

**THE ENVIRONMENT OF INSECURITY
IN TURKEY AND THE EMIGRATION
OF TURKISH KURDS TO GERMANY**

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To my parents

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1987:37) in search of an insider perspective on people, activities and structures by interacting with the members of the group closely but avoiding involvement in central, functional roles.

A final note I would like to highlight about the field research is its timing. Story telling is something contextual and interpersonal as well as individual. It is a snapshot of a moment in the reality of an individual. The arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of Kurdish separatist organisation PKK, on 16th February 1999 is a factor that resulted in demonstrations by Kurdish immigrants all around Europe. Following the arrest was the trial of Abdullah Öcalan, which influenced people's perceptions day by day. The importance of these changes for my research was reflected in two ways: many people became undecided about the Kurdish cause due to the general uncertainty after the arrest and testimonies of Abdullah Öcalan during the trial.⁴ In most cases, they were reluctant to talk about Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdish ethnic revival. They seemed confused about what was happening. During the arrest and trial period there was also an increase in nationalism among Kurdish immigrants as I observed. Therefore the analysis I present here based on the qualitative material was produced in such a context of turmoil and confusion for the Kurds.

Organisation of the book

Chapter one focuses on integration of the environment of insecurity concept into the current international migration conceptualisations with reference to ethnic conflict, deprivation, and migration. Recapturing the main tracks of this conceptual literature, it addresses the relevance of socio-economic deprivation, political deprivation, networks and transnationalism to international migration. The chapter also seeks references in the literature for the expression of ethnicity on the move. It concludes with describing methods and data sources.

⁴ He made statements quite contrary to the Kurdish cause; for example, he declared that he was ready to serve the Turkish state. These statements were televised for days before the trial.

Chapter 2 explores the Turkish context in order to locate Kurdish international migration within the broader national migration regime. I attempt to relate the Kurdish ethnic question in Turkey, socio-economic unevenness and international migration with particular reference to migration from Turkey to Germany and the city of Cologne, as one of the most popular destinations for Turkish migrants. This chapter gives a compact account of Turkish international migration in general and specifically details the migration from Turkey to Germany since the 1960s.

Chapter 3 examines the socio-economic, political, and demographic components of the environment of insecurity. I compare and contrast Turkish and Kurdish populations as well as regions of Turkey. The political, legal and military aspects of the environment of insecurity that strain Turkey's Kurdish population are also reflected on. The context, I argue is a major facilitating factor for migration of the Kurds from Turkey, substantiating the discussion of micro level characteristics in the following chapters.

Chapter 4 describes the Kurdish migration patterns compared to others in Turkey. It moves from the aggregate level of analysis of households to individual motivations. I also describe those who do not migrate along with migrants. Since in many ways, non-migrants' experiences are as useful as migrants' in understanding why and how international migration occurs. Among the Kurds in eastern provinces migration has been more likely recently. In all regions, however, migration is more widespread among the Kurds compared to their Turkish counterparts. Kurdish migrant profiles are also different than the Turks. In qualitative interviews, Kurdish immigrants in Germany reported that the ethnic conflict was a major reason but results from the survey data proved that migration was more of a function of age, gender, regional socio-economic differences, and financial situation. However, the very same interviews also indicate that many Kurds migrated abroad not because of ethnic conflict, but by using it for better economic returns.

Chapter 5 examines the role of information and networks in migration. I focus on elaboration of availability of migration networks for Kurdish migrants and migration strategies followed. Legal and illegal strategies are compared and contrasted with actual stories about Kurdish immigrants in Cologne, Germany. Human smuggling appears as a common path resorted to by many Kurds while migrating to Western Europe.

I outline perceptions about international migration, what it brings and what it takes, as well as reasons and perceptions for return migration in chapter 6. Belonging and homesickness were the most important for half of the Kurds while for the Turks, return migration is a function of the fact that they dislike their life abroad. The Kurds portrayed a diaspora feeling in relation to return migration. Return to Turkey is conditional on the improvement of ethnic and political circumstances in favour of the Kurds in Turkey. However, they continued investing in Turkey as much as Turkish fellow citizens.

