Araştırma Makalesi

On Its Eighth Anniversary:
The EU-Turkey Deal - From Externalization to Digitalization[1]

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Abstract

The article provides a critical review of the EU-Turkey deal on its eighth anniversary. Despite initial success in reducing irregular migration, the deal's shortcomings have led to a resurgence in arrivals and challenges in its implementation. Criticisms focus on the violation of international law and human rights. Moreover, the article shows how the deal reinforces externalization and digitalization policies in migration management, while raising concerns about accountability, transparency, and discrimination. Although digital technologies offer new tools for border control, their deployment has sparked ethical and legal debates regarding their impact on migrants' rights. Overall, the article argues for a re-evaluation of migration policies, emphasizing the importance of a rights-based approach and genuine collaboration to address the complex challenges posed by displacement, detention, externalization and digitalization.

Keywords: The EU-Turkey Deal, externalization, digitalization, the EU, Turkey

Research Article

Sekizinci Yılında Avrupa Birliği-Türkiye Mutabakatı: Dışsallaştırmadan Dijitalleşmeye

Öz

Bu makale, AB-Türkiye Mutabakatı'nın sekizinci yılında eleştirel bir değerlendirme sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Mutabakat, hedeflediği gibi, ilk yıllarda Türkiye'den Avrupa Birliği'ne yönelen düzensiz göçü azaltsa da anlaşmanın eksiklikleri ve uygulamadaki farklı zorluklar, izleyen yıllardaki artışı engelleyememiştir. Makalede eleştiriler uluslararası hukuk ve insan haklarının ihlaline odaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca, makale, mutabakatın göç yönetiminde dışsallaştırma ve dijitalleştirme politikalarını nasıl pekiştirdiğini ortaya koymuş, hesap verebilirlik, şeffaflık ve ayrımcılık konularında artan endişeleri yeniden tartışmaya açmıştır. Dijital teknolojiler sınır kontrolü için yeni araçlar sunmasına rağmen, bunların kullanımı ve göçmen hakları üzerindeki etkileri konusunda etik ve yasal tartışmaları başlatmıştır. Nihayet, makale, yerinden edilme, gözaltı, dışsallaştırma ve dijitalleştirme politikalarıyla ortaya çıkan karmaşık zorlukların üstesinden gelmek için hak temelli bir yaklaşımın ve gerçek işbirliğinin önemini vurgulayarak göç politikalarının yeniden değerlendirilmesini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AB-Türkiye Mutabakatı, dışsallaştırma, dijitalleşme, AB, Türkiye

Introduction

The Syria crisis, now entering its 14th year, remains the largest displacement in the world, with over 12 million Syrians forcibly displaced in the region (UNHCR, 2024). In 2015, over a million refugees arrived in Europe, tragically resulting in more than 3,500 lives lost during the treacherous journey with over 75 percent of them fleeing conflict and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq (UNHCR, 2015). The European Union's (EU) response to the influx of refugees remained relatively in silence until the summer of 2015, when the route. of Syrian refugees shifted towards EU member states (Paçacı Elitok, 2019, p.1).

According to the Dublin regulations, refugees are permitted to seek asylum in the first EU country they enter. As asylum seekers are compelled to remain in the first host countries, significant numbers accumulate awaiting the granting of refugee status, which in fact led to an unfair social, administrative and financial burden on these member states, particularly those located on the EU's Aegean and Mediterranean borders (Bal, 2023, p. 1036). Along this line, Greece failed to safeguard the rights of asylum seekers within its territory, and even engaged in push backs, while Italy and Malta declined to permit INGOs or NGOs to disembark people rescued in the Mediterranean (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Bal, 2023, p.1043).

In order to deal with the influx of refugees, the EU began creating "buffer zones" around its territory by signing readmission agreements with transit countries. Thus, the EU-Turkey deal, also known as the EU-Turkey Statement, clearly illustrates the core aim of the European externalization policies (Kaya, 2022; Strik, 2019; Demirbaş & Miliou, 2024). As it has positioned Turkey as a critical internal and external buffer zone for the EU (Erdoğan & Pütmann, 2023; Demirbaş & Miliou, 2024).

The article critically evaluates the EU-Turkey deal on its eighth anniversary. While the deal initially succeeded in curbing irregular migration, subsequent challenges have led to a resurgence in arrivals and difficulties in implementation. Criticisms primarily revolve around the deal's infringement upon international protection regime and human rights. Additionally, the article examines how the deal reinforces externalization and digitalization policies in migration management, prompting concerns regarding accountability, transparency, and discrimination.

