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**A Feminist Informed Investigation: Irregular
Migration and the EU-Turkey Deal**

By

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To my mom and dad

To my angel

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A Feminist Informed Investigation: Irregular Migration and the EU-Turkey Deal

Hiba Sinno

ABSTRACT

Over the years, traditional migration theory has failed to address and examine gender-specific experiences around migration but has used a gendered-neutral approach in highlighting the circumstances that drive women to migrate through irregular and illegal means. Addressing the challenges that these women face using an intersectional approach has been used to a minimal degree in migration studies. Such a gap in the field of migration poses predicaments that prevent policymakers, politicians, intergovernmental organizations, and many more in addressing such challenges and being able to devise a plan that specifically targets these women and putting it into action and implementation. In this research work, I draw upon the EU-Turkey deal and how it played a major role in negatively impacting the irregular migrant women, migrating irregularly from Turkey to reach the EU. This work uses intersectionality that has the potential to generate insights around the experiences and challenges these women face as well as revealing the invisible oppressive forces that are affecting them because of their identity. The purpose of this work is to promote a gendered analysis that leads to drafting gender sensitive and responsive policies that address the human rights of marginalized groups that are being violated during irregular migration.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Gender, Irregular Migration, Women, Border, EU, Turkey, Feminism

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List of Abbreviations

APD: Asylum Procedure Directive

EU: European Union

GVB: Gender-based Violence

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OWP: Organization for World Peace

UN: United Nations

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNOCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

USA: United States of America

RIC: Official Reception and Identification Centers

SGVB: Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction: “Where Are the Women?”

Gender is a concept that is tied to many facets in our lives such as politics, household dynamics, international affairs, sociology, and many other fields. This work sets the spotlight on the field of migration, specifically irregular migration with respect to gender as the two fields are greatly intertwined with each other and have so much influence on us. Over the years, traditional migration theory has failed to address and examine gender-specific experiences regarding migration but has used a gendered-neutral approach in highlighting the circumstances and conditions that drive women to shift their lives to resort to migrating irregularly and being pushed to migrate through illegal trafficking routes and attempting to seek refuge and resettlement. Addressing the challenges that women face in their migration journey through an intersectional feminist lens remains missing from migration studies at large. Such a gap in the field of migration studies, poses predicaments that prevent policymakers, politicians, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and many more in addressing such challenges and being able to devise a policy framework that adequately targets these women and their intersectional needs.

In 2015, Europe witnessed an influx of irregular migration flows and trends impacting the sending countries and the host countries alike. The same year, the European Union (EU) experienced an influx of over one million refugees who arrived by boat and at

the start of 2016, it was already met with 150,000 irregular migrants. By the beginning of 2016, 86% of the arrivals by sea came from ten countries and from those arrivals 45% encompassed Syrian refugees and 24% came from Afghanistan. The EU has been gravely impacted by the Syrian refugee crisis that has been labeled by the United Nations (UN), the worst and adverse humanitarian crisis of the twenty-first century. The number of migrant women arriving to Europe through irregular means has steadily increased over the years but with no accurate figures to inform us of the exact number of women that are surviving this journey into the EU. This is largely due to the unavailability of sex segregated data. The United Nations Higher Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that the percentage of women among the migrants that are arriving through irregular means are around 20%. A representative of UNHCR has asserted that that from the year 2015, the proportion of refugee women has been greatly increasing whereby migration trends have changed regarding women migrating alone or with their children (Freedman, 2016).

Among the countries that were highly impacted by the European refugee crisis are Turkey and Greece. Based on UNHCR's report, it is important to acknowledge the fact that Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees with over 5 million registered Syrian refugees in this country. Many of these Syrian refugees residing in Turkey have over the years tried to migrate by crossing the Aegean Sea to reach Greece in order to travel onwards to their destined countries in Europe. It has been noted by the UNHCR, that such migration journeys have been deemed to be greatly perilous. A United Nations report claims that traveling through voyage from the Mediterranean to Europe is "by far the world's deadliest journey for migrants, with at least 33,761 reported to have died or gone missing between 2000 and 2017" (UN News, 2017). Since March 2016, the situation of

the irregular migrants has become more detrimental, threatening, complex, and deleterious when the EU and Turkey launched a vastly politicized action plan known as the EU-Turkey agreement that's targeted at reducing the flow of irregular migrants into Europe. In brief, this agreement between Turkey and Europe affirms that Turkey will take the needed measures to prevent individuals migrating irregularly from Turkey to Greece and will take back those who migrated irregularly to Europe even though there has been claims by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), arguing that even though Greece has deemed that Turkey is a 'safe third country' for asylum seekers and refugees coming from Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, and Afghanistan, yet many vivid elements point towards Turkey not being a safe destination for refugees. In various reports we find that many refugees migrating to Europe go missing but we barely know what's happening to these women that are traveling through irregular means, how many are dying, who is going missing, what are their reasons for migrating, what oppressive forces are at play, and most importantly "where are the women?" (Enloe, 2014).

1.2 Research Questions

So, how can intersectional feminism affect and inform our understanding and analysis of the challenges irregular migrant women encounter upon migrating from Turkey to the EU?

- Through an intersectional lens, how has the EU-Turkey agreement impacted the irregular migrant women?
- What oppressive forces are affecting and shaping the irregular migration of women during the flight stage, border crossing, and temporary settlement in reception and detention centers in the EU?

Answering these questions are pertinent whereby intersectionality as a feminist theory has the potential to generate insights around the experiences and challenges these irregular women face when migrating from Turkey to EU how can these challenges be mitigated. This framework is capable of revealing the invisible oppressive forces that are affecting negatively these women upon migrating irregularly as well as studying the relative powers that are shaping these women's experiences. An intersectional approach regards gender as the key element when seeking to make sense of what's going on in the field of migration.

1.3 Literature Review

This section examines the existing literature on gender with respect to the field of migration. The first part of the literature review covers topics around the 2015 European refugee crisis with respect to the Syrian refugee crisis and its impact it had on the irregular migrant women. In this section various authors touch upon the idea of how women categorized as being vulnerable have suffered at the hands of oppressive forces when migrating to Europe from Turkey. The second part of the literature review delves into the politics around the European borders and what's going on when irregular migrant women are migrating irregularly from Turkey to reach Greece and how border policing regulations are affecting them.

In *A Gendered Approach to Migration*, Freedman et al shed light on the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015 taking into consideration that even though such crisis has been the hot issue across media channels yet minimal attention has been given to the challenges women experience when migrating. In this work, the authors' main purpose is to provide

a detailed assessment of the refugee crisis with respect to the gender dynamics that are at play in impacting the journeys of the Syrian refugee women in Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, and the United Kingdom. In this edited volume, the authors examine the structural conditions that play a role in shaping and affecting the experiences of Syrian refugee women. Zeynep Kivilcim et al. assert that the conditions of refugee camps have created problems around diminishing the concept of gender equality as well as the rights of women in these respective camps. Even the UNHCR and other international organizations' work in including gendered needs in their provisions have in practice not been completely addressed. A study by the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) notes that "certain populations receive less attention and less access to programs, including the elderly, women and girls living outside the camps, people with disabilities and sexual minorities". According to Kivilcim et al, such evidence indicates that the championing of gender mainstreaming by UN agencies is in practice kept at the level of mere policy planning with no actual implementation but just a rhetoric concept.

Freedman et al. touch on a lot of topics such as intimate partner and domestic violence as well as sexual and gender-based violence, early or forced marriage, sex and marriage, social class, and gender stereotyping, all experienced by Syrian displaced women in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, and Europe. All such factors that are a threat to the security of these women and girls feed into the ongoing patriarchal control being imposed. The authors subscribe to the fact that the 'crisis' labelling and the humanitarianization of refugee laws and policies aggravates and amplifies the vulnerabilities of refugees and displaced migrants as well as limiting their access to protection measures. With such access being restricted, the women would find themselves

restrained and can only resort to patriarchal protection means like the husband and family. Syrian Women turn to transactional matrimony or arranged marriage for instance, which are considered one of the major tactics adopted in order to survive in the host countries. This in return as Nurcan Baklacioglu argues, increases these women's dependency on men and impedes their agency whereby they would feel helpless and powerless to voice out their concerns and needs in a refugee protection regime where its services "depend primarily on the will and tolerance of the male as the main guardian of private space". The authors in this work argue that the absence of a gender sensitive legal framework with respect to the refugee protection laws and the politicization of legal frameworks related to accessing international protection, legal entry and stay, and the settlement procedures, have resulted in maintaining the legal insecurity of the Syrian refugees, specifically the women. Freedman et al. have emphasized that one of the main reasons why refugees have been attempting to migrate to Europe is because of the legal insecurity they face in neighboring countries.

Jiménez-Lasserrotte et al. reiterate the idea behind the work done by Freedman et al. in *A Gendered Approach to Migration*, stating women irregular migrants (WIMs) are a vulnerable category that are highly exposed to gender-based violence and suffer from sexual aggressions and yet little has been known about their experiences and challenges they face when migrating. The authors assert that WIMs who migrate to Europe have had a history of being subjected to human trafficking, rape, violence, forced pregnancy, and prostitution. And as a matter of fact, the emergency care that is designed for refugees specifically women should include gynecological examinations whereby it is pertinent to take the act of detecting sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and human trafficking

as part of the care protocols. Jiménez-Lasserrotte et al. use the framework developed by Zimmerman et al. that divides the migration process into stages encompassing recruitment, transit, abuse and exploitation, and integration and reintegration, that would help in understanding and analyzing WIMs' experiences. The authors' study that has been carried out on a number of WIMs migrating to Spain reveal that social discrimination, penury, and marginalization constitute key elements in driving these females to go on dangerous, harsh, and uncertain migration journeys. Jiménez-Lasserrotte et al. stress on the fact that even upon the arrival of these refugees, they need emergency care for nutrition, injuries, hydration, and hypothermia. In a research report conducted by Amnesty International, it demonstrates that a huge percentage of female refugees crossing the EU borders have experienced rape, abuse, exploitation, and fell into the hands of smugglers as well as security staff, pressuring them to have sex with them as a means to pass the borders. The threat doesn't just stop at crossing the borders but even in refugee camps still women are prone to face SGBV whereby the UNHCR report states that "in many refugee situations, particularly those involving the confinement of refugees in closed camps, traditional behavioral norms and restraints break down. In such circumstances refugee women and girls may be raped by other refugees, acting either individually or in gangs, and self-appointed leaders may thwart attempts to punish the offenders" (Chapman, 2017). Eleanor Chapman argues that the cause of the underreporting of SGBV is traced to the climate of blaming and shaming the victim whereby abused women would fear disclosing the episodes of SGBV, fearing that they may be denied being granted visas or the refugee status. The author further discusses the challenges associated to the lack of having adequate healthcare services in refugee camps whereby it has been reported that 10% of the refugee

women in Greece are pregnant and the basic health services are lacking. Chapman asserts that even when it comes to settling in the host country, these refugee women and girls face settlement challenges integration laws and policies have not proven to be gender sensitive. She further argues that the intersectionality of the refugee crisis should not be neglected, stating that the “complexities of refugees’ experiences are negotiated through and shaped by intersections of race, class, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and various other identities”. Thus, more research should be conducted around the experiences these refugee women face and “the gender concerns should be kept in mind in the search for solutions” (Chapman, 2017).

