POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATION OF ANTI-IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES: THE CASE OF TURKEY

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Abbreviations

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi / Republican People's Party
DEVA	Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi / Democracy and Progress Party
DGMM	Directorate General for Migration Management
EU	European Union
FRIT	Facility for Refugees in Turkey
GP	Gelecek Partisi / Future Party
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi / Peoples' Democratic Party
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IYI	Iyi Party / Good Party
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi / Nationalist Action Party
NGOs	Nongovernmental Organizations
PMM	Presidency of Migration Management
TIP	Türkiye Işçi Partisi / Workers' Party of Turkey
SP	Saadet Partisi / Felicity Party
US	United States
ZP	Zafer Partisi / Victory Party

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INTRODUCTION

With the approaching elections in Turkey in 2023, immigration policy has become the country's most heated topic of debate. While the country has accepted a massive influx of refugees[1] in the last decade, the issue has become more salient in the last two years due to the electorate's increasing anti-immigrant sentiment.

This rise of anti-immigrant sentiment is related to many factors. Turkey's current economic crisis has resulted in immigrants' being made scapegoats and competitors in an increasingly narrowing labor market while their presence is seen as an unnecessary burden on the welfare state. Furthermore, rising anti-government sentiment has encouraged increased criticism of the government's open-door policy towards refugees. Indeed, the government's flexible refugee policy may have played a role in the rise of protest voting in Turkey.

No picture regarding immigration would be complete without mentioning the rise of anti-immigrant political parties. In 2021, a political party – ZP – was established with an exclusive focus on immigration and became the Turkish version of Europe's anti-immigrant radical right parties. ZP transformed the negative sentiments within the electorate into a political issue, thereby giving them public visibility. As in EU countries, mainstream political parties have been unable to avoid the transformation of the discussion of the issue and its increasing salience. Thus, almost all political parties in Turkey have proposed political solutions for the immigration issue into their rhetoric and political programs.

One caveat is that almost all the political parties we analyze here, whether through texts or interviews with their representatives, lump the immigration issue into a single large package, without differentiating refugees from irregular migrants or other international groups residing in Turkey for various reasons, such as seasonal work. When talking about migration, their representatives mainly refer to the Syrian refugee issue while putting all migrants into the same basket. Thus, the question of irregular migration usually gets mixed in with the highly regular and institutionalized hosting of Syrians in Turkey. This attitude is more prevalent among the opposition than the governing parties. As the designers and executors of Turkey's current migration policy, the governing political parties have a clearer vision, including strategic use of migration.

The report comprises five main sections. We first discuss how international migration has been contextualized and discussed in Turkey. Second, we highlight the critical junctures that have transformed the debate around the recent migration of Syrians, followed by a brief discussion explaining data collection and methodology. A more detailed discussion is also provided at the end of the report as an appendix. Third, we present our analysis and findings of temporal changes in anti-immigration rhetoric and Turkish political parties' anti-immigration scores. This section also characterizes the anti-immigration debate along two dimensions: the salience of the issue and the tone of the rhetoric. Fourth, we discuss how political parties currently frame Syrians living in Turkey and evaluate their proposed migration policies. Finally, we conclude by offering several policy recommendations. It is important to note that our analysis here largely covers the period from 2011 to 2021, thereby setting the background for our follow-up analysis to come before the 2023 elections.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND TURKEY: SETTING THE SCENE

Since the foundation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey has witnessed several large-scale migration flows, although none are comparable to the influx of Syrian refugees since 2011, which has drastically altered Turkey's politics, economy, and societal relationships. There have been four previous significant immigration flows. The first took

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[1] We tried to stick to using "refugee" to define Syrians in Turkey. However, we also interchangeably used "migrant" and "immigrant" in many parts of this research while addressing various literature.

place during the final days of the Ottoman Empire, when vast numbers of immigrants of Turkish descent or culture came to settle in Turkey, particularly from the Balkans and the Caucasus. However, as they were expected to assimilate into Turkish society, they were not really treated as immigrants as understood in today's terminology, but as new citizens of the Republic of Turkey. This was a period when the new republic was trying to homogenize society under Turkish nationalism, which used Sunni Islam as a defining element of inclusion (Kirişci, 1996, 2000; Çagaptay, 2006; Içduygu & Sert, 2015).[2]

The second wave came in 1979, during the Iranian revolution, when many Iranians escaped to Turkey. For many of these refugees, because of Turkey's geographical limitation to the Refugee Convention, Turkey was just a transit country before they settled in third countries, mainly Canada (Akçapar, 2010; Yıldız & Sert, 2021, 2022). In today's terminology, these people would be described as conditional refugees who were expected to leave Turkey once their refugee status was determined. Thus, because it was already known that they would not settle in the country, their future in Turkey never became an issue of public debate.

The third immigration flow occurred a decade later, when Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish citizens were forced from their homes under the oppressive Zhivkov regime. As with the first wave, these immigrants coming were treated as being of Turkish descent and culture, and therefore expected to assimilate into Turkish society (Kirişci, 1995; Parla, 2003, 2006). Given that many already spoke Turkish and were Sunni Muslims, their settlement did not stimulate a long-term public debate (Mahon, 1999).

The fourth wave came a few years later, when Turkey began hosting many Kurdish immigrants from Northern Iraq (Danış, 2011), which made the government realize that Turkey lacked appropriate migration regulations. Parliament then passed Regulation No. 6169/1994 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 to Seek Asylum from Another Country. Most of these people returned to Iraq once the conflict was settled.

The current situation of Syrians in Turkey differs from these previous immigration waves in many respects. Firstly, in none of the previous examples were the numbers as high. For example, the number of Bulgarian Turks who migrated to Turkey in 1989 was around 300,000, which is ten times fewer than the number of Syrians who have fled to Turkey since 2011 (Mahon, 1999). Secondly, in none of the previous cases, did the migrants' status became a lingering issue as those who came were either expected to assimilate into Turkish society because they were already considered to be of Turkish descent and culture, resettled to third countries because of Turkey's geographical limitation on the Refugee Convention, or returned to their home countries once conflicts there ended. None of this, however, applies to Syrians in Turkey, whose status oscillates under Turkey's current Temporary Protection Regime because it nowhere defines the duration of temporariness (Içduygu & Aksel, 2022).

Recent refugee and migrant movements to Turkey have therefore generated public reaction, maybe for the first time in the Republic's history. As of December 2022, almost 3.6 million Syrians were registered under temporary protection in Turkey (see Figure 1). Only one percent of these people are living in the six official temporary shelter centers or camps, in Adana, Hatay, Kahramaraş, Kilis, and Osmaniye. The others are urban refugees scattered throughout the country, mostly in metropolitan provinces like Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara, and other cities along

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[2] There were also other mass scale movements to Turkey through different settlement schemes such as the Greece-Turkey population exchange and the 1934 Settlement Law.

Turkey's southeast border, such as Kilis, Antep, Urfa, and Hatay (see Figure 2). Another 100,000 Syrians have received residence permits while around 200,000 have received Turkish citizenship (PMM, 2022).

