
ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

BOZKURT UGUR. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF TÜRKİYE IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN MIGRATION PROCESSES

Keywords: immigration; refugees from Syria and Afghanistan; problems of social adaptation; competition in the labour market; unemployment; demographic problems.

Bozkurt Ugur,

Phd, Lecturer,

Van Yuzuncu Yıl University (Van-Turkey)

e-mail: ugurbozkurt@yyu.edu.tr

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Abstract. The purpose of the study is to examine the economic problems arising from the ongoing refugee reception process in Türkiye. The volume of immigration has been increasing over a long period and has reached its peak at the present time. Many people were forced to immigrate to Türkiye due to the recent wars in the Middle East. Most immigrants enter our country illegally, which puts Türkiye in a difficult situation, but migrants also face problems. It is obvious that economic problems are particularly acute, and these problems have two different aspects. Firstly, there are the economic problems faced by immigrants themselves who want to achieve better opportunities in

Türkiye; secondly, there are the problems of inflation and unemployment that the Türkiye government faces due to immigrants. At the same time, problems arise between residents and aliens.

Introduction

Migration is an interdisciplinary field that has many definitions but no general rule. We can divide migration into forced and voluntary; the purposes for migration may be labour or asylum; and methods of reaching the destination can be either legal or illegal [1, p. 1686]. The concept of international migration is used to describe the movement of citizens of one country across state boundaries to another country for reasons that are determined by push and pull factors. Push factors encourage people to leave their country and pull factors instil a desire to achieve a higher and safer standard of living in other countries. While not all cross-border movements fall within the definition of international migration, long-term and settlement movements of people do [2, p. 311].

It is known that the determining factor for all migrants is the improvement of living and working conditions. Thus, the main reasons that prompt people to move to another locality are unsatisfying conditions in the place of residence or a desire for better opportunities. However, no matter the motive, people setting off on such a journey face many problems, primarily economic ones [3, p. 166]. In addition, globalization leads to increasing the wealth gap between countries, which, in turn, stimulates migration [4, p. 164]. Although migration appears to be a one-way movement, when we take into account the return of economic and social capital, it becomes clear that migration is actually a multi-directional movement. In this regard, many countries view the migration process as an opportunity not only to reduce the level of unemployment and lower the population affected by it, but also to receive additional remittance [1, p. 1692]. However, when assessing the current situation in

Türkiye, it becomes obvious that migration does not always yield the same results and is often fraught with economic problems. Therefore, it is advisable to examine the history of international migration in Türkiye, as well as the scale of migration and the regulation of migration policy.

Overview of the History of International Migration in Türkiye

Türkiye is located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, which has witnessed numerous migration events throughout history. Due to its location on international migration routes, Türkiye is either a destination or transit country for migration. In the 19th century, migration to Türkiye intensified and is still intense to this day. According to the country's migration history, more than 6.5 million people have migrated to Türkiye since 1859. It is believed that in the 19th century a large number of Circassians from the Caucasus and a small number of Jews, immigrated to Türkiye. In the 20th century, there was a mass migration of Muslims, especially from the Balkan Peninsula [5, p. 209-210; 6].

Throughout its history, Türkiye has received millions of immigrants; however, there is also external migration in the country. In the 1950s, there was an active labour migration from Türkiye to Europe in accordance with the agreement on attracting labour from Türkiye to the countries of the European Economic Community. Judging by the reports, the largest number of departures from Türkiye to Europe took place in 1980 [2, p. 182-183].

Since 1980, Türkiye has experienced a massive influx of refugees or asylum seekers. In 1989, more than 300 thousand Bulgarian citizens of Türkiye and Pomak origin were forced to flee to Türkiye, where they sought asylum (Pomaks are those whose ancestors converted to Islam). Another wave of refugees hit Türkiye in 1991, when requests for asylum came from half a

million people, mostly Kurds; fleeing persecution by Saddam Hussein and his army, they tried to cross the mountains and enter Türkiye [7, p. 297].

