

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF
SYRIAN REFUGEES: A FOCUS ON THE MEDIA IN TURKEY



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SYRIAN REFUGEES: A FOCUS ON THE MEDIA IN TURKEY

BY

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PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the discursive construction and media representations of Syrian refugees in relation to wider politics of nationalism and contested narratives of national identity in Turkey. For this purpose, frontpage coverage of 5 national dailies that were selected based on circulation size, target readership and ideological orientation were analyzed using Discourse-Historical Approach. News items and accompanying visuals sampled from *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Akit*, *Hürriyet*, *Sözcü* and *Sabah* were subjected to analysis through a set of paradigms that this study develops. These paradigms are Humanitarian, Religious, Economic, Socio-cultural and Demographic, Citizenship and Rights, respectively. Under each paradigm, associated subthemes of media framing with regard to the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are scrutinized. This research argues that media discourse on refugees cannot be separated from the broader social and political context and different narratives of who ‘we’ are. Media discourses of inclusion and exclusion that are intertwined; sometimes feeding each other and sometimes rejecting each other and are deeply interwoven with contemporary politics, create meaning through dynamics of inclusion and exclusion at social level regarding the representation of Syrian refugees vis-à-vis ‘us’.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, discourse, media representation, national identity

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Suriyeli mültecilerin medyadaki söylemsel inşasını ve temsillerini Türkiye'deki daha geniş milliyetçilik politikaları ve birbirleriyle çatışan ulusal kimlik anlatılarıyla bağlantılı olarak araştırıyor. Bu amaçla tiraj büyüklüğü, okuyucu kitlesi ve ideolojik yönelimleri dikkate alınarak seçilen 5 ulusal gazetenin ilk sayfaları Söylem-Tarihsel Yaklaşım kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Akit*, *Hürriyet*, *Sözcü* ve *Sabah* gazetelerinden seçilen ilk sayfa haberleri ve bunlara eşlik eden görseller, bu çalışmanın geliştirdiği bir dizi paradigma üzerinden analiz edilmiştir. Bu paradigmlar sırasıyla İnsani, Dini, Ekonomik, Sosyo-kültürel ve Demografik, Vatandaşlık ve Haklardır. Her paradigma altında, medya çerçevelemesinin 'biz' ve 'onlar' ayrımına ilişkin alt temaları irdelenmiştir. Bu araştırma, mültecilere ilişkin medya söyleminin daha geniş sosyal ve politik bağlamdan ve 'biz'in kim olduğuna dair farklı anlatılardan ayrılamayacağını savunuyor. Kimi zaman birbirini besleyen, kimi zamansa birbirini reddeden iç içe geçmiş medya söylemleri güncel politikayla yakından bağlantılı olarak içirme ve dışlama dinamikleri üzerinden Suriyeli sığınmacıların 'biz' karşısında temsil edilmesine ilişkin toplumsal düzeyde anlam yaratmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Suriyeli mülteciler, söylem, medya temsili, ulus kimliği

*To the memory of my grandfather Yunus Yıldırım,
an intellectual of his time whose endeavor has always been inspiring.*

Words will join us together.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Anadolu Agency [<i>Anadolu Ajansı</i>]
AFAD	Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency [<i>Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı</i>]
AI	Amnesty International [<i>Uluslararası Af Örgütü</i>]
AID	Alliance of International Doctors [<i>Uluslararası Doktorlar Derneği</i>]
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis [<i>Eleştirel Söylem Analizi</i>]
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach [<i>Söylem-Tarihsel Yaklaşım</i>]
EU	European Union [<i>Avrupa Birliği</i>]
FBO	Faith-based organization [<i>İnanç-temelli sivil toplum örgütü</i>]
FSA	Free Syrian Army [<i>Özgür Suriye Ordusu</i>]
ICG	International Crisis Group [<i>Uluslararası Kriz Grubu</i>]
IHH	Humanitarian Relief Foundation [<i>İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı</i>]
JAP	Joint Action Plan [<i>Ortak Eylem Planı</i>]
JDP	Justice and Development Party [<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>]
IGAM	Research Centre on Asylum and Migration [<i>İltica ve Göç Araştırmaları Merkezi</i>]
LFIP	Law on Foreigners and International Protection [<i>Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu</i>]

MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières [<i>Sınır Tanımayan Doktorlar</i>]
NMP	Nationalist Movement Party [<i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i>]
NGO	Non-governmental organization [Sivil toplum örgütü]
PDP	Peoples' Democratic Party [<i>Halkların Demokratik Partisi</i>]
RPP	Republican People's Party [<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>]
TİSK	Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations [<i>Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu</i>]
TPR	Temporary Protection Regulation [<i>Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği</i>]
UN	United Nations [<i>Birleşmiş Milletler</i>]
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [<i>Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteciler Yüksek Komiserliği</i>]

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Global Context: *The Age of Migration*

Perhaps, Marx and Engels would have started their manifesto by proclaiming that “A specter is haunting Europe — the spectre of *refugees*” if they were alive today. They might well have continued, “all the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre” (Marx & Engels, 1848 [2016], p. 261) and listed the names of the leaders of the European Union (EU) countries and other current political actors. However, what seems to be peculiar to Europe at first glance is indeed a global trend. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that in 2015, global forced displacement hit record high with a total of 65.3 million people forced to flee their homes - exceeding even post-World War II numbers (UNHCR, 2016). If considered a nation, forcibly displaced people worldwide would make up the 21st largest in the world. And now, the number exceeds 100 million, with millions of Ukrainians, and further displacement taking place around the world, notably in Burkina Faso and Myanmar, which means “1 in every 78 people on earth has been forced to flee – a dramatic milestone that few would have expected a decade ago” (UNHCR, 2022, p. 7).

Given this fact, we might expect a new era ahead for all of us, particularly in terms of global politics and

relations. Indeed, international displacement and migration have brought about so many political, economic and social consequences on a global scale that Castles et al. (2009) call our contemporary epoch ‘The Age of Migration’, an age characterized by migration like never before in history. They argue that although international migratory movements have always been present throughout human history, “what is distinctive in recent years is their global scope, their centrality to domestic and international politics and their considerable economic and social consequences” (Castles et al., 2009, p. 5). Despite being nothing new, human mobility -whether forced or not- has certainly become a defining feature of the modern times.

The world is undoubtedly going through a dramatic change, a change characterized by growing human mobility of different kinds, driven through different channels, and motivated by different stimuli, most notably by the desire to take shelter in a safer and more prosperous world. In connection with this, migration and refugee policies and discourse over immigrants and refugees are likely to play a greater role than before in world politics, particularly in domestic politics of most migration-receiving countries. This became evident in the context of developments such as Brexit, the United States (US) Presidential election in 2016, and the rise of right-wing movements and populist authoritarian leaders, whose rhetoric appeals to nationalist and anti-refugee sentiments, in Europe and elsewhere. One of the very first things, for instance, that the former President of the USA, Donald J. Trump, who had made immigration policies a signature issue of his presidential campaign, was to issue a ban on travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries and all Syrian refugees. Anti-immigrant sentiments were also among the driving motives of those Britons who voted in favor of leaving the EU. The impact of the mass migration to Europe in 2015,

the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, has reverberated in several places of the world, and in several ways, including electoral politics and election outcomes. And much recently, refugee flow from Ukraine has had the potential to impact several domains, ranging from asylum policies to international relations, and has brought consequences felt far beyond the region.

Academics and intellectuals from across disciplines and countries trying to interpret the changing trends in politics –chiefly reflected in Brexit and the US election of President Donald J. Trump- describe the political atmosphere of our time as *The Great Regression* (Geiselberger, 2017b). Recent political changes as well as the rise of authoritarian regimes and populist leaders signal a new phase –a move backwards rather than a progressive one- marked by a rejection of liberal values and an inclusive discourse, opposition to migratory flux and multicultural identities. “We are at present witnessing a resurgence of ethnic, national and religious us/them distinctions” says Geiselberg (2017b, p. 6) in his foreword to the *The Great Regression*. The refugee flow from Ukraine to European countries and the preferential treatment of Ukrainian refugees in comparison to the treatment of non-European refugees further complicates the issue and shows the shifting boundaries with regard to the categorical distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Welcoming attitude towards Ukrainian refugees when contrasted with the challenges that non-European refugees are exposed to, reveals that the distinction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the construction of refugees is largely influenced by actual politics, and may well be over-determined.

In each case, quite contrary to the assumptions that globalization would bring forth cosmopolitanism in political action and thought, today we are going through an era marked by an increasing polarization and discourse of distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It is by no coincidence that the Turkish translation of *The Great Regression*

(*Büyük Gerileme*, Geiselberger, 2017a) has a cover photo depicting a heavily loaded boat carrying African refugees to the European shores. *The Great Regression* can best be visually represented through a boat full of refugees sailing to an unforeseen future in the richer parts of the world, which invalidates the famous saying -“We are all in the same boat”. Apparently, ‘we’ are not -and perhaps have never been- in the same boat as ‘they’ are; for some are on the boat sailing while others are on the shore waiting and watching.

The hostility towards the ‘others’ is reflected through an attempt to consolidate the borders –both physically and discursively. Building a wall along the border with Mexico was one of Donald Trump's key election promises. The construction of the wall started sometime after he took the office and has since remained a highly controversial topic. Hungary’s right-wing government did build a barbed-wire fence on the country’s border with Serbia and Croatia to keep refugees out. Unfortunately, these did not remain the sole examples of hostile approaches to migration and refugees. Many other countries including Greece, Austria, and France chose either to erect border walls or to expand and fortify the existing ones particularly after the mass migration to European countries in 2015.

Turkey, one of the few neighboring countries of Syria to adopt an ‘open door policy’ following the outbreak of war, also constructed a concrete wall along the country’s border with Syria to prevent further crossings, and the erection of the wall on its Iranian border is still ongoing. Although proponents of globalization have long celebrated the fall of traditional national borders to let free movement of goods, services and capital, the principle of ‘laissez-faire’ does not seem to be applied to human mobility. Globalization has so far proven to accommodate contradictions; “the celebration of ‘global culture’ and porous borders on the one hand, and the

simultaneous consolidation of borders, on the other” as argued by Bailey and Harindranath (2005, p. 275). Paradoxically, the more migratory the world has become, the more restrictive measures against migration have emerged. Borders, be them in the form of a concrete wall or steel slats, continue to separate the world – ‘us’ and ‘them’- virtually and metaphorically. However, it is doubtful whether border walls will ever deter migration. As long as the wars, terror and violence continue, so will the migration from conflictual zones to relatively safe countries. This, expectedly, will cause refugees and immigrants to be more widely covered by the media and the issue of representation will, therefore, become more important in terms of constructing ‘us’, those inside the borders, vis-a-vis ‘them’, those outsiders.

As Vukov (2003) points out, immigration is the chief scene “through which national communities are institutionally imagined and materially constructed. The boundaries of imagined communities are generated in part through state policies, particularly immigration policies” (p. 336). He also adds that public debate and media discourse related to the issue “serve as key sites through which public imaginings of the future nation are shaped and struggled over” (Vukov, 2003, p. 337). So far the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ relates to immigration, media will remain one of the main channels through which this distinction is produced, reproduced or contested.

1.2. Regional and Local Context

Much of the current debate over refugees stems from what has been going on in Syria. In 2011, the Middle East was shaken by a wave of uprisings that began in Tunisia and soon spread across the other countries in the region. Whatever the short-term outcomes of the series of protests, their long-run impact has gone far beyond the territorial borders and reached a global scale. The war in Syria triggered by the so-

called ‘Arab Spring’ has now been going on for over ten years and is likely to drag on for some more years, with perhaps new actors and alliances. Even if the war comes to an end sooner and the armed conflict is completely over, social and political tensions will most probably last for a long period, and Syria will never be the same as it was once -not in any way. Since the onset of the war, millions of people have either been internally displaced or fled the country and resettled worldwide –mainly in the neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, and, in much smaller numbers, in European countries. The total number of registered Syrian refugees all over the world has exceeded five million people, and Turkey is hosting by far the largest population of Syrian refugees with more than three and a half million people (UNHCR, 2019) which is an unprecedented influx of refugees entering the country throughout its history. The first group of Syrian refugees arrived in Turkey in April 2011, and now, almost eleven years after their first arrival, 4.17 percent of the total population of the country is made up of Syrian refugees, settled in each and every one of 81 provinces (Mülteciler Derneği, 2022). The number of those who have made it back home so far is 503 thousand 150, as announced by the Interior Minister (“Bakan Soylu Açıkladı”, 2022). It should also be noted that the remaining majority of Syrian refugees do not intend to return home but to permanently reside in Turkey as the latest study conducted by Murat Erdoğan (2021) demonstrated. That is to say, the impact of the presence of Syrian refugees in Turkey is far from being negligible. As a matter of fact, it is quite reasonable to expect the Syrian refugee population to have an impact upon a variety of realms ranging from politics to economics, demography and social issues. Syrian refugees, therefore, will most probably remain on the public agenda, and accordingly, on the media’s agenda for many years to come.

Europe has a long history of immigration and has remained one of the primary destinations of immigrants and asylum seekers worldwide for many years. Legal instruments relating to immigration and asylum have existed equally long. Different from a vast majority of European countries, Turkey has only been recently introduced to the phenomenon of mass immigration. İçduygu (2015) argues that traditionally viewed as a country of emigration, Turkey has become more predominantly a transit country and morphed into a country of immigration over the past decades. However, the development of a legal framework regarding immigration did not keep up with the pace of changing patterns of migratory movements. Up until 2006, Turkey's Law on Settlement restricted the right of asylum and immigration only to the persons of "Turkish descent and culture" (Öner & Genç, 2015b). Until recently, Turkey did not have a comprehensive legislation regulating asylum and immigration. Although it is among the signatories of the 1951 United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention, Turkey retains a 'geographical limitation', which denies refugees from 'non-European' countries of origin the prospect of long-term legal integration in the country. As a result, Syrian refugees lack the necessary legal framework to apply for asylum in Turkey and cannot be granted either the refugee or asylum seeker status.¹

¹ This study purposefully adopts the internationally recognized term 'refugee' to refer to Syrians in Turkey. The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees states that a refugee is a person that "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted (...) is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UNHCR, 2019). 'Asylum seeker', on the other hand, is a term used to refer to those "whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed" (UNHCR, n.d.). Despite the clear

As a result of this, the initial approach –and somehow still pertaining- to Syrian refugees was based on referring to them as ‘guests’. Such an approach has been instrumental in both concealing the ambiguous legal status of Syrian refugees with a humanitarian discourse and prompting sentiments of brotherhood and hospitality to gather wide public support. In 2014, when the Temporary Protection Regulation (*Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği*), which applies to foreigners who were forced to leave their countries was issued, the legal status of Syrian refugees in Turkey became less ambiguous. “Syrians entering Turkey due to the domestic unrest are sheltered under the status of Temporary Protection with an ‘open door policy’. Even though their status is temporary protection, we perceive them as our guests and treat them this way” says then the Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay in 2014 in his foreword for the report prepared by AFAD (Atalay, 2014).

‘Temporary Protection’ (*Geçici Koruma*) status grants beneficiaries the right to legal stay, protection from refoulement and access to a set of basic rights and services, including free healthcare (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, n.d.). In short, Syrian refugees in Turkey are now approached through a legal perspective; they have certain rights and can benefit from basic services. A new phase began for Syrian refugees in 2016, when President Erdoğan announced that those who pass screenings would have the chance

distinctions, these two terms are incorrectly used interchangeably in public discourses as well as in media reports.

to acquire Turkish nationality. Shortly after this declaration, which ignited debates among the public, Syrians fulfilling the criteria like having lived in Turkey for at least five years, knowledge of the Turkish language at sufficient level and a clean criminal record started to apply for citizenship. In January 2019, the Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu announced that the total number of Syrians who were granted citizenship up to date was 79,820 including children (“Bakan Soylu”, 2019). Although this figure has increased since then, it still makes up a tiny part of the total Syrian refugee population, and the future is still uncertain for the remaining majority.

Agamben’s (1995, p. 117) notion of “permanently resident mass of non-citizens” to describe the refugees in the industrial countries in the late 20th century very well applies to the case of a great majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey given the fact that they intend to permanently settle in the country but lack citizenship, at least for an undetermined period of time.

In 2012, then the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said “If the number of refugees increases to 100,000, we will not be able to shelter them in Turkey” (“Turkey Says No”, 2012). However, the current number is 35 times greater than the formerly declared threshold and higher than the population of the 4th largest city, Bursa (TUIK, 2018). According to the statistics announced by the Presidency of Migration Management (*Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı*), of all the total number of Syrian refugees, less than 2% are currently sheltered in temporary protection camps (*Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı*, 2022). The remaining majority, on the other hand, lives in different cities and towns of the country.

It is notable that there is not even one of all the 81 provinces without a Syrian refugee population. While it is relatively easy to access information about the refugees in temporary protection camps through official sources, still not much is known about

the refugees scattered around the country, particularly regarding their material conditions.² Facts and figures are all exact, accurate and accessible information. The ratio of schooled Syrian children to the unschooled, the percentage of Syrian refugees with work permits, the number of Syrians who have acquired citizenship and will have the right to vote in the next elections, etc. are all collected, recorded and shared. However, much is still uncertain about the future of Syrian refugees in the country. Future prospects range from citizenship and integration to repatriation and departure for unknown destinations. Although numerical data is quite important and illustrative, what is beyond figures and numbers –and what cannot be measured or counted– actually counts when it comes to interpreting matters like social inclusion or exclusion, which is closely related to discourse and representation (Wodak, 2008).

² It should be noted that according to media reports, there is an alleged *de facto* ban on academic fieldwork in camps sheltering Syrian refugees. It is alleged that in April 2015, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) sent an official letter to universities stating that academic fieldwork in camps would be subject to permission from the Ministry of Interior. Although the ban was later abolished, universities were not officially informed, and this was interpreted by some as a *de facto* ban (Karakaş, 2016).

1.3 Syrian Refugees and National Identity

Discourse over Syrian refugees is a multi-dimensional construct. First of all, there is the political discourse, that of the political actors in power. Secondly, there is the public/popular discourse, that is, what ordinary people talk about in everyday conversations among each other on the streets and elsewhere. Naturally, the final dimension is the discourse of media outlets which play a crucial role in setting and shaping the public agenda according to the well-known agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). These discourses overlap and converge at some point as well as collide and compete for hegemonic representations. In addition, each dimension of discourse is far from uniformity and consistency within itself, and liable to change in the course of time in accordance with changing circumstances. To exemplify, an analysis of media coverage of the recent ‘refugee crisis’ in major European countries reveals that the narratives changed across Europe during 2015 and “the sympathetic response was replaced with suspicion and hostility” particularly after the terrorist attacks in Paris (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 3). To give an example from Turkey, neither the official / political discourse nor the public discourse on refugees has ever been uniform nor has remained unchanged. The initial welcoming public opinion seems to have been replaced with a hostility, growing each day, towards refugees, as evidenced by several different types of actions ranging from pogroms to anti-refugee social media campaigns.

As van Dijk (2008) puts it “whether in the streets of the inner city, in the press or in parliament, dominant group members are often engaged in discourse about ‘them’: ethnic minority groups, immigrants or refugees, who have come to live in the country” (p.152). However, he adds that such discourses are “complex and full of contradictions” (van Dijk, 2008, p. 152). No matter how disparate or conflictual with

each other they can be, these three domains of discourse -political discourse, public discourse and media discourse- are all interdependent and interrelated. In other words, how the government or state institutions approach Syrian refugees determines, in one way or another, how media outlets represent them and how the general public perceive them, and vice versa. To give an example, scrutinizing the effect of print media and social media discourses over Syrian refugees, Esmer (2017) concludes that media representations affected refugees' social inclusion or isolation. Syrian refugees interviewed by Esmer (2017) stated that they were portrayed as a homogenous group with shared negative features, and as a result, Turkish people did not want to communicate with them.

Van Dijk (2008) argues that in many parts of Western Europe and also in some regions of North America, dominant group members have little direct interaction with minority groups. As a result, much of what people talk about in everyday life is not based on personal experiences but learned from the media. In a similar vein, Szczepanik (2016) employs Thompson's notions of 'mediated experience' and 'lived experience' to examine the media narratives of refugees in Europe after 2015. For those who have had direct interactions with refugees in their daily lives such as state officials or members of non-governmental organizations, it is a matter of 'lived experience'. On the other hand, "An average viewer or reader experiences the recent refugee crisis through what John B. Thompson's (1995) calls 'mediated experience'" (Szczepanik, 2016, p. 28). It is very much the same for a majority of Turkish people who do not live in neighborhoods densely populated by Syrian refugees or work in sectors where the refugee work force prevails. A great deal of what most people know about Syrian refugees is learned through media outlets and social media platforms. A survey of perceptions of local people about Syrian refugees conducted by the Ministry

of Family and Social Policies confirms that media is the major source of information about Syrian refugees for local people while personal experience is in the second place (Sunata & Yıldız, 2018). Media can act either as a conveyor of hegemonic political discourse or as a site where it is disputed or challenged by the public discourse. Whatever the case is, it is a fact that the media is the key source of information for the general public regarding Syrian refugees. Therefore, it is of great importance to understand how the media outlets represent the Syrian refugees to shape the public opinion on the issue.

May it be due to increased media attention or individual experience and encounters, Syrian refugees have become a common topic in everyday conversations in Turkey. Although still not much is known about them, narratives of encounters with the refugees roam in the media as well as in the narrations and fantasies of individuals. The refugee using public transportation, the way refugees interact with each other and with the locals, the refugee asking for food and money, how refugees get dressed, how many children families have, they all contribute to the everyday mentality and sensibility of the members of society. Rumours that Syrian refugees have privileged access to basic services, receive large amounts of financial aid and enroll at universities without having to sit for an exam rapidly spread on social networks. Syrian refugees, regardless of their former or current socioeconomic status, ethnicity, cultural identity, and political view are addressed as a homogenous group of people whose members are characterized mainly by being different from 'us'. Individuals with distinct personalities before and now, 'they' -or 'Syrians' as they are generally referred to in daily conversations- turn into identical entities in the minds of the native population. Conversation on virtually any topic with anyone, anywhere may not come to an end without a mention of Syrian refugees. Small talk with a neighbor

may end with exchanges on how everything has changed since the arrival of Syrians. Arabic phone conversation they hear can spark a chat between two strangers traveling on public transport about how noisy Syrians are. A coworker may ask during lunch whether the others sitting at the table watched banana-eating videos of Syrians on TikTok.

