Introduction

As noted by Castles (2010), a major obstacle to theory formation in migration studies is the complexity and diversity of migration experiences. This issue is particularly challenging when seeking to grasp different migration patterns and political rationalities without running into methodological nationalism or policy-centred perspectives treating migration ‘as a problem’. We argue that the social transformation perspective provides room for manoeuvring around such challenges, since it conceptualizes migration ‘not merely as a result of social transformation, nor as one of its causes, but as an integral and essential part of social transformation processes’ (Castles, 2010: 1578). Whilst placing social transformation at the focal point, our research emphasizes the role of the nation-state as an agent, by either promoting or limiting international migration. This resonates with Massey’s (1999: 303) argument that migration studies have historically paid relatively little attention to the nation-state ‘as an agent influencing the volume and composition of international migration’. In the last decade, although this picture has changed considerably and nation-states are recognized as important actors on the migratory scene, these efforts focus primarily on migrant-receiving countries. Relatively little work has been done on migrant-sending countries and even less has been written on the state’s role in both emigration and immigration processes. Focusing on the case of Turkey, this chapter links the experiences of migration at the national level to those at the global level.

In the 90-year-old history of modern Turkey, internal and international mobility have been the most crucial vehicles of social transformation and demographic transition. When the Republic was founded in 1923, Turkey was primarily an agrarian society with little geographical mobility (İçduyu, 2012a). For the policy-makers pioneering the Turkish modernization process,
Two-way circulation | Emigration boom | New migration patterns | New modes of governance
---|---|---|---

Figure 8.1 Selected milestones in Turkish immigration and emigration policy since the early twentieth century
Nation-building and state-led emigration and immigration (1923 to the 1950s)

The social texture in the early days of the Republic was very much affected by the ethnic and class-based distinctions within Ottoman society during the nineteenth century. As argued by Keyder (1989), the Ottoman Empire joined the European political system and increasingly became embedded in world capitalism from the eighteenth century onwards. Over a period of a century, the shifts in the manufacturing and production processes and the dependency on international markets created a new bourgeois class, which did not exist in earlier epochs. Differing from other countries that had undergone a transition to capitalism, the rising class conflicts in the Turkish geography were marked by religious and ethnic fragmentation between peasants, artisans, bureaucrats – mainly of Muslim background – and a bourgeoisie comprised of non-Muslim populations (Keyder, 1989).

This picture was about to change in the early twentieth century. One of the key factors for this transformation was the emigration and immigration patterns before and after the foundation of the Republic. These migration patterns were triggered by policies aimed at homogenizing the population in the country, which was already affected by waves of nationalism. The homogenization comprised of a dual pattern based on the emigration of non-Muslim populations – mainly Armenians and Greeks – from Anatolia and the immigration of Turkish Muslim populations, especially from the Balkan countries. According to estimates, about 16 million people – 13 million Muslims and 3 million non-Muslims – were living in the region at the start of the First World War (Courbage and Fargues, 1998: 128). The state-led emigration was maintained by agreements of reciprocity with other countries (in 1913 and 1925 with Bulgaria, in 1923 with Greece), forced displacements (as in the case of the 1915 Armenian emigration) and migrations triggered by deterrence policies (including the Wealth Tax of 1942). Among the social engineering initiatives for Turkifying the population living in the Turkish Republic were the administrative and legal arrangements facilitating the immigration and settlement of Turkish populations (Aktar, 2000: 101). These arrangements were put in effect primarily in the 1930s. The 1934 Law on Settlement (Çagaptay, 2002; Kirişçi, 2003; Yıldız, 2007) established two divergent statuses by (a) facilitating the migration and integration of those of 'Turkish origin and culture' either as migrants or as refugees and (b) preventing and impeding the entry as migrants or refugees of those who did not meet this criterion. While these two statuses were in line with what had been the state's migration policy since the late nineteenth century, they also paved the way for succeeding patterns of migration to and from Turkey. As a result of these patterns of migration, the national bourgeoisie changed hands from non-Muslims to the newly enriched Muslim merchants. This new bourgeoisie was also supported by the state elites, who were endeavouring to create a national economy through paternalistic policies (Keyder, 1989: 136-137).