Migration may also serve as a space of enactment for the expression of ethnicity. Chapter 7, focusing on the qualitative material, examines the Kurds' self-ascription of their ethnicity, their understanding of 'us' versus 'them', the role of international migration in accessing cultural freedoms, and the role of ethnicity in managing international migration.

The conclusion underlines the fact that international migration of ethnic minorities are necessary to understand patterns and processes and these may not be the same as described within national migratory regimes. To handle these differences a conceptual tool kit of international migration needs to include environment of insecurity as a background conceptualisation, as glue, to link various approaches ranging from classical economic models to individualistic behavioural models. The evidence presented indicates that Kurdish international migration is embedded in socio-economic patterns and is also responsive to the ethnic conflict enhanced by these patterns. The conflict oriented environment of insecurity does not only act as a push factor but also serves as an opportunity

Chapter One

Conceptualisation of Environment of Insecurity

*"There comes a time when the mind takes a higher plane of knowledge but can never prove how it got there."
Albert Einstein*

International migration literature has been divided into key sub-disciplinary areas, such as labour migration, refugee studies and illegal/ clandestine/irregular migration. Recently human trafficking and smuggling has also appeared as a special area. These divisions, however, often hide the natural complexity of migration processes, which may involve different types of flows at the same time. It is often not easy and sometimes impossible to distinguish an asylum seeker from an economic migrant because asylum seeking and economic migration are often interrelated not due to individual preferences, but because the root causes might have economic and political aspects at the same time as happened in the case of Kurds from Turkey. They have been through a brutal armed conflict as well as striking economic deprivation as described in the following chapters. I review the existing literature to find ways to incorporate ethnic conflict into available conceptualisations.

Conflict is a key factor influencing both the decision to move and the volume of 'border crossings' and 'overstaying'.⁵ International migration,

⁵ Here one can raise the question about conflicts other than the ethnic one and rightly, it has to be noted that all sorts of conflict situations create some kind of hybridisation of migration flows.

Chapter Two

Deprivation at home and abroad: Turkish international migration and the ethnic conflict

In order to understand the international migration of a particular population and the role of the expression of ethnicity in relation to this movement, an understanding of these movements' context is necessary, comprising their background and reasons for migration, their journeys and their destinations.

To date, the international migration of Turkish Kurds has been overlooked in the literature although they have always constituted a significant component of flows from Turkey since the 1960s. Moreover none of the prevalent ethnic diversities within these flows have been discussed within the literature. Although one can find voluminous literature on migration flows from Turkey to Europe and Turkish immigrant communities in Europe, there have been only a few studies exploring its ethnic and religious diversities until very recently. Given the dearth of studies on Turkish Kurdish migration, this research was one of the first to explore this particular and largest minority component of both Turkish society and the Turkish migratory regime.

I draw upon the literature to locate Turkish Kurdish migration within the broader Turkish migration context. Based on the conceptual framework developed in the previous chapter, three areas are essential: a) Turkey's socio-economic and ethnic fabric in relation to conflict and migration. b) The Kurdish population and

İzmir (24 per thousand); for example, the Hakkari province growth rate for urban populations were 67 per thousand, while it was 53 per thousand in Van, and 52 per thousand in Şırnak (SIS 2002, see Table 2.2).

The most recent factor causing migration has been clashes between the Turkish army and PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). These migration figures should be interpreted in the knowledge that most of the least developed areas of the country stand within this region, which is mostly inhabited by Turkish Kurds. It would not be wrong to interpret unevenness in development and differences in migration rates as a reflection of ethnic factors. These record population growth levels in the cities of the South East region are also a direct result of the conflict, which has taken place between the Turkish army and Kurdish guerrilla movement since the mid-1980s. People moved from rural areas to urban centres. The government evacuated more than 3000 villages in the region for “security reasons” in the mid-1990s. Many other villages also were emptied as their residents left because of ongoing clashes and bombings in the rural areas.

