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Conclusion

Seçil Paçacı Elitok and Thomas Straubhaar

in:

Turkey, Migration and the EU: Potentials, Challenges and Opportunities

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	7
List of Tables	8
Acknowledgement	9
Introduction	11
<i>Seçil Paçacı Elitok and Thomas Straubhaar</i>	
Demography and Migration in Transition: Reflections on EU-Turkey Relations	19
<i>Ahmet İçduygu and Ayşem Biriz Karaçay</i>	
Turkey's "Critical Europeanization": Evidence from Turkey's Immigration Policies	39
<i>Juliette Tolay</i>	
Turkey's New Draft Law on Asylum: What to Make of It?	63
<i>Kemal Kirişçi</i>	
Is Migration Feminized?	85
A Gender- and Ethnicity-Based Review of the Literature on Irregular Migration to Turkey	
<i>Gülay Toksöz and Çağla Ünlütürk Ulutaş</i>	
Turkey in the New Migration Era: Migrants between Regularity and Irregularity	113
<i>Sema Erder and Selmin Kaşka</i>	
Causes and Consequences of the Downturn in Financial Remittances to Turkey: A Descriptive Approach	133
<i>Giulia Bettin, Seçil Paçacı Elitok and Thomas Straubhaar</i>	

Table of Contents

Bordering the EU: Istanbul as a Hotspot for Transnational Migration <i>Barbara Pusch</i>	167
Emigration of Highly Qualified Turks A Critical Review of the Societal Discourses and Social Scientific Research <i>Yaşar Aydın</i>	199
Continuity and Change: Immigration Policies in Germany from the Sixties to the Present <i>Mehmet Okyayuz</i>	229
Conclusion <i>Seçil Paçacı Elitok and Thomas Straubhaar</i>	259
List of Abbreviations	271
International Workshop on Migration Potentials from and to Turkey	273
Contributors	275

Conclusion

Seçil Paçacı Elitok and Thomas Straubhaar

Turkey is an important actor in terms of migratory regimes and migration management, as it stands at the junctions of Europe, Asia and Africa. Due to its geopolitical significance and closeness both to the EU Area and MENA (Middle East and North Africa), Turkey became the nexus of emigration, immigration and transit migration. Turkey has been a country of emigration for the last fifty years since World War II. The movement of Turkish guest-workers to Western Europe and especially to Germany has been in the focus of interest. However, other countries of destination have become more important, as Turkish firms have expanded their activities in the neighboring countries. In recent times, another phenomenon has become apparent. More and more, Turkey has also become a country of immigration. Especially migrants from MENA have moved to Turkey with its improving standard of living (in comparison to the region) and the increasing chances of getting a job (especially in informal sectors). Furthermore, however, some of the immigrants see Turkey as a transit country of their long journey to (Western) Europe. This is of special importance for the EU, since the transit movement via Turkey directly affects the immigration control system from Turkey to the EU due to the common Turkish-EU border.

In the context of Turkey's accession to the EU, the issue of "potential migration" from Turkey and its impact upon European labor markets became one of the concerns of the EU, considering Turkey's growing population and young labor force. In the light of the discussion about the deepening of the EU instead of enlargement, the relations between Turkey and the EU followed a stagnating pattern in the post-Lisbon Treaty period. Since the second half of 2008, under the influence of conservative leaders of Europe, such as Merkel and Sarkozy, relations between Turkey and the EU almost came to a standstill. Cur-

rently, privileged partnership as an alternative form to Turkey's membership is among the most controversial issues in the current agenda of EU.

Fears

Among the fears of the EU with regard to Turkey's membership, three points, which are elaborated below, play the most significant role. Firstly, due to the demographics of Turkey, the numbers of seats at the European Parliament will decrease, which is not for the sake of current members. Secondly, in terms of living standard and GDP per capita, Turkey is below the European average and considered as an outlier not fitting into the economic standards. Finally, due to the Muslim identity of Turkey, there are concerns about the disharmony between the Christian values of Europe and cultural impacts of Islam.