Drawing attention to the expanding body of literature on externalization, the objective of this article is to critically assess current approaches and uncover new research directions. This will involve identifying the limitations stemming from legal and humanitarian perspectives, as well as shedding light on aspects that have been under-researched. Along these lines, the review article extensively explores secondary sources to critically examine the

externalization policies of the EU, focusing on a detailed analysis of the EU-Turkey deal. To accomplish this, the review meticulously scrutinized academic literature, integrating the most recent reports from public institutions, diverse organizations, and NGOs to provide novel perspectives on externalization policies.

The article is organised around five sections. Following the introduction, the first section presents an overview of the literature, with a particular emphasis on studies concerning the externalization of migration and border policies. In the second section, a critical analysis of the EU-ization processes is conducted, alongside an evaluation of the key provisions of the EU-Turkey deal. The following two sections delve into the outcomes of the EU-Turkey Deal. In the third section, attention is given to whether the deal effectively stemmed the flow of irregular migration into the EU, while also discussing its legal and humanitarian aspects. Moving to the fourth part, an examination is made of how the deal reinforces policies of externalization and digitalization in migration management, prompting concerns regarding accountability, transparency, and discrimination. Lastly, the fifth and final section of the article offers comments on the findings of the review article and presents concluding remarks.

Literature Review on Externalization Policies

Over the past three decades, the EU's externalization policies have evolved to encompass all strategies, practices, and initiatives aimed at delegating border and migration controls to non-EU countries. The external governance of the EU is generally defined as the expansion of EU rules beyond EU borders (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2009, pp. 793-794). The EU conducts activities related to border control either directly or indirectly outside its sovereign territories, namely in other countries or on the high seas. Specifically, the migration influx into the EU in 2015 accelerated the outsourcing of border controls from the EU to regions such as South-Eastern Europe (Mitrović & Vilenica, 2019, p. 540), Northern and Western Africa (Panebianco, 2020, p.1400), and the Middle East (Schimmelfennig, 2021, pp.322-326). Another instance is the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, which prompted the Council of the EU to propose governing Afghan migration by allocating more funding to the periphery of Central Asia, including Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan (Augustova et al., 2024, p.30). These countries are tasked with providing support to Afghans near their homeland and preventing their entry into the EU (Augustova et al., 2024, pp.30-31). As Augustova, Ilbiz and Carrapica (2024, p. 30) rightly pointed out, externalization, in this context, involves implementing migration controls at a considerable distance, effectively extending the EU border thousands of kilometers into its broader neighbourhood (Frowd, 2021, pp.1333-1336).

In essence, migration controls have become part of the EU's broader agenda to transform non-EU states into more "peaceful" and "liberal" countries that align with "European values" such as freedom, democracy, and

the rule of law (Isakjee et al., 2020, p.1754-1764; Augustova et al., 2024). While the EU's official narrative of externalization stresses an equal partnership between the EU and non-EU countries, European leaders often portray these same states as not fully "democratic and liberal," implying they need the EU's guidance and stabilization (Augustova et al., 2024; Trakilović, 2020, p.50-53).

The concept of externalization inherently adopts a state-centric perspective (Cobarrubias et al., 2023; El Qadim et al, 2021), often overlooking the involvement of other actors in shaping migration and asylum policies. Hence, recently emerging literature that explores the roles of non-state actors, like international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, and private for-profit entities, indicates their significant role in altering externalization policies through various means, including support, influence, or resistance (Cobarrubias et. al 2023).

Furthermore, post- and decolonial theory challenges presentist accounts of externalization. Since it views the evolution of border externalization as more than just a recent response to impede unwanted migration, but it linked it to previous past political spatial formations such as empires and colonies (Lemberg Pedersen, 2013; 2019, pp. 247-252). In light of this contextual backdrop, future research agendas prioritize the contribution of Global South countries like Turkey and Morocco as they challenged their expected roles in shaping these policies (Gazzotti et al. 2023; Stock et al., 2019).

Certainly, the state has evolved into a dynamic and multi-scalar entity, operating both within and beyond its territorial borders. (Moisio & Paasi, 2013, pp. 256-258). In their article, Augustova, Ilbiz, and Carrapica (2024) introduce the concept of "externalization creep" to illustrate how international migration controls offer domestic actors the chance to utilize external support for their security objectives. So, border functions are no longer restricted to the official demarcation lines of state boundaries; instead, they have turned into dispersed management practices, transitioning from fixed-continuous lines to mobile and intermittent points or zones (Cobarrubias et al., 2023; Cuttitta, 2015).

