

**Rethinking the transit migration in Turkey: reality and re-presentation in the
creation of a migratory phenomenon**

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Introduction

At the heart of debate over the phenomenon of transit migration, there exists the noticeably evident case of Europe and its near geographies. Discussions of the transit migration in Europe and its peripheries are not simply descriptions of an existing reality but are to some extent part of the process of constructing that reality whereby discursive practices enable such an entity to be conceptualized and talked about in policy statements.¹ This observation does not mean we need to discard conventional analytical and empirical frameworks which tackle with the reality of transit migration. Rather, in order to have a more informed view of this ‘reality’, we need to work with theoretical abstractions and discursive de-constructions, that is, we should take a multi-dimensional analytical approach to the study of transit migration. At the core of these theoretical and discursive ideas lie *two interrelated aspects of the recent politicisation of international migration* system in Europe: *securitisation* and *economisation*. The political construction of transit migration in the European sphere can be interpreted through the processes of securitisation and economisation of international migratory regimes in the continent which are not only increasingly becoming more restrictive and selective, but also more dynamic and multifaceted. This means that these regimes are often shaped by a complex, interacting, and even conflicting mixture of security concerns (securitisation) and economic interests (economisation) in the migratory regimes of major receiving countries. It is within this context that for instance international migratory flows directed to European countries seem to include a significant proportion of migrants who first come to the peripheral zones of Europe, such as Eastern Europe, Western Asia, or Northern Africa, intending to enter the continent from those areas.² Turkey appears as one of those transit zones of international migrants who intend to enter Europe.

Since the mid-1990s, much has been written about irregular migration in general and transit migration in particular in Turkey. Increasingly, the implications of transit migration for Turkey’s European Union (EU) membership affairs are also being studied. Turkey has in recent years implemented a number of policy changes in its migratory regimes that have been toned by the dynamics and mechanisms of the Turkey-EU relationship. Utilising a relatively revealing data set on the apprehension cases of irregular migrants provided by the security forces together with the findings of several surveys conducted in the country, firstly, this paper documents the irregular and transit migration experience of Turkey for the last 30 years. It also relates the phenomenon of irregular and transit migration in Turkey to the wider context of the international migratory regimes around Europe. Then the paper outlines the developments associated with transit migration in the country. The role of Turkey’s EU affairs within these changes is complex

¹ See Dvell (2006a, 2006b, 2006c).

² See İduygu (2000).

and contradictory, and yet not fully explored. After describing the panorama of transit migration, finally, the paper explores the way in which the political construction of transit migration is associated with the processes of securitisation and economisation of international migratory regimes in Europe and its peripheries.

Irregular Migration in Turkey: A Reality with Blurred Borders

Although Turkey is defined as a “country of emigration” based on the migration of workers to West European countries since the early 1960s, intense migratory movements towards the country in recent years has transformed Turkey to a “country of immigration” as well.³ In fact, migratory flows towards Turkey are not a new phenomenon; immigration towards the country existed since the early years of the Republic. However, migratory practices of these early periods had followed a course substantially different from the migratory practices of recent times, both in terms of nature and scale. International migratory movements towards Turkey during the process of nation-state building comprised mostly migrants with Turkish ethnicity, living in neighbouring countries.

Differing from the time of the early years of the Republic, Turkey has seen, in recent years, flows of migrant groups from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds migrating for various purposes. Ongoing immigration to Turkey of those persons qualified as “*aliens*” altered Turkey’s position in the international migration system in Europe and, in a sense, Turkey’s former singular position of being a “migrant-sending country” is now supplemented by the position of a “migrant-receiving country.” More recently, Turkey is becoming also a transit country (transit zone) for migrants seeking to reach a third country. In this context, it may not be wrong to speak of a triadic position, rather than a dual one. The international migration movements to Turkey as of the end of the 1970s, particularly from neighbouring countries and from other nearby countries include a great variety of migratory movements like those by transit migrants, irregular migrant workers, asylum seekers, and refugees.⁴ Migration towards Turkey does not exclusively comprise these migrant groups. As a product of globalisation and liberal developments in economy, it is now common to see foreign nationals to find jobs in their fields or foreigners obtaining permit for residing, working and living in Turkey (some of them, for instance, are in the context of a form of migration known as the “retirement migration” of Europeans to the Mediterranean coasts).

These migratory movements are closely related to Turkey’s geographical location, and also to the recent history of these geographies. Economic, political and security questions arising in neighbouring countries are among the main reasons that drive people living in those countries to migrate to Turkey. While some see Turkey as their main destination country to work and live, others consider it only as a temporary station on their way to other targeted destinations. Due to Turkey’s position as a bridge connecting Asia, Europe and Africa and its important sea routes, many migrants tend to use Turkey as a transit country for migrating to their destinations in the developed countries of the West and North.

³ See İçduygu (2003, 2006).

⁴ See İçduygu (2003, 2006), Kirişçi (2002).

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the regime change in Iran in the 1970s, the legal turmoil and wars in the Middle East caused by Saddam's regime in Iraq, and finally the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union caused Turkey to emerge as an important destination for irregular migratory movements. As with many other countries of the world, the intensity of globalisation process in this era contributed to Turkey becoming a "migrant-receiving country" and a "transit country" in its international migration system which to a large extent is an integral part of the European migratory regime. This created a complex migration system in Turkey, involving irregular migrants, transit migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and, at times, persons of regular (legal) migrant status.

We will examine the above-described patterns of migration into Turkey under two categories: irregular (undocumented) migration and regular (documented) migration (Table 1). Irregular migration can further be discussed under three separate headings: (a) transit migration (b) shuttle, or circular, migration, and (c) asylum seeker and refugee movements. Regular migration, on the other hand, comprises persons who arrive in Turkey for employment or academic purposes and their family members, and who have the necessary permissions for residence and work. The discussion here will not specifically include regular migration, since it is beyond the scope of the paper.

It is a formidable task to obtain sufficient and reliable data for determining the volume and trends of irregular migratory movements. Nevertheless, there are some indicative estimates available. For example, it is possible to comment on the extent of *irregular migration* towards Turkey by evaluating figures on persons apprehended by Turkish security authorities on charges of irregular migration.⁵ This form of migration is observed to have substantially accelerated from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. Whereas just over 11,000 irregular migrants were apprehended in 1995, and 19,000 in 1996, this figure reached 47,000 in 1999, and by 2000 it was over 94,000 (Table 1). Starting from 2001, a declining trend is observed in the number of irregular migrants detained: this figure, which was nearly 83,000 in 2002, dropped below 50,000 in the year 2005, but again rose to nearly 52,000 in 2006 (Table 1). When it is considered that these figures represent only apprehended irregular migrants, it is clear that the scale of irregular migration through Turkey might be greater than these figures. In reference to relevant literature on migration, it should be fair to say that the true picture would be at least two or three times the number of migrants apprehended. When the magnitude of a figure so calculated is taken into consideration, it can be stated that the scale of the irregular migratory wave Turkey has received in recent years is comparable to many other countries of the world which receive intense immigration.

When the countries from which irregular migrants originate are considered⁶, it can be argued that some of the apprehended migrants, mostly coming from the Eastern and Southern

⁵ Data on the apprehended cases of irregular migrants in Turkey since the mid-1990s are compiled by the Bureau for Foreigners, Borders, and Asylum at the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior.

⁶ Here, based on the country of origin, we assume that all of the migrants coming from the countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, and Somalia are the transit migrants who have intention of going to the third countries, while all of the migrants originating from former communist countries in the Eastern Europe and Asia are the circular migrants who frequently come to Turkey.

borders of Turkey, have intended to choose the country as a bridge to reach their destination countries in the West and North, so they were most likely *transit migrants*.⁷ Considering the data available on migrants detained by security forces, it can be assumed that in the beginning of the 2000s, around 51,000 to 57,000 migrants intended to use Turkey annually as a transit country, while this figure has dropped to a level below 20,000 today. Most of these transit migrants enter Turkey illegally with the help of human smugglers and leave or attempt to leave Turkey using similar ways. It appeared that from 1996 to 2006, nearly 620,000 irregular migrants were apprehended in Turkey, nearly 52 per cent of them seemed to be transit migrants (Table 1). Over this period, the first five source countries of migrants, who were mostly transit migrants, were: Iraq (114,000), Pakistan (51,000), Afghanistan (38,000), Iran (25,000), and Bangladesh (20,000) (Table 2).