Too many

The EU's demographic trend is characterized by low fertility rates and longevity. Thus, in demographic terms, Europe is facing the problems of an aging and shrinking population in addition to the low labor force participation rates. Demographic trends show that West Europe will mostly rely on the foreign labor force in the future. Münz et al. (2007)¹ underline the logical necessity of migration and postulate that on average a net flow of slightly less than one and half million labor migrants per year would be required to keep Europe's economically active population at constant levels.

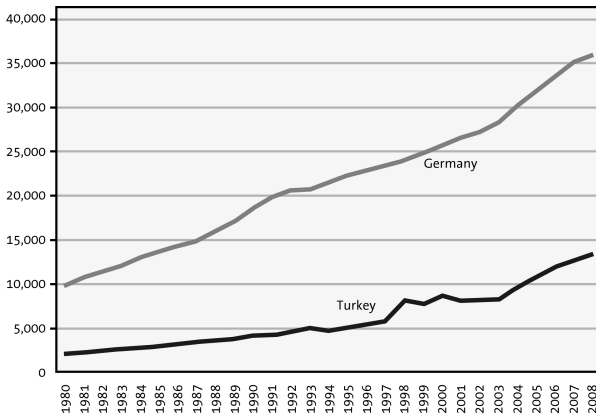
With regard to the future migration potential from Turkey to Germany, the demographic development might become crucial. In the mid-2000s, the size of the population was 82 million in Germany and 70 million in Turkey. In the last decade, the population grew by 0.1 in Germany and by 1.5 in Turkey. In the mid-2000s, 20 % of the total population in Germany was over 65 years of age. In Turkey, this ratio remained only at 6 %. Consequently, the population development might lead to an excess supply of labor in Turkey, while in Germany it might lead to an excess demand for labor. Taken together that will stimulate incentives to migrate from Turkey to Germany. In comparison to Germany, Turkey's population is increasing; however, this trend will be stabilized as well in the long run.

¹ Münz/Straubhaar/Vadean, F./Vadean, N. (2007).

*Too Poor*²

Another crucial factor in determining the causes of migration is the contrast in the average standard of living among different countries. The choice of individuals to emigrate based on their increased income earning potentials does not follow a linear function, but instead a logarithmic one. This means that there is a stronger propensity for an individual to choose to migrate in the case of larger income gaps, which becomes weaker in the case of smaller income gaps. The propensity for an individual to emigrate may occur long before income generation between the host country and the country of origin have equalized because of a saturation point of migration. Thus, the speed of change is important. It makes a big difference whether the income gap is declining rapidly or not.

Figure 1: Per Capita GDP (in Purchasing Power Parities USD)* in Turkey and Germany, 1980 to 2008



* In this figure, Purchasing Power Parities USD have been used to reflect the standard of living and its difference between Turkey and Germany.

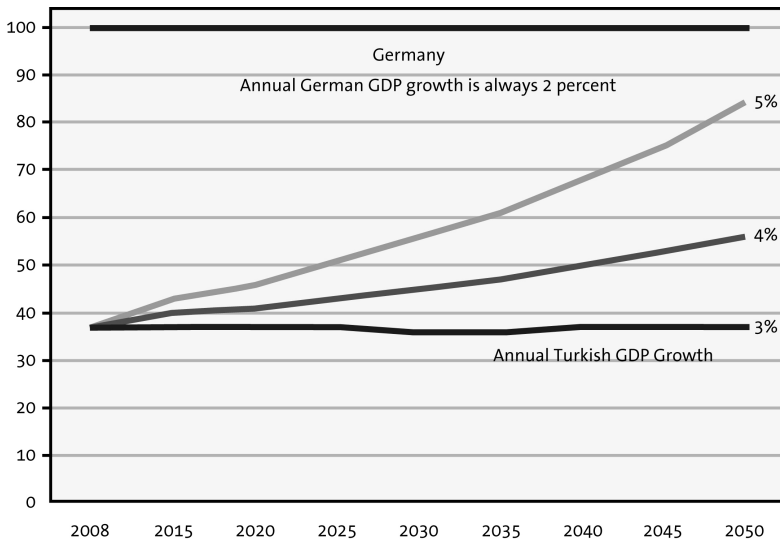
Source: World Bank: World Development Indicators.

