Bringing Neoliberalism and Neo-Ottomanism Together:
Conservative Nationalism in Everyday Life in Turkey after the Syrian Civil War[*]

By Nurbanu Dursun, Istanbul University

Introduction

The movement of people across vast geographies is nothing new. History provides us with accounts of how people moved across lands, fought, settled and produced. These accounts present us how migration is a central, and profound phenomenon in history. Migration is the broader term that is used for these movements and displacements. The Syrian Civil War, that has started in 2011, has led to a major humanitarian crisis in the form of movement and displacement of people since its earlier days. It led to displacement of millions of people to outside countries. Turkey, having the geographic proximity to Syria, is the country that host the highest number of Syrian refugees inside its borders. According to latest UN Refugee Agency report of 21 March 2019[1], more than 3.650.000 Syrian people are registered in Turkey as "persons of concern". This is about 64.2% persons of all displaced Syrian people. These waves of migration to Turkey has been a major phenomenon shaping the everyday life in Turkey for the last decade. Because migration is transformative of the social and the political; through migration, new social, economic, political and cultural relations are formed. The movement of people generates new entities, subjectivities and collectivities. Having the context of migrations transforming what is social and political in the host country at the background, this article focuses on perspectives on the Syrian refugees in everyday life of

---

[*] **This paper is a revised version of my master thesis entitled "The Syrian "Other" in Everyday Life: Perspectives on Syrian Refugees in Üsküdar" presented at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul in July 2017.**

[1] https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria

cities. Empirically, it examines the Turkish conservative perspectives on the Syrian refugees in Üsküdar, a district of Istanbul in Turkey.

Classical studies on migration tend to focus on two important theoretical approaches to migration. These are voluntarist and structuralist perspectives (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 30). The voluntarist perspective relies on pushing and pulling factors that make people move. This model is individualistic, argues that the individual calculates costs and benefits of staying and moving; and then, arrives at the decision of migration (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 31). For instance, in terms of refuge, the repressive political regimes are considered to be a push factor (Papastergiadis, 2000, pp. 30-31). However, Mezzadra (2015) argues that it is commonsensical to say that migration is only very rarely voluntary or free (p. 122). Therefore, studying migration in terms of push and pull factors is not very meaningful. This is especially the case in forced migrations in which "a well-founded fear of violence" is the distinguishing factor of forced migration (Zolberg et al., 1989, p. 33). Although oppressive regimes are considered to be a push factor, it is inadequate to analyze forced migrations from this perspective where violence and life-threatening conditions make the subject lack the authority to decide on push and pull factors in the first place. The structuralist perspective, on the other hand, relies on the differentiation of center and periphery countries in the world economy. Class appears to be the decisive factor for migration from periphery to center countries of industrialization and developed economies. These models are very limited in themselves and they both regard the influence of external factors as the sole reason for migration (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 35).

These perspectives treat migration as very mechanized and economized phenomena. Gender and culture are dismissed from the picture (Abu-Lughod, 1978, p. 226). Therefore, the migrant subject is reduced to processes of economy and positioning of social class. Also, internal factors that lead to migration are not taken into consideration, in which the subject

appears to be fixed and already determined. However, critical migration studies highlight the necessity of having the migrant subjectivity at the center and see how migration is constitutive of experiences of interaction and movement (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 35).

Critical migration studies pose criticisms to these traditional perspectives that undermine the subjectivity of the migrant. These studies criticize the views that migration revolves around the "excess" and it is the movement and displacement of people that are already solitary. Rather, these studies focus on how migration is "integral to the radical transformations of modernity" (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 2) and how it goes hand in hand with globalization (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 3). Yet, migration is not necessarily modern. The movement of people has been the consistent feature of history, but these critical studies aim at bringing the migrant subjectivity back to migration studies. For my analysis, I am interested in how migration is linked to development of new subjectivities and transformation of subjects. Therefore, I do not engage with the migrant as solely "the marginal man" (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 55), nor the host society as the possessor or power.

Before the Syrian Civil War, Turkey was not considered to be a country that hosts refugees (İçduygu, 2014). However, it has been a country receiving immigration in the last decades (Suter, 2013, p. 3). The state of Turkey preferred Turkish descent and culture in its immigration policies (İçduygu, 2015, p. 1). Likewise, granting Turkish citizenship to non-Turkish migrants rests on ethnic and cultural criteria rather than legal and political criteria of citizenship (Kirişçi, 2000). However, Parla (2015) argues that by implementing the new Citizenship Law of 2010, Turkey "seems to be letting go of its policy of favoritism towards the Turkish speaking migrants from Bulgaria" (p. 109). Her article on labor migration from Bulgaria to Turkey following the collapse of the communist system focuses on how ethnic categories of citizenship are being abandoned for neoliberal principles of labor market (Parla, 2015). This neoliberal turn is in conjunction with the diverse immigration flows to Turkey

during the decades of globalization. Although some of these flows were irregular migrants on their ways to Europe, the refugee flows to Turkey have also taken place. The refugee Turks from Bulgaria in 1989 and the Iraqi Kurds during the first Gulf War in 1991 are the main examples (İçduygu, 2015, p. 4). The Syrian refugees, however, has been the highest number of migrants that Turkey has ever experienced. In that sense, there is still a need for in-depth research on Turkey's experiences of Syrian migration and refuge, and how Turkey responds to the incoming migrants and refugees. My research questions were: "Why are there many active individuals and groups that tackle the issue of Syrian refugees in Üsküdar? What motivates people actively involved in helping Syrian refugees in civil society and how are they motivated? What kind of discourses do people have when encountered with the Syrian refugees in everyday life, and how do these discourses operate? Are the incoming others differentiated when the host and refugee populations share the same religion? Does sharing a religion act as an integrating discourse in interaction between the host and guest societies and if so, to what extent? Do people explain their pro-refugee stance by resting on religion only or are other cultural criteria important for people's accepting behaviors towards Syrian refugees? How do emotions operate in encounters with refugees? How are pro-refugee stances constructed in conservative perspectives, through religion or through shared history and culture?

These questions are important for discursive formation and reproduction of national identity when the "other" arrives to the host country through various forms of migrations. It is important to note that displaced people are now problematized in the context of nation-state system and nationalism where the migrants and refugees are politicized (Castles, 2003, p. 20). In the current nation-state system, migration connotes going across the national borders. Mezzadra (2015) holds that the notion of the border has long been associated with stability and occupied a central position in modern political thought, especially in nationalism (p. 130).

