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CARIM-INDIA – DEVELOPING A KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR POLICYMAKING ON INDIA-EU MIGRATION

Co-financed by the European Union

Step-by-step Migration through Turkey: From the Indian Subcontinent to Europe

Ahmet İçduygu, Deniz Sert

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From the Indian Subcontinent to Europe**

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CARIM-India – Developing a knowledge base for policymaking on India-EU migration

This project is co-financed by the European Union and carried out by the EUI in partnership with the Indian Council of Overseas Employment, (ICOE), the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore Association, (IIMB), and Maastricht University (Faculty of Law).

The proposed action is aimed at consolidating a constructive dialogue between the EU and India on migration covering all migration-related aspects. The objectives of the proposed action are aimed at:

- Assembling high-level Indian-EU expertise in major disciplines that deal with migration (demography, economics, law, sociology and politics) with a view to building up migration studies in India. This is an inherently international exercise in which experts will use standardised concepts and instruments that allow for aggregation and comparison. These experts will belong to all major disciplines that deal with migration, ranging from demography to law and from economics to sociology and political science.
- Providing the Government of India as well as the European Union, its Member States, the academia and civil society, with:
 1. Reliable, updated and comparative information on migration
 2. In-depth analyses on India-EU highly-skilled and circular migration, but also on low-skilled and irregular migration.
- Making research serve action by connecting experts with both policy-makers and the wider public through respectively policy-oriented research, training courses, and outreach programmes.

These three objectives will be pursued with a view to developing a knowledge base addressed to policy-makers and migration stakeholders in both the EU and India.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: <http://www.india-eu-migration.eu/>

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Abstract

The phenomenon of irregular transit, or step-by-step, migration is not a new trend as it has been increasingly witnessed in many parts of the world in the last three decades. For instance, at the surrounding regions of Europe, countries like Turkey, Morocco and Ukraine are subject to flows of irregular migrants who come from the third countries and intend to enter Europe from these peripheral territories. While the nature, dynamics and mechanisms of these flows are relatively well-documented in recent related literature, there are limited number of studies which focus on the particular cases of migrant groups. This essay tends to fill in this void, by focusing on the cases of transit migration in Turkey who come from the Indian sub-continent mainly with the intention of going to Europe. While the essay elaborates on Bangladeshi, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan transit migrants in general, special emphasis is mainly on Indians. In the lack of comprehensive and reliable data, the paper is an exploratory study rather than an explanatory one, which attempts to map out a relatively new migratory form and process from India to Europe that develops as a step-by-step, or transit, migration through various countries: the case of Turkey, as a transit country, has provided us with a unique setting which has a relatively long-established tradition of being a transit country towards Europe for thousands of transit migrants mostly from the Middle-East, and is now also increasingly becoming functional for transit migrants who come from the Indian subcontinent and try to enter Europe.

On October 8, 2011, Turkish Police reported that seven people who were found dead in a building fire in Istanbul's Sultangazi district were “illegal” migrants. It is also reported that these seven people, who were at first thought to be highway workers according to neighbours' descriptions, were revealed to be “illegal” transit migrants, most likely on their way to Europe. The victims were found by the firefighters stacked on top of each other in the bathroom of the building. Reporters who visited the scene following an investigation by police found two Indian passports and a Pakistani passport inside the building where the migrants were killed.

Police revealed that two of the seven victims were from India –Amrit Singm (27) and Amardcep Singm (20), and three were from Pakistan –Mohammad Osman (20), Selim Tari (18) and Mohammad Abai (20). The other two men have not yet been identified.¹

Media reporting on irregular transit migrants entering Europe along its land borders is not unusual. What is unusual in this news item is the presence of Indian irregular migrants passing through Turkey on their journey to Europe. Although there is ample evidence of irregular Pakistani and Bangladeshi transit migrants in the country *en route* to Europe, there is little proof of Indian nationals doing the same.

The phenomenon of irregular transit, or step-by-step, migration is not a new trend² (Bredeloup, 2010). In the last three decades, we have increasingly witnessed it in many parts of the world³. For instance, in the European neighbourhood, countries like Turkey, Morocco and Ukraine are subject to irregular migrant flows, migrants these who come from third countries and who intend to enter Europe from these peripheral territories (Collyer, 2006; de Haas, 2007; İçduygu, 2005; Daniş et. al., 2009; Düvell, 2007, 2008). In the recent literature, while the nature, dynamics and mechanisms of these flows are relatively well-documented (Düvell, 2010; Collyer and de Haas, 2010; İçduygu and Yüksek, 2010), there are only a limited number of studies which focus on migrant groups. This essay tends to fill this void, by focusing on transit migration in Turkey from the sub-continent *en route* to Europe. While the essay elaborates on Bangladeshi, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan transit migrants in general, special emphasis is given to Indians.

Before going into a detailed examination of irregular transit migrants from the Indian sub-continent in Turkey, two explanatory notes must be inserted. First, in this paper the notions of “transit migration” and “step-by-step” migration are used interchangeably. Second, the combined investigation of Indians and other irregular migrants from the Indian Subcontinent is due to the fact that these groups of migrants are often mixed and move together over the borders, and they even sometimes use each other's identity cards interchangeably, often, in any case, faked, to disguise their real identities. The main reason for such concealment is that some nationalities, such as the Nepalese, are thought to receive refugee status more easily than others, which is usually the only way to get a regular status in many countries of Western Europe. Therefore, Indians habitually use Nepalese passports.

Step-by-step Migration: Why, and Why to Europe?

When potential migrants do not have the opportunity to move directly from their country of origin to their country of preferred destination, they may move step-by-step. First, they enter transit countries between home and destination countries, and then they try to arrive at their targeted destinations (İçduygu, 2000). There are several reasons for this, but it occurs, above all, when the potential migrants lack the necessary resources, which prevent them from travelling directly to the countries they wish to enter or when the targeted destination countries apply certain restrictive measures for direct entry such as inhospitable visa requirements. In fact, it is often the case that all these make the step-by-step migration an irregular (“illegal”) journey, rather than a regular (“legal”) one. There are

¹ Reported in Today's Zaman, Istanbul, on 10 October 2011.

² See various publication of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) since the early 1990s.

³ See, for instance, for various discussion on transit migration in various parts of the world: Sorensen (2006) for the case of Euro-Med region, Hugo (2005) for the Asia-Pacific region and Alba (2010) for Central America.

also views that transit migration is reconstructed within the processes of migration management by states and international organizations who tend to externalize the migratory flows from core countries to peripheral regions (Düvell, 2010; Collyer and de Haas, 2010; İçduygu and Yüksek, 2010).