2.2 The Kurdish question and the Turkish response

*“O yıllarda ülkemizde
Çeşitli hükümlerle
Yetmiş iki dilden
İkisi yasaklanmıştı
İkincisi Türkçe”²⁹
Cemal Süreya (1988: 25)*

The Kurdish Question in Turkey has been on the political agenda for almost a century (Barkey 1993; McDowall 1996; Robins 1993; Entessar 1989; Van Bruinessen 1992a). The main features of the Kurdish question as a threat to the “national unity of Turkey” arose from the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s following the Treaty of Sevres of 10 August 1920, which prescribed a possible Kurdish state in the region comprising the Southeast of Turkey and

²⁹ “In those years in our country/ two of seventy-two languages/ were banned by various decrees/ the second was Turkish” [translation by Ibrahim Sirkeci].

Chapter Three

The Environment of Insecurity and Kurdish emigration

*“All happy families resemble one another,
but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”
(Anna Karenina, Tolstoi, 1969, p.1)*

The environment of insecurity (EOI), as a background context, is composed of material and non-material environments of insecurity and I consider it as a facilitating factor for Turkish Kurdish international migration. EOI has three sub-domains: socio-economics, politics, and demographics.

International and national level discrepancies between regions are known to be influential on international migration. As many others in the literature, an earlier study of my own, (Icduygu et al. 2001), indicated that the richest and poorest segments are less likely to generate out-migration compared to mid-level developed areas. This is understandable, as international migration requires a significant accumulation of (material and non-material) capital. I place Turkey within the global economy by referring to some broad measures before drawing upon regional inequalities within Turkey. Analysing the socio-economic EOI, I also look at the household level on the basis of housing conditions, education, and possession of durable goods as indicators of welfare status.

Political deprivation is a large chapter of the EOI in Turkey. We may also call it ‘democratic deprivation’ referring to Turkey’s record of human rights

Chapter Four

Kurdish international migration patterns and motivations

*“Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
but neither arrest nor movement.”
(T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*, 1936, pt.2.)*

The environment of insecurity (EOI) as a background context possibly facilitating the migration of Turkish Kurds means that the first task is to identify their migration patterns. TDHS survey data and other statistical sources outlined different demographics for the Kurds than the Turks on which I argue that their migration patterns are likely to be different. The findings of the Cologne fieldwork and the TIMS data shed light on migration patterns and causes of migration for Turkish Kurds and contrasts with the patterns of their Turkish fellow citizens. The starting question is “who moves, who stays?” which is followed by the motives and destination choices for Turkish Kurds.

What distinguishes migrants from non-migrants is still an unanswered question by migration researchers. Given the improvements in telecommunications and transportation along with globalisation of markets, this unknown nature will likely to persist. Characteristics of households may help to distinguish those with migrant members and those without. It is difficult to assess the impact of migration over the general well being of sending families but these differences still have a potential to explain migration. Analysis of migration status by ethnicity is helpful to unveil the Kurdish migration patterns among the broader

Chapter Five

Migration Mechanisms

*“Kürtler yalan söylemek zorunda;
Arnavutlar, doğru.”
(Cemal Süreya, 1989, p.1)⁸⁸*

Mechanisms of international migration are closely linked to networks of information, migration networks and migration strategies. Alongside background characteristics (i.e. sex, age, education, and welfare status), type, amount and source of information are also important in the migration decision (De Jong and Gardner 1981). Information that facilitates migration is channelled through migration networks. Migration strategies are also shaped by the availability and the characteristics of migration network. Therefore personal networks (i.e. familial ties, friendship and community ties) in destination countries are key factors in shaping international migration (Massey *et al.* 1987; Boyd 1989; Hugo 1981; Faist 2000).

Faist explained networks in relation to social capital and discussed as a factor influencing “differential rates of migration out of various communities within the countries of origin” (2000:123). They are also important in transmitting remittances and in job and accommodation arrangements before the move. Thus networks minimise the risks of migration. The influence of networks are important in migration decision making in societies in which strong family

⁸⁸ “The Kurds have to lie; Albanians have to tell the truth.” [Translation is mine].