Therefore, the relation between the nation-state and migration poses something else. The nation-state system aims to regulate the movement of people inside the territories; and sees migration as a possible tool in nationalizing the state (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 2). The movement of people across geographies tests the national borders and poses challenges to their effectiveness. It aims to stabilize destabilizing tendencies of movement and displacement of people within its territories. The modern nation-state system relies on drawing boundaries between our land and the others' lands. De Genova (2015) writes "*Borders make migrants*" (italic in the original) (p. 4). It relies on claiming the land as your own while any movement against this land challenges this possession. Therefore, the incoming other becomes a figure bringing danger creating effects on the host society (Castles, 2003, p. 23). Therefore, one should focus more on how migration could be analyzed in a greater detail when it is not treated as an issue that only occurs among states; but its effects are very much associated with the nation-state system and nationalism. However, it is important to take nationalism not just as a political term but a cultural term meaning "national order of things" in everyday life (Malkki, 1995, p. 5). Limiting migration to the history of states makes us lose important details over the figure of the migrant and how it actually is a constitutive figure in modern social and political thought. Nail (2015) especially highlights the movement of societies and how this dynamism is constitutive of new social and political entities; and nation-state system is one of the key systems of social and political constructs. Highlighting the migration's transformative nature through national identity formation and reproduction is crucial for this study of responses to refugees. Without paying closer attention to these social and cultural aspects of migrations, we cannot understand how migrations shape and transform the everyday life of cities.

That is why I studied the perspectives on the Syrian refugees in a conservative district of Istanbul that has many active civil society groups and individuals working for the Syrian

refugees' wellbeing. I have conducted 17 semi-structured, in-depth interviews in months of February, March and April of 2017; and these interviews constitute the core of the research alongside participant observation. Using these interviews, my research relies on discourse analysis in order to analyze the data. After my analysis, there are reevaluations of three important key areas: the recent past through the Bosnian War, the imaginary on the West and Kemalism. These areas produce and reproduce new subjectivities and collectivities in a neoliberal state and society in accordance with neo-Ottomanism. These areas produce and reproduce new subjectivities and collectivities in a neoliberal state and society in accordance with neo-Ottomanism. The study emphasizes the transformative character of migrations in everyday life by presenting the local perspectives. This study also aims to challenge the focus in migration studies, in which the focus is on the Western European and American countries' experiences of being a host country when the non-Western, non-Christian other arrives. In the Turkish example, where Turkey is the host country, the Syrian other is "familiar" in terms of religion and history; the Syrians are majorly Muslim, similar to the Turkish population that is majorly Muslim, and the Syrian lands have been part of the Ottoman Empire before its dissolution after the World War I and the mandate era in the early 20th century.

My paper is organized as follows: I explain neoliberalization of refuge issue and neo-Ottomanism as two important theoretical tools of my research. Then, I write my findings on how certain themes get emphasized when the conservative Turkish subject encounters the Syrian other; which are the Bosnian War, the imaginary on the West and Kemalism. I conclude with my findings' implications for how a non-xenophobic accounts of perspectives on the refugees can be helpful for future research. Although the Syrians' arrival is discussed in terms of foreign policy, military security and economic burdens, the focus is not on how it affects everyday life. This paper focuses on the Syrians in Turkey as an ethno-political problem in everyday life of cities. It aims to investigate common aspects of Turkish

conservative perspective on Syrian refugees in Istanbul and how people are mobilized in matters related to the refugees in Üsküdar, a district of Istanbul, that I take as my field.

Neoliberalization of Migration in Turkey

One of my critical arguments regarding the civil society mobilization for the Syrian refugees in Turkey is that there is neoliberalization of refugee issue in Turkey, which puts refugees in a gray zone in legal terms, and their faith is determined more by the civil society and their efforts, instead of the state and its capabilities. This is especially the case when we check the official institutions of migration in Turkey. There are three important official agents the host state of Turkey uses in order to address the refugee issue. The Republic of Turkey Disaster and Emergency Directorate (T.C. Başbakanlık Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı, AFAD) is the main public institution that is responsible for the supply of humanitarian needs of the Syrian refugees in Turkey. The institution has temporary shelters and units that house the Syrians, and provide basic needs and services. Apart from accommodation, AFAD has healthcare and education facilities. Yet, the centers supplied by AFAD are not enough. In fact, AFAD writes that they host about 250,000 refugees; where there are almost 3 million Syrian refugees coming from diverse backgrounds in Turkey at that time (AFAD, 2015).

Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent) is an accompanying institution to AFAD in temporary protection units. They provide migration and refugee services consisting of housing, nutrition and psychosocial support to those under temporary protection. Kızılay is a public aid agency; however, they also collect charities from people through online and mobile donations. Another institution that tackles the refugee issue in Turkey is the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Directorate of General of Migration Management (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü, Göç İdaresi). One of the crucial problems is that the Syrians are not given the legal status of refugees; therefore, their rights that could come from being a refugee are undermined. This is displayed in Göç İdaresi's reports. In their annual reports, the Syrians

are classified as migrants and people under temporary protection, not refugees (Göç İdaresi, 2017).

The Turkish refugee policy can be called a "non-policy" since Turkey is still bound by Geneva Convention of 1951 which states that Turkey only accepts refugees from European Union as legal refugees. Rather, temporary measures, in the form of temporary protection regime, are taken in order to respond to the refugee issue as a non-policy. Turkey's implementation of the temporary protection regime itself is why I call the refugee issue a gray zone in Turkey. Instead of changing the old conventions on the status of refugees, Turkey implements a new program that would not limit its say on the refugee issue on the one hand, yet it bears its responsibility towards the refugees from the state through privatization and withdrawal from responsibility; which are characteristics elements of neoliberalization processes.

Neoliberalization refers to processes of privatization, deregulation and withdrawal of the state from economy (Wacquant, 2012, p. 69). The market is deemed as the most efficient institution distributing public goods and resources, not the state (Ong, 2006, p. 11). The state is reduced to a minimal state that remains technical (Ong, 2006, p. 3). However, there are studies on how neoliberalism in the non-Western contexts can get accompanied by non-neoliberal elements in order to survive (Ong, 2006; Tuğal, 2012). In that sense, neoliberalism can get blended in the local values rather than remaining technical through processes of privatization, deregulation and withdrawal of the state from economy. I take this feature of getting blended into the local as an important part of neoliberalization in Turkey. Neoliberalism takes various forms in order to sustain itself in Turkey and neo-Ottomanism provides another means for neoliberalism to keep itself going, and this sustainment includes the refugee issue as an area of neoliberalization, privatization and withdrawal of the state.

I have argued that further neoliberalization of the state in Turkey can be witnessed in areas related to refugees, and there are privatization and withdrawal of the state from welfare of the refugees. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to Turkey. Rather, there are instances of privatization of the refugee issue in the world, and there is a general trend that states are getting less accountable in issues of migration and asylum seeking. The United Kingdom, Canada and Spain are some of the examples. In the United Kingdom, the state is further detached from the immigration policies. The state leaves its responsibilities to the private sphere while it distances itself from the migration area (Athwal, 2015). In Canada, however, neoliberalization of the state in areas regarding migration and refuge is accompanied by introduction of new systems. For instance, there is a private sponsorship system in Canada in which private individuals can get involved in processes of welfare of the migrants and refugees (Hyndman et al., 2017). Similarly, the legal refugee status is not granted to certain groups in Spain; and, the unrecognized refugees are mostly covered by local administrations and NGOs (Jubany-Baucells, 2002). These are important examples demonstrating how states withdraw from issues related to migrants and refugees. Moreover,w through privatization, civil society organizations rise as agents having responsibility in the refugee issue. Mobilization of civil society on the refugee issue does not necessarily mean that the state and civil society organization are two distinct agents in the refugee issue. Rather, in the sponsorship system in Canada, there is a harmonious collaboration between the state and civil society in the refugee issue (Hyndman et al., 2017). Likewise, I argue that my study demonstrates how mobilization of civil society organizations on the refugee issue is not separate from the state discourse and agenda. Therefore, there are neoliberalization, privatization of the refugee issue and withdrawal of the state from responsibility against the refugees; and fostering of civil society organizations cannot be considered separate from the neoliberal state discourse and its agenda.

