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Border Crossings between Georgia and Turkey: The Sarp Land Border Gate

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ABSTRACT

The Sarp land border gate between Turkey and Georgia has become Turkey's gateway to the East in recent years. With a large number of individuals crossing every day, it is also a labour gate, where irregular Georgian immigrants cross the border for work in Turkey. In general, border policies are constructed and reconstructed in a dynamic process in which economic, security, ethnopolitical, geopolitical and cultural paradigms interact. The aim of this paper is to observe the complementary and conflicting relationship and negotiation process between economic and security paradigms in particular, with a focus on the perceptions of the officers of the border administration and state bureaucracy at the local level. To this end, field research was carried out consisting of interviews with Turkish state officials responsible for immigration and border crossing in the Sarp gate region. The article sheds light on the interaction between various agencies, actors and stakeholders in border policymaking at the regional level. It also elaborates on the profiles both of incoming immigrants employed as irregular workers and of deportees. The results of the qualitative study show that the dominance of the economic paradigm that underlies the main framework of Georgia-Turkey relations overrides security concerns between the two countries, thus necessitating a more flexible implementation of laws. The field research illustrates that implementation of laws and regulations at the local level varies and while some groups of irregular immigrants are allowed to work, others are not and, what is more, are deported.

Introduction

The deepening of free-trade zones, an increase in regional integration projects and the new conditions imposed by the globalised economic structure, which have caused the flow of people, goods, capital and information to reach unprecedented levels worldwide, have had profound impacts on borders, border policies, border governance and, unsurprisingly, border studies.¹ Despite the globalisation discourses of the 1990s on the “borderless world”, which focused on de-territorialisation and

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decreasing state control over borders, borders continued to maintain their relevance.² Using methods of “teichopolitics” (the art of building barriers),³ states have continued to regulate and restrict who/what crosses their borders and whether a border will be open or closed.⁴ In many countries, securitisation of immigration policies and hardening of borders through the construction of walls or fences has taken place. Albeit to varying degrees in different countries, security concerns reached their highest level following 9/11, which triggered the securitisation of migration in a global context.⁵ With the eastward expansion of the EU in 2004, processes of de-bordering and re-bordering (especially in border areas with Russia) started simultaneously, leading to a multiplication of borders.⁶ It is even argued that a “Paper Wall”, founded in increasing controls at the external borders of the EU, has replaced the Iron Curtain in Europe.⁷ The EU borders have become sites of both inclusion and exclusion as the EU has evolved into a gated community providing selective access to labour through its work and residence permit policies.⁸ These conflicting visions of integration and exclusion can be seen in North America as well.⁹ In parallel to increasing controls at borders and mass migration from the global South, new technologies such as biometric techniques are utilised to ensure security, a development that signals transition to a biometric state, where the human body becomes a constituent element of the border.¹⁰ The USA and EU introduced the concept of smart borders, which led to the delocalisation of border controls through the use of integrated systems and databases.¹¹ The USA, for example, employed a “beyond the border (perimeter security)” concept in cooperation with Canada by employing new techniques of surveillance (i.e., pre-emptive profiling of travellers), a development which brought about discussions on discrimination against some racial and religious groups, leading to “racialized borders.”¹²

Borders serve not only as physical barriers but also as gateways and checkpoints that allow the flow of people to be controlled. For the EU, which is in the process of re-bordering through its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), borders have dual functions: “border confirming” for the purpose of protecting its citizens on the one hand and “border transcending” for the purpose of transforming its external borders into zones of interaction, opportunity and exchange on the other. The borders filter and control labour mobility in order to meet the needs of capital through offshore detention camps, deportation, or processes of “differential inclusion” such as points-based migration systems that allow irregular workers into the informal labour market.¹³ Exploitation occurs in many cases,¹⁴ such as through underpaid work opportunities and “benching” as seen in the example of Indian IT-workers in Australia.¹⁵ It is also evident that there is cooperation between the state and capital in

exploiting labour, be it migrant or “national” labour. Examples are the increasing exploitation of Mexican workers in the USA resulting from migration laws,¹⁶ and the special economic zones (SEZs) in China and India, where the establishment of sweatshops led to the emergence of internal borders within the state, leaving labour at the mercy of capital for the necessary work and residence permits in these zones.¹⁷

Many actors, governmental and intergovernmental, as well as migrants themselves, have a role in the formulation of border regimes. This leads to discord and bargaining processes, and the conflict between different regimes engenders fragmentation of normativity, production of subjectivity and normative arrangements. As a result, the lines between the legal and “illegal” are blurred at the borders.¹⁸ Local dynamics are influential and bottom-up processes also shape the border regimes.¹⁹ Even if they are part of the state, the officials employed at state institutions responsible for governing the border, such as border guards, military officers and immigration officials, contribute to subjectivity and arbitrariness, not always enforcing the claims of the central government.²⁰

When determining levels of border permeability, the state, in interaction with other actors at the local and international levels, constructs and re-constructs various paradigms, such as, but not limited to, economic, security, ethnopolitical, geopolitical and cultural paradigms. Some of these may take a bigger role than others in shaping a border regime and may influence the local administration, depending on the local, regional and global conditions. Border regions have become zones of contested economic and security interests, where the principles of both free movement and territoriality are challenged.²¹ This study will focus on negotiation and interaction between two paradigms only: the economic and security paradigms. In the economic paradigm, states and other actors aim to maximise their profit and interests through free trade, investment, migrant labour and tourism. This model leads to cooperation between states and the liberalisation of border regimes to boost the flow of goods, capital and people. The border serves as a location of mutual interest and cooperation rather than a barrier. However, liberalisation of this kind can cause problems in the realm of security. In the security paradigm, states identify and fight against threats ranging from terrorism to organised crime. The border serves as a barrier and states decide who may cross and under what conditions crossings may take place. It can be easier for capital to cross the border than people.

This dynamic interplay between the economic and security paradigms never ends, but instead keeps constructing and re-constructing border regimes, while shaping the daily lives of the populations on both sides of the border. These paradigms are observed in the process of border crossing and in the everyday experience of the local populations. They are sometimes complementary, but there is always the possibility of disharmony. Thus,

territorial borders and issues related to border governance and control have been focuses of both cooperation and conflict between states.

