

# Reproduction of Migrant Labor in Turkey: A Case Study on Migrant Labor From Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran

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## 1. Introduction

Turkey has been both a country of transit to reach Europe and a destination country itself for migrants who sought to escape global or regional tensions, civil unrest, political pressures, turmoil, and conflicts that often accompanied economic crises, since the country has a relatively better economy in the region, a strategically more important geographical position and socio-culturally easier living conditions. Especially after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and acceleration of the dynamics of globalization, Turkey had witnessed a massive influx of refugees from countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Turkic-speaking republics of Central Asia. Throughout history, unequal development triggered migration trends revealed as a problem of access to resources. Refugees had become increasingly visible in the cities that are centers of intensified economic activities. Especially the migrants who left their countries to find better conditions in the Turkish labor market often work in low-wage jobs with insecure employment conditions that required heavy labor. In light of these trends, social policies started to play a more important role in the reproduction of labor on a city scale.

After leaving their homelands, irregular migrants are often forced to embark on a dangerous journey risking their lives in suspicious minibusses, hide in trucks, sail into the sea with patched boats, fall into the trap of human traffickers, work in flexible and informal jobs without a work or residence permit, live in cramped rooms of the slums under difficult conditions. On the one hand, they leave their

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homeland, embarking on a compulsory journey at the cost of their lives.<sup>1</sup> Although their painful stories hurt the public conscience, fragmented and palliative responses often fail to implement the structural reforms that are necessary to prevent these events from ever happening again.

Collective or individualistic forms of migration – whether regular or irregular – have become more systematic and mandatory with the advent of capitalism. The influx of migrants started to play a more important role both in the labor market and in terms of the social legitimacy of the powers along with the acceleration of globalization within the framework of the unequal development created by production relations, while all states faced a dilemma of reconstruction or erosion of the nation-state. So-called neoliberal countries adopted more flexible and selective responses in an attempt of managing and directing the resources of underdeveloped or developing countries by acquisitions either with their “soft power” or in a primitive manner and/or by confiscation, causing the displacement of the peoples in these countries. Although wars, crises, outbreaks, disasters, etc. can cause mass migrations to occur in any form of the production system, these contexts within the capitalist system reveal themselves differently from the others. Unsurprisingly, even an unpredictable or random natural disaster can further affect and force underdeveloped communities or even those communities that receive less of the surplus-value, to migrate. As a relationship system, capitalism redefines and shapes social dynamics. Within the framework of this material integrity, the causes and consequences of mass migration cannot be evaluated separately from local, national, or global inequalities, capital cycles, conflicts, and contradictions between labor and capital.

Although controversial waves of migration from Syria and Iraq to Turkey increased in recent years due to the civil war, it is also important to focus on migrants from Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran considering Turkey’s long-standing relations, cooperation and socio-cultural similarities with these countries. Due to various limitations, this study explores this issue from the perspective of Turkey, as can be seen from the data shared below.

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<sup>1</sup> Irregular migration generally refers to entering a country illegally, staying in or using it for transit, or not leaving that country after the specified periods despite entering the country legally.

It does not aim to address the reasons why people migrate, which countries they prefer and their motivations since these questions require in-depth data, more information and a focus on larger territories of different variables of the target, source, and transit countries. International capital circulation and migrant mobility cannot be explained like a closed circuit just by addressing the countries mentioned in this study and their relations. It should also be noted that Turkey may not be the only destination or transit country in the eyes of the citizens of the source countries, several factors can affect the accumulation of capital and its flow between the countries, which cannot be dealt with in this study due to its limitations.

In this context, this paper aims to discuss the situation of migrant labor, especially in the major cities of Turkey, within the context of social and urban policies. The responses that focus on the reproduction of labor should be planned as inclusive and encompassing sets with a rights-based approach, rather than an approach based on limited and/or selective understanding of the social state. Efforts to ensure basic rights and freedoms including human rights, environmental and urban rights usually fail to meet the needs of refugees, who are often left at the mercy of civil society. However, these efforts are indispensable at the first stage to help them integrate with the society. Before moving forward, two points must be clarified about this issue. The first one is related to the concept of rights. In order to avoid ideological mysticism, the concept of "right" will be given functionality within the context of this study. Secondly, it must be noted that due to Turkey's historical and social development and objective position, the concept of rights and the policy responses discussed here cannot provide a magic wand. Therefore, while this study focuses on the vulnerable and fragile migrant labor, it will not reach its goal unless it considers the conditions of the citizens of the country and all the workers who are living in similar conditions.

Considering all these points together, migration dynamics will be discussed by using various economic indicators focusing primarily on Turkey's objective position compared to the countries mentioned above. This study also explores the relationship between labor migration and capital accumulation in an effort to assess the situation of migrant labor, based on the assessment of capital, which complements the labor. The second part of this study compares

Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey and Iran by using economic indicators. The third part evaluates the status of migrants from these countries mentioned in the study. The fourth part assesses demographic data on the quantity and nature of migration patterns and discusses the composition, quality, quantity and spatial distribution of migrants in Turkey by using labor-capital unity and opposition, as the two sides of the same coin. In the light of these findings, the fifth part focuses on the question of “what to do” within the framework of social and urban policies without ignoring the big picture. The conclusion highlights the importance of implementing recommendations with a holistic approach that aims at transformation on all scales.

## **2. Turkey as the West of the East or Bridge to the East**

Agricultural surplus value accumulation, trade race, and industrialization triggered bourgeois revolutions with different class compositions, while a rapid and widespread accumulation of capital emerged after the capitalist class seized the surplus value created by labor, deprived of production tools in the Anglo-Saxon countries and continental European countries. Nevertheless, Turkey and the eastern countries (the countries discussed in this study) failed to play a pivotal role during the integration into the international capital cycles and division of labor within the framework of class relations based on the unique dynamics, historical and social structures in these territories. Some of them could not even participate in this game. On the other hand, social state practices tried to tame the “savage” exploitation of the working class, which lacked production tools in the accumulation processes. As a matter of fact, these practices primarily aimed at effective organization of production and consumption, while envisaging relatively equal (re) distribution of surplus-value by direct and regular interventions of the state in several areas. Although these policies improved the conditions of labor, especially in the post-World War II world, the gains of workers in developing or underdeveloped countries, which are mainly the sources of raw materials and markets, remained limited. Furthermore, these states initiated neo-liberal “open door” policies especially in the 80s and 90s, which led to impoverishment and weakening of the working class in the face of national and international capital movements due to both lack of resources and the prevailing negative attitudes towards the organization of labor.

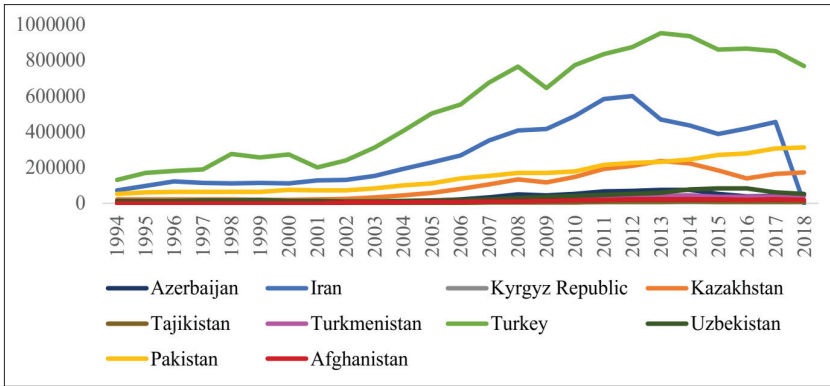
In this context, it would be beneficial to assess the economic outlooks of these countries comparatively by using some data in terms of the labor-capital relationship.

