Transit migration in Turkey: being between Europe and elsewhere in the last forty years & today

Prof. Dr. Ahmet İçduygu
Koç University

LEVEL POLICY SEMINAR, MIGRATION POLICY CENTRE
CONTEMPORARY REALITIES AND DYNAMICS OF MIGRATION IN ITALY
European University Institute (EUI)
APRIL 13, 2018
Purpose

- to consider recent trends in "transit migration" in Turkey,
- to relate them to the wider context of the migration system around them,
  - In order to have a better and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of transit migration
History matters

“Study the past, if you would divine the future” – Confucius

Path dependence
Introduction

“Transit migration” is widely used, but also contested, concept

- hard to have its clear definition
- hard to have its direct measurement
- mixed with other categories of mobility (irregular, regular, temporary, permanent, asylum or refugee movements...)
- implies a stage of “step-by-step migration”, that is a relatively old concept
Introduction

- Academic and policy literature on “transit migration”
  - remains highly descriptive
  - is heavily biased towards the so-called “transit countries”, strictly focusing only on ”transit countries”, and ignoring its wider context, and in particular, the roles played by the “origin” and “destination” countries
  - refers to it as an “anomaly”

- This presentation offers a brief historical-comparative overview
  - to unpack the underscored complexity of transit migratory flows
    - by referring to the wider context of transit migration in Turkey,
  - and, consequently to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon
“Transit migration” in Turkey: not something new

The most recent, remarkable example: 2015 summer/fall --- mass refugee flows to Europe

BUT, there is a long-established history through a specific geography since early 1980s
“Transit migration” in Turkey: Geography and history matter
“Transit migration” in Turkey: a historical synopsis

- “Transit migration” in Turkey has a long-established history, that goes back to early 1980s
- Geography and history matter!

- **Origin countries/push factors**: migration pressure (push factors) in the Global East and South, not only with economic motives, but (mostly) with political reasons -- Afghanistan (since 1978), Iran (since 1979), Iraq (since 1980), Pakistan (since 1980s) Syria (since 2011), and then to a certain extent, Myanmar and Bangladesh (2000s)

- **Transit country/functional factors**: Turkey’s eastern and southern borders are constantly subject to arrivals of huge numbers of refugees and (irregular) migrants

- **Destination countries/pull factors**: European countries are the main targeted countries

- **Transit migrants**: mostly asylum seekers and refugees as a product of mass forced displacements
Afghan refugees and their movements to Europe through Turkey
Syrian refugees and their movements to Europe through Turkey

12.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria

SOURCE: European Commission, Reuters, BBC
“Illegal border crossings” on the Eastern Mediterranean route in numbers, 2008-2017
Detections of “irregular migrants” in Turkey, 1995-2017
## Origin of Transit Migrants in Turkey, Top Five Countries, 2000-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2000-2010</th>
<th>2014-2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Syria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<td>Iran</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
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EU-Turkey Migration Deal

The EU-Turkey summit on the migrant crisis

EU-Turkey talks: Proposals
- All migrants arriving in Greece to be returned to Turkey
- For every Syrian readmitted to Turkey, one Syrian will be resettled by the EU

In exchange, Turkey is asking for:
- Doubling of EU aid
- More European visas for its nationals
- The resumption of EU membership talks
- 6 bn euros from now to end 2018

Main migration routes:

Arrivals:
- In 2016 (as of March 15)
- Since March 2011
- Deed or missing during the sea crossing so far in 2016

Source: IOM, UNHCR

1,250,000 migrants arrived in Europe in 2015
Detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU’s external borders, 2015
(282 962)
1 822 337

Route

- Eastern borders route
  - (1 275)
  - 1 920

- Western Balkan route
  - (43 157)
  - 764 038
    - Not specified 556 258
    - Syria 90 065
    - Afghanistan 53 237

- Black Sea route
  - (43)
  - 68

- Circular route from Albania to Greece
  - (8 841)
  - 8 932

- Western Mediterranean route
  - (7 272)
  - 7 164
    - Guinea 1 991
    - Algeria 1 052
    - Morocco 828

- Western African route
  - (276)
  - 874

- Central Mediterranean route
  - (170 664)
  - 153 946
    - Eritrea 38 791
    - Nigeria 21 914
    - Somalia 12 430

- Eastern Mediterranean route
  - (50 834)
  - 885 386
    - Syria 496 340
    - Afghanistan 213 635
    - Iraq 92 721
Detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU’s external borders, 2016

511 371
(1 822 177 in 2015)

