
The Contemporary Lens in International Relations: Migration and Foreign Policy Nexus in Turkey

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Abstract

Immigration has gradually become one of the main subjects of high policy debate in Turkey. Such a tendency has manifested itself initially through Turkey–EU relations, where immigration policy making has become one of the key issues of accession talks. The Syrian crisis and a massive influx of Syrians have also acted as a catalyst for consideration of immigration policy as a “hot topic” of the agendas of both foreign and domestic policy. This article aims to uncover the interrelations between immigration policy and Turkish foreign policy and to identify major trends and reorientations in immigration policy making.

Key Words

International Migration, Turkish Foreign Policy, Turkey–European Union Relations, Syrian Crisis.

Introduction

There is a considerable amount of literature written on different forms of migration into and out of Turkey.

Throughout history, diverse waves and forms of migratory movements have always affected Turkey. The Iranian revolution, political turmoil in the Middle East, the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War, and more recently the Arab uprising and Syrian crisis have all resulted in a large number of people finding refuge in neighbouring countries, including Turkey. This is coupled with Turkey’s geo-political position and geo-strategic importance as a transit zone between the East and the West, and ultimately has contributed to Turkey’s becoming a *de facto* country of first asylum as well as a destination. Turkey is positioned at a significant juncture within the international migration flows between Asia, Africa and Europe. This connectivity to numerous emigration and immigration countries makes Turkey highly vulnerable to changing trends of migration and requires Turkey to streamline its policy responses accordingly. Given Turkey’s vision of becoming a regional power as well as an international actor, this paper aims to address the major trends and reorientations in contemporary Turkish

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immigration policy making and its relation to Turkish foreign policy.

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The politics of Turkish immigration policy has gradually been debated around two main contemporary drivers, namely the EU accession process and the migratory impact of the Syrian crisis. Modernization in Turkey, political reforms driven by the EU accession process, adoption of the *Acquis*, and humanitarian assistance provided for Syrians arriving in Turkey, as well as the recent debate on the co-existence of a humanitarian and development nexus due to the prolonged nature of the Syrian crisis's migratory impact are all valid points; however, I would argue that this would not be enough in explaining Turkey's current re-structuring of its immigration policy. Turkey's engagement with regional consultative processes, international platforms and international organizations working on diverse dimensions of migration

have also contributed to Turkey's involvement in global discussions related to migration and encouraged the country to become an actor of the international migration governance.

The gradually evolving nature of migration studies in the Turkish context makes the field an important area of research also for the discipline of International Relations. This paper therefore aims to uncover the politics of immigration policy making in Turkey via putting the spotlight on the period after the 2000s. Furthermore, I also adopt an outlook in an attempt to underline the multi-policy level structuration of Turkish immigration policy by identifying patterns for contemporary migration trends. Building on Giddens' "concept of structuration",¹ this paper employs a constructivist perspective in the light of the concept of multi-policy level structuration of Turkish immigration policy, which refers to the development, adjustment and implementation of policies in diverse fields such as external affairs, development, security, international cooperation, humanitarian assistance as well as economy- all of which have a direct or indirect impact on immigration policy making in Turkey. Such a perspective also has the potential to carry the contemporary migration management discourse to a further level, which is the governance of migration that

aims to enhance security, economy and rights.² The paper is divided into five sections. The first section briefly summarizes the migration and foreign policy nexus in general, followed by the Turkish context in section two. The third section elaborates on the impact of emerging foreign policy concepts on Turkish migration policies after the 2000s, and the fourth section identifies major trends and reorientations in foreign policy in line with the changes in migration policies. The final section concludes by bringing together the main ideas put forward in the paper.

The Missing Lens of International Relations: The Migration and Foreign Policy Nexus

Over the years, the issue of international migration has gradually emerged on the international landscape due to a growing number of persons living outside their countries of origin. This continuing increase has also triggered interest in the social sciences towards diverse thematic areas related to international migration, which was formerly limited across disciplines. Massey and his colleagues further elaborate on this point:

“Social scientists do not approach the study of immigration

from a shared paradigm, but from a variety of competing theoretical viewpoints fragmented across disciplines, regions, and ideologies. As a result, research on the subject tends to be narrow, often inefficient, and characterized by duplication, miscommunication, reinvention and bickering about fundamentals. Only when researchers accept common theories, concept tools, and standards, will knowledge begin to accumulate.”³

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Moreover, as underlined by Brettell and Hollifield, a considerable gap exists between the “social scientists who take a top-down “macro” approach, focusing on immigration policy or market forces from those whose approach is bottom-up “micro”, emphasizing the experiences of the individual migrant or the immigrant family”.⁴ This limited coverage of international

migration with its linkages to diverse disciplines is also reflected in the study of international relations. The issue itself has been marginalized in international relations with, as Weiner points out, certain questions often being overlooked:⁵ How do states' actions shape population movements? Under which circumstances do such movements lead to conflict and/or to cooperation? What do governments do in their domestic policies to adjust, influence and control such population flows? Building on these questions, it is legitimate to investigate the root causes for the limited coverage of migration studies by the discipline of international relations. The most common explanation of this marginalization lies behind the recent acknowledgement of international migration moving from the realm of *low* politics to *high* politics. Although the political science literature related to migration and international relations is quite limited, there are a number of scholars who have been directing their research interests to this emerging field of study.⁶

Hollifield⁷ puts forward three lines of inquiry for scholars of immigration within political science. Those include the role of the nation-state in controlling migration and borders; the impact of migration on international relations including institutions, sovereignty and national security; and finally

incorporation, which calls for identity, citizenship, ethical as well as normative issues. Mitchell⁸ explains the late coverage of the study of international migration by political science and international relations scholarship based on three main relationships. The first revolves around the assumption that international relations help to shape international migration with the potential importance of state action to the dynamic process of migration policy making. The second asserts that migration may influence and serve the goals of national foreign policies, which would carry this transnational phenomenon from its traditional sector of low politics to the realm of high politics. And the third emphasizes that "domestic" immigration laws and policies may have an unavoidable international political projection.

