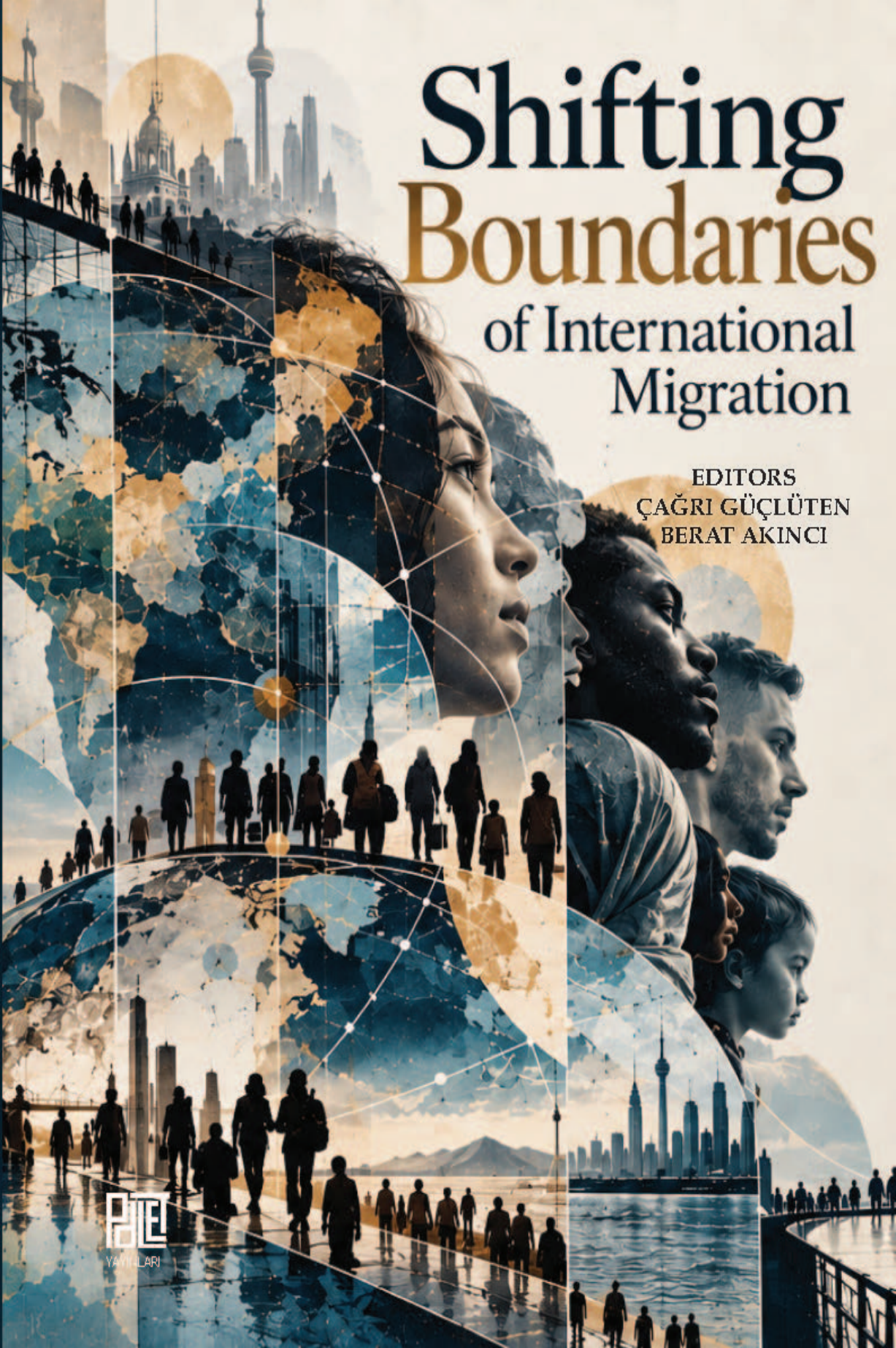

Shifting
Boundaries
of International
Migration
EDITORS
ÇAĞRI GÜÇLÜTEN
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YAYINLARI

SHIFTING BOUNDARIES OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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PALET YAYINLARI ®

T.C. KÜLTÜR ve TURİZM BAKANLIĞI SERTİFİKA NO: 44040
ISBN: 978-625-8552-21-6

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Ekim 2026

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Fevzi Çakmak Mah. Hacı Bayram Cad. No: 57 Karatay / Konya
Sertifika Numarası: 74481

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PREAMBLE

Global migration has been a major force in contemporary international relations. This is no longer just the mobility of individuals from one country to another. In this regard, migration is increasingly linked to questions of sovereignty, security, economic inequality, international protection, human rights, identity and political belonging. Conflicts and political instability, changing labor market needs, demographic trends, environmental pressures and persistent global inequalities are constantly reshaping patterns of human mobility, while governments and international organizations are facing increasing challenges in managing ever more complex forms of movement.

The title "Shifting Boundaries of International Migration" expresses the main point of view of this collection. Migration boundaries are not only geographical but also political, legal, economic, institutional and social. Migration troubles have given rise to stark divisions among national and international politics, sovereignty and global responsibility, security and protection, citizens and non-citizens, and national and transnational loyalties. International migration, in this sense, is not merely a crossing of established borders, but also a factor in their evolution.

This is particularly important for an International Relations perspective, since migration is affected by the global system but can also impact the relationships, institutions and political frameworks of this system. States retain significant power over admission, borders, citizenship and legal status, however, contemporary migration governance increasingly involves regional bodies, international organizations, local authorities, judicial organs, civil society, markets and transnational networks. To understand international migration, we need an analytical framework that connects global structures to the institutions, policies, societies and political narratives that regulate and shape mobility.

In this context, "Shifting Boundaries of International Migration" brings together ten chapters that explore international migration from economic, political, legal, security, humanitarian, social and communicative perspectives. Instead of treating these aspects as distinct fields of study, the volume endeavors to demonstrate their interrelations in the ongoing negotiation of borders, authority, rights, identity and belonging.

The first chapter of the volume, "International Migration in a Shifting Global Order," by **Asst. Prof. Dr. Çağrı GÜÇLÜTEN**, sets an overarching

conceptual framework for the volume by placing international migration within the framework of a changing global order. The chapter explores migration within the framework of sovereignty, borders, global inequalities and changing governance arrangements. Migration is considered both as a consequence of transformations of the international system and as a driver in the redefinition of political boundaries and global governance.

In the second chapter "The Economic Dimensions of Migration: Labor Markets, Dual Markets and Theories", **Asst. Prof. Dr. Süleyman SOYHANOĞLU** discusses the economic basis and impacts of international migration with special emphasis on labor markets, changes in employment and wages, remittances, human capital, welfare systems, fiscal impacts and regional disparities. This chapter integrates theoretical viewpoints and empirical data to demonstrate the connection between international mobility, economic structures, and disparities in opportunities across countries and regions.

The third chapter titled "National and Regional Migration Governance: Policy-Making and Cooperation" by **Research Asst. Dr. Serhat KAYA and Asst. Prof. Dr. Ferat KAYA** discusses migration governance at the national, local, regional and international levels. From the perspective of multilevel governance and on the basis of comparative regional cases, this chapter shows that migration is no longer regulated only by central authorities, and that there is no universally applicable approach to governance; rather, migration governance is the product of continuous exchanges and negotiations among a variety of institutions and actors at different levels.

The fourth chapter, entitled "Governance, Ethics and Human Rights in Migration" prepared by **Asst. Prof. Dr. Abdulkadir AKSOY**, examines the governance of migration by linking administrative duty, ethics, human rights, accountability and legal principles. The section emphasizes that the management of migration cannot be based only on operational efficiency or border enforcement and that the legitimacy of migration policies depends on ethical coherence, legal protections, and rights-based governance.

The fifth chapter, authored by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cüneyt YILMAZ**, bears the title "The Legal Frameworks of Migration: Rights, Status, and Categories of Immigrants" and focuses on the legal classifications that define and distinguish people in transit. This chapter addresses the analysis of the refugee, the asylum seeker, the protected person, the migrant, the displaced person.

It demonstrates that, besides being descriptive categories, they are also frames of reference for the distribution of rights, protections and state obligations.

The sixth chapter "Securitization and Borders: Migration in the Setting of the Security Paradigm" by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Demet DÖNMEZ** analyzes the relations between migration, security and border management in the securitization context. This chapter focuses on border regulation, unlawful migration, the trafficking of migrants, human smuggling, militarization and human security. It highlights the constant tension between national security interests and the protection of migrants' basic rights.

In the seventh chapter, "Forced Migration and Humanitarian Governance," **Prof. Dr. Aziz BELLİ** and **Prof. Dr. Abdullah AYDIN**, analyze the governance of forced migration, including long-term displacement, international organizations, protection gaps and the search for sustainable solutions. This chapter considers the framing of forced displacement within the framework of humanitarian governance, illustrating how responsibility is distributed across countries, international agencies and humanitarian organizations in more complex and protracted displacement situations.

The eighth chapter entitled "Social Structures and Cultural Transformations: Integration, Identity and Transnationalism" by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Berat AKINCI**, **Asst. Prof. Dr. Vedat KANAT** and **Res. Asst. Mert ATİK** discusses the social and cultural implications of migration in terms of integration, assimilation, adaptation, identity, belonging, transnationalism and diaspora. The chapter shows how international migration, seen from the perspective of individuals, societies and states, changes social relations and creates complex identities and belonging.

Chapter nine "Migration, Media and Communication: Framing Mobility in the Public Sphere" by **Dr. Burak SOMUNCU** examines the representation and significance of migration in traditional and digital media. The chapter studies security, humanitarian and economic discourses in conjunction with digital platforms, misinformation, polarization and opportunities for self-representation of migrants through framing, agenda-setting, representation and comparative media-system perspectives.

In the last chapter, "Populism and Anti-Immigrant Discourses" written by **Asst. Prof. Dr. Onur TÜRKÖLMEZ**, the correlation between the global rise of populism and increasing politicization of migration is discussed. The

chapter explores the impact of nativist, anti-immigrant discourse, the portrayal of migrants as the 'other', and the dissemination of exclusionary narratives on mainstream politics, illustrating the link between migration and wider struggles about identity, security, citizenship and political belonging.

The chapters collectively demonstrate that international migration is, at the same time, an economic phenomenon, a governance problem, a legal and humanitarian issue, a security consideration, a catalyst for social change and a site of political contestation. In the general context of International Relations, these aspects combine in the evolving parameters of international migration, whose boundaries are not fixed and geographical only. Rather they are constantly being produced, negotiated and modified in the exchanges between states, institutions, societies and individuals on the move. This volume is centered on a fundamental assertion: international migration is not simply about crossing boundaries, but also about actively contributing to their ongoing reconfiguration.

EDITORS

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INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE GLOBAL ORDER

ÇAĞRI GÜÇLÜTEN*

Introduction

Throughout history, international migration has emerged as a multidimensional process that, through its transformative and shaping nature, has led to the formation of new societies and the reshaping of existing ones. In recent years, the geopolitical developments that erupted with the end of the Cold War and the security paradigms that emerged in the post-Cold War era have significantly altered the way international migration is perceived (Huysmans & Squire, 2009). The examination of universal and abstract definitions of security across various dimensions has also given rise to approaches that bring the migration and security dimensions and the concepts of migration and security closer together (Küçük, 2021). Consequently, in the global order, the fact that the concepts of migration and security began to be used and mentioned together has led to migration flows being subjected to stricter sanctions and to the reversal and transformation of migration. One of the clearest examples of this transformation is security. Traditionally, migration has been approached from the perspective of the sovereign state, particularly in terms of border protection, territorial integrity, political stability and public order (Akıncı & Güçlüten, 2025). Large scale and uncontrolled population movements can in this view be of relevance to national security when they affect domestic stability, exacerbate social or political tensions or create disputes between states (Weiner, 1992). This understanding is very much aligned with state-centric approaches in International Relations, especially the realist assumptions about survival, sovereignty and control in an international anarchy (Mearsheimer, 1994). Migration policy, in this view, is part of the larger state effort to control its territory and to establish the terms of entry and stay of non-citizens within its jurisdiction. But the post-Cold War expansion of security studies complicated this state-centered interpretation to a great extent. Buzan et al. (1998) expanded the security agenda to

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include issues beyond traditional military threats, and showed that security issues can be identified in the political, societal, economic, and other sectors. Their securitization framework was particularly influential in that it shifted the focus from the question of whether an issue is an objectively measurable threat to the political processes through which this issue is presented and accepted as a threat. Using this perspective on migration means that human mobility per se does not constitute an automatic security threat; migration can be securitized through political and institutional practices whereby migrants and cross-border movement are associated with threats to sovereignty, public order, welfare or collective identity. Huysmans (2000) also illustrates how migration in European political discourse was associated with issues of internal security, cultural identity and welfare, which contributed to the construction of migration as a field of insecurity. These developments reveal a more profound transformation in the relationship between migration and the global order. Wars, inequalities, labor market structures, demographic pressures, political instability and institutional arrangements in the international system influence international migration. But the relationship is not unidirectional. Migration also challenges fixed notions of sovereignty, produces new border practices, new forms of interstate negotiation and cooperation, and raises questions about the division of responsibility between states and international institutions. International migration must therefore be seen not only as a product of the transformations of the global order, but also as one of the processes through which that order is constantly negotiated and reconfigured.

1. Migration, Sovereignty and Borders

The use of geographical boundaries is a specific feature which is unique to modern states, but is a fundamental practice that human societies have used throughout history to define themselves and to separate themselves from other groups. Communities, collectives and political entities have produced many distinctions throughout different epochs that set out the domains of their affiliation (Akıncı & Sezik, 2023). However, the transformation of these distinctions into precise and linear boundaries representing control over a defined area are much more recent historical phenomenon. Therefore, the main feature that distinguishes the modern border from the ways of marking the border in the previous times is its deep connection to sovereignty. Before the development of the modern state system in Europe, the borders of the spheres of influence of the political powers were not as clearly defined as the national borders of today. In the feudal context, the overlap of

different spheres of power created a vague and porous character of border zones, especially. This framework began to emerge in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the idea of sovereignty over defined territories began to take shape (Diener & Hagen, 2010), and the spatial distinctions between political entities became more rigid and unflexible. The 1648 Peace of Westphalia is a key historical milestone in the evolution of contemporary ideas of territorial sovereignty. The increased closeness of a government to a particular territory has changed the very nature of sovereignty and of what constitutes sovereign territory. Thus, the change occurred from broad, porous and often indistinct border zones to more concrete and linear demarcations of state jurisdictions. The struggles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the political frameworks that ensued accelerated the transition of border regions into demarcated lines, leading to the formation of this new spatial configuration. (Giddens, 2008, p. 127). The drawing of lines as borders has more clearly demarcated the territorial sovereignty of the states and their political claims of allegiance over the people inhabiting these areas. Thus, the modern boundary is more than a geographical demarcation that defines the beginning and end of state sovereignty. Social, political, and cultural divisions are significant because of the people and communities they divide, just like territorial borders. Thus, the border as a social construction has a double function, as a separating and formative border. It marks the difference between inside and outside, and at the same time it stimulates the creation of communities, collectives and feelings of belonging through this marking. In this sense, borders are important tools in the construction of social, political and ideological categories, drawing the line between "us" and "other" (Tekin, 2016). Especially after the emergence of the nation-state model, the issues of territoriality and sovereignty have gained importance for the countries, and policy tools are used in this regard (Tekin, 2022).

The relationship between international migration and sovereignty revolves around the power to determine the boundaries and composition of the political community. The state, in terms of sovereignty, is not just an actor that exerts control over a certain territory. It is the dominant actor that decides who is allowed to come into the political space, who is allowed to reside there and who is considered to be part of the political community. Thus, the regulation of migration can be understood as one of the most important manifestations of the state's right to self-determination and the exercise of sovereignty. Liberal theory's universalist perspective, by contrast, points to the moral equality of persons and their freedom of mobility (Cole, 2000),

while sovereignty-based approaches foreground the right of political units to set their own membership criteria and control their borders (Aitchison, 2023).

Migration, in this sense, is a domain where the practices of inclusion and exclusion most visibly express state sovereignty. As theories that stress the self-determination rights of political entities claim, the power of a state to control who enters its borders is a constitutive part of the capacity of the organized political community to determine its own future. This conception rests on the assumption that it is a legitimate collective goal to preserve the cultural and institutional structure of the political community. National communities are argued to have a role in shaping the identities of their members, through common goals, interests and bonds and therefore have rights to maintain their cultural integrity (Gibney, 2004). Judging from this perspective, migration policies are not only technical regulations governing population movements; they are also expressions of sovereignty that establish the boundaries and membership criteria of the political body. The power to make such decisions gives countries control over migration and enables them to exercise their sovereignty. The recognition of the right to preserve cultural integrity, relational dynamics, ideas of justice, and the institutional structure of the political community means that the state is empowered with huge power to regulate entry and membership in the nation; Approaches considering the integration of immigrants into the nation as a dimension of the political community's autonomy and relational development connect the state's discretion in this domain with the principle of self-determination (Altundal, 2024). Thus the control of frontiers, the issue of permits to enter, the imposition of conditions of residence and the expulsion of nonnationals when necessary are essential means by which the sovereign state maintains the limits of the political community. But the relationship between migration and sovereignty cannot be reduced to a question of the state's ability to exert control. Migration patterns are intensifying globally and the economic, social and legal effects of globalization are increasingly constraining states' ability to exercise full sovereignty over migration. Migration is part of the economic and social fabric of countries through labor markets, economic relations, family ties and transnational networks, making it difficult for state authorities to exercise full control over migration flows (Pécoud & de Guchteneire, 2006). But the dictates of the market and the standards of human rights might limit the establishment of unlimited and absolute sovereignty in border control, particularly in liberal democratic countries (Sassen, 1996).

This case shows that globalization does not eliminate state sovereignty, but rather changes the application of state sovereignty regarding migration. This change is most evident in the geographical practice of sovereignty. The collapse or reduction of a state's ability to directly control migration at its borders could lead to a relocation of sovereignty practices to the internal realm of the state, rather than the removal of borders. Migration management is therefore not only about the acceptance or rejection of people at the border, but also about processes of surveillance, administrative oversight, legal status assessment, detention and deportation after entry. In this context sovereignty is transforming from a static and territorially limited power into a form of governance that actively administers the movement, legal status and conditions of residence of migrants. Globalization and increased international mobility have not therefore diminished the significance of state sovereignty. Conversely, the management of migration is an indication of the ability of states to determine membership in the political community. Indeed, although it is argued that borders and membership have become less important, the continued and intensive use of legal and administrative instruments, particularly by developed countries, to control migration points to the centrality of sovereignty in international migration. In this sense, sovereignty is more than simply protecting territorial boundaries; it is also about the ability to distinguish between "insiders" and "outsiders," between nationals and nonnationals, between those who are entitled to inclusion in the political community and those who are subject to exclusion. Deportability also encompasses, not only the application of the deportation procedure, but also, and possibly more importantly, the state's power to decide whether or not a foreigner has the right to live within its territory. Deportation, detention and the assessment of the status of migrants are thus seen as devices that contribute to the validation of the claim of sovereignty of the state through the normal management of migration (Dalaman & Türkmen, 2022). The relationship between global migration and sovereignty is mutual and fluid. Migration dynamics contradict the idea that states exercise complete control over their borders, but states reestablish their sovereignty through their capacity to decide entry, membership, residency, and deportation. Thus, migration can be understood as an important political space where sovereignty is reduced and reshaped in changing contexts. In particular, within the security framework of controlling irregular migration, the power of the state to decide who is acceptable, who can be excluded and who is a

security threat is growing. Thus, migration governance and the use of sovereignty are increasingly intertwined.

2. Migration, security and securitization

The emergence of the link between migration and security on the global political scene is closely related to the conceptual development of security, especially in the post-Cold War era. The end of the bipolar international system has led to the expansion and deepening of security studies beyond the traditional definitions of security based only on state sovereignty, territorial integrity and military strength. International migration has been gradually incorporated into security discourses about its implications in terms of political stability, social structures and management of state borders (Şener, 2017). In this process, the migration-security nexus is not simply the product of developments in the post-Cold War period. The wars, local conflicts, ethnic and religious violence, civil strife, and widespread human rights abuses of the twentieth century caused a huge international migration of coerced populations. Therefore, the progress in these aspects has made the classification of people forced to leave their countries as refugees and asylum seekers more visible in the legal and political spheres. This development has shown the humanitarian side of international migration and its link with the security of states. In addition, the evaluation of migration patterns in terms of national security has also gained importance in the political agenda of host countries, particularly in the post Cold War era (Heywood, 2013). This shift in the perception of security has presented a challenge to the state-centric and militaristic threat-oriented approach of traditional security studies. The emergence of ethnic and religious conflicts after the end of the Cold War, the growing significance of non-state actors in world politics and the security problems faced by individuals have shown that security can not be conceived only in terms of military rivalry between governments. In this context, the security agenda has broadened to include a variety of areas including terrorism, human rights, environmental issues, demographic changes and social upheavals. The processes of expansion and deepening identified by Buzan and Hansen (2005) refer to the diversification of perceived security threats and the extension of the security reference object to individuals and social groups outside the state. Consequently, security is now viewed as a complex concept that extends beyond the protection of the state from external threats and encompasses political and social vulnerabilities at various levels.An important aspect of this conceptual transformation of security studies is the

emergence of critical methodologies that focus on the security of the individual. Ken Booth, within this framework, argues that the primary objective of security is not to preserve the state, but to enable the liberation of individuals from the pressures and constraints they experience. Booth (1991) suggests that the state should not be seen as the ultimate goal of security, but rather as a tool for the protection of individuals. Methodology here understands liberation as removing political, economic and social barriers which limit people's lives and sees it as a vital precondition for real security. Therefore, Booth's approach questions the inevitability of the conflict between security and liberty and makes emancipation an essential feature of security. This cognitive perspective provides a theoretical basis to comprehend the evaluation of international migration, including not only the regulation of state borders and issues of national security, but also the risks, violations of human rights and needs for protection faced by displaced persons. Migration flows are perceived as a security concern both in terms of border protection initiatives and in terms of an institutional dimension that includes international treaties, administrative protocols, repatriation systems and transnational collaborative practices. Migration governance is increasingly interwoven with security strategies as evidenced by the bilateral and multilateral agreements negotiated between origin, transit and destination countries (Bourbeau, 2011). In this context, human mobility has been reconceptualized through the regulatory and oversight capacities of authorities, with irregular movement at the center of security concerns. Therefore, the nexus between migration and security has become more and more about the conditions that make such movement acceptable, manageable or dangerous, rather than the risks emanating from the mobility itself. lso international migration is part of security policies, meaning that countries do not express their national interests only through military and geopolitical considerations. In this context, the discourse concerns why international migration should not be seen only as a technical problem of border control. Movements of people are associated with economic growth, workforce needs, and population shifts. They are also connected to political loyalties, social cohesion, and national security. Thus, the elaboration of migration policies is a constant interplay between economic imperatives on one side and political and social security issues on the other. We can see this interaction clearly in one domain: social security. The traditional security paradigms are concerned with the protection of the state's territorial sovereignty and political autonomy while the societal security approach is more focused on the protection of

social bonds and collective identities. According to Waever (1993), societal security is linked to the ability to defend language, culture, religion, national identity and traditions under changing conditions. In this context, migration patterns are part of the security debate, in particular the consequences of demographic shifts in host countries for cultural identity and social cohesion. The idea that demographic or cultural differences inherently pose a security threat overlooks the political dynamics of securitization of migration. The evaluation of migration as a threat to social security is connected not only with the objective consequences of demographic change, but also with the constructions suggested by political actors.

The securitization framework now provides a strong theoretical basis that explains the important role of political discourse in the elevation of international migration on the security agenda. Identifying migration as a threat to national identity, economic prosperity, public security or social cohesion can serve as a rationale for particular security measures. But securitization is more than political actors creating stories of threat. Accepting these narratives by the targeted audience is a crucial phase in terms of political and social legitimacy of security policies.

The history of migration's securitization demonstrates that governments' perceptions of immigrants are subject to change with the economic and political context. After World War II, countries like France, Germany and the Netherlands in Europe implemented policies to attract migrant workers to help stimulate economic growth and address labor shortages. During this period immigrants were perceived as an important labor force that increased the production capacities (Huysman, 2000). Yet, the changing economic environment and the growing importance of migration in the political debates have made issues such as security, social integration or border control more salient in the evaluation of migration. This transition means that migration may be encouraged due to economic needs, but also that it may be seen as a type of movement requiring control in specific instances. The attacks of September 11, 2001 have led to a proliferation of counter-terrorism measures that have had a major impact on the securitization of international migration. During this period, transnational movement, identity verification, and admission procedures have become increasingly interlinked with national security strategies. Those countries that host immigrants have been able to greatly increase enforcement measures because of the rhetorical links made between immigration status, foreignness, and security threats. However, the development of security measures within counter-terrorism frameworks

into more general assessments of all migrants has sharpened debates about the political construction of the migration-security nexus. Here, securitization involves the study of policies that are developed in the face of specific threats and the social groups that are considered dangerous or potentially threatening.

In addition to the national security implications for nations, the security implications of migration require an assessment of the dangers that individuals face. In particular, the phenomena of forced migration demonstrate the limited explanatory power of the state as the only referent of security. For them, migration is mainly a flight from imminent dangers and a search for shelter, and not a security threat. It is conflicts, political pressure, violations of human rights and social strife that drive people to emigrate. Thus, looking at the relationship between migration and security only through the prism of the threats to host countries can lead to ignoring the insecure conditions that cause migration. Huysman's (2000) assessment further shows that the search for asylum is an important factor in making the security aspect of migration visible. The securitization of global migration and its link to human security highlights a fundamental contradiction within the international system. On one hand, states claim their prerogative to control their borders, to maintain public order and to determine the future of their political entities. In contrast, they are confronted with humanitarian and legal responsibilities resulting from cross-border movement. This tension highlights the limits of a sustainable control of migration through security policies only devised at the national level. As the causes, routes and consequences of migration lie within the competence of different states, the control of migration flows is intrinsically tied to intergovernmental cooperation and global institutional arrangements (Çıtak, 2020). In this context, global migration is a major political event that shows that security in the international system cannot be defined only in terms of state protection. While the securitization of migration can be used to justify policies that increase states' capacities to control borders and regulate mobility, the lens of human security draws attention to how these processes affect the lives, rights and protection needs of individuals. The relationship between migration and security thus needs to be understood by not seeing state security and human security as entirely separate domains, but as security concepts that can sometimes come into conflict and sometimes complement each other. This reciprocal relationship is important for comprehending the function of international migration in the global political framework. Migration flows are

increasingly shaping contemporary security policies, forcing a rethinking of the limits of sovereignty, global accountability and intergovernmental collaboration.

3. Migration and the Global Order

The increasing complexity of the public policies has brought about a significant change in the organization and use of political power, and governance has become an important alternative to the traditional state-centered management model. Unlike traditional management models based on hierarchical power relations, governance is about the cooperation of different stakeholders, shared responsibilities and cooperative approaches that cross institutional boundaries. In this sense, public decision-making processes are seen not only as functions performed by central government bodies, but also as processes that are shaped by the interactions between public institutions, the private sector, civil society actors and different stakeholders in interconnected networks (Rhodes, 1996). The growing importance of these regulations has led to the establishment of institutional frameworks that aim to integrate various interests and needs into policy formulation, to increase public participation, and to improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance (Ateş & Şahin, 2020). Governance therefore provides a systematic framework for explaining the exercise of public authority and the resolution of collective problems through coordination, negotiation and institutional collaboration. Digital inequalities can also deepen existing disadvantages faced by migrants by affecting their access to public services, employment opportunities, and social networks in the host country. Therefore, access to digital technologies and digital skills can be considered important factors influencing migrants' participation in social and economic life (Mehmetbeyoğlu, 2026). Migration governance, within the broad conceptual framework, refers to the institutional and political rules that facilitate the management of human mobility and its consequences at multiple levels. Instead of viewing migration as a phenomenon that results from individual choices or state regulations, this approach emphasizes the systems that regulate, coordinate and increase the predictability of migratory flows. Migration governance is not limited to the migration policies and administrative structures established by countries at the national level. It includes bilateral agreements, intergovernmental dialogs, multilateral consultation processes and the activities of international organizations. Further, the global norms and regulatory regimes developed in migration constitute a major element of this governance framework. Migration governance, therefore, cannot be

reduced to border management or the regulation of entry and residency requirements. It also involves a broader arena of engagement in which states and others try to address the causes, regulation and consequences of cross-border movement through varied institutional and political processes. However, ongoing tensions between opposing political, economic and normative priorities hinder the development of migration governance. Nations, in trying to maintain their sovereign control of territorial boundaries and membership in the political community, must also respond to international demands regarding economic interconnections, social integration requirements, and protection of migrant rights brought about by globalization. The divergence of these goals creates many contradictions that complicate the formulation of unified migration policies. In addition, the increasing political salience of anti-immigrant nationalist and populist movements has heightened domestic political debates on immigration in many host countries. The increasing link between migration and electoral competition, national identity and security may diminish the prospects for ongoing international dialog. As noted by Crépeau and Atak (2016), the political character of the protection of the human rights of migrants may deter governments from a comprehensive dialog on all aspects of migration duties. In such circumstances, countries might prefer international consultation platforms that deal with rights-based obligations in a somewhat limited way, but focus on operational cooperation and governance of migration. The strain underscores a core problem of governing migration globally: transnational mobility requires cooperation across national borders, but the character and direction of that cooperation is still largely shaped by states' domestic political agendas and their divergent understandings of sovereignty. The evolution of governance beyond the nation state has made more apparent the political devices of authority, cooperation and collective decision making at the regional level. Regional governance is not a homogeneous institutional set up but a combination of various interactions between governments, social actors and transnational networks. These configurations show that governance is not a politically neutral process and is not shaped solely by state actors. Instead, its emergence reflects the competing interests, institutional predispositions and interactions of actors operating at multiple levels of political authority (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2006). Thus, regional governance can arise from formal agreements among governments, cooperation amongst non-state actors, or institutional arrangements that include both. Such differentiation of types of regional co-operation is necessary to understand the link between

regionalization and the larger changes taking place in the global system. Hettne and Söderbaum (2000) regard regionalization as an institutional project led by states in a particular geographic region, and as a social process driven by wider changes beyond the region. From this viewpoint, it is insufficient to explain regional integration in terms of intergovernmental agreements. Economic relations, social networks and transnational interactions are also part of the making and changing of regional frameworks. Similarly, Hurrell (2005) highlights the complex nature of regionalization, arguing that regional politics encompasses relations between governments, economic actors, social groups and networks operating in different institutional and social spheres. Thus, regionalization is the result of initiatives taken by political actors and the participation of actors from outside the formal systems of governance and is shaped by a mixture of economic interests, political ideologies and common identities. However, traditional state-centered accounts of regional cooperation have mainly emphasized the strategic calculations of governments. Here, the creation of regional institutions is seen as a deliberate response by states to transnational problems that they cannot manage effectively on their own. Rational institutionalist approaches explain international cooperation by investigating the incentives that motivate governments to build and maintain formal institutional arrangements. In this perspective, treaties, intergovernmental agreements and joint declarations are seen as important tools that permit states to coordinate their policies in areas of common concern (Hurrell, 2005, 46). This approach, while contributing to a better understanding of the institutional bases of regional cooperation, offers a narrower conception of governance than models that account for the role of social agents and transnational networks, given its emphasis on governmental decision making. Such theoretical distinctions provide an important conceptual framework for analyzing the evolution of governance mechanisms across national and regional borders within the framework of international migration. Migration flows pose policy challenges that transcend national frontiers and demand responses that include both official intergovernmental cooperation and engagement with a wider range of stakeholders. Hence, regional migration governance should be understood not only as a consequence of intergovernmental agreements but also as a political and institutional phenomenon shaped by state interests, transnational dynamics and wider changes in the global context. This perspective shows that mechanisms centered on the state and decentralized cooperative structures coexist in the regulation of international mobility.

Conclusion

The relationship between international migration and the world system reflects more general changes in the organization and exercise of political power. Cross-border mobility is often explained by armed conflict, economic inequalities, political unrest and structural transformations in international relations. The consequences of cross-border mobility extend beyond the conditions which cause population shifts. Migration is a product of and is conditioned by the political and institutional contexts within which it takes place. The global framework is conditioning the circumstances of human migration, while migratory dynamics at the same time affect the exercise of authority, the definition of political communities and the attribution of responsibilities to different actors. Thus, we witness a dynamic tension between migration and the global order, with existing arrangements shaping human mobility, but also being continuously transformed by it.

Sovereignty in this sense means that the intensification of transnational ties has changed the way state power is exercised, not made it irrelevant. Territorial borders remain important, but modern forms of migration control increasingly operate through legal classifications, bureaucratic procedures and institutional arrangements that reach beyond the material border. Decisions about who can be admitted, who can live, who can be legally recognized, and who can be expelled are important expressions of the state's power to define the composition of its political community. However, economic interdependence, global commitments and transnational social ties constrain the free exercise of authority over mobility. Migration does not simply reduce sovereignty nor does it go on unchallenged. Rather, it illustrates how sovereign power is constantly reproduced and rearticulated in changing political and institutional contexts. The governance of human movement remains a vital site of contestation between local political power and the realities of global interdependence.

The security aspect further proves the controversial character of migration in global politics. The extension of security discourses beyond military dangers allows migration to be considered in relation to societal identity, political stability and internal order. However, the securitization of migration should not be interpreted as a sign that the transnational mobility per se is a threat. Securitization emphasizes the political and institutional processes that influence how migration is represented and perceived as a security issue. These representations have real world implications, especially when

they impact the legitimacy of restrictive measures and the treatment of migrant communities. Equally important is the distinction between protecting nations from perceived threats and protecting individuals from the insecurity that often causes displacement. These perspectives need not be mutually exclusive, but priorities could be very different. Migration and security are thus interlinked and constitute an important question of whose security, how threats are defined and what consequences these policies have. The evolution of international migration governance is an example of attempts to limit such conflicts in a political context of competing interests and overlapping jurisdictions. The governance of migratory processes between countries of origin, transit and destination increasingly requires coordination beyond individual countries given the interlinkages of these processes. But more institutional collaboration should not be confused with the emergence of a common political consensus on migration. Regional frameworks, bilateral agreements and multilateral agreements still reflect the differences in national priorities, institutional capacities and interpretations of global accountability. Moreover, cooperation may take place mainly on the shared objectives of migration management and border control, without giving rise to similar obligations as regards migrant protection or the fair sharing of responsibilities. The concurrent creation of governance frameworks and persistent conflicts over rights and responsibilities reveal the limitations of institutional collaboration when basic political interests are in conflict. In this sense, migration governance is not merely a technical response to transnational mobility but a political practice in which competing understandings of authority, responsibility and collective action are negotiated. The overarching argument advanced in this discussion is that sovereignty, security and governance are closely intertwined elements of the political framework surrounding international migration. All of them offer a view of the relationship between mobility and political power, but none of them offers a sufficient explanation without the others. Sovereignty is the ability to control access to territory and association with political authority; security is the form in which mobility is made politically salient as a potential source of instability; and governance is the organizational form created to coordinate responses across political borders. These aspects together demonstrate that global migration is located at the nexus of government power, community struggles, individual liberty, and transnational collaboration. The contradictions that emerge from their interaction cannot be accounted for solely by the failure of migration policy. Instead, they point to a more fundamental feature of

modern international relations: political power is organized primarily through territorially sovereign states, while the causes, processes and consequences of migration cross those territorial borders.

International migration should be seen as both a mirror of and an engine for change in the global setting. Migration has political implications that go beyond the mere movement of people across borders. It has to do with how countries define membership and create security agendas and how they negotiate responsibilities within global institutions. Strategies that focus on border security or the bureaucratic management of population flows do not take into account these inter-related dynamics. A wider perspective recognizes that migration is part of the continuing discussion on political power and global responsibility. The key problem of current migration governance is not only to increase the capacity to control transnational movements, but to develop frameworks that can address the nexus of sovereign power, security concerns and individual protection. Finally, the role of migration in the global setting can be understood through the dynamic tension between territorial sovereignty and transnational interdependence, a tension that is constantly shaping the limits and possibilities for international cooperation.

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THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF MIGRATION: LABOR MARKETS, DUAL MARKETS, AND THEORIES

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INTRODUCTION

International migration is treated in contemporary economic literature as a fundamental mechanism that transforms both the geographic distribution of labor supply and the returns on factors of production. Although the number of international migrants rose from 75 million in 1960 to 214 million in 2010, the proportion of the world's population remained limited to an increase from 2.5 percent to 3.1 percent, indicating that the phenomenon has transformed more in terms of composition than scale (Docquier, 2014). The first systematic attempt to conceptualize the mobility of individuals across countries as a form of human capital investment was presented by Sjaastad (1962). A two-sector model explaining labor flows from rural to urban areas based on expected wage differentials was developed by Harris and Todaro (1970). A comprehensive review of international migration theories was prepared by Massey et al. (1993). Clemens (2011) estimated that the global gains resulting from the removal of mobility barriers would range from 50 to 150 percent of global GDP, while Clemens, Montenegro, and Pritchett (2019) demonstrated that wage differentials for workers of the same skill level across countries exceed 1,000 percent in some country pairs.

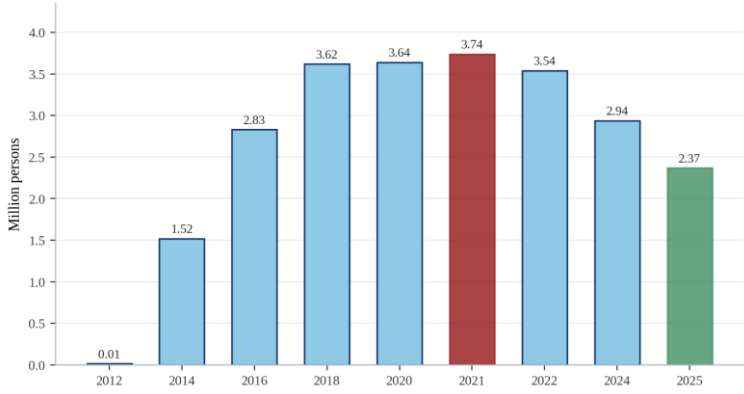
The empirical literature on the economic dimensions of migration has focused on measuring wage and employment responses in the labor markets of host countries. Card (1990) documented that the Mariel wave of migrants, which increased the Miami labor force by approximately 7 percent, had no significant impact on the wages and employment outcomes of the native labor force. A study examining the effects of the 1962 return wave from Algeria to France was conducted by Hunt (1992), which reported that the downward pressure on wages remained limited. In a nationwide analysis based on skill level and experience categories, Borjas (2003) calculated that during the 1980–2000 period, immigration reduced the average wage of the

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native labor force by approximately 3 percent and the wages of workers with less than a high school education by nearly 9 percent. Ottaviano and Peri (2012) demonstrated that, under the assumption of imperfect substitution between native and immigrant labor, the overall wage effect turns positive. Aydemir and Borjas (2011) revealed that a significant portion of the divergence in the literature stems from sample definition and measurement errors.

Turkey has become the country hosting the world's largest refugee population since 2011, providing a context that serves as a natural experiment for measuring the economic effects of migration. The number of Syrians under temporary protection stood at 14,000 in 2012, peaked at 3,737,369 in 2021, and declined to 2,371,412 by the end of 2025 (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). Del Carpio and Wagner (2015) estimated that the shock created by the influx of unregistered labor led to displacement within the domestic labor force, with three to four jobs created in the registered sector for every ten unregistered Syrian workers. In an analysis conducted using the difference-in-differences method, Tumen (2016) reported that the employment-to-population ratio in the treatment region declined by 1.8 percentage points, with the decline reaching 2.3 percentage points in the informal sector while remaining at 0.5 percentage points in the formal sector. The same study showed that approximately 43 percent of those who lost their jobs remained unemployed, while 57 percent withdrew from the labor force. Aksu, Erzan, and Kırdar (2022) demonstrated that relaxing the common trend assumption had no negative effect on men's average wages and total employment.

Figure 1. Syrians Under Temporary Protection in Turkey, 2012–2025



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from the Presidency of Migration Management (2025).

The importance of the Turkish case in comparative literature stems from several structural characteristics. The migration flow occurred on a large scale over a short time frame, resulting in significant variation as the population grew from 14,000 in 2012 to 2.83 million within four years (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). The fact that the host economy is a developing country provides an opportunity to test the findings of literature focused on developed countries (Ceritoglu et al., 2017). The high share of informal employment makes it possible to distinguish the supply shock between the formal and informal sectors; the fact that only about 4 percent of the population under temporary protection held work permits in 2023 highlights this distinction (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). While refugees account for 22.87 percent of the population in Kilis, the national average stands at 3.16 percent, allowing for a comparison of different levels of concentration within the same country. The combination of these characteristics makes the Turkish experience a unique testing ground from the perspective of the international literature.

The following section discusses the theoretical framework of migration economics through competing explanatory models. The subsequent six sections address employment structures, workers' remittances, human capital, welfare systems, fiscal impacts, and regional inequality, in that order. In each section, the quantitative findings from the international empirical literature are first summarized, followed by an examination of the evidence pertaining to the Turkish experience. The analysis is based on findings—including coefficients, ratios, and monetary amounts—compiled from 65 sources. A comparative overview of these findings is presented through eight figures and two tables within the text. The figures cover a wide range of scales, from the global remittance volume of $685 billion to the concentration rate of 22.87 percent in Kilis. The role of methodological discussions in explaining differences in findings is also evaluated within the relevant sections.

The approach adopted throughout this chapter is based on evaluating theoretical propositions alongside empirical testing designs. Aydemir and Borjas (2011) have pointed out that findings in the literature on the economics of migration are largely shaped by the definition strategy. The fact that natural experiment designs report wage losses close to zero, while national skill cell designs report losses ranging from 3 to 9 percent for the same period and the same country, demonstrates that the choice of design determines the outcome (Card, 1990). Borjas (2003) has argued that the national-scale skill cell approach offers a broader range of variation. Attempts

to reconcile the differing magnitudes produced by local and national designs have been made by Ottaviano and Peri (2012). The fact that methodological debate cannot be separated from the interpretation of findings stands out as one of the distinctive features of the literature on the economics of migration.

The scope of this chapter is limited to the dimensions subject to economic analysis. The political, legal, and cultural dimensions of migration are addressed in detail in other chapters of the book. A selection has also been made within the economic dimensions themselves, prioritizing the topics of the labor market, remittances, human capital, the welfare system, public finance, and regional distribution. Trade and foreign direct investment channels are examined in the context of comparing the $283 billion in direct investment directed toward low- and middle-income countries with the $685 billion in remittances (World Bank, 2024). In selecting sources, priority was given to empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals and reports from international organizations that clearly outline their methodologies. Evidence regarding the Turkish experience is primarily drawn from the literature on the influx of Syrian refugees, which began after 2011 and peaked in 2021 at 3,737,000 people (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025).

2.1. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF MIGRATION ECONOMICS

2.1.1. The Neoclassical Approach and Individual Cost-Benefit Analysis

The neoclassical theory of migration models labor mobility as an equilibrium response to differences in wages and employment opportunities across countries. The framework in which migration is regarded as an investment in human capital at the individual level—and the present value of future income streams is compared with the costs of relocation—was established by Sjaastad (1962). The persistence of rural-to-urban migration despite the existence of urban unemployment in developing countries was explained by Harris and Todaro (1970) through the concept of expected wages. A classification that examines the interaction between push and pull factors driving migration decisions and intervening barriers was developed by Lee (1966). Borjas (1987) demonstrated that migrants' earnings are the result of a self-selection process shaped by the income distribution in the country of origin. In a hypothetical two-region model with per capita incomes of $30,000 and $5,000, assuming an average annual earnings of $7,500 per migrant, the total earnings would reach $23 trillion, highlighting the quantitative significance of the wage differential mechanism (Clemens, 2011).

The model's fundamental prediction is based on an adjustment process that leads to the equalization of factor prices in the long run. It is expected that the flow of labor from regions with a surplus of labor supply to those with a shortage will bring wages closer together on both sides (Sjaastad, 1962). The empirical literature shows that the predicted convergence has not occurred and that the real earnings gap for low-skilled workers with observable characteristics identical between the United States and Haiti, Nigeria, and Egypt exceeds 1,000 percent (Clemens et al., 2019). The fact that more than half of this gap cannot be explained by unobservable differences in qualifications suggests that location-specific total factor productivity is the determining factor. Migration costs, information asymmetries, and legal constraints are assessed to play a role in the delay of convergence (Clemens, 2011). The observation of the highest outflow rates in middle-income countries confirms that liquidity constraints limit mobility (Docquier, 2014).

The greatest strength of the neoclassical framework lies in its ability to establish a testable relationship between observable price signals and migration flows. It has been estimated that the global gains resulting from the removal of barriers to mobility would range from 50 to 150 percent of world output, and that this estimate is one to two orders of magnitude higher than the gains that would result from removing all remaining constraints on the flow of goods and capital (Clemens, 2011). In a two-region model where one billion people earn $30,000 per year and six billion earn $5,000, it has been shown that if half the population of the poor region were to migrate, the migrants' earnings would reach $23 trillion—equivalent to 38 percent of global GDP (Clemens, 2011). It has been documented that the real earnings gap between the United States and Haiti, Nigeria, and Egypt exceeds 1,000 percent among low-skilled workers with identical observable characteristics (Clemens et al., 2019). Related studies have shown that more than half of this gap cannot be explained by unobservable differences in qualifications; therefore, location-specific total factor productivity is the determining factor. Among the phenomena that this approach cannot explain are the concentration of migration flows in specific corridors and the low level of out-migration observed from many countries with high income disparities.

Refined versions of the neoclassical model incorporate the dimensions of uncertainty and time into the migration decision. Borjas (1987) formally demonstrated that differences in income distribution generate a selection mechanism that determines the characteristics of migrants. The same study also showed that negative selection is expected when income inequality in

the source country is higher than in the destination country. The fact that the outflow rate of skilled labor exceeds that of low-skilled labor in nearly all countries—with the difference becoming more pronounced in low-income countries—indicates that positive selection is reinforced by poverty (Docquier, 2014). The phenomenon of the migration hump—which arises as migration costs decrease with income—explains why out-migration from the poorest countries remains low (Mayda, 2010). The fact that the highest outflow rates are observed in middle-income countries, and that the regional average for skilled outflow remains at 13 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 11 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, suggests that constraint-based explanations complement the pure wage differential model (Docquier and Rapoport, 2012).