The immediate effects of border closures demonstrate a shift away from the concept of impenetrable fortresses to border areas functioning as gateways. These gateways filter individuals allowed entry, determine those in need of protection, and identify individuals subject to detention and deportation (Pallister Wilkins, 2015; Üstübici, 2019). The underlying principle of externalization assumes that by establishing return and readmission agreements, and by enhancing border security at its external boundaries, the EU can effectively delegate the management of migration to regions and states neighbouring the EU. Externalization entails actions taken by states to impede, dissuade, or divert the influx of refugees and migrants (Crisp, 2022).

Mainly, externalization involves the adoption of EU norms, policy tools, and institutions by non-EU states on European periphery. Deterrent measures such as removal, detention, and deportation are direct outcomes of externalization policies. In summary, the externalization of border and migration policies has emerged as the primary policy framework for managing international migration within the EU, affecting its wider region, as illustrated by the instance of Turkey (Üstübici, 2019, pp. 10-18). Therefore, analysing the EU-Turkey deal on its eighth anniversary not only sheds light on the direct outcomes of the EU's externalization policies but also underscores Turkey's role as the other partner in the agreement.

The EU-ization Process and the EU-Turkey Deal

Numerous studies examining the process of "EU-ization" within the Turkish migration and border regime underscore various dimensions of the EU-Turkey deal, encompassing historical, political, legal, and international factors. (Biehl, 2009; İçduygu & Aksel, 2014; İçduygu & Üstübici, 2014; Özçürümez & Şenses, 2011). While some studies concentrate on assessing the efficiency of achieving the outlined objectives, other publications emphasize the geopolitical impacts of the EU-Turkey deal on migrants' mobility and externalized border control. Several articles assert that by delegating the management of migration flows to Turkey, the EU neglects and shifts its equitable responsibility for refugee protection (Aydin Düzgit et al., 2019; Gürkan & Coman, 2021; Kaya et al., 2021; Kaya, 2021). Some argues that the EU becomes even more dependent on the Turkish government as an ambivalent partner (Bialasiewicz & Maessen, 2018; Pries & Savcı, 2023). Alongside literature on externalization and EU-ization, scholarly discourse on the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the EU underscores the asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between the European "center" and its "periphery," with particular emphasis on the center's strategies of constructing, defining, categorizing, ordering, and subjugating the desired neighbors (Boedeltje & Van Houtum, 2011; Giaccaria & Minca, 2011; Karadağ, 2019).

In parallel, a new line of research has emerged within the field of security, and border studies, focusing on the intersections between digital technologies, security strategies, and migration regimes. Identifying the ongoing process as the "digitalization of European borders" (Broeders, 2007; Nedelcu & Soysüren 2022), resent scholarship in the field underlined the objective of transforming the EU into a "cyber-fortress" (Marin, 2011). These studies specifically examine how biometrics, combined with information and communication technologies (ICTs), are integrated into migration and border control measures. They are seen as effective tools for significantly restricting the movement of nationals from third countries, as well as impeding the freedom of refugees and displaced individuals who find themselves confined behind newly established borders (Nedelcu & Soysüren, 2022).

Indeed, the security technologies are now increasingly embodied in practices of "inclusion/exclusion" that distinguish "risky" (i.e. illegitimate) from "safe" (i.e. legitimate) mobilities and that create spaces where inequality and injustice are experienced (Koca, 2022). Thus, digital technologies can erect new e-borders and enlarge states' control and surveillance capacities (Nedelcu & Soysüren, 2022). Along with this background, as the eighth anniversary of the EU-Turkey deal has passed, the following two sections delve into its impacts by analyzing its intended outcomes, human rights violations, and the effects of the EU's externalization and digitalization policies on migration and border control practices. But before going into this debate, it is crucial to clarify the provisions of the deal.