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In other words, the realist paradigm being the dominant approach during the Cold War period avoided having

the topic of migration become mainstreamed due to the limited effect of migration on balance of power, the East-West struggle or the structure of the international system other than the refugees themselves.⁹ Yet, it is important to mention the growing importance of migration in international politics particularly considering the securitization of migration following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 as well as externalization of the issue via EU level migration policy making. The next section represents an effort to contribute to bridging the gap between international relations and migration studies from the global to the Turkish context.

The Foreign Policy and Migration Nexus in the Turkish Context

Building on the conceptual discussions related to interrelations among foreign policy, security, power and migration, Turkey, with its multi-faceted migratory flows offers a valuable environment for observing the political implications of those conceptual frameworks. Tolay proposes understanding Turkey's impact in the region through different flows of capital, goods, people and ideas. Tolay further asserts that "the more dense, multiform, and multidirectional those flows are, the more central and

indispensable Turkey becomes in its neighbourhood."¹⁰

Today, migration and its impact on Turkey's foreign relations hold a multi-actor nature. Non-state actors such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations and even the private sector are also gradually engaged in foreign policy implications of immigration policies in Turkey. Moreover, Turkey considers migration as an important foreign policy issue where both migration and foreign policy concerns have become converged.¹¹ The last two decades, especially after the 2000s, are crucial in reading the essentials of contemporary Turkish foreign policy given the increasing role played by diverse thematic areas such as economics, trade, security, and human rights, as well as the movement of people in Turkey's international relations. We also witness the rising of cultural and Islamic values coupled with humane and democratic ones. It is important to assess the impact of this new rising trend on migration policy making in Turkey. Within this framework, it becomes crucial to ask a couple of questions, such as: What is the meaning of migration policy in Turkey?

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What are the contemporary drivers and the dynamics behind contemporary immigration policy making in Turkey? What role does migration play within the framework of foreign policy making? Where does immigration policy stand in Turkish foreign policy today? The following section will try to answer these questions in detail.

Evolution of the Turkish Foreign Policy and Migration Nexus in the Post Cold War Era

Distribution of power is considered to be the main defining feature of international relations in the realist way of thinking. Such a distribution with its major consequences manifested itself as the “bipolarity”¹² during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and communist order accelerated the spreading of capitalism all over the globe and the transformation of the world order into a unipolar one. As Markina states, there were no clearly defined enemies anymore.¹³ With the end of the Cold War, there has been an increasing attention on developmental differences. Globalization is a contemporary phenomenon gradually experienced all around the world. However, countries experience different levels

of globalization due to their different levels of development. The conjectural dynamics of the post Cold War era, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and recently the conflict and fragility experienced in diverse regional contexts have all called for re-visiting the concept of polarity in the contemporary structure of the international system.

Contemporary polarity discussions following the dissolution of the Soviet Union have played an active role in the evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy as of the 1990s. Turkey, with its strategic geopolitical position, had to reassess its geostrategic role in the post-Cold War era. Following the demise of the USSR, Turkish foreign policy preserved its traditional security-oriented nature, which had been developed since the early Republican era as well as throughout the Cold War period, building on its threat perceptions. As underlined by Tür and Han, those threat perceptions included a mistrust of Western allies. Even though Turkey has positioned herself with the Western bloc, the foreign policy anxiety driven by suspicions about the division of Turkish territory by the West as well as the threat perception of being surrounded by enemies have all contributed in a mainstreaming of security issues within Turkish foreign policy making processes.¹⁴ Moreover, they emphasize that, although the Soviet demise was the sign of an end

to the perception of a threat from the Soviet Union, it was immediately filled in by “new” actors of Iraq, Iran and Syria as well as by instabilities in the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East as the considered threats to Turkey’s national security.¹⁵ All these events have also resulted in not only a questioning of Turkey by its Western partners from a security point of view, but have also securitized Turkey’s relations with the West.¹⁶ When we recall the regional dynamics of that era, we see historical changes including the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990, the First Gulf War in 1991, and the oppression and atrocities targeted by the Saddam regime towards Iraqi Kurds. These all acted as catalysts for Turkey’s “new” threat perceptions that revolved around Kurdish separatism and empowerment of the PKK by the above mentioned new threat actors during the 1990s.¹⁷

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As Rubin underlined, Turkey has become a more visible and active

international player after the 1990s.¹⁸ In 1991, the Gulf War allowed Turkey to play a central role in the Middle East. Crisis in the Balkans, particularly Bosnia and Kosovo, made Turkey an influential actor in the Balkans and South-eastern Europe. Furthermore, the emergence of the newly independent states of Turkic origin brought up some potential for foreign policy making outside the scope of its traditional practices in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Developmental differences and ethnic conflicts among the newly independent states required Turkey to adjust its traditional foreign policy in line with the new challenges as well as opportunities. Traditional Turkish foreign policy had revolved around mainstream issues such as European Union membership, Turkish-Greek relations, and Cyprus.¹⁹ However, this new foreign policy adjustment also brought up a debate among policymakers and the Turkish public related to a new strategy, identity and set of goals.

