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Stretching, Opening or Sealing the Borders: Turkish Foreign Policy Conceptions and their Impact on Migration, Asylum and Visa Policies

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ABSTRACT

Migration, asylum and visa policies can function as tools of foreign policy while also marking specific shifts in foreign policy choices. This study analyses the structural linkages of such policies with Turkish foreign policy through focusing on two distinctive foreign policy conceptions of two eras, namely during the ANAP (Motherland Party) and JDP (Justice and Development Party) governments. These eras present distinctive characteristics and noteworthy policy shifts for the instrumentalization of migration policies. This study argues that the nexus between migration and Turkish foreign policy manifests itself in three forms: (i) border and asylum policies as part of Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts; (ii) visa policies for rapprochement; with target countries and (iii) co-ethnics and kinship policies for extending spheres of influence.

Introduction

Migration is a complex, multidimensional issue, both as a research subject and as a policy field. A country's migration experiences and migration policies can be shaped by the influence of several internal and external factors—one of which is foreign policy. In many circumstances, it can function as one of the most influential policies for a state's migration policies. Due to its basic characteristics, international migration has significant linkages with a country's foreign policy, which makes migration a more attractive and visible issue in both policy-making and academic research.

Given this background, it can be asserted that migration, visa and asylum policies can be instrumentalized for foreign policy aspirations, as is also observable in many cases of Turkish foreign policy. Within international migration flows, it is possible to study Turkey as a distinctive case with its own idiosyncrasies that combine Turkey's status as an immigration, emigration and transit country. In international migration flows, Turkey thus simultaneously plays these different roles and these roles have also transformed over time. The nexus between migration policies and foreign policy, which has not yet been adequately analysed in the literature, may be one of the most substantial reasons for these transformations.

The main aim of this study is to demonstrate that Turkey's migration, asylum and visa policies reflect noteworthy linkages with Turkish foreign policy strategies and objectives by focusing on how these linkages and nexus are revealed in these policies. This nexus manifests itself in three forms, namely (i) border and asylum policies as part of Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts; (ii) visa policies for rapprochement with target countries; (iii) co-ethnics and kinship policies for extending spheres of influence.

This study juxtaposes and analyses two distinctive foreign policy conceptions of two different periods. The first is the foreign policy conception of the ANAP (Motherland Party) government (in what can be called the 'Özal era'), defined under the term 'model country'. The second conception is the 'strategic depth' policy of the JDP (Justice and Development Party) government after 2009. Both 'model country' and 'strategic depth' were chosen as the best keywords to briefly define the foreign policy conceptions of the two periods. It should be noted that the 'model country' conception of the Özal era should be considered as one given to Turkey by others rather than Turkey's own perspective. However, it gives essential and significant clues for understanding foreign Turkey's policy choices during that period. In light of this, it was preferred to categorize these periods in terms of 'foreign policy conception' rather than 'strategy' or 'doctrine'.

To better explain how foreign policy issues intersect with immigration policies, it is also necessary to discuss some methodological aspects of this study. This study investigates how the nexus formed between migration and foreign policy manifests itself, and how the migration, asylum and visa policies can be instrumentalized for foreign policy strategies and aspirations. The methodology uses a comparative approach by taking distinctive cases from the two periods mentioned above. These two periods and their conceptions, namely 'model country' and 'strategic depth', form the centre of the analysis since both have notable characteristics in terms of using migration policies as a foreign policy tool while also having visible reflections on migration and visa policies. In addition, the policies of these periods mark specific shifts away from the conventional understanding of Turkish foreign policy. Thus, analysis of migration, visa and border strategies within the scope of these policies may also help explain these policy shifts.

Although international migration is a broad framework, this study clusters migration-related policies under three headings as migration, visa and asylum policies, to prevent any confusions in terminology. In the existing literature, Turkish migration policies and Turkish foreign policy are mostly analysed as separate topics, so the main arguments and context of this study have not previously been adequately analysed. Therefore, the literature on both Turkish migration and foreign policy are reviewed here in order to reveal particular intersecting points between these fields.

The first part will present existing debates and insights in the literature about the nexus between migration policies and foreign policy strategies. Then, after briefly analysing the basic elements of the 'model country' and 'strategic depth' conceptions in Turkish foreign policy, the remainder of the paper will examine the three main clusters listed above.