Since its inception, the main political dimension of state-centric Turkish modernity was defined by Westernization. This vision aimed to found a civilized and modern Turkish nation – viewing demographic transition, urbanization and socio-economic development as the proper prescription for the modernization process. From 1923 to the 1950s, Turkish society began shifting from a regime of high levels of mortality and low fertility rates to one of increased fertility rates – a result of pro-natalist state policies. This caused the Turkish population to double from 13 million to more than 27 million (İçduygü, 2004). Although the rural character of Turkey did not change and the rural population hovered at around 18 per cent during this period, urban planning attempts took place in big cities, as well as in emerging small peripheral towns like Tatvan, in Eastern Anatolia. It was within this context that the Kemalist elites attempted to remove the traditional rural image of Turkish society, and replace it with an urban outlook (Bozdoğan, 2001).

These transformations were also coupled with migration policies that were intended to promote the rapid growth of the postwar population and to support the modernization process. Sending Turkish students to European countries (mainly France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) and to the United States and Canada in an attempt to create a Turkish intelligentsia was one of these policies. These highly qualified students received a personal farewell note from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which placed an emphasis on their importance or perceived significance in moulding society: 'I am sending you as a spark, come back as volcanoes!'. Students were expected to receive a 'Western-style education' and return to the Republic in order to respond to the need for qualified labour. Many of them did return and participated in the University Reform of 1933, laying the foundations for modern higher education in Turkey (Şarman, 2005).

The migration boom: rapid urbanization and beyond (1950s–1980s)

The post-Second World War period had brought economic vigour, increases in agrarian production and social and physical mobility. These transformations also had implications in Turkey, where traditional values were replaced with a mentality of development and market freedom (Keyder, 1989: 169–174), not only in cities but in rural areas as well. The rise of the urban industrial job market over family employment reflected the demographic transition in the country, where the motivations shifted from having many children to increasing children's economic and educational opportunities, especially in urban settings. As a result, the period was marked by an internal
and international migration boom, resulting in rapid urbanization and in Turkey becoming a well-known country of emigration.

Beginning with the 1950s, the nation-building process led by the Turkish state became ingrained at the local level and the links between the rural and the urban, which had weakened during the early years of the Republic, were restructured. The passage to multiparty democracy had a significant role in this transformation, since the centre-right government of the 1950s buttressed the urbanization process. According to Buğra (2008), the rapid urbanization was juxtaposed by policies for making the landless farmers into landowners; therefore, it did not stimulate the dissolution of the peasantry, as experienced in other countries. To the contrary, the lack of formal social-security structures in the city and the continuing linkages between the rural and urban populations provided alternative strategies and opportunities for the new urbanites. The major implications of this early developmental period were the emergence of shantytowns (gecekondu), along with new networks and localisms among the inhabitants in the city. During the period between 1950 and 1960, the population increase in the four major cities was nearly 70 per cent, while one in every ten villagers was migrating to the cities (Keyder, 1989).

In the meantime, liberal policies integrated the Turkish state and society into the global and regional political and economic arenas. In parallel with these newly formed international linkages, Turkey entered into new relations with labour-demanding industrialized countries through labour recruitment agreements, beginning with the 1961 Agreement with Germany. Modern Turkey has witnessed, for the first time, the mass emigration of Turkish and Muslim populations abroad. The main goals during these labour agreements were different to the viewpoint of the labour-requesting vs the labour-requested country (i.e. Turkey). The interests of the European labour-requesting countries were to respond to the postwar labour shortage via short-term migration from less-developed countries, while the interests of the labour-requested countries were to send migrants abroad in order to benefit from the economic (export of surplus labour power and remittances) and social (transfer of knowledge and know-how) capital which emigrants would gain in Europe. For both sides, migration was supposed to be temporary.

According to official records in Turkey, a total of nearly 800,000 workers went to Europe through the Turkish Employment Service between 1961 and 1974. Out of these workers, 649,000 (81 per cent) went to Germany, 56,000 (7 per cent) to France, 37,000 (5 per cent) to Austria and 25,000 (3 per cent) to the Netherlands (Akgündüz, 2006). The overall state policy in Turkey was based on facilitating remittance flows and the easy return of labour migrants during the first decade of migration. Remittances were considered to be a solution to the perennial foreign exchange crisis and shortage of foreign funds to pay for imported goods and services (Martin, 1991; Sayan, 1986). However, labour migration triggered numerous unprecedented social and political consequences, beginning in the 1960s – from the separation of spouses and parents to extensive contacts with other cultures, from the formation of competing social networks and emotional ties, to reintegration problems after returning to Turkey. Large numbers of Turks were exposed to different economic, social and political processes during their stay in Western Europe. The local non-migrant people labelled the returned emigrants as Almançı or Almanvali (‘Turk from Germany’) because of their changed attitudes and behaviour. In fact, the returns prompted economic and social transformation in rural areas.