In the works of Selmin Kaşka, she explores the theme of gender and migration with reference to Turkey and Europe and their politics around migration. She states that research work based on the migration of Balkan Turks have represented an undermined area in gender and migration studies. Such literature has made migrant women invisible in the migration process. Research work on the waves of migration from Turkey to Bulgaria and vis versa, that occurred around the time when the Turkish Republic was established, has been characterized for being gender blind. The study conducted by Kaytan in 2014, however considers the element gender in studying and understanding migration and the gender relations with respect to Bulgarian Turks in Turkey. She argues that migrant women’s “citizenship has become a gendered construct due to the gender norms imposed on women immigrant women”, contrary to the discourse on formal citizenship. Kofman and Raghuram contend that “gender is an important factor influencing global migration today and this recognition has spurred a range of empirical studies, theorizations and policy measures”. Moreover, Kaşka states that in the field of gender and migration studies,

migrant women's experiences migrating from and to turkey have not been properly acknowledged. Even though there has been mass literature on Balkan migration, yet such research has taken on a gender-blind approach. As Anthia and Cederberg have argued, "Gender is not the mainstream in the migration literature. Indeed, much of this literature remains inattentive to issues of gender". With regards to this viewpoint, Kaşka asserts that the absence of females in research on Balkan migration should be put under consideration, questioned, and analyzed analytically in depth. Taking gender as a variable and acknowledging it as a pertinent determinant and element in migration as well as the experiences associated with it, has been a global struggle.

Following up on the migration journey of these illegal migrant women, there has been a lot of literature around the borders of Europe and its politics that seem to be affecting a wide range of protagonists migrating to Europe illegally. In Sharon Pickering's work, she reveals through her analysis of the border deaths that took place in EU, United States, and Australia, that females die disproportionately at the global frontier which is the physical land as well as the maritime borders between states. Such frontiers between the Global South and North are considered to be important material and political resources that represent symbolic power for border protection and are directed for the aim of inhibiting irregular and illegal migration. Pickering asserts that finding out why women are dying in the process of crossing borders irregularly "are not clearly discernible from the data, yet based on the extent of literature it is reasonable to conclude that in addition to the role of state sponsored border control, gendered social practices within countries of origin and transit, as well as the practices of smuggling markets, are key contributing factors". Thus, based on the data analyzed by Pickering, she concludes that women face greater risk at the

physical frontier rather than when they are at the internal border sites during migrating illegally and irregularly. Following up on the literature of border crossing, Bosworth et al. examine the experiences of women who are subjected to policing at the edges of Europe and experience the irregular entry of the Greek Turkey border. The authors argue that the border policing at the Greek Turkey border is marked by its traits of being unpredictable, volatile, and capricious whereby it is “highly racialised and gendered”. According to Bauman, the securitization of migration has been taking over migration and asylum policies in crafting a ‘hierarchy of mobility’. There has been a vast contribution in academic works and research around how gender has the power to shape the access of refugee protection and asylum in developing states (Bhabha 2004; Pickering 2011). Gerard et al. make it clear that it is evident that studies and works on gender, refugee protection and asylum, and transit have highly shed light on refugee camp experience. Gerard et al. examine as a matter of fact, the voices of women that are overlooked when it comes analyzing the border security operations of the EU. The authors assert that it is the women’s accounts in those border sites and not just the physical sites of the external borders of the EU that are impacting and affecting the women when they migrate irregularly to the host country.

1.4 Gap

No doubt there is a plethora of literature regarding irregular migration with respect to the European refugee crisis and its impact has on various protagonists. Even though we find records, published works, literature, and various other information sources on the experiences that refugees have went through during their irregular migration journeys, yet

we still find gaps regarding those that are specifically about the experiences of women. There is though literature on irregular migrant women and the challenges they go through but what's interesting is the fact that barely any of the literature works have barely gone in the direction of fully adopting an intersectional feminist approach whereby such framework is able to realize how women are being viewed in a comprehensive manner as well as being regarded as a "often falsely homogenized group of diverse individuals, who each have layer upon layer of independent and distinct experiences" (Diab, 2019). Such a gap poses challenges especially when seeking to craft and implement gender responsive policies that are tailored to these irregular migrant women. The end result would be having rhetoric policies that fail in addressing the challenges these irregular migrant women go through.

1.5 Filling the Gap: Working Argument

In order to understand and analyze vividly the experiences and challenges encountered by irregular migrant women migrating to Europe from Turkey and who seem to be shaping the migration field in international affairs of what goes on around us, the politics of migration and the oppressive forces that are kept invisible, I argue that through adopting a feminist intersectional lens, it would provide us with insights that serve to uncover these invisible forces that are shaping the migration journey of these women. This prominent theory works in a manner that is highly significant for this research work because it promotes a gendered analysis that leads to drafting gendered sensitive and responsive policies that address the human rights of subordinate and marginalized groups that are being violated during migrating irregularly.

Such model is pertinent to fill the gap as it acts as a lens in order to reveal for instance how EU's borders are highly gendered and politicized in nature that are affecting the migration journeys of these irregular migrant women. Such approaches would serve well in filling the gap in research through studying and making sense out of gender and irregular migration. Incorporating intersectionality, is critical in uncovering and analyzing the oppressive forces that are affecting irregular migrant women. This approach is important because it can be used in the field of migration, gender, and international relations in order to better understand and find solutions to the challenges irregular migrant women are facing.

1.6 Methodology

This research work deploys an intersectional approach as an analytical framework capable of revealing the hidden oppressive forces that are impacting and affecting the experiences of irregular migrant women when they migrate through different channels to reach their destinations. Intersectionality acts in this case in the form of a radar that has the ability to detect and closely examine the relative powers that are shaping our thinking when we think about specific issues that these irregular migrant women are going through like SGVB, trafficking, abuse, discrimination, rape, exploitation, and many other forms of oppression. Intersectionality allows us to bring out the undermined elements of identity and to connect them to disparate social outcomes. Moreover, this approach recognizes that every individual's political identity, economic status, and social identities create varied levels of privilege and discrimination.

This work uses the ‘studying through’ approach in the case study being analyzed, in order to reveal insights on the challenges irregular migrant women face when migrating irregularly from Turkey to EU from an intersectional lens and how can the insights revealed by these two frameworks better inform us of the way forward. The ‘studying through’ approach is pertinent in this research work that works around analyzing in depth a series of conflicts, discourses, discussions, key variables, and their overall impacts on the society and, “how new semantic clusters form, and how new governing discourse emerges” and become institutionalized (Shore et.al, 2011).

I will rely mostly on using secondary sources of data as well as primary ones. For secondary sources, I will examine journal articles, academic and scholarly books, as well as previous interviews that address the specific challenges and experiences of the irregular migrant women that they had to go through during their travel. I will analyze using intersectionality journal articles that have addressed dangerous journeys irregular migrants go through when crossing the seas from the middle east in order to reach Europe and based on such analysis I will interpret how it’s affecting negatively irregular migrant women.

For the primary sources, I will examine the policies and political agreements that have went around between Turkey and Europe regarding the EU-Turkey deal and its impact on the irregular migrant women that have been trapped at the borders of EU, mainly Greece because of is gendered politics and protocols that appear to be unhumanitarian.

1.7 Map of Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The following chapter examines the relationship of gender and migration and how these two fields are linked to one another.

This chapter looks in depth at how the field of migration has changed over time to encompass gender as a significant variable in affecting the way we understand and interpret this field. Chapter three discusses in depth the theoretical framework intersectionality which is essential in helping to answer the research questions as well as examining how this framework syncs with the field of migration. Chapter four analyzes first how Turkey is not deemed to be a safe third country and as a result refugees, asylum seekers, and others are migrating to the EU. This chapter also documents the experiences of irregular migrant women during flight, border crossing, and temporary settlement in reception and detention centers in EU. I draw upon EU's border politics and Frontex's real intentions in making profit through incorporating militarizing and rigid border control measures that prevent irregular migrants from crossing its borders. Such tactics are harming the irregular migrants and not looking after their safety and protection needs. Moreover, I examine and analyze through an intersectional lens how gender, violence, insecurity, illegal status, and militarization intersect with one another to negatively impact the irregular migrant women. This section is significant in this research work as it supports the argument and justifies the prepositions made in the final chapter around the need to craft gender sensitive and responsive policies that initiate from a gendered informed analysis with all its intersections being considered.

Chapter Two

Gender and Migration

It is vital to address in this study the relationship of migration with respect to gender taking into consideration that the variable gender despite it being significant in the field of migration, yet it has been overlooked. This interface between migration and gender has been predominantly neglected in academia and policy making. When we examine traditional and normative migration theory, we notice that it is significantly gender blind whereby the literature on migration has essentially been centered upon white men. In *A Theory of Migration*, Everett Lee noted that “children are carried along by their parents, willy-nilly, and wives accompany their husbands though it tears them away from environments they love”. The discourses on migration in fact have mainly been centered upon conceptualizing women as dependent wives or even family members and parents with little account to how this gender category plays a huge role in migration. Boyd, Chant and Radcliffe subscribe to this account stressing on the point that not much attention has been given to women in theories of migration. Women were mainly viewed as individuals accompanying their husbands and following men. Even when independent women migrated for work purposes, their presence was acknowledged on the basis of empirical phenomenon, nothing more than being regarded as mirroring the economic migration of independent men (Kofman, 1999). The sex variable has been as a result a neglected variable in migration on the basis of it being unproblematic and regarding it as a key to classifying the distinct experiences of males and females. Even though high numbers of women began taking part in the migration journey, yet the gendered

movement remained overpassed until the mid and late 1970s whereby great interest arouse around migrant women though they were mainly looked upon through the lens of family life and family reunification and not as economic actors. Concerns over settlement, housing, employment, gender-based violence, and discrimination that women experience during migration were also overlooked (Zlotnik, 1995). Only up until late 1980s, studies on migration began to shed light on women in forced migration/displacement as well as women in labor migration (Kofman, 2014). In the issue of the *International Migration Review*, Mirjana Morokvasic asserts that the migration field also concerns and is a concern for women. During this decade, the act of making women more visible became the preeminent concern whereby a significant number of case studies were published around migrant women from different countries. Despite that, such case studies have barely treated and regarded gender as central and significant variable and the insights yielded around migrant women have marginally impacted migration theory (Kofman 1999 and Mahler 1999). The involvement of gender relations in diaspora decisions has been looked upon as corresponding to a peculiar theory of women's belonging in society. With reference to this particular theory, the mere acknowledgement of gender acting as a variable among other factors is insufficient; hence, it should be established as a principal concept (Boyd, 1989).