When we examined the gross domestic product (GDP) which shows the market value of domestic goods and services produced and the international direct investments by using the World Bank data, we observed that the flow of capital is very limited and irregular in addition to the low-value production in most of the countries we evaluated Table 11.1 and 11.2 Turkey ranks first in terms of GDP and Iran ranks second, followed by Pakistan and Kazakhstan, respectively. Although these data can be deceptive due to the different population sizes. When we examined the GDP per capita, Turkey again takes first place, Kazakhstan ranks second, Turkmenistan ranks third and Iran falls to the bottom.<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan, on the other hand, has the lowest rank. Similar to GDP per capita, Turkey ranks first and Kazakhstan second in attracting international direct investments to the country, while other countries perform closely together. In the absence of sufficient capital, these countries need to attract hot money flows to fund large investments needed for development and growth.<sup>3</sup> Hot money flows enter into these countries with the expectation that earnings will be higher, although the risks are also higher in these countries compared to developed markets, especially when these governments create favorable environments during the global periods of the high money supply. These flows result in cheap labor and exploitation of abundant resources, which is the comparative advantage of the host country.

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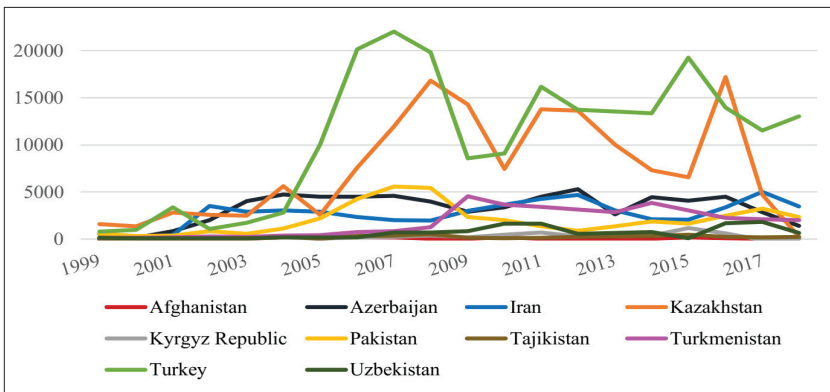
<sup>2</sup> According to 2018 World Bank data, Pakistan is the most crowded country with a population of 212 million, followed by Turkey and Iran, in descending order, with populations of over 80 million. Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have populations of less than 10 million, while Kazakhstan has a population of around 20 million and Uzbekistan has around 33 million. Finally, Afghanistan has a population of 37 million.

<sup>3</sup> Embargoes imposed by the United States can be cited as the biggest reason why Iran ranks lower.



**Figure 11.1.** Countries’ GDP Between 1994-2018 (Millions USD at Current Prices)

**Source:** World Bank, “World Development Indicators”, Databank, Accessed September 17, 2019, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.



**Figure 11.2.** International Direct Investments Between 1999-2018 (Millions USD at Current Prices)

**Source:** World Bank, “World Development Indicators.”

As it can be seen, economic hierarchy was created among these countries themselves while relations with global capital continued within this context. Capitalism, as an unbalanced and unequal game, can reproduce itself by creating opportunities and gains for the losers as well. In this context, capital movements occur despite the internal and external turmoil, terrorism, wars, political repression,

regime-system changes, as well as the weak capital structure of countries compared to developed countries based on agriculture and/or trade, within the framework of individual bilateral relations and timid rapprochement between the states. For example, foreign direct investments in Turkey increased from \$18,812 million in 2000 to \$133,219 million in 2018, while investments in the countries in Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan remained relatively small, following bumpy trends. When we examine the differences in direct investments between these countries and Turkey under the category of “direct investment net positions” (Figure 11.3), it seems that Turkish residents invest more in these countries than the residents of those countries invest in Turkey except the investments with Azerbaijan in 2015 and beyond.

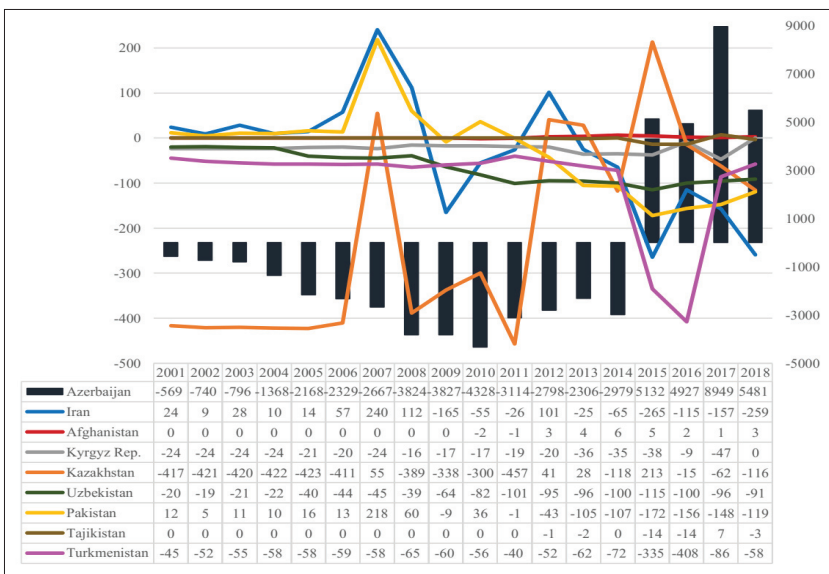


Figure 11.3. Direct Investment Net Positions (Millions \$)<sup>4</sup>

Source: “International Investment Position”, Central Bank of The Republic of Turkey, Accessed on July, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> The numbers of the 8 countries are shown in the graph (left) in the range of -500 to 200, while they are in the graph (right) in the range of 0-10000 due to the size of the net position with Azerbaijan.

In terms of life expectancy as an indicator of development, Turkey ranked first with 77.2 years in 2017, while Iran ranked second with 76.3. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan followed them respectively with averages of over 70 years. Turkmenistan (68), Pakistan (66.9) and Afghanistan (64.1) ranked last. Another data that can be associated with development is the mortality rate under the age of 5. As of 2018, this figure represents one child in every thousand children and the average is 9.9 in Kazakhstan, 10.6 in Turkey, 14.4 in Iran, 18.9 in Kyrgyzstan, 21.4 in Uzbekistan, 21.5 in Azerbaijan, 34.8 in Tajikistan, 45.8 in Turkmenistan, 62.3 in Afghanistan, 69.3 in Pakistan. Afghanistan and Pakistan are the weakest links among these countries.

