



MIGRATION FLOW DYNAMICS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Many people from Syria, North Africa and elsewhere try their chances to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea in order to escape from conflict and poverty in their countries. In Syria alone, the civil war has created a massive forced migration flow, causing almost 13 million people to leave their homes during the last six years. Among them, 6.6 million relocated to safer regions in the country, while 5.3 million seek refuge mostly in the neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Turkey takes the lead with hosting 3,251,997 people, while Lebanon hosts 1,001,051 people, Jordan 654,582, Iraq 244,235 and Egypt 124,534 people in 2017. In fact, the Turkey-Greece, or Eastern Mediterranean, route used to be the main arterial path for many Syrians in their journey to the European continent where they reached out Greece at first, then moved forward to the developed European countries like Germany, France and the United Kingdom. However, the Turkey-European Union (EU) Refugee Deal signed on March 19, 2016, closed this option for many refugees since the Turkish coast guard forces increased their control on the borders to prevent any illegal crossing from Turkey to Greece. The security measures taken by Turkey reduced the daily arrivals dramatically from 1,700 people per day in January 2016 to only 30 in September 2017. In total, a number of arrivals significantly dropped from 856,732 in 2015 to 171,775 in 2016 and reached only 19,978 in September 2017. Nevertheless, this does not stop Syrian refugees from travelling to Europe, causing a shift in the direction of the migration flow to the dangerous Libya-Italy, or Central Mediterranean, route, where they have joined thousands of migrants from the African and Asian countries. Consequently, the closure of the Turkey-Greece route has boosted the number of arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean. For instance, arrivals of migrants in 2016 have increased by 20%, reaching 181,436, and amounted to 110,748 people in January-October 2017. The 2016 increase has also reflected negatively on the deaths at sea numbers. In 2016, the death ratio for the Eastern Mediterranean route was one death for every 389 arrivals, whereas this figure is

almost 10 times higher for the Central Mediterranean route where the death ratio hit one death for every 40 arrivals. In total, 5,096 people were reported dead or missing in 2016 while trying to pass the Central Mediterranean, which is a 43% increase compared to 2015. As for the Eastern Mediterranean, 441 people died in the sea during their journey to Europe in 2016.

There are major concerns being raised over the profile of migrants passing through the Central Mediterranean route. In fact, the majority of the migrants who use the Eastern Mediterranean are Syrians who are escaping from the civil war, whereas the major groups who use the Central Mediterranean route are mainly economic migrants from Nigeria, Guinea, Bangladesh, Cote D'Ivoire and Mali. However, since the situation in these countries is not seen as a humanitarian crisis, increased international migratory flows do not lead to greater assistance from the EU to labor migrants who are escaping from poverty.

In order to reduce the migration flow to Italy from Libya, the Italian government has conducted a number of diplomatic negotiations with the unified central government in Tripoli. On February 3, 2017, Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni and Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Serraj signed an agreement on bilateral cooperation on preventing the arrival of irregular migrants in Italy. According to the agreement, the Italian side will give €220 million (\$236 million) to Libya for both strengthening the Libyan coast guard forces and building refugee camps in Libya. The contribution to the Libyan coast guard forces' improvement is an essential part of the agreement because if the Libyan authorities do catch irregular migrants, they take them back to Libya, but if migrants are caught after reaching international waters then, irrespective of who caught them, migrants have to be taken to Italy. After arriving in Italy, they can apply for asylum and stay in the refugee camps until their application process is finalized. If their asylum application is accepted, then they could either settle in the first country of entry, in this case Italy, or resettle in one of the EU countries, which grants them a permanent settlement.

Looking at the monthly arrival statistics for Italy since February 2017, the number of ar-

ivals continuously increased ranging between 9,000 to 23,000 people until July 2017. It was expected that in the summer period the number of arrivals would significantly increase. In fact, May-August is the peak season for arrivals since 2011. This trend continued in 2016 where a number of monthly arrivals ranged between 23,000-27,000 people. However, according to the UNHCR, in 2017, the number of monthly arrivals sharply dropped from 23,524 in June to 11,461 in July, decreasing to 3,914 in August. There was some increase to 6,188 arrivals in September, and, as of October 22, 2017, the number of arrivals reached 5,433 people. Compared with the previous year, the arrivals fell by 52%, 82% and 64% in July, August and September, respectively.

The reasons for this significant change so far are not clear. However, there is news circulating in the media that the Libyan government has convinced some of the smugglers operating in the Sabratha region, which is the center of human trafficking criminal organizations to halt their migrant smuggling operations. Another possible factor is that due to increased controls at the Libyan border human traffickers might have increased their price for sailing to Italy. According to the UNHCR, the large part of migrants pay smugglers between \$1,000-5,000 per person to be transferred from Libya to Italy. If the prices has indeed gone higher, for people who are escaping from a civil war or poverty these sums are quite high to pay and could be counted as one of the reasons for the decline in the number of refugees. It is also worth mentioning that the strengthening of the Libyan coastal guard forces could also positively contribute to the reduction of the number of arrivals to Italy.

