# Migration Management in Turkey: Discourse and Practice

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the discourse and practice of migration management in Turkey. It identifies four major themes in the discourse between 2014 and 2020: Migration as a 1) burden, 2) humanitarian responsibility, 3) justification for transborder operations, and 4) fault line in Turkey-European Union (EU) relations. Then it analyzes migration management practices in three categories: 1) legal challenges, 2) agents and relations of policing, 3) surveillance. Adopting a multimethod approach, the article combines qualitative data collection with interpretive analysis. It concludes that despite the humanitarian emphasis in political discourse, there are embedded in/security practices in the field of migration management in Turkey.

**Keywords:** Border In/security, European Union, Immigration, Middle East, Refugee

## Türkiye'de Göç Yönetimi: Söylem ve Pratik

### ÖZET

Bu makale Türkiye'nin göç söylemi ve pratiğini incelemektedir. 2014-2020 arasındaki göç söylemini dört temel başlıkta sınıflandırmaktadır: 1) külfet olarak, 2) insani sorumluluk olarak, 3) sınır ötesi operasyonlara gerekçe olarak, 4) Türkiye-AB ilişkilerinde kırılma noktası olarak göç. Ardından, makale Türkiye'nin göç yönetimi pratiklerini üç kategoriye ayırarak incelemektedir: 1) yasal zorluklar, 2) polislik faaliyetleri ve aktörleri, 3) gözetleme faaliyetleri. Makale çoklu-yöntem yaklaşımını uygulayarak, orijinal nitel verileri yorumsamacı analiz ile birleştirmektedir. Makale siyasi söylemde göçün daha çok insani boyutuna odaklanılıyor olmasına rağmen, Türkiye'nin göçü sahada ele alış biçiminde yerleşik güvenlik(siz)lik pratikleri olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sınır Güvenlik(siz)liği, Avrupa Birliği, Göç, Orta Doğu, Mülteci

# Introduction[*]

Discourse and the practice approaches to security are widely utilized in the study of migration and border management. While the former defines security as 'a speech act' claimed by the elites, the latter searches for hints of security in bureaucratic practices of multiple security agents. According to the discourse approach, security is an intersubjective act, socially constructed via language.[1] The practice approach argues that routinized practices also have a potential to construct emergency issues and insecurities.[2] Hence, security is not only a speech act but is also constituted by everyday practices.

Empirical analyses of migration and security in Turkey tend to focus either on discourse or practice.[3] While the former analyzes securitization in elite discourse, the latter emphasizes insecurities of immigrants that stem from daily practices. Yet, the literature lacks studies that focus both on the discourse and practices of in/security in Turkey. Aiming to fill in this gap, we ask: "To what extent are the discourse and practice of migration management in Turkey parallel to each other?" We observe that while the political discourse is framed with reference to Turkey's humanitarian and civilizational responsibilities, the field of practice is mostly shaped by a logic of security. Inspired by the practice approach, we argue that it is not possible to capture insecurity by only analyzing the presence of 'security talk' since states tend not to frame migration openly as a security issue in their discourse. Practices in the field are part of the formation of insecurities as well. Therefore, we emphasize the significance of in/security practices while not disregarding the power of discourse.[4]

In the first section, we look at Turkey's political discourse by analyzing the official speeches of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan[5] between 2014, when he became the president, and 2020.[6] The official website of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey provides transcripts of 727 speeches of Erdoğan. We selected 213 speeches according to three criteria: speeches that are 1) longer than 1500 words, 2) include reference to migration, 3) include one of the following keywords: migration (*göç*),

1 Ole Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization", R. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security*, New York, Colombia University Press, 1995, p. 55.; Başar Baysal, "20 Years of Securitization: Strengths, Limitations and A New Dual Framework", *Uluslararasi Iliskiler*, Vol. 17, No. 67, 2020, pp. 3-20.

2 Didier Bigo, "International Political Sociology: Internal security as transnational power fields", Raphael Bossong and Mark Rhinard (eds.), *Theorizing Internal Security in the European Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 61-85.; Xavier Guillaume and Pinar Bilgin (eds), *Routledge Handbook of International Political Sociology*, London, Routledge, 2017.

3 Sinem Yuksel, "Securitization of Migration: the Case of Turkey-EU Relations", *Marmara Journal of European Studies,* Vol. 22, No. 1, 2014, pp. 169–87.; Elif Sari and Cemile Gizem Dincer, "Toward a New Asylum Regime in Turkey?", *Movements: Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2017, pp. 59-80.; Beste İşleyen, "Transit mobility governance in Turkey", *Political Geography*, Vol. 62, 2018, pp. 23-32.

4 Here we would like to note that if one takes a broader conception of security including threats to economy, then it is possible to argue that there are security references in Erdoğan's speech. However, we aim to understand whether the general framework is dominated by security talk constructing migration as an existential security threat to Turkish state or society. As we argued below, Erdoğan's discourse is mainly dominated by migration as a humanitarian issue.

5 While Erdoğan is not the only political elite that talks about Turkey's migration policies, we build this research on the assumption that his speeches are representative of the official discourse of Turkey's leading elites. Increasingly after he was first elected as president in 2014, Erdoğan has been the most powerful political figure of the executive branch and have significant control over policy-making in multiple areas including migration.