Figure 1: Number of people under International Protection, received Residence Permit, and Syrians under Temporary Protection by year (Source: PMM, 2022)
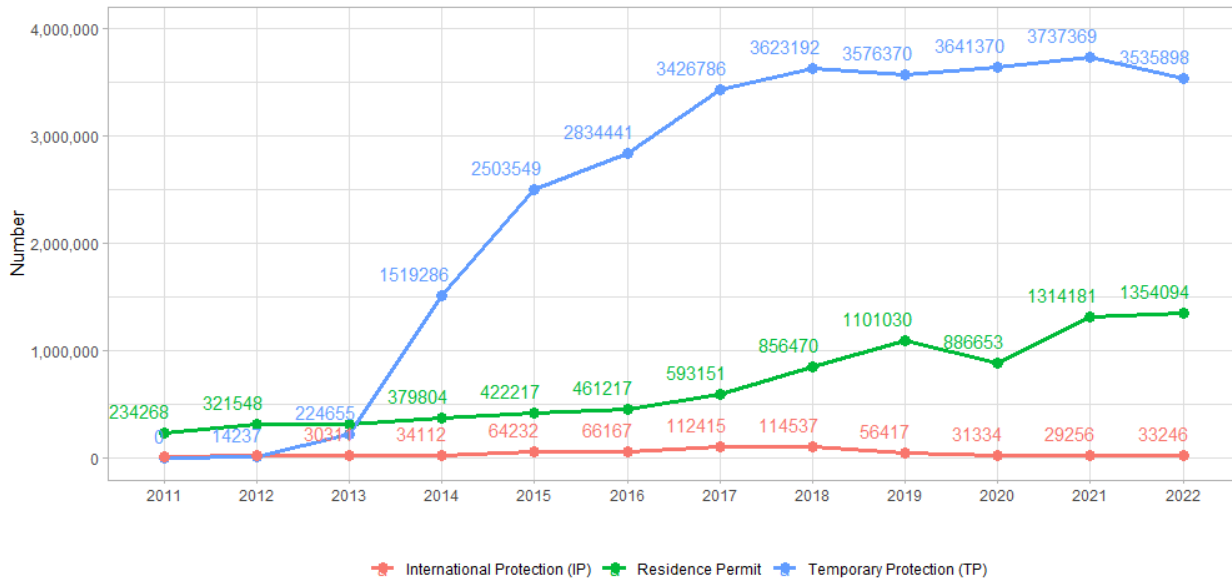
Note: Temporary Protection data only cover Syrian refuges. International Protection data comprise nationalities excluding Syrian refugees. Residence Permit data include Syrian refugees as well.

Figure 2: Distribution of Syrians under Temporary Protection as percentages of each province's total population (Source: PMM, 2022)
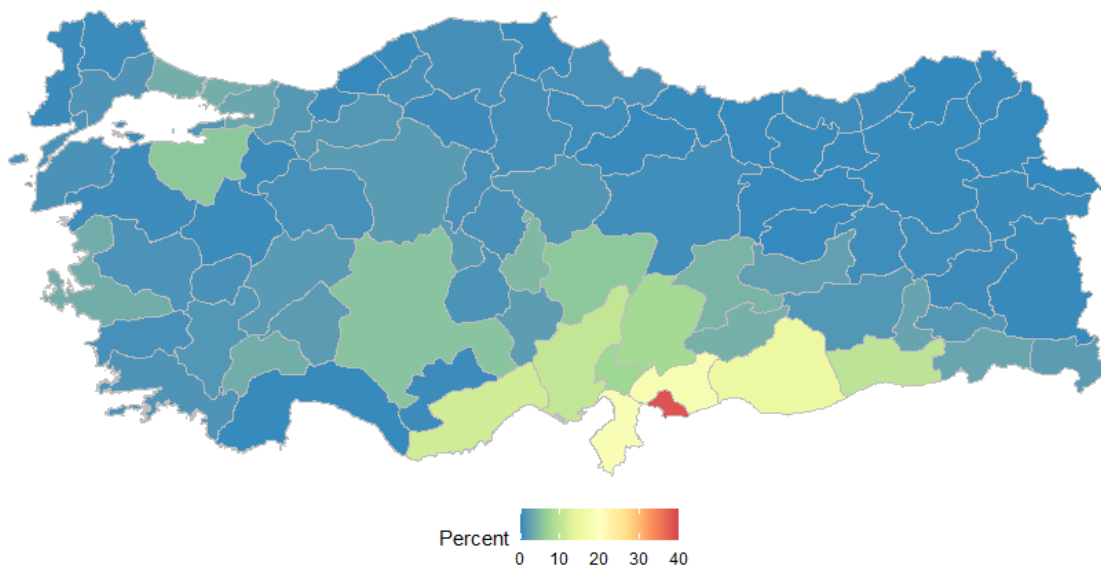
Aside from Syrians, as of November 2022, around 1.3 million foreigners, primarily from neighboring countries like Iraq, Russia, Iran, and Azerbaijan, had received different types of residence permits in Turkey. First, based on statistical data published by the PMM, these groups with permits are considered to be regular migrants. Second, there are currently around 30,000 applications for international protection, mostly from citizens from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, who, if they gain refugee status, are expected to resettle in third countries as *conditional refugees*. Third, in 2022 alone, more than 250,000 *irregular migrants*, i.e., people without any status in the country, have been apprehended in Turkey. Thus, Turkey today is undoubtedly a country of immigration (Içduygu & Kirişci, 2009). Despite this variety, Syrians dominate most of the debate about migration in the country due to their high numbers, which make the issue publicly visible. Yet, these different types of migration require significantly different solutions since their root causes and the problems and opportunities they create for the host country are significantly different.

CONTEXTUALIZING SYRIAN MIGRATION

When Syria's civil war erupted in March 2011, Turkey's AKP government adopted an open-door policy towards arrivals from Syria. After this policy was suspended in 2016, many Syrians continued arriving irregularly or by other ways. A critical year was 2013, when Turkey passed its first law on migration and asylum, i.e., Law No. 6854 on Foreigners and International Protection, and established its first civil administration for migration management, the PMM, formerly known as the DGMM. This administration immediately began to take registrations, which partially explains increasing numbers after this date (see Figure 1).

While the increasing number of Syrians were transforming politics, economy, and societal relationships in Turkey considerably, the country was also experiencing other major political events (see Figure 3). While it is beyond the scope of this report to review them all in detail, it is important to outline some to contextualize the current migration of Syrians more clearly. For example, in the same year that the DGMM was established, the government faced a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest from May to August 2013, known as the Gezi Park protests. What began as a single demonstration against an urban development plan for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park sparked a series of demonstrations in major cities against the government over a wide range of issues from freedom of speech to erosion of secularism (Özen, 2015; Gençoglu Onbaşı, 2016) while refugees and migrants were not a domestic political issue during this time.

A significant milestone came two years later, in 2015. Due to the siege of Kobani by the ISIS, almost 400,000 Kurdish Syrians fled to Turkey. The same year, the US launched the American-led intervention in Syria's civil war. Turkey did not support this intervention and caused international controversy by closing its border with Syria (Al-Arabiya News, 2014). In September, Russia also intervened in the war after the government in Damascus officially requested military aid against insurgents and jihadist groups. The escalating conflict forced increasing numbers of Syrians to flee the country but aiming to reach Europe rather than neighboring countries. In early September, when the world woke up to the striking news media image of a dead Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, whose body was washed ashore on a Turkish beach, more than 300,000 people had already made the dangerous crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands. Thus, 2015 was marked as the year of Europe's refugee crisis, with over 900,000 refugees and migrants arriving in Europe, mostly from Syria (UNHCR, 2015).

