

MIGRATION FROM TURKEY TO GERMANY: AN ETHNIC APPROACH

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*Ülkemin ırmakları dışarı akar
Neden bilmem can havliyle akar...
(Cemal Süreya, 1988)*

*(The rivers of my country are flowing out
Frightened to death they flow, I know not why...)*

The growth in the numbers of asylum seekers to Western European countries over the past decade (Castles and Loughna, 2002) has underlined the significance of “political” and other non-economic factors in shaping migration flows, drawing attention to the inadequacy of theoretical explanations based on socio-economic differentials. The need to reassess earlier research on labor flows to take into account the existence of migrants obliged to flee from situations involving political persecution has become apparent, whether the migrants be directly or personally a target of persecution or whether they feel threatened by association for reasons of ethnicity, geography, etc. My main aim in this article is to raise the issue of the role of “Kurdish ethnicity” as one instance of such political forces in shaping migration flows from Turkey to Germany. During the 1970s and 1980s, research on patterns of migration between the two countries was almost exclusively concerned with the “incorporation of guest workers” into German labor markets and the contribution of their remittances to the Turkish economy. Sectarian differences (Alevi-Sunni) and ethnic cleavages (Turkish-Kurdish) among these migrant laborers and/or asylum seekers has so far remained largely unexplored. Migrants were mainly classified according to rural or urban origin, in order to examine where and how they invested their savings or remittances.

This general picture has been altered dramatically by the political

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tensions of the 1990s in both Germany and Turkey. The 1990s marked a period when the long-standing assimilation policies of the Turkish state towards the Kurdish minority erupted into a five year-long civil war in Eastern Turkey. This event shattered the illusion that Turkey’s “Eastern Question” was an economic problem alone, making it apparent that there was an “ethnic problem” as well. The civil war proved to be another political turning point when the plight of Turkey’s Kurdish population became a major political concern for international civil rights organizations. And in Germany, growing numbers of “political refugees” compounded existing tensions between Kurdish and Turkish immigrant populations.

One could argue that ethnicity has always been a major factor underpinning labor flows from Turkey to Germany, and that “forced migration” of Kurds is rooted in a lengthy history of social and cultural exclusion, which predates the immediate political events of the 1990s. However, while ethnic conflict acts as a direct push factor, it simultaneously creates an environment—a framework of opportunity—that both encourages and facilitates emigration from conflict areas and immediate surroundings. In this paper, I will explore this argument by juxtaposing the analysis of quantitative survey data with the qualitative findings of a study based on in-depth interviews.

Conceptual Remarks

The classification of migration flows in terms of economic (labor movements) and political (asylum seekers, refugees) factors is used not only by governmental agencies. It also coincides with disciplinary specializations and hence broader approaches to migration. Thus economic approaches, from “neo-classical” to “dual-market,” emphasize wage and employment differentials (Massey et al., 1993). Variants of this perspective examine how the economic status of migrants affects migration decisions as shown in the finding, for example, that the relatively better off strata are more likely to emigrate than the poorest or richest segments of the population (Portes and Bach, 1985; Hammar, 1995; İçduygu et al., 2001).

What might be described as “political” approaches underline geographical proximities and established links between sending and receiving areas (Papademetriou and Martin, 1991). Here, the role of networks in shaping the pattern of migration is emphasized (Zolberg

et al., 1986; Kritz et al., 1992). Such networks can be of historical, cultural, political, or economic nature at the macro level, with familial or friendship linkages at the individual level. More recently, studies have focused on refugee flows, and introduced the concept of “democracy deficit” as yet another possible cause for migration (Geddes, 1995; see also Shami, 1996; Joly, 1992; Suhrke, 1995; Rogge, 1998).

Such compartmentalization as implied in the above distinctions makes it very difficult to explore the interaction between the often inextricably combined “economic” and “political” factors involved in ethnic conflict situations. In the present study, I will adopt the notion of “environment of insecurity” (EOI) as a background concept, as a useful way of conceptualizing the role of ethnic conflict within various national migratory regimes (see also Sirkeci, 2003). The concept of “environment of insecurity” includes two groups of components, material and non-material, which are not mutually exclusive. In ethnic conflict situations, migrating abroad is one “exit” option among others. I will argue that it is not just a combination of direct push factors, but a broader opportunity framework that has shaped the international migration of Turkish Kurds.

