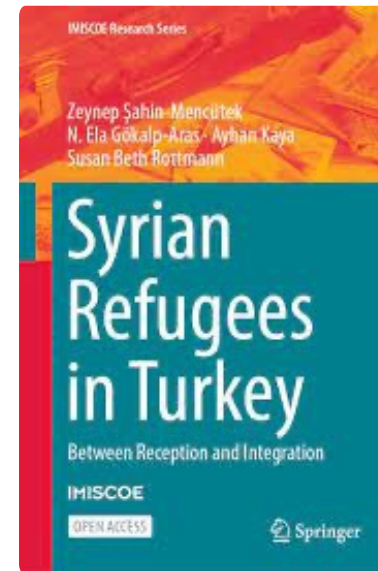


Turkey's migration narratives and strategic temporality

Zeynep Şahin-Mencütek

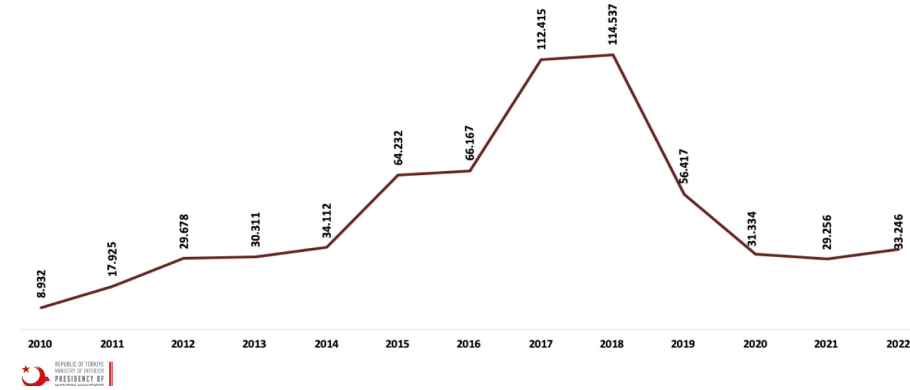
Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies and CERC Migration, Toronto Metropolitan University



