s. It is estimated that the annual number of returnees was around 100,000 in the early 1980s, stabilized at about 50,000 in the 1990s, and has continued at this rate throughout the 2000s (İçduygu & Kirişçi, 2009).

Regarding Turkish migrants coming back to Turkey, there are some studies which focus on Turkish migrants living in Germany and look at the intentions for their return (Fabian & Straka, 1993). Another study by Razum et al. (2005), on the other hand, depends on focus-group sessions with those Turkish work migrants who actually returned to Turkey, and explains their reasons. This study discusses four sets of themes to explain Turkish migrants' return: economic achievement, health and health care, culture and integration, and finally location of family. The focus of this study was also the guest worker returnees; participants were those who returned to two neighborhoods in Central Anatolia.

Turkish migration to the US and its coverage by the literature is different from the Turkish migration experience to Germany in several aspects. First, it wasn't structured by bilateral agreements. Second, the numbers of Turkish or Turkey-originated migrants remained much lower compared to the numbers of Turkish migrants to Germany, and also compared to many other migrant groups in the

US. Third, Turkish migration to the US has mostly been debated in the context of brain drain, with a focus on qualified migrants. This focus was especially due to the fact that after 1950s, there was a flow of qualified Turkish migrants composed of professionals, scholars, and students from Turkey to the US. As Akçapar (2009) states, the highly skilled and educated profile of the Turkish- American community has changed recently with the arrival of a new group of Turkish immigrants, composed of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. However, many studies still focus on the emigration of educated, skilled, professional Turks, discussing especially the negative consequences of this kind of departure for Turkey.

According to Kaya (2004), there have been three waves of Turkish immigration to the US. The first wave was during the period between 1820 and 1920, and around 300,000 people immigrated to the US during that period. Of this number, only 50,000 were Muslim Turks; the rest were composed of Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and other Muslim groups which were under Ottoman rule[1]. Of these migrants, almost eighty percent of the Turks who went to the US before 1924 returned (Grabowski, 2005). Grabowski explains this high rate of return with reference to the initial aim of earning enough money in the US to have a better life after return, and also the inability to deal with the cultural disconnect while living in the US. Kaya describes the second wave as the wave of professionals, with doctors, engineers, academics, and graduate students coming to the US between the late 1950s and early 1980s. The last wave of Turkish immigration started in the mid-1980s, and it has included diverse groups of immigrants, such as professionals and businessmen, as well as unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and students. In a different way from those migrants who came during the first wave of migration, the majority of the migrants who came to the US after the Second World War stayed permanently (Angın, 2003; Saatçi, 2003).

There is a limited number of studies on the return of Turkish migrants from the US. One study by Senyurekli and Menjivar (2012) looks at the return intentions of Turkish migrants living in Minnesota. Depending on thirty interviews with Turkish migrants, the article categorized the interviewees as those who have an assertive desire to stay or return, and those who are ambivalent, the vast majority of them being ambivalent about their return to Turkey. The study also found that

1 Karpat (1985) argues that the total number of Ottoman emigrants to the Americas during the period between 1860 and 1914 is around 1,200,000. Of these people, 600,000 were from Syria and Mount Lebanon, 150,000 Muslims, and the rest were from Albania, Macedonia, Thrace, and Western Anatolia.

the decision to return is a complex one; immigrants have multiple considerations (familial, economic, legal, professional) while trying to decide about whether to return or stay. However, as mentioned above, the article by Senyurekli and Menjivar is about the return intentions of those who are living in the US; it does not look at the reasons for return of those migrants who already went back to Turkey.

Methods

This article depends on a research project which aims to compare the return migration experiences of qualified Turkish migrants who previously lived in Germany and the US and returned to Turkey. A total of 80 Turkish returnees (40 returnees from Germany and 40 returnees from the US) were recruited through snowball sampling, social media ads, and advertisements in Turkish-German Bookstores & Cafés in Istanbul. To focus on the qualified returnees, we only interviewed those people who:

- migrated to Germany/the US with an undergraduate degree or as an exchange student from one of the major universities in Turkey (in the big cities),
- migrated for the purposes of further education and/or professional work,
- lived in Germany/the US for a minimum of five years,
- worked professionally at least for one year (TA and RA positions are included here).

