



Routledge Studies in Development, Mobilities and Migration

FORCED MIGRATION IN TURKEY

**REFUGEE PERSPECTIVES, ORGANIZATIONAL
ASSISTANCE, AND POLITICAL EMBEDDING**

Edited by
Berna Şafak Zülfişar Savcı, Ludger Pries, and
M. Murat Erdoğan



ROUTLEDGE



Forced Migration in Turkey

Turkey hosts more refugees than any other country in the world, with forced migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and other countries converging, either with hopes to settle in Turkey or with hopes to continue onward to the European Union (EU).

This volume addresses the specific experiences and trajectories of forced migrants in Turkey in the context of local and national contexts and the future of EU–Turkey relations. It presents the demographics of forced migrants, the biographies and future plans of refugees, and their interactions with civil society, states, and international agencies. A focus is on organized violence and corresponding experiences in countries of origin, during transit, and at current places.

Based on extensive quantitative and qualitative research, this book will be of interest to researchers and practitioners in the fields of migration, human security, and refugee studies, as well as of sociology, political sciences, and international relations.

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Part 1

Trajectories of forced migrants in Turkey



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Introduction

Forced migration in Turkey—Refugee perspectives, organizational assistance, and political embedding

Berna Şafak Zülfikar Savcı, Ludger Pries, and M. Murat Erdoğan

Abstract

Turkey is of special interest in terms of migration dynamics and the way they relate to this country's history, social structure, and geography. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Turkey was one of the most important sources of the so-called guest workers who were migrating toward Europe. Later, it turned into a hotspot of transit migration. Since the beginning of the 21st century, especially since the recent armed conflicts in the Middle East, Turkey has become the host country for millions of forced migrants who were fleeing, mainly Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Because of Turkey's role as a possible transit bridge, the European Union (EU) negotiated an agreement in 2016—the so-called EU–Turkey deal—as a way to control and restrain the migration of refugees toward Europe. This introductory chapter covers some conceptual work that focusses on forced migration in relation to migrants' life course. It describes the general “landscape” of migration in Turkey in its regional context, especially the challenges of forced and asylum migration from a social scientific perspective. In addition, it provides an overview of comparative international research and introduces the reader to the chapters that follow.

Introduction

Forced migration is becoming increasingly important in the 21st century. As conflicts and catastrophes concentrate in the Global South, and forced migrants' access to countries of the Global North is restricted, they concentrate in neighboring and transit countries. Most massive new displacements of people are concentrated in poor and developing countries (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] 2023: 21). At the end of 2022, the top ten countries of origin of people displaced across borders were Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Venezuela, South Sudan, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Somalia and Central African Republic (Ibid.:19). Three out of four forced migrants live in

countries that about their home countries, and four out of five are hosted by low- and middle-income countries (Ibid.).¹ The top ten host countries of these forced migrants were Turkey, Iran, Colombia, Germany, Pakistan, Uganda, Russian Federation, Sudan, Peru and Poland (Ibid.:21), with Turkey, Germany, and Colombia being the only countries that are members of the OECD; Germany alone was ranked below the top 70 countries in the Sustainable Development Report.² For 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported a new record of 108 million forcibly displaced people worldwide (UNHCR 2023: 2). From 2021 to 2022, the volume of refugees in Europe increased from 7 to 12.4 million mainly as a result of the Russian war against Ukraine. By the end of 2022, 5.7 million Ukrainians had left their country (Ibid.: 19), and estimates of internally displaced persons (IDPs) “range[d] from 7.2 to 16.8 million” (Ibid.: 25). Nevertheless, “Turkey remained the largest refugee-hosting country in the world since 2014, with 3.6 million refugees at end-2022, over 10 per cent of all refugees” (Ibid.: 16).

Therefore, a closer look at Turkey can be deemed both relevant and interesting, it being both an OECD member state and, since 1999, a candidate for EU membership. Despite important political and economic challenges, Turkey is a relatively strong and democratic country within the region; as such, it constitutes a dramatic buffer and transit area between the EU and the more fragile countries to its east, south, and north. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has turned from being a country of emigration to a crucial migration hub, with extended movements of immigration and transit migration as well. This situation partly reflects the increases in organized violence and conflicts, political repression, and authoritarian regimes in both its neighboring countries and the countries that lie along important routes for refugees, such as people from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, and also from Africa. Moreover, Turkey is an interesting case because, in response to the Syrian refugee movement that began in the 2010s, the EU signed a unique agreement with Turkey (the EU–Turkey Agreement) in 2016—one that can be considered a pioneering step in terms of its content and dimensions. The EU was and still is interested in controlling and containing the number of persons who, in seeking employment or applying for asylum, try to enter the territories of its member states.

In light of these circumstances, we will be addressing some crucial questions: What are the experiences and perspectives of forced migrants who arrived in Turkey? To what extent should such migration be seen as refugee migration or as mixed migration? Are many or most of these persons mainly seeking a better life, or are they actually driven by severe and life-challenging threats? We are especially interested in understanding and explaining the role of (organized) violence in their migration course. Are the majority of them truly economic migrants who just want access to better jobs and living conditions, or are they actually forced migrants in the sense of displaced persons and refugees? How was their migration trajectory from the time they left

home until they arrived in Turkey? What are their experiences living in Turkey and what are their plans for the future—to return to their home countries, to remain in Turkey, or to move forward? How do persons involved in providing refugee protection in Turkey—be they state officials or activists of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or international governmental organizations (IGOs)—think about the situation, its challenges and solutions? How should the relations and social cohesion between Turkish society and the refugees be characterized given that the country has suddenly become host to millions of refugees? Finally, what do persons who are involved in refugee protection see as the impacts of the EU–Turkey Agreement?

