

**THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE AEGEAN SEA: AN ANALYSIS IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX**

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of migration varies according to factors in many different dimensions, this study deals with irregular migration and the events that occur in this context. Turkey, due to its geopolitical position, is a transit country in the irregular migration issue, in comparison with neighboring countries, Turkey has become a transit country for migrants due to its relatively higher level of development compared to Middle Eastern countries located to its south and east, and its lower level of development compared to European countries. In this study, the results and reasons for Syrian refugee's attempts to use Turkey as a transit country and cross to Greece over the Aegean Sea will be analyzed from the perspective of Barry Buzan's 'Regional Security Complex Theory. This study focuses on the problem of whether a regional security complex has emerged in the Balkans due to the migration movement resulting from the Syrian Civil War, using Buzan's theory as a framework, between Turkey and Greece.

Keywords: Migration, Immigrant, Refugees in the Aegean Sea, Greece, Turkey.

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EGE DENİZİNDEKİ MÜLTECİ SORUNU: BÖLGESEL GÜVENLİK KOMPLEKSİ BAĞLAMINDA BİR ANALİZ

ÖZ

Göç olgusu, birçok farklı boyutta etki eden faktörlere göre değişiklik göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, yasa dışı göçü ve bu bağlamda meydana gelen olayları incelemektedir. Türkiye, coğrafi konumundan dolayı yasa dışı göç konusunda transit bir ülkedir; komşu ülkelerle karşılaştırıldığında, güneyi ve doğusunda yer alan Orta Doğu ülkelerine nazaran daha kalkınmış olması, Avrupa ülkelerine nazaran ise az kalkınmış olması nedeniyle göçmenler açısından geçiş ülkesi haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışmada, özellikle Suriyeli mültecilerin Türkiye'yi transit ülke olarak kullanarak Ege Denizi üzerinden Yunanistan'a geçme girişimlerinin nedenleri ve sonuçları, Barry Buzan'ın "Bölgesel Güvenlik Kompleksi Teorisi" perspektifinden analiz edilecektir. Bu çalışma Buzan'ın kuramından hareketle, Türkiye ve Yunanistan arasında; Balkanlarda, Suriye İç Savaşı'ndan kaynaklanan göç hareketinden dolayı bölgesel güvenlik kompleksinin ortaya çıkıp çıkmadığı sorusuna odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Göçmen, Ege Denizindeki Mülteciler, Yunanistan, Türkiye.

Introduction

The definition of a Regional Security Complex can be understood as the interactions among regional actors in the context of security. Buzan and Waever, in their description of Regional Security Complexes, have emphasized that security issues can vary based on regional and geographical factors. This study focuses on the claim that Turkey and Greece's security perceptions constitute a regional security domain. Additionally, the study takes on the argument within the framework of this theory, suggesting that the two countries' regional security concepts have been redefined in recent years due to security issues arising from the migration crisis resulting from the Syrian Civil War.¹

Buzan asserts that geographical proximity between two countries triggers significantly higher levels of interaction, in contrast to security interactions that might occur between different countries. Indeed, many

¹ Barry Buzan, *The logic of regional security in the post-Cold War world. In The New Regionalism and the Future of Security and Development*, Vol. 4, Palgrave Macmillan, UK 2000, p. 1-25.

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threats arising from a security perspective occur between two neighboring states.²

When the Regional Security Complex Theory is examined from the global to the local level, it can vary based on states' power potentials and mutual threat perceptions. Additionally, it can become relatively shaped and more complex according to the attitudes of global powers towards the specific region. Although it has been acknowledged that global powers can influence regional issues, Buzan contends that fundamentally, security matters are of a regional nature.³

Between Turkey and Greece, it can be argued that there has been a competitive and threat-perceiving security environment since Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century, persisting to the present day. Historical examples supporting this claim can be traced back much further. For instance, the security crisis between Turks and Greeks that began with the conquest of Istanbul has manifested itself throughout history. In brief, the reasons behind the intense threat perceptions between the two countries include Greece's attainment of independence, the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, the 1912 Balkan Wars, and the 1914-1918 World War I. Evaluated within the framework of the Regional Security Complex between the two countries, these examples form the basis for historical and cultural traumas. In the present day, unresolved security issues persist between the two countries, such as the Aegean Islands dispute, the Eastern Mediterranean Exclusive Economic Zone dispute, and the Western Thrace issue.

Buzan argues that the mentioned regional issues do not lose their regional characteristics independently of the world system. As evidence, he points to geographical problems in regions such as the Middle East, where issues persisted during the Cold War era, indicating their ongoing relevance.⁴ Considering that the historical examples provided encompass a wide period, it can be stated that the problems between Greece and Turkey also possess regional characteristics. Therefore, they can be evaluated within the framework of the Regional Security Complex.

² Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 6-20.

³ Derrick Frazier and Robert Stewart Ingersoll, "Regional powers and security: A Framework for Understanding Order Within Regional Security Complexes", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2010, p. 731-753.

⁴ Buzan and Waever, *op.cit.*, p. 77-80.

The migration triggered by the Syrian Civil War has added a new dimension to the current security issues between Greece and Turkey. Millions of migrants originating from Syria first arrived in their neighboring country, Turkey, and subsequently, a significant portion of them illegally crossed into Greece to move further into Europe.⁵

The study will address the policies formulated by Greece and Turkey in response to the migration movement from Syria. These policies will be examined within the context of the Regional Security Complex between the two countries, and the impact they have on each other's threat perceptions will be elucidated. The nature of the contribution made by the migration movement to the enduring regional security characteristics between the two countries constitutes the research problem.

1. The Refugee Crisis in the Aegean Sea and the Regional Security Complex

The concept of Regional Security Complex, first introduced in Barry Buzan's book published in 1983, is defined as a group of states whose national securities are interdependent and whose fundamental security concerns are closely related.⁶ Barry Buzan, who first proposed the concept of the Regional Security Complex, later developed it further in collaboration with Ole Waever, thus consolidating it as one of the foundational elements of the security approaches of the Copenhagen School. In the theory developed and consolidated by Buzan and Waever, the existing definition of regional security complex was revised as a group of actors (units) whose security enhancement or de-securitization processes are so interrelated that their security problems cannot be understood or solved separately.⁷

The Copenhagen School has contributed three major disciplines to the study of security in an international context. These three sub-disciplines are of great importance and are named 'securitization', 'sectoral security analysis', and 'regional security analysis'⁸ In this study, the main subject of

⁵ Katerina Rozakou, "Nonrecording the "European refugee crisis" in Greece: Navigating through irregular bureaucracy", *Focaal*, Vol. 2017, No. 77, 2017, p. 36-49.