Figure 3: Timeline of Syrian refugee crisis within the context of major events in Turkey
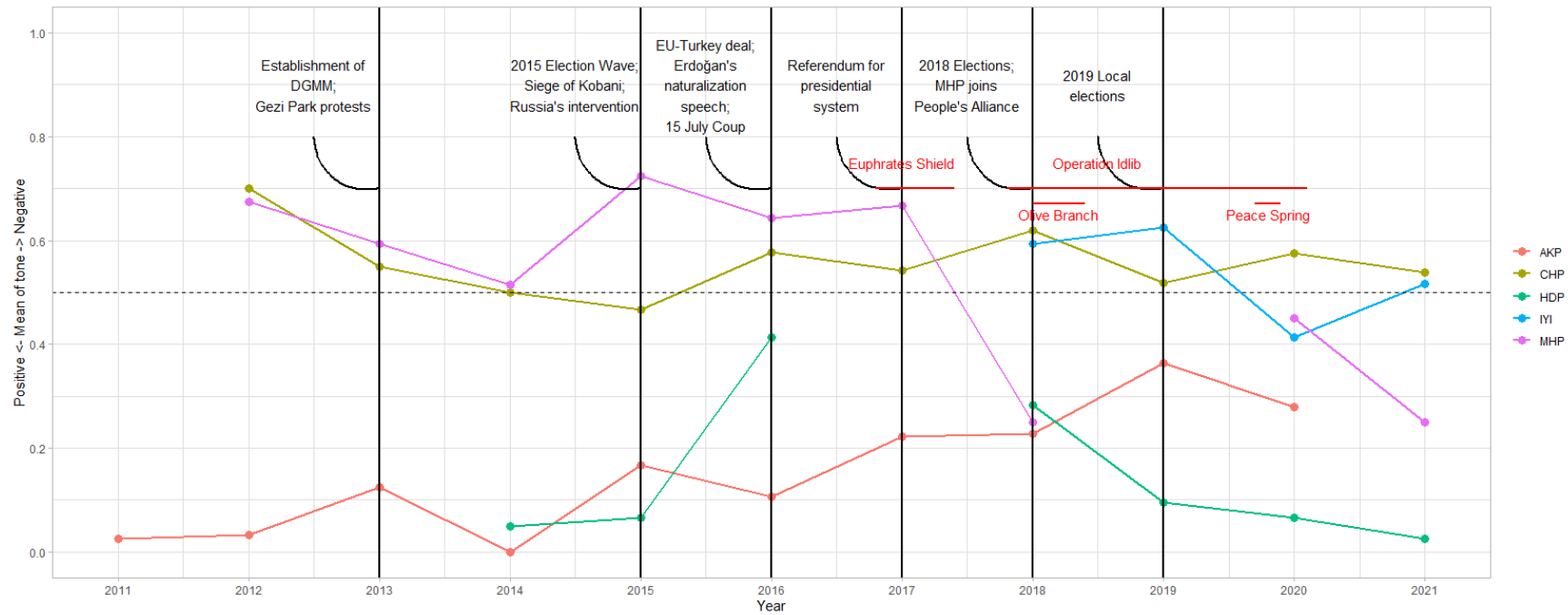
Note 1: Horizontal dashed line indicates the midpoint of rhetorical tone. Vertical straight black lines indicate critical junctures. Horizontal straight red lines indicate the Turkish Armed Forces' cross-border operations in Syria. Operation Idlib was continued as Operation Spring Shield. The 2015 election wave includes both the July and November elections.

Note 2: Speech tone was originally measured with a scale ranging between 0 and 2. However, we rescaled it to range from 0 to 1 to enable a better comparison with the mean values of mentions. Higher scores indicate high immigration saliency and anti-immigration rhetoric, respectively. See Appendix for details on data and methodology.

As a transit country for refugees from Syria to Europe, Turkey became an immediate target of EU migration and asylum policies. In November 2015, Turkey and the EU implemented a joint action plan, and during their third meeting, on 18 March 2016, they issued an EU-Turkey statement about destroying the smuggler's business model by offering migrants a safer alternative route (European Council, 2016). Of the statement's nine major action points, three are relevant here: (1) all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands will be readmitted by Turkey; (2) (also known as the one-to-one scheme) for every Syrian being readmitted to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian currently in Turkey will be resettled in the EU; (3) the EU will provide Turkey with 3+3 billion euros under the EU FRIT program, for projects focusing on humanitarian assistance, education, health, migration management, municipal infrastructure, and socio-economic support. This agreement has been controversial (see Danış & Ürgen, 2021), with many criticizing it for enabling the EU to treat Turkey as an object of its externalization policies to keep people from reaching Europe. Nevertheless, it remains the sole point of cooperation between the EU and Turkey at a time when the relations are almost stalled.

Meanwhile, Turkey's authorities occasionally discussed the future of Syrians in Turkey. On 3 July 2016, for example, President Erdogan announced that Syrian immigrants in Turkey would be granted the right to citizenship (BBC News Turkish, 2016). The announcement, which was received negatively by major political parties, was then overshadowed by the coup attempt on 15 July. This was followed by a major change in domestic politics in 2017, when the governing AKP, with the support of the far-right, anti-migrant MHP, won a constitutional referendum to change the regime from a parliamentary to a presidential system. Under the leadership of Meral Akşener, MHP dissidents then formed a new party called IYI, while MHP formed the People's Alliance with AKP to campaign for elections in 2018. Thus, the most strongly anti-migrant party in Turkish politics became the junior partner in government.

In the meantime, Turkey has been involved in several cross-border military interventions in Syria, namely Operation Euphrates Shield, Operation Idlib, Operation Olive Branch, Operation Peace Spring, and Operation Spring Shield. The government justified these operations as part of its aim to resettle about a million Syrians in the occupied areas (Reuters, 2019). Hence, the authorities were giving mixed messages to the public. On the one hand, with EU support and funding, Turkey embarked on many projects integrating Syrians into Turkish society, going as far as granting citizenship to almost 200,000 people; on the other hand, it launched cross-border operations to resettle as many Syrians as possible in a so-called safe zone created in territory it now occupied in Northern Syria.

In any other country, one might expect the arrival of so many people, representing approximately four percent of Turkey's population, would directly affect electoral behavior. Surprisingly, however, migration was not a major issue before the 2019 local elections and had little effect on voting preferences of the electorate (Elçi, 2022; Fisunoglu & Sert, 2019). We argue that this stems from two reasons. *Firstly*, the ruling AKP's co-religiosity and brotherhood discourse prevented a backlash against Syrian refugees (Çarkoglu & Elçi, 2021) by framing their arrival within a *muhacir-ensar*[3] discourse regarding the prophet Mohammed's refuge in Medina. This catered to the religious feelings of Turkish society. *Secondly*, the discourse of significant political parties has been generally mixed. As discussed in the following sections, our results reveal that political parties in Turkey have simply played a gatekeeper role in the refugee issue by balancing their anti-immigration with several pro-migrant frames.