Figure 1 shows the rather wide gap in the average standard of living between Turkey and Germany by comparing the per capita GDP measured in purchasing power parities USD. The gap has declined. In 1980, the GDP per capita in Turkey reached about 20 % of the German GDP per capita. Today, it reaches about 37 %.

² Paçacı Elitok/Straubhaar (2011, pp. 116–118).

To illustrate how long it may take to catch up, Figure 2 reflects a simple simulation exercise. It is assumed that in the next decades Turkey’s GDP will grow faster than Germany’s GDP. (In the mid-2000s, the GDP per capita was around 30,000 USD in Germany and 10,000 USD in Turkey).

Figure 2: Simulation of the Gap in Per Capita GDP (in Purchasing Power Parities USD)* between Turkey and Germany, 2008 to 2050, under the Assumption of Different Annual Growth Rates for the GDP



* In this figure, Purchasing Power Parities USD have been used to reflect the standard of living and its difference between Turkey and Germany.

Source: World Bank: World Development Indicators.

The simulation shows that under this assumption, the German GDP grows with a constant rate of 2 % per year while the Turkish GDP has to grow by 3 % per year to keep the existing gap of the GDP per capita vis-à-vis Germany stable. Turkey requires a more rapid growth of its GDP to compensate for its more rapid population growth. If the Turkish economy grows by 4 % per year and the German GDP stays at 2 % per year, the Turkish GDP per capita will reach half the size of the German GDP per capita by 2040. If it grows by 5 % per year, the 2:1 gap is reached by 2025. The simulation exercise is a simple esti-

mate to illustrate how long the substantial gap of the average standard of living will persist between Germany and Turkey. This would be the case even if the Turkish economy grows (much) faster than the German one.

Too Muslim

Within the last fifty years of Turkish migration to Western Europe, one dimension became gradually dominant in defining the image of “Turks” in Europe: religion. Turkish migrants increasingly are defined and perceived as being “Muslim” in the first place, in addition to all their specific characteristics. There are several reasons behind this shift. One is unarguably the events of September 11, which somehow increased fears of Muslim communities and contributed to the rise of Islamophobia. The second reason is the pattern within the Turkish diaspora towards conservatism, which reflects itself in the increasing number of ethnic and religious associations, in which Turkish migrants are organized. The internal politics in Turkey is in line with the religious tendencies of Turkish community in Europe. This brings the long-standing question under discussion one more time: the contradiction between the secular identity of Europe and the Islamic tradition of Turkey. The AKP (Justice and Development Party)’s victory in the latest political elections makes this question even more meaningful and it is worth discussing the challenges that Turkey will face in the near future in terms of religion, being the sole Muslim candidate of the union.

Too many fears?

Regarding the population developments in Turkey and in the EU – with a fast-growing population in Turkey and a declining and aging population in the EU – and taking into account the gap in the average standard of living, there is a potential for migration flows from Turkey to the EU indeed. This is one (and probably the most important) reason why some EU countries (especially Germany) are concerned about applying the right of free movement in the case of Turkish workers.³ Are these fears justified by theoretical expectations or empirical evidence? Several studies have attempted to answer these questions; however, “migration intention” is a complicated concept whose measurement is fairly complex.⁴

³ Paçacı Elitok/Straubhaar (2010 a, p. 8).

⁴ For a detailed review, see Paçacı Elitok (2010).