Migration, asylum and visa policies as transversal issues of foreign policy

Foreign policy can be considered as a critical background to migration policies since these policies are shaped by the influence of both external and internal dynamics. However, the

literature on the nexus between migration and foreign policy is still limited. Existing studies in the literature concerning the subject mostly focus on the instrumentalization of asylum and migration policies in interstate relations or visa diplomacy.¹

In this context, Mitchell emphasizes that the intensive linkages of international migration with foreign policy create a strong connection between migration and international relations, since migration policy can serve or influence foreign policy aims.² Dominguez offers a relevant example of this regarding how the United States imposed migration policies as an instrument of its foreign policy goals towards Latin American countries or against communist regimes during the Cold War, such as welcoming Cuban refugees as a foreign policy choice.³ The US also utilized migration policies for years to increase its influence in other areas like the Caribbean and Central America. These strategies can be seen in the provision of rapid visa processes, asylum applications and tailor-made immigration status for citizens of specific favoured countries. Sometimes, such strategies can even aim to embarrass or discredit the regimes of sending countries, such as US policies towards communist regimes during the Cold War.⁴ Teitelbaum categorizes the basic forms of the connections between international migration and foreign policy under three frameworks, namely foreign policy's effects on migration, international migration as a tool of foreign policy and foreign policy impacts on past migration.⁵ Accordingly, foreign policy can catalyse or limit migration flows with specific policies and practices, such as diplomatic leverage and military intervention.⁶

In particular, visa and border management policies can also enhance the link between migratory movements and foreign policy objectives. For instance, 'visa diplomacy', meaning the utilization of visa refusals or issuances to influence other states' policies, is one example of this link.⁷ Stringer argues that visas can be employed as an instrument of 'low level coercion' or 'protest' between states, and in many circumstances it provides a low-cost tool for diplomatic communication. As illustrated by Stringer, visa restrictions by Spain against Canadian citizens during the Turbot War (1995) shows how visa policy can be used as an immediate counter-action in disputes between states.⁸

Among the very few studies offering theoretical perspectives on the migration-foreign policy nexus, Greenhill's comparative study is also noteworthy for demonstrating how migration, refugee crises and forced displacements can be used as instruments of persuasion in foreign policy.⁹ Greenhill analyses 56 forced migration cases from 1953 to 2010, classifies them according to the foreign policy objectives behind them, and examines how successfully they contributed to achieving the intended foreign policy objectives.¹⁰ For example, he classifies the states that exercise coercive migration policies as 'challengers'. From his analysis, challengers achieved their goals by employing migration as a tool in 73% of the 56 cases, which demonstrates the impact of instrumentalized migration policies in foreign policy. However, in many cases, such a persuasion process or 'challengers' are not sufficiently explicit to be easily identified since they can also be imposed by soft diplomacy processes.

Lavenex also examines the nexus between foreign policy and migration for the sui generis case of the European Union, noting how the extraterritorial dimension of migration flows shape state behaviours in supranational migration policy development and in setting the agenda of foreign policy cooperation.¹¹ For the EU, migration and visa policies are not only controversial within the foreign policy-making process but also in its implementation since they are repurposed and externalized as an instrument of relations in foreign policy. In particular, the EU can offer visa-free travel and visa facilitation as 'carrots' to trigger

reforms in neighbouring countries or persuade them to implement EU policy choices, as can be illustrated by examples from trade relations, and justice and home affairs.¹²

Based on her findings concerning Turkish migration policies, Tolay also asserts that because migration policy decisions can be motivated by foreign policy concerns, a change in foreign relations can also eventually affect migration policies.¹³ In addition to historical processes, some of Turkey's structural characteristics regarding international migration flows should also be emphasized as they connect Turkish migration and foreign policy strategies. The most prominent of these is Turkey's geopolitical situation in a neighbourhood of seemingly permanent political turmoil and conflict.¹⁴ This means that Turkey's relations with its neighbours or involvement in conflicts automatically brings migration issues onto its foreign policy agenda. Furthermore, Turkey's geographical location between East and West, and North and South has made it a pivotal transit country on migration routes.¹⁵ This links the issue of migration with Turkey's foreign relations, particularly with Europe. Moreover, the shifts in frequency of entries across different borders can give hints about changing foreign policy patterns. For instance, Kirişçi demonstrates this regarding the increasing number of entries from Turkey's neighbourhood, rising from 168,000 in 1980 to 10.1 million in 2010. He argues that this influx is linked to Turkey's new activism with neighbouring countries.¹⁶

It is also worth emphasizing that states' foreign policy decisions and strategies structurally encapsulate power relations and the positioning of states within international power relations. If migration policies are analysed from this perspective, it is also essential to address Turkey's motives for acting as a soft power while implementing its regional migration policies. For instance, Oğuzlu asserts that Turkey has been preferentially employing and promoting soft power strategies over hard power in recent years.¹⁷ Thus, migration policies also can be analysed within the framework of Turkey's soft power strategies in foreign policy.

Some insights from the 'model country' and 'strategic depth' conceptions in Turkish foreign policy

The 'model country' conception originated in the early 1980s, when the main structure of Turkish political and social life was influenced by the military intervention that had prolonged effects on several policy fields. Turgut Özal's ANAP government, which was able to form a single-party majority government after winning 45% of the votes in the 1983 elections, marks the post-military intervention period in Turkey. It was characterized by very rapid social, political and economic transformations. The entire following decade was labelled as the 'Özal era' for its diverse policy orientations in both domestic and foreign policy. Özal governed as Prime Minister from 1983 to 1989, and later as President from 1989 to 1993. Foreign policy took a prominent place in his policy design, particularly regarding its strong links with one of the essential elements of his policies, namely the liberal economy. While the influence of the US and the NATO policy choices and motives were also incontrovertible, the Özal government's foreign policy was generally defined by multidimensional, economic and national security-oriented strategies, which signified a break from traditional Turkish foreign policy. At the same time, the Özal era was not uniform but experienced substantial disjunctures, the most substantial of which may be the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. However, these two important and

interlinked developments did not have concrete effects until the 1990s, when they created new opportunities and threats for Turkish foreign policy.

