International Relations and Migration Management: The Case of Turkey

FRANCK DUVELL*

ABSTRACT *States often fall out or collaborate over issues to do with international migration whilst migrants through their very actions shape the interdependence of states. Turkey and the EU also frequently argue over migration issues. Over the years, Turkey's economy grew significantly. It became an attraction and a safe haven to migrants and refugees. In April 2013, a new migration and asylum law came into force that responds to these new challenges. This was followed by the EU-Turkey visa liberalisation and readmission agreements. This contribution sketches some of the issues and notably the wider context to these latest developments.*

International relations (IR) or Foreign Affairs (FA) conventionally focus on state actors, international organizations and international non-governmental organisations, on relations and interactions of these and generally on world politics and the global political system. Traditionally, IR was more about political structures and political issues. However, migration has successively become an issue of international politics[1] – there is an increasing body of international law (e.g. Refugee Convention, UN Migrant Workers Convention etc.) and an increasing number of international organizations (UNHCR, IOM, ILO, Global Forum for Migration and Development, ICMPD, Budapest Process etc), that explicitly address international migration. Human agency, however, and the behaviour of people are not normally considered relevant topics in IR. And, yet, it is the very decisions and actions of individuals to migrate that may set states into relation to one another. This contribution firstly, aims to draw attention to the nexus of individual actions and international relations and sketch the importance and implications of migration for IR. Secondly, it thereby looks at the wider context and the relevance of Turkey's new Law no. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection that came into force in April 2013 and the newly established General Directorate for Migration Management[2].

* Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford, UK

COMMENTARY FRANCK DUVELL

Today, there are more than 232 million international migrants in the world; in absolute terms these are more than ever before

Today, there are more than 232 million international migrants in the world; in absolute terms (though probably not proportionally to the global population) these are more than ever before[3]. The majority normally originates from a neighbouring country, a country of the region or a country that shares a common history, language or culture with the receiving country. In migration theory, it is suggested that it is migration systems and migration networks that link together countries and represent the opportunity structures, which may facilitate migration[4]. However, globalization, easy travel, and information technology, including social media have broadened these opportunities, which resulted in an increasing diversification of migration. More and more people now migrate to more destinations and to countries where they have no obvious link to and migration has become super-directional. Almost half of these migrants are economic migrants, such skilled and unskilled workers or service providers with a large proportion also being represented by their respective family members. Students are another significant category of international migrants. In addition, there are over 16 million international refugees; these

are migrants forced to leave their country. We can also expect in the future some significant climate change induced migration. The majority of migrants and refugees is temporary, seasonal or circular[5]; others are more permanent and come to stay.

Simultaneously, international travel has also massively grown in recent years. Air travel has expanded twenty-fold since 1980 and international journeys rose by 50 percent within just a decade to now over 1 billion a year, with an annual growth rate of 5 percent[6]. This is the equivalent of almost 15 percent of the global population. This demonstrates that people are more mobile than ever before in world history. As a consequence, more and more people from other countries populate the streets, shopping malls, historical sites, and beaches but also work places in our cities and country-sides. With this dynamic movement of populations comes an uptick in commercial spending, a boost to the economy, and a heightened awareness and desire to learn from each other.

Migration is an important source of change: socially, demographically, and economically[7]. Migration links neighbouring or distant countries to each other, by creating greater economic transactions and facilitating an exchange of its people, their knowledge, and culture[8]. Migration changes the size, ethnicity and age structure of populations of sending and receiving countries; it alters the cultural, religious, and linguistic composition of societies; and it enriches or deprives

societies of their respective social and economic fabric[9]. Finally, migration affects both the migrants' and their hosts' national, cultural, and individual identities[10]. Vice versa, changing social, political and economic environments and conditions lead to ever changing migration patterns. For instance, an unfolding conflict or war, an economic crisis, or new migration politics (new recruitment schemes or the introduction of visa) impact on the behaviour of people and trigger or disrupt migration networks and migration systems. Furthermore, processes of political integration or disintegration – e.g. through Europeanization and globalization or through the dissolution of states – ensues reinterpretation of borders, boundaries and membership regimes. Both these processes bring about new co-ordinates for migration. Accordingly, migration continuously changes direction and scale, as well as cause and composition.[11] Consequently, migration impacts on the relations between countries and nations.