In conclusion, it could be stated that the Turkey-EU Refugee Deal has almost stopped the arrivals via the Eastern Mediterranean route, and recent developments show that the migrant flow from Libya through the Central Mediterranean route in 2017 will be less compared with 2016. However, blocking routes to Europe is not a sustainable policy that could be continued for a long time unless the core reasons of the migration flow, which are the ongoing civil war in Syria and conflicts and poverty in North Africa, are resolved.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- During his official visit to Ankara, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev met with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss prospects for developing cooperation in trade, industry, banking, investment, tourism, healthcare and other fields. As a result of the visit, more than 20 documents were signed in various spheres. Moreover, during the Turkish-Uzbek Business Forum held as part of the Uzbek President's visit to Turkey entrepreneurs signed agreements worth \$3.5 billion for the implementation of more than 30 joint projects.
- During the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the party voted to enshrine the name of the country's President Xi Jinping and his ideology into the party charter. In addition, five new appointments were made to the seven-member Politburo Standing Committee.
- During his official visit to Astana, Minister of Interior of Saudi Arabia Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud met with President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to discuss further developing fruitful bilateral cooperation. The parties also exchanged views on establishing links between the law enforcement agencies of the two countries in the face of global terrorism and extremism.
- During his official visit to Tashkent, Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Dmitry Rogozin met with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to discuss issues of practical implementation of agreements on further expansion of trade, economic, investment and military-technical cooperation between the two countries. The parties also underlined the importance of strengthening industrial cooperation between the leading enterprises and companies of Russia and Uzbekistan.
- According to the Defense Ministry of Azerbaijan, a group of 50 Azerbaijani servicemen who had served in Afghanistan under the NATO-led non-combat Resolute Support Mission returned to Baku in accordance with the rotation plan.
- According to the Defense Ministry of Russia, a planned training exercise was held to practice effective command and control of the Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces. During the exercise, three intercontinental ballistic missiles were launched from the nuclear-powered submarines, while one missile was test-fired from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome in northern Russia.
- According to the Defense Ministry of Belarus, a deal on the delivery of battery

of Tor-M2 air defense missile systems was signed with the defense contractor of Russia Almaz-Antey.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- According to the Chinese state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation, Kazakhstan started supplying gas via the three-line Central Asia-China pipeline network. Commercial gas volumes were sent through Line C across the Kazakh-Chinese border under the deal that provides for the annual exports of 5 billion cubic meters of gas by Kazakhstan to China.
- According to Energy Minister of Russia Alexander Novak, it is expected that in 2017 gas production in the country would grow by 12% year-on-year, while oil and oil condensate production would decrease by 0.1%.
- According to the Energy Market Regulatory Authority of Turkey, Azerbaijan exported about 4.28 billion cubic meters of gas to the country in January-August 2017 as compared to 4.33 billion cubic meters in the same period of 2016. In August 2017, Azerbaijan suspended production at the Shah Deniz field, the gas from which is supplied to Turkey, due to maintenance works on the platform. Turkey imported 35.93 billion cubic meters of gas in January-August 2017, of which 29.49 billion were imported via pipelines, while imports of liquefied natural gas accounted for 6.44 billion cubic meters. Azerbaijan's share in Turkey's total gas imports stood at 11.9% in January-August 2017.
- According to President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Suma Chakrabarti, the bank will open its office in Tashkent in November 2017. The official opening ceremony will be attended by the EBRD President together with EBRD First Vice President Phil Bennett and Vice President for Risks Betsy Nelson.
- According to the Central Bank of Uzbekistan, in January-September 2017 the inflation rate in the country reached 7.8%, which is a 2.2% increase compared to the same period of 2016. During the reporting period, the average growth in prices for consumer goods amounted to 7.6%, which is a 3.3% decrease compared to January-September 2016, while prices for non-food products and paid services reached 8.6% and 7%, which is an increase by 6.4% and 7%, respectively.
- According to the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, the country's GDP increased by 5.3% in January-September 2017 compared to the same period of 2016 totaling 170.07 trillion soums (\$21.07 billion). It was noted that in January-September 2017 the volume

of industrial output made up 99.06 trillion soums (\$12.27 billion), which is 5.6% higher than in the same period of 2016. During the reporting period, the growth in the manufacture of agricultural, forestry and fishery products reached 3.5% amounting to 46.19 trillion soums (\$5.7 billion).

- According to Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan Beybit Isabayev, for the three quarters of 2017 the volume of goods transported from Kazakhstan through Azerbaijan grew by 744,900 tons, or 269%, due to the growth in the shipment of oil products. Moreover, due to the growth in transportation of sugar products, chemicals, soda, and confectionery products the volume of goods imported from Azerbaijan and through its territory to Kazakhstan increased by 106,700 tons, or 58%. It was also noted that during the reporting period, about 1.5 million tons of cargo were transported by rail, and this is 146% more than in the same period last year.

Society and Culture

- Turkey celebrated its Republic Day and 94th anniversary of the proclamation of the republic. During the celebration, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim and other high-level state officials visited Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's mausoleum.
- President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree on the transition of the Kazakh alphabet from the Cyrillic to the Latin-based script. According to the decree, the Government of Kazakhstan should establish a national commission, which will ensure a gradual transition of the Kazakh alphabet to the Latin-based script until 2025.
- According to Secretary of the Russian Commission for UNESCO Affairs Grigori Ordzhonikidze, Russia's state-owned space corporation Roscosmos addressed the Foreign Ministry of Russia asking to put the Baikonur cosmodrome on UNESCO's world heritage list as a joint nomination of Russia and Kazakhstan.
- According to the UN Country Office in Uzbekistan, since 1992 the monetary contribution of the organization to the country amounted to about \$471 million.
- According to the Department of Disease Prevention and State Sanitary and Epidemiological Supervision of the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan, 88% of infectious diseases in the country are caused by poor water quality. It was noted that 80% of diseases can be prevented by introducing supervision over the provision of high-quality drinking water and compliance of water supply facilities with safety regulations.