Theoretical Analysis of Long-Distance International Marriage Migration[*]

Coşkun SAĞLIK[**]

ABSTRACT

International marriage migration has become the most important method of migration today due to the intensification of cultural interaction. Although the fact that the subject matter is marriage conceals the seriousness of this migration method, the most preferred way to obtain permanent residence in developed countries is to marry a citizen of a destination country. Using this method, thousands of people try to obtain residence permits from developed countries through family reunification or family formation every year. In this respect, we can say that the general purpose of long-distance marriages is to achieve prosperity. In addition, the factors that pave the way for/facilitate this migration method are the increase in intercultural interaction, the development of migrant networks and the proliferation of organisations that instrumentalise international marriage. While this study aims to reveal the qualities and seriousness of long-distance international marriage migration, it also provides a conceptual and theoretical analysis of this migration method.

Keywords: Migration, Marriage Migration, Family Migration, International Marriage Migration.

Uzak-Mesafe Uluslararası Evlilik Göçünün Teorik Analizi

ÖZ

Uluslararası evlilik göçü, kültürel etkileşimin yoğunlaşması nedeniyle günümüzde en önemli göç yöntemi haline gelmiştir. Konunun evlilik olması bu göç yönteminin ciddiyetini gizlese de gelişmiş ülkelerde daimi ikamet elde etmek için en çok tercih edilen yol hedef ülke vatandaşı ile evlenmektir. Bu yöntemi kullanarak her yıl binlerce kişi aile birleşimi veya aile kurma yoluyla gelişmiş ülkelerden oturma izni almaya çalışıyor. Bu açıdan uzak mesafe evliliklerinin genel amacının refaha ulaşmak olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Ayrıca kültürlerarası etkileşimin artması, göçmen ağlarının gelişmesi ve uluslararası evliliği araçsallaştıran kuruluşların çoğalması da bu göç yönteminin önünü açan/kolaylaştıran faktörler olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma, uzak mesafe uluslararası evlilik göçünün niteliklerini ve ciddiyetini ortaya koymayı amaçlarken, aynı zamanda bu göç yönteminin kavramsal ve teorik bir analizini de sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Evlilik Göçü, Aile Göçü, Uluslararası Evlilik Göçü.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, where the tendency to migrate is at an all-time high and national borders are becoming imaginary borders, international migration is becoming impossible to prevent. As a matter of fact, approximately 300 million of the world's population is made up of people born outside their own country or holding foreign citizenship (International Organization for Migration 2024; World Economic Forum 2024; Migration Data Portal 2021). This number does not include people who travel between countries in a mobilized manner. It should also be noted that this number has been reached despite states taking extensive security measures at borders. It is obvious that this number would be much higher if developed countries such as European countries did not implement harsh policies in terms of border protection (Hopyar 2024; Ökten Sipahioğlu 2024).

Despite the tight security of the borders, many people still resort to migration. It must be said that there are thousands of people who even risk death on this path. According to a project by the International Organization for Migration (2025), nearly 76,000 people have been recorded as missing migrants since 2014, and at least 4,000 in 2023 alone. The sheer number refers to the mind-bogglingly boundary-pushing aspect of migration.

As such, the difficulty of entering developed countries causes migrants to try different ways. One of these ways is international marriage migration. Marriage migration mostly reflects migration to developed countries in order to reach prosperity (Turner 2008; Yeoh, Chee & Baey 2017; Yakushko & Rajan 2016). Indeed, in today's global world, it is easy for citizens of different countries to meet and then marry. Many marriages take place even between citizens of the most distant countries in the world and immigrants are granted residence permits in this way. Since marriage migration is one of the shortest ways to enter developed countries through legal means, this form of migration has been increasing in recent years (Davin 2008; Eggebø 2013; Ahsan Ullah & Chattoraj 2023). In 2018, it is known that 41% of migration to OECD countries consisted of migration requiring permanent residence due to family reunification or formation[1] (OECD 2020). Again, according to the OECD's 2017 report, more than 10% of all marriages in many OECD countries were between a citizen and a foreigner, and immigrants were generally granted residence permits based on this reason (OECD 2017). It was noted that Afghan, Iraqi, Somali and Syrian persons who received residence permits in OECD countries - especially after 2014 - were most often granted residence permits on the grounds of marriage.

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[1]This corresponds to approximately 2 million people per year.

The above statistical data reveal the seriousness of international marriage migration. International marriage migration takes place both between bordering countries and between long-distance non-bordering countries. However, long-distance international marriage migration is particularly intense from some countries in Asia to developed European countries. While *cross-border marriages* are partially covered in the literature on international marriage migration, *long-distance international marriage migration* is not covered much in the literature. Within the scope of this research, while the theoretical analysis of long-distance international marriage migration is carried out, it is also aimed to reveal a separate migration method from cross-border marriage migration. Because long-distance international marriages have significant differences from cross-border marriages.