After 2021, however, anti-immigration sentiment increased, especially among the electorate. As briefly discussed in the introduction, this was related to many factors, such as Turkey's current economic crisis for which immigrants have been scapegoated, growing anti-government sentiment and cultural anxiety fueled by social media, the

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[3] Although *Muhacir* (Muhajir) literally means "migrant," it also refers to those who migrated from Mecca to Medina in the early years of Islam. The people of Medina who converted to Islam were called *ensar* while the Muslims who emigrated from Mecca were called *muhajirs*, meaning those who migrated in the way of Allah.

establishment of ZP, which has transformed the electorate's negative sentiments into a political issue, and the approaching elections in 2023, for which immigration has become an important component of political competition. Because our research investigates how political parties framed all these debates between 2011 and 2021, it largely leaves out how the 2023 electoral cycle has affected the rise of anti-immigration rhetoric. We hope focus on this exclusively in a future report.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

For this study, we used a tripartite methodology to triangulate our data and enhance the validity of our findings. The first component is content analysis of the parliamentary group speeches of Turkey's five major parties represented in the parliament: AKP, CHP, HDP, MHP, and IYI (N = 900).[4] The second component is semi-structured expert interviews with party officials responsible for migration policies.[5] The third component is content analysis of the party programs and election manifestos of the five parties to support the findings from the first two components. This tripartite data collection and analysis method helped us to strengthen the validity of our findings and provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the parties' anti-migration attitudes (see Appendix for the details of data collection, methodology, and analyses). In the next section, we focus on three major topics: the anti-immigrant attitudes of Turkish political parties, the way each party frames migration, and their proposed migration policies.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Anti-Immigrant Attitudes of Turkish Political Parties

Many factors can shape a political party's anti-immigrant attitudes and stance on immigration, including ideology and its constituents' concerns. In particular, party's anti-immigration stance may harden due to voters' concerns about issues like competition for jobs, national security, or cultural preservation. Populist radical right parties have been increasingly adopting anti-immigration political stances portraying immigrants as a threat to the interests of ordinary people and the native political culture. For European radical right parties, specifically, immigration has become the most significant issue for generating support for their broader political agenda (see Arzheimer & Berning, 2019; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018; Rooduijn, 2018).

As discussed before, Turkey's case is an anomaly. On the one hand, in less than a decade, it has received a significant number of refugees, around 4 percent of its population, which has created heated public debate and sharply increased anti-immigrant sentiment among voters. As Figure 4 shows, the percentage of respondents who do not want immigrants or foreign workers as their neighbors dramatically increased between the fifth (2010-2014) and sixth (2017-2022) rounds of the World Values Survey, which corresponds to the height of the refugee influx. On the other hand, political party policies did not, at least initially, reflect this anti-immigrant sentiment (see Fisunoglu & Sert, 2019; Elçi, 2022). We argue that this is related to the earlier low issue salience of immigration

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[4] Erdoğan's speeches also include the ones he delivered during the Meetings with Muhtars (local headmen) between August 2014 and April 2017. This period covers the election of Erdoğan as the president until the transition from the parliamentary to the presidential system. Previously, the president had to be impartial, hence, could not hold parliamentary group meetings in Turkey (See: Elçi (2019) for details).

[5] AKP, CHP, HDP, MHP, IYI, TIP, DEVA, SP, and GP.

since differences in the parties' attitudes became clearer in public debate as immigration became a more salient issue.

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents in Turkey choosing "Immigrants or Foreign Workers" as those they do not wish to be neighbors with
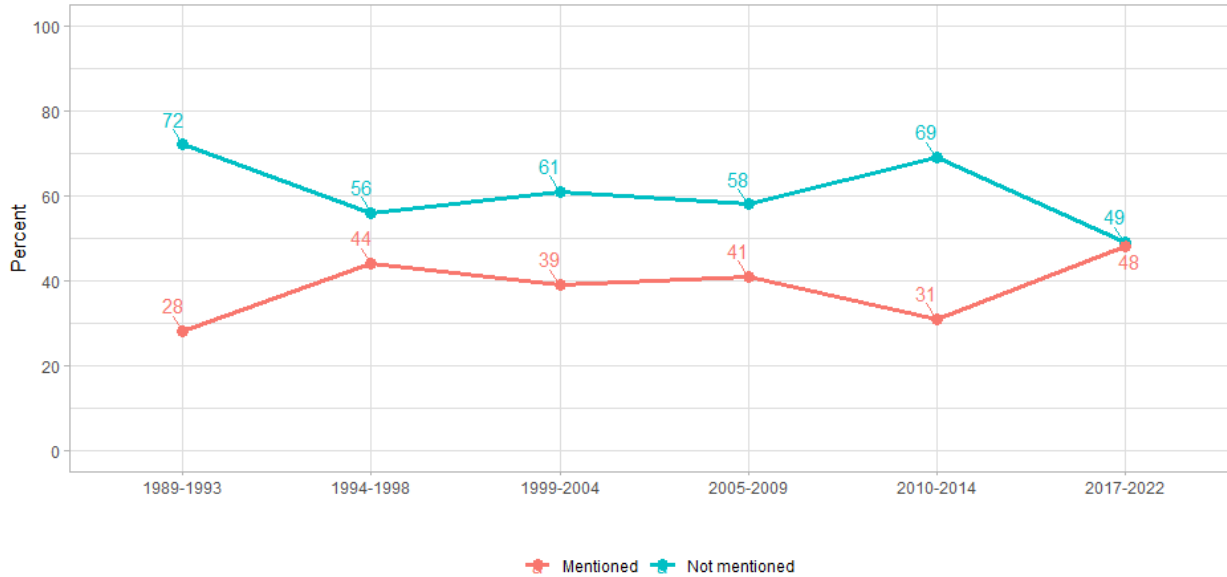

Note: The question wording was: "On this list are various groups of people. Could you please mention any that you would not like to have as neighbors?" The graph excludes "Don't know" and "No answer" options (Source: World Values Survey).

To investigate this, we measured both the saliency of the migration issue in each speech (i.e., whether it mentioned refugees or immigration) and the tone of the speech (i.e., how anti-immigrant it was). Our analysis shows that, out of 900 speeches, 219 (24%) mentioned immigration. In other words, the issue occupied one-quarter of Turkey's political agenda.

Figures 5 and 6 respectively show the overall salience and rhetorical tone of refugee issues by year and party. As Figure 5 shows, the tone of speeches did not pass the midpoint (0.5) between 2011 and 2021. That is, based on these speeches, political discussion of the refugee issue did not become explicitly anti-immigrant during this period, although there were already significant differences in the tone of the political parties (Figure 6). Saliency varied more than tone, peaking twice, in 2015 and 2018, before decreasing, particularly after 2019, to a point similar to 2011. The peak in 2015 can be explained by the rising number of Syrians crossing from Turkey to Europe after the conflict in Syria intensified, namely with the emergence of the EU's refugee crisis. The peak in 2018 can be explained by MHP's decision to join the People's Alliance with AKP for the 2019 election campaign along with Turkey's cross-border military operations in Northern Syria.