The EU-Turkey Deal

On 18 March 2016, the EU and Turkey jointly launched the EU-Turkey deal, aimed at stopping the flow irregular migration via Turkey to Europe (European Commission, 2016a). The EU-Turkey deal builds on the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan, which was adopted on 29 November 2015 to foster closer collaboration with Turkey and to address the challenges posed by irregular migration flows in a coordinated manner. Essentially, the aim of the joint action plan is to step up cooperation for the support of Syrian refugees under temporary protection and their host communities in Turkey and to strengthen cooperation to prevent irregular migration flows to Europe. Compared to the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan, the EU-Turkey deal specifically aims to put an end to irregular migration from Turkey to the EU to dismantle the smuggling networks and provide migrants safer options than risking their lives (European Commission, 2016a).

In the EU-Turkey deal, the EU and Turkish leaders agreed that from 20 March 2016 all irregular migrants arriving in Greece would be returned to Turkey if they did not apply for asylum or if their claim for asylum was rejected. For every Syrian returned to Turkey, a Syrian would be resettled in the EU (one for one) (European Commission, 2016a). According to this agreement, Turkey would take back all immigrants who arrived in Greek territory after March 20, 2016, in exchange for a three billion euros from the EU to cover the costs of protection and support of all migrants within Turkey's borders. The deal stipulates that Turkey take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for illegal migration via Turkey to Europe (European Commission, 2016a). Also, the EU has presented Turkey with the opportunity for concession talks regarding visa-free travel to Europe. Although the concession talks have remained stagnant, an additional three billion euros in monetary aid was extended in 2018. Furthermore, Turkey has been pledged an extra three billion euros for the period spanning 2021 to 2023.

The EU-Turkey Deal: Irregular Migration and Human Rights

Over the past eight years, it has been of vital importance to evaluate the outcomes of the EU-Turkey deal. In this section, the intended outcomes of the deal is examined and then the legal and humanitarian aspects are analysed.

A Closer Look at the Intended Outcomes: From Numbers to Human Rights Violations

The core objective of the EU-Turkey deal is presented as curbing irregular migrant movements. However, rather than achieving its intended outcomes, the EU-Turkey deal has produced contradictory results.

Increasing Irregular border crossings

Basically, the deal addressed to stop mass irregular crossings of refugees from Turkey to Greece/Europe via the Aegean Sea. In terms of the results of the deal, the statistics indicated that the number of refugees (885,386) entering Europe has decreased, in comparison to the year of crisis (Frontex, 2017). Thus, a total of 182,227 migrants tried to reach to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean Route in 2016, with the majority making their attempts within the first three months of the year (Frontex, 2017; 2016). In other words, the number of migrants reaching the Greek islands in the Eastern Aegean significantly decreased towards the end of March 2016. Some studies clearly state that the deal largely eliminated the motivation for migrants to use irregular migration routes to Greece and weakened the operations of human smuggling networks, which is considered a success of the EU-Turkey Deal (Frontex, 2017; 2018). However, just three years later, in 2019, the Eastern Mediterranean emerged as the primary route to Europe, with the number of irregular border-crossings soaring to 83,333, the highest total since 2016 (Frontex, 2020). During the latter half of 2019, arrivals in the Eastern Aegean reached their highest levels since the EU-Turkey deal was implemented. This data is significant in illustrating the persistent motivation of migrants and refugees in reaching Europe.

Throughout 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, along with limitations imposed by both Turkish and Greek authorities on implementing the deal, led to a significant increase in irregular border crossings, despite the year of 2020 began with an increasing trend like that of 2019 (Frontex, 2021). The number of irregular border crossings dropped to 20,283 in 2020, while irregular arrivals to the EU via this route remained steady at 20,567 in 2021, maintaining the same level as the previous year. Nonetheless the Eastern Mediterranean route saw a significant increase in 2022, with approximately 42,800 irregular border crossings. Syrians and Afghans were the top reported nationalities (Frontex, 2023). Following the pandemic, irregular border crossings in the Eastern Mediterranean route maintained its increase with approximately 60,000 people recorded in 2023 (Frontex, 2023; Frontex, 2024a, 2024b). This trend on this route is also mirrored in the data regarding external irregular border crossings

of the EU. The number of irregular border crossings at the EU's external border surged to approximately 380,000 in 2023, primarily representing the highest level since 2016 (Frontex, 2024a, 2024b; Rescue.org, 2024). As a conclusion, the statistical data clearly indicate a consistent upward trend over the past three years.