⁶ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, The University of North Carolina Press 1983, p. 106.

⁷ Buzan and Waever, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

⁸ Leszek Sadurski, "Regional Security Complex Theory: Why is this Concept still Worth Developing?", *Athenaeu: Polskie Studia Politologiczne*, Vol. 75, No. 1, 2022, p. 137-153.

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investigation is the impact of the refugee crisis in the Aegean Sea on the region, as understood through the lens of the regional security complex theory, which was first proposed by Barry Buzan and subsequently established in the literature by the Copenhagen School, specifically the third approach of “regional security analysis”.

In the field of international relations, for many years, the study of security systems had been dominated by global-level disciplines, as events were analyzed through a realist structuralist perspective. While this was the case, regional approaches in international relations were neglected for a long time, and the first regional approaches in the security system of international relations were seen in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the theory proposed by Buzan and Waever, they argue that the foundation is based on the likelihood that threats may come from closer distances, as they believe that the dangers of the international system are not only concentrated in the relations between the great powers but also in the relations between the countries of the regions. Buzan and Waever argue that the foundation of the concept is based on the likelihood of threats originating from closer distances being higher. They posit that threats that occur nearby can more easily spread and have a more immediate impact, making mutual security dependence more important and regional security complexes more intense in these areas.⁹

Looking at historical events, it can be seen that countries generally have more concerns about neighboring countries and that trust ties are stronger with neighboring countries compared to foreign ones. Except for the relatively calm period between 1923 and the late 1950s, it can be stated that Turkey and Greece perceived each other as rivals. The threat perception has been at high levels for both countries, evident in concrete examples such as the Cyprus issue, the Aegean Islands dispute, the Istanbul pogrom, and Greece’s Megali Idea strategy. Particularly, the issue of islands in the Aegean Sea, which is the focus of this study, can be regarded as a geographical area where periodical high security concerns intensified due to the countries’ uncompromising stances arising from disputes over territorial waters. In their theory of regional security complex, Buzan and Waever argue that the proximity of nations sharing a common geography plays a significant role in shaping their security perceptions and interactions, as the proximity of nations

⁹ Buzan and Waever, *op.cit.*, p. 28-30.

leads to a strong interdependence in terms of security concerns and actions.¹⁰ They argue that the likelihood of security threats emanating from neighboring countries is higher than from distant nations and that the proximity of nations makes the spread and impact of security threats more rapid. As such, mutual trust and security interdependence are stronger among neighboring countries, leading to the formation of more intense regional security complexes. They suggest that historical evidence supports the idea that nations generally have greater concerns about their neighbors than about distant countries and that security ties tend to be stronger among neighboring nations.¹¹

2. Immigrations and Migrants in a Conceptual Framework

In essence, migration can be divided into two main categories based on distance, namely internal or external migration, and based on the cause, it can be further divided into forced or voluntary migration. According to studies, there are many sub-types of migration within these two main categories. In this study, various types of migration are examined, including primitive migration, individual migration, forced migration, irregular migration, mass group migration, and brain drain. Primitive migration is a result of an environmental push factor.¹² Individual migration refers to the process of individuals moving based on their own free will, utilizing their own accumulated resources and skills. Forced migration, as defined by the United Nations, refers to the movement of individuals who are forcibly displaced, either within their country or across international borders, due to human rights violations, natural disasters, or other humanitarian crises.¹³ Illegitimate migration refers to the movement of individuals across national borders without proper authorization and documentation. In this context, states have implemented various agreements and regulations to control the duration and purpose of stays of incoming individuals, and as a result, customs and visa controls are often implemented upon entry into the country. However, those

¹⁰ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p. 2-7.

¹¹ Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, p. 30.

¹² Lori M. Hunter and Raphael Nawrotzki, "Migration and the Environment", *International Handbook of Migration and Population Distribution*, (ed.) Michael J. White, International Handbooks of Population, Vol. 6, Springer, Dordrecht 2016, p. 472.

¹³ A. I. Kanu and Immaculata Olu Omojola and Mike Boni Bazza, "The National Migration Policy: A Critical Review", *Nnadiabube Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2019, p. 95.

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who enter the country covertly, without the necessary permits and documents, are considered to be in an irregular migration status.¹⁴

In all the types of migration mentioned, there are disadvantages and risks for the host country, to a greater or lesser extent. This type of migration typically flows from less developed or developing countries to developed countries.¹⁵ In addition to the migration types discussed above, another distinct type of migration is mass group migration. While other migrations are carried out individually or by single families, mass group migration involves large groups of people. In the context of migration, a mass group migration refers to the movement of a large number of individuals in a coordinated manner, or the movement of a significant portion of a population within a specific time frame.¹⁶ According to the United Nations' definition, there are four major migration routes worldwide. Two of these intersect directly in the Eastern Mediterranean region, which concerns both Greece and Turkey. One route involves traveling overland from Asia, passing through Turkey, and crossing the Aegean Sea to reach Greece, while the other route involves migrants coming from Africa, attempting to reach the European continent by sea, passing through the Eastern Mediterranean, and reaching the Aegean islands. These two major migration routes, which have such significant global implications, are situated in the geographical intersection of Greece and Turkey. This situation directly and adversely impacts the regional security risk between the two countries.¹⁷

In the context of migration, there are various effects on host countries, source countries, and migrants themselves, as migration is a multidimensional phenomenon. Few subjects are as important for social sciences and sociologists as migration. Today, communities carry great significance in the international sphere, and without understanding the information about the members, borders, economic, social, and political status of a community, it is impossible to discuss the subject. In light of the political significance it

¹⁴ Alessandra Casarico and Giovanni Facchini and Tommaso Frattini, "Illegal immigration: Policy perspectives and challenges", *CESifo Economic Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 3-4, 2015, p. 675-678.

¹⁵ Carolina Canibano and Richard Woolley, "Towards a socio-economics of the brain drain and distributed human capital", *International Migration*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 2015, p. 116.

¹⁶ David Scott Fitzgerald and Rawan Arar, "The sociology of refugee migration", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2018, p. 397.