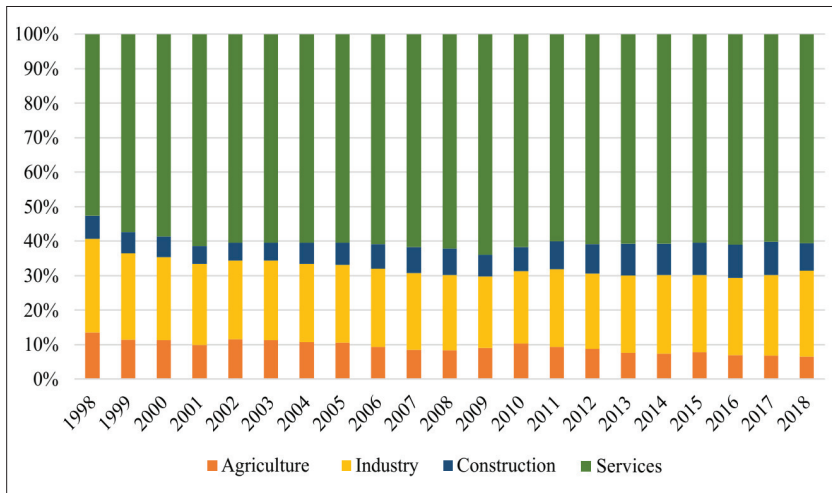
To sum up, it can be seen that Turkey enjoys a comparatively better position than other countries we focused on, especially through limited data sets in terms of economic activity and quality of life. Moreover, it can also be argued that the Turkish economy seems attractive for the migrants coming from these countries. Especially after Turkey abandoned the import-substitution industrialization model, Turkish capitalism became more dependent on the outside and moved towards the OEM industry and service sector with low added value. After the crisis of 2001, returns of capital increased with the assembly of goods imported at low costs from China, India and other Eastern countries and exported to Europe. In addition to the increased capital gains, austerity policies, cheap labor, low-interest rates, and currency differences created significant growth for Turkey. Although the country became a center in its region, it could not move beyond its status as a developing country.<sup>5</sup> Failure of growth and development in agriculture and industry forced Turkey to rely on other sectors with low added value. Since 1998, the share of industrial production in GDP has decreased dramatically by more than half. In contrast, significant increases have been recorded in the service sector and construction (Figure 11.4). Turkey's employment figures are also distributed in line with the proportions of these fields of activity. Based on 2014-2018 data, nearly 20% of employment was recorded in the agricultural sector, while these rates were around 20% in industry, 5%-7% in construction and

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<sup>5</sup> Nuray Ergüneş, "Global Integration of Middle-Income Developing Countries in the Era of Financialisation: The Case of Turkey", in *Financialisation in Crisis*, ed. Costas Lapavistas (Brill, 2012), 217-241.



around 55% in the service sector. When the employment rates in agriculture and construction are considered together with low value-added production in the service and industrial sectors, it can be seen that a favorable environment is created for migrants to find work. Although unemployment rates have been increasing due to the current economic crisis, migrants could still find employment opportunities due to the widespread informal sectors in Turkey even under these conditions, which will be explored in depth in the following sections.



**Figure 11.4.** Gross Domestic Product, Percentages at Current Prices per Fields of Economic Activity (1998-2018)

**Source:** “Periodic Estimates”, TURKSTAT, Accessed on September 15, 2019.

Although countries from all over the world have been closely watching this region, due to its population size, natural riches, and geopolitical importance, this interest failed to create favorable outcomes for the local populations. Each country’s relationship with the capitalist system and social formation differed within the framework of its own social context and history. For this reason, the migration of labor is based on unequal development among these countries.

As we discussed along with the economic indicators, significant economic differences and inequalities together with the political and social turmoil triggered waves of migration among these countries. The phenomenon of migration, which is based on unequal development, can only be understood through the types and sizes of capital acquired in Bourdieu's sense of the term (1986) on the one hand, and the contradiction, conflict and integrity of labor-capital as demonstrated by Marx (1990) on the other.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, owned capital also shapes the dynamics of spatial mobility as a means of access to resources for both individuals, labor, and states. While accumulation and circulation require a certain type of capital, mobility also needs certain types of capital. For example, this can be better understood when we consider those who can or cannot migrate within the same class and living conditions.

### 3. Turkey's Migrants

Although investments in structured environment often limit the movements of capital and mobility is often the lowest among the lowest classes of societies, capital inherently circulates and labor migrates, given the current dynamics of globalization.<sup>8</sup> Europe and the USA attract a significant number of workers from Turkey with the capital movements and "opportunities" they offered, considering the gross domestic product per capita. On the other hand, Turkey has also become an attractive center for workers from the East due to its advantages in many comparative areas as shown above and also as a transit country to get closer to more developed countries.

Before moving to more general and specific findings in the light of the data on the status of migrants coming to Turkey from these countries, it should be noted that as a center of attraction Turkey also created strict barriers to migrants due to diversified legal statuses. Nation-states and identities, which are destroyed and rebuilt by crossing an imaginary line called "border", can create new obstacles and challenges for the "foreigners".<sup>9</sup> Considering legal

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", in *Education: Culture, economy, and society*, ed. Albert Henry Halsey et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 46-58.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume I*, Trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> David Harvey, *Limits to Capital* (London, Newyork: Verso, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> The concrete drawing of these imaginary lines with walls, wires and mines seriously harm the solidarity of the independent global society.

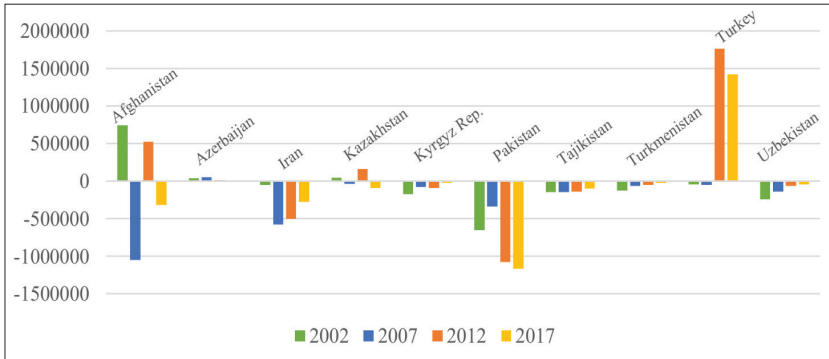
and administrative regulations and nature (regular and irregular) of international migration movements, the types and durations of the work permits are set with limits.<sup>10 11</sup> Irregular and forced migration creates greater insecurities and significant problems than regular and voluntary migration in the process of reproduction of labor. Although migrants, persons under temporary protection, asylum seekers, or refugees categorically refer to different groups in the literature and several different legal arrangements are made within these classifications, this study indicates that it is necessary to go beyond these distinctions. As a matter of fact, Turkey currently hosts millions of people, who can be described as migrants in the broadest sense, and their problems intensify regardless of their language, religion, race, or legal status. Considering the domestic law governing international migration, bilateral agreements signed between states and international treaties, it can be said that these legal categories fail to address the burning realities and more comprehensive and inclusive approach should be developed based on accurate assessment of current situation.

When we look at the net migration status of these 10 countries, including Turkey, we can say that Turkey has become a country of migrants, especially in the last 10 years, based on World Bank data (Figure 11.5), that can be accessed for over five-year periods starting in 2002. On the other hand, a relatively limited and more balanced migration regime existed in other countries, especially in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

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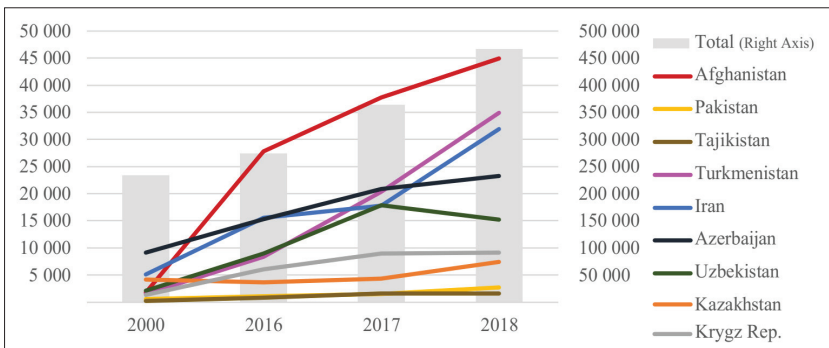
<sup>10</sup> Ahmet İcduygu, Sema Erder, and Ömer Faruk Gençkaya, *Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Göç Politikaları, 1923-2023: Ulus-Devlet Oluşumundan Ulus-Ötesi Dönüşümlere* (Turkey's International Migration Policies, 1923-2023: From Nation-State Formation to Transnational Transformations) (Istanbul: MiReKoç, Koç University Migration Research Center, 2014.)