Thus the global economic order and the global migration order are both in an interdependent process of constant change. Old economic powers decline in importance while new economic powers arise, as first the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and now also the MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey) countries. These trends alter a country's attractiveness or need for migration; moreover, political crises and war disperse a country's population. Both these processes can impact on migratory flows. As a con-

sequence, previous sending countries become receiving countries while receiving countries become sending countries. It has thus been noted that more and more migration is now south-south or south-east, which partly supplements and partly replaces the importance of the old western receiving countries.

These developments are also reflected in Turkey. For instance, Turkey has risen to the 17th rank of the global economic order and is expected to rise further. It is, therefore, already considered to be a contender among the group of global powers[12]. This also changes Turkey's position in the global migration order. Turkey no longer is a major migrant sending country as during the guest workers and refugee years of the mid and late 20th century. Instead, Turkey has already become a net immigration country[13] meaning that more migrants arrive than leave. Turkey hosts significant communities of German, Russian, Ukrainian, Azerbaijani, Iranian, Iraqi, Afghani, Armenian, Georgian, and smaller communities of Moldovan and Senegalese immigrants. Most prominently, Turkey also receives large numbers of refugees, more than any other European country. They come from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia, but most recently and noticeable from Syria. Also international travel to Turkey has almost tripled within just one decade, from 11 arrivals of foreigners in 2001 to 31 million in 2011. The most important growth rates are travellers from Russia and China, as the numbers have quadrupled[14].

International Relations, Migration, and Human Agency

Frequently, migration impacts on and subsequently shapes international relations. For instance, Turkey was drawn into an argument with the EU over transit migrants who planned to continue their journey to Greece, usually in a clandestine fashion. The same scenario occurs throughout Europe. For instance, in May 2007, a boat loaded with 27 men from Sub-Saharan Africa left Libya; soon afterwards it sank in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. While these men managed to survive by clinging to a floating tuna net, a war of words broke out between Malta, Italy, and Libya over who was responsible for the rescue.[15] Another example occurred in 2011 when Italy entered into conflict with France, Germany, and Austria over granting residence permits to a group of Tunisian boat people which then allowed them to travel to other EU countries. Also Greece was frequently criticized by other EU member states over its assumed failure to prevent the entry of undocumented immigrants from Turkey who would then move on to other EU destination countries. In a similar context, Bulgaria's entry to the Schengen zone has been delayed due to concerns the citizens of Bulgaria would take advantage of this and migrate in large numbers.[16]

In these cases, it was the real or assumed intention, decision and action of people to migrate that put migration on the political agenda of the affected countries. And because mi-

> **Turkey no longer is a major migrant sending country as during the guest workers years of the mid and late 20th century. Turkey has already become a net immigration country**

gration is an inherently international process - because people migrate from one country to another - it has for some time been widely accepted that migration is best dealt with bi- or multilaterally.[17] Italy, Malta and Libya, Italy and France, the EU and Turkey or Greece and the other member states would not have had a conflict if people would not have migrated. In these cases it were the actions of migrants that pushed the governments of the affected countries onto the negotiation table. In the same context, Malta, an otherwise almost insignificant EU member state gained significant power as it took on role of a watch tower guarding the EU against irregular migration in the Central Mediterranean.[18] In this case it was the action of migrants that changed the position of a state in the European power system. This is to argue that international conflicts and more generally international relations can be determined by the actions of migrants. Thus, more broadly spoken in these cases it was human agency that was constitutive for the international relations of these countries.

Migration and Diplomacy

Migration diplomacy[19] is widely de-
ployed by sending as well as receiving
countries. For example, in the 1970s
the idea of an integrated Arab world
and an Arab labour market was per-
vasive and one of the political ideas
to achieve this was to facilitate free-
dom of movement of workers. In the
same context did Saudi Arabia favour
(Arab) Eritrean refugees and guerril-
las in their fight against (Christian)
Ethiopia. In these cases, 'migration

policy [was] an indirect instrument
of foreign policy, and the opening and
closing of borders on the receiving or
sending side have been used as tools
of political leverage' and occasionally
as a political 'weapon'.[20] In 1999, after
Malawi had lost most its medical staff
to other countries due to emigration,
mostly to the UK, and thus suffered
from severe staff shortages in its
health system, it raised the issue with
the UK to stop active recruitment
and thus to minimise further emigra-
tion. The Philippines frequently use

diplomatic channels to promote the admission of more Filipino migrant workers to other wealthier countries, as in 2004 with Japan, or to better protect their rights. In 2013, Russia threatened to introduce visa requirements for Ukrainians as a means to blackmail and stop the country's alignment with the EU and instead bring it back under Russia's control. This would have severely affected labour migration of millions of Ukrainians to Russia, a strategy that is vital for the livelihood of many Ukrainians as well as for Ukrainian economy and stability as a whole.