Figure 5: Tone and saliency of the Syrian refugee issue in speeches
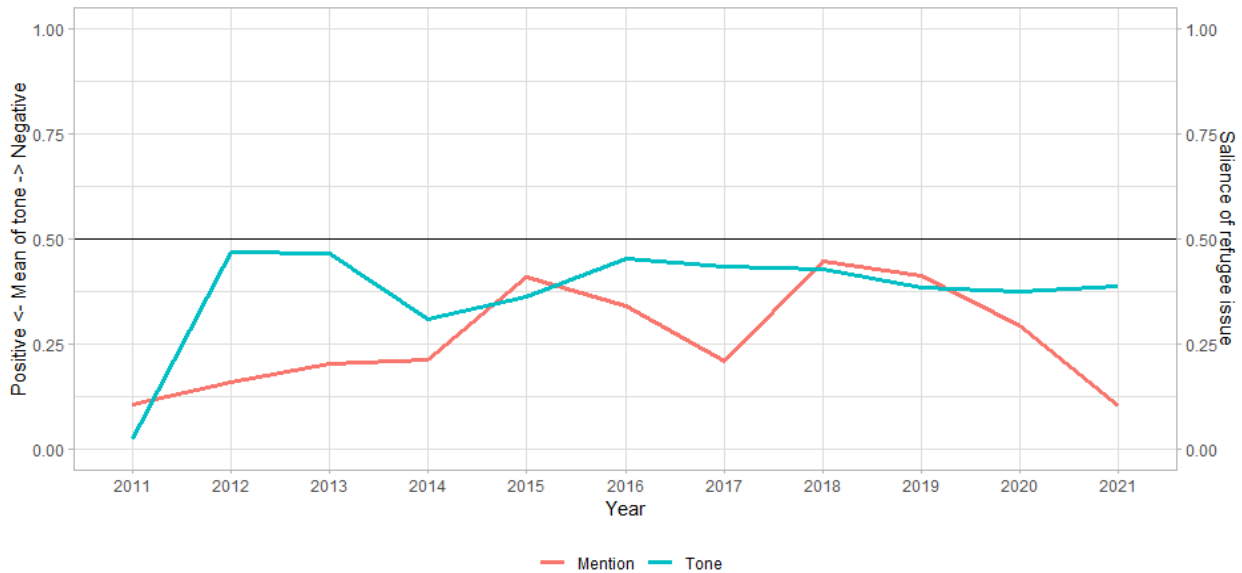
Note: The horizontal black line indicates the midpoint of the scale.

Figure 6: Tone and saliency of the Syrian refugee issue in speeches by parties
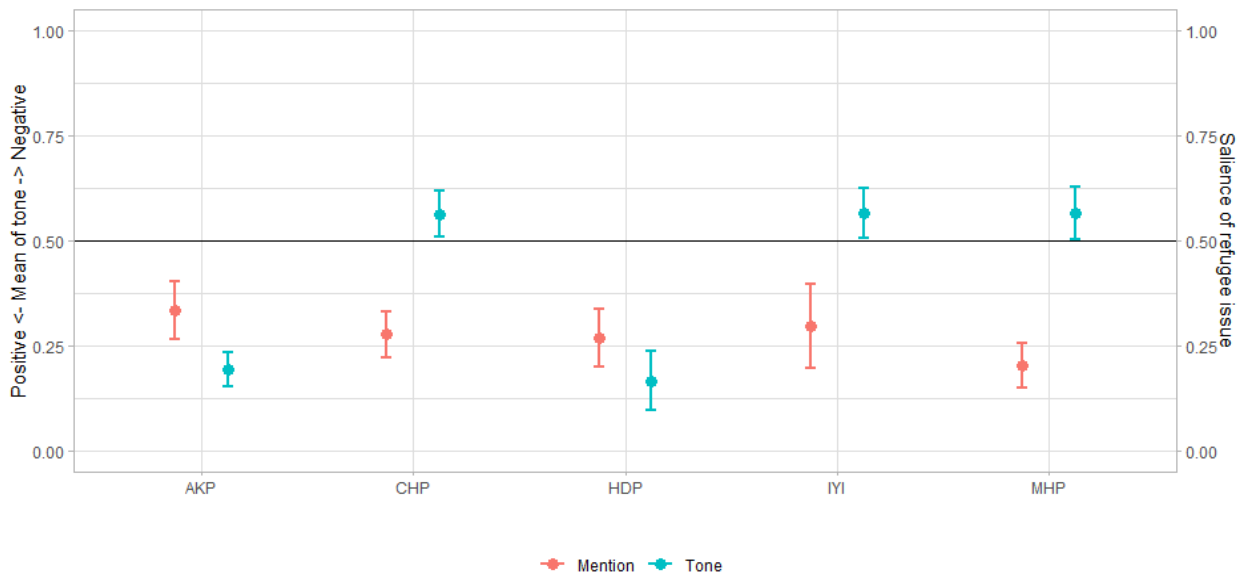
Note: The horizontal black line indicates the midpoint of the scale. Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals.

As Figure 6 shows, the five parties fall into two camps on the immigration issue: AKP and HDP have a more pro-immigrant stance (tone is below the midpoint) whereas CHP, MHP, and IYI have a more anti-immigrant stance (tone is above the midpoint). Strikingly, there is no significant difference in the pro- or anti-immigration tone of the parties in each group despite their ideological differences or parliamentary role.

Our elite interviews mainly aimed to determine the motivations informing each party's political attitudes on immigration. The findings indicated that three groups of factors informed their attitudes: the first group relates to their position in the political system – i.e., whether they were in the ruling coalition or in opposition. The second group relates to how they framed *Turkish citizenship*, specifically whether ideas about belonging shaped their attitudes and whether they saw newcomers as a threat. The third group relates to the influence of ideology on their political attitudes. Specifically, the more ideologically positioned political parties, particularly MHP and HDP, had stronger (negative and positive, respectively) stances toward immigration.

Regarding political position, the ruling coalition's political parties (AKP and MHP) both had a more positive attitude towards immigration despite their ideological differences. The reason is quite evident: Political actors who can shape immigration policy tend to be more pro-immigrant because their attitudes are shaped by political rationality rather than pro-immigrant bias. For the opposition parties, on the other hand, opposing immigration meant opposing the governing coalition's policies. This is less applicable to MHP in the content analysis because, before joining the ruling alliance, its stance was similar to those of the other opposition parties, although it eventually became more pro-immigrant while in government.

Furthermore, because they were in power, the governing parties had greater confidence because they know about immigration figures, rules, and procedures much better than the opposition parties. Hence, they displayed a feeling of being in control over the immigration issue whereas the opposition parties reflected anxiety stemming from their suspicions about the coalition's intentions due to the government's non-transparent political handling of the issue, which meant they had no specific information about immigrant numbers or ethnic composition, or the types of immigration policy. Consequently, the opposition parties' anti-immigration stances were not against immigrants per se but mostly about the government's handling of the issue.

Regarding the second group of factors related to ideas about who belongs and is worthy of acquiring Turkish citizenship, the parties' stances followed their ideological orientations. That is, rather than being merely a question of how to manage immigration, political attitudes towards immigration are shaped by how each party envisions modern Turkey's national identity, institutions, and territory. For religiously oriented conservative political parties, most notably the governing AKP, integration can be more easily handled based on a shared religious identity and an understanding of the spatiality of the Turkish citizenship based on the "Muslim identity." For parties that envision Turkishness more through ethnic or cultural markers, most notably CHP and IYI, the majority Muslim migration with no connection to Turkish national culture presented a problem or sometimes even a threat. For these parties, integration is based on ethnocultural similarity, so they may see large numbers of immigrants lacking this as disturbing. Finally, secular parties consider the Syrian immigrants' religious (specifically Muslim) background as a political instrument that AKP could use to destroy the Turkish Republic's secular foundations. In each case, however, the political parties treated immigrants as a homogenous group, assuming a common cultural, religious, and political identity.