2.1.2. The New Economics of Migration and Household-Based Risk Diversification

The new economics of migration is based on the proposition that the decision-making unit is the household, and that migration serves risk diversification rather than income maximization. The foundational formulation of this approach was presented by Stark and Bloom (1985), who argued that underinsurance and credit markets create a migration incentive. The transfer relationship, which operates as an implicit contract among household members, was modeled by Stark and Lucas (1988). Stark and Taylor (1991) tested the hypothesis that the incentive to migrate is driven more by perceived relative deprivation compared to a reference group than by absolute income levels. The fact that the global remittance volume is projected to reach $905 billion in 2024, with the $685 billion portion directed toward low- and middle-income countries exceeding twice the $283 billion in foreign direct investment flowing to the same group of countries, demonstrates the scale of the flow explained by the household-based framework (World Bank, 2024). The theory's position within the literature on international migration has been assessed by Massey et al. (1993).

The most significant contribution of the new economics of migration lies in establishing a causal chain that links migration to market failures in the country of origin. The argument that households facing credit constraints secure the funds necessary for productive investment through migration has been supported by Stark and Lucas (1988). It has been documented that remittances serve a consumption-smoothing function and increase during periods of shock; the flow to low- and middle-income countries remained at $599 billion even in 2020—the year of the pandemic—and did not decline

(World Bank, 2024). The fact that the remittance dependency ratio in Tajikistan reached 45.4 percent of gross domestic product indicates that this mechanism has gained significant weight in some economies. The mechanism whereby temporary migration decisions cease once the target savings level is reached was examined by Dustmann and Görlach (2016). The limitation of this approach lies in its exclusion of an analysis of the labor demand structure in the host country.

Empirical testing of this approach has been limited due to the need for detailed household-level data. An analysis combining fourteen household surveys conducted in eleven target countries revealed a strong, positive relationship between educational level and the amount sent, while the relationship regarding the probability of sending remittances remained mixed (Docquier, 2014). Yang (2011) highlighted the difficulty in distinguishing between altruistic and self-interested motivations in remittance behavior. The sensitivity of relative deprivation measures to the definition of the reference group affects test results (Stark and Taylor, 1991). The unobservable nature of intra-household bargaining processes makes it difficult to directly test the implicit contract model (Stark and Lucas, 1988). Despite methodological challenges, the approach's success in explaining transfer patterns is supported by the limited amplitude of fluctuations in the flow, which grew by 1.2 percent in 2023 and 5.8 percent in 2024 (World Bank, 2024).

2.1.3. The Dual Labor Market Theory

The dual labor market theory attributes the source of migration to the structural labor demand in developed economies. Piore (1979) proposed that industrialized economies are divided into two segments—the primary and secondary sectors—with the secondary sector consisting of low-wage, precarious jobs that are shunned by the native labor force. In the case of Turkey, the fact that only about 4 percent of the population under temporary protection was granted work permits in 2023 indicates that the secondary sector is also legally defined (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). While the rate of informal employment as a share of the population declined by 2.3 percentage points, the decline in the formal sector remained at 0.5 percentage points, confirming that the two sectors responded differently to the shock (Tumen, 2016). Ottaviano and Peri (2012) have shown that migrant and native labor can be imperfect substitutes even within the same skill cell. The mechanism by which the native labor force shifts toward communication-intensive jobs through task specialization has been modeled by Peri and Sparber (2011).

The dual-market framework gains particular explanatory power in economies where the informal sector is widespread. The concentration of Syrian refugees in the informal sector without work permits has produced a settlement pattern consistent with the definition of the secondary sector (Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015). The fact that the 2.3-point decline in employment in the informal sector occurred simultaneously with a 0.5-point decline in the formal sector points to low inter-sectoral mobility (Tumen, 2016). Aksu, Erzan, and Kırdar (2022) documented that while the competing informal domestic labor force was negatively affected, the complementary formal labor force benefited. A 4 percent decline in the prices of goods produced in labor-intensive informal sectors highlights the relationship between cost advantages and sectoral structure (Balkan and Tumen, 2016). A similar effect of low-skilled migration on consumer prices has been demonstrated by Cortes (2008) using data from the United States.

The persistence of the sectoral divergence predicted by the theory varies depending on the institutional structure of the host country. Although the number of Syrians granted work permits rose from 118 in 2011 to 113,208 in 2022, their share of the 3,536,000-person population remained around 4 percent, indicating that the permit system administratively reinforces the orientation toward the secondary sector (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). It is expected that inter-sectoral mobility will increase if opportunities for transitioning to formal employment expand (Aksu et al., 2022). The mechanism through which the local labor force gains upward mobility via task specialization has been modeled by Peri and Sparber (2011). The creation of three to four jobs in the formal sector for every ten informal Syrian workers confirms the existence of an indirect link between the sectors (Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015). The policy implication of the sectoral framework points to the decisive role of permit regime design in labor market outcomes.

2.1.4. The World-Systems Approach and Migration Networks

The world-systems approach positions migration flows as a result of the expansion of capitalist production relations into peripheral regions. The analytical framework based on the distinction between core, semi-periphery, and periphery was developed by Wallerstein (1974). The increase in the number of migrants moving from developing to developed countries—from 10 million in 1960 to 55 million in 2000—and the rise in the share of migrants residing in high-income countries from 43 percent to 60 percent indicate that the flow has intensified toward the core (Docquier, 2014). The

fact that migration among developing countries accounts for approximately 45 percent of total mobility, with 72.6 million people, reveals that the picture is not one-sided. The concentration of migration flows along former colonial ties, shared languages, and trade relations supports the argument of structural dependency (Mayda, 2010). The need to integrate different levels of analysis into a single explanation has been emphasized in the relevant review (Massey et al., 1993).

Migration network theory posits that once migration flows begin, they acquire a self-perpetuating dynamic. The mechanism by which the information and solidarity resources accumulated by earlier migrants reduce the costs of subsequent migration has been defined by Massey et al. (1993) under the heading of "cumulative causation." Bartel (1989) documented how settlements with high migrant density become centers of attraction for newcomers. In the case of Turkey, the fact that Istanbul hosts the largest concentration—469,142 people—beyond the border provinces demonstrates that the network effect can transcend geographical proximity (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). The explanatory power of diaspora size on bilateral migration flows has been tested by Mayda (2010). Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport (2008) have shown that network effects also operate in skilled labor flows and indirectly influence human capital accumulation.

The primary difficulty encountered in measuring network effects stems from the endogeneity problem. The fact that settlements with high migrant density tend to have favorable economic conditions makes it difficult to distinguish between network effects and opportunity effects (Bartel, 1989). It has been observed that instrumental variable approaches are widely used to make this distinction (Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015). In the case of Turkey, the use of distance from the border as an instrumental variable and the definition of the study area as five subregions with a refugee rate exceeding 2 percent aim to capture the external component of the settlement decision (Tumen, 2016). It has been argued that this strategy carries the risk of contamination by confounding factors such as trade patterns and camp settlements (Ceritoglu et al., 2017). It has been demonstrated that choices in the specification strategy directly affect the magnitude of findings (Aydemir and Borjas, 2011).

Table 1. Comparison of Core Theoretical Approaches in the Economics of Migration

Approach	Level of Analysis	Principal Motive	Seminal Work
Neoclassical theory	Individual	Wage differentials and expected earnings	Sjaastad (1962), Harris and Todaro (1970)
New economics of labor migration	Household	Risk diversification and relative deprivation	Stark and Bloom (1985), Stark and Taylor (1991)
Dual labor market theory	Sector	Structural labor demand	Piore (1979)
World-systems theory	Global structure	Capital penetration and dependency	Wallerstein (1974)
Migration network theory	Community	Cost-reducing social capital	Massey et al. (1993)

Source: Author's elaboration based on the cited studies.

2.2. EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURES AND LABOR MARKET EFFECTS

2.2.1. The Substitution and Complementarity Debate

The impact of immigration on the labor market of the host country is shaped by the degree of substitution flexibility between immigrant and native labor. In a national-scale analysis based on skill and experience cells, Borjas (2003) calculated that during the 1980–2000 period, immigration reduced the average wage of the native labor force by 3 percent and the wage of the labor force with less than a high school education by nearly 9 percent. Within the same framework, it was shown that the wage loss for high school dropouts ranged from 3 to 6 percent under the assumption of perfect substitution, and from 2 to 5 percent when complementarity was assumed. Ottaviano and Peri (2012) found that when imperfect substitution between the native and immigrant labor forces is assumed within the same cell, the total effect changes sign, and the long-run impact on the average native wage is either zero or slightly positive. The fact that small changes in the substitution elasticity parameter can alter simulation results at the significance level indicates that the debate is parametric in nature. The mechanism by which immigration generates specialization gains by directing the native labor force toward communication- and language-intensive tasks was formulated by Peri and Sparber (2011).

Measuring substitution elasticity is one of the most controversial empirical questions in the economics of migration. Aydemir and Borjas (2011)

demonstrated that narrowing the definition of the skill cell amplifies measurement error, causing estimates to be biased toward zero, and that this bias becomes evident in a breakdown based on four education and eight experience groups. The fact that wage losses, which were measured at the national level in the range of 3 to 9 percent using the same data, are close to zero at the state level points to the magnitude of the measurement error. In a reestimation using the full dataset from the 2000 U.S. Census, the fact that the inverse substitution elasticity estimate across the four education groups was found to be close to zero indicates the parameter's fragility (Ottaviano and Peri, 2012). Differences between the native-born and immigrant labor forces in terms of language, cultural capital, and access to networks make it difficult to assume perfect substitution within the same cell. Task-based analyses, which define the substitution relationship in terms of the work performed rather than skills, offer an alternative measurement approach (Peri and Sparber, 2011).

The slope of the labor demand curve constitutes the empirical counterpart to the substitution debate. Card (1990) reported that the Mariel wave, which increased the Miami labor force by approximately 7 percent, had no significant effect on the wages and employment outcomes of non-Cuban workers; however, the unemployment rate among Cuban workers rose by approximately 3 percentage points above the expected level during the 1980–1981 period. Hunt (1992) demonstrated that the pressure on local wages from the 1962 return wave of migrants from Algeria to France—which expanded the labor force by approximately 1.6 percent—remained limited. It has been argued that small effects measured at the local level stem from the domestic labor force's response through internal migration; this claim was tested by Card and DiNardo (2000) and was not supported by the data. The theoretical conclusion that the long-run wage effect converges to zero when the capital stock adjusts endogenously is frequently cited in the literature (Friedberg and Hunt, 1995). The distinction between the short and long run must be taken into account when interpreting findings.

A significant portion of the divergence in the empirical literature stems from the identification strategy employed. While wage flexibility estimates derived from local labor market designs generally remain close to zero, national skill cell designs report losses in the range of 3 to 9 percent for the same period, highlighting the gap between the two approaches (Borjas, 2003). Early analysis examining the effects on the low-skilled domestic labor force was conducted by Altonji and Card (1991). Using data from the United

Kingdom, Dustmann, Fabbri, and Preston (2005) demonstrated that immigration exerted downward pressure on wages at the lower end of the wage distribution while increasing wages at the upper end. The general trend in the literature points to a consensus that the total effect is small, while distributional effects are pronounced (Friedberg and Hunt, 1995). The finding that measurement error systematically underestimates estimates requires caution when interpreting results close to zero (Aydemir and Borjas, 2011).

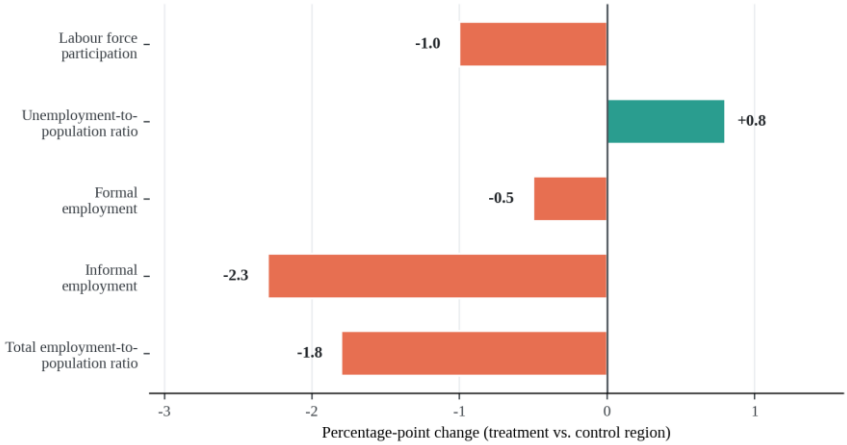
The skill composition of immigration is another key variable that determines the direction of the effects. Low-skilled immigration exerts downward pressure on the lower end of the wage distribution; the fact that the loss among workers with less than a high school education reached 9 percent in Borjas's (2003) calculations, while the average loss remained at 3 percent, highlights the magnitude of distributional divergence. Findings have shown that skilled immigration increases the productivity of the native labor force through the complementarity channel (Ottaviano and Peri, 2012). In the case of Turkey, the fact that approximately 45 percent of the 239,835 work permits issued in 2023 were granted to Syrian nationals—and that this group consists predominantly of low-educated men—indicates that the composition is weighted toward low-skilled workers (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). Friedberg and Hunt (1995) have emphasized that changes in the skill composition are balanced in the long run through capital deepening. The literature criticizes the fact that the distinction between the aggregate effect and the distributional effect is often overlooked in policy debates (Borjas, 1994).

2.2.2. Informal Employment and Occupational Segregation

In economies where informal employment is widespread, the labor market effects of migration operate through a different channel than in formal economies. The fact that asylum seekers without work permits directly increase the supply of informal labor creates a well-defined supply shock (Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015). Tumen (2016) reported that the ratio of informal employment to the population among the native labor force declined by 2.3 percentage points in the region hosting refugees, and that those who lost their jobs either exited the labor force or remained unemployed. The same study's difference-in-differences findings indicate that a 0.8-point increase in the unemployment rate was accompanied by a 1-point decline in the labor force participation rate. Ceritoglu et al. (2017) assessed that the limited 0.5-point decline in formal employment was partially offset by the expansion of

social services in the region. Related studies consistently report that the effects were concentrated among the 15–64 age group and the low-educated labor force.

Figure 2. Effects of the Syrian Inflow on Native Labor Market Outcomes



Source: Author's elaboration based on findings reported in Tumen (2016).

Difficulties in measuring informality directly affect the reliability of the findings. The fact that household labor force surveys do not include the refugee population prevents the direct observation of the magnitude of the supply shock (Ceritoglu et al., 2017). While the ratio of the refugee population to the native population remains around 3 percent nationwide, the fact that this ratio reaches 22.87 percent in Kilis indicates that measurements based on the national average significantly underestimate the local shock (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). The use of density measures based on administrative records at the settlement level reduces the risk of measurement error (Aksu et al., 2022). It is assessed that the finding that a narrowing of the skill cell definition skews estimates toward zero also applies to the measurement of informality (Aydemir and Borjas, 2011). It is understood that improvements in the data infrastructure will play a decisive role in enhancing the reliability of the findings.

Testing the common trend assumption has been crucial for the robustness of findings in the Turkish literature. Aksu, Erzan, and Kırdar (2022) demonstrated that, when the assumption is relaxed, the 2.5 million Syrians who arrived by the end of 2015 did not have a negative impact on men's average wages or total employment. The same study reported that the decline in female employment stemmed largely from the disappearance of part-

time jobs. The finding that the local labor force, which is in a competitive position in the informal sector, was negatively affected, while the complementary labor force in the formal sector benefited, highlights the extent of sectoral divergence (Aksu et al., 2022). Erten and Keskin (2021) examined the relationship between female employment and domestic violence in the context of refugee inflows. Akgündüz, van den Berg, and Hassink (2015) conducted an analysis that simultaneously considered the variables of prices, employment, and internal migration at the regional level.

The trend of findings in the Turkish literature over time points to the existence of integration processes. The number of Syrians granted work permits rose from 118 in 2011 to a level that placed them in first place in 2016 and reached 113,208 in 2022, resulting in a gradual shift toward formal employment (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). While no significant change was observed in the total number of new firms at the firm level, Akgündüz, van den Berg, and Hassink (2018) reported a marked increase in the number of new firms with foreign partners, along with signs of growth in gross profit and net sales. The creation of three to four jobs in the formal sector for every ten informal Syrian workers demonstrates the scale of demand-side compensation (Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015). An analysis tracking employment and price variables at the regional level showed that the pace of adjustment varied across provinces (Akgündüz et al., 2015). It is assessed that evidence regarding the duration of the adjustment process remains limited.

2.2.3. Prices and Secondary Market Effects

The impact of migration on labor costs is reflected in the real income of local households through the prices of goods and services. Balkan and Tumen (2016) found that the general level of consumer prices fell by approximately 2.5 percent due to the influx of refugees. The same study documented that price declines for goods produced in informal labor-intensive sectors reached 4 percent, while prices in formal labor-intensive sectors remained virtually unchanged. Balkan, Tok, Torun, and Tumen (2018) reported that rents in the housing market increased by 5.5 percent, with the increase in low-quality units limited to 1.7 percent. The same study demonstrated that rental pressure in high-quality housing units deepens residential segregation. A similar effect of low-skilled migration on consumer prices was revealed by Cortes (2008) using U.S. data.

The distributional consequences of the price channel generate a welfare dimension distinct from labor market effects. The fact that prices fell by 4

percent in informal labor-intensive sectors while remaining virtually unchanged in formal labor-intensive sectors indicates that gains and losses were concentrated among different consumer groups (Balkan and Tumen, 2016). The fact that the decline in prices of basic food items occurred significantly faster than that of luxury food items suggests that the gains were concentrated among low-income households. The fact that the 5.5 percent increase in rents was concentrated in high-quality housing units and remained limited to 1.7 percent in low-quality units is also creating a divide among tenant households (Balkan et al., 2018). The fact that those benefiting from cheaper services and local workers who lost jobs in the informal sector are concentrated in different income groups leads to a differentiation in the net effect across these groups. The shift of local households away from immigrant-dense neighborhoods toward higher-quality housing explains the mobility response underlying the rent increase (Balkan et al., 2018).

Changes in the sectoral composition emerge as another mechanism determining the medium-term effects of migration. While no significant change was observed in the total number of new firm entries, a marked increase in the number of new firms with foreign partners indicates that the sectoral structure is undergoing a compositional shift (Akgündüz et al., 2018). Signs of growth in gross profit and net sales suggest that hosting refugees has had a positive impact on firm performance. Concerns expressed in the literature suggest that access to cheap labor could delay capital substitution and thereby slow productivity growth. In the case of Turkey, the fact that the 108,520 work permits issued in 2023 were concentrated primarily in labor-intensive sectors such as textiles, construction, and services confirms this sectoral concentration (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). Measuring the long-term growth effects of this sectoral transformation presents an open area for future research.

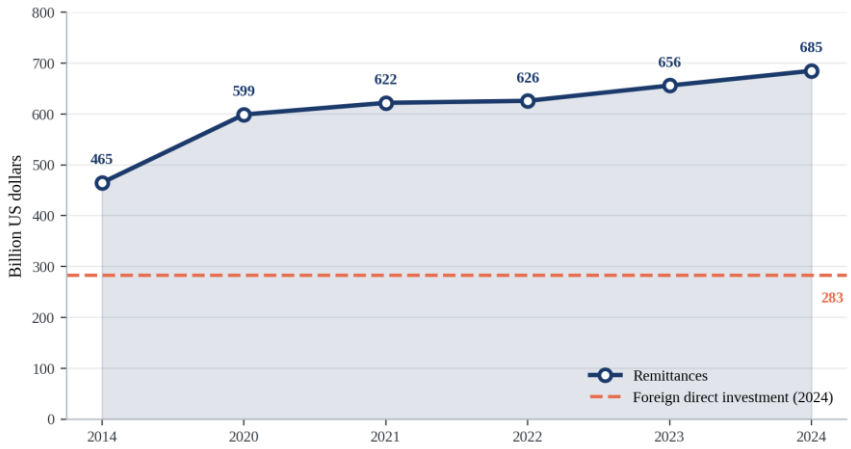
2.3. WORKERS' REMITTANCES

2.3.1. Scale and Motivations of Remittances

Worker remittances are considered one of the most stable sources of external financing for developing countries. The global volume of worker remittances reached $905 billion in 2024, with the portion flowing to low- and middle-income countries hitting a historic high of $685 billion (World Bank, 2024). While foreign direct investment flowing to the same group of countries declined by 41 percent over the past decade—from $476 billion to $283 billion—remittances rose by 57 percent, increasing from $465 billion to $685 billion (World Bank, 2024). The largest recipient countries were India

with $129 billion, Mexico with $68 billion, China with $48 billion, the Philippines with $40 billion, and Pakistan with $33 billion. In terms of the ratio to gross domestic product (GDP), Tajikistan ranked first at 45.4 percent, followed by Tonga at 38 percent and Nicaragua at 27 percent (World Bank, 2024). A comprehensive theoretical assessment of the scale, determinants, and development impacts of remittances was compiled by Yang (2011).

Figure 3. Remittances and Foreign Direct Investment to Low- and Middle-Income Countries



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from the World Bank (2024).

The position of remittances in the development literature is established through comparison with official development assistance and foreign direct investment. It has been reported that remittance flows have exceeded the volume of official development assistance in all measurements since 2000 and, in 2023, surpassed foreign direct investment directed toward low- and middle-income countries by more than $270 billion (World Bank, 2024). It has been shown that, excluding China, transfers have become the largest source of external financing for this group of countries since 2015. The fact that transfer flows reach households directly helps reduce losses associated with intermediary institutions (Yang, 2011). It is argued that while the allocation of resources at the household level generates a local information advantage, decentralized decision-making falls short in areas requiring scale, such as public infrastructure (Stark and Lucas, 1988). It has been reported that the poverty-reducing effect of remittances is pronounced at the household level but remains limited at the aggregate level (Yang, 2011).

The statistical framework used to measure transfer flows has limitations that make comparative analyses difficult. The global transfer volume, estimated at $717 billion in 2020, $791 billion in 2021, $831 billion in 2022, and $905 billion in 2024, demonstrates a continuous increase even during the pandemic (World Bank, 2024). The balance of payments definition, which distinguishes between worker remittances, migrant remittances, and household remittances, reduces cross-country consistency. The fact that the share of informal channels varies significantly from country to country leads to systematic measurement errors (Yang, 2011). The fact that the share of remittances to India originating from high-income countries rose from 26 percent in the 2016–2017 period to over 36 percent in the 2020–2021 period, while the share from Gulf countries fell from 54 percent to 28 percent, illustrates the shift in the source composition (World Bank, 2024). It is anticipated that improvements in the data infrastructure will alleviate the primary constraint on remittance reporting.

The macroeconomic function of remittances directly affects the supply of foreign exchange and the current account balance in the sending country. The fact that remittances exhibit less volatility compared to foreign direct investment and portfolio flows during times of crisis leads them to play a stabilizing role (Yang, 2011). The projected growth of remittances to low- and middle-income countries—1.2 percent in 2023 and 5.8 percent in 2024—indicates that the amplitude of fluctuations remains limited (World Bank, 2024). The fact that remittance flows to South Asia recorded the highest increase at 11.8 percent in 2024 points to the magnitude of regional divergence. The effects of household-level remittances on smoothing consumption and increasing education expenditures have been documented by Yang (2011). The mechanism whereby productive investments increase as credit constraints ease has been argued by Stark and Lucas (1988).

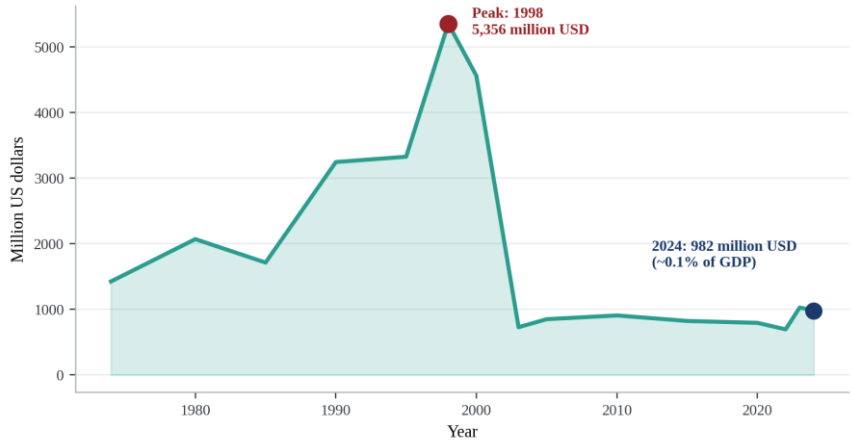
Remittance costs are a direct parameter determining the net development impact of remittances. The global average cost of a $200 remittance was measured at 6.49 percent in the first quarter of 2025, remaining more than double the 3 percent target under the Sustainable Development Goals (World Bank, 2025). Although the cost has declined by approximately 3.2 percentage points from the 9.67 percent level recorded in the first quarter of 2009, it is evident that the pace of convergence toward the target remains insufficient. While the average cost for transfers made through digital channels is 4.85 percent, it stands at 7.30 percent for non-digital channels (World Bank, 2025). The fact that the bank channel is the most expensive type of

service provider at 14.55 percent demonstrates the decisive role of channel choice in determining the net transfer cost. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most expensive recipient region at 8.78 percent, while South Asia is recorded as the cheapest region at 4.80 percent. The fact that the share of corridors with an average cost below 5 percent is projected to rise from 17 percent in 2009 to 84 percent in 2025 highlights the impact of competition on costs.

2.3.2. Turkey's Experience and Evolving Position

Turkey stands out as a country that was clearly a net recipient of workers' remittances during the second half of the 20th century. The remittance flow generated by labor migration to Western Europe, which stood at $1.4 billion in 1974, reached its peak of $5.36 billion in 1998 (World Bank, 2025). The decline of this flow to $729 million in 2003 indicates a trend consistent with the theoretical expectation that remittance patterns weaken as migrant communities become more settled (Dustmann and Görlach, 2016). Remittance income stood at $982 million in 2024, accounting for approximately 0.1 percent of gross domestic product (World Bank, 2025). The country's shift over the past two decades to becoming primarily a destination for migration has led to a structural transformation in the direction of remittance flows. The low remittance capacity of the refugee population toward their countries of origin is linked to patterns of informal and low-wage employment (Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015).

Figure 4. Personal Remittances Received by Turkey, 1974–2024



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from the World Bank (2025).

The literature documents that diaspora ties also generate development impacts through channels other than remittances. By combining the results

of fourteen household surveys conducted in eleven host countries, it was demonstrated that the amount sent by highly educated migrants has a strong and positive relationship with their level of education (Docquier, 2014). The fact that two-thirds of the 20 million migrants with higher education degrees living in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries come from developing countries illustrates the scale of diaspora capital. The knowledge and trade links established by the stock of skilled migrants with their countries of origin have been assessed by Docquier and Rapoport (2012). It has been shown that while the diaspora's contribution is decisive in India's IT sector, the compensatory mechanism does not function in countries such as Haiti and Jamaica, where the outflow rate of skilled workers exceeds 80 percent (Docquier, 2014). It is understood that the direction of this effect is shaped by country-specific conditions.

The impact of remittances on the macroeconomic balances of source countries does not present a uniformly positive picture. The fact that the ratio of remittances to gross domestic product (GDP) reaches 45.4 percent in Tajikistan, 38 percent in Tonga, and 27 percent in Nicaragua highlights the extent of this dependency (World Bank, 2024). It is argued that in countries with such high ratios, large-scale remittance inflows may create appreciation pressure on the real exchange rate, thereby weakening the competitiveness of trade-related sectors. The fact that three of the top four countries with the highest dependency ratios are classified as fragile states points to a relationship between remittance dependency and institutional weakness. Yang (2011) reported that, at the household level, remittance income can have a disincentivizing effect on labor force participation. It is noted that the direction of this effect is shaped by the allocation of remittances between consumption and investment (Stark and Lucas, 1988).

2.4. HUMAN CAPITAL

2.4.1. The Brain Drain and Brain Gain Debate

The migration of skilled labor from developing to developed countries has long been viewed as a negative phenomenon in terms of the source country's human capital stock. The number of migrants with higher education degrees living in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries reached 20 million in 2000 and increased by 70 percent over the course of a decade (Docquier, 2014). The same study reported that two-thirds of this population came from developing and transition economies. A theoretical analysis of brain drain in the context of the

integration of international professional markets was conducted by Bhagwati and Hamada (1974). The argument that the prospect of high returns abroad encourages investment in education in the sending country—and that the net effect can turn positive—was developed by Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport (2001) through a cross-sectional data analysis covering 37 developing countries. A comprehensive literature review on the relationship between globalization, brain drain, and development was prepared by Docquier and Rapoport (2012).

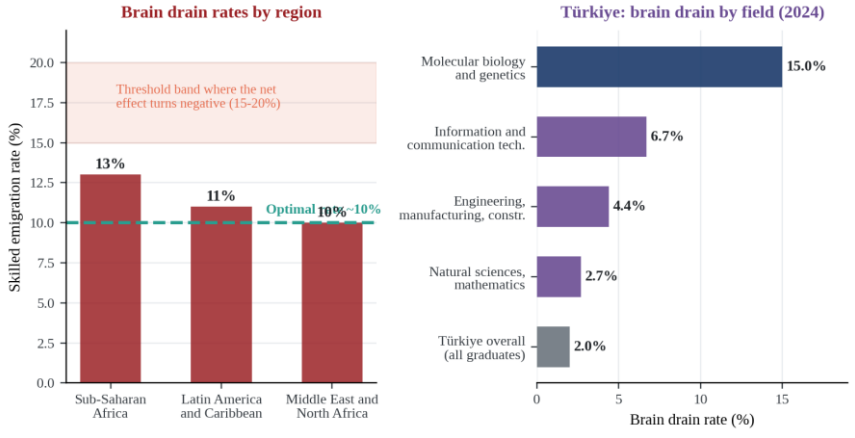
The conceptual framework of the brain drain debate has undergone a significant transformation over time. Early literature treated the outflow of skilled workers as an irreparable loss from the perspective of the source country (Bhagwati and Hamada, 1974). Subsequent studies incorporated the incentive effect of migration probability on educational investment into their models and found that, in a cross-section covering 37 developing countries, migration had a positive and significant effect on pre-migration human capital accumulation, with this effect being stronger in countries with low per capita income (Beine et al., 2001). Although the number of international migrants rose from 75 million in 1960 to 214 million in 2010, the proportion of the world's population remained limited to an increase from 2.5 percent to 3.1 percent, indicating a shift in composition (Docquier, 2014). The fact that the share of migrants residing in high-income countries rose from 43 percent to 60 percent during the same period, and that the flow from developing to developed countries increased from 10 million to 55 million, highlights the scale of this shift in direction. Gibson and McKenzie (2011) systematically addressed the issues within the measurement framework.

The functioning of the brain gain mechanism depends on the fulfillment of certain threshold conditions. It has been calculated that the qualified outflow rate—which maximizes human capital accumulation—averages 10 percent; if this rate exceeds the 15–20 percent range, the net effect turns negative (Docquier, 2014). A simulation study covering 108 developing countries revealed that 88 countries were classified as "losers" and 20 as "winners" (Beine et al., 2008). The same study emphasized that losses in the "losing" countries were substantial, while gains in the "winning" countries remained modest. When regional averages are examined, the highest brain drain rates are observed in Sub-Saharan Africa at 13 percent, in Latin America and the Caribbean at 11 percent, and in the Middle East and North Africa at 10 percent (Docquier and Rapoport, 2012). The fact that the rate exceeds 80 per-

cent in small island states such as Haiti and Jamaica demonstrates the magnitude of the scale effect (Docquier, 2014). It has been reported that approximately twenty countries have lost between one-third and one-half of their higher education graduates, while large economies such as Brazil, China, and India have reaped moderate gains.

The sectoral concentration of brain drain creates a separate dimension of vulnerability for the source country. In Turkey, the brain drain rate among higher education graduates rose from 1.6 percent in 2015 to 2.0 percent in 2024 (TÜİK, 2025). The fact that the rate stands at 1.6 percent for women and 2.4 percent for men indicates a distinct gender-based disparity. The fact that the 4.3 percent rate among private university graduates exceeds the 1.7 percent rate among graduates of public universities by more than two and a half times—and reaches 8.3 percent among fully scholarship-funded graduates—highlights the strength of the selection effect (TÜİK, 2025). By field, the highest rates were recorded in information and communication technologies (6.7 percent), engineering, manufacturing, and construction (4.4 percent), and natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics (2.7 percent). At the undergraduate level, molecular biology and genetics ranked first at 15.0 percent, while the most preferred destination countries were the United States at 21.6 percent, Germany at 17.4 percent, and the United Kingdom at 11.3 percent (TÜİK, 2025). The fact that the returns on publicly funded education are realized in another country creates a problem of financial externalities (Bhagwati and Hamada, 1974).

Figure 5. Brain Drain Rates: Regional Comparison and Distribution by Field in Turkey



Source: Author's elaboration based on Docquier (2014), Docquier and Rapoport (2012), and TÜİK (2025).

2.4.2. Skill Mismatch and Second-Generation Outcomes

The underutilization of migrant human capital in the host country is one of the persistent challenges in the economics of migration. The fact that the educational level of the migrant population exceeds that of the native population indicates that integration issues do not stem from a lack of education. In the United Kingdom in 2011, while 21 percent of the native-born population held a higher education degree, the rate stood at 32 percent among immigrants from the European Economic Area and 38 percent among immigrants from outside the Area, revealing an inverse pattern (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014). While approximately half of the native population falls into the low-education category, the fact that this proportion remains at one-fifth among immigrants from the European Economic Area confirms the direction of self-selection. Borjas (1987) modeled how immigrants' earnings profiles are shaped by self-selection patterns. Findings suggesting that the integration process leads to earnings convergence over time were compiled by Borjas (1994).

The educational outcomes of the second generation serve as a key determinant of the long-term human capital effects of migration. Tumen (2021), using an instrumental variable design that accounts for changes over time in regional refugee density, documented that the international test scores of Turkish adolescents in mathematics, science, and reading increased following the refugee influx. The fact that the increase in scores was concentrated in the lower half of the distribution and that no significant effect was found in the upper half indicates that the refugee influx narrowed achievement inequality within the native population. The larger increase observed among students with low maternal education levels highlights the socioeconomic gradient of the effect (Tumen, 2021). The mechanism by which shrinking opportunities in the lower segments of the labor market increase the returns to education is supported by the fact that the increase among male adolescents was greater than that among female adolescents. The fact that the displaced group in the informal sector consists predominantly of low-educated men establishes a consistent link between the two findings (Ceritoglu et al., 2017). The fact that 1,076,067 of the registered Syrian population are under the age of eighteen illustrates the scale of the demand pressure on the education system (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025).

From the perspective of the host country, the realization of human capital gains depends on the effectiveness of recognition and integration policies. The fact that, of the 212,682 foreigners granted work permits in Turkey in

2022, 46,532 were university graduates, 2,019 held doctoral degrees, and 5,625 held master's degrees indicates that the employment of highly skilled foreign workers remains limited in scale (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). The fact that 31.7 percent of permits in the same year were issued to foreigners with a high school or equivalent education and 20 percent to those with an elementary school education reveals that the composition is weighted toward low-skilled workers. The length and uncertainty of diploma equivalency processes lead skilled immigrants to work in jobs below their skill level. Dustmann and Görlach (2016) modeled how the expectation of a temporary stay reduces investment in language and country-specific skills. The conclusion that reducing status uncertainty would encourage investment in human capital is prominent in the policy literature.

2.5. WELFARE SYSTEMS AND IMMIGRATION

2.5.1. The Welfare Magnet Hypothesis and Empirical Tests

The welfare magnet hypothesis argues that generous social assistance programs constitute an independent pull factor for immigrants. The fact that the payment level in California's assistance program for needy families rose from 68 percent of the median state level in 1970 to 2.5 times the median state level twenty years later provided a strong natural comparison setting (Borjas, 1999). While the share of new immigrants choosing California who did not receive assistance declined from 30.1 percent to 28.9 percent between 1980 and 1990, the same share among new immigrants receiving assistance rose from 36.9 percent to 45.4 percent, demonstrating the clustering effect. The same study showed that the welfare participation rate of immigrant households is significantly more sensitive to changes in state benefit levels than that of native-born households. It was reported that the picture differed across the comparison states: in Texas, the native-born participation rate rose from 5.8 percent to 6.4 percent, while the immigrant rate fell from 10.8 percent to 10.0 percent (Borjas, 1999). Borjas and Hilton (1996) documented that immigrants' participation in means-tested programs increased disproportionately relative to the native-born labor force during the 1984–1991 period.

The weight of this argument in policy debates remains disproportionately high relative to the strength of its empirical support. In an analysis yielding contrary findings, Kaushal (2005) reported that the level of assistance was not a determining factor in the settlement preferences of newly arrived immigrants. Levine and Zimmerman (1999) demonstrated that the

"magnet effect" remained limited in tests conducted on the native population. The finding that the welfare cut implemented in Denmark reduced net immigration by approximately 5,000 people per year, while the repeal of the measure nearly reversed the effect in kind, confirms the existence of the effect while showing that its magnitude is limited. It is noted that a significant portion of the clustering observed in the California example stems from the state preference of low-educated immigrants, making it difficult to isolate the pure benefit effect (Borjas, 1999). It is emphasized that the magnet effect is mechanically eliminated when access to benefits is legally restricted.

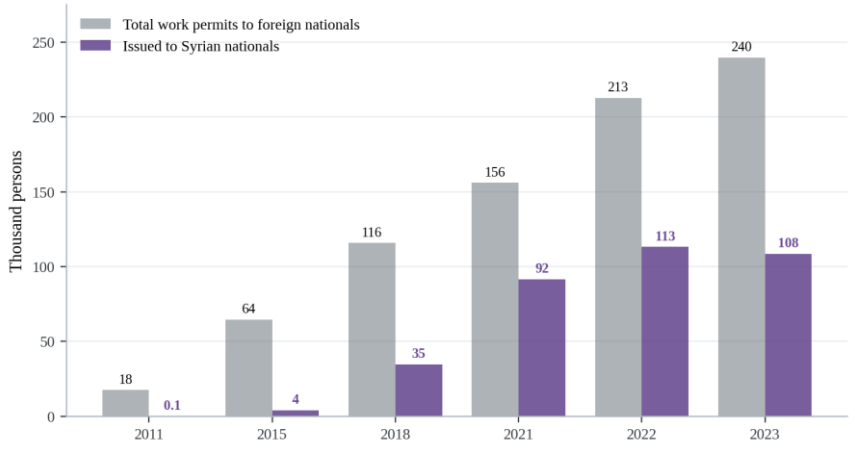
In the European literature, the debate has shifted to the selective effects of redistribution regimes on the composition of immigration. In an analysis using the European Union's database on income and living conditions, Boeri (2010) demonstrated that legal immigrants—particularly skilled ones—do not receive net transfers from the state. The same study also showed that dependency is now observed in non-earnings-based transfers and that low-skilled migrants are concentrated through self-selection in countries with the most generous welfare systems. Data from the United Kingdom showing that new immigrants are 45 percent less likely to receive social assistance or tax credits compared to the native population weakens the empirical basis of the "magnet hypothesis" (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014). Bratsberg, Raaum, and Røed (2014) used Norwegian longitudinal data to show that immigrants' participation in social insurance systems increases with length of stay. Taken together, the findings suggest that while the existence of the magnet effect is not in question, its magnitude remains controversial.

The methodological dimension of the welfare magnet debate stems from the endogenous nature of settlement decisions. In the California example, it is difficult to disentangle how much of the 16.5-point difference in settlement rates between immigrant groups receiving and not receiving benefits is attributable to the level of benefits and how much is attributable to educational composition (Borjas, 1999). The fact that regions with high levels of assistance also have strong labor markets makes it difficult to distinguish between these two effects (Kaushal, 2005). Designs that take advantage of policy changes are considered to be relatively successful in making this distinction (Levine and Zimmerman, 1999). In the European context, the limited availability of cross-country mobility data complicates the analysis (De Giorgi and Pellizzari, 2009). The consensus emerging from the literature is that the magnet effect is smaller than previously assumed.

2.5.2. Social Protection and Barriers to Access

Access to social protection systems for the refugee population is shaped by the gap between legal status and administrative practice. The fact that the number of Syrians granted work permits rose from 118 in 2011 to 113,208 in 2022 indicates significant progress has been made in transitioning to formal employment (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). Considering the population of 3,536,000 people under temporary protection in the same year, the fact that the permit rate remains around 4 percent highlights the structural nature of informality. The fact that the 212,682 work permits issued correspond to a rate of 4.3 percent of the total registered foreign population of 4.9 million shows that the problem is not limited to the Syrian population (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). The transition to formal employment, which terminates eligibility for cash assistance, can create an unintended lock-in effect in the incentive structure. Aksoy and Tumen (2021) have shown that differences in local administrative capacity lead to inequalities in service delivery.

Figure 6. Work Permits Issued to Foreign and Syrian Nationals, 2011–2023



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (2024).

The composition of social expenditures is a key variable in determining the net burden of migration on the welfare system. The young age structure of the migrant population implies a relatively low burden on pension and long-term care expenditures (Rowthorn, 2008). In the case of Turkey, the fact that 1,076,067 of the registered Syrian population are under the age of eighteen indicates that the burden is concentrated in education and health expenditures rather than in pensions (Presidency of Migration Management,

2025). Rowthorn (2008) has shown that highly skilled immigrants produce a distinctly positive net contribution, while low-skilled immigrants produce a negative one, and that the effects of the two groups largely offset each other. Bratsberg, Raaum, and Røed (2014) have demonstrated that social insurance participation changes over the course of a person's stay. Measuring the net effect requires fiscal frameworks that evaluate expenditure and revenue items together.

The feedback effect of social protection systems on the composition of migration is relevant to long-term fiscal sustainability. The mechanism whereby generous redistribution attracts low-skilled migrants while deterring highly skilled migrants was formulated by Boeri (2010). In contrast, it is argued that the young age structure of the immigrant population improves the dependency ratio and that the net effect remains within a range of plus or minus 1 percent of gross domestic product (Rowthorn, 2008). The fact that social insurance participation increases with length of stay partially reconciles the two arguments (Bratsberg et al., 2014). The fact that there were 212,682 work permits in Turkey in 2022 for 4.9 million registered foreigners, with the ratio remaining at 4.3 percent, indicates that participation in the contribution-based system is structurally limited (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). It is clear that the net assessment must be shaped according to the country's demographic structure and migration composition.

2.6. FISCAL IMPACT

2.6.1. Calculation Approaches and Methodological Discussions

The impact of migration on public finances is calculated by measuring the difference between the taxes paid by the migrant population and the public expenditures from which they benefit. The key finding in the international literature is that estimates of the net contribution fall within a range of plus or minus 1 percent of gross domestic product (Rowthorn, 2008). Calculations for Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries have reported that the medium- and long-term effects are close to zero and rarely exceed a range of plus or minus 0.5 percent (Preston, 2014). Rowthorn (2008) demonstrated that highly skilled immigrants generate a distinctly positive net contribution, while low-skilled immigrants generate a negative one, and that the contribution of one group largely offsets the cost of the other. In a dynamic approach based on generational accounting, it has been calculated that the net present value of a skilled immigrant in the 40–44 age group reaches seven times the gross national income per capita, while the contribution of an average new immigrant remains at

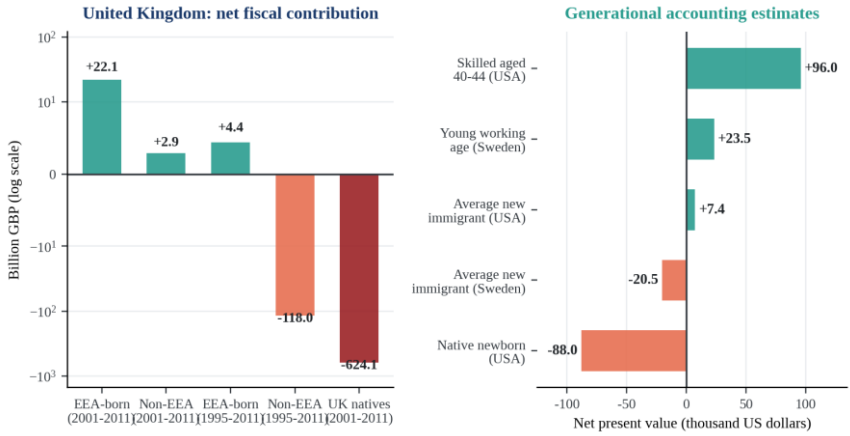
$7,400, or 0.3 times per capita income (Storesletten, 2000). The relevant literature emphasizes that assumptions regarding the cost-sharing of public goods have a decisive impact on the results.

The first challenge encountered in calculating fiscal impacts stems from defining the concept of "immigrant." When the average-cost method is applied to the same dataset, the net effect of new immigrants from outside Europe for the 2001–2011 period is calculated as a surplus of 3 billion pounds; when the marginal-cost method is used, it is calculated as a surplus of 28 billion pounds (Rowthorn, 2008). The fact that these same calculations turn into negative 30 billion and negative 20 billion pounds, respectively, when adjustments for interest on debt and labor market displacement are added, demonstrates that methodological choices alter the results at the significance level. It is noted that defining immigrants by place of birth versus citizenship yields different population figures (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014). Whether or not to include the second generation in the calculation, and whether the cost of public goods should be distributed proportionally to the population or based on marginal cost, constitute separate points of choice (Preston, 2014). The clear reporting of definitional choices has become a fundamental requirement for comparability.

Empirical findings vary significantly depending on the composition of the immigrant group and the measurement period. Dustmann and Frattini (2014) calculated that immigrants from the European Economic Area who arrived in the United Kingdom between 2001 and 2011 contributed 34 percent more than they received from the system, generating a net contribution of 22.1 billion pounds. The same study showed that while the contribution from newcomers from outside the EEA amounted to 2.9 billion pounds—a surplus of 2 percent—the native population generated a negative contribution of 624.1 billion pounds by paying out 89 percent of what it received. When broken down into subgroups, it was reported that immigrants from countries that joined the EU in the 2004 enlargement contributed 5 billion pounds, those from other European countries contributed 15 billion pounds, and those from outside Europe contributed over 5 billion pounds. When the entire immigrant population is considered for the 1995–2011 period, the picture changes: it was calculated that those of EU origin generated a positive contribution of 4.4 billion pounds, while those from outside the EU generated a negative contribution of 118 billion pounds (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014). The increase in social insurance contributions alongside

length of stay and the decrease in net contribution are the primary factors explaining the difference between the two periods (Bratsberg et al., 2014).