Ultimately I argue that what differs Turkish experience of privatization of the refugee issue from others is its use of a new political discourse, that is turned into a social discourse, while treating the refugees. For instance, Spain and Turkey have similar frameworks when it comes to granting the legal status of refugee to limited groups and leaving the position of asylum seekers in a gray zone. However, Turkey advocates a neo-Ottoman discourse of restorative nostalgia, while Spain does not employ similar methods of nostalgia. In that sense, there is a merging of neoliberal state and neo-Ottoman state in Turkey.

Neo-Ottomanism

If there is a merging of neoliberal and neo-Ottoman state in Turkey; then, what is neo-Ottomanism? As the name of the term suggests, there is an emphasis on Ottomanism, a key strategy aimed at producing a new, loyal and national Ottoman citizen base during the late periods of Ottoman state and society. It was advocated in order to sustain the ethnically, religiously and culturally heterogeneous imperial population from the negative effects of the nationalist thoughts following the French Revolution. Neo-Ottomanism draws from this theoretical heritage and holds the ethnically, religiously and culturally heterogeneous population as its core. Instead of assimilationist policies of the Kemalist discourse, there is an emphasis on Islamic and multicultural character of society. The neo-Ottoman understanding of the nation does not rely on a secular, ethnic understanding. Rather, shared past and religion as well as multiculturalism appear to be the key factors that make the neo-Ottoman nation.

Neo-Ottomanism's other main feature is regarding the foreign policy understanding. There is a great link between foreign policy discourse and domestic policy discourse and foreign policy is used in order to shape and rebuild the domestic policy. In that sense, I do not treat neo-Ottomanism as a specifically foreign policy discourse but rather I focus on how it is transformative of the society as well. Neo-Ottomanism focuses on interventionism as opposed to isolationism in the geography Turkey is located in. This is a new outlook on foreign policy.

Instead of having a cautious and isolationist foreign policy that constructs Turkey as a bridge between the East and the West, the new framework rejects being a bridge because it does not connote a central position. Rather, there is an aim to become a prominent actor that is in harmony with its geography in which Turkey is viewed as a "compass" (Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015, pp. 312-313). Geography is emphasized to a great extent and Turkey's advantages of being located in this geography is deemed important. There is the central argument that there must a harmony between the state and its surrounding, neighboring environment. Geography is not considered indifferent to its history. In fact, historical experiences and shared past are focused on as sources of forming bonds. Interventionism should not be considered as hard power. Rather, soft power is emphasized as it is deemed effective influence of the hegemonic power over the designated area.

Neo-Ottomanism has been used since the Özal administration in the early 1990s. The liberal and secular thinkers close to Özal, have written on neo-Ottomanism arguing how the Ottoman heritage in the geography is something that Turkey cannot separate itself from and it was first advocated as a foreign policy discourse. Although neo-Ottomanism is not a phenomenon specific to the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party), it is further discussed through the AKP years and its transformative effect is state and society. However, Ahmet Davutoğlu, former prime minister of Turkey, is the key figure associated with neo-Ottomanism. Davutoğlu's famous book, Strategic Depth, is considered to be one of the key texts of neo-Ottomanism. In this book, coming to terms with the Ottoman past as recognizing and reinstituting it are emphasized. For instance, Davutoğlu gives examples from the late Ottoman period in which soft power of the empire is highlighted. Intervention of the Ottomans is described as non-colonialist and non-imperialist (Davutoğlu, 2001, p. 52). That is why the intervention of the Ottoman state was not considered to be problematic. Rather, the Ottoman system is advocated as an ideal form. Instead of employing

a cautious attitude that is isolationist, there is the idea of state being active in foreign policy. This activeness is not considered to be aggressive, assertive but rather powerful in the sense that state having a say in matters related to the region. The region refers to the geographical area that is composed of Turkey's neighbor countries, with whom Turkey shares historical, ethnic, religious and cultural bonds with. One of the most influential arguments is that Turkey, by abandoning the heritage of the Ottoman state and society, got alienated from its history and geography (Aras, 2009, p. 128).

This alienation could make more sense by explaining nostalgia. The concept of nostalgia, to be more clear, restorative nostalgia (Boym, 2001), makes the neo-Ottoman discourse more meaningful. Neo-Ottomanism constructs a past, that is imaginary and advocates it as the truth, as an ideal that needs to embraced and revived. In that sense, the emphasis on the past is not only a feeling of longing, yearning for the past. On the contrary, it has a practical side. The feeling of longing for the past is fostering action and practice. Then, the past is aimed to be revived, revoked and re-embraced. I argue that in order to restore the past and attain a certain restorative nostalgia linked with neo-Ottomanism, there is mobilization of the society and transformation of the state. That is why I think there is a making of a new subjectivity in conjunction with a certain state hegemony in the civil society. Neo-Ottomanism provides frameworks in which people can get mobilized in civil society through instrumentalizing the past. The past acts as a shared imaginary that helps mobilization of people in civil society that is in the context of the neoliberal Turkish state.

Methodology

My research rests on 17 in-depth, semi-structured interviews I have conducted in February, March and April of 2017. In addition, I have used participant observation as secondary sources. The people I have interviewed are either Üsküdar residents, or they work in Üsküdar,

or even if they do not work in the district they are active in the district in some capacity (whether observing the district because it is on their commute routes or go to the district to socialize). Therefore, all interviewees were able to give me details on everyday life in Üsküdar. All my interviewees describe themselves as conservative people, although their range of conservatism differ. The age range of my interviewees changes between mid-20s to the late 50s. Almost half of them are females (8 people), and the other half is males (9 people). I have aimed at having a diverse selection of interviewees in terms of their occupations. Therefore, my selection includes people working at a think-tank and charity organizations, people running coffee and tea houses and boutique restaurants, housewives, businessmen, medical doctors, an academic scholar, a writer, a graduate student in the area of education, a banker, and a shop assistant. Almost all of the interviewees are members of the middle class; yet, some of them would belong to lower middle class, while others are members of the upper middle class. Their education levels differ in conjunction with their middle-class status. All interviewees are graduates of high school but not everyone are university graduates. This is especially the case for head-scarf wearing women who have not attended university due to the headscarf ban that was implemented for years. People with post-graduate degrees are in minority. To that aim, I describe all my interviewees as active and mobilized people in matters regarding the wellbeing of Syrian refugees in Istanbul. Their activeness is in different capacities and these positions were, most of the time, voluntary.