Long-Distance International Marriage: Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis

The main reason for the high number of long-distance international marriages is the increasing tendency to migrate in order to *achieve prosperity (*Kim 2012; Lee & Arguillas 2016; Kaur 2012; Charsley et al. 2012). The factors that facilitate long-distance international marriages can be attributed to three main reasons. The first is the facilitation of *intercultural interaction*, the second is the fact that people who settle in developed countries, especially as a result of labor migration, use *migrant networks* to marry people from their own culture and attract their spouses to these countries, and the third is the *instrumentalization of marriage* as a result of the proliferation of intermediary firms, matchmaking sites and brokers who arrange international marriages (Figure 1). At the end of all these factors, the overall goal is to achieve prosperity.
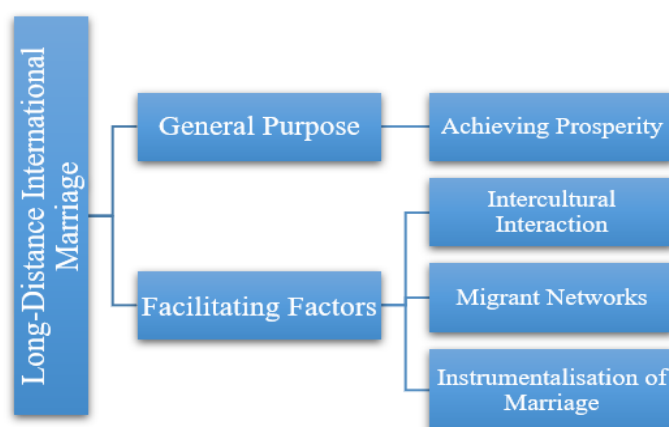

Figure: 1. Conceptual Schematic of Long Distance International Marriages

Achieving prosperity can be considered as a general goal for both cross-border marriages and long-distance international marriages (Jones & Shen 2008; Kang, Chai & McLean 2015; Constable 2012; Lee & Klein 2017). This is because every migration is an act

carried out by people who are dissatisfied with where they are and who seek to achieve something better. The same is true for marriage migration. In particular, long-distance international marriage migrations are largely carried out with the aim of achieving prosperity. Therefore, marriage migration has a large share in international migration. This situation is mentioned in Batalova's study dated 2022. According to the aforementioned study (2022); as of 2020, the number of people living outside their countries of origin worldwide reached the highest level in history, almost four times the level in 1960, and most of this increase was due to labor migration or family migration. In fact, the proportion of international migration for family reunification among OECD countries has surpassed labor migration and ranked first among all forms of migration. In 2021, while the rate of labor migration among permanent migration to OECD countries was 18 percent, the rate of family migration corresponded to 43 percent (OECD 2022). For this reason, long-distance marriage migration is one of the main factors that cause the share of international migrants in the world population to increase from 2.6 percent in 1960 to 3.6 percent in 2020. This is because there are thousands of marriage migrations to Europe and America, which are considered developed countries, every year. Looking at the route of these migrations, it is seen that there is a transition from countries such as Asia and Africa to countries such as Europe and America. Especially in European countries, there is a lot of family reunification migration from Asian countries.

The route of long-distance marriage migration can be analyzed by looking at some country-specific statistics in Caroline Oliver's 2013 report. In this report, 21% of family migration to the Netherlands is Asian and 18% is African, while 58% of family reunification migration to the UK is of Asian origin. In the same report, Turkey, Somalia and Russia are the leading countries in terms of nationality in family migration to the Netherlands, Pakistan and India in family migration to the UK, and Turkey and Russia in family migration to Germany. Another report shows that the largest group of migrants in Denmark are from Turkey, Poland and Syria, and that 49% of migrants from Turkey and 34% of migrants from Syria have residence permits due to family reunification (Denmark Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2022). These rates prove that the route of long-distance international marriage migration is from less developed to developed regions. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the general purpose of international marriages is to achieve prosperity.

Intercultural Interaction

The factors that facilitate marriage migration for the purpose of achieving prosperity should actually be read as factors that pave the way for long-distance international marriage migration

and, frankly, cause it to increase. In this respect, the first issue to be addressed is the increase in intercultural interaction.

After the industrial revolution, all kinds of mass production and consumption practices, especially the impact of rapidly increasing trade, have made it possible to reach every corner of the world. With the change in economic practices and tools, people's provincial life began to decline and urban life began to revitalize. The provincial and hermit-oriented lifestyle of the Middle Ages changed and trade, monetary values and consumption spread to all areas. As such, the scale of trade rapidly crossed national borders and led to a revival of exchanges between countries. During this exchange, not only economic exchange but also cultural exchange has taken place to a great extent. First of all, people from different cultures had the opportunity to get to know other cultures by leaving their own lands. In fact, in a way, they were forced to do so. Because just as homo sapiens did not remain trapped in the African savannahs and crossed intercontinental distances with the dream of exploring different worlds, modern man did not confine himself within feudal walls and started to set foot almost everywhere in the world.

Of course, in order to do this, people first developed the means of transportation and communication. In particular, the development of means of transportation, which made it possible to travel between countries, caused societies to mix and get to know each other on a cultural and intellectual level. The reason why transportation developed so much in the first place was born out of economic needs. Because it was not possible to trade only between certain social groups at the regional level, it was necessary to export the surplus production. As such, countries searched for markets to sell the products of mass production. The industrialization process, which started especially in England, spread rapidly throughout Europe and then to other continents.

The first sparks of globalization should actually be sought here. Because the opening of the local to the outside means that its unique characteristic has changed. Products no longer have any importance without a market value. This market is now the competitive arena of the global arena. Therefore, the local is now global and the global is now local. So much so that the national borders for which millions of people died in the first and second world wars have become the imaginary borders of today's global world.