As noted above, the last three decades have seen the emergence of new migratory flows around the world, one of which has been the step-by-step migration rising in peripheral zones of core migrant-receiving areas around the world: Central America, Southeast Asia, and Eastern and Mediterranean Europe (Sorensen, 2006; Hugo, 2005; Alba, 2010). For instance, international migratory flows directed to central and western European countries include migrants who first come to the peripheral zones, such as Eastern and Mediterranean European countries, quite often “illegally”, intending to enter Western Europe from these areas. Similarly, Central America serves as a transit zone for North America, and Southeast Asia for Australia.

What becomes clear from the earlier studies is that any discussion of transit migration must involve the elaboration of dynamics and mechanisms of migratory systems in which migration-related practices and the policies of various countries interact with each other: this interaction links the countries of origin, transit, and arrival in the operating system of a migratory regime (İçduygu, 2005). From an analytical point of view, every migration situation can be divided into *four* main components: a *sending* component, a *receiving* component, a *migrating* component, and the *larger component* in which the other three components operate. In transit migration, a fifth component is added to the whole process: *transiting*. Among these five, even though it is the transiting component, i.e. the transit country that functions as the core of the whole transit migratory process, this presence can only be designated in its relative position to the sending and receiving components. At the same time, it is necessary to get to grips with the structural interdependency of the transiting component to sending and receiving components. Without this it is almost impossible to explain the whole process. In other words, the different components in a transit migratory process are inseparably linked to each other; and the dynamic character of this process requires that each component should be seen as a part of a larger whole (İçduygu, 2000).

To list and fully elaborate all the dimensions of the irregular transit migratory flows affecting Europe is beyond the scope of this paper. What one can try to do is to set out some of the contexts for recent irregular transit migration and linking these to irregular transit migrants from the Indian subcontinent who come to Turkey with the intention of migrating to European countries. Let us now be more specific and examine the main characteristics of step-by-step migration flows that target Europe.

One of the main features of the European immigration system since the early 1990s has been the strong growth in irregular migration, especially in respect to third-country nationals who arrive across the borders of neighbouring countries, often “illegally” (Düvell and Vollmer, 2011). Indeed, these transit flows seem to be a matter of migratory procedures, which are largely determined by restrictions in the larger context of prevailing international migratory regimes. Simply, if one asks the straightforward question of “why we have transit migration”, the “obvious” answer must be “because people cannot directly migrate from their countries of origin to the targeted countries of immigration”. In other words, transit migration is a “Fortress Europe” product. However, this picture reflects a paradox: while there exists a strong image, or reality, of fortress Europe, why then are there ongoing irregular migratory flows to the continent?

It is known that for the last three decades, numerous irregular migrants have been able to incorporate themselves into the economic and social environments of European receiving countries (İçduygu, 2007). Interestingly, many European economies are still absorptive of migrant labour, often tolerating or possibly preferring these to irregular migrant labour. Against this background, one can argue that a reason behind this could be the cheap labour provided by irregular migrants mainly in 3D jobs that is dirty, dangerous and demeaning. While this absorption capacity in the economies is obvious in some senses, hardening immigration barriers are also visible on the other hand. Thus, the consequences are anomalous, but also apparently compatible with the international migration market

conditions in Europe: thousands of potential migrants tend to choose to be irregular transit migrants who want to come to Europe. Taking the key position of individual migrants into consideration, transit migration should not be confined to migrants alone, but rather it should be linked to their articulation as they fit themselves into the whole migratory regime. It is in this context that one has to deal with irregular and transit migrants. This means focusing on the question of how more and more potential (irregular) migrants are emerging, while there is nowhere for them to migrate legally, but many places for them to go in an illegal fashion.

Studies of irregular migration in Europe have been hampered by established views on the securitization of migration (İçduygu and Yükseser, 2010). We need to appreciate that many of the key questions framing our understanding of irregular transit migration now have a very different range of answers from the largely security-based ones, which shaped earlier analyses. In our globalized contemporary world, we have witnessed that new mobility strategies are designed to achieve various types of economic and non-economic objectives. Given the absence of the “friendly” formal (“legal”) regulation of immigration in European countries, potential migrants in the sending countries such as Pakistan and India are still keen to move from their home countries. There the economic, social, and political climate push them out, towards European countries, which indirectly continues to attract migrants, while not directly pulling in migrants to these territories.

In summary, there are two main lines of argument that concern the agendas for interpreting the irregular transit migration flows towards Europe. One refers to the “growing undesirability of mass migrations and the need to control and manage migration in the face of apparently increasing pressures for people to migrate” (King, 2002: 93). The other stresses “the fact that the natural forces of migration will always overcome regimes of control and containment” (King, 2002: 93). While the former views irregular transit migration as a phenomenon to be creatively managed, the latter sees it as something to be fought. What is implicitly shared by these two views is that, to a certain extent, irregular transit migration is inevitable: it needs either to be managed or repressed.

To sum up this part of the discussion, the reality, or image, of irregular transit migration towards Europe, which is observable today is a product of international migratory regimes in Europe. These regimes tend to be increasingly restrictive and exclusionary towards those migratory regimes from the relatively poor countries, which are already attached to Europe through earlier migratory networks.

Step-by-step Migration over Turkey: an Overview

Within the European context, step-by-step migration through Turkey, a main transit country, *en route* to Europe is attracting more and more attention. While Turkey is progressively more involved in globalization, we observe increased mobility among people in the country who are moving for political and/or economic reasons. This rise in mobility produces amplified problems of control, with an increased number of irregular border crossings, as well as an increased number of overstayers. Turkey’s geographical position is the foremost reason why the country is prone to irregular transit border crossings. It has become, in short, a bridge between its politically and economically unstable neighbours in the East and the South and its prosperous neighbours in the West and the North.⁴ Turkey’s mountainous eastern borders and the length of its Aegean and Mediterranean shores also make it an attractive travel route for irregular transit migrants, from further afield including such distant countries, as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Furthermore, the EU’s recent policies of border management and migration control, applying highly restrictive admission procedures and increasing immigration control, have diverted the Europe-targeted immigration flows to peripheral zones such as

⁴ The country has 7 railway, 41 air, 20 land, and 49 sea border entries, comprising a total of 117 gateways into the country. While its sea borders are 8333 km long, the length of the country’s land borders is 2949 km. Turkey has 269 km borders with Bulgaria, 203 km with Greece, 276 km with Georgia, 328 km with Armenia, 18 km with Azerbaijan, 560 km with Iran, 384 km with Iraq, and 911 km with Syria.