In 1992, Sylvia Chant and Sarah Radcliff published *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries*, which contributed greatly to the field of research on gender and migration. In the introduction, the authors stated that barely analysts and researchers have presented more than just providing numerical sex differences across migration studies. Nevertheless, this work is mainly empirical and entailed not much theoretical

interpretation and analysis of the variable gender. Thus, there needs to be a move beyond the discourse of the distinct migration patterns of women and men to variations that emphasize the element of development within such context.

The household unit became a well-known unit of analysis in the field of migration. In the 1980s more research was conducted on 'household strategies' with respect to gender and migration because it was believed to merge micro/behavioral perspective with the macro/structural perspective (Bach and Schrami, 1982). For instance, Chant has asserted that "there is little doubt that this is the most fruitful basis from which to elaborate future concepts and methodologies for gender-selective mobility". As a matter of fact, gender division of labor should be given attention based on reproductive and productive activities and relating it to the aspect of migration at the household level. Feminist scholars did pinpoint that often there is a dire tendency to recognize and characterize the household as a single benevolent unit that is monolithic in nature which in return would enshroud discrimination within this setting (Matthei, 1996). It is important to note that households in various countries actually differ from one another which makes it difficult to take this unit in research on migration and gender as a constant theoretical unit. Akesson, for example, has made it clear that trying to determine who is part of the household or belongs to it is problematic and introducing migration into this picture further complexifies matters. In the literature, various authors have stated that women's marginal and subordinate positions in the labor market are a mirror to the family decisions and choices that seem to perpetuate and maintain gender inequalities (Tienda, Booth, 1991). Under the theoretical construction of gender relations in migration decisions as mentioned above which as well focuses on the gender division of labor, it

emphasizes that such division compels women to take on the bulk of household chores and place them in inferior positions, refraining and confining their geographical locomotion or restricting them to subordinate and unsafe capacities in their respective destinations.

Despite the growing trends and flows around the migration of women throughout the years, we still find a bias being portrayed and manifested around the roles of women and their contributions in the field of migration and development. During the 1960s and early 1970s, analysts, policymakers, academics, and researchers assumed that women were acquiescent and passive during the migration journey (Grieco and Boyd, 2003). Thus, when we examine previous discourses on migration, women's role as economic agents and the duties they perform have appeared to be kept hidden and being referred to as 'migrants and their families'. Many of the gender academic scholars in the migration field have asserted that it's critical to unveil this termed bias that gives a false image and instead make women's roles visible during migration. This does not only involve conceding to the magnitude of the migration of females but also recognizing the particular configurations that take place during the women's migration journey along with their efforts to the survival of their household.

The effects and influence of gender as a variable on the migration journey of both men and women is vivid and apparent in shaping the multiple stages that they go through when migrating and dictating who is able to move and for what reasons (Gideon, 2016). As a matter of fact, gender has the power to shape migrant women's conditions in the receiving state as well as in the post migratory stage. The gendered image that's taken upon the migration of women is to a large degree tied in the position women take in the

reproductive cycle along with their ability and chances of moving based on the respective time and including their levels of autonomy. Here, the construction of gender allocates to females the duties related to the household and reproductive sphere and has the power to uphold and justify the differences around class, status, and the levels of authority between males and females. Such process needs a gendered analysis, specifically one that is tailored to the framework of intersectionality which will be explored in depth in the following chapter, whereby such analysis goes deep in exploring how gender taken as a social concept, shapes and affects migration trajectories as well as the experiences and their aftermaths. This gendered analysis is essential because it is capable of recognizing how economic, political, and social factors in the context of global migration, not only provides forms of submission but also gives women opportunities for liberation (Zimmerman et al., 2011). Under global migration, a gendered analysis would explore and analyze how social relations affect and impact the experiences of both men and women migrants. Topics such as health, GBV, education, labor, trafficking, exploitation, domestic abuse and violence, and many more are pertinent dimensions and grounds for analysis whereby the social forces that exist around us eventually and diversely influence and become manifested in the bodies and minds of women and men. Thus, migration should be understood as an engendered experience and the mentioned dimensions need to be realized as a reflection of the differentials that exist between men and women, impacting their experiences in migration. Hence, for an effective gendered analysis to take place, it should “take into account the subtle as well as the obvious factors that coalesce to create different experiences all along the migration process” (Grieco and Boyd, 2003).

When we examine patterns of migration, we notice that the gendered differences in the experiences of migration of both men and women are visible. This is the case because gender is a variable that serves as a contributing element at various phases of migration such as the pre-migratory phase whereby a gender curious analyst would not only investigate what's going on at that stage but also, be cognizant in asking the right questions beyond who is moving and why, but also asking questions that have the chance of uncovering hidden oppressive forces and power dynamics.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality

3.1 Overview on Intersectionality

In 1989, the term ‘intersectionality’ was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate and a scholar of critical race theory. This term became a central analytical framework for studying and understanding how elements of an individual's political and social identities dictate the differing modes of privilege and discrimination. Intersectionality was taken as an alternative methodology directed at contesting essentializing notions found in political identity which implicitly presumed that “white, middle-class women or black men are the exemplary victims of systems of sexism or racism” (Prins, 2006). All these notions ineluctably steered to hiding the differences that exist via intra-groups such that “in the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class” (Crenshaw, 1991). This powerful concept depicts how the systems of inequality around gender, ethnicity, race, gender identity, class, age, and many others, intersect to create effects. Kimberlé Crenshaw asserts that the aim of intersectionality is to uncover and study how the interconnected systems of power affect the neglected and marginalized groups in our everyday lives (Crenshaw, 1989). It is important to note that the forms of inequality and oppression are mutually reinforcing, such that one form of inequality can directly reinforce another form. Take the case of

irregular migration experienced by women for example, without including health and socio-economic status, race, and nationality, it will most likely create and reinforce oppressive forces and inequalities among these irregular migrant women. Thus, empirically intersectionality aims to pinpoint the interconnections of the various sources related to the oppressive forces experienced by women and those who have been ruled out from feminist analysis (Anthias et al., 1983). Crenshaw states that the missing part is “how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts” (Steinmetz, 2020).

Gines categorizes the works of the activists, academics, thinkers, and scholars who did not use the term intersectionality as proto-intersectional that is defined as:

“identifying and combating racism and sexism – through activist organizing and campaigning – not only as separate categories impacting identity and oppression, but also as systems of oppression that work together and mutually reinforce one another, presenting unique problems for black women who experience both, simultaneously and differently than white women and/or black men” (Gines, 2014).

Significant precursors to contemporary intersectionality theory involve the view of the Combahee River Collective of “interlocking systems of oppression”, Angela Davis, the analysis and interpretation of Deborah King’s around manifold jeopardy and manifold consciousness, and Audre Lorde’s work from the 1980s on Black feminists. Mariana Ortega has avowed that there are also prominent conceptualizations around intersectionality developed in Latina feminism, such as Anzaldúa's viewpoint on the borderlands and mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 2012).

Simply put that the concept of intersectionality has an extended and intricate history as well as genealogy but still it is widely recognized that this concept as well as its terminology in contemporary discussion was incited by the work of legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989), mainly through her review of the “single-axis frameworks” that are about understanding and comprehending the concept of domination in the scope of legal discrimination. The “single-axis framework” regards the terms gender and race as interrelated and also mutually exclusive components of experience. Such framework inherently validates the viewpoint of the most privileged individuals of marginalized groups. Thus, a single-axis framework mistranslates and misrepresents the experiences of Black women who are constantly subject to various intersecting types of submissions. According to Crenshaw:

“the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women’s lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately” (Crenshaw, 1991).

Since the publication of Kimberlé Crenshaw’s works on intersectionality, such concept has become most significantly potent and eminent in gender, sexuality, and women studies. It has been noted to be “the most important contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with other fields, has made so far” (McCall, 2005). Nevertheless, feminist scholars and philosophers have expressed that intersectionality’s influence has yet to be considered within the mainstream of philosophy such that “intersectionality is largely ignored as a philosophical theme or framework” (Goswami et al., 2014).

When examining the merits of intersectionality as an analytical framework in the fields of academia and policymaking, it “recognizes that to address complex inequalities, a one-size-fits-all approach does not work” (Hankivsky and Renee, 2011). It brings a viewpoint that considers the intersection of social positions without devaluing or prioritizing one position like race and class over or against one another. Intersectionality as a concept rejects the idea of binary divisions between men and women and takes into consideration the differing and varying positions and social constructions around gender. The scope and the prism of narratives and practices in our daily lives through which they are refracted and stimulated, uncover and bring about their sexist, racist, and classist nature.

Intersectionality acts as a lens to make visible the forms of inequality that are reinforced by oppressive forces, acting in a way to aggravate each other. Crenshaw stresses that it's not a matter of considering each form of inequality as separate from one another like race inequality, class, immigrant status, and many others, but as to recognizing how each form acts in an intricate and interconnected way to reinforce one another (Steinmetz, 2020). Matsuda contends that it prompts us to query ‘then other question’: “When I see something that looks racist, I ask “‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask ‘Where is the heterosexism in this?’” (Prins, 2006). Privileging a system of oppression over another and using only a single framework of oppression would only create limitations in seeking to explain and understand the inequalities that exist among us.

One of the aims of intersectionality as an approach is to subvert forms of oppressive forces and elements of subordination with the purpose of unveiling their intricacy and their interrelatedness. Squires avows that:

“Theories of intersectionality hold that discrete forms of oppression shape, and are shaped by, one another, and a failure to recognize this results in both simplistic analyses and ill-conceived policy interventions. This approach still retains a notion of structural inequality and operates with groups as the subjects of equality policies rather than individuals, but is attentive to the cross-cutting nature of structures of oppression and the overlapping nature of groups”
(Squires, 2008).