<sup>11</sup> Gülay Toksöz, Seyhan Erdoğan and Selmin Kaşka, *Türkiye'ye Düzensiz Emek Göçü ve Göçmenlerin İşgücü Piyasasındaki Durumları* (Irregular Labor Migration to Turkey and The Situation of Migrants in the Labour Market) (Ankara: IOM International Organization for Migration Turkey, 2012).



**Figure 11.5.** Countries' Net Migration Status (2002-2007-2012-2017)<sup>12</sup>  
**Source:** World Bank, "World Development Indicators."

As to the migrants Turkey hosted, some countries come to the forefront (Figure 11.6). As of 2018, total international migration to Turkey nearly doubled compared to the early 2000s, with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Iran listed among the top three countries respectively. An average of 15,000 to 20,000 migrants from Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have arrived in Turkey in recent years, while a much smaller number of regular migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan also chose Turkey.



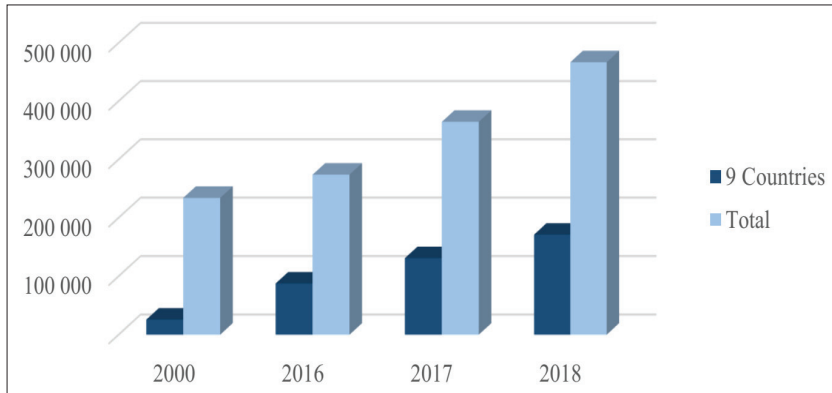
**Figure 11.6.** Distribution of Migrants by Country and Total Number of Migrants in Turkey (2000, 2016-2018)<sup>13</sup>

**Source:** "Migration Statistics", TURKSTAT, Accessed September 15, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> The data does not include "irregular migration".

<sup>13</sup> The figures for 9 countries are shown in the range of 0-50000 (left in the chart) and the total number of migrants is sorted by years in the range of 0-500000 (right in the chart).

The ratio of migrants coming from these countries in total number of migrants hosted by Turkey increased from approximately 10 percent in 2000 to approximately 37 percent in 2018 (Figure 11.7).

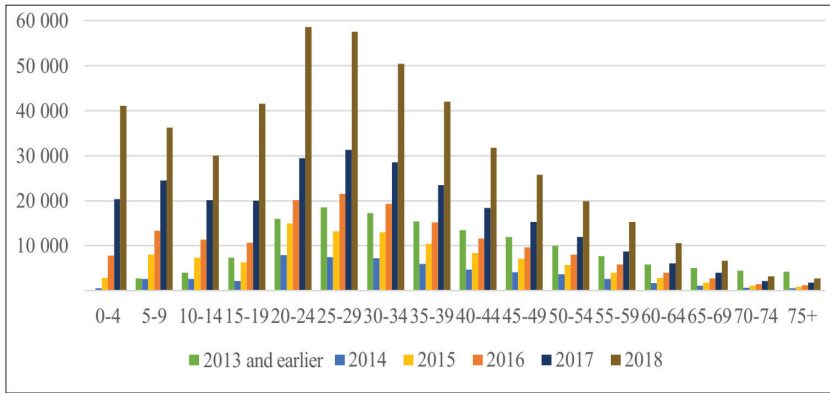


**Figure 11.7.** The ratios of these nationalities in the total number of migrants hosted by Turkey<sup>14</sup>

**Source:** TURKSTAT “Migration Statistics.”

Turkish Statistical Institute’s “international migration statistics” database does not provide a distribution of migrants by age groups and nationalities. However, when we consider that migrants from the Central Asian Turkic Republics, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan constituted 37 percent of all migrants in total, we can draw some conclusions on age groups by considering age groups of all migrants (Figure 11.8). Examination of the data shows a steady annual increase in the number for all age groups, especially in the young population. On the other hand, the existing concentration of population in the 0-15 age group indicates that the working-age population may grow in a short time. Although it may seem insignificant due to their low numbers in the Turkish labor market, it can lead to negative outcomes in an environment where job opportunities decrease with the increase in unemployment.

<sup>14</sup> These numbers include Syrian migrants, while more than three and a half million Syrians in Turkey are included under the “temporary protection” status.



**Figure 11.8.** Distribution of Foreigners in Turkey by Year and Age Groups (2013-2018)

**Source:** TURKSTAT “Migration Statistics.”

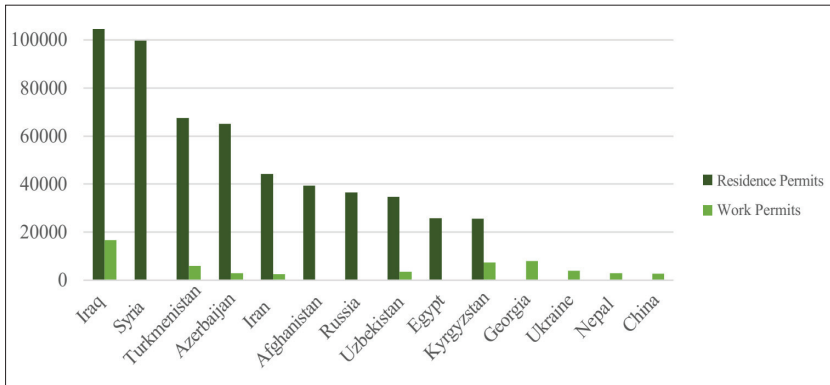
As it can be seen, Turkey hosts a large population of migrants especially those coming from specific countries for various reasons. While some people remain in their own countries within the existing framework of the power structure due to opportunities and obstacles in their countries, others leave their hometowns without ever returning. In some cases, internal and external migration may be more balanced as a result of changing trends at the individual, regional or global levels. Again, when we look at the net migration with these 9 countries, we can see that the number of incoming migrants from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Kazakhstan is considerably higher than the number of outgoing migrants while Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan experience a more balanced migrant mobility (Table 11.1). Although this figure does not include definite information about the net migration status of the countries, Turkey needs to see who hosts more migrants and what is to be done next.