In today's world, it is not possible for cultures to remain in their own inner world and be trapped there. Because commercial activities that necessitate interaction have turned the whole world into a global market. Therefore, it takes a short time for a product produced in any

city in Europe to reach Hong Kong. Two things are necessary for this. One is transportation and the other is communication. Both have the quality of enhancing intercultural interaction. Historically, following the developments in the transportation (road, rail, sea and air transportation) and communication (telegraph, telephone, radio, television) sectors, the introduction of the internet into human life towards the end of the 20th century has brought intercultural interaction and communication to the highest level. After the development of road, railway and maritime transportation in the field of transportation, airplanes were introduced to transportation with the Wright brothers' first flight attempt in 1903 (Karakaş-Özür 2019). With the commercial flights in France in 1919 and in the USA in 1926 and the regular flights that started after World War II (Deniz 2016), it became much easier for people to go from one place to another thanks to the aircraft technology that developed all over Europe. In addition, with the development of radio in the 1920s, television in the 1940s and the internet in the 1990s, people communicated with each other and became aware of different cultures.
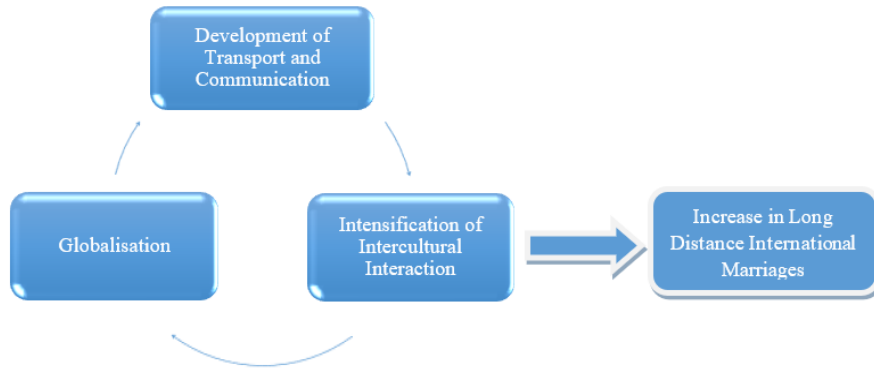

Figure: 2. The Cycle of Intercultural Interaction and the Long-Distance International Marriage Relationship

As can be seen in the figure above (Figure 2), it is the development of means of transportation and communication, as well as the spread of globalization to all areas of life, that enables intercultural interaction to increase. As a matter of fact, while transportation and communication provide the process of transmission, globalization provides dissemination. Therefore, globalization, transportation and communication, and intercultural interaction are mutually reinforcing. Intercultural interaction triggers the increase in international marriages. Because people who are strangers to each other and who do not interact and communicate with each other are unlikely to marry. Therefore, one of the most important reasons for the increase in international marriages is intercultural interaction, which enables people from different cultures to meet and exchange at common points.

The historical background of the process of intercultural interaction has passed through the stages mentioned above and has reached the highest levels today. The information provided by communicative media enables people to learn about different cultures. People who have knowledge about different cultures gain the courage to meet people outside their own culture. This is because the development of communication tools (especially social media) makes people with different cultures living anywhere in the world no longer strangers and brings them closer to themselves. People who are not seen and communicated with are always perceived as foreign and other. For this reason, perhaps one of the biggest effects of communicative media is that it brings the foreign and the other closer. The likelihood of meeting and marrying people with whom one feels close increases. At the same time, the development of transportation tools that make it easier to go anywhere in the world makes it possible for people to meet face to face and thus increase their interaction even more.

Every intercultural interaction also necessitates communication, or every attempt at communication brings about interaction. Interaction and communication are phenomena that need each other. For this reason, while discussing intercultural interaction, it is also necessary to talk about intercultural communication. Because it is important how communication occurs when people from different cultures meet. The existence of common activities and language that make intercultural interaction and communication possible enables people to mingle and get to know each other. In other words, people who meet in a common space need to agree in a language they can understand as subjects of a common activity.
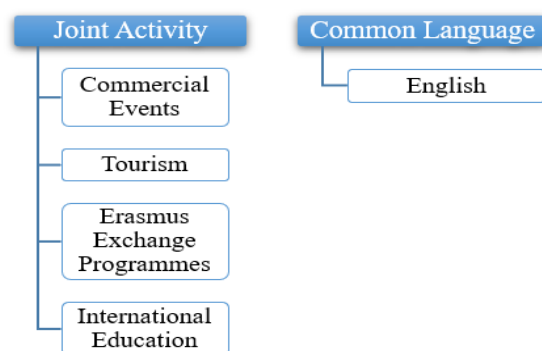

Figure: 3. Major Factors Enabling Intercultural Interaction and Communication

Especially due to the globalization of economic activities, people can go anywhere in the world for business negotiations and commercial activities. Since global companies operate internationally and open branches in different countries in order to trade, it is inevitable for company members to come together with citizens of different countries. Thus, commercial activities bring people together at a common point. It becomes possible for people who meet at

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a common point to get to know each other and then develop relationships that can lead to marriage.

In addition, especially with the development of transportation vehicles, the tourism sector has also developed as the distance between countries has shortened considerably in terms of time. Tourism has enabled people to travel to different countries and people from different cultures to get to know each other. The tourism sector even makes special efforts to attract tourists by making their own advertisements (advertisements of tourist attractions) in order for countries to generate income. As such, people can easily travel from one country to another for vacation, shopping and cultural trips. Tourism agencies provide services in cooperation with hotels. Especially since hotel employees have a close relationship with tourists, they are very likely to marry these people. In fact, it is known that a significant number of people (especially men) who settle in developed countries through marriage migration used to work in hotels. Not only hotel workers, but also people who are engaged in the tourism business and provide services in places frequented by tourists meet and marry tourists. For this reason, tourism activities are one of the most important activities that provide cultural interaction. Tourism is an important travel program as it creates an environment for cultural interaction and leads to an increase in long-distance international marriages.