As a newly emerged data source, information released by the Turkish General Staff⁸ on the irregular border-crossings since September 2006 provides us with some figures which implicitly reflect the nature of transit migration through Turkey. This new information on irregular border-crossings is complementary to the data provided on apprehended cases of irregular migrants elaborated above. According to this data set, there were approximately 48,000 foreign citizens apprehended in the period of September 2006 - February 2007 as they violated the rules of border-crossings in Turkey: more than one-fifth were from Palestine, less than one-fifth from Iraq, more than 10 per cent from Afghanistan, another 10 per cent from Mauritania, nine per cent from Pakistan, and seven per cent from Somalia (Table 4). Data indicated that nearly four-fifths of these irregular border-crosser were caught on the borders between Greece and Turkey, and Bulgaria and Turkey while migrants were departing, and the remaining one-fifth were apprehended on the eastern borders of Turkey (mostly on Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian borders) while these migrants were entering Turkey (Table 5).

As a part of the irregular migratory flows to Turkey, by shuttle, or circular, migration, we refer to the mobility of persons making multiple trips to Turkey in search of economic opportunities. In circular migration, entry into Turkey is typically legal, but visas may be overstayed. Or, some people may engage in circular movements in order to avoid overstaying their visas. One important mode of shuttle migration is suitcase trade (or shuttle trade), in which case persons are less likely to stay in Turkey beyond the duration of their visas. Another significant mode is the mobility of people who come to Turkey in search of informal jobs, in which case visa violations are more likely, but also depend on Turkey's visa regime for a particular country as well as the proximity of that country to Turkey. The reason that we consider both suitcase trade and labour migration as forms of circular migration is because, conceptually and empirically, there are a number of similarities between these forms of cross-border mobility. First, the economic activities of both the suitcase traders and irregular labour migrants are largely informal. Second, these two forms of circular migration are often intermingled with each other: suitcase traders may turn into labour migrants, or vice versa, labour migrants may sometimes

⁷ As it will be discussed later in this paper, there is much evidence that many irregular migrants are transit migrants who come to Turkey with the intention of going to a third country but who remain here and continue to maintain the idea of being in transit.

⁸ Information on these irregular border-crossings was compiled by the General Command of Gendarmerie and the Coast Guard Command.

engage in cross-border trade.⁹ Third, states on both sides seek to curb circular migration through restrictive measures, with the result that corruption at the borders and in law enforcement increases.¹⁰ Fourth, both suitcase trade and irregular labour migration often operate through cross-border social networks and linguistic and ethnic ties.¹¹ And finally, both types of circular migration are characterised by the prevalence of women due to their unfavourable position in post-Soviet labour markets.

As a part of the circular migration, *suitcase trade* is motivated by an effort to take advantage of the demand for and supply of various merchandise and differences in costs—including taxes, tariffs and transportation—between origin and destination countries. Suitcase trade to Istanbul from the Maghreb and East Europe (Hungary, Poland and later Bulgaria) started in the late 1980s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the concomitant removal of travel restrictions, entries by suitcase traders from former Soviet Union (FSU) countries skyrocketed.¹² It is difficult to estimate the number of suitcase traders; however, figures on entries from post-Soviet countries throughout the 1990s give us a rough idea, although these figures also include tourists and other travellers.¹³

Irregular circular labour migrants are those people from the poorer republics of the Community of Independent States (CIS) as well as some Balkan countries who arrive in Turkey on tourist visas to work informally in domestic services, the entertainment sector, sex work, construction, tourism sector, agriculture, and garment workshops. Based on some case studies on specific groups or sectors, it is possible to say that the majority among these are women, and hail from places such as Romania, Bulgaria,¹⁴ Gagauzia,¹⁵ Moldova, the Ukraine, Azerbaijan,

⁹ For some indications of this intermingling in the case of post-Soviet countries, see Yüксеker (2004); in the case of North African suitcase traders, see Daniş (2006) and Perouse (2002), cited in Daniş (2006).

¹⁰ For a conceptual discussion of corruption in relation to state capacities for controlling irregular migration through the case of Moldovan labour migrants in Turkey, see Eder (2007). For a similar discussion in the case of Russian suitcase traders, see Yüксеker (2004).

¹¹ On the social networks weaving the transnational suitcase trade market, see Yüксеker (2003). Regarding ethnic Turkish Bulgarian irregular migration to Turkey, see Parla (2006); on the migration networks of the Turkish-speaking Gagauz and of Moldovans, see Kaşka (2006), Keough (2007) and Ünal (2008).

¹² Although exact figures are unavailable, suitcase trade exports from Turkey to FSU countries were estimated to be around 9 billion dollars in 1996 and fell sharply after the Russian financial crisis in 1998 and have not recovered from a low point of 2 billion dollars per year since the early 2000s, partly as a result of the transformation of the nature of international trade between Turkey and Russia and other FSU countries. For a detailed account of shuttle trade from the FSU, see Yüксеker (2003).

¹³ Only 37,087 people entered Turkey from the USSR in 1989, whereas the next year, this figure climbed to 222,537. By the mid-1990s, entries from all Community of Independent States (CIS) countries stood at 1.5 million; and despite a drop down to 1 million in 1999 following the currency crisis in Russia, by 2000 this figure went up to 1,380,000. As of 2006, total number of entries from the CIS stands at 3,773,000 (Yüксеker, 2003 and TUIK, 2008). Within the CIS, Russia accounted for the largest volume of suitcase trade from Turkey, and the greatest number of shuttle traders (Yüксеker, 2003). Accordingly, it also accounts for the largest number of entries from CIS: 677,152 in 2000 and 1,853,442 in 2006.

¹⁴ On the migration of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria, see Parla, (2007).

Armenia, Georgia and Turkmenistan. Whereas women most typically find employment as domestic labourers, men are more likely to work in the construction¹⁶ and agricultural sectors. No information on the gender and sectoral breakdown of irregular labour migrants is available. As in the case of suitcase trade, it is difficult to estimate the number of circular labour migrants. Here, we rely on two different types of data to get an idea about the directions and extent of circular labour migration; however, both need to be interpreted with some caution. One source of data is the earlier-mentioned figures on apprehensions by security forces which give us some indication of the movements of circular irregular migrants. Accordingly, the top five source countries of circular irregular migrants were: Moldova (53,000), Romania (23,000), Georgia (18,000), Ukraine (18,000), and Russian Federation (18,000) (Table 2). These figures would suggest that, although the proportion of irregular migrant (circular) workers within the total number of apprehended irregular migrants seems to have increased in recent years, their absolute numbers must be decreasing. Again, according to the same figures, the annual number of such migrants is estimated to have reached the level of 35,000 to 43,000 in the early 2000s, but as of today, this figure has dropped below an annual level of 24,000 to 33,000.

However, figures for apprehensions for visa violations and illegal entries and exits may be misleading in the case of circular labour migrants. Ethnographic evidence on migrant domestic workers indicates that these irregular migrants strategically plan their stays according to the Turkish visa regime and the distance between their respective countries and Turkey. Therefore, the number of apprehensions may fall at a time when the number of migrants is increasing. For instance, ethnic Turks from Bulgaria can stay up to three months within a six-month period without a visa requirement; migrant workers would then come back for another three months. In this case, such a migrant would not appear in apprehension figures, but would appear several times in the annual figures for “arriving foreigners” in Turkish statistics.¹⁷ To give a divergent example, the tourist visa expires after 30 days for citizens of Turkmenistan. Again, ethnographic evidence suggests that they would stay on for a year or more since a back and forth trip to their country is very costly. In this case, such a migrant’s exit on an expired visa would appear in the apprehension statistics, but probably less frequently than in the case of migrants from a country closer to Turkey.¹⁸ Another source of data, figures on legal entries to Turkey, may give us some

¹⁵ On the migration of the Turkish-speaking Gagauz minority, see Keough (2007); on Moldovan migrants, see Ünal (2008).