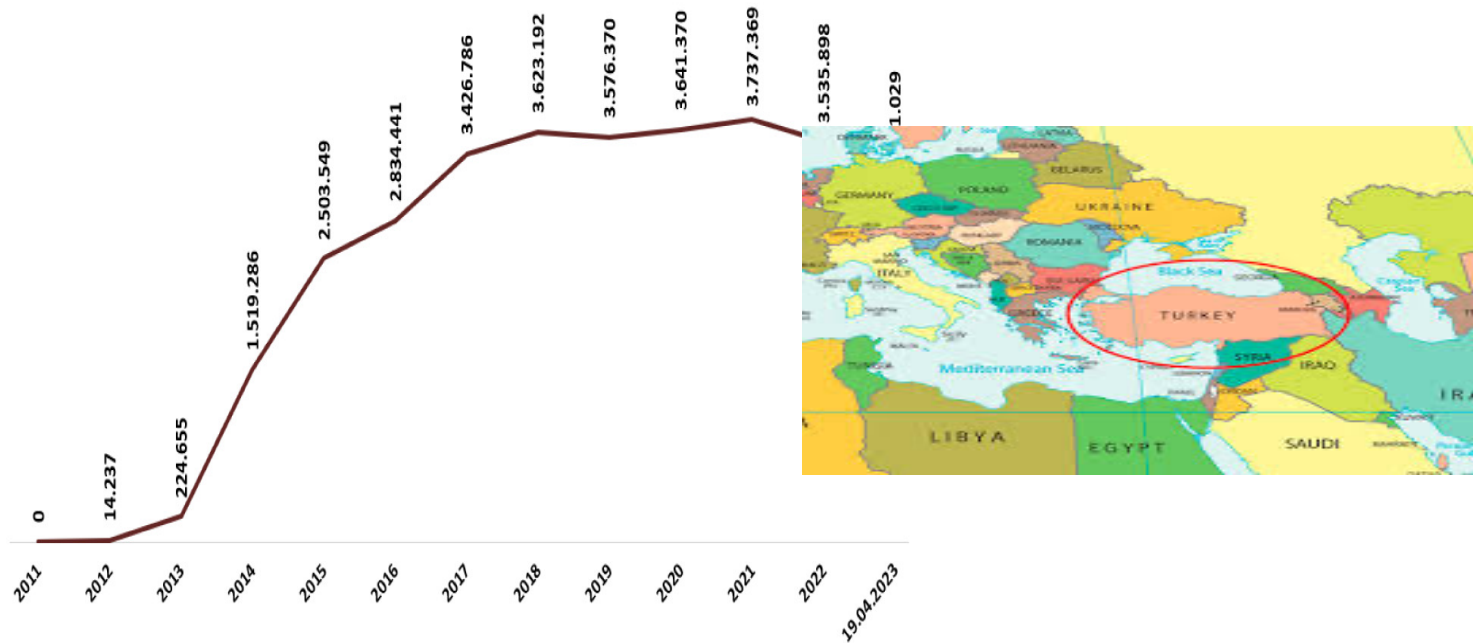
Context: Mixed Migration Patterns

- * Hosting millions of displaced people seeking refugee
Syrians ‘under temporary protection’
Asylum seekers (Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians and others from Asia and Africa.
- * a transit hub for so-called ‘irregular’ migrants
- * country of origin for many migrants and asylum seekers in Europe and N.America

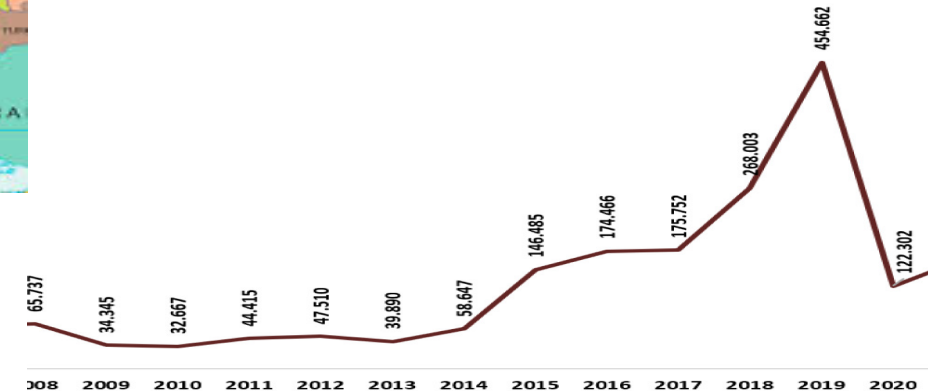
INTERNATIONAL PROTECTIONS APPLICATIONS BY YEARS



DISTRIBUTION OF SYRIANS UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION BY YEAR



THE NUMBER OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS WHOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CAPTURED BY YEARS