**Table 11.1.** 9 Countries' Net Migration Status in Turkey (2016-2018)

		Afghanistan	Pakistan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Iran	Azerbaijan	Uzbekistan	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Rep
2018	<b>Inflow</b>	44 977	2 680	1 595	34 915	31 922	23 245	15 231	7 395	9 131
	<b>Outflow</b>	8 168	1 068	1 110	10 096	9 242	13 804	13 171	2 453	7 747
	<b>Net</b>	<b>36 809</b>	<b>1 612</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>24 819</b>	<b>22 680</b>	<b>9 441</b>	<b>2 060</b>	<b>4 942</b>	<b>1 384</b>
2017	<b>Inflow</b>	37 747	1 468	1 616	20 317	17 794	20 865	17 871	4 318	8 982
	<b>Outflow</b>	6 413	627	501	4 001	5 065	10 555	5 528	3 604	4 596
	<b>Net</b>	<b>31 334</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>1 115</b>	<b>16 316</b>	<b>12 729</b>	<b>10 310</b>	<b>12 343</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>4 386</b>
2016	<b>Inflow</b>	27 850	1 113	852	8 394	15 539	15 284	8 975	3 644	6 012
	<b>Outflow</b>	6 883	624	346	3 555	5 695	4 290	3 236	2 296	2 745
	<b>Net</b>	<b>20 967</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>4 839</b>	<b>9 844</b>	<b>10 994</b>	<b>5 739</b>	<b>1 348</b>	<b>3 267</b>

**Source:** TURKSTAT "Migration Statistics."

Although it can be argued that the majority of migrants consist of people who seek better living conditions and see Turkey as a destination country or transit country, the populations coming to Turkey from these countries are not homogeneous groups. As mentioned above, differences in legal statuses directly affect the living conditions of these migrants. For example, having a residence permit and a work permit is of great importance for an immigrant to adapt to the community he/she lives in. The DGMM (Directorate General of Migration Management) under the Ministry of Interior ranked the top 10 countries by the numbers of residence permits and work permits given to foreigners in Turkey in 2018. While these data show the nationalities of foreigners living in Turkey together with their migrant status, a comparison of the significant differences between the two data sets reveals the necessity of in-depth study on the working and living conditions of migrants (Figure 11.9).



**Figure 11.9.** Foreigners in Turkey with Residence and Work Permits in 2018 (Top 10 Countries)<sup>15</sup>

**Source:** “Statistics”, Directorate General of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior” Accessed on September 15, 2019.

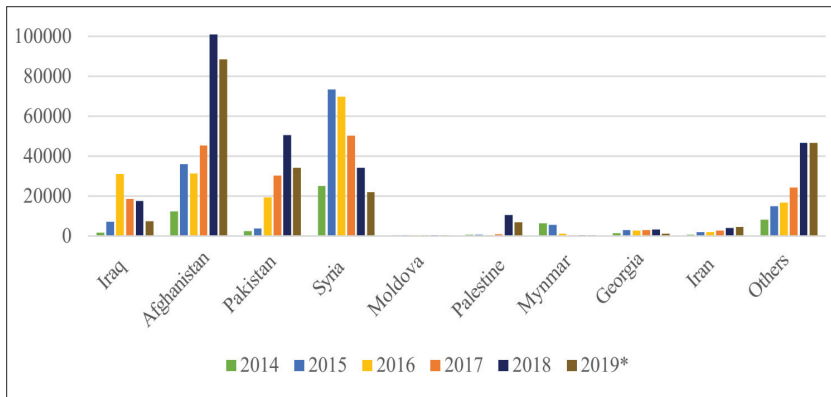
As to the nationalities and numbers of irregular migrants identified by the Directorate General of Migration Management, while the number of migrants from Iraq and Syria decreased compared to previous years, the number of illegal migrants from Afghanistan and Pakistan have increased in the last five years including those staying in the country or who did not leave on time. Some of them are apprehended, placed in the “Removal Centers” and deported, while others continued their lives within Turkey without being caught, and the number of these migrants may be much more significant considering the number of those who are apprehended.

When the numbers of migrants, residence permits, work permits and irregular migration trends are considered together, it can be seen that Afghan migrants tried to live in Turkey both legally and illegally, while significant differences existed between Pakistani regular migrants and irregular migrants (Figure 11.10). The citizens of Iran and the Turkic Republics enjoy a relatively better position in Turkey as migrants due to the lack of irregular migration patterns

<sup>15</sup> Considering that the residence permit is the mandatory prerequisite for obtaining a work permit, it can be assumed that those who obtained a work permit also had residence permits. Therefore, the chart does not show the residence permits of immigrants from Georgia, Ukraine, Nepal and the People’s Republic of China because they are not among the top 10 countries in terms of residence permits.



and varying intensity of migrations from Central Asian counties. However, the gap between the residence permit and work permit reveals that they work in the informal sectors and live unsafely since they are not “tourists.” When regular and irregular migratory patterns are considered in light of the economic development of the countries, Afghanistan stands out among the source countries, while Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Iran differ from other countries in terms of migrant density.



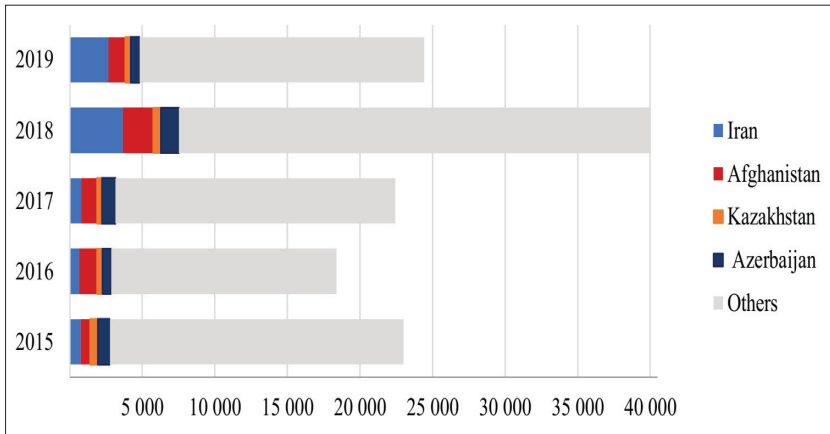
**Figure 11.10.** Nationality Distribution of Irregular Migrants Apprehended by Year (2014-2019)<sup>16</sup>

**Source:** The Directorate General of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior, “Statistics.”

Another issue that can be directly related to social and urban policies is to what extent the housing needs of immigrants are met and in what ways. While there is no national data about this issue, the number of houses sold to foreigners can be used as the most valuable data in this respect. Although these data do not differentiate between the foreigners who acquired residence for primary use or investment purposes, analysis of the data can still provide important insights if we assume that these residences are sold primarily for use. As a matter of fact, in terms of the countries we examine, only the citizens of Iran, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have purchased houses in large numbers enough not to fall into the “other” category within the ranking of the Turkish

<sup>16</sup> 2019 data are as of August 14, 2019.

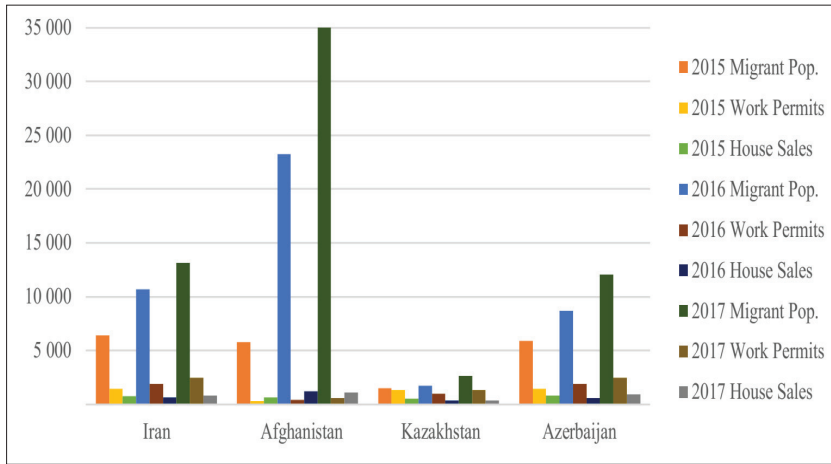
Statistical Institute (Figure 11.11). Among them, Iran ranks first, Afghanistan ranks second, Azerbaijan ranks third and Kazakhstan ranks last. Considering the number of migrants, even if all of these houses were purchased for primary use, it can be said that most of the migrants meet their housing needs as tenants or using different housing methods (houses of relatives, acquaintances, etc.).