The main methodological difficulty for most of these studies lies in the fundamental political and institutional change that goes along with a Turkish accession to the EU. Turkey becoming a member of the EU and being granted the right of free movement for Turkish workers means doubtlessly a unique experience with no historical blue-print at all. Thus, if there is a case where the famous Lucas-critique⁵ is well applied, it comes with the changes an EU membership for Turkey would generate. The methodological key questions are: how far can we (1) use experiences in the past to learn something for the future and (2) speculate about the migration potential from Turkey to the EU after such a fundamental change from strong to no restrictions has taken place? Briefly, summarizing the existing empirical evidence⁶ from all the different studies, one thing becomes very clear: the estimations present broadly varying numbers. Figures with respect to the volume of potential Turkish migrants from Turkey to the EU range between 0.5 to 4.4 million. It is sufficient to say that the literature lacks an agreement on a reasonable interval with a minimum and a maximum value. The wideness of the range is rather large and quite sensitive to the data sets and methodologies that are applied, which brings the reliability of numbers into discussion. Forecasting the approximate volume of potential migration is quite necessary, especially for policy makers; however, one should be cautious when approaching the estimation literature, since the range is rather wide and the quality of the data is poor and the methodologies are unclear and inconsistent. Moreover, the focus of the debate should rather shift to the profile, the structure, the dynamics, the regional distribution, trends and mechanisms of potential migration flows and to the motivation of migrants to come to Europe.

Actually, the question is not so much: how many Turkish workers would take use of the right to move freely? The right question is: how many more (or

⁵ The Lucas-critique is "that any change in policy will systematically alter the structure of econometric models. ... [This conclusion] is fundamental; for it implies that comparisons of the effects of alternative policy rules using current macro econometric models are invalid regardless of the performance of these models over the sample period or in ex ante short-term forecasting" (Lucas [1976, p. 41]). The Lucas-critique refers to the level of consistency and invariance over time and space. It is about the correctness of an extrapolation from past migration patterns to expected migration behavior and it is about the possibilities of applying empirical migration experiences from one area to another. Some scholars try to overcome this fundamental methodological problem by the inclusion of so-called country-specific effects. In most econometric forecasts the country-specific aspects are captured by a country-specific intercept, which remains constant over time. However, it remains more than crucial how the country-specific intercept is defined and applied to Turkey that has had no historical experience of free migration to Europe.

⁶ Paçacı Elitok (2010).

even less) would move compared to a situation with no right of free movement? Erzan et al. (2006)⁷ show that if Turkey's membership process is endangered and high growth cannot be sustained, 2.7 million people may be penetrating the EU-15 despite the restrictions on the labor mobility. This is more than in a scenario with a Turkish EU membership and free movement for Turkish workers. Thus, it is not unrealistic to expect, that under the lack of full EU membership and free movement of labor, Turkish migration flows towards the EU will be even at higher levels. The migration experience after the Eastern enlargement has shown that the actual migration flows are fairly below the expected levels, following the accession. It might be that something like a migration hump will be the most realistic scenario. There will be an increase of migration flows firstly, just after the right of free movement is granted. But after a while, it will decrease.⁸

Potentials⁹

Migration flows from the EU to Turkey will be determined by various factors (income differentials, unemployment, migrant networks, migration policies, religion, culture, etc.) in the future. European retirees will keep migrating to Turkey, particularly to the Aegean and Mediterranean Area, for their retirement life. The return of people with a Turkish background and also the return of retiring Turkish migrants (e.g., first-generation German-Turks) will also be an increasing part of potential migration flows from the EU to Turkey. Yet, due to the entry requirement to the host country every six months, their movements will be categorized under circular migration. As Istanbul becomes more and more attractive for international business, headquarters of multinational corporations will keep setting up there, which will motivate expatriate workers and professionals to migrate to Turkey for work-related purposes. In addition to foreign professionals, the potential migration to Turkey of highly skilled migrants with a Turkish background who are educated in Germany is and will be significant.