Discrimination against refugees and their exclusion by the locals go hand in hand with an emphasis on their suffering. Compassion for refugees may all of a sudden be replaced with hatred, and hospitality towards refugees may easily turn into hostility. People may express their fear of refugees as potential criminals very soon after making remarks on the unbearable consequences of poverty and losing one's motherland. The rhetoric of brotherhood may be accompanied by metaphors of host and guest, which imply a hierarchical relationship and underline the temporariness of refugees while emphasizing the permanence of the native population. Complimentary words about the hospitality of the Turkish people may be followed by a call for Syrian refugees to go back to their country to fight in the war. Those who share the photos of Baby Alan on their social media accounts with an extremely emotional comment may not behave sympathetically when they come across Syrian children begging on the street. All these seemingly contradictory ideas and acts may either be implicitly or explicitly displayed one after another at a time or at different intervals depending on the public agenda. It is apparent that a lack of coherence and consistency prevail in everyday thinking and the common-sense regarding Syrian refugees.

In this regard, everyday thinking regarding Syrian refugees reflects what Billig et al., (1988) call as 'ideological dilemmas', a social psychological approach to understand the common-sense, since they involve contradictory moral imperatives and tensions between diverse matters such as humanitarianism and discrimination or

equality and hierarchy. Billig et al.'s (1988) approach emphasizes that both formal and common-sense ideologies involve dilemmatic themes which may be either explicit on occasions when they convey meanings "which the communicator intended to express" or implicit when "meanings can go beyond the overt intentions of the communicator" (p. 22). An example for an explicit expression of an ideological dilemma may be the very well-known "I'm not a racist, but..." as the second half of the sentence is most frequently completed in such a way that disproves the statement in the first part. After the photos of Baby Alan went viral, a user comment on *ekşi sözlük*, one of the most popular digital participatory dictionaries, read "I'm not a racist, but it's better that he died" because if he had lived and grown up, he would have become either a beggar or a rapist according to the author ("Kıyıya Vuran Suriyeli", 2015). Baby Alan deserved death because he was a potential criminal. Even if he had not committed any crime as a baby, he would have certainly done so as a grown-up Syrian refugee. What made the author of the comment to arrive at such a conclusion was apparently based on a generalization about Syrian refugees -that they are all criminals- which is a racial discrimination point of view despite his claim to the contrary. In van Dijk's (2008) account, such rhetorical formulations and strategies are employed to deny racism and in everyday talks "people may justify a negative act or discourse relative to a minority group member by justifying it as an act of legitimate defense, or by detailing that the other person was indeed guilty and, therefore, deserved a negative reaction" (p. 93).

The idea to study the representations of Syrian refugees in the media originated from identifying the inconsistencies in everyday talks, regardless of the political orientations of the speakers involved. The lack of a coherent approach – whether entirely humanitarian and embracing or totally discriminatory- towards

Syrian refugees, as this study argues, is closely related to how ‘we’ imagine ourselves as a community and construct our identities. Views on refugees have always been about “how we imagine who we are as a people and who we wish to include as part of the nation, whether this is explicitly recognized or not” as Chavez (2013, p. 25) puts forward in his work on the Latino immigrants in the US. It is on this premise that this study is embarked on to investigate the narrative of ‘we’ through the representation of ‘they’.

Anderson (1983) suggests in his ground-breaking work on the sources of modern nationalism that nations are social constructs, or ‘imagined communities’, existing only in the minds of those in the community. They are imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’ suggests that while most of the members of one single nation will not know each other, they are brought together by the image of their communion. The concept of ‘imagined communities’ also implies that nations can be re-imagined and therefore transformed. In Anderson’s account, the print media play a major role in the construction of ‘imagined communities’ and shared identity that lay the structure of a modern nation. Habermas (1991), in a similar vein, argues that the print media were the driving force behind the lively discussions in the bourgeois public sphere. Van Dijk (1991), from a similar point of view, argues that the media, in addition to setting the agenda for public discussion on issues particularly concerning foreigners and migrants, strongly suggest how the readers should think and talk about those issues. That is to say, the media helps construct an ‘imagined community’ through representations of inclusion of some and exclusion of others. Therefore, understanding

the media discourses regarding Syrian refugees in Turkey is the key to grasp the nature of attitudes towards them and to make predictions on the future public discourses.

At its core level, this study is built upon the concept of ‘imagined communities’. It is, therefore, acknowledged that the media help construct an identity of ‘us’ with some shared characteristics by differentiating ‘them’ or ‘others’. The national identity is re-imagined and re-constructed through the representations of ‘others’. Here it should be noted that media representations of Syrian refugees do not solely remain in the realm of the issue of immigration. The constitutive elements of the state and nation, the identity of citizenship and the attitudes towards the EU are renewed and renegotiated throughout this process, all of which make the topic of the research quite relevant to the current debates and agenda in the country.

What determines the representations of ‘others’ - Syrian refugees in this context- is a discourse over national identity. In other words, this study argues that the representations of Syrian refugees rely on nationalism. However, the concept of nationalism adopted here is much different from the traditional understanding of nationalism as a site of explicitly expressed ideas based on the total exclusion of ‘others’. Anderson’s (1983) work reveals that nationalisms can be most usefully explored not as explicitly expressed political ideologies held by individuals but as part of large cultural systems. In a similar vein, Billig (1995) argues that nationalism is pervasive and ubiquitous. In this sense, Billig’s (1995) notion of ‘banal nationalism’ is instrumental in making sense of nationalism underlying the media representations of Syrian refugees.

Billig (1995) suggests that “The national flag hanging outside a public building in the United States attracts no special attention. (. . .) Daily the nation is indicated, or

‘flagged,’ in the lives of its citizenry” (p. 6). In his terms, nationalism is “continual ‘flagging,’ or reminding, of nationhood through the daily reproduction of ‘ideological habits’” (Billig, 1995, pp. 6–8). Nationalism – ‘banal nationalism’ in Billig’s terms- is flagged particularly by the mass media through routine symbols and habits of language. Through such flagging, members of a nation are reminded of their national belonging and the national identity is reproduced on a regular basis. However, national identity is not rigid but multifaceted and subject to change in accordance with the change in dominant ideology. Wodak et al. (2009) argue that “There is -in an essentialist sense- no such thing as one national identity. We believe that rather different identities are discursively constructed according to audience, setting, topic and substantive content” (p. 4). In other words, different national identities -whether co-existing or successive- are re-defined and re-negotiated in time. Who is to be embraced and who is to be excluded is a matter of struggle for hegemonic views.

The theory of hegemony by Gramsci and the theory of encoding/decoding by Stuart Hall—very much influenced by the former- make up the upper layers in the theoretical background of this study. Clarke et al. (2003) suggest that ‘dominant culture’ is indeed fragmented and negotiated: “Almost always it requires an *alliance* of ruling-class fractions—a ‘historical bloc’” (p. 39). As the alliance between ruling-class fractions is re-framed with changing actors, different discursive practices will be adopted to consolidate hegemony. From this point of view, it can be argued that national identity is also re-defined in accordance with the changing actors of the alliance of ruling-class fractions.

Gramsci (2011) proposed two strategies to challenge hegemony: a ‘war of maneuver’ and a ‘war of position’. While the former indicates a phase of direct confrontation and struggle of force, the latter involves a slow conflict, where forces

struggle to gain positions of influence. ‘War of position’ is the struggle against the hegemonic power of the ruling class over ideas and beliefs. In this sense, Gramscian ‘war of position’ is relevant to the representations of refugees in media and political discourse as Holmes and Castañeda (2016) put forward in their work on the representation of the ‘European refugee crisis’. Holmes and Castaneda (2016) argue that representations of refugees in media and political discourse “participate in a Gramscian “war of position” over symbols, policies and ultimately social and material resources, with potentially fatal consequences” (p. 12). When applied to the Turkish context, this insight is instrumental in understanding the recently changing elements of national identity with a great deal of reference to the Ottoman past and Islam *vis-à-vis* the traditional formulation of Turkish national identity.

There is an ongoing competition, or a ‘war of position’ in Gramscian terms, for hegemonic national identity, which is mediated through the media. Not that a counter-hegemonic discourse is flourishing; the formerly hegemonic discourse of national identity seeks to preserve its position while the recently articulated one tries to establish its hegemony. To put it another way, basic parameters of Turkish national identity have been reformulated in the last decades (Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015). A discursive battle has been waged over the constitutive elements of national identity, and the media have become the main battlefield of this political and ideological confrontation. Discourse over Syrian refugees, as this thesis argues, is very much framed within this context. In other words, the stance towards Syrian refugees has become quite related to the rivalry between the two national identities for hegemony.

Billig (1995) states that “If nationalism is an ideology of the first-person plural, which tells ‘us’ who ‘we’ are, then it is also an ideology of the third person. There can be no ‘us’ without a ‘them’ (p.78). Following Billig, this study argues that the

discursive representation of Syrian refugees is deeply embedded in the reformulation of the collective 'we'. Here it should be noted that the distinction between 'us' and 'them' may have multiple discursive configurations. Dichotomies such as 'host' versus 'guest', 'citizen' versus 'non-citizen', or '*ensar*' versus '*muhacir*' all essentially rest on a distinction between members of the nation and refugees. The collective 'we' may also include refugees, placing them on the same shared ground, for example, of religion as natives versus foreigners: 'we' (Muslims) versus 'they' (non-Muslims). It may also be the case that the collective 'we' reflects political and ideological divides, meaning, for example, 'we' as the seculars of the nation versus 'they' as Islamists, implying refugees as well. Following Billig (1995), Wodak (2008) points to ambivalent and shifting boundaries of the collective 'we' of the nation; sometimes embodying the whole nation and indicating particular groups at other times: "Someone who is excluded now might be included tomorrow, and vice versa. Neither inclusion nor exclusion in our societies can or should be seen as static phenomena" (p. 61).

The process of imagining a nation is thus a dynamic re-production of a national self-identity in relation to 'them'. This imagined shared identity, in other words, how 'we' imagine 'us', is entwined with how 'we' imagine 'them' and who 'we' imagine 'them' to be. 'Us' and 'them', are neither natural nor unchanging categories but are rather contingent and open to reconfiguration and contestation. Defining the imagined community of 'us' can turn into a political struggle over who 'we' are as is the case in contemporary Turkey. It is from this vantage point that this research explores how different narratives of who 'we' are relates to the media debate on Syrian refugees.

While it is true that the representation of Syrian refugees is closely connected to how the national identity is ‘imagined’, this does not necessarily mean it is defined with total exclusion of refugees. On the contrary, the hegemonic national identity might require an inclusive stance to be adopted. To be more precise, defining the national identity over the Ottoman legacy and Islam involves a narrative of ‘we’ characterized by inclusiveness towards those of a shared past and religion, particularly Syrian refugees. The rhetoric of ‘*ensar*’ (close in meaning to ‘helpers’) and ‘*muhacir*’ (close in meaning to ‘migrants’) is thus compatible with the recent reconfiguration of the national identity. The government representatives have frequently compared the role of Turkey in aiding Syrian refugees to that of the ‘*ensar*’, referring to the local inhabitants of Medina who sheltered Prophet Mohammed and his followers (*muhacirs*) in their homes when they emigrated from Mecca. In his speech soon after the Reyhanlı bombings in Hatay province in 2013, then the Prime Minister Erdoğan beseeched the local people of Reyhanlı to assume the role of ‘*ensar*’ to help those ‘*muhacirs*’, Syrians seeking to escape the brutality (“Suriyelilere ensar olun”, 2013). Similarly, the successor Prime Minister Davutoğlu, stated in 2014 in his speech in Gaziantep, one of the border cities with a high number of Syrian refugee population, that the city has now become a city of ‘*ensar*’ (“Gaziantep ensar şehir”, 2014).

Applying this religious analogy to the case of Syrian refugees, the government representatives “not only touch upon the emotions and religious beliefs of their conservative constituency but also attempt discursively to construct a society according to their own imagination” (Karakaya Polat, 2018, p. 7). This imagination, however, although seems to be inclusive of refugees, inherently involves the exclusion of other groups, particularly of non-Muslims, whether of the refugee population or the native population. Whether inclusive or exclusive, the representation of Syrian

refugees in the media is very much dependent on the nature of “imagined community”; how and who ‘we’ imagine ‘us’ to be, which brings forward the research question as presented in the following.

1.4. Research Question and Methodology

The present study seeks to contribute to the field of media and communications by illuminating how the print media in Turkey have discursively constructed accounts of Syrian refugees. Drawing on the media content covering almost a ten-year time period, this research aims to reveal categories of representation and is expected to be revealing in terms of enabling an understanding of the complex and often ambiguous media representations of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The main research question that is posed in this study is “How do the print media in Turkey construct their accounts of Syrian refugees in relation to different narratives of national identity?” The main research hypothesis is that “imagined community” or hegemonic national identity is mediated through the print media in relation to the representation of Syrian refugees. To put it differently, the media's representation of Syrian refugees cannot be separated from the representation and imagining of ‘us’, however ‘we’ is imagined. Thus, this research departs from a heuristic point of view, and aims to explore distinct categories of representation in relation to different narratives of ‘we’ and ‘they’.

It is not a general question of how Syrian refugees are portrayed by the media that this research is concerned with. The present research incorporates a particular theoretical perspective and deals with a particular aspect of representation. In connection with this, this research explores the dichotomies produced, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion involved in the media discourse on refugees.

In order to achieve a thorough understanding on the issue, this research adopts Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to explore the data collected from the selected newspapers. Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), which originated from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), emphasizes the historical as well as the contemporary socio-political dimensions of discourse, and proposes an interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach to study social phenomena. Research design and methodology will later be elaborated in a separate chapter (Chapter 5). Using DHA, this thesis aims to analyze press coverage of Syrian refugees in Turkey, specifically in relation to national identity.

1.5. Literature Review

There are quite many studies investigating representation and framing of refugees, particularly in migration receiving countries. Academic interest has been considerably growing since 2015 when refugees arrived in European countries in mass numbers, what has come to be labelled as ‘refugee crisis’ (Eberl et al., 2018). Analyzing the media discourse in European countries with a comparative perspective, Fotopoulos and Kaimaklioti (2016) suggest that media coverage highlighted the numbers of refugees the most. Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017) also state in their comparative analysis of visual typology of European news that the media seems to have covered the issue through a substantially similar approach by dehumanizing refugees. Holmes and Castaneda (2016) argue that media discourse shifts the responsibility from historical, political and economic factors to the refugees themselves by making a distinction between ‘deserving refugee’ and ‘undeserving migrant’. Heidenreich et al. (2019) rely on a large-scale corpora of media content

from five different European countries and reveal country-specific frames, and how these frames shifted during the refugee crisis.

The amount of scholarly work dealing with Syrian refugees has rapidly accelerated in recent years. As a matter of fact, literature on Syrian refugees in Turkey has substantially grown in recent years, with media discourse on refugees taking up an important share of the scholarly work. It is noteworthy that considerable research interest in media content has been displayed by scholars outside the field of media studies as well. Due to limitations of space, a full review of the literature is not possible here. It should be noted that the number of studies on Syrian refugees in general, and media discourse on refugees in particular has reached such a point that meta-analyses seem possible. It may well be a research topic in itself to explore the commonalities, patterns and trends of the existing studies.

Research on Syrian refugees in Turkey can be categorized mainly into two groups: reports by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think-tanks, and academic work. Academic studies can also be classified as to whether the research was conducted under a migration research center (e.g., HUGO of Hacettepe University, MIREKoc at Koç University) or as an individual research project. Göksun (2016) sketches the NGOs, think-tanks and academic research centers that produce publications on the subject.

Reports produced by NGOs and think-tanks, and research conducted under academic research centers predominantly pertain to the fields (e.g., politics and law) other than media studies. Among the ones in the field of media and communications, the report prepared by Efe (2015) for the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is notable in terms of its content and relevance to this study. Drawing on the content analysis of the relevant news reports and opinion articles

published on the websites of eight national newspapers between 2011 and 2015, Efe (2015) finds that there is a correlation between the political and ideological orientation of newspapers and the representations of Syrian refugees they produce, which he treats as to whether they are positive or negative. It should be noted that despite the similarities in terms, this present study is different from the work by Efe (2015) in several aspects including the theoretical background, research method, scope, newspapers chosen and timespan.

Another noteworthy report was penned by Cantek and Soykan (2018) for *Hâlâ Gazeteciyiz* (We are still Journalists), an independent platform launched by a group of journalists and academics who were dismissed from their positions at media outlets and universities. Cantek and Soykan (2018) examine the coverage of refugee news by *Hürriyet*, *Yeni Akit* and *Sözcü* in relation to the turning points in the course of migration governance. An overall review of their findings suggests that the initial portrayal of refugees in positive terms has been replaced by a negative portrayal that characterizes refugees as disruptive and menacing outsiders (Cantek & Soykan, 2018, p. 17).

“Media 18-Month Monitoring Report: News Coverage on Refugees and Migration in the National and Local Media”, prepared by Doğanay (2019) for the Research Centre on Asylum and Migration (İGAM) is also noteworthy. Based on a qualitative analysis of the content collected from national and local newspapers and TV channels within an 18-month time period, the report reveals the prevailing themes of news reports and columns, most of which are identified as discriminatory. Doğanay (2019, p. 114) notes that although there are also instances of neutral reporting, the number of news content that portray refugees from a negative framework outweighs the number of those from a positive framework.

More recently, the report penned by Uzunoğlu (2021) from NewsLabTurkey Research Hub focuses on opinion articles published in a variety of national newspapers. Uzunoğlu (2021, p. 5) notes that while pro-government media mostly treat refugees in neutral or positive terms, negative discourse becomes more salient in oppositional newspapers.

The number of academic studies regarding the media representation and framing of Syrian refugees has also considerably increased in recent years. Existing studies can be classified according to the units of analysis as to whether social media content or traditional media content is used. Research studies drawing their analyses on social media content (Sayımer & Derman, 2017; Aslan, 2018; Özdüzen et al., 2020; Bozdağ, 2020; Erbaysal Filibeli & Ertuna, 2021) approach the topic from a similar perspective, and focus on the theme of hate speech / hate discourse. Törenli and Kıyan (2021) concentrates on Twitter to trace the reflections of political polarization in Turkey in Twitter posts about Syrian refugees. According to their findings, users close to the opposition Republican People's Party (RPP) and the ultra-nationalist far right Nationalist Movement Party (NMP), despite being in opposing political alliances, both have negative attitudes toward Syrian refugees whereas users close to the incumbent Justice and Development Party (JDP), have a positive attitude and generate positive discourses (Törenli & Kıyan, 2021, pp. 217-218).

Çağlar and Özkır (2014) focus on columns published in *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, and identify positive, negative, and balanced views. According to researchers, columnists at *Sabah* predominantly adopt a refugee-friendly discourse while *Hürriyet* columns harbor discriminatory views, which they argue, result from a superficial anti-government stance and not based on a firm political or ideological ground (Çağlar & Özkır, 2014, p. 499).

Pandır et al. (2015) draw on a content analysis of news reports and visuals. They also use positive, negative and neutral categories. Overall, their findings suggest that Turkish media produce a positive or neutral representation of refugees. Paksoy and Şentöregil (2018) arrive at a similar conclusion in their analysis of news reports and opinion articles. In contrast, Göker and Keskin (2015) find that negative portrayals of refugees are far more salient in the overall coverage of newspapers. Likewise, Onay-Çöker (2019) finds mostly negative representations of Syrian refugees in her analysis of the coverage by dailies during the time of the army's intervention in Syria. Bilge (2019) utilizes cultural fusion theory principles and finds there is a significant othering of refugees through both positive and negative portrayals.

A considerable number of academic studies focus on a particular topic, theme or aspect. For example, Çoban Keneş (2016) focuses on the use of metaphors in producing discriminatory discourses. Atasü-Topçuoğlu (2018) concentrates on the naturalization debate. Memişoğlu and Başol (2019) explore the media's response to the 2015 refugee crisis. Narlı et al. (2020) focus on the daily press framing of Syrian women refugees. Finally, Yücel (2021) focuses on the Covid-19 period and concludes that Syrian refugees were symbolically annihilated by Turkish media during the pandemic.

One noteworthy study in the field belongs to Nas (2015), who examines the news reports about the troubling encounters between local people and Syrian refugees. Concluding remarks by Nas (2015) involve similar insights that this thesis is built upon; Syrians are “instrumentalized as ‘others’ to reproduce the ‘us’, a certain Turkish racialized-gendered-class privileged society” (n.p.).

One last noteworthy study is very recent; published around the time of reviewing this chapter. Arıdııcı (2022) explores the construction of the self / the other by focusing on the coverage of the pro-government *Sabah* and the anti-government *Sözcü* from 2014 to 2018. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, Arıdııcı (2022) explores how the media discourse on refugees sheds light on the tension between the Kemalist definition of the nation since the establishment of the republic and the new national project under the incumbent JDP, which she refers to as ‘secular’ and ‘humanitarian’ nationalisms. She argues that regardless of whether refugees are included/excluded in either side of the Turkish media, nationalism is common in both through the languages and discourses the newspapers use. Arıdııcı’s (2022) work bears similarities with this research in terms of relating the representation of Syrian refugees to wider politics of nationalism in Turkey. Differences concern, first of all, research methodology, time span, and scope. Secondly, and more importantly, her account rests on a binary opposition of the Kemalist nationalism / anti-government media characterized by politics and discourse of exclusion versus the JDP nationalism / pro-government media defined by inclusivity. As it will be later elaborated (Chapter 3), this research, however, argues that both nationalisms involve exclusionary politics, creating their own ‘others’. In addition, inclusive discourse towards refugees may harbor diversions, and involve exclusion of other social groups, as will be discussed in the analysis chapter.

The present work differs from the existing studies in the field of media representation of Syrian refugees in Turkey in laying a historical, sociological and theoretical foundation for studying the discursive construction of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. To be more precise, this study relates the subject matter to a historical and theoretical background by analyzing the emergence of nations and nationalism in light of

constructivist theories of nationalism (Chapter 2), and the formation and evolution of national identity in Turkey (Chapter 3). In addition, the analysis of news reports and photos ultimately stands on the shoulders of an exploration of the relation between the formulation of hegemonic national identity and representation of Syrian refugees in media. Based on the lack of a comprehensive approach backed by a theoretical framework and holistic perspective, this study may be expected to fill a gap in the existing literature of media representations of Syrian refugees.

1.6. The Scope of the Study

This study is framed by the above-mentioned theoretical background to analyze the discursive and visual representations of Syrian refugees in five national newspapers. Mainstream Turkish newspapers can be generally classified according to their ideological and political stance such as conservative, nationalist or liberal. Most Turkish newspapers make no attempt to be unbiased, but instead reveal their stance on issues in a range of explicit and implicit ways. Aside from the ideological or political leaning, attitude towards the current foreign policy of the country can be reasonably expected to play a role in shaping the coverage relating to refugees. Taking all these into consideration as well as the circulation rates and ownership groups, five mainstream newspapers were chosen to collect data from: *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Akit*, *Hürriyet*, *Sözcü* and *Sabah*. As of March 2020, the top-3 best-selling newspapers in Turkey are respectively: *Sözcü*, *Sabah*, and *Hürriyet* (“Tirajlar”, 2020). Therefore, a significant portion of the data will be collected from highest-circulated newspapers each owned by a different company or group.