The exceptions to this pattern were HDP and TIP, which exclusively framed the issue of migration in terms of humanitarian law and based the right to belong on universal rights. DEVA and GP also referred to humanitarian law and the universal rights of immigrants, although their political strategy aimed to appeal both to anti-immigrant

voters and conservative groups. The emergence of anti-immigration parties also appeared to affect the internal dynamics of all parties, particularly the mainstream ones. Alongside Turkey's deepening crisis, the establishment of ZP with its uniquely anti-immigrant political rhetoric increased the salience of immigration and radicalized mainstream parties' immigration stances, most notably affecting the IYI Party.

As Figure 7 shows, our text analysis confirmed our previous findings regarding the tone and saliency of the immigration issue over time and by parties. Similar to Figure 6, AKP and HDP speeches were more pro-immigrant than those of the other parties, although HDP's position fluctuated whereas AKP's rhetoric became slightly more anti-immigrant. Until 2017, MHP was the most strongly anti-immigrant party. However, it became more pro-immigrant while governing alongside AKP. The main opposition party, CHP, remained above the midpoint on the anti-immigrant side, although its negative discourse decreased and stayed close to 0.5. IYI, established in 2017, only became eligible to hold parliamentary meetings after the 2018 elections. While around 75 percent of the speeches of its leader, Meral Akşener, mentioned immigration in 2018, the issue's saliency then decreased over time as the party focused on the economic crisis, particularly during the pandemic. However, our interviews show that IYI's immigration stance changed after Ümit Özdag resigned from the party in 2021 to establish ZP. Our elite interviews also indicate that IYI's migration discourse significantly affected by ZP as they share a similar cadre and ideological orientation.

HOW POLITICAL PARTIES FRAME MIGRATION

According to Mudde (2012), anti-immigration sentiment emerges when immigrants appear to threaten a given country's cultural, security, economic, and political structure. From a cultural perspective, immigrants are stigmatized as aliens that undermine native in-group values by introducing non-native lifestyles and ideas into society. Cultural frames may also involve perceived threats toward the secular lifestyle of particular groups. The security aspect is related to debates over crime and terrorism due to the securitization of the immigration issue while the economic dimension is linked with welfare chauvinism, in which immigrants are labeled as being financially burdensome because they exploit social benefits and take jobs from the local population. Finally, in politics, immigrants are perceived as collaborators with the elites who prioritize newcomers at the expense of the native populations' demands. In the previous section, we have discussed how citizenship frames directly shape political parties' immigration discourses. This section discusses the negative and positive political frames that political parties use to address the immigration issue.

Since there are both anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant parties in Turkey, we measured both the negative and positive framing in our textual analysis. We drew on the literature findings that we touched on above to group negative and positive frames under four themes: culture, security, economy, and politics. When, for example, party leaders described Syrian refugees as siblings of Turkish people due to their religious similarities, we coded this as a religious frame, or, when leaders portrayed refugees as victims forced to leave their homes and homeland, we coded this as a political frame.

Table 1 presents the results. It shows that party leaders used positive frames more than negative ones, except for the economic theme. Hence, the primary driver of anti-immigration in Turkey appears to be welfare chauvinism. Many speeches framed refugees as guests, brothers, or sisters (26%), forced to leave their homes and homeland (33%), needing protection as a moral, humanitarian duty (24%), and victims of the Assad regime (15%).

Figure 7: Tone and saliency of the Syrian refugee issue in speeches by party and year

Note: The horizontal black line indicates the midpoint of the scale. Missing tone values indicates that those speeches mentioned Syrian refugees non-evaluatively.

Our elite interviews showed that, despite cultural or religious anxiety among secularist political parties, such as CHP and IYI, the interviewees refrained from describing the refugees as culturally different to the host population. This could reflect the political context in which attacking (or even pointing out) religious symbols and identities could reduce these parties' overall voter appeal by playing to Turkey's widely instrumentalized secular-religious cultural divide. Hence, rather than pointing out the cultural divide, these political parties either highlighted the economic crisis and the economic burden of refugees or, as we argued in the previous sections, mentioned the transparency problem.

Since we only coded textual material until 2021, we could not see how attitudes towards migration have changed since the establishment of ZP and the consequences of the upcoming elections. However, our elite interviews indicated that demographic anxiety was already becoming more prevalent, specifically for right-wing parties. Once again, IYI stands out in this regard in its emphasis on how the increasing number of ethnically different immigrants could challenge the ethnic basis of the Turkish state, although similar demographic concerns were also frequently mentioned by ZP, which is Turkey's most strongly anti-immigrant party. While MHP also raised demographic concerns, these did not refer to Syrian refugees, which the interviewees argued mostly include Turkmen populations, but rather illegal migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other Middle Eastern and African states. Indeed, MHP was the only party that carefully distinguished between Syrian refugees and illegal migrants in claiming that the security threat came from illegal and irregular migrants rather than Syrian refugees.

PROPOSED MIGRATION POLICIES

In the final step, we analyzed the political parties' proposed solutions to the immigration issue. In our text analysis, we coded whether the speaker offered a solution and, if so, what the offered solution was. As Figure 8 shows, around 70 percent of the speeches offered no specific solution. Around 20 percent suggested returning Syrian refugees without a regime change while less than five percent suggested opening borders for refugees to move to a third country or the EU.

Here, we need to note once again that our textual analysis does not cover 2022. This matters because the "no solution" attitude changed radically as migration issue became more salient due to campaigning for the 2023 elections. Indeed, by the end of 2022, almost all political parties had published documents offering policies to the immigration issue. These reveal that all political parties now propose the voluntary return of Syrian refugees as the primary solution to the immigration problem.

More specifically, among the major parties, IYI and CHP emphasize voluntary return. They both lay out return stages, starting with establishing diplomatic relations with the Assad government and helping Syria achieve political order to ease the refugees' return. Neither party offers any specific plans for integrating refugees in Turkey. As a political choice, IYI rejects such a policy while CHP only briefly mentions it for remaining refugees, which the party predicts will be few once the Syrian conflict is settled. Small parties like DEVA and GP emphasize the need for integration, although they also both underline the need for voluntary return. HDP and TIP are the most pro-integrationist parties parallel to their framing of the immigration issue as concerning universal rights.

Table 1: Most frequent frames in speeches (Top three choices)

	Cultural frame	Security frame
1	Guest/brotherhood (positive) 26%	Refugees are victims of the Assad regime (positive) 15%
2	Ethnic differences (negative) 7%	Border security (negative) 13%
3	Religious similarities (positive) 6%	Refugees are victims of PKK-PYD terror (positive) 9%
	Economic frame	**Political frame**
1	Welfare chauvinism (negative) 29%	Refugees are forced to leave their home and homeland (positive) 33%
2	Refugees are a threat to the local population in the job market (negative) 8%	Protecting refugees is a moral/humanitarian duty (positive) 24%
3	Turkey receives international aid thanks to refugees (positive) 2%	Refugees are suffering in border crossings (positive) 12%
		Refugees are changing Turkey's demography (negative) 12%

Note: We separately coded the cultural, security, economic, and political frames used in the speech.