Also Turkey has frequently been at the forefront of migration diplomacy. On the one hand, EU countries frequently raise concerns regarding migration, whether over allegations that EU accession or visa liberalization could facilitate large-scale migration to the EU from Turkey or over claims that Turkey does not do enough to control its borders to prevent irregular migration of transit migrants towards its western borders. On the other hand, Turkey too, notably in 2010 played the migration card, over the Armenian issue when Erdogan threatened to expel irregular Armenian migrants[21] in a political move to quell calls to recognize the Ottoman killings of ethnic Armenians during WWI.

More recently, news hit the headlines that the EU and Turkey have simultaneously signed a readmission agreement *and* a road map to visa liberalisation. On the one hand, combating irregular and transit migration through Turkey and other countries has long been a major concern of the EU. On the other hand, visa free entry of its citizens to the EU has long been at the heart of Turkey, notably as this is usually a right of EU candidate countries. For long, the EU as the more powerful actor had refused Turkey any visa liberalisation and Turkey could do little but bemoaning this. However, the EU also needed Turkey's collaboration in the fight against irregular migration and this has given Turkey a bargaining chip; once Turkey recognised this it linked its signature to the readmission agreement to the EU's agreement to visa liberalisation. While this trade off works to the benefit of Turkey's government and its citizens, it works against the needs and interests of poor economic migrants and refugees in search of security, jobs, and family members.

Subsequently, as these examples show, migrants and refugees as diverse as Eritrean refugees, Ukrainian workers and Armenian migrants can become the pawns in the political and commercial chess game of countries.

International Relations, Visa Diplomacy and Migration Politics

Another area that is closely related to international relations is visa politics, which is an important element of migration politics. Visa politics serve an important though an often academically overlooked aspect of international diplomacy and international relations: "visa diplomacy is defined

as the used of visa issuance or denial at an individual, group or interstate level to influence another state's policy.[22]" Visas might be refused to members of other governments to influence their policies, visas may also signal to other governments that their citizens are considered an economic or security threat, or visa requirements might signal that the economic conditions of another country or the quality of their national identity documents are considered insufficient and thus facilitating fraud. The flip side is that abolishing visa requirements for certain countries signals to them that they are not considered a threat and their citizens are viewed as welcomed. Thus, visa policies are not only used to govern the flow of people but also as instrument in shaping international relations.

Turkey has successively liberalised its visa policy towards many other countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This went hand in hand with the famous expansion of the Turkish Airlines network.[23] Consequently, the citizens of these countries can now easily obtain visas or can often enter visa-free for periods of up to three months in Turkey.[24] Indeed, "the free movement of people is emerging as an increasingly significant factor in Turkey's foreign relations.[25]" Being able to visit another country relatively freely has various consequences: free movement of people facilitates economic activity and growth ranging from tourism and shopping to business and trade, and helps to advance and grow regional economic, politi-

cal, and cultural integration. Further to this, it enables people of different countries to get acquainted with one another and with its cultures. This also shapes the perceptions people have of the respective other country and subsequently the relations between the countries. In other words, mobility and migration can drive international relations 'from below'. The free movement of people combined with liberalized trade and business were significant factors, which

Combating irregular and transit migration through Turkey and other countries has long been a major concern of the EU

allowed Turkey to avoid being drawn into the EU's economic crisis. Instead, Turkey has been able through these policies to expand its export markets and diversify its economic relations and become less depended on the EU[26]. This type of visa diplomacy and the free movement of people are essential in helping Turkey to become a regional economic and subsequently also political hub, just as free travel was a precondition for the success of the EU.