The reason for choosing top-selling newspapers is first and foremost their role in creating and sustaining popular public discourses. Moreover, the selected

newspapers may contribute to a variety of data as they are all marked by distinctive discourses and narratives rooted in political views, profile of the target readers, and attitudes towards or relations with the current political actors. *Hürriyet* is renowned for representing the dominant mainstream views of the day by adopting a discourse embedded in a broad spectrum ranging from secularism to nationalism and liberalism. In addition to the top-selling newspapers, *Yeni Akit* and *Cumhuriyet* were selected for this study. *Yeni Akit* can be considered an influential newspaper even though its circulation is not that striking. Indeed, it can be argued that what is written in *Yeni Akit* is mostly a justification of and motivation for the government agenda. Additionally, *Yeni Akit* has its roots in Islamism. It started out as a newspaper supporting the National View Movement led by Necmettin Erbakan. Today, a pro-government stance combined with Islamist ideology is apparent and dominant in *Yeni Akit*. The newspaper is unique in the sense that most of the other pro-government newspapers do not emphasize Islamism as much as *Yeni Akit*. *Sabah*, for instance, despite being explicitly pro-government, is different from *Yeni Akit* in this sense. *Sözcü*, on the contrary, targets the dissident population, particularly secular and social democrats. The newspaper is marked by opposing views on several domestic and foreign issues and comes under fire from time to time due to its coverage of ethnic groups and minorities and is criticized for promoting a nationalist discourse. *Cumhuriyet*, one of the oldest newspapers in the country, is renowned for promoting secular views and publicly referred to as a “dissident newspaper”. *Cumhuriyet* is, naturally, quite critical of the government as well as the foreign policies.

One final note regards the stance towards the government. Newspaper selection was also designed to keep a degree of balance in terms of position towards the government. *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit* are openly pro-government outlets while *Sözcü*

and *Cumhuriyet* are from the anti-government camp. The case of *Hürriyet* is noteworthy. Previously owned by the Doğan Group, the newspaper was from time to time critical of the government (Balamir Coşkun, 2020, p. 644; Yeşil, 2018, p. 246). From 2018 onwards, after it was purchased by the Demirören Media Group, the newspaper leaned towards a pro-government character, though not as explicitly as *Yeni Akit* or *Sabah*. Table 1 shows the political stance of each news outlet.

Table 1

News outlets and political stance

News outlet	Political stance
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	secular left-leaning, anti-government
<i>Hürriyet</i>	liberal, moderate anti-government (until 2018) / pro-government (since 2018)
<i>Sabah</i>	right-wing conservative, pro-government
<i>Sözcü</i>	secular, anti-government
<i>Yeni Akit</i>	Islamist, pro-government

All in all, selected newspapers are all marked by distinctive discourses and narratives rooted in political views, profile of the target readers, and attitudes towards or relations with the current political actors, all of which may be expected to play an important role in how they construct their accounts of Syrian refugees. In addition, attitudes toward the Syrian War and Turkey-Syria relationships may be expected to play a significant role in the portrayals of Syrian refugees in the newspapers.

However, despite the differences, it is assumed that newspapers do also have similarities in terms of representations of Syrian asylum seekers by producing stereotypical images. One of the purposes of this study is, therefore, to focus more on the prominent themes and images which are thought to have a great impact on public attitudes and reactions and shape the characteristics of ‘imagined community’. In doing this, special focus will be given to how representation contributes to a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In addition to this, a focus on the elements differentiating the coverage of each newspaper will be revealing in terms of identifying the tension between competing formulations of national identity.

This study aims to reveal the discursive constructions and visual representations of Syrian refugees in the above-mentioned national newspapers. The research is aimed to cover related news reports and photos published in the frontpages of five newspapers. To be more precise, data will be collected from the print editions of newspapers –and not from the online websites of the newspapers- published in almost a nine-year time period, starting with the arrival of Syrian refugees in April 2011 till the end of March 2020, when the mass march of refugees to Edirne to cross over to Greece made the headlines for some time. Albeit not virtually, the march to Edirne symbolically represents the ‘return’ of refugees, which was another reason to choose March 2020 as the ending point for data collection.

Fortunately, frontpages of newspapers are digitally archived and easily accessible on the web. However, as they are stored as JPEG files, it is impossible to search the content through the use of keywords. This means that data gathering has to be done manually -in case the absence of professional media monitoring service- by reading the frontpages of each newspaper and sorting out the relevant news articles.

Another note should be made here regarding the choice to limit the data to the frontpage content. This decision stems, first and foremost, from the undeniable fact that the frontpage is the most important page of a newspaper. Well-known agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) suggests that the issues given the most media attention are likely to be considered as vital ones by the public. In this sense, frontpage content has a major part in the agenda-setting role of the media as the selection of news items is based on what is considered and what is not considered to be newsworthy enough to be reported on the frontpage, which gets the most attention from readers. Therefore, exploring the frontpage coverage may help understand how and in what aspects the issues regarding the Syrian refugees are highlighted by the newspapers to shape the public opinion on the issue.

Another reason for excluding the other pages of newspapers from the scope of the study is related to practicality. In order to be able to extend the time span to longer years, it was necessary to include frontpage coverage only. To put it another way, widening the timespan of the research while keeping the content narrow was more compatible with the purpose of this study as it would be more revealing in terms of understanding the shift in the media coverage through the years.

One last note concerns visuals. Visuals will not be treated separately from news items. That is to say, this research does not entail a separate processing, coding or analysis of visuals. This would go far beyond the scope and purpose of this study. That being said, this study takes visuals and textual content complementary to each other. Therefore, news photos accompanying the news items become a subject of analysis to the extent that they support the theme under analysis.

1.7. Outline of the Study

This research is composed of seven chapters including the introduction and conclusion. After this introductory chapter, Chapter 2, will sketch the selected grand theories of nationalism to grasp the underpinnings of nationalism, the practice of nation building and the making of national identity. This first part of Chapter 2 will visit the work of modernist thinkers of nationalism, an overview of which will set a wide context for the research. The second part of Chapter 2 will narrow the focus to the discursive construction and reproduction of nationalism and national identity, and how it relates to the refugee debate. Finally, Chapter 2 will end with a listing of conceptual tools that were extracted from the theories and approaches discussed and that will drive the research in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the exploration of nationalism and national identity in Turkey, through the conceptual tools Chapter 2 provides. One of the aims is to point to the dynamic aspect of the national identity in relation to the political history. Another issue this chapter aims to address is how the construct of national identity has been an area of struggle between conflicting agents. This chapter ends with the recent issues regarding national identity and refers to the status of the Syrian refugee regarding this.

Chapter 4 is divided into two parts. The first part of the chapter explores the major policy responses to the Syrian migration. The change in policies towards Syrian refugees over the years paralleled the change in discourses of the ruling party and vice versa. After examining the changing policies and legal framework regarding Syrian refugees, the second part of the chapter overviews the most prominent aspects of the phenomenon. Referred to as ‘paradigms’, these aspects are as follows: humanitarian, religious, economic, sociocultural and demographic, citizenship and rights paradigms.

It is argued that these five paradigms or dimensions of the issue are relevant and contribute to, and engage with different standpoints, discourses, and narratives of different parties including policy makers, political parties, NGOs, media, and the wider public. These paradigms are later treated as the macro themes of the media discourse in the analysis chapter.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the methodology and research design. This chapter first introduces Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) and then provides details regarding the research design. Data collection, classification, selection and coding are explained here. The chapter ends with the introduction of discursive strategies that will be explored and questions that will guide the analysis in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the analysis of the data. This chapter makes use of the paradigms mentioned in Chapter 4 and tries to make sense of the positions offered within these paradigms. The discourses of the selected newspapers are analyzed in this chapter under five macro-topics. Each macro-topic corresponds to a paradigm explored in Chapter 4, albeit named slightly differently. Under each macro-topic, relevant sub-themes are presented. Differences with regard to the coverage of each newspaper are also addressed under each sub-theme.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion chapter which aims to review the findings and present a critique of the existing studies in the field. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also addressed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES OF NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Benedict Anderson (1983) points out that “Nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyze” (p. 3). And yet it is imperative to lay out, or at least attempt to lay out, a theoretical framework and background on the emergence of modern nation-states and genesis of nationalism to ultimately achieve the research aim and objectives of this dissertation. This chapter will, therefore, sketch the selected grand theories of nationalism to grasp the underpinnings of nationalism, the practice of nation building and the making of national identity. To scrutinize how national identity in Turkey is re-negotiated through media in relation to the issue of Syrian refugees, it is also necessary to dwell upon its history, how it was formed, and manifested itself, and most important, how it has transformed, particularly in recent years under the rule of the current government, which will be scrutinized in the following Chapter 3.

The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to set a firm ground upon which the analyses in the following chapters can subsequently be built. An overview of the theories of nationalism is essential to develop a perspective towards the evolution of nationalism and national identity in Turkey, and how it is related to the case of Syrian refugees. With this purpose in mind, this chapter first explores the modernist theories of nationalism, an overview of which will set a wide context for the research. The second part of the chapter will narrow the focus to examine the reproduction and discursive construction of nationalism and national identity by briefly presenting the relevant literature and linking it to refugees and immigrants. Finally, this chapter will

end with a listing of conceptual tools that were extracted from the theories and approaches discussed and that will drive the research in the following chapters.

2.1. Modernist Paradigm

Seeking to enquire into the origin of any contemporary ‘-ism’, one would have to trace it back to the 19th century, if not as early as the 16th, since much of the world as we know it today -particularly in socioeconomic terms- was moulded then by a series of far-reaching turning points that changed the course of history irreversibly. Nationalism, too, sprang in this era out of a combination of social and political changes. It is here -at the very beginning- noteworthy that such a perspective towards the origin and basis of nationalism belongs to the modernist paradigm -to borrow Smith’s (1998) terminology- which views nationalism as a product of modernity and incomprehensible in the absence of socio-economic structures of modern society. Risking repetition, to clarify the terms, it needs to be stated that among the theoretical approaches addressing the origin of nations and nationalism, it is the paradigm of modernism that the major premise of this dissertation rests upon. This study thus upholds the view that “Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth” (Gellner, 1983, p. 48) and that nations and nationalism is an “artefact” (Anderson, 1983, p. 4), a product of “social engineering” (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 13).

Modernism is a radical paradigm shift in nationalism studies and emerged as a reaction to the approach of the previous generations -Primordialists- who contended that nations were ancient and viewed nationalism as a natural trait of human societies (Özkırımlı, 2010, p. 72). Although Özkırımlı (2010, p. 67) points out a recent revival and reformulation of the approach, Primordialism can be described as a long-

outmoded school of thought which attracts little scholarly attention compared to other dominant and contemporary approaches. Another major stream of thought which will not be discussed in this chapter, but which still should be mentioned is Ethnoscience. This approach has evolved from a critique of modernism and emphasizes the role of myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols in the formation of nations (Smith, 1998, p. 191). This study opts for the modernist paradigm primarily because modernism, as a theoretical approach, bears “immense explanatory power” in terms of examining the genesis and spread of nations and nationalism (Kumar, 2010, p. 394). Secondly, the role of mass media in general and newspapers in particular occupy an important place in the accounts of modernist scholars. Modernist approaches are “particularly illuminating in uncovering the role of discursive networks of communication and of ritualised activities and symbolism in forging national communities” (Smith, 1998, p. 224). Finally, the conceptual framework that the modernist paradigm offers is more relevant for the research aims and purposes so far the development of nationalism in Turkey is concerned.

Among the many scholars of the modernist school of thought, the three most seminal contributions are by Ernest Gellner (1964, 1983), Benedict Anderson (1983), and Eric Hobsbawm (1983, 1990). The first approach to be discussed in this chapter is that of Hobsbawm, whose historical analysis sets a thorough and illuminating foundation to explore the conditions under which nations and nationalism have evolved. Although Hobsbawm makes, in his *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990), a great deal of reference to Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) and Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983), as it came later to the field of nationalism studies, it is more helpful to start with his account since he provides a linear chronology of the evolution of nationalism.

The two other prominent modernist approaches to nationalism, namely those of Gellner and Anderson, will then be addressed respectively.

2.1.1. Hobsbawm and *The Invention of Tradition*

‘Constructivism’ is a blanket term encompassing theoretical approaches to nationalism derived from the premise that the nation is a fabricated entity whose existence is an outcome of its own recognition. According to Kumar (2010), the constructionist paradigm is one of the varieties of modernism and looks at nations “in terms of their socially constructed nature” (p. 395). Hobsbawm (1990), one of the proponents of the constructionist understanding of nationalism, puts forth that “any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a ‘nation’, will be treated as such” (p. 8). He disputes the idea that nations exist because of any pre-existing bond or commonalities between peoples. In other words, there are no “objective criteria” for nations (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 5). Even though members of nations usually seem to have commonalities in several aspects such as culture, history, language, geographic region or religion, none of these is an indispensable marker or a sole determinant of a nation. It is rather a sense of belonging and a community attachment amongst people that makes up a nation. In other words, it is not the existence of a bond in any kind but the recognition of a bond that nations arise from. In this sense, nation is a fabrication, an artificial entity, and “can only be recognized a posteriori” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 9).

When it comes to the historical evolution of nations and nationalism, Hobsbawm (1990, p. 14) notes that the modern sense of the terms are relatively recent, dating back to the late nineteenth century. For Hobsbawm, social, political and economic transformation from the late eighteenth century onwards line beneath the

genesis of nations and nationalism. Hobsbawm elaborated his theory of nationalism mainly in two works: *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), which he co-edited with Terence Ranger, and *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality* (1990). However, in order to gain a fuller understanding of his account, it is necessary to refer to his earlier work, particularly to his much acclaimed series on the history of the 19th century.

In general, for Hobsbawm, nations emerged during the transformation of social relations from agrarian society to industrial economy within capitalist development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this sense, nations and nationalism came to the fore in ‘The Age of Revolution’, which extends from the French Revolution in 1789 to 1848, when a wave of republican revolts swept across Europe but was later fiercely repressed. In Hobsbawm’s (1962) account, this period marks “the greatest transformation in human history since the remote times” (p. 1). The order of society and the way people lived their lives came to differ radically from that of only a century ago. This transition to a new social, political and economic landscape was driven by a ‘dual revolution’, the French Revolution and the British Industrial Revolution. While the former brought a new paradigm of politics and power by overthrowing monarchies and replacing them with representative governments, the latter revolutionized social and economic structure. The ‘dual revolution’ paved the way for capitalism and political liberalism to spread out from Europe, where they were born to the rest of the world. Nations, and nationalism, too, came to the fore in this revolutionary era. In Hobsbawm’s (1962) own words, “Nationalism, like so many other characteristics of the modern world, is the child of the dual revolution” (p. 145).

The Industrial Revolution changed the nature of material production by replacing manual labor with machines, which resulted in a huge increase in

productivity and economic output. The new mode of production ignited a great change in population distribution as industrial job opportunities caused many to move from the countryside to the cities in search of employment. Rapid urbanization because of industrialization brought about a change in the social fabric of societies, reducing the importance of localities and dependency on kinship relations. Change in the traditional patterns of social relationships altered the composition of society, which now comprised disconnected and alienated individuals. The newly emerging and rapidly growing social classes, working class and urban middle class, became vitally important in the political arena and demanded political emancipation and representation. Despite their antagonistic economic interests, what the members of these two social classes shared was a feeling of discontent against the existing social order. The deterioration of living and working conditions for the working class led to a growing unrest, which later fed riots and uprisings such as the Revolutions of 1848. Middle class, on the other hand, enjoyed the benefits of the Industrial Revolution and grew increasingly prosperous and moved up in social status but lacked judicial and economic privileges granted to the nobility and clergy as well as political influence since political power was still in the hands of aristocracy. On top of all this, or rather beneath it, advances in print technology leading up to the mass production and mass circulation of printed material, particularly books and newspapers, along with the rise of public schooling and a sharp increase in literacy rates allowed a rapid dissemination of ideas among broad publics who were once excluded from participating in society (Hobsbawm, 1962, pp. 135-136).

The French Revolution, on the other hand, had a lasting impact upon politics and ideology by challenging traditional notions of authority and power. It was the French Revolution that marked the dawning of a new era of ideas. In Hobsbawm's

(1962) words, “France provided the first great example, the concept and the vocabulary of nationalism” (p. 53). Demolishing the monarchy and stripping the Church of its power and privileges, The French Revolution marked the collapse of the aristocratic order, which was largely religious in character, and opened a new chapter in the history of Europe, and subsequently in the rest of the world, by establishing a republic with a secular foundation based on the consent of the governed, and not the divine rights of the King. Masses were transformed from subjects into citizens who were now incorporated into the political system through electoral democracy. The rising middle class whose ideas were “those of classical liberalism” gained political power it had been aspiring to reach (Hobsbawm, 1962, p. 58). In Hobsbawm’s (1962) account, the “dual revolution” of 1789-1848 “was the triumph not of ‘industry’ as such, but of capitalist industry, not of liberty and equality in general, but of *middle class* or ‘*bourgeois*’ liberal society” (p. 1, italics original). The following period in history, which he elaborates in the second volume of his series, *The Age of Capital*, saw the expansion of capitalist industrialization and diffusion of the triumphant ideas and values across several aspects of society (Hobsbawm, 1975). “The Age of Revolution”, which gave birth to radically new forms of organization and set of ideas including nation-states and nationalism, was followed by an era when they proliferated, and penetrated wider and deeper. “The Age of Capital” was, therefore, “primarily that of the massive advance of the world economy of industrial capitalism, of the social order it represented, of the ideas and beliefs that seemed to legitimize it and ratify it: in reason, science, progress and liberalism. It is the era of the triumphant bourgeois” (Hobsbawm, 1975, p. 15).

Through the lens of Hobsbawm, rather crudely put, the history of nationalism cannot be separated from the expansion of capitalism and the rise of bourgeoisie. In a

similar vein, Wallerstein (1987), though never developing an extensive account of nationalism, addresses the issue and takes the nation as a “clay-like historical product of the capitalist world-economy” (p. 387). Best-known for his world-system theory, Wallerstein (1991) relates nationalism to the historic conditions of capitalist development and reiterates the constructionist view: “statehood preceded nationhood, and not the other way around, despite a widespread myth to the contrary” (p. 81).

After this brief mention of a shared perspective, to return to the thread of the French Revolution, classical liberalism reflected the interests of triumphant bourgeois, the leaders of the Revolution opposed the aristocratic hierarchy but did not envision a truly democratic or egalitarian society. What they desired was a secular state with a constitution guaranteeing civil liberties and private enterprise, and a government administered by taxpayers and property owners (Hobsbawm, 1962, p. 59). However, officially such a political system was not a reflection of the class interests of bourgeois but was rather based on “the general will of 'the people', which was in turn (a significant identification) 'the French nation'” (Hobsbawm, 1962, p. 59). In this sense, ‘the people’ was equated with ‘the nation’, which in turn served to build a sense of shared interests and identity.

This is how the idea of the nation came to the world stage as “novelty” (Hobsbawm, 1990). From about 1870s onward, the nation began to acquire its modern meaning in the sense that the people was identified with the nation and the nation was identified with the state, which was embodied in the principle of popular sovereignty replacing the omnipotence of the sovereign authority and in the form of nation-states (Hobsbawm, 1990). In Hobsbawm’s account, nationalism, as an ideology, was an extension of industrialization and modernization and an outcome of centralization of states, evolution from a traditional society to a modern one. In this sense, nationalism

preceded nations. In other words, nations were an outcome of nationalism: “Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 10).

As Hobsbawm (1983) sees it, nationalism is an ‘invented tradition’, a fabrication of elites seeking to safeguard their status threatened by the rapid social transformation since the Industrial Revolution. As opposed to what might be expected from what is inherent in the definition of the word (tradition) itself, Hobsbawm (1983, p. 2) argues that traditions are not peculiar to traditional societies, but they do also exist in the modern world. According to Hobsbawm (1983), the central tenets of the liberal ideology in the nineteenth century was in rupture with the pre-modern, traditional society for the sake of constant radical change. With the rise of modernity, social patterns prevailing the ‘old’ society vanished, and traditional authority and community bonds dissolved, which led to “voids which might have to be filled by invented practices” (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 8). Nations and nationalism were the most widespread ‘invented’ practices in an era of rising organized mass politics. When politics ceased to be a domain confined to the ruling classes, and ordinary citizens gained wider participation in the political process through mass democracy, the ruling elites were faced with the challenge of maintaining social cohesion and preserving power, which led them to apply methods to ensure compliance and control. Ordinary people, transformed from subjects into citizens whose political activities were legitimate and institutionalized, now had to be taken into account, if only for the sake of electoral votes.

This is where the practice of inventing traditions comes into play, at a precarious stage of enhancing wider conformity to the newly emerging social order.

‘Invented traditions’ were the primary means of securing unity among fragmented publics and earning loyalty of masses. In Hobsbawm’s (1983) own words,

Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values or norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past (p. 1).

A practice that employs ancient materials to serve a novel purpose, Hobsbawm (1983) adds, the invention of traditions occurs “more frequently when a rapid social transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions had been designed” (p. 4).

Although they are historically novel, invented traditions assert ties with a glorious far-distant past. When there is no such past, one is invented, a past history that legitimizes the nation-state and acts as a social glue. The invention of traditions such as rituals, symbols, myths, stories etc. necessitates certain conditions, particularly radical societal change, and new power relations. The new power group, with the help of elites, seeks to impose its own legitimacy through such practices.

Hobsbawm (1983) lists the three major innovations relevant to the invention of traditions as the development of primary education in a secular framework which would replace the role of the Church, the invention of public ceremonies (e.g., Bastille Day) that merged official celebrations and popular festivities, and the mass production of public monuments (e.g., monuments of local Republican figures) (pp. 270-271). As a consequence of these practices, “nationalism became a substitute for social cohesion

through a national church, a royal family or other cohesive group self-representations, a new secular religion” (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 303).

Hobsbawm (1990) identifies three distinct periods in the evolution of nationalism. The first period extends from the age of the French Revolution, which marks the ideological birth of nationalism in the widest sense, to the World War I era, when it proliferated. There were two distinct types of nationalism in this period. In its preliminary stage -up until the 1870s-, the concept of the nation was fused with the ideals of the French Revolution and rooted in the liberal ideology. Legacy of revolutionary and liberal views, the nation denoted rather a cultural collectivity and referred only to those ‘great nations’, many of which had completed their formation by the 1830s. Those nations with an extensive territory and a huge population provided a “threshold principle” in Hobsbawm’s account (1990, p. 31). To explain, the nation had to be of a sufficient territorial extent and population size in addition to a certain level of economic development to promote growth. While states which surpassed a threshold of territorial extent, population size -regardless of the ethnic composition- and economic strength could legitimately rise to the rank of nations, the ones failing to transcend the threshold were deemed to have “no historic justification” to form a viable entity (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 30). In addition to the threshold principle, three other criteria were seen equally important to determine whether a territory could be regarded as a nation: “Historical association with a state, (...) a long-established cultural elite, possessing a written national literary and administrative vernacular, (...) and a proven capacity for conquest” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 37-38). Although language was a point of reference, according to Hobsbawm, the existence of a national language was not of crucial importance to be ranked among great nations. Nation-building and national progress at this stage did not depend on ethnic, linguistic

or religious identity, which was evident from the multicultural makeup of most of the nations. In other words, unification was the major driving force for liberal nationalism.