Border policy is also part of foreign policy. Geopolitical dynamics and foreign policy objectives shape the regimes governing borders, including visa regimes.²² Decisions by geopolitical actors shape the daily lives of populations located in the borderlands. An example is the visa-free border regime that came into force in 2012 between Poland and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, leading to a boost in tourism and cross-border shopping. However, the conflict between the EU and Russia, and the sanctions that followed, due to the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 not only strengthened the mental barriers for Polish citizens and discouraged them from crossing the border, but also forced neighbouring Lithuania to cease negotiations with Russia for a similar border regime with Kaliningrad.²³ Visa facilitation and readmission agreements are often used by the EU in the context of the ENP as a foreign policy tool. The ENP not only serves the purpose of promoting values such as democracy, human rights, and rule of law within its neighbourhood, as decided at the Seville Summit (2002), but also urges stricter border controls and reformation of border agencies in order for the states to benefit from visa-free mobility.²⁴ However, often cooperation in externalising the security threats posed to the EU by illegal migration receives the highest priority.²⁵

Even though various paradigms interact and negotiate with each other in this construction and reconstruction process, the current article aims primarily to identify aspects of economic and security paradigms operating at the Turkey-Georgia border. It uses the Sarp land border gate as a case study. In light of the research conducted in the border region, the article dwells upon the processes of inclusion/exclusion and the selection of immigrants – those who are received and those who are deported – through border crossings. Utilising the perspectives of the service providers, the state cadres on the Turkish side who take part in the local governance of the Turkish-Georgian border and Sarp gate, the article discusses people's movements there with a specific focus on irregular migrations and deportations.

The Study: Turkey-Georgia Border and the Sarp Land Border Gate

In the region of southern Caucasia, borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and Armenia and Turkey are closed. Therefore, the open border between Georgia and Turkey, especially at Sarp gate (the other crossing points are at Türkgözü and at Aktaş in Ardahan province), serves as an essential connection route between these regional countries, as well as to Russia and various Central Asian nations. Many factors make Turkey and Georgia strategic partners, as often stated by officials of both countries.²⁶ Georgia, thanks to its strategic position in the Caucasus, serves as a buffer

zone between Turkey and Russia. It is also the main transit corridor for energy pipelines: the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines both pass through Georgia.²⁷ In addition, Turkey is a partner in constructing the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, also known as the “Iron Silk Road”, with the aim of providing a new channel of transportation to Central Asia. For these reasons, peace and stability in Georgia is very important for Turkey.²⁸

Reflecting the interdependence between the two countries, Turkey is a valuable partner for Georgia, too. As a NATO member, Turkey supports the territorial integrity of Georgia and provides training and equipment to Georgian military forces.²⁹ The importance of Turkey for Georgia increased sharply with the Rose Revolution (2003) and the subsequent Russian initiatives to topple the pro-Western Saakashvili administration and gain control over the Georgian autonomous republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which finally culminated in war in August 2008. Turkey’s border policy in particular and foreign policy initiatives in the South Caucasus in general, such as the negotiations with Armenia to open the closed border, should be analysed in the light of these geopolitical developments. From 2004 on, Russia started to increase its grip on Abkhazia and South Ossetia by distributing Russian passports to the residents. These actions strengthened loyalty to Russia since Russian citizenship meant access to jobs in Russia, freedom of travel and the ability to claim Russian state pensions.³⁰ As tensions increased from 2006 on, Russia tried to undermine Georgia’s economy through boycotts, sanctions and strict visa policies. Not only was Russia previously Georgia’s biggest trade partner, but Georgian people also worked and lived in Russia for many years, their foreign remittances making an important contribution to Georgia’s economy. In June 2006, 2,300 Georgians were expelled from Russia and visa restrictions followed.³¹ In the aftermath of the war in 2008, sanctions were tightened. Russia had already closed the land border gate at Upper Larsi in late 2006 and after the events of 2008, for a while it became almost impossible for Georgian citizens to obtain visas. Even though citizens of Georgia still need to obtain visas for travel to Russia, following negotiations, the Upper Larsi border gate was reopened in late 2011.³²

In the wake of these developments, Turkey and Georgia signed a free-trade agreement in November 2007 and following the war in 2008, Turkey replaced Russia as Georgia’s biggest trade partner.³³ Turkish exports rose from \$522 million in 2006 to \$1.7 billion in 2014,³⁴ while imports rose from \$123 million to \$239 million in 2014, excluding shuttle trade.³⁵ Turkish businesspeople invested in Georgia and founded around 500 firms.³⁶ In addition to these ventures, Turkey also provides employment opportunities for Georgian labour. Recently, Georgia started to experience a feminisation of this type of migration. The importance of human capital, increasing divorce rates and an absence of local economic opportunities motivate Georgian women’s migration and in this regard Turkey is an

important destination country.³⁷ In 2013, citizens of Georgia comprised the largest group (19.9 percent) among foreign workers in Turkey, as 6,440 people were granted work permits, mostly for domestic jobs such as babysitting.³⁸ Despite the exploitation of cheap migrant labour, given the economic conditions in Georgia, working in Turkey appears to be a better option than trying to find work locally. In sum, it is observed that Turkey's border policy and visa regime with Georgia aimed to provide breathing space to mitigate Russian sanctions.

Sarp gate links Sarp village and the nearby town of Hopa in Turkey to Sarpi village and Batumi province in the autonomous Adjara region of Georgia. The border between Georgia and Turkey is a relatively old one, drawn in 1921 as part of the Kars Treaty signed by the USSR and the Turkish government, who agreed on the river running through the centre of Sarp village as a dividing line. It was a "closed border" during the Cold War era. Despite demographic homogenisation over the decades, with Muslims concentrated on the Turkish side and non-Muslims on the Georgian side, ethnic kinship ties between the inhabitants of the region persisted. Following the end of the antagonistic geopolitics of the Cold War, the Sarp land border gate was opened in 1988 and crossings started in 1989. As a result of negotiations, both Turkey and Georgia lifted visa requirements for visitors (up to ninety days) from February 2006.

In addition, in 2007 a new terminal was opened in Batumi Airport in Georgia, and it began to serve as a domestic and international airport for both Georgia and Turkey. Despite being in Georgian territory, Batumi Airport serves as a domestic airport for Turkey, and passengers, subject only to internal flight regulations, are shuttled from there to Hopa. This exceptional status of Batumi airport, a globally rare case – a similar airport exists on the Switzerland-France border and another on the Canada-USA border – further increased the number of crossings at Sarp. Georgia and Turkey both relaxed visa requirements for Georgian and Turkish nationals in 2011, and it became possible to cross the border with ID cards instead of passports. Georgian nationals cannot stay in Turkey for more than 90 days in a 180-day period; in other words, Turkey provides a conditional stay permit for Georgian nationals whereby they must leave Turkey before ninety days is up in order to get a visa exemption for another ninety-day stay. On the other hand, Turkish nationals may remain in Georgia for up to a year without any visa requirement or conditionality, following an amendment made by the Georgian government in 2015. The cost of crossing the border with an ID card and without a visa is relatively cheap, at around 5 USD for Turkish nationals travelling from Turkey to Georgia.