In this volume, we offer answers to these questions based on a broader empirical study along with the expertise of outstanding scholars in this field. From 2019 to 2022, a team from the Free University of Berlin and the Ruhr University Bochum organized the scientific research project ForMOVE (“Organized violence, new migration patterns, and development: A comparative study in Europe and the Americas”), which was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and supported by teams in Mexico and Turkey.³ In the ForMOVE project we employed quantitative and qualitative research methods (including standardized surveys, the autobiographical narratives of forced migrants, expert interviews, and ethnographic visits to migrant shelters and organizations). Taking a longitudinal life-course perspective, we focused specifically on the role of different types of (organized) violence before and during the migration course for different groups of people who originated from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala (in the case of Mexico) and from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria (in the case of Turkey). The study aimed to contextualize original data at the micro level of forced migrants in light of primary expert information at the meso level of organizations, with a secondary analysis of macro data at the level of countries and regions. This volume concentrates on the results obtained through the collection and analysis of the data from Turkey.

Despite the use of *refuge* or *displacement* as legal terms related to specific formalized contexts and programs, we prefer to use the term *forced migration*, indicating that an individual or a group has been pushed to leave his, her, or their residential home because of a significant degree of enforcement and threats that are often imposed by force, compulsion, or coercion in the form of persecution for racial, religious, ethnic, political, national, or gender reasons or based on life-threatening disasters or catastrophes. For these reasons, forced migration is approached not as a singular short-term event that changes from one place to another but as a process and a prolonged aspect of people’s lives and social practices (Alba et al. 2022; Pries 2022; Pries & Savcı 2023). Forced migration is therefore more than a unique phenomenon that has no substantial impacts on a person’s life course. Like migration in general, it is characterized by multifaceted and dynamic processes (Castles 2003). Because of its dynamic nature, forced migration cannot be evaluated solely from a cross-sectional or series-data perspective. Such views can provide only a partial understanding

of this phenomenon's complexity and may overlook the intertwined processes that are involved.

From a social scientific perspective, migration is always a long-lasting experience in a person's life. Even when the physical movement from one place to another falls within a relatively short period of time, the social process of arrival in a new societal context and the negotiation of belonging can be prolonged, sometimes over several generations (Pries 2021). Moreover, migration regularly initiates or stabilizes transnational social relations that can be perpetuated. This phenomenon has been well documented since the first pioneering studies by Znaniecki and Thomas (1958). Initially published in five volumes between 1918 and 1920, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* provided their analysis of the complex, intensive, and long-lasting interrelations between families and villages in Poland and the Polish migrant communities that were established in cities in the United States. This work can be considered the foundation of a transnational and multilevel life-course perspective in migration research. Later on, migration research became more specialized, examples being (a) a sociological model of structural tensions between power and prestige that lead to migration decisions (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1970); (b) perspectives on rational choice-making for migration, including the value-expectancy model (De Jong & Fawcett 1981), and the "new economics of labor migration" (Borjas 1989; Stark 1984); (c) qualitative and anthropological studies (Berry 1997; Boyd 1989); and (d) macro-institutional views on labor market segmentation (Mabogunje 1970; Piore 1979). As will be developed in the next section, we will be following a transnational and life-course perspective.

In this volume, we concentrate on forced migration from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria toward Turkey. We pay particular attention to forced migrants' experiences with organized violence and the policies enacted in relation to the migration of refugees between the EU and Turkey. In this chapter we will first present our basic conceptual approach to the study of forced migration from a transnational, longitudinal, and organized violence-centered perspective. Next we shed light on empirical findings concerning forced migration trajectories and on the organized violence-forced migration nexus in the context of Turkey. We then sketch out the transformation of migration dynamics in Turkey and the development of EU–Turkey relations with regard to their impact on forced migration in Turkey. The penultimate section describes the ForMOVE project. Finally, we summarize the contents of the individual chapters in this book.

Transnational life courses, biographical projects, and their layers

In the 21st century—especially since the invasion of Iraq by US forces and in response to the activities of Islamic State (ISIS), the civil war and armed conflicts in Syria that began in the 2010s, and the withdrawal of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops from Afghanistan in 2021—hundreds of

thousands of persons had to leave their homes and countries. Most of them are not registered as refugees in terms of the Geneva Refugee Convention.⁴ Meanwhile, although IGOs use such terms as *forcibly displaced people* or *population of concern*, we prefer the term *forced migrants*. First, we hold that this term focuses more on the persons concerned as *agents and subjects*, even if their space of action is strongly constrained. Second, we understand forced migration not as a single act but as an ongoing social practice from a *longitudinal or life-course perspective*. Third, we focus on forced migrants in the context of their *transnational social relations*—despite approaching them as being fixed within “national container societies.” Fourth, we view forced migration in terms of a broader range of contexts and reasons that may be relevant in understanding why they leave their residential home; it could be persecution for religious, ethnic-racial, political, or gender reasons but also in response to disasters or catastrophes that make their current situation untenable. In any case, the forced character of this type of migration is defined by a significant degree of enforcement and threats to people’s lives. Fifth, we hold the view that forced migration should be analyzed as a continuity of social practice and not as a one-time decision-making event.

The basic assumptions noted above are in line with the more recent literature. In 2003, Stephen Castles pointed out that “forced migration needs to be analyzed as a social process in which human agency and social networks play a major part” (Castles 2003: 13). Also, we agree with Crawley and Skleparis (2018: 59), who found that there is “a substantial body of academic literature that has demonstrated a disjuncture between conceptual and policy categories and the lived experiences of those on the move” and who critically question such terms as *voluntary/involuntary/compulsory* and *refugees/displaced persons* (e.g., Turton 2003), which are often limited to legal or political program aspects and are not embedded in a more specific social scientific understanding.