6 The time we collected and coded the documents ( June 17th, 2020).

migrant (*göçmen*), refugee (*mülteci*), asylum-seeker (*sığınmacı*), guest (*misafir*) and border (*sınır*). We analyzed each speech separately and identified four major themes: migration as a 1) 'burden', 2) 'responsibility', 3) justification for transborder operations', and 4) 'fault line in Turkey-EU relations'. We find that between 2014 and 2016, Erdoğan most frequently referred to Turkey's burden and responsibilities in hosting migrants, while in the post-2016 era, he introduces new themes to his discourse: migration as a justification for transborder operations and a fault line in Turkey-EU relations. In the second section, we examine Turkey's migration practices in three groups: legal challenges, agents and relations of policing, and surveillance. Our analysis starts with the implementation of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), the implementation of Turkey-EU Readmission Agreement, and the issuing of Temporary Protection Regulation in 2014 all of which transformed the field of practices significantly.

## Discourse on Migration

Since the first post-conflict refugee flows from the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, the Turkish government has framed its policy mainly around a humanitarian responsibility in the region. On numerous occasions, President Erdoğan categorized Turkey's citizens as *ensar* and the migrants as *muhacir*.[7] This framing is often followed by a reference to Turkey as a humanitarian actor protecting those who suffer from the conflicts and constant threats in their home countries. To see how this framing has evolved until 2020, we identify the most frequently appearing themes.

Until mid-2016, President Erdoğan most frequently referred to two themes: migration as a 1) burden and 2) responsibility (see Table 1). We delve into each theme and identify several subcategories to further examine Erdoğan's discourse. The following table summarizes the number of references to each:

**Table 1.** President Erdoğan's references to two themes with subcategories (2014-2016) [8]

| Theme[9] | # of References 2014-2016 | Percentage Shares (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Burden of migration** | **81** | |
| Unshared burden | 49 | 60% |
| Turkey's burden | 32 | 40% |
| **Responsibility to host migrants** | **66** | |
| Protector of victims | 24 | 36% |
| Civilizational - religious duty | 23 | 35% |
| No discrimination | 10 | 15% |
| Humanitarian responsibility | 9 | 14% |

7 The terms have a religious connotation referring to the people of Medina (*ensar*) who helped immigrated Muslims (*muhacir*) including Prophet Muhammad during his migration from Mekka to Medina (*Hicret*/Hejira) in 622 AC. Erdoğan uses the term *ensar* referring to Muslims who help other Muslims in need by providing shelter and protection.

8 After the EU Turkey Statement of 2016, Erdoğan started to frame migration as a fault line in Turkey-EU relations. By late 2016, after the operations in Syria, he started to frame migration as a justification for Turkey's operations. Therefore, we divided and analyzed data in two tables: 1) the period between 2014-2016 (Table 1) and 2) between 2016-2020 (Table 2). Until 2016, discourse on migration revolved around two themes: 'migration as a burden' and 'Turkey's responsibilities.' Please see the full dataset and codebook (Migration and Security in Turkey Dataset-MIGSTR): https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/BFDXNI

9 For the definition of each theme and examples from speeches, see https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/BFDXNI

President Erdoğan frames migration policies as a burden that the country is motivated to carry without discriminating against any of the migrants, but also emphasizes the lack of support from the international community. He frequently talks about Turkey's motivation to carry the burden that comes with the country's proclaimed responsibilities. This 'burden' refers not to an existential threat to the state or society, but rather it aims to remind the international community that immigrants come with certain economic needs that should be met through a principle of responsibility sharing. While talking about Turkey's motivations, Erdoğan also stresses that Turkey has a "no discrimination" approach and "humanitarian responsibility" (See Table 1). The following statement exemplifies this emphasis:

> "I state and underline this: here is a Turkey that does not interrogate the ethnic origin, faith, sect of those who come from Iraq and Syria, but instead a Turkey that opens its doors, feeds, provides clothes, and shelters all those in need (…) without any discrimination, sees human beings just as humans and as life."[10]

One third of all references towards Turkey's motivation either goes to 'protector of victims' (36%) or to 'civilizational-religious duties' (35%). For instance, in 2015 Erdoğan openly said: "this nation will never stand by the oppressors but will continue to stand with the oppressed and the victims."[11]

Most of the references where Erdoğan talks about the burden of migration, he continues with how that burden is carried by Turkey (40%) and unshared by others (60%). Depending on the occasion, Erdoğan often refers to the burden unshared by the world, the EU and Europe, the West and the Arab League. Most of these references are followed by a message that even if no one shares the burden, Turkey will continue on its own path because of its responsibilities:

> "Hey World, hey West; when it comes to talking, you talk about women's rights, yet what have you done about the rights of the two million people that seek refuge in my country? (…) Do you know how many asylum-seekers are there in the whole West, In Europe? 150.000. How many do we have? Here, 2 million. The facts speak for themselves. So where does this [Turkey's share of the burden] come from? [We do] this as a practice due to our civilizational understanding, culture, belief."[12]

The above-mentioned themes in Turkey's migration discourse continued steadily and without interruption until mid-2016, when President Erdoğan added two new themes to his framing of migration. First, referring to the EU-Turkey Statement (March 18th, 2016), Erdoğan stresses migration as a 'fault line' in Turkey-EU relations. Second, referring to Turkey's transborder operations in Syria, Erdoğan starts to utilize the unshared burden of migration as a 'justification' for transborder opera-