My interviews Interviews lasted between 20 minutes to 60 minutes and were audio-recorded. Apart from the time I have audio-recorded the interviews, I was able to observe their offices as well as residencies. I conducted interviews in places that were the most convenient for the interviewees which included their houses, café places and restaurants. Almost all interviews were one-on-one while a few of them took place in a group of two

people upon the circumstances. I recorded all the interviews with the permission of the interviewees and fully transcribed the audio recordings.

After transcribing, I have employed open coding and searched for common themes and metaphors that have come up in the interviews. One of the things I find curious was how conservative people in Üsküdar were mobilized for the Syrian refugee, and established support systems for the refugees, contrary to the literature. The literature usually mentions conservative people's xenophobic attitudes against the refugees in the West. However, the case in Turkey was somehow different and I wanted to argue how Üsküdar proved itself a different case when the non-Western arrives a non-Western setting in which the both share a common religion and have a sense of shared history. In the field, I found that the arrival of Syrian refugees showed up as a means of reevaluating and reimagining the past, as well as their idea of nation and national identity for the conservative people. In that sense, I have focused on how my interviewees imagined and interpreted the past, the Turkish and Islamic nation, what they think on the relation between the Turkish and Syrian identities, their take on general Turkish responses to the Syrian crisis and refugees, whether Islam or Ottoman past could be used as a unifying mechanism.

Findings: Reevaluating and Reimagining the National

My research shows that the arrival of Syrian refugees acts as a mechanism for reimagining and reevaluating certain historical points and ideological themes for active, mobile conservative identities in Turkey. Although my research has started on a contemporary state, it translated into a broader time-scale that includes several themes in Turkish and conservative national identity. While mobilizing for the Syrian refugees; their wellbeing, their education, they usually agreed on a neo-Ottoman articulation of Turkish national identity with its relation with its surrounding, neighboring nations and identities. These findings show

migrations could transform, or produce and reproduce certain subjectivities, hegemony and nostalgia in the host society. While some of my interviewees had a more egalitarian outlook on the relation between the Turkish and Syrian identities, some had a clear Ottomanist hegemonic view on the Syrians, that the Ottoman Empire was the savior. Some of my interviewees simply rested on religious brotherhood as the sole reason for their motivation. However, certain themes and metaphors have come up in their interviews even if they have different outlooks on relations with the other. Therefore, I categorize the conservative perspectives on the Syrian crisis into three. These are the Bosnian War as a founding-act of neo-Ottomanism, the disillusionment with "the West", and Kemalism as the ultimate other.

I argue that this reimagination and reevaluation is in line two broad mechanisms: neoliberalization of the refugee issue and neo-Ottomanist nostalgia. Firstly, neoliberalization of the refugee issue mobilizes civil society and non-state actors to take the lead on the refugee issue in which the refugees are in a gray zone. Secondly, neo-Ottomanist agenda presented by the political power have been an ideological mechanism that this neoliberal mobilization could be made possible. These two mechanisms work together in Turkey in which the Turkish host identity rests on the neo-Ottomanist nostalgia in order to welcome and look after the refugees, which the state cannot, both in terms of capabilities and intentions, tackle on its own. This is why the three categories I have mentioned above are of great importance. It could be argued that these three categories of themes and metaphors were already "there", meaning in use in Turkish conservative ideology, even before the Syrian arrival. Although these categories are not novel, what is new is their re-articulation and reproduction when the "other" arrives. Although religion and ideology play important roles in viewing the other, the question of how that viewing of the other changes is crucial. Now, I present my in-depth discussion of three categories that have come up in my research.

The Bosnian War: A Founding Act of Neo-Ottomanism

I hold that the Syrian War is taken into account with memories of the Bosnian War in 1992. This was especially the case in my interview with Musa and Erkan. I have met Musa and Erkan in a charity organization in Uncular Street, Üsküdar. I have heard that the organization especially helps the Syrians with in-kind transfers, finding and acquiring furniture and other appliances for their homes. I have contacted Musa, an employee at the organization, through phone and he invited me over the association's place for the interview.

When I was there, Musa introduced me to Erkan, a tea-shop owner in Üsküdar's main square, who was also there. They both agreed to have the interview. In fact, Erkan was more eager to share his experiences since he had recently been to the Turkish-Syrian border with other members of the association in order to assess the situation there. This included seeing the immediate necessities of the Syrian people arriving to Turkey and coming up with plans in order to decide what could be done for the Syrians. Erkan, firstly, underlines the feeling he had that he needed to do something about the incoming Syrians whether it is material help or non-material support. He says this feeling comes to people who are believers:

> I told the others that I want to cross to the other side [across the border], get a gun and thought maybe we could do something. In that moment, spirit, I asked if we could do something like that. There are, of course, humiliation and disappointment of not being able to go to the Bosnian War. (Erkan, 40s, male)

Erkan's referral to the Bosnian War and Bosnian refugees have also come up in other interviews. The Bosnian War took place in the early 1990s after the collapse of Soviet and Yugoslavian regimes and it was a stage for genocide, the most violent period in the European history after the Holocaust in the 20th century. The link between the Bosnian and Syrian Wars are formed through violence and pain that both wars share. Both wars are considered to be two of the most violent cases in recent history and their aftermath in terms of forcing thousands of people to leave their countries, migrate and seek refuge elsewhere. Through these experiences and victimization of Bosnian and Syrian refugees, links are formed between

cases. I also argue that the context of neo-Ottomanism help linking the two wars. The intervention into the Bosnian War through active foreign policy mobilizing the international actors is actually earlier phases and examples of neo-Ottoman thinking in the 1990s. In the Syrian case, the Turkish government's close relations with Syria before the war, and its close following of the war through siding with the opposition against the Assad regime are demonstrative of the active Syrian policy. Furthermore, the operation of Euphrates Shield was a military operation against the radical terrorist groups launching attacks on the Turkish lands. Therefore, Syria is somewhere that Turkey has actively intervened.