¹⁷ UN Migration, <https://weblog.iom.int/worlds-congested-human-migration-routes-5-maps>, (17.10.2023).

carries, the subject of migration and migrants attracts attention in the social sciences. The political implications arising from large-scale migration in developed countries, the unease generated by the rights granted to migrants among a significant portion of the native population, and the effects on domestic political situations can all be examined within this context.¹⁸ Aforementioned, it is apparent that migration and the presence of migrants are issues that carry significant political weight in developed countries that receive high numbers of immigrants. Amongst the concerns harbored by native populations in these countries is the fear of immigrants taking over their own spaces. The greatest potential impact that migrants may have on the political landscape is through the mobilization of large groups of migrants in acts of civil unrest, or by potentially altering the outcome of elections through a majority vote.¹⁹

Creating an effective policy for immigrants requires an understanding of the concept of migration from both politicians and the general public. If politicians, leaders, and the public can comprehend the scale and nature of migration, it will be easier for them to control, restrict, and even prevent it. To provide an example, the situation of the mass migration from Mexico to the United States in 2006 can be cited as a situation in which the United States, recognizing the magnitude of the migration flow, implemented a policy solution by expanding its border fencing with Mexico and augmenting it with electronic sensors and cameras. In the past, certain sections of the US-Mexico border were fortified with barbed wire, however, as the influx of migration increased, measures were taken to enhance security. The US government's decision to increase the use of barbed wire, as well as to supplement it with electronic sensors and cameras, was aimed at reinforcing border security in order to combat unchecked migration.²⁰

The primary goal of the recently enforced security policy is to limit and regulate migration through designated entry points. Despite intensified measures at the border, this has had little impact on irregular immigration, resulting in individuals settling in the country after being unable to re-enter,

¹⁸ Nadzeya Laurentsyeva, Alessandra Venturini, "The social integration of immigrants and the role of policy—A literature review", *Intereconomics*, Vol. 52, No. 5, 2017, p. 289.

¹⁹ Adrian Favell, "Immigration, integration and citizenship: Elements of a new political demography", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 2022, p. 5.

²⁰ David Escamilla-Guerrero, "Revisiting Mexican migration in the Age of Mass Migration: New evidence from individual border crossings", *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 53, No 4, 2020, p. 210-212.

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and others disguising themselves as tourists to conceal their presence. The positive aspect of this situation is that it demonstrates the responsiveness of current government leaders to the voices of the public, as they have attempted to take some measures in response.²¹

The phenomenon of migration comprises various elements and is a multidimensional issue. Though many countries primarily associate it with social sciences and social policies, it is a matter that requires examination from various perspectives. At times, unexamined migration events can result in complicated issues. Throughout history, migration has always been a phenomenon that necessitates a comprehensive evaluation from various perspectives, as it can affect individuals and everything associated with them.

2.1. Turkey's Immigration Policy

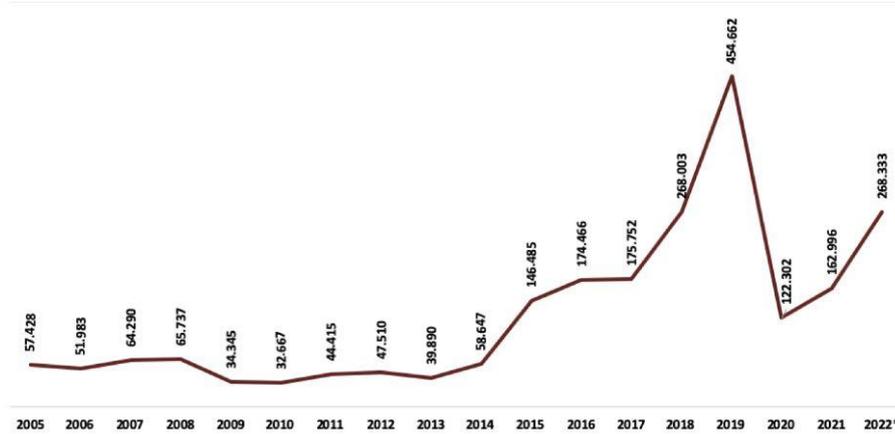
Throughout its history, Turkey experienced migration as both a recipient and a source country. Due to its strategic location, it provided refuge to people fleeing instability and conflict in neighboring countries and served as a transit point for individuals seeking asylum and resettlement elsewhere. Three significant waves of migration occurred, including the return migration of Turkish citizens from the Balkans following World War I, the influx of Iraqi refugees during the Gulf War and the American invasion of Iraq, and the current Syrian refugee crisis.²²

Data provided by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Turkey indicates a surge in the number of irregular immigrants entering the country, as demonstrated in the table above. The number of irregular immigrants has consistently increased annually, with a considerable spike in 2018-2019. The approximate number of Syrian refugees in Turkey stands at 3.2 million, with some staying in refugee camps while others reside in different cities throughout the country. The majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey are male, with a significant portion between the ages of 19-29, and the largest demographic being under 18 years of age.²³

²¹ Yoo-Duk Kang, "Refugee crisis in Europe: determinants of asylum seeking in European countries from 2008-2014", *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2021, p. 40-44.

²² Latif Dilek and Nusret Sinan Evcin, "Reconsidering 'EU Actorness' in Changing Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean Region", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2022, p. 123-144.

²³ Gökhan Tuncel and Süleyman Ekici, "Göçün Siyasal Etkisi: Suriyeli Göçmenlerin Türkiye Siyasetine Etkisi", *Birey ve Toplum Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2019, p. 58-59.

Figure 1: Number of Migration in Turkey by Years

Source: Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs, Directorate of Migration Management

Turkey has maintained an open-door policy for all migrants, granting citizenship, work permits, education rights, and health insurance to many. Syrian migrants who became citizens chose their place of residence freely, typically settling in cities near the Syrian border or major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Some Syrian partners now operate local businesses. Although challenges emerged regarding culture, economy, and society, Syrian refugees have adapted to Turkey and its living conditions. Some, who could not adjust, attempted to move to Europe using illegal routes.²⁴ To address irregular migration, Turkey has introduced laws and decrees regarding refugees, modifying, improving, and adding to them as necessary. The “Foreigners and International Protection Law” (No. 6458) was added to Turkey’s domestic legal system in 2013, followed by the “Temporary Protection Regulation” in 2014 and the “Regulation on the Work Permit of Temporary Protected Foreigners” in 2016, all related to Syrian migrants in Turkey.²⁵

²⁴ Ayhan Kaya, “Migration as a Leverage Tool in International Relations: Turkey as a Case Study”, *International Relations*, Vol. 17, No. 68, 2020, p. 25.