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10 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan "Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nin 24'üncü Dönem 5'inci Yasama Yılı Açılışında Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech Delivered at the 24th Term 5th Legislative Year opening of Turkey's Grand National Assembly]," 01 October 2014, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/2941/Türkiye-buyuk-millet-meclisinin-24uncu-donem-5inci-yasama-yili-acilisinda-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

11 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan "Türkiye İhracatçılar Meclisi 22. Olağan Genel Kurulu'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma" [Speech Delivered at the 22nd Turkey Exporters' Assembly Regular General Meeting]," 21 June 2015, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/32786/turkiye-ihracatcilar-meclisi-22-olagan-genel-kurulunda-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

12 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Türk Metal Sendikası Kadın İşçiler 20. Büyük Kurultayı'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the 20th Grand Congress of Women Workers of the Turkish Metal Union]," 06 March 2015, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/29595/turk-metal-sendikasi-kadin-isciler-20-buyuk-kurultayinda-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

tions.[13] The following table summarizes Erdoğan's post-2016 discourse on migration:

**Table 2.** President Erdoğan's references to four major themes with sub-categories (2016-2020)

| Theme | # of References 2016-2020 | Percentage shares (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Burden of migration** | **154** | |
|     Turkey's burden | 89 | 58% |
|     Unshared burden | 65 | 42% |
| **Responsibility to host migrants** | **130** | |
|     Protector of victims | 49 | 38% |
|     Civilizational - religious duty | 33 | 25% |
|     Humanitarian responsibility | 29 | 22% |
|     No discrimination | 19 | 15% |
| **Justification for transborder operations** | **128** | |
|     Create safe zones/resettle migrants | 62 | 48% |
|     Act alone due to unshared burden | 31 | 24% |
|     Prevent another refugee flow | 28 | 22% |
|     Secures Europe as well | 7 | 6% |
| **Fault line in Turkey-EU relations** | **36** | |
|     EU did not keep its promises | 17 | 47% |
|     EU needs Turkey | 11 | 31% |
|     Turkey may open the borders | 5 | 14% |
|     EU overlooked its values | 3 | 8% |

After the EU-Turkey deal and the start of Turkey's transborder operations, references criticizing the EU on the shape of Turkey-EU relations intensified. Disagreement over migration management policies turned into fault lines in Turkey-EU relations (See Table 2). Turkey, while defining itself as a humanitarian actor, places the EU on the opposite side with severe criticism on its attitude towards migration. President Erdoğan criticized the EU for not keeping its promises, although Turkey does its part by reducing irregular migration towards Europe and by hosting millions of refugees. These 'unkept promises' stem from different political and legal channels of Turkey-EU cooperation, such as the Turkey-EU Readmission Agreement of 2013, the Turkey-EU Joint Action Plan of 2015, and he Turkey-EU Statement of 2016. Erdoğan emphasizes EU's promises on the opening of new chapters in Turkey's accession negotiations, visa-free travel for Turkish citizens, increasing financial assistance to support Turkey in meeting visa liberalization needs, and EU funding for accommodation of immigrants and refugees that are kept in or returned to Turkey.[14] Erdoğan criticizes the EU's limited performance in managing the refugee flows and the EU's role on the state of Turkey-EU:

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13 Here we refer to a series of transborder operations that started on August 24th, 2016 with the Operation Euphrates Shield. Since Erdoğan does not refer to Operation Shah Euphrates of February 2015 in relation to Turkey's migration policies we excluded it from the analysis.

14 European Commission, "EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan", 2015, https://ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/15_october_2015_eu_turkey_joint_action_plan.pdf (Accesssed on 15 February 2021); EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement, "EU - Turkey agreement on the readmission of persons residing without authorization", 2013, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A4309179 (Accessed 16 February 2021); EU-Turkey Summit, "Meeting of heads of state or government with Turkey - EU-Turkey statement", 2016, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/29/eu-turkey-meeting-statement/ (Accesssed on 16 February 2021).

> "In the last one year we have developed a significant cooperation framework with the EU. We gave reciprocal promises to each other accepting that we can overcome this problem by sharing the burden and responsibility. In the last couple of months, with the precautions that we took under this framework we managed to bring down the number from 7000 irregular migrants a day in October 2015, to approximately 50. These figures indicate that Turkey successfully fulfilled its promises as part of its deal with the EU. However, the EU did not keep the promises given to us in the deal."[15]

Erdoğan's framing of the migration issue as a fault line in Turkey-EU relations is often followed by various messages that the EU (and sometimes the West) has overlooked its humanitarian values, that the EU fears migration flow, that if the EU decides to continue with this approach Turkey may reopen its borders, and that the EU needs Turkey as well (See Table 2). By early 2016, President Erdoğan warned that the number of migrants had become an issue getting beyond any country's capabilities to deal with alone: "the situation has become a burden that can no longer be carried by Turkey alone with its own capabilities."[16] After a couple of months, in mid-2016, President Erdoğan stressed that since the international community continues to not share the burden, Turkey will act alone:

> "Here, do we have 3 million refugees in our country? Yes. So, does any support come from the world for this? No. They only talk, they only make promises. (…) We said that in our civilization being an *ensar* is unique, we are *ensar*. And we opened our hands, our chests to the *muhacir* and host them in our countries. Whatever we do, we will do it by ourselves."[17]

Corresponding with the immediate aftermath of the operations in Syria, Erdoğan's discourse that signaled Turkey's need to act alone has turned into a 'justification' for Turkey's operations in Syria. Erdoğan frequently framed Turkey's operations in Syria as an attempt to "secure a place for Syrian migrants to be returned to their homeland"[18] (See Table 2). Just after the Operation Euphrates Shield on August 24, 2016, President Erdoğan said:

> "We want to declare a 4000-5000 square kilometer area as a safe zone and then we will resettle our refugee brothers to this safe zone. Similarly, we can resettle those would expect to take refuge and those brothers who already took refuge to us."[19]

By the end of 2016, the 'unshared burden' that Turkey carries due to the migration crisis, together with the risk of new migration flows turned into justifications for Turkey's transborder op-

15 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteciler Zirvesi'nde Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the United Nations Refugee Summit]," 20 September 2016, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/52365/birlesmis-milletler-multeciler-zirvesinde-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

16 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Somali 6. Yüksek Düzeyli Ortaklık Forumu'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma" [Speech at the Somalia 6th High Level Partnership Forum], 23 February 2016, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/39904/somali-6-yuksek-duzeyli-ortaklik-forumunda-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

17 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Beştepe Millet Kongre ve Kültür Merkezi Açılışı ile Şehitleri Anma Programı'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the Martyrs' Commemoration Program and the Opening of the Beştepe National Congress and Cultural Center]," 29 July 2016, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/49832/bestepe-millet-kongre-ve-kultur-merkezi-acilisi-ile-sehitleri-anma-programinda-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

18 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "TRT World Forum'da Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the TRT World Forum]", 21 October 2019, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/112223/trt-world-forum-da-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

19 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "ABD'deki Türk STK'larla Bir Araya Geldiği Toplantıda Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech Delivered at the Meeting with Turkish NGOs in the USA]", 22 September 2016, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/52398/abddeki-turk-stklarla-bir-araya-geldigi-toplantida-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

erations. As Turkey continued with a series of operations, Erdoğan frequently stated that Turkey will keep in its own path and resolve the issue at the source. In 2018, he said:

> "While they set up traps to keep Turkey busy, distract and channel its energy towards other directions we remained on our path. With Operation Euphratus Shield ( … ) we started our first active intervention. ( … ) We made it possible for our refugee brothers in Turkey who came from Syria to return their own lands. Now, we wanted the same in Afrin. (...) We will resolve the Afrin case, then do the same in Idlib."[20]

Turkey's discourse continued similarly throughout 2019 and 2020 as well. President Erdoğan stated that Turkey tries to secure its borders and Syria from terrorists, to establish a safe zone in the area and eventually resettle the Syrian 'guests' and 'brothers' in Turkey back to their homeland (See Table 2).

To sum up our findings so far, while there are changing frequencies in the number of references to each theme and their subcategories, one can identify four major themes that defined Turkey's migration management strategy from 2014 until 2020: 1) migration as a burden, 2) migration policy as motivated by Turkey's responsibilities, 3) migration as a justification for Turkey's transborder operations in Syria, and (4) migration as a fault line in Turkey-EU relations. In the early years of the Arab uprisings, Turkey established its migration discourse not mainly as an existential threat - according to Erdoğan this is what the West and the EU do - but as a civilizational, humanitarian, and religious duty coming from the traditions of Turkish society and the state. When Erdoğan refers to migration as a burden he generally uses it to stress 'how Turkey fulfills its humanitarian responsibility' contrary to the rest of the world. As the number of migrants and therefore 'the burden' increased, President Erdoğan more vehemently criticized the world for turning a blind eye to the severity of the humanitarian crisis, for unkept promises and for the unshared burden. Then, he starts to stress that Turkey will do whatever is needed, and it will do it alone if this ignorance keeps continuing. His discourse shifted from a more liberal tone such as keeping an open door to all those who are running away from bombs, towards an aim to resettle migrants back to the safe zones that Turkey had to establish alone. Although there are occasional security references in political speech, it is not possible to extract the construction of migration as an existential threat as the discursive approach would define security. Put differently, migration is not securitized in the official discourse since migrants are not referred to as an existential threat to state or society. Yet, discourse and practice do not always go in parallel to each other and one may only have a comprehensive approach to security by understanding the extent of parallelism between the two.

## Practices of Migration Management

In contrast to the general emphasis on humanitarian responsibility in political discourse, migration is governed through a security mindset in the field. To clarify how this mindset is apparent in practices we analyze legal challenges, co-policing practices, and surveillance activities.

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20 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "45. Muhtarlar Toplantısında Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the 45th Meeting of Mukhtars]," 8 February 2018, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/89357/45-muhtarlar-toplantisinda-yaptiklari-konusma (Accessed 28 June 2020).