Apart from these, another activity that enables intercultural interaction and communication is the Erasmus exchange programs. More than 13 million people have so far participated in the Erasmus+ program between 2014 and 2021 with the participation of staff, students and young people of all ages (European Commission 2023). As a European Union exchange program, Erasmus gives students and employees from different countries the opportunity to travel and get to know other cultures. Within the scope of this program, people who come together in common places cause intercultural interaction. Thus, the likelihood of people from different cultures getting to know each other and getting married increases.

Similar to Erasmus exchange programs, millions of students migrate from their home countries to other countries for undergraduate and graduate studies.

Number of international or foreign students enrolled in OECD and non-OECD countries

Millions of students

Total 5.6

Non-OECD 1.7

OECD 3.9

Note: The data sources use similar definitions, thus making their combination possible. Missing data were imputed with the closest data reports to ensure that breaks in data coverage do not result in breaks in time series
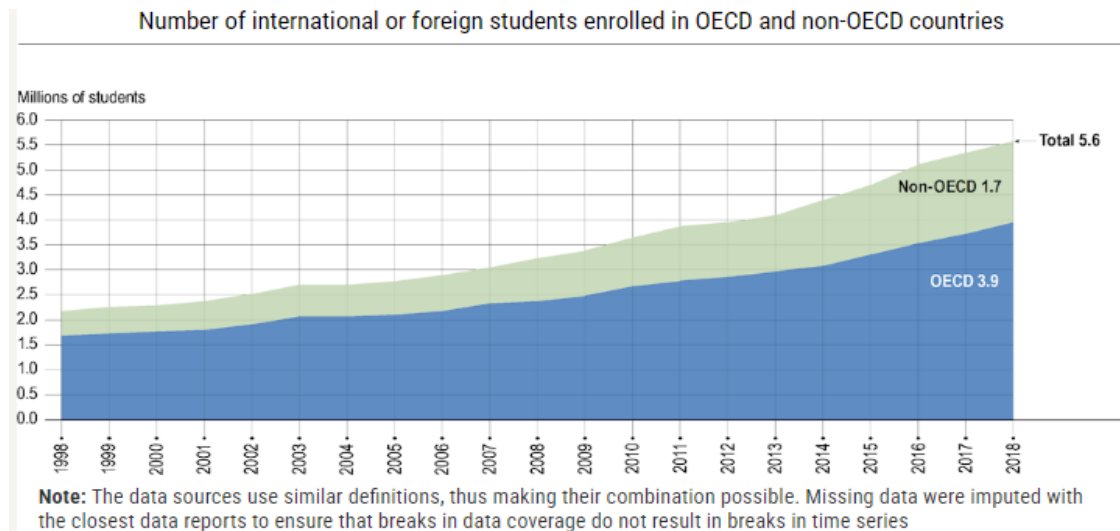
Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2020).

Figure: 4. Number of International Students Enrolled in OECD and Non-OECD Countries

As seen above (Figure 4), as of 2018, nearly 6 million students, mostly from OECD countries, were studying at universities abroad for higher education purposes. Moreover, according to data from the same source, students from Asia - mostly from China and India - constitute the largest group of international students enrolled in higher education programs at all levels, accounting for 57% of all mobile students across the OECD in 2018 (OECD 2020). In fact, this proportion is even higher than that of European international students. Therefore, the number of people from outside Europe and the United States who settle and study in OECD countries is considerable. The international education system, based on the aforementioned numerical data, is one of the biggest activities that enable intercultural interaction and communication. In this context, it can be said that people who study in different countries are more likely to get to know each other and then marry. People who come from the farthest countries of Asia and settle and study in regions such as Europe and America are also more likely to decide to stay after getting to know and get used to these places. International education is undoubtedly one of the most important reasons for the decision to settle in OECD countries, whether for work permits or marriage.

Of course, people from different cultures who come together through the joint activities mentioned above need to communicate in a common language. English, the world's most widely spoken language (Statista 2023), used as a language of communication by approximately 1.5 billion people, is included in the education system of almost every country, enabling people from different cultures to communicate. Generally, people who have the opportunity to go abroad and deal with people from different cultures for work or other reasons

are obliged to at least learn English. In fact, English-speaking countries are the most preferred countries for international migrants to carry out the above activities. To give a small example, four English-speaking countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada) receive more than 40% of all international mobile students in OECD and partner countries (OECD 2020). This is precisely why English is recognized as a world language. Because for intercultural interaction to take place, it is essential to have an intercultural language. Since not every person can master every language, it is natural to use a universally accepted language. Having a common language is important for intercultural interaction and therefore for international marriages to take place. Because people who talk can get along, people who get along can get to know each other, and people who get to know each other can develop closer relationships and decide to get married.

Migrant Networks

Another important factor that facilitates and increases international marriages is the formation of migrant networks. This is because migrants attract people from their own culture for family formation or family reunification. Especially migrants with conservative cultures do not want to marry people from foreign cultures, so they use migrant networks to marry people from their own country. In addition, migrants who are already married can bring their family members after settling in the destination country. Thus, migrant networks, which play a role in both family formation and family reunification, pave the way for international marriages.