Chapter Six

Migrants' Future and Future Migrants

*“Gidip dönelim
Bakarsın göneniriz gidip dönelim
Ben yılmam taş çekerim çamur kararım ben
Senin de gürül gürül saçların var nasıl olsa”¹⁰¹
(Turgut Uyar, *Dünyanın En Güzel Arabistanı*, 1995, p.102)*

The migration patterns and processes of Turkish Kurds have been explored in previous chapters. The role of ethnic conflict as an opportunity framework and the facilitating role of migration networks have been discussed. Given the availability of similar migration networks, the continuation of the current state of ethnic relations in Turkey and, of course, if the present gap between welfare levels in Turkey and Europe continues, it would not be wrong to expect further migration flows of Turkish Kurds into Europe. However, the migration decision is also influenced by individuals' perceptions and intentions.

This chapter focuses on migration potentials for Turkish Kurds. The analysis is particularly focused on micro level indicators since the data provided by the TIMS and qualitative research do not support macro level analysis of future migrations. Therefore, the analysis here will remain limited to the perceptions, intentions, and investment patterns of Turkish Kurds. However, it must be acknowledged that these are not totally irrelevant to macro level factors. For

¹⁰¹ “Lets go and come back / then might we be better off, lets go and return / I never be daunted to carrying stones, blending mud / and, anyway, you also have luxuriant hair.” (translation is mine).

Chapter Seven

Migration and the expression of ethnicity

*“ve ben Amerikanca bir filmi Kürtçe
seyrediyorum.”¹¹¹
(Yılmaz Erdoğan)*

*“I have been a strange man in a strange land.”
(Bible, Exodus ch.2, v.22)*

My interviews with Kurdish immigrants in Cologne revealed an interesting aspect of international migration; changes in the expression of ethnicity. Kurdish men and women have described a ‘dynamic’ and understandably situational ethnic identity. There is nothing new in interchangeable description of identity. Ethnic references throughout different stages of migration was, however, new to me and more interestingly, Kurdish people’s ascription of their ethnicity in relation to migration was another feature of ethnic conflict’s reflection or involvement in international migration.

According to Barthes (1966) and Lyotard (1984) narratives exist in all cultures, histories, and all languages as a primary method of communication and the *expression of experience*. These expressions may change according to the context of narration, and therefore it is very likely that the same experience can be

¹¹¹ “...and I am watching an ‘Americanish’ film in Kurdish”. (translation is mine). Yılmaz Erdoğan is a Turkish Kurdish poet. His emphasis in this poem is on the fact that no matter which language the film is in, he watches it in Kurdish. The word “Americanish” is used to denote it is in American language.

Chapter Eight

Opportunity Frameworks: ethnic conflict, environment of insecurity, and international migration nexus

*“It requires a very unusual mind
to undertake the analysis of the obvious”
(A. N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 1925)*

“Just as weather moves from areas of high pressure to low, so too transnational migration flows from areas of high political, social or economic insecurity to what migrants tend to perceive as areas of lower insecurity” (Heisler and Layton-Henry, 1993: 148). The migration movement of Turkish Kurds has also followed this very pathway from an environment of insecurity to an environment of relative security. I have attempted to examine the international migration of Turkish Kurds from Turkey to Cologne, Germany within its broader context of ethnic conflict characterised by the burdens of socio-economic and political deprivation. Contrasts between Turkish and Kurdish population patterns and migration patterns enabled a clearer understanding of relative insecurity for the Kurds which facilitated international migration: both as a set of push factors and by providing opportunity frameworks.

Statistics, observations, and narrations offer a rich multilevel analysis of Kurdish migration and ethnic conflict leading us to a conclusive summary of international migration experience of this particular population. This analysis can be used as a model for similar cases, such as Berbers of North Africa, or Eritreans