Istanbul will keep and even increase its attractiveness for migrants, especially highly skilled ones. Considering its development, Istanbul will be com-

⁷ Refik/Kuzubas/Yildiz (2006, pp. 33–34).

⁸ Paçacı Elitok/Straubhaar (2011, pp. 107–128).

⁹ *Ibid.* (pp. 122–123).

peting with other global cities in attracting international migration flows. Student migration will play a crucial role, as well. Due to the lack of cultural and language barriers, students from Turkish-speaking countries like Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, etc., will prefer Turkey for educational purposes. This temporary future potential of students may turn into permanent migration depending on the work opportunities.

One can observe heterogeneity to a great extent within the Black Sea Area and the Middle East. Economic forecasts on the future of the Turkish economy and Turkey's neighborhood postulate that this heterogeneous structure will continue and become even more intensified since the dynamics of each economy are quite diverse. The discrepancies among the countries in the region can be considered as a sign for a future divergent pattern. The probability of these countries to converge is fairly low. Moreover, the heterogeneity of the Turkish neighborhood has implications in terms of distribution of gains from trade as well as the migration potential.¹⁰ Due to the gaps among countries with respect to their main macroeconomic indicators, Turkey's role in managing the migration flows from Middle East and ex-Soviet Union countries is of considerable importance. Under this framework, it is possible to foresee that migration from the Middle East will keep its importance in the near future and may even increase due to the latest developments in the visa policy of Turkey. Male migrants will be motivated by the job opportunities in construction, tourism and entertainment, whereas female migrants will be preferred for domestic services. Current migration forms, such as contract-dependent labor migration and marriage migration, will be persistent in the near future, where asylum seeking (in accordance with the possible solution of Kurdish dispute) may have a declining trend with the full membership to the EU.

The migration potential from Turkey to the Middle Eastern countries is relatively weak due to the tendencies in the region to employ their own citizens and encourage the young generation to work in the country.

Challenges and Opportunities

Push and pull factors behind the potential migration are of great importance. With the possible membership to the EU, Turkey should consider revising these factors in their historical context so as to find policy solutions for eliminating the pushing factors and improving the pulling ones. Considering the

¹⁰ Paçacı Elitok/Straubhaar (2010 b).

low wages and high unemployment as the main pushing factors behind the potential for labor migration, Turkey can develop policy measures to deal with these issues. This, inevitably, requires structural and institutional reforms that stabilize the Turkish economy. Better living standards, which are closer to the EU average, would decrease the motivation of Turks to migrate towards Europe. EU membership helps to reach this goal. What we have learnt from the EU experience in the past is that if labor has the legal right to move freely, this makes people (especially in border areas) more mobile internationally, but it does not induce mass migration in itself from one country to another. People's social and cultural ties with their local environment are an important obstacle for migration, and this factor has commonly been underestimated from the perspective of theoretical economics. Furthermore, it has not been taken into account seriously enough in light of the structural migration (forecasting) models. Therefore, EU membership might provoke not more but rather less migration from Turkey to the EU.

The EU intends to control migration, to select migrants on a skill-basis, to avoid illegal migration and to sign bilateral agreements so as to correspond to the need for immigrating labor force. Turkey, a country, which has waited long for EU membership, alters its foreign policy and migration management in a manner that improves its relations with its neighbors, especially in the Middle East. With respect to visa restrictions, Turkey has been following a liberal visa policy since 2005. Several visa-free agreements were signed with neighboring countries including Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Russia. The main motivation of Turkey was mainly economic gains from more integration in the region, yet its liberal visa regime brought the "construction of a new Schengen area in the Middle East" under discussion. This alteration stands both as a challenge and an opportunity for Turkey and its future perspectives on migration. On the one hand, it can be read as a "political message" to the EU, which lately initiated the privileged membership as an alternative for Turkey, revealing that there are other options for Turkey in its neighborhood for various integration possibilities and unions. On the other hand, within the EU, Turkey's liberal visa policy increased the concerns about the security issues in relation to border management, since the free entrance of immigrants both from Middle East and from Russia facilitates the potential for illegal and transit migration to Europe via Turkey.¹¹

¹¹ *Ibid.* (p.126).