An environment of insecurity can be elaborated in terms of general political aspects, socio-economic indicators, the legal framework, and demographic implications. Relative poverty is one of its most important aspects. However, poverty does not directly breed asylum migration; rather, other factors within an environment of insecurity can facilitate migration through an opportunity framework created by these circumstances. So in addition to relative poverty and the role of political tensions (Zolberg et al., 1989), the role of networks as providing opportunities for external migration must be taken into consideration (Böcker, 1995; Faist, 2000). Such networks, based on political, religious, kinship, and friendship ties, are important in understanding how Turkish Kurds have been able to follow similar pathways as their Turkish fellow citizens in migrating to Germany.

Data and Methods

Immigration research has always been difficult due to the lack or poor quality of available data; indeed, statistical records on migration are incomplete by nature. The reasons for this are multiple: a) migration is often a continuous process with no clear beginning and end, b)

it may involve unregistered and/or illegal movements, c) national statistics systems are often not compatible with each other, and d) in underdeveloped countries they are often not available. Additionally, registers may be flawed because of scant information on various groups or inadequate administrative or political descriptive terminology for such groups. For example, migrants from Turkey usually appear as “Turkish” despite significant differences among various ethnic and religious groups.¹ As Courbage (1998) has noted, this is normally because these statistics have been collected for purposes different than for comprehensive migration analyses.

The analyses of this study are based on the 1999 Turkish International Migration Survey (TIMS) data² in addition to qualitative doctoral research conducted in Cologne, Germany in 1999. The TIMS was part of a broader comprehensive study on the causes of international migration conducted in seven countries (Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Senegal, and Ghana) by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute commissioned by Eurostat in 1994 (European Commission, 2000a). The TIMS provides the only data enabling researchers to investigate international migration and ethnicity in Turkey since the 1965 census. It was conducted in 28 districts of eight provinces representing different levels of development and emigration in Turkey.

In the TIMS two sets of questionnaires were used, one for households and one for individuals. The first questionnaire was administered to 1,564 households while the second one gathered information from about 4,680 individuals (European Commission, 2000b). The study investigated the causes, mechanisms, dynamics, and consequences of international migration with a special retrospective emphasis on the ten years preceding the survey (1986-1996). A quarter of the households questioned were identified as migrant households, half of which had members who had experienced migration within the specified ten-year period.

The qualitative data employed in the analysis was collected in Cologne. The selection of Cologne was not an arbitrary one. Among nations Germany hosts the largest Turkish immigrant stock, and Cologne accommodates the second largest Turkish immigrant commu-

¹ For the purpose of this study, the use of “Turkish,” when unqualified, will mean non-Kurdish Turkish citizens.

² The TIMS data set was collected in 1996 but published in 1999.

nity in Germany after Berlin (Zft, 1997a and 1997b). A semi-structured interview schedule was implemented among Turkish Kurdish immigrants, who were contacted by a snowball technique. The interview agenda was composed of four categories of information: a) background information, b) previous migration experiences, c) migration process, and d) life after migration. Throughout the interviews, immigrants' ethnic experiences in terms of discrimination, feelings of belonging, self-ascriptions, and descriptions of others were also investigated. Pseudonyms are used when presenting individual cases to ensure anonymity. Interviews were conducted according to the method described by Valentine (1997) as "Tell me about..." Following to this method, interviewees were asked to talk about their migration experiences with the researcher only facilitating the narration by directing respondents towards key topics of the interview schedule (Sirkeci, 2003).

The TIMS study uses a regression model (more on this below) to analyze the survey data where the constant variable was migration status, against several possible background factors that may influence migration. In-depth interviews, on the other hand, are analyzed in order to reveal recurring themes, which are then examined in relation to the research objectives.