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identity, strategy, as well as a new set of goals, it was Turgut Özal's approach of an assertive foreign policy as of 1989, which acted as a catalyst for structuration of the "new foreign policy".²⁰ Within this scope, that vision of the era with its open market economy and international cooperation driven nature was in need of new areas for self-assertion. The collapse of the Soviet Union followed by the establishment of the independent Turkic states in Central Asia called for a potential role to be played by Turkey in terms of its common cultural heritage, which was streamlined around the mainstream identity of "Turkishness". Within the same time period, Turkey's self-identification as a Eurasian country was also applauded by its Western allies, given their hesitations about a filling of the "power gap" in Central Asia by Iran. Therefore, Turkey's emergence as a potential actor in Central Asia and its close engagement with the West had a relieving impact on her transatlantic partners, who promoted the idea of "Turkey as a new model," fuelled by its "secular and democratic political structure and its free market economy".²¹

Besides the economy driven early migratory flows, the Ahıska Turks made a request to then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel during his visit to the Central Asian Turkic Republics and Azerbaijan in 1967, that they be accepted

by Turkey.²² Upon the enactment of the Law for the Acceptance into Turkey and Resettlement of Ahıska Turks, No. 3835 in 1992,²³ in total 500 families, 150 in 1992 and 350 in 1993, were accepted by Turkey. The majority of these came from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.²⁴ The common identity of *Turkishness* could be seen as the motivating factor for immediate acceptance of the Ahıska Turks by Turkey in 1992 coupled with a legislative framework on settlement.

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During the 1990s, Turkey also opened its borders to 467,489 Iraqi people and provided humanitarian assistance to them after the Gulf Crisis.²⁵ Turkey, having previously accepted 51,542²⁶ Iraqi people after the Halabja chemical attack in Northern Iraq in 1988 as well as a mass inflow of people of Turkish decent from Bulgaria as of 1989,²⁷ had

started to question how to respond to the emerging new influx from Iraq. Building on these challenges, President Turgut Özal proposed the establishing of a security zone within the territory of Iraq under international guarantorship, where the Iraqi people could be accommodated. Upon agreement by the US and a majority of the Western states, a no-fly zone, located at the Northern Iraq and Turkish border, was established to protect humanitarian operations and settlement of Kurdish refugees.²⁸

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Within this scope, the 1990s were mainly the period for Turkey to witness an escalation of conflicts and wars in neighbouring countries, with a direct impact on mass migratory movements towards Turkey, initially from Iraq and then from Bosnia, from which there were 20,000 Bosnians between 1992-1995 and 17,746 Kosovars in 1999 who sought asylum in Turkey.²⁹ Given this migratory snapshot, one can say

that the 1990s acted as the baseline for the contemporary nexus between migration and Turkish foreign policy from Central Asia to the Balkans as well as the Middle East. Concepts such as “activism” and “multi-dimensionalism,” which were employed in Turkish foreign policy during the 1990s, have also prepared a legitimate platform for the structuration of the parameters of the Turkish foreign policy and migration nexus of the 2000s.³⁰

While it took some time for Turkey to adjust her position within the conjuncture of the post-Cold War period, the end of the 1990s brought forth an historical shift in terms of mainstream threat perceptions. Those perceptions also called for a de-securitization of Turkish foreign policy.³¹ The traditional Turkish foreign policy was structured on two main building blocks: while the *status quo* aimed at preserving the established order within the existing borders, *westernization* focused on Western oriented foreign policy structuration.³² The traditional actors of foreign policy making were in particular considered to be the products of a higher structure with an isolated nature from all other political areas.³³ As of the 1990s, however, a streamlining of Turkish foreign policy at the international and regional levels has constituted its main axis. It has also been a period with an increasing number and

diversity of actors affecting the world order; developments in information and communication technologies; as well as systemic changes that have all contributed to self-adjustments of Turkish foreign policy. The concept of regional power has also gradually been used with reference to Turkish foreign policy. Kut underscores the existence of confusion over Turkey's role in the post- Cold War at the time, exciting but blurred debates among politicians and the public in terms of whether Turkey could fulfil its newly emerging roles.³⁴

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The first decade of the post-Cold War period could be divided into two clusters: The first half focused on discussions that revolved around uncertainties, objectives, threats and opportunities. It was a period in which the role of NATO was questioned at both national and international scales. Furthermore, the impact on Turkey

of a potential degradation in NATO's importance at the global scale was also debated. The second half of this first decade acted as an era where differences between Turkey's foreign policy rhetoric and practice became visible. The early 2000s witnessed the establishment of the *Justice and Development Party* (AKP). Under the AKP, Turkey, with its geopolitical stance, economic growth, population and military power has begun to explore its potential to transform those strengths into different foreign policy instruments in several thematic areas, from security to migration. There have been many discussions and studies on assessing Turkey's soft power and regional power potential,³⁵ and many of them seem to agree that Turkey's ambition and intention is in becoming a regional power.

As mentioned above, as of the 2000s, an important phase in Turkish foreign policy has been witnessed, particularly following the establishment of the AKP in 2001, and coupled with the development and enhancement of concepts in Turkish foreign policy making such as pro-active diplomacy, multi-dimensional foreign policy, and Turkey's power as being soft, smart and regional.³⁶ These contemporary changes in Turkish foreign policy actually have their roots from the early 1980s with President Turgut Özal, who tried to embrace Turkey's Ottoman

heritage into an active diplomacy and foreign policy strategy with its neighbours. The late President Özal, with his vision to reassess and segregate domestic and foreign policy decisions, took radical steps forward in his era.³⁷ Some of these radical steps included “economic reform plans, European community membership initiatives, his definition of “trade” in return for American aid, relations with Greece, immediate recognition of the post-Soviet Republics, and his opening for cultural freedom for Kurds”.³⁸

Given these transformations in Turkey between the 1980s and 1990s, it can be argued that they prepared the legitimate platform for the structuration of the parameters of the Turkish foreign policy in the 2000s. After coming to power in 2002, the AKP acted as a catalyst for an amalgamation of previously developed concepts to offer contemporary new frameworks of Turkish foreign policy. Walker asserts that “as a result of its Islamic roots and Muslim outlook, the AKP has focused on the unifying character of the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim values inherited by the Turkish Republic”.³⁹ Such a vision sought for opportunities to enhance Turkey’s multi-lateral and multi-sectoral affairs with its neighbours. Here, it is critical to emphasize the mainstream identity perception and discourse adopted during the 2000s by the AKP, which has revolved around the

notion of Muslimhood in conjunction with Turkishness.