Over time, emigrants began to settle in cities after their return, rather than in their home villages, and some even stayed in the host country. Emigration also contributed to migrants’ quality of life, bringing upward social mobility and increased social standing in Turkey after their return. Perhaps the most important change was related to the evolving status of women during this period which, according to Abadan-Unat (1977), was marked by a certain emancipation and liberation, more or less limited to increased purchasing power. Still, urbanization, the adoption of the nuclear family pattern, women’s entry into the labour market and their encounters with new social rights in the host countries, caused the demise of the institution of extended family and reconfigured traditional family roles.

This pattern continued until the 1973 oil crisis, which triggered economic stagnation and the halt of state-led labour migration in Western Europe. In the 1970s, new geographies, such as Australia, the Middle East and North Africa, became the target of immigrant populations. Subsequent emigration waves to Europe were comprised of family reunifications, family formations, refugee movements and clandestine labour migration (İçduygı and Sert, 2010), which differed significantly from previous flows of emigrants – consisting primarily of young single men and women from rural backgrounds (Abadan-Unat, 2011).

While social and physical mobility swept the country through internal migration and the emigration of ethnic Turks, the emigration of non-Muslim populations led to transformations in the ethnic and religious realm. In the period 1950–1980, the non-Muslim population decreased from 225,000 to fewer than 150,000 (İçduygı, 2008). Events causing violence against the non-Muslim populations in 1955, the 1963–1964 crisis in Cyprus, rising violence against minority populations during the 1960s along with the effects of the Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus in 1974, pushed non-Muslim and mainly Rûm populations to displacement. In addition, the Jewish populations moved to Israel after the establishment of the Israeli state. Such events reinforced the ethnic and religious homogenization in the country, which had already been maintained in large measure since the population exchanges in the early days of the Republic. This also solidified the ‘minority problem’, which was intertwined with the rising public perception of ‘the others within’ (Yumul, 2005).
The politicization of migration: questions of identity and citizenship (1980s–2000s)

As asserted by İçduygulu (2009), the first objections against the settled definitions of citizenship in Turkey happened as a result of international migration, which surfaced in the 1980s. Starting in the 1960s, as noted in the previous section, millions of Turks left their country in search of work, better life conditions or political liberty. Even though a significant number of these emigrants became members of the host societies, both professionally and socially, over the decades, they were not granted political rights through citizenship. Despite efforts in the 1970s to encourage migrants to return to Turkey, most emigrants stayed in their European host countries. This has gradually become an accepted fact for the Turkish state and society, changing their perception of Turks abroad from that of ‘distant workers’ to ‘migrant workers’, ‘Turkish citizens abroad’ and even to ‘minorities in Europe’.

The adoption of neoliberal policies attracted increasing flows of FDI over the 1990s, lessening the role of remittances in the Turkish economy. As the economic expectations from emigrants faded away, the management of social and cultural affairs and the issue of maintaining ties with the non-permanent emigrants abroad gained importance. The identity questions of the 1980s, including binary oppositions such as Turk/Muslims vs foreigners and Turkish emigrants vs non-Turkish emigrants, became important in policy-making. The post-1980 period was characterized by the increasing engagement of the Turkish state with emigrants in host countries, rather than those in Turkey (Üner, 2013). It is argued in the literature (Içduygulu and Keyman, 2000; Mügge, 2012; Sayan, 1986) that a number of reasons were behind this policy change: the settling of former labour migrants, as elaborated on above, emerging patterns of political migration of different opposition groups (communists, Islamists, Alevi and Kurdish nationalists) fleeing to Europe from the military junta and the rising cultural revivalist movements of Turkish citizens in European countries. In the early 1980s, in particular, the policy of military rule was to reduce political opposition both within the territories of Turkey and abroad (Mügge, 2012). As a result, the state provided legal and official incentives to keep in close contact with, maintain ties to and improve conditions for Turkish emigrants in Europe. In 1981, the state introduced a law that allowed dual citizenship for the first time in Turkey – significantly increasing the number of Turkish citizens who also obtained the citizenship of their host country (Kadirbeyoglu, 2010).