¹⁶ There is scanty scholarly evidence on irregular male migrant workers. For a recent study on informal construction workers from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Georgia in the construction sector, see Toksöz and Akpınar (forthcoming).

¹⁷ Currently, a 90-day visa exemption also applies to Georgia, although previously, Georgian citizens were required to get 15-day tourist visas. In this situation, apprehensions of Georgians for visa violations are likely to fall, while legal entries will continue to increase. For Azerbaijanis, Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians, there is a two-month tourist visa policy.

¹⁸ But the illegal entry-exit apprehension figures for Turkmens would likely be smaller than apprehensions of Moldovans, who, according to ethnographic accounts, stay for about six months in Turkey and then leave, the point at which an overcharge on fines for visa overstays apply (Keough, 2007; Eder, 2007). In addition to Moldovans (and the Gagauz minority) and Turkmens, Armenian citizens can also get 30-day tourist visas.

indirect indication on the circular movement of irregular labour migrants. Although these figures obviously also include bona fide tourists, students and business people, they may be considered to be broadly indicative of a pattern of circular labour migration from the countries mentioned above (see Table 3). This pattern may be more visible for countries such as Armenia, Georgia and Turkmenistan,¹⁹ whereas the increasing number of visitors from Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Bulgaria must be due to a mixture of tourism, business and labour migration.

In recent years, Turkish authorities have implemented measures for regulating irregular migration in the context of procedures for harmonising with the EU, the penalties for human trafficking and smuggling have been increased, and the issue of protecting borders is now dealt with more seriously. As a preliminary hypothesis, it may be argued that these measures have been more effective in curbing transit migration – as the figures on apprehensions (Table 2) suggest – and less effective in stemming irregular circular labour migration for a number of reasons. First, part of the reason for this may be due to the fact that labour migrants most often enter Turkey legally, unlike many transit migrants. Second, several case studies provide some support for this contention, showing that although the fines for visa overstays have been increased for CIS countries in recent years, corruption seems to play some role in migrants' efforts to escape apprehension and/or prolong the duration of their stay in Turkey.²⁰ Third, and related to the second point, labour migrants, especially domestic workers, are less visible in public, making it unlikely for them to be caught, whereas Turkish police more regularly target sex workers and entertainment workers for deportation.²¹ Fourth, Although Bulgarians can now freely seek work within EU borders and Moldovans and Ukrainians can become legal labour migrants in Russia, irregular labour migration from these countries continues, partly due to Turkey's proximity and partly due to cultural affinities. Fifth, periods of relative economic stagnation²² and intense unemployment problems in Turkey may have made the Turkish labour and commodity markets less attractive for both suitcase traders and some circular labour migrants; however, in the specific case of female domestic labour, the "care crisis," that is, the growing demand for elderly and child care in middle class urban homes continues to be pull factor for migration. Since the available sources of data are not conclusive, further studies need to be conducted to test the validity of these statements.

It is difficult to know to what extent the two forms of irregular migration– both transit and circular – lead to a relatively permanent stay of immigrants in Turkey, but there is no visible evidence that this proportion is significantly high: any type of residual immigrant population residing in the country as a product of these two migratory flows seemed to be quite small, only probably five to ten per cent of these flows.

¹⁹ Given that standards of living in Armenia, Turkmenistan and Georgia would preclude a significant tourist flow to Turkey's coastal resorts (unlike in the case of Russia, for instance), these entries may be attributed to increasing labour migration; especially in the Georgian case, the sharp increase (compared to Azerbaijan) following the visa liberalisation may be indicative of a circular flow.

²⁰ See, Eder (2007) and Ünal (2008).

²¹ On this point, see Kirişçi (2008).

²² Although the overall performance of the Turkish economy in recent years is relatively better than the early 2000s, in particular some areas of the economy, such as clothing manufacture, construction, and agriculture, where irregular migrants can find employment opportunities, have been faced with some serious production and financial problems.

As discussed earlier, Turkey, constituting a transit zone between Asia, Europe and Africa, has become an important stopping point, or a stepping stone, for many *asylum seekers* since the 1980s. Without a doubt, the political irregularities, problems and turmoil in its periphery makes Turkey's borders all the more open to entries for asylum purposes. A great majority of these asylum seekers has comprised citizens of Iran and Iraq. Actually, this de facto situation constitutes incompliance with the geographical limitation clause notation that Turkey entered in the UN Geneva Convention of 1951. According to this limitation, Turkey would consider asylum applications by persons only from European countries and would not undertake any liability as to asylum seekers from outside Europe.²³ Although such a limitation is in effect, almost all of those who seek asylum in Turkey comprise non-European persons. Without a doubt, the geographical limitation clause that Turkey applies makes the asylum regime in the country inconvenient and causes serious criticism from the international community and various international agencies. Having concerns that, without such a geographic limitation, Turkey would become a real "buffer zone" between Europe and the countries of intense political turmoil in the region and that it would be faced with an extensive wave of asylum seekers, Turkish authorities have tended to oppose the abrogation of this limitation clause. It has been stated that such a change would be thinkable only along the concrete developments towards full membership to the EU. Nevertheless, in practice, this limitation is not applied; asylum seekers from outside Europe are granted temporary asylum, if and when they are granted refugee status through a joint procedure of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and the Ministry of Interior, the phase of re-settlement to a third country is initiated.

When we consider the total magnitude of various migratory waves towards Turkey in the last twenty five years or more, it is not possible to proclaim that asylum seeker and refugee movements have an extremely heavy weight quantitatively. Between 1997 and 2007, Turkey received over 30,000 asylum applications (Table 6). When we consider their families as well, this figure climbs to 56,000. The greatest number of asylum applications to Turkey is received from Iran and Iraq. 46 percent of these applications are filed by Iranians, 44 percent by Iraqis and the rest by asylum seeking migrants from other countries. In 2000, nearly 4,000 Iranians and over 1,600 Iraqis sought asylum in Turkey.²⁴ In recent years, however, these figures have declined. Whereas the approximate annual number of asylum seekers towards the end of the 1990s was 6,000, by the mid-2000s, this figure dropped to below 4,000. In 2006, asylum figures were less than 2,300 for Iranians and less than 800 for Iraqis. In 2007, again a notable increase was observed in the number of asylum seekers, in particular with the arrivals of people from Iraq and

²³ This is related partly to the refugee problem in post-war Europe and is partly a ramification of the anti-communism policies that Turkey adopted during those years, meaning Turkey would grant asylum to persons that arrive from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the Cold War. With her absolute pledge for protection and placement of persons fleeing communist regimes in particular, Turkey undertook to serve a very limited number of asylum seekers. In fact, during the Cold War years, migratory movements in Turkey involving asylum seekers from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were scarce and limited, with their numbers being notably low. According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) data, between 1945 and 1991, less than 8,000 asylum applications from the Soviet Union and Eastern European states were filed with Turkish authorities as per Turkey's position under the Geneva Convention of 1951. More than half of these applications was filed between 1979 and 1991 (İçduygu, 2003).

²⁴ See İçduygu and Toktaş (2005).

some African countries: over 4,400 applicants, including their family members the number was over 7,600 (Table 6). In fact, from 1997 to 2007, more than 27,000 of the total 56,000 asylum seekers (more than 48 per cent) were granted refugee status and re-settled in other countries, such that they were “a type of transit migrants” in Turkey in the last ten years.²⁵ Currently, while more than 7,000 refugees are waiting for resettlement, another 5,000 asylum seekers are waiting for their status to be determined. This asylum procedure itself makes Turkey fully a transit country for those people who have been granted the refugee status and waiting for resettlement.