We only interviewed those people who met all the above criteria. We conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews which lasted an hour-and-a-half on average. The participants were interviewed in their offices, in cafes and restaurants, at universities, and in a few cases, on Skype. All the interviews except two were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were conducted in Turkish. Relevant quotations from the interviews were then translated into English. Before the interviews, participants were given personal information forms. In these forms, there were questions about their age, marital status, place of birth, city of residence before migration, level of education, work experience, citizenship, number of children, citizenship of children and partner/spouse, and educational level and occupation of mother and father. After the participants filled out information forms, interviews started. Interview questions were related to: i- the period before they migrated to Germany/the US, ii- the period they spent in Germany/the US, and iii- the period after they returned to Turkey.

The responses for all questions were first analyzed separately. Groups of questions which were related to the same theme were also analyzed together to have a general idea about each theme. We also read all the interviews several times to have an idea about the context of each participant's migration story. Lastly, there was also a comparative analysis of the responses of returnees from Germany and the US. This comparative analysis gives us an idea about the differences between the contexts of Germany and the US for migrants in general and qualified migrants in particular.

The Characteristics of the Sample

Half of the respondents in our sample were male (25 males for Germany, 15 males for the US) and other half female, no respondent writing a different identifier for gender. Most of them are married (for Germany n=27, the US n=24). Ages ranged between 31 and 76 for Germany, average being 46, whereas ages for the returnees from the US ranged between 31 and 48, with an average of 38. The vast majority of them were living in one of the three biggest cities in Turkey (Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir) before they migrated to Germany/the US, and the majority of them are currently living in Istanbul or Ankara. In terms of the level of education, our group of interviewees are highly educated. Among the group of returnees from Germany, 18 had PhD, 12 had master's, and 10 had bachelor's degrees, and among the group of returnees from the US, 24 had PhD, 14 had master's, and 2 had bachelor's degrees. They are currently working in a variety of sectors like banking and finance, consultancy, academia, research, civil society, legal services, health, insurance, tourism, defense, construction, textile, and logistics. 10 returnees from Germany have German citizenship (one having German citizenship from birth) and 5 returnees from the US have American citizenship. 21 returnees from Germany and 16 returnees from the US have children. The majority of respondents in both groups initially migrated to the host country on student visas (24 for Germany, 27 for the US). Most of the respondents migrated during the period 2000-2010 (22 for Germany, 24 for the US) or during the period 1990-2000 (7 for Germany, 9 for the US), and the majority returned after 2010 (20 for Germany, 28 for the US), followed by the returns during 2000-2010 (15 for Germany, 12 for the US). The average period of stay in the host country is 12 years, and the average period after return is 9 years for returnees from Germany, while the respective periods are 8.5 and 4.5 years for returnees from the US.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Life in Germany/the US

While talking about Germany, our respondents most often talked about order and discipline as the most positive aspects of life in Germany. As returnees who are currently living in Turkey, they frequently described life in Turkey and especially in Istanbul, using the word "chaos". A third aspect that, for them, complemented order and discipline was the fact that systems (economic, political, legal, etc.) successfully functioned in Germany, while it was not the case for Turkey. According to them, as all kinds of rules were taken seriously in the German context, daily life was less stressful, and more predictable. They also talked about high living standards, democratic and social rights, respect for privacy, and environmental consciousness as the other aspects that they valued about Germany.

In the returnees' descriptions of the US also, there were a lot of references to order, functioning systems, abidance to the rules, predictability, democratic rights, and high living standards. What was more emphasized in the descriptions of the US was the opportunity to meet people from several different countries and to learn about their cultures. They talked about this opportunity as an enriching experience. Being together with other people who were experiencing similar problems because of living in a foreign country made them feel more comfortable. Lastly, the US was described as a country which is easier to live and where it is less likely to experience discrimination as a foreigner.