### *Legal Challenges*

The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) entered into force in 2014, setting out the main pillars of the national asylum system. It combined the existing regulations on asylum and immigration and harmonized Turkey's legislation with the international and EU standards.[21] It has introduced legal safeguards about the principle of non-refoulement and access to the procedures for determination of refugee status.[22] Provisions of the law apply differently to refugees from European and non-European origin due to Turkey's adaption of the geographical limitation in the 1951 Convention regulating that 'only migrants of European origin' can apply for refugee status.[23] To enable the accommodation of non-European immigrants in Turkey, this law established a legal basis for the temporary protection regime that had already been applied since the end of the Cold War. Temporary protection status is given when it is impossible to activate the mechanism of international protection due to high number of entrances, as in the case of mass entrance of Syrian immigrants in Turkey.[24] According to this regulation, individuals who seek temporary protection status "shall not be punished for entering in Turkey irregularly" as long as they 1) are identified by Turkish authorities while entering, or 2) apply to the authorities (i.e. DGMM) in a "reasonable time period."[25] Although they are granted certain rights and facilities, migrants under temporary protection are at a disadvantage because they are not eligible to apply for refugee status due to the geographical limitation that deprives them of several other legal rights and protections. To overcome the limitations stemming from this legal loophole, Turkey introduced the Temporary Protection Regulation of 2014 which gave individuals easier access to basic rights and services.[26] However, these rights do not always transfer directly to the field. Only a few immigrants under temporary protection were settled in camps, whereas the majority have been allowed to settle in urban areas. Migrants who live outside of the camps are not guaranteed access to livelihoods other than free healthcare.

The Temporary Protection Regulation, while providing rights for a legal stay, also regulates removal and deportation by determining the issues about establishment, management and monitoring of removal centers, accommodation centers and camps.[27] Once DGMM makes the decision for deportation, the person needs to leave Turkey in the given time. Otherwise, that person is forcibly taken to the nearest removal center by the police. Implementation of the EU-Turkey Readmission agreement in 2014 further stipulated that irregular migrants who cross into the EU territory via Turkey can be deported back if their asylum application is rejected.[28] Apart from Turkish citizens, Turkey is obliged to take third country nationals and stateless persons back if the person 1) enters into an EU

21 Ahmet İçduygu and D. B. Aksel, "Turkish Migration Policies: A Critical Historical Retrospective", *Perceptions*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2013, p. 181.

22 "Progress Report 2013", p. 65, https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/2013%20ilerleme%20raporu/tr_rapport_2013_en.pdf (Accessed 20 February 2020).

23 UNHCR, State Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, p. 5 https://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b73b0d63.pdf (accessed 26 June 2021).

24 DGMM, "Turkey Migration Report 2014", p. 72-73, https://www.goc.gov.tr/yillik-goc-raporlari (Accessed 20 June 2020).

25 UNHCR, "Temporary protection in Turkey", https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/information-for-syrians/temporary-protection-in-turkey/ (Accessed 20 February 2021).

26 "Temporary Protection Regulation", 2014, https://www.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/goc.gov.tr/Gecici-Koruma-Yonetmeligi-Ingilizce.pdf (Accessed 20 June 2020)

27 Ibid.

28 "EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement", 2013, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A4309179 (Accessed 13 June 2020).

state with a visa given by the Turkish authorities, 2) has a residence permit to live in Turkey, or 3) enters into an EU state transiting from Turkey or after staying in Turkey for a time period.[29] The agreement states that the rule only applies to Turkish and EU nationals and "irregular migrants originating from countries with which Turkey has signed readmission agreements" until September 30, 2017.[30] Until that date, to find a fast solution to the ambiguous status of third country nationals - especially due to the mass migration from Syria - Turkey and the EU agreed to the EU-Turkey Statement on March 2016.

After March 2016, Turkey declared that all Syrians who were returned from Greece would be granted temporary protection.[31] Turkey also adopted a regulation that gave Syrian immigrants certain rights and privileges, on paper, in multiple areas, ranging from access to the labor market to social assistance and health. However, these rights were not always fully given in practice. For instance, due to the scarcity of job opportunities in rural areas and widespread unregistered employment of immigrants by local employers, their rights in the labor market are far from secure. Between 2016 and 2019, only 1.5 percent of all adult Syrians living in Turkey received work permits.[32] The vast majority of migrants who are not granted refugee status continue to be employed informally as a low-skilled labor force.[33] The rights of these migrants are not protected under international agreements because of their temporary protection status. While these regulations aimed at solving the accommodation of non-European immigrants in Turkey, they do not overcome the insecurities that migrants face in the field due to their continuous ambiguous status.

The Turkey-EU Statement also introduced a one-for-one deal. Accordingly, all irregular migrants would be returned to Turkey and for every migrant who was returned, another Syrian refugee would be taken to the EU.[34] This deal has been criticized on the basis that Turkey's geographical limitation makes readmission to Turkey debatable and contradicts with the principle of non-refoulement.[35] The limitation also puts Turkey's safe third-country status into question. Migrants 'under temporary protection' are not protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention (Geneva Convention) because they are not eligible to apply to or get asylum. This, in return, means that migrants staying in Turkey are not being assisted in camps by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). While they can apply for a legal status, the UNHCR's implementation partner in Turkey was generally overburdened when the number of the people was high. Furthermore, during these long periods of uncertainty, the Ministry of Interior transfers these individuals to a satellite city to keep migrant groups easily accessible and manageable. The uncertainties and inconsistencies stemming from the

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29 Ibid.