Source: <https://en.goc.gov.tr/irregular-migration>



TURKEY RESPOND

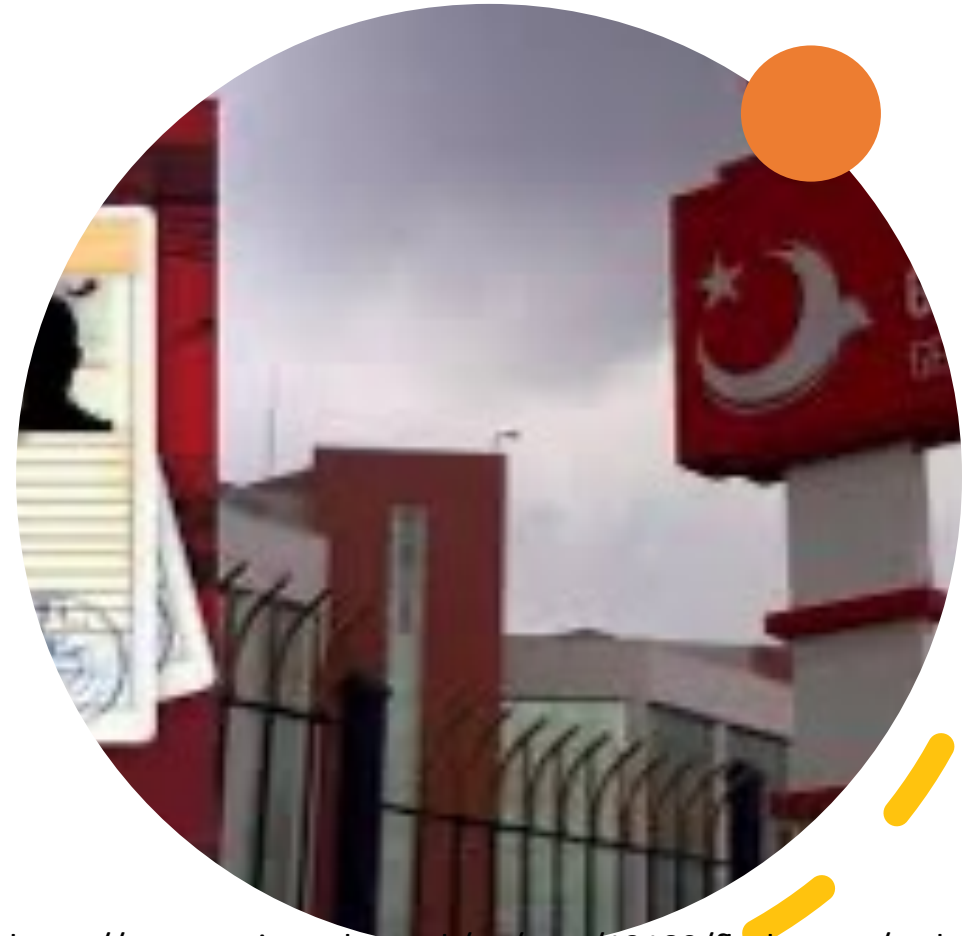
- complexity of policies, practices, and experiences in governing refugee situation
- entanglements of issue areas (e.g. security, economy, societal dynamics) influencing the policy and politics
- capacity issues in the public policy and service provision
- importance of
 - 1-policies and discourses developed during the reception, protection, and integration phases
 - 2-continuities, ruptures, and changes over time
 - 3-interactions and differences in responses across scales -transnational, national, local, individual-; in other words, to examine how policies are translated into local contexts, then how they are felt and experienced by refugees and how refugees claim agency and develop belonging

*engaging with ongoing discussions (refugee governance, politics of migration, agency/belonging)

*complementing conceptual frameworks (liminality, precarity, fragmentation, local turn, institutional ambiguity, etc)..

Strategic temporality as an overarching concept

- Temporality as a **governance strategy** that is intentionally produced to control and manage refugee situations.
- It has **institutional, legislative and discursive** components that all shape policy instruments addressing displaced people.
- **Reception** is temporal in being mainly ad hoc in practice and discourse via the idea of guesthood, hospitality and cultural intimacy.
- Temporary **protection** status in legislation, *temporary protection card (kimlik)*
 - co-constitutive practices causing legal precarity and stratification.
- **Integration** also shows strategic temporality in its uncertainty and ambiguous fluctuation along an integration-(dis)integration/exclusion spectrum over time.