The migrant network is the network formed by the original migrant settling in a foreign country acting as an intermediary for those who come after him/her (Wickramasinghe and Wimalaratana 2016; Çağlayan 2006; de Haas 2021). In other words, established immigrants in the foreign country pave the way for new immigrants and enable them to settle in the foreign country more easily (Massey et al. 1993; Lee 1966; Bodvarsson et al. 2015; King 2012; Faist 2000). In this way, a network is formed among migrants. After the first migrants overcome all the difficulties and disadvantages of being in a foreign country, they become a reference for the newcomers, so that the next migrants can migrate more easily. People who use migrant networks get some ideas and information from experienced migrants and apply to the destination country to migrate. Therefore, they face fewer difficulties. This is because they learn both the pre-migration procedures and how to get a foothold in the destination country through the people who refer them. Migrant networks are usually formed among spouses, friends and relatives, and people who have acquaintances tend to migrate by using these networks. Thus, migrant networks serve an important function in overcoming difficulties both before and after

migration. Migrants also undertake a mission to encourage people in the country of origin to migrate. Because if the people who leave raise their living standards, other people are likely to emulate this life.

Especially in long-distance international migration, marriage migration is realized by using the migrant networks. Migrants with conservative cultures who cannot fit into the family system and understanding of the country they are in, communicate with the people they left behind through migrant networks and choose suitable individuals for marriage. There has been a significant increase in international marriage migration due to the marriages realized as a result of the relationships established through migrant networks.

First generation immigrants in developed countries are more willing to marry off their children (second generation) to people from their own culture. They do this both to reduce divorce rates and to expand their social and cultural circles by bringing people from their own culture to their place of residence. Especially cultural factors such as religion, language and family traditions push conservative migrants in this direction. In order to resist assimilation and avoid being a minority, intra-group marriages are important. For this reason, they use their networks with their home countries to find potential spouses.

Sportel (2016) stated in his study that most of the Moroccan and Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands choose a spouse from their country. In the same study, it was mentioned that most of the Moroccan second generation immigrants in the Netherlands (approximately 70%) chose a spouse of Moroccan origin. Similarly, Gelekçi's (2014) study on Turks living in Austria revealed some important findings. As a result of the survey based on a total of 410 respondents, 72.1% of married Turks living in Austria stated that their spouses were their relatives or fellow countrymen, while only 0.4% stated that their spouses were foreign nationals. As can be seen from this high rate, immigrants with a conservative culture, especially due to their sensitivities about kinship, origin and religion, use immigrant networks to choose people from their close circles in their home countries for marriage. In addition, restrictive measures such as language tests, income and age requirements in developed countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Austria also push immigrants to marry someone from their own country.

Since there is a lot of marriage migration through migrant networks, long-distance international marriages are becoming easier and increasing. In addition, migrants who marry people from their own culture and try to preserve the in-group structure have problems with integration and have difficulty adapting to the existing culture.
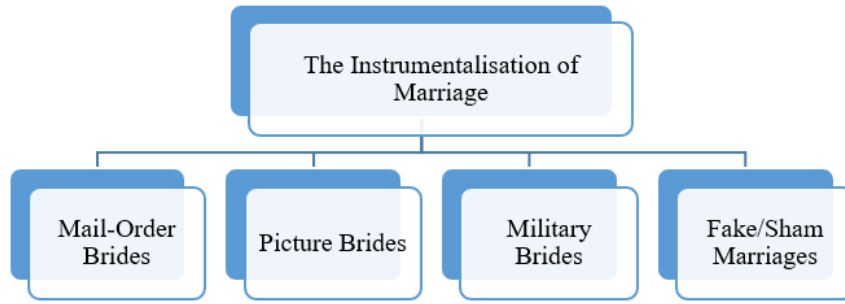
Instrumentalization of Marriage

Figure: 5. Ways of Instrumentalizing Marriage

Finally, one of the most important factors (Figure 5) that facilitate long-distance international marriages and cause them to increase massively is undoubtedly the *instrumentalization of marriage*. It is inevitable that everything that is instrumentalized becomes insignificant over time and disappears with the achievement of the goal. In this respect, since long-distance international marriages with foreign nationals are used as a means to achieve prosperity (such as obtaining a residence permit from a developed country), a healthy family cannot be established as a result of such marriages. Because the goal is not to build a family but to achieve prosperity.

When starting to discuss the instrumentalization of international marriages, it is first necessary to understand how such marriages started and where they have evolved. In this respect, it would be useful to approach the issue from a historical perspective. In order to analyze the instrumentalization of international marriages, the concepts of *mail-order brides*, *picture brides*, *military brides* and *fake/sham marriages* should be mentioned.

Mail-order bride services date back to the early settlers of North America, when men wrote to Europe in the hope of finding a wife. Among North America's first mail-order brides were "les filles du roy French women who came to what is now Quebec to marry French soldiers (approximately 1000 French women from 1663 to 1673) (Meng 1994). Filles du roy marriages were especially encouraged by the French government, and payments were made to these women in order to redress the imbalance between men and women in the American colonies. The high level of poverty in France of that period and the scarcity of women in the French colonies in America paved the way for filles du roy marriages. Because women had to receive government subsidies to get out of poverty. As a result of their marriages, what is now the Canadian province of Quebec became the only province with French as its official language, and for the same reason, mail order women played a role in the colonization of Australia. Later,

during the Second World War, American soldiers wrote letters to women they had never met and arranged marriages through correspondence (Sarker et al. 2013).