Turkey. There migrants find a comparatively lax visa regime, i.e., the country has a rather open visa regime even for those countries whose nationals are continuously involved in irregular transit migration.⁵ Thus, transit migrants in Turkey are becoming an important phenomenon. They enter the country via different methods: using forged documents; hiding in vehicles that are passing from the land borders; passing land borders on horses, donkeys, or on foot; crossing sea borders by ferries, fish boats, or small boats; or entering the country legally, but not leaving when their visas expire.

Reading İçduygu (2005), we can distinguish four distinct periods of irregular transit migration to Turkey, disclosing both changes in the characteristics of migrants and of migratory flows, *and* the changes in Turkey's migration policies and practices. In the *first* period, between 1979 and 1987, which might be named the *fertilization* period, irregular transit migration was largely an issue of Iranians arriving in Turkey following the 1979 Iranian Revolution. These were mostly transit migrants, as many of them stayed in Turkey only temporarily, and then left again for the European countries or for North America. The *second* period, the *maturation* period of irregular transit migration in the country, stretched from 1988 to 1993, when flows from Iran continued, and when we also began to observe large numbers of asylum seekers from Iraq (Kurds). Like their Iranian counterparts, most of the Kurdish asylum seekers from Iraq left again for third countries. The *third* period, the *saturation* period, began with Turkey's 1994 Regulation on Asylum⁶ until 2000, and not only marked policies towards migration flows through Turkey, but also witnessed continuing, diversifying and increasing irregular transit migration flows to the country. Besides continuing flows of Iranians and Iraqis, irregular transit migrants from Africa as well as from South Asia began to arrive to the country. It was during these years that the number of irregular transit migrants increased and diversified with a peak in 2000. And the Turkish authorities, at this point, began to pursue a more active and targeted policy to deal with such flows.

The final period, since 2001, might be characterised as the *EU-ization* of irregular transit migration. The number of irregular transit migrants has decreased, albeit with fluctuations. At the same time, the irregular migration issues, including trafficking and smuggling, have become an item both on the domestic and the international political agenda; especially within the context of Turkey-EU relations, and Turkey has pursued even more active policies to deal with them. While the state began to issue new policies and practices that are becoming more control oriented and restrictive,⁷ forms of irregular

⁵ Turkey's visa policy towards India is based on reciprocity, and it is not a fast and easy process; based on the information provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Diplomatic passport holders are exempt from visa for their travels to Turkey for up to 90 days. Ordinary, Special and Service passport holders need a visa to enter Turkey. Ordinary, Special and Service passport holders with a valid Schengen or OECD member's visa or residence permit may get their one month single entry visas at the Turkish border upon their arrival. Those with a valid visa do not need a residence permit for up to 90 days. However, foreign nationals who reside, work or study in Turkey, should register at the nearest local police department upon their arrival in Turkey, regardless of the validity of their visa. To work in Turkey, one must apply to the nearest Turkish mission to obtain work permit and visa with a valid passport, visa application form and a letter from an employer. There are other documents that should be submitted to the Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) by the employer within ten working days of the application. The list of those documents can be found at the MLSS' website (<http://www.csgb.gov.tr>). Applications are finalized by the MLSS within thirty days at the latest. Right after arrival in Turkey (before starting to work), the person should be registered at the local police department within one month to obtain the necessary residence permit. For more information on Turkey's visa regime, please visit: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/visa-information-for-foreigners.en.mfa>

⁶ *Regulation No. 1994/6169 on the Procedures and Principles related to Possible Population Movements and Aliens Arriving in Turkey either as Individuals or in Groups Wishing to Seek Asylum either from Turkey or Requesting Residence Permission in order to Seek Asylum From Another Country (last amended 2006)* [Turkey], No. 1994/6169, 19 January 1994, English translation available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49746cc62.html> [accessed 21 May 2012].

⁷ For example: (1) Law on Work Permits for Aliens" was accepted on 27 March 2003. The law was put into force on 6 September 2003. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security is authorized to issue all types of work permits for foreign nationals to ensure better management and control over the process. (2) the Law on Amendment of Turkish Citizenship Law No: 403 was accepted on 4 June 2003. With this amendment, a probation period of 3 years is required for acquiring Turkish citizenship through marriage. (3) The Road Transportation Law came into force on 19 July 2003 and the Road

migration also changed form. In essence, irregular migration became more institutionalized; “institutionalization” refers here to the environment in which migratory networks formed by irregular migrants, traffickers and smugglers became more established, operating as a self-reliant system. Thus, in this final period, we observe a more institutional reaction by the state towards irregular migration, which is largely a result of the *EU-ization* of the issue.

As a result of the illicit nature of the phenomenon, there are no statistics available for irregular transit migration passing through Turkey. But there are estimates based on the number of irregular migrants who have been apprehended in Turkey. The data compiled by the *Bureau for Foreigners, Borders, and Asylum at the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior* on the cases of apprehended irregular migrants in Turkey since the mid 1990s offers one data source. Another data source is the newly publicized data source of information released by the *Turkish General Staff* on irregular border-crossings. These provide some figures which expose the nature of transit migration through Turkey. It is important to note a point about these two datasets: on the one hand, the data compiled by the *Bureau for Foreigners, Borders, and Asylum at the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior* includes *all* apprehensions since the mid 1990s. Thus, the data is comprised of: (1) border apprehensions; (2) apprehensions of visa-overstayers in the entire country; as well as (3) apprehensions of irregular labor migrants, i.e., those who are informally working in the country without work permits. This data includes then all the apprehensions conducted by the police as well as the military, and the total figure for the years 1995 to 2010 is 811,891 (See for example Table 1). On the other hand, the figures provided by the *Turkish General Staff* are *only* comprised of apprehensions on the borders and in the areas where the military rather than the police are responsible for security. The total figure from this dataset is around 400,000. Thus, the former dataset also includes the latter. In this study, only the former dataset is utilized.