One of the most crucial challenges for Turkey in its relations with the EU is illegal migration. Due to its geographical location, Turkey will be under the risk of increasing irregular migration pressure. Potentials for irregular migration to Turkey (from the Middle East and from ex- Soviet Union countries) and the significance of female migration within this flow will continue to be of considerable importance. Kirişçi (2008)¹² emphasizes the increasing importance of managing illegal migration, both as a challenge and as an opportunity, for Turkey in the near future, as it has become a transit country. Yet, he postulates that the manner in which “migration” has become securitized by the EU has adversely affected the EU-Turkish relations and generated “mistrust” on both sides. According to Kirişçi, the EU feels that Turkey is not doing enough to combat and prevent illegal transit migration and suspects that Turkey has allowed illegal migrants to use its territory to transit to the EU; and there is fear on the Turkish side that the EU intends to use Turkey as a buffer zone for irregular migrants in line with the EU regulations. Currently, Turkey altered its approach with respect to migration policy, namely: asylum law, visa regulations, illegal migration and human trafficking. In terms of asylum, the two main legislations that are under consideration are the 1994 Asylum Regulation and the 2006 Circular stipulating asylum procedure and the rights and obligations of refugees and asylum seekers. Even if Turkey is party to the UN Refugees Convention of 1951, it has still not lifted the geographical limitation, namely, non-Europeans are not granted refugee status. If it is well managed, the challenge of illegal migration can turn into an opportunity for Turkey so as to freshen the negotiations with the EU. Cooperation and dialogue between Turkey and the EU with respect to illegal migration would be beneficial for the security of both sides.¹³

Turkey is under criticism because of its migration policies being weak, unsystematic and temporary. Taking the past as a reference point for the future based on the lessons from migration history, Turkey has to re-evaluate its own interests and build up policy tools dismissing push factors, particularly in transition period, so as to transform migration from being a challenge to being an opportunity. There are risks and challenges for Turkey waiting at the gate of Europe. It is crucial to recognize the importance of policy-oriented questions regarding the push and pull factors and how they changed throughout history

¹² Kirişçi (2008).

¹³ *Ibid.* (p. 126).

and how they influenced migration decisions. Turkey ought to conduct reforms on expected emigration and immigration flows as a structural grounding of legislations and institutions in addition to the economic measures discarding the pushing factors, such as low wages, economic instability, unemployment and inadequate working conditions. Yet, Turkey must recognize the importance of migration as a development tool for its own sake (with or without EU membership), and should get prepared for short- and long-term effects of expected migration. It is better for Turkey to realize the importance of immigration factors during the EU negotiations and restructure its position according to its potential benefits from migration flows. The approach of Turkey in the 1960s, namely, considering migration as a remedy for unemployment and remittances as a source of foreign currency, should be replaced by a more realistic and contemporary future projection so as not to repeat the same mistakes. Turkey should seek routes for a transformation from a labor exporter country to a labor importer country.

The EU is being criticized due to the lack of common binding frame. Even if several steps have been taken so far, Europe is still lacking a common immigration policy and is under criticism due to the lack of consistency among European members. The former policies were criticized because of being inflexible, non-adaptive, top-down, bureaucratic, too specific and designed for the local needs. It is among the targets of the Lisbon Agenda for the post-2010 period to create employment opportunities for the unemployed low skilled migrants, to promote the integration of available migrants and to implement a shift to a more selective migration policy. Consequently, migration will keep its key role in relations of Turkey with the EU – not necessarily for the next fifty years but certainly for the next decade.

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