It is understood that in mail-order marriages, women migrate from one place to another. Especially since the citizens of Asian and European countries residing in America prefer women from their own countries to marry, this situation has caused women to migrate. Since countries such as America and Australia are countries formed by immigrants, it should be considered normal for the first mail order women to migrate to these countries. This is especially true for the United States. Although some Europeans initially led to mail-order marriages (such as France, Ireland), it is seen that Asians are mostly involved in this developing sector. This is because, as mentioned at the beginning, the route of international marriages is from undeveloped and developing countries to more developed countries. Even when mail-order brides first emerged, the course of this situation was the same. As a matter of fact, it is understood that most of the mail-order brides who settled in America in the modern sense come from developing regions such as South and Southeast Asia (Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Taiwan, Macau, South Korea, Hong Kong and China) (Meng 1994).

The appearance of mail order brides today is, of course, very different from its first form. Over time, many international companies have emerged that play a role in the supply of mail order brides. These companies have become intermediary companies that enable women and men to find each other. In this sense, the biggest reason for the instrumentalisation of international marriages is the proliferation of intermediary companies that arrange international marriages and the transformation of women into market objects. Of course, in every market, according to Marx's logic, what matters is the exchange value of the object. In this respect, it has become inevitable that marriage agencies have become places where big capitals revolve, and since the 1970s there has been a significant increase in the number of companies marketing brides from foreign countries. The first examples of marriage agencies naturally began to proliferate more in the United States. The number of mail order bride agencies in the United States, which was estimated to be 100 in 1986, increased to 200 in 1992 and to about 500 in 1995 (Chun 1996). It is estimated that more than 16,500 US marriages in 2007 were mail-order marriages through these agencies (Wayne 2011). Matchmaking agencies often found potential brides in economically troubled countries, particularly the Philippines, through newspaper and magazine advertisements.

After the 1990s, due to rapid developments in the field of information technology (IT), mail-order bride marketing agencies started to conduct their business over the Internet. These

IT-mediated services offered customers access to more profiles, more detailed information about potential brides, instant messaging, webcam communication, e-mail options and 24/7 customer support (Sarker et al. 2013). Thus, while intermediary agencies conducted their business more easily, customers had more information about the people they preferred. Mail-order marriage agencies, which conduct their business through matchmaking websites that require membership, continue to export brides to the developed countries of the world. As a matter of fact, the income status of these agencies is also high. Because single men of a certain age regularly pay money to these agencies to buy young women from Asia and Eastern Europe. In addition to the fee for membership to the agency websites, money is also charged for various services in the process of arranging women. In this way, the fortune of matchmaking agencies reaches serious amounts. In his 2011 article, Teddy Wayne stated - based on research by IBISWorld - that these agencies generated more than $2 billion in revenue in 2010 alone.

From this statement, we can interpret that mail order bride marketing agencies reduce women to a commercial commodity. To put it more crudely, such marriages, which take place in the form of a commercial exchange, proceed in a process that benefits both parties. The exotic women of Asia who seduce the white men of America consent to become the commodity of these agencies in order to get rid of poverty and oppression or to get a residence permit in a developed country. On the other hand, the white men of America and Europe want to marry women who are subservient and submissive to them, preferably younger women. On the one hand, there are men with certain wealth and the advantage of being in a developed country, and on the other, women with the disadvantages of economically and civilisationally underdeveloped countries.

In addition to marriages with mail-order brides, marriage styles such as *picture brides* and *military brides* have led to the instrumentalisation of marriage and the increase in long-distance international marriages. The next stage of such marriages actually resembled the mail-order marriage style. For this reason, it is thought that a brief explanation of the phenomenon of picture brides and military brides will be sufficient.

Picture bride marriages originated from the widespread custom of arranged marriages in Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, referring to the practice of exchanging photographs before the traditional meeting between prospective spouses, especially if the parties were separated by long distances (Meng 1994). Later on, however, this type of marriage was transformed into the practice of preparing and sending catalogues with pictures of the individuals to the parties and thereby consummating the marriage. This method of marriage,

which originated from the Japanese tradition, was continued by Japanese American workers and the first settlers of picture brides in America were the immigration of women who married Japanese in this way. However, the main actors of both picture brides and military brides have been Koreans and Chinese. Especially Koreans have caused thousands of people to migrate through family reunification. Women selected by the groom's relatives based on photographs were sent across the ocean to meet a husband they had never seen (Bartik 2021).

In fact, the main purpose of marriages with picture brides was to unite people from the same culture and thus ensure the continuation of the sociocultural structure. For women, it was generally seen as a way out of poverty. The same logic applies to filles du roy style marriages, the forerunner of the first mail-order marriages. French settlers in America also expanded their colonies in America by marrying people from their own culture. However, the phenomenon of the picture bride here was actually done in a way similar to the catalogues of matchmaking agencies introducing people. The picture brides, which contain less information compared to the catalogues, are intended to introduce themselves to the person they will marry.

In the later appearances of picture brides and military brides, women from poor and oppressed countries of Asia began to come to the fore. About the subject, Jı-Yeon Yuh (2022, p. 68) made the following explanation by addressing the different and common aspects of picture brides and military brides:

> "Picture brides came from Japanese-colonised Korea, and their families ranged from poor to relatively wealthy, residing in towns and cities on the Korean peninsula. Many of them had strong nationalist sentiments due to their dislike of living under Japanese rule, and this was one reason for their emigration. In contrast, most of the military brides came from a South Korea under US rule and firmly entrenched in a structure of national division. They often came from relatively low-income backgrounds and resided in areas close to US military bases. Having lower levels of education than their males and coming from impoverished areas can be seen as commonalities between picture brides and military brides."