The Kurdish Question and the Turkish Response: Ethnic Conflict in Turkey

The roots of the ethnic question in Turkey can be dated back to the early 1920s, and are most understandable when framed as integral to the problems of nation- and state-building (Franz, 1994; McDowall, 1996; İçduygu et al., 1999); thus, some scholars place the starting-point of conflict at the early periods of Turkish nationalism in the late Ottoman era. One probable explanation for the constant ethnic crisis throughout the Republican period lies in the nature of building a nation-state out of the remnants of a multinational world empire. Whatever the reasons for the degree of ethnic complexity during Ottoman times, the new Turkish Republic started out with a heterogeneous population (Franz, 1994). Some homogenization of the population was achieved through the population exchange following the Turkish War of Independence, but this was largely on religious grounds. Since then, Turkey's Kurds have been a major issue for Turkey despite offi-

cial discourse which has refrained from using the term "Kurdish issue," although about 30 minor and major insurrections in Eastern Turkey during the Republican period give some idea of its magnitude (McDowall, 1996).

Until recently these issues have not been studied in any great depth, with the exception of some small contributions, mostly because of official and unofficial impediments. However, it may be hoped that recent changes in Turkish legislation will draw more attention to this issue, attention which we are beginning to see in works published by mainstream publishing houses in Turkey. "Turkey's Kurdish question," as Barkey (1997) called it, has been interpreted variously by scholars with a range of different concerns, some explaining it as a result of economic backwardness, others adopting a reductionist approach, calling it a "terrorist movement"; this latter interpretation has also informed official policy in this area in Turkey. The least heard approach has been that of Turkish Kurds as a distinct ethnic population appealing for rights which have been recognized by the United Nations for decades, as has been described repeatedly by Turkish Kurdish and other researchers.

Ultimately it is difficult to determine a clear cause-and-effect relationship between socio-economic backwardness and ethnic conflict in this context, however, the current situation is one of obvious, and often multiple forms of, deprivation experienced in a particular geography and by a particular population. This deprivation is experienced in three ways:

1. *Major socio-economic underdevelopment* is evidenced by low levels of basic opportunities and services in the areas of education, income and employment, and health care among the Kurdish population, as revealed in the vast differences in these socio-economic indicators between the western and eastern parts of Turkey (İçduygu et al., 2001; İçduygu et al., 1999). In the late nineties, average annual household incomes were around \$3,500 in the Southeast compared with more than \$11,000 in Istanbul (TDN, 1998). Similar discrepancies appear in the relevant indices provided by the Turkish State Planning Organisation, which showed the eastern provinces holding the lead in the least-developed group, in contrast to the most-developed western provinces of Turkey (Dinçer, 1996; Gitmez, 1983). Educational attainment levels as revealed by the Turkish Demographic Health Survey household data also provide evidence for ethnic differences: in 1993,

34.3% of Kurds living in urban areas had “no education” compared to 9.7% among their fellow citizens; the corresponding figures for rural populations were 42.8% and 18.2%, respectively (Sirkeci, 2000, p.167). It is possible to multiply such examples wherever ethnicity- or region-based data are available. Although it would be wrong to generalize, the eastern part of Turkey is mainly populated by the Kurds while the Turkish population dominates in the West.³ Thus we can assume that those living in comparatively less prosperous or developed areas may be suffering from relative deprivation compared to others living in more prosperous areas, without ignoring the fact that the local or regional populations are not ethnically homogeneous.

2. *Demographic trends* characterized by high fertility and population growth rates may also contribute to the environment of insecurity owing to population pressures in a context of limited resources. The Kurdish share of the total population in Turkey has increased “due to high fertility, as well as declining mortality rates” (Koç and Hancıoğlu, 1999, p. 4). Additionally, during the years of active armed clashes between the Turkish Army and Kurdish rebel forces, there has been extensive internal displacement, especially within the Eastern region. Cities in the mainly Kurdish-populated provinces have seen large intakes of rural populations as a result of general unrest and village evacuations for security reasons. Turkey’s urban population growth rate during the 1990s was almost 27 per thousand, while it was twice or more as high in the Eastern cities; for example, 74 per thousand in Şırnak and 38 per thousand in Diyarbakir (SIS 1990; SIS 2002).

Fertility has declined steadily in Turkey over the last two decades, as has the population growth rate, which was estimated at 1.58% from the last census of 1997 (HUIPS, 2000). Tuba DüNDAR (1998) also notes a declining trend in fertility rates overall and estimates a more rapid decline among the Kurds. Nevertheless, the fertility rate for the Kurdish population is still two times higher than that for Turkey as a whole; thus, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was 6.2 for Kurds compared with only 2.7 among the Turks and 3.1 for the whole of Turkey.