Sarp gate is one of the busiest of Turkey's twenty-two permanent active land borders.³⁹ In a way, Sarp can be seen as Turkey's doorway to the East/Caucasia and Central Asia, while another busy land border gate,

Kapıkule in Edirne (Turkey-Bulgaria), is a gateway to the West/Europe. Movements through the Sarp land border gate have steadily increased over the years.⁴⁰ The renovation of the gate in 2009 allowed crossings to occur in massive volumes, as shown below (Table 1).

The figures in Table 1 illustrate two points. First, over the years, crossings at the Sarp land border gate have increased. The number of passengers who entered Turkey via the Sarp gate has tripled since 2008, with an average increase of approximately 20 percent each year. The peak increase occurred in 2012, with a 55 percent rise in the number of passengers in comparison to 2011. A similar increase is also seen in the number of passengers exiting Turkey via the Sarp land border gate; the exit numbers also reflect an average increase of 20 percent yearly, with a 57 percent peak increase in 2012 compared to 2011. This is the time when travelling between Georgia and Turkey with ID cards instead of passports became possible, resulting in the upsurge in passenger movement. It is interesting to note that while travel to and from Turkey via the Sarp land border gate has been increasing over the years, the reverse has occurred at the Kapıkule land border gate in Edirne, on Turkey's border with the EU zone and the busiest gate in that region. The Sarp gate has seen a higher flow rate of passengers than the Kapıkule gate in recent years.⁴² Turkey's western border and its gates, at Kapıkule, Hamzabeyli, İpsala and Karaağaç on the borders with Bulgaria and Greece, are regulated by the Schengen visa regime, with much stricter rules and a higher level of security than Sarp gate. The border regime at Sarp is similar to the regime between Turkey and Northern Cyprus, an entity recognised as a state only by Turkey, where border crossing with ID cards is possible. The importance of Georgia to Turkey is thus demonstrated.

The second point illustrated by Table 1 is that the entry and exit numbers of vehicles and rigs have also increased over time. The yearly increase in the number of vehicles and rigs moving in and out of Turkey at Sarp gate remains lower, however, than the corresponding passenger rate, suggesting that people movement is a determining characteristic of Sarp gate. That Kapıkule gate hosts a larger number of rigs in comparison with Sarp gate illustrates the efficient environment at Kapıkule for the free movement of goods between Turkey and Europe, while a less hospitable environment exists there for the circulation of people, due to the stricter controls of the Schengen area.

Table 1. Crossings at Sarp border gate (2008–2014).⁴¹

| | | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Entry to Turkey | Passengers | 1,087,777 | 1,305,916 | 1,571,710 | 1,801,440 | 2,796,312 | 3,263,990 | 3,098,497 |
| | Vehicles | 94,725 | 132,875 | 228,555 | 290,532 | 383,341 | 454,263 | 430,475 |
| | Rigs | 81,344 | 76,129 | 88,667 | 114,213 | 139,922 | 141,707 | 148,089 |
| Exit from Turkey | Passengers | 1,092,971 | 1,308,808 | 1,561,642 | 1,800,683 | 2,824,261 | 3,263,424 | 3,088,203 |
| | Vehicles | 120,477 | 148,294 | 249,307 | 309,188 | 415,341 | 485,023 | 468,565 |
| | Rigs | 73,458 | 73,647 | 84,917 | 111,878 | 134,348 | 134,335 | 125,010 |

Below are entry and exit figures broken down by nationality, illustrating the dense flow of border crossings at Sarp gate (see Tables 2 and 3).

The current study investigated the role of economic and security concerns in the government of the Sarp gate, with a specific focus on immigration and deportation. The field research was conducted in June 2015 in the border region of Artvin province in Turkey and its districts, Sarp, Kemalpaşa and Hopa. Operation of the Sarp gate involves the collaboration of different state offices and bureaucracies. Accordingly, the sample for the research was composed of the following state institutions: Provincial Governorate of Artvin, Artvin Provincial Gendarmerie Command, Artvin Provincial Administration of Migration, Hopa District Governorate, Hopa District Directorate of Security, Hopa District Gendarmerie Command, Hopa Municipality, Kemalpaşa District Gendarmerie, Deputy Governorate of Sarp Border Gate, Customs Directorate of Sarp Border Gate and the Border Platoon Command. Visits were paid to these organisations involved in the administration and government of the Sarp border and its gate.

In order to trace the views and perceptions of the Turkish state officials working at and for the Sarp border gate, those occupying higher positions

Table 2. Top ten foreign nationals entering Turkey from Sarp border gate.⁴³

| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Georgia | 468,330 | 533,977 | 722,095 | 898,334 | 1,016,169 | 1,037,124 | 1,287,212 | 1,632,575 | 1,606,376 |
| Azerbaijan | 15,157 | 21,160 | 31,922 | 37,128 | 51,937 | 73,392 | 86,704 | 98,851 | 127,553 |
| Russia | 1,597 | 5,228 | 8,859 | 7,043 | 10,118 | 9,420 | 18,325 | 28,193 | 33,590 |
| Armenia | 17,548 | 27,313 | 26,457 | 25,308 | 31,617 | 37,565 | 39,729 | 39,748 | 31,937 |
| Iran | 750 | 1,994 | 3,014 | 3,310 | 7,739 | 31,135 | 39,893 | 23,576 | 15,416 |
| Greece | 5,964 | 7,424 | 7,404 | 8,867 | 10,607 | 10,723 | 11,858 | 12,344 | 12,253 |
| Ukraine | 1,532 | 1,448 | 1,884 | 2,889 | 2,778 | 3,306 | 5,193 | 9,251 | 11,119 |
| Bulgaria | 1,812 | 2,120 | 2,423 | 2,325 | 3,070 | 4,567 | 5,103 | 5,295 | 5,166 |
| Germany | 929 | 1,109 | 1,272 | 1,268 | 1,517 | 1,805 | 2,721 | 3,323 | 3,490 |
| Poland | 579 | 735 | 613 | 644 | 963 | 1,246 | 1,365 | 1,970 | 2,406 |
| Others | 5,696 | 3,917 | 6,484 | 9,975 | 11,026 | 11,916 | 16,991 | 24,569 | 22,648 |
| Total | 519,894 | 606,425 | 812,427 | 997,091 | 1,147,541 | 1,222,019 | 1,515,094 | 1,879,695 | 1,871,954 |