It would be also fair to stress that the movement of asylum seekers and that of irregular migrants often intermingle. In many poor regions of the world, economic collapse, internal wars, ethnic violence and natural disasters (such as famine) have gone hand in hand. But nevertheless, the international refugee regime is still largely based on the definition of individual persecution in the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the 1967 Protocol. Therefore, there is a gap between the reality of forced migration (environmental refugees, economic refugees, etc.) and its definition in legal texts and practices.²⁶ To begin with, therefore, there are many more people who feel obliged to flee their countries than the number of people who would eventually be able to seek asylum or be given refugee status. On the obverse side of the coin, international legal and human rights norms may also present an opportunity for some economically motivated irregular migrants who may take advantage of the asylum seeking procedure and the non-*refoulement* principle to prolong their stay in a particular transit or final destination country.

For instance, the nature of African irregular migration and asylum seeking to Turkey is a case in point which demonstrates the intermingling of asylum seeking irregular migration. A survey of a non-representative sample of 120 African migrants in Istanbul in 2005 has yielded findings supporting both of the above-mentioned situations.²⁷ The majority of West African respondents to the survey cited economic difficulties as the reason for migrating, whereas the great majority of Somalis cited threats on their lives and generalized violence. Somalis constitute the only significant African group to have sought asylum upon their arrival in Turkey. But for other national groups such as D.R. Congolese, Ethiopians and Mauritians, economic difficulty and security concerns were reported together, although very few people from these countries have applied for asylum in Turkey. On the other hand, for some asylum applicants, asylum seeking and irregular migration were intertwined, not only on the way to Turkey, but also, in the event that their refugee applications were rejected. The survey indicated that African asylum seekers remain in Turkey after their cases get a final rejection, and then make attempts to illegally cross into Greece.

Characteristics of African migration to Turkey further indicate the blurred boundaries between transit migration and asylum seeking.²⁸ The great majority of Somali and Mauritanian

²⁵ For a detailed elaboration of these figures, see the UNHCR Ankara Office webpage <http://www.unhcr.org.tr>.

²⁶ For a critical discussion on this, see for instance, Hyndman (2000).

²⁷ This discussion draws on Yüksekler and Brewer (2008), and Brewer and Yüksekler (2006).

²⁸ This is related to the increasing securitisation of migration regimes in Europe, as we discuss below. Regarding the securitisation of Sub-Saharan migration through the Maghreb, for instance see Baldwin-Edwards (2006). Regarding the increasing role of human smuggling in response to the securitisation of migration, see Nadig, (2002).

respondents to the aforementioned survey reported that they had paid human smugglers to take them to Greece or Italy by boat, but they were left off of the Turkish coast. Thus, these people were transit migrants and/or asylum seekers who had not intended to be in Turkey. Yet, there were also those who had willingly come to Turkey as a transit country. A case in point was the West African respondents to the survey who had entered Turkey on tourist visas before the visa regime for African countries was tightened in 2005. In the survey, about three fourths of Ghanaian and Nigerian respondents said they intended to cross into Greece from Turkey. However, this is also the point where the meaning of transit migration gets blurred. The overwhelming majority of the respondents who had entered Turkey legally had expired visas and therefore were in irregular status. They were predominantly Nigerians and Ghanaians, followed by D.R. Congolese, and the average length of visa expiry was more than one year. Given that there is a large overlap between African migrants who have been in Turkey for considerably long durations and those who express an “intention” to reach the EU, the meaning of “transit” becomes blurred.²⁹ Under these conditions, the majority of African irregular migrants and asylum seekers reported that they engaged in survival activities in the informal economy such as sweatshop production, street vending and odd jobs in the commercial sector. There were even a few women from Ethiopia and Eritrea among the respondents who worked as domestic labourers in foreigners’ homes in Istanbul. Likewise, research on Iraqi Christian asylum seekers and transit migrants in Istanbul has shown that some women work as domestic labourers in Christians’ homes to support their families’ quest to move westward to Europe or North America.³⁰ Hence, not only the meaning of transit becomes vague as the duration of stay is prolonged, but also the distinctions between transit migration, irregular labour migration and asylum seeking are blurred.

Irregular Migrants in Turkey: Evidence from the 1995³¹ and 2003 IOM Studies³²

By comparing the two unique studies on irregular migration in Turkey conducted in 1995 and in 2003 through the commissioned surveys by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), it is possible to present an overall picture of the irregular transit migrants in the country. These studies on irregular migration in Turkey provide an insight into the personal characteristics of irregular transit migrants in Turkey, and they convey information about the irregular transit migration.

The first 1995 IOM study, which entirely concentrated on transit migrants, was based on interviews with 159 irregular transit migrants in Turkey conducted in Istanbul and Ankara. This study reflected five major groups of transit irregular migrants in Turkey: Iranians, Iraqis, Bosnians, Africans and the others who were mainly Asians. Almost three-quarters of the transit

²⁹ As Düvell (2006b) suggests, there is a need to untangle migrants’ “intentions” such as reaching the EU from actual migrant experiences in terms of research methodologies.

³⁰ Danış (2007).

³¹ See IOM (1996).

³² See İçduygu (2003).

migrants in the sample were males. Three-fifth of the 159 respondents were below the age of 30 and more than three-fifth were either single or divorced. Most of them were born in cities, received some education and had been employed prior to their migration. A considerable number of these migrants arrived in Turkey without valid documents and they did not have clear information about the country before arrival. Almost one out of three respondents were planning to use traffickers/smugglers to reach their final destination countries, which were mainly named as Denmark, Greece, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the USA.

The second IOM study, which primarily focused on irregular migrants and not only on transit ones, was based on interviews with 53 irregular migrants and was conducted in Istanbul and Van provinces in 2003. Iranians and Iraqis each made up approximately one-quarter of the sample, Afghans made up another 14 per cent, with the remainder coming from some of the former Eastern Block countries, as well as from Africa. As a result, the 2003 IOM study reflected mainly migrants who consider Turkey a transit area *en route* to the developed countries of the West. This group constitutes migrants who entered Turkey illegally and wanted to leave the transit country illegally. Meanwhile, there were also respondents, citizens of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, who legally entered the country but drifted into illegality later on.

Although the predominant stereotype of irregular transit migrants is of young, unmarried, poor, uneducated, unskilled males from rural backgrounds, the actual profile of those interviewed in Turkey is quite different. For instance, as shown by the 2003 IOM study, irregular migrants in Turkey today are mainly young, married men and women, from diverse national and ethnic backgrounds and with a considerable degree of formal education and experience in urban areas. Almost two-thirds of the migrants had already worked in their countries of origin before migrating. When asked about their approximate monthly income, some 55 per cent reported that their income was either low or below average, while four percent had not received any income at all. Quite differently, however, the 1995 study indicated that two-thirds of the respondents considered their income to be average. That means that the newcomers had a lower economic status as compared with their predecessors from 1995.

In the 2003 IOM study, nearly 40 per cent cited lack of employment opportunities and/or relative poverty as their reasons to migrate. Almost two-thirds claimed to have left for political reasons, and almost half referred to social, cultural or religious difficulties. Another 42 per cent expressed concern about the possibility of a war. Clearly, a combination of reasons acted as push-and-pull factors. Results of the 1995 IOM survey indicated that migrants came for similar reasons.

A large proportion of the irregular transit migrants interviewed in 2003 for the IOM 2003 study had entered Turkey without valid travel documents. Only two-fifths had entered Turkey with both a valid passport and a valid visa. In 1995, however, only two out of five respondents entered Turkey without a valid document. This indicates that there were more illegal entries in 2003 than in 1995. As discussed above, these figures have increased from in the second half of the 1990s, confirmed by the official statistics. However, there has been a considerable decrease in the number of illegal entries and departures in the first half of the 2000s.