It is also important to note that the figures stand for only those apprehended migrants, and that the scale of irregular migration through Turkey is naturally much greater than what this data represents. Taking into consideration the relevant literature on migration, it can be inferred that the actual number would be at least two times higher than the number of migrants apprehended (İçduygu, 2007). An evaluation of the figures on apprehended persons shows that this type of migration considerably increased from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. While almost 20,000 irregular migrants were apprehended in 1996, the number increased to approximately 30,000 in 1999 and 95,000 by 2000. There was a decrease in 2003 to 56,000, and a further decrease back to the 30,000s in 2009 and 2010. This was a result of the harmonization process in Turkey: within the context of its EU membership negotiations the Turkish state has invested more in border management and control. Thus, this figure confirms that the range of irregular migration within Turkey in recent years is equivalent to many other countries of the world that are known to draw in large-scale irregular immigration.

(Contd.) _____

Transportation Regulation became effective in 2004. The regulation states that transportation permit shall not be renewed for 3 years and the vehicle used will be seized if the person is sentenced for migrant smuggling. (4) Article 79 of the new Turkish Penal Code Law No: 5237, which was put into force on 1 June 2005, defines migrant smuggling. This article introduces a provision stipulating penalties of 3 to 8 years of imprisonment and 10000 days judicial fines to migrant smugglers. If the crime is committed by perpetrators acting as an organization, the penalty to be imposed shall be increased by half. Article 79 also provides for coercive measures (confiscation of assets) on legal entities involved in migrant smuggling. For more examples, please visit the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-_s-fight-against-illegal-migration.en.mfa

**Table 1. A comparison of apprehended people:
Top ten nationalities of apprehended people compared
to apprehended people from the Indian Subcontinent (1995-2010)**

| Nationality | Total | Rank |
|--------------------|---------|------|
| Iraq | 129,759 | 1 |
| Pakistan | 70,690 | 2 |
| Afghanistan | 60,704 | 3 |
| Moldova | 55,195 | 4 |
| Iran | 29,019 | 5 |
| Palestine | 28,453 | 6 |
| Unknown | 28,219 | 7 |
| Georgia | 25,733 | 8 |
| Romania | 24,277 | 9 |
| Somali | 22,653 | 10 |
| Bangladesh | 21,686 | 11 |
| India | 4,400 | 28 |
| Sri Lanka | 959 | 50 |
| Nepal | 467 | 69 |
| Total | 811,891 | 183 |

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the data provided by the Turkish Ministry of Interior.

Taking into consideration the countries of origin of apprehended irregular migrants, it can be claimed that those migrants entering Turkey especially from that country's Eastern and Southern borders, intend to use Turkey as a bridge to reach their destination countries in the West and North. Most transit migrants' entry into the country is illegal, which is organized by the human smugglers, and they leave or attempt to leave via similar routes. It appears that 1995-2010, from a total of 183 nationalities (including a category of unknown), the first five main source countries of irregular migrants were Iraq (129,759), Pakistan (70,690), Afghanistan (60,704), Moldova (55,195), and Iran (29,019); while Bangladesh was ranked 11th with 21,686 apprehensions, India was 28th (4,400), Sri Lanka was 50th (959) and Nepal was 69th (467) (Table 1).

Looking at the top ten locations of apprehensions in Turkey between 1995 and 2010,⁸ it becomes apparent that entry points to Turkey are mainly on the Iranian and Iraqi borders. Van province is a well-known example, and the departure points are in the western parts of the country, mainly in the coastal areas such as the provinces of Muğla, Çanakkale, İstanbul and İzmir, or close to the border with Greece including Edirne province. Recently, there have also been apprehensions closer to the Syrian border, as observed in Hatay.

Before discussing the transit migratory flows from the Indian subcontinent through Turkey, there is also the need to clarify the position of asylum seekers in the country, who are often misinterpreted as part of irregular migration there. The categories of asylum seekers and economically motivated irregular migrants tend to overlap. The main reason for this confusion is that both types of flows originate in the same countries, and both types of migrants are involved in irregularity due to their entries, stays and their prospects of departure at the hands of smugglers or traffickers. This as previous

⁸ Based on the data compiled by the *Bureau for Foreigners, Borders, and Asylum at the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior*.

studies have shown, depends very much on the similar dynamics and mechanisms of the migratory and asylum regimes in the region. Another relevant factor is Turkey's position in respect of the 1951 Convention and its geographical limitation excluding non-European asylum seekers who, however, account for the majority of migrants there. This is a further factor contributing to an environment in which these economically motivated irregular migrants and politically mobilized asylum seekers are often inseparably merged. Non-European asylum seekers are granted temporary asylum, and once they are granted refugee status through a joint procedure of UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and the Ministry of Interior, they are resettled to a third country. This asylum process has turned Turkey into a transit country for those people who have been granted refugee status and who are waiting for resettlement, a typical example of transit migrants as "refugees awaiting resettlement" (IOM, 2004: 53). In fact, from 1997 to 2008, more than 27,000 of 56,000 asylum seekers (i.e. more than 48 per cent) were granted refugee status and re-settled in other countries, making them transit migrants in Turkey in the last ten years.⁹ At present, more than 7,000 refugees have been waiting for resettlement and another 5,000 asylum seekers have been waiting for their status to be determined. Looking at the data available for 1995 and 2010, a total of 72,021 asylum applications were made in Turkey from 80 different nationalities (Table 2). The top five nationalities were: Iran (33,906), Iraq (28,241), Afghanistan (4,901), Somalia (2,385), and Uzbekistan (335): Sri Lanka ranked 11th (123), Pakistan 15th (69), Bangladesh 27th (24), India 47th (7), and Nepal 56th (3). Thus, the three nationalities most involved in irregular migration, i.e., Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, are also among the top five nationalities of asylum applications (See Table 1 and 2). In the meantime, both groups are part of transit migration flows in Turkey. Thus, the movement of asylum seekers and transit migrants often amalgamate and the distinctions between transit migration, irregular migration, and asylum seeking are often blurred.

**Table 2. A comparison of asylum applications:
Top five nationalities of asylum applications compared
to applications from the Indian Subcontinent (1995-2010)**

| Nationality | Total | Rank |
|--------------------|--------|------|
| Iran | 33,906 | 1 |
| Iraq | 28,241 | 2 |
| Afghanistan | 4,901 | 3 |
| Somali | 2,385 | 4 |
| Uzbekistan | 335 | 5 |
| Sri Lanka | 123 | 11 |
| Pakistan | 69 | 15 |
| Bangladesh | 24 | 27 |
| India | 7 | 47 |
| Nepal | 3 | 56 |
| Total | 72,021 | 80 |

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the data provided by the Turkish Ministry of Interior.