> In the US, I had a chance to meet people from several different countries. I had Chinese friends, Japanese friends, Persian friends… The most positive aspect of living in the US was having contact with so many different cultures. Their cuisines, customs, and cultures in general… That was the best thing. (Returnee from the US, Assistant Professor)

> Equality… America may be the country where there is the least discrimination. Legally, it is hard to discriminate. Laws actively protect you against discrimination. They actively protect you, and people are then afraid of discriminating against others… (Returnee from the US, International Logistics Specialist)

When asked about the negative aspects of their lives in the host country, returnees from Germany most frequently complained about discrimination against foreigners in general and Turks in particular. As argued above, this is very different from the portrayal of the US as a country where it is comfortable to live as a foreigner. The returnees from Germany discussed that although their experiences of discrimination were different from the kinds of discrimination that guest workers faced in some aspects, they still believed that they faced discrimination in different spheres of life. They talked about discrimination in public places, during the pro-

cesses of getting or renewing their visas, while entering or leaving the country, in the educational system, in daily life encounters, and in their professional experiences, such as glass ceilings that prevented them from climbing up to higher positions. Some of them were also uncomfortable with the fact that as educated, professional people, they were treated in the same way with uneducated, lower class Turks.

> I don't know Germany's current immigration policy. But when I was living there, I did not like it at all… The image of the Turk in Germany, that was one major negative aspect of life. Even when you first state that you are Turkish, their attitude totally changes. They have prejudices… I worked in Germany for a while, also in a private company. While I was working, I always thought that it was impossible for an immigrant to move up the career ladder. I felt like I would not really have a future in Germany. Part of it is about their resistance to foreigners. What people call, the glass ceiling… I was able to see, up to what level I would advance… But then you cannot go further, you cannot get out of those limits. Even if you become successful, you feel that you will be blocked. I did not stay any longer. Because this was how I was feeling. (Returnee from Germany, Research and Development Manager in Turkey)

> We have been subject to all kinds of discrimination. Everywhere… I believe that I have been treated badly just because I am a foreigner. And I was a good foreigner. I can speak German very fluently, almost like my native language. That seemingly positive statement 'I did not expect you to be Turkish', it is in fact pretty bad. I've heard it a thousand times! Because I speak German, I don't wear a head scarf, things like that… By saying this to me, you position what I am at such a low level! What this means is being a Turk is such a terrible thing, and you are that, but better than the other Turks… Even the most civilized person makes this statement, without even thinking about it. It hurts us. As a second thing, at the time, many people were talking about membership of Turkey to the EU. In the academic circles, when they found out that I am Turkish, I have been exposed to all kinds of statements and behaviors which conveyed the idea that Turkey does not belong to the EU… I was always forced to take my guard. (Returnee from Germany, Associate Professor)

> Discrimination and racism are especially more visible in some cities and neighborhoods. There is one neighborhood in Berlin… At the time, I did not know that it was one of those Nazi neighborhoods. On one of my off days, I went there just to walk around. I was beaten there. I will never forget it… I got out of the subway and saw a group of people, with dogs, and drinking beers… Then they shouted, dirty Turk… I did not know what to do, I just turned back, and then they came after me… This was one experience that I had there…For no reason… (Returnee from Germany, Family therapist)

Our respondents described German people as "cold" and "distanced", and complained about the difficulty of establishing close relationships and the existence of limited human relationships. Although they talked about order and abidance by the rules as the most positive aspects of life in Germany, they were critical of what

they called "German obsession with rules" and rigidity. Although rules brought predictability and order, they also made life highly monotonous according to them.

On the other side, the returnees from the US talked about individualism, and loneliness as the most negative aspects of life in the US. On the one hand, they appreciated what they called an individualist culture where people also had larger personal space, as it provided more space for freedom, and for standing on one's own feet. On the other hand, it also made them feel lonely most of the time, and as we will discuss later, it has also been the major reason behind their return to Turkey. Although they were very critical of intrusion in to their private lives in Turkey, they also thought that it makes human relationships much closer and warmer. They think of the relationships in the US as more superficial and social and less satisfying. A further implication of loneliness is the feeling that there won't be anybody to support them when they fail or when they need help.