After the Cold War ended, Özal oriented Turkey towards the Turkic Republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus, based on the motto of 'leadership for the Turkic Republics' and 'being a model country'. In this regard, Turkey aspired to take the roles of both 'regional leader' and 'bridge' in Özal's foreign policy.¹⁸ In parallel, Turkey contemplated becoming 'an elder brother' for newly independent Turkic states,¹⁹ considering the Soviet bloc's dissolution as an opportunity. The motto of 'model country' formed the centre of the Özal governments' strategies, particularly in the 1990s, to increase Turkey's regional influence through an activist approach. This strategy was apparently an attempt to take a share in the redistribution of power in the post-Cold War world; and the transforming structure of power relations in world politics was perceived by Özal as an opportunity to redefine Turkey's influence within a wider geography. The Central Asian Turkic republics lay within the centre of the target regions for the model country strategy under Turkey's aspiration to become a regional power. The concept of 'model' was intended to denote a country with a predominantly Muslim population that embraced pluralist democracy and secular values, and had strong ties with Europe and the US. In addition to the Turkic republics, Özal followed a strategy of formulating multilateral cooperation with countries of the Black Sea area.²⁰ Özal also prioritized the institutionalization of these policies and cooperation through establishing two new multilateral institutions in 1992: the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA).

Early on, Özal's government also placed the Middle East at the centre of its strategies by expanding economic relations, and generating higher capital flows and energy trade.²¹ This critical change encouraged dreams of reviving and developing cultural and historical linkages with Middle East states within a multilateral perspective (please see Table 1). The post-military intervention period in the Özal era can also be defined through the policies in approximation with the 'green belt' countries of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. According to Bilgin, however, traditional perceptions of the region as a source of possible threats remained the same due to PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) terrorism and problematic relations with states like Syria and Iran, although Özal transformed Turkey's geographical imagination of the Middle East into an area of opportunity.²²

Almost two decades later, the Justice and Development Party government promoted the 'strategic depth' and 'central country' conceptions by revitalizing Özal's earlier 'model country' aspirations. The JDP, which first came to power in 2002 with 34% of the votes, has remained in power for more than a decade. Foreign policy has always been at the centre of its policies for promoting a new activism in Turkish foreign policy with a bid to become an influential regional actor by also including Africa and the Balkans in its list of target regions.²³ However, it has simultaneously invited criticism of a paradigm shift from Turkey's traditional foreign policy principles and actions. The JDP's foreign policies in this current period are frequently seen in their multilateralism and activism as resembling the policies of the Özal era towards Central Asia and the Middle East by expanding geographic outreach.²⁴ Turkey's geographical imagination has also changed from its earlier Western-oriented path by building on ANAP's efforts.²⁵

Table 1. Migration–foreign policy nexus in the Özal era.

Özal era	
Milestones for Turkish foreign policy (TFP)	<p>Transformation after the 1980 military intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold War dynamics • Iran–Iraq War • Collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War • Post-Cold War redesign of international relations • Dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia • Kosovo Crisis • First Gulf War
Change in TFP orientations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model country aspirations regarding Central Asia and the Middle Eastern countries • Reconstruction of relations with Europe after the 1980 military intervention • Economy-centred, multidimensional foreign policy • Impact of NATO and the US • Reconstructing relations with the EU
Change in target geographies in TFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green belt countries • The Caucasus • Central Asia Turkic Republics • Black Sea countries • The EU • Muslim countries (D8—Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria)
Change in migration policies of Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visa liberalization for target geographies • Directive on migration and asylum • Migration policies as part of humanitarian assistance • Ad hoc management of migration without institutionalization
Main actors in the migration policies of Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Interior • Ministry of Foreign Affairs • UNHCR • Military and military police, gendarmerie and the coastguard

Beyond the ‘central country’ aspirations, ‘strategic depth’ has been at the centre of the JDP’s foreign policy strategies. The widely debated foreign policy doctrine of Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was previously both Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, was framed by the concept of ‘strategic depth’, which was also promoted in the title of his popular book on Turkish foreign policy. Davutoğlu’s model ambitiously proposed to design a multilateral foreign policy that diversified Turkey’s international relations options, giving it a regional soft power role with arbitrary involvement in international conflicts, particularly in the Middle East and the wider Muslim World, in order to promote Turkey as a ‘central country’ in global politics.

