

Turkish migration reports and the value of statistics history essay

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In a globalized world, the borders of nation-states have all become at least semi-permeable, if not completely open to exchange of people, technology, and culture. While some race to embrace this change, claiming that we are all "citizens of the world", others stand guard over age-old traditions that may be easily lost in a global culture. Although much of this exchange is made possible with advances in modern technology characterized by devices like the smart phone and online social networks, the true disseminator of this phenomenon is the people: in many parts of the world border patrols have ceased to exist all together and even in those where they do still enforce geographical boundaries, moving from one place to another, be it temporary or permanent, is easier to accomplish than ever before. Migration, more so than short-term travel, is helping to create the "global city". But is this new, shared culture something to embrace or be cautious of? And for a country like Turkey with a unique and precarious position in the political court, will globalization, in the form of human migration, foster the beginning of a golden age of new cross-cultural interactions or encourage only the formation of tightly-knit groups with no interest in mixing with the 'outsiders'? It may be prudent first to discuss what we mean by 'migration' and other relevant vocabulary. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, to migrate is to move from one country, place, or locality to another. It is also useful to understand the difference between immigration and emigration: the former refers to people entering a country other than their native land usually with the intention of remaining there permanently. Emigration however, refers to leaving one's place of residence

or country to live elsewhere (Emigration). In this study I will be primarily focused on analysis and statistics dealing with immigration to and within Turkey, since the direct effect of this immigration of the Turkish class structure may be more simply extrapolated. Acquiring valid and reliable statistics for such a large-scale phenomenon can present a problem, and seems to have done just that for many of the available academic readings[1]. Some research has had to take a different approach, such as Walter Willcox's *Statistics of Migrations, National Tables, Rumania, Serb, Croat and Slovene State, Turkey, Palestine*: "As no direct migration statistics are available for this country, and as the immigration and emigration statistics of other countries to which citizens of Turkey have gone throw some light upon migrations from and back to Turkey, but for this purpose need to be combined, two tables of indirect migration statistics for Turkey have been introduced" (Willcox, 888). In this manner, the validity of the statistics may be considered high if the country that collected the data used valid techniques. However, we unfortunately have little way of discovering this information and given the vast wholes in the data, I believe this particular collection of statistics may be used best in a continuum with modern data to try to suggest a reliable trend (or perhaps lack thereof) from 2013 back until the late 19th century. Reliability, or the consistency of statistics is one of the most important factors to take into consideration when dealing with migration, since any sudden major shift in population could be directly related to world events, such as World War II or the Great Depression. If migration statistics are reliable, they may also shed light on economic and social conditions in the country in question, thus they are

extremely useable data. Another useful aspect in migration statistics may be the reason for migration. In a report published by the OECD in 2012 the nature of immigrants' status in Turkey is described: The population of legally resident foreigners fell by about 6% between 2008 and 2009, from 175 000 to 163 000. Of these, 11% were for employment and 17% for study, with most of the others ethnic Turks from nearby countries living with relatives in Turkey. The leading nationalities of resident foreigners were Azerbaijan (11%), the Russian Federation and Bulgaria (8% each) and Germany (6%). Among the 17 500 work-permit holders, the main nationalities were the Russian Federation (11%), Germany (7%) and the United States (6%). Among the 27 000 students, the main group was Azerbaijanis (13%). The total number of irregular migrants who were apprehended fell from 68 300 in 2008 to 34 300 in 2009. Of those found in Turkey, about one-third were overstaying workers, and the rest had entered illegally (Country Notes: Turkey, 328). This provides meaningful insight into Turkey's social class system by simply revealing 'pull reasons' for immigration to Turkey. A 'pull reason' is a reason why an immigrant would be drawn to Turkey as opposed to a 'push reason', which provides a reason to leave one's country of origin. Among legal resident foreigners, three primary motivations are noted: 1) family, 2) study and 3) employment. Although no specific statistic is given for those who immigrate to Turkey and live with family already here, it is said to be the grand majority of cases, with study and employment making up 28% of the legal resident foreigners. It thus follows that the leading nationalities of Turkey's resident foreigners are from neighboring countries like Azerbaijan and Bulgaria[2]. Although useful, given the ethnic and national identity '