30 "Progress Report 2015", https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/5%20Ekim/2015_turkey_report.pdf (Accessed 03 March 2020).

31 "1st Report EU-Turkey Statement", 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160420/report_implementation_eu-turkey_agreement_nr_01_en.pdf (Accessed 18 April 2020).

32 "Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Sayisi" [Number of Syrians in Turkey], 2020, https://multeciler.org.tr/Türkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/ (Accessed 20 June 2020).

33 Aslı İkizoğlu Erensu and Zeynep Kaşlı, "A Tale of Two Cities: Multiple Practices of Bordering and Degrees of 'Transit' in and through Turkey", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2016, pp. 528-548.

34 Council of the European Union, "EU-Turkey Statement", https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement (Accessed 24 April 2021).

35 Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2017", https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/ world_report_download/wr2017-web.pdf (Accessed 12 February 2020).; Amnesty International, "Turkey: No Safe Refugee: Asylum-Seekers and Refugees Denied Effective Protection in Turkey", 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/3825/2016/en/ (Accessed 12 February 2020).

legal framework create insecurities for immigrants that are also observable in bureaucratic practices of migration management.

### Agents and Relations of Policing

The Law on Foreigners and International Protection also transformed the actors and practices of policing by introducing a new institutional framework that enhanced police and judicial cooperation. It declared the establishment of the DGMM under the Ministry of Interior as "the main entity in charge of policy-making and proceedings for all foreigners in Turkey."[36] Incorporating authority for the implementation of migration policies, the DGMM has undertaken several tasks from the general directorate of security, the national police, and the UNHCR.[37] It became the agency responsible for the implementation of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP).[38]

Both EU and Turkey frame the establishment of the DGMM as a shift from a "security-driven approach" to migration management towards a more "civilian approach."[39] In practice, the LFIP granted the DGMM authority to perform security related tasks and increased security forces' authority within and beyond Turkey's borders. It also increased the power of security officers by authorizing them to check documentation, not only on Turkey's borders, but also inside the country on bus journeys and of passengers who utilize transit zones in the airports. The officers were given the authority to hold 'suspicious persons' for up to four hours. Following the passage of the LFIP, the EU has also increased funding for the enhancement of security equipment "to prevent smuggling and departures of migrants from the Turkish mainland."[40] As such, rather than civilizing the field, the LFIP and the establishment of the DGMM diversified and increasingly maintained in/security practices.

The attempted coup of July 2016 significantly changed relations in the field. Turkey established specialized departments under the gendarmerie and the police to enhance their capacity to fight 'organized crime,' including 'irregular migration.' The attempted coup also caused the LFIP to be amended by multiple emergency decrees. The decree of 2016 regulated that "people who are considered to be affiliated with terrorist organizations can be removed from Turkey without the possibility of suspending a removal decision by filing an appeal."[41] Another decree in 2018 resulted in the abolition of several boards established by the LFIP and established a new department under the DGMM, gathering responsibilities under a single roof.[42] These responsibilities include performing operations against irregular migration, providing coordination between security forces to fight with irregular migration, implementing the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement, and performing other duties given

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36 UNHCR Turkey, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey", https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-turkey (Accessed 25 May 2020).

37 LFIP (Law No. 6458), "Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu [Law on Foreigners and International Protection]", 2013, https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.6458.pdf (Accessed 16 April 2020).

38 Official Gazette, "Geri Kabul Anlasmasi Hakkinda Basbakanlik Genelgesi [Prime Ministry Circular on the Readmission Agreement]", https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/04/20140416-10.htm (Accessed 13 May 2020).

39 "Progress Report 2013".

40 "1st Report"; "Progress Report 2014", https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/IlerlemeRaporlari/2014_progress_report.pdf 64 (Accessed 21 May 2020).

41 "Progress Report 2018", https://www.ab.gov.tr/siteimages/kapbtablolar/20180417-turkey-report.pdf (Accessed 18 April 2020).

42 "Progress Report 2019", https://www.ab.gov.tr/siteimages/resimler/20190529-turkey-report(1).pdf (Accessed 18 April 2020).

by the DGMM.[43] The DGMM continues to be the primary institution in the implementation of in/ security practices adopting the more security-inclined mindset of the newly redesigned Turkish Presidency. Despite suggestions from the EU for the establishment of a single civil agency in charge of border security, Turkey has not responded to this positively and then put this idea on complete hold in 2019, mainly due to its security related concerns in several border regions.[44]

In 2016 Turkey also conducted its first direct transborder military operation. Turkey's political discourse and practices towards migrants from the Middle East and North Africa region started to change simultaneously. Yet news about discomfort in the public and politicians peaked around the local elections of March 2019 when the Ministry of Interior called immigrants to go back to the satellite cities where they were registered until August 2019. Following this order, the Office of the Governor of Istanbul published a press release stating that it sent thousands of undocumented migrants back to removal centers in different cities located in Turkey.[45] The Office of the Governor also started to search for and detect unregistered employment of immigrants in order to notify lawful authorities for punishment.

According to the International Refugee Rights Association, some of these migrants were deported or sent to removal centers, although what needed to be done was to return them to their satellite cities.[46] DGMM representatives rejected these claims by stating that only those who got involved in crime, who were 'undocumented' or who were 'voluntary' were returned.[47] It is also notable that neither the Ministry's nor DGMM's activity reports contain information on systematic return operations within Turkey.