It was only after the 2000s that the Middle East re-emerged on Turkey’s horizon as a region where concepts of foreign policy, such as soft power, trading state, and role model, could be exercised. Within this scope, the “strategic depth” theoretical framework developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu, former Prime Minister of the 62nd Government of the Turkish Republic, became one of the key building blocks for Turkish foreign policy in the early 2000s. In his book entitled *Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position*, published in 2001, Davutoğlu suggests that geostrategic location and historical depth act as determining factors in assessing the significance of a nation at the international level and asserts that Turkey will become a “central power” via integrating its historical and strategic depth within its geography.⁴⁰ Moreover, Turkey’s active engagement with the EU via alignment to the *acquis*, the reform process, and a membership perspective, were key defining factors of the “Europeanizing” of foreign policy over this first decade of the 2000s.⁴¹ As underlined by Tür and Han, the utilization of foreign policy tools experienced a considerable change through this Europeanizing of foreign policy, as diplomacy, dialogue, multilateralism and institutionalization gradually replaced the mainstream

foreign policy discourse that was dominated by actual or potential use of force.⁴² It was also emphasized that Turkey's changing foreign policy conceptions towards the Middle East from 2002 to 2011 could best be understood through a "role theory analysis",⁴³ which was described as follows:

"Role theory analyses the cultural/ideational, geostrategic, political and economical determinants of a country's foreign policy, through eliciting state elites' cognitive filters and perceptions. Many studies analyse Turkish foreign policy with reference to state identity, culture, geographic location, economic material factors and strategic/military considerations, as well as state elites' political preferences, but only a limited number of these studies implicitly refer to role theory."⁴⁴

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In their study, Özdamar and colleagues employ role theory analyses and identify eleven Turkish foreign policy conceptions, six of which were considered to be more prominent before the Arab uprisings. Those conceptions included; "mediator", "defender of regional peace and stability", "regional subsystem collaborator", "good neighbour", "bridge across civilizations" and "trading state". However, the authors underscore their observation of a solid decline in some of those concepts, particularly "mediator", "defender of regional peace and stability", "regional subsystem collaborator", and "good neighbour," observing that those were gradually replaced by new conceptions such as "central/pivotal country", "active independent country", "developer" (i.e. assisting developing countries), "protector of the oppressed" and "model/example country".⁴⁵

Turkey's efficiency in dealing with the economic crisis, considerable growth in international trade, reaching an agreement with the EU on a date for negotiations in 2004, acknowledgement of the PKK as a terrorist organization by the EU⁴⁶ and the US,⁴⁷ were some of the events and developments that marked this period. However, we may consider 2010 as a turning point at which the baseline of Turkish foreign policy started to move in a different direction. Walker puts forth the argument of Turkey's new location as

being at the core rather than in the periphery:

This new strategic outlook is not merely national but regional, and it shifts Turkey's self-perception of being on the periphery to an understanding that the country is at the very centre of important historical developments.⁴⁸

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Building on its new vision in foreign policy making as well as the contemporary developments at both the global and regional scales, Turkey would need to follow a multi-directional foreign policy while situating itself in the core and producing its own foreign policy tools for different thematic areas. So, what is the essence of this snapshot of Turkish foreign policy as of the 2000s in terms of the country's

migration policymaking processes? Can we draw a solid framework of analysis in terms of the foreign policy and migration nexus in the light of those emerging conceptions? If so, what would be the actual and potential implications of those diverse and dynamic foreign policy conceptions on Turkish migration policy of the 21st century? These questions provide the basis of the following section.

The Impact of the Emerging Foreign Policy Concepts of the 2000s on Turkish Migration Policy

Turkey is one of those countries that have been affected by diverse forms of migratory movements throughout its history. The Turkish migration policy context has witnessed a gradual shift from a nation building process to an era of migration management and governance. The diversity in migratory movements has also required the country to develop diverse policy responses to the emerging needs of the national agenda. Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the period until the 1950s could be categorized as Turkey's nation building process. The 1960s' development agenda was dominated by the emigration of Turkish nationals as "guest workers" to Western Europe, particularly to Germany. Emigration of

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Turkish nationals as migrant workers to Europe was considered to be a crucial tool for development in terms of remittances, experience sharing, and skills development. The “temporary recruitment” of Turkish nationals in Europe, however, went beyond its temporary scope, with approximately six million Turkish nationals eventually living abroad. In line with the shift in Turkey’s foreign policy paradigms, those nationals have been gradually considered as the agents of Turkey’s soft power in the international community rather than being just agents of economic development. Turkish nationals abroad have gradually come to be considered as an important factor of Turkish foreign policy making processes due to their human capital in terms of diaspora networks and lobbying efforts as active agents of soft power. The establishment of the Prime Ministry Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities in 2010 has also acted as an important catalyst for organization of the Turkish diaspora. Besides the traditional migratory flows, diverse forms of immigration have also begun to be debated in the Turkish

national agenda as of the 1980s. Turkey, as a traditional country of emigration as well as a transit country, also became a key destination country following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the conflicts in Middle East.