Figure 7. Quantitative Evidence on the Fiscal Impact of Immigration



Source: Author's elaboration based on findings in Dustmann and Frattini (2014) and Storesletten (2000, 2003).

The generational accounting approach highlights the intertemporal dimension that static calculations overlook. Calculations for the United States show that fiscal balance could be achieved by increasing annual immigration from 1.1 million to 1.6 million and targeting skilled immigrants in the 40–44 age group (Storesletten, 2000). It has been calculated that achieving the same balance through taxation would require a permanent 4.4-point increase in the income tax rate. The fact that the net present value of a native-born newborn was found to be minus $88,000 underscores the importance of the benchmark (Storesletten, 2000). In a similar calculation for Sweden, the net present value of a young working-age immigrant was found to be $23,500, while the average new immigrant generated a net loss of $20,500; the employment rate threshold required for a zero net contribution was calculated to be 60 percent (Storesletten, 2003). The fact that age and employment rate emerge as key determinants confirms the sensitivity of the fiscal impact to its composition.

2.6.2. Public Perception and the Turkish Context

Public perception of the fiscal impact of immigration generates a political dynamic independent of the measured variables. Data from the United Kingdom shows that new immigrants are 45 percent less likely to receive social assistance or tax credits and 3 percent less likely to live in public housing

compared to the native-born population (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014). The fact that the native population's tax payments during the same period fell 11 percent short of the transfers they received concretizes the gap between perception and reality. Dustmann and Preston (2007) distinguished between the relative weight of fiscal concerns and labor market concerns in the formation of attitudes toward immigration. When the perceived burden exceeds the actual burden, it reshapes redistribution preferences (Boeri, 2010). It has been argued that transparent fiscal reporting could play a functional role in bridging the gap between perception and reality (Preston, 2014).

Measuring the fiscal impact in the Turkish context is challenging due to limitations in the data infrastructure. The fact that 108,520 individuals under temporary protection were employed with work permits in 2023 results in low contributions from direct taxes and social security premiums (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). The fact that approximately 45 percent of the 239,835 work permits issued that same year were granted to Syrian nationals highlights their significant share of registered foreign employment. It is estimated that the contribution made through indirect taxes reaches a significant level via consumer spending. It has been observed that the increase in demand for education and health services has led to regional concentration in public spending (Aksoy and Tumen, 2021). The transition to formal employment is expected to have a dual effect: broadening the tax base and reducing welfare expenditures (Aksu et al., 2022).

The presence of international financial support constitutes a distinguishing feature of the Turkish case in the comparative literature. The European Union's Financial Facility for Refugees in Turkey, which entered into force in 2016, mobilized a total of 6 billion euros in two tranches, each amounting to 3 billion euros (European Commission, 2021). Of this funding, 2.4 billion euros was allocated to humanitarian aid projects, while 4.2 billion euros was earmarked for long-term development support. The Emergency Social Safety Net initiative, implemented under the program with a budget of 1.725 billion euros, was the Union's largest humanitarian aid program to date and provided monthly cash transfers to approximately 1.7 million refugees. The fact that the Conditional Education Assistance component in the education sector reached more than half a million children with 104 million euros in funding illustrates the distribution of expenditures (European Commission, 2021). The transition to formal employment, which terminates eligibility for cash assistance, can create a lock-in effect in the incentive structure. It is

assessed that changes in the composition of resources directly affect the burden on the central budget.

Table 2. Selected Quantitative Evidence on the Fiscal Impact of Immigration

Study	Context and Period	Measure	Quantitative Finding
Dustmann and Frattini (2014)	United Kingdom, 2001–2011	Net fiscal contribution	EEA-born: +£22.1 billion (34% more paid in). Non-EEA: +£2.9 billion (2% more). UK natives: -£624.1 billion
Dustmann and Frattini (2014)	United Kingdom, 1995–2011	Net fiscal contribution	EEA-born: +£4.4 bn. Non-EEA: -£118.0 bn
Storesletten (2000)	USA, generational accounting	Net present value per person	Skilled workers aged 40–44: 7 times GNP per capita. Average immigrant: +$7,400. Native newborn: -$88,000
Storesletten (2003)	Sweden, generational accounting	Net present value per person	Young working-age population: +$23,500. Average new immigrant: -$20,500. Break-even employment rate: 60%
Rowthorn (2008)	Advanced economies	Share of GDP	All net-contribution estimates fall within ±1%
Preston (2014)	OECD countries	Share of GDP	Medium- to long-run effect close to zero, rarely exceeding ±0.5%

Source: Author's elaboration based on the cited studies.

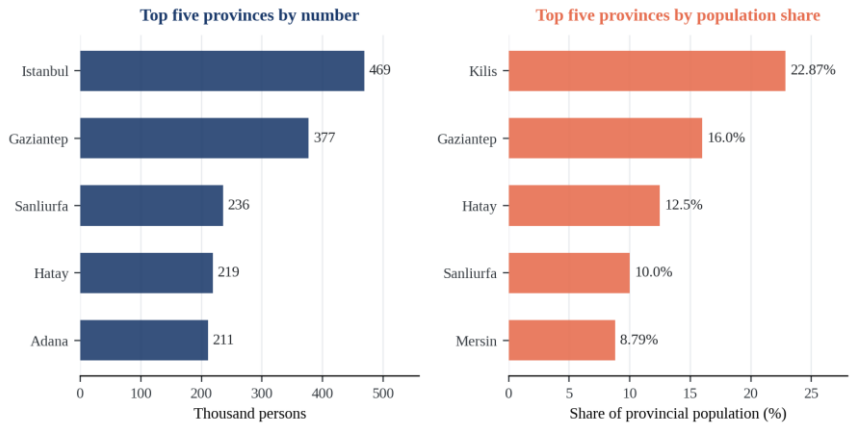
2.7. REGIONAL INEQUALITY

2.7.1. Spatial Concentration and Local Labor Markets

The uneven distribution of migration flows within the country leads to the concentration of effects in specific local labor markets. The provinces hosting the largest number of people under temporary protection are Istanbul with 469,142 people, Gaziantep with 377,017, and Şanlıurfa with 235,812 (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). When measured as a percentage of the urban population, however, the picture changes entirely, with Kilis taking the top spot at 22.87 percent. The fact that this ratio stands

at 16 percent in Gaziantep, 12.5 percent in Hatay, 10 percent in Şanlıurfa, and 8.79 percent in Mersin highlights the extent of concentration in the border provinces (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). The fact that the ratio remains at 3.16 percent nationwide highlights the gap between the national average and local concentration levels. Aksu, Erzan, and Kırdar (2022) have demonstrated that distance from the border is the primary determinant of settlement patterns, while employment opportunities exert a secondary pull effect.

Figure 8. Provincial Distribution of the Population Under Temporary Protection



Source: Author's elaboration based on data from the Presidency of Migration Management (2025).

Adaptation mechanisms in local labor markets determine the trajectory of the impact over time. The claim that local effects would spread to the national level if the local labor force responded through internal migration was tested by Card and DiNardo (2000) and found to be unsupported. In the case of Turkey, the fact that the effects continued to be concentrated in border regions despite the refugee population reaching 2.5 million by the end of 2015 indicates that the internal migration response remained limited (Aksu et al., 2022). While no significant change was observed in the total number of new firm entries, the increase in the number of new firms with foreign partners—which occurred alongside signs of growth in gross profit and net sales—indicates the presence of demand-side compensation (Akgündüz et al., 2018). Friedberg and Hunt (1995) emphasized that capital mobility and changes in sectoral composition are among the adjustment channels. Aksoy and Tumen (2021) demonstrated that the pace of adjustment varies depending on the institutional capacity of local governments.

The choice of geographic units used to measure regional effects directly influences the estimation results. In studies on Turkey, defining the treatment area as subregions where the refugee population ratio exceeds 2 percent and the control area as subregions where the ratio remains below 2 percent yields results that are sensitive to the choice of threshold (Tumen, 2016). In this division, which is based on five treatment and four control subregions, the pre-migration period was defined as 2010–2011, and the post-migration period as 2012–2013. It is emphasized that using narrowly defined local units causes spillover effects to contaminate the control group, while using broader units reduces variation and thereby lowers the sensitivity of the estimates (Aydemir and Borjas, 2011). Using distance from the border as an instrumental variable carries the risk of contamination from confounding factors such as trade patterns and camp settlements (Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015). It is considered that sensitivity analyses should become standard practice.

2.7.2. Urban Segregation and Regional Convergence

The spatial effects of migration generate long-term inequalities through intra-urban settlement patterns. The fact that the 5.5 percent increase in rents was concentrated in high-quality housing units while remaining limited to 1.7 percent in low-quality units indicates that settlement segregation has become discernible through prices (Balkan et al., 2018). Balkan, Tok, Torun, and Tumen (2018) have shown that the source of this increase lies in native households moving away from immigrant-dense neighborhoods toward better-equipped neighborhoods. The assessment that immigrant clusters may slow down language acquisition and labor market integration is debated in the literature (Bartel, 1989). Massey et al. (1993) argued that clustering increases the likelihood of employment through job-finding networks. Tumen (2021) examined how segregation affects educational outcomes through school composition.

From a regional convergence perspective, the impact of migration is assessed based on the trajectory of income disparities between source and destination regions. The neoclassical expectation that free mobility reduces regional income disparities is derived from the framework of Sjaastad (1962). The fact that the real wage gap among workers with identical observable characteristics exceeds 1,000 percent in some country pairs indicates that convergence has not occurred (Clemens et al., 2019). Harris and Todaro (1970) demonstrated that the expected wage mechanism can coexist with urban unemployment. From the perspective of structural dependency, it is

argued that migration deepens inequality by transferring resources from peripheral regions to the center (Wallerstein, 1974). The finding that the stock of human capital erodes in regions where the skilled outflow rate exceeds the 15–20 percent threshold, while an accumulation effect operates in those remaining below the threshold, indicates that the mechanisms of convergence and divergence operate simultaneously (Docquier, 2014).

The regional distribution of public policy instruments plays a decisive role in managing the spatial effects of migration. While refugees account for 22.87 percent of the population in Kilis and 16 percent in Gaziantep, the national average remains at 3.16 percent, creating a significant gap in per capita public service capacity among provinces (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). It is assessed that density-based resource allocation mechanisms could be effective in bridging local capacity gaps (Aksoy and Tumen, 2021). If infrastructure investments lag behind population growth, a permanent decline in service quality occurs. It has been shown that in cities where housing supply is inelastic, rental pressure grows disproportionately (Balkan et al., 2018). Spatial policy design must be linked to indicators of migration intensity.

Internal migration dynamics serve as a conduit that transforms the regional impacts of international migration. The fact that Istanbul has become the province hosting the largest number of refugees—469,142 people—demonstrates the scale of secondary mobility from border provinces toward the west (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). The fact that distance from the border is the primary determinant of settlement patterns, while employment opportunities exert a secondary pull effect, indicates that these two dynamics operate in tandem (Aksu et al., 2022). The decline in the refugee population from a peak of 3,737,000 in 2021 to 2,371,000 in 2025, and the simultaneous observation of this decline in Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa, indicates that the return process has reshaped the regional distribution. It appears that the question of whether the native labor force exhibits countervailing mobility has not been sufficiently tested using Turkish data (Card and DiNardo, 2000). Regional analyses must incorporate internal migration flows into the model.

Conclusion

The literature on the economic dimensions of migration shows that no single theoretical framework is sufficient to fully explain the observed phenomena. The neoclassical approach highlights the explanatory power of wage differentials and estimates the gains from removing barriers at 50 to

150 percent of world GDP, while excluding household-level risk motives (Clemens, 2011). The dual labor market theory makes the structural demand in the country evident and is supported by the fact that the 2.3-point employment loss in the informal sector is more than four times that of the 0.5-point loss in the formal sector (Tumen, 2016). The world-systems approach and network theory help explain how the flow of migrants from developing to developed countries has risen from 10 million to 55 million over the past four decades (Docquier, 2014). It is widely accepted in the literature that theories should be treated as complementary levels of explanation rather than mutually exclusive alternatives (Massey et al., 1993). It has also been observed that theoretical pluralism shapes empirical design choices.

Empirical findings point to a pattern where the overall effect of migration is small, while its distributional effects are pronounced. A significant portion of the divergence regarding wage and employment effects stems from identification strategies and measurement error (Aydemir and Borjas, 2011). In the case of Turkey, it has been documented that the effects are concentrated in the informal sector, with the 2.3-point decline in the ratio of informal employment to the population exceeding four times the 0.5-point decline in the formal sector (Tumen, 2016). The fact that the 2.5 percent decline in consumer prices reached 4 percent in labor-intensive informal sectors confirms the functioning of the labor cost channel (Balkan and Tumen, 2016). The fact that the 5.5 percent increase in rents was concentrated in high-quality housing units indicates that the welfare effects vary by household type (Balkan et al., 2018). The measurement of the fiscal impact is highly sensitive to accounting framework choices (Preston, 2014).

From a policy design perspective, the key requirement is to monitor the effects of migration at the subgroup and regional levels. The fact that only 108,520 work permits were issued in 2023 for a population of 2.4 million under temporary protection—with the rate remaining below 5 percent—demonstrates that regulations facilitating the transition to formal employment are a priority tool (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024). The fact that the concentration rate in Kilis—at 22.87 percent—exceeds the national average of 3.16 percent by more than sevenfold makes it imperative to strengthen local administrative capacity (Presidency of Migration Management, 2025). The fact that the 5.5 percent increase in rents is concentrated in high-quality housing suggests that measures aimed at expanding the housing supply could help alleviate this disparity (Balkan et al., 2018). In the field of education, interventions targeting language acquisition and

resource allocation are expected to improve outcomes for the second generation, considering the population of 1,076,000 under the age of 18 (Tumen, 2021). The fact that the overall brain drain rate of 2.0 percent rises to 6.7 percent in the information technology sector necessitates sector-specific retention policies (TÜİK, 2025).

The methodological lesson emerging from the paper as a whole is that inferences based on a single estimation strategy remain fragile. The fact that natural experiment designs report wage losses close to zero for the same period, while national skill cell designs report losses ranging from 3 to 9 percent, illustrates the design sensitivity of the findings (Borjas, 2003). The fact that relaxing the common trend assumption alters the average wage effect at the significance level in the case of Turkey demonstrates the same sensitivity in the local context (Aksu et al., 2022). In the realm of fiscal impact, the fact that the difference between the average cost and marginal cost methods ranges from +3 billion to +28 billion pounds within the same dataset demonstrates that the choice of method determines the outcome (Rowthorn, 2008). The joint reporting of sensitivity analyses and multiple specification strategies has become essential for reliable inferences (Aydemir and Borjas, 2011). Establishing longitudinal data infrastructure based on administrative records appears to be the most effective way to overcome current limitations (Bratsberg et al., 2014).

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NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: POLICY-MAKING AND COOPERATION

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Introduction

Migration is one of the most complex areas of public policy, where states must simultaneously balance multiple factors: sovereignty, the economy, security, and human rights that often conflict with one another. For this reason, migration governance stands as one of today's most complex and multi-stakeholder areas of contemporary public policy. While states require migrant labor to sustain economic growth, they cannot disregard the public's expectations regarding security. This contradiction explains why migration policies are often so volatile, contradictory and subject to different practices from one period to the next. A country might tighten its borders rhetorically while simultaneously adopting a much more flexible approach in practice due to labor shortages in specific sectors. This is not a temporary issue easily resolved by political will; rather, it is a persistent tension inherent in the very structure of liberal democracies.

For a long time, migration governance was viewed as solely the responsibility of the nation-state. Decisions regarding who guards the borders, who receives a visa, and who is deported were under the authority of the central government. However, this landscape has shifted over the last thirty years. Today, the process of formulating and implementing migration policies is not under the control of a single actor. National governments, local authorities, regional organizations, and international institutions all have a say. A municipality might implement a policy within its jurisdiction that the national government opposes. A regional organization attempting to establish common rules binding its member states may encounter concerns regarding

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sovereignty. An agreement signed at the global level often remains merely a statement of intent, without legally binding any state.

A consequence of this multi-layered governance structure is that actors at different levels both cooperate and experience tensions regarding the sharing of authority and responsibility. While central governments seek to retain decision-making authority over migration policies, local governments-which are directly confronted with the day-to-day consequences of migration on the ground- are developing faster and more practical solutions to the needs that arise in practice. This sometimes leads to open conflict between the center and the local level, while at other times, a successful local solution is eventually incorporated into national policy. This same tension is evident at the regional level as well; states wish to benefit from a shared regional framework yet are unwilling to compromise their sovereignty. Consequently, regional models vary widely: some are binding and governed by strict rules, while others rely solely on voluntary cooperation.

At the national level, security concerns, human rights obligations, labor market needs, and political rhetoric are in constant conflict. The fact that states view migration as both a threat and an economic necessity gives rise to internally inconsistent policies. Furthermore, the boundary between regular and irregular migration is not a fixed reality; it is often drawn by politics itself. The picture becomes even more complex at the local level. Municipalities and civil society organizations are playing an increasingly significant role in migration policymaking. Within the same national framework, some cities may adopt inclusive policies while others pursue exclusionary ones. Examples like "Sanctuary City" show that local governments are no longer just implementers, but have become actors who create policy on their own. Yet, this autonomy is subject to financial and legal limitations. At the regional level, four distinct experiences emerge: the European Union's institutional yet fragile structure; North America's system, which appears centralized but is fragmented in practice; Africa's cooperation efforts, which struggle with capacity issues; and Southeast Asia's consensus-based model, which lacks strong binding force—all yielding vastly different outcomes. The fundamental conclusion to be drawn here is that there is no one-size-fits-all model. Each region establishes its own balance based on its specific history and politics; a practice that works in one region often fails when transplanted directly to another.

In this section, national and regional migration management are examined within the framework of a multilevel governance approach; the interactions among national policies, local practices, and regional cooperation mechanisms are evaluated from a comparative perspective. These three levels do not operate independently of one another. The non-binding nature of global commitments, the growing role of non-state actors, new forms of oversight brought about by digitalization, and the inequalities exposed by the Ukraine crisis are all components of this multilevel structure. A crucial question arises here: when authority is distributed among so many actors, who is accountable to whom? The answer to this question is not always clear-cut. Migration governance cannot be managed from a single center or based on a single logic. The picture spans from the boundaries of national sovereignty to the possibilities of local autonomy, and from regional diversity to both the opportunities and inequalities brought about by multilevel coordination. The key takeaway is this: the success of migration policy stems not from perfect institutional design, but from continuous negotiation among various levels and actors. Therefore, migration governance should be viewed not as a static structure, but as a constantly evolving process subject to ongoing renegotiation.

1.1. National Migration Policies and Regulations

Migration has historically been one of the most sensitive areas of state sovereignty. Decisions regarding who may cross the border, who may remain, and who may be granted citizenship tangibly demonstrate the state's power to control society (Hollifield et al., 2014). For this reason, national migration policies are not merely administrative matters; they constitute a multidimensional political arena where debates over sovereignty, security, the economy, and national identity intersect.

At the national level, migration policies comprise mechanisms for entry control, residence and work permits, and deportation. Entry policies are shaped by visa regulations and asylum application processes. Meanwhile, residence permit systems define the legal status of migrants by striking a balance between temporary and permanent residency (Castles & Miller, 2009). Deportation mechanisms represent the most controversial aspect of state strategies for managing irregular migration.

The inability of states to find a permanent solution for managing migration flows is not solely due to a lack of political will. According to Hollifield

(2004), this situation is explained by the concept of the "liberal paradox". Liberal democratic states depend on migrant labor to sustain economic growth, yet they are simultaneously compelled to address public demands against migration. At the same time, they cannot ignore the public's anti-migration backlash. In many European countries, rates of irregular migration continue to rise despite strict border controls. Freeman (1995) interprets this contradiction from a different perspective: the actors who derive economic gain from migration—namely employers—are few in number but organized, whereas the losers—namely low-wage local workers—are unorganized despite being numerous. The organized side plays a greater role in shaping migration policy.

A historical review of migration policy reveals that states have been far from consistent in this regard. Following World War II, Western European nations sought to address labor shortages through external recruitment in an effort to revitalize their economies. The labor agreement signed between Germany and Turkey in 1961 stands as the most prominent example of this era. Although most of these programs were halted after the 1973 oil crisis, migration flows persisted through family reunification and asylum channels (Castles, 2006). Short-term decisions can lead to long-term demographic and societal consequences that states fail to anticipate.

Security is another powerful factor shaping migration policies. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, counter-terrorism became a top priority on the global agenda. During this period, governments began to view migration as part of this struggle, effectively treating migrants and asylum seekers as potential security risks. Practices such as biometric fingerprinting at airports, stricter security checks for visa applications, and the use of "terrorist watch lists" became widespread. In academic literature, this process is termed "securitization". Securitization is the process by which migration – normally treated as a standard matter of public policy – is reframed as an urgent and extraordinary issue threatening national security. When an issue is shifted from the realm of ordinary debate and framed as an existential threat, states can far more easily implement harsh measures that would otherwise be legally contentious (Bigo, 2002). Concrete examples of this include biometric passports featuring fingerprints, smart border systems utilizing aerial camera surveillance, and closed centers where migrants are detained prior to deportation. The impact of this approach extends beyond

public policy, altering societal perceptions as well. In this context, migrants may be viewed not as neighbors, workers, or members of society, but rather as potential security risks. Such a perception hinders the long-term processes of social cohesion and integration for migrants.

Human rights-based approaches serve as a counterweight to the trend toward securitization. The 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol oblige states to comply with the principle of non-refoulement, thereby giving migration an international legal dimension (UNHCR, 2010). Numerous rulings by the European Court of Human Rights regarding practices of collective deportations and detention conditions demonstrate that member states are violating both their international and regional legal obligations. The failure to sanction these violations has two important consequences: confidence in the binding nature of the international normative framework diminishes, and national policies increasingly diverge from international standards.

Another critical dimension of national policies is the increasingly blurred boundary between regular and irregular migration. Irregular migration arises not only from illegal border crossings but also from situations such as the loss of legal status, visa overstaying, and protracted legal proceedings (De Genova, 2002). Therefore, irregularity should be viewed not merely as a demographic reality, but as a condition created by policy and legal categories themselves. While some researchers explain this through the concept of "structural irregularity", others argue that irregular migration actually serves an implicit demand for cheap labor and is rendered economically functional (Castles, 2004). Labor market dynamics also constitute a structural factor that directly shapes national migration policies. Developed economies have a permanent need for migration due to aging populations, declining fertility rates, and shortages in both low- and high-skilled labor. Canada's points-based migration system and Germany's 2020 "Skilled Immigration Act" are among the examples that place economic logic at the heart of migration policy (Triadafilopoulos, 2012). However, how this economic logic is reflected in political rhetoric during election periods is often overlooked; migration policy becomes a purely political tool, detached from labor market needs. This contradiction indicates that policy inconsistency is not merely an institutional issue but a political one as well. Ultimately, national migration policies are shaped by the pressure of conflicting demands such

as sovereignty, the economy, security, and human rights. Central governments are unable to manage this tension on their own; their capacities remain constrained by structural limitations. This situation has paved the way for the emergence of a multi-level structure in migration governance. Municipalities, local governments, and civil society organizations have evolved from mere implementers of national policies into stakeholders that develop policies and contribute to governance. Consequently, the role of local actors in policy-making is steadily increasing, and policy-making processes are taking on a multidimensional character. For this reason, the ways in which national migration policies are implemented and transformed at the local level have gained importance as a distinct area of study. The next section will examine this transformation through the lens of local governments and municipalities.

1.2. Policy-Making Strategies at the Local Level

The capacity of national governments to manage migration policy entirely through a centralized approach is constrained by structural limitations. The most tangible manifestation of these limitations is the increasingly evident shift of the policy-making process toward the local level. Local governments do not merely implement the legal frameworks established by central governments; they also make decisions that directly affect the daily lives of migrants, provide services, and at times, develop unique strategies that diverge from central policy (Penninx et al., 2006). This situation transforms the local level from a mere implementation mechanism into an independent arena for policy-making.

The policy capacity of local governments regarding migration varies significantly from country to country, and even from city to city within the same country. Comparative studies conducted in Europe indicate that some municipalities have gone beyond national policies to develop comprehensive integration programs (Caponio & Borkert, 2010). In contrast, some local governments do the exact opposite, limiting themselves to implementing central government directives and failing to develop distinctive policies. The most striking example of local policymaking is found in "sanctuary city" practices. In certain countries, particularly in North America, municipalities refuse to participate in federal deportation operations targeting irregular migrants. These municipalities make provide access to public service regardless of immigration status (Ridgley, 2008). Such practices are viewed as a form

of resistance developed by local governments against the national security narratives and serve as significant examples illustrating the tension between central and local authorities in migration governance. However, the legal basis for these practices remains contentious. Central governments attempt to curtail local initiatives through measures such as funding cuts or legal sanctions.

Another significant dimension of local-level policymaking is the provision of services related to immigrant integration. Local actors play crucial roles in areas such as language training, employment assistance, housing support, and access to healthcare services. However, these roles are often not adequately reflected in national policy documents. Alexander (2007) argues that local governments can position their migrant policies in three distinct ways: exclusionary, temporary, or inclusive. This positioning can take shape independently of national policy trends. Indeed, as numerous comparative urban studies in Europe have demonstrated, two municipalities operating within the same national framework may adopt radically different approaches to immigrant integration; this disparity highlights both the extent to which national policy varies in practice and the decisive influence of local political culture.

Civil society organizations are also a vital part of the local policy process. Immigrant associations, human rights organizations, and religious institutions provide services in areas that the state cannot reach. Furthermore, they contribute to policymaking processes through collaboration with local governments (Però & Solomos, 2010). This demonstrates that local governance is shaped not by a single center, but through the negotiation and cooperation of multiple actors. Particularly in large cities, civil society's participation in this process is becoming institutionalized, fostering more structured cooperation among municipalities, immigrant organizations, and international organizations. The quality and continuity of this participation are directly linked to the effective functioning of local democracy. Urbanization is also a significant factor influencing local migration policies. Large cities with high concentrations of immigrant populations are places where both the greatest opportunities for integration and the most intense experiences of exclusion occur. Sassen (1991) argues that global cities simultaneously require two distinct groups of immigrants: on the one hand, highly educated, high-earn-

ing immigrants, on the other, low-wage service sector workers. Consequently, immigrant groups with differing socioeconomic backgrounds coexist within the same city. This implies that local governments must formulate policies tailored not to a single immigrant profile, but to an immigrant population with vastly different needs.

On the other hand, the capacity of the local level to formulate autonomous policies is not independent of structural constraints. Central government control over financial resources, the limits of legal authority, and the pressures of the national political climate significantly reduce the local governments' room for maneuver. It is observed that local governments often retreat from inclusive policies during periods when anti-immigration rhetoric is on the rise. This situation raises questions regarding the sustainability of local initiatives and whether local actors can truly attain an autonomous position within a multilevel governance framework. Redesigning financing mechanisms and clarifying the division of authority between local and central levels could be key steps toward strengthening local governance capacity.

Another significant dimension of local policy-making is the process by which successful local practices are incorporated into national policy. Successful integration models developed at the local level sometimes serve as a source of inspiration for national policies, thereby transforming local governments from mere implementers into policy-developing actors. Borkert and Bosswick (2007) examined the case of Germany and demonstrated, with concrete data, the impact of local integration practices on national reforms. These findings confirm that the local level not only implements national policy but also shapes it. In conclusion, the local level is not simply a site for the implementation of national policies; it is an independent policy-making authority in migration governance. However, this autonomy is not unlimited; it is determined by financial constraints, the legal framework, and the political context. The relationship between national and local levels varies from country to country and region to region. Therefore, a comparative perspective is essential to understand these differences.

1.3. Comparative National and Regional Models

Policy differences at national and local levels clearly demonstrate that migration governance does not fit a single mold. A comparative perspective is necessary to understand these differences. Comparative migration research does precisely this: it investigates why states and regional structures

respond so differently to migration, what historical, institutional, and political conditions underpinn these responses, and which models produce better outcomes (Hollifield et al., 2014).

The European Union has established one of the most comprehensive and legally binding migration governance frameworks at the regional level. The Common European Asylum System (CEAS), the right to free movement, and the Schengen regulations have extended migration policy beyond the borders of member states, embedding it within a supranational logic (Geddes, 2008); for this reason, it is frequently used as a reference point in comparative literature. However, the 2015 refugee crisis clearly demonstrated just how fragile this framework can be under political pressure. The resistance of member states to solidarity mechanisms and their reintroduction of border controls revealed that the EU was facing a severe test as an integrated model, once again exposing the gap between the rhetoric of integration and the actual conduct of member states. In response to this tension, the European Commission proposed a new Pact on Migration and Asylum in 2020. Following lengthy negotiations, a historic agreement was reached between the European Parliament and the Council in December 2023, and the Pact entered into force in May 2024. This framework, comprising ten separate legislative acts, addresses responsibility-sharing, solidarity mechanisms, and border management as a whole (European Parliament, 2024).

Migration governance in North America appears structurally quite different from that of the European Union. In the United States, the authority to determine migration policy rests with the federal government; however, states and local governments play a decisive role in the implementation phase. States and local authorities implement federal policies in different ways based on their own preferences, or sometimes refuse to implement them altogether. The "sanctuary city" example discussed in the previous section serves as the most concrete illustration of this fragmented structure: some municipalities refuse to participate in federal deportation operations and instead pursue their own local policies.

Canada, on the other hand, has presented a different model of migration governance. Due to its approach rooted in multicultural federalism, policies regarding immigrant admission and integration are coordinated between the federal government and the provinces (Triadafilopoulos, 2012). A key instrument of this coordination is Canada's points-based migration system;

under this system, immigrant candidates are scored based on criteria such as education, language proficiency, work experience, and age, allowing the country to select the candidates best suited to its economic needs. Additionally, through the Provincial Nominee Program, the provinces participate directly in the immigrant selection process based on their specific labor market requirements. However, in recent years, the political landscape underpinning the system, rather than the system's operational mechanics, has undergone significant change.

In response to the housing crisis and public backlash, the Canadian government has capped permanent residency targets at 380,000 annually in its 2026–2028 Immigration Levels Plan. It has also reduced temporary residency targets by 43%, lowering the figure from 673,650 in 2025 to 385,000 in 2026. In 2027–2028, the share of economic immigrants in the total admission is planned to increase to 64 percent. This development demonstrates that, even though the federal-provincial coordination mechanism remains unchanged, the Canadian model is not immune to the global political polarization trends in the field of immigration.

On the African continent, regional migration governance is shaped by entirely different constraints. The African Union's 2018 Migration Policy Framework and the free movement protocols under ECOWAS in West Africa reflect a determination to establish an integrated approach at the continental level. However, institutional capacity gaps, funding issues, and the sovereignty concerns of member states seriously hinder the implementation of these efforts (Betts, 2011). Moreover, the significant share of intra-continental migration within total migration flows calls into question the relevance of migration policy literature, which has largely been developed on the assumption of North-to-South migration, in the African context. The African experience demonstrates that migration governance is not merely a matter of institutional design; it is also directly linked to economic development, political stability, and the building of regional trust.

Regional cooperation in Southeast Asia, developing within the ASEAN framework, is not based on binding rules, unlike that of the European Union. As member states are unwilling to compromise their sovereign rights, ASEAN opts for consensus and dialogue rather than joint decisions (Caballero-Anthony, 2004). A tangible result of this choice can be seen in intra-

regional labor migration: labor importing countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand rely on millions of migrant workers from neighboring countries, particularly in the construction, agriculture, and domestic service sectors. However, there is no common legal framework to protect these workers or bind member states; as a result, migrant workers remain unprotected regarding wages, housing, and working conditions.

ASEAN adopted the Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers at the "12th ASEAN Summit" held in Cebu in 2007, thereby embracing in principle the need to establish a regional protection framework. Following a decade of negotiations, this declaration evolved into a more detailed text through the ASEAN Consensus signed in Manila in 2017. However, at this point, a debate has emerged regarding the fact that, despite generating normative frameworks, ASEAN struggles to achieve concrete and binding progress. The main reason for this is that the organization is founded on principles of consensus and is committed to refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of member states. Furthermore, the national policies of member states may conflict with one another; for instance, while the Philippines prohibits private employment agencies from charging fees to migrant domestic workers, Singapore permits agencies to charge a fee equivalent to two months' worth of the worker's two-year salary. Nevertheless, in its self-assessments under the 2018–2025 Action Plan, ASEAN reported steady progress in fulfilling its commitments.

Comparing these four regional experiences raises the question of whether migration policies have converged over time. Hollifield (2004) points to a common logic shaping the migration policies of advanced industrial democracies: states seek to maintain economic competitiveness by remaining open to markets and migration, yet find themselves caught between security concerns and rights-based obligations. This is known as the "liberal paradox". However, this framework primarily explains advanced industrial democracies such as Western Europe and North America; the same dynamics do not operate with the same intensity in regions with different political and economic structures, such as Africa and Southeast Asia. Indeed, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) 2024 World Migration Report highlights significant disparities between regions. Another point highlighted by the report is that practices effective in one region cannot be scaled up to the global level; for instance, the regulations regarding migrant rights

developed by South American and Caribbean countries in response to the Venezuelan crisis did not prove equally functional when attempts were made to incorporate them into global agreements.

Another significant aspect of comparative models is how the balance between regular and irregular migration is established. The Frontex mechanism established by the EU to manage its external borders and North America's border security system are considered the institutional counterparts of efforts to control irregular migration. However, similar institutions do not exist in Africa and Southeast Asia, effectively rendering irregular migration an area beyond effective control. Betts (2011) argues that global migration governance is not based on a single framework but rather on fragmented institutions that have evolved at bilateral, regional, and inter-regional levels. This fragmented structure also highlights the disparity in institutional capacity between wealthy and impoverished regions: while the EU and North America have established robust border management infrastructures, regions lacking similar capacities face a structural disadvantage in managing irregular migration.

Comparative analysis also helps us understand why failures in implementation are so widespread. It is argued that migration policies fail for three reasons: the social dynamics of the migration process itself, pressures created by globalization and North-South inequality, and internal contradictions within political systems (Castles, 2004). These three reasons explain not only the situation in individual countries but also why regional models encounter similar failures. From a comparative perspective, policy failures are not specific to a single country but stem from the system itself. When examining comparative national and regional models, it becomes clear that political will, rather than institutional design, is the primary determinant of migration governance. No single model operates in the same way everywhere; a policy that succeeds in one country depends on that country's unique conditions and often fails to yield the same results when transplanted directly to another.

1.4. Multilevel Governance Dynamics

National policies, local strategies, and regional models demonstrate that migration governance operates not at separate levels, but within an interconnected and interdependent network. The need to explain this structure paved the way for the emergence of the concept of multilevel governance.

The concept was initially used to explain the European Union's integration process (Marks, 1993), and has evolved over time into a fundamental perspective in many global policy domains, including migration governance. Under this approach, governance is not concentrated in a single center; rather, authority and responsibility are shared among actors at various levels.

According to Hooghe and Marks (2003), multilevel governance comprises two primary types. The first type of governance corresponds to general-purpose, hierarchical jurisdictions with clearly defined boundaries, whereas the second type of governance consists of task-specific jurisdictions with boundaries that may overlap and shift according to circumstances. Migration governance exhibits characteristics of both types: on one hand, there are border control mechanisms where states maintain their claims to sovereignty; on the other, there are polycentric structures in which non-state actors play a decisive role in areas such as migrant integration and humanitarian aid. For this reason, migration governance operates within a hybrid system. The same state may act according to the logic of the first type of governance in border security while shifting to the logic of the second type of governance in integration policies.

At the global level, the IOM, UNHCR, and various UN bodies shape national policies through non-binding norms, technical support, and funding mechanisms. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted in 2018, can be considered the most comprehensive product of these global efforts (IOM, 2020). The Compact offers a holistic framework that addresses migration governance through the lenses of human rights, development, and security. However, the fact that the Compact is non-binding and that some states such as the US, Israel, Australia, Poland, and Hungary have withdrawn from the process, indicates that a fully institutionalized migration governance structure has not yet been established at the global level.

One of the fundamental challenges in applying a multilevel governance approach to the field of migration is the issue of accountability. The distribution of authority and responsibility across multiple levels and actors increasingly obscures who decides on what, who is responsible for which outcomes, and how citizens can hold policymakers accountable (Papadopoulos, 2003). This problem is particularly acute in migration policy, as migrants are often subject to decisions made by multiple levels of governance without

possessing full citizenship rights. The democratic accountability deficit constitutes the most significant structural problem of multilevel governance in terms of legitimacy.

The growing role of non-state actors in migration governance is also an integral part of multilevel governance dynamics. International non-governmental organizations, migrant rights groups, academic networks, and private sector actors participate in policy negotiations, contribute to the development of norms, and occasionally fill service gaps that states cannot reach. Betts (2011) argues that an effective migration governance architecture must combine intergovernmental coordination with the active participation of non-state actors. This multi-actor structure renders governance both more inclusive and more complex. Conflicts of interest among actors, information asymmetry, and coordination costs are among the primary factors limiting the effectiveness of multilevel governance.

Digitalization is also adding a new dimension to migration governance. Biometric databases, migrant tracking systems, and AI-powered border control technologies are increasingly transforming migration governance into a technical field. These technologies are based on the logic of managing migrants by classifying them according to risk levels (Amoore, 2006). These developments also give rise to new debates regarding the privacy and security of personal data. While this process facilitates the work of states, it simultaneously makes it more difficult for migrants to learn how their personal data is being used and to challenge such usage. The question of how this data is shared among different institutions and who oversees it remains an unanswered, ongoing research topic.

Finally, the mass displacement from Ukraine following 2022 serves as a significant stress test that challenges the dynamics of multilevel governance, particularly in the context of the EU. In the wake of the full-scale invasion launched by Russia in February 2022, more than 6.3 million Ukrainians sought refuge in Europe; as of April 2026, 4.37 million of them are still living in the EU under temporary protection status. By invoking the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time in history, the EU granted this population rapid access to housing, employment, and social security rights; this response marked a distinct departure from the policies followed during past refugee crises (Schrooten, 2025). This swift reaction demonstrated that national, regional, and local levels could act in a coordinated manner. However,

it also laid bare the stark disparity between the protection status granted to Ukrainian refugees and the treatment of other groups of asylum seekers. This inequality raises questions once again about the extent to which multilevel governance operates in accordance with universal human rights standards.

In conclusion, multilevel governance dynamics partially undermine the notion that migration policy can be managed from a single central authority. Global commitments, regional frameworks, national regulations, and local practices operate according to logics that are not always mutually compatible, a situation that structurally generates governance gaps. Yet, this scenario is not merely a source of problems; it also presents a significant opportunity for socio-political analysis and the design of new policies.

Conclusion

The national migration policies, local policy-making processes, regional governance models, and the multilevel governance approach discussed in this chapter demonstrate that migration governance cannot be explained by a single model or mechanism. At the national level, states face a structural tension between the economy's labor needs and the public's security expectations. Although the labor agreement Germany signed with Turkey in 1961 officially ended following the oil crisis, the fact that migration flows continued via family reunification and asylum channels demonstrates that states cannot permanently control migration through a single policy instrument. The trend toward securitization that emerged after September 11 also highlights a similar tension on a different level; while framing migration as a threat may generate short-term political support, it increasingly widens the gap between states' international human rights obligations and their actual practices.

At the local level, it becomes evident that the central government's monopoly over migration policy is limited. Municipalities have evolved into actors capable of formulating their own policies, going beyond merely implementing national decisions. "Sanctuary city" practices represent the most extreme example of this autonomy; however, this autonomy is not absolute, as financial resources and legal authority remain largely in the hands of the central government. Nevertheless, certain practices developed at the local level are observed to influence national policy over time, demonstrating that

the flow of policymaking can move not only from the center to the periphery but also in the opposite direction.

Regional comparison offers perhaps the clearest message: there is no single model of universal validity. While the European Union established a robust institutional framework, the 2015 refugee crisis clearly demonstrated the fragility of this framework under political pressure. The Canadian model was long regarded as an exceptional case capable of managing migration policy relatively insulated from political polarization; however, the significant reduction of quotas for the 2026-2028 period in the face of the housing crisis and public pressure has shown that even this model cannot remain immune to global trends. While a lack of institutional capacity limits regional cooperation in Africa, the ASEAN example reflects a different type of impasse: the region produces documents regarding migrant workers' rights, yet these fail to translate into tangible protections, and the national practices of member states can conflict with one another. The fact that these four regional experiences encounter similar limitations for different reasons suggests that the success of migration governance depends less on institutional design than on the political will underpinning those institutions.

Furthermore, evaluating national policies, local policymaking processes, and regional governance models through the lens of multilevel governance reveals a structure that is interconnected yet lacks full internal coherence. Documents such as the Global Compact do not legally bind states, and some states may withdraw from the process entirely. The growing influence of non-state actors and international organizations in the governance process, while making governance more inclusive, also gives rise to new uncertainties regarding accountability. Digitalization exacerbates this uncertainty; border control systems based on biometric data and risk profiling enhance states' administrative capacity while diminishing migrants' control over their own data. The case of Ukraine clearly illustrates the inequalities inherent in this multi-level structure: the same system may provide rapid and comprehensive protection to one group of migrants while adopting a much stricter stance toward others.

When all these assessments are considered together, the fundamental conclusion that emerges is that the success of migration governance stems not from a flawless institutional design, but from continuous negotiation

among the state, local governments, regional organizations, and global institutions. This negotiation never reaches a definitive conclusion; rather, it is reshaped as political climates, economic conditions, or crises evolve. Therefore, migration governance should be viewed not as a static, completed system, but as a dynamic process that is continually renegotiated.

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GOVERNANCE, ETHICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN MIGRATION

ABDULKADİR AKSOY*

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is remembered as an age in which human mobility has acquired a speed and scale unprecedented in any earlier period of history. Castles et al. (2014) describe the present period through the concept of the "age of migration" and emphasize that migration is no longer an exceptional condition but has become a structural feature of modern societies. Today migration does not mean merely the geographical displacement of a population or the transfer of labor between countries. Migration is a multilayered phenomenon that simultaneously sets in motion many economic, social, cultural, legal, and political processes. For this reason it has become increasingly difficult to regard migration as the subject of a single discipline or a single public institution.

This multilayered structure of migration makes it a privileged field of study for the discipline of public administration. The modern nation-state regards the authority to decide who may be present within its borders as one of the most concrete expressions of its sovereignty. Migration, however, is a phenomenon that continually tests this authority. On the one hand, states are concerned with protecting national security and public order. On the other hand, they are bound by obligations arising from international law, human rights instruments, and universal humanitarian values. The right of sovereignty, security concerns, and human dignity often meet at the same decision-making table. Migration management is carried out precisely in this tense field where these three axes intersect and at times conflict.

From the standpoint of public administration, migration becomes the subject of three distinct questions. The first question concerns authority and asks who is to govern migration and at what level. The second question concerns values and examines the ethical principles within which the administration should act. The third question concerns legitimacy and debates the conditions under which migration policies may be considered acceptable.

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These three questions are not independent of one another. How authority is distributed, which values are observed, and how legitimacy is secured are interwoven questions. For this reason migration is increasingly treated in the public administration literature as a subject that requires holistic analysis. Rather than reducing migration to a single dimension, this chapter aims to situate it at the intersection of these three questions.

The traditional view regarded migration as a technical administrative task controlled by the central state alone. Yet over the past three decades a strengthening tendency in the public administration literature has considerably weakened this single-center understanding. The idea of "governance without government" developed by Rosenau and Czempiel (1992) demonstrated that, alongside the state, many other actors are also decisive in solving public problems. In the public administration literature, the concept of governance describes the transition from a hierarchical command-and-control logic to one of horizontal coordination and shared responsibility. This transition is especially pronounced in the field of migration, because migration processes concern local governments, the central administration, civil society organizations, and international organizations at the same time.

This chapter addresses the phenomenon of migration through three interconnected pillars of the public administration discipline. These pillars are governance, ethics, and human rights intertwined with the rule of law. The chapter's central argument can be summarized as follows: migration management is not merely an administrative and technical border-control activity. Migration management is, on one side, a field of multi-actor responsibility practices and, on the other, a field of rights-based legitimacy. The success of migration policies cannot be evaluated solely by criteria of efficiency and control. The legitimacy of these policies also depends on criteria of ethical consistency and legal guarantee.

This study is conceptual and theoretical in character. Its principal method is the critical evaluation of theoretical approaches and the relevant literature in the field of migration governance. In conducting this evaluation, the concepts and debates of the public administration discipline are placed at the center. Concepts such as governance, accountability, public service, and oversight are used as analytical tools for examining the phenomenon of migration. The aim of the study is not to describe a particular country case in detail. The aim is to set out the general principles of migration governance and the relationships among these principles. In this respect the study seeks

both to offer a theoretical framework and to produce general implications for practice.

The study proceeds under four main headings. The first heading examines the multilevel governance of migration in its local, national, and transnational dimensions. The second heading discusses the ethical dilemmas that arise in migration control and border management, particularly in the context of securitization and surveillance technologies. The third heading addresses human-rights-based approaches to migration governance and a human-centered understanding of public administration. The fourth heading evaluates accountability mechanisms and the continuity of the rule of law during periods of crisis. The chapter concludes by proposing a holistic understanding of migration governance in which these four axes complement one another.

1. THE MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE OF MIGRATION: LOCAL, NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSIONS

Migration policy was long seen as a field in which central governments held sole authority. Nation-states kept the powers to grant citizenship, to control borders, and to determine the status of foreigners as their own monopoly. However, the intensity that migratory movements have acquired in recent years has made the limits of this monopolistic model visible. The consequences of migration are felt not at a single level of governance but simultaneously at many interconnected levels. For example, a migrant's need for shelter may concern municipalities, their legal status may concern the central administration, and their crossing of the border may concern international institutions.

This situation has brought with it a conceptual shift from migration management toward migration governance. Geiger and Pécoud (2014) show that international organizations have in recent years become increasingly influential actors in the design and implementation of migration policies. Coşkun (2022) evaluates the transition from migration management to migration governance as the necessity of a multi-actor, coordination-based model. Dereli (2023) for his part, emphasizes that migration management is a contemporary field of public policy and that effective policies must rest on an evidence-based foundation. Under this heading, the multilevel governance of migration will be addressed in terms of its conceptual foundations, the role of local actors, and the dimension of transnational cooperation.