In analogy to the Özal era, JDP policies have been also viewed as representing a significant shift from Turkey’s traditional foreign policy orientation, which had been framed within the axis of the Western world since the early years of the Republic, to a neo-Ottomanist foreign policy (Please see Table 2).²⁶ For instance, Türkeş asserts that the JDP’s foreign policy has been both hegemonic and a neo-Ottomanist project, although Davutoğlu never used this conception officially when he was in the government.²⁷ Furthermore, Türkeş claims that the JDP’s popular campaigns to promote the party as defender of a pluralist society were reflected in its foreign policy ambitions to position Turkey as a role model for societies in the Middle East and promote a new activism in the Balkans.²⁸ Within this perspective, even

the JDP's Syrian refugee policy is also classified as an extension of the JDP's neo-Ottomanist aims in Syria.²⁹ On the other hand, the long-standing debate on whether these policies actually revive Ottomanism is still unresolved. For instance, according to Oğuzlu, Turkey's foreign policy has increasingly been 'Middle Easternized' during this era,³⁰ whereas Aras argues that JDP policies simply represent a gradual development of the Özal era activism by following a soft power-oriented proactive foreign policy.³¹ Aras rejects claims that it represents a paradigm shift in foreign policy by pointing to JDP government efforts over Turkey's EU membership process.³² The resemblance to the Özal era in Turkey's greater Middle East involvement, primarily for trade and investment, with a stronger emphasis on soft power assets,³³ and the increased use of diplomatic and economic tools over military means in Turkey's Middle East foreign policy, are the other issues in these debates.³⁴ Apart from the ongoing debates on the axis and policy orientations of Turkish foreign policy, international migration, visa and asylum policies have undoubtedly become more visible tools of foreign policy of this era, as can be demonstrated by several examples.

Within this scope, the following sections present reflections of the 'model country' and 'strategic depth' conceptions in Turkish foreign policy on migration policies under three headings. These are (i) border and asylum policies as part of Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts; (ii) visa policies for rapprochement with target countries; and (iii) co-ethnics and kinship policies for extending spheres of influence.

(i) Border and asylum policies as part of Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts

One prominent example of employing migration policies for foreign policy purposes in the Özal era was Turkey's refugee policy during the Iraq War. Turkey accepted Iraqi refugees twice in this period. In 1988, many Iraqi Kurds from northern Iraq fled following Saddam Hussein's chemical attack (known as the Halabja Massacre). Around 88,000 Peshmarga were accepted into Turkish refugee camps with their families. Turkey then placed the refugees in temporary settlement centres in Muş, Diyarbakır and Mardin. The second mass flow was precipitated by the first Gulf War in 1991, when Turkey accepted around another 500,000 refugees. Because Turkey was part of the allied coalition in the Gulf War, it accepted the refugees as a part of burden-sharing with other countries. At the same time, pressure from the international community and Turkey's bid for EU membership should not be ignored as factors behind its acceptance of large numbers of refugees. However, based on its traditional stance on migration policies, Turkey did not grant official 'refugee' status to the Iraqis in line with its geographical limitation to the Geneva Convention.³⁵ In 1991, after experiencing a massive flow, Turkey decided to close its borders immediately, before reopening them following a critical UN Security Council Decision on 5 April 1991. After strong pressure from the Özal government, the decision was taken to establish a secure no-fly zone along the Iraq border based on UN Resolution 688.³⁶

Turkish migration policy during the First Gulf War included essential elements pertaining to Turkish foreign policy strategies within the Özal era's model country framework. Turkey had strong aspirations to position itself as a rising power in world politics and, more importantly, as a model country. Its acceptance of Iraqi refugees and involvement in the Gulf War also demonstrate that political ties and alliances with Europe and the US were still important parameters of Turkish foreign policy decisions. While one of Turkey's main

Table 2. Migration–foreign policy nexus in the Davutoğlu era (2009–2014).

Davutoğlu era	
Milestones for Turkish foreign policy (TFP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU accession process • Syria's civil war • Arab Spring • Increasing irregular migration and asylum movements
Change in TFP orientations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Turkish foreign policy • Strategic partnerships • Leadership bid in the region
Change in target geographies in TFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle East • Africa • Muslim countries
Change in the migration policies of Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-actor, multilateral framework • Harmonization with the EU • Developing legal instruments • Resistance to the EU • Increasing focus on Turks abroad • Visa liberalization and visa-free agreements with Middle Eastern countries • Readmission as a bargaining tool • Becoming a 'destination country'
Main actors in the migration policies of Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Interior • UNHCR • Military and military police • EU • Gendarmerie, and the coastguard • NGOs • Yunus Emre Institutes • Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities

motives to join the war was to satisfy the requirements of its alliance with the US, winning favour with EU countries for its accession efforts was another strong motive for Turkey to decide to shelter refugees.