In 2011, due to the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, more than 3.6 million people migrated to Türkiye in a short period of time, thus starting a period of migration unprecedented in history. Many of the country's citizens were fleeing ISIS forces or fearing reprisals from government troops. Seeking refuge in Türkiye, millions of Syrians moved there thanks to Türkiye's "open door policy". It is widely known that in 2014 Türkiye became the host of the largest number of refugees in the world [8, p. 40]. In 2018, it retained this status for the fifth year in a row, accepting 3.7 million refugees, mostly Syrians. In 2021, the number of Syrian migrants in Türkiye continued to grow; they are under temporary protected status. In addition, Türkiye has recently experienced a large number of incidents related to illegal migration. Between 2015 and 2021, more than 1.5 million illegal migrants were detained, mainly from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Among the detained illegal migrants, the largest groups are citizens of Afghanistan (470 thousand people) and Pakistan (196 thousand people). However, thousands more illegal migrants continue to live in Türkiye [9, p. 34].

In the post-Cold War period, Türkiye's experience with migration was shaped by many internal and external factors. Globalization has become an important external force that has contributed to the rapid transformation of Türkiye into a "country of transit". In addition, in the 2000s, Türkiye faced problems in developing migration policies. This was due to the national-state structure of Türkiye society. Since a nation-state is a community that regards itself as one people with a common territory and a single narrative, then international migrants could not be part of this narrative in Türkiye, which violated the fundamental principle of the nation. In this context, the country's traditional immigration policy in the 20th century was largely determined by state building processes, as well as the desire to

preserve a homogeneous national identity [10, p. 178]. It is obvious that both the political and economic aspects of this situation in Türkiye are volatile and problematic.

Social and Economic Challenges of Migration

The influx of migrants to Türkiye in recent years has brought with it many challenges, especially social and economic ones. Türkiye's various policies, especially regarding Syrian migrants, have been aimed at finding temporary solutions to problems. The practice of granting "guest" status, which was initially adopted with the expectation that the crisis in Syria would be short-lived and asylum seekers would return to their countries, soon had to be adjusted. It became clear that the integration of refugees was possible, first by granting them temporary protection status (2014), and then by granting them the right to work and access to Türkiye citizenship (2016), albeit very limited in nature. After 2017, there was the question of the expulsion of Syrians in government discourse. In 2019, it was noted that, on the one hand, specific policies reflected this intention of "repatriation", but, on the other hand, there were plans developed for the integration of Syrians [11, p. 319–320].

One of the issues is that the implementation of this policy implies an official and public acknowledgment that the majority of Syrian refugees are not going to return to Syria and are staying in Türkiye for a lengthy period of time. The priority for the Turkish government is to mitigate this highly politicized issue, as well as the increasingly negative public sentiment against the continued presence of Syrian refugees. Therefore, it is necessary to effectively demonstrate the economic benefits to the host community, as well as the benefits of social cohesion between refugees and the host community through integration, as opposed to the social and political problems that will arise if refugees are continuously isolated [12, p. 7].

There is an opinion that societies with cultural similarities will not have problems coexisting. However, an in-depth analysis of Syrian immigration in Türkiye shows that while cultural proximity initially plays a positive role, its favourable effects decrease as the duration of stay in the country increases. There are many factors, the most relevant of which is the size of the later inflows of migrants; it can even be argued that it is the key factor. Moreover, a large number of immigrants can be a basis for discrimination and interfere with the construction of a new identity. This situation can become a serious obstacle to adaptation processes. The fact that there are publicized discriminatory statements against migrants and their children is an issue that Türkiye should pay attention to [9, p. 328].

With 1 million refugees reaching school age in 2018, Türkiye committed to including all Syrian refugee children previously attending temporary education centres in the national education system by 2020 [8, p. 193]. However, this poses many problems. Listed below are the major barriers to schooling for Syrian children living outside the refugee camps in Türkiye.

1. *A language barrier.* Due to the fact that migrant children speak only Arabic, they face a language barrier in Türkiye schools. Research shows that schoolchildren in Türkiye are not receiving proper education and are lagging behind.