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees statistics, by the end of 2016, 65.3 million individuals were forcibly displaced by conflict and violence, out of which 22 million persons were refugees.

A wide variety of issues, including the EU accession process; the foreign policy and migration policy nexus; international cooperation on migration management; national security and border management; the Syrian crisis causing more than 3.4 million Syrians seeking temporary protection in the country; national identity; citizenship; labour market needs; unemployment; social cohesion; protection of vulnerable groups and rights of migrants, have all contributed to the contemporary debate on migration policies in Turkey. This gradual increase and diversity in the migratory movements affecting the country has also become an issue of high political consideration for many

European countries, as many of the migrants transiting Turkey carry the ambition to reach the borders of the European Union.

This contemporary change has also witnessed one of the most severe humanitarian crisis fuelled by the mixed migratory flows particularly in the Mediterranean and beyond since the Second World War. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics, by the end of 2016, 65.3 million individuals were forcibly displaced by conflict and violence, out of which 22 million persons were refugees.⁴⁹ Moreover, the last couple of years have been recorded as the deadliest years, with more than 5,600 migrants dying or going missing during migration in 2015, and 7,559 migrant deaths recorded worldwide in 2016.⁵⁰ This situation has increased Turkey's strategic importance for its European partners and prepared the basis for foreign policy cooperation in the areas of managing migration. Turkey, building on its efforts to align its normative and operational framework with the EU *acquis*, has been experiencing a historical reform process, with the aim of transforming the normative and institutional framework with a particular focus on human rights and a comprehensive approach to migration management. The drafting of the primary and secondary legislation on migration

and asylum and restructuring the normative and institutional framework on Turkey's asylum and immigration systems have been among the main endeavours of the Turkish authorities.

Within this framework, Turkey has enacted the *Law on Foreigners and International Protection (No: 6458)* published in the Official Gazette on 11 April 2013, No: 28615 and has fully come into force as of 11 April 2014, as the Directorate General on Migration Management (DGMM) took over the relevant roles and responsibilities from the Directorate General of Security.⁵¹ This Law marks a milestone in Turkish migration history. Being a first of its kind primary legislation on migration, it makes substantial changes in the Turkish immigration and asylum system, as well as outlawing the *Law on Residence and Travels of Foreigners (No: 5683)* in Turkey.

With the enactment of the *Law on Foreigners and International Protection* in 2013, Turkey witnessed a landmark achievement for the Turkish migration management system through the establishment of the *Directorate General on Migration Management* under the Ministry of the Interior, which then became the leading actor of Turkish migration policy. There were several motivating factors preparing the basis for drafting the *Law on Foreigners and International Protection*. These include:

With the enactment of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection in 2013, Turkey witnessed a landmark achievement for the Turkish migration management system through the establishment of the *Directorate General on Migration Management*.

“Increasing recognition of Turkey’s economic power and immigration projections connected to it, growing belief in the ability to control migration and the benefits of such control, lessons learned from EU experiences pertaining to migration management, conditionalities stemming from the EU accession process, increasing awareness on the international human rights standards through the advocacy roles of INGOs and NGOs and finally European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decisions, which has criticized Turkey for lack of a legislative system to protect migrants’ rights.”⁵²

It is also crucial to mention the current national efforts towards regulating the administrative and legislative policies

on migration management. While establishing legislation with a view to harmonise with EU norms, it is important that Turkey not only fulfils its obligations arising from international law concerning asylum and migration but also identifies its objectives and principles, taking into account Turkey’s subjective circumstances. Three important developments took place in Turkey’s decision-making processes, especially on issues of migration and foreign policy, including “a change in foreign policy outlook, a change in the distribution of power within the Turkish bureaucracy and government, and an increase in the role played by non-state actors”.⁵³

Another dimension of migration in terms of its usage as a foreign policy tool lies in the increasing number of qualified foreigners, especially international students. Nye elaborates that foreign students affect a state’s reputation in addition to enhancing its soft power.⁵⁴ Within this scope, it is complementary to highlight the significant number of university students particularly from the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia studying in Turkey. The country, besides having foreign university students as the agents for enhancement of its soft power, also has the potential to carry Turkish influence beyond its territories through the Yunus Emre Institute and its branches in nearly 60 countries.

Additionally, the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency has also been actively engaged in the execution of “new” foreign policy concepts, particularly in Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.

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Today, we are able to speak about emerging migration policy paradigms in Turkey. Migration policy is gradually becoming a foreign policy tool for strengthening Turkey’s power position in its region as well as in the international arena, due to its political, financial and cultural dimensions. Migration policy has also gradually become an area of public policy, with its new actors including the Ministry of Interior, the Directorate General on Migration Management and the Prime Ministry, Disaster and Emergency Management Authority in line with their migration management and humanitarian assistance efforts in the country. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prime Ministry Office of Public Diplomacy, Prime Ministry Presidency of Turks Living

Abroad and Relative Communities, the Prime Ministry Cooperation and Coordination Agency and the Yunus Emre Institute have also been getting engaged in migration policy debates both at the national and international levels. As a result of this multi-sectorial approach to migration policy, coupled with the migratory impact of the Syrian crisis, Turkish public policy making processes have also been witnessing the establishment of migration-related new directorate generals, departments or units under diverse ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, and the Ministry of National Education, so as to offer better services to migrants with diverse status.