²⁵ Tuncel and Ekici, *op.cit.*, p. 58-59.

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To maintain better control over this situation and make the process more successful, the “Department for Combatting Irregular Migration” was established on July 15, 2018, through Presidential Decree No. 4. The purpose of this agency is to carry out tasks and procedures related to migration, to develop new measures in frequent communication with law enforcement agencies, to control the implementation of existing measures, and to enforce relevant provisions in cases such as the return agreements to which Turkey is a party. To combat irregular migration, two strategy documents and a national action plan were prepared by the Migration Management Authority. The first strategy document and national action plan for combating irregular migration covers the years 2015-2018, while the second covers the years 2021-2025.²⁶

The Republic of Turkey’s current government and other decision-making bodies such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Presidency of Migration Management, implemented projects* and updates aimed at providing basic needs and protection for refugees within the state’s borders, as well as those who may come from beyond the borders, while also attempting to minimize negative effects on the national population, economy, politics, and culture. Turkey endeavored to develop a national approach, working in collaboration with various state institutions and stakeholders, aiming to address irregular migration, particularly from neighboring countries. This approach is claimed to be more humane, considering both the interests of refugees and Turkey’s national interests, without disregarding either. The government implemented various laws and regulations to ensure the basic needs and protection of refugees within its borders, as well as to control the influx of migrants. Despite initial challenges, such as conflicts and instability arising from the large influx of Syrian refugees, the situation improved over time through the gradual integration of refugees and the implementation of various policies by the Turkish government. Additionally, it is important to remember that the right to life of all individuals, regardless

²⁶ Ministry of Interior, Presidency of Migration Management, “www.goc.gov.tr”, (19.12.2022).

* The Directorate of Migration Management has implemented a project titled ‘Strengthening Cooperation with Origin Countries and Strategic Partners to Prevent Irregular Migration through Complementary Activities.’ Its primary objective is to enhance the operational capacities of the Presidency of Migration Management and strategic partners such as Turkish law enforcement agencies in combating irregular migration; to ensure effective and advanced migration management in Turkey; and to strengthen regional cooperation between Turkey and major origin countries to prevent irregular migration. For more info: <https://www.goc.gov.tr/goc-projeleri56>, (17.10.2023).

of their citizenship, should never be ignored, particularly in the context of international human rights and humanitarian considerations.²⁷

The recent developments indicate that Turkey lacks a sustainable migration policy. Approximately 77% of Syrian-origin migrants in the country being unemployed turns them into potential sources of instability within the country.²⁸ Turkey's migration policy appears to be primarily built upon a vested interest relationship through Greece and the European Union. Firstly, the financial gain obtained from the European Union under the readmission agreement signed by Turkey constitutes its primary short-term interest. However, it can be argued that the financial benefit is negligible when considering the material assistance provided to migrants and other social losses. Secondly, Turkey uses migrants as a shield against other issues with Greece. This was evident during the 2020 Greece-Turkey border crisis. Following the death of 33 soldiers in the city of Idlib, Turkey announced that it would open its border gates for Syrian migrants to enter Greece. Subsequently, tens of thousands of migrants moved towards Greece, leading to a border crisis and resulting in violence against migrants by Greek officials, causing several deaths.²⁹

Turkey utilizes its migration policy more as a means to make progress in European Union membership negotiations and gain benefits such as visa-free travel, particularly in the context of the European Union, rather than a cooperation tool with Greece. In this context, it can be said that Turkey adopts pragmatic and short-term policies. This situation has a negative impact on regional security between Greece and Turkey. Evaluating Turkey's migration policy in the context of Buzan's Regional Security Complex, it is necessary to address a situation where security risks increase rather than cooperation. Turkey attempts to shape its migration policy to balance geopolitical issues it faces in the Aegean islands, such as territorial waters disputes, or economic challenges.

²⁷ Özden Zeynep Oktav and Aycan Çelikaksoy, "The Syrian Refugee Challenge and Turkey's Quest for Normative Power in the Middle East", *International Journal*, Vol. 70, No. 3, 2015, p. 411-412.

²⁸ Kıvılcım Akkoyunlu Ertan and Birol Ertan, "Türkiye'nin Göç Politikası", *Contemporary Research in Economics and Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2017, p. 24.

²⁹ France 24, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20221017-greece-and-turkey-trade-blame-after-dozens-of-nearly-naked-migrants-found-on-border>, (17.10.2023).

2.2. Greece's Immigration Policy

Before the 1990s, Greece lacked a clear immigration or refugee policy due to a lack of immigrants.³⁰ However, as the economy and industry developed, workers from various countries began to arrive, and the stable policies established as an AET and EU member attracted more immigrants. Greece's location, tourism industry, and cultural features also made it an attractive destination. Consequently, the sudden influx of immigrants in the 1990s resulted in a significant renewal of the country's population and demographic structure.³¹

Before the 1990s, Greece mainly repatriated individuals of Greek ethnicity. However, economic migration increased after the Cold War, and by 2001, immigrants accounted for 8% of the population. After the Cold War, Greece experienced a rise in economic migration, which led to immigrants comprising 8% of the population by 2001. Before this, Greece primarily repatriated individuals of Greek ethnicity.³² In the 1990s, migration patterns shifted to Albania, Balkan countries, and Pakistan. Before this shift, Greece was not seen as a country of immigration. In 1991, a law on immigration was passed, but it was insufficient, leading to the issuance of a new law in 1997 that established conditions for immigrants to live and work in Greece. Migration patterns in the 1990s shifted to Albania, Balkan countries, and Pakistan, altering Greece's status as a non-immigration country. In 1991, an insufficient law on immigration was passed, prompting the issuance of a new law in 1997 that set living and working conditions for immigrants in Greece.³³

Greece hosts numerous refugees from various countries including Lebanon, Vietnam, and the Middle East, despite being one of the least developed nations in the EU. Migration resulting from the collapse of regimes in Central and Eastern Europe has led to a substantial workforce in Greece.