The distinction between migration management and migration governance is not merely a terminological preference. The concept of migration management most often refers to the central administration's activity of controlling and regulating migratory movements. The focus of this concept is efficiency, order, and control. The concept of migration governance, by contrast, points to a broader framework. Within this framework, the decision-making process is distributed not to a single center but among many interacting actors. The concept of governance is also concerned with how the process is conducted. Participation, transparency, and accountability are inseparable components of the concept of governance. The transition from migration management to migration governance therefore means recognizing both the diversity of actors and the value criteria pertaining to the process.

1.1. The concept of multilevel governance and its place in migration policy

The concept of multilevel governance was first developed to explain the decision-making processes of the European Union. The study that sets out the theoretical framework of the concept most clearly belongs to Liesbet and Gary (2003). According to these authors, governance occurs in two basic forms. In the first type of governance, authority is distributed among general-purpose, clearly bounded, and enduring administrative units. In the second type of governance, authority is shared among flexible, task-specific units that intersect with one another. Migration policies often present a complex picture in which these two types operate together. On the one hand, established public institutions and, on the other, temporary structures created for particular projects contribute to the same process.

The two types of governance set out by Liesbet and Gary (2003) find concrete counterparts in the field of migration. Municipalities and ministries endowed with constitutional powers may be cited as examples of the first type of governance. These units are permanent, clearly bounded, and general-purpose structures. As examples of the second type of governance, one may point to coordination boards, project-based partnerships, and temporary task units established to manage a particular migration situation. These structures are flexible and focused on a specific task. The distinctive feature of migration governance is that these two types are often in operation at the same time. While established institutions provide continuity and stability, flexible structures offer the possibility of responding quickly to changing conditions. The operation of these two logics together can in some cases

provide an advantage, while in others it may give rise to coordination problems.

The application of multilevel governance to the field of migration makes visible that the distribution of authority is two-directional. In the vertical dimension, authority is shared among the local, regional, national, and international levels. In the horizontal dimension, authority is distributed among public institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations at the same level. Scholten and Penninx (2016) note that this two-directional structure of migration and integration policies makes governance increasingly difficult, because each level acts according to its own priority and resources. When alignment among levels cannot be achieved, policies may be produced in a disconnected manner. This disconnection leads to the inefficient use of public resources and to gaps in services.

The relationship among levels does not always operate harmoniously. Scholten and Penninx (2016) draw attention to the fact that levels can become decoupled in migration and integration policies. In some cases the national level and the local level define the same problem differently. In other cases a decision taken at one level becomes inapplicable at another. This decoupling reduces the impact of policies and leads to the inefficient use of public resources. Multilevel governance therefore does not mean merely the distribution of authority. It also requires the construction of a common problem definition and a common language among levels. When a common framework cannot be established, multilevelness may turn into a source not of strength but of fragmentation.

The Turkish public administration literature has also closely followed this conceptual transformation. Üstüner (2003) explains the policy-making process through the theory of network governance and demonstrates that decisions are now shaped not at a single center but within networks among actors. Okçu (2005) discusses the adaptation of Turkish public administration to the European administrative space through the concept of "multiplanar governance." Demirol Duyar (2024) for her part, uses the network governance perspective as a theoretical framework of analysis for understanding complex fields such as transportation policy. These studies show that the concept of governance is not merely a management technique. Governance is also a perspective on how public responsibility is distributed among actors. In a phenomenon that crosses borders, such as migration, this perspective becomes inevitable.

The multilevel structure of migration policies also brings with it a significant coordination problem. Zapata-Barrero et al. (2017) draw attention to the "local turn" tendency that has become pronounced in the field of migration and integration. According to this tendency, the local level has increasingly become a more fundamental actor in migration governance. However, the local level's rise in importance does not mean that alignment among levels is achieved automatically. On the contrary, when national and local priorities diverge, policy decouplings arise. For this reason, in order to be successful, multilevel governance requires strong coordination mechanisms and open channels of communication among actors. When coordination is not achieved, the multiplicity of actors turns into a source not of richness but of disarray.

The solution to the coordination problem mentioned above is closely related to institutional design. Shared data systems that ensure information sharing among levels, regularly convened coordination boards, and a clearly defined division of tasks are the basic instruments of this design. Coordination is not a result that arises spontaneously. Coordination can be described as a capacity that must be deliberately built and sustained. The success of multilevel governance therefore depends on the extent to which this capacity is constructed. Moreover, coordination is necessary not only vertically but also horizontally. Overlaps or gaps in tasks may arise among different institutions at the same level. A well-designed governance structure attends to both vertical and horizontal coordination at the same time and clearly delineates areas of responsibility.

1.2. The Strategic Role of Local Actors and Capacity Building

The effects of migration are felt most concretely at the local level—that is, in cities and in the service areas of municipalities. A migrant or asylum seeker most often gains access to shelter, water, education, and health services first at the local level. For this reason municipalities occupy a key position in the implementation arm of migration governance. Zapata-Barrero et al. (2017) emphasize that local governments are not merely units that implement central policies. Local governments can also produce distinctive policies suited to their own conditions. This feature makes them active rather than passive actors in migration governance.

The rise in importance of the local level is also explained in the public administration literature through the principle of subsidiarity. According to this principle, a service should be provided by the smallest administrative unit closest to the citizen. This principle carries a particular meaning in the

field of migration, because a migrant's everyday needs are met through concrete services rather than abstract policy goals. The opening of a language course, the increase in the capacity of a health unit, or the preparation of a school for new students takes place at the local level. For this reason local governments are not only the implementers of migration governance but also producers of knowledge. The information gathered in the field is one of the most valuable resources enabling national policies to be designed realistically.

On the other hand, the strategic role of local governments and actors becomes especially pronounced in the field of social integration. Integration is not an abstract goal but a process that takes place within everyday life. In this context, Kahraman and Tanıyıcı (2018) point to the importance of the cooperation networks that municipalities and civil society organizations establish at the field level. These networks serve to fill the areas left empty by central policies. Because local actors are the units that observe the needs of the migrant population most closely, they can develop flexible and on-the-spot solutions. This proximity can make it easier for services to correspond to real needs.

At the same time, a difference in approach can sometimes arise between the local level and the national level. Because local actors are in direct contact with the migrant population, they can at times develop more pragmatic and inclusive solutions. In providing a service, a municipality may focus on a person's concrete need rather than their legal status. The national level, by contrast, may adopt a more cautious stance out of concern for oversight and order. This difference in approach is a natural consequence of multilevel governance. However, in order for the difference not to turn into a conflict, communication among levels must be kept open. A relationship of mutual learning, in which local experience feeds national policy and the national framework gives direction to local practice, can be regarded as the most productive mode of operation of multilevel governance.

Nevertheless, the ability of local actors to perform this function is directly connected to the capacity they possess. Capacity is a concept that has both financial and administrative dimensions. Municipalities are often obliged to take on new tasks related to migration without a corresponding increase of resources in their budgets. In their study, Aktel and Kaygısız (2018) draw attention to the fact that the distribution of authority and resources at the local level is often not balanced. Örselli and Babahanoğlu (2016), for their part, treat migration management as a public policy process and trace

how the institutional structure has been shaped over time. The transfer of authority to the local level also requires the transfer of sufficient resources and trained personnel. Otherwise, localization may lead to a decline in service quality.

Furthermore, the diversity of actors at the local level is not limited to public institutions. Civil society organizations, professional associations, and volunteer networks also play a decisive role in the local arm of migration governance. This multi-actor structure provides flexibility in service delivery. However, the same structure also carries the risk of blurring who holds responsibility. While the role of local actors is strengthened, capacity building and accountability must be considered together. Capacity building is not merely the transfer of resources. Capacity building also encompasses institutional learning, personnel training, and information sharing among levels. Without these three elements coming together, the strengthening of the local level remains on paper.

1.3. Transnational Cooperation and Global Migration Regimes

The highest level of migration governance can be described as the level of transnational cooperation and the global system. According to Betts (2011), unlike fields such as trade or finance, there is no integrated and single global regime for international migration. Migration governance exhibits a fragmented structure dispersed across subfields such as refugees, labor migration, human trafficking, and irregular migration. This fragmentation is one of the principal factors that make it difficult to act in common at the global level. Each subfield has its own institutions, rules, and actors.

In this context, the fragmented structure of the global migration regime can be explained by historical reasons. Fields such as refugee protection, labor migration, the fight against human trafficking, and the prevention of irregular migration became institutionalized in different periods and out of different concerns. Each field has its own conventions, its own specialized organizations, and its own priorities. Betts (2011) notes that this situation makes it difficult to produce a coherent policy at the global level, because a step taken in one field may conflict with a goal in another. For example, border controls tightened out of security concern may indirectly weaken the right to apply of persons in need of protection. The fragmented structure makes it difficult to render such contradictions visible and to remedy them. For this reason global migration governance continually keeps on its agenda the search for ensuring consistency across fields.

Within this fragmented structure, the most institutionalized field is the refugee regime. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations, 1951) is the basic international document defining the definition of a refugee and the obligations of states. Organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration produce normative frameworks in this field and provide technical support to states. Geiger and Pécoud (2014) demonstrate that these organizations have over time become not merely implementing actors but policy-making actors. Through the reports, standards, and examples of good practice they produce, international organizations shape national policies.

The influence of international organizations should not be seen as limited to legal texts alone. These organizations can also steer national policies through training programs, technical guides, and comparative data. Geiger and Pécoud (2014) emphasize that this steering is often realized not in the form of direct coercion but by constituting a common framework of knowledge and expertise. How a migration concept is defined, which indicators are measured, and which practices are considered good practice are to a large extent shaped by these organizations. This situation grants international organizations a significant agenda-setting power. At the same time, it shows that the frameworks these organizations produce must also be kept open to democratic oversight and critical evaluation.

The most recent example of the effort to create a common framework at the global level is the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted in 2018 (United Nations, 2018). This document may be regarded as the first intergovernmental text to address international migration in a comprehensive manner. The compact is a non-binding, cooperation-based framework. The goals it sets aim to bring states together around common principles while preserving their sovereign rights. Although it has been criticized for not being binding, the compact is considered important for constituting a common language and reference point in migration governance. Such documents constitute examples of "soft law" instruments that guide states without coercing them.

On the other hand, the reflection of norms produced at the global level onto national and local practices often does not take place in the form of a direct and seamless transfer. İçduygu and Keyman (2000) state that global processes take on distinctive forms in national policies. States reinterpret global norms in line with their own political priorities and security concerns.

For this reason multilevel migration governance is not a simple hierarchy among levels. Multilevel governance is a continual process of bargaining and adaptation. How this process operates is also considered to be closely connected to the ethical dilemmas to be addressed in the next heading.

In this context, the gap between norm and practice is one of the fundamental difficulties of global migration governance. A state's adoption of an international document does not necessarily mean that the principles of that document are fully reflected in administrative practice. In documents whose legal binding force is weak, this gap is even more pronounced. Nevertheless, these documents should not be regarded as functionless. Common principles provide criteria by which civil society, academia, and international public opinion can evaluate states. Even if these criteria carry no direct power of sanction, they can constitute a ground for holding to account. Global migration governance therefore operates through common expectations and mutual monitoring as much as through binding rules. This soft mode of operation often emerges as the most realistic option in a field such as migration, where concern for sovereignty is high.

2. ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN MIGRATION CONTROL AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

The most visible and most contested face of migration governance is border management. The border is the place where a state exercises its sovereign authority in the most concrete form. It is also the threshold at which the fundamental rights of migrants and asylum seekers become most fragile. For this reason border management cannot be seen as a purely technical control activity. Every decision taken at the border can be evaluated at the same time as an ethical decision. To turn a person away or to admit them produces moral as well as administrative consequences.

Carens (2013) states that there is a continual tension between democratic states' authority to control migration and basic principles of justice. According to him, even if the state's right to control its borders is accepted as legitimate, the exercise of this right is not unlimited. This right is framed by universal humanitarian values and international law. Under this heading, two basic ethical dilemmas of border management will be addressed. The first of these is the securitization of migration, and the second is the use of surveillance technologies.

The debate on the ethics of migration often proceeds between two extreme positions. At one extreme stands the sovereignty-based approach, which foregrounds the state's right to control its borders as it sees fit; at the

other extreme stands the cosmopolitan approach, which gives weight to people's freedom of movement and to universal humanitarian obligations. Real policies are generally situated somewhere between these two extremes. Carens (2013) too constructs the debate through the tension between these two positions. In this context, the principal aim of this part of the study is to render visible the ethical dilemmas that arise in border management and to analyze how these dilemmas are reflected in administrative decisions.

2.1. The Tension Between Securitization and Ethical Responsibility

The concept of securitization is one frequently used in the international relations literature. Buzan et al. (1998) defined security not as an objective condition but as a discursive process. According to this approach, an issue is moved into the domain of security when it is presented as an existential threat through the discourse of authorized actors. A securitized issue is taken out of ordinary politics. It is thereby placed within a framework that legitimizes extraordinary measures. Within this framework, practices that would not be accepted under normal conditions begin to appear ordinary.

In the analysis of Buzan et al. (1998), the securitization process has a particular structure. According to it, the process begins with a speech act that presents an issue as an existential threat. However, this speech act alone is not sufficient. The discourse must be accepted by an audience. When the audience embraces the discourse, the issue ceases to be a subject of ordinary politics. At this point extraordinary measures begin to appear legitimate. When migration is at issue, this process can operate especially rapidly, because migration is an emotionally charged subject in which concerns about identity, the economy, and security converge. The important contribution of securitization theory is to show that a threat is not a given reality but a definition constructed by particular actors.

The securitization of migration can be described as one of the most frequently invoked fields of application of this theoretical framework. Huysmans (2000) sets out in detail how migration has been constructed as a security problem in the context of the European Union. Within this framework, when migration is associated with unemployment, crime, and cultural concerns, it begins to be perceived as a threat. Bigo (2002), for his part, seeks securitization not only at the level of discourse but in the everyday practices of security professionals. According to him, migrants become objects of control not because they constitute a concrete threat but because

they are positioned as a threat within a logic of a "governmentality of unease." This approach supports the view that a threat is not a given fact but a produced perception.

In addition, securitization takes place not only through discourse but also through institutional practices. It can be stated that border-control practices have made migration a security issue step by step. This approach demonstrates that securitization is produced not by a single utterance but also by established administrative routines. In fact, the relationship between migration and security is not new (Léonard, 2010). Weiner (1993), for his part, systematically related the dimensions of stability and security of migration. However, the current debate focuses on how this relationship is constructed and with what ethical costs it comes.

On the other hand, the securitization of migration can generate ethical tension. When an issue is presented as an existential threat, the state's ethical and legal obligations may be pushed into the background. The duty to protect border security and the duty to safeguard the right to life of asylum seekers come into confrontation. Yet the principle of non-refoulement, one of the fundamental principles of international law, prohibits sending a person to a place where their life or freedom would be in danger (United Nations, 1951, Article 33). This principle draws an ethical limit that security concerns cannot transgress. But the discourse of securitization tends to render this limit invisible. Ethical responsibility, by contrast, requires seeing the migrant as a human being who holds rights rather than reducing them to a threat category.

The ethical position developed against securitization places the moral status of the migrant back at the center. According to this position, a person seeking asylum is seen first of all not as a security variable but as a human being in need of protection. In this respect the state's security concern is legitimate, but whether this concern alone justifies a policy is a matter of debate. An ethically consistent migration policy must observe both security and the obligation of protection at the same time. This requires that every measure taken on security grounds be subjected to the criterion of proportionality.

2.2. Surveillance Technologies and Data Ethics

The most marked feature that border management has acquired in recent years is that it has become technology-intensive. Biometric methods such as fingerprinting and facial recognition have become ordinary instruments of

border control. Amoore (2006) explains this development through the concept of the "biometric border." According to this concept, the border should no longer be seen merely as a geographical line. According to her, the border has turned into a layer of control coded onto the migrant's body and moving together with them. Biometric data are used to fix identity and thereby to sort individuals into the categories of "legitimate" and "risky" mobility. Control thus becomes portable through the person's body.

At the core of the logic of the biometric border lies a classification of risk. Amoore (2006) states that this logic divides mobility into two as legitimate and risky. According to her, travel for business or tourism is regarded as legitimate mobility, while irregular migration is placed in the category of risky mobility. This distinction produces a decision about persons in advance, based on past data. The problem at this point lies in the fact that the decision in question is often made independently of the individual themselves. A person may be assigned to a risk category because of the identity characteristics they carry, before having done anything at all. This situation is in tension with fundamental legal principles such as the presumption of innocence and individual assessment. Technology here therefore does not remain merely an instrument but also internalizes a decision logic about who is to be considered a threat.

The collection of biometric data has brought with it the construction of large-scale databases. When the migration databases created in Europe are examined, it can be stated that these systems serve as "new digital borders," because these databases can re-identify the past movements of irregular migrants through digital traces. Control thus operates continuously not only at the physical border but also within the country. In this respect surveillance can also serve to push the migrant out of public institutions by making them visible. To be visible can, in this context, mean not protection but exclusion (Broeders, 2007).

On the other hand, the entry of artificial-intelligence-supported systems into border management has carried this debate to a new dimension. The new technologies used in migration management contain certain criticisms from the standpoint of human rights, because the migrant population is becoming a field in which new technologies are tested without oversight. Automated decision-support systems have begun to be used in the evaluation of asylum applications. However, these systems are often not transparent and are not subjected to adequate oversight. When it becomes difficult to

explain the grounds on which an application was rejected, avenues for seeking rights are also weakened. Technology, in this case, while providing efficiency, may erode accountability (Molnar, 2019).

3. HUMAN-RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES TO MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

The securitization and surveillance tendencies addressed in the previous heading tend to position the migrant as an object of risk or control. The human-rights-based approach can be regarded as a counter-paradigm developed against this tendency. This approach places at the center of migration governance not the state's concern for control but the rights and dignity of the human being. Migration policy thereby ceases to be merely a problem of control and can be transformed into a problem of rights guarantee.

The human-rights-based approach is not an abstract moral stance. This approach produces concrete consequences for how administrative processes are to be designed. When a public service is being designed, whether the migrant is seen as a "beneficiary" or as a "rights-holder" directly determines the nature of the service. While the beneficiary is a passive party who accepts what is offered to them, the rights-holder can be seen as an active subject who can make claims and hold to account. Under this heading, first a human-centered understanding of public administration and then access to social rights and the prohibition of discrimination will be addressed.

3.1. A Human-centered Understanding of Public Administration

Since the beginning of the two-thousands, the discipline of public administration has experienced a significant paradigm debate in its understanding of management. The "New Public Service" approach of Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) offers perspectives that should be dwelt upon in these debates. This approach differs from the earlier models of public administration. Traditional public administration focused on hierarchy and rules, and New Public Management on efficiency and customer satisfaction. The New Public Service understanding, by contrast, sees the citizen not as a customer but as a rights-holding subject. According to this understanding, the principal role of the public official is not to steer society but to serve citizens.

The importance that the New Public Service understanding holds for the field of migration arises from its redefinition of the role of the public official. In the traditional understanding, the public official is seen as a clerk who applies the rules. In New Public Management, they are expected to behave like a manager attentive to efficiency. In the New Public Service understanding, by contrast, the public official is positioned as an intermediary who

helps citizens to define their common interests and to access their rights. This difference in role directly affects the nature of the relationship established with the migrant. An administration that sees the migrant as a file number and one that sees them as a rights-holding person may apply the same legislation in very different ways. The human-centered approach must therefore aim to transform not only the rules but also the mindset that applies the rules.

When this paradigm is carried over to the field of migration, it produces an important consequence. The migrant ceases to be "an object to be managed" and becomes a subject possessing fundamental rights and freedoms. It has long been repeated that human rights are universal. However, irregular migrants can often access these rights only in a problematic manner. This situation shows that the recognition of rights in texts alone is not sufficient. Rights must also find a counterpart in administrative practices. Otherwise a right remains merely a discourse (Dembour and Kelly, 2011).

The realization of a human-centered understanding of public administration becomes clear to a large extent at the level of the officials who carry out implementation. Lipsky's (1980) concept of "street-level bureaucracy" explains this situation. According to him, public policy is shaped not only in high-level decisions but in the everyday practices of officials in direct contact with the citizen. In this context a migrant most often encounters the state at an official's window. The discretion that this official possesses determines whether rights can actually be exercised. For this reason the human-centered approach concerns the training, workload, and working conditions of field personnel as much as high-level texts of principle.

In addition, the "street-level bureaucracy" perspective also shows that discretion has two faces. Discretion gives the official the possibility of producing flexible solutions suited to the concrete situation. In this respect discretion is regarded as necessary for a human-centered service. However, the same power can acquire a different function under conditions of heavy workload and inadequate resources. It can be said that officials under intense pressure may over time develop a kind of service-rationing mechanism. Slowing down processes, deterring applications, or not giving priority to those in the most difficult situations are manifestations of this mechanism (Lipsky, 1980). For this reason the human-centered approach cannot content itself with merely expecting goodwill from officials. It must also, by regulating officials' workload, training, and working conditions, support the exercise of discretion in favor of rights.

The fundamental ground of human-centered public administration is the concept of human dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) proclaims that all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. This principle is valid independently of the migrant's legal status. In addition, the human-centered approach also values participation. Consulting migrants' views when decisions concerning them are taken both improves service quality and can strengthen the legitimacy of decisions. Seeing migrants not as a passive object of the process but as an active participant is accepted as the distinctive feature of human-centered administration. Participation is also accepted as a practical instrument that ensures services correspond to real needs.

Although the concept of human dignity may appear to be an abstract principle, it is concretely reflected in administrative design. Dignity-based public service keeps waiting times reasonable, makes application processes comprehensible, and avoids practices that needlessly wear the person down. The arrangement of service spaces, the manner of officials' communication, and the provision of information in a language the person can understand are the everyday counterparts of the principle of dignity. The human-centered approach attends to these details, because the migrant most often encounters the state not through grand policy texts but through these small and concrete experiences. Whether a service is humane is often revealed in the nature of these experiences. Dignity is therefore not only a legal value but also a criterion of service quality.

3.2. Access to Social Rights and the Prohibition of Discrimination

The concrete test of the human-rights-based approach is given in the field of access to social rights. Education, health, and shelter are seen as indispensable rights for a human being to be able to lead a dignified life. The extent to which these rights are accessible for migrants is regarded as a fundamental criterion of the humane legitimacy of migration governance. Accordingly, deficiencies in access to social rights can push migrants into a cycle of poverty. An individual who cannot access services is over time driven into a more fragile position (Kansu-Karadağ, 2018).

The fundamental principle of access to social rights is the prohibition of discrimination. The prohibition of discrimination prevents persons in similar situations from being treated differently on arbitrary grounds. In this respect it can be stated that the prohibition of discrimination forms the backbone of migration law. This principle requires that rights be granted not only to citizens but to everyone present in the country. In practice, however, the

scope of rights is often stratified according to a person's legal status. This stratification is in tension with the principle of equality (Costello, 2016).

The stratification of rights according to legal status makes visible an important conceptual problem. Atasü-Topcuoğlu (2016) interrogates the concepts of "regular" and "irregular" migration in the migration literature from the standpoint of human rights. According to her, a person's being characterized as "irregular" often also restricts their access to fundamental rights. Yet human rights are accepted as rights that precede legal status and are not dependent on it. Dembour and Kelly (2011) likewise draw attention to the risk of irregular migrants being stripped of their status as subjects of rights. According to them, depriving a human being of rights solely on account of their administrative status contradicts the claim to universality of the concept of human rights. This contradiction is expressed as one of the fundamental problems that migration governance must solve.

Shortcomings in practice should often not be attributed to a single cause. When language barriers, lack of information, complex administrative processes, and inadequacy of personnel come together, rights recognized in texts can become effectively unusable. The rights-based solution aims to render these obstacles visible one by one and to remove them. Strengthening information services, providing translation support, and simplifying administrative processes can be expressed as parts of this solution.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AND THE RULE OF LAW

The multi-actor structure of migration governance can provide flexibility in service delivery. However, this structure also brings with it an important question. When authority is distributed among many actors, who will be held responsible when an error or a rights violation arises? This question brings the concept of accountability to the center of migration governance. Without accountability, the multi-actor structure can turn into a field in which responsibility is lost.

Accountability and the rule of law can be described as the final pillar that secures the legitimacy of migration governance. The rule of law requires that public power be exercised not arbitrarily but within the framework of predetermined rules. Accountability, for its part, ensures that the actions of those who exercise this power can be scrutinized. The two principles are accepted as complementary to one another. Without rules, oversight remains without criteria; without oversight, rules remain without sanction.

On the other hand, legitimacy, in the public administration literature, expresses that a policy is not only effective but also acceptable. Even if a migration policy attains its goals, it can lose its legitimacy if it is carried out in a manner contrary to law or removed from oversight. Accountability and the rule of law are the two basic principles that secure this legitimacy. These principles limit the power of the administration and ensure that this power can be scrutinized. In a multi-actor and multilevel migration governance, the need for these guarantees increases still further, because as authority is distributed, it becomes more difficult to identify who is responsible for an error or a rights violation. Under this heading, first administrative and judicial avenues of oversight, and then the continuity of legal protection during periods of crisis, will be addressed.

4.1. Accountability in Migration Governance and its Avenues

It is often criticized that the meaning of the concept of accountability is not sufficiently clear. Bovens (2007) gave this concept a theoretical clarity. According to him, accountability should be seen as a relationship between an actor and a forum of oversight. In this relationship the actor is obliged to explain and justify their conduct. The forum can pose questions, make an evaluation, and the actor may face the consequences of this evaluation. Bovens also shows that there is not a single type of accountability. Political, legal, administrative, professional, and social accountability operate differently from one another. In migration governance, all of these types are needed at the same time.

The types of accountability that Bovens (2007) distinguished complement one another in migration governance. Within this framework, political accountability refers to the responsibility of the ministers and administrators responsible for migration policies before parliament and the electorate. Legal accountability refers to the scrutiny of administrative acts before the courts. Administrative accountability encompasses internal audit and inspection mechanisms. Professional accountability concerns officials' adherence to professional standards and ethical rules. Social accountability, for its part, rests on the monitoring function of civil society, the press, and public opinion. Successful migration governance needs not just one of these types but all of them at the same time. When one type weakens, the others can to a certain extent fill this gap, but none is sufficient on its own.

In migration management, accountability is realized through various avenues of oversight. Internal audit enables an institution to review its own functioning regularly. Ombudsman oversight allows citizens to voice their

complaints about the administration before an independent forum. Judicial review, for its part, provides the possibility of contesting the lawfulness of administrative acts before the courts. The effectiveness of these avenues of oversight directly determines the legal guarantee of migration governance. When there is no effective avenue for seeking rights, recognized rights lose their meaning in practice. For this reason oversight should be seen not as a bureaucratic formality but as the foundation of the guarantee of rights.

In addition, multi-actor governance can give rise to a particular difficulty in terms of accountability. This difficulty is termed in the literature the "problem of many hands." When many actors contribute to a decision, it becomes difficult to determine to whom responsibility belongs. Each actor can transfer responsibility to another. In migration governance, because the central administration, local governments, civil society organizations, and international organizations take part at the same time, this problem can become even more pronounced (Bovens, 2007). For this reason multilevel governance requires that, alongside the distribution of authority, the distribution of responsibility also be clearly defined. When it is not predetermined who is responsible for what, accountability can fall into a gap.

A current dimension of the accountability problem concerns automated decision systems. As mentioned earlier, artificial-intelligence-supported systems are becoming widespread in migration management. Molnar (2019) shows that these systems contain serious gaps in terms of oversight and accountability. When a decision is produced by an algorithm, it becomes difficult to explain the grounds of that decision and to identify who is responsible for it. Such applications, used as algorithmic governance, must also obtain citizens' consent (Hillo et al., 2025). Preserving accountability requires that the efficiency offered by technology be made subject to the principle of scrutability. At this point no decision should be taken entirely outside human oversight. Human oversight should be positioned as the final stop not of automated systems but of the guarantee of rights.

An often-overlooked function of accountability is learning. Bovens (2007) notes that accountability operates not only to apply sanctions but also for institutions to draw lessons from their errors. Examining how a rights violation came about can be an effective way of preventing the recurrence of similar violations. But for this learning function to be realized, transparency is required. The grounds of decisions must be recorded and accessible. Transparency is used not to punish the administration while seeking fault but to improve it systematically. In this respect accountability

shows that it is both an instrument of oversight and an instrument of improvement and institutional learning for migration governance.

4.2. The Continuity of Legal Protection in Exceptional Situations

The most demanding test of migration governance is given during periods of crisis. Mass influxes, sudden population movements, and emergencies lead states to take extraordinary measures. Agamben (2020) analyzes this situation through the concept of the "state of exception." The state of exception can be described as a threshold at which the ordinary functioning of law is suspended. At this threshold the individual may be pushed outside legal protection and may fall into a position dependent solely on the discretion of the state. Agamben's analysis shows how the discourse of crisis can erode legal guarantees. For this reason the state of exception should be regarded as an approach that must be carefully circumscribed.

In this context, the concept of the state of exception denotes not the complete disappearance of law but its suspension. Yet this is precisely what is dangerous. An overt lawlessness is easily noticed and can be opposed. The temporary and necessity-driven suspension of law, however, is often presented as a legitimate requirement. For this reason it is necessary to note that the state of exception tends toward becoming permanent. Measures regarded as temporary can remain in force even after the crisis has ended (Agamben, 2020). In the field of migration this tendency is seen in the form of extraordinary measures taken during periods of mass movement turning over time into ordinary practices. For this reason exceptional measures must, from the very beginning, be limited by a clear time period and strict oversight.

Periods of crisis should not constitute a justification for suspending the principle of the rule of law. The fact that a situation is extraordinary does not legitimize the administration's acting arbitrarily. On the contrary, the periods in which rights are most under threat are the periods in which legal guarantees are most needed. International human rights law too adopts this logic. For this reason certain rights have been defined as inviolable rights that cannot be suspended under any circumstances. The right to life and the prohibition of torture are among these rights (United Nations, 1966, Articles 6–7).

The resilience of the rule of law during periods of crisis can also be regarded as an indicator of the soundness of democratic governance. Costello (2016) emphasizes that legal oversight must continue even during periods

of crisis. A crisis management in which judicial review is disabled may appear rapid in the short term. In the long term, however, it can bring with it both rights violations and the erosion of trust in institutions. In this respect the continuity of legal protection should not be seen as an obstacle that slows crisis management. On the contrary, the continuity of legal protection can be regarded as a guarantee that renders crisis management legitimate.

The maintenance of legal protection in exceptional situations should be seen as a matter of institutional preparedness. An administration acting improvisationally in a moment of crisis can increase the risk of rights violations. Instead, crisis scenarios must be designed in advance. For this reason oversight mechanisms must be configured so as to operate during periods of crisis as well. Accountability and the rule of law can be regarded as the legitimacy anchor of migration governance during periods of crisis as much as during ordinary periods. Without this anchor, a multilevel and multi-actor governance structure can easily turn into an unscrutinized exercise of power. Institutional preparedness should be considered the most effective guarantee that prevents this transformation. A migration governance that can preserve the rule of law during periods of crisis therefore not only prevents rights violations but also strengthens trust in institutions and in the state.

CONCLUSION

Migration has been one of the important tests of states and societies since ancient times. It has therefore been examined in different disciplines in the social sciences, foremost as a field of public policy. This chapter has addressed the phenomenon of migration through the pillars of governance, ethics, and human rights of the public administration discipline. The discussion conducted supports the argument set out at the outset. Migration management is far more than a technical border-control activity. In this context, migration management should be seen as a multi-actor regime of responsibility and a rights-based field of legitimacy.

The four axes addressed throughout the study are interrelated headings. These axes can be regarded as four complementary dimensions of migration governance. Multilevel governance shows within what structure migration policies are produced. In addition, the ethical debate examines in the light of which values this structure should operate. The human-rights-based approach, for its part, is regarded as an effort to place the migrant at the center of the process as a subject. Finally, accountability and the rule of law ensure that the entire structure remains scrutinizable and legitimate. In this respect the neglect of one axis can also weaken the others. A governance lacking

ethical concern can turn into a technical apparatus of control. A discourse of rights lacking accountability, for its part, may find no counterpart in practice. For this reason migration governance acquires a holistic meaning only when these four dimensions are considered together.

As mentioned in the first part of the study, migration has ceased to be a field that a single center can control. Migration governance is a multilevel structure in which the local, national, and transnational levels are intertwined. The success of this structure is closely related to coordination among levels and to the capacity of local actors. The distribution of authority produces a meaningful result only when responsibility and resources are distributed together with it. On the other hand, it is important to bring out the ethical and humane dimensions of migration management. The securitization of migration and the spread of surveillance technologies carry the risk of reducing the migrant to an object of control. The human-rights-based approach, by contrast, proposes seeing the migrant as a rights-holding subject. A human-centered understanding of public administration is positioned as the bridge that carries this approach into administrative practices. Without this bridge, human rights may be seen merely as a text of principle.

The study has stated that the legitimacy of this entire structure rests on accountability and the rule of law. Multi-actor governance can remain unscrutinized when responsibility is not clearly defined. Periods of crisis, for their part, are among the moments in which legal guarantees are most tested. It is precisely at these moments that adhering firmly to the rule of law stands out as the distinctive feature of democratic governance.

From this framework, several practical implications can also be derived. The first implication is that the delegation of authority must be considered together with the delegation of resources and capacity. The second implication is that measures taken out of security concern must remain bound by the criteria of proportionality and scrutability. The third implication is that rights-based principles must find a counterpart not only in policy texts but also in administrative practices in the field. The fourth implication is that it is imperative to keep oversight mechanisms operational during periods of crisis as well. The common point of these implications is to take migration governance out of being a problem of technical regulation and to see it as a problem of legitimacy and responsibility. The public administration discipline, with the conceptual accumulation it possesses, can make an important contribution to the development of this holistic perspective.

In conclusion, migration governance is an administrative process that has an ethical compass and a human rights anchor. The success of future migration policies will depend on the just balance that states establish between their sovereign rights and human dignity. This balance can be established through a multi-actor, rights-based, and accountable understanding of governance. Seeing migration not merely as a problem to be managed but also as a field of legitimacy and responsibility is the most important contribution that the public administration discipline can make to this field.

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LEGAL FRAMEWORKS OF MIGRATION: RIGHTS, STATUS, AND CATEGORIES OF IMMIGRANTS

CÜNEYT YILMAZ*

Abstract

This chapter examines the legal categories attached to people on the move under international migration law (refugee, asylum seeker, beneficiary of subsidiary protection, beneficiary of temporary protection, migrant, and displaced person). It asks which legal sources give rise to each category, which risks trigger which state obligations, and on what criteria the categories are distinguished from one another. The study follows a doctrinal method, reading the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol together with human rights treaties, European Union secondary legislation, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union, and Türkiye's Law No. 6458. The central argument is that legal categories do not name essential attributes of persons; rather, they are instruments for distributing obligations along distinct axes, namely the type of risk involved, cross-border location, formal legal recognition, and duration. Consequently, the same individual may occupy more than one category at once, and disputes over categories are frequently a disguised form of disputes over rights.

Keywords: International Protection, Refugee Law, Non-Refoulement, Complementary Protection, Temporary Protection

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Introduction

A defining feature of migration law is that the legal response owed to a person often turns on the name assigned to that person. Someone fleeing a besieged city and someone travelling in pursuit of economic opportunity may be physically indistinguishable at the border. Yet the former is, in principle, protected from return and entitled to seek asylum, while the latter remains, in most legal orders, a foreign national subject to ordinary conditions of entry and stay. The category is thus the threshold at which rights are allocated. According to UNHCR data, 117.8 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide at the end of 2025 (UNHCR, 2026b). The criteria that determine who, within this population, counts as what in law derive largely from a text drafted seventy years ago in post-war Europe, together with the complementary regimes that have since grown up around it.

The scholarship has approached this threshold from two largely separate directions. A doctrinal line of inquiry has dissected the elements of the refugee definition, its interpretive methods, and the scope of the resulting state obligations in considerable detail (Grahl-Madsen, 1966; Hathaway, 1991; Zimmermann, 2011; Hathaway and Foster, 2014; Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021). A critical and sociological line, by contrast, has examined the administrative production of categories, the politics of labelling, and the ways in which categories distort lived experience (Zetter, 1991, 2007; Malkki, 1995; Chimni, 1998; Bakewell, 2008; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). The two lines have largely run in parallel: doctrine tends to take categories as given and refines their content, while critical scholarship tends to interrogate the categories wholesale without sufficiently disaggregating their legal function. The gap this chapter seeks to fill is the absence of a framework capable of reading the legal logic and the political cost of categories within a single analysis.

The chapter's argument is as follows: legal categories do not designate essential attributes of persons; they operate along distinct axes, namely type of risk, cross-border location, legal recognition, and duration, each of which triggers a different distribution of state obligations. Overlap between categories is therefore not a legal defect but a structural consequence of the fact that these axes are independent of one another. The chapter pursues three questions. First, which legal sources generate which state obligations in response to which types of risk. Second, how the refugee definition and asylum procedures narrow or expand access to these obligations in practice. Third, how complementary and temporary protection, together with the categories

of migrant and displaced person, fill the gaps left by refugee status, and what new boundaries they draw in doing so.

The study relies on a doctrinal legal method. Treaty texts are interpreted within the framework of Articles 31 and 32 of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, with travaux préparatoires and UNHCR guidance used as interpretive aids. Case law was selected according to two criteria: decisions that directly draw or extend the boundaries of a category (from the European Court of Human Rights, the Court of Justice of the European Union, and the apex courts of Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States), and decisions of particular comparative value for Türkiye. At the level of legislation, EU secondary law, Türkiye's Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, and the 2014 Temporary Protection Regulation (No. 2014/6883) are examined. This selection makes no claim to representativeness; it was made because it is well suited to showing how categories are constructed across three institutional settings, universal, regional-supranational, and national. The review of legislation and case law was updated as of September 2026. Because the study involves no data collection from human participants, no ethics committee approval was required. The chapter proceeds as follows: Section 5.1 examines the sources and layers of protection underlying the categories; Section 5.2, the refugee definition; Section 5.3, asylum-seeker status and procedures; Section 5.4, complementary and temporary protection; and Section 5.5, the distinctions among the categories. The conclusion discusses the theoretical contribution of the analysis.

1. Legal Categories and International Protection

Under classical international law, the admission of foreign nationals to a state's territory and their continued presence there fall within the state's discretion, as a natural consequence of sovereignty. The rules that constrain this discretion are not the product of a general principle but of discrete treaty obligations (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021). A legal category is the trigger that determines for which persons these exceptions operate. In this chapter, "legal category" denotes a normative label that binds a given set of facts to a given set of obligations. A category is not a sociological description; it is a rule of attachment.

The present shape of these categories is the product of historical accretion. Under the League of Nations, protection turned on membership of a community rather than on the assessment of individual risk. The arrangements of the 1920s concerning Russian and Armenian refugees, together

with the 1933 and 1938 conventions, defined the person by reference to origin and the absence of national protection (Hathaway, 1984; Skran, 1995; Marrus, 1985). The Nansen passport system was the most concrete institutional instrument of this period: initiated in 1922 at the instigation of Fridtjof Nansen, the League's High Commissioner for Refugees, this document afforded identity and travel facilities to stateless Russian refugees on the basis of the origin group to which a person belonged, rather than any assessment of individual risk (Skran, 1995; Marrus, 1985). The system was gradually extended to cover Armenian, Assyrian, and Spanish refugees, yet each extension required a fresh group definition, so that protection remained tethered to a particular national or ethnic category (Hathaway, 1984). This juridical group-based identification gave way, with the 1951 Convention, to an individualised test: what now mattered was not a person's membership of a community but the well-founded fear of persecution borne by that person alone. This shift was not merely technical. In the political conjuncture of the Cold War, an individual's flight from their state could be read as a meaningful act within the rivalry between systems, and the Convention's originally Eurocentric construction cannot be understood apart from that context (Chimni, 1998; Haddad, 2008).

The term "international protection" carries this legacy while shifting in content according to the setting in which it is used. UNHCR's 1950 Statute, in defining the High Commissioner's mandate, places the refugee at its centre (UN General Assembly, 1950: para. 6). Over time this mandate expanded through successive General Assembly resolutions: Resolution 3274 (XXIX) of 1974 designated UNHCR as the body competent to receive claims under Article 11 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, Resolution 31/36 of 1976 confirmed this function after an initial trial period, and Resolution 50/152 of 1995 broadened the mandate further to stateless persons generally, independently of the 1961 Convention (UN General Assembly, 1974, 1976, 1995). Each resolution extended the organisation's reach to a population defined not by persecution but by the absence of a legal bond of nationality, an expansion returned to in Section 5.5 in connection with the relationship between statelessness and refugee status. The organisation began, over the same period, to use the broader phrase "persons of concern" to capture this widening mandate. In European Union law, international protection is defined as the sum of refugee status and subsidiary protection status (Directive 2011/95/EU, Art. 2(a)). Türkiye's Law No. 6458 follows the same logic, constructing international protection as a triad

of refugee, conditional refugee, and subsidiary protection statuses (Arts. 61-63). That the same term carries a functional meaning at UNHCR and a strictly statal meaning in EU and Turkish law is an early indication that the categories reflect an institutional choice more than a legal reality.

The sources of protection obligations can be grouped into four layers. The first layer is refugee law itself: the 1951 Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and the instruments that extend them regionally, namely the binding 1969 OAU Convention and the non-binding 1984 Cartagena Declaration. The second layer comprises the non-refoulement obligations of human rights law: Article 3 of the Convention against Torture, Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN Human Rights Committee, 2004), Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and Article 19(2) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The third layer is international humanitarian law: Article 45(4) of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the transfer of protected persons to a state where they fear persecution, but this provision does not create a status. The fourth layer consists of regimes devoted to specific fields, namely statelessness, migrant labour, and children's rights (the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons; the 1990 Migrant Workers Convention; Article 22 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child). National law is superimposed on these layers and typically supplies the actual content of a category. Table 1 compares the principal protection regimes within these layers along the dimensions of triggering risk, primary legal source, core state obligation, and the resulting bundle of rights.

Table 1. Comparative overview of the principal protection regimes

Regime	Trigger	Primary legal source	Core state obligation	Bundle of rights
Convention refugee	Well-founded fear of persecution linked to one of five grounds; presence outside country of origin	1951 Convention; 1967 Protocol	Non-refoulement (Art. 33); recognition of status	Most extensive bundle; rights expand incrementally with presence, lawful stay, and durable residence
Extended refugee (regional)	External aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order	OAU Convention (1969) Art. I(2); Cartagena Declaration (1984) III(3)	Treatment broadly analogous to Convention refugees at regional level	Governed by regional law; Cartagena is not binding

Regime	Trigger	Primary legal source	Core state obligation	Bundle of rights
Subsidiary / complementary protection	Risk of serious harm (death penalty, torture, indiscriminate violence, etc.); no ground required	ECHR Art. 3; CAT Art. 3; Directive 2011/95/EU Art. 15; Law No. 6458 Art. 63	Absolute non-refoulement; recognition of status at national level	Varies by national and EU law; typically shorter residence permit
Temporary protection	Mass influx; group-based determination	Directive 2001/55/EC; Law No. 6458 Art. 91; Regulation No. 2014/6883	Emergency admission; non-refoulement; protection without individual examination	Time-limited; defined minimum rights
Stateless person	Non-recognition as a national by any state	1954 Convention	Identity and travel documents; basic rights	Status recognised; confers no right of entry
Migrant worker	No protection trigger; rights-based protection	1990 Convention; general human rights law	Equal treatment in working and living conditions	Few states parties; confers no right of entry

The distinctions among the rows of the table are best read along three variables: which risk triggers the category, which state comes under which obligation, and what the content and duration of the resulting bundle of rights are. Hathaway's account of "surrogate protection" explains the first variable. On this view, international protection is a secondary mechanism that is engaged only when a person's own state fails to perform its protective function; poor living conditions alone do not suffice, what matters is the collapse of national protection (Hathaway, 1991; Hathaway and Foster, 2014). The requirement that a person be outside the country follows from this same logic. Human-rights-based complementary protection widens the trigger: no ground of persecution need be shown, and the reality of a risk of serious harm is sufficient (McAdam, 2007).

The regional instruments in the second row of the table depart from Hathaway's surrogate-protection logic more sharply than a first reading suggests. Article I(2) of the 1969 OAU Convention extends the refugee definition to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of their country, is compelled to leave their place of habitual residence to seek refuge elsewhere, while Conclusion III(3) of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration recommends the same extension to persons whose lives, safety, or freedom have been threatened by generalised violence, foreign aggres-

sion, internal conflict, massive violation of human rights, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order. Both formulations replace the 1951 Convention's subjective, individualised fear with an objective, event-based test, and both substitute "place of habitual residence" for "country of nationality," thereby severing the definition from any inquiry into the applicant's personal circumstances. This is not a minor variation on Hathaway's model but a genuinely different paradigm: protection is triggered by the objective fact of a disturbance, not by a demonstrated failure of the applicant's own state to protect that particular individual. Brazil's practice illustrates how consequential this doctrinal difference can be. On 14 June 2019 Brazil's National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) formally determined that Venezuela was experiencing a "serious and widespread violation of human rights" within the meaning of the Cartagena formula; the first batch of claims decided on this basis, 174 in number, was approved on 24 July 2019, and in December 2019 CONARE moved to a simplified, group-based procedure that dispensed with the individual interview altogether, provided the applicant could establish identity and the absence of a criminal record (UNHCR, 2019b). By the early 2020s this procedure had produced refugee recognition for tens of thousands of Venezuelan nationals, the largest population recognised as refugees under the Cartagena definition anywhere in the region (UNHCR, 2019b). Read together with the *Salimullah* decision discussed in Section 5.3, this comparison cautions against treating "the Global South" as a uniform category in refugee law: a regional definition may be considerably more generous than the 1951 Convention's individualised test even where, as in India, judicial enforcement of even the Convention's own core guarantee proves considerably weaker. Generosity of definition and strength of enforcement are, in other words, independent variables, which is precisely what the four-axis reading proposed in this chapter would predict.

The relationship between the second and third variables is less often noticed. The prohibition on refoulement is a negative obligation: it forbids the state only a specific act, namely returning a person to a state where they are at risk. Status, by contrast, is a positive bundle of rights: residence, employment, family reunification, travel documents. It is in the space between these two things that categories do their real work. A person may be under an absolute protection against refoulement and yet remain, for years, in legal limbo, enjoying only a limited set of rights (Edwards, 2005; McAdam, 2007).

Struggles over categories are therefore usually contests over the scope of rights that lie beyond the risk of return, rather than over that risk itself.