³ According to the Turkish International Migration Survey, the “Western” region is composed of Aydın, Balıkesir, Bursa, Çanakkale, Denizli, Edirne, İstanbul, İzmir, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Manisa, Sakarya and Tekirdağ, while the “Eastern” provinces are those of Adıyaman, Ağrı, Ardahan, Batman, Bayburt, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gümüşhane, Hakkari, Iğdır, Kars, Malatya, K.Maraş, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Sivas, Şırnak, Ş.Urfa, Tunceli and Van.

Another difference detected in the demographic data is the gradual decrease of fertility by age among Kurdish women compared to the steep decline observed among their Turkish counterparts after the age of 25 (Koç and Hancıoğlu, 1999; DüNDAR, 1998).

The demographic pressure resulting from high fertility and growth rates may be assumed to have practical implications for migration tendencies due to high demands for scarce resources. For example, it is known that Kurdish households are often overcrowded, the mean size of households for the urban Kurdish population in 1993 being 6.3, as opposed to 4.6 for the Turkish population (Sirkeci, 2003). The corresponding figures for rural populations were 7.9 and 5.9, respectively (ibid.), while the average number of persons per sleeping room was 3.9 for the Kurds as opposed to 2.6 for the Turks in 1993 (ibid.).

3. *Political deprivation* is evident in restrictions on political participation and representation. Despite recent changes in legislation, the influence of past oppressive regimes barring ethnic representation is very likely to continue, at least for the near future. This political deprivation is embodied in such practices as bans on political parties (i.e. closures of HEP [People’s Labor Party] and DEP [Democracy Party]) and frequent and arbitrary prohibition of pro-Kurdish party rallies since the early 1990s.⁴ Widespread arrests of pro-Kurdish party members, especially in pre-election periods, and arbitrary impediments to fair elections in some Kurdish populated locations, are examples of an ongoing assault on the political representation of a particular ethnic movement in Turkish public life (Mater, 1999; HADEP, 2000; White, 2000). Laws also disallow any organization founded on the basis of ethnic interests or identity, whether cultural or political, and Turkish legislation of various kinds has deliberately aimed at minimizing elements of Kurdish identity and culture (see Yeğen, 1999). As I have discussed elsewhere, almost every aspect of life in Turkey is affected, including names, organizations and memberships, and education

⁴ While electoral policies were not formulated with the intention of eradicating pro-Kurdish political parties, they have resulted in an effective restriction of Kurdish political representation. The justification for this approach was to prevent a highly fragmented, multi-polar party system, seen as the cause of the chaotic socio-political environment of the 1970s which resulted in multiple crises (Evin and Özbudun, 1984). However, this anti-fragmentation policy eventually created a representation crisis which became ever more visible in the last elections of November 2002. In that election, not just a number of Kurdish votes but about 45 percent of all valid votes went to parties which were left outside the parliament.

(Sirkeci, 2003, p. 114). The Turkish Civil Code (No. 1587, Art. 16), for example, states that “names may not be given which are illegal or which offend or do not represent *the nation’s* culture, moral values, traditions, or customs (emphasis added).” However, it was thought that the meaning of “the nation” was not sufficiently clear in this article, so it was made explicit in the Regulation on Family Names of 1931 (No. 2/1759, Art. 5): “New family names which are permissible are to be drawn from the *Turkish language*. Names from *foreign races and nations* may not be used as family names (emphases added).” Despite these legal restrictions, in practice many people have been able to use Kurdish names. While arbitrary use of this kind of restriction has certainly affected the Kurdish people, these articles were not formulated only against Kurdish names; other foreign names have also been restricted (among them Ernesto, Che, and J.R).

There is no question that the Kurdish ethnic question intensified throughout the 1980s and 1990s (White, 2000) when armed clashes between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and the Turkish Army led to a death toll of roughly 35,000, mostly civilians. This figure alone could serve as sufficient motivation for migration abroad among those living in the affected regions. Yet other figures provide more factors creating an environment of insecurity: a military deployment of 300,000 in the Kurdish-populated areas; 3,428 villages evacuated for security purposes; 908 unsolved (“actor-unknown”) murders, including suspicious deaths under police custody; and a number of political party bans and newspaper closures.