Ineffective Return and Readmission Scheme
With the 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey deal, Turkey and the EU decided on the "one in, one out" deal, which implied that for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from the Greek Islands, another Syrian will be resettled to the EU. On the side of the implementation, however, the official data clearly demonstrated that the expected outcomes of the deal were not fulfilled. Along this line, the data illustrated that from April 2016 to 31 December 2017, only 11,711 Syrians were resettled from Turkey to the EU (European Commission, 2018). From the start of the implementation to the end of the year of 2017, Turkey has readmitted 1,484 persons, including only 236 Syrians, who had reached Greek islands directly from Turkey (European Commission, 2018). Furthermore, between January to May 2016, 2,510 individuals lost their lives, while attempting to cross to Europe, compared to around 1,800 for the same period in 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). This data indicates that migrants may be willing to take even greater risks to evade state's security measures. In conclusion, it is worth concluding that the implementation of the deal remained unsatisfactory.

On 28 February 2020, the Turkish government announced it would cease controlling its land and sea borders with Europe and open the passage for migrants wishing to cross. This led to the setting up of an informal camp at one of the border crossing points between Turkey and Greece in Pazarkule, hosting close to 60,000 migrants and refugees in dire conditions (European Commission, 2020a). Later in March, the Turkish authorities organised transport for the migrants and refugees away from the border area and closed the borders with Greece and Bulgaria except for commercial traffic because of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Turkey, unilaterally suspended return and resettlement operations under the EU-Turkey deal due to the COVID-19 pandemic, starting from March 2020 onwards (European Commission 2020a). However, resettlements from Turkey to the EU resumed in July 2020. Since the Pazarkule events in 2020, the border area between Greece and Turkey has become highly militarized (Karadağ & Bahar, 2022). Despite Turkey's historically flexible borders and its open border policy, Greece has escalated its pushback operations, particularly along the Evros River and the Aegean Sea. On March 23, 2020, the first instance of using life rafts in pushbacks occurred, with thirty-one asylum seekers left adrift on the waves of the Aegean Sea (Karadağ & Bahar, 2022).

Regarding resettlement from Turkey to the EU under the one-for-one scheme, 4,225 Syrian refugees were resettled to eight EU Member States in 2021; while 5,046 Syrian refugees were resettled in eight EU Member

States in 2022 (European Commission, 2022; 2023). The total number of Syrian refugees resettled from Turkey to the EU Member States under the one-for-one scheme reached 39,648 as of September 2023 (European Commission, 2023). Only 2,140 people have been returned from Greece to Turkey under the deal (Rescue.org, 2022), while smuggling routes to Italy and to Cyprus were increasingly used (European Commission, 2021). Turkey is still maintaining the suspension of returns from the Greek islands that it put in place in March 2020. The data on return and resettlement indicated that the implementation of the deal has not attained the intended outcomes.

A Closer Look at the Legal Framework: From Human Right Violations to Externalization

Many studies focus on the legal aspects of the EU-Turkey deal in light of international and humanitarian law, specifically examining the principles and practices of safe-third-country, non-refoulement, and the deal's compliance. First of all, despite carrying the characteristics of an international agreement, the deal lacks a legal nature due to its *non-compliance* with these formal requirements, and thus, it lacks legal bindingness (GAR, 2024). As a result, its auditability is also questionable (GAR, 2024). Secondly, the EU-Turkey deal implies that Turkey is a *safe third country.* In defining a safe country, the EU denoted main criteria referred in the 1951 Geneva Convention and the Asylum Procedures Directive (Danış, 2021; GAR, 2022, 2024). Essentially, a safe country respects human rights, while maintaining a democratic political environment, and rule of law. The Asylum Procedures Directive defines candidate countries as safe if asylum seekers or refugees are assessed individually. In addition, the 1951 Geneva Convention's safe country definition requires that a person who has to resettle in a third country, having already been granted refugee status in the host country, must receive a guarantee that the third country will continue to protect their refugee status (GAR, 2024; Bal, 2023). As a result, defining Turkey as a safe third country, despite not meeting the necessary requirements of international and European law, constitutes a violation of human rights.

Essentially, Turkey does not grant refugee status to Syrians living in Turkey or returned from Europe due to its geographical reservation to the Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol. In its place, Syrian refugees in Turkey are provided temporary protection under Article 42, Section 2 of the 2013 Law of Foreigners and International Protection. This Article also indicates that persons under temporary protection are "not entitled" to the right of transfer to a long-term residence permit (Bal, 2023). This means that refugees, including Syrians, who are returned to Turkey do not have access to an effective protection in line with the 1951 Geneva Convention, which is required for a safe third country under EU law. Furthermore, among those returned to Turkey, both Syrian refugees and certain asylum seekers have had their status lost upon their return (Türkeş, 2017; Bal, 2023).