Nevertheless, in our study we focused on the specific relation between organized violence and forced migration with the goal of understanding and explaining how experiences of organized violence are present in and influence the life course of migrants who had to leave Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and subsequently arrived in Turkey. When and how are forced migrants’ actions influenced by violence, and especially organized violence, which Pries defined as perpetrators “putting into practice or convincingly threatening with social action that harms persons or groups physically and/or injures mentally in a collective way in order to achieve collective and/or corporate goals” (Pries 2022: 8)? Which types of violence and organized violence can we distinguish, and when do they occur in the course of migration? How do forced migrants subjectively process their experiences of (organized) violence? Which kinds of organizations and social groups did migrants experience as either hostile or supportive? How do forced migrants perceive state agencies, and how do state agencies approach forced migrants? Are there specific person-related factors such as gender, ethno-racial ascription, age, or social class that mediate the role

of (organized) violence? All these questions suggest a longitudinal perspective on the life course as a whole, which combines the migrants' living conditions before, during, and after the (tentative) stages of migration. Therefore, especially in terms of forced migration, a life-course approach seems most appropriate.

As underlined by Bernardi et al. (2019), the life-course approach was developed in many scientific disciplines and, since the 1960s, more explicitly in psychology, demography, sociology, medical studies, history, and anthropology. By 1974, Glen Elder had already published his pioneering study *Children of the Great Depression*, which proved the substantial effects of specific individual and collective events (like the Great Depression of 1929) on the overall life courses of persons and how, for example, a person's age during that period impacted various cohorts of people differently (Elder 1974). Almost at the same time, Daniel Bertaux (1976) published a volume on life histories in France. In Germany, Martin Kohli (1985) proposed the systematic sociological concept of "the institutionalization of the life course." Bertaux and Kohli (1984) gave an overview of the international research related to the life-story approach, which they understood to be "based on narratives about one's life or relevant parts thereof" (Ibid.: 217), and distinguished quantitative and qualitative, objective and subjective, and scientific and humanistic literacy-oriented perspectives. Adopting a more "objective" and "quantitative" perspective, Giele and Elder (1998: 22) defined the life course as "a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time." Roughly speaking, we can distinguish two strands in life-course studies: life history or biographical research and the analysis of life courses as trajectories, as sequences of observable events (Mayer & Müller 1986; Voges 1987; Mayer 1990).

Although during recent decades general life-course research flourished in many thematic fields (Bernardi et al. 2019), it did not spread systematically in migration research and was adopted even less readily in the analysis of forced migration. For instance, Carling and Collins (2018) criticize the traditional (orthodox) migration theories that approach the migrant as "only a calculating autonomous self" (Ibid.: 913); they consider "migration as an on-going process of subjective becoming [...] displacing the view of migrants as autonomous, male, rational calculating subjects" (Ibid.: 914.). Carling (2002) and Carling and Schewel (2018) propose evaluating the decision to migrate based on people's capabilities and aspirations. This could extend the dimensions that are considered in migrants' decision-making. Erdal and Oeppen (2018) underline the longevity of forced migration processes and suggest the term *onward migration* in order to include the time dimension in analyzing migration processes. Ahrens and King (2023: 5) define onward migration as

...a spatial trajectory that involves extended stays in two or more destination countries. Acknowledging that any migrant can be a potential onward (or return) migrant allows for a more open-ended and processual understanding of migration. After living in one destination country,

migrants may decide to move to one or more new destinations. Countries and places thus can change from being destinations to becoming points of departure.

(Ahrens & King 2023: 5)

Besides this relevant acknowledgment, there is almost no specific reference to the broad tradition of life-course research.

In contrast, there are only a few explicit studies of migration in life-course research. This approach views an individual's social participations as a series of configurations and passages of social status that are related to time (especially age, period, and cohort) and that are embedded in broader societal and institutional arrangements (Mayer & Huinink 1990; Wignens et al. 2011). By focusing on the interaction of structure and agency over time, the life-course viewpoint encompasses the key dimensions of social life and fundamental concepts such as roles, social positions, status and status passages, trajectories, transitions, and turning points. Concepts such as lifespan, human agency, age/period/cohort as timing, and linked lives are central in a life-course perspective:

Life-course patterns emerge from the complex interrelations of societal structuring forces and biographical plans and actions in the historical course of time. Relating individuals' life courses in their timing, pacing, and sequencing of life events (micro-level) to the dynamics of social structures and institutions (macro-/meso-level) is a central idea of the sociological life-course approach.

(Wignens et al. 2011: 6)

Although the highly relevant and timely volume edited by Wignens et al. (2011) is entitled *A Life-Course Perspective on Migration and Integration*, all the chapters concentrate on integration but not on migration.

Here, we focus not only on migration in spite of integration but on the specific context of refuge as forced migration under highly restricted conditions of agency. Forced migration begins under unexpected circumstances and is almost traumatic by nature, with the "destination" country not even being a choice; forced migration points to distinct life-cycle processes and differs from voluntary and planned immigration procedures. Most research in the Global North on the topic of migration focusses on voluntary and labor migration, not least because these countries are typically not exposed to large-scale refugee movements, and they may overlook the characteristics and conditions of forced migrants (Erdoğan 2021).