It is in this context that the issue of irregular transit migration has received increasing attention in Turkey from the media. There has been a particular focus on those irregular migrants, wrongfully labelled either as "refugees" or "illegal migrants", who try to cross the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece. This has interested, above all, the policymakers and government officers who are under constant pressures from the EU to stop the tide of "illegal" migration, and from the non-governmental and international organizations that are concerned about human rights issues (Kirişçi, 2008).

⁹ See UNHCR figures at <http://www.unhcr.org.tr>.

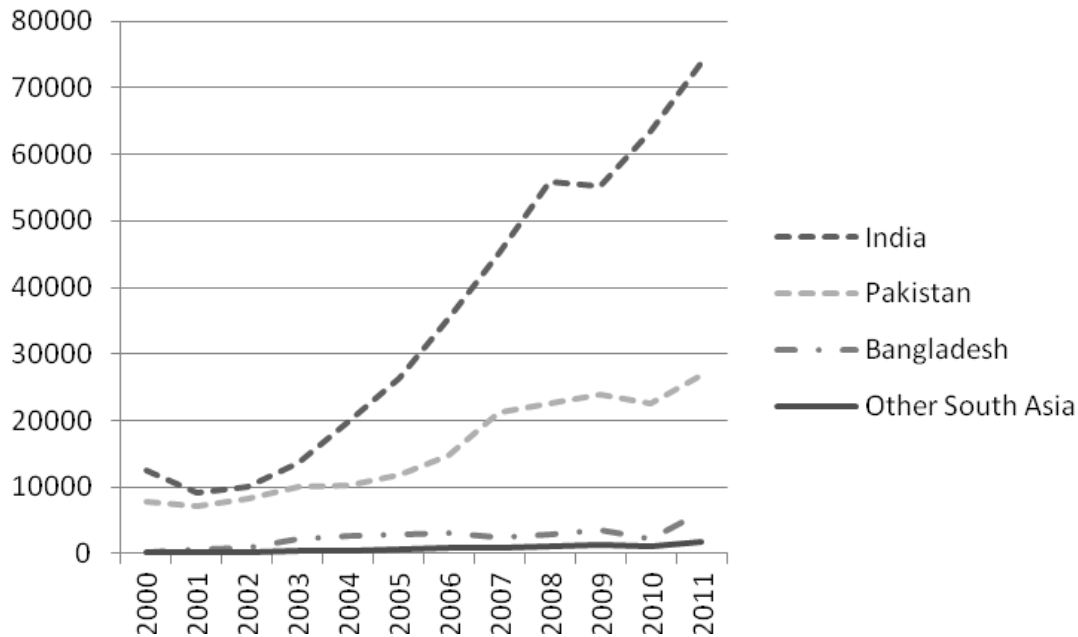
From the Indian Subcontinent, via Turkey, to Europe: Indians, Pakistanis, and Others

Our analysis of the Indian subcontinent consists of five countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka with a particular focus on India. Thinking of the evidence available, we can make, at the outset, *three* arguments regarding irregular migration flows from the Indian Subcontinent via Turkey to Europe. *First*, the growing numbers of people arriving in Turkey as part of Turkey's attachment to the globalization process: we also observe increasing mobility from the Indian subcontinent both regularly and irregularly. In short, there are mixed flows and the status of migrants varies. On the one hand, there are an increasing number of Indians entering Turkey in regular flows, arriving either as tourists, students, professionals, and/or dependents. As in other cases of irregular migration, for some, regular entry becomes irregular over the medium term, as people choose to overstay their visas. On the other hand, there are an increasing number of people from the subcontinent involved in irregular border crossings. In addition to them, we can state that even in regard to regular flows, the Indians in Turkey can be considered as a *floating* population rather than permanent settlers. *Second*, there is anecdotal evidence that forged documents are often used by irregular migrants from the Indian subcontinent entering Turkey. As stated earlier, the main reason for using forged documents is that some nationalities are believed to obtain refugee status more easily than others, which is the only way for a long-term regularization in many countries of Western Europe. *Thus*, a small number of people also exploit the asylum track to get a regular status.

Mixed migration flows: Regular migrants, Overstayers, Floating Population

Looking at the arrival and departure statistics provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute's tourism statistics based on a source from the General Directorate of Security, it is notable that there is a visible increase in arrivals from the Indian subcontinent to Turkey (See Figure 1). While these officially recorded arrivals of nationals from the Indian subcontinent are still less than one percent of all arrivals into the country (on average 0.6 percent for the period between 2000 and 2011), arrivals from the Indian subcontinent in 2011 (108,360) are almost five times greater than arrivals in 2000 (20,965) (See Table 3).

Figure 1. Arrivals of people from the Indian subcontinent by nationality (2000-2011)



Source: Compiled by the authors based on the data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute tourism statistics based on the source of General Directorate of Security.

Utilizing the same data, for the period between 2000 and 2011, we can observe the arrivals of people from the Indian subcontinent by nationality (See Figure 1). Over the years, there is a definite boost in the number of arrivals of Indian nationals in Turkey from 12,546 in 2000 to 73,731 in 2011. The number of Pakistani nationals has also increased from 7908 in 2000 to 26,735 in 2011. Besides this data, there is also anecdotal evidence that in recent years there is a growing interest among Indians in visiting Turkey. The owner of an Indian restaurant¹⁰ in Istanbul, who has regularly hosted tourist groups from India and Pakistan in the last five years, underlined that it was not only the rich, but also the middle classes who are coming to visit Istanbul; the city has become a more popular destination over the years. A number of these people are visa-overstayers, but there are really no figures on this phenomenon, other than a subjective narrative, also confirmed by the consulate officials,¹¹ stating that there are a number of people who have overstayed their visas.

Table 3. Arrival and Departure Statistics of people from the Indian Subcontinent (2000-2011)¹²

| Nationality | Arrivals | Departures |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Bangladesh | 30,115 | 27,228 |
| India | 420,587 | 409,990 |
| Pakistan | 187,491 | 201,385 |
| Other South Asia | 9,260 | 9,142 |
| Total subcontinent | 647,453 | 647,745 |
| Total all countries | 95,696,107 | 96,909,268 |

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute's tourism statistics based on a source from the General Directorate of Security.