Regarding border policies as part of Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts during the JDP governments after 2009, Turkey's stance towards Syria's civil war and the resulting influx of Syrian refugees are worth analysing as one of the most significant and concrete examples of Turkey's migration and foreign policy connections. In fact, this ongoing process began with Turkey's normalization of bilateral relations with Syria following a long crisis, particularly over the PKK, lasting until the end of the 1990s. When Bashar El Assad became Syrian President, the JDP government launched a series of initiatives to encourage further cooperation, including an agreement to construct the Arab Natural Gas Pipeline and a free trade agreement in 2004 that also included Jordan and Lebanon.³⁷ In 2008, Turkey mediated in the Golan Heights conflict between Syria and Israel, while the 2009 free movement agreement, which allowed mobility between the countries for the first time, was the first example of Turkey's open-door migration policy towards Syrians as part of the JDP's 'zero problems' foreign policy.

However, the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2009 changed all political balances and damaged bilateral relations. In April 2011, Turkey started to implement an open-door policy for Syrian refugees before suspending all economic relations and agreements with

Syria in August 2011, and closing the Turkish embassy in Damascus in March 2012. Prime Minister Erdoğan then declared that the conflict in Syria was also a domestic concern of Turkey.³⁸ In addition to Turkey, Syria's other neighbours, namely Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt, also accepted refugees. Having already abolished visa restrictions for Syrian citizens in 2009, Turkey extended this to an open migration policy, which it supported by hosting refugees in camps. However, Turkey did not grant official refugee status to the Syrians due to its geographic limitation to the Geneva Convention, so only temporary protection status was provided by the Turkish government as an interim remedy. In October 2011, the Turkish government declared that people arriving from Syria would be granted 'temporary protection' in line with the 1994 directive, Article 10. After the Law on Foreigners and International Protection entered into force in April 2014, it became the main instrument to regulate protection and assistance for asylum-seekers and refugees in Turkey. According to Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), Turkey was hosting around 2.7 million Syrian refugees by September 2016, with around 10% placed in 27 refugee camps established within the boundaries of 10 cities.³⁹ Contrary to previous experiences, particularly during the Gulf Wars, the standards and conditions in its camps for Syrians were mostly well appreciated.

Although Turkey's open border policies during the Syrian civil war can be mostly explained and justified in humanitarian terms, this strategy of accepting Syrians fleeing from the regime in Syria also reveals the traces of a strategy to discredit an opponent regime in another country. Turkey became a party to the conflict by taking a stance against Assad, which indicates that its acceptance of Syrian refugees was not just motivated by neighbourly relations with a community facing civil conflict. Moreover, Turkey's relations with Syria are also an interesting case of employing migration as a foreign policy tool since Turkey first adopted open migration policies with a discourse to deepen relations with Syria, before implementing the same open migration policies with a different discourse to protest against its government. That is, Turkey's migration policies regarding Syria deepened friendship before becoming an instrument against the Syrian government during the conflict. Syrian refugees constituted a part of the critical and opponent discourse of the Turkish government against the regime in Syria by asserting 'problems about Syrian refugees cannot be solved as long as the Assad regime remains in power in Syria'.⁴⁰

According to Öktem, Turkey's migration-related challenges are strongly linked to its soft power policies and actors.⁴¹ In this context, the JDP's policies for the Syrian refugees have been discussed for their implications both for Turkish foreign policy and also domestic policy. The huge financial responsibility that Turkey has undertaken by welcoming Syrians brought domestic political criticism while Turkey also criticized the international community for not sharing a part of financial burden or accepting some of the refugees. On the other hand, the rise in irregular entries to European countries and the unjust suffering of Syrian refugees, in particular through the Mediterranean route, increased the salience of the issue in the European media after 2015. In this context, Syrian refugees became a vital issue of relations between EU and Turkey. In addition, Turkey's open-door migration policy for Syrian refugees established a linkage between its migration policy and the EU accession process, which is one of the major, complex items in Turkey's foreign policy agenda. Following the high volume of refugee flows through Turkey to Europe and increasing disturbance in European societies, in October 2015 German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Turkey to present an Action Plan. Merkel's main aim was to control irregular flows by activating the

readmission agreement. In return, it was proposed to offer Turkey €3 billion financial support (Facility for Refugees) to provide services for refugees in Turkey, to initiate the process regarding the blocked chapters of the accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey, and to put the EU visa liberalization into practice for Turkish citizens.⁴² Following the initial bilateral talks, on 29 November 2015, Turkey and the EU agreed to activate the Joint Action Plan. After a long period of silence, the EU-Turkey Summit in November 2015 represented a move to revitalize relations between the EU and Turkey.⁴³ However, Merkel's visit and the agreement were also criticized by some parties in Turkey since it was perceived as offering implicit support to the JDP on the eve of national elections in Turkey.⁴⁴ For instance, according to Türkeş, the JDP reconsolidated its power before the 1 November 2015 elections by taking advantage of international deals over Syria and its refugees.⁴⁵ Consequently, as an unusual case in Turkish politics, an outcome of Turkey's international migration policy was transformed into both a domestic and a foreign policy issue.