According to Hobsbawm (1990), from the 1870s, a new type of nationalism started to emerge. The emergence of this new type of nationalism coincides with the practice of invented traditions when nationalism reached a popular ground particularly through public education. Along with the rise of mass politics, nationalism started to take its modern sense, in the form of a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, particularly on linguistic and ethnic terms. Ethnicity and language became central to define nations in the discourse of this new type of nationalism. As such, this new type of nationalism was marked with important differences from the one in the initial stage as it no longer drew reference from the ‘threshold principle’. As opposed to the democratic-liberal nationalism which aimed at unification, this was the reactionary-separatist nationalism of small nations against empires such as the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungary (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 104). It was at this stage that ethnicity and language became the defining criteria for nationhood. Another important feature of nationalism at this stage was that it became associated with the political right and the middle class.

The second period of nationalism in Hobsbawm’s (1990) account extends from 1918 to 1950 and indicates an era when the world passed through “the apogee of nationalism” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 131). This period saw two key developments which paved the way for nationalism to reach its peak. The first was the fall of multinational empires in Central and Eastern Europe, and the second was the Russian Revolution, which led the victors of World War I to adopt the Wilsonian principle of self-determination to counter the expansion of Bolshevik influence (p. 131). As an

attempt to reshape the political map of the continent to establish a new world order, the principle of self-determination -the notion that ethnically identifiable nations should have the right to govern themselves- were widely accepted. However, it simply failed to work as expected since most of the new states were made up of diverse peoples and nationalities, just like was the case with their predecessor empires.

The main change was that states were now on average rather smaller and the 'oppressed peoples' within them were now called 'oppressed minorities.' The logical implication of trying to create a continent neatly divided into coherent territorial states each inhabited by a separate ethnically and linguistically homogeneous population, was the mass expulsion or extermination of minorities (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 133).

Nationalism at this stage did no longer revolve around the goal of unification but was characterized by a secessionist potential, which was evident from the increase in the number of new nations. Hobsbawm (1990) contends that what made this period the zenith of nationalism was not the rise of fascism but the proliferation of nationalist ideas on the left: "Nationalism thus acquired a strong association with the left during the antifascist period, an association which was subsequently reinforced by the experience of anti-imperial struggle in the colonial countries" (p. 148).

Chief among the developments in this period was the rise of mass media which allowed for a rapid circulation of standardized messages, particularly of the ones relating to national interests (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 141). Had it not been through mass media, national symbols of the public sphere would not have so rapidly diffused into everyday lives of citizens. To put it reversely, it would not have been possible to spread national icons and figures for citizens to identify with but for the ability of mass media to transfer issues of the private sphere into the public agenda. Furthermore, the rise of sports as a mass spectacle helped ordinary people to identify

themselves with the nation, personified in a national team playing against a rival national team.

Finally came the third stage of nationalism in the late 20th century, when diverse forms of nationalism, most of which reinforced divisions and conflicts came to the fore and nationalism was transformed from a political movement to a mass ideology. As for the future, Hobsbawm is speculatively optimistic about the fate of nationalism. Writing in 1990, he anticipated that “nationalism is historically less important. It is no longer, as it were, a global political programme” (p. 191).

In short, for Hobsbawm, nationalism precedes nations. Along with the state and its ruling elites, nationalism invented nations through the fabrication of new traditions, myths, symbols and a ‘suitable history’. As Hobsbawm (1990) puts it, though constructed from above, nations and nationalism are dual phenomena that cannot be comprehended unless also studied from above.

2.1.2. Gellner and Homogenization

Gellner’s approach to nationalism is different from that of Hobsbawm -not fundamentally though- in terms of the point of departure. Having had a long career as a historian, Hobsbawm focuses his analysis on ‘how’ nationalism has evolved over time, in different periods of history. Gellner (1983), on the other hand, sets out to explore “why nationalism has emerged and become pervasive” (p. 139) and follows a sociological path which was paved by earlier theorists such as Durkheim and Weber. Inherently interdisciplinary though his frame of analysis is, Gellner’s approach draws on a sociological tradition whose “cardinal feature (...) is a distinction between ‘traditional and ‘modern’ societies” (Özkırımlı, 2010, p. 98). The dichotomy between traditional agrarian society and modern industrial society is implicit in his

understanding to the emergence of nationalism. Industrialization, education and common language are the key factors in Gellner's approach towards the formation of nations and nationalism, which can be labeled as the socio-cultural variety of the modernist paradigm (Kumar, 2010, p. 395).

Similar to Hobsbawm, Gellner traces the origin of nationalism in the 19th-century industrialization in Western Europe. However, he avoids using the word 'capitalism' and refers to 'industrial society'. In Gellner's (1983) account, transformation of society from an agrarian-based economy and social structure to an industrial-based one inescapably led to the birth and spread of nationalism: "the age of transition to industrialism was bound (...) also to be an age of nationalism" (p. 40). To explain, nations do make sense only in the age of industrialization, and not before, because it was only in this period of history that 'homogeneity' became essential.

In agrarian societies, at the top of social strata, there was a small ruling class of elites possessing a 'high culture' that differentiated them from the majority of the populace at the bottom, which was made up of agricultural workers from a 'low culture'. While 'low culture' refers to that of the illiterate or less educated local peoples with different group identities, 'high culture' denotes the standard and codified culture of the educated ruling elites -members of aristocracy, clergy and military. The members of these two separate strata had little, if not any, interaction with each other. As a result, the ruling elites did not attempt to impose their culture or language on those local peoples who spoke a variety of languages or dialect. That is to say, agrarian society relied on a firm distinction between high and low cultures, which was for the benefit of the ruling elites as they needed cultural heterogeneity to affirm and maintain their social status. In such a society characterized by cultural disparity between different segments of the population, there was no room and need for

homogenizing or unifying notions and practices like nations and nationalism. In other words, cultural heterogeneity in the pre-industrial age hindered the formation of nations.

Industrialization, on the other hand, entirely altered the social structure creating a new form of political, societal, and economic organization characterized by division of labor. Gellner (1983) defines industrial society as “the only society ever to live by and rely on sustained and perpetual growth, on an expected and continuous improvement” (p. 22). There emerged a need for homogenization in the industrial era, which set the stage for the modern nation to arise. As opposed to agrarian society, industrial society requires a homogenous community, particularly on cultural and linguistic terms, which would uniformly act to achieve the goal of economic growth. According to Gellner (1983), whereas agrarian society was marked by rigid social stratification, social mobility is the main driver in industrial society and is achieved through education and literacy. In industrial society, “a man’s education is by far his most precious investment, and in effect confers his identity on him” because it provides individuals with specialized knowledge and skills necessary to join the workforce, adapt to new circumstances in an ever-changing society and climb up the social ladder (Gellner, 1983, p. 36). Whereas material circumstances of life depended on one’s social status in agrarian society, individuals in industrial society are defined in terms of the cultural capital they possess. In contrast to a vertically organized rigid social hierarchical structure of agrarian age, modern society is horizontally organized and “egalitarian because it is mobile” (Gellner, 1983, p. 25). Social and cultural distinctions between the ruled and rulers, in industrial society, become more fluid and boundaries get permeable through education and mobility. While culture highlights disparities in status in agrarian society, citizens in the industrial age are bonded

together to create a “shared literate culture (nationality)” (Gellner, 1983, p. 85) through standardized public education. In this sense, “culture” acquired its modern meaning and use in the period of Industrial Revolution and came to mean what Williams (1960) point out “the general state of intellectual development, in a society as a whole” (p. xiv).

According to Gellner (1983), mass education was established and monitored by the centralized state in order to generate a literate, skilled and mobile workforce that industrialism requires. In industrial society, literacy is neither a specialism nor a privilege enjoyed solely by a minority of elites but a *sine qua non* for participation in public life. No other institution but the central state can maintain such an immense education system available to the mass of the population.

The level of literacy and technical competence, in a standardized medium, a common conceptual currency, which is required of members of this society, if they are to be properly employable and enjoy full and effective moral citizenship, is so high that it simply cannot be provided by the kin or local units, such as they are. It can only be provided by something resembling a modern ‘national’ educational system, a pyramid at whose base there are primary schools, staffed by teachers, led by the product of advanced graduate schools. Such a pyramid provides the criterion for the minimum size for a viable political unit (Gellner, 1983, p. 34).

From an economic perspective, education serves the needs of an industrial society by producing the human capital required to keep the economy running. Culturally and ideologically speaking, education plays a prominent role in the construction of cultural homogeneity, creating a uniform mass culture conveyed through a standardized national language. Education also plays a vital role in promoting a sense of loyalty and obedience to the state because once education

becomes the key to social mobility, as Gellner (1983) puts it, “In such a society, one's prime loyalty is to the medium of our literacy, and to its political protector” (p. 142). At this point, the ultimate goal of nationalism comes forward, to cultivate a collective identity among individuals to help foster loyalty to and identification with the nation-state.

With mass public education, established and maintained by the centralized state, “high culture” becomes pervasive and universal. This is, in Gellner’s (1964) account, “the marriage of state and culture” (p. 107), which inevitably breeds nationalism. A standardized “high culture” becomes all pervasive and the age of nationalism is thus “the age of universal high cultures” (1983, p. 35). Nationalism and its accompanying sense of group identity plays a pivotal role in unifying society: “A high culture pervades the whole of society, defines it, and needs to be sustained by the polity. That is the secret of nationalism.” (1983, p. 18).

In Gellner’s (1983) approach, nationalism is functional to industrialization. He sums the “functional prerequisites” of industrial society as “universal literacy and a high level of numerical, technical and general sophistication” (p. 35). At this point, nationalism functions as an effective instrument to construct, from a whole population, a single political entity of citizens tied to each other through a literate, homogenous culture and a common language, which is then recognized as ‘nation’. As Gellner (1964) puts it, it is nationalism that produces nations and not the opposite way: “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents them where they do not exist” (p. 168). In his acknowledged definition, Gellner (1983) refers to nationalism as “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (p. 1). Nation-state thus emerges

as a new form of political organization in which cultural and political units -nation and state- converge.

In Gellner's (1983) account, "nationalism is essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority" (p. 57), however, he points out that "nationalism usually conquers in the name of a putative folk culture. Although nationalists claim the opposite, the nation is a modern phenomenon, which helps foster a homogenous culture and society".

Gellner's perspective of homogenous culture is relevant to the "culture-industry", a term coined by Horkheimer and Adorno (1947) to refer to the mass culture of the 20th century. While Gellner highlights the role of education in fostering a homogenous culture in the early industrial age, Horkheimer and Adorno are concerned with mass media outlets, operating like a factory for the mass-production of cultural goods in late capitalist societies. As Horkheimer and Adorno (1947) see it, "Culture today is infecting everything with sameness. Film, radio and television form a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous within itself, and all are unanimous together" (p. 94).

In Gellner's account, cultural homogenization is a prerequisite for the smooth functioning of industrial society and can only be achieved through state-sponsored and state-monitored mass education. Nationalism, in this perspective, serves the purpose of homogenizing the population into a single entity in a top-down process to eradicate diversity, and hence conflict. In a similar vein, creating homogeneity is the key impetus behind the 'culture-industry', or mass culture. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the 'culture-industry' leads to standardization of cultural products on one hand, and standardization of individuals into an inert mass of consumers with no capacity for critical thought or independent action on the other. The purpose of the 'culture industry' is close to what nationalism aims for in Gellner's theory, to sweep

differences under the carpet and mask inequalities in order to ensure stability and obedience. Just as nationalism makes itself seem natural, inevitable and eternal; the 'culture-industry' produces the illusion of an orderly society where change is neither required nor anticipated. This brief comparative consideration brings us to nationalism's relationship with the 'culture-industry'. The 'culture-industry' plays a crucial role in cultivating a homogenous and uniform culture imagined by nationalism.

As for the future of nationalism, Gellner (1983) seems to be less optimistic than Hobsbawm. He argues that "mankind is irreversibly committed to industrial society" (p. 39) and unless the existing socioeconomic structures come to an end, nationalism will neither fade out nor will diverge into a different path. Back in 1983, he anticipated that "this is not something which will be visible in our lifetimes" (p.113). In Gellner's (1983) view, nationalism is intrinsic to our time: "nationalism as a phenomenon, not as a doctrine presented by nationalists, is inherent in a certain set of social conditions, and those conditions, it so happens, are the conditions of our time" (p. 125). Given the contemporary trends in global politics towards authoritarianism and increased xenophobia which provides a fertile breeding ground for nationalism, his foresight seems to have proven right.

According to Perry Anderson (1992), Gellner's work is "the boldest and most original theory of nationalism to date" (p. 206). However, he joins the camp of critics such as Mann (1992, p. 139) and Kumar (2010, p. 397), who find Gellner's theory of nationalism explicitly 'functionalist'. Perry Anderson (1992) asserts that Gellner focuses on the economic factors underpinning the emergence of nationalism while neglecting the emotional aspect. According to Perry Anderson (1992), Gellner's work ignores the fact that nationalism has mobilized many populations fervently and driven

passion. In his own words, “what it plainly neglects is the overpowering dimension of collective meaning that modern nationalism has always involved, that is not its functionality for industry, but its fulfillment of identity” (Anderson, 1992, p. 208). His brother Benedict Anderson, another leading proponent of the constructivist view of nationalism, has more to offer at this point because his account spares more room for the emotional aspect of nationalism. To explain why individuals identify themselves with a nation and why nationalism retains such an immense power of identity-shaping is the major goal of Anderson (1983) in his most acclaimed work.

2.1.3. Anderson and *Imagined Communities*

Anderson (1983) explains that the armed clashes between Vietnam, China, and Cambodia -all socialist states- in the late 1970s “provided the immediate occasion for the original text of *Imagined Communities*” (p. xi). These wars provided “clear evidence that transnational socialism was being trumped by nationalism and this was an ominous portent for the future” (cited in Özkırımlı, 2010, p. 105). So many had died and so many had killed for the sake of national interests which were supposedly not to have outweighed international solidarity. One of the key questions Anderson (1983) had in mind before setting out to explore the origin of nations and nationalism was “why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy” (p. 4). Thus, Anderson’s (1983) work addresses why nationalism, and its related phenomena have “aroused such deep attachments” deep enough to lead people to death and destruction (p. 4).

Anderson (1983) starts his exploration with a clear description that underlies his whole analysis: “nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a

particular kind” (p. 4). Like Hobsbawm and Gellner, Anderson argues that the idea of such a collectivity -the nation- is not natural by nature but needs to be cultivated. In Anderson’s account, the nation came on the scene in the 18th century at the juncture of a series of historical and cultural events. However, nation and nationalism, once they were formed, “they became ‘modular’, capable of being transplanted” (Anderson, 1983, p. 4), models to replicate and reproduce in various settings.

Anderson (1983) compares the modern nation, in his much-adapted coined phrase, to an ‘imagined community’, which gave his book its title. He famously defines the nation as “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 6). First, Anderson believes that the nation is ‘imagined’ because, other than a traditional village where face-to-face interaction is mostly feasible, it is simply not possible for the members of any community of people to know each other personally. The members of a nation do not know and will never meet most of their con-nationals, “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). However, Anderson makes it very clear that what he refers to by the term “imagined” does not draw upon a distinction between the ‘false / unreal’ and the ‘true / real’. To be more precise, the word “imagined” should not be mistaken for ‘imaginary’, which connotes unreality, and thus, presupposes a dualism. Anderson (1983) rather refers to people’s shared imagining of each other as members of a national community and puts forth that “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (p. 6). In sum, in Anderson’s account, in much the same way for both Hobsbawm and Gellner, the idea of the nation and its derivatives are built upon the recognition of a commonality, and not upon any pre-existing commonality itself.

Secondly, the nation is imagined 'limited' because each nation is confined to limited boundaries beyond which others exist. Even the largest nations hold a finite number of people, and no nation imagines itself to be one and the same as humankind. As Anderson (1983) puts it, "the most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation" (p. 7). Frontiers of a nation separate the insiders from the others on earth. Thus, nationalism leads people to think in terms of a distinction between 'us' -those encompassed by borders either physically or discursively- and 'them' -those of other nations. Thirdly, the nation is imagined as 'sovereign' because the concept emanated from a period when "Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (Anderson, 1983, p. 7). The nation came into being in an era when the power of religion and dynasties to sustain political communities came to an end. Thus, nations desire to be free and exercise self-government over their lands through a sovereign state. Lastly, the nation is imagined as a 'community' because members view each other as comrades of a common cause, which helps disguise actual inequalities and exploitation. For Anderson (1983), it is this sense of comradeship, after all, that makes it possible "for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (p. 7). He then poses a crucial question: "what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history (scarcely more than two centuries) generate such colossal sacrifices?" (Anderson, 1983, p. 7). How can such a recent phenomenon in history drive masses so profoundly to its causes? For Anderson (1983), the answer to this question is to be found by a consideration of the 'cultural roots' of nationalism.

Like Hobsbawm and Gellner, Anderson takes the late 18th century as a turning point in the history of nations and nationalism, however, he traces the 'cultural roots'

of nationalism further back, to the 16th and 17th centuries. The nation, for Anderson, came into being at the crossroads of a series of developments in social, cultural, and economic realms. Decline in three fundamental conceptions laid the foundation for the modern nation to come forth. First, after the Enlightenment, religion diminished in influence and lost its primary role in providing meaning for people's lives.

Additionally, the geographical explorations of non-European lands made the world a smaller place, leading to an increased interaction between people of different beliefs.

This, in turn, broadened people's perspectives and knowledge about other ways of living and cultures. Religion could no longer remain either the dominant point of reference for people's identities or the major force to maintain communities. The decline of religious dominance was also closely related to the demotion of sacred languages. While sacred languages such as Latin lost their primacy both as the language of instruction and as an administrative language, vernacular languages grew in importance, particularly due to the advancements in print technology. The decline of Latin, for Anderson (1983), "exemplified a larger process in which the sacred communities integrated by old sacred languages were gradually fragmented, pluralized, and territorialized" (p. 19).

The second decline was that of the dynastic realm which took place over a similar period. Monarchy, which derived its power from divinity, began its gradual descent in the 17th century in Western Europe, and its demise was accelerated by the French Revolution. In Anderson's account, nationalism filled the void left by the decline of religious community and dynastic authority and provided individuals seeking new ways of thinking and being with meaning for their existence on Earth.

Finally, there emerged a new concept of time which made it possible to imagine the nation. The pre-modern understanding of time, which conceived the

present as predetermined by God, and the past and future running in a cyclical pattern, was replaced by a linear understanding of time that perceives history progressing as a result of causal relations. Humans could now imagine themselves experiencing time simultaneously with others whom they have never met. For Anderson (1983), the profound change in the understanding of time can be best understood through the two genres, novel and newspaper, which “provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation” (p. 25). Both the novel and the newspaper are structured around the same fundamental principle: simultaneity. The novel portrays different characters, who may never actually meet each other, performing different acts at the same time. Characters in a novel are connected to each other in two ways. First, they are connected to each other as members of a society. Secondly, they are linked to each other in the reader’s mind. It is only the reader who knows what different characters are doing at a given time through the storyline. For Anderson (1983), the novel is a “precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (p. 26). Anderson (1983) gives the example of an American who would perhaps never meet most of his fellows and know what they are doing at a particular time but “he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity” (p. 26).

In a similar vein, what makes the newspaper distinctive as a cultural product is that stories from around the world which had occurred independently show up on the same page because of an “imagined linkage” (Anderson, 1983, p. 33). What connects all those independent stories is the date on top of the newspaper. It is the “calendrical coincidence” through which all those stories are connected. (Anderson, 1983, p. 33). Additionally, the readers are connected to each other because they can identify themselves with others who are simultaneously reading the same pages. The act of

reading the daily newspaper is tantamount to participating in a ceremony that ensues on a daily basis nationwide. The participants are well conscious of the fact that others, whom they might not have met in person, are performing the very same act probably around the same time. “What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?” (Anderson, 1983, p. 34). To this end, Anderson argues that the newspaper has played an important role in cultivating the sense of ‘imagined community’ that is embedded in nationalism.

In Anderson’s account, the print technology together with the drive of capitalism to expand into new markets -what he terms “print-capitalism”- played a major role in creating a national consciousness among people. Print-capitalism, for Anderson (1983), “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate to others, in profoundly new ways” (p. 36). Thanks to the advancements in printing, texts could be produced for a large body of readers in vernacular languages. The 16th century saw an explosion in the number of books published, which made books available to a larger number of people than ever before, and thus, turned publishing into a well-paying enterprise driven by the motive to increase profits. As capitalism was seeking to spread into new unsaturated markets, publishers preferred vernaculars over Latin. As a consequence, these vernaculars were standardized and eventually dethroned Latin from its old place of literary language. These standardized vernacular languages, according to Anderson, enabled unified forms of communication since people who spoke different dialects were now connected to each other through a common language which differentiated them from those who spoke another language. This led people to develop a sense of belonging to a particular community defined by a common language. Thus, language played a pivotal role in uniting people and cultivating a sense of belonging to a community.

Hundreds of thousands of people could now communicate with each other to form an 'imagined community'.

At this point, it is necessary to recall the notion of 'bourgeois public sphere' by Habermas, for whom the press served as the key means for the exchange of communication and debate among publics in the 18th century. In Habermas' (1991) words, the public sphere is "the coming together of private people into a public" (p. 35). 'Public sphere' is a communal and communicative space which brings literate people together for rational-critical debate on matters of common concern, particularly of those that make it to the journals and newspapers. There would hardly have emerged a 'public sphere' as it was, were it not for the press, the "preeminent institution" of the public sphere (Habermas, 1991, p. 181). What Habermas called the 'bourgeois public sphere' is very much compatible with what Anderson termed as 'imagined community' in the sense that they both rely on the media consumption practices of people -who may not know each other personally- to form a collectivity. They both highlight the role of mass media, particularly newspapers in bringing people together around a common activity in a common spot, may it be a coffee house or the reader's mind. In order not to stray too far from the focus of the chapter, suffice it to say that their theories complement each other and help understand the role of newspapers in forming communities better.