The above section has briefly summarized the Turkish context within which a discussion of the relationship between ethnicity and international migration could be taken beyond mere statistical evidence. The forms of deprivation mentioned above, from economic to social to political, could be either facilitating factors for ethnic conflict or a result of it, while in regard to migration associated with such deprivations, ethnicity becomes an additional and significant factor in the Turkish context. The following section attempts to evaluate the role of ethnicity against other background factors. The hypothesis here is that ethnic conflict may influence the international migration of a particular ethnic group. Of course, the established Turkish international migratory regime certainly influences the general patterns of migration from Turkey to Germany. Yet the above-mentioned forms of deprivation should be kept in mind throughout this analysis since

they may act as a combined background push factor for international migration.

Background Factors and International Migration from Turkey

The relative influence of background variables including ethnicity are examined here with the help of a logistic regression model applied to the TIMS (Turkish International Migration Survey) report of 1999 as mentioned above (European Commission 2000a and 2000b). A logistic regression model is a formula-based method used in statistics to calculate the relative importance of various causes for an outcome. In the regression model used, the various reasons or influencing background factors, known as independent variables, are region of residence, educational attainment, age, sex, household size, financial situation, comparative household welfare, religion, and ethnicity. These are all calculated with reference to one another in order to determine the relative importance of each one in the migration outcome of the households and individuals interviewed.

Results of the statistical calculation reveal that gender and region have the highest scores indicating they have the greatest influence on migration. These are followed by age, and then by the financial situation of household. Based on their respective scores, religion, ethnicity, and comparative financial situation are the weakest three of the nine variables. Nor does education seem particularly significant with its relatively low score. Members of “financially adequate” households are the most likely group to migrate compared to those from more than “sufficient” or from “inadequate” households. In fact, the likelihood of migration for the middle category is nine times higher than the wealthier households. Gender difference emerges as the strongest variable affecting migration status, with females more likely to migrate than males. As for regional variation, individuals from the Central and Eastern regions show a lower propensity to migrate than those from the West. When it comes to religion, the analysis reveals that Alevis are more likely to migrate than Sunni Muslims, while the high score for non-religious group indicates that they are also more likely to migrate than Sunnis, although this result was not statistically significant. Significantly for my argument, other variables being equal, Turks are less likely to migrate than the Kurds—a finding per-

haps indicative of the role of the overall environment of insecurity, while the motivation could also be economic. The results for educational attainment are rather predictable. Those with minimum educational—primary school or secondary school—are twice as likely to migrate as those with no education. Those with higher education are half as likely to migrate, although this was not statistically significant. However, this finding still supports the pattern that migration is more likely to attract individuals in the middle categories of attainment than those in the lowest or the highest ranks. Expectedly, though not as much as for the gender of the individual, migration is quite responsive to the age of individual and the size of household he or she is from. Older people are more likely to migrate than are the young, while individuals from larger households are more likely to migrate than those from smaller households.

According to the regression analysis of the TIMS data, ethnicity does not emerge as the most important factor influencing migration. However, as argued at the beginning of this study, within the framework of the material environment of insecurity, ethnicity becomes relevant along with other variables in determining international migration, to the extent that Kurds seem more likely to migrate abroad than their fellow Turkish citizens. When considered as a whole, that is, when the pressure of ethnicity is added to the total effect of other variables (such as regional, educational, and financial variations), the environment of insecurity as a combined push factor seems to provide a hypothetical explanation worth investigation.

The tendency to migrate on the part of the Kurds need not be assumed to take the form of direct escape from the ethnic conflict, but should rather be situated within the opportunity framework created by the conflict. Of importance here is the way in which ethnicity as a variable contributes to migration status and blurs the distinction between economic and political migration. Qualitative material presented in the following sections lends support to this argument and highlights the role of the environment of insecurity in shaping the international migration of Turkey's Kurds.