Another interviewee, Osman, puts emphasis on Bosnia as a founding moment. Osman, a member of the board of trustees of İnsani Yardım Vakfı (Humanitarian Relief Foundation, İHH), tells me İHH, one of the most active humanitarian aid organizations in Turkey, was founded after the Bosnian War. On their website, it says that the organization was established by "the humanitarian aid work that were started by the hearts that could not remain indifferent to the Bosnian War in 1992" (İHH, 2017). Osman, also starts his interview on the perspectives on the Syrians in Turkey with mentioning how their organization was founded during the Bosnian War in order to gather and send humanitarian aid to the region. The comparison between the Syrian War and the Bosnian War becomes apparent. He later follows the example of the Bosnian War by Kosovo and Chechnya wars, as other founding elements of the perspective on the Syrian people. Osman compares the process and aftermath of the Bosnian War with the Syrian War:

> In 1992 Bosnian War, all political parties of Turkey, from right to left, embraced the Bosnians. There was a great mobilization to help Bosnia. People coming from there [Bosnia] were cherished and embraced. It was the same in the Chechnya War in 1994-1997. The Turkish left, the Turkish right, the Islamists, the conservative, the nationalists embraced the Chechen people. It was not a source of conflict. No one said "Why are the Chechen are here? What are they doing in there? What are the Bosnians looking for?" It was not a source of political conflict and polemics. But, unfortunately I have to say that we haven't given a good account of ourselves in the Syria issue . . . Can you imagine, the shared emotions and sensibility shown towards people in Bosnia

and Chechnya were not displayed in Syria. Why? The left and the right. "Was it necessary? Why did they revolt against the regime? If Syria is divided, Iran will be, too. Then, Turkey will be divided." etc. The massacres in Syria were used for politics. We didn't discuss the limits of human tragedy there. The tragedy was not prioritized. I was astonished. Around 10 to 15 thousand people arrived from Bosnia, and 30 to 40 thousand people from Chechnya. 50 or 100 thousand people didn't come to Turkey from these countries. Chechnya had a population of 900 thousand and Bosnia had a population of 2,5 million. Now, there are 3 and a half million people arrived. It is as much as a country. (Osman, 40s, male)

Osman's discursive style includes references to Bosnia. Bosnia, together with Chechnya are examples of discourses on pain endured by the Muslims in recent decades. In fact, when articulating the number of Syrian refugees coming to Turkey, he gives examples from Bosnia. The Syrian population in Turkey is about 3 million and Osman tells me this number is close to the population of the Bosnian state as a country. It is as if the whole Bosnian society has arrived Turkey. He gives other examples from the Balkan and the Caucasus states' populations in order to make sense of the number of Syrians, and the great volume of it, in Turkey. In this account, the reference to the Bosnian War takes place in a comparison between the effects of migration on the host society of Turkey. Similarly, İHH's activism in the Balkans, and designating the Balkans as opposed to other geographies is noteworthy.

Bosnia, through humanitarianism and institutional help, is subject of conversation in Leyla and Fadime's accounts as well. Leyla is a health officer, whereas Fadime is a gynecologist. They are both in health industry and their experiences with the Syrians have a more professional tone in which it is a relation between the health officer and the patient. This puts matters in a different context but it is not devoid of any reference to history and memory. When I ask what they think of the Syrian refugees' conditions in Turkey, Leyla recalls her experiences in Bosnia. Leyla holds that the official agents' activities were observable. She argues that the official actors "are still there" and active. She tells it in the context of responsibility where the Turkish host state and society feel responsible. These accounts mention Bosnia in terms of how Turkish institutions are still active there, although it has been

many years since the war. Leyla and Fadime discuss what the Syrian lands represent. Leyla says,

> An Arab does not feel responsible; an Indonesian does not feel responsible or a Moroccan does not feel responsible. It has been years, more than 20 years that TİKA[2] brings aid to Bosnia. The same with the Yunus Emre Institute. I have seen them in Jerusalem. There are Yunus Emre cultural centers and TİKA branches in Bosnia and Jerusalem. The walls from Abdülhamid era are destroyed by Israel and the collapsed walls are still restored by TİKA. You still feel yourself responsible. It is because you have ethics, morals that are heritages of *ecdad*, grandparents. It is helping others in the cause of Allah. (Leyla, 30s, female)

For instance, Songül, a housewife working in charity to the Syrians independently, is another interviewee that tells me traces of the Ottoman past is on Syrian lands:

> When you observe the [Syrian] lands, when you look at *ecdad*, you see that there are our Ottomans' traces in almost half of Syria. (Songül, 40s, female)

The shared history is emphasized in these accounts. Shared history almost has a binding quality that glues two estranged societies together and metaphors of family and *ecdad,* which literally means grandparents, reinforce this binding. The cultural heritage in the form of historical remains are deemed important. In this aspect, the interviewees' use of the phrase "our lands (*bizim topraklar*)" is noteworthy. "Our lands" are used with "our ancestors" in order to form a familial relationship between Syria and Turkey. However, this relation usually takes an imperial form where the Ottoman center of Istanbul is elevated. The quotation also has a celebratory tone, in which there is celebration of the self over help given to the others. The Turkish help to the area is deemed important and it is explained through the shared past and ancestry. Therefore, the metaphor of family is accompanied by shared past and ancestry here. The metaphor of *ecdad* is quite significant and it refers to a process of forming familial relations between communities. In that sense, Bosnia is taken to be the founding act of the

---

[2] TİKA (T.C. Başbakanlık Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı – Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) is an official institution under the Turkish Prime Ministry that operates soft power in countries that Turkey has historical and ethnical relations with. Their projects and activities cover a large range of fields from tourism, restoration and development to education and health.

perspectives on the Syrian refugees through the metaphors of family and *ecdad*, which means the relations between the communities are closer and more binding than imagined.

The Bosnian War was a matter that is followed closely by the Turkish state and society. This close following is important because when the Syrian refugees arrive, the local imaginary remembers the experiences of the Bosnian War. These experiences are both experiences of the victimized Bosnian refugees and Turkish articulation of the Bosnian War. The Bosnian War is used as a framework for comparing and contrasting the conditions of refugees. The Syrian refugees are reminders of the recent history of other experiences of displacement, forced migration and seeking refuge and the Bosnian War and its aftermath are given as lived experiences of how people fled war and sought refuge in other countries. The Bosnian War is also taken as a framework in which Turkish people were not able to contribute much. In a way, by helping the Syrian refugees and mobilizing around their problems, the experiences and disappointments regarding the past are aimed at overcoming and reversed. The Syrian refugees now provide means that the subject and the collectivity around the burdens of the past could get relief. The Syrian War provides means to reverse the Bosnian War.

The Disillusionment with "The West"

In my interview with Musa and Erkan, in addition to familial discourses regarding the Bosnian War, there is longing for the past and its re-articulation and a wish for its restoration. When Turkey becomes the center, not a part of the periphery, the centralization of the West gets problematized. Therefore, the enemy of this scheme becomes "the West" that threatens the familial relations between Turkish and Bosnian, Syrian identities in which the past acquires central importance. The West becomes the ultimate perpetrator of violence and war in the geography.