> Loneliness… I had friends, but after a while, you get so much used to being alone most of the time. That is, in fact, scary. Being alone most of the time… Loneliness is considered natural, normal there. People don't have the same kinds of friendships as here. In reality, it was what had disturbed me the most in Turkey in the past. That closeness, the neighborhood relations, people stopping by all the time… At the beginning, I felt comfortable in the US. I liked that distance, what they call the personal space there. But that also makes you feel lonely. When you live in a city like Los Angeles, you feel it even more. It could have been different if I was living in a smaller community, I don't know. But in Los Angeles, everybody was alien to each other. (Returnee from the US, Assistant Professor)

> I was very uncomfortable with the fact that people were extremely individualistic. It made me feel really depressed at times, very lonely… What I found the most disturbing about the US was that, many people were suffering from depression. It was a lonely society… (Returnee from the US, HR Specialist)

> What I found the most negative… It was also the major reason for our return… We were feeling lonely. Ok, I appreciate that people do not intervene in each other's affairs. But one major disadvantage of it is then you become too distant. We had friends, but we could never get as close as in our friendships in Turkey… So, what bothered me the most was loneliness. (Returnee form the US, Senior Researcher)

In a similar way with the returnees from Germany, the returnees from the US also considered "order" as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they talked about it as the most positive aspect of the US, as it has made life easy and predictable. However, they were also complaining that when social life is too orderly, it becomes monotonous; there was no room left for any surprises in daily life. They were thinking that in the US, everybody's life was pretty similar to each other's.

Another negative implication of order and rule-abidance, for them, is the fact that American people try to resolve ordinary disputes not by dialogue but through the legal system. The other negative aspects that were frequently mentioned were the high costs of health care, and American people's general lack of knowledge about and interest in the rest of the world.

The positive and negative aspects of their life that we discussed here are also key to understanding their return and re-adaptation after return. The positive aspects of their life in Germany/the US were also mentioned as the things that they miss during their current life in Turkey. What they liked about Germany/the US, and what they also think does not really exist in the Turkish context makes the re-adaptation process more difficult for them. On the other side, the negative aspects of their life in the host country are also important for understanding the reasons why they chose to return to Turkey. In the next section, we are going to discuss those reasons for return.

Reasons for Return

As discussed earlier, the reasons behind the decision to return was one of the major questions of our research. We received probably the longest and most complicated responses to that question. It seemed to be a question that has also occupied the minds of our respondents; they were trying to come up with coherent explanations for their return both for themselves, and also for the others. According to their accounts, during their stay in the host country, whether or not to return was the main subject of discussion in many groups of people from Turkey; they were continuously comparing the advantages and disadvantages of living in that country. The majority of the returnees from both Germany and the US stated that at the time of their first migration, they had the intention to return to Turkey after a while. Most of the times, they were planning to return after reaching a certain aim, like getting the master's degree or PhD, having some work experience, or for males, working abroad for at least three years so that they could waive the military service obligation in Turkey. However, for many, there was the fear of feeling regret after return, and the initial decision was revised several times, sometimes being more favorable towards the idea of a permanent stay in the host country, while other times feeling more inclined to return.

Behind the final decision to return, there were usually multiple factors, and these factors were similar for both groups of returnees. Among these multiple fac-

tors, the professional or economic ones seem to have been less influential. Personal, emotional, familial, and cultural reasons were emphasized a lot more compared to material or career-related reasons. Returnees from both countries underlined factors like longing for their families, close friends, their home-country, and their culture, feeling lonely in the host country, and lack of social support as their major reasons for return. Especially when there was a serious illness in a close family member, return became more urgent. Also, when the partner or spouse of the person was in Turkey or returned to Turkey, that speeded the process of return. The return of close friends to Turkey also became influential in their own decision to return. A few of them talked about their feelings of responsibility to Turkey, to their home country. They had the idea of going back and making a contribution to improve the situation in the country, and this was a major motive behind their decision to return.