complex' of the Turkish state, it would be interesting to see data on how many of the immigrants are actually 'foreigners' (as opposed to 'foreign-born' Turks). I suspect this would shed light on past emigration and immigration patterns in Turkey and the Ottoman Empire as well. Perhaps many immigrants are "returning home" rather than settling in a new location altogether. These statistics may even be able to offer commentary on the social and economic stability or condition of Turkey in relation to other countries. This is perhaps particularly evident in the mention of 'irregular' immigrants who for one reason or another found it no longer suitable to remain in their previous countries, presumably so much so that escape was worth risking legal consequences in Turkey. These statistics offer insight into how the surrounding countries may affect the social fabric of Turkey: Most asylum seekers [from Iraq and Iran] were transiting Turkey on their way to Europe. Thus Turkey is acting as a portal, temporarily accepting these people with little to no intention of integrating them into the official framework - and yet any passerby will still be a part of the global exchange of cultures, leaving some mark on the Turkish social structure. Even in a more basic sense, Turkey's willingness to work with asylum seekers may have been influenced by the globalization trend as it sought admittance to the European Union. This suggests yet another area of interest: Turkey, pushing hard toward 'western development' is also dealing with the 'eastern influence' of asylum seekers and other Middle-Eastern immigrants, producing what could be a very undesirable conflict between the goals of a nation and the necessary steps required to achieve them. More research should be done in examining this theme. The Turkish national identity is a

thing of great concern for Turkey, as illustrated in many of its historical patterns of citizenship and immigration. As mentioned above, immigration from neighboring and nearby countries may be a continuation of historical trends and/or the reconciliation of historical anomalies of population placement. Government support for this form of social unification can be seen here: The founders of the modern Turkish state were also concerned about creating a homogenous sense of national identity in an otherwise ethnically and culturally diverse country. Exclusive priority was given to encouraging and accepting immigrants who were either Muslim Turkish speakers to start with, or who were officially considered to belong to ethnic groups that would easily melt into a Turkish identity such as Albanians, Bosnians, Circassians, Pomaks, and Tatars from the Balkans. From the establishment of Turkey in 1923 to 1997, more than 1.6 million immigrants came and settled in Turkey, more than half of them by the early 1950s. The immigrants were successfully assimilated into the "Turkish" national identity (Kirisci). This policy, although no longer official, is still evident today and a major force in shaping Turkey's class structure. Kemal Kirisci predicts that "Albanians, Bosnians, Circassians, Pomaks, Tatars, and Turks—mostly from the Balkans—will be able to immigrate to Turkey, while others will face a closed door. Minorities claiming a link to Turkey who are not Sunni Muslims, that is, everyone from Armenians and Assyrians to Greeks and Jews, as well as unassimilated Kurds and Alevis, will find it difficult to immigrate". This is thanks to the Turkish attempt to maintain a (perhaps antiquated) 'homogenous' national identity in the midst of a globalized world. The statistics show an overall decrease in Turkey's foreign immigrants, perhaps

indicating that Turkey has already started to tighten in the reigns. Turkey's struggle will be with finding a balance between embracing the economic prosperity that comes with 'westernization' and maintaining cultural hegemony among its new, non-Turkish, citizens. Although Turkish emigration and diaspora are not the main topic for discussion in this paper[3], it is prudent to mention yet another factor that could have a high impact on the changing (and perhaps, as seen above, increasingly conservative) social class structure in Turkey: brain drain. According to IOM's 'Migration in Turkey: A Country Profile' report, "Turkey is among the top ten sending countries in terms of the number of students studying in US higher education institutions." It states a surprisingly high number of students are leaving Turkey for foreign education, as indicated by the following statistics from UNESCO: The number of Turkish students in the United States grew to about 12, 500 in the 2004-2005 academic year, according to the Institute for International Education. Meanwhile, statistics from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicate that approximately 52, 000 Turkish students studied abroad in 2004, mainly in Germany, United States, France, and England, making Turkey the seventh highest ranking country in terms of gross outflow of students for that year (UNESCO, 2006) (Migration in Turkey: A Country Profile, 43). This is significant because "a high incidence of student non-return results in difficulties for newly established universities to recruit qualified academic staff" (Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, 43). Clearly effecting not only the current generations but the generations to come, if it becomes a pattern that highly educated Turks acquire and use their credentials outside

of the country, it could signal a significant shift in the social structure of Turkish society, leaving academia more and more in the hands of foreigners. Although the role of statistics in the social sciences is an often-unclear one, in sociology, and in this example, it is clearly a relevant and necessary tool for understanding social change and structure. Why do Turks rally around a homogenous identity that arguably never truly existed? Why do foreigners come to Turkey and what does their presence leave? When proper statistical techniques are used, we can begin to investigate the complex ties and relations between and within countries. For Turkey, this migration, this exchange of people is both a rejuvenator and an omen of changing times.

Figure 1: OECD statistics showing 1) the lack of available statistics in Turkey and 2) the top 10 nationalities from which immigrants come. Both shed great light on the particular situation of Turkey.