By its very nature, irregular transit migration tends to become intertwined with asylum seeking processes. When asked whether they had applied for refugee status, 67 per cent replied

that they had not whereas 27 per cent had applied for it, of which only six per cent had actually been granted refugee status. In the 1995 study, the numbers of applications for asylum in 2002 were on the decline. Many would have been unable to migrate to Turkey without the help of smugglers. In fact, 62 per cent arrived with the help of smugglers. When asked about the reasons coming to Turkey, 50 per cent said they had done so because Turkey was a neighbouring country. Prior information concerning the country of destination usually plays an important part in the decision to migrate and the successful adaptation to new circumstances.

Access to sufficient financial means obviously plays a role in the decision to migrate. The wish to migrate implies substantial financial sacrifices for the potential migrant and family members. The need to bribe and pay smugglers makes the whole process of irregular migration extremely expensive. Thus, to facilitate their departure from their home countries, 45 per cent of the migrants had made some kind of payment either as bribe or cash down payment to the smugglers. On average, payments of smugglers cost the migrant some USD 825, ranging from a minimum of USD 50 to a maximum of USD 3,500. The average cost for the passage to Turkey amounted to USD 1,433, ranging from USD 100 at the low end to a maximum of USD 15,000. When compared with the average costs from the year 1995, migrants were paying less money in 2003 in terms of US dollars.

Contrary to the general perception that migration flows are fuelled by extensive social networks among migrant families in the countries of origin and of destination, only 18 per cent of the migrants interviewed mentioned the likelihood of family members joining them in Turkey. This would seem to indicate that their decision to migrate was taken individually and less related to family migration history through Turkey. Notwithstanding such declarations, family and migration connections seem obvious. Almost sixty per cent of the married couples interviewed were living in Turkey with their spouses, and about 46 per cent of those couples had their children with them.

In the IOM 2003 study, only 16 per cent had residence permits and none had work permits. As irregular transit migrants cannot be hired legally, they are usually found in precarious and low-paid jobs (so-called 3D jobs: dirty, difficult and dangerous). However, in 1995, a quarter of the respondents had residence permits, and nine percent had work permits. Almost 70 per cent of our respondents reported that their income was either low or below average, with five per cent claiming to have no income at all. Only two respondents reported that their income levels were above average in Turkey. Housing conditions for irregular transit migrants were generally very poor. Half of the respondents shared rented accommodation, ten per cent lived alone, eight per cent lived with friends, four per cent with relatives and four per cent lived at their workplace, while six per cent lived in hotels and ten per cent in shelters.

In the 2003 study, fifty-nine per cent of the sample group had already attempted to leave Turkey. In 1995, however, as many as 71 per cent of the respondents were in the same position. Half of them had tried to enter Italy in 2003, 12 per cent aimed to go to Germany while another 12 per cent had tried their luck entering a third country. Asked to explain their preferences for certain destination countries, only five per cent of the respondents referred to the ease of obtaining a visa as the primary incentive. Forty per cent chose their destination because they have family members living there. Twenty-six per cent said that having friends in the destination country was an important factor in their decision, and sixty-one per cent thought that they would

be able to improve their standard of living in the destination country. Most of the respondents acknowledged that as the preferred northern and western European countries of destination had tightened their admission policies, it would be necessary to enter the country illegally and subsequently look for means of regularising their status.

Since a large portion of the interviewed migrants in the 2003 IOM study were transit irregular migrants and had no valid travel documents, they were on the look-out for some means of transportation. This was where the traffickers and smugglers came into play. The travel arrangements made by such intermediaries frequently involve clandestine passages through various third countries, as confirmed by 40 per cent of those interviewed. Italy (the most popular transit country), Germany (a close second), Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, France and Sweden were the most desirable countries of transit as well as of destination.

Concerning their onward journey and the likely cost involved, in the 2003 study, fifty-five per cent had no idea how much money in bribes and smuggling they would still have to pay to proceed to their destination, with 15 per cent believing that they would not have to pay anything any more. In terms of actual amounts, one respondent reckoned with a further payment of some USD 200, 15 per cent put the figure at USD 1,000 and another 10 per cent put it as high as USD 2,000. None had a clear idea about the actual cost involved in obtaining travel documents, with their estimates ranging from USD 50 to USD 15,000.

In the 2003 study, for most of the respondents the lack of valid travel documents presented the main obstacle to their onward travel from Turkey, nor did they have any guarantee of obtaining the appropriate documents to enter their preferred country of destination. In fact, 71 per cent had failed in their attempt to exit Turkey through illegal means. Regarding the option of returning to their home countries, only 14 per cent were ready to do so and then only under certain conditions, for example, if travel costs were paid, while 29 per cent did not consider this a viable alternative to onward migration. Asked whether any prior knowledge of the difficulties involved would have deterred them from migrating, an overwhelming 82 per cent replied negatively.

Transit Migration in Turkey: A Re-construction of the Reality with Blurred Borders?

The re-construction of the reality regarding transit and irregular migration and asylum seeking to Turkey should be analysed within a broader perspective. In order to do this, we want to utilise two notions mentioned at the outset of this paper, namely, the securitisation and economisation of migration. As European immigration policies and practices were increasingly driven by both so-called selective choices of economic interests and restrictive measures of security concerns during the 1990s, one of the consequences of these economisation and securitisation processes for the European international migratory regime was the politicisation of transit migration. Not only various individual countries in the European sphere, but also their international or supra-national organisations, have tended to be absolutely obsessed by the notion of transit migration at the peripheries of the continent. For instance, when one examines various immigration-related documents of the organizations such as the Council of Europe,³³ European Union,³⁴ and

³³ See for instance, CoE, *Assembly debate* on 22 January 2001 (1st Sitting), see also CoE Document 8904 dated 13 December 2000 on Transit Migration in Central and Eastern Europe Report by Committee on Migration, Refugees

International Organisation for Migration³⁵ since the mid-1990s, one can see frequent references to the phenomena of transit migration.

As discussed elsewhere,³⁶ while thousands of transit migrants “illegally” cross borders mostly from the southern and eastern borders of Europe to the northern and western parts of the continent, or as they work “informally” in the economies of Europe, it appears that *two* related things, rather paradoxically but at the same time in a complementary fashion, are happening. On the one hand, in a market-driven environment of migratory regime around the continent, there have been complementarities between the economies which are in need of labour and the economies that have surplus labour. As a result, then, labour flows occur from the latter to the former. On the other hand, however, since many material conditions in the state control of borders and labour markets make free international migration unviable in Europe, many of these migrant labourers find themselves in a situation where although they violate the rules of border-crossings, or of residence and work permits, they are still able to migrate to and work in these economies. When these migrants are not able to migrate directly from their own homelands to the countries in Europe due to the highly restrictive and selective immigration policies, transit migration, in other words, step-by-step migration often has become a migration strategy to enter into the targeted destination countries in Europe. In short, when national economies in Europe need labour, it seems that it often becomes irrelevant to think of the status of labour in these economies as being regular or irregular: indeed, in particular the case of the southern European countries amply illustrates this tendency.

It seems very ironic that while most of the European countries tend to be advocating or actually adopting a range of restrictive control systems against the incoming migrant flows, their economies are able to absorb thousands of irregular migrants without any unbearable confrontation. Often relying on a *restrictionist rhetoric of fewer benefits but more costs of immigration*, which in itself precludes a so-called rational assessment of immigration flows, these states emphasise that there is a need for continuous and strong intervention to restrict and regulate migration flows. On the other hand, however, mostly within a *liberal frame of economic rationality*, it appears that as these economies start to experience labour shortages, concerns about the availability of labour in domestic markets arise, and consequently calls for immigrant labour increase. In addition to all these developments, thousands of irregular migrants, often using the migration strategy of step-by-step movement, pour into these countries, and become very functional to the needs of economies there. Even if initially they are irregular migrants, they

and Demography (Rapporteur: Mr Tadeusz Iwiński, Poland, Socialist Group), also CoE Document 8937 dated 22 January 2001 on Transit Migration in Central and Eastern Europe Opinion by Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (Rapporteur: Mr Alexander Shishlov, Russian Federation, LDR).