Moreover, the contemporary migration policy provides the basis for multidirectional change as it calls for Turkey’s participation, membership and socialization both at national, regional and global levels. Within this scope, the rise of migration through Turkey’s open border policy, the EU accession process, as well as mass migratory movements of people due to conflict and fragile states in the Middle East since 2010, all call for multi-policy level structuration of contemporary Turkish immigration policy in terms of international economic relations, humanitarian assistance, diplomatic

relations as well as border and human security. International migration has the potential to be one of the key determinants of the foreign policy agenda from local to global scales. As such, Turkish migration policy has gradually become more politically debated and visible within the scope of two main contemporary drivers that the country has been engaged in, namely *the EU accession process* and *the Syrian crisis*.

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Turkey's modernization, political reforms driven by the EU accession process, EU requests of Turkey to adopt the *Acquis*, and humanitarian assistance provided for Syrians arriving in Turkey might all be considered as valid points in explaining Turkey's positioning over the current structuration of its immigration policy, however they would not be enough. In migration politics, it has become clear that the Turkish authorities have realized that beyond the interest in adopting the

EU *Acquis*, there is also a more actual national interest to modernize Turkey and to reform migration related normative, administrative as well as operational frameworks. This can be considered as a very endogenous factor, which is generally not touched upon by mainstream scholars. So, in addition to the motivations driven by the EU accession process, Turkey has also its own vision and strategic priorities in terms of diverse fields including foreign policy, economy, development, trade and so on. Therefore, this endogenous domestic driver of all recent developments in the migration realm is critical to bear in mind when unpacking the politics of Turkey- EU relations pertaining to migration.

The EU accession process has been a catalyst on migration issues as well as being one of the defining and central issues of Turkey-EU relations in the 2000s. Given the contemporary changes in global politics, international migration has gradually become a structural issue on the global political agenda. Similarly, the migration and foreign policy nexus has shifted from the periphery to the core in Turkey's EU accession talks, in line with recent developments in the EU migration and asylum agenda in the aftermath of the Stockholm Program, that culminated in the EU-Turkey Statement on 18 March 2016. The overall framework of the EU-Turkey deal focused

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on countering migrant smuggling particularly across the Aegean Sea by returning “all new irregular migrants” crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands after 20 March 2016 back to Turkey.⁵⁵ The Directorate General of Migration Management reported a year later that 915 irregular migrants had been readmitted by Turkey since 4 April 2016, the majority of whom were from Pakistan and Syria.⁵⁶ The increasing of resettlement of Syrians from Turkey, the acceleration of the visa liberalization process for Turkish nationals, and the securing of financial support for Turkey in terms of sharing the burden were also complementary elements of the EU-Turkey deal. Within this scope, Turkish migration policy has become a highly political area of interest with its potential impact on the EU’s security, economy, and external relations as well as domestic politics, coupled with increasing numbers of people on the move. Having said this, the future of Turkey’s migration policy will naturally be impacted by relations between the EU and Turkey,

given the inter-connectedness between migration diplomacy and membership diplomacy.⁵⁷

In addition to the EU accession process of the 2000s, the migratory consequences on Turkey of the Syrian crisis have had a direct impact on Turkish migration policy. There is no doubt that the massive influx of Syrians to Turkey has made Turkish migration policy more visible and more debated both at the national and international levels. However, such an increasing visibility of migration issues just around the Syrian crisis carries the possibility of limiting, deepening and politicizing the scope of the migration policy discussion, which could disrupt Turkey’s vision of a comprehensive approach to migration management.

In addition to the EU accession process of the 2000s, the migratory consequences on Turkey of the Syrian crisis have had a direct impact on Turkish migration policy.

The volume and political context of the Syrian crisis has triggered consideration of migration issues at a political level. Syrians’ mobility has captured public attention for several

reasons: i) the volume is very high (the highest volume of asylum influx in the world since World War II); ii) it happened at a time when Turkey was trying to redefine its role in the Middle East; iii) internationally the issue is also becoming more visible via Turkey's active role in response, which has been reflected in EU progress reports and UN documents such as regional response and resilience plans; and iv) the EU and the international community are pressuring Turkey to both ensure that refugee crisis from Syria is better governed and that border protection is better managed to curb irregular flows targeting the EU.

While considering the Syrian crisis and migration nexus, it would be beneficial to approach the issue according to two time periods. The first would cover the period up until the Arab uprisings in the Middle East Region, a time that witnessed Turkey's rising power in the region through articulation of its soft power. The second would cover the period of the Arab uprisings and afterwards, during which Turkey tried to revitalize its significance in the region through the Syrian crisis. Building on a series of interviews conducted with representatives of key governmental, non-governmental and international institutions as well as academics, a common vision underlying Turkey's limited foresight in terms of predicting the scope of Syrian crisis can be seen.

It was particularly mentioned that Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria gave birth to an outcome that has had a huge impact at home, resulting in almost 3.5 million Syrians living in Turkey. Therefore, the massive influx of Syrians to Turkey due to the "open border policy" has acted as a laboratory for the recently enacted Law on Foreigners and International Protection No.6458 that came into force on 11 April 2013. Turkey's post-2010 Syria policy also has had a direct influence on the evolution of its migration policy. The following section will summarize some recent trends in Turkey's immigration policy.