I have asked the role of international actors to all my interviewees. The questions on other international actors' positions created affective economies in which almost all of the interviewees took the international sphere as "the West". Therefore, the discourse of the West constitutes a large ground in which the West increasingly becomes the other of the Turkish identity when the Syrian refugees arrive and it gets reevaluated. When answering my question, Erkan picks an accusative tone and addresses the international actors by calling them out. He means the European, American and Israel as "the West" in his discourses. He uses the pronoun "you" as if he speaks to a person in order to refer to the West:

> The international actors do nothing. They don't do anything. They build obstacles so that they [the refugees] wouldn't come. Scoundrels! You [the West] started it. The Arab Spring? Whose spring is it? Am I the one that have done all these things? Am I the one who armed all these groups? Am I the one who have sold rockets to ISIS? When they come here, what is the first thing they do? They have occupied the oil wells. What do the oil wells mean? An oil barrel is sold for 50 dollars in international markets. How much do you get from these barrels? Who buys these? Is it Turkey? No, you are the buyer. But, it is the West they say. See the contrast? You are the burglar! You are shameless and the murderer. You are the one arming that group [the ISIS] there. You buy those guys' oil for a lira, if it is 5 liras, and you don't give them any money. What do they do instead? They give them weapons. You financed this group. You created terror. What else would you do? People have become refugees and they get drowned in seas. This is not your problem. You are not interested in rehabilitating people and doing them good. You are a selfish murderer. I mean the West. I mean Israel. This is not because I speak out of anger and partiality. You have to view things through justice. How come do they know what justice is? Am I the one who buys oil? You buy it. If you but it, then you are the burglar. You are the murderer. You are the founder of that group. (Erkan, 40s, male)

I chose to have this quotation because it demonstrates a rather clear perspective on the West. Erkan's accounts treat the West as a monolithic entity that is characterized by negative features such as being greedy, promoting terrorism and violence. There is not much ambivalence in his accounts. The West is associated with terror, darkness and greed. The West is characterized by a certain utilitarianism that only considers its well-being and does not care of the others. The others of the West are non-Westerners, and the non-Westerners are not of value. The value itself is very rationalized in the Western sense. It is not a spiritual

value. The Western value refers to a utilitarian value system, it needs to be profitable. In that sense, the reason the West is associated with negative qualities is ultimately related to utilitarianism. Although the West is not inherently bad, it adopts such utilitarian means that it makes it greedy and inhuman. These utilitarianism leads to a process in which the West ultimately becomes the reason why all wars take place.

Ayhan, another interviewee, relies on a discourse in which the West is opportunistic and always thinking of its economic interests. Ayhan runs a think tank that researches abuses of human rights. The think tank especially focuses on abuses of rights in Europe studying Islamophobia. He actively follows the current affairs and proposes his commentary on these affairs. During the interviews, he gives the example of London local elections. Ayhan tells me why Sadiq Khan, London's first Muslim major, was elected:

> The London major's being Muslim-origin and his election are all commercial and economic. This is not political. It totally depends on economic, commercial reasons because there is a need for hot money . . . We don't think that way. We don't think the Syrian rich may invest in Turkey. This is naïve. Maybe it is humane but it is not realistic. (Ayhan, 50s, male)

When I ask Osman what he thinks of the other international actors and agencies approaches to the Syrian issue, he gives me a perspective regarding the West.

> When we compare other countries with Turkey, except for Germany and Switzerland, I would say that the West hasn't given a good account of itself. The Western world was scared and frightened of the Syrian refugees saying "How are we going to look after them? How to host them? They are from a different culture. If the Muslims come here, Christianity will be in danger." I think it was Hungary who said to only get Christian refugees. Unfortunately, the West didn't give a good account of itself. People drowning in the Mediterranean… We all watched it, it was in front of the whole world. Europe put barriers up both in political and cultural senses. There were ethnical, religious, political and cultural barriers. You have to accept that. It was not a good test for them. It considered "What happens if they come? Would our order get halt? What would happen to our socio-cultural and sociological [order]?" It is because Europe lives according to order. But Turkey did not do it. Turkey's approach was totally conscientious. It acted in accordance with religion, traditions, culture, customs and manners. (Osman, 40s, male)

In this account, the West has failed the test of accepting and hosting the Syrian refugees. Once again, the West is used interchangeably with Europe. It showed how there are barriers against the non-Europeans in their countries. Being non-European is also associated with being non-Christian. Osman thinks Christianity is one of the defining elements of the European identity and gives the Hungary's declaration that they would only accept Christian Syrian refugees as an example. This is related to how Europeans live according to rules and order, whereas the Turkish response has a conscientious side where it accepts the refugees no matter what conditions it is in. This resembles Ayhan's account in which he deems the Western perspective utilitarian. In that sense, being utilitarian is linked to being orderly. Yet, being orderly and relying on non-conscientious principles is deemed inhuman when there is a human tragedy in the form of displacement and migration of millions of people. Therefore, the Turkish response is articulated to be more humane and it draws from religion, culture, customs and traditions. When the West is imagined to be utilitarian, the non-Western is claimed to be the opposite of the rational, interest calculating image. In that sense, Osman holds that there are some essential qualities of being Turkish and living in Anatolia, a land mixed with various identities, the migrants' land in a way: "Hospitality is extended to the other in our historical experiences, religion, belief systems, traditions and customs". Then, the Turkish and Islamic becomes conscientious, humane, compassionate as opposed to the West:

> Europe erects political, religious and status barriers. It does not say "humans are first." It prioritizes its security, not human security. The West has this egoist approach. In Turkey, there is this belief in predestination that comes from traditions in Eastern societies. We say Allah is the guarantor. We say the guests come with their fortunes. This comes from beliefs. It does not mean anything in the West. There is no translation of *nasip* [foreordination] in the West. (Osman, 40s, male)

Even if the West is not actively in war, it is hold to be the reason why wars erupt in the first place. Therefore, the West is, in a sense, the mastermind behind all violence. These negative features make the West "the enemy" in Erkan's discourse:

But this state could fix these problems. This state could rehabilitate things. It can achieve these by acknowledging the obligation that comes from the history. It is not about running projects following Western examples. It is not how it goes. The West is our enemy till the end. It has never been our friend. It will never be humane. They are cruel. We haven't distinguished the people from Bosnia with the Syrians.[3] (Erkan, 40s, male)

A similar pattern is in Ayhan's discourses. He relies on a friend-enemy distinction in order to explain the relations with the West:

When we started our Islamophobia project, some people called it an operation against Europe saying Europe is not Islamophobic and there is tolerance for Muslims. On the contrary, it is the opposite. Europe is the Muslims' enemy. (Ayhan, 50s, male)

Relying on a discourse of friend and enemy is very crucial. I take it as demonstrative of how the relations with the West are constructed in a dichotomy. In this framework, the West is either the friend or the enemy; and it cannot be anything in between. Similarly, the friend-enemy discourse articulates two actors, the West and the non-Western, whether it is Turkish, Middle Eastern, Islamic, or Eastern. When the West is taken as a monolithic concept, the relations with the West are constructed in a dichotomous manner. The West is not a recent "enemy" but its position against the Turkish identity is historicized. Erkan argues that the West has never been a "friend" in history and the relations with the West always had conflicts. Therefore, he does not take the West as a role model. Erkan's account provides the Ottoman imperial, but not colonial, history as a legacy that must be followed rather than the Western examples. Giving examples from the Iraq invasion and oil prices, Erkan calls the West "burglar" and "murderer", and he later holds that the West disguises itself. This seems to be the other major problem with the West. The West not only perpetuates wars; the West perpetuates wars in disguise, not openly. Erkan follows his narrative by relying on a verse from Quran. He says those who raise unrest in the region disguise themselves being

---

[3] For the original passage of this translated quotation, see Appendix B, 14.

ameliorators. These are in the context of how people have started leaving their countries in the first place.