³⁴ In particular after the European Council held a special meeting on 15 and 16 October 1999 in Tampere on the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice in the European Union, almost every EU document on immigration issues in Europe refers to the transit migration flows around Europe.

³⁵ Starting with the mid-1990s, transit migration issues increasingly gained a visible importance in the activities of IOM; for instance, IOM commissioned various research reports on transit migration in Central and Eastern Europe.

³⁶See İçduygu (2007a).

eventually become regularized ones.³⁷ Both in public and academic debates, this migratory picture could constantly be told by reference to the argument that relatively free migration has not accelerated at a pace comparable to relatively free-trade flows and free-capital movements. Indeed, this may imply that the conservative positions of nation-states towards immigration still persist prominently in this age of large-scale, accelerated globalisation.

This last point made above indicates “the increasingly economic aspect to migration trends, and the economisation of movements of people.”³⁸ As migration discourses, policies and practices in Europe over the last decades has tended to concentrate on the benefits that migrant labourers bring to countries’ economies, the subsequent economisation of national migration policies and programmes³⁹ has become the widespread trend in international migration — not only attracting skilled and temporary migrants but also often practically relying on irregular immigrants who provide these economies with cheap labour particularly in some sectors such as services and agricultural seasonal work. This has been particularly evident in the southern European countries which have strived to be regionally competitive in Europe by accepting these immigrant workers into their booming economies. In this context, response by the irregular transit migrants serves to the needs of certain sectors of the economies in Europe.

It is well recognised that initially after the collapse of communist regimes in the early 1990s and later, in the wake of the attacks of September 11, immigrants to Europe were increasingly viewed as potential contributors to the insecure and uncertain climates surrounding economic, social and political spheres in the continent. As noted by Ibrahim, this view “has been possible through the broadening of the concept of security and the linking of risk and threat to migrants.”⁴⁰ It is within this context that “the process in which migration discourse shifts towards an emphasis on security” is known as the securitisation of migration. By its mostly irregular nature, its dynamics which entail a state of uncertainty and insecurity, and its impact on people and societies, transit migration is perceived as posing a serious challenge to the long-standing paradigms of certainty and order in migrant-receiving countries.⁴¹ One of the prominent features of this process of securitisation has been therefore the production of a discourse of fear and proliferation of dangers with reference to the possibilities of arrivals of transit migrants positioned in the neighbouring countries and regions. In fact, the securitisation of migration in Europe can be examined as a discourse through which the notion of transit migration is addressed in policy statements. An investigation of discourses on transit migration in the European sphere

³⁷ For instance, there were more than 4.5 million irregular immigrants who were regularised in the southern European countries in the last two decades.

³⁸ See McNamara (2007).

³⁹ See Hugo (2002), Iredale (1997), Richardson et al. (2002), and McNamara (2007).

⁴⁰ See Ibrahim (2005: 164).

⁴¹ See Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002).

reveals how the securitisation of migration discourse is built upon the concept that transit migration leads to a chaotic migratory system. A very obvious manifestation of the securitisation of migration in Europe has taken a tangible form through the discussion over transit migration in Turkey as it is critically questioned in the country's EU accession process.

It is for this reason that the economisation and securitisation of migration regimes in Europe should also be assessed in terms of their impact beyond the EU borders. Globalisation of migration (the fact that directions and motivations of immigration and emigration are currently much more diverse than they were until the 1980s) requires us also to view these twin processes from a global perspective. Numbers of potential migrants to the EU have risen since the 1980s as a result of developments within the global political economy, such as the debt crisis, structural adjustment policies and ensuing unemployment, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, internal wars and international conflicts. Yet globalisation has also transformed the labour markets of many middle-income countries in a way that affords for the first time the use of migrant labour both in low-wage and high-wage sectors (e.g. domestic labour and high-skilled labour of business experts). Processes of globalisation have also affected the EU economies; while unemployment increased, new labour needs both in high and low-wage sectors emerged. It is within this context that securitisation and economisation of the European migration regimes took place as we discussed above.

When we examine Turkey's current position within the European migration systems in this light, the following picture emerges. First, since the 1980s Turkey has become a transit route for migrants and asylum seekers uprooted because of the above-mentioned global processes. Second, the securitisation of migration has had repercussions for Turkey, in terms of channelling increasing numbers of migrants who want to reach the EU to travel through Turkey, or to remain in Turkey. Related to this, the EU has demanded from Turkey since its candidature to union membership in 1999 to both securitise migration within its borders and to conform fully to the norms of the international refugee regime. Third, irregular migration to Turkey is also economically motivated. So, it is possible to talk about the economisation of the migration regime in Turkey itself. On one side, irregular labour migrants from especially CIS and Eastern European countries have been circulating to fill low-end service labour demands instigated by the Turkish urban middle classes. To some extent, transit migrants who have to enter the informal economy in order to survive or to finance their onward journey are part of the economisation of the migration regime.

Although the reality of transit migration in Turkey had emerged in the early 1980s, it was not an issue of concern in the country until the mid-1990s. In fact, there was no discussion domestically in Turkey using the term "transit migration" or "transit migrants," even though there were actually thousands of migrants who came from Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq to the country with the intention of going to a third country. In other words, transit migration was ontologically present, but epistemologically absent. Thus, the study of transit migration in Turkey suffered from an academic and public neglect in its early stages. Also, transit migration was not an area of study until it became a "risky" reality for its final destinations in the European core countries. Shortly, when transit migration was conceptualised and talked about in Europe, it also became an issue of discussion in Turkey.

Due to reasons such as the intermingling of international migration issues with the European Union's economic, social and political areas of integration in general; and Turkey's significant position as a 'sending country', 'receiving country', and 'transit country', especially within the Eurocentric international migration and asylum regimes in particular, international migration debates have become central to the Turkey-EU relations. Within this framework, *it can be observed that while discussions on the issue of international migration in the EU in relation to Turkey are being held, the following question is repeatedly asked: whether Turkey, in its position as 'transit country' will be successful in managing migration control at the south-east gate of Europe, and if so to what extent, in producing and implementing policies in compliance with the EU-centric international migration and asylum regimes. It is also asked so often that even if the accession issue is removed from the agenda, the question of how Turkey will protect the south-eastern border of the EU from migration waves will remain an important item on the agenda.*

Turkey and the EU started negotiations targeting full membership on October 3, 2005. Under this new situation, issues of international migration are considered to be the key items on the agenda relating to Turkey's relations to the EU. Since then, various reports by the European Commission on Turkey have emphasised that this enlargement will be different from the previous ones, frequently making references to the issues of transit migration. For instance, in the recommendation on Turkey's progress towards accession in the EU in the Commission's Statement for the European Union and European Parliament dated November 6, 2004, the following point was stated: "in terms of Turkey, managing the new and long external borders of the EU will constitute a significant political challenge and will require large investment... Closer cooperation before and after the accession shall make it easier... to handle migration and asylum issues in addition to... human trafficking."⁴²

As can be clearly observed in the discourses on Turkey's EU membership debate, the notion of transit migration and many issues associated with it have become vital for the discussions regarding the EU-Turkey relations. Consequently, for instance, possible cooperation areas such as ensuring security of the external borders of the EU, asylum, human smuggling and human trafficking, have become major issues of debate. One of the most widely debated issues in this context is the 'management of migration and asylum flows' arriving in the country, and in particular the question of how Turkey's state institutions and legal frameworks would handle the phenomenon of irregular transit migration and asylum. As elaborated elsewhere,⁴³ these debates have made clear that the health and stability of Turkey's integration into the EU depends not only on the economic, social, and political transformations in the country, but also on specific policy matters. The issue of "migration management" is seen here to be a component of the country's Europeanisation or the "EU-isation" process.⁴⁴ Moreover, as the "Europeanisation" of national immigration and asylum policies and practices is not only a matter of policy but also a matter of

⁴² The European Commission released a Progress Report on Turkey and a Recommendation based on the report on October 6, 2004. These documents stated that Turkey has adequately met the political criteria and recommended that Turkey's accession negotiations to the EU be initiated.