Migration as an Alternative to Conflict, Conflict as an Opportunity Framework for Migration

As the individual cases from my fieldwork in Cologne indicate

(Sirkeci, 2003), migration from Turkey to Germany has involved a remarkable portion of political migrants who left their home country to better their lives, prioritizing "political betterment" as the main cause of their migration as stated in interviews. Many Turkish Kurdish immigrants interviewed in Cologne reported that they (or their parents) had considered migration to Germany as an alternative to remaining within physical proximity of the conflict. Parents indicated that they were worried about their children because of the risk of their possible involvement in clashes between the Turkish Army and the PKK rebels, which often resulted in torture and even death. A politically involved male Kurdish immigrant interviewed in Cologne (Sirkeci 2003, p. 154, Interview no. M16) said that he had come to Germany to attend the university in 1980, but decided to stay on in order to escape from possible ethnic persecution: "On paper, I came to the university, but actually I came to stay here. What could I do in Turkey? A few months after my arrival, the Army took power and declared emergency rule." Not only militants and activists but also ordinary people made explicit references to politics in their decision to migrate. A female Kurdish migrant in Cologne (p. 308, Interview no. F11) said, "we came here for Apo (a nickname for Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK) otherwise we would not stay here for even one minute."

While ethnic conflict did not appear to register as a sole or direct reason for migration in the TIMS study for period in question (the ten years leading up to 1996), interviews revealed that for some it has clearly served as a framework of opportunity for their migration plans. Many with only a minor connection with the Kurdish question followed various pathways to get access to the wealthy markets of the Western industrialized countries. Thus a number of respondents from the Cologne study reported that, while refugees, their reasons for migrating were not ethnic and/or political, but mainly economic. A Kurdish male respondent (p.155, Interview no. M22) plainly expresses that he deliberately used the EOI as an opportunity framework (in conjunction with the opportunity provided by the presence in Germany of two uncles who had migrated earlier), while from a certain point of view he could be considered a refugee in the sense that he had been living in a Kurdish and Alevi dominated neighborhood in Istanbul which was raided by the police several times in the early 1990s.

In our neighborhood, everybody wants their children to escape. The police killed many people there. It is also a very poor part of Istanbul. Nobody could find a job there. Nothing to do...I flew on a fake passport and visa...[then] went to my uncle's place in Berlin and applied for asylum...I claimed that I was tortured and so had become mentally unstable. I hadn't been tortured, although it was a possibility because I had been taken into custody several times. They sent me for psychiatric examination, and I pretended I was crazy. Then I got the pass! But I had to attend a psychiatric clinic for eight months, twice a week [laughing]...I am sending money to my siblings and mother in Turkey...

A Şanlıurfa born immigrant (p. 155, Interview no. M10) had heard that with the support of the PKK one could get refugee status easily in the UK and had thought of going, but ultimately changed his mind and decided to go to Germany with the help of traffickers. His sole concern was to make money:

[F]ew people migrated from our village. I thought we had a chance [to get a residency permit] because we are Kurdish. Everybody was coming here so I decided to try my luck. I thought I could find a job and earn a lot...[but] they did not give me a work permit. I am staying in a detention center and not allowed to go further than 30 km from here. I am working illegally in restaurants. I am earning about 600 DM [£200], but it is not very good money...Everyone in Turkey is expecting me to send money. So I also considered going into the drug business. They say there is a lot more money doing that...

While the individuals in the above two cases both indicate having used the EOI as a means for seeking economic improvement abroad, this does not negate the fact that both individuals also made strong cases regarding fear of persecution while in Turkey. Thus it would be too simple to consider them "false asylum seekers." While the level of the fear and "probable cause" in individual cases may be disputed by government agencies, the importance of these examples lies in revealing the role of ethnic conflict as both a push factor (fear of persecution related to the ethnic conflict) as well as an opportunity framework. According to interviews (Sirkeci, 2003), a number of individuals living in the core or on the periphery of conflict areas made their migration in the last twenty-year period when the armed conflict reached its greatest intensity in Eastern Turkey. Among those individuals, some

had already been considering migrating when they realized that the conflict situation might help their case, and so made the attempt. Others observed acquaintances or co-nationals migrating successfully, having cited the conflict as a reason, and thus wanted to do the same. These cases provide further evidence for our hypothesis that ethnic conflict can trigger migration within an ethnic population regardless of how or in what sense they are involved in the conflict situation.