The state considered dual citizenship to be a crucial tool enabling the integration of emigrants into their host societies. However, some of the host nation-states did not allow dual citizenship. As a result of complaints among emigrants, the Turkish state adopted a number of measures in order to provide quasi-citizenship to those who were born in Turkey, but had acquired citizenship in their host countries. The early 1990s were marked by a number of incentives facilitating emigrants’ political and social engagement with Turkey, such as the Pink Card procedure (replaced by the Blue Card in 2009) granting rights to those who gave up Turkish nationality and the change in the Turkish Party Law allowing the establishment of Turkish party branches outside of Turkey. The state took other legal and administrative measures to facilitate the political and social participation of Turkish emigrants (Şenay, 2013). The emerging problems of citizenship and rising xenophobia in Europe – which had emerged through events such as the Solingen arson attack in Germany in 1993 – are also considered by scholars to be causes of the Turkish state’s adoption of the Pink Card mechanism (Kadirbeyoglu, 2010).

Even though modern Turkey had been affected by immigration waves since the 1920s, they were based on ‘common descent and culture’. The immigrants of the 1980s were, for the first time, ‘foreigners’, who were neither Turkish nor Muslim. Some of the flows to Turkey were related to the overall globalization process, which facilitated and boosted the movement of people, goods, technologies, ideas and finances. In addition, the political turmoil and economic transformations over the previous 30 years in the region obliged people to move to safer, more-developed countries, making Turkey a passageway. In the East, the draconian politics in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq – especially towards minorities – and the insecurity after the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf crisis, pushed people to enter Turkey to seek asylum. In the West, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist systems in Eastern Europe prompted the citizens of these countries to arrive in Turkey in search of temporary work.

A significant portion of the ‘non-Turk, non-Muslim’ immigration to Turkey since the 1980s has been irregular and such immigrants are defined by Turkish law as ‘illegal’. Until the 1994 Asylum Regulation, a handful of texts lay down clauses and modalities regarding the entry, exit, stay and residence of aliens, without touching on issues of asylum or labour. The 1994 Regulation defined the conditions for applying for asylum in Turkey; however, this still provided only limited opportunities to be legally recognized, due to the geographical limitation clause of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Article 1 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees granted countries the possibility to accept only those who were fleeing events in Europe. Despite criticism, the Turkish state did not lift the limitation and allowed only temporary asylum to non-European asylum-seekers until they had resettled in a third country. Analyzing this from the perspective of the nation-state paradigm and international migration, policies with regard to immigrants in Turkey have been reluctant to recognize the immigration of non co-ethnics and resistant in reforming nation-state-centred migration policies as a response to the rising migration challenges.

As a result of the legal and administrative framework, which was based on an approach of ‘ignorance’, the ‘foreigners’ who entered the country were
entrenched in urban poverty in the peripheral squatter settlements, together with the internal migrants. In their ethnographic analysis of the Sultanbeyli district in Istanbul, Işık and Pınarçioğlu (2001) argued that migrants were ‘taking turns in poverty’. The first settlers were the early-comers from Anatolia in the 1950s and were followed, in the late 1980s, by internally displaced Kurdish populations and ‘foreign’ immigrants. While the first squatters in the peripheries allowed for the emergence of ‘informal’ and ‘marginal’ economic strategies, subsequent settlements – especially in the marginal spaces within the city centres (as in the case of Tarlabası in Istanbul and Kadifekale in İzmir) – created urban poverty and an underclass incapable of upward social mobility.

In between nationalist legacies and global trajectories (post-2000s)

As noted by Fargues (2013: 5), ‘[w]hile the nation state is a community that recognises itself as one people sharing one territory and one narrative, international migrants are perceived as transgressors to the founding principle of the nation: emigrants, because they live outside the territory of which they still share the narrative; immigrants, because they are not yet part of the narrative attached to the territory in which they are newcomers.’ Indeed, one must view the challenges of the new modes of migration transition and its governance in Turkey since the 2000s within this context of the nation-state and the international migration dilemma.