Indeed, the lack of protection contravenes the principle of *non-refoulement* in refugee law, which safeguards refugees from being sent back to places where their safety or freedoms may be jeopardized (GAR, 2024).

Despite having legal status in Turkey, Syrians experience precarity, where their rights are often restricted, leading to insecurity (Baban et al., 2022; Demirbaş & Miliou, 2024). As Demirbaş and Miliou (2024) argue in their article, the temporary nature of legal status functions as a tool for governing and controlling refugees, contributing their vulnerability. In this context, Lorey (2015) stresses that precarity serves as a form of governmentality (Demirbaş & Miliou, 2024). The EU-Turkey deal, by aiming to keep refugees in Turkey, perpetuates a system that subjects them to poverty and uncertainty (Demirbaş & Miliou, 2024). Furthermore, limitations on rights exacerbate Syrians' precarity, as they are required to register in specific cities in Turkey to access essential services like work permits, healthcare, and education (Danış & Dikmen 2022). By designating Turkey as a 'safe third country', the EU-Turkey deal further legitimizes and perpetuates the precarious living conditions endured by refugees (Demirbaş & Miliou, 2024).

As part of the EU-Turkey deal, Turkey primarily focused on programs and projects related to social cohesion, integration efforts, entrepreneurship, and long-term vocational training, funded by FRİT and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). According to Pries and Savcı (2023), the FRIT component of the deal is positively evaluated for providing substantial support to refugees and for enhancing the governance structure for refugee protection and migration management in Turkey. In their study, they (2023) underline that the funds of the FRIT were spent to a great extent for primary humanitarian aid at the beginning and then shifted stepwise to a more development approach in strengthening institutional infrastructure of law-based management of migration and refugee protection. Pries and Savcı also suggest that the FRIT was quite successful in initiating a complex multilevel engine of networking organizations that ranged from Turkish state authorities, IGOs, INGOs up to local NGOs. Against this perspective, some scholars emphasize the constraints faced by rights-based civil society organizations, lack of institutionalized mechanisms to give refugees voice at the various levels and highlight the close cooperation between the state and government-aligned CSOs (GAR, 2022).

Nonetheless, recent news regarding Turkey's refusal to cooperate with the European Court of Auditors (ECA) has sparked further discussion on this issue (Washington Post, 2024; European Court of Auditors 2024). The auditors requested information from Turkey, including a list of schools receiving EU support, the number of refugee pupils attending these schools, and details on the reintegration of children not in education into the school system, along with their exam pass rates compared to Turkish students. However, Turkey's education

ministry refused to provide the requested information, preventing the auditors from assessing the impact of EU projects (Washington Post, 2024; European Court of Auditors, 2024). Without this data, the auditors are unable to measure the effectiveness or sustainability of education projects funded by the EU. Despite joint and individual requests from auditors and officials from the commission responsible for ensuring proper use of the bloc's funds, Turkey has not complied. In summary, the EU-Turkey deal has failed to achieve its intended outcomes and has been criticized for violating basic human rights.

The EU-Turkey Deal: From Externalization to Digitalization

This section delves into the ways in which the deal strengthens externalization and digitalization policies within migration management, while simultaneously eliciting concerns regarding accountability, transparency, and discrimination. While the integration of digital technologies presents novel opportunities for border control, their implementation has ignited ethical and legal deliberations concerning their potential effects on migrants' rights and well-being.

A Closer Look at the Policies of Externalization: The New Pact on Migration and Asylum

The EU disregarded the root causes of refugee flows, neglecting the fundamental principles of the international protection regime established following the 1951 Geneva Convention. It shifted the burden and responsibility to third/transit countries, thereby bolstering populist rhetoric and advancing externalization policies to fortify Fortress Europe. Various practices and naive cooperation and collaboration efforts among EU member states have resulted in a spectrum of approaches, from far-right parties' anti-migrant sentiments to welcoming slogans within the EU. At the same time, digitalization of border control practices not only extends the reach of externalized policies but also aligns with the competitive neoliberal market economy. In Bal's perspective (2023), member states' panic and neoliberal nationalism resulted in the implementation of EU's old-style migration management coupled with "securitization" and controlled "market-informed" access (Eder & Özkul, 2016).