Table 3. Top ten foreign nationals departing Turkey from Sarp border gate.⁴⁴

| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Georgia | 477,727 | 535,675 | 725,067 | 897,917 | 1,012,050 | 1,038,057 | 1,295,815 | 1,636,731 | 1,601,385 |
| Azerbaijan | 22,357 | 23,478 | 37,370 | 41,600 | 52,369 | 74,992 | 90,031 | 102,082 | 124,677 |
| Armenia | 18,998 | 27,179 | 28,623 | 28,812 | 32,060 | 38,195 | 41,142 | 40,945 | 32,834 |
| Russia | 1,929 | 6,072 | 6,634 | 7,690 | 9,961 | 10,465 | 18,286 | 27,608 | 31,530 |
| Iran | 714 | 1,379 | 1,495 | 1,432 | 4,093 | 24,260 | 29,983 | 17,999 | 14,091 |
| Greece | 6,328 | 7,898 | 8,237 | 9,153 | 10,960 | 11,311 | 12,799 | 13,196 | 12,839 |
| Ukraine | 1,509 | 1,436 | 1,544 | 2,668 | 1,821 | 1,617 | 2,813 | 6,893 | 8,626 |
| Bulgaria | 1,712 | 2,056 | 2,457 | 2,332 | 3,112 | 4,627 | 5,192 | 5,353 | 5,109 |
| Germany | 1,654 | 1,679 | 1,691 | 1,676 | 1,742 | 2,143 | 3,182 | 3,787 | 4,085 |
| Kazakhstan | 195 | 269 | 354 | 628 | 729 | 877 | 1,144 | 1,496 | 2,169 |
| Others | 7,568 | 7,560 | 7,413 | 9,071 | 12,035 | 13,529 | 19,427 | 27,570 | 23,618 |
| Total | 540,691 | 614,681 | 820,885 | 1,002,979 | 1,140,662 | 1,220,073 | 1,519,814 | 1,883,660 | 1,860,873 |

in the bureaucracy were selected for interview. Sixteen interviews were conducted with the most senior bureaucrats at each state office visited by the research team, at the workplaces of the respondents. All of the interviewees in the sample group happened to be male; they were overwhelmingly middle aged and university graduates. The shortest interview took around 30 minutes and the longest, around 100 minutes; the average was around 50 minutes. Several questions were addressed to the respondents regarding aspects of the economic and security paradigms operating at the Sarp land border gate. The interview questions were aimed at understanding the official documentation for entry and exit procedures; the means and measures for border crossings at Sarp gate; the typologies and structures of immigration to Turkey at Sarp gate; the typologies, conditions and procedures for deportation; and the bureaucrats' concerns over economics, trade, security and threats. The interviews revealed perceptions regarding irregular migration and deportation which highlighted aspects of the Sarp gate.

The Findings

The results of interviews with high-level bureaucrats involved in the operation of the Sarp gate at the Turkey-Georgia border showed that there is a large discrepancy between the rules governing the gate as stated and the practical realities on the ground. The field research illuminated the details of crossings at the Sarp gate, especially the different types of crossings that occur there. The respondents stated that around 20,000–30,000 people per day cross to and from Turkey at Sarp gate, though there is a seasonal peak occurring during summer, when tea harvesting and tourism are on the rise. The numbers add up to around 6 million people using Sarp gate annually, which confirms the official statistics. The respondents provided information on the nationalities of those crossing the border at Sarp gate as well: a significant majority is Turkish and Georgian nationals, followed by Azeris, Armenians, Russians, Kirghiz, Uzbeks and Turkmen. Kirghiz and Uzbek nationals are restricted to air transport; consequently, in recent years, the number of Kirghiz and Uzbek people using Sarp gate has dropped, since their obligation to use air transport mainly sees them pass through the nearby Trabzon airport. Syrians, who live in large numbers in Turkey following the civil war in Syria, are not allowed into Georgia, and therefore they do not use the Sarp border gate. Nevertheless, at the time of the research, small numbers of Syrians, around 20–25 families, could be seen in the city and town centres of Artvin seeking work at tea plantations.

In regard to settlement and work permits, the officers at the Artvin Provincial Administration of Migration and Hopa District Governorate

informed us that the weekly number is around three to four applications. Most of these are from Georgian women who marry Turkish nationals, while the remainder is from Georgians and Azeris applying for work purposes. The foreign nationals crossing at the border gate can be roughly classified into two main groups, reflecting the inclusion or exclusion processes. This classification highlights economic and security paradigms, since some groups are allowed and some groups are not, or are expelled. Varying perceptions lead to the differential treatment and situational easing of the border regime through the process of differential inclusion.⁴⁵ The category of included groups consists of undocumented irregular workers, cross-border shoppers, tourists and transit border crossers, while the category of excluded groups consists of sex workers, smugglers, drug users and illegal border crossers. Yet it is necessary to add that inclusion is conditional and arbitrary. A person from the included group is also a potential candidate for exclusion and deportation if he or she is involved in crime or denounced to the authorities for working illegally without a permit.

The group of undocumented irregular workers who work illegally without a permit contains subgroups. Tea and hazelnut harvesters are the biggest subgroup, and are considered important for the local economy. These immigrants are predominantly female Georgian nationals. Migration shows four seasonal peaks each year, related to the tea harvest and hazelnut seasons. Before Batumi became a tourist centre, there were tea plantations and tea factories in the region. Local farmers who specialised in tea harvesting became unemployed as the nature of Batumi changed and started to go to Turkish plantations and factories, mainly in Rize and Giresun, for work. Busses come to the gate around 12:00 and 24:00, because if the stay in question does not exceed 24 hours, it is not counted as part of the limit of 90 days' stay within a 180-day period. Therefore, the busses/shuttles pass in and out of the gate twice a day for the tea workers to work in the plantations in Rize, and there are two shifts of tea workers who work twelve hours each per day.

There are also nurses among the irregular migrants, mostly Georgian women who care for the elderly, children and the sick. They work not only in the north-eastern Black Sea region of Turkey, but all over Turkey. They operate in shifts; that is, a female immigrant works for 90 days within the permitted limit and then her relative or friend comes to serve the same household for the following ninety days. Additionally, there are immigrant domestic workers, who are mostly women of Georgian and Turkmen origin. They work in house-cleaning jobs, both in the border region and in other big cities of Turkey. Like the nurses, they work in shifts of ninety days, taking turns with a relative or friend from their home country.