However, the first initiative could not produce the expected results, so Turkey and the EU made a new deal in March 2016. Briefly, this proposed the return of all irregular migrants on Greek islands who had arrived via Turkey after 20 March 2016, and the resettlement of one Syrian in the EU for every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands.⁴⁶ In exchange, the EU promised to follow the conditional visa liberalization roadmap to lift visa requirements for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016, and increase its refugee facility aid from €3 billion to €6 billion. The EU set the end of June as its deadline to implement visa-free travel for Turkish citizens, which foresees 72 benchmarks including issues related with the management of migration, security, rights and readmission.

On the other hand, the deal met with international criticism, particularly regarding its sustainability, non-compliance with international ethical norms and its content. It was claimed that the deal ignored the root causes of the refugee crisis and conflict in Syria, and utilized Turkey as a buffer zone against refugee flows. Despite the criticism, however, political actors in both the EU and Turkey supported the deal, and on 4 May 2016 the European Commission released a report concerning Turkey's progress on the visa liberalization roadmap.⁴⁷ The report declared that Turkey had fulfilled 67 of 72 benchmarks, with further work needed for only five benchmarks. However, among these, benchmark 65, which recommends that 'Turkey should revise its legislation and practices on terrorism in line with European standards by narrowing its scope', became a point of controversy when the Turkish government refused to make such an amendment. Moreover, political actors in Turkey also changed rapidly, with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declaring that visa exemption was the only condition for the readmission agreement just after Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu resigned in May 2016.⁴⁸ As a result, the future of the deal became unclear while debates on the obligations of the parties continue.

In this case, Turkey's stance regarding international migration flows and its policies on Syrian refugees were indirectly transformed into a foreign policy issue within the context of relations with the EU. In fact, Turkey used the refugees and management issues on irregular migration as a bargaining chip in its relations with the EU in order to accelerate negotiations and visa liberalization.⁴⁹ This can be seen as an example of the explicit instrumentalization of migration policies in foreign policy.

Overall, it should be also emphasized that developments in migration policies within the two eras also contributed to the development of new legal structures for Turkish migration policies. Until the 1990s, Turkey had no concrete regulatory policies on migration despite

having a relatively long tradition of migration and hosting refugees dating back to the Ottoman period. The Directive on Migration and Asylum was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 14 September 1994, probably motivated by the mass flows of Iraqi Kurds to Turkey in 1988 and 1991, and the effects of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Similarly to the Özal era, active migration and asylum policies have also boosted regularization during the JDP period. In one significant step, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection was adopted in 2013 while a General Directorate of Migration Management was established under the Ministry of the Interior.

(ii) Visa policies for rapprochement with target countries

Visa policies have close ties with foreign policy objectives, as the visa regime is one of the primary components of each country's foreign policy.⁵⁰ Correspondingly, Turkish foreign policy strategies are clearly reflected in visa policies. In a report published by the Transatlantic Academy on Turkey's foreign relations in 2010, Turkey's approach to the Middle Eastern countries in the 2000s was compared with its stance towards former Soviet Republics after the end of Cold War. Turkey's liberal visa policies were noted as the intersecting dimensions of the policies within these two periods.⁵¹

During the Özal era, Turkey used visa liberalization and facilitation to support trade liberalization and new agreements with other states. This meant removing visa requirements for citizens of a certain state, or providing easier and quicker visa application processes. Several agreements were concluded with target countries during this period and customs, visa and travel facilitation being the main provisions of these Özal era agreements with countries such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.⁵² Such initiatives have had long-lasting impacts on Turkey's migration system. Kirişçi argues that Özal's liberalization approach in economics and foreign policy was one of the main foundations of Turkey's current visa policies.⁵³ Thus, visa facilitation or liberalization was included in trade agreements with target countries as a strong positive motivation during Özal's time. For instance, the Bosphorus Statement and the Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) were signed by the heads of state from Armenia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Greece, Moldova, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia and Ukraine on 25 June 1992, in Istanbul.⁵⁴ One of the expectations of this initiative was visa facilitation for all BSEC member countries. In short, visa liberalization in this era appears to have been a direct outcome of liberalization and economic concerns. Visa facilitation also took place with Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan. For example, Turkey granted visa facilitation to Tunisia and Morocco with fast-track visa processing.⁵⁵ Turkey's *Official Gazette* also provides interesting data regarding the prominence of the visa agreements between 1983 and 1993, when 26 decisions were taken about visa agreements and arrangements, including the approval of visa exemptions for certain periods, reciprocal visa abolition and enhancing visa regimes.⁵⁶

One of the most interesting examples of employing visa policies as a tool of foreign relations in this period was Özal's unilateral decision to provide visa exemptions to Greek citizens in 1984 in an attempt to shift the focus of relations from security to dialogue. In 1999, however, following increased tensions between Turkey and Greece because of allegations of Greek support for the PKK, there were calls to reinstate visa requirements.⁵⁷ This shift indicates how changing conditions in foreign relations can also reverse visa policies.