There is a production and reproduction of disillusionment with the West in the interviews. The West becomes the enemy of the imaginary family of the Turkish and Syrian communities. The West becomes a necessary evil that the local identity needs in order to construct its subjectivity; yet there is an aim of overcoming the West's discursive centrality. Therefore, there is an ambivalent position attached to the West; while the West is deemed destructive of the true essence of the Turkish identity, the Turkish subject also needs it in order to construct themselves. This ambivalence of the West becomes important when mobilizing around the refugee issue. This is achieved through metaphors of friend-enemy and drugs, diseases. The disillusionment with the West is also related to Kemalist projects of modernization as Westernization, which is the subject of the next part.

Kemalism as the Ultimate Other

I have contacted Özge after getting her name from Melike and Halid, one of the first interviewees who run a small restaurant and give free food to Syrian families in Üsküdar. During our interview, they referred to Özge, an author, from time to time and recommended her for my thesis saying her insights could be what I was looking for. They told me Özge was very devoted to visiting Syrian families on a regular basis and keeping dialogue as the basis of her solidarity with the Syrian refugees for almost four years. What she aims is not to bring extravagant gifts to children and families, but rather keeping things regular and consistent. Following their advice, I have contacted Özge, she agreed to do the interview and invited me to her office close to the Üsküdar square.

Özge problematizes the past and actually differentiates between the two pasts, one is the traumatic past associated with Kemalist reforms; and the other is the Ottoman past that is yearned for, that is distant but missed by her. On the Kemalist past, Özge has serious

criticisms regarding the Kemalist regime, one being the alphabet reform. When counting the

positive effects of hosting the refugees, she says that:

> Look, with the arrival of our Syrian refugee friends, our letters that were taken away
> from us, that were vandalized, have come back . . . Our letters, veiling, madrasas, life
> styles, everything has been slaughtered. (Özge, 30s, female)

However, reforms' ulterior motive is to disengage and alienate people from their ummah:

> We didn't know the existence of the Syrian lands and our brothers and sisters on that
> geography. It is because the curriculums and reforms [Kemalist reforms] have done
> whatever it takes for us not to know them. So, that wouldn't know them, we wouldn't
> know the values there. (Özge, 30s, female)

Modern Turkish state was founded by Kemal Atatürk in 1923. The Kemalist secularist

worldview derives from Kemal Atatürk's founding principles of the republic. Although

Atatürk was a politician and a military leader, not necessarily a theoretician; his

conceptualization of the founding principles of the new nation-state, that needs to erase its ties

to the Ottoman Empire, as the Turkish republic has been vital and referred to Kemalism, or

Kemalist ideology. Kemalism's greatest aim was to modernize the society according to

Western principles with reforms from above in order to achieve quick social and political

change. Official Kemalist principles were written in Republican Peoples Party's party

program in 1931. Kemalism was composed of six principles. These were republicanism,

secularism (*laicite*), nationalism, populism, statism and revolutionism (or reformism); these

principles explained the vision of the Kemalist government in early republican era. Four

features of Kemalism has been influential in forming criticisms in my interviews. These are

Kemalism being a laik ideology, a nationalist ideology, its abolition of the caliphate as well as

its promotion of modernization through Westernization. Neo-Ottomanism used some of these

criticisms against Kemalism as founding elements of its own.

Features of Kemalism are criticized through the metaphor of vandalism in the

interviews. These metaphors are used as means to hold the Kemalist ideology as a violent

force. This does not connote a physical violence per se but rather an everyday violence that

challenges the essences of subjectivity and collectivity. The violence associated with Kemalism draws on from enforcement and imposition. One of the reasons that the Kemalist reforms in the early republican era was problematic is that the reforms did not originate from below but instituted from above by force. Because the reforms take place in everyday life, violence is generalized and extended to micro settings of daily happenings. For instance, one of the interviewees gives the example of the alphabet change reform as vandalism in how she experiences that enforcement in the everyday life. Enforcement of reforms is considered in the context of changing one's identity, an unnatural process that draws one's identity from its essence. There is a process of alienation associated with reforms.

One of the most criticized reforms was the conversion to a Latin alphabet in 1928, which had devastating effects on the religious elite making the whole literate illiterate. The change of alphabet from Arabic to Latin is indicative of forced forgetting. It refers to one of the most traumatic Kemalist reforms for the religious intelligentsia because it meant breaking the links between the present and the Ottoman and Islamic past. Arabic alphabet, apart from being any alphabet, was the alphabet that the words of the Quran are in (Çağaptay, 2006, p. 14). There is a certain emphasis put on Arabic. Arabic remains a sacred language for Muslims that is different than everyday language in Turkey (Connerton, 1999, p. 66).

In Leyla's account, this forced forgetting through reforms and foundation of the new nation-state is mentioned; yet, it is in a more disguised tone. When I ask what being a Syrian means in Turkey, Leyla answers:

> Those are your lands and they are your people. They have been assimilated in time. They have always spoken in that language. When you go to Hatay or Antep, they speak the same language. Just because you are located northern than them you have forgotten your language. If you would be located more southern, we would have spoken the same language. Syria is just a name of a city. (Leyla, 30s, female)

Ahmet, the owner of a trendy coffee house in Üsküdar who employs Syrian employees, says they have established a solid relationship with the Syrian employees. He refers to the borders when he shares his perspectives on the Syrian refugees:

> Syria had been a part of these lands 100 years ago. The drawn borders were not real nor realistic. These were drawn by forces outside. Syria was what Diyarbakır is to us now. It feels very different just because there is this 100-year-gap. Yet, we share the same culture, outlook on life and many other features. (Ahmet, 30s, male)

The borders are deemed arbitrary and Ahmet held them as influences of imperial powers of the time. The West is further discussed in the context of Kemalism, and Kemalism's characterizing feature is taking modernization as Westernization. Kemalism is problematic because it promoted modernization as Westernization. The problem was not to decide whether to modernize or not, because there was no question on its necessity. There was a need for modernization in order to get ahead as a state and society. Rather the actual question was on how to modernize. Kemalism chose to modernize through Westernization, but this was a problem for the conservative ideology. In other words, although the West was the object of criticisms in the interviews; an analysis on the Kemalist ideology is demonstrative that Kemalism is the central ideology that faces the criticisms. Following these discussions, the Syrian refugees are not considered to be the others in the neo-Ottoman context. Rather, Kemalism is constructed as the ultimate other again. The Syrian refugees are taken as identities and communities that could be integrated in the society that is transforming; yet, the Kemalist ideology remains an ultimate other that needs to be overcome. The Syrian refugees are not problematized but the Kemalist discourse becomes a problem that needs solutions. What has come up in interviews is that the arrival of Syrian refugees provides grounds for challenging and reevaluating the Kemalist discourse and experiences. Criticisms on Kemalism makes new imaginaries on the nation possible. Similar to discourses on the West, mobilization of people around the refugee issue makes Kemalism an object of discourses. When the strict Kemalist principles on national identity are relaxed, the Ottoman past can get

revoked. Therefore, a neo-Ottoman national imaginary necessitates taking what has come after the Ottomans as a problem. What has come after the Ottoman state is the Kemalist republic. Therefore, the Kemalist ideology becomes the object of criticism and it needs to be reevaluated and rearticulated in order to restore the Ottoman past through the mobilization of people.