Contemporary Trends in Turkish Immigration Policy of the Early 21st Century

Turkey has been affected by diverse forms of migration originating from conflict and fragility happening in different regional settings. Traditionally, those migratory flows of diverse profiles prepared the basis for Turkey's reactive and periodic immigration policies to be enforced. However, when we elaborate on Turkey's contemporary immigration policy vision, we see a proactive, holistic and a multi-policy level structure trying to keep the balance between security and human rights as well as between national interests and the level

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of international engagements. Turkey's immigration policy today, therefore, is one that is having gradually more significance in public policy discourse, international relations, as well as foreign policy making processes. The genuine nature of the 2000s is also crucial to bear in mind given the fact that immigration is becoming one of the main subjects of high policy debates. Such a tendency has manifested itself initially through Turkey-EU relations where immigration policy making has become one of the key issues of accession negotiations in line with Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security, and has become more articulated around the discussions pertaining to the Turkey-EU Readmission Agreement and visa liberalization dialogue. The Syrian crisis and subsequent massive influx of Syrians have also acted as a catalyst for high policy level consideration of immigration policy, a "*hot topic*" on the agendas of both foreign and domestic policy. However, such an increasing visibility of immigration issues just around the Syrian crisis has also called for the possibility of limiting,

deepening and politicizing the scope of immigration policy discussion, which would interrupt Turkey's declared vision of a comprehensive approach to migration management.

Within this scope, this section aims to unpack the politics of immigration policy making in Turkey via analysing migration policy changes particularly after 2000s. By doing so, it attempts to uncover the interrelation between immigration policy making and Turkish foreign policy in an effort to identify major trends and reorientations. The multi-policy level structuration of Turkish immigration policy as the core pattern also provided the legitimate basis for identification of nine contemporary trends of immigration policy making in Turkey after 2000s. Those include humanitarianization, developmentalization, politicization, diplomatization, regionalization, economization, securitization, externalization and projectization.

The trends of *humanitarianization* builds its discourse on the traditional approach of Turkey being the "protector of oppressed".⁵⁸ The Syrian crisis and its huge impact in terms of mass migration to Turkey have prepared the legitimate basis for the deepening of such a trend in line with the enhanced operational and inter-institutional capacity on migration management in humanitarian emergencies. This

trend has also manifested itself in mainstreaming a human rights approach throughout the primary and secondary legislations on immigration in Turkey.

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Developmentalization has shaped the discourse on Turkey’s contemporary efforts in mainstreaming immigration into development planning. For sure, diverse migratory flows coupled with the massive influx of Syrians with their prolonged stay in the country have all resulted in pushing authorities to structure the required basis to include a migration component into development planning efforts. Consideration of migration as a tool for development is not a new phenomenon for Turkey since it dates back to the 1960s when Turkey, after becoming an emigration country, started to consider Turkish nationals abroad as agents of national development who could contribute to Turkey’s social, economic and cultural development. It is also crucial to mention the efforts of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) in terms of development

assistance, particularly in Africa and Central Asia, which is an indirect manner of contributing to migration management via supporting the livelihoods of potential immigrants in their countries of origin. As elaborated through the study, Turkey has also been one of the countries where national consultations for identifying priorities for the Post 2015 Development Agenda take place. The country report for Turkey has had a considerable focus on the very cross cutting nature of immigration in development planning with diverse sectors such as health, education, employment, conflict and fragility, etc. To complement such a vision, the UN Development Cooperation Strategy 2016- 2020 for Turkey for the first time has had a dedicated pillar addressing migration and international protection, with well defined outcomes to be monitored over the next five years. Within this scope, ownership over the issue of migration by diverse actors such as the UN, NGOs, INGOs, academics as well as the private sector is on the rise. Turkey has also started to take a more active role in international platforms. To give an example, Turkey has been chairing the Global Forum on Migration and Development and, in 2015, the G20, where the nexus of migration and development has been one of the core agenda issues. Last but not least, migration in terms of emigration,

immigration, and internal migration have been mainstreamed into the 10th National Five Year Development Plan for 2014- 2018, which has acted as a catalyst for multi-policy level structuration of immigration policy in Turkey.

The trend of *politicization* reveals that Turkish immigration policy has even become a cross-cutting area where domestic and foreign policy converge. One concrete proof of such a claim justified itself in the public discourses of the political parties that were adopted for their general election campaigns of 2015. The politicization of Turkish immigration policy is not limited to the Syrian crisis. Another level of politicization manifested itself in the opposing views of the ruling AKP and opposition CHP related to the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement. While the AKP put the spotlight on visa liberalisation dialogue with the EU in their public rhetoric, the CHP focused on the responsibilities and burden that Turkey accepted to undertake by signing the Readmission Agreement. There are recent debates on how the externalization of the EU migration policy is restructured so as to include a wider neighbourhood policy and thus readmission agreements are the main tools of such an approach by the EU. One can say that while the EU tries to externalize its migration policies through readmission agreements,

in the Turkish context Turkish immigration policy gets politicised through externalization of the EU migration policy. This is also another area where domestic and foreign policy converge in Turkey. Moreover, the EU-Turkey Statement has also witnessed increasingly politicised perceptions and application of migration policies as a bargaining tool between parties.

The trend of *politicization* reveals that Turkish immigration policy has even become a cross-cutting area where domestic and foreign policy converge.

Diplomatization is also a very recent trend, which manifests itself particularly in Turkey's relations with the EU, where migration lies at the core of the negotiations. With ratification of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement, migration-driven diplomatic relations are getting more visible and immigration is gradually becoming a subject of high policy debate. In line with Article 110 (1) of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, the Directorate General on Migration Management is authorised to establish overseas organisations pursuant to the Decree

Law on the Overseas Organisations of Public Institutions and Agencies No: 189 of 13/12/1983. Within this scope, appointment of migration counsellors and migration attachés is foreseen in the main countries of origin for Turkey. Such a vision calls for the diplomatization tendency to be mainstreamed gradually in the medium term. Finally, the EU through the recently announced European Agenda on Migration foresees to assign migration liaison officers to EU Delegations in neighbouring as well as third countries. Such an attempt by the EU would catalyse diplomatic relations pertaining to migration, which would have a direct impact on the deepening of *diplomatisation* in Turkey-EU relations.