The category of migrant occupies a distinctive position within this scheme. There is no universally accepted legal definition of a migrant in international law. The International Organization for Migration's glossary defines a migrant broadly, as a person who leaves their own country to settle elsewhere, and expressly notes that the term denotes no legal status (IOM, 2019), while the United Nations statistical definition confines itself to persons resident for more than one year (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1998). Migrants' rights derive from general human rights law, that is, from guarantees owed to everyone within a state's jurisdiction (Costello, 2016); the 1990 Migrant Workers Convention has remained an instrument to which the principal migrant-receiving states are not party. The migrant category is thus not a subordinate class of protection law but the name of a field of rights that confers no right of entry.

Two global compacts, the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, have institutionally entrenched this distinction (UN General Assembly, 2018; UNHCR, 2018). Two separate non-binding instruments mean two separate institutional owners and two separate policy vocabularies. The 2016 New York Declaration, by contrast, emphasised that refugees and migrants are entitled to the same universal human rights (UN General Assembly, 2016). In other words, the international community institutionally separates the categories while simultaneously affirming the commonality of the underlying rights. This internal tension resurfaces, in different guises, at the level of definition, procedure, and complementary protection in the sections that follow.

Categories serve a further function: they supply a vocabulary for distributing responsibility among states. The preamble to the 1951 Convention acknowledges that the refugee problem, given its international scope and nature, cannot be satisfactorily resolved without inter-state cooperation, yet the Convention's operative text contains no binding burden-sharing mechanism (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021). This absence has produced a profound imbalance in the geographic distribution of the refugee population: according to UNHCR data, the overwhelming majority of the forcibly displaced are hosted in developing countries neighbouring refugee-producing states (UNHCR, 2026b). The 2018 Global Compact on Refugees responded to this imbalance with the non-binding Global Refugee Forum and voluntary contribution mechanisms, but it left burden-sharing at the level of a political

commitment to solidarity rather than a legal obligation (UNHCR, 2018). At this juncture the debate over categories and the debate over responsibility become inseparable: the question of which status a person is granted cannot be divorced from the question of which state bears the cost of that status; indeed, as will be discussed later in the chapter, this very question of cost distribution is the underlying impetus behind the European Union's reforms of temporary protection and the Dublin system.

2. The Refugee Definition: The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol

Article 1(A)(2) of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees remains the central norm of international refugee law. It defines a refugee as a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear unwilling, to avail themselves of the protection of that country. The definition can be broken down into six elements: well-founded fear, persecution, a causal nexus, one of five grounds, presence outside the country, and inability or unwillingness to avail oneself of state protection (Hathaway and Foster, 2014; Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021). Each of these elements has, over the decades, generated its own body of case law and doctrine.

The context in which the Convention arose explains the limits the definition still carries today. Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised the right to seek asylum from persecution, but this right was never converted into a state obligation; granting asylum has remained a prerogative of the state rather than a right of the individual (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021). Article 1(B) of the Convention initially confined the scope of protection to events occurring in Europe or before 1951; this geographic and temporal limitation was lifted by the 1967 Protocol. That removal was not a mere technical correction; it was the decisive step that transformed refugee law from a product of Europe's post-war political memory into a universal regime (Zimmermann, 2011). According to UNHCR's most recent count, 149 states are party to the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol (UNHCR, 2026a); Türkiye, however, is among the small number of states that have retained the geographic limitation and continues to grant Convention refugee status only to persons arriving from Europe (Law No. 6458, Art. 61). This exception, discussed in detail below, is the underlying reason for the tripartite status architecture of Turkish law.

The element of well-founded fear requires the joint assessment of a subjective and an objective component. The subjective component concerns whether the person genuinely fears; the objective component, whether that fear rests on a reasonable basis (UNHCR, 1979/2019: para. 38). In practice, decision-makers increasingly emphasise the objective element, moving toward a test of reasonable possibility supported by country-of-origin information rather than the applicant's own subjective narrative. The United States Supreme Court's decision in *INS v. Cardoza-Fonseca* made clear that the "well-founded fear" standard does not require certainty but is satisfied by a reasonable likelihood of persecution (INS v. Cardoza-Fonseca, 480 U.S. 421, 1987). The UNHCR Handbook notes that even a probability as low as roughly one in ten may satisfy this threshold (UNHCR, 1979/2019: para. 42).

The Convention does not itself define persecution. The dominant doctrinal approach reads persecution as the systematic and serious violation of fundamental human rights; the human-rights-based approach developed by Hathaway and Foster (2014) proposes determining which rights violations meet the persecution threshold by reference to the hierarchy of international human rights norms. This approach distinguishes persecution from mere discrimination or inconvenience while bringing within its scope such serious violations as torture, arbitrary detention, forced marriage, and the wholesale denial of political participation. The agent of persecution need not be the state: where the state is unable or unwilling to provide protection, persecution originating from non-state actors also falls within the definition (UK House of Lords, *Horvath v. Secretary of State for the Home Department*, 2000; Supreme Court of Canada, *Canada (AG) v. Ward*, 1993).

The five grounds, race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, and political opinion, constitute the most contested element of the definition. These grounds were not chosen to limit arbitrarily the causes of persecution but reflected the political priorities of the Cold War era; gender-based persecution or flight from generalised violence, for instance, may fall outside the definition's scope (Chimni, 1998). The category of membership of a particular social group has become the principal device for stretching this gap. The Canadian Supreme Court's decision in *Ward* divided social groups into three sub-categories: groups defined by an innate or unchangeable characteristic; groups defined by a characteristic that, although once voluntarily shared, has become so fundamental to identity that a person ought not be compelled to abandon it; and groups whose membership is defined by the ordinary operation of the state (Canada (AG) v. Ward, 1993). United

States case law has added to this the criteria of "social visibility" and "particularity" (Matter of M-E-V-G-, 26 I&N Dec. 227, BIA 2014). Within this framework, gender-based persecution, persecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and family membership have progressively been brought within the scope of particular social group (UNHCR, 2002a, 2002b, 2012).

One of the most concrete testing grounds for the social-group category concerns women who are victims of domestic violence. The UK House of Lords decisions in *Islam v. Secretary of State for the Home Department* and *R v. Immigration Appeal Tribunal, ex parte Shah* accepted that women in Pakistan subjected to violence by their husbands, and to whom the state failed to provide effective protection against that violence, could constitute members of a particular social group defined as "women in Pakistan"; the decision emphasised that, alongside an immutable shared characteristic (sex), the group must also be perceived by society as a distinct and separate cohort (Islam and Shah, [1999] UKHL 20). The United States Board of Immigration Appeals reached a comparable conclusion in *Matter of A-R-C-G-*, holding that the group of "married women in Guatemala who are unable to leave their relationship" satisfied the criteria of immutability, social visibility, and particularity (Matter of A-R-C-G-, 26 I&N Dec. 388, BIA 2014). This line of authority has drawn into the definition, through an interpretation that questions the public-private divide, a type of risk the definition did not originally contemplate; UNHCR's guidance on gender-related persecution reinforces this reading through the principle that a state's failure to protect against violence by private actors can render the resulting persecution attributable to the state (UNHCR, 2002a).

The causal nexus requires that the persecution be established as occurring "for reasons of" one of the five grounds. Whether this nexus turns on the subjective intent of the agent of persecution or on the objective effect of the persecution is particularly contested in claims involving mixed motives. The High Court of Australia's decision in *Chan v. Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs*, together with subsequent case law, has accepted that a ground need not be the sole cause of persecution; it suffices that it make an operative contribution (Chan v. Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, 1989).

The requirement of presence outside the country marks the geographic boundary of the definition and is directly connected to Hathaway's surrogate-protection logic: international protection can be engaged only once a

person has moved beyond the reach of their own state's protection (Hathaway, 1991). This condition excludes persons displaced within their own country from the definition; such persons fall instead within domestic law and the UN Guiding Principles (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1998). It is likewise immaterial whether the moment of leaving the country precedes or follows the emergence of the fear of persecution: "refugees sur place," that is, persons who face a risk of persecution owing to events arising after their departure (a change of regime, or political activity undertaken while in exile), also fall within the definition (UNHCR, 1979/2019: paras. 94-96). The sur place doctrine is, in fact, the clearest illustration of the Vienna Convention interpretive method announced in the introduction: nothing in the ordinary meaning of Article 1(A)(2) addresses the temporal sequence between departure and the emergence of risk, yet reading the provision in light of the Convention's object and purpose, namely the protection of persons who cannot safely return, leaves no coherent basis for excluding a person whose risk crystallises only after they have left. The text is silent; the object and purpose of the treaty resolves the silence.

The element of inability or unwillingness to avail oneself of state protection gives rise to the debate over the internal protection alternative. Where a safe area exists within the country of origin that a person could reasonably reach and settle in, international protection, given its subsidiary character, may be displaced. UNHCR stresses that this assessment must incorporate both a relevance test and a reasonableness test; physical safety alone is insufficient, and it must also be shown that the person could lead a life of dignity in that area (UNHCR, 2003a). In EU law this criterion is codified in Article 8 of Directive 2011/95/EU.

Individualised evidentiary assessment is central to the definition's application. The UNHCR Handbook states that the burden of proof is shared between the applicant and the decision-maker, that certainty is not required and reasonable likelihood suffices, and that the benefit of the doubt applies once the applicant's general credibility has been established (UNHCR, 1979/2019: paras. 196, 203-204). This procedural relaxation reflects refugee law's recognition of the evidentiary gap in which the asylum seeker typically finds themselves; a person is often compelled to flee without being able to produce documentary proof.

The transposition of the 1951 definition into European Union law took place through Directive 2011/95/EU, the Qualification Directive. The Directive largely preserves the elements of the Convention while codifying, in

greater detail, acts of persecution (Art. 9) and persecution originating from non-state actors (Art. 6(c)). The Court of Justice of the European Union's decision in *Salahadin Abdulla* confirmed that the Directive must be interpreted consistently with the Convention, while also being capable of going beyond the Convention's minimum standard (Salahadin Abdulla and Others, C-175/08 and others, 2010). The Court's decision in *X, Y and Z* held that sexual orientation falls within the scope of particular social group, but that criminalisation alone does not amount to persecution; what must be examined is whether the criminal penalty is actually enforced (X, Y and Z v. Minister voor Immigratie en Asiel, C-199/12, C-200/12, C-201/12, 2013).

The definition is complemented by the provisions on cessation and exclusion. Article 1(C) of the Convention sets out six circumstances in which status ceases, prominent among them a refugee's voluntary re-availment of the protection of their country of nationality and the "ceased circumstances" clause, applied where the conditions underlying persecution no longer obtain (Art. 1(C)(5)-(6)). UNHCR emphasises that the ceased-circumstances clause applies only where there has been a fundamental, stable, and durable change; a temporary lull does not suffice (UNHCR, 2003b). The exclusion clauses appear in Article 1(F) and remove from the definition's scope persons who have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, a crime against humanity, a serious non-political crime prior to admission as a refugee, or acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Ezokola v. Canada* held that exclusion requires proof of the individual's knowing and significant contribution to the crime, and that senior standing within an organisation or government is not, by itself, sufficient (Ezokola v. Canada, 2013 SCC 40). The function of the exclusion clauses is not punitive; it is to safeguard the integrity of the protection regime by preventing the perpetrator from sharing the same status as the victim (Gilbert, 2003).

The definition also has a field of application independent of state will, namely the mandate refugees falling under UNHCR's own competence. Article 35 of the Convention obliges states parties to cooperate with UNHCR in the exercise of its functions, in particular by facilitating its duty to supervise the application of the Convention's provisions. This supervisory competence, under UNHCR's own Statute, also provides the basis for UNHCR to conduct its own independent status determination, under its own definition, where a state is not party to the Convention or applies the refugee de-

finition narrowly (UN General Assembly, 1950: paras. 6-7). Such a determination creates no status binding on the state concerned, but does enable the person to benefit from UNHCR's protection and, typically, from access to resettlement processes (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021). UNHCR's mandate-based status determination has historically served a complementary function in states that either are not party to the Convention or apply a geographic limitation, including, in Türkiye, for persons arriving from outside Europe; prior to the entry into force of Law No. 6458, status determination for such persons was conducted largely by UNHCR (Kirişçi, 2007).

Under Turkish law, the definition is bifurcated as a consequence of the geographic limitation. Article 61 of Law No. 6458 grants refugee status to persons who satisfy the definitional requirements as a result of events occurring in European countries, while Article 62 provides "conditional refugee" status for persons arriving from outside Europe who satisfy the same requirements. A conditional refugee may remain in Türkiye pending resettlement to a third country; this arrangement preserves the material elements of the definition while narrowing its geographic scope, a distinction that in practice has proven decisive particularly for third-country nationals who are not Syrian. The definitional provisions of the Law reproduce almost verbatim the five grounds and the element of persecution found in the 1951 Convention; the real difference emerges in the geographic scope of the status and the corresponding bundle of rights.

3. Asylum-Seeker Status and Procedures

An asylum seeker is a person awaiting the recognition of status; the difference between refugee and asylum seeker is not a difference in rights but a difference in the moment of recognition. UNHCR's oft-repeated principle is that recognition of status is declaratory, not constitutive: a person is a refugee from the moment they satisfy the definitional requirements of the Convention, prior to any determination by a state or by UNHCR (UNHCR, 1979/2019: para. 28). The recognition procedure does not create this status; it merely ascertains it. This principle is the doctrinal foundation for why asylum seekers, throughout the procedure, are entitled to protection against refoulement, against arbitrary detention, and to certain basic rights: although not yet "recognised," the possibility that the person is a refugee constrains how the state may treat them.

The legal content of the asylum-seeker concept, by contrast, is far less standardised than that of the refugee concept. The 1951 Convention contains no provision on asylum procedure whatsoever; procedure is a matter

each state regulates under its own domestic law (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021). This gap has produced considerable divergence in asylum procedures across states: some systems provide for a single-stage administrative examination, while others establish multi-stage administrative and judicial review mechanisms. Within the European Union, a common procedural framework has been developed to reduce this divergence; the 2024 Asylum Procedures Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 has replaced the earlier Directive 2013/32/EU and, as part of the final reform package of the Common European Asylum System, has become a directly applicable regulation (European Parliament and Council, 2024). The Regulation provides for several tracks with differing speeds and levels of safeguard, namely the border procedure, the accelerated procedure, and the normal procedure.

The principle of non-refoulement lies at the heart of the asylum procedure. Article 33(1) of the 1951 Convention provides that no state shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. UNHCR's Executive Committee has confirmed that this principle applies equally at the point of admission at the border, that is, a state may not send a person to a place where they face a risk of persecution even before formally admitting them to its territory (UNHCR Executive Committee, No. 6, 1977). The United States Supreme Court's decision in *Sale v. Haitian Centers Council* departed from this reading, holding that Article 33 does not apply to a state's actions on the high seas, outside its own territory (Sale v. Haitian Centers Council, 509 U.S. 155, 1993). This decision is a clear illustration that refugee law does not speak with one voice at the international level, and that the question of geographic scope remains unsettled.

The European Court of Human Rights has constructed the prohibition on refoulement through Article 3 of the ECHR on a basis independent of, and broader than, the 1951 Convention. *Soering v. United Kingdom* held that a state effecting extradition may incur responsibility where substantial grounds exist for believing that the person would face treatment contrary to Article 3 (Soering v. United Kingdom, App. No. 14038/88, 1989). *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy* extended this protection to persons intercepted and returned on the high seas, finding that migrants returned by Italy to Libya fell within the jurisdiction of the Italian state vessel and that Article 3 had been violated (Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy, App. No. 27765/09, 2012).

This decision offers a striking example of human rights law's broader conception of jurisdiction overriding the geographic limits of refugee law proper. *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* held that, where the asylum and reception conditions in another Member State to which an asylum seeker is transferred under the Dublin system reach the Article 3 threshold, the transferring state may also incur responsibility (M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece, App. No. 30696/09, 2011).

The Turkish Constitutional Court operates the non-refoulement obligation through the prohibition on ill-treatment in Article 17 of the Constitution, applying a standard of review that parallels, yet remains independent of, Strasbourg's case law. According to the Court's settled jurisprudence, the obligation of the administration and of the ordinary courts, in the context of a deportation measure, is to determine whether the risk of ill-treatment in the receiving country exceeds mere possibility and rises to a real and arguable level; once an applicant substantiates a claim based on ethnicity, religious belief, political opinion, or membership of a particular group, the burden of proving the absence of such a risk shifts to the administration (Constitutional Court, 2015/3941, 1 March 2017). The Court has further emphasised that this duty of inquiry is not obviated by the fact that the receiving state is a member of the Council of Europe or a party to the ECHR, a finding of some importance for the argument, developed in Section 5.1, that Türkiye's geographic limitation does not, in itself, weaken the domestic review of non-refoulement. A more recent Plenary decision confirmed that removal to a third country is likewise subject to the same scrutiny where it carries a risk of indirect refoulement, that is, of onward removal from that third country to the country of origin (Constitutional Court, Hooman Hosseinpour, App. No. 2019/24514, 29 September 2022).

This robust European line might suggest that the non-refoulement principle applies with uniform binding force everywhere; the judicial practice of states not party to the Convention tells a different story. The decision of the Supreme Court of India in *Mohammad Salimullah v. Union of India* is instructive in this regard. The Court declined to halt the deportation of detained Rohingya asylum seekers to Myanmar, holding that, since India is not a party to the 1951 Convention, the principle of non-refoulement could not be imported into domestic law through Article 51(c) of the Constitution (Mohammad Salimullah v. Union of India, W.P. (C) No. 793/2017, 8 April 2021). The decision stands in evident tension with the doctrinal position that treats

the principle as a norm of customary international law with universal binding force (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021), and it demonstrates that the practical force of non-refoulement derives chiefly from a culture of judicial review capable of giving it effect, and from the extent to which the state concerned is party to human rights treaties, rather than from the principle's standing in the abstract. Read alongside the Turkish Constitutional Court's jurisprudence discussed above, the Indian Supreme Court's decision shows that the same principle can produce diametrically opposed outcomes within two different constitutional orders, and that the strength of non-refoulement protection depends substantially on the constitutional architecture of the domestic legal system in question.

The Court of Justice of the European Union's decision in *N.S. v. Secretary of State for the Home Department* confirmed the same logic within EU law, holding that the rebuttable presumption underlying the system, namely that Member States could not be unaware that an asylum seeker transferred to another Member State faced a risk of inhuman or degrading treatment within the meaning of Article 4 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights on account of deficiencies in that state's asylum procedure or reception conditions, is capable of being rebutted (N.S. v. Secretary of State for the Home Department, C-411/10 and C-493/10, 2011). Read together, these two decisions show that the concepts of "safe third country" and "mutual trust" are not absolute but are constrained by empirical conditions.

A subset of the asylum procedure requiring particular safeguards concerns unaccompanied children. The best-interests principle in Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is an interpretive principle that must govern every stage of the asylum procedure, from the appointment of a guardian and age assessment to the manner of interview and the final decision (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005, General Comment No. 6). In EU law this principle is given concrete effect through the Asylum Procedures Regulation's specific provisions on guardianship for unaccompanied children, exemption from the border procedure, and the benefit of the doubt in age assessment (European Parliament and Council, 2024, Arts. 22-23, 53). Because medical methods of age assessment carry an inherent degree of uncertainty, doctrine and UNHCR guidance both recommend that such methods be used only where serious doubt exists and only as one element within a multidimensional assessment, encompassing physical, psychological, and developmental factors, rather than as determinative in itself (UNHCR, 1997, Policy on Unaccompanied Children).

Three elements stand out among the procedural safeguards: an effective remedy, individualised assessment, and the incorporation of country-of-origin information into the procedure. The European Court of Human Rights' decision in *Jabari v. Turkey* held that subjecting an asylum claim to judicial review lacking automatic suspensive effect may violate the right to an effective remedy under Article 13 of the ECHR (Jabari v. Turkey, App. No. 40035/98, 2000). The EU Asylum Procedures Regulation partially codifies this line of authority, providing a minimum guarantee of legal assistance and an effective remedy across all procedural tracks, including the border procedure (European Parliament and Council, 2024, Arts. 15-16, 68).

The border procedure is among the most contested variants of asylum procedure: a person is examined at the border or in a transit zone, without being formally admitted to the state's territory, typically while deprived of liberty and within accelerated time limits. The 2024 Asylum Procedures Regulation obliges Member States to apply the border procedure in certain circumstances, such as the use of false documents, a low recognition rate for the country of origin, or a threat to public order or security, and caps the procedure at a maximum of twelve weeks (European Parliament and Council, 2024, Arts. 43-51). Scholars emphasise that the border procedure carries two structural risks at once: effective deprivation of liberty, and a superficial individual assessment resulting from the accelerated timeframe (Moreno-Lax, 2017). This risk is compounded for children and other vulnerable groups; the Regulation accordingly exempts unaccompanied children, as a rule, from the border procedure (European Parliament and Council, 2024, Art. 53(1)). The geographic concentration of the border procedure is also significant: in practice it is applied predominantly in Member States along the external border, thereby reproducing, at the procedural level, the very burden-distribution problem noted in Section 5.1.

The personal interview, which lies at the core of the procedure, is the stage at which evidentiary assessment actually occurs. The 2024 Asylum Procedures Regulation guarantees that the interview be conducted in a language the applicant understands, with a qualified interpreter where necessary, by an interviewer sensitive to the applicant's gender, and that the interview record be read back to, or made accessible to, the applicant (European Parliament and Council, 2024, Arts. 13-14). A recurrent error in credibility assessment is to treat inconsistencies in an applicant's narrative as automatic indicators of fabrication, without regard to cultural difference; the UNHCR Handbook stresses that trauma, the passage of time, and cultural differences

in narration can all affect memory and expression, and that minor inconsistencies do not undermine credibility so long as they do not touch the substance of the claim (UNHCR, 1979/2019: paras. 198-202). This approach reflects a deliberate choice to distinguish the evidentiary standard of refugee law from the standard of certainty beyond reasonable doubt applied in criminal proceedings, given that the applicant's situation is, as a rule, one in which documentary proof is simply unobtainable in the course of flight.

Under Turkish law, the asylum procedure is set out in the fourth part of Law No. 6458. Applications are made to the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management; the applicant receives a registration document and is entitled to remain in the country for the duration of the examination (Arts. 65, 69). The Law recognises a right to bring an action for annulment before the administrative courts against the rejection of an international protection application (Art. 53). Türkiye's geographic limitation, however, channels applicants arriving from outside Europe into conditional-refugee rather than refugee status, so that although the procedure is the same, the legal character and durability of the resulting status differ. In addition, individual asylum procedure for Syrian nationals has largely been suspended in favour of the group-based temporary protection regime, a matter returned to in Section 5.4.

A further instrument frequently invoked by states at the outset of the asylum procedure is the administrative detention of the asylum seeker. Article 31(1) of the 1951 Convention provides that refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened, enter or are present without authorisation, present themselves without delay to the authorities, and show good cause for their unlawful entry or presence shall not be penalised on account of that unlawful entry or presence. This provision reflects a foundational assumption of refugee law: it is frequently impossible, as a practical matter, for a person fleeing persecution to depart with properly obtained documents, and irregular entry cannot therefore be treated, in itself, as an indicator of unreliability or unlawfulness (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021). The Article does not, however, prohibit detention outright; it prohibits only penal sanction. UNHCR's Executive Committee Conclusion No. 44 states that detention should be the exception rather than the rule, and may be applied, subject to the principle of proportionality, only for limited and legitimate purposes such as verifying identity, determining the elements on which the asylum claim is based, addressing cases in which

the person has concealed their nationality or claim, or protecting public order and security (UNHCR Executive Committee, No. 44, 1986). The European Court of Human Rights' decision in *Saadi v. United Kingdom* held that an asylum seeker may be detained under Article 5(1)(f) of the ECHR to prevent an unauthorised entry, but that such detention must not be arbitrary and must be applied in good faith and for a duration proportionate to its purpose (Saadi v. United Kingdom, App. No. 13229/03, 2008). In EU law, Directive 2013/33/EU on reception conditions enumerates a limited, exhaustive list of grounds for detention and adopts the principle that detention is a measure of last resort, to be applied only once alternatives have first been considered (Arts. 8-9).

The Turkish Constitutional Court's jurisprudence on administrative detention has given concrete effect, at the level of domestic law, to the same proportionality review. In its *K.A.* decision, the Plenary held that the conditions of accommodation of an applicant held at the Kumkapı Removal Centre pending deportation were inadequate to a degree incompatible with human dignity, in violation of Articles 17 and 40 of the Constitution; the decision established that the lawfulness of administrative detention depends not solely on its stated justification but also on the physical conditions in which it is actually carried out (Constitutional Court, K.A., App. No. 2014/13044, 11 November 2015 [Plenary]). This line of authority constitutes a parallel guarantee, overlapping with the non-penalisation principle in Article 31 of the 1951 Convention but resting on an independent constitutional foundation, namely the prohibition on ill-treatment and the right to an effective remedy.

A further distinctive feature of the asylum procedure within the European Union is the Dublin system, which determines which Member State is responsible for examining a given application. Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013, the Dublin III Regulation, determines the responsible state by reference to, in order, family unity, the possession of a valid residence document or visa, and the Member State of first irregular entry (Arts. 7-15). The system rests on a "single application" principle: a person may lodge an asylum application in only one Member State, and an application made in a Member State other than the responsible one becomes, in the first instance, the subject of a transfer decision to the responsible state. The *M.S.S.* and *N.S.* decisions discussed above have shown that this presumption of automatic transfer is constrained by human rights law. The restructuring of the

Dublin system as part of the 2024 reform package, together with the addition of a solidarity mechanism under the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (EU) 2024/1351, represents an institutional response to the unsustainability of placing responsibility solely on the state of first entry (European Parliament and Council, 2024b). The new Regulation enables Member States to contribute to the responsible state, in a flexible manner, through a "solidarity pool" involving relocation of persons, financial contributions, or operational support (Arts. 56-66).

Among the most contested areas of the asylum procedure in practice are the concepts of "safe third country" and "safe country of origin." These concepts allow an application to be rejected without examination on the merits, or to be channelled into an accelerated procedure. Scholars emphasise that these instruments risk weakening the principle of individual assessment, and that the presumption of safety must remain rebuttable in the individual case (Costello, 2016; Moreno-Lax, 2017). The 2024 reform of the EU Asylum Procedures Regulation preserves these concepts while maintaining the requirement that a safe-country designation rest on objective and up-to-date information, and that the applicant retain the possibility of arguing that the presumption does not hold in their particular circumstances (European Parliament and Council, 2024, Arts. 59-61).

The safe-third-country presumption is, in Gammeltoft-Hansen's account, one instrument within a wider repertoire of migration control that developed states have projected beyond their own territory: interdiction at sea, carrier sanctions, visa regimes, and agreements that shift the processing, or the presence, of asylum seekers onto other states (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2011). Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan describe the cumulative effect of these measures as a "deterrence paradigm," a policy architecture that treats the prevention of arrival, rather than the protection of the person who arrives, as the primary object of asylum policy, and they identify a growing tension between this paradigm and the legal obligations, chief among them non-refoulement, that developed states continue formally to accept (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan, 2017). The United Kingdom's agreement with Rwanda, concluded in 2022 under a Migration and Economic Development Partnership, was among the most far-reaching recent instances of this architecture: it proposed not merely to reject claims at the border but to remove asylum seekers to Rwanda for the substantive determination of their claims there, irrespective of the merits of the claim or any connection between the claimant and Rwanda. The UK Supreme Court's unanimous decision in *R*

(AAA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department held the scheme unlawful, finding that Rwanda's asylum system suffered from structural deficiencies, that its record included a documented failure to honour a materially similar non-refoulement undertaking given to Israel, and that the government had therefore failed to establish the substantial grounds required to treat Rwanda as safe (R (AAA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department, [2023] UKSC 42). The Court went further than the safe-country doctrine strictly required, observing that the courts, and not the executive alone, bear responsibility for independently assessing the risk of refoulement, and suggesting, in an obiter passage of some consequence, that non-refoulement is arguably a rule of customary international law that binds a state irrespective of which treaties it has ratified. The scheme was abandoned in 2024 following a change of government, before a single individual had been removed under it, a detail that illustrates Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan's broader claim that deterrence policies face escalating legal and political costs even where they are not directly defeated by a court on their merits.

4. Complementary and Temporary Protection

The five-ground limitation of the 1951 Convention, together with its requirement of an individual procedure, has produced two distinct gaps in practice. The first concerns persons who face a risk of serious harm without being able to show a ground of persecution; indiscriminate armed conflict, the death penalty, and the risk of torture fall into this category but do not always coincide with one of the Convention's five grounds. The second concerns the practical unworkability of individual procedure in situations of mass influx. Complementary protection has developed in response to the first gap, temporary protection in response to the second. Neither regime displaces refugee status; each fills the space it leaves behind, according to a different logic.

The doctrinal foundation of complementary protection lies in the absolute non-refoulement prohibitions of human rights law. Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment prohibits, without any exception, the return of a person to a state where they face a risk of torture; unlike the security exception under Article 33(2) of refugee law, this prohibition is absolute (Committee against Torture, subsequent elaborations of 1997 General Comment No. 1; McAdam, 2007). Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights carries the same absolute character; the European Court of Human Rights' decision in *Saadi v. Italy* made clear that not even a national-security justification can

displace Article 3 protection (Saadi v. Italy, App. No. 37201/06, 2008). This absoluteness is the first feature distinguishing complementary protection from refugee status: whereas refugee status can, under Article 33(2), be subject to exception in cases of serious crime or a security threat, the non-refoulement prohibition grounded in the risk of torture or ill-treatment admits of no such exception.

In European Union law, complementary protection has been codified under the name "subsidiary protection." Article 15 of the Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU) defines serious harm under three headings: the death penalty or execution; torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and, in situations of international or internal armed conflict, a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence. The third heading has received an important interpretation in the Court of Justice of the European Union's decision in *Elgafaji*: the Court held that the more indiscriminate violence there is, the lower the degree of proof required of the applicant's individual circumstances, such that mere presence in the affected region may suffice where the level of indiscriminate violence is exceptionally high (Elgafaji v. Staatssecretaris van Justitie, C-465/07, 2009). This decision opened the door to a situational, collective assessment of risk distinct from the individualised logic of persecution.

Subsidiary protection status carries a more limited bundle of rights than refugee status; the Directive sets the minimum duration of the residence permit at three years for refugees and one year for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (2011/95/EU, Art. 24). This differential has been criticised in the literature as a "hierarchy of protection": although the same state accepts the same absolute risk of refoulement, the rights conferred by status differ according to the door through which the person entered (McAdam, 2007; Costello, 2016). The counterpart under Turkish law is subsidiary protection status under Article 63 of Law No. 6458, which enumerates the death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and indiscriminate violence arising from armed conflict, largely reproducing the tripartite structure of the EU Directive.

Temporary protection is a mechanism developed in response to mass and sudden population movements, one that suspends individual status determination. Early conclusions of UNHCR's Executive Committee emphasised that individual refugee status determination becomes practically impossible in situations of mass influx, and that group-based approaches involving immediate admission are therefore necessary (UNHCR Executive Committee,

No. 22, 1981). The European experience following the Kosovo crisis laid the groundwork for the institutionalisation of this mechanism, and in 2001 the European Union adopted Council Directive 2001/55/EC on temporary protection. The Directive encourages solidarity and burden-sharing among Member States while making the determination of a mass-influx situation contingent on a Council decision adopted by qualified majority (Art. 5). The Directive lay entirely unused for twenty years, and was activated for the first time only following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, through the Council Implementing Decision of 4 March 2022 (Council of the European Union, Decision 2022/382). This delay is a striking illustration of the gap between the legal existence of a mechanism and its political usability.

The Ukrainian experience has given concrete substance to the operation of temporary protection. By removing the requirement of an individual asylum application, the mechanism provided immediate residence permits, the right to work, accommodation, social assistance, medical care, and access to education for children (2001/55/EC, Arts. 8-14). Protection was initially granted for one year, designed to be extended automatically should the underlying conditions persist (Art. 4). In practice, the mechanism has been repeatedly extended: the Council of the European Union most recently extended the period of protection to 4 March 2027 in July 2025 (Council of the European Union, 2025), and then extended it once more, to 4 March 2028, in July 2026 (Council of the European Union, 2026). By the end of 2025, approximately 4.5 million people across the European Union were benefiting from temporary protection status (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026). The Council has also adopted a coordinated recommendation on the transition out of temporary protection, advising Member States to pursue a phased exit strategy once conditions in Ukraine permit a safe and sustainable return (Council of the European Union, 2025b). The Court of Justice of the European Union's decision in *Krasiliva* confirmed that, where a beneficiary of temporary protection is already protected in another Member State, a second Member State may refuse a new application for temporary protection, since duplicated protection is incompatible with the logic of the system (Krasiliva, C-753/23, 2025).

A striking feature of the Ukrainian experience is the debate over discrimination in the mechanism's application, that is, over for whom, precisely, temporary protection has been activated. Decision 2022/382 extended protection primarily to Ukrainian nationals and their family members, together

with third-country nationals holding international protection status in Ukraine, but left the protection of third-country nationals who held a temporary residence permit in Ukraine before 24 February 2022 and could not safely and durably return to their own country to the discretion of the Member States (Art. 2). This distinction, which opened different legal pathways for different nationalities fleeing the same war, has been criticised in civil-society and academic writing; some Member States interpreted this discretion broadly, others narrowly (Ineli-Ciger, 2025; European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026).

That the Directive lay dormant for twenty years is instructive as to how political, rather than strictly legal, the mass-influx threshold in practice is. During the European "refugee crisis" of 2015-2016, the simultaneous lodging of asylum applications by approximately 1.3 million people, predominantly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, appeared, as a factual matter, to satisfy the Directive's definition of "mass influx," yet the Council did not activate the mechanism, opting instead for voluntary, temporary resettlement and relocation programmes (Ineli-Ciger, 2018). This preference was political rather than legal in its underlying rationale: the absence of consensus among Member States on burden-sharing made it difficult to assume the automatic and comprehensive obligation of admission that the mechanism entails. The speed and near-unanimity with which the mechanism was activated following Russia's invasion of Ukraine throws this contrast into sharp relief; scholars have read it as evidence that the same legal threshold can be applied at markedly different speeds depending on political will, even where the criterion itself remains unchanged (Ineli-Ciger, 2018). This observation connects directly to the political dimension of category selection discussed in detail in Section 5.5.

The trajectory of temporary protection in the Ukrainian case is also notable for showing how a mechanism defined in law as "temporary" can, in practice, be prolonged indefinitely. Table 2 summarises the successive extension decisions.

Table 2. Successive extensions of the EU temporary protection mechanism for Ukraine

Decision	Date	End of protection period
Initial activation: Council Implementing Decision 2022/382	4 March 2022	4 March 2023
Automatic first extension (Directive Art. 4(2))	(By operation of the Directive)	4 March 2024

Decision	Date	End of protection period
Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2409	2023	4 March 2025
Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836	June 2024	4 March 2026
Council Implementing Decision (July 2025)	July 2025	4 March 2027
Council Implementing Decision (July 2026)	July 2026	4 March 2028

Source: The basis of Directive 2001/55/EC and the relevant Council Implementing Decisions (Council of the European Union, 2022, 2025, 2026).

This trajectory makes two points apparent. First, the Directive's own maximum duration of three years (Art. 4(2)) has, in practice, been superseded by successive implementing decisions; scholars have criticised this pattern as a form of "temporary prolonged protection" at odds with the letter of the Directive (Ineli-Ciger, 2025). Second, each extension decision defers not only the duration of protection but also, for a further year, the political uncertainty over when and how the mechanism will ultimately end, an uncertainty that constitutes a distinct problem for the medium- and long-term life planning of persons under protection (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026).

The trajectory of temporary protection under the Ukraine mechanism, notwithstanding its legal designation as "temporary," began to be tested in practice following the fall of the Assad regime in Syria in December 2024. Under Turkish law, temporary protection is regulated by Article 91 of Law No. 6458 and the implementing Temporary Protection Regulation No. 2014/6883. The provision enables protection to be extended, without recourse to individual international-protection status determination, to foreign nationals who have been compelled to leave their country, cannot return to the country they have left, and have arrived at or crossed the border en masse for urgent and temporary protection. This regime has applied to asylum seekers arriving from Syria since April 2011; the Regulation governs matters such as the temporary protection identity document, health care, education, social assistance, and work permits (Regulation No. 2014/6883, Arts. 25-30). The Turkish case is instructive in showing that temporary protection can, over a period exceeding a decade, harden into a durable state of statuslessness; the "temporariness" in the concept's name has become an expression of political expectation rather than a legal time limit (Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel, 2017; İçduygu, 2015). According to figures from the Ministry of the

Interior, the Syrian population under temporary protection, which had reached its peak of approximately 3,737,000 in 2021, had fallen to roughly 2,280,000 by mid-2026 amid accelerating voluntary returns following the change of regime, with a cumulative total of more than 1.4 million people having voluntarily returned to Syria since 2016 (Rudaw, 2026; NTV, 2026). This trajectory is consistent with the institutional logic of temporary protection, which was designed as a bridge valid until conditions for return materialise rather than as a durable status in its own right. Yet the fact that return rests on the principle of voluntariness is, as the Presidency of Migration Management itself has stressed, an administrative undertaking rather than a legal requirement; the extent to which return is in fact a free choice after more than thirteen years of temporary protection remains a separate matter for empirical inquiry.

Alongside complementary and temporary protection, refugee law has developed a third complementary avenue, gathered under the heading of durable solutions: resettlement and complementary pathways. UNHCR treats durable solutions under three headings, namely voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement (UNHCR, 2003c). Resettlement is the transfer, with a permanent right of residence, of refugees whose access to protection, safety, or specific needs remains inadequate in the country of first asylum, to a third country; it is not a right of the individual but a humanitarian programme dependent on the sovereign discretion of states and facilitated by UNHCR (UNHCR, 2011). Global resettlement quotas meet only a small fraction of the refugee population in need; this shortfall is the rationale behind the 2016 New York Declaration and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees adding complementary pathways, namely work and study visas, family reunification, and humanitarian visa programmes, to the repertoire of durable solutions (UNHCR, 2018; UN General Assembly, 2016). These pathways do not displace refugee status; they provide access to protection through a legal door distinct from the classical asylum procedure and, in this sense, constitute a hybrid mechanism that shares the administrative burden of asylum systems with migration-management instruments (UNHCR, 2019a).

5. Distinctions: Refugee, Asylum Seeker, Migrant, Displaced Person

The categories examined in the preceding sections are not hierarchical rungs arranged along a single classificatory axis. Each answers a different question, and the same person may accordingly occupy more than one category, at different moments or even simultaneously. This section compares

the four categories along four distinct axes, examining why they overlap and why that overlap does not, in law, constitute a problem.

The distinction between refugee and asylum seeker is, as noted above, a distinction in the moment of recognition; both are potential or actual subjects of the same material definition (1951 Convention, Art. 1(A)(2)). An asylum seeker is a person whose status has not yet been determined, whether administratively or judicially, and who already benefits, during that period of waiting, from a portion of the minimum guarantees afforded to a refugee, in particular the principle of non-refoulement (UNHCR, 1979/2019: para. 28). A conceptually mistaken but politically widespread usage reserves the term "asylum seeker" for persons whose applications have been, or are expected to be, rejected, and "refugee" solely for those who have been accepted. This usage disregards the declaratory nature of status and conflates the administrative decision with the status itself (Zetter, 2007; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018).

The distinction between refugee and migrant, by contrast, rests on a substantive threshold: no risk of persecution or serious harm is required within the migrant category, and a person's movement may be explained by economic, familial, educational, or other reasons. In practice, however, this threshold becomes blurred for two reasons. First, as the concept of "mixed migration flows" indicates, persons in need of protection and persons not in such need often travel along the same route, which necessitates the individual assessment of every person at the level of procedure (joint UNHCR-IOM work; Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 2018). Second, persons displaced by climate change, environmental degradation, and slow-onset disasters frequently fit neither the classical refugee definition nor the classical migrant definition precisely; such persons are not persecuted, yet return may be impossible or meaningless for them (McAdam, 2012). New Zealand's *Teitiota* case showed that climate-induced displacement does not fall directly within the refugee definition, but may, under certain conditions, trigger a human-rights-based non-refoulement obligation; the UN Human Rights Committee's view in *Teitiota v. New Zealand* accepted that climate change may heighten risks to the right to life, while finding no violation on the facts of that particular case (Human Rights Committee, Teitiota v. New Zealand, CCPR/C/127/D/2728/2016, 2020).

The distinction between refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) is, by contrast, purely geographic: the type of risk may be identical, yet a person falls within the scope of refugee law only once they have crossed an

international border. The UN Guiding Principles define an internally displaced person as a person or group of persons who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who has not crossed an internationally recognised state border (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1998: para. 2). Internally displaced persons remain, by virtue of the principle of sovereignty, primarily the responsibility of their own state; the intervention of international actors is secondary and contingent on that state's consent or its incapacity (Kälin, 2008). The 2009 Kampala Convention is the sole regional instrument to have made this field binding, on the African continent, imposing on states the obligation to protect, assist, and provide durable solutions for internally displaced persons (African Union, 2009). Data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre indicate that internally displaced persons constitute the largest single share of the global forcibly displaced population, accounting for approximately 58 per cent of all forcibly displaced persons at the end of 2025 (UNHCR, 2026b).

When statelessness is added to these four categories as a fifth axis, the dimensions of overlap widen further, and the institutional expansion of UNHCR's mandate traced in Section 5.1 becomes directly relevant to the analysis. The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons defines a stateless person as a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law (Art. 1(1)). Statelessness may coexist with refugee status; indeed, the 1951 Convention's own definition implicitly recognises this possibility by referring, alongside "the country of his nationality," to "the country of his former habitual residence" for a person without a nationality (Art. 1(A)(2), second paragraph). The two statuses are not, however, identical: statelessness in itself creates no risk of persecution; it denotes only the absence of a legal bond of nationality, whereas the refugee definition is risk-based. A person may be recognised as a refugee not because they are stateless, but because their statelessness exposes them to a particular discriminatory practice, such as systematic exclusion from fundamental rights (UNHCR, 2014). The situation of the Rohingya population in Myanmar is the clearest contemporary example of how the systematically exclusionary operation of nationality legislation can give rise to statelessness and refugee status at once; UNHCR has found that the statelessness of the Rohingya is the direct consequence of a racially defined nationality regime, and

that resolving this statelessness is treated as a precondition for a sustainable return (UNHCR, 2017). The axis of statelessness is thus a distinct legal condition, irreducible to any of the four categories yet cutting across each of them.

These four categories may also convert into one another over time. A person may first be displaced within their own country, become an asylum seeker upon crossing a border, become a refugee upon recognition of status, be classified as a migrant upon resettlement in a third country, or exit all of these categories entirely upon acquiring citizenship. A category is, accordingly, not an identity but a snapshot of a person's legal position at a given moment. Table 3 compares the four categories along four distinct axes.

Table 3. Comparison of the categories of refugee, asylum seeker, migrant, and internally displaced person

Axis	Refugee	Asylum seeker	Migrant	Displaced person (IDP)
Risk criterion	Persecution/serious harm; established	Alleged persecution/serious harm; not yet determined	Not required	Broad range of causes including persecution, conflict, and disaster
Border position	Outside the country	Outside the country	Outside the country	Within the country
Legal recognition	Status recognised	Status pending	No status as a rule	Generally no formal "status"; a factual description
Primary legal source	1951 Convention/1967 Protocol	Same Convention plus national procedural law	General human rights law; migration legislation	UN Guiding Principles; national sovereignty
Responsible actor	Asylum state (with international support)	Asylum state	Host or country of origin	Primarily own state
Duration	Tends toward permanence; subject to cessation conditions	Temporary, for the duration of the procedure	Variable	Until resolved; often protracted

Source: The basis of the relevant treaties, the Guiding Principles, and the doctrinal literature (UNHCR, 1979/2019; UN Commission on Human Rights, 1998; Zetter, 2007).

The table makes visible why these categories can be simultaneously distinct and overlapping. Risk criterion and border position are independent axes: a person may carry a high level of risk without yet having crossed a border (an IDP), or may have crossed a border without carrying risk in the classical sense (a migrant). The axis of legal recognition adds a temporal dimension: the same material risk carries a different administrative visibility before recognition (asylum seeker) than after it (refugee). Zetter's labelling

thesis becomes directly relevant at precisely this point: categories are administrative instruments, shaped by the managerial capacity of institutions, that determine the allocation of resources and the priority of intervention; labelling a person a "refugee" or a "migrant" frequently reflects, more than it reflects that person's actual experience, the budgetary, political, and legitimacy needs of the institution doing the labelling (Zetter, 1991, 2007). This thesis does not imply that categories are legally unnecessary; categories remain the indispensable instruments that determine which state falls under which obligation. It does, however, remind us that a political choice is concealed wherever a categorical boundary is drawn.

This concealed choice becomes especially visible in the context of mixed migration. Crawley and Skleparis's study of the European "refugee crisis" of 2015-2016 showed that, in media and political discourse, the distinction between the "genuine refugee" and the "bogus asylum seeker" was drawn far more often on the basis of the applicant's nationality than on the content of the claim, a simplification incompatible with the principle of individual assessment (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). In a comparable vein, the fact that the temporary protection regime was applied swiftly and generously in the case of Ukraine, yet with hesitation in earlier mass-influx situations, such as the early years of the Syrian crisis in Europe, shows that the same legal instrument can be activated at markedly different political speeds depending on geography (Ineli-Ciger, 2018). Category selection is, in this sense, as much a political decision about which population will be protected, at what speed, and with what generosity, as it is a technical act of classification.

This framework can also be positioned against a reading that would abolish legal categories altogether. Bakewell's (2008) critique of policy-driven categories and Zetter's (2007) labelling thesis implicitly suggest that categories subordinate research and humanitarian action to the state's administrative priorities, and that academic and humanitarian actors should accordingly turn toward an analysis grounded in lived experience, independent of these categories. Yet the findings of this chapter also show that categories are not a wholly dispensable administrative fiction: the question of which state owes an absolute obligation such as non-refoulement, to which person, and when, cannot be answered without first making a categorical determination. The problem lies not in the existence of categories but in the fact that categorical boundaries are usually drawn from administrative convenience rather than from lived experience. The four-axis analysis proposed in

this chapter aims to render that convenience visible without eliminating categories altogether, making reviewable the axis along which, and the justification by which, a given boundary is drawn.