Among undocumented irregular migrants, there are also shop workers. These immigrants are again mostly Georgian women. The officer at the Kemalpaşa District Gendarmerie stated that the proficiency of these women

in both Georgian and Russian is useful in sales to foreign customers buying from the approximately 600–700 shops located in Kemalpaşa and Hopa. Some of these women also work at coffee shops, restaurants and hotels as waitresses, dishwashers or receptionists. The women work on a daily employment basis. If the Georgians' stay does not exceed 24 hours, it is not counted within the maximum ninety-day legal stay limit. They travel through the gate on foot and use mini shuttles on both sides of the border every day without violating the maximum legal stay allowed.

Construction workers, another subgroup among the undocumented irregular migrants, are mostly Georgian men who work as labourers painting houses, or as porters. There are employment markets for labourers early each morning in Hopa and in Kemalpaşa. According to Hopa municipality governors, the workers pass through the Sarp gate every day by minibus and gather at the centres of the settlement areas. Middlemen come to these markets to collect the labour force needed for the work of that day.

Another subgroup in this category is made up of cross-border shoppers and shuttle traders. These immigrants are mostly Georgian women, but there are also Armenians and Azeris who buy goods in Turkey and carry them back to their country in their luggage. Textiles are cheap in Turkey and goods to a value of 300 USD can be carried per pass through the gate.

Tourists are also welcomed by the local officials and population, as they contribute to the regional economy. Russians who come to Batumi for tourism also pass through the Sarp gate for shopping and sightseeing in the Hopa region, taking advantage of Turkey's visa exemption for Russian nationals. Georgians also cross the border for touristic reasons, especially to visit the historical İřhan Church in Yusufeli. Some Georgians visit the church for pilgrimage purposes. There are also Georgians who use the Sarp gate to visit relatives living in the Artvin region, since there are families split by the border.

The last group in this category comprises transit border crossers, like Armenians who work in Greece. These immigrants travel using Armenian-registered busses. Forty to fifty busloads of Armenian passengers enter the gate on Thursdays and leave on Saturdays. Georgian undocumented and documented workers (registered workers with work permits, such as domestic workers or nurses) who work in other cities, such as Istanbul, cross the border by bus, since travelling by bus is cheaper than flying. Azeris also pass through the gate to work in the big cities of Turkey such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Azeris obtain a one-month visa at the gate after paying a visa fee. Some Azeri immigrants also engage in shuttle trade by buying textile items from Laleli district in Istanbul and selling them in Azerbaijan.

Regarding the excluded category, composed of border crossers who face the risk of deportation, there are many subgroups. Sex workers in the Hopa region are mostly Azeri women, but there might also be Kırgız and Uzbek women from time to time. Georgian sex workers usually operate in Batumi.

Security officers at Hopa District Directorate of Security informed us that sex worker immigration had decreased over the years. Most hotels used for sex work were closed by Turkish authorities, yet a few places remain. Smugglers are also in the “unwanted groups” category. They are mostly Georgian men and women. Since cigarettes, alcoholic drinks and gas are cheaper in Georgia than in Turkey, they bring these items through the gate as part of their individual customs allowance. According to state officials at Kemalpaşa and Hopa District Gendarmerie, there is an ant-like carrying style; that is, two cartons of cigarettes (with 10 packets of cigarettes in a carton) and/or two bottles of alcohol are carried by each of 10–15 individuals per crossing. The items are collected by a ringleader who has crossed the border to the Turkish side. A smuggler receives around 1 USD for each carton of cigarettes from the ringleader. For gas smuggling, the permitted amount per vehicle (car, bus, etc.) per crossing is 200 liters of gas in the tank. The vehicle drivers enlarge their tanks and carry cheaper gas from Georgia to Turkey. Buses with no passengers in them that cross through Sarp gate are part of the daily scene there. Another group who are deported is drug users. According to state officials at Hopa District Directorate of Security, Hopa District Gendarmerie Command, Kemalpaşa District Gendarmerie and Deputy Governorate of Sarp Border Gate, Georgian drug users are frequent border crossers. They enter Turkey from Georgia on a daily basis. The penalty for drug use in Georgia is heavy, so some drug users consume drugs, which usually come from Istanbul, on the Turkish side, if they are not caught beforehand and deported by the Turkish authorities. It is reported that around two people die per month on the Turkish side due to overdoses.

Although it is illegal for foreigners to work in Turkey without work permits, irregular immigrants passing through the Sarp gate to Turkey for work purposes are tolerated. According to the respondents, the cheap labour that the immigrants provide and the fact that the economy is ready to absorb that cheap labour are the main reasons behind irregular migration. The low wages, high rate of unemployment and surplus of labour in the South Caucasian countries push irregular migrants to Turkey. On the Turkish side, work such as tea and nut harvesting, construction, domestic cleaning and home-care work are jobs that the locals do not favour, due to the low wages and the availability of better-paying alternatives. Even seasonal work or temporary work opportunities are attractive to irregular immigrants, especially the Georgians. The costs of regular workers in Turkey are high and most employers prefer not to carry the burden of employing legally registered workers. The following excerpt illustrates the high numbers of Georgians working in Turkey and the logic of the labour market:

There are too many people working illegally in Turkey in this way. ... Here wages are higher.... It is estimated that around 200,000 Georgians work here...