As it can be read from the relevant description, picture brides and military brides have different and common historical backgrounds. In fact, both types of brides have attempted to emigrate with the mood of escaping from their past. The difficulties in their past (economic and political) led them to emigrate across the ocean where they knew no trace. It was also a unique opportunity for American Koreans. Because they were thirsty for these bride candidates from their own culture and country. Both the value and worthlessness of women have been clearly revealed in such marriage migrations.

Although the presence of Asian women in America is for the purpose of marriage, the difficulties experienced by these women in their places of destination show that women have become objects of exploitation. They were subjected to both sexual exploitation and racist discrimination by Americans. Despite all this, hundreds of thousands of picture and military brides migrated to America throughout the 20th century. In fact, an estimated 60 per cent or more of Korean Americans who immigrated after 1965 can attribute their immigration to a military bride (Yuh 2022). Due to the increasing numbers of Asians, there have also been changes in the racist discourses of Americans. As David Yoo (1995) points out, stereotypes about Asians have changed from "yellow dangerous vermin" to "model minority threat". Thus, such racist labelling of Asians was added to the white-black binary distinctions.

Whether it is mail-order brides, picture brides or military brides, it must be said that these marriage styles have increased international marriage migration by instrumentalising marriage. This is because people who do not know each other marrying people from different countries and forming a family leads to the simplification of marriage and its transformation into a commercial exchange. Moreover, marrying just to migrate and trying to benefit from the right to family reunification causes the institution of family to be distorted in terms of meaning. Such marriages mean that rich, wealthy or men with certain advantages order brides from poorer countries. Because it is a transaction based on the interests of both parties, it creates a practice contrary to the traditional understanding of marriage. This destroys the emotional aspect of marriage and reduces it to an object bought for money. Everything that is reduced to the level of an object loses its meaning and becomes empty in time. Therefore, the issue of marriage turns into a logic of shopping. Since shopping itself is based on buying, giving and consuming, international marriages become a simple ritual. For this reason, the above-mentioned forms of marriage cause both the instrumentalisation of marriage and the increase in international marriage migration.

As mentioned before, the aim of such marriages is to migrate to a developed country and thus to achieve prosperity. Although the first forms of such marriages were aimed at preserving the sociocultural structure, they later turned into an understanding of using marriage as a means to migrate to a developed country (through family reunification). Since the course of migration in history has always been from developing countries to developed countries, the purpose of international marriage migration has also worked in the same direction. Since developed countries do not apply an open door policy to migrants, migrants have tried to try all kinds of ways to reach prosperity. For example, after the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion

Act, many Chinese managed to enter the United States as "paper sons" claiming to be the children of Chinese born in the United States, and the Japanese used the provisions of the 1907-1908 Gentlemen's Agreement to bring picture brides (Kim (1977) and Kikumura and Kitano (1973) cited in Glenn 1986).

For this reason, using marriage as a means to achieve the main goal - prosperity - has become the main purpose of international marriages. In fact, *fake/sham marriages* have started to proliferate in the last fifty years just to enter the developed countries in this way. In other words, fake marriages have been made in order to circumvent the immigration procedures of developed countries and to obtain the right of residence there (Tikka 2021; Infantino 2014; Viuhko et al. 2016; Benson and Charsley 2015). Undoubtedly, fake marriages are one of the most important factors enabling the instrumentalisation of international marriages.

A sham marriage refers to a union entered into on paper with the primary aim of obtaining residency in a developed country, typically in exchange for money (UK Government - Home Office 2021). In such cases, at least one party engages in a fraudulent marriage to acquire legal residency status, thereby attempting to circumvent government regulations. Sham marriages have evolved into more professional forms of arrangements such as mail-order, picture-based, and military bride marriages. Today, thousands of such marriages are carried out, particularly with the aim of migrating to European countries. These marriages often involve the sale of marriage rights in exchange for financial compensation. Individuals may pay a citizen of a developed country to marry them under the condition of remaining legally wed for a certain period in order to obtain residency.

However, some studies have shown that not all sham marriages are based on financial transactions. For instance, Kim (2011) notes that North Korean, Chinese, and Mongolian women often engage in sham marriages with South Korean men to secure legal and financial protection. Similarly, Chen (2015) discusses how Chinese migrant women seeking to engage in sex work obtain residency in Taiwan through paper marriages with Taiwanese men. Two prominent features of these studies are that the women tend to marry men from neighboring countries, and that no financial payment is made to the spouse in these cases.

In its current form, sham marriage predominantly involves men from less developed countries paying women citizens of developed European countries in exchange for marriage, with the aim of securing residency. Indeed, in his study, Tikka (2021) found that the majority of migrants entering European Union countries through sham marriages are men. As a result,

when sham marriages occur between individuals from culturally distinct and geographically distant nations -particularly in cases involving marriage migration to Europe or the United States- the gender dynamic of migration shifts from predominantly female to male.

Picture and military bride marriages have gone down in history as the marriage styles of the twentieth century. Mail-order bride marriages have become a different version of the online matchmaking sites of today. Fake marriages are still actively used as a key to enter a developed country. In conclusion, both mail-order bride marriages and sham marriages serve similar purposes. Since both are seen as the key to prosperity, the instrumentalisation of marriage is inevitable. Since the things that are instrumentalised are easy to do, we can say that such marriages greatly facilitate and increase long-distance international marriage migration.