A number of factors were behind this transition from a country of migration to one of immigration. Globalization clearly is a major external force behind Turkey quickly becoming a ‘migration transition’ country. This broader phenomenon is captured by Castles and Miller (1998) and Stalker (2000). İçdüygu and Keyman (2000) demonstrate the impact of globalization in the specific case of Turkey. They also point out the importance of internal developments as factors transforming Turkey into a ‘migration transition’ country. Turkey’s liberal market economy, characterized by informality, is another internal factor that attracts migration into the country. Yet another internal factor has been government policies making entry into Turkey much easier than was the case during the Cold War. As discussed in the following pages, the single-party rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP, or AKP in Turkish), with its partly liberal stands, has been instrumental in the country’s immigration policy reforms since the early 2000s. Lastly, Turkey’s current ambition to become a member of the EU, and the accompanying political liberalization, are altering the state’s traditional conception of national identity. There has been growing pressure to adopt policies that recognize Turkey’s own ethnic and cultural diversity. Inevitably, this is having a bearing on how the Turkish state and society are looking at foreigners and migrants. In turn, government policy is under growing pressure to be reformed and adapted to the realities of Turkey becoming a ‘migration transition’ country – a transformation from mainly being a country of emigration to being one of immigration.

The early signs of changing policy in the area of immigration are becoming increasingly apparent and the EU has been an important driving force since the early 2000s. For example, Turkey, as part and parcel of pre-accession requirements, has to harmonize its legislation in areas identified in the EU ‘Accession Partnership’ document and, more specifically, in the Action Plan on Asylum and Migration adopted by the government in March 2005. This action plan lays out the tasks and timetable which Turkey intends to follow in order to prepare for the development of a fully-fledged national status-determination system, lifts the geographical limitation of accepting only refugees from European countries and adopts EU directives on asylum and migration in general. However, uncertainty over Turkey’s membership prospects is discouraging officials from advising the government to make these changes too precipitously.

Moreover, there is a deep-seated concern that Turkey may become a ‘buffer zone’ or a kind of ‘dumping ground’ for the EU’s illegal migrants and rejected asylum-seekers. At the south-east periphery of the EU, Turkey functions as a transit zone for thousands of so-called ‘transit migrants’ attempting to enter Europe. The concern over the country becoming a buffer zone has been strongly propounded by Turkish officials during the readmission agreement negotiation process. Considered by the EU as an effective tool for returning irregular migrants to outside its territories, the readmission agreement has occupied a crucial position in the pre-accession process over the last decade. As a result of long negotiations, both sides finally reached an agreement on readmission on 16 December 2013 in Ankara, confirming in tandem the launch of a visa-liberalization dialogue – an incentive demanded by the Turkish side in return. According to a European Commission press release, the readmission of third-country nationals will enter into force three years after the signature. The visa-liberalization dialogue consists of the screening of Turkish legislation and administrative practices based on the Roadmap Towards a Visa-Free Regime with Turkey, without setting ‘a specific timeline by when the dialogue should be completed’. Hence the liberalization of the visa for Turkish citizens will depend on the fulfilment of the requirements listed on the roadmap, including the implementation ‘in full and effective manner of the RA’, the management of the borders and the visa policy in order to prevent irregular migration and the establishment of migration and asylum systems in line with international standards.

It is estimated that, in the last two decades, more than half a million transit migrants – primarily from Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries – were apprehended in the country trying to make their way to Europe. Another half a million, mostly coming from post-Soviet countries, were apprehended while they were irregularly working in various sectors. In the same period,
there were more than 100,000 asylum-seekers individually arriving in Turkey, in addition to the mass movements of 500,000 Kurds from Iraq during the first Gulf War in 1991, and another half a million Syrians in light of the recent, and ongoing, crisis. In addition, there is a stock of around 250,000 foreigners who have residence permits, most of whom are professionals, students or retired ‘sun’ migrants (İçduyu, 2012b). As a result, the 2000s signify changing migration flows with respect to four different categories of immigration in Turkey: irregular labour migrants, transit migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, and regular migrants. The irregular migrants (labour/shuttle and transit migrants) signified those who either used Turkey as a way to cross into a third country, or who stayed or worked in the country without the necessary permits. The asylum-seekers and refugees were considered in parallel with the irregular migrants, due to their entry into Turkey often being through irregular border-crossing. Regular migrants are comprised of immigrants and their family members who arrived in Turkey for employment, education, settlement or long-term living and recreational purposes.