The data relating to residence permits and the work status of foreign nationals in Turkey are also relevant as they provide the means of comparison of nationals from the Indian subcontinent with other subcontinent groups and with the larger number of foreign nationals in Turkey. Examining Table 4, there are almost one thousand people from the Indian subcontinent, officially living in Turkey, with resident permits, either as students, professionals, and/or their dependents. While the figure is only 0.64 percent of all the foreigners officially residing in Turkey, it is still significant and reflects the potential for a future trend. Among this group, Indians make up the largest segment, followed by Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and others.¹³

¹⁰ Male, aged 41, interviewed in Istanbul on 15 December 2011.

¹¹ Interview in Istanbul on 16 December 2011.

¹² Please note that the data presented here is from tourism statistics with no room for interpretation. In the case of Pakistanis, the fact that the number of arrivals are less than the number of departures might be because they have arrived before but left during this period.

¹³ Tables 5 and 6 present further details of the causes of regular stays in Turkey.

Table 4. Foreign Nationals from the Indian Subcontinent in Turkey with Residence Permits and Work Status (2009)

| Country | Various* | Working | Student | Total |
|-------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|
| Bangladesh | 36 | 5 | 72 | 113 |
| India | 212 | 224 | 21 | 457 |
| Pakistan | 182 | 90 | 178 | 450 |
| Sri Lanka | 6 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| Nepal | 1 | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| Total | 437 | 324 | 277 | 1038 |
| Percentage** | 0.37 | 1.85 | 1.02 | 0.64 |

* The category mostly includes dependents, i.e., family members.

** Compared to the total number of foreigners with residence permits and work status.

Source: Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum of the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior.

Table 5. Foreigners from the Indian Subcontinent in Turkey: Work Status, Sectoral and Gender Divisions (2010)

| Nationality | <i>Tourism</i> | <i>Instructors teaching in Embassy Schools</i> | <i>Sportman</i> | <i>Private School-Language Course</i> | <i>Private Institutions</i> | <i>Public Corporations</i> | <i>Scientific Research-Archaeological Dig Research Academician</i> | <i>Installation, Maintenance and Repairs</i> | <i>Religious Official</i> | <i>Press/Journalist</i> | <i>Exemption of Work Permit</i> | <i>Other</i> | <i>Extension</i> | <i>First Application</i> | Gender | | TOTAL | |
|---------------------------|----------------|--|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Male | Female | | |
| Bangladesh | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| India | 22 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 169 | 1 | 1 | 16 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 10 | 186 | 60 | 208 | 38 | 246 |
| Nepal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Pakistan | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 32 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 40 | 10 | 44 | 6 | 50 |
| Sri Lanka | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Total Subcontinent | 25 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 210 | 3 | 2 | 22 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 11 | 240 | 70 | 263 | 47 | 310 |
| Others | 928 | 41 | 314 | 527 | 10,350 | 234 | 639 | 1,313 | 263 | 38 | 168 | 968 | 2,438 | 22,883 | 3,438 | 14,723 | 11,598 | 26,321 |
| TOTAL | 953 | 45 | 315 | 530 | 10,560 | 237 | 641 | 1,335 | 277 | 38 | 168 | 983 | 2,449 | 23,123 | 3,508 | 14,986 | 11,645 | 26,631 |

Source: Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum of the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior.



Table 6. Foreigners with residence permits (excluding work reasons) from the Indian Subcontinent in Turkey for education and other purposes with gender divisions (2010)

| Nationality | EDUCATION AND COURSE | | | | | | PEOPLE GAINED RESIDENCE RATHER THAN WORK AND EDUCATION | | | | | | | | | | | Gender | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--|---|------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|------------|--------|---------|-----------|-------------------|--------|--------|---------|--|
| | Primary-Secondary-High School | Undergraduate | Graduate | Turkish Language Course TOMER | Course | TOTAL | Near to a Turkish citizen Wife/Husband | Near to a friend who has residence permit | Near to a Turkish citizen relative | Tourism | For Work Permit Application | Possession | Other | TOTAL | Extension | First Application | Male | Female | TOTAL | |
| Bangladesh | 0 | 39 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 50 | 13 | 7 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 30 | 68 | 12 | 66 | 14 | 80 | |
| India | 5 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 23 | 29 | 211 | 2 | 26 | 2 | 0 | 33 | 303 | 263 | 63 | 140 | 186 | 326 | |
| Nepal | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 8 | |
| Pakistan | 21 | 59 | 11 | 36 | 2 | 129 | 48 | 83 | 5 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 184 | 255 | 58 | 208 | 105 | 313 | |
| Sri Lanka | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 32 | 16 | 18 | 23 | 11 | 34 | |
| Total Subcontinent | 26 | 110 | 17 | 45 | 9 | 207 | 97 | 301 | 8 | 46 | 2 | 0 | 100 | 554 | 607 | 154 | 444 | 317 | 761 | |
| Others | 2,463 | 15,758 | 1,244 | 1,255 | 551 | 21,241 | 29,764 | 16,301 | 4,771 | 12,901 | 56 | 1,162 | 60,237 | 125,194 | 130,494 | 15,941 | 67,462 | 78,973 | 146,435 | |
| TOTAL | 2,489 | 15,838 | 1,261 | 1,300 | 560 | 21,448 | 29,863 | 16,602 | 4,779 | 12,947 | 58 | 1,162 | 60,337 | 125,748 | 131,101 | 16,095 | 67,906 | 79,290 | 147,196 | |

Source: Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum of the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior.

Despite the increasing number of arrivals from the Indian subcontinent, and the presence of a regular group staying in Turkey, our interviews disclose that it is hard to receive visas and permits. Consulate officials¹⁴ state that Indians face difficulties with the Turkish authorities and note that the Turkish visa regime is “not very liberal”.¹⁵ In the same interviews, while asserting that Indian irregular transit migrants from Turkey are almost a non-existing phenomenon, officials mentioned visa expiry. Yet, it was interesting to see officials’ treatment of visa overstays not as a category of irregular migration, but rather as a question of bureaucratic mismanagement on the side of the authorities or personal memory lapses on the part of migrants. Still, there is anecdotal evidence of regular migrants finding themselves in an irregular position by overstaying their visas.