Although professional and material factors were not frequently mentioned as their reasons for return, there were professional and material conditions that made their return possible. For instance, getting a good job offer from Turkey and securing a certain level of income helped some of them to take the final step towards return. However, as discussed before, emotional, familial, and cultural reasons were more dominant in the decision to return, and in many cases, they returned recognizing and accepting the negative financial and professional consequences of that decision. In other words, for many of them, returning to Turkey was not a very good economic or career decision. Only in some cases, some academics came back from Germany had expectations to have more stable jobs and better careers in Turkey. For most others, the return was rather more costly.

When we compare the reasons for return from Germany and the US, we see that similar factors have been influential in both cases. However, one striking difference between returns from these two countries is that discrimination in the host country has played a major role in return from Germany, whereas it was not mentioned as a reason of return from the US. Those who lived in the US were mostly expresssing that they did not have experiences of negative discrimination in the US. To the contrary, they gave examples of positive discrimination where they got favorable treatment because they were from a different country, and not familiar with the American context. Returnees from Germany not only told that there was discrimination against Turkish people in Germany, but they also considered it as the main reason why they did not want to stay in Germany for a longer period.

> If I could ever be comfortable living there, if I could have at least some recognition, I would probably not have returned. They always make you feel that you belong to Turkey. Even if you get something that you deserve, some position, some right… they make you feel like they give it to you, but you don't deserve it. In daily life conversations, in jokes, they always emphasize that you are a foreigner. I was feeling it less at work, but more in daily life. (Returnee from Germany, Working at an NGO)

> I could never feel at ease psychologically. I started to think of it as an environment where I was always pressured because of my identity. I could never have a sense of belonging. Without having that feeling of belonging, I could never feel happy. I always wanted to return, although I knew that return would bring loss of income and material resources. (Returnee from Germany, Associate Professor)

> I was thinking, if my children are born here, they will also be labelled because of their Turkishness. I had gone to Germany based on my own decision, but my kids were going to suffer because of my decision. (62)

Re-adaptation to Turkey

Although most of our respondents stated that they got re-adapted to Turkey (26 returnees from Germany and 26 returnees from the US said they re-adapted), still it is important that many of them think that they could not re-adapt after a long time after return (the average period after return is 9 years for returnees from Germany, and 4.5 years for returnees from the US). Moreover, even those of them who think that they got re-adapted, talked about the fact that re-adaptation has been a long and arduous process for them. There are long debates on the *culture shock* that is experienced after migrants move to their host countries. Our findings show that the *reverse culture shock* can equally be painful and take long time for the returnees. Some of our respondents argued that for them, adaptation after migration had been easier compared to their re-adaptation to Turkey after they returned. Although they appreciate the positive aspects of life in Turkey, they also seem to miss many aspects of their past lives in Germany/the US. The longer the period they spent in the host country, the harder the re-adaptation process seems to be. Re-adaptation to Turkey was also coupled by adaptation to new stages in life, like getting married, friends getting married, or becoming a mother/father.

> If you had asked me this question during the first three years, I would have said I could not re-adapt. The first three years, I had a lot of difficulty. But later, you start to accept it. I went to Germany and lived there for five years, but before that period, I was living here. (Returnee from Germany, Senior Researcher)

> When I first went to Germany, it took a couple of months for me to adapt. Let's say, one year for total adaptation. When I came back to Turkey, it took at least two-three years to adapt to Turkey, and it definitely was a tough period for me. I found it at least ten times harder compared to my first period in Germany. I am glad that it is now over. (Returnee from Germany, Research and Development Manager)

> Slowly, yes, I am adapting… But it has been really slow and painful. It took a long time… It's been almost three years and just recently, I have started to feel ok… It's interesting that I had found it easier to adapt to the US… Maybe it's because when I came back, I had really high expectations in terms of social life. But those expectations were not really met. Many things have changed, people's lives have changed, friends have changed… So adaptation took a long time. (Returnee from the US, Assistant Professor)

> It took a long time, at least two-three years… But it is not only adapting to Turkey, also adapting to a new stage in my life. This is the first time I am living in Turkey as a married person… I am also adapting to that, not only to my return to Turkey. (Returnee from the US, Researcher)

The ones who said that they could not re-adapt emphasized that they will never adapt to some things about Turkey, as they don't want to. They talked about the problem with adapting to things that they consider to be wrong. Several of them were thinking that Turkey has changed significantly in a negative direction during the last couple of years, and it is hard to adapt to this new state of Turkey. Moreover, they themselves have also changed as a consequence of living in a different country for a long time, and being a part of the social life there. This made the adaptation process all the more difficult.