Despite these reservations, we think, in sum, that during the last two decades or so there have been substantial advances in theoretical and empirical research in both streams: life-course analysis and (forced) migration studies. Nevertheless, few attempts have been made to systematically combine the two. Findlay et al. (2015: 394) refer to Glen Elder's "five principles (the lifespan, human agency, time and place, timing, and linked lives) that explore the

relation between mobility and the multiple transitions in roles (and sometimes reversals) that occur across the life course,” and they propose a “new conceptual framework for the analysis of population mobility across the life course, in order to deepen the geographical understanding of the significance of demographic processes such as the second demographic transition” (Ibid.: 399). From a demographic perspective, they collect helpful insights from social scientific research but hardly specify the concepts of (social, geographical, etc.) mobility and migration. Although citing interesting schemes for classifying timed events in relation to spatial mobility (Ibid.: 392), they barely deal with different types of migration, such as internal versus international or voluntary versus imposed. Klabunde and Willekens (2016) presented an overview of decision-making models of migration and found that there are few to no approaches that explicitly consider the life course or time-for-decision-making aspects (Ibid.: 93). An interesting but quite limited aspect in combining (forced) migration with a life-course perspective was elaborated by Carling (2002) and Carling and Schewel (2018). Carling and colleagues analyzed what they called the *involuntary immobility* of people, first for the case of Cape Verde emigration and then also other regions. They apply the term *involuntary immobility* to those who aspired to migrate (had a conviction that migration is preferable to non-migration) but were unable to do so. On this basis they proposed three main categories of migrants: *voluntary nonmigrants* (the majority of people in many countries), *involuntary nonmigrants* (people who aspire to migrate but cannot do so), and *migrants* (people who both aspire to migrate and are able to do so).

In the next section, we will discuss empirical findings with regard to forced migration trajectories as well as the organized violence–forced migration nexus in the case of Turkey.

Social situation and life courses of forced migrants: Some findings from the literature

Although several factors and situations influence the life courses of forced migrants, organized violence stands out as a fueling ingredient. In their origin countries, forced migrants may have been subjected to organized violence and its consequences, along with other forms of violence and poor living conditions or instabilities; however, various types of violence may also pose a risk during their flight or after they arrive as they attempt to establish themselves in a different country. Researchers from several social scientific fields are becoming increasingly interested in the different facets of forced migration. In our studies we focused on the nexus between forced migration and organized violence, and we classified the key aspects of this nexus based on the results of empirical research. One aspect of this research is concerned with comprehending the characteristics of forced migrants, as well as the circumstances in their origin country that led to their flight. Another aspect concerns their experiences during their escape, which is also closely related to organized violence, as a way

to identify migratory paths. The third aspect concerns how the conditions, experiences, and policies of the country of transit influence the migration trajectories of forced migrants. The fourth and final aspect concerns how forced migrants shape their migration trajectories and decide on their biographical projects, such as returning to the country of origin, staying in the country of transit, or moving forward to another country in the hope of settling in a desired destination.

As mentioned in many studies, migration is a gender- and age-selective population movement (de Haas et al. 2019: 47). Single men and young adults tend to migrate most frequently. The characteristics of general migration dynamics also apply in part to forced migration. In Turkey, there are forced migrant groups from various countries and social classes. In addition to Syrians, other relevant groups of (forced) migrants come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and African countries, although in Turkish society, the topic of refugees is most often associated with Syrians. Syrian forced migrants in Turkey represent all social classes and age groups, because the armed conflicts and civil war in Syria directly affected almost the entire population. The registration data obtained for the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) reveal the sociodemographic structure of Syrian forced migrants in Turkey. For 2022, the PMM reported 3.5 million Syrians seeking temporary protection in Turkey. In 2021, among the Syrian population under temporary protection in Turkey, some 1.5 million were children under the age of 15. There was almost a gender-equal split among the forced migrants (about 54% were men and 46% women). Adali and Türkyilmaz (2019) found that the age structure of Syrian forced migrants in Turkey differs from that of the Turkish population and also from that of the population in Syria, and Syrian forced migrants in Turkey are younger than residents in Syria. During the period 2014 to 2016, refugees with higher levels of education migrated from Turkey to Europe, which resulted in a lower mean educational level among the Syrian refugees who reside in Turkey (Erdoğan 2019).

Research also indicates differences in education levels between Afghan migrants under international protection in Turkey and the overall population in Afghanistan (Koç 2017). In summary, studies reveal that the population of forced migrants living in Turkey is diverse in terms of their educational backgrounds, age groups, and places of origin. In addition, many sociodemographic characteristics of forced migrants in Turkey differ from those of the overall population in the corresponding countries of origin.

Although the forced migrants living in Turkey cannot be described as a “homogeneous group” in terms of their legal status, population size, and certain socioeconomic characteristics, their reasons for leaving their countries of origin reveal a similar pattern, the main reasons being the intense environment of war and violence, the social and political pressures imposed by authoritarian regimes, and the consequences of this unstable environment. According to the UNHCR (2019), when conflict and violence in a

country last longer than anticipated, increasing numbers of people will seek refuge internationally. Moreover, the need to leave such countries is not only in response to terror and war; the environment of violence and insecurity created by different criminal groups in countries that are not directly affected by war or terrorism also increases the tendency to migrate (Conte & Migali 2019: 411). When violence becomes widespread in a region, people are more likely to migrate to other countries for fear of becoming victims of such violence or because of damage to the infrastructure that supports the economic and social life of their region (Krause 2016). The most important factors determining the flow of forced migration toward Turkey are (a) prolonged wars and conflict conditions in the origin countries from which Turkey receives forced migrants, (b) the forms of violence spread by many different actors, (c) the fear of becoming a victim of violence at any time as a result of these violence-intensive spaces, and (d) the lack of an adequate infrastructure to sustain economic and social life. While the reasons for refugees' migration to Germany may differ according to a group's country of origin (Brücker et al. 2016), the field research on forced migrants in Turkey—especially on Syrians—reveals that the primary drivers of escape are security concerns and violence-related factors (AFAD 2013; AFAD 2017).