The framework intersectionality is not without its critics in feminist studies. Some of the critics of intersectionality have highlighted that it is limited in the sense that it principally stresses on the ‘action-theoretical level’. A macro-level conceptualization of intersectionality is needed in order to perform a profound analysis on the intertwined social categories such as gender, class, sex, and racial subordination. Here, Patricia Hill Collins suggests the concept of “interlocking systems of oppression” to fill the gap. She clarifies that:

“the notion of interlocking oppressions refers to the macro-level connections linking systems of oppression such as race, class, and gender. This is the model describing the social structures that create social positions. Second, the notion of intersectionality describes micro-level processes – namely, how each individual and group occupies a social position within interlocking structures of oppression

described by the metaphor of intersectionality. Together they shape oppression”
(Fenstermaker and West, 2002).

Other Critics have expressed discontent that the discourse on the concept of intersectionality tends to emphasize a lot the sites and interactions of oppression, obedience and submission without considering and acknowledging the associations and intersections of dominance, supremacy, as well as privilege. Jennifer Nash has contended that this resulted in “the question of whether *all* identities are intersectional or whether only multiply marginalized subjects have an intersectional identity”. Despite the fact that some feminist academics and scholars assert that the concept of intersectionality includes considers all actors and not just the groups that are subordinated, oppressed, and marginalized, Jennifer Nash states that the “overwhelming majority of intersectional scholarship has centered on the particular positions of multiply marginalized subjects”. In theories of intersectionality, this overdependence and emphasis on oppression makes academics and theorists “to ignore the intimate connections between privilege and oppression,” through neglecting for instance “the ways in which subjects might be both victimized by patriarchy and privileged by race” (Nash, 2008). Because of such predicament, philosophers like Ann Garry have suggested a wider and embracive concept and perspective on intersectionality that considers oppression, subordination, as well as power, dominance and privilege.

On the other hand, Naomi Zack contends that feminist analysts and scholars ought to move beyond taking the concept of intersectionality at the macro-level of interconnected systems of oppression or even widening the concept to encompass both privilege and oppression. She states that intersectionality as an approach subverts its main

aim in making feminism more comprehensive through splitting up women into compact groups organized by distinct intersections of gender, race, sexuality, age, status, and so on. According to Zack, “as a theory of women’s identity, intersectionality is not inclusive insofar as members of specific intersections of race and class create *only* their own feminisms”. Zack notes that “intersectionality has not borne impressive political fruit” because its directed towards “the reification of intersections as incommensurable identities”.

On the other hand, queer theorists like Lynne Huffer and Jasbir Puar offer a different viewpoint on intersectionality whereby they have criticized it as a theory of identity. Dissimilar to Naomi Zack, these theorists’ focus isn’t on the accumulation of disparate identities but on the ways the concept of intersectionality remains according to Jasbir Puar “primarily trapped within the logic of identity”. Huffer states that:

“the institutionalization of intersectionality as the only approach to gender and sexuality that takes difference seriously masks intersectionality’s investment in a subject-making form of power-knowledge that runs the risk of perpetuating precisely the problems intersectionality had hoped to alleviate” (Huffer, 2013).

Some scholars have attempted to reconfigure the concept of intersectionality in response to these criticisms through focusing on its provisionality like Carastathis did or understanding it in terms of a family similitude concept as did Garry. Collins on the other hand has suggested developing the concept of intersectionality as a critical social theory by reflecting on its methodology, genealogy, and epistemology.

The issue at hand is that intersectionality definitely is more easily applicable in some case studies. In the areas of migration and gender studies, complexities are much more challenging to navigate but through applying an intersectional approach in such fields has a lot of merits that makes it a significant theory and framework that has the ability to generate insights beyond what is visible to us in reality. One of the elements that makes intersectionality a successful social and critical theory is that it addresses a pivotal theoretical and normative issue in feminist studies which is around the acknowledgement of the differences and distinctions that exist among women. In recent years, the topic around the differences of women has as a matter of fact become the central topic in feminist theories since it tackles significant problems, contemporary feminism has been facing regarding its exclusions (Zack, 2007). Intersectionality touches precisely on the issue around differences that exist among females by acting as a lens that makes visible the dynamics and power relations that exist among us (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006). Moreover, this approach acknowledges the exclusions that have contributed to playing a role in agitating feminist scholarship through the fallaciously easy technique of ‘asking the other question’ such that:

“The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call ‘ask the other question.’ When I see something that looks racist, I ask, ‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, ‘Where is the heterosexism in this?’ When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, ‘Where are the class interests in this?’” (Matsuda, 1991)

Intersectionality brings together two key strands in contemporary feminist theory around the issue of difference and diversity in understanding the effects produced by

class, gender, sexuality, and race on women's identities, challenges, experiences, and the strive for empowerment. Gradually over the years, there became a shift in attention to how the elements of social categorizations interact and react with one another in the social, material, and political realities experienced by women to yield and alter the system of power relations (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1983). Even though intersectionality is mainly associated with the Black feminist theory as well as the social and political scheme agenda of conceptualizing the relations and interactions between social categories, yet it also has been recognized by a second strand in the feminist approach. Postcolonial theory, queer theory, poststructuralist, and diaspora studies needed an alternative to the stagnant conceptualizations of the identity and an agenda on breaking down the binary polarities that exist in the identity (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006). Here, intersectionality was a neat match in the postmodern project and contemporary feminism regarding conceptualizing various, distinct, and shifting identities. Intersectionality synchronized with Foucauldian viewpoints and interpretations on power dynamics and the breaking down of homogenous categories (Staunoes, 2003).

When it comes to the field of policy making, intersectionality has been applied in a plethora of ways whereby it has opened the doors for a wide array of methods and its use in policy circles as well as in research fields. The increase in the diversity of groups and societies and the responsiveness to their needs are a central criterion for policy analysts and makers to assess the quality of the policies being enacted. Many analysts and researchers disagree with the extent to which intersectionality can be applied in research and policy making. Mieke Verloo contends that "different inequalities are dissimilar because they are differently framed" and thus she asserts that in order to "ground policy

strategies not only in similarity, but also in the distinctiveness of inequalities”.

Additionally, Skeggs avows that for instance social categories have varied logics in how they are conceptualized and organized like how we cannot treat ‘ethnicity’ the same way as ‘social class’ (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006). Pattynama and Phoenix however, pinpoint that such claims need not necessarily reject the approach of intersectionality as the differences and inequalities that exist are not actually independent of each other. Moreover, Pattynama and Phoenix argue that intersectionality does in fact have the essence to motivate and drive forward political action, policy making, and policy development because it helps policy analysts and politicians in recognizing and “understanding how individual stories are politically embedded and have political consequences”. Intersectionality, hence, functions in a way to uncover and understand the way marginalized groups in society are being affected by the oppressive forces that drive social inequalities to continue to be sustained. This approach is needed whereby it has qualities of being attentive to how social categories interact in society with elements of inequalities. Such a methodological trait is particularly vital in dealing with crafting policies that include dimensions of diversity, inclusiveness, and equality.

3.2 Intersectionality’s Relevance to This Research

In the above sections, I have discussed vividly intersectionality as a feminist theory to which this research work uses as an analytical tool that has the ability to answer the mentioned research questions. This tool works in a flexible manner that can inform us of the invisible oppressive forces marginalized groups are being subjected to. Irregular migrant women’s journeys and their struggles have been kept hidden and pushed aside in order to maintain a system that works around hierarchy and power in a patriarchal world.

The case study of EU and Turkey to which this research focuses on with respect to the irregular migrant women, incorporates intersectionality as the main methodology in order to draw out how systems of power, oppression, and discrimination interact and intersect. Understanding how such elements are working together in order to define a patriarchal dominant social context is highly critical in this case study in order to not just become cognizant of what's happening to these irregular migrant women but also to moving forward in seeking out solutions that targets these marginalized groups in their migration journey that is highly gendered in nature. From this point, intersectionality motivates us to deeply examine the relative powers that are at play and to gain a better understanding of the paradigms of oppression that are affecting the irregular migrant women upon.

Chapter Four

Findings and Analysis

This chapter is the heart of this research work. Here, I seek out to answer the research questions using intersectionality as the central approach that will enable us to move forward. In the first section, I examine closely why Turkey has been deemed not a ‘safe third’ country’ which have led many irregular migrants to migrate to another country. I then provide an overview on the EU-Turkey agreement as well as how Frontex has taken rigid measures for the purposes of keeping irregular migrants out of the borders and at the same time focusing on making profit rather than protecting the lives of the innocent. I move on to lay out the journeys of the irregular migrants specifically the women and their challenges when it comes to experiencing GBV during flight, border crossing, and lastly temporary settlement in reception or detention centers before moving on to continue their journeys. Lastly, I analyze using intersectionality, why irregular migrant women face such challenges and what can be said about the ways their gender and illegal status have contributed to putting them in vulnerable and insecure positions.

4.1 Turkey a ‘Safe Third Country’?

Over the years, Turkey has faced an influx of irregular migrants such as Syrian refugees as well as displaced migrants from Iraq and Afghanistan which contributed to straining Turkey’s ability in providing humanitarian services and aid because of the increase in the needs of these irregular. Moreover, Turkey hosts the second largest number of Syrian refugees, 49.2% being women and from every household, around 22%

are women (Samari, 2017). It is important to note that over the years, the government of Turkey has aimed at averting the interference and the works of UNHCR and other intergovernmental and international organizations regarding Turkey's control over the growing influx of incoming irregular migrants (Özden ,2013). The basic needs of these irregular migrants like food, shelter, and protection are supplied to them as much as the government can offer but when it comes to other needs like employment, education, and health care, they are usually lacking.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) has argued that even though Greece has deemed that Turkey is a 'safe third country' for asylum seekers and refugees coming from Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, and Afghanistan, yet many vivid elements point towards Turkey not being a safe destination for refugees. The human rights NGO, Fenix, avows that such classification of Turkey is incongruent with the Asylum Procedure Directive (APD). Moreover, often the right to asylum in Turkey is not recognized because of the nature of the registration process of it being dominated by arbitrary discretion regarding the registration of refugees for international and temporary protection. There has been also reported cases of "arbitrary detention and illegal deportations" as well as the "lack of access to housing and medical care" (Donnelly, 2021). Fenix asserts that the government of Greece "did not establish on the grounds of national law the methodological rules for the individual assessment of the safe third country concept to the specific case" as it should have in reference to article 38(2) of the APD (Donnelly, 2021).