Consistent with Bal's assertions, scholars in the field have underscored that externalization policies, employing a carrot-and-stick strategy as evident in negotiations for the EU-Turkey deal, encouraged transit countries like Turkey to leverage refugees through bargaining and instrumentalization (Danış & Dikmen 2022; Karadağ, 2022). In other words, Turkey is not a passive recipient of EU externalization when it comes to negotiating with the EU over migration related topics (Ataç et al., 2017; İçduygu & Üstübici, 2014; Karadağ, 2019; Üstübici, 2019) In fact, the EU policies of externalization and securitization create an environment where it becomes politically advantageous for Turkey to manipulate migration flows, as evidenced by the negotiations of the deal and the events in Pazarkule. (Swan, 2023; Casaglia & Pacciardi, 2023).

Thus, externalization policies are once again being considered to create certain political incentives among transit countries, such as Turkey, while bolstering the EU's Fortress Europe rhetoric, which hampers the implementation of the international protection regime. However, the clear failure of externalization policies in general, and the deal in particular, has not deterred the EU from formulating and implementing new policies on borders, migration and asylum. Along these lines, the recently approved New Pact on Migration and Asylum represents another effort by the EU to address migration challenges.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum Reloaded
As mentioned in the section of irregular arrivals, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has noted that the year of 2023 experienced the most significant surge in irregular entries into the EU since 2016. Thus, on 10 April 2024, the European Parliament voted in favour of the new rules on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, (European Commission, 2024). Indeed, the Pact negotiations began in 2015 as a response to more than a million asylum seekers arriving in Europe fleeing war and persecution, primarily from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Eritrea. It seeks to revise the Dublin Regulation which mandates that the country of first entry - such as Italy, Greece, Malta to process asylum requests, thereby creating substantial migration pressure on these countries. According to the European Commission, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020b) was designed to create sustainable and regulated migration flows, addressing shortcomings in current systems while promoting a cohesive approach to migration and asylum based on solidarity and accountability (European Commission, 2020b).

However, the implementation of the Pact underscored the inefficacy of this system, the shortcomings of national asylum frameworks, and the absence of solidarity within the EU, as frontline countries like Greece became overwhelmed and incapable of adequately processing asylum claims. After three years of negotiations and despite warnings from over 50 civil society organizations, the Pact on Migration and Asylum was once again approved through a vote. In principle it focuses on crucial key developments: the reinforcement of external borders; the modification of responsibility rules; the inclusion of mandatory solidarity provisions; and the harmonization of procedural arrangements to handle and process arrivals at the border and asylum applications. Primarily, the pact will have significant repercussions for the right to seek international protection both within EU countries and across the EU as a whole.

The Pact introduces *fast-tracked asylum procedures*, subjecting more asylum seekers to accelerated processes at borders, resulting in shorter interviews, limited legal counsel access, and inadequate vulnerability assessments (Woolrych, 2024). By expanding the *safe third country* principle, asylum seekers may be deemed inadmissible

and deported to non-EU countries, raising the risk of refoulement (Ibid). Essentially, individuals who passed through safe countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, or Turkey before reaching Europe could have their asylum claims rejected (Statewatch, 2024).

Furthermore, Europe might see a *significant rise in the detention of asylum seekers* due to the new pact's requirement for extensive screening and processing at border facilities (Statewatch 2024). Under this mandate, various categories of asylum seekers, including families with children of all ages, could be detained in closed facilities for up to 12 weeks while their claims are assessed (Woolrych, 2024; Statewatch, 2024). Additionally, the introduction of *new screening and detention protocols at borders* will lead to further pressure on border states. Also, the proposed *solidarity mechanism* falls short in effectively sharing responsibility/burden. As, governments can choose between different measures, such as financial assistance, relocation programmes, or logistical assistance. In other words, states unaffected by migration pressures have the option to provide financial aid to border states or non-EU countries, or they can choose to relocate and host asylum seekers themselves (Statewatch, 2024).

Indeed, the reluctance of countries to engage in relocation, as demonstrated during the deal's implementation, indicates that this mechanism will not result in a more equitable and fairer distribution of asylum seekers across the EU. While *solidarity funds* could improve living standards, they unfortunately also carry the risk of leading to an increase in the number of detention facilities. In times of crises, such as periods marked by high influxes of arrivals, the implementation of *emergency measures* may lead to *violations of rights* such as delaying the registration of asylum seekers, subjecting them to fast-tracked and lower-quality procedures, and extending their detention periods (Statewatch, 2024).