Anderson (1983) outlines four types of nationalism defined both in historical and geographical terms. First, the 'creole nationalism' of the Americas, which he claims, was pioneered by European settlers. He notes that one of the distinctive features of the national independence movements in both South and North America was that they were led by elites who did not intend to engage large populations at all. This first wave of nationalism, in Anderson's account, came into existence in the

Americas way before nationalism in Europe because of two main reasons. First of all, language was not an issue in these colonies since they spoke the same language as their colonizing powers which they fought against to gain their national independence. Secondly, colonies had long existed as independent administrative entities, distinguished from each other particularly in economic terms. This, in turn, helped them develop a sense of being separate from each other and possessing a unique community identity. Print-capitalism and the rapid spread of newspapers across the continent further helped each colony to construct a distinctive identity, which later fed its claim to national independence.

The second type of nationalism in Anderson's account is European nationalism that emerged at the beginning of the 19th century in dynastic empires. One of the key features of European nationalism is that, as opposed to 'creole nationalism', it was primarily language based, and 'print-capitalism' played a great role in its formation. Furthermore, American independence movements provided models for nationalism of Europe to look up to. In other words, Anderson contends that nationalism in Europe deliberately copied the nationalistic movements in the Americas.

In Anderson's (1983) account, nationalism in Western Europe was pioneered by upper classes. "More typical, however, was a coalition of lesser gentries, academics, professionals, and businessmen, in which the first often provided leaders of 'standing,' the second and third myths, poetry, newspapers, and ideological formulations, and the last money and marketing facilities" (p. 79). Anderson contends that growing bourgeoisie together with intellectuals promoted the spread of a common national language to be used in education, and public administration. Vernacularization of the print language allowed the new bourgeoisie to engage the masses, among whom literacy was rapidly spreading, in the nationalist revolution. On

the whole, Anderson puts forward that it was the vernacularization and standardization of the print language that rendered it possible to have a common national language, which was fundamental to be ranked among the legitimate nations. National language served as a means to circulate stories about the allegedly honorable past of the nation and, thereby, became the soil in which imagined communities flourished.

‘Official nationalism’ is the third type of nationalism described by Anderson. According to his account, official nationalism is the “willed merger of nation and dynastic empire”, which “developed after, and in reaction to, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s” (Anderson, 1983, p. 86). While European nationalism was a reaction to imperial rulers, official nationalism was a reaction to popular nationalism of Europe. According to Anderson, official nationalism is the deliberate project of the old empires in order to preserve their position against a growing tide of European nationalism. In an effort to justify the legitimacy of their rule over a large territory, the ruling classes tried to transform the empire into a nation in a top-down process. Anderson suggests Russia as one of the examples where official nationalism was imposed by the state to create homogeneity, particularly through the spread of common national language and modern education. In Anderson’s account, well-educated young intellectuals, who were also well-informed about the European model of nationalism, took the lead in national movements, and played a pivotal role in cultivating nationalist sentiments. Print-capitalism further contributed to the dissemination of nationalist thinking among larger publics. Here again, as was the case with European nationalism, language -and subsequently print-literacy— plays a key role in creating imagined communities. Anderson (1983) points out the role of the language and press referring to Turkish

nationalism in the late 19th century: “And the seeds of Turkish nationalism are easily detectable in the appearance of a lively vernacular press in Istanbul in the 1870s” (p. 75). Although he does not explicitly cite in *Imagined Communities* neither the late Ottoman Empire nor the early Turkish Republic among those where “official nationalism” was implemented, he slightly mentions Turkish nationalism to highlight its imposing and imitative character: “To heighten Turkish-Turkey's national consciousness at the expense of any wider Islamic identification, Atatürk imposed compulsory romanization” (Anderson, 1983, pp. 45-46). However, elsewhere Anderson (2001) lists the late Ottoman Empire together with Tsarist Russia and Imperial Great Britain among official nationalisms in the late 19th century.

The fourth form of nationalism set out by Anderson (1983) is colonial nationalism, which refers to the nationalism that came to light in colonized Asia and Africa after World War II, when “the nation-state tide reached full flood” (p. 113). In Anderson’s account, this “last wave” of nationalism was a blend of popular European nationalism and official nationalism and was also inspired by the republican ideals at the core of the national independence movements in the Americas. Colonial nationalism manifested itself particularly through the education system that was designed on the model of official nationalism, and administrative regulations that were fashioned on the model of popular nationalisms of Europe.

Imagined Communities has been a seminal work in various fields of study from literature to geography and cultural studies. It is one of the most-cited books in the social sciences and “by far the most cited text in the study of nationalism” (Breuilly, 2016, p. 2). In media studies, too, it has held a great appeal as Castello (2016) points out, “Anderson’s work has now become a key reference in any research on the media and their role in national construction” (p. 59).

2.1.4. The Common Insights of Modernist Thinkers

In short, all the three approaches discussed provide a fuller picture of the emergence and evolution of nationalism. The common thread running through the approaches of all the three aforementioned modernist thinkers is that nationalism is a recent historical phenomenon which eventually became ubiquitous and established a new world order of nation-states. Through the lenses of these scholars, nations were formed through capitalism and industrialism. The nation and national identity -either invented or imagined in character- is a construct, and modern education, language as well as media plays a crucial role in its formation. Despite the similarities in their treatment of the origin of nationalism, they have differing views on several points. Most importantly, while Hobsbawm and Gellner locate the origin of nationalism in Western Europe, Anderson asserts that nationalism was born in the Americas and was later adopted in Europe. When it comes to the insights into the future of nationalism, Hobsbawm (1990) thinks differently from the two other scholars. He anticipates that nations “retreating before, resisting, adapting to, being absorbed or dislocated by the new supranational restructuring of the globe” (p. 191). Anderson and Gellner, on the other, share the foresight that nationalism will not in any near future cease to exist. As Anderson (1983) puts it, “the ‘end of the era of nationalism,’ so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (p. 3). Furthermore, the three scholars differ in their attitudes towards nationalism as a political ideology. Hobsbawm, a life-long Marxist, flatly expresses his hostile stand: “no serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed nationalist” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 12). Gellner (1983), too, is apparently unsympathetic to nationalism, for him, it is “indeed inscribed neither in the nature of things, nor in the hearts of men, nor in the pre-conditions of social life in

general, and the contention that it is so inscribed is a falsehood which nationalist doctrine has succeeded in presenting as self-evident” (p. 125). Anderson, on the other hand, admits that he is “the only one writing about nationalism who doesn’t think it ugly” (Khazaleh, 2005, n.p). At this point, he refers to the work of Michael Billig and his concept of “banal nationalism”, which underlines the embeddedness of nationalism in everyday practices.

Özkırımlı (2010) notes that the reproduction of nations and nationalism has been generally neglected by mainstream works in the field and takes *Banal Nationalism* as “the first study to provide a systematic analysis” of the subject (pp. 170-171). Nationalism is neither single nor stable, there is a wide spectrum of nationalisms that undergo constant transformation, interrelate and reverberate, as well as collide and compete. National identity, too, is far from a uniform content, subject to reproduction over time. Particularly in late modern times, as Hall (1996) points out, identities are “increasingly fragmented and fractured, never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (p. 4).

2.2. Billig and *Banal Nationalism*

Billig contributes to the field of nationalism studies by offering an insightful social psychological perspective to explain the contemporary pervasiveness of nationalism. Following the ideas of Gellner and Anderson, Billig (1995) argues that nations need to be ‘imagined’ as communities, and strong social psychological forces are at play in this process of imaging. As Billig (1995) puts it, “the imaging of the nation is part of a wider ideological, discursive consciousness” (p. 10). It is important to note that different from his predecessors, Gellner and Anderson, who focus on how

nations and nationalism emerged, Billig is rather concerned with how nationalism sustains itself, and explores the mechanisms that help its reproduction in everyday practices, which he thinks was ignored before:

I was particularly impressed by Gellner and Anderson, who were arguing that there was something historically new about national identity. However, I felt that most of the writers on nationalism were missing out something important: the everyday nationalism of the established nation-state (cited in Özkırımlı, 2010, p. 172).

According to Billig, nationalism is not something that prevails only in the right-wing extremist political scene. He criticizes the dominant view which labels nationalism as a phenomenon peculiar to non-Western, and non-established nations and newly emerging nation-states. In his account, “there is something misleading about this accepted use of the word ‘nationalism’. It always seems to locate nationalism on the periphery” (Billig, 1995, p. 5). He is also critical of the tendency to draw a distinction between ‘patriotism’ and ‘nationalism’. In Billig’s account, the common rhetorical formation of such a distinction is yet another concoction of nationalism, cultivating an opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’. While patriotism is presented as benign and praised as ‘our’ loyalty and attachment to ‘our’ homeland, nationalism is associated with malignancy and extremism, and attributed to ‘others’. He re-formulates the commonly held distinction between ‘patriotism’ and ‘nationalism’ as “Our Patriotism - Their Nationalism” (Billig, 1995, p. 55-59). In his account, although nationalism may not seem to drive an assertive political action or always exert major ideological influence in Western nations, it is deeply embedded in the routines of everyday life, and reproduced on a daily basis: “Nationalism, far from

being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition” (Billig, 1995, p. 6). Ordinary people are constantly reminded of their nationhood in everyday life: “Daily, the nation is indicated, or ‘flagged’, in the lives of its citizenry” (Billig, 1995, p. 6). However, the reminders of nationhood are generally so tenuous or subtle that they go overlooked, without a conscious perception or awareness. Typical sections of daily newspapers (‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ news), the use of the terms such as ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘here’, saluting of the national flag in schools, symbols on coins, banknotes, and stamps, the way the weather forecast is reported on TV (generally with an image of the national map), press coverage of sporting events, the use of national flags in sporting events, and etc. all remind ‘us’ of ‘our’ nation in a world of nations. He notes that “The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion, it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building” (Billig, 1995, p. 8). It is for the very reason that they are not consciously noticed, these reminders are so potent to fuel nationalism.

Billig uses the metaphor of ‘flagging’ to refer to occasions and practices which remind people of their nationhood in everyday life. Constant ‘flagging’ of nationhood in everyday life is a process of both remembering and forgetting. On one hand, ‘flagging’ acts as a medium to get us to remember our nationhood. On the other hand, this remembering is also an act of forgetting since we forget the fact that we are constantly reminded of our nationhood, and thus take it for granted, as if it were a fact of nature or an inevitable part of the order of the world. Although they generally go unnoticed, ‘flaggings’ of nationhood are not hidden at all. Banal ‘flaggings’ work through “Small words, rather than grand memorable phrases”, and so, what we need to do to unfold them is to become “linguistically microscopic” (Billig, 1995, pp. 93-94).

In Billig's account, nations do usually have different stories to be told, sometimes as many as the groups competing for hegemony. As Billig (1995) puts it, "The historical tales emerge from the struggles for hegemony" (p. 71). He suggests two examples to explain his point. In Britain, for instance, the national past can be narrated in two contradictory lines. From a conservative point of view, the past is affirmed and narrated as a time of stability whereas in liberal discourse it is condemned as the time of impoverishment. Another example Billig provides is Estonia. Once a part of the USSR, the country had a totally different account of national history taught at schools from the one that prevails today. Back then, the official history depicted Soviets as liberators whereas the unofficial history articulated the stories of those persecuted by Russians. As the nature of hegemonic power changed, so did the account of the official history. According to Billig (1995), national history, and thus national identity, is a matter of discursive dispute over hegemony, and is subject to change over time in accordance with changing power structures:

Different factions, whether classes, religions, regions, genders or ethnicities, always struggle for the power to speak for the nation, and to present their particular voice as the voice of the national whole, defining the history of other sub-sections accordingly. (...) Thus, national histories are continually being re-written, and the re-writing reflects current balances of hegemony (p. 71).

After discussing the grand theories of nationalism, which seek to explore the origins and dynamics of the phenomenon, this chapter recapitulated the contribution of Billig -greatly influenced by the pioneering theories- to the field and his concept of 'banal nationalism', which asserts that national identity is reproduced in a mundane

fashion in daily life. Before moving onto the next chapter, it is worthwhile to discuss some of the fruitful insights into the discursive formation and reproduction of the national identity to set a better ground for the discussion of the changing discursive terrain of the national identity in Turkey.

2.3. Discursive Construction of National Identity

One of the seminal works on the discursive construction of the national identity belongs to Wodak et al. (2009), who suggest, following Anderson (1983), that “nations are mental constructs, ‘imagined communities’, which nationalized political subjects perceive as discrete political entities” (p. 3). Against such a backdrop, they present their argument that national identities are “produced and reproduced as well as transformed and dismantled, *discursively*” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 4, italics original). In this account, national identity refers to a synthesis of attitudes, behavioral patterns, emotions and perceptions shared collectively and internalized through socialization. Opposing an essentialist notion of national identity, they contend that there is no single national identity binding at all times and for all nationals; it is “rather different identities are discursively constructed according to audience, setting, topic and substantive content” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 4). Although their study focuses on the specific case of the Austrian national identity, particularly regarding the country’s accession to the EU in 1995, their conceptual framework and methodological approach is applicable to other nations as well. However, they note that it is important for the researcher to “take careful note of the historical and cultural features specific to the nation being investigated” so that the conceptual and analytical tools they offer can be useful (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 5).

After this brief note on the methodological approach, we shall now return to the insights presented by Wodak et al. (2009), to study the discursive formation of national identity. Wodak et al. (2009), argue that previous research in the field “primarily emphasize national uniqueness and intra-national uniformity but largely ignore intra-national differences” (p. 4). Analyzing discourses at different levels, they illustrate how the national identity is discursively constructed and reproduced with reference to sameness and differences. Their study operates on the premise that national identity is constructed and reproduced through discourse.

If a nation is an imagined community and at the same time a mental construct, an imaginary complex of ideas containing at least the defining elements of collective unity and equality, of boundaries and autonomy, then this image is real to the extent that one is convinced of it, believes in it and identifies with it emotionally. The question of how this imaginary community reaches the minds of those who are convinced of it is easy to answer: it is constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly in narratives of national culture: “National identity is thus the product of discourse” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 22).

2.4. National Identity and Significant Others

The discourse over national identity interrelates on several planes. Triandafyllidou (1998) points out that national identity is not only defined over in-group characteristics, common traits shared by co-nationals, but also over out-group characteristics, “that is, through distinguishing and differentiating the nation from other nations or ethnic groups others” (p. 593). This insight echoes that of Hall (1996), who notes that “identities are constructed through, not outside difference” (p. 4). Similarly, Benhabib (2004) points out that “every nation has its others, within and

without” (p. 18). In her account, “nationalism is constituted through a series of imaginary as well as very real demarcations between us and them, we and the others” (Benhabib, 2004, p. 18).

Construction of national identity is necessarily a matter of drawing borders between “us” and “them” -if not always territorially, certainly discursively. Each nation asserts its unique identity by differentiating itself from the others.

Triandafyllidou (1998) proposes the notion of “significant others” to refer to other nations or ethnic groups that are “territorially close to, or indeed within, the national community and threatens, or rather is perceived to threaten, its ethnic and/or cultural purity and/or its independence” (p. 600). There is literally no national history lacking an articulation of the ‘other’, either positively or negatively toned. She then makes a distinction between two different typologies of “significant others”: external and internal. There are three subcategories of “external significant others” (Triandafyllidou, 2001, pp. 37-38). The first is the dominant nation or ethnic group in a multinational state from which the new nation seeks emancipation and/or separation. The second type applies to the neighboring nations or nation-states that might either be perceived to pose a threat or provide inspiration to the nation. The third type of “external significant other” comprises territorially close nations, nation-states or ethnic groups which do not assert any territorial claims but instead, stake claims to the cultural heritage of the ingroup. Thus, they are deemed to be threatening the nation’s distinctiveness and originality.

According to Triandafyllidou (2001), for a sovereign nation-state, an “internal significant other” is generally either an ethnic minority or an immigrant community (p. 34). Ethnic minorities, which take part in the process of state formation may later be perceived to disrupt national cohesion, disturb the cultural unity or pose a threat to

the territorial integrity if they assert secession from the national unity. Immigrant communities, too, become “internal significant others” when they are seen to violate the cultural cohesion and endanger the ethnic homogeneity by their different language, religion, culture or customs. The nation, then, as Triandafyllidou (2001) states, “engage in a process of reaffirmation of its identity. It is also likely to seek to redefine its identity, so as to differentiate the ingroup from the newcomers” (p. 36). In this sense, perception of the immigrant community by the native population becomes intrinsic to the definition and re-definition of the nation. Triandafyllidou (1998) points out that during periods of social and political unrest or economic instability, when the identity of the nation also becomes a contentious issue, “significant others” are even more highlighted:

If it is the national identity that is contested, the significant other helps to clarify the boundaries of the ingroup and to reinforce its members’ sense of belonging. If, in contrast, the nation undergoes a period of general economic or socio-political crisis, the significant other provides for a ‘distraction’ from the real causes of the crisis. Moreover, it is a means for reasserting the positive identity of the nation against the odds. (p. 603)

This insight is particularly relevant to the research topic. It is from this point of view that the next chapter traces the changes in the discourse of national identity in Turkey over the course of time in relation to narratives competing for discursive hegemony.

2.5. Key Analytical Tools

Before proceeding on to Chapter 3 to trace the evolution of nationalism in Turkey, it is necessary to highlight the key theoretical components discussed in this chapter. Theories and approaches presented in this chapter offer interpretive keys, particularly in so far as the study of re-negotiation and reproduction of nationalism and national identity in Turkey is concerned. Conceptual tools that are remarkable for their applicability to the present study may be summarized as follows. First of all, in the light of the modernist theories of nationalism, the nation is taken as a modern construct whose emergence is related to the development of industrialization and capitalism and subsequent, or concurrent, changes in social relations. Anderson's famous phrase serves as a starting point and provides a base for further deliberation. The nation -any nation- is an 'imagined community' resting on the collective projection of a people who consider themselves to be belonging to the same unity and sharing a common cause. With that insight also comes the question how such an imagined community is constructed in the minds of individuals. At this point, the notion of "Invention of Tradition" by Hobsbawm and Ranger offers a perspective to explore the nation-building process, which involves deliberate acts by state elites and intellectuals to foster a sense of commitment to the community. Any nation-building process is the fabrication of symbols, images, narratives to define the markers of collective identity. This is even more so for the nation-building process in Turkey, particularly in the early Republican Era when the founding leaders of the Republic launched a full-scale project of modernization and nationalization to create new citizens with national consciousness who would then become actively engaged in the political restructuring. The newly founded nation-state sought to foster an 'imagined community' among the members through the 'invention of traditions', from the

narrative of a mythical past to signs and symbols of everyday use. However, as the following chapter will show, the young Turkish Republic did not start it from scratch but inherited a great deal of nationalist thinking that gained ground especially among intellectuals in the late Ottoman Era. ‘Official nationalism’ of the late Ottoman Era, to borrow Anderson’s term, was a reaction to European nationalism and an endeavor to safeguard the long-declining Empire’s future. On the other hand, nationalism in the Republican Era, though owing much to the earlier discourses was rather concerned with building a brand-new nation and state that was characterized by uniformity. It is here that the notion of ‘homogenization’ by Gellner comes forward. The ultimate objective of nationalism is, as emphasized by Gellner, to create a homogeneous body of people, particularly on linguistic and cultural terms, who can act uniformly. This insight offers a useful vantage point from which to examine the construction of the Turkish national identity during the early years of the Republic. At this point, employing Wodak’s approach, it is necessary to take national identity as a discursive construct which is historically bound and continuously evolving. An analysis of the articulation of the Turkish national identity during its initial stage of formation is helpful to understand how it has transformed particularly in the last decades. As Wodak et al. (2009) point out, national identity is produced and reproduced with reference to sameness and differences. What makes us who ‘we’ are relies heavily on what makes us different from whoever the ‘others’ are. It is here that the notion of “significant others” by Triandafyllidou (1998) comes into play to explore how the Turkish national identity is defined over differences from ‘others’, whoever they may be, depending on the historical conditions and changes in power structures. Finally, the question arises how the research material of this study -newspapers- is relevant to the discursive construction of the national identity. As discussed earlier in this

chapter, media, in the broadest sense, plays a crucial role in the formation of the 'imagined community'. Media is a tool which assists the production, dissemination and legitimization of 'invented traditions'. It is a site where hegemonic discourses of nationalism and national identity are reiterated and confirmed as well as contested and challenged. Media contributes to the construction of the national identity through the production and circulation of narratives and images which highlight and spotlight 'significant others'. Therefore, the media is the major bearer of "banal nationalism", to borrow from Billig (1995), which reproduces the national identity on a day-to-day basis in the most mundane fashion.



CHAPTER 3

NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TURKEY

This chapter aims to trace a historical trajectory of nationalism and national identity in Turkey, which will be fruitful in investigating newspaper articles and images relating to Syrian refugees with the aim of revealing how they invest in the reconstruction of the national identity. This historical analysis will demonstrate the particularities of the making of Turkish national identity. It is both beyond the objectives of the present work and the scope of this chapter to present a full record of the history of modern Turkey.

To that end, periodization in this chapter will encompass the time frame from the 19th century when nationalism made its appearance in the Ottoman Empire to the early years of the Turkish Republic when national identity was extensively codified. The articulation of national identity formulated in this era, despite going through changes, long retained its hegemony until the 1980s when it was substantially challenged by the rise of political Islam (Taşkın, 2008, p. 142), which ultimately led to the successive electoral victories of the current ruling party in the 2000s. Since taking power in 2002, the JDP has embodied different political and ideological strains which can be traced back at least to the inception of multi-party politics in 1946. However, it is both due to the limitation of this study and because a counter-rhetoric of national identity began to claim hegemony from the 1980s onwards that the period between the advent of the multi-party era and the 1980s will remain untouched in this chapter. It should also be noted that since a dichotomy of ‘Old Turkey’ (particularly, but not solely, in reference to early Republican era) versus ‘New Turkey’ has been a

repository for the JDP's discourse, these historic periods require special considerations.

This chapter seeks to accommodate the theoretical foundations presented in the previous chapter into the exploration of nationalism in Turkey. This exploration draws at its core on Anderson's (1983) definition of the nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 6). It is beyond possibility for the members of this community to be acquainted with each other, and yet they imagine themselves to be related to each other through a common framework; a set of shared beliefs, values, practices, and characteristics. The process of imagining a nation is thus a dynamic re-production of a national self-identity in relation to the 'Other'. This imagined shared identity, in other words, how 'we' imagine 'us', is entwined with how 'we' imagine 'them' and who 'we' imagine 'them' to be. Nationalist discourse seeks to promote uniformity within the community while relying on a distinction between 'us' and 'them', which are neither natural nor unchanging categories but are rather contingent and open to reconfiguration and contestation. Defining the imagined community of 'us' can turn into a political struggle over who 'we' are as is the case in contemporary Turkey. It is from this vantage point that this chapter explores different narratives of who 'we' are.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part of the chapter traces the origin of nationalism back to the late Ottoman Era, which will not only help better understand the making of Turkish national identity in the Republican Era but will also provide crucial insights into the re-making process in the last decades. Following Anderson (1983), the emergence of nationalism in the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire is analyzed under the rubric of "official nationalism". The three respective phases of "official nationalism" -Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism- are visited in

this part. The second part of the chapter addresses the making of Turkish national identity in the early Republican Era through the practice of “inventing traditions” (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Following Gellner (1983), this part of the chapter argues that “cultural homogenization” served as the leitmotif of nationalism in the early Republican Era. This part aims to reveal the “significant others” (Triandafyllidou, 1998) against which the national identity was defined. The main question posed here is who ‘we’ were meant to be. The final part of the chapter focuses on the rule of the JDP during which building a ‘New Turkey’ *vis-a-vis* ‘Old Turkey’ has been one of the major discourses in the political arena. It is an era when constructing a new imagined community and a new national identity through the practice of re-inventing traditions and presenting new significant others lay at the heart of the political project by the ruling party.