Conclusion

Bringing together the four sets of questions addressed in this chapter reveals that the categories of migration law share a common logic: each triggers a particular state obligation by combining a particular type of risk, a particular border position, and a particular duration. The refugee definition rests on an individualised and ground-dependent risk of persecution; complementary protection transcends this ground requirement through the absolute prohibitions of human rights law; temporary protection offers a group-based shortcut for mass situations in which individual procedure is practically unworkable; and the categories of migrant and displaced person mark the outer boundaries of protection law through, respectively, the absence of risk and the absence of a crossed border. Because these four axes, namely type of risk, border position, legal recognition, and duration, operate independently of one another, it is inevitable that the same person will occupy more than one category over time; cross-categorical permeability is therefore not a system malfunction but a structural feature of the system itself.

The theoretical contribution of this chapter lies in bringing together, within a single framework, two observations that doctrinal and critical scholarship have generally treated separately. Doctrine dissects the elements internal to each category with great rigour, while leaving the relationship among categories largely implicit; critical scholarship correctly diagnoses the administrative and political construction of categories, but rarely specifies the concrete legal axes along which that construction occurs. The four-axis reading proposed here brings Zetter's labelling thesis (1991, 2007) into the same analytical plane as Hathaway's surrogate-protection logic (1991) and McAdam's analysis of complementary protection (2007).

The analytical purchase of the framework lies in its capacity to show, for any pair of categories, which axes diverge and which converge. Refugee and subsidiary-protection beneficiary diverge along a single axis, namely risk type; both are outside their country, both are recognised, and both tend, as a rule, toward a durable status. Refugee and temporary-protection beneficiary, by contrast, diverge along two axes at once: risk assessment is group-based rather than individual, and status is designed from the outset to be time-limited; only border position remains shared. The distinction between

refugee and internally displaced person can be reduced to a single axis, namely border position; the two categories may converge in terms of risk type, yet one falls almost entirely within international law, the other almost entirely within domestic law and the principle of sovereignty. This comparison shows that the distance between categories must be measured not on a single scale but along four independent axes, and that the question "which category affords stronger protection" therefore admits no single answer; the answer depends on which axis, that is, which concrete right (duration of stay, work permit, family reunification), the question is directed at.

The practical implications of these findings are equally clear. As the Ukrainian case shows, a protection regime designated "temporary" can, through successive extensions, become in practice a long-term status, even as the temporariness embedded in its name continues to constrain beneficiaries' access to long-term rights and to the security needed for future planning. In the Turkish case, the combined operation of the geographic limitation and the group-based temporary protection regime attaches the same factual situation, namely flight from war, to different legal categories and, accordingly, to different bundles of rights. These observations demonstrate, for policymakers, that categories are not merely a matter of nomenclature; each categorical choice produces concrete and measurable consequences for rights.

The limitations of the study should also be acknowledged. A doctrinal method does not provide field data on how categories actually operate in administrative practice; the observations reported in this chapter rest on secondary sources and judicial decisions. The comparison has, moreover, been confined to the universal, EU, and Turkish levels; regional regimes such as the African Union Convention and the Cartagena Declaration, together with practice in Latin America and Southeast Asia, have been addressed only in passing. Future research might examine the legal categorisation of climate-induced displacement, the comparative application of complementary protection regimes across states, and the empirical outcomes of procedures for transitioning from temporary protection to durable status, particularly by tracking the process by which the Ukrainian mechanism eventually comes to an end.

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SECURITIZATION AND BORDERS: MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SECURITY PARADIGMA

DEMET DÖNMEZ*

Introduction

Security has been one of the fundamental needs of societies since their inception. Ensuring that people feel safe and not under any threat is the raison d'être of the state. While traditional security concepts primarily focused on territorial integrity and military security, the understanding of security has become more complex, especially in the post-Cold War era.

Security is the most important need after physiological needs such as food, drink, and shelter are met (Maslow, 1943: 7-30). The concept can be defined in various ways. Its literal meaning is expressed as "the smooth functioning of legal regulations in social life, the ability to live without fear" (www.tdk.gov.tr, 15.06.2026). Another definition states that security is "the absence of threats to fundamental values" (Baylis et al., 2008: 229). Considering these definitions, it can be said that the aim of security is to ensure social order. However, it is not accurate to speak only of the security of individuals or societies when ensuring social order. The security of the state and of states on a global scale is also extremely important. In this context, the concept of security tends to expand continuously. Various types of security can be discussed, such as social, political, legal, economic, psychological, and public security (Özel and Dönmez, 2016: 244). Especially in the post-Cold War era, the work of the Copenhagen School representatives on securitization theory has had a significant impact on the transformation of the meaning and depth of the different dimensions of the concept.

To correctly understand securitization theory, it is necessary to examine how the Copenhagen School defines the concept of security. According to the Copenhagen School, security is a movement that transcends the rules of politics and is treated as a supra-political phenomenon. In this context, securitization is expressed as an extreme version of politicization. The Copen-

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hagen School establishes an analytical framework through five different areas it defines as economic, political, military, environmental, and social, and defines the concept of securitization as a lens that explains the interaction and dimensions of relationships between these units (Kaya, 2025: 71-72). Copenhagen School theorists Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Japp De Wilde have defined the concept of security as encompassing all forms of threat directed at both the state and individuals (Eroğlu and Kaya, 2023: 28).

1. The Securitization of Migration

Public administration plays a central role in the execution of the fundamental functions of the modern state and in the effective, efficient and fair delivery of public services to citizens. (Güçlüten & Akıncı, 2024). Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be limited solely to the movement of people from one country to another; it encompasses economic, social, political, and security dimensions. The increasing focus on irregular migration, refugee status, and border movements from a security perspective in political and social discussions has led to the construction of migration as a security issue. In the international relations literature, this process is explained by the concept of "securitization of migration" (Huysmans, 2000).

Securitization, introduced by the Copenhagen School, has been significant in deepening discussions on the relationship between migration and security. The scope and impact of issues related to the concept of migration are quite broad. In this context, in addition to problems such as economics, politics, and culture, values such as justice, equality, and respect are observed to be discussed more frequently (Castles and Miller, 1998: 106). Migration refers to people changing their living spaces voluntarily or involuntarily. However, if the movement extends beyond borders, this situation takes on a different dimension. Considering the displacement movement that defines and concerns the borders of states, migration must be evaluated within the context of international relations. The emphasis on the relationship between migration and borders also brings the issue of "security" to the forefront. There is a need to address migration on the international agenda with a "security" dimension, different from its known dynamics (Kaygusuz, 2021: 61). In this process, political actors can present the issue not only as a policy problem but also as a threat. And in this case, the processes are extremely important.

At the beginning of the securitization process, the identification of any issue as a security threat is not a process carried out solely by the state. Civil society organizations, trade unions, social movements, and other non-state

actors can also bring certain issues to the agenda as threats and develop a securitizing discourse accordingly. However, the state and the political elites within the state are in a more advantageous position compared to other actors in the securitization process due to their institutional authority, political influence, and resources. Therefore, the success of a securitization initiative depends not only on expressing an issue as a threat, but also on the securitizing actor's ability to effectively construct this discourse and gain acceptance among the target audience (Balzacq, 2005).

The second stage of the securitization process concerns the acceptance by society of the threat discourse put forth by the securitizing actor. At this stage, the actor attempts to move the issue beyond ordinary political debate by claiming that a situation exists that threatens the existence of the reference object. However, merely expressing an issue as a threat is not sufficient for it to automatically transform into a security issue. For securitization to occur, the alleged threat must be accepted by the target audience, and the implementation of measures outside of ordinary political practices to eliminate the threat must be seen as legitimate. Therefore, the attitude of the receiving audience is one of the fundamental elements determining whether the securitization process will succeed. If the target audience accepts the threat and considers the application of extraordinary measures against it legitimate, the securitization process is complete. Conversely, if the threat discourse is not accepted or if social consent for extraordinary measures is not formed, the securitization initiative fails (Şener and Uzun, 2022: 473).

The roots of immigration being considered as a security issue can be traced back to the 1980s. This process accelerated as the concept of security became more central in international politics, especially after the September 11, 2001 attacks. The Arab Spring that started in the Middle East in 2010 and the political instability that emerged during this process paved the way for a more intense discussion of the relationship between migration and security. Especially the mass displacement and migration movements caused by the civil war that started in Syria have strengthened the evaluation of migration not only as a humanitarian and economic issue, but also as a security-related problem (Mavi, 2022: 253).

The securitization of migration has various policy and social consequences. First, securitization can lead to a change in the nature of migration policies and strengthen the consideration of migration from a border control and security perspective rather than a social policy or human rights framework (Altunbaş and Memişoğlu, 2024).

Secondly, presenting immigrants as a threat to national security, social identity or cultural integrity may contribute to their positioning as the "other" within the host society. In the securitization literature, it is emphasized that framing migration as a threat can also occur through identity and social belonging (Ibrahim, 2005).

Thirdly, securitization can facilitate the implementation of tougher policy tools aimed at strengthening border controls, controlling migration movements and combating irregular migration. Studies show that the securitization process is associated with the strengthening of borders and the development of technological surveillance and border control mechanisms (Altunbaş and Memişoğlu, 2024; Gabrielli, 2014).

2. Border Control and Management

While border control involves physical measures to be taken along borders, border management encompasses not only border control but also preventing illegal immigration, arms and drug trafficking, facilitating all types of legal movement (people, goods) across the border, and ensuring coordination among the institutions responsible for border management (Saltaş and Aktel, 2021: 432). In this context, borders, traditionally considered one of the fundamental indicators of state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political authority, have become multi-dimensional areas where migration, security, trade, human mobility, and international protection policies intersect. With this transformation, border management has moved beyond being merely a practice aimed at controlling entry and exit from the country, becoming a comprehensive governance area encompassing various functions such as classifying different migration movements, identifying and managing potential risks, facilitating regular mobility, and identifying individuals in need of international protection. When we think of borders, the first thing that comes to mind is their maintenance, that is, their security. Border security is defined as active and passive measures taken at land, sea, and air borders to prevent all types of illegal crossings (Ministry of Interior, ESYSUYEP, 2006: 12). These measures can include technological equipment, fences, and walls, as well as preventive measures included in border agreements between neighboring countries. These agreements generally aim to ensure that borders are (Saltaş and Aktel, 2021: 432) (a) free from all attacks by the other state, (b)that the population living along the border does not violate border security, (c) that all kinds of smuggling, gang activity, and theft are prevented through cooperation.

In this process, the securitization of migration can also affect how borders are defined and managed. Framing migration movements as a threat to national security, public order, or the integrity of the country leads to considering borders not only as crossing points but also as areas where security risks are managed. Thus, border control is increasingly linked to security-oriented practices such as regulating migration movements, identifying potential threats, preventing irregular migration, and monitoring cross-border mobility (Menjívar, 2014).

One of the fundamental issues in border management within the context of migration is combating irregular migration. The emergence and development of irregular migration systems are related to the existence of a structural mismatch between the social and political conditions necessary for mobility. This mismatch stems from the difference in the dynamics that cause migration to both those giving and receiving migrants. From the perspective of the receiving party, there is an imbalance between the demand for entry into countries and the entry capacities offered by political systems. Looking at the situation from the perspective of the dynamics of migration, there is a discrepancy between widespread social expectations and demands (driven forces) and the state's capacity to meet or suppress them. The irregular migrations encountered today are essentially a reactive response to such mismatches (Nargül, 2025: 9). However, a clear distinction must be made between irregular migration and the search for international protection. The fact that a person has entered a country through irregular means does not negate their right to seek international protection. Therefore, border control mechanisms should not be limited solely to ensuring security; they should also include mechanisms that enable the identification of individuals in need of protection and their access to relevant legal procedures. The oil crisis of the 1970s is considered a turning point in migration policies. The end of recruitment programs and the significant decrease in tolerance towards migrants led to an increase in irregular migration. Globalization, economic restructuring, and advancements in communication technologies, while encouraging international migration on the one hand, weakened state control over migration on the other. During this period, irregular migration became a structural feature of mobility processes, leading to a competition between states and migrants to develop strategies. While states tightened border controls, migrants developed new methods to overcome these obstacles (Castles, 2004). In this context, border management necessitates establishing a

stable balance between security and human rights. While states have sovereign powers to control their borders and determine their own migration policies, this power must be exercised in accordance with international law and human rights obligations. In particular, the principle of non-refoulement, the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, the protection of children, and the right to access asylum procedures are among the fundamental parameters that determine the legal framework of border control practices.

Another important dimension of border management is international and regional cooperation. The fact that migration movements often cross the borders of multiple countries makes it difficult to achieve sustainable migration management solely through national measures. Therefore, it is important to improve information sharing between countries of origin, transit, and destination; combat human smuggling and trafficking; establish return and readmission mechanisms; conduct search and rescue operations; and coordinate international protection mechanisms (Huymans, 2000).

3. Human Smuggling and Trafficking

Regarding the definition of migrant smuggling, Articles 3 and 6 of the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime are widely accepted. Article 3(a) of this convention, entitled "Definitions", defines migrant smuggling as "*the facilitation of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which he is not a national or permanent resident, for the purpose of obtaining financial or other gain, directly or indirectly*" (Güçlü, 2020: 221). The crime is fundamentally based on facilitating the illegal passage of a person across the borders of a state. Until the 2000s, migrant smuggling was often used interchangeably with the concept of human trafficking, and the two concepts were frequently confused. These concepts, which should be considered separately, have three fundamental distinctions made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. These are:

Victim: In migrant smuggling, the migrant may not be a victim, and the person involved in the smuggling is often consenting to the situation. However, other crimes involving violence and danger are frequently committed against migrants during the smuggling process. It is possible for migrants involved in smuggling to withdraw their consent during the smuggling activity. Therefore, the issue of migrant consent is quite complex. When a migrant who has entered irregularly is apprehended, it is up to the relevant state to determine the level of complicity.

Irregular entry or stay: Migrant smuggling has a transnational dimension involving at least two countries. The aim of migrant smuggling is essentially to facilitate the passage or stay of a person in country A to country B. Human trafficking can also involve the passage or settlement of an individual, but this is not always the case. The stay and transfer of victims of human trafficking can occur through legal means. Victims of human trafficking cannot be limited to groups of people who lack the opportunity for regular migration. Moreover, human trafficking can occur within the victim's own country without requiring border crossing. Exploitation: Since profit is at its root, exploitation is the fundamental aim of human trafficking. Migrant smugglers profit by facilitating irregular entry or stay. Once an immigrant enters the country, the immigrant-smuggler relationship usually ends (Güçlü, 2020: 223-224).

Human trafficking is a form of crime based on the control and exploitation of individuals through various methods. In this crime, methods such as coercing, threatening, deceiving the victim or taking advantage of his or her fragile situation can be used. The main feature of human trafficking is that the person is not only transported from one place to another but also used for exploitation. Exploitation can manifest in various forms, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, forced begging, and similar practices (United Nations, 2000).

In terms of human trafficking, it is not necessary to move the victim within the borders of the country or between countries. According to the 2010 report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), human trafficking is a crime that can occur independently of the phenomenon of migration. This situation requires human trafficking to be addressed not only from a border security perspective, but also from a human rights and victim protection perspective. In this context, although there are some similarities between immigrant smuggling and human trafficking, there are also important differences between the two crimes. First, there is a difference in terms of the purpose of the crime. The main purpose of immigrant smuggling is to obtain economic or other benefits in exchange for illegally moving a person across the border. The main purpose of human trafficking is to exploit the victim in various ways. Secondly, there is a difference in terms of the element of border crossing. Migrant smuggling is inherently linked to the illegal crossing of an international border. In human trafficking, it is not necessary to cross the border. Thirdly, the victim’s position in the crime process differs. While in immigrant smuggling, the person establishes

a relationship with the smuggler in exchange for a certain service in most cases, in human trafficking, the will of the victim can be eliminated by the use of force, threats, deception or similar methods and the person is exposed to exploitation (UNODC, 2010: 16-17).

Combating immigrant smuggling and human trafficking is a process that requires multi-actor and international cooperation. Effective information sharing and coordination between government institutions, law enforcement units, judicial authorities, international organizations and non-governmental organizations is important in revealing criminal networks. In addition, strengthening legal and safe migration channels, raising awareness of potential victims and developing protective mechanisms for groups at risk are also important elements of preventive policies. Focusing combat policies only on controlling borders may cause the exploitation dimension of human trafficking to be overlooked. For this reason, the approach to fighting crime needs to address both security and human rights dimensions together (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2002: 3-5).

Immigrant smuggling and human trafficking are two important types of crimes that, although related to each other, differ in terms of their legal characteristics and the forms of crime. While ensuring illegal border crossing and obtaining economic or other benefits comes to the fore in immigrant smuggling, the exploitation of a person is the main element in human trafficking (UNODC, 2018: 19). Establishing this distinction correctly is important for both academic studies and the effectiveness of crime-fighting policies. Identifying and protecting victims of human trafficking requires that the fight be carried out not only with a punitive but also with a victim-oriented approach (OHCHR, 2002: 1, 3-4).

4. Militarization and Human Security

Militarization can be defined as the process by which military institutions, values, resources, and methods gain increasing importance in a society or state. This process is not limited solely to the growth of the army or the rise in military spending. The increasing weight of a military perspective in political decision-making mechanisms, the definition of security problems as military threats, and the greater use of military methods in solving civilian problems can also be considered indicators of militarization (Bayer et al. 2025: 819-820). The concept of militarism is also important in understanding the concept of militarization. While militarism is generally associated with the normalization of military values and the logic of war in political and

social life, militarization more broadly refers to a process and a field of transformation. Therefore, an increase in a society's military spending can be one of the indicators of militarization; however, it is not a sufficient measure on its own (Bayer et al. 2025: 820-822).

Militarization can manifest itself at different levels. While the growth of state-level defense budgets and the development of military capacity constitute one dimension of this, the proliferation of military symbols, discourses, and security practices at the societal level constitutes another dimension. Furthermore, the intensive military control of borders for security purposes, and the handling of issues such as migration and social protests through security-centric methods, can also be examined as different forms of militarization (Goodman, 2024).

The 1994 Human Development Report of the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) addressed human security in seven fundamental dimensions:

- Economic security
- Food security
- Health security
- Environmental security
- Personal security
- Political security
- Community security

This approach has significantly broadened the scope of the concept of security. For example, if a state has a strong military capacity against external attacks, but at the same time a large population suffers from poverty, hunger, or problems accessing healthcare, it will not be sufficient to evaluate security solely from a military perspective. At the heart of the human security approach lies the idea of "not fearing freedom" and "not being deprived of freedom". Therefore, security is not only about protecting physical existence, but also about an individual's ability to exercise their fundamental rights and lead a humane life (UNDP, 1994).

The relationship between militarization and human security is complex and multifaceted. It is not possible to say that there is a direct and universally valid opposition between military capacity and human security. States have a responsibility to protect their citizens from external attacks, armed groups,

or war conditions. Therefore, to a certain extent, military capacity can contribute to the physical dimension of human security. However, reducing security solely to military threats can lead to various problems. In a country, the predominantly military implementation of security policies can cause economic and social security issues to be relegated to the background. For example, directing a significant portion of public resources to defense spending can create opportunity costs in terms of alternative public policies and social services (Brozoska et al., 2022). However, the concrete results of this relationship vary according to the economic conditions, threat perceptions, and budget preferences of countries.

Another dimension of militarization in terms of human security is its impact on the political and social spheres. The prolonged implementation of emergency security policies can, in some cases, necessitate a rebalancing of the balance between civil liberties and security. Restrictions imposed on areas such as freedom of expression, assembly and demonstration, privacy, and political participation under the pretext of security must be evaluated separately from a human security perspective (UNDP, 1994).

5. Potential Effects of Militarization on Human Security

Armed conflicts, wars, and acts of terrorism directly threaten the right to life of individuals. Building defense capabilities against such threats can be important in ensuring the physical safety of people. However, protecting the civilian population and complying with international humanitarian law during military operations are also fundamental elements of human security (UNDP, 1994).

It is not possible to make a one-sided assessment of the economic effects of military spending. Defense investments can create technological development, employment, and industrial capacity in some countries. Conversely, the channeling of public resources into military areas can create opportunity costs for other public services. Therefore, the impact of military spending on human security should be evaluated not only in terms of the size of the expenditure but also in conjunction with the economic structure and how public resources are distributed (Brozoska et al., 2022).

The militarization of security policies can lead to a re-evaluation of the relationship between security and freedoms. States may resort to extraordinary measures when faced with threats such as terrorism, war, or internal conflict. However, the scope and duration of these measures are important

in terms of protecting fundamental rights and freedoms. The human security approach considers not only the physical protection of the individual but also the guarantee of their rights as part of security (UNDP, 1994).

Militarization can also affect societies' perceptions of security and the relations between different social groups. Security policies that constantly identify certain groups as threats can deepen social divisions. Therefore, the consequences of security policies on social cohesion, discrimination, and equality must also be considered (Huysmans, 2000).

Conclusion

The relationship between migration, border management, and security has become so multifaceted that it cannot be considered solely within the context of protecting the territorial integrity and borders of states (Akıncı & Güçlüten, 2025). The securitization of migration movements can lead to security-centric practices across a wide range of areas, from border control methods to policies aimed at combating irregular migration. However, viewing migration solely as a security threat risk neglecting the rights of migrants and those in need of international protection. Therefore, it is crucial that border management be conducted with a holistic approach that considers both security needs and human rights obligations.

The distinction between migrant smuggling and human trafficking is also of particular importance in this context. While migrant smuggling primarily involves obtaining material or other benefits in exchange for facilitating illegal border crossings, human trafficking is fundamentally about the exploitation of individuals. The fact that crossing borders is not a necessity in human trafficking demonstrates that combating this crime cannot be considered solely as a part of border security policies. Therefore, in addition to law enforcement and border control, identifying, protecting, and guaranteeing the fundamental rights of victims is also vital in combating this crime (Akıncı & Sezik, 2023). The relationship between militarization and human security, as explored in this study, points to the need to consider the broader consequences of security policies. While military capacity can contribute to the protection of states and individuals against specific security threats, defining security solely through military capacity can lead to the neglect of the economic, political, and social dimensions of human security. The opportunity costs of defense spending, the impact of extraordinary security measures on fundamental rights and freedoms, and the potential divisions that can arise from defining specific social groups as security threats should be considered within this framework.

In conclusion, the effects of securitization and militarization processes on migration and border policies need to be evaluated from a human security perspective. The human security approach, rather than being an alternative that excludes state security, offers a complementary perspective that makes visible the economic, political, social, and human consequences of security policies on the individual. In this context, it is important that an effective security policy is based not only on the protection of borders and the state, but also on the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals.

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FORCED MIGRATION AND HUMANITARIAN GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

The digital divide can reinforce the challenges faced by migrants in host societies, particularly in terms of accessing public services, securing employment, and establishing social connections. In this regard, digital access and literacy play an important role in determining the extent to which migrants can participate in the social and economic life of their host countries (Mehmetbeyoğlu, 2026). The concept of migration has existed since the dawn of humanity and has consistently remained a prominent issue on the global agenda. This phenomenon has been shaped by history and, in turn, has shaped history itself. In this context, the realities of migration and being a migrant have made themselves felt significantly across every historical period. However, heightened awareness of the causes and consequences of migration over the past quarter-century has elevated the phenomenon beyond a simple or even trivial concept. In particular, the impact of globalization which has rendered living standards in other countries more visible alongside regional crises, has both encouraged those who choose to move and compelled those who would prefer not to do so (Yılmaz, 2019: 1711). Migration has been a constant feature throughout human history, driven by aspirations for better economic, social, political, or geographical opportunities (Güçlüten & Abdulvahitoğlu, 2026). Indeed, since the 2000s, civil wars, instability, and proxy wars in regions such as the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, Yemen), Africa, Afghanistan, and, more recently, Ukraine—triggered by events like the Gulf War and the Arab Spring[1] have produced the largest waves of displacement seen on a global scale since World War II. This situation has rendered refugee crises a top humanitarian and political priority.

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1 This term has been phrased in this way because it represents an established misconception; it would be more accurate to describe the events that took place as "Arab Popular Movements" (Aydın and Duzcu, 2019: 59).

Furthermore, the widening prosperity, income, and quality-of-life gaps between developed and developing or least-developed countries have rendered migration the most rational option for populations seeking a better future.

On the other hand, factors linked to the climate crisis—such as drought, desertification, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events—have threatened agriculture and habitats, particularly in the Global South, giving rise to a new wave of "climate refugees" or "environmental migrants." While numerous other causes could be cited, what warrants particular attention is the emergence of novel and distinct concepts accompanying each topic. This is because the scope of migration has expanded significantly, spawning various subcategories, while the concepts influencing and influenced by it have diversified. Consequently, a vast body of literature has begun to develop. Furthermore, all the efforts dedicated to understanding and interpreting migration have also generated diverse subcategories. Indeed, the topics addressed in this section of the book are a product of this relatively recent diversification. This study focuses on two main themes: forced migration and humanitarian governance. Within this framework, a comprehensive assessment is conducted, examining the spheres of influence and impacts generated by these concepts, as both possess unique characteristics and offer distinct perspectives on the contemporary political, social, and cultural environment (Güçlüten, 2024).

This study first elucidates the concept of forced migration and its related terminology. Subsequently, current challenges within the context of forced migration are identified and categorized. Under the heading of "Humanitarian Governance in the Context of Protracted Displacement," humanitarian governance is defined, its connection to forced migration is established, and the conceptual framework is reinforced. Furthermore, through the sections titled "The Role of International Organizations in Managing Forced Migration," "Protection Gaps," and "The Search for Durable Solutions," this study endeavors to clarify the current global landscape and its international political implications. Finally, the "Conclusion and Evaluation" section presents a general assessment of the current state of affairs alongside recommendations for future action.

Forced Migration: A Conceptual Framework

As with concepts used across other social sciences, numerous definitions and interpretations exist regarding forced migration. Broadly speaking, forced migration refers to the involuntary displacement of individuals or groups from their homes or regions due to factors beyond their control, such

as conflict, natural disasters, persecution, or environmental changes. Unlike voluntary migration, in which individuals relocate by choice, forced migration stems from conditions that threaten life, safety, or livelihoods, leaving individuals with no option but to flee (Oxford Review, 2026; Sarıteke et al., 2018: 389–390). Consequently, the term "forced migrant" must be defined in tandem with this framework. Whether driven by natural or anthropogenic factors—such as the movements of refugees and internally displaced persons, individuals displaced by environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear catastrophes, famine, or development projects—it denotes a person subjected to a migratory movement involving coercion, including elements that threaten their life and livelihood (ec.europa.eu, 2026).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) highlights several key points when defining forced migration. It describes forced migration as "a migration movement involving coercion, pressure, or compulsion, regardless of its causes." Although the definition "is not a concept of international law, the term has been used to describe the movements of refugees, displaced persons (including those displaced by disasters or development projects), and, in some cases, victims of human trafficking." At the international level, the use of this term remains debated because it is widely acknowledged that a continuum of mobility exists rather than a strict voluntary/forced dichotomy, and that an overly broad definition could weaken the existing international legal protection regime.

Meanwhile, the concept of displacement has garnered significant attention in recent times. The IOM defines displacement as "the movement of persons who are forced or compelled to leave their homes or usual places of residence, particularly as a result of armed conflict, a climate of generalized violence, human rights violations, or natural or man-made disasters, or in order to escape the effects of such events" (IOM, 2019).

In accordance with the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, refugees are individuals who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, are outside the country of their nationality and are unable or, owing to such fear, are unwilling to return to it (migrationdataportal, 2026). Thus, a state of necessity or hardship is inherently present. However, because the motivations for departure in refugee scenarios are not invariably driven by direct coercion or force compelling departure, not all such individuals are classified as having undergone forced migration or displacement. The United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines refugees as individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol, the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; those recognized under the UNHCR Statute; persons granted complementary forms of protection; and beneficiaries of temporary protection. The refugee population also encompasses "persons in refugee-like situations" (UNHCR, 2017).

Persons in refugee-like situations refer to "groups of people who are outside their countries or regions of origin and face protection risks similar to those faced by refugees; however, for practical or other reasons, their refugee status has not yet been formally determined" (UNHCR, 2013).

According to the UNHCR, asylum seekers are "individuals who have applied for international protection and whose applications for refugee status have not yet been conclusively decided" (UNHCR, 2017: 56).

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are defined as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, 1998).

In mid-2022, the UNHCR added the category "other persons in need of international protection" to its reporting framework. This category encompasses "persons located outside their country or region of origin (typically having been forcibly displaced across international borders) who are not reported under other categories (asylum-seekers, refugees, persons in refugee-like situations) but who are likely to be in need of international protection, including protection against forcible return and access to basic services on a temporary or longer-term basis." This classification now incorporates the group previously designated as "Venezuelans displaced abroad," alongside individuals not captured by other categories. Retrospective adjustments have been applied to UNHCR statistics dating back to 2018 (UNHCR, 2023: 4).

Mixed movements (also termed mixed migration or mixed flows) denote "complex population movements consisting of people, usually traveling in an irregular manner, using the same routes and transport modes, but for different underlying reasons." Individuals participating in mixed movements

possess diverse needs and profiles; they may comprise asylum seekers, refugees, victims of human trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, and irregular migrants (IOM, 2019).

According to the UNHCR, resettlement entails "the transfer of refugees from the country where they have sought protection to another State that has agreed to accept them and grant them permanent residence with refugee status" (IOM, 2019). Resettlement programs are administered collaboratively by the UNHCR and participating states.

Current Challenges in the Context of Forced Migration

Forced displacement is not merely a humanitarian concern but a critical development challenge. Globally, 90 percent of displaced persons reside in low- and middle-income countries. Notably, more than half of these refugees have experienced protracted displacement exceeding four years. Furthermore, as of the end of June 2025, approximately 117.3 million people worldwide remained forcibly displaced. A striking statistic in this regard is that 67 percent of refugees originate from just five countries: Venezuela, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Sudan. Conversely, 34 percent of refugees are hosted by five nations: Colombia, Germany, Türkiye, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Uganda, meaning these countries shoulder over one-third of the global refugee population and other persons in need of international protection. Moreover, 71 percent of refugees are hosted in developing countries that are already striving to achieve their own developmental milestones. Coping with sudden inflows of vulnerable populations places immense strain on host governments, stretching their capacity to deliver basic services and infrastructure. Given these compounding pressures, host communities likewise require substantial international support (World Bank, 2026). Consequently, contemporary challenges associated with forced displacement can be categorized as follows:

Shortcomings in International Law and Protection Regimes: The limitations of the 1951 Geneva Convention in addressing emerging threats, such as climate migration or gang violence, are prominent. Issues surrounding "individualized persecution" and the "five grounds for persecution" create substantial legal barriers. In short, strict definitions and exclusions fail to encompass contemporary drivers of migration, exposing clear structural incompatibilities within the Convention regarding climate displacement and gang-related violence. While climate migration represents an almost complete "legal vacuum," gang violence faces exceptionally high and volatile evidentiary hurdles in practice (UNHCR, 2025; Duzcu, 2025: 299–300).

Political and Socio-Economic Burdens on Host Countries: The pressures exerted on integration, employment, healthcare, and educational infrastructure are severe. Because a significant proportion of host populations reside in developing nations—where access to resources is already constrained—bearing the responsibility of hosting refugees strains political and socio-economic thresholds. Additionally, involuntary migration often encounters substantial resistance to social integration, further complicating the process (World Bank, 2026).

The Rise of the Far-Right and Securitization: Framing migration through a national security lens rather than a humanitarian framework has prompted tighter border controls and "push-back" practices. The perception that involuntary migrants threaten social, political, and economic cohesion fosters the view that migration constitutes a security risk (Ağır and Sezik, 2015: 106–107). Consequently, reinforcing national borders—previously perceived as porous due to globalization—has emerged as a primary state response, casting migrants as national security threats.

Lack of Durable Solutions: Persistent obstacles hinder the UNHCR's three traditional durable solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and third-country resettlement. Proposed mechanisms frequently fall short of ultimate objectives, leaving policy implementation superficial. Unless root causes driving forced and voluntary migration are addressed—or proactive steps taken to foster empathy toward migrants—policy frameworks will remain merely palliative.

Social Integration, Racism, and Xenophobia: The proliferation of anti-immigrant rhetoric across media and political platforms fuels hostility. Amid social unrest and economic crises, foreign populations are frequently scapegoated, rapidly accelerating xenophobic tendencies.

Humanitarian Governance

The intellectual foundations of humanistic governance are rooted in the concept of ren zheng within the Confucian tradition. In this paradigm, effective governance is not measured solely by rule enforcement; the moral caliber of leadership and the nature of the relationship established with society are deemed fundamental. Accordingly, humanistic governance entails compassion for humanity (ren ai de xing), self-regulation of leadership conduct (zheng ji ren ge), the simultaneous observance of legal mandates and moral values (xing li bing yong), the clear distinction between ethical and unethical practices (hao huai fen ming), and virtuous, wise leadership (xian ming ling

dao). Within Confucian philosophy, cultivating ren—representing benevolence and love toward others—is inextricably linked to self-mastery (ke ji). Specifically, ke ji denotes exercising self-restraint and moderation by subduing self-centered desires, whereas fu li refers to acting in accordance with established ethical principles and rituals that preserve social order. Rituals in this context extend beyond traditional ceremonies to encompass a broad spectrum of legal rules, administrative guidelines, social norms, and moral obligations. Ultimately, these principles serve to structure interpersonal relationships and maintain social cohesion (Keping, 2018, p. 52).

At the core of human-centered governance lies the premise that regulating individual behavior solely through external legal frameworks is insufficient. This approach recognizes that inherent human values transcend formal rules and that the ultimate source of ethical conduct resides within the individual's inner consciousness. Consequently, human consciousness, core values, and moral orientation constitute the central tenets of human-centered governance, distinguishing it fundamentally from corporate governance. While corporate governance relies on external control mechanisms and compliance rules, human-centered governance encourages individuals to shape their behavior internally through personal values, conscience, and ethical awareness. Thus, a value-driven approach operating "from the inside out" contrasts sharply with a rule-bound management philosophy functioning "from the outside in," ensuring that ethical behavior reflects internalized values rather than mere compliance (Md Noor et al., 2022, pp. 1428–1430).

Human-centered governance is a multidimensional paradigm that evaluates administrative processes not merely through economic efficiency and organizational performance, but by placing human rights and social needs at the forefront. This framework harmonizes economic, political, and civil spheres holistically by aligning economic growth with social justice, ensuring the rule of law, accountability, and transparency within political systems, and empowering individuals and civil society in the civic sphere (Akdemir, 2018, pp. 261–262).

Emphasizing human-centered governance does not imply a rejection of economic globalization or market forces. These dominant global structures offer valuable opportunities for enhancing material and social living conditions worldwide. Furthermore, historical trajectories have elevated neoliberal paradigms to such prominence that direct opposition—particularly in the absence of viable alternatives—would prove counterproductive. Instead, the proposed approach possesses a more targeted scope. The realization of

human-centered governance depends upon mobilizing democratic forces, aligning with what Richard Falk has characterized as "humane governance" (Falk, 2000, pp. 318–319).

A people-centered governance model tailors public services to citizens' actual living conditions and needs rather than administrative convenience. This entails rendering service delivery citizen-centric while fostering the structural conditions required to transform public administration. Key elements include formulating clear strategies, enhancing cross-institutional cooperation, and adopting innovative management practices to ensure digital and organizational transformations genuinely address societal needs.

Ultimately, human-centered governance expands traditional administrative scopes by embedding human and social values. Core objectives include balancing economic growth with social justice, advancing human rights, safeguarding environmental values, reducing poverty and violence, and ensuring active citizen participation in decision-making, thereby positioning civil society as a pivotal governance actor alongside political and economic institutions (Akdemir, 2018, p. 263).

Humanitarian Governance and Forced Migration

Forced migration should not be misconstrued as a transient population movement confined to isolated crisis periods. Contemporary displacement—driven by disasters, conflicts, violence, and human rights violations—has increasingly evolved into a large-scale, protracted phenomenon. Consequently, policies addressing displaced populations must transition from short-term emergency responses to long-term, sustainable governance mechanisms (Brumat et al., 2023, p. 94).

From a humanitarian governance perspective, forced migration and protracted displacement transcend mere mobility or aid logistics; they represent multifaceted governance challenges encompassing human rights, social justice, equitable service access, political participation, and social cohesion (Güçlüten, 2025). Core priorities include guaranteeing basic needs, protecting human rights, upholding social justice, eradicating discrimination, and empowering marginalized groups (Akdemir, 2018, pp. 261–263). Success in protracted displacement management extends beyond basic service provision; it requires enabling displaced individuals to participate in decisions affecting their lives, empowering them via civil society networks, securing equal access to local services, and fostering self-reliance.

In managing forced migration, humanitarian governance moves beyond immediate relief provision to encompass the institutional norms and regulatory frameworks governing these populations. It constitutes an institutional intersection where humanitarian assistance converges with regulatory and control mechanisms (Topçuoğlu, 2025, p. 336). Humanitarian governance emerges as a multi-stakeholder framework where civil society and non-state actors collaborate alongside the state. Here, civil society organizations function not merely as aid providers but as active advocates for refugee rights capable of shaping policy (Topçuoğlu, 2025, pp. 334–335).

Effective humanitarian governance focuses on building long-term coping capacities, safeguarding fundamental rights, facilitating livelihood access, and formulating durable solutions. Aligning border management with humanitarian principles mitigates irregular migration challenges while reinforcing social stability and security (Ramos & Ramos Valencia, 2024, p. 41). Furthermore, this approach relies on transparent, accountable coordination among state institutions, civil society, and international organizations (Ramos & Ramos Valencia, 2024, pp. 41–42).

The Role of International Organizations in the Management of Forced Migration

The cross-border nature of forced migration elevates migration management beyond national jurisdiction, necessitating robust international cooperation. International organizations serve as vital institutional mechanisms enabling states to pursue common objectives through established principles and collaborative frameworks (Dedeoğlu, 2011, pp. 17–18).

International organizations fulfill diverse functions, including protecting displaced persons, fostering common policies, and establishing state accountability mechanisms. Notably, the United Nations and the European Union play instrumental roles in developing international protection standards and institutionalizing asylum policies. Within the EU, the progression from the Dublin Regulations to the Amsterdam Treaty and the Common European Asylum System underscores efforts to manage forced migration through supranational mechanisms rather than purely national policies (Tokdemir, 2024, p. 141).

Beyond operational assistance, international organizations monitor migration trends, generate empirical data, formulate public policy recommendations, provide technical training to national institutions, and strengthen coordination among stakeholders (Çetin, 2022, p. 228). As prolonged dis-

placement extends the operational mandates of organizations like the UNHCR, emphasis has shifted toward reducing host-country burdens, enhancing refugee self-sufficiency, expanding third-country solutions, and ensuring safe, dignified returns. Thus, international organizations act as indispensable facilitators of burden-sharing and comprehensive, sustainable solutions (Brumat et al., 2023, pp. 93–96).

Conclusion and Evaluation

As one of the most enduring dynamics in human history, migration has undergone a qualitative transformation driven by globalization, regional conflict, socio-economic disparities, and environmental crises, reaching unprecedented complexity. Forced migration is no longer a localized humanitarian crisis; it is a multidimensional governance challenge impacting global geopolitics and host-society development. Developing integrated, multilevel policy frameworks from grassroots to state levels is imperative, especially as institutional inadequacies and international apathy exacerbate the crisis.

Addressing the challenges of forced migration requires an effective, flexible, and rights-based humanitarian governance model that surpasses palliative or securitized responses. Through collaborative engagement among global actors, international institutions, and civil society:

The 1951 Convention must be updated—or supplemented by complementary regimes—to address climate-induced displacement and contemporary forms of violence.

The international community must ensure equitable burden-sharing, providing robust, development-oriented support to host nations.

Holistic approaches prioritizing human dignity, social cohesion, and durable solutions must supersede restrictive security-centric policies.

Ultimately, the trajectory of forced migration will profoundly shape not only the future of displaced populations but also the integrity of the global conscience and the international system.

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SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS: INTEGRATION, IDENTITY, AND TRANSNATIONALISM

BERAT AKINCI* - VEDAT KANAT - MERT ATİK*****

INTRODUCTION

When discussing the phenomenon of migration, the importance of social structures is becoming increasingly prominent in a globalizing world. This is because factors such as wars, crises, economic fluctuations, the climate crisis, and food security and borders which have emerged within the international system reveal the transformation of international migration via social dynamics. The concepts of integration, assimilation, adaptation, transnationalism, and diaspora, as discussed in this context, by presenting an analysis of international migration at the levels of individuals, states, and societies, reveal the polarizing and unifying roles that perspectives on migration play within social structures. Accordingly, bordering is seen as an active process through which political entities create identities, regulate movement and differentiate between inclusion and exclusion (Güçlüten, 2026). This section will describe the stages through which the social and cultural aspects of international migration have evolved and transformed, and concepts related to integration, assimilation, adaptation, transnationalism and diaspora will serve as foundational elements in this process.

1. Integration and Assimilation Theories

Migration comes to fore as a phenomenon that simultaneously influences many dynamics within the international system and has retained its dynamism throughout history. While migration refers to the temporary or permanent displacement of individuals and communities due to economic,

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cultural, social, and political factors, this concept has a structural meaning that goes beyond mere physical relocation and encompasses factors such as the reconfiguration of identity, states' perspectives on migration, and social awareness. In this context, while integration and assimilation—when the phenomenon of migration is discussed encompass situations in which they interact with one another, the areas where they diverge also provide a very comprehensive overview of perspectives on migration from the standpoint of states, societies, and individuals. For this reason, integration and assimilation theories form an inseparable whole and provide a theoretical framework for key aspects of migration, such as its perception, processes, implementation, and management.

In this regard, the first concept to be addressed—integration—refers to the ability of immigrants to live in harmony within a social framework. In this context, integration reflects the processes of adaptation of social structures on the social, economic, and cultural levels in a globalizing world. Indeed, integration refers to a dynamic that prioritizes the adaptation of refugees and migrants to the society in which they live and that is characterized by continuity (ECRE, 2005, p.14). While this dynamic has a highly diverse structure, it shapes the evolution of the phenomenon of migration in terms of meaning and temporal context. Integration processes do not occur in a unidirectional manner; rather, they unfold in a multifaceted, multidimensional, and multilayered way (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p.16; Demirava, 2021, p.6).

In Ager & Strang's (2008) study titled "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," which has gained prominence in the migration literature in the context of integration, multifaceted instrumental frameworks for successful integration are presented. These instrumental structures are located in four basic frameworks. These are categorized under:

1-Markers and means (employment, education, housing, health)

2-Social connection (social links, social bonds, social bridges)

3-Facilitators (Cultural knowledge and stability, language, safety)

4-Foundation (Rights, citizenship) (Ager & Strang, 2008).

In this context, integration reflects the processes of adapting to the socially dominant culture, while also presenting a conceptual framework in which material (economic) and non-material (social) elements interact to highlight the social and economic development of immigrants through the

opportunities afforded by a high standard of living (Güçlüten & Baltalı, 2025). Furthermore, drawing on the work of Ager and Strang (2008), a model of migration is envisioned in which integration processes—such as access to education, housing, health care, and employment—and cultural adaptation processes develop in tandem.

Particularly in the 2000s, the concept of integration in Germany became a central theme (Leitmotif) for newly developed immigration policies (Laubenthal, 2023). One of the main reasons for this is that migration is controlled through social integration. In this context, integration reinforces social cohesion and preserves the dominant culture by heavily instrumentalizing the cultural element in the management of migration. This situation shapes migrants' perspectives on integration. From the migrants' perspective, the prevailing view is that their diverse cultures are confined to a limited sphere and that they must adapt to integration (Laubenthal, 2023). When examined in a cultural context, integration involves a two-pronged distinction. These two aspects are the "Melting Pot" and the "Salad Bowl." "Melting Pot" has emerged as a concept that describes the process by which the diverse cultural structures of minority groups dissolve and fade away within the dominant culture (Yalçın, 2002, p.46). Although this concept is generally considered within the framework of assimilation, it is recognized that, within the framework of integration, social harmony based on culture places pressure on immigrants. Indeed, from a strategic perspective, assimilation reflects the new social structure that emerges as the culturally dominant groups subject the non-dominant groups to cultural assimilation (Berry, 1992, p.77). In "Salad Bowl," the situation is shaped by the migration and cultural interaction that have developed over the years. Especially after the 1960s, the metaphor of the "salad bowl"—in which differences are preserved—has been used more widely in the literature than the concept of the "melting pot," in which differences are subject to assimilation into the dominant culture (Şan & Tzampaz, 2021). In this context, the development of integration on a cultural basis depends on practices of internalizing differences or externalizing differences.

When examining conceptualizations of integration from different perspectives, it is seen that systemic, social, and civic integration come to fore. System integration involves the inclusion of individuals in the system through coordinating agencies (Heckmann, 2006, p.9). In this context, the term "system" refers to the integration of immigrants into the social structure and their access to a certain standard of living. Access to education,

health care, employment, and citizenship rights reflects the fundamental dynamics of system integration (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007, p. 9). Social integration focuses on the totality of reciprocal, conflictual, or regulatory relationships that develop among actors and emerges within a conscious, systematic framework (Lockwood, 1964, p. 371; Heckmann, 2006, p. 9). Thus, social integration provides the fundamental background for the realization of structural integration and offers a descriptive perspective that express the social position of immigrants. Civic integration is a type of integration that fosters a sense of competence in immigrants regarding a country's history, language, and culture, and reflects the process of internalizing the country's values (Goodman, 2009, p. 27). Integration presents a multidimensional conceptual framework in the literature on international migration that argues that social integration is achieved through soft power within social, historical, cultural, economic, and instrumental (language, security, education, etc.) contexts. In this context, the concept of integration interacts with that of assimilation, and these two concepts provide the theoretical framework for explaining the dynamics of international migration. As a middle ground between the concepts of multiculturalism and assimilation, integration reflects practices in which culture is both internalized and externalized (Ahlén and Boräng, 2018, p. 4). However, in a sense, integration creates a necessary causal relationship for assimilation. Integration refers to the process by which immigrants adapt to the society within the dominant culture without becoming too much like it (Bartram, Poros, & Monforte, 2017, p. 182). In this context, when viewed from the perspective of international migration, the fact that adapting to a society without resembling its dominant culture reveals that integration is the key driver of the concept of assimilation (Dönmez, 2025).