Flexible Mechanisms of Migration: From Guest Workers to Illegal Migrants

In recent decades, tightened migration control in Europe and its periphery has directed international migration to more permeable borders of Europe. On the one hand, border countries like Greece and Spain have been targeted by large clandestine migration flows by boat, border crossings, and so on. Large hubs for illegal migration have also appeared in peripheral countries. For example Istanbul (Turkey) has become a major hub for channeling irregular migrants originating from the Middle East and Africa.⁵ The future of migration to Europe appears, therefore, to depend on a balance between the regulations imposed by governments and the challenges invented by migrating individuals.

With the help of transnational networks, as these irregular migration mechanisms have become more flexible, they have also become more important within international migration to Europe, as Okolski describes: "A Sri Lankan now traveling to Germany, having neither legal papers nor money, does not feel lost and helpless in Belarus or almost anywhere else if he is equipped with a magnetic telephone card with which he may instantly request cash from a nearby cousin or friend, or get instructions from a (migrant) trafficker" (Okolski, 1999, p.148). Similarly, an odyssey starting from a remote town of Eastern Turkey and continuing towards a capital of Western Europe has a good chance of success if supported by fellow citizens who live abroad, trafficking networks, and other contextual factors. For example, a Kurdish immigrant who had made use of trafficking networks reported in the Cologne study that he had no contact with foreigners regarding his travel logistics during the entire journey from a village

⁵ See İcduygu (1996) on transit migration in Turkey.

in the province of Bingöl to Cologne via Bosnia, Albania, Italy, and France. All contact persons, except for a French driver who gave him a lift at the final border crossing from Italy into France, were fellow citizens originally from Bingöl. Of course, such clandestine migrations of the last two decades are only one form of irregular migration. Contract marriages, on-paper joint ventures, and au-pair and study arrangements can also serve as paths to the restricted labor markets of "fortress Europe."

In this context a recent debate within migration studies may be mentioned, one on the measurability and predictability of human behavior. Migration may result from a process of decision-making in which the motivations of individuals or families and their conscious or unconscious choices are often too complex to identify with certainty, as when a genuine asylum seeker may also be influenced by economic concerns or, as Castles and Loughna (2002) discussed in reference to the mass labor migrations of the 1960s, an economic migrant can also have political motivations. The Cologne interviews show that reasons for migrating may not only be multiple, but may also change over time. The important point here is that the typologies used in the literature as well as in policy are in need of revision. They may reflect the mechanisms from which migrants have benefited, as reported after the fact of migration at a given moment in time, but are far from reflecting the nature of or full range of reasons for any particular migratory move, reasons which are perhaps more complex and colorful than those registered in the gray zones of passport control desks in Germany.

Concluding Remarks

This study argues that ethnic conflict is an important factor in Kurdish international migration from Turkey, but that its role is not limited to its depiction in refugee studies and can be more complex than may be understood from any one rationale. Conflict circumstances can act as a direct push factor for migration, but may also serve as an opportunity framework for those already planning to migrate and with no or only loose connections with the conflict itself. Such a combination of pressure and encouragement is likely to bring about a cumulative causal effect. Within such a framework, however, the dichotomy between economic and political migrants, while of value as a simplification for purposes of modeling, is increasingly losing its meaning. Fore grounded reasons given for migration, what-

ever they might be, can change over time and place since they are relational, situational and contextual, making it difficult and sometimes impossible to finally distinguish an asylum seeker from an economic migrant.

These relativizing factors combined with the general lack of data to make it very difficult to identify the role of ethnicity within Turkish migratory patterns. At this point we cannot generalize about Kurdish migration in relation to the ethnic conflict, but only suggest the possibility of a different migratory regime for Kurds within the wider trends of migration from Turkey. This differentiation is highly likely to be influenced by ongoing ethnic tension and armed ethnic conflict. Supporting this hypothesis, the qualitative material of this study and the contextual background described indicate that ethnicity is significant, while the quantitative analysis suggests that it is a motivating factor, while not the most influential one. Thus it may be most reasonable to suggest that ethnicity be included among explanatory variables in future analyses of Turkish international migratory regimes.

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