After migrants are forced to leave their home countries behind because of violence, a number of interrelated factors—including the resources of the forced migrants, the social networks in transit, the cultural links between the origin and transit countries, and the dynamics of migration governance—interact to determine their migration trajectories towards Turkey. Almost half the Syrian refugees (who constitute the majority of the forced migrants in Turkey) live in the provinces near the border with Syria in the hope of going back home and because of the cultural ties that were formed many years ago. The forced migration trajectory of this population is shaped by cultural proximity as much as by geographical proximity. Social networks and enduring cultural links not only affect migration to cities near Turkey's southern border but also have an impact on migration to the highly industrialized provinces in the Western part of Turkey and to İstanbul.⁵ One of the crucial drivers of forced migrants' decision to live in İstanbul is social networks, which include family links and social, cultural, and religious networks (Kaya & Kırac 2016: 19). Like the Syrians living in İstanbul, Afghan migrants living in İstanbul have shaped their migration routes toward İstanbul, having been influenced by the social networks that migrated to İstanbul in the late 1970s and that continue to exist in certain districts, such as Zeytinburnu.

The process of forced migration may consist of a series of migration mobilizations with many iterations. The impressions and experiences of the migrants throughout their journey and in the country of their current stay might impact each prospective sequential movement of the migration trajectory. The establishment and strengthening of border restrictions, as well as the externalization of borders, are linked to organized violence and the migration

paths of forced migrants. Furthermore, the institutional capacity for managing migration inflows in the transit country, as well as the country's level of development in terms of extensive human rights, rapid economic growth, democratization, and prioritization of strategies for vulnerable groups and minorities, has helped to reduce the risks of exploitation and of organized violence that confront forced migrants.

Scholars have pointed to the numerous elements in the linked relationship between organized violence and forced migration, as well as the effects of violence on migratory trajectories in Turkey. Crawley et al. (2018) and İçduygu and Sert (2016) have underlined the potential for forced migrants to become victims of organized violence as a result of their reliance on smugglers and state authorities' efforts to prevent irregular entry into the country. Violence is more likely to occur as a result of border authorities' activities or other types of trafficking, detention, or deportation (Karamanidou et al. 2020 See Gökalp-Aras & Sahin Mencütek (2019) for border management and migration control policies in Turkey). Crawley et al. (2018) and Santana de Andrade (2020) emphasize the significance of institutional solutions to limit potential risks connected with the economic exploitation of forced migrants. During their stay in Turkey, forced migrants face significant levels of exploitation, poor and insecure working circumstances (Canefe 2016; Makovsky 2019; Karadağ 2021), and a growing tendency to be politically exploited.

Migrant biographical projects are also significant in terms of migratory paths and life courses. In terms of migratory trajectories, biographical projects (which are often built around the notion of aspirations in the literature) indicate three fundamental alternatives: one alternative is about their returning aspiration, another is about their settlement aspiration in their current location, and the third is about their going forward aspiration—or, to use a more current expression, about their “onward migration.” Della Puppa and his colleagues (2021) define onward migration as the process by which individuals leave their home country, reside in a second country for a period of time and then relocate to a third country. Onward migration is characterized as a processual and relational process that includes unfinished and unplanned phases (Ahrens & King 2023; Erdal et al. 2023). Although the term refers to a broader concept that encompasses many types of migration and is eligible for use in evaluations of forced migration, the overwhelming tendency among those who pioneered its usage is to focus on intra-EU movement. Ahrens and King (2023) state that the UNHCR resettlement method is ideally suited to the concept of onward migration, and the desire of irregular migrants or asylum seekers who arrive in the first safe area may be assessed using this concept.

Although the literature on the concept of onward migration and analyzing migration trajectories through this concept in the case of Turkey is not vast, studies and empirical analyses on forced migrants' aspirations show the crucial elements of secondary movements and how biographical projects are related to these elements. These studies, in particular, assess migrants' intentions to

return or move forward to another country and offer significant findings in the context of forced migrants staying in Turkey. In their quantitative research on the return ambition of forced migrants staying in Turkey, Kayaoğlu and colleagues (2021) discovered that structural, cultural, and social components of integration are significantly connected to return aspirations. Cultural and social integration has an impact on refugees' desire to return, both directly and indirectly. Müller-Funk and Franssen (2020) conducted 757 survey interviews and 41 in-depth interviews with Syrian forced migrants in Turkey and Lebanon. They concluded that migrants who are married, have legal status in their place of residence, are from Aleppo Governorate, and have close acquaintances living outside of Syria are less likely to want to return, whereas migrants who have a high household income are more likely to want to return. Other research conducted by Rottmann and Kaya (2020) stressed the importance of cultural closeness in the desire of forced migrants to relocate. While studies have concentrated on the migratory trajectories and life courses of forced migrants in transit countries, understanding the different elements of the dynamic, multidirectional migration process requires a more extensive and comprehensive conceptual framework.

Transformation of migration dynamics in Turkey

It is quite difficult to define Turkey's identity because of its particular political structure, historical and cultural characteristics, and geography. More than half of the 13 million inhabitants of the Republic of Turkey, which was founded in 1923 by M.K. Atatürk and his friends, were immigrants who came to İstanbul and Anatolia, especially after the Balkan Wars (Karpas 2015). While 7% of Turkey's geography is technically considered to be part of the European continent, the rest of the country is in Anatolia (described as "Asia Minör"). Therefore, when it comes to classical migration concepts, one might consider Turkey to be in the middle of the "push-and-pull" factors that characterize human mobility.