Georgians are exempted from the 15 TL fee... They enter and exit every day... The night crossers, we call them “24:00 hour crossers”, 1,500 people cross to the other side of the border at night.⁴⁶

The Sarp gate allows irregular workers to enter Turkey legally, but when the immigrants spread through the region, as well as into other parts of Turkey, and get involved in irregular/illegal work, the state authorities need to identify them and complete the necessary official documentation for deportation. Yet the state authorities are unwilling to follow irregular immigrants who work; in other words, the border is controlled and passage through the Sarp gate is officially fully overseen and documented, but no similar official control exists over the immigrants working unregistered in Turkey, especially in Hopa, Artvin and the north-eastern Black Sea region. The Kemalpaşa District Gendarmerie officer mentioned that when he himself was at a coffee shop, he saw a Georgian waitress. When he warned the shop owner about not hiring foreign nationals, the latter replied by asking the officer to find him a waitress of Turkish nationality who would work cheaper than a Georgian, which was naturally impossible. In a way, we see the dominance of the economic paradigm, caused by local dynamics, which allows the state authorities to omit labour transactions from their inspections, resulting in the exploitation of migrant labour. The following excerpts illustrate this point:

Tea harvesting is very innocent. Those working illegally are not prosecuted. Those who work decently are not prosecuted. There are hundreds, thousands of people who are working in this way and tolerated... That is state policy, the state lets everyone in.⁴⁷

As we sent workers abroad in the 1960s, now they send workers to us. Georgia is 50 years behind when compared to Turkey... From our point of view there is no problem with the entry of illegal workers. If there is no entry ban, we say come in. But if he is harvesting hazelnuts without a work permit, it is illegal. However, they come and most of them work in tea and hazelnut harvesting and in houses.⁴⁸

Despite the ease of crossing the border at Sarp with the use of ID cards, the respondents told of attempts at illegal border crossings. The authorities at the Deputy Governorate and Customs Directorate of Sarp Border Gate and Hopa District Gendarmerie Command reported that common methods for crossing the border illegally involved fake ID cards, duplicate ID cards (made by changing the picture of an original document stamped with fake stamps, fake passports, and fake stamps on the passports) and hiding from the authorities, for example, by travelling in vehicle trunks. Those caught are mostly identified as Georgian nationals, but there are some Armenians, Azeris and Kirghız, too. The most common reason for illegal border crossings is entry bans; that is, the attempt is made by foreign nationals who were previously deported and received a penalty of a re-entry ban of six months to five years in addition to a fine. Armenians are required to have a visa when entering Turkey, which is given for one month at the gate. Among those Armenians with a visa overstay on their record, according

to the interviewees, are some who attempt to use fake documents when crossing at Sarp gate. Illegal entry with fake documents is identified by the control personnel at the gate through intelligence, informants or the individual attention of the control personnel.

Regarding deportation, those who previously entered Turkey illegally comprise the majority of those affected. Due to a lack of coherent official data on the number of deportations, the field research found that the total number of people deported annually via the Sarp gate is between 1,000 and 1,500. This can be considered a very small number when compared to the approximately 1,000 to 1,500 irregular workers entering Turkey via this gate every day. According to the data provided by Hopa District Directorate of Security and Artvin District Gendarmerie Command, the police forces and gendarmerie deported 280 foreigners in 2009, 199 in 2010, 367 in 2011, 426 in 2012, 484 in 2013 and 238 in 2014. Most of those who are deported are Georgian nationals sent back via the Sarp gate and handed over to Georgian officials on the other side. For all other foreign nationals who are deported – that is, Azeri, Kirghız, Turkmen, Uzbek, Armenian, Russian, Iranian, Liberian and Guinean deportees – Istanbul airport is used. Prior to being sent to Istanbul, these deportees require accommodation. Since this is a scarce resource for the state officials, rooms in local police stations might be used. Before the establishment of the Migration Administration in 2015, deportations were transacted by the General Directorate of Security. The European Union does not provide any financial support for the deportation in the region of foreigners from Turkey. The types of foreigners, who are deported, as understood from the field research, can be grouped into six categories.

The first group consists of foreign nationals who did not enter Turkey by legal/documented/official means. They might have entered Turkey via the forest or mountains on the border instead of using the official land border gate at Sarp. Others might have passed through the Sarp gate illegally, for example, in a car trunk, and were caught by Turkish authorities. During incidental document control, either in areas like Hopa, Kemalpaşa, or Artvin, or at the gate itself, it may be realised that the foreign nationals' entrance papers lack official stamps, or that some foreigners have illegal documents; that is, fake IDs, passports and stamps. Among the deportees for illegal entry, there are also people who have re-entered Turkey at the Sarp gate after previously being deported, but have not waited for their re-entry ban periods to pass, or have not been able to pay fines related to their previous deportation although their re-entry ban has ended.

The second group is undocumented irregular workers, who may be deported regardless of the fact, as mentioned, that they are often tolerated by the local authorities. In a few cases where employers at tea/hazelnut plantations or construction sites do not want to pay the wages of the Georgian workers, they notify the Gendarmerie of the workers' undocumented status. These immigrants are deported following denunciation by Turkish nationals, usually with a stake in the deportation such as avoiding

having to pay wages. This can be considered the highest level of exploitation.

The third group consists of people who have overstayed their visas or permits. If Georgians violate the permitted stay duration and are caught following inspections either at their accommodation or at the gate, they are deported. Azeri and Armenian nationals, due to visa requirements to enter Turkey, are usually deported on the grounds of visa overstays.

The fourth group is sex workers. Immigrant women who are shown to be involved in sex work with substantial evidence are deported with re-entry bans (six months to five years). If the foreign-national sex workers have sexually transmitted diseases, they are permanently deported and never allowed to re-enter Turkey.

The fifth group consists of people involved in crime during their stay in Turkey. Foreigners who engage in theft at hotels, car theft, or homicide are permanently deported and are never allowed to re-enter Turkey.

The sixth and final group consists of smugglers. Those border crossers who are caught at the gate with an amount of goods such as cigarettes, alcohol or gas in excess of what is permitted are either not allowed to pass through the gate, or if caught by the authorities on the other side, in Hopa, in Kemalpaşa or even Artvin, deported.

In the interviews, it was a common theme that there are no large, organised networks of human smuggling and trafficking in the region. Almost all of the respondents mentioned cases of small networks providing means for illegal border crossings, usually for those who had previously been deported from Turkey. Human smuggling occurred not through mafia-like organisations but rather individual networks based on kinship or acquaintance. As some of the respondents said:

This place is not located on the human trafficking route. . . . There is no case of human trafficking. If one can cross the border with an ID card, then why would human trafficking take place? Here human trafficking is not very possible; it can only be done individually.⁴⁹

There is nothing collective, they come by individual will, and there are no job opportunities in Georgia.⁵⁰

There is no organized human trafficking. . . . There are cases of individual efforts of people who were previously deported. Two or three persons take advantage of the customs officer, who turns a blind eye. The Georgian Police allow them and they pass to this side.⁵¹

Human smuggling takes place on an individual basis. . . . Human trafficking in Sarp is very sporadic.⁵²

Albeit in small networks and small numbers, human smuggling does occur. A sergeant at Hopa Gendarmerie told us of cases that involved victims of this practice. The most common service provided by the

smugglers involves fake IDs and fake stamps on passports. The means reported are as follows:

There must be a criminal group involved in fake IDs, very sporadic. They use duplicated IDs made through forgery. . . . Denunciations for human trafficking occur one or two times a year. . . . Things like collecting the IDs and not giving them back happen.⁵³

There is the issue of forgery. \$1,500 is paid to the person who organizes this. Forged stamps cost around \$500–600. If one wants to cross the border illegally by car, it costs about \$1,000. They cross the border by hiding inside buses.⁵⁴

There are also cases of human trafficking. The Sarp gate is mentioned as “Freedom Gate” in the press. If this many passengers and buses cross the border, it happens. Buses pose a problem. Because of the density of border crossers, no matter how much effort you spend, some manage to escape. Denunciations for human trafficking are also received. The production of fake stamps is certainly organized. . . . It is mentioned that it brings around \$500–800 for the person who makes the forgery.⁵⁵

For sex workers, the increasing trend in human smuggling seems to be fake marriages and obtaining citizenship through marriage to Turkish nationals. As one of the respondents mentioned:

There are cases of human trafficking. How? One is deported. Then he falls prey to the gang and enters Turkey illegally in a secret compartment of a car. There are both Turkish and Georgian gangs. There was a Georgian woman who organized this business in Hopa (she organized the travel of sex workers) by using forged documents etc. . . . The number of deportations increased and controls increased and now prostitution is much less than it was before. They are involved in prostitution and benefit from fake marriages. They go through the same process as Turkish citizens in a prosecution. This method is used widely. I conduct a secret investigation and visit the address three months later in order to evaluate the marriage. Then based on the investigation result, we send a report (to the Provincial Administration for Migration).⁵⁶

In the interviews, the issue of refugee and asylum-seeker applications was also addressed. It was reported that few applications for asylum were received. The perspective of state authorities regarding asylum seekers is that some of their applications are corrupt or deliberately misleading.⁵⁷ According to the administrator at Artvin Provincial Migration Office, “Asylum is misused. They pretend to be victims of human trafficking. But they do it voluntarily. She is involved in prostitution voluntarily, but when she becomes pregnant she seeks asylum because the employer fires her.” Women immigrants who are forced into sex work might not be considered smuggled people in a vulnerable position; rather, they might be treated as voluntary illegal migrants who, as a last resort, apply for asylum to be able to stay in Turkey.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the politics and management of border crossings, states have various tools at their disposal, from erecting walls to visa regimes and background checks

(such as documentation of personal income, employment and purpose of travel), and from removal to deportation and imprisonment. Especially with migration posing a threat to the labour market and becoming a challenge for the welfare state, due to cheap migrant labour and unemployment,⁵⁸ different segments of society, such as interest groups, bureaucrats, politicians and business circles have influence both in framing legislation and in implementing immigration and border governance. Implementation of laws and regulations takes place both at the border gates and inside the national territory after border crossings. However, the line between informality and illegality is often blurred. Informal activities in the labour market may turn into accepted practices due to the inability of the state to interfere, or a lack of interest on its part in doing so.⁵⁹ Bureaucratic agents, in particular the law enforcement bureaucracy, play an important role in implementation. Often their preferences matter, as it is they who influence how strictly legislation is imposed. Thus, there emerges a gap between official and de facto policy and between national legislation and local implementation of laws regulating migration and border crossings. Our research on the Turkey-Georgia border and the Sarp gate found that the laws are not applied strictly and, especially in relation to irregular migration, there is a tolerant environment.

From the viewpoint of economic rationale, for countries that suffer from a shortage of labour, especially in the labour-intensive secondary sector, irregular migrant labour becomes necessary and, what is more, a norm that then overrides the intentions of stricter border controls.⁶⁰ Cross-border economic disparities, unequal employment opportunities and geographical proximity, the so-called push-and-pull factors, encourage cross-border labour practices.⁶¹ The societal perception of irregular migrants is related to the same economic rationale. Some groups of immigrants are more likely to elicit sympathy, depending on perceptions of the level of risk they pose to a community, culpability for sanctioned actions and level of integration into the society.⁶² The current study, in this vein, illustrates that the Georgians are a group of immigrants who are not seen to be a risk to the local communities in the border region. Quite the contrary, irregular immigrants, Georgian or otherwise, are seen as part of ordinary life. The demand for cheap labour and the desire to sell manufactured goods on the Turkish side, as well as the availability of certain cheap goods (that is, cigarettes, alcoholic drinks, gas, etc.) on the Georgian side, are crucial components of this situation.

The special case of the Sarp border gate highlights the dominance of the economic paradigm operating there, while other factors, such as security, and geopolitical, ethnopolitical and cultural considerations, are also influential to varying degrees. There is a relatively weaker focus on security in the border administration than on economic concerns. The study focusing on immigrants to Turkey and deportations from Turkey illustrates that the Sarp border gate region is an interdependent borderland.⁶³ In a situation of interdependence, there

is a mutually beneficial economic system arising out of stable international relations and favourable economic conditions involving foreign capital, markets and labour that permits the borderland societies to benefit from growth and development. In the case of the Georgia-Turkish land border at Sarp gate, asymmetrical interdependence is evident, a model where a stronger and wealthier nation with higher productive capacity is often matched with a weaker nation that provides cheap labour. However, due to its strategic position and being a transit corridor for Turkey's trade and communications with the Caucasus, Russia and Central Asia, Georgia enjoys a special status and has leverage over Turkey. Despite the asymmetry, both sides, Turkish and Georgian, benefit from the complementarity in proportional degrees. Especially following the conflict with Russia, Turkey emerged as an important trade partner, FDI provider and destination country for Georgian migrant labour. As stated by the former Georgian Prime Minister, Bidzina Ivanishvili, "Turkey is Georgia's number one trade partner. There are many Georgians employed in Turkey. I believe we will have greater cooperation in the future. We are ready to attract Turkish businessmen to Georgia."⁶⁴ However, as observed during the field research, state officials tend to ignore the fact that employment of undocumented migrant labour leads to exploitation. Instead, they regard such employment as a natural outcome and more a sign of Turkey's goodwill toward Georgia, given the poverty, unemployment problems and wage differentials there.