> One side of me refuses to adapt to Turkey… (Returnee from Germany, Marketing Director)

> Let me put it this way: I don't want to adapt to this non-sense. People who don't take their jobs seriously, or who focus on the details and miss the big picture… Why should I adapt to this? Why should I adapt to something worse after experiencing something better? Why should I adapt to people who don't take science seriously?… These are not the kinds of conditions that you would wish to adapt to. (Returnee from Germany, Professor)

> Turkey has changed a lot. I cannot really adapt… Turkey has changed, people have changed… There were some changes between 1980s and 2000. But after 2000, there has been a much more serious transformation. I can say, today's Turkey has nothing to do with the Republican Turkey. (Returnee from Germany, Instructor)

> I could not adapt, I cannot adapt, and I should not adapt! After going abroad, living there for ten years, and coming back, if I re-adapt to those things that I find wrong, it means that those ten years were wasted…There were people who told me that after going abroad and living in a different country, you cannot be happy neither there nor in your own country. When you go to one, you will always miss the other. (Returnee from Germany, Researcher)

What is emphasized in the last quote about always missing the other country while you are living in one, and almost forever losing your chance to be happy in any context has been repeated by many respondents.

> I feel like I cannot adapt to the world any more. Because I have migrated twice. Once to Germany… And then back here…. After migrating twice, I now feel like a person without a country. I can live everywhere, but I am not at home anywhere… It's not easy. So, to those people who want to go abroad, I would recommend thinking twice. (Returnee from Germany, Actor)

Compared to the returnees from the US, returnees from Germany talked about having a relatively easier and shorter period of re-adaptation. There were those of them who said that re-adaptation took only a couple of hours, which was never the case for returnees from the US.

> It did not take long to get readapted. Like an hour (laughs)… in the background, there was always the idea of returning when we were in Germany. And for me, there was never a feeling of belonging in Germany. (Returnee from Germany, Senior design engineer)

> I had never been disconnected from Turkey. So it has been easy to readapt. There are just some new things to learn… But it's a good thing that there are these new things… (Returnee from Germany, Doctor)

This difference was related to the difference in the frequency of contact with Turkey during the period of migration. Because of the physical proximity of Germany and Turkey, and lower costs of flights between the two countries, those who lived in Germany could visit Turkey several times during the year, which made it possible for them to stay in contact with Turkey. It was not the case for those who lived in the US. There were those who talked about not having gone to Turkey from the US for two-three years. The cost and long duration of flight, and having jetlag after travelling between the US and Turkey were the main factors that discouraged them from visiting Turkey frequently. We can argue that consequently, during their period of migration, they became more detached from the context of Turkey, and this has made re-adaptation much harder upon return. Moreover, related to what was explained about the experiences of discrimination, it is possible to say that being exposed to discrimination in the German context led them to appreciate the social life in Turkey, and to get readapted more quickly.

Ongoing Connections with Germany/the US

The vast majority of returnees from both countries stated that they still have connections with the host country. However, when we further queried about the types of connections they have, we saw that they mostly have personal and familial connections left, while having very limited academic, professional, or commercial connections. Six returnees from Germany talked about family members or relatives who are still living in Germany, and eleven of them said they sometimes visit Germany. Other than these, the current connections for many of them are in the form of exchanged e-mails or social media communications, and in a few cases mutual visits with friends who are in Germany. A few academics mentioned continuing academic connections, and a few others still had some professional connections. However, to a large extent, it is hard to say that they have strong connections that they maintain. Moreover, as more time passed the remaining connections were also getting weaker.