Finally, it is necessary to discuss the issue of sustainability of the aforementioned marriage styles. Since these types of marriages are realised on a rational basis based on mutual interest, they do not last long. In addition, mail-order bride marriages and fake marriages in today's international marriages are generally based on the relationship between a local citizen of the developed country and a foreigner. Therefore, it should be said that such marriages are mostly made between different cultures.

Since the fate of fake marriages in terms of sustainability is known, it is sufficient to say that such marriages result in divorces. Because it is futile to expect that marriages based entirely on self-interest will result in a healthy family building. Therefore, it is known that almost all of the marriages made for money end in divorce. It is inevitable that the person who obtains a residence in a developed country will immediately seek a divorce. In other words, the end of the interest and the end of the marriage coincide at the same time.

When we analyse some studies that examine marriages between the same and different ethnic groups, similar results emerge. Ryabov and Zhang (2019) analysed the results of two different surveys and examined the divorce rates between same and different ethnic identities in international marriages based on homogamy and convergence theories. According to the results of the study, even after taking into account socio-demographic factors (such as race-ethnicity, income, education, age) known to affect marriage breakdown, the duration of marriages between foreigners and natives is shorter than the duration of marriages between two natives, and foreign-native marriages are more unstable than native-native marriages. In the same study, it was mentioned that marriages between US-born citizens and some foreign nationals are made for the purpose of obtaining residence. It was found that such marriage

migrants who use marriage as a strategy to obtain legal residence in the US are more prone to divorce than other international marriages. This issue is also discussed in Iris Sportel's (2016) book on divorce in transnational families. Sportel discusses some research results (Van Huis and Steenhof and Kalmijn's studies) and shares a few statistics on divorce rates in international marriages. Based on the relevant research results, Sportel (2016) mentioned that couples consisting of a Dutch and a non-Westerner have a much higher risk of divorce than Dutch-Dutch couples and that more than 55 per cent of marriages between Dutch and non-Western foreigners (including Moroccans and Egyptians) end in divorce. It is also worth noting that the divorce rate between Dutch women and non-Western men is higher (around 10 per cent) than the divorce rate between Dutch men and non-Western women. In other words, the divorce rate increases even more when the foreign spouse and the immigrant is a man.

As it can be seen from the research results above, the divorce rates of native-native marriages and native-foreign marriages differ. Generally, divorces are much higher in marriages between different ethnic identities. We can base the reasons for this on several points. Firstly, since most long-distance international marriages are made in order to obtain residence in developed countries, a healthy family cannot be established as a result of marriages between different cultures. The general purpose of long-distance international marriage migration is to achieve prosperity, and the tool used to achieve this purpose is marriage. The instrumentalised understanding of marriage damages the unions established between different cultures in a short time. Secondly, although globalisation causes intense interaction between cultures, a common understanding between different cultures has not yet been developed. The lack of a common understanding between the individualised European and American people and the Asian and African people who try to suppress individuality through establishing a family causes most long-distance international marriages to end in divorce.

CONCLUSION

The trajectory of migration has consistently been from developing regions toward developed ones. Regardless of the method of migration, this fundamental reality remains unchanged. Individuals tend to choose destinations where they can secure their future and, in particular, attain economic comfort. For this reason, the general direction of migration is toward areas of prosperity. It is possible to assert that similar motivations underlie various types of migration. For instance, in their study, Mihi-Ramirez and Kumpikaite (2014) highlighted the significance of economic pull factors in student migration, noting that preferred destination countries are often the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Similarly, in a qualitative study on

young Kosovars migrating to developed countries, Blazhevska (2017) identified economic factors and the desire to live under better conditions as primary drivers of migration. The report by the Denmark Ministry of Immigration and Integration (2022) reveals that the majority of migrants to Denmark originate from Turkey, Poland, and Syria, and that half of the Turkish migrants arrive through family reunification. Thus, as in other types of migration, international marriage migration also tends to target developed countries. In other words, the primary motivation behind long-distance international marriage migration is the pursuit of prosperity.

One of the migration methods that occurs in this context is marriage migration. Marriage migration is used as a shortcut to obtain residence in developed countries. The main purpose here is, of course, not to start a family but to achieve prosperity. In order to achieve prosperity, there are thousands of marriage migrations from various Asian countries to Europe and America every year. Marriage migration (family reunification and family formation) has the highest proportion among migration from developed countries for the purpose of obtaining permanent residence. According to the OECD's 2022 report, 43% of permanent migration to OECD countries is made up of marriage migration through family reunification, which requires this migration method to be taken seriously.

Since international marriage migration, especially long-distance marriage migration (between non-bordering countries) is generally aimed at achieving welfare, the instrumentalisation of marriage becomes inevitable over time. Both the proliferation of activities that enable intercultural interaction, the development of migrant networks and the increase in matchmaking sites and fake marriages, which cause the instrumentalisation of marriage, increase long-distance international marriage migration to serious levels. Therefore, developed countries are developing more and more stringent policies on granting residence permits due to marriage. Because the development of an unstoppable migration method leads to the proliferation of immigrants and threatens the dominant culture. This study is important in terms of drawing attention to both the inevitable aspect of marriage migration and the seriousness of this migration method.

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Etik Beyan:	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan edilir.	**Ethical Statement:**	It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.
Çıkar Çatışması:	Çalışmada kişiler veya kurumlar arası çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.	**Conflict of Interest:**	The authors declare that declare no conflict of interest.
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