The geo-economic integration model developed by C. Sohn that regards borders as a resource, with its emphasis on cross-border cost differentials and centre-periphery relations, is very useful for understanding cross-border labour dynamics.⁶⁵ In the case of Sarp, labour cost differentials, in particular, explain the flow of Georgian irregular cross-border labour through the Sarp gate. However, cost differentials alone do not pave the way for these flows and to integration. The level of porosity at borders is decided through bilateral relations and the visa regimes of the bordering countries, often taking geopolitical considerations and foreign policy objectives into account. Between Turkey and Georgia, there is a visa regime somewhat similar to the regime employed at the EU's internal borders. This is a very uncommon situation, and neither Turkey nor Georgia has similar regimes on their borders with other countries. Yet, these agreements alone do not explain the concentrated flow of irregular labour to Turkey, and the dynamics between the security and economic paradigms of border politics must also be considered.

As a result of the opening of the border with Georgia and increasing cross-border and transit trade, the population in areas such as Hopa experienced an increase in their wealth, intensifying the already asymmetric nature of the economic relations between the different sides of the border. In recent decades, Turkey witnessed its status changing from a country of emigration to a country of immigration due to increasing economic asymmetry, especially with its northern, southern and eastern neighbours,⁶⁶ a development

that led to many people shuttling in or to circular migration with the hope of finding a job in Turkey while avoiding visa overstays.⁶⁷ Similar to the case of Andalusia (Spain), where the local population's unwillingness to work in the agricultural sector despite high levels of unemployment necessitated the use of migrant labour from Africa and Eastern Europe,⁶⁸ the current study showed that the locals avoid "unwanted jobs." Wealth accumulation through commerce in the Hopa area has caused a shift in the labour market. As jobs had to be filled, a solution that benefitted by the employment of illegal Georgian workers was found.

From a different perspective, Henk van Houtum and Martin van der Velde have argued that the elimination of material barriers alone is not enough to cause cross-border labour mobility, contrary to the assumptions of economic rationale or co-existence of local push-and-pull factors. The mental barriers erected by the perception of unfamiliarity with the lifestyle and people on the other side of the border may also easily deter mobility.⁶⁹ Even though the Turkish-Georgian border was an ideological, militarised and closed border throughout the Cold War, an alienated border until the early 1990s, and remains a border between the Christian and Muslim faiths, the hybrid culture of the border area has never been destroyed.⁷⁰ As observed during the field research, some members of the local population in Artvin either have Georgian as their mother tongue or understand Georgian. Some have relatives on the other side of the border, an outcome of its demarcation in the 1920s. Connections of this kind may have contributed to the flow of labour, as they made communication easier at the beginning, while Georgian workers started to learn some Turkish during their stays in the country. Immigration studies show that common language is an important facilitator.⁷¹

Despite these factors positively contributing to the outcome, it seems the greatest contribution comes from interaction and negotiation between the security and economic paradigms, and the influence of different actors and stakeholders at a regional level in the process of border policymaking. It also shows the impact of interaction between capital and the state in regulating the flow of migrant labour, with the aim of exploiting wage differentials to the benefit of capital. The demands of local stakeholders (such as tea-plantation owners) who need cheap labour, a need made greater by a shunning of these jobs by local workers, influence the attitudes of local administrations and law enforcement agencies, especially in regard to how strictly they implement laws and regulations concerning illegal migrant labour. A classification is made by local agencies, with the participation of the local population, which divides foreign nationals into groups based on the threats they pose and their contribution to the society.⁷² The border acts as a process of social division and this "social sorting"⁷³ leads to a selective or flexible implementation of the laws that depends on the character and activities of the individuals and groups concerned and the needs of capital, leading to differential inclusion.⁷⁴

A recent study on Turkey showed that despite recent modifications in laws concerning foreigners, especially regarding removal and deportation, they are not transparent processes and, in addition to secret government decrees concerning who will be deported, the subjectivity of the law enforcement agencies also causes problems at the implementation level.⁷⁵ Even developments in the area of foreign policy influence the attitude of the authorities in deciding which nationals will be more eligible for deportation, as the example of the willingness of the authorities to deport Armenians shows.⁷⁶ The process of categorisation was also observed during the field research. As one interviewee argued, jobs such as tea-harvesting are “very innocent” and if illegal migrants work with “decency” they are not prosecuted or deported. Regardless of laws that forbid employment of unregistered migrant labour, such employment is seen as very natural and tolerable. On the other hand if migrants are involved in “indecent jobs” (such as sex workers and smugglers) they deserve “prosecution” instead of clemency and tolerance. This system of classification also affects the level of human smuggling and trafficking activities at the border gate. People deported by the Turkish authorities generally also receive an entry ban of some years. They may then try to enter the country illegally. In light of the limited number of human smuggling and human trafficking activities and networks at the border and in the mountainous geography of the border area, the research pointed not to large mafia-style criminal organisations, but instead to smaller and more flexible groups acting on an opportunistic basis, a finding in parallel to previous studies on the eastern borders of Turkey.⁷⁷

As shown in this study, various factors such as the interplay between the economic and security paradigms, asymmetry in the labour markets, the dynamics between local stakeholders and government, cultural and linguistic affinity, the changing function of the border from barrier to bridge, the proliferation of border resources, and last but not least, Turkey’s geopolitical and foreign policy objectives that allows a privileged treatment of Georgia in order to maintain it as a buffer-state, corridor and trade partner, have created a unique border regime between the two countries. The findings have pointed out that the different yet simultaneous processes of social-sorting and inclusion/exclusion have blurred lines between informality and illegality. The study underlined the view that borders should be seen as dynamic processes of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, with the participation of multiple actors, like law enforcement agencies, groups of capital and labour, and other border populations, all of whom actively negotiate the border.

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52. Administrator, Provincial Migration Office.
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54. Security Officer, Artvin Provincial Migration Office.
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57. Turkey applies geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention and accepts asylum applications from Europe only. However, as a result of the need to converge with the EU *acquis* as well as in response to the massive influx of Syrian refugees, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection was enacted in 2013. The Directorate General of Migration Management was established and started to receive asylum applications and conduct interviews with applicants. During the field research, it was observed that the Directorate General's provincial branch in Artvin was understaffed,

- leading to problems in handling the applications. Yet despite the new law, the legal framework in Turkey is still far from meeting the international standards. Even the Syrians in Turkey are under ‘temporary protection’ rather than having refugee status. Non-Europeans and non-Syrians may only have ‘conditional refugee’ status according to the law. For more information, see K. S. Biehl, ‘Governing Through Uncertainty: Experiences of Being a Refugee Country for Temporary Asylum’, *Social Analysis* 59/1 (2015); J. Vukasinovic, ‘Illegal Migration in Turkey-EU Relations: An Issue of Political Bargaining or Political Cooperation?’, *European Perspectives* 3/2 (Oct. 2011).
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