Tensions increased again in early 2020 when the Office of the Turkey President decided to open the borders to let migrants cross to Europe following an attack on the Turkish army in Idlib. Thousands of immigrants of different origins reached the borders, but Greek forces used harsh measures such as setting off bombs and using teargas to tell immigrants to turn back to Turkey.[48] Some of the refugees claimed that Greek security forces "forced them back to Turkey, smashed their phones, ripped up their IDs, and beat them."[49] Turkey deployed additional police forces at the border "to prevent Athens from pushing back refugees who are trying to cross into Greece."[50] This crisis eased a

43 DGMM, "Türkiye'nin Düzensiz Göçle Mücadelesi [Turkey's struggle with irregular migration]", https://www.goc.gov.tr/Türkiyenin-duzensiz-gocle-mucadelesi (Accessed 20 April 2020).

44 "Progress Report 2019".

45 Governorship of Istanbul, "Düzensiz Göç, Kayıtsız Suriyeliler, Kayıt Dışı İstihdam [Irregular migration, undocumented Syrians, illicit employment]", 2019, http://istanbul.gov.tr/duzensiz-goc-kayitsiz-suriyeliler-ve-kayit-disi-istihdam-ile-ilgili-basin-aciklamasi (Accessed 23 March 2020).

46 Cihat Arpacık, "İstanbul'da yaşayan on binlerce kayıtsız göçmen sınır dışı ediliyor [Tens of thousans of undocumented migrants that live in Turkey are being deported]", *Independent Turkce*, 2019, https://www.indyturk.com/node/53026/haber/istanbulda-yaşayan-binlerce-kayıtsız-göçmen-sınır-dışı-ediliyor (Accessed 18 February 2021).

47 Ibid.

48 Stelyo Berberakis, "Yunan sınır muhafızlarından göçmenlere: 'Size yalan söylediler [Greek border coasts to the migrants: They lied to you]", *BBC News Turkce*, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-51687672 (Accessed 26 June 2020).

49 Arwa Damon and Murat Baykara, "Greece stands firm on migrants, as Turkey opens floodgates to Europe", *CNN World*, 2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/01/europe/turkey-greece-migrants-open-border-intl/index.html (Accessed 04 June 2020).

50 Taylan Bilgic, "Turkey to deploy 1000 special police forces at Greek border", *Bloomberg*, 05 March 2020, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-05/turkey-to-deploy-1-000-special-police-forces-at-greek-border (Accessed 16 February 2021).

couple of weeks later when Turkey decided to reclose its borders due to the threat posed by the CO-VID-19 pandemic, yet the well-being of migrants who already crossed the borders remained unclear. While Turkey and Greece accused each other of endangering immigrants' lives and well-being, all these interactions disregard the legal regulations they are party of and increased in/security practices at and around the borders, putting immigrant lives into danger.

### Surveillance

Surveillance activities are considered to be in/security practices since they are tools of governments to create 'illegal subjects.' Turkey has gradually increased surveillance activities, occasionally cooperating with EU, Frontex and Greek security forces. In 2013 Turkey and Frontex started to exchange data within the scope of the memorandum of understanding and have enhanced cooperation with another plan in 2014 on joint surveillance practices of "sharing statistical data for risk analysis, training activities and operational cooperation."[51] Eventually, the Turkey-Frontex Risk Analysis Network was established as an intelligence-sharing platform to conduct joint analyses on border in/security and migration control.[52] The DGMM also sets up an electronic monitoring system and a database to accumulate information about the practices of the removal centers.

As such, Turkey's territory and border zones are increasingly becoming spaces "where surveillance intensifies, and migrant lives are held hostage."[53] Turkey's measures to increase its technological capacity mostly aimed at improving a common surveillance capacity nationally and internationally. Systems that provide land-based surveillance of the Aegean Sea have also been developed. With these measures, Turkey's border security has increasingly moved from being "patrolling driven" to "intelligence-driven."[54] In practice, these measures assist Greek and Frontex authorities to get informed in advance and apply measures to push back migrant boats towards Turkish territory.[55]

Through surveillance activities, agents of border security create 'good and bad migrants.' By tracking mobility in and through Turkey, they become able to control who crosses borders by limiting or preventing certain people's mobility. The EU-Turkey Statement further increased surveillance in the Aegean Sea "to remove the incentive for migrants and asylum seekers to seek irregular routes to the EU."[56] According to the European Commission, lack of a data protection law in Turkey hampers its cooperation with the police forces of member states and Europol. With the adoption of a new regulation in 2016, the cooperation of policemen, border guards and coastguards on border checks and surveillance systems was enhanced. The regulation also established the National Coordination and Joint Risk Analysis Center "to collect, exchange, process data on border security and

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51 "Progress Report 2014", p. 65; Giray Sadik and Ceren Kaya, "The Role of Surveillance Technologies in the Securitization of EU Migration Policies and Border Management", *Uluslararasi Iliskiler*, Vol. 17, No. 68, 2020, pp. 145-160.