³⁰ Gizem Aliođlu akmak, "Avrupalılařmasının Ařıl Tendonu: G Politikaları ve Yunanistan rneđi", *Mukaddime*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2018, p. 45.

³¹ Chagial Kioutsouk, *Trkiye ve Yunanistan'da Uygulanan G Politikaları (1990 Sonrası)*, İstanbul University Social Sciences Institute, International Relations, MA Thesis, Supervisor: Assist. Prof. E. Zeynep Gler, İstanbul, 2013, p. 58.

³² Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *Gler ađı: Modern Dnyada Uluslararası G Hareketleri*, (transl.) Blent U. Bal and İbrahim Akbulut, İstanbul Bilgi niversitesi, İstanbul 2008, p. 281.

³³ Maria Siadima, *Immigration in Greece During the 1990s: An Overview*, King's College London Mediterranean Studies, MA Thesis, Supervisor: Prof. Rory Miller, London 2001, p. 9.

The country's lenient policies towards refugees, capitalization on instability, and its location have all contributed to increased immigration. The EU has begun to pressure Greece due to its position as the Eastern gateway and its potential impact on member states. Greece attempted to prevent uncontrolled and irregular migration by fencing off the shores of the Evros (Meriç) River, but this was not a definitive solution. Despite these efforts, Greece remains a transit country for Syrian migrants and not a destination.³⁴ The ongoing influx of migrants from Syria and Afghanistan targets Turkey as their first destination, then Greece, and finally other EU countries. Irregular migrants enter Turkey through various policies and illegal routes before targeting Greece due to its proximity to the Turkish border. Greece has tried to control irregular immigration by apprehending migrants, returning them to Turkey, and implementing a 'zero tolerance' policy to block their entry by land, air, or sea. Unfortunately, this strict policy has resulted in harm and loss of life for many irregular immigrants. The Aegean Sea remains a significant escape point for irregular immigration.³⁵

The influx of irregular immigrants after the 2009-2010 Euro crisis caused significant difficulties for Greece, particularly on its islands close to Turkey. The islands' populations were overwhelmed by the number of immigrants, leading to a request for help from the Prime Minister. A decision was made for all islands to adopt a unified policy, but this was ineffective. The situation soon became a major humanitarian problem that Greece could not handle alone, prompting it to seek help from the EU, Turkey, and other relevant parties. Although the agreement with Turkey produced positive results, the EU did not provide the expected support. Germany, however, has been a major supporter of Greece in this crisis.³⁶

Greece's migration policy orientation has gradually taken a harsher stance, driven by the fear of transforming from a transit country into a permanent destination for refugees. A concrete example of this shift is evident in the law introduced in 2020 regarding international protection. This law implemented stringent measures, such as detention for up to 18 months and limitations on financial aid, for refugees arriving in Greece. The migrant crisis

³⁴ İlhan Aras and Akın Sağıroğlu, "Yunanistan ve Suriyeli Mülteciler: Avrupa'nın Kapısını Zorlamak", *Uluslararası Politik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2017, p. 21.

³⁵ Song Nui and Bing Fan, "An Overview of the Middle East Immigrants in the EU: Origin, Status Quo and Challenges", *İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi İGÜSBD*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2016, p. 66.

³⁶ Aras and Sağıroğlu, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

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along the land border with Turkey at the Evros River in 2020 also led to various physical measures being taken along the border with Turkey. Greece began implementing measures such as erecting walls, installing wire fences, and digging trenches along the Evros border.³⁷

The border region of Pazarkule-Kastanies, which was the focal point of the 2020 migration crisis, holds significance in demonstrating the tension in the foreign policies of Greece and Turkey. In the Pazarkule region, it was clearly observed that international migration was utilized as a tool of foreign policy, particularly by Turkey, as migrants were drawn to the region with hopes of reaching Europe following the Idlib events in 2020. In response to this strategic move, Greece, by nullifying Article 78.3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), caused some humanitarian rights violations and failed to fulfill the requirements of international law.³⁸ This situation marked one of the moments when political tensions between Greece and Turkey reached their peak. Certainly, the tension between Greece and Turkey within the regional security complex began to ease over time due to the intensified financial expectations of both countries within the European Union.

Greece's policy has confined its cooperation opportunities with Turkey solely within the framework of the readmission agreement signed between the European Union and Turkey. Additionally, by strengthening border measures, Greece attempts to create barriers and isolate itself as much as possible from Turkey. Moreover, one of the reasons for its desire to extend its territorial waters to 12 nautical miles within the context of the island dispute with Turkey should be viewed as geopolitical interests. If Greece extends its territorial waters to 12 miles in the Aegean islands, the Aegean Sea will become the Greek Sea, potentially confining Turkey to its Anatolian shores. This situation would significantly facilitate migration control for Greece. In this context, it can be argued that one of the reasons behind Greece's expansionist policies is to control the element of irregular migration within the framework of the regional security complex.

³⁷ Bpb, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/laenderprofile/english-version-country-profiles/505134/migration-and-migration-policy-in-greece/>, (18.10.2023).

³⁸ Ali Hüseyinoglu and Deniz Eroğlu Utku, "Turkish-Greek Relations and Irregular Migration at The Southeasternmost Borders of the EU: The 2020 Pazarkule Case", *Migration Letters*, Vol. 18, No. 6, 2021, p. 661-665.

3. The Impact of the Refugee Crisis in the Aegean Sea on Turkey and Greece

In the region constituting the border between Greece and Turkey, both countries have devised strategies according to their interests to prevent the migration crisis from escalating into a major crisis. It is essential to note that Greece's foreign policy approach adopted in the post-Soviet era remains relevant today. Greece's foreign policy and Balkans strategy can be examined under three main headings, all of which will guide in addressing both the migration crisis and relations with Turkey.