As in the previous period, the rise in the number of ‘foreign’ migrants during the 2000s has had significant implications for the outlook and expansion of urban areas. Nearly a quarter of Turkey’s urban population is currently living in the three biggest cities — the largest being Istanbul, with more than 15 million inhabitants. International migration to the country is also targeted towards bigger cities, as they provide more economic and social opportunities for immigrants. Two policy responses aimed at reducing the challenges of rising poverty are urban renewal — which aims to transform squatter areas in the city centres and to relocate the inhabitants in new public housing — and the implementation of ‘satellite cities’ to provide temporary residences in less-populous Anatolian cities for asylum-seekers and refugees. Both policies are based on the dislocation of the mainly migrant populations and have been criticized by academia and by civil society for not envisioning social services for the post-displacement period.

Moreover, the Turkish state recently enacted the Law on Work Permits of Foreigners (Law No. 4817), which enabled labour migrants to obtain their documents in Turkey more easily. The enactment of this law, that facilitates foreign nationals’ search for work and employment in Turkey, heralds the state’s more-welcoming attitude towards the migrant labour force. A new Law on Foreigners and International Protection was adopted by parliament in April 2013. Combining the previously planned two separate laws, the Law on Aliens and the Law on Asylum, this law is designed to bring about some landmark reforms in order to provide Turkey with a modern, efficient and fair management system in line with core international and European standards. With the new law, Turkey commits itself to taking the necessary steps towards the integration of immigrants into the country and to treating asylum-seekers and irregular migrants according to international norms. The law officially declares the foundation of the General Directorate of Migration Management, established under the Ministry of the Interior, which will be a hub for the implementation and regulation of the entry into, stay in and exit from Turkey of foreign nationals, and for the protection of the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers. Critically thinking, we can argue that the developments brought about by this new law mark genuine progress in the country’s public policy agenda.

The increase in international migration brings to light new social implications, some of which have not been as ostensible in the past in Turkey. One of these implications is the rising tension between the non-migrant majority population and the immigrant minority — as in the case of the Syrian refugee crisis. Since the start of clashes between Syrian government forces and the opposition in early 2011, more than 400,000 Syrian refugees have fled to Turkey. Under the direction of the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), temporary settlements were expanded to comprise 20 camps in ten provinces. However, the majority of the refugees have been living outside the camps since 2012, with crucial numbers of people without any form of registration in Turkey. Although state policies in the early months of the crisis were very generous, the increase in the number of people and the emerging tensions between the migrants and Turkish citizens triggered the publicizing of the migration issue in the country.

The Syrian refugee crisis evokes other questions about the possibility of migrants’ naturalization and citizenship regime. Although Turkey’s migration policies have undergone a remarkable transformation towards liberalization since the early 2000s, there is likely to be various paradoxical developments about the direction of these changes. In some policy areas, including that of citizenship, the prospect of Turkey loosening its traditional immigration policies seems less likely. Although the new Settlement Law of November 2006 has made similar changes towards the liberalization of migration policies, it continues to limit formal immigration to Turkey to individuals and groups of ‘Turkish descent and culture’. This approach is very closely related to the traditional conception of ‘Turkishness’ reminiscent of the 1930s. The identifying features of ‘Turkishness’ are not solely related to Turkish ethnicity, but to the ability and willingness of immigrants to adopt the Turkish language and to be a member of the Muslim Sunni ethnic group often closely associated with Ottoman rule in the past. Technically, Albanians, Bosnians, Circassians, Pomaks, Tatars and Turks — mostly from the Balkans — who are included in this definition will be able to migrate to Turkey. 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 — are likely to face difficulties in migrating to Turkey. Such a policy is not in accord with the emerging EU common immigration policy, which increasingly emphasizes civic connections to the host territory and to employment prospects rather than to ethnic or national origin, as grounds for immigration.
Despite the legal and administrative challenges to the naturalization of ‘foreign’ migrants, there have been transformations in the Turkish citizenship regime over the last two decades (İçüşyuyu and Kirici, 2009). These seem relatively covert when one examines the enactments within the country, including naturalization through marriage and the granting of citizenship to certain professional groups (including a handful of African footballers playing in Turkish leagues). However, the Turkish state has been overtly producing proactive policies since the 1980s, through adoption of the needs of Turkish emigrants, who have now become settled minority groups in their host countries. As mentioned in the previous section, flexible forms of quasicitizenship have been introduced under settings where the host countries did not allow for dual citizenship. In 2012, the Turkish state introduced consular voting, which will allow citizens living abroad to participate in future elections. Considering that more than five million Turkish citizens (nearly six per cent of the entire population of Turkey) are living abroad, consular voting is expected to bring new challenges to the Turkish political system.