The land borders of Turkey total 2,753 km. Greece (203 km) and Bulgaria (269 km) (two EU member states) form the border to the west, while Syria (911 km), Iraq (378 km), Iran (529 km), Armenia (325 km), and Georgia (276 km) run along Turkey's eastern and southern borders. Thus, Turkey is surrounded on one side by "prosperous" and relatively stable democratic Western countries and on the other by countries that are generally unstable and are often governed by authoritarian or even dictatorial regimes. No wonder Turkey has long been referred to as a "transit" country for migrants/refugees who pass through on their way to the West from the east and the south.

Between 1945 and 1990, Turkey existed within the framework of its alliance relations and was an important actor in the Cold War, so it remained relatively free of serious issues when it came to controlling humanitarian mobility. The first significant mass influx of refugees into Turkey occurred during the protracted war between Iran and Iraq. In 1988 and 1991, asylum

seekers—mostly Kurds who were trying to escape the violence of the Iraqi regime, including its use of chemical weapons—moved toward the Turkish border. Turkey’s general policy during this period was to keep the refugees within the border areas and to liaise with the Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian governments to ensure their speedy return when that became feasible. Such containment reduced the risk of any major problems, and most of the refugees eventually returned to their home countries.

After 1990, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was an influx of Russian, Ukrainian, Moldovan, Georgian, and Armenian citizens who came to Turkey, mostly for economic reasons. These mass forced migration movements across Turkey’s eastern and southern borders continued even after the end of the Cold War and became a major concern between 1990 and 2000. However, when “terrorist organizations” and “uncontrolled humanitarian movements” were identified as threat areas in Turkey’s new security concept, the Turkish government started to devise legislation and institutional structures in the field of migration and asylum under the leadership of the Ministries of the Interior, Defense and Foreign Affairs. Although Turkey is a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention (an important international convention in the field of international protection), it took a long time for the appropriate legal and administrative arrangements to be made. Following the events that took place from 1988 through 1991, a regulation was issued in 1994 that laid the groundwork for dealing with this issue.

Turkey continued to apply “geographical restrictions,” even though it considered the 1967 New York Protocol to be risky (because it abolished the time and border restrictions set out in the Geneva Convention). Still, it can be said that the need for the most important regulation is closely related both to the “uncontrolled humanitarian mobilizations” within the new security concept that emerged after 1990 and to Turkey–EU relations. The Accession Partnership Document in 2000 and Turkey’s “National Programme” in 2001, put forward by the EU following Turkey’s EU membership candidacy in 1999, considered border security and asylum as part of the holistic European security and asylum system. At that time, Turkey was envisaged as the *de facto* south-eastern border of the EU by virtue of the ongoing negotiations regarding its candidacy and full membership in the EU.

Significant progress has since been achieved in strengthening the country’s legal and institutional capacity, readmission agreement and integrated border security in the field of asylum and migration. The Asylum and Migration Legislation and Administrative Capacity Building and Implementation Office of the Ministry of the Interior was established in 2008. With the Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection published in the Official Gazette No. 28615 in 2013, the said Bureau was restructured and established as the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) in 2014. There is no doubt that this process toward migration management basically started with the recent global and regional developments and was based on the accession requirements of the EU. Nevertheless, as Syrian refugees began to

arrive in April 2011, a different structure would be required as Turkey became the country hosting the highest number of refugees in the world within a short period of time.

After 2011, the influx of asylum seekers and irregular migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran reached unprecedented numbers. More recently, topics related to the asylum seekers and refugees as well as border security have become the most discussed and politicized issues in Turkey. This process has resulted in an increasing demand for new and effective institutional structures. Within this context, the DGMM was elevated to a higher bureaucratic level and on 29 October 2021 was renamed the PMM. The need to establish a ministry for migration and asylum issues is also frequently on the agenda.

Under Turkey's open-door policy, the number of Syrian asylum seekers who were allowed to enter Turkey in 2011 and who were granted "temporary protection" from 2014 onward exceeded 3 million in 2015 and 3.5 million in 2023. At first, Syrian migrants were being hosted in 26 camps in Turkish cities near the Syrian border. As their number increased, an important political shift occurred, and the movement and residence of Syrians within Turkey were not interfered with. However, this lenient situation enticed more than 3.5 million Syrians to move from the cities bordering Syria to the cities within Turkey, especially the western part. As a result, İstanbul has become the city with the largest number of Syrians in Turkey. However, since the Turkish state considered this western movement a "temporary problem," it was not possible to devise a resettlement plan for Syrians, even in 2023.

After 2013, the situation involving asylum seekers in Turkey entered a new phase. Not only Syrians but also new asylum seekers and irregular migrants started to enter Turkey (mainly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran). The main aim of these migrants was to use Turkey as a transit country en route to Europe. Therefore, between 2014 and 2016, there was an extraordinary humanitarian influx from Turkey to the Greek islands and from there to Europe. During this 2-year period, half of the people crossing to Europe were Syrians and the other half were from other countries. In Europe, alarm bells began to sound, and after a series of meetings between the EU and Turkey in 2015 and 2016, the situation reached the international level with the issuance of the 18 March 2016 Statement. The EU's expectation from the Turkish government was that it would stop the influx of refugees and, in return, the EU would provide financial support for the refugees in Turkey. However, more important for Turkey was the need for progress in Turkey–EU relations and the assurance that the EU would ensure the liberalization of visa requirements for Turkish citizens.

However, Davutoğlu, who had signed the 18 March 2016 Statement, was dismissed two months later, and this event was followed by the coup attempt in July, which derailed Turkey in terms of democracy and human rights. At this point, all the promises the EU had made to Turkey regarding political developments were suspended and in many areas even regressed.