3.1. Official Nationalism of the Ottoman Empire

The broad wave of change that swept across Europe in “the long 19th century” (Hobsbawm, 1962) was bound to have its repercussions -sooner or later- in Ottoman society as with any other society in the rest of the world. The “dual revolution” (Hobsbawm, 1962), though rather late, found echoes in the Ottoman Empire as well. The Empire was then faced with a dual challenge. On the one hand, it had to modernize the state, imperial institutions and economy to be able to compete with European powers. On the other hand, in order to preserve its territorial integrity, it had to resist the spread of secessionist nationalist movements that were gaining momentum especially in the Balkans. Until this century, the Empire had ruled over a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-national territory under a system commonly referred to as the ‘*millet* system’. In the following, I will first briefly explain the

‘*millet* system’, and then the three consecutive paths of “official nationalism” in the late Ottoman era.

Deringil (1993, p. 5) argues that the developments in the Ottoman Empire were quite similar to those in other imperial systems threatened by rising nationalism. In his account, in order to counterbalance the influence of nationalism, imperial powers including the Ottoman Empire pursued policies of standardization and uniformity through education and language, a policy which very well resonates with Anderson’s concept of ‘official nationalism’. Although Deringil (1993, p. 5) focuses on Ottomanism as “a fine example of Anderson’s official nationalism”, I will here use the concept in a broader sense to refer to all the endeavors to preserve the state authority and arouse a sense of belonging in public.

3.1.1. The *Millet* System

This system was a “socio-cultural and communal framework based, firstly, on religion, and, secondly, on ethnicity which in turn often reflected linguistic differences” (Karpat, 2002, p. 612). The system granted semi-autonomy to Muslims and non-Muslims under the leadership of their own clergy. The Empire was composed of different *millets* such as Orthodox Greeks, Jews, Muslim Turks and Kurds, Protestants, and Armenians. Each *millet* was liable to pay a different amount of tax and abided by their own codes. The system was basically instrumental in assisting the emperors to govern a multi-national territory. The system was not egalitarian in essence, though, as McCarthy (1997, p. 131) puts: “Muslims felt superior and often acted accordingly” because official religion of the Empire was Islam.

The *Millet* system meant that people living under the reign of the Ottoman Empire drew their identity primarily from the religious community they belonged to

(McCarthy, 1997, p. 129). They were also bound together under a central state authority, *Devlet-i Ali-i Osmani* (The Sublime Ottoman State), as the subjects of the sultan (Karpas, 2002, p. 694). As Gellner (1983) points out for traditional societies, the Ottoman society was marked by a sharp distinction between the ruling elites and the mass of the population. “The Subject Class” was diverse in religion, ethnicity and culture (Shaw, 1976, p. 150). The ruling elite, let alone attempting to eradicate this discrepancy through fostering a common identity, drew its legitimacy from the very existence of such a disparity. The strict distinction between the ruling elites and the rest of the population helped sustain the Ottoman dynasty. In this sense, the ruling class had no intention of reigning a culturally homogenous empire: “the ruling Turks had never attempted to impose cultural homogeneity on the ruled *millets*” (Keyder, 1993, p. 19). However, the growth of nationalism and secessionist movements brought the necessity to forge a new and rather inclusive identity.

Nationalism, not much unexpectedly, found its first audiences among the non-Muslim populations in the Empire. As ethnic/national identities became more salient, the Ottoman identity began to lose its magnetism particularly for non-Muslims. Growing restlessness among non-Muslim populations threatened the territorial integrity of the Empire and suppressing revolts through military force proved impossible. The first step taken to counterbalance the influence of European nationalism and to revitalize the backward Empire amidst the ever-growing challenge of European powers was to modernize the state apparatus through several reforms. *Tanzimat Fermanı* (The Imperial Edict of Reorganization) and *Islahat Fermanı* (The Imperial Reform Edict), respectively, along with several modernization reforms on different domains, introduced a new concept of belonging to the diverse ethno-

religious communities of the Empire: citizenship (Karpas, 2002, p. 504; McCarthy, 1997, pp. 296-97).

Tanzimat Fermanı marked the launch of a new era when new ideas and institutions flourished across the Empire. Most importantly, all subjects, regardless of their religion, were to be treated equally before the law. This meant granting the non-Muslim population in the Empire equal status as full members of the Ottoman community, at least on paper (Zürcher, 2017, p. 45). Formerly viewed as subjects, all the people living under the reign of the Sultan became citizens with equal rights, at least on paper.

3.1.2. Ottomanism

As subjects were transformed into citizens through reforms, the loyalty to the Sultan was replaced with Ottoman patriotism. Ottomanism, envisioned subjects from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, united as Ottoman citizens under the central authority of the Empire (Üngör, 2011, p. 27). Paradoxically though, Ottomanism and the related reforms to counterbalance the influence of European nationalism eventually paved the way for Turkish nationalism to flourish (Karpas, 2002, p. 548)

However, the Balkan Wars (1912- 1913) proved it impossible to preserve the territorial integrity of the Empire by forging a common Ottoman identity. When the war was over, the Empire had lost most of its European territory. Hence, Ottomanism lost its currency (Zürcher, 2017, p. 129). This preliminary phase of nation-building then came to an end, and another articulation of a common identity gained more appeal. When it became definite that the Empire had to proceed without non-Muslims,

the ruling elites and intellectuals started to cling more strongly to the idea of pan-Islamism as a tool to unify the Muslims.

3.1.3. Islamism

The ethnic composition of the Ottoman Empire had changed to a great extent due to wars and migratory movements towards the end of the 19th century. While the loss of territories resulted in a decline in the non-Muslim population, the Muslim population went up proportionately (Karpas, 2002, pp.691-92). In addition, Ottomanism had proved fruitless in preserving the Empire intact. Under the reign of the Sultan Abdülhamid II, a new policy that highlighted the Islamic character of the state and emphasized Islam as a uniting force for the Muslim population was put into practice. In line with this new focus, the title of caliphate gained more prominence for Abdülhamid II, who argued that Islam was far beyond a religion and offered the primary basis for the rule of the state as well as the order of the social life (Karpas, 2002, pp. 507-508). This is primarily the reason why, as Zürcher (2017, p. 72) points out, “Abdülhamid is seen as an exemplary figure: the last truly powerful Islamic prince who was at the same time caliph” among Islamist conservatives, who have become dominant in the last two decades.

Following Anderson, Bora (2017, p. 15) argues that nationalism that flourished in the Ottoman Empire in the last quarter of the 19th century was a belated recurrence of the transformation of European empires into national states. According to Bora (2017, p. 16), what made this preliminary stage of nationalism - “proto-nationalism”- peculiar was that it was soiled in religious identity, which he points out, citing Hobsbawm (1990), is paradoxical for nationalism.

3.1.4. Turkism

The route to modernization in the Ottoman Empire followed varying ideological traits which both converged and diverged at different points and led ultimately to the formation of the nation-state. Turkism was the endpoint on this route and was reached when the two other previously traced paths proved to be leading to an impasse (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 128-129). The Young Ottomans, who once advocated the idea of unity around the common ground of Ottoman patriotism, took the lead in the development of Turkism as an ideological means for the restoration of the state. The efforts to counterbalance the influence of European nationalism had ended in failure, and the only remaining plausible option for salvation seemed to nourish Turkish nationalism.

Any account on the history of Turkish nationalism would be lacking a great deal if it did not mention one of leading figures, Ziya Gökalp, whose thoughts have had an immense impact on a broad spectrum of nationalisms in Turkey (Parla, 1985, p. 7; Bora, 2003, p. 437). Ziya Gökalp, formerly a supporter of Ottomanism, contributed greatly to the vocabulary and rhetoric of modern Turkish nationalism. In Gökalp's formulation, Islam was an integral part of national culture, and needed adjustments to be compatible with the modern nation. Achieving a synthesis of modernity and national culture; adopting Western models of modernization while retaining Turkish / Islamic culture, crystallized in Gökalp's thought, has been an important theme for Turkish nationalism since the early 19th century (Kadioğlu, 1996, p. 178). This dilemmatic thought is what Kadioğlu (1996) calls "the paradox of Turkish nationalism", which she says led to "both a hostility towards and an imitation of Western ways" (p. 185). In this sense, particularly for the early stage of Turkish nationalism, the Western / European ways and culture served as the "other" that

Turkish / Islamic culture should try to distinguish itself from while getting closer to it.

3.2. The *Invention of Tradition* in the Republican Era

The concept of ‘invention of tradition’ is here used in a way that is compatible with but not identical to the sense Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) use the term. In other words, the term is used here loosely to refer to the practices of the state designed to assert a continuity with an ancient mythical past and bolster identification with the ‘imagined nation’. However, the practice of inventing traditions is neither peculiar to Republican nationalism nor can be confined to the period of 1930s.³

Before proceeding to the next part, it is important to note that the Republican Era does not point to a radical deviation from the path of “official nationalism”, a survival strategy of imperial powers as Anderson (1983) sees it. To be more precise, “official nationalism” underlines the motivation behind cultivating nationalism; to save and serve the interests of the state. It is here neither my purpose nor is it compatible with recent historiography (Zürcher, 2010) to suggest a clear-cut distinction between Ottoman nationalism and Republican nationalism by analyzing them under different headings. There is rather a continuity than a separation in the process going towards the making of the nation-state. Turkish nationalism was not

³ Deringil (1993), for instance, utilizes the concept to investigate the practices of the Ottoman ruling elites geared towards the creation of an Ottoman nationality in the 19th century. Yanık (2006) analyzes the adoption of Nevruz among public celebrations in the 1990s within this context. Posocco (2018) refers to the notion in his study on Panorama Museum 1453, as a means of reproducing a heroic past.

invented from scratch by the founders of the nation-state but was modified from almost a century-old tradition of thought and practice (Canefe, 2002, p. 145).

Republican Turkish nationalism, or Atatürk nationalism as Bora (2003, pp. 437-438) calls it, inherited -as much as it challenged- many of the tenets and practices of its predecessors; added new dimensions and meanings to it; and eventually formed itself as the “official nationalism” of Turkey, in the sense that Bora (2003) uses the term; to denote the official ideology of the state. This official nationalism long sustained its hegemony until it was fundamentally challenged by “Islamic-conservative nationalism” of the JDP (Saraçoğlu, 2011).

3.2.1. *Cultural Homogenization and Republican National Identity*

In Gellner’s (1983) thought, the emergence of industrial society enforced cultural homogenization, which in turn paved the way for the emergence of nations and nationalism, as explored in the previous chapter. Here the concept of ‘cultural homogenization’ is borrowed loosely from Gellner to refer to the formation of national identity in the Republican Era. The transformation from an empire to a nation-state came with several changes in boundaries, not only territorially but also and, more importantly, discursively and ideationally. One of the most remarkable challenges in the making of the nation-state was to determine the boundaries to the nation. Who would be considered as part of the nation and who would not? Who were to be identified as insiders and who were to be outsiders? These were huge questions confronting the builders of the new nation-state. In fact, it would not be a stretch to say that at its very outset, the Republic was faced with a national identity crisis -or, to borrow from Toprak (2005, p. 30), a “soul-searching drama” - the consequences of which have reverberated to today.

The founders of the Republic had to be occupied with the task of inventing the ‘imagined community’, who would develop a sense of belonging to this new national collectivity. The period following the First World War was one of political and military turmoil. Defeated in the war, the Empire was heading speedily towards its long-awaited demise. Subsequently, most of the Ottoman territory came under the occupation of the Allied forces, leaving a small portion of Anatolia, which was predominantly inhabited by the Muslims and the Turks from the late 19th century onwards (Karpas, 2002, p. 433), for the Ottoman rule. In the meantime, political struggle against foreign dominion was escalating in Anatolia and armed resistance against the Allied troops was developing into a War of Independence (also called the “National Struggle”) under the military command of Mustafa Kemal, who had also become the most prominent figure in political actions and mobilization.

This was an in-between stage, from the War of Independence to the founding of the Republic, in the course of nationalism’s development as the highest priority was to secure the territorial integrity of what had remained of the Ottoman lands. Who would be the persons deemed to be entitled to inhabit those lands was to be negotiated thereafter. This is not to say that there was no deliberation or discussion on the matter of identity. However, neither a consensus nor a shared understanding of the ‘imagined community’ could have been reached before the physical boundaries to the collectivity were finalized. In this era, and a little later, the task of salvation and state building outweighed the project of forging and defining a national identity (Bora, 2017, p. 20).

Turkism -now had very little appeal, nor were there any realistic conditions for the unity of all Turks- was replaced with a territorial understanding of the nation in which ethnicity was of lesser significance than religious identity. This became evident

in the declaration, in 1920, of the National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*), a set of principles concerning national independence and territorial integrity. The National Pact, which later determined the borders of the present-day Turkey, “advocated not Turkish national sovereignty but that of all Muslim Ottomans” (Zürcher, 2017, p. 139). Throughout the War of Independence, a deliberate emphasis was placed on the Islamic character of the struggle (Zürcher, 2017, p. 152), which served the purpose of justifying the legitimacy of resistance in the eyes of Anatolian Muslims and rallying them to the national cause now led by Mustafa Kemal and his followers (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1996, p. 235; Çağaptay, 2005, p. 11). What united and mobilized Anatolian population during the War of Independence was rather their Muslim identity than Turkishness (Özbudun, 1998, pp. 151-2). In other words, Islam had been a major marker of the common identity of the people who made up the majority in Anatolia. This is primarily why, if not solely, what energized the war-weary Anatolian Muslims for the War of Independence, more than anything else, was the Greek invasion of İzmir (Shaw & Shaw, 1977, p. 342; Lewis, 1968, p. 241). Once forming a separate non-Muslim *millet*, pejoratively referred to as “*gavur*” (a term meaning “infidel” and still in use today) in the Ottoman Empire, Greece had gained independence, after a nationalist revolt, in 1830 (Karpas, 2002, p. 528). In this sense, the Greeks emerged as the predominant “other” for Anatolian Muslims during the War of Independence (Ergül, 2009). This religion-based nationalism, though leaving a legacy of a mindset, was from 1923 replaced with a different understanding of nationalism seeking “a new Turkish national and secular corporate political identity” (Zürcher, 2010, pp. 231-32).

When the military struggle against the foreign invasion was over, political struggle at home immediately gained momentum. The first matter to be resolved was

“the form and structure of the Turkish state” (Lewis, 1968, p. 256). The sultanate was abolished in 1922, and the next step was the public acknowledgment of what had already -more or less- *de facto* taken place. In 1923, the Turkish Republic was proclaimed, with Mustafa Kemal as its first president. For most of the 1920s, through a series of decisive legislative and executive acts and institutional reforms, the Turkish Republic devoted special attention to legitimize the new ruling order under the administration of the Republican People’s Party (RPP), and secularize the state and society (Çağaptay, 2005, p. 13). The caliphate, which had already lost its political force when it was separated from the office of the Sultan, was finally abolished in 1924. In the following, religious shrines (*türbe*) and dervish convents (*tekke*), which held a significant role in the everyday lives of Muslims, were closed down (Zürcher, 2017, p. 173). The process of secularization went on to encompass almost every aspect of social, cultural and political life, and legal domain; from the method of measuring time to the matters of marriage and inheritance, and from the clothing of men to the official script (Lewis, 1968, pp. 271-73; Zürcher, 2017, pp. 188-190). One of a great “symbolic revolution” (Lewis, 1968, p. 267) was that the wearing of *fez*, the headgear of men which made their Muslim-Ottoman belonging visible in public view, was prohibited while a Western-style headdress was promoted. Educational reform was another major pillar of secularization. The whole system of religious education was eliminated, with the traditional Islamic schools (*mektep*) and religious seminaries (*medrese*) being integrated into a unified system of national education under the surveillance of the Ministry of Education (Shaw & Shaw, 1977, p. 384). Islam, which had so far been the major adhesive to hold the Anatolian population together, was then largely removed from the public political realm, leaving behind a void needed to be filled (Çağaptay, 2005, p. 14).

In the early making of the Turkish national identity, particularly through a series of secularizing reforms, the main objective can be summarized as breaking off the ties with the Ottoman past (Ahmad, 2006, p. 3; Çağaptay, 2005, p. 13; Lewis, 1968, p. 279); “a radical rupture with the ancien régime” (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1996, p. 235). The imagining of the nation was at bottom an act of displacing the “old imagining”, which derives its legitimacy “from divinity, not from populations, who, after all, are subjects, not citizens” (Anderson, 1983, p. 19). In Anderson’s (1983) account, the decline of religion and dynastic realm that took place in a gradual manner over a long period of time following the Enlightenment made it historically possible to imagine the nation. Such a deep-rooted and dramatic alteration had no parallel in the Turkish context and it was against this background of deprivation that Turkish nationalism came into being. Therefore, as Kadioğlu (1998b) points out, “the process of Enlightenment in the West became a project in the context of Turkish modernization” (p. 6). Central to the project of modernization, handed down by the *Tanzimat* reformers and now undertaken by the founding cadres of the Republic, was to radically reorient the structure of state and society towards modern Western models, a goal for whose attainment nationalism emerged as the ideological tool. For the founders of the Republic, to quote Cizre-Sakallıoğlu (1996), “nationalism became more than an emancipating force: it became a project to subvert the existing cosmology and relations of subordination” (p. 234).

With its all political and religious constituents and cultural symbols, the Ottoman was now cast aside in favor of a new imagining, which was yet to be harvested. While the process of state building was very near its completion, the issue of accordingly building a nation was coming to the fore. It is here useful to recall Gellner’s (1983) definition of nationalism: “primarily a political principle which holds

that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (p. 1). The Turkish Republic had come into existence as a state, and as Kadioğlu (1998a) suggests, the state was now searching for its nation. The question at this point, regarding the national identity to fill the void left by the dismissal of the Ottoman-Muslim identity, according to Kadioğlu (1996), was -rather than “Who are the Turks?”- posed as “Who and/or how are the Turks going to be?” (p. 177).

The first wave of reforms hinted at a secular imagining of the nation, which situated religion not in the political foreground but more towards the private domain and among the cultural markers of national identity. On the one hand, “secularism became entangled with the definition of the nation” (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1996, p. 234). On the other hand, it was the Muslim population -the Muslim percentage of Anatolian population had by 1923 increased to approximately 98 per cent (Zürcher, 2017, p. 165) - who would make the national collectivity, so the making of the national identity had to involve the fusion of being a Muslim into it. The state had to rely on “the individuals’ cultural markers -including religion- as the building blocks of the new construct, the nation” (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1996, p. 234).

Such an insight was also at the root of immigration and citizenship policies, best exemplified by the 1923 Greek-Turkish population exchange which involved the exchange of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Greeks living in Turkey with non-Turkish speaking Muslims living in the Balkans (Yeğen, 2004, p. 57). This example, according to Yeğen (2004, p. 58), reveals the significance of Muslimhood in the definition of Turkishness; for being a Muslim was considered to be fundamental to Turkishness while non-Muslims were deemed to be outsiders to this body. Çağaptay (2005) is of the same opinion -that “Islam was a subtle but definitive marker of Turkishness in the 1920s” (p. 156). He also adds that this religion-based definition of

Turkishness was the legacy of the former *millet* system and shows Turkish nationalism was still drawing on its previous origins (Çağaptay, 2005, p. 156). This is quite, as Aktürk (2009, p. 893) puts it; “ironic”, though, because the Republic was, on the one hand, relying on Islam as a marker of Turkishness, and thus inheriting from the former *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire; on the other hand, it was yearning to diverge from the Ottoman past in order to follow significantly different political and cultural directions. Islam had “indelibly marked the Ottoman Muslim and Turkish identity for centuries” (Çağaptay, 2004, p. 80) and the Republic did not intend -or could not possibly do so even if it had attempted- to merely erase it from the canon of national identity.

Islam was neither alien nor central to the imagining of the Turkish nation; it was supposed to remain somewhere down in the hierarchy of national identity components but would never rise to the top among other cultural codes of belonging to the nation to reach wider visibility in public sphere and force to organize social and political life. In order to prevent the ascent of Islam from the building level to the broader landscape level, the state would keep a close eye on religious practice through the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), established in 1924 under the office of Prime Ministry. The Presidency of Religious Affairs, charged with appointing imams and determining the content of Friday preachers, would promote a reformed and enlightened version of Islam, or “state Islam”, as Cizre-Sakallıoğlu (1996, p. 234) calls it.

As remarked by Cizre-Sakallıoğlu (1996), “Islam was viewed as an inferior cultural marker when compared with a modern Turkish identity based on the principle of citizenship endowed with universal rights” (p. 235). Republican nationalism envisioned a nation in which members, who were “Muslim by religion and

Westernized by life-style” (Al, 2015, p. 87); secular in worldview and outlook, identified themselves first and foremost, as Turkish nationals -if not ethnically, then judicially (as Turkish citizens) and culturally.

The package of national identity was awaiting to be filled with more items, a process which accelerated in the 1930s. The previous era was rather determined by reforms on a wide scale to bring a secular state into being. By the early 1930s, once “a secular republic had been firmly established and the country rebuilt, the regime was able to shift more of its attention to ideology” (Çağaptay, 2005, p. 44). The pillars of this ideology -the six principles of Kemalism; republicanism, populism, nationalism, revolutionism, secularism and statism, which are still symbolized by the RPP’s six-arrow emblem - were finalized and adopted as the “fundamentals and unchanging principles” of the ruling party in a general congress as early as the beginning of the era in 1931 (Lewis, 1968, p. 286). The definition of the ‘nation’ in the party’s program accepted in this general congress is quite telling in terms of the Republican imaginary of the national identity. The program defines the nation as a “social and political community of citizens connected to one another through language, culture, and ideals” (Çağaptay, 2005, p. 44).