⁴³ See İçduygu (2007b).

⁴⁴ In a different context, on the issue of Europeanisation of civil society, Diez *et al.* (2005) refer to the notion of 'EU-ization' as a dominant form of Europeanisation in Turkey's European integration process.

politics, the efforts to elaborate this process appear to be uneven and vigorously debated.⁴⁵ The notion of “migration management” remains very central to Europeanization, defined as “processes of construction, diffusion, and institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, “ways of doing things” and shared beliefs and norms to a European model of governance, caused by forms of cooperation and integration in Europe.”⁴⁶ In few places is this more present than in Turkey, where different kinds of national immigration and asylum policies and practices are infused with historical legacies, social validity, cultural notions, and political importance which in turn are intensely contested by the European influence.

That the EU process of introducing the new perception and new law on the management of immigration and asylum flow in Turkey plays a role is undisputable. Consequently, it is possible to make *two* main observations concerning the impact of the EU process over the transformation of irregular transit immigration- and asylum-related policies and practices in Turkey. *First*, the ongoing discussion implies the presence of a ‘positive’ impact of this process on these policies and practices in Turkey. Introduction of penal codes over trafficking and smuggling is, for instance, a good example given in this context. Yet, although new legislation is welcome, the shortage of trained personnel dealing with asylum seekers and irregular migrants and the inadequacy of facilities for apprehended irregular migrants raise concerns about human rights violations in detention centres. While the strength of this impact is rather moderate, at the same time it is growing, which is probably a reflection of the general opinion that while the EU process is for many quite positive on the whole, at the same time what happens in this context is always something less than expected. *Second*, as far as Turkey’s reaction, or resistance, is concerned, the influence of the EU process on irregular transit immigration- and asylum- related policies and practices seems to vary: for instance, the impact of the EU process on some specific and practical asylum issues was in general stronger than it was on some general and normative immigration concerns. It seems that Turkey’s sceptical perspective on the Europeanisation of national immigration and asylum policies and practices is strongly linked to the question of burden-sharing versus burden-shifting. Of course, this is again not surprising as the whole Europeanisation process often proceeds as a top-down process originating from the core -- in this case the EU -- which is also often met with the resistance of a bottom-up process coming from a periphery -- in this case Turkey.

From the Turkish side, indeed, there is a feeling that EU policies and practices for managing migration and the array of related restrictive measures shift the burden of controlling migration to countries on the periphery, like Turkey, with the conclusion of readmission agreements often being cited as a case in point. Likewise, preventing Turkey from turning into a buffer zone between the immigrant-attracting European core and the emigrant-producing peripheral regions has been a similar area of concern for Turkish policy-makers. Therefore, Turkish authorities advocate the need for burden-sharing instead of what is being seen as a case of burden-shifting, especially in relation to a phenomenon such as irregular transit migration or asylum that ultimately targets various European countries. On the other hand, it appears that the EU authorities are urging Turkey to devote more resources and energy to its efforts to manage

⁴⁵ See İçduygu (2004: 93) and Kirişçi (2005a: 355-7).

⁴⁶ Bulmer and Radaelli (2004: 4).

and control migration and asylum flows across and within its borders. Of course, these demands and considerations are central to EU-Turkish relations and create many areas of concern for both sides, from security and human rights issues to economics and politics. Practically and naturally, however, the likelihood of any progress in this field is strongly linked to the negotiations between the Commission and the Turkish authorities on burden-sharing.

Concluding Remarks

While scholarship on transit migration is accumulating, it is possible to make two main observations: one is the increasing number of inquiries on the cases of transit migration, and second is the ongoing discussion on the meaning and nature of transit migration. The former often locates the phenomena into a migration system approach by taking it for granted in terms of its presence in a wider migratory context, and the latter usually questions whether it is a mere reconstruction of reality rather than something original in terms of its content. In other words, transit migration today is not only an ontologically recognized phenomenon, but it is also an epistemologically debated concept. Emphasising this problem, Düvell has argued that “transit migration is as much a discourse as it is a scientific concept” which in some ways is a “war cry” by the EU against countries expected to keep migrants off of the EU borders.⁴⁷ What we have sought to do in this paper is to unpack the term transit migration in the Turkish case to point out both their discursive and analytical aspects. Through a discussion of existing empirical evidence on irregular migrants, we have shown on the one hand that there is a reality of transit migration in Turkey. But on the other hand, the borders between the reality of transit migration, other forms of irregular migration and asylum seeking are gray areas, rather than being clear-cut boundaries. In order to make sense of these blurred boundaries, we have sought to contextualise the irregular migration experience of Turkey within the context of the securitisation and economisation of European migration regimes, as well as the securitisation and economisation of Turkey’s own migration regime under impact from the EU. In doing so, we attempted to clarify also the discursive dimension of transit migration, but without dismissing the reality of it.

⁴⁷ See Düvell (2006b).

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Table 1: Indicative Number of Migration to Turkey, 1996–2006

	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>
Irregular Migration	18800	28400	29400	31600	94600	92400	82800	56200	61200	43841	51983
Illegal entries/departures					51400	57300	44200	303	34745	19920	18876
Overstays					43200	35100	38600	25852	26455	23921	33107
Asylum application		5100	6800	6600	5700	5200	3794	3966	3908	3914	4548
of which: Afghan					100	400	47	77	341	365	339
of which: Iran		1700	2000	3800	3900	3500	2505	3108	2029	1716	2297
of which: Iraq		3300	4700	2500	1600	1000	974	342	964	1047	724
Residence Permit					68100	61254	57670	52203	155500	131594	186586
of which: work					24200	22414	22556	21650	27500	22130	22805
of which: study					24600	23946	21548	21810	15000	25240	24258
of which: other					19300	14894	13566	08743	113000	84224	139523

Sources: UNHCR Ankara Office (2002-2006), Bureau for Foreigners, Borders, and Asylum at the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior (2000-2006)

Table 2: Irregular Migration in Turkey: Apprehended Cases, 1995-2006

<i>Country</i>	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Afghanistan	24	68	81	921	2476	8746	9701	4246	2178	3442	2363	3665	37911
Albania		1		9	792	1026	1137	580	341	318	220	57	4481
Algeria	27	25	69	207	102	430	305	542	378	397	375	144	3001
Armenia	4	2		1	98	474	452	505	494	835	858	933	4656
Azerbaijan	21	3	3	10	620	2262	2426	2349	1608	1591	1410	937	13240
Bangladesh	113	322	301	2408	1193	3228	1497	1810	1722	3271	1524	2313	19702
Bulgaria	21	22	39	103	1005	1699	1923	3132	989	550	363	376	10222
Egypt	4	12	99	29	94	382	184	182	222	257	137	80	1682
Georgia	37	9	9	5	809	3300	2693	3115	1826	2294	2348	1989	18434
Germany		1	1		372	629	458	586	988	1477	984	634	6130
India	2	25	18	102	189	779	599	475	846	803	206	105	4149
Iran	252	362	364	1116	5281	6825	3514	2508	1620	1265	1141	972	25220
Iraq	2128	3319	5689	14237	11546	17280	18846	20926	3757	6393	3591	6412	114124
FYROM*	1				439	488	384	197	185	105	54	0	1851
Moldova	19		17	5	5098	8312	11454	9611	7728	5728	3462	1575	53009
Morocco	28	53	93	295	369	1401	849	603	361	402	171	138	4763
Nigeria	1	20	30	84	137	450	301	733	117	142	34	73	2122
Pakistan	708	435	307	1798	2650	5027	4829	4813	6258	9396	11001	3508	50730
PRC				1	115	545	264	674	787	788	339	295	3808
Romania	68	12	107	36	3395	4500	4883	2674	2785	1785	1274	1013	22532
Russian Federation	5	4	52	2	1695	4554	3893	2139	2130	1266	1152	730	17622
Sierra Leone				20	42	462	273	121	14	6	2	6	946
Stateless					61	322	235	0	0	0	0	0	618
Syria	78	86	144	476	776	1399	782	462	623	1097	983	1238	8144
Tunisia	3	48	81	44	76	255	216	191	274	301	300	292	2081
Turkey					2085	3289	5304	6951	5660	3341	2164	2052	30846
Ukraine	9	4	17	4	1715	4527	3451	2874	1947	1341	1335	1004	18228
UK		2		4	233	643	423	451	510	563	662	537	4028
Uzbekistan	1	1			142	587	535	533	584	714	652	287	4036
Other	7808	13948	20603	7382	3632	7695	8055	6908	8461	10644	662	2006	97804
Unknown		20	315	127	292	2998	2499	1934	826	716	4074	16606	30407
Total	11362	18804	28439	29426	47529	94514	92365	82825	56219	61228	43841	51983	616527

*Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia

Source: Compiled by the author from data obtained from UNHCR Ankara Office, (2002-2005). Bureau for Foreigners, Borders, and Asylum at the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior, (2000-2006)

Table 3: Circular Labour Migration to Turkey: “Arriving Foreigners,” selected countries, 2000-2006

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Azerbaijan	179, 878	178,861	163,114	192,645	330,313	411,652	380,132
Bulgaria	381,545	540,437	834,070	1,006,268	1,310,643	1,621,704	1,177,903
Armenia	17,549	7,080	17,572	23,118	33,097	36,648	41,692
Georgia	179,563	163,970	161,687	167,759	235,143	367,339	549,328
Moldova	62,687	46,064	46,079	55,329	72,055	90,704	108,578
Romania	265,128	180,941	180,106	185,111	169,348	202,623	245,941
Turkmenistan	10,987	14,996	21,323	15,970	26,621	34,282	48,857
Ukraine	173,551	177,402	193,038	225,452	293,644	380,392	487,917

Source: TUIK (2008), <http://www.tuik.gov.tr>

Table 4: Irregular Migration in Turkey: “Illegal Border-Crossings”, 2006-2008

September 2006 - February 2008																			
	2006				2007								2008				Total		
	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	June.	July.	Agu.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.		Jan.	Feb.
Afghanistan	41	72	33	83	14	24	38	174	706	527	639	665	979	461	518	211	128	83	5396
Algeria	10		7			2		1		3	5	6	5	1	2	8	13		63
Azerbaijan	1					2			2	1	1	8	20	5	14	13	7	23	97
Bangladesh	7	9	5			20	5	28	28	36	47	36	62	32	38	28	41	12	434
Burma										19	11	51	109	235	700	638	615	214	2592
China		8	8	18	14	33	8		13	34	45	36	59	45	17	35	74	21	468
Egypt			1		2	1			1	4	4		2	9	5	1			30
Eretria									3	78	85	198	131	73	67	74	4	38	751
Georgia		19	13	17	16	29	34		77	89	64	100	81	80	99	77	61	80	936
India		4	1	3			2		2	9		10	3	10	2	2	5	1	54
Iran	11	20	16	30	25	11	34	50	76	40	107	111	107	78	97	83	97	63	1056
Iraq	294	412	246	197	144	141	182	568	540	770	1024	1202	1510	611	321	373	322	124	8981
Lebanon	1	2							3	1		3	2	1	8				21
Mauritania	73	100	104	101	48	47	29	158	233	308	352	493	647	800	1038	233	190	90	5044
Moldova				2					1	2	10		4	14	14		3	7	57
Morocco	1		3	2	3	3	4	4	6	9	3		2	5	10	5	9	2	71
Pakistan	17	62	16	6		81	9	275	399	337	222	430	964	1086	479	120	127	73	4703
Palestine	44	57	122	226	133	237	488	534	536	891	1122	949	1917	897	873	369	397	408	10200
Rwanda									3	6	7	28	17	10	10	3	4	3	91
Somali	82	106	138	338	98	130	172	209	156	166	199	308	550	391	243	129	83	192	3690
Sri Lanka				6						21	11	11	24	17	8	4	5	4	111
Sudan		1			2				22	2	9	3	4	2	1				46
Syria	19	21	50	79	42	62	111	15	102	93	104	57	117	69	17	47	48	46	1099
Tunisia	1	3	2		1	11	3	3	2	9	2	1	4	4	6	3		1	56
Turkish	55	54	51	53	32	75	123	94	159	118	135	98	173	75	47	54	60	54	1510
Turkmenistan									1		2		10		4	5	4	7	33
Unknown	707		1									2			2				712
Total	1364	950	817	1161	574	909	1242	2113	3071	3573	4210	4806	7503	5011	4640	2515	2297	1546	48302

Source: General Command of Gendarmerie and the Coast Guard Command

Table 5: Irregular Migration in Turkey: “Illegal” Border-Crossings By Location, 2006-2008

Borders	Bulgaria B.		Aegean Sea		Georgia B.		Iran B.		Mixed B.		Syria B.		Greece B.		TNE	TNAP
	NE	NAP	NE	NAP	NE	NAP	NE	NAP	NE	NAP	NE	NAP	NE	NAP		
Sept.06									81	1362					81	1362
Oct.06	2	5	2	37	1	2	14	71	2	74	21	83	28	693	70	965
Nov.06	1	5	1	29			13	46	2	65	17	37	26	692	60	874
Dec.06	3	10	4	73	1	1	13	42	8	156	14	49	25	842	68	1173
Jan.07							11	36	3	30	15	47	22	471	51	584
Feb.07	2	2	1	5	1	1	13	131	1	9	22	130	21	635	61	913
Mar.07	4	15	1	47			9	19	2	78	18	80	30	984	64	1223
Apr.07	3	11	2	46	1	1	18	139	32	1308	10	64	27	648	93	2217
May.07	4	59	5	64	1	3	16	151	42	1787	25	95	29	1091	122	3250
June.07	7	34	10	234			16	123	30	1804	21	88	27	1097	111	3380
July.07			7	136	1	1	13	55	31	2540	26	108	31	1236	109	4076
Agu.07	2	8	2	29	3	6	14	171	31	2112	28	314	44	2211	124	4851
Sept.07	1	12	7	124	2	3	20	171	32	4923	27	203	29	1886	118	7322
Oct.07	4	8	5	165	1	1	17	109	30	3094	28	164	30	1303	115	4844
Nov.07	1	2	6	171			12	86	31	3027	22	104	26	1242	98	4632
Dec.07	1	2	1	19	1	1	9	45	30	1800	22	90	28	686	92	2643
Jan.08							5	54	30	1399	22	120	26	681	83	2254
FEb.08			6	135			6	8	30	1062	14	52	22	482	78	1739
TNE		35		6		13		219		448		352		471		1598
TNAP		173		1314		20		1457		26630		1828		16880		48302

NE: Number of Events

NAP: Number of apprehended people

T: Total

B.: Borders

Source: General Command of Gendarmerie and the Coast Guard Command

Table 6: Asylum Applications in Turkey, 1997–2006

	<i>Iranians</i>		<i>Iraqis</i>		<i>Other</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	Cases	Persons	Cases	Persons	Cases	Persons	Cases	Persons
1997	746	1392	1275	2939	83	117	2104	4448
1998	1169	1979	2350	4672	124	187	3643	6838
1999	2069	3843	1148	2472	184	290	3401	6605
2000	2125	3926	791	1671	108	180	3024	5777
2001	1841	3485	497	998	372	709	2710	5177
2002	1456	2505	402	974	219	315	2077	3794
2003	1715	3092	159	342	373	514	2247	3948
2004	1225	2030	472	956	540	922	2237	3908
2005	1021	1716	490	1047	753	1151	2264	3914
2006	1343	2297	364	724	1094	1527	2801	4548
2007	1024	1668	1738	3470	1651	2502	4413	7640
Total	15734	27933	9686	20265	5501	8414	30921	56597

Source: Compiled by the author from data obtained from the UNHCR Ankara Office and Bureau for Foreigners, Borders, and Asylum at the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior, (2000-2006).