Conclusion

Contrary to Turkey's history, which is not characterized by hosting refugees, the Turkish state and society are faced with a new phenomenon since 2011. The Syrian refugees in Turkey has led to new social, political and economic structures that deserves great, in-depth attention in academia. However, research on Syrian refugees is largely composed of reports that assess the situation. The first category of informative studies on the Syrian refugees in Turkey provides historical and legal framework for the Syrian migration to Turkey (Özden, 2013; İçduygu, 2015; Suter, 2013). The second category of reports focuses on social acceptance of the Syrians in Turkey and how the Turkish state and society encounter the Syrian other (Erdoğan, 2014; Güney & Konak, 2016; MAZLUMDER, 2013a; MAZLUMDER, 2013b; MAZLUMDER, 2014; Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2015). Apart from these studies that focus on counting and identifying the Syrian refugees in Turkey and explaining their problems and coming up with possible prospects for the future, the representation of the Syrian refugees in media has also attracted interest (Yaylacı and Karakuş, 2015; Efe, 2015; Doğanay, 2016; Kolukırık, 2009).These studies usually point out the political parties' perceptions of the issue and their approaches to it. The politicization of the issue is analyzed through political parties' positions, not in civil society in everyday life. This is the reason why I wanted to analyze perspectives on the Syrian refugees through the concept of everyday life. This paper regarded the Syrians in Turkey as an ethno-political problem in everyday life of

cities. It also aimed to investigate common aspects of exemplary perspective on Syrian refugees in Istanbul in a conservative neighborhood.

My findings reveal that shared history, culture and religion could act as mechanisms of establishing positive relations between the host and guest societies. In the Turkish context, rearticulating the past and certain ideological themes was of great importance when the other; that had common history, culture and religion with the host country; arrived. Almost all my interviewees based their motivations to help the Syrian refugees on this imaginary of shared past and religion. Although their articulations of the past differ, they employ tactics to reimagine the past when they mobilize for the Syrian refugees. In that sense, three categories surfaced: the recent past of the Bosnian War, the West as the enemy, and the Kemalist formulation of the state and society.

Although my paper is a small-scale case study, it could serve as a starting point for future research on how non-xenophobic perspectives on refugees and migrants operate, and what kind of motivations are used for positive perspectives on refugees. Instead of analyses of exclusion, this aims at bringing an account that shows an refugee-friendly motivations in civil society. This is especially important in a climate where refugee and migration studies are majorly filled with accounts on how migrants and refugees are excluded in the host country. Needless to say, these are accounts that the socially, culturally different non-Western migrant enters the Western context; and there is a need for more research on the non-Western settings of hosting migrants and refugees.

References

Abu-Lughod, J. (1978). Recent migrations in the Arab world. In McNeill, W., & Adams, R. (eds.) *Human migration: Patterns and policies* (pp. 225-240). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Aras, B. (2009). The Davutoğlu era in Turkish foreign policy. *Insight Turkey*, *11* (3), 127-142.

Athwal, H. (2015). 'I don't have a life to live': Deaths and UK detention. *Race & Class*, *56* (3), 50-68. doi:10.1177/0306396814556224

Boym, S. (2001). *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Castles, S. (2003) Towards a sociology of forced migration and social transformation. *Sociology*, *37* (13), 13-34.

Davutoğlu, A. (2001). *Stratejik derinlik: Türkiye'nin uluslararası konumu*. İstanbul: Küre Yayıncılık.

Hyndman, J., Payne, W., & Jimenez, S. (2017). Private refugee sponsorship in Canada. *FMR,* 54. Retrieved from www.fmreview.org/resettlement

İçduygu, A. (2014). Türkiye'ye yönelen uluslararası göç hareketleri. *Türkiye'nin uluslararası göç politikaları, 1923-2023: Ulus-devlet oluşumundan ulus-ötesi dönüşümlere.* MiReKoç Proje Raporları 1, 2014. TÜBİTAK.

İçduygu, A. (2015). *Syrian Refugees in Turkey: The Long Road Ahead*. Migration Policy Institute, April 2015.

İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar için Dayanışma Derneği. (2013a). *Türkiye'de Suriyeli Mülteciler: İstanbul Örneği*. MAZLUMDER İstanbul Branch.

İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar için Dayanışma Derneği. (2013b). *Kamp Dışında Yaşayan Suriyeli Kadın Sığınmacılar Raporu.* May 2014.

İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar için Dayanışma Derneği. (2014). *Gaziantep'te Suriyelilere Yönelik Saldırılar ve Toplumsal Nefretin Sebeplerinin Analizine Dair Rapor*. MAZLUMDER Gaziantep Branch, November 2014.

Kirişçi, K. (2000). Disaggregating Turkish citizenship and immigration practices. *Middle Eastern Studies, 36 (3)*, 1-22.

Malkki, L. H. (1995) Refugees and exile: From "refugee studies" to the national order of things. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *24*, 495-523.

Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013). *Border as method, or, the multiplication of labor*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Nail, T. (2015). *The figure of the migrant*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Papastergiadis, N. (2000). *The turbulence of migration: Globalization, deterritorialization and hybridity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Parla, A. (2015). For us, migration is ordinary: post-1989 labor migration from Bulgaria to Turkey. In van Boeschoten, Riki and Vermuelen, Hans and Baldwin-Edwards, Martin (eds.), *Migration in the Southern Balkans: From Ottoman territory to globalized nation states* (pp. 105-121). London: Springer.

Ong, A. (2006). *Neoliberalism as exception: Mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Saraçoğlu, C., & Demirkol, Ö. (2015). Nationalism and foreign policy discourse in Turkey under the AKP rule: Geography, history and national Identity. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *42* (3), 301-319. doi:10.1080/13530194.2014.947152

The Republic of Turkey Disaster and Emergency Directorate. (2015). *Introduction*. Retrieved from https://www.afad.gov.tr/ar/9841/Introduction

The Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Directorate of General of Migration Management. (2017). *2016 Türkiye göç raporu*. Retrieved from http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/2016_yiik_goc_raporu_haziran.pdf

Tuğal, C. (2012). "Serbest meslek sahibi": Neoliberal subjectivity among Istanbul's popular sectors. *New Perspectives on Turkey, 46*, 65-93.

Wacquant, L. (2012). Three steps to a historical anthropology of actually existing neoliberalism. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*, *20* (1), 66–79. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8676.2011.00189.x

Zolberg, A. R., Suhrke, A., & Aguayo, S. (1989). *Escape from violence: Conflict and the refugee crisis in the developing world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.