A close reading of this definition reveals the underpinnings of “imagined community” in the Republican era. It is, first and foremost, a social and political community made up of “citizens”, who are regarded as much more than just beneficiaries of a lawful status. In her work exploring the evolution of citizenship and civic education from the late Ottoman Empire to the 1980s, Üstel (2008, p. 322-23) argues that the “ideal citizen” of the Republic was to be both “civilized” and “patriotic”. Regarding the former, citizens were expected to abide by the civilized codes of conduct and social behavior which were considered to be consistent with the

norms of Western civilization. The latter aspect of citizenship, patriotism, required a whole-hearted devotion and loyalty not only to the territorial homeland but also to ethnocultural ties which were seen akin to familial bonds. In this sense, the concept of citizenship is defined more by “duties” with respect to the state than by “rights”, and as such, the “ideal citizen” of these years was supposed to be not “civic” but “militant” (Üstel, 2008, p. 323). The notion of citizenship was thus more of a degree earned through meeting liabilities to the nation and the state than a legal status enjoyed equally by each and every member of the nation. According to Üstel (2008, pp. 323-324), citizens are “burdened with duties”, and a discourse of perceived “threat” and “danger” posed by external and internal others is employed to justify these duties. This brings us to the next feature of the nation as defined in the RPP program; “social and political community of citizens”. The determinants of this social and political community are then listed in order: “language, culture and ideals”.

To start with the first of these axes, language, needless to say Turkish, plays a great role in the socio-cultural framing of national identity. The first principal step in the field of language had been taken in the previous decade, in 1928, when the Arabic script was replaced with the Latin one. In the 1930s, a further linguistic dimension was added to the markers of national identity through institutional design and practices. Established in 1932, The Turkish Language Academy (*Türk Dil Kurumu*) set out to purify the language from Arabic and Persian loanwords, which had heavily influenced the Ottoman-Turkish, the official language of the Empire (Alici, 1996, p. 228). The project of linguistic purification, despite the many reasonable and practical grounds, was ideologically galvanized by quite the same motive as the alphabet reform; “to cut off Turkish society from its Ottoman and Middle Eastern Islamic traditions and to reorient it towards the West” (Zürcher, 2017, p. 190). A modern and

standardized national language, written in Latin letters and purged from Arabic and Persian influences, according to Alıcı (1996); “would come to symbolize the Turkish nation as unique, having a particular language, hence a particular culture of its own” (p. 228).

Inasmuch as it was detached from the recent past, this new purified language was to be attached to a separate history, one which had yet to be ‘invented’. The history claimed for the national language found its expression in the invention of the Sun-Language Theory (*Güneş-Dil Teorisi*), which purported that all languages were originally derivatives of one primordial language spoken in Central Asia, and that Turkish, which all the languages had emerged from, remained closest to this root language (Zürcher, 2017, p. 191). Another important point to be noted here regarding language is that it was considered to be one of the determinants of cultural homogenization as was noticeable from the “*Citizen, speak Turkish!*” (*Vatandaş, Türkçe Konuş!*) campaign, in which -ironically enough- the Turkish Jews took an active role despite being among the major target population groups (Aslan, 2007, pp. 257-258; Çağaptay, 2005, pp. 57-60; İnce, 2012, pp. 61-62). The title of the campaign very well implies that in order to be deemed a ‘citizen’ of the Republic, one needs to speak Turkish. This perception, as aptly observed by Ülker (2003), is also reflected in the migration and settlement policies in the early Republican era. According to Ülker (2003), speaking Turkish and possessing Turkish culture were among the major criteria to be met by newcomers to get accepted, for the aim of the Republic was to create a “homogenous nation in its cultural and linguistic senses” (pp. 197-98). Speaking Turkish is one of the benchmarks which set the boundaries for the new nation -those of both inclusivity and exclusivity. According to Çağaptay (2004, p. 97), as the “*Citizen, speak Turkish!*” campaign suggests, the gates were open for those -

non-Turkish Muslims or non-Muslims, particularly Jews- who adopted the Turkish language. However, those who sought to retain their cultural, linguistic or ethnic identity, especially the Kurds, were kept at the margins, and under state surveillance and monitoring (through e.g., population resettlement and immigration policies) to ensure that they do not flourish to claim a separate identity from that of the homogenous collective identity that the Republic yearned for (Çağaptay, 2005, pp. 86-89; Aktürk, 2009, p. 900).

Getting back to the definition of the nation in the RPP program; right after ‘language’, ‘culture’ is introduced as the second unifying element that holds the citizens together. Raymond Williams (2015) famously asserts that culture is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (p. 49). One of the definitions that Williams (2015) specifies is that culture “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general” (p. 52). It is this sense of the term -“a particular way of life”- that was, in all likelihood, employed in the definition of the nation in the RPP program. Following Williams, Eagleton (2000, p. 23) adds another dimension to the concept of culture: “it is also the site of a political conflict”. One might stretch to say that there is perhaps no better example than the case of Turkey to reflect the concreteness of Eagleton’s remark, for the fiercest encounters between power blocs -however one may choose to name them; Kemalists vs. Islamists, or seculars vs. conservatives- competing for hegemony have arguably taken place in the domain of culture, and particularly over cultural symbols, as has been observed by many (Al, 2020; Aydın-Düzgit, 2019; Erdoğan, 2016; Kalaycıoğlu, 2012). If we take culture as ‘a particular way of life’ as Williams suggests, there is a deep-rooted, and ongoing, and perhaps never-ending, debate over the way it should be, the way people live their lives and make sense of themselves. What, then, was the

substance and references of the culture –‘particular way of life’- suggested as one of the bonds to bring the citizens of the freshly formed nation together supposed to be?

Ziya Gökalp was pretty much preoccupied with this question years before the Republic was established. His thoughts had great influence on not only the founding cadres of the Republic, and on Mustafa Kemal in particular, but also on the following generations of political figures, and on different ends of the political spectrum (Parla, 1985, pp. 7-8). Ziya Gökalp was one of the first to define the concept of ‘culture’ in the Turkish language. He made a distinction between “culture” and “civilization”; the former being national, natural and organic, and the latter international, cultivated, and artificial (Gökalp, 1968, p. 22-23). Drawing upon the distinction he made between “culture” and “civilization”, Gökalp (2010) offered a three-fold path to modernization in one of his most acclaimed work; *Turkification, Islamization and Civilization* (*Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*). What he proposed was a “synthesis of Turkism, Islamism and Modernism (Westernism)” (Parla, 1985, p. 50). In his own words: “We Turks have to create a Turkish-Islamic culture by fully appropriating to ourselves the mentality of contemporary civilization and its sciences” (Gökalp, 1959, p. 101). Hence, in Gökalp’s thought, modernization required the acquisition of material properties of the Western civilization; scientific, technological and industrial advancements, but not the adoption of the European way of life and moral values.

Despite the many convergences, Republican nationalism diverges from Gökalp’s thought in two important and interrelated respects. First, Mustafa Kemal essentially rejects the notion of distinction between ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ as formulated by Gökalp (Yıldız, 2019, p. 119). Thus, taking ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ as one and the same rendered a wholesale Westernization, an appropriation of Western civilization in full, from its legal and institutional framework to cultural

practices and aesthetics. The second, and very much related to the first, point of divergence concerns the role of religion. Gökalp treats Islam as part of the essential fabric of the Turkish national culture and a vital constituent of Turkish identity (Davison, 1995, pp. 212-213). For Republican nationalism, on the other hand, Islam was to be confined to the private realm of personal belief, and not to become a point of reference for the shared culture of the nation, for anything Islamic was deemed to be reminiscent of the old regime that the Republic set out to overthrow (Yıldız, 2019, p. 119).

As a consequence of this train of thought, the Republic sought to detach the Ottoman-Islamic past from the core of the common culture, and fill the resultant void with a glorious, ancient pre-Islamic past. In this ‘invented’ remote past, elaborated as the “Turkish History Thesis”, the Turks were the descendants of Aryan inhabitants of Central Asia, from which they spread to various parts of Asia, Africa and Europe, and created the greatest civilizations of human history (Zürcher, 2017, p. 192). The glorification of such a mythical past served several ideological and political as well as pragmatic ends. One of the purposes was to instill into people a sense of national pride and boost their self-respect, which had seriously been damaged after long years of Western superiority (Lewis, 1968, pp. 359-360; Zürcher, 2017, pp. 192-193). More importantly, such a vision of history -the view of a golden age of pre-Islamic Turks, which denounced and renounced the past 600 years of Ottoman-Islamic history (Ersanlı, 2003, pp. 234-239)- reflected the Republican leadership’s ultimate grand goal of transforming the country in profound ways -from the social structure to cultural and intellectual framework- to make it inextricably become a part of the Western world. The Turkish History Thesis, which presented the Turks as the builders of modern European civilization, according to Hanioğlu (2011, pp. 202-203) was

designed to build a cultural connectivity between Europe and modern Turkey; a cultural affinity that dated back to prehistoric times. From this point of view, European civilization was neither alien nor contradictory to the culture and lifestyle of Turks, and, thus, they could take on and embrace Western ways.

According to Zürcher (2017), the emphasis on Central Asian roots, “even if it was largely mythical, as something separate from the Middle Eastern and Islamic civilization of the Ottoman Empire, made it easier to exchange elements from traditional Middle Eastern civilization for those of the West” (p. 193). The Republican leadership was steering the future of the country away from the Islamic Ottoman, and predominantly Arab Middle East, and was heading towards the West “to reach to the level of contemporary civilization” -one of the most celebrated mottos of the Republican regime (Kadıoğlu, 1996, p. 186). On this path of Westernization, the Turkish History Thesis and its twin, the Sun-Language Theory served to sketch the traits of the new Turks with a shared knowledge of the past and a common desired direction for the future “by abolishing more religious and traditional customs, morals, and daily life habits of the Ottoman society” (Al, 2015, p. 91). It is here noteworthy that this invented history, which highlighted racial roots, did not perpetually mark either the official or mainstream articulation of the Turkish national identity (Özdoğan, 2010, p. 51). Despite the traces that remained, the historical theses (at least in their extreme versions) fell into disuse from the late 1940s onwards (Ersanlı, 2003, p. 223; Zürcher, 2017, p. 193).

To cut a long story short, the Republic imagined a culturally homogeneous and secular community of Turkish-speaking citizens leading a modern way of life and actively engaging in the task of leading the country to the level of contemporary civilization. This national imagination obviously left certain segments of society out.

3.2.2. Significant Others of the New Republic

Yıldız (2019) distinguishes three major periods, each characterized by certain discursive shifts and trends, in the evolution of Turkish national identity in the years between 1919- 1938. According to Yıldız (2019; pp. 16-17), in the first period (1919-1924), through the War of Liberation, Turkish national identity was primarily defined over religious lines; the official political discourse equated the nation to the Muslim population and took ethnic diversity as a given circumstance. In other words, all Muslims, regardless of ethnicity, were considered as members of the nation. The second period (1924-1929), when most of the previously mentioned secularizing reforms took place, was marked by a total deviation from the religious core in favor of secular and Republican themes. Under the motto of “unity in language, culture and ideal” (“*dilde, kültürde ve ülküde birlik*”) (Yıldız, 2019, p. 16), Turkish national identity came to be defined through legal and political terms, the latter particularly predominant. In this sense, while citizenship and common language (Turkish) use were legal criteria, shared cultural inheritance and commitment to Republican ideals were among the major political constituents of national identity.

In the third period (1929-1938), markers of national identity were supplemented with ethnic and racial themes, symbolically reflected in the motto; “unity in language, culture and blood” (“*dilde, ekinde (kültür), kanda birlik*”) (Yıldız, 2019, p. 17). Having evolved through a combination of these trends; the resultant Republican imaginary of national identity, in Yıldız’s (2019) terms, is “ethno-secular.” Although ethnicity played an important role in defining who ‘we’ are in the Republican mindset, it was not essentially identified with ‘race’, or of Turkish descent (Yıldız, 2019; Çağaptay, 2005). As such, the borders of the ‘imagined community’ expand to accommodate non-Turks (Çağaptay, 2005) and yet contract to keep those -

whether Turk or non-Turk- who refuse to adopt Republican principles and values, particularly secularism, as outsiders (Yıldız, 2019). To put it differently, borders are permeable and movable for some on the condition that they certify basic requirements -leading a secular life, speaking Turkish, adopting a Westernized Turkish culture, and embracing Republican ideals (Yıldız, 2019, p. 18)- are met. Those who are denied entry and kept behind the gates -the “Others”- are pious Turks, non-Turkish Muslim communities (e.g. Kurds) and non-Muslim minorities (Yıldız, 2019, p.18).

Bora (2017) has a different account on the others of the Republican national identity. According to Bora (2017), neither the Kurds nor minority groups can be labeled as the ‘other(s)’ of Turkish national identity (p. 39). The other(s) does not come from external sources, either. To be more precise, neither Greece/ Greeks nor the West /Europeans have come to serve as the dominant other(s) of the Turkish national identity. In Bora’s (2017) account, “Old Turkey”, in other words; the Ottoman, makes the ‘other’ for the Turkish national identity. “New Turkey” was built upon the debris of the old one.

In this formulation of the national identity, the Ottoman, organized around the principle of religious affiliation, is envisioned as a giant specter hindering the Turkish national identity from reaching its maturity (Bora, 2017, pp. 41-42). There was a deliberate attempt to detach the religious elements from the constituents of the national identity. Arabic identity, deemed as an extension of the old Islamic identity, therefore, came to serve as an external other for the Turkish national identity. Bora (2017, pp. 42-43) points out that even after the national historiography began to revolve around an axis of Greek-Turkish antagonism, Arabs remained among the significant others. Before moving onto the next section, it is worth noting that this antagonism towards Arabs still occupies a place in the collective imagination and is

among the underlying themes that contribute to anti-Syrian sentiments, if not the major one, in the country, a point that will be addressed again in the following chapter.

3.3. Neo-Ottomanism as *Banal Ottomanism* of the JDP

Billig (1995) defines banal nationalism as the nationalism that becomes powerful and hegemonic through its visibility and its potential to be reproduced by ordinary actors. In this regard, Tokdoğan (2018, p. 74) suggests neo-Ottomanism, which is an essential element in the JDP's version of the national identity, becomes banal as it is easily reproduced by both social and ordinary actors, which enables the double process of expressing it both as divine and ordinary.

Until this point, it has been noted that the subject of the national identity is an ethno-secular citizen, who identifies as a Turk and a secular Muslim leading a Western lifestyle. The JDP version of the national identity is a pious Muslim leading an Islamic lifestyle with an emotional bond to the Ottoman period imagination (Koyuncu, 2014, pp. 319-322; Aktürk, 2018, pp. 527-530). These qualities considered; this identity is often related to neo-Ottomanism. Neo-Ottomanism can be defined as a set of qualities exploited such as a pride in the Ottoman past, a belief in the leadership of Turkey for the Muslim states, a set of images and a state of affectivity and emotionality and a repertoire of feelings reinforcing these two (Yavuz, 2016, p. 442-43; Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 79-81). Neo-Ottomanism is considered a form of Islamism, and as well as that, it is strictly related to the foreign policy of the JDP government, in which Turkey becomes a powerful actor throughout the Middle East (White, 2013; Tokdoğan, 2018; Alaranta, 2015; Ergin & Karakaya, 2017).

Yavuz (2016) makes a similar point:

Neo-Ottomanism does not simply regulate Turkey's foreign and domestic politics, a set of ideals, values, ethics, norms; more importantly the holistic set constitutes the essential definition of Turkey defines itself. (...) Neo-Ottomanism is about constructing a new 'national' (national, but not nationalist) identity and translating it into foreign policy of using historical, cultural and religious ties to the former Ottoman territories (pp. 442-443).

Another related term is Ottomania which could be described as the ordinary enjoyment of Ottoman related products and practices ranging from buying textile products to posing for photos in clothes inspired by Ottoman sultans and princesses in shopping malls (White, 2013; Ergin & Karakaya, 2017).

As mentioned before, there is a general agreement that what is excluded in the Republican national identity was the religious elements of the Ottoman period (Yavuz, 2016, p. 446). Bora (2003) takes this to the extent to say the image of the Ottoman is against which the new Republican national identity constructed itself. Then the question becomes how it became possible for masses to engage in the national identity construction offered by the JDP (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 94). In this sense, it should be noted that in Turkish intellectual and political history, there has been a tradition of thought which viewed the Ottoman period as the reign of the glorious, imperial, omnipotent and omnipresent state (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 59-60). This prolonged the phantasy of a resurrection of a powerful Islamic state, with its happy and motivated subjects (Bakiner, 2013, p. 699; Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 57).

It should be noted that Islam is not only a matter of ideology for some conservative intellectuals or politicians. It is also the case in Turkey that different

actors, including the state, referred to Islam when they sought for the popular consent or when they needed to produce some sort of a common sense (Koyuncu, 2014, pp. 47-48). Alaranta (2015) suggests the Kemalist Republic was not all oppressive against so to say the whole of the religion, but its role in the political sphere. However, the conservative tradition with its emphasis on anti-Westernism and anti-republicanism created a mythology of the oppressive Kemalist period and elite, which banned religion, religious lifestyle and threatened religious people. To conclude, it can be said that the Republican position on Islam was more or less ambivalent, that is, it was excluded from the core elements of the new national identity, but it had been a prestigious sort of reference to (re)activate the link between the state and the population. This ambivalence and the resisting prestige of Islam made it possible for the JDP to reformulate a new form of national identity with religious dispositions.

3.3.1. The Invention of *New Turkey*

It could be said that what new Turkey is, and who it includes and excludes, has been a topic of debate visited frequently. In this regard, the problematic foundation of the Republic of Turkey, has made it possible for different actors to claim the emergence of a new Turkey in different times of history.

The term ‘new Turkey’ entered Erdoğan’s vocabulary around 2010 (Christofis, 2018, p. 13). The term was also used in the JDP’s party program in 2014, and it has been voiced by prominent figures including İbrahim Kalın and Ahmet Davutoğlu, sometimes with differing words but similar emphases (Alaranta, 2015, p. 93-94).

What has been meant by the term could be deduced from the early discussions: a rule of the ‘nation’ instead of the elite and a freedom of religion (Alaranta, 2015, p.

140-142). More concretely, religious people will be able to hold important state positions and the official barriers to lead a religious life in the public sphere will be erased. One must remember Erdoğan's repeated use of 'my nation' (*benim milletim*), not surprisingly Erdoğan refers to the 'real' owners of the land and state, including the Muslim nationalists and excluding the Kemalist elite and seculars (Koyuncu, 2014, p. 158; Alaranta, 2015, p. 95). White (2013) describes the outcome of the national identity project by the concept of Muslim nationalism:

The AKP and its pious supporter, in contrast, have developed and implemented an unorthodox alternative definition of Turkishness and the nation that imagines Turkey not as a nation embattled with its present political borders but as a flexibly bounded Turkey that is the self-confident successor to the Ottomans in a rediscovered (and reinvented) past. The new Turkish identity, which I call Muslim nationalism, is that of a pious Muslim Turk whose subjectivity and vision for the future is shaped by an imperial past overlaid onto a republican state framework, but divorced from the Kemalist state project (p. 9).

Similarly, Saraçoğlu and Demirkol (2015) suggest that Sunni Muslim values have become the core element of the JDP era national identity, in contrast to the Kemalist national identity where Islam was a cultural aspect of Turkishness.

Even though the term 'New Turkey' has been popularized in the JDP rule, it should be noted that there is a history behind that. Turgut Özal was effective in the imagination of a new Turkey with the neo-Ottoman attitude, which had similar aims with the JDP in terms of redistribution of power (Alaranta, 2015, pp. 145-147; Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 64-66). Özal was also viewing himself and popularized as a leader

for other Muslim countries, which is another crucial element for new Turkey; it seeks to be an active role player in the regulation of Islamic geography (Yavuz, 2016).

Yavuz (2016, p. 464) argues that while neo-Ottomanism was cultivated during the Özal era, Özal's version of neo-Ottomanism had little in common with Ottomanism in the Ottoman Empire or Erdoğan's as it aimed at expanding the market for Turkish goods and remained pro-Western. In contrast, Erdoğan's formulation is driven by "a desire to become a supreme leader of the Muslim world" (Yavuz, 2016, p. 464).

However, the JDP has been capable of formulating and spreading neo-Ottomanism in a popular sense and making it visible through the participation of the general population, which provides a specific form of national identity construction; that is, a banal nationalism was at work (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 74-75).

The national identity project of the Republic was welcomed by the state officers and the ruling elite but did not reach the masses. This contributed to the survival of Islam's power both in individual imaginations and the sociopolitical sphere. Gellner (1994, p. 83) also shares the view that Kemalism was able to transform the upper levels of society, state and institutions but failed to reach the transformation of a great many of the population.

It could be worth remembering that neo-Ottomanism of the JDP is reminiscent of Islamism, one of the pre-republic ideologies aiming to save the Ottoman Empire that were previously explored in this chapter (Alaranta, 2015, p. 100). This neo-Ottomanism had roots in the foreign policy of the JDP which was heavily shaped by the ex-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (Ergin & Karakaya, 2017; Alaranta, 2015; Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015). It could be also viewed as an ideological attempt but at the same time the images and discourses were simultaneously produced by extra-state

actors in everyday life, which in this sense, exemplifies a new form of banal nationalism as offered by Billig (Tokdoğan, 2018).

It is quite difficult to identify the differing and varying processes during banalization, but to emphasize some of them is possible. The idealization of President Erdoğan by juxtaposing his image to Sultan Abdulhamid, especially on social media groups, may be suggested as an example of this banalization (Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 93). Küçük and Türkmen (2018, pp. 14-16) argue that a new cosmology, which competes with the Republic's discourse of national struggle, is invented around the figure of Erdoğan as the new savior national leader. This could be viewed going hand in hand with the TV series that glorify the Ottoman past as well as the social media participation of the people who were fans of these series. Even though social media use and television viewing could easily be labeled as passive activities, it should be noted that there is a certain sense of activity as the viewers also reproduce what is shown, as well as construct and spread the myth of a strong country ruled by a strong leader.

As a more formal and expectable aspect, the attempts in education and educational environment were crucial. One of the basic movements was the change of Abdulhamid imagery in history courses; now he was a positive and heroic figure (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 86). The Ottoman language was reintroduced to the general public, but with the specific aim of providing a sense of Ottoman continuity and erasing the alleged rupture created by the Republic (Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 84-86). The educational projects were strongly related to the statements of the JDP elite, including Erdoğan and Davutoğlu, who viewed the Latinization of the alphabet and language led to a rupture in terms of historical consciousness (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 85).

Another practice worth mentioning is the naming of construction sites and projects with reference to Ottoman imagery, symbols and motifs. This not only shows how nostalgia for the Ottoman past (of glory) was offered for the desire of the public, but it also reveals the contribution of the market to the banalization of the neo-Ottoman national identity through such practices (Ergin & Karakaya, 2017, p. 38; Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 90-91). It should be noted that the construction sector that saw an unprecedented growth during the JDP rule, creating a new group of conglomerates with close links to the government, has proven instrumental in popularizing and legitimizing the party's political agendas (Yeşilbağ, 2021).