Greece's first strategy is its defensive approach known as the 'Muslim Arch,' signifying its being surrounded by Muslim countries. It perceives potential threats from Albania to the west, Bosnia to the northwest, Macedonia and Bulgaria to the north, both hosting significant Muslim Turkish minorities, and Turkey to the east. Concerning migration, it is essential to note that this strategic perspective has added a new dimension to Greece's threat perception. The majority of migrants come from the Muslim Middle East, intensifying Greece's sense of threat. Considering that over 10 million migrants are originating from Syria alone and an estimated 4 million Syrian Muslim population ready to cross into Greece from Turkey, Greece, with its approximately 10 million population, can be said to feel seriously threatened. Greece, already predisposed to prejudices against the Muslim identity, heightened its state of alertness in the face of the significant Muslim migrant threat. This situation, coupled with the possibility of irregular immigrants being involved in terrorism and other crimes, further deteriorated bilateral relations with Turkey.³⁹

Greece's second strategy, unlike the first, is not defensive but reflective of an active policy, asserting that the Balkans are Greece's hinterland. This claim includes the Aegean Sea as well, which Greece regards as its own. In this context, Greece operates under the assumption that all the territories in the Balkans derive from Greece's historical and cultural heritage.⁴⁰ Greece has sought to establish this notion through investment and soft power elements, mainly due to its relatively stronger economic power compared to other Balkan countries. Particularly during the 2015-2016 migration crisis,

³⁹Asteris Huliaras and Tsardanidis Charalambos, "(Mis)understanding the Balkans: Greek Geopolitical Codes of the Post-communist Era", *Geopolitics*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2006, p. 468-469.

⁴⁰Huliaras and Tsardanidis, *op.cit.*, p. 472-473.

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Greece adopted a stringent stance, considering the Balkans as Greek soil and homeland. The country did not provide permanent shelter for incoming migrants, attempting to transit refugees away from the Balkans as much as possible and redirect them towards Western Europe.⁴¹

Greece's third strategy can be evaluated as the Europeanization strategy. With this strategy, Greece addresses all the issues it finds challenging, especially within the framework of the European Union, and strives to act in collaboration with Brussels. Greece currently attempts to confront the European Union and Turkey in the disagreement over territorial waters in the Aegean Sea. Similar tactics were employed during the migration crisis in the Aegean, aiming to put the European Union and Turkey at odds. It can be argued that Greece has been successful in this strategy. With the readmission agreement signed between Turkey and the European Union, Greece managed to escalate the issue to a higher authority and partially control it.⁴² Consequently, relations between Greece and Turkey have become mutually threatened, characterized by a high level of mutual threat perception and fragility. Greece's anti-Muslim strategy and its perception of the Aegean Sea solely as its own territory have generally contributed to this situation.

Turkey's strategy towards Greece and the Aegean Sea has remained largely unchanged for many years. Turkey asserts that the Aegean Sea is unique and remains steadfast in limiting its territorial waters to 6 nautical miles. Turkey declared many years ago that if Greece extended its territorial waters to 12 miles, it would consider it a direct cause for war, a stance that still holds validity. This situation leads to a significant portion of the Aegean Sea being in the status of international waters. Consequently, complete authority cannot be granted to a single country regarding intervention with migrants. Additionally, Turkey consistently expresses its dissatisfaction with Greece's demilitarized status of the Aegean islands in every medium.⁴³

One of the fundamental issues concerning migration is the lack of cooperation between Turkey and Greece in search and rescue operations in the Aegean Sea. The two countries have not been able to enforce the

⁴¹ Ivo Bosilkov and Dimitri Drakaki, "Victims or Intruders?: Framing the Migrant Crisis in Greece and Macedonia", *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2018, p. 33.

⁴² Huliaras and Tsardanidis, *op.cit.*, p. 476.

⁴³ Kenan Şahin, "Ege Denizi'nde Yetki Alanları Paylaşımının Öncülü: Karasuları Sorunu", *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi*, Vol. 17, No. 40, 2021, p. 707.

International Hamburg Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, established in 1979, in the Aegean Sea. According to this convention, in cases where search and rescue regions cannot be determined in the relevant geography, collaboration is expected. However, Greece, considering the Aegean Sea as its sovereign territory, is unwilling to comply with the convention. Turkey, on the other hand, does not perceive search and rescue operations as a sovereignty matter but approaches them as humanitarian activities.⁴⁴ This disagreement significantly hampers efforts to combat irregular migration in the Aegean Sea.

The migration route caused movement in the Aegean Sea and eventually led to problems in Turkish-Greek relations. Numerous immigrants utilizing the sea route in this unlawful migration encountered extreme hardships, and a few died before finishing their journey. The progression of these lamentable occurrences gradually led to a humanitarian catastrophe, and the origin of the issues cannot be solely attributed to any single country. While it is clear that a solution should be sought together for these problems, Turkey and Greece followed many agreements and common control and prevention policies in the face of all these events.⁴⁵ The most important of these agreements is the protocol made in March 2016 on the implementation of article 8 of the agreement signed between Turkey and Greece in 2001. This article refers to the fact that immigrants who are proven to have passed from Turkey to Greece or the Greek islands will be accepted back by Turkey. While efforts were made to return non-Syrian immigrants to their countries, Syrian immigrants were to be settled in camps designated by the government. In this exchange policy, the EU is responsible for taking in a registered refugee from Turkey for each irregular immigrant returned from Greece to one of the EU member states. Another clause in the protocol states that all expenses will be covered by the European Union. In the first implementation of this agreement, about 72.000 irregular refugee immigrants were exchanged.⁴⁶

With the emergence of the migration crisis on top of the long-standing political issues between Greece and Turkey, especially from the Greek

⁴⁴ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/baslica-ege-denizi-sorunlari.tr.mfa>, (20.10.2023).

⁴⁵ Daniele Archibugi and Marco Cellini and Mattia Vitiello, "Refugees in the European Union: From emergency alarmism to common management", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 2022, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 497.

⁴⁶ Yusuf Küçükbaşol - Haydar Pekdoğan, "Türkiye'nin Göç Yönetim Süreci ve Jandarmanın Dönüşümü", *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 2019, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 896.

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perspective, Turkey has been solidified as a serious threat. When looked at in the context of Buzan's regional security complex, as Buzan also states, we must control our immediate surroundings so that we can take quick and effective measures against a potential threat.⁴⁷ While a bad event from far away takes time to happen, events that occur in our immediate surroundings can happen quickly and the results they create can cause bigger damages. This is also the case for Turkey and Greece, which are neighboring countries. Irregular immigrants, especially those using the sea route, attempt to enter Greece at great risk to their lives, as the Turkish state lacks control over the situation. Despite these dangers, a significant number of them managed to enter Greece successfully.