Route
(in 2015) in 2016

Top three nationalities

Eastern borders route
(1 927)
1 349

Western Balkan route
(764 038)
130 261

Not specified 102 430
Afghanistan 10 620
Pakistan 5 583

Black Sea route
(68)
1

Circular route from
Albania to Greece
(8 932)
5 121

Western Mediterranean route
(7 004)
10 231
Guinea 2 184
Algeria 1 760
Côte d’Ivoire 1 646

Central Mediterranean route
(153 946)
181 459
Nigeria 37 554
Eritrea 20 721
Guinea 13 550

Eastern Mediterranean route
(885 386)
182 277
Syria 84 585
Afghanistan 43 120
Iraq 27 978

Western African route
(874)
671

Detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU's external borders, 2017

204,718

(511,046 in 2016)

Route

Top three nationalities:
- Syria: 19,447
- Nigeria: 18,309
- Côte d'Ivoire: 16,300

Western Balkan route (130,261):
- Pakistan: 4,355
- Afghanistan: 3,388
- Iraq: 960

Eastern Mediterranean route (182,277):
- Syria: 16,395
- Iraq: 7,193
- Afghanistan: 3,985

Western Mediterranean route (9,990):
- Morocco: 4,809
- Algeria: 4,219
- Côte d'Ivoire: 3,345

Central Mediterranean route (181,376):
- Nigeria: 18,163
- Guinea: 9,714
- Côte d'Ivoire: 9,509

Eastern borders route (1,349): 776

Black Sea route (537)
detections of illegal border-crossing, Europe, Jan.-Feb., 2018
# Detections of illegal border-crossing, various borders of Europe, 2010-2018

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Detections of illegal border-crossing, various borders of Europe, % distribution, 2010-2018

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After the EU-Turkey Migration Deal

<table>
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<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>1569</td>
<td>GRAND TOTAL</td>
<td>1569</td>
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<td>PAKISTAN</td>
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<td>IVORY COAST</td>
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<td>SYRIA</td>
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<td>HAITI</td>
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<td>ALGERIA</td>
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<td>LIBERIA</td>
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<td>INDIA</td>
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<td>IRAQ</td>
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<td>SRI LANKA</td>
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<td>NIGER</td>
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<td>DEMOCRATIC CONGO</td>
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<td>SUDAN</td>
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<td>EGYPT</td>
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<td>CAMEROON</td>
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<td>YEMEN</td>
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<td>MYANMAR</td>
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<td>NEPAL</td>
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<td>SENEGAL</td>
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<td>SIERRA LEONE</td>
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<tr>
<td>GHANA</td>
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<td>BURKINA FASO</td>
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<td>GUINEA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>WEST SAHRA</td>
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Detections of “irregular migrants” in Turkey, 2005-2018

TOP FIVE COUNTRIES, FIRST 3 MONTHS OF 2018

Afghanistan: 18 000
Syria: 9 000
Pakistan: 5 000
Iraq: 4 000
Iran: 1 000

TOTAL NUMBERS, 2005-18

[Graph showing the total numbers of detections for each year from 2005 to 2018]
Detections of “irregular migrants” in Turkey by locations, 2017
Migrant Smugglers Apprehended in Turkey, 2010-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Migrant Smugglers by Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1.161*</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>4.641</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3.314</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1.292</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1.711</td>
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</tbody>
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* by the date of 29.03.2018
Concluding Remarks

- Turkey has a long history of “transit migration”
  - determined by the migratory regime(s) in its neighborhood, southeastern Asia, Middle East, and eastern Africa, and Europe
  - very much affected by the political crisis and conflicts, and protracted refugee situations
  - facilitated by the established culture (mechanisms and dynamics) of transit migration

- Transit migration is NOT an anomaly --- it is a norm

- Transit migration in Turkey is a part of the European Migratory System
  - highly politicized in the context of EU-Turkey relations

- The EU-Turkey migration deal has certain results
  - there is a considerable decline in numbers, but increase in the violations of the rights of asylum seekers
  - limited numbers of returns
Concluding Remarks

- Mainly the fragile states and protracted refugee situations in three countries --- Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq --- create an environment for the persistence of transit migration through Turkey to Europe.

- The number of transit migrants through Turkey arriving on Europe’s shores in the last two years was significantly lower than previous years, but the arrivals have not stopped.

- In 2018, there are increasing number of Afghans and Pakistanis arriving in Turkey, mostly with the intention of moving to Europe.

- The pool of irregular migrants and asylum seekers/refugees in Turkey is remarkably expanding.

- Currently planned repatriation programs for Syrian refugees in Turkey, Jordon, and Lebanon may direct some of Syrian refugees to Europe.
The question persists to be answered: *Does Turkey, as a country of transit migration, remain as a “safety valve” or a “ticking bomb” for Europe?*

*Depends on...?*
THANK YOU...