Looking at different migrant groups from the Indian subcontinent who are staying in Turkey with regular permits, Indians are the largest group among them. Still, their numbers are considered to be rather low, especially when compared with other countries such as the US, the UK, and/or Australia. Moreover, with the exception of a few Turkish-Indian marriages, these people should not be considered as permanent settlers in Turkey. Rather, they should be seen as a *floating population*. While there is no official data regarding the duration of their stay in Turkey, our interviews with the consulate officials reveal that many Indians who have regular status are in the country only for four or five years. They are mostly located in Istanbul and Ankara and are professionals working for large Indian companies such as Tata and Mittal Group, residing in Turkey with their dependents. They tend to be Hindu or Christians.

We can cite two main reasons why Indians do not choose Turkey for permanent stay, even when they receive a regular permit. Indian migration is known to be directed towards English-speaking countries with competent labor markets, and Turkey does not meet these criteria. Thus, many regular Indians in Turkey are just here for a certain period of time, in rotation, getting ready to go to another country when the time comes.

Irregular transit migration: Human smuggling and forged documents

Recently, media coverage of a particular story sparked interest again in irregular transit migration, while also underlining the changing characteristics of the phenomenon in Turkey: the latest EU-ization period in the previous sub-section, i.e., it is getting more diversified as well as more institutionalized. As mentioned previously, 9 October 2011, seven irregular migrants lost their lives in a fire in the shantytown of Sultangazi in Istanbul. Four were from India; and three were from Pakistan. When they were found, their hands were tied and all of them were in the bathroom of the house that was locked from the outside. In the following days, 70 irregular migrants from Myanmar were found locked in a house in the same neighbourhood. There were rumours about the involvement of organized human smuggling networks.¹⁶

Almost seven percent of all apprehensions in Turkey from 1995 to 2010 involved irregular transit migration. Reviewing the numbers for apprehensions from 1995 and 2010, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis comprise 94 percent of all apprehensions from the region (See Figure 2). We can cite three main reasons for the dominance of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in these figures. *First*, Pakistanis

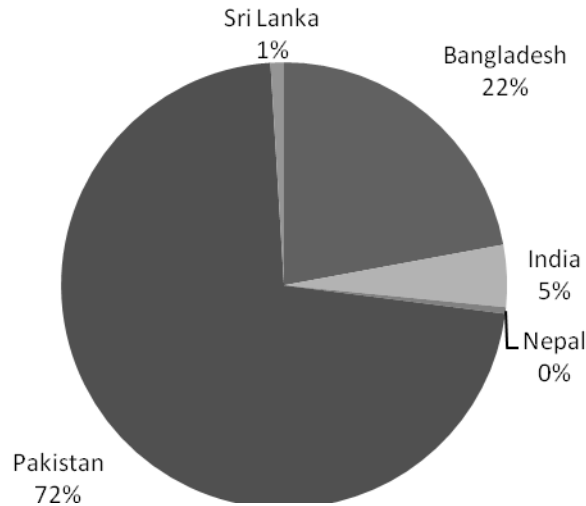
¹⁴ Interview in Istanbul on 16 December 2011.

¹⁵ However, compared to the Indian visa regime, Turkey’s visa regime is rather liberal. To illustrate, foreign Nationals desirous of going to India are required to possess valid passports from their country with six-months validity from the date of travel and a valid Indian Visa. Unlike Turkey, there is no provision of “Visa on Arrival” in India. Foreign passengers should ensure that they are in possession of valid Indian Visa before they start their journey to India except Nepalese and Bhutanese nationals who do not require visas to enter India and nationals of Maldives who do not require visa for entry into India for a period up to 90 days (a separate Visa regime exists for diplomatic/official passport holders). For more information please visit the official website of the Consulate General of India, Istanbul: http://www.cgiistanbul.org/visa_services

¹⁶ Daily News, Haber Türk, 14 October, 2011.

and Bangladeshis are known to have long had a culture of irregular movements. And *second*, they have better established networks for irregular migration (See figures on arrested human smugglers in Table 7). *Furthermore*, many Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are Muslims giving them a link with Turkey. Within the same period there are records of 4,400 Indian, 467 Nepalese, and 959 Sri Lankan nationals. When this mobility is observed over the years from 1995 to 2010, there are increases in the number of apprehensions in 2000, 2006 and 2008 (See Figure 3).

Figure 2. Apprehensions of people from the Indian subcontinent (1995-2010)



Source: Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum of the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior.

Analyzing the data on the number of human smuggler arrests between 1998 and 2010, almost three percent of all organizers of human smuggling in Turkey are from the Indian subcontinent (See Table 7). Arrests of organizers from Bangladesh and Pakistan are the highest, in line with the scale of irregular migration from these countries. Thus, we observe a high correlation between the number of human smuggling organizers and the size of the irregular flows, which illustrates their role in this kind of mobility.

Table 7. Arrested human smugglers (1998-2010)

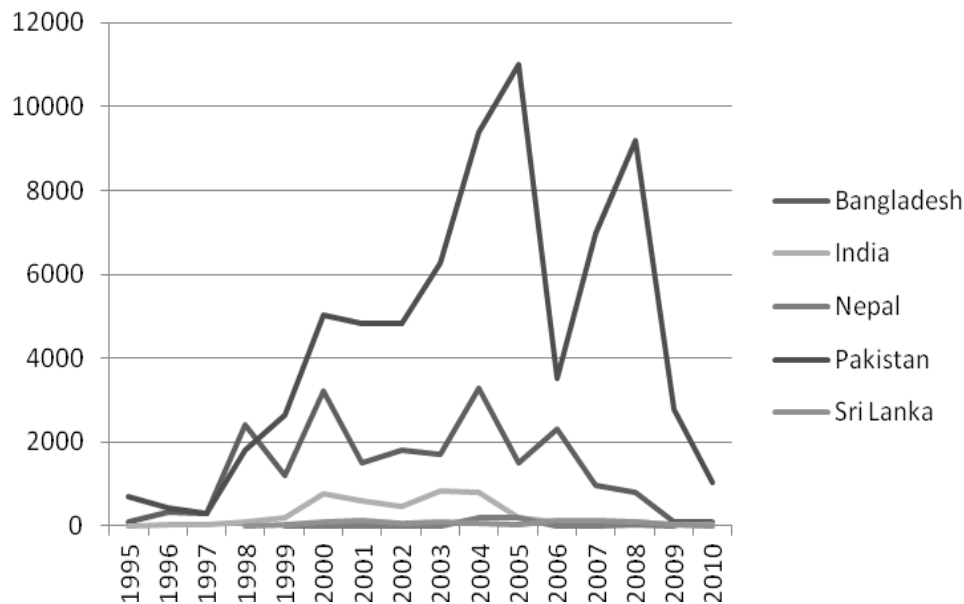
| Nationality | Total |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Bangladesh | 89 |
| India | 8 |
| Nepal | 0 |
| Pakistan | 198 |
| Sri Lanka | 6 |
| Total Subcontinent | 301 |
| TOTAL | 11,117 |
| Percentage* | 2.8 |

*Compared to the total number of organizers arrested in Turkey over the indicated period.