52 Frontex, "Non-EU Countries", https://frontex.europa.eu/partners/non-eu-countries/ (Accessed 04 June 2020).; See also Frontex Annual Activity Report 2016, https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/key-documents/?category=general-report&lang=de (Accessed 02 March 2020).

53 Ozgun E. Topak, "The Biopolitical Border in Practice: Surveillance and Death at the Greece-Turkey Borderzones", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 32, No. 5, 2014, p. 816.

54 Ibid.

55 ProAsyl, "Pushed back: systematic human rights violations against refugees in the Aegean sea and the Greek–Turkish land border", 2013, https://www.proasyl.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/PRO_ASYL_Report_ Pushed_Back_ english_November_2013.pdf (Accessed 05 January 2020).

56 "1st Report".

to carry out joint risk analysis."[57] As such, the statement is performative in the sense that it contributes to the creation of "migrant illegality" and constructs migrants as "illegal subjects."[58] Following the implementation of the deal, the number of irregular migrants crossing to the EU has decreased sharply, while many smugglers have also been caught by the Turkish Security Forces.[59] However, in practice, the statement probably led people to new dangerous routes, rather than safely keeping them within the country.

Since 2016, Turkey has also begun to tighten and frequently close its southern borders, thereby abandoning its open borders policy. It announced that migrants coming by land must do so through official border posts to enable border guards to surveil who enters, and who might bring 'security risks.' It also ended the visa-free policy for Syrians who come by air and sea. Furthermore, Turkey started to build a security barrier - a wall - at its shared borders with Syria.[60] By amending the LFIP, it also allowed the deportation of irregular migrants and those whom the Turkish state associates with terrorism or a threat to public order after the coup attempt. The change in Turkey's system change further centralized and monopolized the authority of state institutions. Influenced also by the trauma of the attempted coup, the government developed policies to take control of the tools to collect and share in/security data for surveillance. The Cyber Security Council was abolished and a board under the Office of the President was established to take over its authority.[61] The DGMM introduced two digital datasets namely Gocnet and KURE containing data on every foreigner residing in the country.

All these surveillance activities create relationships of exclusion and inclusion since they are based on databases that label humans through the use of algorithms. Originally, these techniques are "associated with police surveillance activities to catch criminals."[62] Implemented with physical practices of in/security, they aim at associating immigrants with security by establishing legality and illegality. This is also why 'undocumented' migrants are considered to be a source of threat for governments because 'being undocumented' makes it possible for governments to govern them through surveillance.

## Conclusion

Discourse and practice are significant and interrelated components of the migration-security nexus. To comprehend this nexus, we first analyzed Erdoğan's speeches as representative of Turkey's official discourse. We identify that until mid-2016, while stressing the burden that Turkey carries, Erdoğan mostly frames Turkey's migration policies around humanitarian, civilizational and religious responsibilities. Erdoğan introduced new themes to Turkey's migration discourse around 2016 which correspond with the EU-Turkey Statement and Turkey's transborder military operations. By mid-2016, he starts to increasingly refer to Turkey's migration policies as a fault line in Turkey-EU relations and

57 Ibid.

58 Aysen Üstübici, "The impact of externalized migration governance on Turkey: technocratic migration governance and the production of differentiated legal status", *Comparative Migration Studies*, Vol. 7, No 46, 2019, p. 4.

59 "1st Report".

60 M. Aldroubi, "Syria-Turkey border wall completed", *The National*, 2018, https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/syria-turkey-border-wall-completed-1.738637 (Accessed 06 March 2020).

61 "Progress Report 2019", https://www.ab.gov.tr/siteimages/resimler/20190529-turkey-report(1).pdf (Accessed 03 March 2020).

62 İşleyen, "Transit mobility", p. 28.

a justification for Turkey's operations in Syria. However, migration is not securitized in the official discourse since migrants are not referred to as an existential threat to state or society.

Utilizing a practice approach to security, we suggest that it may not always be possible to identify 'the securityness of an issue' by only looking at the political discourse. We observe that while the discourse is dominated by references to Turkey's humanitarian responsibilities, migration is still handled through in/security practices in the field. First, we find that although the legal framework has improved over time, there are still two main challenges that create insecurities for the migrants: 1) there is a legal hole regarding the status of the non-European immigrants, 2) the rights that are given to immigrants by law are not always fully accommodated in practice. Second, we identify that DGMM's entrance into field in 2014 does not necessarily provide a shift from a security to a civilian approach. Increasingly since 2016, it has continued to coordinate and implement in/security practices along with civilian practices related to migration management. It has not only taken over authority from security bureaucracy, but also decreased the role of NGOs and IOs to consolidate the power of state bureaucracy in the field. Third, we observe that Turkey has significantly increased surveillance activities within and beyond its territory by both improving national capacity and cooperating with the EU actors. These surveillance activities result in insecurities for certain group of individuals through constructing 'illegal migrants'; hence, creating relationships of inclusion and exclusion.

To conclude, the article clarifies that the discursive approach may fall short in fully capturing insecurities faced by migrants. The presence of a humanitarian emphasis or lack of security talk does not imply a 'secure environment' for migrants. As a result of migration policies and practices, migrants continuously encounter insecurities in Turkey, in the EU, and on migration routes. As the responsibility remains unshared and states continue to handle migration through in/security practices, migration will be prone to cause severe risks for human lives and well-being.

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