Even though Turkey is a signatory and an endorser of the Geneva Convention also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention, yet still Turkey struggles in its

asylum policies and laws being identified as encompassing ‘geographic limitations’ as well as only permitting the right for asylum to individuals who are refugees originating from Europe and fleeing because of “events occurring in Europe” (Human Rights Watch, 2000). As a result of this ‘geographic limitation’ in Turkey, irregular migrants like Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis are acknowledged as merely ‘guests’ and not as ‘refugees’ (Özden ,2013). Because of this unjust policy, we find in Turkey a refugee framework that includes the act of refugee integration with no assimilation and local hosting of these irregular migrants and the end result would cause the creation of camps that are contrary to the society and resident community. Additionally, Turkey has suffered a huge burden trying to respond to the refugee crises and has spent over 3.5 billion dollars even though it has rejected assistance and help from UNHCR (Samari, 2017). It is no doubt that Turkey is pregnable and exposed as a result of its humanitarian as well as its community services that have been terribly impacted by the ongoing dissensions and struggles near its borders with Syria and Iraq.

Moreover, Turkey is nowhere near being a ‘safe third country’ which also goes back to it not following the non-refoulement principle by the Geneva Convention. Being a ‘safe third country’ means that this country should not return anyone to a country where they may face violence, assault, harassment, torture, and other inhuman treatments. Unfortunately, that is not the case with respect to Turkey whereby many reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented the illegal pushbacks happening in Turkey especially with the Syrian refugees that are being pushed and forced back to Syria’s conflicted zones (HWR, 2013). Turkey has made it even more impossible

for irregular migrants that are seeking asylum, specifically Syrian refugees from crossing its borders through closing all its official borders.

Many of these irregular migrants are being held unlawfully and forced to sign ‘voluntary’ repatriation forms, recognizing their alleged threat to public safety and wellbeing before being expelled (Amnesty International, 2020). Because there had been tremendous acts of forced ‘voluntary’ returns executed by Turkish officials on the irregular migrants, the specific number of voluntary returnees is unknown. Barely any data exists on what’s happening to the irregular migrant women that are being sent back to dangerous country zones or those that are making their way into Turkey after risking their lives at the hands of smugglers exploiting them as well as Turkish board guards that are violently pushing them back and preventing them from safely crossing (HWR, 2013).

Hence, it is evident that Turkey is not the safe destination for irregular migrants that are being put in vulnerable positions especially women and girls whose experiences and challenges are being kept in the dark.

4.2 Overview: EU-Turkey Agreement

In 2015, Europe witnessed an influx of around 1 million irregular migrants and refugees arriving to Europe. The European and Syrian refugee crises have put the EU states at a difficult position to manage and in November 2015, the EU put forward a Joint Action Plan that was agreed upon in terms of working with Turkey on migration management (European Commission, 2015). The EU pledged to provide 3 billion euros to Turkey to upgrade its border management and security, take back refugees that have entered the European states through irregular means and shelter them. The Joint Act Plan

meant an agreed upon cooperation between the EU and Turkey whereby Turkey would take the needed measures that encompass fortifying the “interception capacity of the Turkish Coast Guard, notably by upgrading its surveillance equipment, increasing its patrolling activity and search and rescue capacity, including through stepping up cooperation with EU Member States” (European Commission, 2015). The EU promised from its part of the deal to reinforce the “Turkish Coast Guard patrolling and surveillance capacity as well as other relevant Turkish authorities” (European Commission, 2015). The vice president of the European Commission stated that “the only benchmark of course are the figures going down” (Reuters, 2016). Such remarks have clearly showcased how the main focus is only on reducing the number of refugees entering the EU’s borders with an absolute neglect for the wellbeing, protection, and safety of these refugees. This is even more evident when he stated in January 2016 that he wasn’t content with the efforts Turkey has made based on the Joint Action Plan claiming that the “numbers are still way too high in Greece, between 2,000 and 3,000 people arriving every day. We cannot be satisfied at this stage” (Müller, 2016). The Executive Director of EU’s border agency has asserted after a month later that Turkey needed to insert “more stringent border controls” since barely it is doing enough to prevent refugees from migrating irregularly to Europe (Müller, 2016).

The situation of the refugee crises has exacerbated tremendously in the year 2016 whereby on March the EU has decided to take measures in order to respond effectively to the influx of refugees coming from Turkey because of its open border policy. On March 20, 2016, the EU made a deal with Turkey based on a controversial agreement that targeted the “return of all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers from Greece to

Turkey that involved the “return of all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers from Greece to Turkey” (European Commission, 2016). This agreement encompassed three main facets:

- Turkey would take any needed measures in order to prohibit the irregular migration of people migrating from Turkey to Greece whereby 6 billion euros would be provided to Turkey in the form of aid to help it cope with refugees it hosts and enhance the humanitarian situation
- Starting from March 20, all refugees irrespective of their nationalities who are arriving to Greece through irregular channels, would be sent back to Turkey
- A resettlement plan aimed at European resettlement of exclusively Syrian refugees such that for every Syrian refugee returned back to Turkey, one Syrian refugee will be granted asylum in a European member state along with Turkey dealing with the selection process and looking over the criteria (European Commission, 2016)

4.3 EU Borders

Over the years, the number of people migrating through irregular means has stimulated states from around the world to respond to such migration trends through the application of strict border management techniques by tightening their borders and enacting border policing policies and political weight. As a matter of fact, governments based their efforts on disrupting and fending off unsanctioned and irregular migration of people to the point that very often such tactics have been put to action at the expense of the human rights of these irregular migrants. Such procedures have reshaped and

remodified the borders' management, sovereignty, policing, as well as the ways we perceive groups of people to be either included or even excluded at state borders.

When it comes to the border of the EU, there are many protagonists involved and engaged in the EU's border decision-making and establishment of policies. The EU Member States have to coordinate together and cooperate with the security and border agencies in order to implement the needed measures around border control and policies. It's a complicated process and because collecting data and sharing it with each member states requires harmony, the Commission established in 2004 the European Border and Coast Guard Agency also known as Frontex in order to coordinate and regulate border controls. This agency helps in analyzing data and tracing migratory patterns and cross-border illegal and unlawful actions and flows beyond the EU's outer borders. Moreover, this agency systematizes and harmonizes border operations as well as the external interventions happening at the borders to help Member States respond effectively to the humanitarian emergencies. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency deploys its efforts on preventing and deterring any illegal operations happening at the EU borders such as human trafficking and exploitation, smuggling, black-marketing, and terrorism. In the year 2011, Frontex implemented a Fundamental Rights Strategy that's about incorporating a human rights approach in its activities and in 2012 it has assigned a Fundamental Rights Officer and has put to action a Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights to monitor the abidance with this approach (Amnesty International, 2014). Despite Frontex's efforts in implementing standard operating procedures around reporting critical and serious cases of violations of human rights yet, we notice that it lacks an organized system for inspecting and examining cases on human rights violations from operational

fields as well as its ineffectiveness and failure to deal with individual charges. This illustrates how Frontex's human rights approach's impact is in practice narrow and limited even though it has been funded significantly over the years in order to upgrade its operations and technology being used. When we examine for instance the annual budget of Frontex from 2013 till 2015, we notice that over 90 million euros have been allocated to it and in those years, there was the eruption of the refugee crises. The European refugee crisis has sparked the EU authorities to take action through the militarization of the border security by deploying military forces in order to control and manage the borders (Amnesty International, 2014). The Balkan Route has been absolutely sealed off because of the increasing flow of irregular migrants taking this route to reach Europe. Such actions are nowhere near looking after the safety, protection, and human rights of people, with thousands of migrants being stuck in terrible and dreadful conditions in Macedonia and Greece (Akkerman, 2016). In 2015 for instance, Bulgaria deployed armed soldiers at its borders as well as Macedonia, troubled by the probability of turbulence and disruption occurring in the country lead by the influx of refugee flows. In August, it had deployed around its borders an additional 25 soldiers as well as armored vehicles for increasing the border policing (Zhelev, 2013). According to the Human Rights Watch, there has been tremendous cases of refugees being subjected to violence and interrogation by the police as well as the military (France-Presse, 2015). In Macedonia, armed forces were deployed in order to prevent irregular migrants from entering through Greece whereby they have used stun grenades and also tear gas. Amnesty's European deputy director asserted that "this kind of paramilitary response is an unacceptable pushback in violation of international law" (Byrne, 2015). Hungary adopted a similar tactic through

enacting a policy that authorizes the police and military to use net guns, rubber bullets, as well as tear gas on the migrants at the borders (Akkerman, 2016). Slovenia's government has also undergone with same tactic and has even assigned private security enforcements to work with the police border in guarding its borders (The Guardian, 2015).

The EU borders have been reshaped in a way that involves the inclusion of not just public networks but also the private sector in establishing EU's border policies and management. Many of the Human Rights advocates and organizations have criticized this method of privatization of the EU border management because of its violation of the human rights of people especially irregular migrants trying to safely cross the borders. The private security organizations that are behind such measurements have been critiqued for their goal of making profit from such border policies and exercises rather than being concerned with fulfilling the state's interest (Akkerman, 2018). Over the years the budget of Frontex has been increased outrageously and many countries such as Greece have bought lots of equipment from the External Borders Fund of Europe in order to upgrade its surveillance and patrolling at its borders with Turkey (Amnesty International, 2014). When we examine the discourse around the claims made by these private security organizations, we notice that they are purposely framing the picture of irregular migration flows and trends as a surging imminence to which Europe is being subjected to and highlighting how they can put an end to such ongoing immigration threats through providing strong ridged defense and security technology (Akkerman, 2018). From this standpoint, it is clear who are the players that are benefiting through taking advantage of these immigration flows. These military and private security forces hold so much power that they have been behind shaping the EU's response to the refugee crises as well as in

impacting the EU's border policy and shaping it by continuously pushing for control policies and security measures as well as more funding to be needed for research in the security and military field. Based on all the facts mentioned, it is evident that the European Commission and the EU states' goals around rescuing refugees and providing protection for them actually contradict their actual response to the refugee crisis. It is clear that they are working more to prevent irregular migrants from entering their borders whether they are a threat to them or not. According to Amnesty International, many reports on violations of human rights of migrants as well as refugees trying to enter the Greek borders and other EU countries have been documented.