From the perspective of Greece, the arrival of migrants from China or India takes time, while the events of migration and/or irregular migration taking place in Turkey, due to proximity, are inevitably affected much quicker and in larger quantities. The situation discussed earlier from Greece's perspective is also applicable to Turkey's proximity to Syria. Syrian migrants find it more convenient to cross into Turkey on foot, making it one of the most popular migration routes.⁴⁸ In this context, within the framework of the Regional Security Complex, Greece must keep Turkey under control, and Turkey must keep Syria under control. To be prepared for potential threats, whether anticipated or sudden, it is necessary to always be ready and to develop defense and management policies accordingly. As Buzan's theory suggests, we must always be in control of events happening in our immediate surroundings and have various internal and external policies in place for our own security.⁴⁹ The security of countries that are inextricably linked cannot be considered separately, and for this reason, the need for policies that are ready to respond to potential threats from neighboring countries is understood. Turkey's policies and decisions regarding Syria and Syrian refugees, as well as Greece's agreements and policies towards migrants, are all steps taken to secure the countries' safety within the context of the regional security complex as theorized by Buzan. The support provided by the European Union to Greece and Turkey in this regard is intended to prevent

⁴⁷ Barry Buzan, "The Southeast Asian Security Complex", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1988, p. 1-2.

⁴⁸ Céline Cantat, "Refugee Solidarity Along the Balkan Route", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2021, Vol. 34, No. 2, p. 1348-1369.

⁴⁹ Barry Buzan's concept of the "Security Complex" could also serve as a useful guide for the post-Cold War world, and his work can be referenced accordingly: Barry Buzan, "Rethinking Security after the Cold War", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1997, p. 5-28.

the irregular migration crisis from escalating into a regional problem and to minimize the impact on other EU member states.

Currently, it is possible to assess the migration issue between Greece and Turkey in two distinct geographical categories. The first one is the land border region, specifically the Evros border, which caused high tension in 2020. Despite limited contributions from the European Union initiatives, this region is now more stable. The reason for this can be attributed to the absence of any border dispute between Greece and Turkey in this region. This was evident from the recent joint statements of Greece's Minister of Migration and Asylum, Kairidis, and Turkey's Minister of Interior, Ali Yerlikaya in October 2023. Particularly in Kairidis' remarks, it was stated that the situation regarding irregular migration at the Evros border is satisfactory. However, he emphasized that much progress needs to be made in preventing irregular migration in the Aegean Sea.⁵⁰ It can be argued that the challenges in the Aegean Sea are not solely due to the difficulty of controlling irregular migration at sea; rather, it is primarily because the legal status disagreement in the Aegean Sea creates difficulties for both countries in both political and migration matters.

The Aegean crisis is a multifaceted issue that involves various actors, including states, international organizations, and non-state actors, and interests in the region. In recent years, the crisis was characterized by a series of incidents and tensions between Greece and Turkey, which escalated due to the ongoing migration crisis. Barry Buzan's Security Complex Theory provides a framework for understanding the security dynamics of a particular region. According to Buzan, a security complex is a group of states whose security concerns are closely linked and whose interactions are dominated by the use or threat of force.⁵¹ In the Aegean region, Greece and Turkey form a security complex due to their historical and geopolitical ties, as well as their overlapping security concerns, such as territorial disputes, military buildups, and migration flows.⁵²

⁵⁰ 'Joint Statement', Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, <https://migration.gov.gr/en/synantisi-ypoyrgoy-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-k-dimitri-kairidi-me-ton-ypoyrgo-esoterikon-tis-toyrkias-stin-agkyra/>, (25.10.2023).

⁵¹ Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, p. 34-38.

⁵² Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2009, p. 7-24.

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The Aegean crisis characterized by a series of incidents and tensions between Greece and Turkey, including territorial disputes over islands and maritime zones, airspace violations, and military maneuvers.⁵³ These tensions exacerbated by the recent migration crisis, which has led to a surge of asylum seekers and refugees crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece.⁵⁴ The migration crisis has put a strain on the already fragile relations between Greece and Turkey, with both countries accusing each other of failing to manage the flow of migrants and refugees. The crisis also raised concerns about the security implications of large-scale migration, such as terrorism, organized crime, and social unrest.⁵⁵

In the context of Buzan's Security Complex Theory, the Aegean crisis highlights the interdependence of security concerns in the region and the need for a cooperative approach to address them. As Buzan argues, security complexes can be transformed through a process of regional security governance, which involves the creation of shared norms, institutions, and practices that promote cooperation and mutual security.⁵⁶ In addition to the limited efforts of regional security governance in addressing the Aegean crisis, the involvement of external actors has also complicated the situation. The United States and Russia, for example, were involved in the region, both as mediators and as supporters of their respective allies, Greece and Turkey.

The involvement of external actors in the Aegean crisis highlights the interconnectedness of security issues and interests beyond the region. As Buzan's Security Complex Theory suggests, security complexes are not isolated entities but are embedded in larger regional and global security contexts.⁵⁷ Moreover, the involvement of external actors in the Aegean crisis raises questions about the potential for regional security governance to address conflicts and promote mutual security. The presence of external

⁵³ Nathalie Tocci, "Europeanization in Turkey: Trigger or Anchor for Reform?", *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2005, p. 73-83.

⁵⁴ Andreas Stergiou, "The Post-Cold War Era", *The Greek-Turkish Maritime Dispute: Resisting the Future*, Springer International Publishing, 2022, p. 51-58.

⁵⁵ Alexander Betts, "Towards a 'Soft Law' Framework for the Protection of Vulnerable Irregular Migrants", *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2010, p. 209-236.

⁵⁶ Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, p. 34-38.

⁵⁷ Barry Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century", *International Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 3, 1991, p. 431-451.

actors in the region can undermine the development of shared norms and institutions among the countries in the Aegean security complex.⁵⁸

Despite the challenges posed by external actors, there are some potential avenues for regional security governance to address the Aegean crisis. The EU, for example, has played a role in managing the migration crisis, and it could potentially support a more comprehensive approach to regional security governance in the Aegean.⁵⁹

In conclusion, the Aegean crisis is a complex security challenge that requires a regional approach based on cooperation, dialogue, and mutual security. The Security Complex Theory of Buzan provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of the crisis and the potential for regional security governance to transform the security complex in the Aegean region. However, the involvement of external actors and the limited efforts of regional security governance pose challenges to the development of a cooperative and secure Aegean region. In addition to the recent agreement on maritime disputes, there are some other positive steps towards regional security governance in the Aegean region. For example, Greece and Turkey participated in various confidence-building measures (CBMs) aimed at reducing tensions and enhancing cooperation. These CBMs include the exchange of military information, joint search and rescue operations, and cultural exchanges.⁶⁰

Moreover, there are efforts to involve other regional actors, such as Cyprus, in the discussions on the Aegean crisis. Cyprus has its territorial disputes with Turkey, and its involvement in the talks could help to create a broader framework for regional cooperation and security governance. However, there are also significant challenges to regional security governance in the Aegean region. The historical and geopolitical tensions between Greece and Turkey, as well as their differing approaches to migration and refugee flows, pose significant obstacles to cooperation. Moreover, the involvement

⁵⁸ Gokcen Yavas, "Europeanization of the Aegean Dispute: An Analysis of Turkish Political Elite Discourse", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2013, p. 520-539.