Assimilation creates a situation in which immigrants become more integrated into the dominant culture and adopt its ways. According to Park and Burgess (2017), assimilation refers to a phenomenon of culturally intense integration that reflects the processes through which individuals and groups within social clusters share the historical and cultural values, memories, and emotions of other individuals and groups (Park & Burgess, 2017, p. 11). In this context, assimilation is a concept discussed in the international migration literature from a cultural perspective. In the book *Introduction to the Science of Sociology (1921)*, edited by Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, it is emphasized that the concept of assimilation originated from the phenome-

non of migration. In a sense, processes of intense convergence with the cultures and social structures of other nations broaden the scope of assimilation. Assimilation, a term also used in the European context to refer to the detachment of the individual from the nation (denationalization), highlights the points at which societies diverge geographically and politically (Şan & Tzampaz, 2021). The divide between Europe and the United States is evident in assimilation within the context of international migration. While in Europe the focus is on the integration of small, non-dominant cultural groups into the dominant social culture, in the United States, migration is primarily driven by individuals who have cut their ties to their former countries of citizenship in order to adopt a new culture (Park & Burgess, 1921). In this context, assimilation is interpreted differently depending on cultural, historical, and political conditions; drawing on experiences in Europe and the United States, the distinction between "hard" and "soft" assimilation within the framework of international migration comes to the fore. In his book *Assimilation in American Life (1964)*, Milton Gordon—one of the leading figures in American assimilation theory—laid the foundations for classical assimilation theory. According to Gordon, there are seven types of assimilation. These include cultural and behavioral assimilation (known as acculturation), structural assimilation, integration, the creation of a sense of belonging at the societal level, attitudinal acceptance, behavioral acceptance, and dichotomies among ethnic groups regarding civic identity (Gordon, 1964, p. 71; Kivisto, 2005, p. 14). In this context, the definition of assimilation not only creates a cycle that extends from the individual to the family and from the family to society, but also reflects the evolution of the phenomenon of migration within social structures. By treating structural assimilation as a separate category, Gordon emphasizes the similarities between the immigrant community and the host community when socioeconomic conditions are taken into account (Gordon, 1964; Budyta-Budzyńska, 2011). According to Alba and Nee, assimilation refers to an ethnic and racial regression, and this situation results in a disappearance (Alba & Nee, 1997). This definition, which opens the door to an approach different from classical assimilation theories, has diversified the theoretical foundations of international migration. In another study by Alba and Nee, a new theory of assimilation was developed; by emphasizing institutional changes and citizenship rights, this theory challenges mainstream Anglo-American theories (Alba & Nee, 2003). Since the 2000s, classical assimilation theories have undergone a transformation and taken on a more critical character. In this context, according to Esser, social inequality is the key factor triggering assimilation,

and this situation leads to a gradual process in which ethnicity is lost (Esser, 2004; Laubenthal, 2023).

Generally speaking, while integration and assimilation theories come to fore in explaining the social, cultural, political, and economic foundations of international migration, they also play a functional role in interpreting policies developed in the context of migration.

2. Adaptation Process of Migration

The process of integration, which evolves, changes, and transforms through the concepts of integration and assimilation, shapes the dynamics of social structures based on the psychological, social, cultural, and economic changes experienced by immigrants. In this context, the integration process involves various classifications, and this is reflected in the behavior of immigrants. Indeed, the integration process is viewed as another step in the inclusion of immigrant groups into host communities (Budyta-Budzyńska, 2011).

One of the fundamental conceptual frameworks developed during the adaptation process can be found in Colleen Ward's work. According to Ward, when examining intercultural transitions in the context of migration, psychological and sociocultural adaptation should be distinguished from one another; this distinction contributes to the integration of conceptual discussions on culture shock (Ward, 1996). In this context, examining the integration process from psychological and cultural perspectives not only helps in understanding and interpreting the social changes resulting from migration but also creates the conditions that pave the way for policymakers to make migration policies sustainable. Psychological adaptation encompasses immigrants' level of satisfaction within the host community, their emotional dynamics, and their mental health (Sam et al., 2006). Sociocultural adaptation, on the other hand, emphasizes the behavioral aspects of immigrants' adaptation to a new culture and helps define the scope of their actions within that new cultural framework (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). In this context, migration is a reflection of an integration process shaped by a sense of belonging, discrimination, and cultural codes. Berry (2006) contributed to conceptual diversity by explaining the processes of psychological and sociocultural adaptation that occur in the context of migration within the framework of two models. These two models are addressed through the "cultural learning/shedding" and "stress and coping" models (Berry, 2006). The cultural learning model posits that immigrants find their own way by understanding

the values and skills associated with a particular culture within an environment that encompasses new cultures (Ward, 2001). An example of this is when immigrants try to learn the language of their host community and strive to familiarize themselves with the literature and art of that culture. Another model, the stress and coping model allows for a more comprehensive examination of the concept of acculturation by examining the reactions of immigrants during the acculturation process and the stress they experience as a result of the polarization, conflict, and discrimination they face (Kuo, 2021). This is because the process of adapting to a new culture, while fostering social integration and creating polarization, also affects the psychosocial well-being of immigrants. Digital inequalities may exacerbate the existing disadvantages experienced by migrants by limiting their access to public services, employment opportunities, and social networks in host countries. Accordingly, access to digital technologies and the ability to use them effectively are significant factors shaping migrants' social and economic integration (Mehmetbeyoğlu, 2026).

In the light of psychological and sociocultural adaptation, scales were developed to conduct an in-depth examination of the economic, social, and cultural dynamics of international migration; these scales aimed to identify the underlying factors that influence the role of migrants in the context of social adaptation. The Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS), developed by Ward and Kennedy (1999), was used to measure sociocultural adaptation. It assesses immigrants' adaptation skills in areas such as making friends, using public transportation, understanding the local language and customs, and dealing with bureaucracy (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). At this point, migrants' ability to adapt can influence their social relationships, values, norms, and social status. In particular, key determinants such as language proficiency, duration of stay in the country, and social networks play a more prominent role in the context of sociocultural adaptation (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). The scale, which was expanded in subsequent years, was named the Revised Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS-R) under the leadership of Wilson (2013). The 21-item scale includes strong predictors based on five subcategories (interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and social participation, ecological adaptation, and language proficiency); and unlike the SCAS, the SCAS-R has been designed to indicate better social adaptation rather than interpreting a high score as poor adaptation (Wilson, 2013; Doğan & Tunçkol, 2023).

The measurement of integration processes is based not only on absolute gains but also on comparisons of migrants' social and economic situations. In this context, Subjective Well-Being (SWB) stands out as a key indicator, highlighting migrants' access to a good standard of living and the dimensions of social and economic development. As the name suggests, subjective well-being is negatively associated with discrimination, unemployment, limited access to health care, and a lack of social interaction (Dolan et al., 2008). As all of these situations take a turn for the better, the integration process of immigrants is becoming increasingly solidified. Indeed, the relationship between income level and satisfaction is closely linked to the international migration literature (Simpson, 2013). However, subsequent studies have shown that income level is often an insufficient factor in triggering international migration. Higher levels of well-being tend to reduce individuals' interest in international migration, and it has been emphasized that the relationship between subjective well-being and migration is stronger than the relationship between income level and migration (Cai et al., 2014). When assessing social adaptation processes, it becomes evident that, alongside the behavioral and psychological dimensions of these processes-which develop alongside integration and assimilation-access to a good standard of living and social well-being also come to the forefront. Developed within this framework, SCAS, SCAS-R, and SWB play a role in making adaptation processes measurable and demonstrate that the phenomenon of international migration is incorporated into methodological quantitative studies.

3. Identity Forming and Belonging

While identity formation and a sense of belonging demonstrate that international migration cannot be confined solely within physical borders, they also reveal the dominant role played by social mechanisms (communication, negotiation, institutional exclusion, etc.) in addressing its non-physical dimensions (Güçlüten, 2024). In this context, identity is constructed through the "self"–"other" distinction, and differences in values, language, culture, and history determine the nature of this distinction. According to Max Weber, ethnic and cultural identities arise from subjective beliefs shaped by a shared past (Weber, 1968, p. 389). In this context, a shared history, culture, values, and beliefs are key elements in the formation of identity. Constructed ethnic and cultural identities, by highlighting the differences arising from the phenomenon of migration, sometimes foster interaction and at other times lead to social polarization. The various forms of interaction and negotiation that migrants engage in based on their identities are

explained by the Cultural Identity Styles (CIS) framework developed by Colleen Ward (Ward et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2025). Identity styles, which are categorized into two main types, are discussed under the headings Hybrid Identity Style (HIS) and Alternating Identity Style (AIS) (Ward et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2025). While AIS is used to describe the fluid nature of ethnic identities through the resilience of social communication in response to changing circumstances, HIS is used to describe the formation of a synthesized identity resulting from the social interaction between immigrant groups and the host community (Visser, 2016; Ward et al., 2025). In this context, identity patterns reveal that migrants' identities are not fixed and are strongly influenced by changing political, economic, and social conditions. In this regard, states' legal regulations regarding citizenship rights are one of the factors that influence the concept of identity. For example, thanks to the lenient citizenship policies in France, most people of Maghreb origin hold legal French status by the time they reach adulthood (Weil, 2002, p.180). However, while these lenient policies often do little to help overcome identity crises, they do pose obstacles to the development of a sense of belonging. Second- and third-generation Algerians who have immigrated to France are experiencing a crisis of identity and belonging in the social sphere and do not view themselves as either fully Algerian or fully French (Silberman & Fournier, 2006).

Within the framework of identity, the phenomenon of migration is being shaped by political processes such as war, conflict, and peace, leading to new conceptual explorations (Dönmez & Bedir, 2020). In this context, "Ethnicity in Exile"-one of the key concepts in the process of identity construction-highlights the relationship between international migration and politics. Under conditions of exile, migrants interact with a different culture, and this interaction serves as one of the factors that facilitates their integration into the new cultural framework (Berray, 2019). Identities reproduced through social and cultural networks are evolving in tandem with a sense of belonging. In Moro's (2004) studies examining the relationships among Ugandan and Sudanese refugees in Egypt, it is argued that these identities are reshaped as a result of their convergence on a shared local foundation. In particular, it can be observed that the host country's attitude toward migration may enable these identities to form strong social networks (Berray, 2019).

At this point, boundaries emerge in the transformation of identity, and migrants' sense of belonging evolves according to sociocultural conditions. In Alba's (2005) study, identity boundaries-defined as bright and blurred-

provide an important theoretical foundation for understanding the interaction and communication of identities in the context of migration. Muslim immigrants, particularly in Western Europe, encounter clearly bright religious boundaries, and these boundaries in Western Europe are concentrated within the framework of secularism (Casanova, 1994; Alba, 2005). Blurred boundaries, on the other hand, tend to arise more frequently in the American model, with Mexicans living in the United States cited as an example (Alba, 2005). In this context, identity-based conceptualizations are shaped by countries' growing religious and ethnic sensitivities and give each country's attitude toward immigration its own unique character. Migration, which over the centuries has reflected the permanent or temporary relocation of individuals and societies, also follows different patterns over time. Compared to the migration patterns of the 20th century, the 21st century has seen migration evolve into a threat-driven phenomenon, driven by a changing world order, the pandemic, wars, socioeconomic factors, and the climate crisis (Dao et al., 2021).

Consequently, changing economic and social conditions in global politics are shaping the concepts of identity and belonging among migrants. While identities that strengthen social networks reinforce feelings of belonging in the host country, the regulations implemented by states regarding immigration policies and citizenship rights create boundaries around identity, thereby initiating a process of dual identity construction between migrants and the host country. In this context, identity and belonging are mutually reproduced through crises in international politics (war, conflict), domestic political dynamics, and factors related to integration with local identity.

4. Transnationalism and Diaspora Studies

Finally, in the context of international migration, transnationalism largely reflects the ways in which intercultural communication has accelerated and international social networks have strengthened alongside globalization. Transnationalism is used to describe the framework within which multilateral networks and interactions emerge, transcending the boundaries of nation-states (Vertovec, 1999, p. 447). In this context, transnational ties mobilize the multiple connections that shape, reinforce, and sustain migrants' interaction with their own identities (Glick Schiller et al., 1992, p. 2). While multiple linkages have evolved along three fundamental dimensions in the literature on transnationalism, the importance of both material and non-material elements is emphasized. Approaches to transnationalism, categorized into economic, political, and sociocultural dimensions, serve as

the foundation for explaining the continuity of migration dynamics (Portes et al., 1999).

In an economic context, transnationalism refers to the network of social connections created by transnational corporations through investment, trade, and remittances, while political transnationalism encompasses the struggle of immigrant groups to preserve their cultures; this is shaped by bilateral agreements and civil society organizations (Dunn, 2025, p. 18). In a sociocultural context, transnationalism emerges as an inclusive version of various forms (Dunn, 2025, p.18). In this regard, transnationalism—which serves as a fundamental backdrop for diaspora studies that facilitate the mobility of migrants based on unity and solidarity-blurs the distinction between migration, nation-state.

Carl Dahlman (2004) specifically emphasizes that the concept of diaspora is based on transnational relationships. For this reason, he demonstrates that the diaspora arises from social networks formed across nation-state borders through intense interactions among migrants. While early discussions of the concept of "diaspora" were primarily associated with the homeland, the number of cases studied was quite small (Brubaker, 2005). However, with the emergence of a bipolar world order in the international system and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, the concept of "diaspora" expanded. While the diaspora does not arise solely from the movement of people, changes in borders also play a significant role in its emergence (Brubaker, 2005). Within the framework of political borders, ethno-national communities such as Russians and Hungarians have been separated and identified with the diaspora (Brubaker, 2000). In addition to political boundaries, religious boundaries have also contributed to the formation of diaspora identity. Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Catholic groups have formed diasporas and prioritized their religious identities (Parekh, 1993; Kastoryano, 1999; Vertovec, 2000; Axel, 2001). In this context, diasporas are shaped by shared identities and help keep the spirit of solidarity alive (Safran, 1991, pp. 83–84).

While diaspora studies bring racial, ethnic, religious, and political identities more into the open through transnational connections, they also pave the way for different cultures to engage in dialogue and communication through migration, thereby opening the door to organizational formation. In this context, there are studies in the international migration literature that address the relationship between transnationalism and the diaspora.

In her book *Unending Migration: from Guest-worker to Transnational Citizen*[1], Nermin Abadan-Unat emphasizes how Turks who went to Europe as temporary guest workers in the 1960s gradually became permanent minorities over the years and, in the process, forged transnational connections. In this context, the book has become a classic in the literature on migration for its demonstration of how international labor migration constructs transnational identities.

The book *Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism*[2], edited by Pirko Pitkänen, Ahmet İçduygu, and Deniz Sert, examines the manifestations of transnational connections at the levels of states, societies, and individuals. In this context, the continuity of the phenomenon of international migration is revealed through the development of analytical levels of the concept of transnationalism.

Another important work, *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants*[3] by Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar, highlights the role of migrants as active agents in the context of neoliberal restructuring and urban transformation, revealing how urban structures affect migrants at the local, national, and global levels. In this regard, the study offers an analysis of urban migration from historical and cultural perspectives.

Transnationalism and diaspora studies have added a more global dimension to migration studies by arguing that, in the literature on international migration, social networks are shaped through intense identity interactions, and have highlighted the dynamism of the phenomenon of migration in the context of identity, culture, and solidarity.

Conclusion

A review of the international literature on migration reveals that, while explaining the functional role of the concepts of integration and assimilation-which provide the theoretical framework for migrants' social integration-it has been emphasized that integration leads to a more gradual transition to integration, whereas assimilation leads to a more abrupt one. In this context, integration and assimilation-which shape migration policies in eco-

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1 Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Bitmeyen Göç: Konuk İşçilikten Ulus-Ötesi Yurttaşlığa*, 3. bs., İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2017

2 Pirkko Pitkänen, Ahmet İçduygu, and Deniz Sert, eds., *Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012)

3 Nina Glick Schiller ve Ayşe Çağlar (Ed.), *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2011.

nomic and social contexts-embody mechanisms that internalize and externalize migrants' diverse identities and cultures, as illustrated by the "melting pot" and "salad bowl" metaphors.

The prominence of sociocultural and psychological adaptation within the context of migration's integration processes results in a blend of material (economic, employment) and non-material (social, cultural, historical) elements. Scales developed in this context-such as the SCAS, SCAS-R, and SWB-which measure migrants' adaptation processes, reflect the increasing use of quantitative research methods in international migration studies. In this context, migration is transforming into an observable, measurable construct, thereby introducing a new understanding in the social sciences.

When examining the concepts of identity and belonging, the various forms of identity shaped by historical, religious, cultural, and political factors have influenced the state of belonging by bringing about shifting boundaries of identity (bright–blurred) that have emerged primarily in Europe and the Americas. In this context, states' immigration policies reveal the dynamics of the relationship between belonging, migration, and migrants by highlighting the mutually exclusive and inclusive roles played by the identities of the host country and migrant groups.

The way in which the phenomenon of international migration is shaped by expanding social networks fuels the concepts of transnationalism and diaspora, thereby revealing the dynamism of the socioeconomic and cultural conditions brought about by globalization. In this context, main studies reveal that international migration, urbanization, labor mobility, the state, society, and the individual collectively construct transnational identities, emphasizing that shared identities foster solidarity.

As a result, international migration-through the mutual interplay of state policies and the identities of migrant groups-establishes strong social networks rooted in transnationalism and the diaspora, and shapes dynamics-particularly global ones-within the context of wars, crises, and development trends, rather than local ones.

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MIGRATION, MEDIA, AND COMMUNICATION: FRAMING MOBILITY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

BURAK SOMUNCU*

INTRODUCTION

Migration, one of the most deeply rooted social dynamics in human history, is today a field of contestation that is as cultural as it is economic and political. Migration and urbanization are among the most powerful forces shaping the modern World (Güçlüten, 2026). It cannot be understood merely as a physical act of relocation; migration is simultaneously a complex process through which identities and meanings are reproduced. It is precisely at this juncture that the media emerges as the most powerful apparatus through which the public debate on migration is constructed and through which society comes to perceive this phenomenon. Indeed, Castles and Miller (2009) are right to argue that contemporary migratory movements are intertwined not only with economic inequalities but also with transformations in communication technologies. Within this structure, the media is a critical actor that determines how migration becomes visible in the public sphere, which dimensions of it are foregrounded, and which voices are suppressed.

The concept of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) is defined as a democratic communicative space in which individuals and groups can deliberate on social issues. Habermas's structural transformation analysis revealed the historical formation of the bourgeois public sphere and the central role of the media within it. The media is perhaps the most decisive component of this space; for the manner in which a sensitive and multi-layered topic such as migration is presented directly affects society's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors toward that topic. With the rapid proliferation of digital platforms and social media alongside traditional media, the discourses representing migration have become increasingly plural and diverse. This plu-

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ralization, on the one hand, expands opportunities for democratic participation, while at the same time bringing with it the risks of disinformation, hate speech, and polarization.

Migration mobility is a sociological phenomenon that enables cultures and individuals to meet in the public sphere and defines the processes of intertwining or inability of Indigenous peoples and immigrant societies in every society. (Güçlüten, 2024). The question of how migration is represented in the media cannot be treated as a merely technical dimension of journalistic practice. Representation, as Hall (1997) notes, is not a neutral reflection of reality; it is a meaning-making process constructed through cultural codes, ideological positionings, and institutional interests. For this reason, the linguistic structures, visual choices, source preferences, and narrative schemas of migration news must be read as sites in which social power relations are either reproduced or contested. Users on social media often exist within an algorithmic bubble by serving them with content that resonates with their beliefs and viewpoints, which results in an echo chamber (Bozbaş & Aydın, 2024). Van Dijk's (1991) tradition of discourse analysis laid the methodological foundations for such a reading, demonstrating that the implicit ideological structures embedded in media texts can be systematically decoded.

This chapter examines the multidimensional relationship between migration and media from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. Drawing on a range of communication theories most notably framing theory a broad analysis is conducted spanning traditional media to digital platforms. The chapter successively examines how migration is framed in traditional media, the role of digital media and platforms in the representation of migration, how migrants make their own voices heard on social media, and finally how different media systems shape migration journalism. This analysis is not merely a descriptive exercise; it is also an attempt to interrogate the normative dimensions of the media-migration relationship representational justice, public sphere democracy, and cultural citizenship.

The theoretical backbone of this chapter consists of framing theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974), agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), representation theory (Hall, 1997), and the comparative media systems approach (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). These theoretical tools make it possible to grasp, from a multi-layered perspective, how migration is made

meaningful in the public sphere. The empirical findings draw on comparative research selected from European, North American, and Turkish contexts, thereby rendering visible both universal trends and local specificities.

The methodological approach of this chapter rests on a dialogue between theoretical synthesis and empirical findings. Rather than a single case study or quantitative content analysis, a comparative reading of research drawn from diverse geographical and media contexts has been preferred. This choice aims to capture the universal dynamics of the media-migration relationship alongside local particularities. Readers will be able to follow, in each subsection, both the theoretical tools and how those tools operate in conjunction with concrete research findings. The chapter thus serves simultaneously as a theoretical introduction at the graduate level and as a literature map for researchers active in the field.

1. REPRESENTATION OF MIGRATION IN THE MEDIA: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

A rich theoretical corpus is available for making sense of the relationship between migration and media. This theoretical map extending from framing theory and media systems analysis to digital communication and self-representation practices serves as an indispensable guide for understanding how migration is rendered visible in the public sphere. The subsections below address each of these axes, supporting them with relevant empirical findings.

1.1. Framing Migration in Traditional Media

What a news story says is as important as how it says it perhaps even more so. Entman (1993) builds the concept of framing precisely on this tension: selecting and foregrounding certain aspects of perceived reality, and shaping them around particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and proposed remedies. Framing theory holds that the manner in which a given topic is presented plays a decisive role in shaping audiences' perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations of that topic (Entman, 1993). These four functions problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and remedy suggestion allow for the systematic analysis of which aspects of a news text are emphasized and which are pushed to the background.

Drawing on Goffman's (1974) tradition of frame analysis, this approach has established itself as an important conceptual tool in the analytical study

of journalistic practice. Goffman referred to the cognitive schemas individuals employ to make sense of everyday experience as 'frames,' and described in detail how these schemas operate in social interaction. In the context of migration journalism, framing theory enables us to analyze how journalists, editors, and media organizations define and present migration through particular narrative schemas. News selection, headline writing, visual choices, source use, and linguistic metaphors function as concrete indicators of this framing process.

Traditional media newspapers, television, and radio have historically produced a set of dominant frames around migration; these frames are not isolated from one another but rather operate in an intertwined and mutually reinforcing manner. The most common is the 'threat frame,' which positions migrants as an element threatening national security, economic order, or cultural fabric (Van Dijk, 1991; Altheide, 1997). Altheide's (1997) concept of the 'problem frame' explains how news media contributes to the production of fear. Metaphors such as 'flood,' 'surge,' and 'wave,' which are frequently encountered in coverage of irregular migration, carry the linguistic traces of this framing; they portray migrants not as individual subjects but as an uncontrollable, anonymous mass much like a natural disaster. These linguistic choices are not accidental: they function systematically to feed securitization discourse.

The 'humanitarian crisis frame' which appears entirely different from the threat frame yet is structurally allied with it comes to the fore particularly in the aftermath of dramatic events such as wars, famines, or natural disasters. Within this frame, the media presents refugees and asylum seekers as suffering victims in need of assistance (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017). Chouliaraki ve Stolic (2017), by examining visual representations in European news media, revealed how refugees are positioned through certain visual typologies. Although this framing serves to generate empathy in the audience, it carries the danger of fixing the representation of migrants in a passive and disempowered position; the victim narrative renders invisible migrants' capacity for agency, their political subjectivity, and their social contributions. What kind of pressure does this discursive choice create on migrants' public visibility?

The 'economic frame' constitutes yet another component of this picture: migrants are treated primarily as labor market actors and evaluated in terms of their impact on the host country's economy. Within this frame, migrants are portrayed at times as contributors to economic development and at other

times as competitors to the native workforce (Bleich vd., 2015). Bleich and colleagues' (2015) study on the representation of minorities in the British press quantitatively documented how economic framing operates systematically in news headlines. The economic frame positions migrants not as human subjects but as objects of a cost-benefit calculation; it strips the migration debate of its moral and political dimensions, reducing it to a purely technical matter of governance. The triad of threat, crisis, and economic burden frames, despite carrying different emotional tones, arrives at a common outcome: migrants are positioned as objects of events rather than as subjects.

When integrated with McCombs ve Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory, it becomes apparent that these framing practices shape not only the existing news but also which dimensions of the social debate on migration are foregrounded. Agenda-setting theory holds that the media tells people 'what to think about'; second-level agenda-setting (attribute agenda-setting) further argues that it also influences 'how to think about it.' The frames that the media presents intensively directly affect how the public perceives the issue and how policymakers construct their policy agendas. This interaction also brings with it the risk that migration policies may be shaped according to media logic.

Van Dijk (1988, 1991), employing discourse analysis, comprehensively examined how traditional media represents ethnic minorities and migrants, demonstrating that the language, source preferences, and discursive structures used in news items exhibit a systemic pattern of differentiation and othering. Van Dijk's (1988) 'news as discourse' approach decodes the ideological schemas underlying the surface structures of news texts. According to these studies, journalistic practices most often position migrants as a 'source of problems,' while legitimating the host society as the bearer of norms and standards. The prioritization of elite actors politicians, security officials, and experts in source selection narrows migrants' opportunities to convey their own experiences and reinforces a unidirectional narrative structure.

Georgiou ve Zaborowski's (2017) comparative study conducted in ten European countries documented that media frames during the 2015–2016 refugee crisis varied significantly from country to country, yet the threat and crisis frames emerged as a general tendency. This finding points to the fact that framing practices are deeply related to both local media cultures and national political contexts. Another important conclusion revealed by the

research is that the voices of refugees are extremely limited in news coverage; the vast majority of news stories speak about refugees rather than speaking with them. This 'speaking about/speaking with' distinction can be regarded as a fundamental criterion of representational justice.

Another dimension of framing practices in traditional media is the semantic weight carried by visual representations. The selection of photographs, camera angles, use of color, and compositional choices, together with written text, construct the image of the migrant. Visual motifs such as crowded boat scenes, faces behind barbed wire, and border patrols function as iconographic elements that reinforce threat and crisis frames. By contrast, the relative scarcity of images showing migrants' everyday life practices, professional accomplishments, or social contributions clearly reveals the visual dimension of representational imbalance.

Another important dimension of framing practices is the selection and hierarchy of news sources. In traditional media, migration news relies heavily on the voices of political actors, the security bureaucracy, and expert commentators, while the perspectives of migrants, civil society organizations, and local communities remain in a secondary position. This source hierarchy, while maintaining the appearance of 'objectivity,' in fact serves to reproduce dominant institutional viewpoints. Increasing source diversity stands out as a concrete point of intervention in addressing framing imbalances. Enriching journalism ethics codes with principles specific to migration reporting 'human first' approaches, stereotype-avoidance guidelines, and linguistic sensitivity protocols is among the good practices developing at the international level in this field.

International organizations such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have published ethical guidelines on migration and refugee journalism, aiming to provide guidance for media professionals. These guidelines contain concrete recommendations such as preferring 'irregular migrant' over 'illegal immigrant,' conveying individual stories on a consent basis, protecting children's identities, and contextualizing statistics. Their impact in practice, however, may remain limited depending on media organizations' editorial policies, journalists' workloads, and commercial pressures. The evolution of theoretical awareness into practical transformation depends not only on individual journalists' will but also on the structural transformation of newsroom cultures and the media economy.

The dominant frames in traditional media's migration journalism threat, crisis, and economic burden position migration not as a process of structural social transformation but as a 'problem' to be managed. The critical interrogation of these frames has become a fundamental necessity both in terms of media literacy and democratic representation. Developing framing awareness in journalism education, increasing source diversity, and incorporating migrant voices into news production processes are concrete steps toward building a more equitable representational environment. How far these steps can go, however, is a separate question that must be evaluated alongside the new representational practices brought by digital media.

1.2. Digital Media, Platforms, and Migration

The digital transformation has reshaped the relationship between migration and media but this transformation is neither purely liberating nor purely threatening. Castells (2009) conceptualizes this new communicative environment as 'network communication,' arguing that the production, circulation, and consumption of information now operates not according to a hierarchical but a networked logic. Castells's (2010) network society theory contends that communicative power has shifted from traditional media institutions to distributed digital networks, and that this shift has had profound effects on social movements, identity formations, and forms of political participation. Migration has also received its share of this transformation; both the communicative practices of migrants and the forms of public representation of migration have begun to bear the imprint of digitalization.

Digital media differentiates migration discourse in several ways. Digital platforms, by democratizing content production, grant actors beyond journalists and media organizations civil society organizations, migrants, activists the right to voice in the public sphere. As Bruns (2008) expresses through his concept of 'produsage,' users are now positioned not merely as consumers but as producers of content as well. This transformation has weakened the gatekeeping function of traditional media and opened the way for alternative narratives about migration to enter circulation. Civil society organizations' digital campaigns, migrant activists' blogs and vlogs, and independent documentary filmmakers' online publications constitute concrete examples of this pluralist narrative environment.

The role of digital media in the representation of migration cannot be fully explained by an affirmative democratization narrative. Pariser's (2011) concept of the 'filter bubble' draws attention to the fact that algorithms surround users with content that reinforces their own biases and interests. This

mechanism can accelerate the spread of extremist discourses on migration within certain communities and lay the groundwork for polarization of public opinion. Algorithmic personalization reduces users' exposure to opposing views, thereby making it more difficult to conduct the migration debate on a shared public ground. Combined with the echo chamber effect, filter bubbles can contribute to the radicalization of anti-migrant or pro-migrant closed communities within themselves.

How social media platforms Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, TikTok shape migration discourse is a subject of growing research interest. While these platforms facilitate the production of content that renders the experiences of refugees and migrants visible, they also provide environments in which hate speech, disinformation, and anti-migrant discourses can spread rapidly. The inconsistency of platform moderation policies, the ambiguities in the definition of hate speech, and the delegation of content moderation to automation further complicate this dual dynamic. It has been empirically documented that disinformation campaigns with migration themes intensify on social media particularly during election periods.

Gillespie et al (2018) conducted a comprehensive study demonstrating that Syrian refugees used smartphones and social media as a fundamental 'infrastructure' during their passage to Europe. This study reveals that digital tools have become an inseparable part of the migration experience; refugees rely heavily on these tools to meet vital needs such as route information, communication, and safety. Smartphones, map applications, translation software, and messaging platforms form the logistical backbone of the migration journey while also making it possible to maintain bonds with family and friends. This finding clearly demonstrates that digital technologies are not a luxury access tool for migrants but a vital infrastructure.

Smets (2018), in his study examining the media use practices of Syrian refugees in Turkey, developed the concept of 'connected migrants' and found that digital media serves refugees not merely as a means of obtaining information but also as a vehicle for identity construction, a sense of belonging, and maintaining ties with their communities. Smets's findings show that the media use of refugees cannot be understood independently of social context: language barriers, legal status uncertainties, and economic constraints profoundly shape digital practices. The concept of the connected migrant positions migrants not as passive information consumers but as active and strategic media users.

Dekker ve Engbersen (2014) examined how social media transforms migrant networks and facilitates the process of migration decision-making. Platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp strengthen migrants' informal information networks and contribute to the consolidation of community solidarity before, during, and after migration. Social media transcends the geographic boundaries of traditional migration networks, providing prospective migrants with real-time information about living conditions, employment opportunities, and legal procedures in the destination country. While contributing to more informed migration decisions, it also creates a risk environment in which incorrect or misleading information can spread at the same speed.

Kaplan ve Haenlein (2010) define social media as internet-based applications that provide users with opportunities for content sharing, collaboration, and the formation of online communities. In the context of migration, this definition encompasses a diverse range of digital practices including WhatsApp groups, Facebook migrant communities, YouTube channels, and TikTok videos. These practices shape both intra-community communication and migrants' contacts with the outside world. The rise of short-video platforms in particular has enabled young migrants to share their experiences in creative and accessible formats; this content has at times attracted the attention of mainstream media and entered wider public circulation.

The issue of the digital divide cannot be overlooked either. In contexts where migrants' access to digital media is constrained by language barriers, economic insufficiencies, and legal restrictions, opportunities for representation and participation in digital spaces also narrow. The digital divide is not limited to hardware access; digital literacy, platform usage skills, and awareness of online safety are also components of this inequality. The risk that the voices of migrant groups in advantageous positions in terms of access will drown out the voices of disadvantaged groups is a cautionary reminder that disrupts the illusion that digital media democratizes the migration experience homogeneously.

Another critical dimension of digital platforms in migration discourse involves debates on data colonialism and surveillance capitalism. Migrants' digital footprints location data, communication records, social media profiles are viewed as a valuable resource both by state border management apparatuses and by the data economy of private corporations. Biometric registration systems, border surveillance technologies, and social media intelligence demonstrate that digital tools generate not only opportunities but also

risks for migrants. Digital rights, data protection, and platform accountability are becoming increasingly central topics in migration research.

The effects of AI-assisted content moderation and automated translation systems on migration discourse remain an insufficiently studied area. Automated moderation algorithms' inadequacy in detecting hate speech in certain languages may result in anti-migrant content produced in minority languages remaining on platforms for longer periods. Automated translation tools' loss of cultural nuances and context can cause migrants' self-narratives to be conveyed inaccurately or incompletely. These layers of technological mediation disrupt the illusion that digital media is a 'transparent channel' and demonstrate that platform infrastructure itself is an ideological and political actor.

Digital media and platforms shape migration discourse through a bidirectional dynamic that carries the potential both to democratize and to polarize. When algorithmic logic, platform economics, and access inequalities are taken into account, the claim that the digital space represents migration more fairly and inclusively must be evaluated within structural constraints. Regulatory debates in the areas of platform governance, content moderation, and digital rights constitute the ground for steps that can be taken to overcome these constraints. Acknowledging that the digital space is not a neutral public forum is the starting point of this debate.

1.3. Migrants' Self-Representation in Social Media

Contemporary governments are striving to implement comprehensive, multi-dimensional migration management frameworks that are not only responsive to current realities but also resilient and adaptable to the evolving dynamics of future migratory trends (Güçlüten, 2025). While traditional media speaks about them, migrants now speak for themselves. Self-representation is the practice by which individuals or communities directly share their own identities, experiences, and perspectives with the public without the mediation of others. Migrants, who have been largely positioned as 'news objects' in traditional media, have now gained the ability to make their own voices directly heard in digital and social media environments. This transformation carries profound consequences for the politics of representation. Self-representation is not merely an individual expressive practice; it can also be read as a collective strategy of resistance and negotiation against dominant narratives. The right of migrants to tell their own stories is a fundamental component of a democratic public sphere.

Hall's (1997) theory of representation provides a foundation for analyzing how meaning production is shaped through cultural practices and how particular groups are stereotyped. According to Hall, representation is not a reflection of reality but a process constructed through discourse and cultural codes. Systems of representation function as ideological apparatuses that produce the 'us' and 'them' distinction, normalizing certain identities while othering others. The narratives that migrants construct about themselves through social media can be read as a site of negotiation and resistance against these dominant codes; they disrupt stereotypical images, render complex and multi-layered identities visible, and foreground the human dimension of the migration experience.

Bhabha's (1994) concept of the 'third space' expresses the creative potential of cultural hybridity and mutual interaction. According to Bhabha, cultural identities are not fixed and essential categories; they are structures continuously reproduced through processes of negotiation, translation, and hybridization. The representational practices of migrants on social media can also be evaluated within this framework: social media, as a space in which cultural elements from both origin and destination countries are brought together and hybrid and plural identity narratives are produced, offers a representational repertoire that goes beyond standard identity categories. The content produced in this third space multilingual videos, hybrid music genres, fusion recipes, and bicultural humor reveals the creative and productive dimensions of migrant identity.

Madianou ve Miller (2012), through the concept of 'polymedia,' explain how digital migrants functionally use different media platforms together according to their communicative needs. Polymedia argues that users make platform choices based on their social and emotional needs in the face of the diversity of technological possibilities. This conceptualization regards migrants' media use not as an instrumental choice process but as an integrated practice that intersects with social, emotional, and practical needs. For instance, a migrant may prefer one platform for video calls with family, another for daily communication, and a third for identity expression and community building. This multiple media use reflects the complexity of migrants' communicative ecology.

Diasporic digital communities also occupy an important place in the context of self-representation. As Kissau ve Hunger (2010) note, the internet offers migrant and diaspora communities possibilities previously unavai-

lable for both maintaining ties with their countries of origin and participating in social life in the host country. Facebook groups, YouTube channels, and Twitter/X communities bring together migrant individuals living in scattered geographies, constructing a common digital public sphere. These digital diaspora spaces undertake a wide variety of functions including language preservation, the transmission of cultural practices, political mobilization, and mutual solidarity. Georgiou'nun (2006) studies on diaspora, identity, and media provide a theoretical grounding for the central role of these digital communities in identity negotiation.

Leurs ve Ponzanesi'nin (2011) research on digital diaspora demonstrated that social media serves a central function for younger-generation migrants and diaspora individuals particularly in terms of both identity negotiation and community building. These individuals frequently display and negotiate their dual or multiple identities in a performative manner through digital platforms. The digital practices of young diaspora members differ significantly from those of the parental generation, exhibiting a more creative, more visual, and more globally oriented communicative repertoire. This intergenerational difference points to the dynamic and evolving nature of digital self-representation practices.

The practice of self-representation is, of course, not independent of structural constraints. Platform algorithms reduce the visibility of certain content while foregrounding others, which can indirectly limit migrants' self-representation opportunities. The algorithmic visibility economy rewards engagement-driven content, which at times creates pressure for migrant narratives to be dramatized or commercialized. Furthermore, hate speech and trolling emerge as a significant factor constraining migrants' freedom of digital expression. Female migrants and LGBTQ+ migrants in particular may encounter the manifestations of intersectional discrimination in the digital sphere more intensively.

It must also not be overlooked that self-representation practices are not homogeneous, and that migrants exhibit significant variation depending on such variables as level of education, language proficiency, economic situation, age, and gender. The gap between the social media visibility of urban, educated, and digitally literate migrants and the invisibility of migrants with rural origins, who face language barriers, or who exist in conditions of legal status uncertainty reflects the inequalities within the field of self-representation itself. For this reason, 'migrants' social media experience' should be approached from a plural and intersectional perspective rather than through

a homogenizing categorization. An intersectionality approach helps us understand how axes such as class, race, gender, age, and legal status become entangled to shape self-representation opportunities.

Another dimension of self-representation practices consists of the institutional forms of migrant media (ethnic media/migrant media). Community radio stations, migrant newspapers, multilingual news websites, and diaspora television channels constitute a collective media infrastructure that goes beyond individual social media uses. These media outlets both bring to the agenda topics that mainstream media ignores and ensure the circulation of information within migrant communities. Digitalization has also accelerated the transformation of these traditional migrant media organs, triggering a transition process extending from print newspapers to online platforms and from cable television to YouTube channels.

The emotional and psychosocial dimensions of self-representation practices are also noteworthy. Bonds maintained with family and friends through social media support migrants' sense of belonging, psychological resilience, and continuity of identity. The ability to closely follow political developments in the country of origin keeps the political subjectivity of diaspora individuals alive and enables forms of transnational political participation. However, this state of constant connectivity can sometimes reinforce the feeling of 'double absence' the condition of being neither fully here nor fully there reminding us of the fact that digital bonds cannot substitute for face-to-face relationships. Self-representation functions both as a refuge and as a terrain of negotiation within this emotionally fraught geography.

Visual self-representation practices selfie culture, story sharing, vlog formats also foreground the aesthetic and performative dimensions of migrant identity. In contrast to the victim or threat images of traditional media, visual content produced by migrants themselves frequently reflects the ordinariness, beauty, and complexity of everyday life. This 'politics of the ordinary' constitutes a quiet yet effective counter-narrative against dominant frames that position migrants as exceptional and problematic subjects. Aesthetic choices, filter use, choices of location, and bodily presentation constitute the visual language of identity construction; this language carries a communicative power distinct from that of written text.

The practice of self-representation carried out by migrants on social media opens an alternative discursive space against the dominant framings of traditional media. Despite all its limitations, this space harbors an original

democratizing potential that allows the migration experience to be brought into the public sphere through first-hand, pluralist, and resistant narratives. The realization of this potential depends on the equitable regulation of platform governance, the widespread dissemination of digital literacy, and the development of effective mechanisms against hate speech. Undoubtedly, creating these structural conditions is a matter that falls within the responsibility not only of technology companies but also of policymakers and civil society.

1.4. Media Systems and Models of Migration Journalism

Understanding migration news requires more than looking at individual narratives or framing choices; for the frame selected by a reporter is largely predetermined by the structural logic of the media system within which they work. Media systems define the institutional, economic, and political framework within which journalistic practices take shape; they determine the norms of news production, source relations, and the degree of editorial autonomy. Without this structural perspective, explaining the differences in migration journalism across countries solely in terms of cultural preferences is insufficient.

Hallin ve Mancini'nin (2004) comparative media systems framework conceptualizes the media-politics relationship in Western democracies through three fundamental models: the Liberal Model (United Kingdom, Ireland, North America), the Democratic Corporatist Model (Northern and Central Europe), and the Polarized Pluralist Model (Southern Europe). These models diverge significantly from one another in terms of journalistic traditions, media ownership structures, state-media relations, and professional norms. Hallin ve Mancini's typology offers a productive framework for the comparative analysis of migration journalism as well, allowing us to understand how different media systems frame migration in different ways.

In the Liberal Model, the dominance of market logic can lead to migration news being shaped by commercial considerations. Dramatic and conflict-driven narratives are foregrounded with the aim of attracting audience interest; newsrooms operating under the pressure of commercial competition gravitate toward simplified and emotionally charged frames rather than complex structural analyses. In the Democratic Corporatist Model, adherence to institutional norms and professional journalism ethics makes possible a relatively more balanced and contextual approach to migration news. In this model, in which public service broadcasting is strong, more favorable

institutional conditions exist for treating migration from a multi-perspectival standpoint. In the Polarized Pluralist Model, the reflection of strong political polarization into the media creates an environment in which migration news is deeply shaped by ideological tendencies; media outlets frequently align with political camps and migration journalism becomes an extension of this alignment.

Benson'un (2013) study comparing migration news in France and the United States empirically documented that the same migration phenomenon can be presented with entirely different frames in different media systems. In the French press, a discursive mode characteristic of a public forum was found to predominate, while in the American press, narrative-driven and individualized journalistic practices were found to be determining. Benson's analysis, grounded in field theory, shows how the structural characteristics of the media field dependence on advertising, journalistic autonomy, distance from the political field shape news frames. These findings reveal that framing practices derive not only from individual journalistic preferences but from the objective structure of the media field.

The case of Turkey constitutes an original and noteworthy example in this context. The Syrian refugee migration that unfolded particularly after 2011 was received in the Turkish media with both intense interest and deep political polarization. Pro-government and opposition media outlets presented the same migration phenomenon with sharply divergent discourses: in one sector, the frames of 'hospitality' and 'humanitarian responsibility' were predominant, while in the other sector, frames of 'security threat' and 'economic burden' came to the fore. Turkey's media system exhibits characteristics close to the Polarized Pluralist Model of the Hallin ve Mancini typology, while also being shaped by its own distinctive historical and political dynamics. This situation concretizes the fact that the dynamics of pluralism and polarization within the media system directly reflect onto migration news.

Strömbäck ve Esser'in (2014) concept of the 'mediatization of politics' can also be evaluated within this framework. Mediatization refers to the process by which politics increasingly adapts to the logic, formats, and priorities of the media. The shaping of political debates on migration policy according to media logic dramatization, personalization, polarization can constitute an obstacle to genuine policy deliberation. Politicians' adjustment of their statements on migration to the media agenda carries the risk of reducing complex structural problems to slogans and symbolic gestures. The ownership

structure, financing model, and relationship with the state of media organizations exert a determining influence on these dynamics.

Sassen'ın (2001) global city theory adds a spatial dimension to the migration-media relationship. In cities that function as international migration hubs such as New York, London, and Paris the media environment exhibits a multilingual and multicultural structure; this allows for the diversification of both migrant media and pluralist voices in mainstream media. Global cities are nodal points where not only finance and service sectors but also communication infrastructures are concentrated. The media ecology in these cities carries a transnational character that goes beyond national media systems. The presence in these cities of migrant journalists, multilingual news platforms, and diaspora media also demonstrates that the geographic distribution of migration representation is unequal.

De Genova'nın (2002) framework of 'illegality and deportability' contributes to our analysis of how media discourses other migrants through legal categories. The manner in which the expression 'illegal immigrant' has been normalized in the media and the function this discourse serves in legitimizing the exclusion of migrants from social rights is interrogated from a critical perspective. According to De Genova, 'illegality' is not a natural or pregiven condition but a social position produced through legal, political, and discursive practices. The role of the media in this production is to present certain legal categories as natural and inevitable, thereby overshadowing migrants' human status.

Nacos ve Torres-Reyna (2007), in their study examining the media representation of Muslim Americans, demonstrated that the securitization discourse that took hold following the September 11 attacks fundamentally transformed media frames. This finding indicates that the relationship between media systems and models of migration journalism cannot be evaluated independently of historical and conjunctural conditions. Events such as moments of crisis, terrorist attacks, and mass migration waves can rapidly transform existing framing patterns; once securitization discourse becomes entrenched, it can remain durable for a long time. This situation shows that not only the structural characteristics of media systems but also conjunctural shocks shape migration journalism.

Another dimension of media systems analysis is the role of public service broadcasting in migration journalism. Public broadcasters, by virtue of their relative independence from commercial pressures and their universal service

obligations, have the potential to treat migration more thoroughly, contextually, and in a pluralist manner. Public broadcasters' openness to political interference, however, can hinder the realization of this potential. The existence of independent regulatory bodies, constitutional guarantees of editorial autonomy, and transparency of financing models are critical factors that determine the quality of public broadcasting's migration journalism. Comparative studies show that in countries with a strong and autonomous public broadcasting tradition, migration news tends to be less polarizing and more informative.

The role of transnational media flows and global news agencies must also be evaluated within the media systems framework. Global agencies such as Reuters, the Associated Press, and Agence France-Presse occupy a central position in the international circulation of migration news, indirectly constraining the framing choices of local media organizations. The linguistic and visual templates of wire service reports carry a certain framing heritage even when adapted to local contexts. This situation shows that migration journalism is a product not only of national media systems but also of the global news economy. Strengthening local journalism and supporting independent news production are important in terms of balancing this dependency relationship.