The EU-Turkey agreement sets the stage for organizing power relations around the irregular border crossing of migrants. Such agreement as I contend, has affected Frontex in structuring its regulations, strategies, and policies in ways that have negatively impacted irregular migrant women irregularly migrating from Turkey to EU and attempting to cross Greece borders. The inhuman EU-Turkey deal and the closure of the Balkan route has put the lives of refugee women at great risk, eroding their rights for asylum and finding themselves trapped and imprisoned on Greek islands, unable to cross Greece's borders and at the same time facing the threat of being pushed back to Turkey (Rygiel et al.,2016). The relative power wielded by the EU-Turkey deal has shaped Europe's response to the European refugee crisis in various ways. This policy has turned the Greek islands into refugee containments termed as "Europe's Guantanamo bay" by the Lesbos Mayor (Pete, 2015). Refugees who are managing to cross the borders of Greece are stumbling upon Greek security, border guards, and police who are detaining, stripping, and pushing them back to Turkey (UN News, 2020). Many UN reports have

reported the excessive use of power and force by police and the military to enforce pushbacks on the irregular migrants and such tactics have led to the death and injury of many asylum seekers. The UN news has argued that “Greece must take immediate action to end the violence against migrants and asylum seekers at the border between Turkey and Greece, an independent UN human rights expert said on Monday, expressing alarm at reports of violence at the hands of some Greek security officers and unidentified armed men”.

Amnesty and many intergovernmental organizations and NGOs have documented the horrid conditions refugee females of all ages that have been gravely impacted by the border protocols enacted by European governments in the sense of combating traffickers, smugglers, and terrorists at the cost of the security of these refugees. European officials' strategies in tightening the borders have put these refugee women at vulnerable positions whereby it's becoming more difficult for them to reach the EU and smugglers and traffickers are taking advantage of the situation in demanding higher sums of money in return for a passage into Europe. A UNHCR official has expressed fear stating that such tremendous restrictions regarding the border crossings have significantly contributed in increasing the exposure of refugee women to violence and exploitation at the hands of smugglers (Freedman, 2016). According to Hein de Haas, “lots of money goes into border controls, but this does not address the causes of migration. Instead, it helps two groups, the smugglers and the migration control industry, while the suffering and border deaths among migrants and refugees increase” (Proctor, 2015).

4.4 Experiences of Irregular Migrant Women: Flight, Border Crossing, and Reception/Detention Centers

Gender, irregular migration, legal status, violence, insecurity, and militarization of borders, all intersect with one another to create added layers of oppression experienced by irregular migrant women. Studying and analyzing the experiences and challenges of irregular migrant women without incorporating a gendered approach would only generate a narrow point of view of what's actually going on during the migration process. Intersectionality is pivotal in this field of study as it acts as a lens to break down the added layers of oppression experienced by these irregular migrant women as well as explaining the reality of why they are being marginalized and oppressed. In this section I showcase how the above-mentioned elements have a tremendous impact on the experiences of irregular migrant women when migrating to EU during flight stage, border crossing, and lastly temporary settlement in reception or detention centers through an intersectional framework.

4.4.5 Oppression and Violence During Flight and EU Border Crossing Stage

From an intersectional lens, there has been barely any detailed documentation or news reports that specifically detail the challenges irregular migrant women go through when travelling by sea because of the way EU has responded to the refugee crisis. The closure of the authorized routes that lead into Europe, Frontex's tactics in tightening the border controls, and as well as the increase in militarization, externalization, and policing at the EU borders have had detrimental effects on the lives of irregular migrants who have been forced because of these strict and inhumane measures to resort to traveling and agreeing to conditions that put their lives at risk. In 2015, the European Network of

Migrant Women recorded that approximately 3,000 people have gone missing or even dead during migration to Europe. It even claimed based on various findings that it has been noticed that a huge percentage of women are the ones that are disappearing on such irregular journeys and such cases have been disregarded and neglected which has contributed to producing a discrepancy around the number of women at each stage of their migration journeys from the point of transit till they reach their destination (Alam et al., 2019). The UN Office on Drugs and Crime asserted that 23% of the young girls and 49% of the women have accounted to being subjected to human trafficking during irregular migration to Europe (Alam et al., 2019). According to Khan, he argued that:

“The route is mostly controlled by smugglers, traffickers and other people seeking to prey upon desperate children and women who are simply seeking refuge or a better life. We need safe and legal pathways and safeguards to protect migrating children that keep them safe and keep predators at bay.” (UN News, 2017)

From this standpoint, we notice a casual intersection between the disappearances of females and the human trafficking, smuggling, and exploitation networks to which they principally target these helpless females. Such intersection is amplified when these irregular migrant females find themselves in a position desperate to migrate because of the conditions of their home country like the Syrian refugee crisis and at the same time finding that all ‘legal’ and accessible routes leading to Europe have been closed and tightened. Because of such realities, these females who include mothers, unaccompanied girls, pregnant women, disabled women, old women, and others fall into the hands of

traffickers, smugglers, abusers, rapists, and terrorists who take advantage of their situation.

One of the most deleterious and pertinent challenges experienced by irregular migrant females during their migration journeys is the exposure to gender-based violence (GBV). Based on many studies and reports, the probability of females to experience a continuum of SGBV at all stages when migrating is higher than that of men. In 2016, testimonies of refugee women were collected by Amnesty International who have expressed feeling troubled, threatened, and intimidated by men along their migration to Europe because of experiencing harassment, financial exploitation, rape, physical violence, and emotional abuse by smugglers, refugees, and security personnel (Alam et al., 2019). Many refugee women interviewed by UNHCR have expressed being pressured by smugglers to perform ‘transactional sex’, that is to exchange sexual intercourses for the price of their passage (UNHCR, 2016). These women are being taken advantage of because such criminals know they are desperate to flee from the war and violence experienced in their home countries and often don’t have the financial means to pay for their journeys. Many women have been used as bargaining chips in order to facilitate the crossing of their family members and husbands. A representative of UNHCR has pointed out that the percentage of females travelling alone or with children has increased greatly since the beginning of 2015 (Freedman, 2016). He avowed that this is the trend now since its being used as a tactful strategy on the part of the males who think that sending ahead children and women on their own will gain them successful means of entering Europe because they will be regarded as being ‘more vulnerable’ and would more likely be provided with protection and safety by European officials (Freedman, 2016). The

prevalence of prostitution networks is enhanced and enforced during irregular migration because of the lack of protection and safety measures that are focused on protecting the rights of refugee women. According to members of NGOs working in refugee camps in France around Calais, smugglers as well as sex work networks have taken over the camps, demanding coerced sex from helpless refugees (Freedman, 2016). UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura has argued that:

“Sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as the war crime that it is; it can no longer be treated as an unfortunate collateral damage of war” (UN News, 2012).

According to UN Women, incidences of GBV against irregular migrant women are caused by various actors that include not just smugglers and human traffickers but also authority figures such as the board guards, military and police as well as intimate partners, and among migrants themselves. In Kos, many refugee women who were interviewed had expressed that they were victims of GBV and had suffered at the hands of Turkish border guards, police, and military as they were attempting to leave Turkey by crossing the borders in order to reach Greece. Some of these women were separated from their families, detained, and imprisoned for days by Turkish police and as a result they experienced severe sexual assault and violence. They had even shown signs of trauma and extreme fear, hesitating and refusing to talk about their exposure to violence they had experienced (Freedman, 2016).

In the case of Turkey and the EU, many news reports have documented the increase in violence against irregular migrant women, mainly upon attempting to migrate and cross the borders of EU. According to Human Rights Watch, violence experienced

by refugees migrating from Turkey to EU, had been eminently witnessed at the borders of Greece. At the Greece-Turkey borders, Greek police guards, armed men, and border security forces have inhumanely stripped, robbed, assaulted, and detained asylum seekers and irregular migrants as well as forcing them back to Turkey. Even with such violations to human rights and illegal actions yet the EU officials have still praised Greece for enacting these border control procedures and exercises and they had even provided more funding and support to Frontex. Nadia Hardman, a Human Rights Watch advocate and refugee rights analyst and researcher has pinpointed that:

“The European Union is hiding behind a shield of Greek security force abuse instead of helping Greece protect asylum seekers and relocate them safely throughout the EU. The EU should protect people in need rather than support forces who beat, rob, strip, and dump asylum seekers and migrants back across the river” (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Moreover, after the enactment of the EU-Turkey deal, many incidents of violence and pushbacks have been documented at the Turkey-EU borders, principally at the EU’s southeastern borders where Greece as well as Bulgaria meet Turkey. Refugees mainly from Afghanistan and Syria have been reported to be illegally and forcefully pushed back to turkey, denying their right for asylum. Such pushbacks involve the deportation of irregular migrants without even examining each case individually, which is banned and forbidden under international law (Amnesty International, 2014). According to Amnesty International, since September 2012, there has been documentation on the illegal pushbacks happening from Greece to Turkey and since March 2014 from Bulgaria.

So much discrimination and racism are at play when it comes to who is allowed to cross EU's borders and who isn't based on one's nationality. This case is evident after Russia's invasion on Ukraine in February 2022, whereby European states have been more willing to accept the arrival of Ukrainian refugees than those coming from the Middle East, specifically Syrian refugees. Organization for World Peace (OWP) has claimed that EU has 'double standards' when it comes to immigration:

Although Europe, especially the eastern European countries who have accepted the bulk of Ukrainian refugees, should be applauded for their rapid response to this horrific humanitarian crisis, the bigotry revealed by its reception to the Ukrainians cannot be overlooked. The wave of Ukrainian refugees has revealed the double standard behind Europe's anti-immigration stance and further highlighted the discrimination non-European refugees have faced in the past decade” (Schengen Visa Info News, 2022)

Back in 2015, more than 1.3 million refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern and African countries, have arrived to EU seeking asylum and protection (Fallon, 2022). The EU countries responded violently whereby Frontex tightened more the EU borders and EU officials made agreements with Turkey in order to put a stop to these arrivals. Since then, European authorities have made a lot of efforts to block the arrival of these refugees. But in 2022, upon the arrival of 3 million who have fled because of the Russia- Ukraine war, we notice a very different and vivid response of EU that has welcomed Ukrainians with 'open arms' (Fallon, 2022). Greece, an entry point for many refugees and which has faced a lot of extreme criticism and denunciation from human rights activists from subjecting Syrian and Afghani refugees fleeing from

violence and war to illegal pushbacks and violence, has taken on a different stance towards the arrival of Ukrainian refugees through pledging to support them:

“EU countries, including Greece, stepping in to protect Ukrainian refugees shows what we’ve long urged for: safe access to the EU for refugees is both necessary and feasible. And fair and humane asylum systems benefit us all” (Fallon, 2022).