As in the Özal era, the JDP governments have used visa policies to increase the effectiveness of their foreign policy strategies. In a speech delivered in 2011, entitled ‘Vision 2023: Turkey’s Foreign Policy Objectives’, Davutoğlu justified Turkey’s visa exemption policies on the basis that they link political objectives, foreign policy issues and economic objectives in an integrated foreign policy strategy.⁵⁸ Beyond reflecting closer relations, visa liberalization is also a significant element of Davutoğlu’s zero problems with neighbours policy. During the JDP governments, visa requirements have been abolished for around 40 countries from many areas beyond Turkey’s immediate neighbourhood, including Qatar, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Croatia, Kosovo, Brunei, Lithuania, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Cameroon, Slovenia, Serbia, Russia, Ecuador, Seychelles, Ukraine, Panama, Thailand, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Albania, Saudi Arabia, Czech Republic, Andorra, Guatemala, Venezuela, Georgia, Paraguay and Mongolia.⁵⁹ Almost half of these agreements have been concluded since 2009, during the period when Davutoğlu was in the Office for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Only between 2002 and 2005 do visa policies appear to have been tightened due to the impact of efforts to harmonize regulations with EU requirements, whereas there has been systematic visa liberalization with neighbouring countries since 2009.⁶⁰

(iii) Emigrant, co-ethnic and kinship policies for extending spheres of influence

This final set of policies, including towards co-ethnics and emigrants, also illustrates a changing perspective in Turkish migration policies, which should be stressed while analysing the eras focused on in this paper. This change in perspective has apparently increased the role of emigrant Turks during the JDP government whereas co-ethnic citizens of other countries were given more priority during Turkey’s model country conceptions of the 1980s and 1990s.

In this regard, Turkey’s open-door policy towards Bulgarian Turks as co-ethnics was one element in the ‘brotherhood’ dimension of Özal’s ‘model country’ foreign policy conception. Consequently, it was inevitable for the ANAP government to embrace ethnic Turks outside Turkey. In parallel, Bulgarian Turks were one of the most important cases within the foreign policy–migration policy nexus of that era. By 1984, after Turks living in Bulgaria had experienced threats of ethnic cleansing and restrictions on their rights by the Bulgarian regime, around 300,000 ethnic Turks migrated to Turkey to escape the Bulgarian government’s assimilationist policies.⁶¹ In response, the Turkish government adopted legislation in August 1989 to provide for their settlement in Turkey under the Law on Settlement. However, within two months, the government had retreated from this open-door migration policy due to mass flows of Bulgarian Turks. Turkey’s state-led immigration policy aiming at a homogeneous population, based on the principle of ‘Turkish descent and culture’, was apparent in sheltering co-ethnics from Bulgaria under the perspective of ethnic kin.⁶² Daniş and Parla make important remarks on the prominent role of geography and kinship while determining strategies towards immigrant groups within the conceptualization of a ‘hierarchy of acceptance’ in Turkish migration policies. They explain that the Turkish state’s welcoming policies regarding the migration of co-ethnics from the Balkans to Turkey was motivated not only by nationalist expectations that such groups would help create a homogeneous society but also by aspirations to use them as a foreign policy tool.⁶³ Accordingly, in the 1980s and 1990s, support for co-ethnics in Turkey’s neighbourhood became a popular

strategy and discourse within the context of an active foreign policy.⁶⁴ Thus, policies toward Bulgarian Turks should be assessed within this context.

The Özal era was also characterized by discourses emphasizing that ‘Turkey’s security interests start with Bosnia’, which made clear Turkey’s policy priorities. In particular, the Humanitarian Assistance Programmes, which later became a crucial component of Turkish foreign policy, stemmed from Turkey’s aim of being a model country. Turkish migration policies towards Bulgarian Turks may also become more understandable in light of this background. By the end of the 1990s, however, co-ethnic and kinship policies had become more limited as a result of an increasing volume of migration to Turkey from its neighbourhood and the EU harmonization process.⁶⁵ This changing paradigm was revealed in JDP policies through its more intense relations with Turkish emigrants in Europe over kinship relations with co-ethnics.

The issue of Turkish emigrants is a key concern of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the title of ‘Turkish citizens living abroad.’⁶⁶ According to MFA statistics, more than 5 million Turks live abroad, with almost 4 million in Western Europe, 200,000 in the Middle East, 300,000 in Northern America and 150,000 in Australia.⁶⁷ As the most popular destination for Turkish emigrants historically, Europe has been at the centre of policies. In the 1960s, Turkey concluded bilateral labour agreements with several Western European countries, boosting Europe’s labour resources by sending labour as guest workers primarily to Germany, France, Austria and the Netherlands.⁶⁸ During the initial years of these labour agreements, both sides had mainly economic expectations. Turkish concerns were mostly shaped around exporting its excess labour and gaining remittances. After the oil crisis and economic stagnation in the 1970s, however, Western European countries terminated the agreements and made their migration policies more restrictive. Nevertheless, the impact of family reunifications prevented any sharp divergence from previous migration trends from Turkey, which still remained one of Europe’s largest immigrant populations. According to İçduygu and Aksel, these new patterns of Turkish migration through labour agreements transformed the earlier terminology on co-ethnics into a new conceptualization of ‘external Turks’ and these communities then politicized as part of Turkish foreign policy objectives.⁶⁹ Moreover, social and political concerns were added to the list of expectations from Turkish emigrants in Europe, which linked these groups to Turkey’s foreign policy objectives.