2. *Economic hardships.* Due to economic hardships, immigrant families cannot afford the cost of education of their children. To meet their basic needs, many families are forced to make their children work.

3. *Social cohesion.* Some Syrian families are reluctant to enrol their children in schools due to fears that their children are going to be bullied at school and have difficulty socializing with their classmates [13, p. 57]. It is clear that migrant families' fear of their children getting hurt outweighs their desire for them to benefit from education.

It is known that migrants have problems with education and healthcare. Although Arabic language training was provided

in temporary educational centres for immigrants, the desired results could not be achieved due to the lack of accreditation. This situation slows down the adaptation and social integration of immigrant children.

However, the employment of Syrian doctors and teachers in the fields of healthcare and education is progressing well. Still, technical issues and an increase in the number of school-age children have resulted in many endeavours not taking place. In addition, children with special needs could not receive the necessary care due to the lack of experienced teachers [8, p. 248].

Another issue the government is worried about is a high birth rate among immigrants. Moreover, this is happening against the background of a decline in the birth rate among Türkiye women (in 2022, the fertility index was 1.38, whereas in 2017 it was 2.1). This situation threatens Türkiye's demographic structure [9, p. 64–65; 14, p. 599]. In addition, migrants have changed the ethnic and religious balance in many regions, especially in Kilis, Hatay and Gaziantep. We can say that contradictions between Sunnis and Alawites have intensified in many regions [15, p. 3].

Apart from the social problems caused by migration in Türkiye, which we have tried to explain above, there are also many economic issues. In the early years of migration, there were no major economic problems and migrants were not a subject of debate. However, after the currency devaluation and debt crisis in 2018, the impact of migrants on the economy became a focus of controversy. As noted above, rising unemployment and an influx of refugees slowed economic growth. In addition, competition for jobs and in business was rising, which significantly soured relations between the host society and immigrants [16, p. 2].

Competition in the labour market is one of the main economic challenges immigrants face. When migrants arrive in a host country, they often enter competition with local workers for jobs, especially in low-skilled industries. Such competition can lead to stagnation and even salary reduction for local employees [17,

p. 3–4]. Moreover, migrants may face discrimination in the labour market, which can limit their employment opportunities and result in lower wages than that of local workers [18]. We can say that there are similar cases in Türkiye. Native-born workers face wage stagnation and unemployment, especially due to the fact that migrants agree to work for lower wages. At the same time, it is obvious that migrants are unable to work for adequate wages.

Without a work permit, Syrian refugees face major financial hardships. In the Türkiye labour market, there are particularly many illegal Syrian immigrants who are not registered as refugees. These immigrants typically use their savings to rent small apartments and work under the table in textile factories, clothing stores, restaurants, construction and agricultural sites. If such Syrians are caught by the police, they are sent to refugee camps. As illegal workers, they earn less than the minimum wage, which is reported to be \$250–300 per month, an amount sufficient to cover basic living expenses. Some manage to scrape together enough money to send some of their earnings back to their families in Syria [15, p. 10].

The situation was further complicated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most refugees in Türkiye have limited access to essential items that help stay healthy during a pandemic, such as hygiene supplies and personal protective equipment. The economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has left hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees in an even more drastic situation [19, p. 130]. In 2019, the share of Syrian migrant workers was 37.9 per cent, dropping to 29.4 per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic. It is clear that many migrants, whose psychological state was negatively affected by the situation, lost their jobs [9, p. 292].

Today, Afghans are another group of migrants that have social and economic problems. Due to recent political events in Afghanistan, Türkiye faces numerous cases of illegal migration from this country [20, p. 81]. These unregistered migrants are known to work in many regions of the country. Therefore, it is not possible to assess the extent to which informal employment is

affecting the economy. However, the arrival of millions of migrants in Türkiye has led to an increase in housing prices. In addition, the shrinking of zones of employment led to a decrease in wages and the level of social welfare. Migrants also had an important role in the sharp increase in inflation [16, p. 4].