**Figure 11.11.** Distribution of Houses Sold to Foreigners by Nationality (2015-2019)

**Source:** “House Sales Statistics”, TURKSTAT, Access September 15, 2019.

When some data sets are evaluated together to the extent that time series allows, the situation becomes clearer. When we consider the number of migrants, the number of work permits and the number of houses sold to foreigners together, it can be said that except migrants from Kazakhstan, migrants from Afghanistan, Iran and Azerbaijan face significant problems in terms of both housing and working conditions (Figure 11.12). Especially Afghan immigrants are the most disadvantaged group in this table. However, irregular migrants are not included in this assessment, since they are not registered. If they are to be added to the equation, informality will likely increase both in terms of labor market and housing.

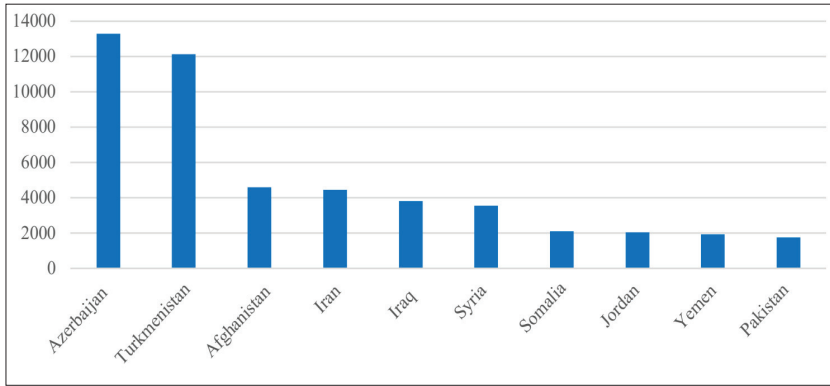


**Figure 11.12.** Comparison of Migrant Populations, Work Permits and Number of Houses Sold to Foreigners<sup>17</sup>

**Source:** TURKSTAT, “House Sales Statistics” and “Work-Life Statistics”, The Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, Accessed on September 15, 2019.

A significant number of students from these countries also choose Turkey for their studies, in addition to the migrants who seek work, victims of war trying to survive, or capitalists seeking investment in Turkey (Figure 11.13). When we look at the distribution of foreign students in the country as of 2018, it is seen that the top four come from the countries mentioned in this study. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan took the top two places by far, followed by Afghanistan and Iran, respectively. In particular, agreements on education between countries played a major role in this phenomenon.

<sup>17</sup> Other countries were not included in this chart due to the unavailability of data from these countries. Available data on these three variables only existed for Iran, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. The lack of data is mainly due to the low numbers in different variables for these countries.



**Figure 11.13.** Foreigners Living in Turkey with Student Permits in 2018 (Top 10 Countries)

**Source:** The Directorate General of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior, “Statistics.”

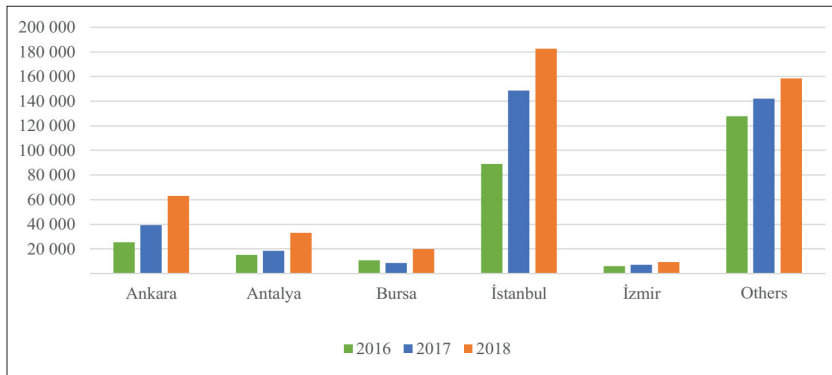
#### 4. Migrants’ Labor and City

Insights can be gained about the state of labor in the Turkish urban spaces by considering the migration flows to Turkey in the light of macro data. Migrants also face similar unequal development patterns that triggered migration among countries. While people from different countries may experience very similar situations, the citizens of the same country may also witness differences based on dichotomies of the regular-irregular, capitalist-worker, blue collar-white collar, or student. Although global and national dynamics play an important role in the accumulation, distribution, and reproduction of labor on the urban scale, it is necessary to identify the targeted beneficiaries of social and urban policies in order to define and develop these policies. This section examines social and urban policies by using quantitative and empirical data to reveal the conditions of migrant labor in the urban space by also considering the above-mentioned findings.

Migrant labor is particularly important at the harvest times of agricultural production, especially in the rural areas. Apart from these seasonal migratory patterns, cities offer several opportunities for migrants as densely populated areas with a lot of economic activities. The increased pace of urbanization both worldwide and in Turkey also contributes to this situation. Although rural production, which creates significant inputs for the industries and

feeds cities, is not free from the social relations of the existing forms of production, the urban spaces emerge as a place of sociocultural and economic diversity in direct proportion to its attractiveness. Urban life may seem frightening and repulsive to migrants, who are in a new network of relationships filled with contrasts and contradictions, but it also facilitates their adaptation and integration processes. Therefore, the cities, especially the metropolitan areas are attractive for international migrants who face much more challenging conditions than domestic migrants.

According to TURKSTAT's data between 2016-2018<sup>18</sup> and the data shared by the Directorate General of Migration Management as of 14 March 2019, foreigners seem to be concentrated in Turkey's most populous and developed cities (Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya, Bursa and Izmir).<sup>19</sup> The total number of foreign nationals living in these five provinces is more than double the number of those living in other provinces. The distribution of migrants in Turkey by province (Figure 11.14) shows a very similar result. As in other data sets, Istanbul, which is described as a "megacity", takes first place in the rankings, while Ankara and Antalya follow Istanbul. Industry and agriculture in Bursa, tourism and agriculture in Antalya may be the reasons why these two cities host more migrants than Izmir. On the other hand, in-depth studies are needed to explore the unique conditions of these two cities.



**Figure 11.14.** Distribution of Migrants by Provinces between 2016-2018 (First five provinces and the total number for other provinces)

**Source:** TURKSTAT, "Migration Statistics."

<sup>18</sup> Distribution of Total Foreigners by Provinces, 2016-2018.

<sup>19</sup> Distribution of Foreigners in Turkey with Residence Permits, by Provinces.

When we look at the data on distribution of usable household income in 2018 published by TURKSTAT for the provinces of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, very significant differences can be observed between the shares of household income for the top 10% with the households with the lowest income (Table 11.2). Although this inequality of income distribution can be seen all over Turkey, TURKSAT's data provide specific information on the regional scale, and Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara are considered as regions. In light of these data, although both Turkey and the major cities are in high demand by migrants in general, the income inequality seems debilitating in every sense for the masses trying to survive in the city.