Meanwhile, Turkey has been criticized by the EU, notably by Frontex as its visa diplomacy is seen as facilitating irregular transit migration to the EU; it is claimed that people who can easily travel to Turkey exploit this

opportunity by irregularly moving on to the EU.[27] This throws a light on a policy dilemma Turkey is facing. On the one hand, Turkey is interested in good relations with the EU, it's still powerful political ally and economic partner to the North and West. Indeed, as an EU candidate country, Turkey must also comply with the EU *acquis,* which in the end also embraces all its migration policies, including the visa country list. On the other hand, Turkey also has international political and economic interests beyond the EU, and these are of growing importance. In particular,

Turkey is now better prepared to manage migration and take advantage of the potential benefits of migration while managing the more problematic aspects

Turkey is striving to develop good relations with the other countries in the region, in the Commonwealth of Independent States, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East, Northern Africa and elsewhere for both political and economic reasons.

Towards a Modern Migration Policy

Migration politics inherently touch upon foreign and domestic affairs, including economics and social cohesion. Throughout the 20th century, Turkey focussed on and favoured ethnic Turkish migration and was otherwise concerned with its own extensive Turkish Diaspora mostly in Western Europe. The regulation of all other migratory trends, including refugee migration, was generally not comprehensive, inconsistent, and became increasingly inadequate.[28] As a result, migration to Turkey was de facto often unregulated or irregular. In 2008, the Bureau for Asylum and Migration under the Under Secretariat of the Ministry of Interior was introduced and mandated with preparing new, modern, and comprehensive migration legislation and administration that would better serve Turkey's interests, meet EU requirements, and respond to the often critical ruling of the European Court of Justice.[29] Thorough preparation further supported by field visits and intensive consultations with national and international stakeholders resulted in an impressive and widely praised new piece of law. However, there remain causes for concerns and criticisms (e.g. art. 58 on the detention of families and children, art. 77 on qualifying threefold violation of the dispersal to satellite cities as withdrawal of an asylum application or art. 82 on the requirements for a residence permit). By and large, however, the law not only reflects European standards, but also in its spirit and in some of its details even goes beyond these and represents a rather liberal and humane approach. With this law, Turkey is now much better prepared to manage migration and take advantage of the potential benefits of migration while managing the

more problematic aspects. Also the interests and well -being of the individual migrants and refugees shall be much better protected by this law. However, it all depends on the organizational culture of the responsible agencies and how the law will be interpreted and implemented on the ground.

Conclusion

For Turkey, as for many other countries, international relations, migration and visa policy as well as economic and welfare policy are closely related. The liberalised circulation of capital, goods and people facilitates regional political and economic integration and is widely considered benefiting economic growth and the well being of the affected populations[30] (though there are also costs and risks that require careful monitoring and management of migration). In moral terms, and given that Turkey maintains its liberal migration and visa policy, Turkey will increasingly been seen as freer, more open and welcoming country, and an alternative to the EU for business people and tourists while the EU runs the danger of increasingly being perceived as an exclusive, closely controlled and rather unwelcoming fortress. ■

Endnotes

1. Myron Weiner, "International Migration and International Relations," *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1985), pp. 441-455 *was amongst the first making the link, he also recognised migrants as agents (a) contributing to the interdependence of states and (b) by changing states' populations and thus also impacting on the domestic dimension of IR.*

2. For an overview see Meral Açıkgöz and Hakkı Onur Ariner, "Turkey's Law on Foreigners and International Protection: An Introduction," *TurkMiS working paper, Oxford: COMPAS*, No. 2 (January, 2014), http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/files/Publications/Briefings/TurkMiS/Brief_2_Ariner_Acikgoz_2014.pdf.

3. "Number of international migrants rises above 232 million, UN reports," *UN News Centre, September 11, 2013, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp/html/story.asp?News ID=45819&Cr=migrants&Cr1=.*

4. E.g. Douglas S. Massey, et al., *Worlds in Motion Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

5. Temporary migration: migration of foreign workers with fixed-term contracts, students with fixed-term visa, refugees with a temporary protection status; seasonal migration: short-term, repetitive and cyclic labor migration; circular migration: systematic and regular movement of usually labor migrants between their homelands and foreign countries.

6. "UN World Tourism Organisation World Tourism Barometer," Vol. 11 (October 2013), *unwto. org*, http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_barom13_05_oct_excerpt_0.pdf.