This process has shown that the refugee issue, which has become the main foundation of EU–Turkey relations in recent years, has had profound effects, with Turkey accusing the EU of “externalization” and the EU accusing Turkey of “instrumentalization” and even “weaponization.” In February 2020, Turkey’s decision not to “control” the Greek border became another serious cause for conflict. Nevertheless, since 2015 the refugee issue has been the “material” of EU–Turkey relations and continues to be the most pressing problem and one that is likely to continue for a long time (Erdoğan et al. 2023).

The current situation in Turkey, which started with the influx of Syrian refugees and was then followed by the entry of more than 4 million forced migrants, including some 400,000 other asylum seekers and irregular migrants, has shown a serious tendency toward politicization in recent years and has created a new situation that may be called “securitization from society” (Erdoğan 2021). On the one hand, while the pressure of migration from the periphery toward Turkey continues, discussions about border security in Turkey also continue; on the other hand, the debate over the return or resettlement of the refugees in Turkey also continues. If Turkey fails to manage this process well, serious problems are bound to emerge. The risk is growing both for the refugees seeking protection in Turkey and for Turkish society, mainly in terms of the country’s social cohesion. EU–Turkey cooperation is crucial in this regard. However, the new era requires that both sides adhere to the basic logic of the 18 March 2016 Statement, and success can be realized only through not only short-term but also medium- and long-term planning and commitment. It is noteworthy that the desire to move forward to the EU has dramatically increased among both the newly arrived Afghan, Pakistani, Iraqi, and Iranian forced migrants and the refugees who are becoming more and more pessimistic about their lives and future prospects in Turkey. Issues regarding refugee rights, national interests, EU–Turkey relations and social cohesion need to be addressed, and a real sharing of responsibility needs to be developed.

The ForMOVE project

Based on extended empirical research, this book analyzes the most pertinent features of forced migration within the context of organized violence in Turkey. The studies reported here were designed to answer several important questions: How does forced migration fit into larger social and sociodemographic contexts? How did migrants experience violent situations after they were forced to leave their countries of origin and of transit? If forced migrants can’t decide whether to return home or to remain in “everlasting temporariness,” what are their plans?

The studies included here explore the causes, pathways, and consequences of forced migration, as well as the ways in which people in both sending and receiving countries understand and react to this phenomenon. They illuminate

the choices that confront forced migrants: return home, accept a temporary existence, or move on? This volume highlights these concerns along with other, less obvious facets of forced migration within the corridor between Turkey and the EU. In the first part of the book we analyze the migration trajectories and life courses of forced migrants living in Turkey based on the primary data obtained in the ForMOVE project, while the second part discusses the socio-political repercussions of these forced migrant inflows, such as local integration and migration policies, taking into account the relations between the EU and Turkey.

Qualitative data collection

The field research in the ForMOVE project described here took place in three provinces in Turkey. This multisited,⁶ multiscale⁷ project used mixed research methods and a transdisciplinary⁸ perspective in analyzing the data collected. Three main methods were used to generate the primary *qualitative data*:

- 1 We conducted interviews based on the biographical interviews of forced migrants. Primary data were collected through this method in two cities in Turkey (Gaziantep and İstanbul). A total of 17 Afghans and Syrians who had to leave their country regardless of their legal status were interviewed. Despite the pandemic conditions, all but one of these interviews were conducted face-to-face to establish a relationship of trust and comfort between the interviewer and the forced migrant, since this was a specialized qualitative data collection method.
- 2 Based on the key-person interviews, we established lists of organizations and experts who could be interviewed at all three locations during the field visit phases. Municipalities, international NGOs, IGOs, local NGOs, and NGOs formed by refugees working in the field of forced migration were all evaluated for inclusion on the lists. Expert interviews were then carried out based on these lists as well as on the snowball process.
- 3 The last instrument we used for qualitative data gathering was interviews with 16 experts. Included in this round were expert interviews with specialists and activists from organizations in Gaziantep (9 interviews), İstanbul (6 interviews), and Ankara (1 interview). The interviews were either translated verbatim and transcribed or were summarized based on the format of the expert interview guideline.

Quantitative data collection

The ForMOVE project's *quantitative data analysis* relied on data obtained from a survey conducted in specific provinces of Turkey. This research project was designed to administer a face-to-face survey to forced-out migrants from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq who were staying in different provinces of

Turkey. Because of the delicate nature of the research topics, it was imperative to establish a rapport between the forced migrant participants and the interviewers. Therefore, we chose face-to-face interviews as the preferred mode for administering the survey because it allows the interviewers to take advantage of nonverbal cues and to employ more thorough questioning techniques.

The survey was formulated with the aim of examining the various aspects of forced migration in relation to organized violence and to draw comparisons between these interrelated phenomena in Turkey. The survey instrument was a questionnaire designed to be administered in person by an interviewer. To prevent any potential influence on the interviewees' selection of answers, and to ensure that they chose the correct response rather than the seemingly appropriate one, the response categories were not revealed to them. This approach was taken to minimize any potential bias in the data collected from these forced migrants. Use of an interviewer-administered questionnaire resulted in enhanced response rates and improved question clarity.

The survey commenced with an inquiry regarding informed consent. The questionnaire itself consisted of eight distinct sections, each of which was dedicated to exploring a unique aspect of the connection between organized violence and forced migration. Questions were predominantly closed-ended and encompassed diverse categories. Furthermore, we formulated inquiries that were not restricted to a specific answer. Prior to their inclusion in the data set, all open-ended inquiries underwent a thorough review, purification, and categorization process. The survey instrument was initially composed in English and was subsequently translated into several other languages, including Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi, Turkish, and German. For the data collection process in Turkey, the Arabic, Kurdish, and Farsi versions of the questionnaire were administered.