Table 2: Most frequently used frames by political party

Party	Cultural		Security		Economic		Political	
	Positive	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Negative**
AKP	▓		▓		▓		▓	
CHP						▓		▓
MHP		▓		▓				
IYI						▓		
HDP	▓		▓				▓	

Note: Shaded boxes indicate the most frequently used frames

Concerning the solutions by the governing coalition parties, as we argued above, the strategic use of immigrants seemed more prevalent. MHP and AKP incorporate the voluntary return of refugees in their policy proposals, although they seem to be more cautious than opposition parties about the number of possible returnees. Neither party explicitly mentions the role of normalizing relations with the Assad regime as a condition for return, instead focusing more on Turkey's role in Syria as a condition for a partial return. In particular, their central policy is to transfer Syrian refugees to safe zones in Syria, established and controlled by Turkey. IYI shares the safe-zone approach as a backup plan if it proves impossible to normalize relations with Assad and establish order in Syria. In short, all major parties agree on the voluntary return of Syrian refugees, but for different reasons and with under conditions.

Figure 8: Frequency of proposed Solutions to the Syrian refugee crisis Figure 8: Frequency of proposed Solutions to the Syrian refugee crisis
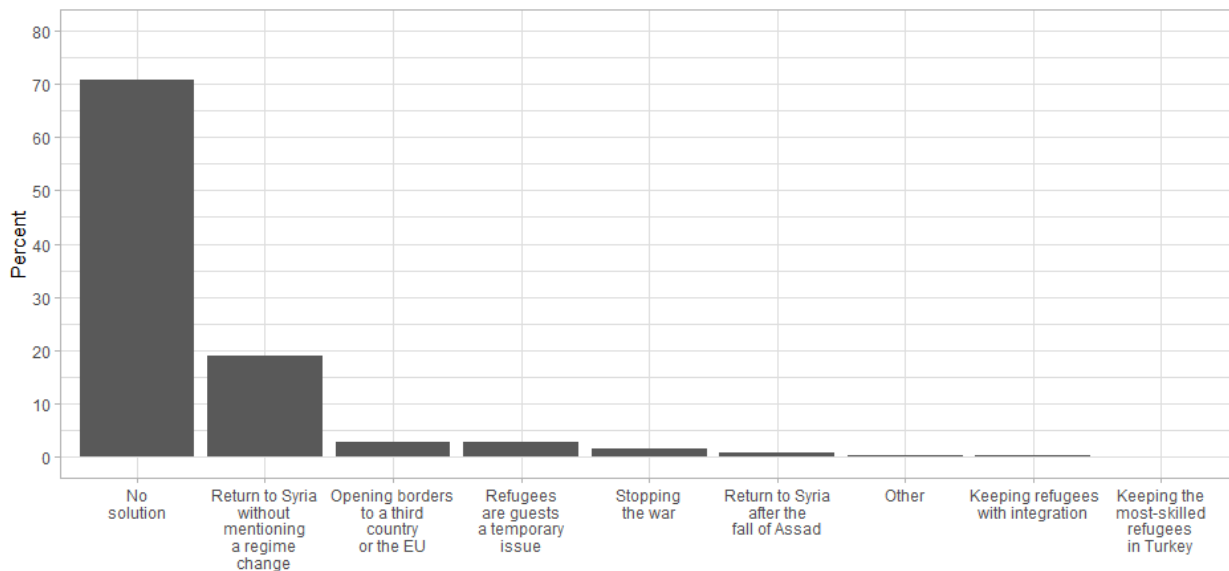
Note: The question was, "What solution does the speaker propose regarding immigration?"

Figure 9 is also very much in line with our findings from elite interviews. While MHP and CHP mostly have no solution for the issue compared to other parties, all actors mention the return option to a varying extent. IYI is the leading party in supporting the return of Syrian refugees. AKP also mentions the return of Syrian. However, their tone differs. For example, while AKP mostly favors voluntary return or resettlement of refugees in safe zones in Turkey-controlled areas in Northern Syria, IYI supports the "safe return" of refugees with the support of international organizations, the EU, and countries in the region in line with the law and human rights. Finally, HDP and IYI offer opening borders to a third country or the EU, whereas AKP defines refugees as guests and their presence as a temporary issue.

Figure 9: Frequency of proposed Solutions to the Syrian refugee crisis by political party
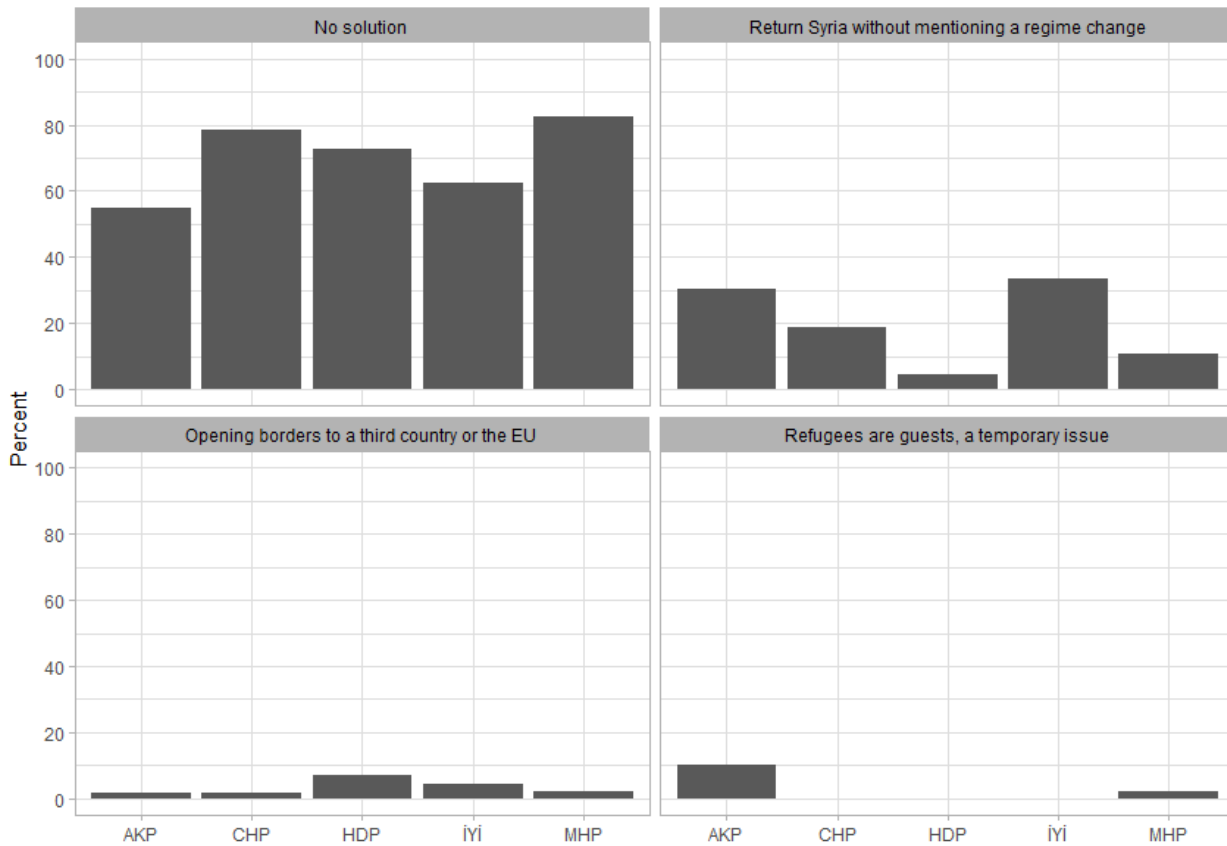
CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Migration is a complex phenomenon in that there are different types of migration with different root causes and diverse statuses, affecting many countries. Turkey is no exception as there are currently many foreigners in Turkey who fit different legal categories. These include *regular migrants* with residence permits granted for various reasons; people seeking *international protection,* mostly to be resettled to third countries in case they are granted refugee status, i.e., c*onditional refugees*; *irregular migrants* whose numbers only recorded if they are apprehended – there are many more who are not; and Syrians under Turkey's *temporary protection regime*, who, due to their high numbers, dominate the discourse on immigration in Turkey. Each of these groups has different problems that require different solutions. Nevertheless, even political actors supposed to develop diverse policies for these wide-ranging situations are unaware of the variety of immigration to Turkey. There is therefore a need for more transparency, public discussion, and dialogue at all levels.