7. Franck Düvell, "Migration, Minorities, Marginality: New Directions in European Research," Chris Rumford, (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of European Studies*, (London: Sage, 2009), pp. 328-346.

8. Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

9. Stephen Castles, *Ethnicity and Globalization*, (New York and London: Sage, 2000).

10. Anna Triandafyllidou, *Immigrants and National Identity in Europe*, (London: Routledge, 2001).

11. Franck Düvell, *Europäische und internationale Migration*, (Hamburg: Lit, 2006).

12. Chris Wright, "After the BRICS are the MINTs, But Can You Make Any Money From Them?," *Forbes,* January 6, 2014, http://www.forbes.com/sites/chriswright/2014/01/06/after-the-brics-the-mints-catchy-acronym-but-can-you-make-any-money-from-it/.

13. "Net Migration," *World Bank*, 2013, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.NETM.

14. Arriving Foreigners and Citizens, *Turkish Statistics Institute (TURKSTAT),* 2013, http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1072.

15. For an analysis of the dispute see Cetta Mainwaring, "Centring on the Margins: Migration Control in Malta, Cyprus, and the European Union," Ph.D. thesis, Oxford: Oxford University, 2012.

16. "Schengen for Bulgaria and Romania postponed again, but most of EU firm on free movement of persons," *Sofia Globe*, December 5, 2013, http://sofiaglobe.com/2013/12/05/schengen-for-bulgaria-and-romania-postponed-again-but-most-of-eu-firm-on-free-movement-of-persons/.

17. See, for instance, Michael Jandl and Irene Stacher (eds.), *Towards A Multilateral Migration Regime*, (Vienna: ICMPD, 2004).

18. Mainwaring, "Centring on the Margins: Migration Control in Malta, Cyprus, and the European Union."

19. This concept has been applied and popularised by IOM, see, for instance "IOM Migration Policy Framework for Sub-Saharan Africa," *IOM*, (November 17, 2000), https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/about_iom/en/council/80/MC_INF_244.pdf.

20. Helene Thiollet, "Migration as Diplomacy: Labor Migrants, Refugees, and Arab Regional Politics in the Oil-Rich Countries," *International Labor and Working Class History,* No. 79, (2011), pp. 103-121.

21. "Turkey threatens to expel 100,000 Armenians," *bbc news*, March 17, 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8572934.stm.

22. Kevin Stringer, "Visa Diplomacy," *Diplomacy and Statecraft,* Vol. 15, No. 4 (2004), pp. 655-822.

23. Orçun Selcuk, "Turkish Airlines: A Foreign Policy Tool," *Today's Zaman*, December 17, 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/news-301432-.html.

24. See the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, articles 11-18; for some more analysis of Turkey's different visa see also Kemal Kirişçi, "Informal 'Circular Migration' into Turkey: The Bureaucratic and Political Context," *CARIM Analytic and Synhetic Notes,* European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, No. 21 (2008).

25. Deniz Devrim and Eduard Soler, "Turkey's Bold New Visa Diplomacy, " Notes Internacionales, *CIBOB* (March 12, 2010), http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/notes_internacionals/n1_12/turkey_s_bold_new_visa_diplomacy.

26. Wright, "After the BRICS are the MINTs, But Can You Make Any Money From Them?"

27. See Frontex deputy executive director Arias in Colin Freeman, "Budget airline tickets fuel illegal immigration into Europe, warns EU border chief," *Daily Telegraph*, October 21, 2013, *http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10391981/Budget-airline-tickets-fuel-illegal-immigration-into-Europe-warns-EU-border-chief.html.*

28. "Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu Tasarısı ile İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu, Avrupa Birliği Uyum Komisyonu ve İçişleri Komisyonu Raporları" [Proposal on the Law for Foreigners and [Internal Protection and the Reports of the Human Rights Review Commission, the European Union Harmonization Commission and the Interior Affairs Commission], No: 310, *TBMM*, http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/sirasayi/donem24/yil01/ss310.pdf.

29. Açıkgöz and Ariner, "Turkey's New Law on Foreigners and International Protection: An Introduction."

30. "International Migrants Day: 18 December," *UN*, http://www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday/bac kground.shtml.