The EU’s divergent responses highlight how much the role of identity and social categorization play a significant role in dictating who is privileged and who is oppressed. The intersection of a refugee’s nationality, religion, and race and how these layers of identity have impacted the EU’s views. Many nonwhite refugees and asylum seekers who are students from Middle East and Africa and are fleeing from Ukraine because of the war, have reported being subjected to violence and discrimination at the EU borders (Zaru, 2022). Many European countries have expressed reluctance to accept Muslim refugees unlike Ukrainians who are white and Christian, akin to the way many citizens in EU countries regard themselves. In Hungary for instance, Viktor Orbán, the conservative Prime Minister has welcomed Ukrainians having a Christian national identity and has shut out those coming from the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and ‘others’ that are fleeing from war conflicts. The Prime Minister has taken on fierce measures such as putting long razor-wire fence in order to prevent refugees coming from the Middle East to enter the borders, labelling them as a civilizational and security threat:

“Those arriving, have been raised in another religion, and represent a radically different culture. Most of them are not Christians, but Muslims. This is an important question, because Europe and European identity is rooted in Christianity” (Zaru, 2022).

Bulgaria's Prime Minister Kiril Petkov has stated that:

“These people are Europeans. ... These people are intelligent, they are educated people,” said the centrist leader early on in the Ukrainian crisis. “This is not the refugee wave we have been used to, people we were not sure about their identity, people with unclear pasts, who could have been even terrorists” (Zaru, 2022).

Such examples around the rhetoric and discourses of authority figures and politicians suggest that EU's discernment of Ukrainians as the 'real refugees' such that they pose no threat in contrast to those fleeing from violence, conflicts, and war outside the continent of Europe. This shift in views and stances according to Rachael Reilly of the Geneva-based Global Detention Project is “very tainted by racism and xenophobia,” and specific to the Ukrainian context” (Zaru, 2022). All these documentations and discourses show how shared religious, linguistic, racial, and national ties increase the approval rate of asylum-seeking applications in the EU. Many authority figures have expressed their biased and Islamophobic views on the identities of asylum seekers migrating from Middle East and Africa, considering them as uncivilized people unlike the Ukrainians who share similar cultures with EU citizens. Such social categorizations have played a huge role in dictating who gets to be welcomed into the EU states and who is pushed back. It's interesting how all these European countries have stood by Ukrainians to offer them help and protection and did absolutely the opposite to refugees coming from Middle Eastern and African backgrounds. Such responses affect extremely families, mothers, pregnant women, single women, young girls, disable and old women as well as children that are being subjected to racism and discrimination upon seeking to

cross the borders of EU in order to seek safety and asylum and are getting beat up and pushed back from EU to Turkey for instance.

4.4.6 Insecurities at Reception and Detention Centers

Irregular migrants who are asylum seekers and refugees that make it successfully to EU are met with more challenges especially the females. These single women, young girls, mothers, disabled women, and others who have fled from their home countries because of the war and violence and made their journeys to Europe, are entitled to protection, safety, asylum, and humane conditions. Unfortunately, this is not the case when they reach Europe and upon crossing the EU borders. The EU-Turkey deal has made significant modifications around where irregular migrants can be housed and accommodated, depending upon the date of their arrival. Irregular migrants who have arrived to Greece before March 20, 2016, and who have already travelled beyond the Greek islands to reach Greece, are required to stay in formal or informal open sites after the announcement of the EU-Turkey agreement (Women's Refugee Commission, 2016). These migrants and refugees are able to move freely while they wait for their registration and claims to be reviewed. While those who have arrived after March 20, 2016, are required to remain on the Greek islands and stay in former reception center until their asylum claims are decided (Women's Refugee Commission, 2016). This 'containment' policy that has been enacted by the Greek government following the EU-Turkey agreement, compliments the 'hotspot' approach adopted by the European Commission. This approach is based on allocating asylum seekers in hotspots in Italy and Greece whereby the governments and authority can be able to easily perform asylum measures and operations. The containment policy that was originally crafted in a way to readily and

effortlessly return asylum seekers who have been rejected back to Turkey, actually resulted in completely generating overcrowded camps. The capacity of the reception and detention facilities as well as the service administrators have been absolutely overwhelmed by the influx of asylum seekers waiting for their basic needs to be met. For years, intergovernmental organizations and human rights actors such as Refugees International have urged the government of Greece to modify its containment policy. Unfortunately, there was no avail and things got worse for the situation of asylum seekers when in November 2019, the Greek authority had enacted a new policy that is centered upon establishing closed detention centers on the Greek islands like in Chios and Lesvo, that lack the proper protection and safety measures for asylum seekers (Women's Refugee Commission, 2016). By the end of November 2019, the amount of asylum applications pending increased insanely, reaching 83,633 applications and around half of these asylum seekers are confined to the Greek islands. From these asylum seekers, approximately 20,000 of them are women and children waiting for their applications to be processed (Women's Refugee Commission, 2016). Such harsh, unsafe, overloaded, and unsanitary detention centers that are initially designed to host a maximum of around 5,000 people are in reality hosting more than 42,000 people. This insane congestion has worsened the conditions for refugees and asylum seekers who have resorted to living outside Official Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) in makeshift camps. The conditions in Moria, which is the largest RIC, is described by UNHCR as "extremely disturbing" (Cone, 2016).

After the enactment of the EU-Turkey deal, many humanitarian organizations as well as the UNHCR have stopped providing services at such detention centers, dissenting

and objecting the strategy of using these detention centers (UNHCR, 2016). The vulnerabilities of asylum-seeking women are aggravated by their containment in these horrid detention centers and the inadequacy of the accommodation conditions at refugee camps in the EU and have been documented as lacking. The UN has reported that many women are being subjected to sexual assault and violence at the congested reception and detention centers in Greece. In 2017, around 600 asylum-seekers on the Greek islands have reported being subjected to SGVB in spite of the Greek government's efforts to handle and deal with the poor and overcrowding conditions (UNHRC, 2018). Cécile Pouilly, a UNHCR spokesperson stated vividly that the situation of the reception centers of Moria and Vathy are troubling whereby thousands of asylum-seekers are living in terrible situations with inadequate security as well as unsuitable shelter. She stated that the situation is worrying such that:

“In these two centers, bathrooms and latrines are no-go zones after dark for women or children, unless they are accompanied.... Even bathing during daytime can be dangerous. In Moria, one woman told our teams that she had not taken a shower in two months from fear”.

Women in such centers are reluctant and afraid to report harassments because fear and the possibility of being sexually assaulted, shamed. There is so much discrimination and stigmatization going on in these spaces that are supposed to be a safety zone for these helpless women. Women in such centers are reluctant and afraid to report harassments because of fear, shame, and the possibility of being sexually assaulted again. Pouilly stated that security guards have reported to be insufficient as well, especially at night and near the areas where refugees live in tents. These lack of security measures create more

spaces of danger and increase the risks and chances of women being prone to being sexually exploited, raped, harassed, and violated (UNHRC, 2018). In March 2017, Amnesty International has interviewed more than 100 females who have migrated from their homelands in order to escape the war and persecution because of their gender identity or sexual orientation and who are now residing on the Greek islands in camps that have exceeded their capacities and had to share tents with male strangers (Amnesty International, 2018). The local authorities in Kos for instance, did provide refugees with the first batch of asylum seekers with accommodation in a hotel building but sadly the conditions of it were terrible with no electricity or even running water. Moreover, many women and young girls were put in vulnerable and insecure positions of having to share their rooms with male strangers and with no separate bathrooms. These females have expressed feeling scared and not safe around these men in such accommodation facility that they felt the need to leave, troubled by the fact that they were completely exposed to harassment by these males (Freedman, 2016).

4.5 Applying Intersectionality

Based on the above findings that detail the experiences of irregular migrant women that are impacted by the EU-Turkey agreement, a gender curious investigator ought to apply an intersectional lens in order to uncover why these women are facing all these challenges? What can be said about the experiences of irregular migrant women? Intersectionality here can be applied in the sense that it has the power to not just reveal the oppressive forces that are shaping the experiences of these irregular migrant women upon migrating from Turkey to EU, but also to explain vividly how such forces intersect with one another to create an environment where women are marginalized and

oppressed. The above-mentioned challenges such women face tell us that one of the most evident social categorizations that are dictating their paths is their 'illegal' status. The increase of militarization by Frontex over the years has been due to the fact that many irregular and illegal border crossings have been attempted with the increase of human traffickers, terrorists, smuggler, and those who are a threat to the nation. Unfortunately, these helpless irregular migrant women get caught up and mixed up by these criminals and get subjected to SGVB by them as well as by border guards, military, and security patrols. Homogenizing groups like these migrants, results in detrimental effects on the lives of innocents. From an intersectional lens, oppression and the relative powers that are at play are uncovered once we realize that women have to be regarded as a heterogeneous group that are falsely homogenized in a way that only adds layers of subordination, violence, and marginalization. Once we break apart this homogenous categorization, then we can be better able to address the conflicts and challenges experienced by these irregular migrant women. The illegal status of irregular migrant women only makes their journeys difficult especially when crossing the EU borders because they are seen as targets and submerged in a group that is considered the 'others' who are in the views of the EU authorities a threat to the stability of their states. For that manner, their actions of violence, militarization, and harsh security measures are justified from their perspective. Such a viewpoint is very narrow and does not look at the big picture that it's doing more harm to humanity than actually saving it and protecting people's rights. Intersectionality notices how these social categorizations which are gender and status of the migrants are highly correlated and linked to one another. These facets reinforce one another to create the reality of fear, violence, exploitation, abuse,

insecurity, and other forms of marginalization these women are experiencing when migrating.

The list does not end there such that nationality, culture, and religion also play a vital role as witnessed in the EU's response to the influx of Ukrainian refugees being welcomed at the EU borders versus the ill-treatments and violent response by the EU with respect to the refugees coming from the Middle East and Africa. Such social identities intersect with one another along with the illegal status in order to create layer upon layer of oppression that dictates which migrants are privileged and which are discriminated and subordinated. The EU's reaction towards the Ukrainians in contrast to non-European refugees and the speeches of EU authority figures highlight how biased they are towards people who do not come from their own roots and share similar culture such that they are depicted as being 'others'.

