

Editors' Letter

This issue of *New Perspectives on Turkey* is focused on two pressing issues that concern Turkey: political polarization after the failed military coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, and human smuggling across the Mediterranean.

In the past decade, the smuggling of migrants through different routes across the Mediterranean has become a major humanitarian and international issue. Triggered by political strife in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, the debate on human smuggling has come to engulf the European Union (EU), Turkey, and southern Mediterranean countries. Popular and media accounts of human smuggling often focus on the humanitarian crisis and the role of smugglers, as well as on the EU backlash against irregular migration. In a Special Dossier brought together by Ayşem Biriz Karaçay and entitled "Researching Human Smuggling in the Mediterranean," we feature articles that go beyond such accounts in order to typify and compare human smuggling routes, discuss the role of state policies and international relations, and focus on the agency of migrants.

In an article with a comparative focus, Ayşen Üstübcü and Ahmet İçduygu analyze the impact of state policies on human mobility, investigating especially the effect of border closures in Turkey and Morocco on migration at two ends of the Mediterranean. Their analysis finds that the impact of border closures on irregular migration and human smuggling is not always the same.

Veronika Bilger, in her contribution to the Special Dossier, seeks to develop a typology of migrant smuggling. She argues that six fundamental mechanisms of migrant smuggling that were identified in the early 2000s have persisted over time, despite certain important changes in the modus operandi of migrant smugglers.

Ela Gökalg Aras and Zeynep Şahin Mencütek's focus, like that of Üstübcü and İçduygu, is on state policies. Specifically, they examine Turkey's foreign policy as it pertains to irregular migration over a period of time beginning with the 1990s. Their claim is that the patterns of continuity and change seen in Turkey's irregular migration regime during this period have been conditioned by shifts in the country's migration profile as well as by the external political and security environment.

Özge Biner has a different take on human smuggling in her article, which focuses on the province of Van on the Turkish-Iranian border. Rather than state policies, she turns her attention to the agency of the migrants themselves. In this, she seeks to add to our understanding of how smuggled migrants mobilize their agency in such a way as to manipulate and challenge the system, as well as of how this process transforms migrants' capacity to simultaneously recognize and unsettle state bordering practices.

This issue also features two articles that concentrate on Turkish political life in the wake of the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016. Both of these studies are products of the project entitled "Post-Coup Opportunities on Conflict Resolution and Democracy," conducted by the Resolution and Mediation Stream of the İstanbul Policy Center at Sabancı University. Taken together, these articles point to the deep level of political polarization in Turkey while warning that any potential political and administrative reform will require the country's social, political, and cultural polarizations to be overcome.

Senem Aydın-Düzgit and Evren Baltalı's goal in their contribution to the issue is to shed light on the Turkish elite's views of polarization. Focusing on four political frames—harmony, continuity/decline, conspiracy, and conflict—the authors find that there is a considerable degree of polarization among the Turkish elite regarding their views on the presence of polarization in Turkey. Their analysis shows that pro-government elites typically deny polarization's presence, whereas oppositional elites insist on its presence and significance.

In their article, Bülent Aras and Emirhan Yorulmazlar focus on the need for administrative reform in Turkey in the aftermath of July 15. Discussing the ongoing political transition process, they emphasize that, in addition to constitutional amendments, there is also a need for change in the administrative order. In light of how the coup attempt and the subsequent purges have weakened state capacities, the authors discuss the prospects for capacity development and institution building. However, in order to overcome the ongoing state crisis, there is a need for cooperation and a level of understanding among the government, the opposition, and the bureaucracy. With this in mind, the authors claim that continued polarization and disenfranchisement can only further fragment Turkish politics.

This issue of *New Perspectives on Turkey* addresses crucial questions pertaining both to Turkey's domestic politics (namely, polarization) and to international relations (namely, human smuggling). We hope that our readers will enjoy and benefit from these contributions.

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