⁵⁹ Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "Between escalation and détente: Greek-Turkish Relations in the Aftermath of the Eastern Mediterranean Crisis", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 5, 2022, p. 802-820.

⁶⁰ Mirmehdi Mirkamil Aghazada, "Greater Mediterranean Regional Security Complex: Myth or Reality?", *Vestnik RUDN International Relations*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2021, p. 429-440.

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of external actors, such as the US and Russia, in the region adds another layer of complexity to the situation.⁶¹

Despite these challenges, the Security Complex Theory provides a useful tool for analyzing the dynamics of the Aegean crisis and identifying potential avenues for regional security governance. As Buzan argues, security complexes can be transformed through a process of regional security governance that involves the creation of shared norms, institutions, and practices that promote cooperation and mutual security.⁶² In the case of the Aegean region, such governance could help to reduce tensions, enhance cooperation, and promote stability and security in the region.

Conclusion

To sum up, borders are lines that define a country's political identity, responsibilities, and separation from other countries in terms of governance and values. Governments have the responsibility to protect their borders, determine who can enter and exit, and take action against unauthorized entry. Illegal crossing of borders poses a threat to the security of a country. This threat is often caused by individuals seeking better living conditions and security in other countries by leaving their own. Sometimes, instability within a country can also lead to consequences that affect neighboring countries, such as the influx of refugees. The Arab Spring period is an example of how events within a country can have significant impacts on neighboring countries, including a large increase in migration.

The migration wave that originated in Syria has had a significant impact on the neighboring countries and the surrounding region. After the Syrian war, conflicts also arose in Afghanistan and other Middle Eastern nations. Another country that experienced the effects of migration, although not to the same extent as Syria, is Afghanistan, with people fleeing the country. The Aegean Sea is currently the most commonly used irregular migration route, causing significant regional problems. Data collected from analyzed sources indicate that migration events have greatly impacted Turkey

⁶¹ Filippou Proedrou, "Re-conceptualising the Energy and Security Complex in the Eastern Mediterranean", *Cyprus Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2012, p. 22-25.

⁶² Yannis A. Stivachtis, "A Mediterranean Region?: Regional Security Complex Theory Revisited", *Vestnik RUDN International Relations*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2021, p. 416-428.

and Greece, both of which share borders with the Aegean Sea. Due to their geographical location, the Turkey-Greece border has long served as a significant transit route for irregular migration. The resulting high level of irregular migration poses significant security threats for both countries. Initially, each country focused on protecting its own borders and implementing policies to manage the influx of irregular migrants. However, none of these measures offered a definitive solution. Over time, the two countries began making joint decisions and implementing similar policies.

Initially, it seems that each country is focused on protecting their own security; however, events spiral out of control. In particular, Greece's policy of neglecting the fate of irregular immigrants unless they enter their country is not only ineffective but also leads to immigrants facing difficult conditions while trying to cross into Greece. These irregular immigrants face inhumane conditions, and some lose their lives, including a high number of children. The incidents caused significant uproar in the media, and Greece denied responsibility by claiming that they occurred within Turkish territorial waters.

The occurrence of events during this period led to major issues in Turkish-Greek relations and resulted in the deterioration of bilateral ties. Despite the lack of success in Greece's implemented policy, its attempts to return or prevent irregular immigrants from entering inevitably caused its relationship with Turkey to deteriorate. Each irregular immigrant that entered Greece from Turkey carried significant importance within the European Union, as they were considered within EU borders. With the EU also aiming to protect itself, it supported Greece in its policy change and Greece subsequently entered into various agreements with Turkey. This agreement, which can be referred to as a return agreement, caused a shift in the course of events and led to the initiation of a rapid exchange of information between Turkey and Greece. Even though the agreement managed to establish a certain level of control over irregular immigration, the problem persists and its impact has only slightly decreased.

The failure of Greece, in the initial stages, to cooperate with Turkey in addressing the irregular migration issue and opting instead to bring the matter to the attention of the European Union, resulted in a significant loss of time and an escalation of the situation. As the signs of civil war in Syria emerged, Turkey and Greece, in consideration of their national interests, should have implemented a control policy in order to address the issue of irregular migration, rather than solely focusing on solving the problem at their border.

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This would require both countries to seek solutions within their territories, instead of relying solely on border controls. Today, although the problem of irregular migration remains unresolved, the situation has shown significant improvement when compared to the past. Turkey and Greece, now with experience in addressing the issue, should focus on preventing irregular migration and work towards finding solutions to the underlying causes of the civil war in Syria, with the support of the EU. Ultimately, the security of neighboring countries, geographically close to one another, cannot be considered independently and it is essential to prioritize the security of our external borders in order to safeguard our internal security.

In light of the events that transpired, it is evident that the initial approach taken by Greece in addressing the irregular migration issue, which involved not cooperating with Turkey and instead relying on the intervention of the European Union, resulted in significant delays and exacerbation of the problem. As the indicators of the civil war in Syria became apparent, Turkey and Greece needed to adopt a joint strategy for controlling the influx of migrants and addressing the underlying issues in order to safeguard their national security. The problem of irregular migration on this route remains unresolved to this day, but its magnitude significantly decreased. It is crucial for Turkey and Greece, in collaboration with the EU, to not only focus on preventing irregular migration but also on finding a solution to the Syrian civil war to prevent further displacement of individuals. As neighboring countries, the security of Turkey and Greece is interdependent and to maintain internal security, it is essential to also prioritize external security. This can be understood within the framework of Barry Buzan's regional security complex theory, which posits that the security of states within a region is interconnected and cannot be viewed in isolation.

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