Over the last few years, policies for preserving ties with emigrant communities abroad have been coupled with the emergence of new membership forms without citizenship. Indeed, the reflections of this newly emerged ideological setting of neo-Ottomanism have become very clear, with the establishment of a new government department – the Prime Ministry Presidency for Turks Abroad and Relative Communities (Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlık). The Presidency was set up in 2010 with the objective of maintaining and strengthening the relationship of the Turkish state with Turkish citizens living abroad, with those of Turkish origin living outside Turkish territories and with foreign students in Turkey. This is the first time that emigrants abroad and non-citizen Turkish ethnic communities have been brought together under the same institutional roof (Aksel, 2014).

According to the Presidency, close contact with Turkish citizens living abroad is of the foremost importance and ‘citizens who are dispersed to vast geographies in the world, from Germany to Jordan, the Balkans to Australia, are increasingly becoming more effective and successful in their residence countries in different fields, including economics, science, arts, sports and politics’. Besides this interest, the Presidency projects a discourse which often references the country’s glorified Ottoman past, and its history, people and geography. Together this rhetoric and the promotion of the Turkish language and culture abroad through the establishment of Yunus Emre Cultural Centers reflect the Turkish state’s concern for making use of the neo-Ottoman discourse (Kaya and Tocmen, 2011). Since the early 2000s, various external and internal factors have made Turkey take more systematized steps toward institutionalizing the ‘management of international migration flows and their outcomes’. It seems that a considerable shift has taken place in the last decade towards a proactive policy-making position on emigration and immigration issues. However, with the changing global, regional and local outlook around Turkey, it is too early to say whether the country is on a smooth path of policy-making on international migration.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has addressed some of the challenges associated with the transformation of the migration paradigm from one based on nationalism and the nation-state to one founded on transnationalism and the globalized world. In so doing, it has linked the national-level experience of migration with the global-level phenomenon of migration, in order to elaborate on the dynamics and mechanisms of international migration in Turkey. More importantly, the chapter argues that, during the last 90 years of the Turkish Republic, internal and international mobility have been the most crucial vehicles of social transformation.

A number of paradigmatic shifts since the early twentieth century have prompted a process of revisionism with regard to Turkey’s international migration policies. For the first half of the twentieth century, nation-building concerns determined the nature of emigration and immigration flows in the country: departures of non-Muslims and arrivals of Turks and Muslims dominated the flows. In the mid-twentieth century, migration policies focused on the economic gains from emigration flows: labour migration to Europe was seen as a tool for reducing unemployment, obtaining remittances and acquiring skills. Starting in the early 1980s, Turkey was faced with flows of immigrants with different national, ethnic and religious backgrounds: regular and irregular labour migrants, transit migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees all arrived in the country. In the 1980s and early 1990s, any noticeable policy concern about emigration and immigration issues was absent from politics. From the mid-1990s until recent times, the Turkish state’s position vis-à-vis the issue of international migration has broken away from the approach of ‘ignorance and neglect’ which dominated the period of the 1980s and early 1990s: both emigration- and immigration-related issues have gained in importance on the public policy-making agenda. Today, in the early twenty-first century, Turkey is confronted with questions concerning the consequences of emigration and immigration, and how the various migration patterns can be managed by policy-makers. It appears that the country’s migration policy-making processes are now caught between ‘the politics of the past’ (nationalist legacies) and ‘the politics of the future’ (globalist trajectories).

Notes

1 According to Ayhan Akar, the Turkification process was ethnically defined and was based on ensuring the domination of Turkish ethnic identity in every aspect of social life.
References