> I still have connections with friends. We communicate on Skype. But besides that, I don't have any institutional connections. (Returnee from Germany, Coordinator in an NGO)

> At a very basic level… Just with some friends we exchange messages on Facebook… There are some people that I had met when I was there, and they later moved to other places. We have some communication with them but it's getting less and less frequent over time. (Returnee from Germany, Senior engineer)

> Personal relations, they are still there… I've been to Germany four times last year. But not much academic connection left… (Returnee from Germany, The manager of a research institute)

Similarly, almost all of the returnees from the US mentioned continuing personal relationships with friends in the US. The ones who migrated to the US at earlier ages and stayed there for long periods explained that they had their social networks and most of their close friends in the US. Although they were less than half of the respondents, more returnees from the US compared to the ones from Germany talked about continuing academic and professional connections with the host country. They mentioned ongoing relationships with their thesis/dissertation advisors, people from their cohorts in graduate school, and colleagues from their previous jobs. Some of them were also engaged in collaborative research projects with scholars from American universities. The ones who are now working at American-originated companies talked about their links with the US due to their current jobs. Additionally, three respondents had pension funds, and three others had bank accounts in the

US. However, when we evaluate these together, it is still hard to talk about strong ongoing connections with the US other than the personal connections.

> I don't really have any professional connections left, but I have very close friends. We communicate a lot. Most of my friends are there. But personal connections… (Returnee from the US, International field director)

> It's been five years since I left. So, I now have few connections left in the US. And I did not have a very good relationship with my advisor towards the end, so we are not in contact any more. Just some friends with whom we exchange messages on Facebook. That's it… (Returnee from the US, Senior researcher)

Permanent Return or Re-migration?

A major difference between the returnees from Germany and the US is that most of those who came back from Germany think of their return as permanent, while returnees from the US mostly seem to be open to the idea of re-migrating to the US or to another country. The average age of the group from Germany was higher, and many respondents talked about the difficulty of relocating after a certain age. They thought of themselves as too old to start a new life again. Therefore, age was one factor behind the consideration of their settlement in Turkey as permanent. The difficulty that they experienced in Germany because of being foreigners or because of their ethnic identity was another major reason why they wanted to stay in Turkey permanently; they had developed negative opinions about living in a different country based on their past experiences. Even those of them who were open to the idea of re-migrating did not want to go back to Germany. They were more willing to migrate to countries like the US or Canada, where, they believed, they would face less discrimination.

Less returnees from the US think of their stay in Turkey as permanent, and many of them are open to the idea of re-migrating either to the US or to another country. Although it does not necessarily mean that they will definitely re-migrate in the future, still we can argue that a good migration experience made them open to future migration experiences. Some of them, although still open to the idea of going to the US again, believed that after spending a long time in Turkey after their return, their re-migration has become impossible. This was because they thought that the time spent in Turkey did not really contribute to their careers, and the employers in the US would no more be willing to hire them. We had mentioned that according to the accounts of our respondents, they were continually discussing the option of returning to Turkey while they were living abroad. It seems that many of

those who returned from the US have also been assessing whether they made the right decision by returning and evaluating their future possibilities to re-migrate.

> We loved the experience of living in another country. If somebody gave me the same amount of money that I earn here, we would, without hesitation, go to that country, and live another five years in that country. (Returnee from the US, Portfolio Manager)

Although there was a difference between the returnees from these two countries in terms of their attitudes towards re-migration, many individuals from both groups expressed increasing concerns about the possibility of staying in Turkey permanently. Because of what they consider as the changing situation in the country, even those of them who returned to Turkey with the intention of settling permanently had started to contemplate whether it may be necessary to relocate to another country in the future. They especially voiced concerns about their children's future.