Such viewpoints around migrants having a non-European identity initiate a recurring form of discriminatory barriers as well as eliciting violent tactics and militarization from Frontex who works in a way to keep irregular migrants specifically those who do not share European roots like Arabs from crossing the borders. Intersectionality here captures how violent systems of power are maintained and reinforced not just in the EU's militarized actions but also based on its authority figures' discourses whereby they have implemented policies like the containment policy that does no justice to these migrants.

Furthermore, in the stages of migration, women experience GBV as showcased in the above case study. Gender plays a key role in dictating the experiences and challenges of these irregular migrant women that are being influenced by the EU's response to the

European refugee crisis. Their lives, well-being, health, and safety are being put at risk because of the social inequities that are embedded in society. Gender norms as well as unequal power relations intersect with one another to render a patriarchal society where vulnerability is more associated to women than men. Here, gender inequality is produced from behavioral expectations as well as traditional gender roles between men and women. This unequal distribution of power as well as the gender norms are the root causes of SGVB to which these women are subjected to. Whether it's during flight, crossing borders, or transition, women face multilayers of oppression and many perpetrators try to exploit these irregular migrant women that are desperate to reach their destinations safely as well as taking advantage of the gender and social inequalities in order to exercise coercion, power, domination, and deception on their victims. The way violence is being used not just by smugglers, criminals, and abusers but also by authority figures and irregular migrant males says a lot about how they use GBV in order to define their own gendered identities as being the dominant force while women are the subordinated and submissive targets in this patriarchal and unjust social context. Thus, the intersection of gender and illegal status is vivid with respect to the experiences and challenges these irregular migrant women face. Such intersection informs us of why women are experiencing GBV and other challenges whether at the stage of crossing borders or living at reception and detention centers. Because these women's status is illegal, such facet makes it easier for criminals to target and exploit them judging by the fact that barely there is any clear policy or legal means that can protect them. They are forced to stay silent about the violence, harassment, and abuses they face and not report it

to officials in order to not get sent back to where they came from because of their status that gets in the way of being able to reach Europe.

Hence, these women are taken as a homogenous group associated to migrants that hold an illegal status that intersects with their nationality and gender, making them vulnerable to all forms of violence that deters their health, well-being, and safety. Oppression results from how social categories taken by irregular migrant women are formed to produce a mode of discrimination, subordination, and marginalization.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: Looking Forward

As showcased throughout this work irregular migrant women face a lot of challenges when it comes to migrating irregularly from Turkey to the EU. The deal that has been agreed upon by Turkey and the EU has highly affected the irregular migrants' experiences specifically the women during the flight stage of migration as well as crossing the borders, and at the reception and detention centers. Many oppressive forces slip their way into the experiences of these women because of how certain elements such as gender, nationality, illegal status, violence, border politics and power intersect and interact with one another to reinforce a social context that maintains inequality, patriarchy, and rigid gender norms.

Europe over the years has been dealing with the European Refugee Crisis with failed attempts to control the situation at hand. Even though the EU regards migration as a pivotal issue that should be given proper attention and care since so many people are being impacted by this worldwide crisis. It is important to note that even though the EU and Turkey are advocates of supporting the UN's initiatives in protecting the human rights of refugees and providing safety for asylum-seeking individuals, yet when we look at their actions, they absolutely contradict their standings. This is evident in the case of EU-Turkey's deal and how they responded to the influx of irregular migrants trying to migrate from Turkey to Greece. In 2019, Ankara had become increasingly anxious because of its heedless attacks on northern Syria against the Kurdistan Workers Party and contended that

that the EU should support its endeavors in Syria in order to fight against ‘terrorists’ (Frantzman, 2020). The EU on the other hand, had condemned Turkey because of its operations and as a result of that, Turkey reacted by threatening them that they would open their borders and send an influx of refugees to Europe (Frantzman, 2020). It is important to note as I have discussed earlier that the EU and Frontex’s responses to the irregular migrants coming to EU had been ridged and it was clear that they are trying to keep these irregular migrants at all costs from crossing their borders through besieging their borders and applying anti-migrant populist tactics and politics. On February, Turkey started weaponizing the refugees it hosts as a tactic to pressure the EU to back up its politics and send more aid whereby it had opened its borders for refugees to migrate to Greece (Frantzman, 2020). Such tactics had aggravated the EU because of Turkey blackmailing them to the point that the EU closed its borders, applying militarizing measures at the borders to prevent irregular migrants from crossing its borders (Frantzman, 2020). Turkey in this case, contradicts its standings especially around abiding by the 1951 International Refugee Convention that is about ensuring that these migrants are protected and provided with asylum. These helpless irregular migrants unfortunately, are being used as pawns in the hands of Turkey in order to promote its interests.

The EU on the other hand isn’t innocent as much as Turkey in violating the rights of irregular migrants and putting their lives in danger because of their vile pushback strategies. Based on the 1951 International Refugee Convention, one of the responsibilities of Europe that is enshrined in this treaty is to protect the refugees and abide by the principle of non-refoulement as well as being committed to providing asylum (Smith, 2018). In the State of the Union speech of President Jean Claude Juncker, he highlighted that “a Europe

that protects” by stating plans for incorporating an added figure of 10,000 Frontex security and border guards thereby displaying tighter policing controls on the EU borders as a means to prevent irregular migrants from crossing its borders (Smith, 2018). Many reports have documented the illegal pushback operations taken by EU authorities and the violation of human rights of irregular migrants as well as the documented harassments, GBV, assault, and other forms of violence against the irregular migrant women. The EU denies claims around pushbacks and if they did occur, it would claim that they are barely ‘isolated incidents’ (Amnesty International, 2014). Amnesty International has made it clear that up until this day, there has been the absence of effective investigations around the pushback claims, and no one has been held accountable even though many media channels have reported live the effects of the pushbacks taking place that are putting the lives of migrants at risk. In February 2022 for instance, frozen dead bodies of more than 19 migrants have been discovered by Turkish officials near the borders of Greece (Sattar, 2022). Turkey had accused the border guards of Greece in stripping these migrants who have been found barely with little clothing and have been left to die in the cold weather after not allowing them passage and pushing them back to where they came from. Whether these accusations are true or not, many reports have been documented by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, detailing the horrid violence and abuses by Greek guards on the irregular migrants. The surviving migrant women have reported to Amnesty International that they have been beaten by male officers at the Greek borders and were subjected to molestation (Sattar, 2022). There have been numerous findings and evidence around Frontex being involved in the act of destroying and covering up incriminating evidence related to the illegal and unauthorized pushbacks exercised by the border guards

on the coast of Greece. Even with such detailed documentations on what's going on at the EU's borders, yet the EU has turned a blind eye on the violations going, completely contradicting its standings around doing its best to protect the refugees and provide safety and asylum for them according to the 1951 Refugee Convention (Sicily, 2021).

Even though many brief reports, policy initiatives and recommendations, and laws have been proposed in Turkey and the EU such as working on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Gender Equality Strategy put by the UN with respect to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development, yet when we closely look at these policies, we realize that they are framed in a way of being gender blind as well as gender neutral in the sense that they don't consider gender being an important and significant facet in the migration process. Based on a policy brief by the European Court of Auditors, EU member states still do not have gender sensitive and responsive policies put in action to address the basic needs, safety, and protection of the irregular migrant women. Moreover, EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2018) avowed that there are no effective action plans and measures that address these needs and protect the rights of the irregular migrant women. The EU and Turkey's divergent responses as highlighted above, showcase how these countries have looked after their interests at the expense of the irregular migrants and have only contradicted their motivations in doing their best to protect and provide safety and asylum to these helpless migrants. There seems to be only the existence of discourses that are only giving us a false impression of how these states are trying to look after the rights of irregular migrants. Such actions and responses are doing anything but solving the refugee crisis and putting an end to the dangers that these irregular migrants are being

exposed to as well as reinforcing relative power that clearly subjects them based on their identities to being oppressed and dominated.

Thus, in order to move forward there needs to action plans that are based on crafting gender sensitive and responsive policies that address the issues and challenges irregular migrant women are subjected to whether during the flight stage, crossing borders, or even in the transition and settlement stages of migration. Such policies need to be formed based on an intersectional lens that has the power to highlight how social categorizations impact and affect the journeys of these irregular migrant women and to also highlight “how an apparently gender-neutral process of movement is, in fact, highly gender-specific and gender-oriented, as well as may result in differential outcomes for men and for women” (Diab, 2019). These gender sensitive policies need to be framed in a way that put mainstreaming gender at the center of migration since it affects males and females differently. The central objective of these policies shouldn’t be around doing whatever it takes to reduce the number of irregular migrants but acting in a humane way around trying to solve the refugee crisis through putting forward programs that protect the rights of migrants and providing safe spaces especially for women to be able to report incidences of GBV for instance and act upon them to put an end to such violations. Moreover, such policies need to encompass protocols and measures to hold individuals who violate the rights and safety of irregular migrants accountable for their actions, so no one dares to go above the law.

Policy makers who are crafting and implementing these gender sensitive policies need to be curious about what is happening to these women during their irregular migration journeys. They need to ask the right questions that would initiate a gender

curious investigation as well as discourses that are gender sensitive to any pertinent issue being faced by irregular migrant women. They need to ask for instance:

- What is the meaning behind gender, status, ethnicity, nationality, religion, race and other social categorizations that intersect with one another to create forms of oppression and inequities experienced by irregular migrant women across political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of society at the societal, institutional, and individual level?
- How are these layers of built-in systems of oppression that generate marginalization, discrimination, racism, inequities, and violence maintained, reinforced, as well as being resisted across distinct social domains?
- How can our understanding of the intricate intersections of power dynamics and gender inequities that are built based upon binary data, guide us in focusing on implementing measures that protect irregular migrant females during their migration journeys as well as promoting a social justice agenda?

Asking such questions is the first step in truly giving attention to the challenges irregular migrant women are facing. Intersectionality has the power to draw our attention to how these women are being troubled and impacted by oppressive systems. As a result, incorporating intersectionality in gender sensitive policies has its merits since it promotes a ‘leave no one behind’ agenda. The experiences of these irregular migrant women should be addressed from a global justice, gender sensitive, and human rights viewpoint and not based upon regarding it in the sense of a security and political concern. Crafting policies should be done in the sense that moves beyond a generic, binary, homogenized, and gender blind and neutral approaches. If these policies aren’t crafted based on an

intersectional approach that realizes the importance of sex segregation of data and how one needs to be gender-curious about what's going on to these irregular migrant women, then their experience, actions, and voices will be permanently invisible. "Gender makes the world go round" (Enloe, 2014).

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