**Table 11.2.** Distribution of Available Household Income by 10 Percentile Income Groups in 2018

	In top 10%	Second 10%	Third 10%	Fourth 10%	Fifth 10%	Sixth 10%	Seventh 10%	Eighth 10%	Ninth 10%	Last 10%
Istanbul	2,6	3,8	4,7	5,4	6,5	7,6	9,0	10,9	14,1	35,6
İzmir	2,6	4,1	5,1	6,1	7,3	8,6	10,2	12,1	15,7	28,3
Ankara	2,9	4,1	5,1	6,1	7,2	8,3	9,6	11,5	14,5	30,8

**Source:** "Income Distribution and Living Conditions Statistics", TURKSTAT, Accessed on September 15, 2019.

When we look at the distribution of irregular migrants in the provinces, different explanations seem to be needed (Figure 1.15). While metropolises attract irregular migrants as areas where job opportunities are plentiful and informal activities are concentrated despite the unequal income distribution, the migrant density in the coastline may be due to the irregular migrants seeking to cross into Europe by sea. The density in the eastern provinces can be explained as an outcome of migrants' attempts to cross the eastern and southeastern borders of the country for miles. Such phenomenon emerges especially for irregular Afghan and Pakistani migrants, who enter Turkey mostly on foot from the eastern borders and who are apprehended when they tried to cross into the West from the eastern provinces.



Pekcan, the Minister of trade stated that number of active single-share joint-stock companies owned by foreign nationals was 2,883 and the number of limited companies was 38,952 as of 30 June 2019 according to the data stored in the Central Registry System (MERSİS) in response to a written question posed by Ömer Fethi Gürer, the Deputy of the Republican People's Party for the province of Niğde, the top 10 countries in the distribution of these companies are as follows: Syria, Iran, Iraq, Germany, Egypt, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Russia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>20</sup> The top ten fields of activity for these companies are wholesale trade of goods, residential construction, real estate, tourism, consultancy, wholesale and brokerage, restaurant and restaurant business, textile marketing and trade, construction of non-residential buildings, food marketing and trade respectively. According to the response of Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan to another question based on MERSİS data, approximately 20% (8661 out of 47078) of the companies established in Turkey between 01 January 2019 and 29 July 2019 are companies owned by foreigners. During the same period, 7837 companies were closed in Turkey and 871 companies owned by foreign nationals were also closed.<sup>21</sup> In the light of these data, although we do not have exact information on the size, service capacity, etc. of the companies, it can be said that foreign entrepreneurs seem relatively more resilient in terms of the economic bottleneck that Turkey has faced. When we consider the sub-sectors in which these foreign-owned companies operate, it can also be said that the aforementioned fields of activity may be the areas where migrant labor is concentrated in Turkey.

In addition to the knowledge and observations of the author of this study in different contexts, especially in the city basins, as well as the knowledge and observations obtained during the preparation of the doctoral thesis focused on urban transformation, several studies and social media posts also show that migrant labor concentrated in labor-intensive service sectors including construction, tourism, seasonal agricultural activities, Original Equipment Manufacturing (OEM), small-to-medium-scale manufacturing industry. These

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<sup>20</sup> "Written Question Motion (a)", Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Accessed on September 10, 2019, <https://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d27/7/7-13337c.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> "Written Question Motion (b)", Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Accessed on August 6, 2019, <https://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d27/7/7-14599c.pdf>.



fields of activity usually employ migrant labor based on arm strength, which often requires a low skill level or no skills. Within the framework of the concreteness and objectivity of production, cultural levels and positions related to historical and social context can also be influential, although labor has no language, religion or race. Predispositions, habits and acquaintances can bring people from the same countries (e.g. Afghan capitalist and Afghan laborer) together in a more concrete sense (e.g. the effect of chain migration). This does not eliminate the existing relation between labor and capital, but deepens it, making labor even more dependent on capital.

### **5. Reproduction of Migrant Labor in the City**

Either as a final or temporary destination, Turkey hosts regular migrants from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Iran due to its geographical location and level of development, while also hosting the irregular migrants, the weakest link in the Afghan and Pakistani migration process. From the perspective of Turkey, it can be said that both regular and irregular migrants of Afghan nationality can be seen in a separate place compared to other migrants in Turkey in terms of the social turmoil within the framework of economic production relations. Since they do not enjoy a similar special status that is granted to Syrian refugees, especially the irregular Afghan migrants can easily find themselves involved in insecure and informal activities, when they are not apprehended by law enforcement, given that many of them are young and of working age according to data on foreigners' age groups. Although Afghan migrants clearly exemplify this phenomenon, this is also valid for other workers in similar situations. Although this study focuses on migrant labor and aims to highlight various facades of the social structure, it mainly addresses the capital-labor relationship without reducing it to any categorical distinction.

Several legal-administrative regulations are needed to regulate the labor market in terms of migrant labor. Approaches based on labor and production should be made a priority in this sense. First of all, migrant labor should not be subjected to a regular-irregular distinction and no discrimination should be made between the domestic-foreign labor. The objective position of the worker eliminates all these distinctions against the capital. The informal economy and production relations, which are forced by income

inequalities, limited employment opportunities and unequal development, must be prevented. Several emergency responses are needed, such as eliminating the requirements for obtaining the residence and work permit, and the recognition of inclusive social rights to the workers with no discrimination between foreign and domestic labor. In the first place, these steps should be targeted at the national level and efforts should be made to mainstream these by leveraging global dynamics and relations with the close countries. In particular, it is necessary to establish a union focusing on labor between the organizations that pursue economic and cultural cooperation, and among the countries mentioned in this study. Populist approaches that accompany neo-liberal policies based on neo-classical economics aim to leave labor completely unprotected against the capital while deepening the conflict and contradiction between labor and capital ingrained in the capitalist system on other planes (cultural and social) and leaving irreversible damages to the networks of relations on local, national and international levels. As is the case of Europe and the USA, occasional and intense reactions to migrants within Turkey are one of the best indicators of this situation.

It is very important to develop responses that will improve and transform the situation of labor and especially migrant labor in particular, within the context of social and urban policies for the urban spaces where labor is concentrated by understanding how labor is to be produced or not produced or reproduced. The analyses focusing on the (re) production of labor through (collective) consumption for urban space are relevant but inadequate.<sup>22</sup> Cities are the places of production, where consumption is also organized. Therefore, the consumption patterns focused on the reproduction of labor reveal the production dynamics, the labor-capital relationship itself. In this respect, it is possible to identify areas of response such as housing, health, education, culture-arts and the environment together with the target audiences such as women, children and people with disabilities in the case of migrant labor by considering the dynamics between consumption and production, including an assessment on the state of capital in the effort to understand the situation of labor mentioned above.

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<sup>22</sup> See Castells Manuel, *City, Class and Power* (London: Palgrave, 1978).

One of the most basic needs, housing and healthy housing environment, is a right for all people including immigrants. Contemporary Turkish metropolises are characterized by a spatial organization in which communities that are polarized within their existing and poor housing areas and environments, avoiding contact with each other except in mandatory situations, live in their own districts, areas or regions. In this sense, it can be said that migrant labor is heading towards the lower-cost areas as tenants considering the residence permits and house sales to foreigners. Likewise, the slums that marked the rapid industrialization of cities together with the increased mechanization in agriculture and the migration from rural areas to urban areas especially after the 1950s, still provide an important alternative for meeting the housing needs of the workers today. Although slums were replaced by high-rise buildings with the post-2000 urban transformation interventions, both the new ones and those left behind (at least until they are demolished) continue to offer affordable housing for the migrant labor. Although urban transformation is an intervention aimed at reshaping the space of labor and therefore reveals itself through different relationships, it comes across as a process in which opposing spaces are created within the framework of the old predispositions of the masses. In terms of migrant labor, this new equation creates housing opportunities, although the quality of the housing environment is questionable. Landlords started to rent the old or run-down housing stock around the housing projects to the migrants after these projects were halted due to the economic difficulties in the construction sector. So these are rented to the migrants until these projects regain their momentum. These places, where urban services are limited or not provided at all with no social facilities have become the place of the "other", whose labor is used, ignored and branded with negative judgments. On the other hand, it should be noted that migrant workers, who are subjected to more exploitation in the workplace as insecure and vulnerable workforce, pay more for the less, although they are living in comparatively cheaper residential areas. Under these circumstances, housing is a very important right that cannot be subjected to the value of exchange. Residential areas that can be organized under public ownership must be provided to those in need without discrimination of their status as immigrants or citizens.