Turkey is also an anomaly. Despite the high number of foreigners in the country, there has generally been a lack of anti-immigrant populism. However, this has been changing due to Turkey's growing economic crisis and the emergence of the anti-immigrant ZP. Indeed, it is already evident that migration will be *the* issue in the upcoming 2023 elections. This changing dynamic of Turkish migration politics opens up venues for further research that we aim to address in our follow-up report next year. In the meantime, we make the following policy recommendations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

To the government of Turkey:

1. Data transparency should be ensured for healthy public discussion. The current publicly available data on the national level should also be provided on the provincial level. Publicly unavailable data on different categories of migration, e.g., subsidiary protection, should be shared. Imperfect knowledge creates a collective bad for all.

2. The current political informality is not sustainable. Instead, policies towards different types of migration should be clearly defined. While informality creates a space of policy maneuver for the government, government policies should encourage formality.

3. Misconceptions about different categories of immigration must be overcome, e.g., the distinction between irregular migrants and Syrians under temporary protection must be clearly defined to inform the public. The government should develop specific policies for different types of immigration. The flexible visa policy that shapes current forms and patterns of irregular migration should be revised.

4. Turkey has become a destination for all types of migrants. Given that Turkey has multiple positions within the global migration system, it needs multiple diverse migration policies. For example, as a transit country, it needs to enhance multilateral collaboration at both governmental and non-governmental levels to stop migrant smuggling. As the host of the world's largest refugee community, it needs to keep a balanced relationship with Syria while continuing its global collaboration. Improving the political relationship with the Syrian government is also important for ensuring the security of refugees who aspire to return to Syria if certain circumstances allow.

5. Integration mechanisms should be established based on types of migrants, which should also be transparent, public, and auditable.

To the political parties of Turkey:

1. Data-driven and data-based analysis should be practiced.

2. Immigration to Turkey is not only about Syrians; there is no single form of migration; rather, there are many different forms of migration that should be considered in detail.

3. As expressed in interviews, the current preference for cancelling the Turkey-EU Statement can only lead to a stalemate. Instead, opposition parties should pursue re-negotiation to obtain better terms for Turkey.

4. Although the current discourse of returning refugees to assuage the public's demographic fears seems to be a good political instrument, it can only serve as a short-term policy. The complete return of all refugees is impossible, so Turkey's political parties must realize that creating unrealistic public expectations will only generate larger societal problems in the long run.

5. Despite current public resistance, the political elites should rethink and include integration in their discourse.

6. Migration should be considered a nonpartisan, consensual issue for the medium- and long-term social good.

7. Major parties should be self-reflective and set their own agenda instead of following anti-system parties.

To the European Union and member states:

1. Despite declining interest, the Turkey-EU Statement should be renegotiated.

2. Irregular migration and international protection should be treated as different policy areas.

3. The EU must reconsider its externalization policies and focus more on root causes. In their current form, the EU's migration policies only serve to create an unjust Europe that promotes anti-EU sentiments abroad.

4. EU backstage politics does not work. Instead, more public dialogue should be pursued with different actors in Turkey. There is a need to establish bureaucratic transparency.

5. More funds and resources should be provided to municipalities and local NGOs in Turkey to strengthen civil society participation and horizontal ties between Turkey and the EU.

APPENDIX

A. Methodology of Content Analysis

For the content analysis, we applied holistic grading method after gathering 900 speeches given between June 2011 and December 2021. These were given by five parties with more than 20 parliamentary deputies: AKP, CHP, HDP, IYI, and MHP. These speeches are publicly available on the parties' official websites and Youtube channels. Table A-1 shows the distribution of speeches by year and party.

In the first step of the content analysis, we established a holistic grading rubric similar to that used by previous studies to measure populism (Hawkins, 2009) and nationalism (Jenne et al., 2021). Second, we recruited five coders and conducted pilot tests based on the rubric. Third, we conducted a reliability test using ten randomly selected speeches. Krippendorf's alpha values indicated that our reliability scores were above the acceptable levels of 0.712 for interval values and 0.804 for nominal values (Neuendorf, 2002). Fourth, after generating a Qualtrics page for coding to minimize potential errors, we distributed the speeches to the five coders, who entered their evaluations into the links based on the rubric. Finally, we merged and cleaned the data before the analysis.

Table A-1: Distribution of speeches by party and year

	AKP	CHP	HDP	IYI	MHP	Total
2011	5	5			9	19
2012	22	20			28	70
2013	27	20			32	79
2014	14	18	19		25	76
2015	17	12	11		14	54
2016	15	33	14		32	94
2017	18	31	26		21	96
2018	25	30	26	11	18	110
2019	10	25	23	21	6	85
2020	10	25	17	22	15	89
2021	14	31	28	27	28	128
Total	177	250	164	81	228	900

B. Elite Interviews

We conducted nine semi-structured elite interviews to acquire information and contextualize their migration policies. We specifically asked about inter-elite debates within the political parties, critical junctures that made them change their opinions, and the other political parties and figures that they use to benchmark their migration policy. The interviews enabled us to determine why the parties hold their particular views and how they make connections or demonstrate disjunctions among the different political attitudes they hold. The authors carefully read and coded all interviews to identify the patterns and themes in the responses.

Dates of interviews in alphabetic order:

1. Interview with AKP representative, 16 September 2022, İstanbul, face to face
2. Interview with CHP representative 27 September 2022, Zoom
3. Interview with DEVA representative 19 September 2022, Zoom
4. Interview with GP representative 17 September 2022, Zoom
5. Interview with HDP representative 13 September 2022, Zoom
6. Interview with IYI representative 10 October 2022, Ankara, face to face
7. Interview with MHP representative 5 December 2022, Istanbul, face to face
8. Interview with SP representative 19 September 2022, Zoom
9. Interview with TIP representative 14 October 2022, Zoom

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