<https://www.actionpal.org.uk/en/post/13189/flash-news/turkey-imposes-measures-for-temporary-protection-card>

Strategic temporality as an overarching concept

- Strategic temporality is also reflected in institutional arrangements and their practices
- State institutions dominating the field but cooperating with non-state and local actors to get support. they act strategically as part of the state's refugee response legitimized within hospitality and guesthood discourses that are embeded temporally.
 - Temporary legislation and policies, increased ad hoc-ism, excessive use of discretionary power, and bypassing institutional accountability
 - changes of state agencies can be taken as the indicators of strategic temporality (from AFAD to DGMM).
- non-state actors negotiate this strategic temporality with centralist institutions and thereby open space for themselves to act through subsidiarity. But, uncertainty is the main feature of interactions
- Temporality also helps to describe asylum seekers' experience of "being between" and their encounters with locals and the state actors in the host country



<https://en.goc.gov.tr/syrians-invited-to-update-their-records>

Political narratives enforcing strategic temporality

- An important discursive strategy is revolved around the hospitality discourse domestically and moral responsibility and humanitarianism internationally
- Syrian refugees as “guests” linked with some deep-rooted values such as ‘Turkish hospitality’, ‘Muslim fraternity’, ‘and ‘guesthood’ ‘generosity’ traditions (Baban et al., 2017; Chatty 2013; El Abed 2014; Erdoğan 2015).
- religious solidarity, tradition, religious credentials. Turkish government leaders consistently compared Turkey’s role in assisting Syrian refugees to that of the *Ansar*, referring to the *Medinans* who helped to migrating Muslims, *Muhajirun*, who were escaping from persecution.
 - Contribution of discourses for how elevated public and private efforts to accommodate Syrian refugees from a humanitarian responsibility to a religious and charity-based duty.
- deliberately avoided to use crisis framing, unlike in European examples.
- Moral responsibility moral superiority, moral high ground on this issue globally and vis-a-vis Western countries

The welcoming/positive narratives did not last long; replaced with cold-statistical calculations and restrictive policies and practices. the *Ansar* spirit has been gradually replaced with a return discourse and open hostility towards Syrians in Turkey, which now seeks to deter new arrivals and repatriation



Implications of Strategic Temporality and Agency of Refugees

- Challenges in labour market, education, housing, health and citizenship.
- Most work informally and experience economic precarity; a third of Syrian children are not in school; refugees must secure their own (often substandard) housing; linguistic and other barriers prevent full health care access, and pathways to citizenship or long-term permanent residence are limited.
- Feelings of profound anxiety and uncertainty for refugees as they go about their day-to-day lives.
- “being between” positions
- Due to their legal precarity and temporariness, most refugees rarely take risks, such as participating in activities that involve confrontation with receiving state authorities.
- Nevertheless, **silent or defacto integration** happens.



Drivers/Motivations for strategic temporality

- Successive governments tended to pursue a pragmatic and selective approach to their forced migration governance, even though it simultaneously focused on humanitarianism and moral responsibility (Korkut 2016). They retained the power to decide how to treat certain migrant groups based on their ethnicity and its foreign policy priorities (Abdeltaaty 2021).
- Geopolitical considerations, particularly security issues, have been always entangled with Turkey's migration and asylum policies and procedures in the region it locates
- General suspicion about Middle Eastern countries, on the one hand, and a goal of improving relations with Western countries on the other.
- Regional and international alliances
 - Justice and development Parties' foreign policy objectives and fluctuating interests in terms of the conflict (e.g. Syrian) that caused the displacement
 - the European accession process
- identity and demography related concerns
- “temporariness of Syrian ...aims primarily at incorporating Syrian refugees into local economies as surplus labour” (Osserian, 2020, 1).
-

Towards a global pattern for temporary protection regime(s) and strategic use of refugee hosting

* extends protection to a broader set of people than those covered by the Convention's refugee definition and helpful for mass refugee cases (see Ukrainians)

- it is also used primarily to deter individual asylum applications and hinder displaced people's settlement.
- Reasserts state's discretion power by eliminating the building blocs of refugee regime
- years of waiting under uncertainty and ambiguity, protracted situations
- Ease usage of migration as leverage



<https://respondmigration.com/blog-1/migration-diplomacy-readmission-agreement-and-turkey-eu-refugee-statement/01052019>