Source: Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum of the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior.

How do human smugglers bring these people into the country? After interviews with two experienced captains, Mendillioğlu (2011) states the following. First, they have to find a ship. Given that it is very expensive to purchase a new ship, there is a need to obtain a used one, with the hope that it will finish the journey without any disasters. Then they must hire a captain and personnel. On average, a captain earns 10,000 USD a trip. Assuming that these rather expensive two steps are achieved, once the journey begins, the ship has to spend three days on the Somali sea lanes, which is a military area. If the ship makes it through the Somali sea lanes, then it is important to find compliant Egyptian officials in the Suez Channel. While this is not a very hard task, the captain still needs to file reports at every step of the way. Moreover, in order to feed the passengers and crew, the ship needs to make several stops in different ports, meaning further scrutiny and additional bribes for the officials. Thus, it is no easy thing to bring these people along this long sea route. There are two other options: to use the land course from India, through Iran into Turkey; or to use the land route to the Mediterranean coast in Egypt, Syria, and Israel, and then to continue with a short journey with smaller boats to the Mersin port, or other ports in the south of Turkey. Migrants sometimes also use “freelance” methods, like hiding in the luggage or engine rooms of big ships. Most of the time the entire process runs through established networks between different stakeholders.

Figure 3. Apprehensions of people from the Indian subcontinent over the years (1995-2010)



Source: Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum of the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior.

This trend was also confirmed in our interviews. A respondent who has had regular correspondence with irregular migrants from India in Istanbul mentioned that human smuggling from the subcontinent has a long tradition going back to the 1970s.¹⁷ He had stories of irregular migrants coming into Turkey overland from Iran. The same informant also mentioned forged documents as a means of entering the country: something often associated with the subcontinent. Our dialogue with the police has also confirmed this pattern where irregular migrants use forged documents to come into Turkey with the assistance of human smugglers networks:¹⁸ So we have, for example, a Bangladeshi using an Indian passport. Consulate officers have also mentioned a similar incident where an Indian citizen reported the loss of his passport, and the passport was later found by the Turkish police on the apprehension of an irregular migrant. A similar story was also mentioned by the media:

¹⁷ Male, aged 41, interviewed in Istanbul on 20 December 2011.

¹⁸ Male, aged 35, interviewed in Istanbul on 10 December 2011.

The Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested 10 persons, including eight Bangladeshis, from the city after central intelligence agencies received information on a new trend coming to the fore: a large number of Bangladeshi nationals are illegally visiting European countries with forged Indian travel documents.¹⁹

A report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2009) on the smuggling of migrants from India to Europe, which offered a study on the scope and magnitude of irregular migration from the southern state of Tamil Nadu in India, provides the law enforcement authority records from Chennai. Accordingly, in the period between January and May 2007, two Indians were deported from Turkey back to Chennai. Admittedly, the number is small, 0.3 percent of all deportations, but it is still an indicator.

Asylum Track

As mentioned earlier, the movements of asylum seekers and that of transit migrants are often fused and the division between transit migration, irregular migration, and asylum seeking are, as a result, distorted in Turkey. Among the 80 different nationalities that have asylum applications in Turkey, Pakistan ranks 15th (69 applications), Bangladesh 27th (24 applications), India 47th (7 applications), and Nepal 56th (3 applications) (See Table 2). Thus, as the number of asylum seekers is relatively low, supposedly, there are no or few cases of asylum seekers who gain refugee status. As happens frequently in the cases of other asylum seekers, it is quite often the case that economically motivated irregular migrants from the subcontinent use the asylum track for easy access to target immigration countries.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has attempted to map out a new migratory form and process from India to Europe that develops as step-by-step, or transit migration through various countries. Turkey, as a transit country, has provided us with a unique setting which has a relatively long-established tradition of being a transit country towards Europe for thousands of transit migrants mostly from the Middle-East, which is now becoming increasingly functional for transit migrants who come from the Indian subcontinent and who try to enter Europe. As a smaller but not insignificant segment of this transit movement, Indian citizens have also begun to use Turkey as a stepping stone for their long journey between their homeland and Europe. However, given the lack of comprehensive and reliable data, most of our findings and interpretations could be seen either as particular narrow or relatively vague and they could also be viewed as confusing. Finally, one should note that this is an exploratory study rather than an explanatory one.

Our descriptive analysis implies that the irregular transit flow of Indian citizens from Turkey to Europe is as much a result of migratory strategies of these individual migrants as it is a consequence of the strong transnational ties between India and Europe. Such ties would include the pull of the underground economies of Europe, long-established ties to Italy, and especially colonial ties with the UK. On the one hand, the European migration system has developed a sort of self-proliferating dynamic that triggers not only irregular transit flows from Europe's close neighbours, but also more distant parts of the globe, such as India. On the other hand, the changes induced by the EU migration system affect more generally the balance, or paradox, between the economics of immigration, which demands more cheap labour and the politics of immigration, which increasingly limits the migratory flows. The main transit migration flows to Europe, including Indians, are, therefore, embedded into this paradoxical climate surrounded by transnational networks. Thus, while we did not find many examples of mass smuggling and/or trafficking of Indians through Turkey to Europe, we conclude that

¹⁹ Reported in The Indian Express, New Delhi, on 27 July 2009.

the extension of the transnational linkages and transnational spaces has had a strong transformative impact on the emergence of long-distance step-by-step migration from India to Europe.

Overall, we observe growing mobility from the Indian subcontinent to Turkey, which is both regular and irregular in its nature. On the one hand, Indians dominate the regular flows to Turkey, arriving either as tourists, students, or professionals. However, even this regular stock is known to reside in Turkey as a floating population. Also, a number of regular entries into Turkey are known to become irregular as they overstay their visas. The irregular transit movements, meanwhile, from the Indian subcontinent to Turkey are dominated by Pakistanis and Bangladeshis where Indians constitute only five percent of these flows at least according to the numbers on apprehensions. Human smugglers are actively involved in these flows and irregular border crossings via Turkey constitute a main trend for use of forged documents.

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