The economic, social and psychological entrapment of the migrant labor is reflected in the mobility within the city. It is also important for social acceptance that migrant labor, who faces challenges with regard to adaptation and exclusion, increases its use of space and becomes more visible. In this sense, it is important to focus on the transportation methods and patterns that provided both access to the workspace(s) and the facilities of the city. Spatial inequalities and polarization, which became striking through income inequalities, urban growth on steroids and scattering, led to an increase in private vehicle ownership and use. Public transportation, even via occasional contacts, strengthens communities' ties with each other. Therefore, in order to increase the mobility of the workers including the migrant labor in Turkish cities, public transportation opportunities should be expanded and made free.

It is especially important to offer free and accessible health services for irregular migrant labor, who has no social security and tries to make a living through arm labor. It is common for the workers to lose their health and become incapacitated as a result of physical fatigue. Health problems are frequently encountered in the fields of activity such as construction, transportation, contract manufacturing and some labor-intensive sub-fields of the service sector. The dysfunction of labor, which can also create problems in terms of capital in an environment where labor supply is limited, creates favorable conditions for the employer due to the surplus of "disposable" workers, whose absence may not even be noticed as mentioned above. Again, it is critically important to prevent the above-mentioned informal activities.

Another important area of intervention in terms of social policies is education. Education has a very important place both in terms of increasing the quality of the existing working-age labor and for migrant children who receive or will receive basic education. Children who are excluded from the education system in the current conditions can cause serious social problems in the future. In this sense, migrants workers' skills can be increased by offering training programs for the education of migrant children, regardless of their regular-irregular status, in the fields of activities that can create added value. Even expansion of the existing educational opportunities available to the citizens in a way that they will also

cover migrants (without any discrimination based on their regular and irregular status) will solve many problems in this area.

While social welfare programs for migrants can be meaningful for those who live in dire conditions and barely survive, they can also become harmful both in terms of social relations and in the eyes of the individuals rather than benefiting them since they make the masses dependent and passive. In-kind or cash benefits are short-term options to be provided according to the situations encountered but they do not eliminate the deprivation and poverty of migrant labor and do not liberate the workforce by empowering it. Therefore, instead of social assistance programs, it would be more beneficial to develop rights-based social policy interventions and regulations, which can increase the resilience of migrant labor.

Compared to the networks of relations in the countryside, distant convergences in the city have evolved into cold incidental contacts caused by spatial rifts. The glorification of the individual who shakes the social structures harms the practice of peaceful coexistence by creating groups and communities that do not tolerate those who do not resemble themselves through consumption patterns and associated identities. In this context, contemporary social and cultural activities that strengthen solidarity networks are of great importance in terms of ensuring the egalitarian structure at the cultural level with their potential for increased sharing. The absence of such activities may lead to the emergence of other formations that can harm the society especially in terms of the adaptation of the migrant, who is seen as a "foreigner", to the city life and social structure. At this point, some notes will be sufficient at the level of functionality without entering into ontological and epistemological discussions in the field of civil society. Civil society organizations advocating for the rights of people, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers must leave the gray areas and pursue a strategy that does not separate the benefit of rights, equality and justice from the benefit of society beyond solidarity and cooperation activities. Therefore, social and cultural activities should be leveraged to ensure the re-production and convergence of the migrant's culture, predispositions and differences based on the objective position of labor. Thus, isolation and withdrawal of migrant labor can be prevented.

Discussions on these areas of intervention should be detailed in a way that takes the target audiences into the account. The reproduction of migrant labor under the categories of women, men, children, young people, old people or people with disabilities reveals different vulnerabilities on the same basis of social and urban policies. In this context, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive and responsive approach. This approach requires acknowledgment and exercise of the right to speak, from the distribution of resources to the use of spaces, as Lefebvre (1996) noted as the “right to the city”.<sup>23</sup> Interventions that question and shake the current production forms and production relations should be implemented within the context of the above-mentioned fields of activity by using functional, comprehensive, inclusive and egalitarian approaches instead of hollow and dysfunctional rights sets. This transformational effort, which requires cooperation and coordination between local, national and international levels, cannot achieve its goal only with the exceptional and irregular initiatives of a local government, a state, or a civil society area. Instead, the transformation of production relations, which penetrates all areas of life and redefines societies, needs a holistic struggle on all scales.

## 6. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the reproduction processes of migrant labor in Turkey by using the examples of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and the Turkic Republics of Central Asia. It also made comparisons based on national data in order to explore the size, quantity and nature of the labor mobility that is based on unequal development. Turkey is also included in our case study, as a temporary or final destination country for our sample countries. When considered together with the international migration data examined in depth, it was observed that economic differences between the countries affected both the intensity of migration processes and the state of migrant labor. On the other hand, migrant labor faced significant challenges in terms of reproduction due to its legal status trapped in the categories of regular-irregular migrants, permanent-indefinite work, residence-work permits in urban areas where the labor of migrants is greatly concentrated. Arrangements must be made to

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<sup>23</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

ensure equal rights for all people by eliminating the discrimination on the basis of migration status until no undocumented immigrants remain. Such change will ensure that irregular immigration, which increases informal activities along with the problems it creates, loses its meaning for Turkey and migrants who want to live in Turkey.

In this context, it is also necessary to consider the state of migrant labor, which is more vulnerable or more resilient depending on categorical distinctions, various dynamics and mechanisms, together with the state of domestic labor in Turkey. Both migration processes and reproduction of labor should be addressed by considering Turkey's historical and social context through the labor-capital and production-consumption continuum.

The compulsory attractiveness of capital cycles concentrated in urban spaces makes it difficult to reproduce labor with the inequalities it creates and deepens. In countries such as Turkey, which has a Mediterranean-type, "selective" welfare state approach, they reproduce themselves by meeting the economic, social and cultural needs through introverted community organizations that can undermine social integration and social cohesion.<sup>24</sup> For the reproduction of migrant labor that live in difficult conditions, it is important to focus on intervention areas such as housing, transportation, social assistance, health, education, culture-arts, employment and the environment, which should be emphasized with an inclusive social policy approach while also taking target groups such as women, children, young people and people with disabilities into an account. Social and urban policies centering on labor and usage value based on equality, justice and social benefit can achieve social cohesion, increase solidarity and build peace by organizing the (re)distribution of resources. Although these recommendations can be implemented at different stages, selective

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<sup>24</sup> To Esping Andersen's (1990) liberal, conservative/corporatist and social democrat categories of social welfare practices, Ferrera (2006) added the Mediterranean-Southern European style as a fourth category. This model, in which families and communities alleviate the state's welfare expenditures, ignores the more fragmented, irregular, populist and informal sectors in terms of its practices. See: Gösta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). and Maurizio Ferrera, "The Southern European prosperity model in Social Europe," in *Social Policy Articles*, ed. Ayşe Buğra and Çağlar Keyder (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006).

approaches can fail if they do not aim for transformation on all scales with a holistic approach.

It is clear that asylum seekers with temporary protection status are likely to return to their homeland if the turmoil in their country ends, but it is possible that migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran or other Central Asian Turkic Republics can become a permanent part of the country, as most prominently experienced in the case of migration from Turkey to Germany. Therefore, the desire and search for peaceful coexistence equally, fairly and without destroying each other will guide the future efforts on local, national and global scales.



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