> When I think about the situation in the country… And I have a daughter… I really don't know. A couple of years ago, there were some job offers, one for a job in Europe, and another in the US. At the time, I did not find them very enticing. But now, with everything going upside down in the country, things have changed. There is no proper educational system. We have conflicts with many other countries. And with the increase in terror… You know what I mean. So now, it is hard to say that we will permanently be here. If another opportunity comes up, I will not stay in Turkey. (Returnee from the US, Senior Researcher)

> I am concerned about the future. If we have children here, I really don't know what the future will bring to them… With all the political and social developments here… I don't want to raise my children in this kind of society. The quality of education is very low. Proper schools are too expensive; I cannot afford them. I will not know whether my child will die on the street or in the military. I may consider having children in a couple of years and then leaving Turkey. (Returnee from the US, International Logistics Specialist)

> The situation of the country is obvious. We may need to leave if there is increasing conservatism… (Returnee from the US, Assistant Professor)

Discussion and Conclusions

This study, which aims to understand and compare the return migration experiences of Turkish qualified migrants from Germany and the US, was structured around four major questions. First, we aimed to understand the reasons for return to Turkey for these qualified migrants. Second, we looked at whether and to what extent they got re-adapted to Turkey. Third, we also tried to understand whether, and to what extent they maintain their connections with the host country. Finally, we questioned

whether they are considering their return as a permanent settlement or whether they have intentions to re-migrate to the host country, or to another country.

In terms of the reasons for return, we saw that personal, familial, emotional, and cultural factors had been a lot more influential in their decision to return, than professional or economic reasons. In some cases, there was a career-related or economic development which sped up the return or made the return possible. However, the main motives behind their return to Turkey were far from being economic or career-related. Factors like being close to family and friends, the possibility to speak the native language, living in the culture that they are accustomed to, raising their children in their home country were much more dominant than income levels or material conditions of their lives. In many cases, they returned to Turkey recognizing and accepting the economic and professional costs of their return. In addition to those reasons, being exposed to discrimination in different spheres of life was another major reason for return from Germany, while it was not mentioned as a reason by returnees from the US. Our respondents complained extensively about the labelling of Turkish migrants in Germany, while there was no such labelling in the American context. While both groups who lived in Germany and the US equally talked about the difficulties of living in a foreign country, those who lived in the US did not talk about discrimination as a major element of that difficulty. Also, although it may not make much sense to argue that only qualified migrants return to their home countries to escape from discrimination, it's meaningful to claim that with their higher income levels and educational and professional credentials, they are the ones who can afford that kind of escape.

Second question about re-adaptation to Turkey revealed that it was in many cases a much more difficult process than the initial process of adaptation to the host country. After living in a different country, returnees missed the positive aspects of life there, even if they returned to their home country willingly. They appreciated what they found positive about Turkey, while also longing for some of the comforts they had in the host country. This was the reason why some respondents mentioned that after living abroad for a while, it becomes impossible to be happy in any context. There were some factors which were influential in making the re-adaptation process easier or harder. Those who kept constant contact with Turkey during the period of migration in the form of regular visits had an easier time to re-adapt. This especially applied to returnees from Germany, for whom it was easier to travel frequently. Significant changes in the political system and increasing repression, however, made the re-adaptation process harder for many. Turkey, becoming

a totally different country from what they knew in the past, had now turned into a context to which some can never adapt.

Third, although returnees from both countries kept some contact with the host countries, they mostly had personal contacts in the form of e-mail and social media communications. Although more returnees from the US mentioned ongoing commercial, professional, or academic connections, still for both groups, they were not very strong connections. As more time passed after return, these linkages were getting even weaker. We can argue that for a government, it should be a priority to benefit from the kind of brain gain that may be created as a result of the return of qualified migrants back to the country. For that kind of brain gain to take place, governments should actively come up with policies that would encourage the maintenance on returnees' connections with the host countries.

In terms of the last question about permanent settlement versus re-migration, there was again an important difference between the returnees from two countries. More returnees from Germany considered their return to be permanent, while most returnees from the US did not think of their settlement in Turkey as permanent and they were open to re-migrating. Depending on this, we can argue that when migrants have a positive experience, with less discrimination, even after they return to their home countries, they may want to repeat that experience again. In that case, return migration does not necessarily constitute the end of the migration cycle for them. Although there was a difference between the re-migration intentions of returnees from two countries, both groups were increasingly considering re-migration because of what they see as the changing conditions in the country. While for both groups, their initial migration was steered mostly by pull factors related to the host countries rather than push factors, their possible re-migrations will most probably be caused by push factors related to Turkey.

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