A Closer Look at the Policies of Digitalization: "New Normal"
These amendments furthered the externalization of migration and asylum policies, as well as the digitalization of EU border security. Thus, the EU has invested in automated lie detectors to be deployed at border crossing points, the development of automated border control gates, systems using "big data" to predict migration movements, and swarms of drones for border surveillance: a new normal of digitalization in migration and border control.

"New Normal": From Fortress Europe to Cyber Fortress
States and companies now routinely generate and store digital traces of physical bodies, populations, migration routes and border crossings, as the management of migration and border control increasingly relies on artificial

intelligence and digital technologies. These digital traces, derived from DNA tests, fingerprints, or facial images, are fuelled by algorithms powered by big data. Ultimately, datafication and digitalization introduce new dimensions to externalization policies in general and migration and border control practices in particular (Nedelcu & Soysüren, 2022). Thus, recent scholarship in the field has emphasized the goal of turning the EU into a "cyber-fortress" (Marin, 2011).

The collaboration between state and non-state actors raises critical concerns about neoliberal market dynamics, demonstrating the intersection of law, business, and ethics in the modern world. Essentially, these collaborations reveal how profit maximization and human rights are often intertwined with corporate practices, political realities, and societal norms. With the use of big data through various means such as scanners and codes, civil servants and military police monitor and regulate the movement and circulation of materials, technologies and "bodies" but not "individuals".

The phenomenon of datafied border governance has extended its reach deeply into society and beyond state borders. Its normalization and transnationalization are evident, marking a significant shift in contemporary border management practices. Tazzioli and Walters' argument (2016) becomes particularly crucial at this juncture to understand the evolution of border control policies. Their concept of the "politics of in/visibility," elucidates how border governance functions in "pre-frontier" zones to intercept and criminalize migrants even prior to their arrival in EU territory. These practices give rise to social, ethical, and political dilemmas, including concerns about involving authorities with poor human rights records and employing violent border control tactics within the EU border regime through extensive digital security networks like EUROSUR.

In addition to Tazzioli and Walters, Follis (2017, pp. 1003-1013) also highlights the collaboration with unjust regimes and morally questionable actors, as well as the potential violation of human rights obligations. Therefore, Lemberg and Haioty (2020) emphasize the urgent need for research networks to investigate the experimental and expansive nature of datafied migration and border control by examining knowledge and resource transfer. Since the normalisation and legitimisation of securitised border technologies is coupled with the possibility of informal and illegal transfer of data and its use for a purpose other than what was originally specified. Additionally, the process of datafying borders is connected to the perpetuation of biases via algorithmic and biometric border governance mechanisms. From border management to asylum processing, digital technologies bring new harms and risks, such as unchecked errors in decision-making caused by biases engrained in algorithms, risks to data security and protection for refugees and asylum seekers. Consequently, algorithms automate inequality and

reproduce discrimination against marginalized communities. Overall, all of them critically open up new avenues for the debate on externalization, securitization and border policies.

Conclusion

Rather than achieving its intended outcomes, the EU-Turkey deal has produced a contradictory result: an increase in irregular arrivals, endangering lives and eroding fundamental human rights. As part of the deal's implementation, individuals seeking entry to the EU face deportations, detention in camps, and redirection to more perilous routes. In its eight anniversary the deal has failed to meet its goal of reducing "irregular" arrivals on EU territory, while challenging international protection regime and violating human rights. Despite being designated as a safe third country for resettlement and removal operations under the deal, Turkey's geographical limitations on asylum applications hinder its recognition as a "European safe third country". This limitation, unique to Turkey, is primarily driven by concerns of being overwhelmed as a buffer zone for refugees attempting to enter Europe. The status as irregular migrants or as refugees under "temporary protection" is precarious in general. Encountering obstacles like a severe economic downturn, hyperinflation, rising anti-immigrant sentiments, and a growingly authoritarian political atmosphere in the aftermath of the pandemic, Turkey has only a weak legal and service framework for managing forced migration. Additionally, Turkey's ability to leverage refugees as a bargaining tool also indicates the lack collaborative nature of the deal and its failure on moving "refugee crisis" outward from the European center to periphery. In this vein, by disregarding its international obligations and enforcing policies of externalization and digitalization on migration and border management, the EU endures the complex, multi-level, and multi-dimensional impacts of these policies, leaving refugees and migrants in precarious economic, social, or legal situations.

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