This new paradigm also helps explain why the JDP government established the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities in 2010 to maintain relations with the Turks living abroad. It can be seen as an attempt to institutionalize a new approach to Turks abroad, which was triggered by the establishment of the Advisory and High Committees for Turkish citizens living abroad in 1998.⁷⁰ Even before 1998, other efforts can also be considered as part of these policies, such as the establishment in 1986 during the Özal era of the Turkish Cultural Centres abroad. These centres aimed to assist Turkish citizens abroad and promote Turkish culture. In 2007, Yunus Emre Cultural Centres were established with similar purposes. Within this framework, external Turks are nowadays embraced as part of a wider Turkish public diplomacy. Turkey’s expectations from external Turks range from contributing to the EU accession process to functioning as social capital by linking Turkey and the EU.⁷¹

Conclusion

Based on this analysis of the close connections between Turkey's migration policies and foreign policy conceptions across two different periods, it can be concluded that this nexus has been employed to contribute to three different aspects of foreign policy strategies discussed here. These three aspects also demonstrate similarities between the migration policies of the two eras in Turkish political history.

The first aspect is related to Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts. Due to its proactive policies during the Iraq War, Turkey became responsible for admitting Iraqi refugees. Such a policy was later reproduced, albeit in a different manner and on a larger scale, following Turkey's involvement in Syria's civil war during the JDP period. In a notable analogy to Özal's claim that 'Turkey's security interests start from Bosnia', the JDP defined the Syrian civil war as a domestic issue. Within this scope, Turkey's open-door migration policies during Syria's civil war may be seen as an inevitable result of the JDP's main foreign policy choices in this period. However, this function, directly or indirectly, was also a reflection of an unconventional choice in Turkish foreign policy as it contradicted one of the main principles of traditional Turkish foreign policy, namely non-interference in neighbours' domestic affairs and conflicts. Correspondingly, it is surely beyond doubt that migration policies and related policy decisions have been one of the most controversial aspects of the JDP's foreign policy⁷² as it has been transformed into the central issue of relations between the EU and Turkey. In the case of the Syrian refugees, the crisis revitalized the dialogue between the EU and Turkey by bringing the issue onto the common agenda of the parties to reach a joint solution. As a result, a migration policy issue was linked to Turkey's EU accession process, which is one of the major issues in Turkish foreign policy.

The second aspect is strengthening economic and cultural ties with target regions. This function was apparent in visa liberalization and facilitation policies for Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries in the Özal era, and a similar motive can be seen in the JDP period through including visa policies as a supplementary element within trade and energy agreements. One important point of discussion concerning the JDP government's visa policies concerns their profound impact on the traditional path of Turkish foreign policy with its perspective of EU membership and alliance with the West. According to Eralp, despite contributing to develop Turkey's political and cultural relations with neighbouring countries and improve Turkey's image, visa liberalization for Middle East countries had some side effects in terms of Turkey's commitments to the EU on migration and asylum policies since it raises security concerns for the EU.⁷³ In spite of these criticisms, visa diplomacy has been employed as an explicit tool of the JDP government and marketed as reflecting a widening in Turkish foreign policy's horizons.

The third aspect is expanding Turkey's influence more widely and legitimizing it through the existence of Turks abroad. This study demonstrates that the form of approaches has changed between the 1980s and 2000s, with a shift in focus from co-ethnic Turks to Turkish emigrants. Nevertheless, although the form of the Turkish state's approach towards Turks abroad and co-ethnics has changed, it still remains one of the tools for extending the country's presence internationally.

Finally, even though this study asserts that the unconventional conceptions in Turkish foreign policy in the two eras, namely model country and strategic depth, led to a more intense use of migration policies as foreign policy instruments, one major conclusion from

analysing the two cases is that this instrumentalization also has serious limitations. It is worth noting that although a significant shift in foreign policy objectives from a security-oriented path to a pro-active policy was the major unconventional characteristic of the conceptions discussed in this study, the most prominent limitation and challenge to the sustainability of migration policies based on these foreign policy conceptions interestingly arise through security concerns. As a foreign policy choice, Turkey's open-door migration policies and liberal visa policies have potential to trigger security concerns at domestic level, as in the example of increasing anxiety in Turkish society due to growing numbers of Syrians in Turkey. On the other hand, these policies can also be questioned at international level, such as the concerns of the EU relating to border management and irregular flows transiting through Turkey. Therefore, the ongoing debates demonstrate that the instrumentalized migration policies, which stemmed from conjectural motives for short-term foreign policy objectives, are helpful to strengthen and support designed foreign policy conceptions. However, they can also potentially contradict other aspects of foreign policy in the long term.

Notes on contributor

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