Afghans migrate to Türkiye to either settle there or move to a third country. The goal of those Afghan migrants who are planning to stay in Türkiye is to improve living conditions. Housing, healthcare, employment and economic environment are not particularly migrant-friendly. Those who arrive in Türkiye as temporary asylum seekers with the purpose of resettlement to a third country are lingering there as long as possible. However, Afghan migrants face problems in both cases. Migrants who want to get the best opportunities for employment and living conditions find themselves in a difficult situation and do not register. In addition, Afghan migrants who choose to resettle to a third country are faced with a long relocation process, reduced quotas for entry into third countries, uncertainty in obtaining the status, no work permit and the inability to use public services [21, p. 106].

Certain steps are being taken in order to address the challenges that Afghan migrants and the government of Türkiye face in connection with the migration process. Due to the strengthening of migration to Türkiye, especially through Afghanistan and Pakistan, security measures were strengthened at the Iranian border. To prevent migrants from entering the country, Türkiye managed to build border walls in a short period time. In 2019, a 182 km long wall was built on the border with Iran. Moreover, in 2020, Türkiye constructed an 81 km long wall along the Iranian border in the Ağrı Province. And finally, in 2021, the construction of 43 kilometres of wall on the border in the Hakkâri Province was completed. These partial fences are supposed to cover the entire Iranian border [22, p. 26]. Having spent significant funds on the accommodation of migrants,

Türkiye also had to finance the erection of protective structures in order to keep new refugees from entering the country.

Lastly, it should be noted that the economic consequences of migration are the subject of constant debate. Some experts argue that mass migration can stabilize the population and contribute to the development of multicultural societies [23]. However, since the economic consequences of migration are complex and multi-layered, for their full understanding an additional research is being called for [24].

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to note that Türkiye was a witness to many migration events both in the past and present. Mass migration phenomenon that started in the 19th century is especially noticeable. During that period, Türkiye with an agriculture-based economy was not wholly susceptible to the negative impact of migration. However, it is clear that migration affected the economic activities that developed and diversified starting in the 20th century. In addition, recent migrations to Türkiye, especially from Syria and Afghanistan (the latter is illegal) put many problems on the agenda. We can say that both migrants and Türkiye are facing diverse challenges.

According to the data, migrants most often experience economic problems that have a far-reaching impact on their well-being. These problems include financial difficulties, troubles adjusting to the new economic conditions, discrimination and limited employment opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated these economic issues, widening the inequality and making it more difficult for migrants to earn their livelihood. At the same time, inflation in Türkiye increased at the expense of migrants, while competition for jobs between local residents and labour migrants did not ensure economic prosperity of any of the parties. As you can see, there are situations where the basic need for housing is not being met fully. Therefore, politicians and

interested parties should address economic problems related to migration. To eliminate economic problems, it is crucial to ensure the well-being of migrants and the local population, as well as the successful integration of migrants into a new society.

It is clear that migrants face many social challenges. There are issues with ensuring access to housing, medical services and education opportunities. In addition, various migrant-related problems give rise to tensions in society. As a result, as the Türkiye economy is increasingly confronted with such problems as recession, high inflation and devaluation of the lyre, resentment towards refugees is growing, fuelling nationalist sentiments. Time will tell what means Türkiye will resort to in order to address challenges in connection with international migration.

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VLADIMIR KIRICHENKO. IRAN-SAUDI RECONCILIATION: IMPACT ON THE SITUATION IN THE REGION

*Keywords: Saudi Arabia; Iran;
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Vladimir Kirichenko,
Research Associate,
Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS,
e-mail: black-whit@yandex.ru
© V. Kirichenko 2024

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Abstract. The article reveals the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran in 2023. Diplomatic relations were interrupted in 2016 after the destruction of Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran by protesters against the execution of the famous Shiite theologian Nimr al-Nimr in the kingdom. Also, a significant part of the article is devoted to the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which began on October 7, 2023. The reaction of the main regional actors to this event is considered.