With ratification of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement, migration-driven diplomatic relations are getting more visible and immigration is gradually becoming a subject of high policy debate.

The tendency of *regionalization* is valid for a reading of Turkish immigration policy in line with Turkish interests to be a regional power driven by its cultural and ethnic heritage. Turkey's

efforts at enhancing its power position in its region is an indicator for more emphasis on this trend not only in Turkish foreign policy but also in the Turkish economic context, as well as, in a latent way, in the migration and development context. At a time of power shift in several regions in which Turkey both tries to influence and is itself influenced by many actors, the trend of regionalisation of Turkish immigration policy is complementary to understanding the whole foreign policy debate, which in turn has a direct or indirect impact on the international migration debate.

The tendency of *regionalization* is valid for a reading of Turkish immigration policy in line with Turkish interests to be a regional power driven by its cultural and ethnic heritage.

Discussions over Turkey's economic development have a direct link to the evolution of immigration policy trends in line with the trend of *economization*. Turkey's commercial relations with diverse countries call for enhanced levels of interaction with those countries pertaining to facilitation of transnational mobility to contribute to the development of further economic

relations. Turkey, in addition to its effort for alignment with the EU *Acquis*, also continues to follow a genuine visa policy via lifting of visa requirements with many countries, with a vision of enhancing its economic relations.

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Securitization has always been one of the core pillars of Turkish immigration policy alongside human rights and mutual interests. Furthermore, this mainstream trend of securitization finds its contemporary justifications in Turkey's efforts for better management of its borders and in the institutionalization of an integrated border management approach in line with that of the EU. Moreover, the crime prevention dimension of the issue with a particular focus on combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking also calls for an increased level of security to be one of the core defining factors in Turkey's immigration policy. The requirements of the EU-Turkey Readmission

Agreement are also other elements which prepare the legitimate basis for further securitization of immigration policy. As the last point, the effects of the Syrian crisis and the issue of foreign fighters attempting to transit through Turkey require still more attention on the security dimension of migration management.

In line with the increased level of importance dedicated to external dimensions of EU migration policy, Turkey has also been paying more attention to the external dimension of its immigration policy. The requirements of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement also put Turkey in a position to negotiate readmission agreements with the countries of origin for the irregular migrants, which directly offers another level of analysis for *externalization* of Turkish immigration policy. There is a genuine interest in understanding the way that European migration policy has been affecting Turkey via its instruments of externalization including the readmission agreement, visa liberalisation dialogue, and integrated border management support. Moreover, Turkey's efforts to convince its Western partners to establish a safe haven in Northern Syria as a response to Syrians' massive influx may also be considered as an attempt at externalization or management via externalization.

The requirements of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement also put Turkey in a position to negotiate readmission agreements with the countries of origin for the irregular migrants, which directly offers another level of analysis for *externalization of Turkish immigration policy*.

A final trend of *projectization* is a critical one given the increasing number and volume of projects developed in the area of migration management by numerous actors, including international organizations, international and local non-governmental organizations, universities, think tanks and even the private sector. As migration is becoming a “*hot topic*”, the tendency of projectization of immigration policy making is also becoming more visible. Such a trend also calls for diverse costs and benefits for immigration policy making in the Turkish context. On one hand, one can mention the costs of this trend, which include the short-term nature of projects and risk of instrumentalizing the topic of migration via production of a “*migration projects industry*”. On the other hand, the benefits of such a trend could be summarized as a proactive and multi-stakeholder approach

with effective inter-institutional cooperation, result-based planning and implementation, exchange of norms and practices, and enhanced level of international socialization among the parties involved.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to uncover the politics of immigration policy making in Turkey by putting the spotlight particularly on the last two decades. Its attempt to uncover the interrelations between immigration policy making and Turkish foreign policy and to identify major trends and reorientations in immigration policy making aimed to contribute to its originality. This study tried not only to unpack the essence of the mainstreaming of migration into the discipline of international relations, but also to mark the complementary dimension of the politics of immigration policy making in Turkey given the rising importance and acknowledgement of the issue with its cross-cutting nature of diverse disciplines. Moreover, its efforts to understand the migration and foreign policy nexus through the lens of international relations helped to reveal the emerging concepts of contemporary foreign policy and their potential as well as actual impacts on immigration policy making. Without mentioning the historical milestones and key developments pertaining to

the evolution of immigration policy making in Turkey, this study would not have a coherent approach. Therefore, an effort was made to reflect the main highlights through Turkey's history of immigration policy making, which included the impacts of mainstream identity consideration, perceptions of self and other, and their changing nature across time and space. Turkey-EU relations with a particular focus on the impact of the external dimension of EU migration policy on Turkey and the migratory impact of the Syrian crisis served as the two main subjects of analysis.

The multi-policy level structuration of Turkish immigration policy as the core pattern also provided the legitimate basis for identification of nine contemporary trends of immigration policy making in Turkey over the 2000s.

The multi-policy level structuration of Turkish immigration policy was unpacked through the research as the core pattern providing the baseline for development, adjustment and implementation of policies of diverse fields such as external affairs, development, security, international cooperation, humanitarian assistance as well as economy. The multi-policy level structuration of Turkish immigration policy as the core pattern also provided the legitimate basis for identification of nine contemporary trends of immigration policy making in Turkey over the 2000s. Those include humanitarianization, developmentalization, politicization, diplomatization, regionalization, economization, securitization, externalization and projectization. Given the evolving nature of immigration policy making, particularly from humanitarian assistance to development aspects fuelled by the need for synergizing diverse thematic areas, there is a certain added value for underlining the essence of each of the identified trends to contribute to the migration debate in the Turkish context.

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