Media systems constitute a structural context that determines the form, content, and ideological frame of migration news. A comparative perspective provides grounds for understanding journalism in different countries as a product not merely of individual journalistic preferences but of historical, institutional, and political factors. This structural perspective also suggests that interventions aimed at improving migration journalism should be directed not only at individual journalist training but also at the institutional reform of media systems. To ask which model produces a more equitable migration journalism is, ultimately, to ask which kind of media democracy we stand for.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the multidimensional relationship between migration and media and communication has been analyzed along four principal axes: framing practices in traditional media, the transformative role of digital media, migrants' self-representation strategies, and the structural determinacy of media systems. These four axes have been treated not as isolated domains but as dynamics that operate in mutual interaction, feeding and constraining one another. The framing practices of traditional media are carried over into

the digital environment, digital self-representation opportunities undermine the dominant narratives of traditional media, and the structural characteristics of media systems shape both domains.

The findings obtained clearly reveal that the manner in which migration is represented in the media is neither neutral nor independent. Across a broad spectrum extending from traditional media to digital platforms, dominant frames predominantly position migration as a 'problem,' 'threat,' or 'crisis.' The threat frame, the humanitarian crisis frame, and the economic frame, despite operating in different registers, tend to fix migrants as either a source of danger or an object of assistance; their capacity for agency, their social contributions, and their complex subjectivities are rendered invisible in the process. Nevertheless, the self-representation opportunities offered by social media open space for the development of alternative and resistant discourses. The existence of this space demonstrates that dominant frames are not absolute; they are open to negotiation, resistance, and transformation.

When evaluated from the perspective of public sphere debates, it becomes apparent that the manner in which the media frames migration has profound effects on democratic accountability, cultural pluralism, and social cohesion. The rational-critical deliberation required by Habermas's (1989) ideal of the public sphere can be obstructed by the media's framing practices on polarizing topics such as migration. The value of framing, agenda-setting, and representation theories as analytical tools in this context is undeniable; for these theories bring to light the ideological and institutional dynamics underlying ostensibly objective journalistic practices. Critical media literacy emerges as a fundamental competency that enables these dynamics to be recognized both by media consumers and by media producers.

Migrants' self-representation practices in digital media can be regarded as concrete indicators of a transition from a unilateral and top-down understanding of representation to a pluralist and participatory public sphere. Polymedia practices, digital diaspora communities, and hybrid identity narratives carry the potential for migrants to move beyond being 'objects spoken about' and become 'subjects who speak for themselves.' Structural obstacles such as the determinacy of algorithms, the digital divide, and hate speech significantly constrain this democratizing potential. The inequalities within the self-representation field itself education, language, gender, legal status remind us that this potential is not evenly distributed.

From a comparative media systems perspective, it becomes clear that migration journalism is neither a universal nor a uniform practice; on the contrary, it is profoundly shaped by historical, institutional, and political conditions. The Liberal, Democratic Corporatist, and Polarized Pluralist models demonstrate that the same migration phenomenon can be presented with entirely different frames. The Turkish case concretizes how media polarization is reflected in migration news and renders visible the need for structural reform. It is therefore necessary to examine critically not only news texts but also the structures that produce and distribute journalism.

The analytical framework presented in this chapter also proposes a set of questions for future research. Among the questions that remain insufficiently answered are: how AI-assisted news production will affect migration frames, how climate migration will be represented in the media, how platform regulations will transform self-representation opportunities, and what distinctiveness media systems in the Global South exhibit in migration journalism. Investigating these questions requires an interdisciplinary approach at the intersection of communication studies, migration studies, political science, sociology, and law. In addition to academic production, journalism education, media literacy programs, and civil society monitoring activities play critical roles in the transmission of knowledge in this field to society.

The media-migration relationship is not merely a matter of representation but also a matter of power, identity, and democracy. The construction of a media environment that renders migrants visible in their human dignity, their plurality, and their social contributions is a collective responsibility that falls on media professionals, researchers, and policymakers alike. Fulfilling this responsibility requires: developing framing awareness, increasing source diversity, incorporating migrant voices into news production processes, equitably regulating digital platform governance, and advancing the democratic reform of media systems. When future research examines the context-specific manifestations of this multilayered relationship in local settings, its visual culture dimension, and the effects of AI-assisted content production on migration representation, the theoretical and empirical richness of the field will deepen further.

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POPULISM AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT DISCOURSES

ONUR TÜRKÖLMEZ*

Introduction

One of the most significant issues defining global politics over the past two decades is the rise of populism alongside the structural crises of representative democracies (Moffitt, 2016). In the literature, populism is generally characterized as a "thin-centered ideology" premised on the moral and irreconcilable antagonism between the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite", which advocates for the direct reflection of the democratic will in politics (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). This flexible, protean definition of populism enables it to emerge as a global phenomenon across both the left and right wings of the political spectrum by articulating itself with different "thick" ideologies such as nationalism or socialism (Stanley, 2008, p. 95). Socio-economic inequalities produced by neoliberal globalization, widespread distrust of political elites, and the growing influence of supranational regulatory institutions on national politics have created fertile ground for populist actors, transforming populism from a marginal political style into the defining global Zeitgeist of our era.

There is both a clear scholarly consensus on certain points and deep theoretical divergence regarding how populism should be conceptualized. The basic point of agreement is that populism places the concept of "the people" at its center and adopts an anti-elite stance (Rooduijn, 2014). However, there are substantial ontological disagreements regarding whether populism is inherently an ideology, a discourse, a strategy, or a political style.

Scholars such as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser conceive of populism as a thin-centered ideology and draw a distinction between exclusionary and inclusionary forms of populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). According to this approach, right-wing populism in Europe follows exclusionary practices through nativism, while left-wing populism in Latin America exhibits an inclusionary character grounded in socio-economic concerns.

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Ernesto Laclau regards populism not as an ideology but as "the construction of the political" and a "political logic" (Laclau, 2005, p. 117). For Laclau, "the people" is not a given reality but a category that is subsequently constructed through the articulation of unsatisfied democratic demands into a chain of equivalences (Laclau, 2005, p. 74). At the center of this construction stands an "empty signifier" that can be filled with different meanings. Mouffe (2018) follows this line of reasoning and argues that populism, approached in a non-essentialist manner, can be transformed into a political program for the left. For Mouffe, the category of "the people" is a discursive political construct, and alternative constructs and narratives can compete in the democratic arena (Mouffe, 2018).

While Kurt Weyland (2001) defines populism as a political strategy employed by leaders who personalize power and rely on non-institutionalized mass support (Weyland, 2001), Moffitt (2016) approaches populism as a political style and performance (2016, p. 64). According to Moffitt, populists are not merely actors who exploit existing crises for their own benefit; they can also manufacture crises in order to secure their own legitimacy.

The fundamental cleavage at the center of these debates concerns whether and how the category of "the people" can be filled with content. Whereas the Laclauian approach treats the people entirely as a discursive empty signifier, scholars such as Ostiguy and Taggart contend that this signifier cannot be entirely empty. Taggart (2000) argues that populists always draw upon a romanticized, retrospective, and idealized construction of the people, and that the concept of the people therefore possesses certain cultural limits (Taggart, 2000, p. 95).

The intersection of populism's global rise with migration politics becomes most pronounced in the context of the process through which the boundaries of the nation-state and the forms of national belonging and identity are being redefined. At the discursive level, the construction of the category of the people necessarily implies an exclusionary boundary by its very nature. Populist logic constructs the identity of the true people not only vertically against the corrupt elite positioned above, but also horizontally against "the others" positioned below or outside (Brubaker, 2017). In this context, in contrast to the inclusionary left populism developed in Latin America-which aims to incorporate excluded classes into the political sphere-the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and North America exhibits an exclusionary character that frames migrants, asylum seekers, and ethnic minorities as threats to the imagined homogeneous nation (Mudde &

Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Accordingly, the anti-immigrant discourses of right-wing populist parties rest not on mere xenophobia but on a strategy of defending the sovereignty of the "native" people against the allegedly cosmopolitan policies of the elite, on the grounds that migrants drain welfare state resources and corrupt national culture.

The centrality of migration to populist politics is related not only to an increase in the sheer numbers of migrants, but also to the economic and cultural disruptions generated by the process of globalization (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Structural transformations in advanced liberal democracies-including deindustrialization, job insecurity, and demographic aging triggered by declining birth rates-have produced a deep sense of cultural and economic deprivation among those characterized as the losers of globalization. In this context, migrants have been turned into the primary scapegoats for intensifying economic competition, deteriorating social order, and the erosion of traditional values. Particularly critical junctures such as the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the subsequent 2015 European Refugee Crisis have enabled populist leaders to instrumentalize crisis through promises of protecting the people's jobs, welfare, and cultural integrity, and to maximize the politicization of migration issues in electoral arenas.

The refugee threat narrative constructed by right-wing populist actors through nationalism, xenophobia, and security anxieties lends legitimacy to contemporary states' efforts to perpetuate emergency regimes. Whether in the form of barbed wire fences and street patrols erected in Europe, the criminalization of migrants in the United States, or the instrumentalization of migration within a double bind of legal ambiguity and charitable assistance in Turkey-all of these processes serve to racialize migrants and strip them of their rights as political subjects.

The growing hegemony of populist actors in migration politics has not remained confined to electoral successes or rising vote shares alone; it has also led mainstream centrist parties, out of fear of losing votes, to adopt populist discourses and impose restrictive measures curtailing migrants' rights (Smet & Stoyanova, 2022). The securitization of irregular migration, the intensification of border controls, and retreats from multiculturalism represent the concrete manifestations of this pressure on migration regimes. More critically, the systematic erosion of migrants' rights in this fashion presents itself as a symptom of the attrition that authoritarian populist regimes-rejecting pluralism-inflict on constitutional democracies. In this vein, this

chapter aims to examine the transformative and erosive impact of populism's global rise on migration policies, and to provide the conceptual and historical background of the multidimensional relationship between migrants' rights, exclusionary discursive strategies, and local/global dynamics.

The primary focus of this study is how the global rise of populism has transformed migration from a matter of rational public policy into an existential crisis of identity and security. The framing of migrants as the dangerous other through nativist and exclusionary discourses by populist actors not only reinforces their own political legitimacy but also, through a contagion effect, corrupts mainstream centrist politics and erodes liberal democratic institutions and the universal human rights regime from within. Accordingly, the scope of this study is to examine the political hegemony that populism produces through anti-immigrant discourse, and the multidimensional damage this inflicts on states' migration policies, democratic structures, and the social fabric.

In line with the stated aims and scope, the text is organized into complementary subsections. The first part of the study examines the global rise of populism in migration politics and analyzes the strategies by which populist actors politicize migration through crisis construction. It then discusses how this exclusionary politics tests the resilience of liberal democratic institutions and lays the groundwork for a collapse in constitutional pluralism. Subsequently, the direct impact of anti-immigrant rhetoric on policy-making processes is analyzed through the linguistic strategies, metaphors, and us/them dichotomies employed; in this context, the radicalization of centrist parties is addressed through the concepts of “populist gap” and “contagion effect.” The media's role in constructing the other and its representations-which enable this exclusionary discourse to be disseminated to the masses-will also be examined separately.

In the final section of the study, civil society responses and resistance strategies developed against states' exclusionary and securitization-oriented discourses and policies are addressed. This section examines “citizenship from below” acts in which migrants appear not merely as passive victims but as direct political subjects. Through case studies from various countries, the section shows how autonomous, civic, and institutional forms of solidarity, expanding across streets and urban spaces in opposition to populist domination, construct a new and inclusive political arena as an alternative to exclusionary policies.

1.1. The Rise of Populism in Migration Politics: A Global Overview

It was noted earlier that, as a thin-centered ideology-that is, one that does not offer a comprehensive worldview covering all domains of social, economic, and political life-populism cannot, on its own, provide an encompassing political program, and must therefore articulate itself with "thick" ideologies such as nationalism, conservatism, or socialism in order to sustain itself. In the context of right-wing populism, this articulation typically takes place through "nativism". Nativism is an ideology that holds that states should be governed exclusively by those who belong to the native people (the nation), and that any element that is not native (people, ideas, ideologies, institutions, etc.) constitutes a fundamental threat to the homogeneous nation-state (Mudde, 2007, p. 19). When populism and nativism combine, the definition of the pure people is narrowed along ethnic and cultural lines, becoming a constitutive component of anti-immigrant discourse. Brubaker explains this relationship through the vertical and horizontal dimensions of populism. While populism in the vertical dimension constructs a conflict between "those below" (the people) and "those above" (the elites), nativism draws a boundary in the horizontal dimension between insiders (us) and outsiders (migrants/others) (Brubaker, 2017, p. 363). In right-wing populist discourse, the vertical and horizontal dimensions are intertwined. Elites are not merely corrupt; they are also stigmatized as collaborators who favor migrants and minorities over the native people (Brubaker, 2017).

One of the most important mechanisms in this process is the instrumentalization of crisis. Moments of crisis (such as the migratory movements following the 2011 Syrian Civil War or the 2008 Global Financial Crisis) have served as opportunities for populist actors to demonstrate the failure of existing institutions and mainstream policies (Ayas, 2024, p. 33). Migrants are portrayed as a burden that depletes economic resources, a demographic menace that destroys national identity, and an invasion that threatens national security (Tahincioğlu, 2020, p. 285). Right-wing populists establish their legitimacy by voicing ordinary people's concerns through a language of revolt against political correctness-a coarse, unfiltered, and rule-breaking register that rises from below.

The tangible effects of populism, nativism, and anti-immigrant discourse produce common reflexes across different geopolitical contexts while taking shape according to their own local dynamics. Populist radical right (PRR) parties in Europe (Marine Le Pen's National Front/Rally (FN/RN) in France,

the AfD in Germany, the FPÖ in Austria, and Lega in Italy) have directly politicized the migration crisis as a civilizational crisis and as an existential threat to the welfare state (Tahincioğlu, 2020, p. 286). In the European context, anti-immigrant sentiment feeds not only on a perception of economic threat but also on a deeply rooted cultural fear of the "Islamization of the West" (Forlenza, 2018, p. 138). For instance, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni claims there is a structural incompatibility between certain interpretations of Islamic culture and the values and rights of European civilization (Weninger, 2025). Similarly, in France, Marine Le Pen has likened Muslims praying in the street to the Nazi occupation, spreading the fear that the national territory and culture are under invasion (Weninger, 2025). Likewise, the PEGIDA movement in Germany and the FPÖ in Austria, having made it their mission to defend Christian Western culture against Islam, declared the European Union elites who support multiculturalism enemies of the people (Tahincioğlu, 2020).

In the United States, while the roots of populism date back to the People's Party of the 1890s, contemporary American right-wing populism is built on an opposition between producers and parasites who live off the system (Lowndes, 2017). Movements such as Trumpism and the Tea Party, claiming to represent the white, working, tax-paying "true American" middle class (the pure people), have positioned elites above (globalists, the liberal academy, the media) and lazy, system-draining, or dangerous others below (Mexicans, Muslims, undocumented migrants) (Lowndes, 2017; Savage, 2018). Trump's "America First" vision, employing a rhetoric of outsider status to break the established order, has instrumentalized migration directly along the axes of border security and cultural extinction.

In conclusion, exclusionary right-wing populism intertwined with nativism in both Europe and the United States is eroding the pluralism of democratic institutions by drawing sharp boundaries around the people and excluding or instrumentalizing the "other", thus transforming migration policies from a matter of rational public policy into the frontline of a deep identity crisis and political polarization (Ayas, 2024; Smet & Stoyanova, 2022).

1.1.1. Populist Actors' Strategies for Politicizing Migration and Discursive Crisis Construction

The fundamental logic underlying populist strategy is the construction of crisis not as a natural or objective condition, but as a discursive and performative instrument (Moffitt, 2016, p. 201). According to Benjamin Moffitt, populists do not merely react to crises; they frame complex phenomena

such as migration as situations of radical failure and urgency-as crises-thereby legitimizing extraordinary leadership practices (Moffitt, 2016, p. 204). Indeed, the mass human displacement caused by the Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, was transformed by populist political actors into a perception of invasion and crisis in which borders and national sovereignty had been lost, and was used as a basis for the ruthless criticism of existing policies (Ayas, 2024, p. 33). This crisis narrative aligns with Laclau's theory of the empty signifier; concepts such as migrant, refugee, and elite become negatively charged signifiers onto which all unsatisfied demands and socio-economic anxieties in society are projected (Laclau, 2005, p. 69).

Another mechanism employed in the politicization of migration is the portrayal of migrants as an existential security threat and the primary factor of cultural degeneration (Dück & Glassner, 2022, p. 633). In the European context specifically, this situation is supported by a civilizational discourse premised on the claim that Christian Western civilization faces the danger of Islamization (Forlenza, 2018, p. 138). Populist parties produce a politics of fear in order to activate voters' anxieties and fears, equating migrants with terrorism, crime, and social decay (Wodak, 2015, p. 1). This serves to render the limitation of liberal democratic institutions and human rights reasonable in the eyes of the public (Dück & Glassner, 2022, p. 632).

The framing of migration as an economic burden is explained in the literature through the concept of welfare chauvinism. According to this approach, the rights and welfare provided by the welfare state should belong exclusively to the native nation, and migrants are portrayed as parasites who exploit this system (Akkerman, 2012, p. 1406). At this point, there is profound disagreement and debate in the academic literature. While some researchers read the rise of populism as an economic response by the losers of globalization-a consequence of the economic inequalities and unemployment produced by globalization (Kriesi et al., 2008, p. 18) scholars such as Inglehart and Norris explain it as a cultural backlash against multiculturalism and liberal values, rather than economic anxieties (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 7). Eatwell and Goodwin, who synthesize these two opposing arguments, contend that economic and cultural fears are not independent of each other, but converge around a sense of relative deprivation in which voters believe they are losing their status and resources in relation to migrants and elites (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018).

These conceptual frameworks and discursive strategies have produced significant damage to states' migration policies and liberal democratic institutions across different geopolitical contexts. In Hungary, the Orbán government used the 2015 "migration crisis" to frame the numerically modest migrant inflows as an Islamic invasion of Christian Europe, and enshrined this as a constitutionally declared state of emergency caused by mass migration (Kovács & Nagy, 2022, p. 216). This Schmittian mechanism of the state of exception not only wholly eliminated refugees' right to asylum, but also laid the groundwork for the demonization and criminalization of civil society organizations (CSOs) and human rights advocates assisting migrants, and thus for the collapse of liberal constitutional democracy (Kovács & Nagy, 2022, pp. 218-220).

In France, it is evident that anti-immigrant radicalization has not remained confined to far-right parties but has transformed mainstream parties as well. The crime-migration-terror nexus produced by the National Front (Rassemblement National) was subsequently adopted by mainstream politicians Nicolas Sarkozy and later François Hollande (Dück & Glassner, 2022, p. 637). Legislative proposals advocating the denaturalization of foreign-born criminals or terrorists integrated the populist us and them distinction into the state's security and citizenship policies, thereby damaging constitutional pluralism (Dück & Glassner, 2022, pp. 638-640).

In the United States, Donald Trump's political discourse successfully fused economic insecurity with cultural anxieties (white Americans' status concerns) (HoSang & Lowndes, 2019). Trumpism, which coded Mexican migrants as rapists and criminals and Muslims as a security threat, framed itself as the representative of productive citizens while framing migrants and globalist elites as parasites living off the people's backs (HoSang & Lowndes, 2019). This crisis performance was given concrete form through exclusionary state policies such as the construction of a border wall and travel bans.

One of the most tangible impacts of populist anti-immigrant discourse on liberal democracies is its transformative power on party systems and mainstream political competition. Examining the Belgian case, Desmet and Smet (2022) note that mainstream parties integrated nativist and anti-immigrant policies into their own programs in order to stem the electoral support flowing to the radical right (Vlaams Belang); in this process, migrants' rights were sacrificed for the sake of electoral support (p. 302).

In conclusion, populist actors transform migration from a matter of rational public policy into a discursive crisis performance onto which the people's existential security and identity concerns are projected (Moffitt, 2016, p. 202). The most concrete and dangerous consequence of these discursive strategies is that anti-immigrant rhetoric, rather than remaining confined to far-right parties, transforms centrist parties (the mainstream) as well, and thereby erodes the institutional resilience of liberal democracies and the universal human rights regime from within (Stoyanova, 2022, p. 66).

1.1.2. Institutional Resilience in Liberal Democracies and Democratic Backsliding

Whether the restriction of migrants' rights can itself be considered democratic backsliding is a contested matter. A minority strand in the literature (for instance, Stoyanova and Mindus) argues that populism's emphasis on the pure people and its targeting of migrants transform the constitutional identity of the state into an anti-pluralist structure, and that the systematic violation of migrants' rights therefore constitutes in itself an indicator of democratic backsliding (Mindus, 2022, p. 70; Stoyanova, 2022, p. 66). However, the majority of constitutional law scholars hold the view that migration and anti-immigrant sentiment should be regarded not as democratic backsliding itself, but merely as an apparatus employed by populists to seize power (Smet & Stoyanova, 2022, p. 17). According to the majority view, genuine democratic backsliding requires the systematic dismantling of judicial independence, media freedom, and civil society.

This theoretical debate is given concrete form in institutional resilience practices in different countries. In Hungary under Viktor Orbán (Fidesz) and Poland under Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS), the 2015 migration crisis was instrumentalized to dismantle liberal democratic institutions. The Orbán government criminalized irregular border crossings, erected razor-wire fences, and declared civil society organizations that assist refugees enemies of the people threatening national security (Kovács & Nagy, 2022, p. 218). In Poland as well, while judicial independence was destroyed, migrants were presented as an existential threat to national culture and security, and the resilience of democratic institutions was completely shattered (Mikołajczyk & Jagielski, 2022, p. 237).

In Italy, the closed ports policy and the Security Decree criminalizing NGOs rescuing migrants at sea, adopted by Interior Minister Matteo Salvini in the coalition between Lega and the Five Star Movement, demonstrated how administrative power was deployed ruthlessly against migrants (Zirulia & Martinico, 2022, p. 260). In Austria, the coalition government restricted

asylum seekers' access to social assistance and the labor market by tying it to integration requirements such as language proficiency (Ammer & Kirchmair, 2022, p. 282). In both countries, while constitutional courts and institutions showed a degree of resistance, populist policies created significant cracks in the rule of law. In the United States, while the resilience of civil society and the courts prevented full-blown authoritarianism, minority rights, constitutional norms, and political norms suffered profound damage during the Trump era.

Populist anti-immigrant discourse has largely succeeded in pulling mainstream parties toward its own securitization and exclusionary line. By stretching the interpretation of the judiciary and the law, states' migration policies have been distanced from universal human rights standards, creating a terrain that demonizes migrants as the dangerous other and dismantles the constitutional guarantees of liberal democratic institutions. The varying levels of institutional resistance across different countries have been unable to alter the broader trend that populist policies have become the new normal in the West and beyond.

1.2. Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric and Its Impact on Policy Making

Right-wing populist and anti-immigrant actors, in constructing international migration waves and migrants as threats, engage in a mobilization of discourse and metaphors that depict society as a body left vulnerable to dangers arriving from outside (Bigo, 2002, p. 67). This construct is premised on a simplified us/them dichotomy that divides the world into two mutually opposed poles (Ulusoy & Güngörmez, 2023, p. 178). An examination of the relevant literature and case studies reveals that the linguistic strategies, metaphors, and historical references employed in the process of transforming migrants into an existential security problem constitute one of the principal sources sustaining right-wing populism (Ceylan et al., 2025, p. 53).

1.2.1. Discursive Strategies, Metaphors, and the 'Us/Them' Dichotomy

Populist rhetoric is constructed through a logic that divides insiders and outsiders through sharp boundaries, attributing everything positive to insiders and everything negative to outsiders. In this process, migrants are presented as a pathological element that seeps into the body politic from outside, disrupting the nation's homogeneity and political integrity. In European political discourses, migration is conveyed to the public through metaphors such as a “tidal wave” for Britain, a “hole in the dikes" for the Netherlands, and a “barbarian invasion” for France (Bigo, 2002, p. 69).

This exclusionary language is reinforced with terms that define migrants in dehumanizing ways and directly associate them with crime. In the case of the United States, content analyses of Donald Trump's presidential speeches reveal that migrants are consistently framed through words such as “illegal” and “alien” and the phrase “mass invasion”, constructing a narrative of urgent crisis and moral decay (Edilashvili, 2025, pp. 149-152). Trump's characterizations of certain countries as “shithole countries” represent the most extreme examples of the nativist fabrication and othering strategy (Duch et al., 2022, pp. 1-2).

Three fundamental frames are used in the construction of discourses: instrumental/pragmatic, collective identity, and universal moral values (Van der Brug et al., 2015, p. 29). Right-wing populist and anti-immigrant movements predominantly invoke the collective identity frame, constructing migration as a conflict axis in terms of cultural and religious traditions and national values (Van der Brug et al., 2015, p. 30).

According to the securitization theory developed by the Copenhagen School, migration can be constructed as an existential threat to national security, state sovereignty, or societal survival through the concepts employed by decision-makers, rather than being an objective threat per se (Ceylan et al., 2025, p. 53). The securitization process finds resonance in the masses by stoking fears and traumas embedded in the historical memory of communities (Ulusoy & Güngörmez, 2023, p. 178). The clearest example of the instrumentalization of historical memory for anti-immigrant politics is found in the case of Turkey's Zafer Partisi (Victory Party). Rising in Turkey as a niche, single-issue anti-immigrant party, Zafer Partisi defines Syrian refugees not merely as an economic burden but as an imperialist project aimed at altering the country's demographic structure and triggering a civil war-that is, as a covert invasion (Ceylan et al., 2025, pp. 58-59). The party leadership justifies its exclusionary project by referencing the narrative of the Arab Revolt during the First World War, Ottoman territorial losses, and historical traumas of partition known as the “Sèvres Syndrome”, in order to make this threat comprehensible and acceptable to the masses (Ceylan et al., 2025, pp. 63-64). Similarly, right-wing populists in the European Parliament read Turkey's foreign policy not merely as a diplomatic rival but through the lens of Neo-Ottomanism and ambitions of revanchist power and domination with reference to historical European-Ottoman wars, thereby inflaming historical fears (Ulusoy & Güngörmez, 2023, pp. 186-193).

Populist and anti-immigrant actors have transformed migration from a mere population movement into an existential security crisis, framed through cultural, biological, and military metaphors appropriate to the relevant context. Academic research clearly demonstrates that this crisis discourse has moved beyond being a fantasy of the marginal right, transforming into an institutionalized practice that, through mainstream politicians and the state's security apparatus, has come to dominate national and local policies.

1.2.2. The Populist Gap, the Contagion Effect, and the Transformation of Migration Policies

In the literature on the construction and politicization of migration policies, the concept of the populist gap refers to the legal and practical gaps between what liberal democratic states can legitimately do within the framework of international and constitutional human rights norms to restrict migration and the radical-often unethical and unrealistic-demands of populist politics (Boswell, 2003, p. 4). This gap has become a space that right-wing populist parties exploit disproportionately in order to maximize electoral support. Centrist parties (center-right and center-left), in turn, are compelled to adopt the overly restrictive measures of populists so as not to lose votes (Boswell, 2003, p. 4). The diffusion of these radical exclusionary discourses developed by the far right into centrist politics, hardening mainstream parties' migration policies, is referred to as the "contagion effect" (Akkerman, 2012, p. 512).

Traditionally, center-right parties have been compelled to adopt a harder line on migration and integration in order not to lose voters drawn toward the populist right (Akkerman, 2012, p. 512). However, the contagion effect has not remained confined to right-wing politics alone; center-left and social democratic parties have also, in response to the challenge from the radical right, moved away from their traditionally inclusionary policies and progressively shifted their migration policies in a more restrictive direction (Akkerman, 2012, p. 512).

Similar dynamics have been strongly at play in European countries. In the United Kingdom, from the 2000s onward, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the more marginal British National Party (BNP) sharply politicized migration and the European Union's freedom of movement (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, pp. 23-24). As a result of this populist pressure, both the Conservative Party and the center-left Labour Party moved toward strict managed migration and hostile environment policies

that criminalized undocumented work and, where such an offense was committed, accelerated deportation procedures (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, pp. 22-23, 38-39). In the Netherlands, the rise of Pim Fortuyn (LPF) and Geert Wilders (PVV) dismantled the traditional multicultural structure and paved the way for assimilationist policies (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, p. 102). Under pressure from these radical right parties, the center-right VVD and center-left PvdA adopted new integration policies that restricted the assistance provided to migrants (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, pp. 115, 119-121).

States that cannot directly target migrants owing to the constraints imposed by international agreements and constitutional rights resort to the strategy of shifting down policies to local and municipal authorities (Guiraudon & Lahav, 2000, p. 163). Local administrators influenced by the gap created by populists and concerned about electoral performance produce discriminatory micro-policies to satisfy the far-right electorate. For example, although no radical anti-immigrant party at the national level has entered parliament in Spain, the local electoral successes of parties such as the Plataforma per Catalunya have forced centrist parties' (PP and CiU) local candidates to radicalize on the issues of migration and immigration (Ros & Morales, 2015). Similarly, in the city of Treviso in Italy, the municipality's removal of public park benches to prevent migrants from gathering in public spaces shows how legal restrictions have percolated into local spatial governance (Balbo et al., 2012, p. 224).

1.3. Media Representation and the Construction of the "Other"

Populism tends to identify a culprit or scapegoat to blame for complex socio-economic and political developments. It also mobilizes support through a perceived ability to offer practical solutions to complex problems. Anti-immigrant discourse is not merely an expression of fear; it is a political practice of power, strategically constructed to establish hegemony, consolidate electoral support, and simultaneously legitimize exclusion.

The mainstream media, in representing migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, does not merely transmit information objectively; rather, it engages in a hegemonic and ideological practice of framing. The media has become the primary instrument in constructing the other and in normalizing and disseminating discriminatory discourses to broader audiences, framing refugees through populism's us/them dichotomy (van Dijk, 1991, pp. 42-43). Anti-immigrant discourses produced by populist politicians and elites are legitimized in the public sphere through the media's metaphorical language and partisan thematic emphases. This process can pave the way for

racism to be presented as an acceptable security and public order concern in society (van Dijk, 2000, pp. 37-38).

1.3.1. Metaphors and Themes in the Media Representation of Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees

Across different regions of the world, the press can be observed to draw on remarkably similar shared repertoires of metaphors when narrating the phenomenon of migration and migrants. According to Otto Santa Ana's analyses, the press frequently depicts migrants in dehumanized terms-as animals being hunted or trapped, or as a disease or germ spreading and weakening the social body (Santa Ana, 2002, pp. 65, 71, 82). Such biological and zoological metaphors render migrants' individual stories and human suffering invisible, reducing them to the status of a danger to be exterminated or treated.

The most commonly invoked comparison when describing migration movements is the natural disaster metaphor. The arrival of asylum seekers is conveyed in the Western media through terms such as “flood”, “tide”, and “influx”; in the Turkish press, similarly, through the equivalent words “sel” (flood), “dalga” (wave), and “akın” (influx) (Philo, Briant, & Donald, 2013, p. 3; Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016, pp. 157-158). Reisigl and Wodak, founding figures of the discourse-historical approach, note that the presentation of migration through metaphors such as avalanche and flood marks migrants as a threat in the receiving country and creates a climate of panic (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001, pp. 59-60).

Migrants are largely associated in news coverage with themes of crime, narcotics, illegality, and social conflict. According to van Dijk, the media prefers to portray these groups as an economic burden on the welfare state and a threat to Western cultural values, while finding structural issues such as discrimination, racism, or poverty to which migrants are subjected to be of insufficient news value (van Dijk, 1991, pp. 248-249). Through this crime-association strategy, the media provides implicit support for populist politicians' securitization policies.

In contrast, there are differing views in the literature regarding the usage and function of metaphors. While it may be argued that migration conveyed through metaphors such as influx and flood inherently contains racism, KhosraviNik contends that these metaphors do not produce the same negative effect in every context, and that meaning changes according to the socio-political climate of the period (KhosraviNik, 2009, p. 488). For instance, the

"flood" and "influx" metaphors that frequently appeared in the British press during the 1999 Kosovo crisis framed refugees as helpless victims, generating great humanitarian sympathy and compassion toward them. The very same metaphors, however, were deployed during the 2005 general election in an entirely right-wing security policy context, constructing asylum seekers as a threat that would destroy the country (KhosraviNik, 2009, pp. 487-488). This demonstrates that in textual analyses, words must be read not in isolation but together with the political conjuncture in which they are produced.

In Turkish press representation practices, migrants are positioned on the one hand as victims, while on the other hand being framed as a threat or burden that destabilizes the economy, disrupts public order, and transforms the cultural fabric (Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016, pp. 160-161; Tiryaki, 2022, p. 124). The Turkish print press initially attempted-partly under the influence of the lack of clear status in the legal framework-to describe the Syrian refugee influx through Islamic references and concepts such as "guest" (*misafir*) and "brother in faith" (*din kardeşi*), but as the duration of stay extended, it evolved toward exclusionary practices similar to those of the Western media (Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016, pp. 154-155; Tiryaki, 2022). Newspapers occupying different positions on the ideological spectrum-such as Cumhuriyet, Hürriyet, or Yeni Şafak-have turned Syrian and Afghan refugees into scapegoats by attributing problems such as the economic crisis, rising rents, and public order issues to them (Göker & Keskin, 2015, pp. 137, 146).

1.4. Counter-Narratives, Resistance Strategies, and Civil Society Responses

These exclusionary and criminalizing policies targeting migrants-legislative barriers, labels and stigmas in the media-have simultaneously generated their own antithesis, laying the groundwork for the emergence of new civil resistance and solidarity practices that reject state-centered forms of belonging. Contemporary migration sociology and critical citizenship studies emphasize that refugees and undocumented migrants are not merely passive victims; on the contrary, they construct their own political subjectivities through practices of "citizenship from below" and the solidarity networks they build with civil society (Nyers & Rygiel, 2012, pp. 2-5). In this context, the concept of solidarity goes beyond the logic of humanitarian assistance, transforming into a strategy for creating a radical alternative political arena and a counter-narrative against exclusionary populist narratives.

Refugee and migrant resistance refers to the process by which individuals rendered stateless and statusless demand in practice rights that they do not legally possess, thereby entering a political arena. Isin's conceptualization of "acts of citizenship" defines citizenship not as a static legal status but as a repertoire of actions that rupture socio-historical patterns, through which subjects constitute themselves as claimants of rights (Isin, 2008).

One significant example of this performative resistance is the struggles waged against the compassion logic through which states code refugees as apolitical victims. As demonstrated in Moulin's study of Palestinian refugees in Brazil, refugees' refusal of the logic of gratitude imposed by the state and the UNHCR-through the establishment of camps and the organization of public protests-has been interpreted as a move to reclaim their own voice and political subjectivity (Moulin, 2012). A similar act of citizenship took place in Turkey, where Afghan refugees who staged a sit-in in front of the UNHCR office in Ankara in 2014 and went on hunger strike by sewing their mouths shut transformed their bodies into a radical instrument of resistance against the politics of governing through uncertainty (Biehl, 2015, p. 73). These actions attempt to rupture the narrative in populist discourses that constructs migrants as silent masses, repositioning refugees as political actors who directly demand rights.

1.4.1. Conceptualizing Solidarity: Autonomous, Civic, and Institutional Models

The solidarity established by civil society with migrants is nourished by practices aimed at dismantling (de-bordering solidarity) the borders that populist states and politicians claim to impose artificially (Dimitriadis & Ambrosini, 2023, pp. 5-6). Agustín and Jørgensen examine the alternative political arenas formed by civil society and migrants through three fundamental solidarity typologies:

Autonomous Solidarity: This is a model that rejects collaboration with state institutions and conventional NGOs alike, embracing horizontal, non-hierarchical, and directly participatory democracy. It reproduces the political arena entirely independently of the state, through occupied spaces (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019, p. 40).

Civic Solidarity: These are inclusive practices created by local populations and civil initiatives to build a shared sense of "us" with migrants. In this model, confrontation with the state is not always directly targeted; ra-

ther, the aim is partial collaboration with local authorities to achieve the integration of the excluded into the system and their support in everyday life (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019, p. 41).

Institutional Solidarity: This is an institutionalized solidarity model in which local governments and civil society cooperate to form islands of resistance against the exclusionary border and migration policies of national governments. The conflict takes place between local and national scales (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019, pp. 41-42).

The academic literature converges on the point that solidarity actions and acts of citizenship rescue refugees from passivity and transcend the victim and/or criminal dichotomy that official authorities assign to them. It is a widely accepted argument that resistance, through solidarities bringing together activists on both sides of the border, attempts to create a new commons (Rygiel, 2011, p. 14). However, a matter on which no consensus has been reached concerns the nature of solidarity. Fassin critiques the purely humanitarian aid approach of human rights organizations and civil society organizations toward migrants. According to Fassin, this approach erases the political history of refugees, reducing them to apolitical victims, and indirectly legitimizes the state's production of compassionate mechanisms of repression (Fassin, 2012, pp. 126, 145, 241). This tension is clearly visible in the Turkish case. According to Çelik's analysis, while groups such as the Migrant Solidarity Network (Göçmen Dayanışma Ağı) in Istanbul approach the matter as a political human rights and freedom of movement struggle, state-backed NGOs have reduced this process to a charitable matter (Çelik, 2018, p. 54). Kleres, in a comparison of Germany and Sweden, demonstrates the differentiating role of emotions in mobilization: civil groups in Germany act predominantly through a depoliticizing emotion of sympathy/compassion, while groups in Sweden unite around political anger and political solidarity against the state's restrictive laws (Kleres, 2018, pp. 230-232). Another debated issue is whether the institutionalization of civil society movements dampens resistance. Oikonomakis notes that with the involvement of EU funds and the state in integration and acculturation programs for migrants in Greece, solidarity slackened and the problem of the "NGO-ization of resistance" emerged (Oikonomakis, 2018, pp. 88-89). Nevertheless, researchers such as Foerster and McDonald argue that institutionalization efforts at the level of local governments create a strong, pragmatic, and legally protected space against national policies, and thus support institutional solidarity (McDonald, 2012, pp. 143-144).

1.4.2. Case Studies: The Spatial and Political Construction of Counter-Narratives

In order to understand how theoretical debates and typologies take shape in practice, it is necessary to examine cases across Europe, Turkey, and the United States. In Europe, the most striking example of autonomous solidarity is the City Plaza Hotel in Athens. An abandoned hotel, City Plaza was occupied by civil activists and migrants and created a horizontal space based on cohabitation and co-production in opposition to the state's/NGOs' restrictive camp model. This space was construed as a materialized utopia in which refugees practice self-governance while integrating into urban life, in opposition to the right-wing populist narrative of the "invasive migrant" (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019, p. 62; Oikonomakis, 2018, pp. 93-94). The Calais Jungle camp in France became one of the largest centers of transnational solidarity and resistance. Whereas the camp was in the state's eyes an illegal border-crossing point, for No Borders activists and migrants it was transformed into an autonomous political arena of mutual skill-sharing "in which even cooking together in communal kitchens counted as a political act of insubordination" (Alcalde & Portos, 2018, pp. 260-264; Rygiel, 2011, pp. 10-14). In Denmark, the Friendly Neighbors network, representing the civic solidarity model, is primarily founded on a culture of care and hospitality, yet has come to the fore as an attempt to dismantle from the grassroots the state's discourse of refugee non-acceptance through the local partnerships it has developed for refugee integration and its tacit support for civil disobedience actions (Agustín & Jørgensen, pp. 82-84). In Spain, the Barcelona as Refuge City project represents the pinnacle of institutional solidarity. The city, led by Mayor Ada Colau, challenged the Spanish central government's non-compliance with EU quotas and, by establishing a "Solidarity Cities network" with other European cities, developed a new model of multilevel governance that bypasses national governments (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019, pp. 101-102; Foerster, 2019, pp. 24-25). In Turkey, domestic political contestations and the processes relating to the restructuring of the political arena have, alongside populist anti-immigrant sentiment, generated a unique sense of camaraderie between refugees and local activists. Groups such as the Migrant Solidarity Network (Göçmen Dayanışma Ağı) and the "I'm a Refugee, Fellow Citizen!" (Mülteciyim Hemşerim!) initiative in Istanbul have rejected the humanitarian discourse and produced politics directly through migrant identity (Çelik, 2018, pp. 48-50). Due to the state's marginalization of oppositional politics, one activist's statement "we became refugees in our own country" illustrates that refugeehood is perceived not merely as a legal border crossing but as an ontological state of insecurity

toward the state, and demonstrates the efforts of local activists and Syrian/Afghan refugees to unite along a common line of political resistance (Çelik, 2018, pp. 44, 52-53).

Resistance practices in North America have been shaped largely through urban belonging and opposition to deportation. Worker cooperatives such as "Magic Cleaners" organized by undocumented Latin American migrants in Los Angeles, and student activism, have created a subjectivity of undocumented citizens based on urban belonging and productive labor rather than legal citizenship (McNevin, 2012, pp. 166-169). The "Don't Ask Don't Tell" (DADT) campaign conducted by the "No One Is Illegal" group in Toronto, Canada, has rendered the state's internal borders invisible in the urban space by enabling refugees to access services such as healthcare and education "without fear", thereby initiating a process of legalization from below (McDonald, 2012, pp. 143-144). These practices merged with the declarations of "Sanctuary City" by local governments that administratively and legally resisted the federal government's ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids and restrictions during the Trump era in the United States, transforming into an institutionalized counter-narrative (Foerster, 2019, p. 20).

Conclusion

This study has aimed to examine how the global rise of populism has transformed migration and the process of migration governance from a matter of rational public policy into an existential security and identity crisis, and the damage wrought by this transformation on liberal democratic institutions. In this scope, the multidimensional effects of the exclusionary hegemony produced by populist politics through anti-immigrant discourse-ranging from states' migration policies to media representations and ultimately to civil society's resistance practices-have been placed under scrutiny. Throughout the study, it has been sought to demonstrate that the politicization of migration is not merely a rhetoric of marginal political groups but has evolved into a structural problem that transforms mainstream politics and threatens constitutional pluralism and the universal human rights regime.

In this context, the study has first discussed how populist actors transform migration into a strategic crisis performance. It has analyzed how the populist logic, by manipulating socio-economic and cultural anxieties, polarizes the masses through a sharp "us and them" dichotomy; how migrants

are framed as invaders and criminals through metaphors, linguistic strategies, and the othering representations of the media. The argument has been advanced that this discourse is not confined to radical politics but, creating a contagion effect, also leads centrist parties to harden their policies, and that migrants' rights are sacrificed for the sake of votes by exploiting the legal gaps created by populists. The thesis that the pressure produced by populism, in different country examples, has undermined judicial independence and the constitutional identity of the state, thereby paving the way for democratic backsliding, has been presented as a fundamental axis of discussion.

In addition to all these exclusionary state practices, in the final phase of the study, the alternative spaces of resistance produced by civil society and migrants themselves were also opened to discussion. The capacity of these counter-narratives woven on streets, in occupied buildings, and in sanctuary cities to performatively challenge the exclusionary border policies monopolized by the state was assessed, and the study was brought to a conclusion by emphasizing the potential of autonomous, civic, or institutionally constructed solidarity networks to build a new, inclusive, egalitarian, and rights-based political arena against populist hegemony.

In today's world of accelerating international migration movements, the phenomenon of migration is increasingly debated in advanced Western democracies through narratives of crisis and threat. With the rise of populism in global politics, the use of migrants as a political instrument and scapegoat has become one of the fundamental strategies of far-right and populist leaders. The othering policies targeting migrants fabricated by right-wing populist actors and movements are not coincidental; on the contrary, they are premised on systematic mechanisms aimed at manipulating social anxieties.

Populist actors present migrants as an existential cultural threat to the identity of the homogeneous nation. Especially in Europe, discourses premised on the incompatibility of Christian Western civilization's norms with Islamic culture are highly prevalent. According to the right-wing populist narrative, non-European-origin populations are deliberately replacing the homogeneous nations, and white/native populations are being demographically assimilated. Discourses in which migrants are painted as unskilled workers exploiting the employment opportunities of local people and the resources of the welfare state find resonance in the masses. Another context is the criminalization of migrants. Although statistics on crime rates demonstrate that migrants or undocumented migrants have lower crime rates than

native citizens, leaders have used isolated and agitation-prone cases to code all migrants as dangerous criminals.

The greatest sociological mechanism underlying the success of threat narratives is the racialization of migrant populations as a single homogeneous, dangerous group. In the United States and Europe, whiteness is being redefined to a large extent through a largely fabricated us and them dichotomy, with reference to migrants. Furthermore, the migrant threat constructed by right-wing populist actors and movements is not simply a concern about border security. The discourses of cultural corruption, economic exploitation, and crime waves produced through migrants aim to make racialized others bear the cost of globalization and the neoliberal crisis. Statistical manipulations backed by the media, the militarization of border policies, and practices directed at the criminalization of asylum seekers deepen social polarization in contemporary Western democracies and inflict structural damage on the universal norms of human rights.

Despite all these negative developments, actions carried out both in the legal sphere and through the organized grassroots initiatives of civil society demonstrate that a new arena of autonomous resistance and politics can emerge against this othering populist machinery. Although anti-immigrant populist discourses and states' securitizing exclusion mechanisms construct borders as insurmountable walls, the joint actions of civil society and migrants are fragmenting these walls politically and spatially. The acts of citizenship through which migrants refuse to be passive victims and directly demand rights, and the solidarity networks woven at autonomous, civic, or institutional levels, are removing politics from the monopoly of the nation-state and spreading it to the streets, the city, and the grassroots. These alternative political arenas produced in occupied hotels and border camps in Europe, in Turkey's contracting civil political space, and in North America's sanctuary cities carry the potential to dismantle the us and them division constructed by populism and to build a new, inclusive, and rights-based global commons. The bottom-up solidarity practices woven in streets, border regions, and sanctuary cities in opposition to states' exclusionary and securitizing narratives are also harbingers of a new political arena in which the concepts of citizenship and migration will be redefined in the future.

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International migration is one of the most consequential and contested issues of our time, reshaping states, societies and the global order. This book offers a comprehensive and interdisciplinary exploration of international migration, examining how it challenges and transforms traditional boundaries – territorial, legal, political, social and cultural.

Bringing together perspectives from international relations, law, security studies, political economy, sociology and media studies, it analyses the complex dynamics that govern human mobility in a rapidly changing world. From sovereignty and border governance to human rights, economic actors, transnational ties, identities and populist discourses, the book illuminates the multiple dimensions and real-world implications of migration in the 21st century.

Accessible yet rigorous, *Shifting Boundaries of International Migration* is an essential read for students, scholars and policymakers seeking to understand the evolving contours of global migration and its profound impact on the international system.



ISBN: 978-625-8882-21-6