Sampling method

Since it was difficult to identify a sampling frame that would cover all groups of forced migrants, we followed a *non-probability sampling method*. This method has limitations in terms of representativeness, so we used certain criteria to increase the heterogeneity of the respondents.⁹ It is important to note that the selection of forced migrants was based on three initial criteria that pertained to the provinces. Our selection process involved identifying a province in close proximity to the Syrian border, a second province that accommodated a significant number of forcibly displaced individuals by offering diverse employment prospects, and a third one situated close to the departure port (Gaziantep, İstanbul and Izmir, respectively), which generated a total of 350 forced migrants: 180 of Syrian origin, 85 of Afghan origin, and 85 of Iraqi origin. Although quotas based on age and gender had been defined, it was a challenge to comply with these quotas owing to the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the course of our research, we collaborated with interviewers who themselves had experienced forced migration. These interviewers attended

training workshops that covered the key concepts of the project as well as the survey methodology. The training involved not only the modules pertaining to the questionnaires but also the process of selecting forced migrants, establishing contact with them and the ethical considerations associated with such activities. One of the strengths of the methodology is that the interviews were conducted in the respondents' mother tongues.

Structure of the book

The first part of this book offers the basic findings of the ForMOVE project (Chapters 1 through 4). In Chapter 1, Berna Şafak Zülfişar Savcı, Ludger Pries, and Nora Halstenberg present an analysis of the survey data regarding three questions: Which different routes did forced migrants take to arrive in Turkey? Which types of organized violence did they experience before leaving their countries of residence, during their journey to Turkey, and after arriving in Turkey? On which sociodemographic and event-based factors do their future plans depend if they hope to move on (and where), return to their countries of origin, or stay for a longer period in Turkey? The content of Chapter 1 is based on a longitudinal survey of 350 forced migrants from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria who lived in Turkey in 2020. It sheds light on the types of (organized) violence before and during the course of migration. Finally, the authors identify some crucial factors that influence forced migrants' plans to return, stay, or move on.

In Chapter 2, Ludger Pries and Nick Linsel explain the concept and use of biographical narratives in migration research and present some basic findings from recent studies. They then demonstrate the usefulness of this biographical approach by comparing the biographies of two Afghan forced migrants in Turkey. The chapter focuses on the subjective reconstruction and sense making of what forced migrants experienced before, during, and after their flight, shedding light especially on the role of organized violence during these different stages of the life course. Like most Afghan refugees, these two interviewees grew up and made their lives within violence-intensive social spaces. They were exposed to a permanent environment of fighting between armed groups (the State, the Taliban, ISIS, warlords and their militias, etc.). Even at the level of extended family networks there was a strong tendency to escalate violence and use it as a way to resolve personal conflicts. For these interviewees, therefore, violence in their everyday lives was taken for granted. Correspondingly, even under the precarious and often informal living conditions in Turkey, most Afghan refugees perceive Turkey to be a relatively safe (not violence-intensive) social space.

Chapter 3 addresses the specific situations and challenges faced by female forced migrants in Turkey. Since the 2000s, the feminization of migration has become increasingly more important, with women and girls making up 50% of the global refugee population. Migrants who are escaping war and violence in the Middle East region tend to direct their routes of escape to neighboring

countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. Of the more than 3 million Syrian forced migrants under temporary protection in Turkey, 45% are women and girls. Based on secondary data and studies, as well as on quantitative analysis in the ForMOVE survey, this chapter by Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç, Berna Şafak Zülfikar Savcı, Ximena Alba Villaléver, and Michelle Gutstein offers insights into the socioeconomic status, level of education, household composition, urban experiences, marital status, and legal status of female forced migrants in Turkey. Although studies tend to focus on the most vulnerable groups, the poorest and most disadvantaged ones, they also include women with relatively high levels of social and economic capital, which is often manifest in well-developed social networks and relations. This chapter specifically focuses on the group of women and their aspirations to stay in Turkey, relying on combined data from the ForMOVE survey and the ForMOVE expert interviews.

Similar to Chapter 2, Chapter 4 concentrates on analyzing the biographical interviews obtained during the ForMOVE project. From the biographical perspective, not only is the “objective” political, social, and economic context during the migration journey relevant, but also is the question of the “subjective” perceptions and processing of occurrences and feelings. The chapter presents an overview of the biographical narrative interviews carried out with 17 forced migrants from Afghanistan and Syria who lived in Turkey in 2020. The authors analyze forced migrants’ life between life-threatening restrictions basically due to forms of (organized) violence and varying degrees of agency. To what degree do they perceive external control and socially imposed limitations of their agency? To what extent do they perceive self-efficiency in their life course? Concerning their entanglements in social spaces, how do they locate and manage their life course between individual, family, and broader collective social adherence? Based on their analysis of the 17 biographical interviews, the authors present the types of violence that the interviewees reported before, at the beginning of the journey, and during the flight, as well as at the places where they now live. Their main argument is that violence in its different forms is more important in the life courses of these interviewees than has often been reflected in the literature or reported explicitly by the interviewees. The double marginalizing of experiences of violence in the migrants’ experienced and narrated life courses and in public discourse can be attributed to several mechanisms.

In the second part of this book (Chapters 5 through 9), the focus shifts to a more general discussion of the project’s findings. Chapter 5, written by M. Murat Erdoğan and Nihal Eminoğlu, presents the situation of forced migrants from Syria and other countries in Turkey within a broader context. About 6.5 million Syrians have fled the country and more than 6 million people inside Syria have been displaced as a result of the anti-government protests that began in March 2011 and that quickly descended into civil war. This situation has generated one of the worst humanitarian crises and mass displacements of the 21st century. The majority of the displaced Syrians went to nearby countries, including Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Erdoğan and Eminoğlu sketch out the current situation in the Middle East and then discuss how these