Another element was the popularization and festivalization of Istanbul's conquest celebrations. Once that celebration was a festival of conservatism and it was a signifier of the victory against the Kemalist elite, like a reconquest of Istanbul from the Republican elite (Çınar, 2001). However, they were transformed into an Ottoman festival for all, with the inclusion of pop singers and other elements that are not very conservative but pretty much Ottoman (Koyuncu, 2104, pp. 97-100; Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 88-89). The importance of this festival was also noted by White (2013): "Instead of commemorating the 1923 founding of the Turkish nation, the new Turks pay public tribute to historical events like 1453 Ottoman Muslim conquest of Christian Byzantine" (p. 9). In this sense, celebrations of Istanbul's conquest were invented, as in Hobsbawm's perspective, within the framework of claiming a different narrative of history and national identity and were banalized once that narrative became more established and institutionalized.

The re-conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque could be considered a spectacle of banal Ottomanism. The first prayer was full of symbolic elements that were intended to point to the last blows against the Kemalist project. This is not

surprising as the reconquest of Hagia Sophia by making it a mosque again has been imagined as a victory against the Kemalist regime as well as the enemies of the nation, especially the Western world, which has been equated to the Christianity (Özekmekçi, 2012). The whole event was planned and performed with precise details, turning it into a spectacle to glorify the Neo-Ottoman Islamic reconquest of the Byzantine Church as well as the assumed victory of ‘New Turkey’ over the ‘Old Turkey’. There were thousands of people, -some wearing Ottoman-style outfits and some waving Turkish flags; some reciting religious chants and some enchanting pro-government slogans and raising banners with the images of Sultan Mehmet II and President Erdoğan. The event was broadcasted live on national level television channels, confirming the message reached the whole of the nation. Taking the decision to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque as part of “culture wars”, Al (2020) writes:

If Atatürk wanted his new nation to be Muslim but secular, Turkish but European, it was not built on wide societal consensus. His revolution faced opposition, particularly after the transition to multi-party elections in 1950, from those with a different imagined community in mind: Muslim with Ottoman pride, Turkish with native and authentic culture not relying on western civilization. Modernisation congruent with Islamic and Ottoman civilization has been the essential ideological toolkit for such opposition (para. 4).

It is important to note that different actors from different interest groups did contribute to this banalization process. Masses contributed to the banalization of Ottoman past watching the TV series glorifying it, and circulating their joy and pride, partisans founded groups on social media and circulated words and images whereas

investors gave their construction projects Ottoman-themed names. Within this atmosphere of pride, self-esteem and joy, the image of the Syrian refugee started to haunt the minds.

3.3.2. “My *Millet*” and New Significant Others

The JDP’s version of the national identity, the identity of the new Turkey is constructed on the premise that the Republic wounded the nation (*millet*) – that is, the conservative Sunni subject – but through the neo-Ottoman national identity those who were cast out will be able to reunite with the omnipotent and imperial state (Koyuncu, 2014, p. 325; Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 147). The wounded will return as the sovereign. Banality, in this sense, served this imagined wounded to reclaim its sovereignty and self-esteem through the use of language, architecture, spaces and media. This new form of national identity would also need new objects of hate and desire, both internal and external.

It was not difficult at all to point to the internal significant other, ‘the Kemalist elite’, constructed as the owners of the state and a privileged minority in relation to them, who are formulated as “White Turks” (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 141). The fabrication of internal others did not come to an end with the defamation of the secularist elite. Evidence could come from quantitative data by Çelik et al. (2016) which shows that the prominent other for the JDP voters was Kurds (with a rate of 30%) surpassing the JDP opponents (20%). Another example is that all the political parties, except for the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP), whose votes come from mainly the Kurdish population, were invited to join the mass rally that took place in Yenikapı in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in 2016 (Çapan & Zarakol, 2019). This last

example suggests that the pro-Kurdish PDP, and its vote base Kurdish people, are not taken as a part of the national unity.

As mentioned before, the early Republican national identity crystallized itself against the otherness of the Greek first, and later the Ottoman. The neo-Ottoman identity, on the other hand, often positioned itself as anti-Western and anti-European, translated into a discourse of imperial powers (as in Erdoğan's remarks like "The World is greater than five") and corrupt morals. (Ertuğrul, 2012) argues that the way the JDP tailors the foreign policy vision of the country in Turkey-Europe relations contributes to reproduce the rhetoric of "clash of civilizations", in harmony with the neo-conservative line of thought, which essentializes civilizational identities and equates them as opposites; 'Western' and 'Christian' versus 'Eastern' and 'Islamic'. In a similar vein, (Kaliber & Kaliber, 2019) point to a steady leaning towards an anti-Western discourse in the context of foreign policy, which resulted in the repositioning of the West as the 'other' of the new national identity.

The LGBTI community began to be seen, more intensely than ever before, as a group that threatens the cores and purity of national identity in this era (Birdal, 2013; Hazar, 2018). Hazar (2018) sees a parallel with neo-Ottomanism regarding the attitudes towards the LGBTI community, that they may be tolerated as long as they stay within their imposed limits. Birdal (2013) shows different examples of accusing non-heterosexuals as morally low and violent by different conservative authors. Hazar (2018) also notes that the JDP views non-heterosexual identities as the products of the Western culture, and target the two together, citing the following statement by Erdoğan: "Shame on those who in the West divert their sensitivity to the so-called freedoms, rights, and law shown in the debate over gay marriage away from Syrian women, children, and innocents in need of aid" (p. 172). This statement also shows

how the issue of war in Syria, and refugees becomes instrumental in cultivating a positive self-perception of Turkey while condemning the West, a point that will be visited again in the following chapters.

Alevis, a frequently stigmatized community, may be listed among the significant others. It should be noted that in a context where Alevi people mostly refrain from exposing their identity due to fear of violence and harm of which there are many examples from both the distant and recent past, Erdoğan did not hesitate to expose the Alevi identity of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, intending to devalue him for conservative populations (Ertuğrul, 2012, p. 183; White, 2013, p. 61). Mutluer (2018) shows that through the statements by the Head of Religious Affairs, there was an attempt to normalize Alevi people and practices during Alevi opening phase, then their demands were ignored as they were called to pray under mosques and their authenticity regarding their practices were neglected.

More can be added to those mentioned above; feminists, environmentalists, Armenians, Jews, and the list can go on to the extent that leaving only those who are self-identified Sunni Muslim, Turkish, and supporters of the government that the new national identity encompasses. The case of Syrian refugees in this picture is not that straightforward but has proven to be puzzling as time goes by.

3.3.3. Syrian Refugees: *Millet*, *Ümmet* or Others?

Syrian refugees arrived in the above-mentioned historical context, that is to say, in a competing environment of national identities. Even though the neo-Ottoman version of national identity seemed to have become hegemonic, and the conclusion

could have been expected to welcome Syrian refugees, the further complexity regarding the issue and the resistances at work complicate the case.

It should be noted that the history of the Turkish Republic had examples of immigration flows, like those of Balkan Turks. However, as Balkan Turks were able to speak Turkish, their presence was not necessarily a challenge to the national identity (İçduygu, et al., 2014, p. 55). That was not the case for Syrian refugees, which complicated the issue regarding the question whether they are insiders or outsiders as language is an exclusive factor in the creation of national identity (Gellner, 1983). As a matter of fact, Syrian migration to Turkey corresponds to a time when speaking Turkish and belonging to Turkish descent and culture was replaced with common religious bonds as the primary criterion for admission to the national body in the official discourse.

The function of Islam in neo-Ottoman identity was another aspect regarding the position of the Syrian refugee. Saraçoğlu and Demirkol (2015, pp. 305-306) suggest that the Islamic aspect of the national identity and the emphasis on the religious international community (*ümmet*) was basically for the regulation of internal politics; it was a call and an attempt to include the non-rebellious and submitting Kurds. If that is the case, then it could be concluded the Syrian refugees, or any other Muslim community, is not the real matter of the subject.

To conclude, it can be said that the issue of Syrian refugees tested the boundaries of the new Turkish national identity, if only it did not create a crisis (Saraçoğlu, 2018). It should be noted that even the JDP voters engaged in neo-Ottoman ideals were uneasy about Syrian refugees (Kaya & Nagel, 2020). The conclusion regarding Syrian refugees in the context of neo-Ottoman national identity is not final, which also refers to the fact that national identity is actively re-negotiated,

re-constructed and re-created. Therefore, the image of the Syrian refugee had to be constructed, but it was rather obscure on which ground this should have been done. As expected, the construction of the Syrian image would be regulated and mediated by the media, which leads to the research presented here.



CHAPTER 4

SYRIAN REFUGEES POLICIES, POLITICS AND PARADIGMS

The primary aim of this chapter is to offer background information and context necessary for the analysis of news reports in the following chapter. For this purpose, the chapter first explores the state policies from the arrival of Syrian refugees to Turkey to today. The change in policies towards Syrian refugees over the years paralleled the change in discourses of the ruling JDP and vice versa. After examining the changing policies and legal framework regarding Syrian refugees, the chapter overviews the most prominent aspects of the phenomenon. The five paradigms or dimensions of the issue were identified as follows: humanitarian, religious, economic, sociocultural and demographic, and finally citizenship-rights. All these five aspects are relevant and contribute to, and engage with different standpoints, discourses, and narratives of different parties including policy makers, political parties, NGOs, media, and the wider public.

4.1. Policies: A Brief History of Ten Years

It seems likely that in a couple of years most people will hardly remember how it all started. What happened and why did such an unprecedented number of Syrians arrive in Turkey making it the top refugee-hosting country in the world (UNHCR, 2022). Whoever wishes to tell the whole story of what happened in Syria would have to refer to the so-called Arab Spring, which is long over but its repercussions still linger. Whatever might have caused it or however it might have all started out seems, at some point, to have become irrelevant to the current situation in Syria, which is less

than solely a national or regional matter but more an international issue particularly when the fact that more than half of the Syrian population have been forced to leave their country and scattered across the world (Grandi, 2021) is taken into consideration. The war in Syria, without any foreseeable end point, has been going on for such a long time that one might find it very difficult to keep track of the course of events, changing currents and trends, actors and alliances involved, and conflicts and clashes generated and sustained. My purpose here is to offer a glimpse of the narrow picture of what happened on the Turkish side after the war forced Syrians to leave their country. In the following, I will briefly outline the main policies implemented, and actions taken by the government to manage the Syrian refugee migration and settlement in the last ten years.

4.1.1. Open-Door Policy and Failed Forecasts

As of mid-2021, Turkey is now by far the top refugee-hosting country in the world, followed by Colombia and Uganda (UNHCR, 2022). According to the statistics by the Presidency of Migration Management (*Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü*), the number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey is over 3.6 million as of 2022 (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2022). Back in 2011, there was neither such a high number of refugees in Turkey nor was there a specialized state institution which collects and organizes statistical data of migration and migrant population.

The first group of Syrian refugees arrived in Turkey in April 2011. Migration from Syria continued all through that year and in 2012 at relatively small numbers; turned into a flow in 2013 when thousands of refugees passed the border on a daily basis and has decreased to a very low level since 2016. The initial response of the government was to allow the flow of refugees by following an open-door policy,

which was officially sustained till 2015 when Turkey started to implement visa restrictions for new arrivals from Syria (İçduygu & Nimer, 2020, p. 418). This unconditional welcoming of Syrian refugees stemmed, first, from the assumption that the conflict in Syria would soon be resolved, ending with the collapse of the regime, and refugees returning home (İhlamur-Öner, 2014, p. 45; Kirişçi, 2014, p. 1; Şahin Mencütek et al., 2020, p. 101). Statements by the government representatives reveal that they neither expected the number of Syrian refugees to grow so fast so exponentially nor anticipated the crisis in Syria would last this long. For example, then Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu said in 2012: “If the number of refugees exceeds 100,000, we will not be able to shelter them [the Syrians]” (Demirtaş, 2012). Davutoğlu later stated that this “psychological threshold” was surpassed, and that from then on it became impossible to accommodate all the refugee population in camps (“Davutoğlu: “Sığınmacılar konusunda”, 2013). In another much-debated example, then Prime Minister Erdoğan said: “That day is close. We will pray near the grave of Salahaddin Ayyubi and pray in the Umayyad Mosque” (“Premier vows to”, 2012). Several other remarks made by government officials in the early years of the Syrian conflict may be quoted, but all, as Öner and Genç (2015a, p. 257) argue; “reminded or connoted the ‘expectation of temporariness’ of the Syrian migration to Turkey”, and none would show a sign of planning ahead regarding the governance of Syrian refugees as İçduygu et al. (2017) argue:

The analysis of political statements of the governing party reveals that the government had assumed a temporary stay of refugees, instead of long-term and permanent settlement, based on the expectation that the conflict would be over in a relatively short time. This assumption also led to short-term solutions to ill-defined problems, such as the limited capacity of camps and an inability

to sustain basic rights due to an ever-increasing number of refugees. (pp. 460-61)

From the government's perspective, there was an emergency that required immediate action, and the existence of refugees was temporary. This vision was reflected in the initial handling of Syrian refugees by organizations such as the Turkish Red Crescent (*Türk Kızılayı*) and AFAD whose primary duty is to assist in emergencies and disasters (İçduygu, 2015, p. 9; Korkut, 2016, p. 9). The thought that refugees were temporary also marked the official discourse which presented Syrian refugees as 'guests', a term which "does not have any legal meaning under national or international law, and thus does not provide a secure status to refugees" (Toğral Koca, 2016, p. 63). Guests are expected to leave when their visit is over -this was, at least, what the government had expected in the first place, and what the government led the Turkish public to expect in the second place⁴.

Initial policies towards Syrian refugees were also closely related to Turkey's new "assertive" foreign policy approach under the JDP government in general, and Syrian policy in particular (Gökalp Aras & Şahin Mencütek, 2015, p. 194). Ahmet

⁴ Here it may be useful to recall the case of Turkish labor migrants in Germany, who were called *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker), a term that was later received very negatively by the migrants themselves (Zürcher, 2017, p. 275). What brought Turkish workers to Germany was the economic boom in the country in the post-war era, different from the case of Syrian refugees. However, they were also seen as temporary in the initial years of their migration. When it became clear that their stay would be long-term, the issue of integration came to the fore (Triandafyllidou, 2001, p. 71).

Davutoğlu, former Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister, is considered the architect of the new foreign policy orientation of Turkey. Davutoğlu (2001) elaborated his foreign policy vision in his *Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)*, published one year before the JDP came to power. Although he refuses to self-identify as a neo-Ottomanist (Torbakov, 2017, p. 134), and declines the label of neo-Ottomanism for his approach (Tüysüzoğlu, 2014, p. 93), his foreign policy outlook came to be dubbed as neo-Ottomanist (Tüysüzoğlu, 2014; Torbakov, 2017; Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015; Murinson, 2006) or Pan-Islamist (Özkan, 2014). According to Murinson (2006); “Neo-Ottomanism, as manifested in the Strategic Depth doctrine, has become a significant feature of Turkish foreign policy” (p. 961).

In this vision, -constructed through criticism of the previously dominant foreign policy orientation that is perceived as inert, focusing too much on the West, and devoid of references to Islamic civilization and the Ottoman past- Turkey, endowed with a unique asset stemming from its geographical position and historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire, can transform itself into a leading regional power, and consequently an important global actor by actively engaging in regional affairs, and expanding its political sphere of influence in the former Ottoman territories through soft power and active diplomacy (Tüysüzoğlu, 2014, pp. 89-94; Murinson, 2006, pp. 947-953). It is this vision that shaped Turkey’s foreign policy in the Middle East after the Arab uprisings, and in particular Syrian policy. To put it differently, Syria was to be the “showcase” of this new foreign policy vision (Gürpınar, 2020, p. 20). Likewise, the Syrian war provided a “testing ground” for the viability of neo-Ottomanism, which later proved to be unsustainable in its core (Saraçoğlu, 2018, pp. 25-26).

Reflecting on the Syrian refugee migration and foreign policy nexus, Gökalp Aras and Şahin Mencütek (2015, pp. 201-202) argue that this foreign policy outlook

found its resonance in the initial policy responses such as open-door policy and avoidance of counting on international aid as Turkey was trying to demonstrate its capacity of ‘soft power’, confidence to act as an influential force and mediator in the region, as well as to establish prestige in the international community as a prominent actor that has the ability to handle major humanitarian and political issues. However, as the protracted war in Syria forced Turkey to revise its foreign policy priorities, and retreat from an assertive stance to a more defensive one, policies towards Syrian refugees changed accordingly; from an ‘open-door’ policy to ‘non-arrival’ policy, from avoidance of external help to seeking for burden share, and from a humanitarian approach to the securitization of the issue (Gökalp Aras & Şahin Mencütek, 2015, pp. 204-206).

Altıok and Tosun (2019) also argue that Turkey’s policy responses to the management of Syrian refugee flow were clearly guided by foreign policy considerations and calculations regarding Syria. According to Altıok and Tosun (2019, pp. 11-14), Turkey’s ambitious foreign policy to become an active role player in Syria after the then-anticipated fall of the Assad regime led initially to an open-door policy -a policy largely opportunistic in nature, for refugees were included because of their potential future role in rebuilding Syria- but was later modified to a more security-based approach and close-door policy after 2015 when foreign policy shifted away from proactive efforts to prioritize homeland security and border safety. In a similar vein, Çevik and Sevin (2017, p. 400) draw attention to the opportunistic use of the refugee issue and argue that despite presenting it as a moral duty to open its borders, Turkey has “simultaneously attempted to benefit from the crisis by promoting a more positive image” about itself to the outside world. According to Çevik and Sevin (2017), particularly through unprecedented humanitarian aid and open-door

policy in addition to active diplomatic involvement in the Syrian conflict, Turkey attempted to create an affirmative brand image for itself as a “benevolent, humanitarian, moral and central country that deserves to be more influential in the international arena” (p. 407).

It should also be noted that the open-door policy did not in practice mean that doors were open to all from Syria seeking refuge in Turkey. Toğral Koca (2015, pp. 216-218) argues that there was a selective approach in the admission of refugees; some were denied entry on the ground that they lacked passports or visas (e.g., Palestinians resident in Syria)- as well as exclusionary practices such as push-back operations, sometimes causing death and injuries, by border officials to prevent crossings. İçduygu (2015, p. 7) also states that despite the declared official policy, authorities applied some “informal approaches” such as border checks to hinder new arrivals from Syria as the number of refugees steadily increased. The greatest challenge to the open-door policy was the case of Kurds from Kobane fleeing from Islamic State (IS) militants (Korkut, 2016, p. 15). The reluctance of the government to keep borders open for Kurds from Syria as well as their unequal treatment in comparison to other Syrian refugees after eventually being admitted is an overt example of selective approach in the admission and protection of refugees, of which Korkut (2016, pp. 13-16) calls “selective humanitarianism” - a point which will be further discussed later in this Chapter.

At the end of the day, forecasts did not match the realities, and the government had to make shifts and adjustments both in terms of legal framework and policies, and its discourse as the number of refugees kept growing.

4.1.2. Temporary Protection Regime: A Temporary Solution

Syrian refugees were initially referred to as “guests” partly because -as mentioned above- their stay was assumed to be short lived. More importantly, there was no firm legal category to apply to the case of Syrians; no legislative guideline to follow in the case of Syrian refugees (Şimşek & Çorabatır, 2016, p. 111). Despite being a signatory of the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Turkey maintains a geographical reservation, which means it grants refugee status, and the right to asylum only to “persons who have become refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe” (Özden, 2013, p. 5). Non-Europeans, as a result, cannot be recognized as refugees in Turkey. For asylum seekers of non-European origin to apply for refugee status, they must go through a process performed in cooperation with the UNHCR in Turkey and Turkish authorities (Baban et al., 2017, p. 89). Those applicants found eligible for refugee status are later resettled in a third country by the UNHCR. However, this was not the case with Syrians in Turkey. In October 2011, in a break from the initial label of “guests” with no legal standing, the government declared that Syrians were entitled to “temporary protection”, a status with a clearer legal connotation (Kirişçi, 2014, p. 14). In line with this move by the government, and with the huge number to be processed, the UNHCR stopped registration activities for Syrians in Turkey (Özden, 2013, p. 5)⁵. This means that Syrians in Turkey cannot go

⁵ As of 10 September 2018, the UNHCR stopped registering non-Syrians wishing to apply for international protection in Turkey, too (UNHCR, 2018). Presidency of Migration Management (*Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı*) is responsible for registering and processing international protection applications for all foreigners.

through the regular procedure of refugee application, and therefore cannot be defined under international standards of practice as asylum seekers whose refugee applications are being processed. Neither refugees, nor asylum seekers in terms of international law and practice, Syrians in Turkey have been treated under the national legal framework, which situates them “in a position of limbo” (Baban et al., 2016, p. 5)⁶.

The major step towards a clearer legal status of Syrian refugees came in April 2013 with the adoption of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) (Erdoğan, 2020, pp. 5-7)⁷. Subsequently, the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) was established under the Ministry of Interior and became the main public institution in charge of migration management, registering and processing asylum applications⁸. Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR), adopted in 2014, further enhanced the legal framework; better defined the scope of the “temporary protection” status, and the rights of the beneficiaries (İçduygu & Millet, 2016, p. 4)⁹. These two legislations set the legal framework of the temporary protection regime that the Syrians in Turkey are subject to.

⁶ As was mentioned earlier in the Introduction Chapter, this study purposefully employs the term “refugee” because it corresponds more appropriately to the case of Syrians regardless of their official legal status, and has more widespread use in academic literature as well as public discourse.

⁷ Full text of the Law is available online (YUKK, 2013).

⁸ The institution later underwent a change of status and started to operate under the name of Presidency of Migration Management (*Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı*) (Erdoğan, M. N., 2021).

⁹ Full text of the Regulation is available online (GKY, 2014).

Non-refoulement (no forcible return) is among the principles of this regime.

However, TPR states that it is the discretion of the government to decide on the duration of the temporary protection, which means that there is no legally binding guarantee against deportation proceedings that could be initiated by the administration (Şimşek & Çorabatır, 2016, p. 116). Syrians under the temporary protection regime can have access to basic services including health care and education; access to work permit and social assistance. However, there are great discrepancies between legislation and reality as highlighted by Kutlu (2015). For example, regarding access to education, although the legislation gives Syrian children the right to enroll either at public schools or at Temporary Education Centers (TECs) that only admit Syrian students, the rate of schooling remains desperately low, and a great majority of the schooled children attend private schools established either by municipalities or Syrian NGOs (Kutlu, 2015, p. 9)¹⁰. Regarding employment, current legislation places restrictions on the sectors, branches and regions that registered Syrians can seek job opportunities, which leads them to opt for unregistered jobs and precarious work for extremely low wages (Kutlu, 2015, pp. 7-8).

Kutlu (2015, p. 1) criticizes the current legislation for treating the issue as a temporary crisis, falling short of a right-based approach, and long-term planning. In a similar vein, Sert and Danış (2021, p. 200) describe the temporary protection status as

¹⁰ TECs were closed down as of 2019. The decision to close TECs and integrate Syrian students into the national education system came following the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, and primary and pre-school aged Syrian students could only attend public schools as of September 2016 (İçduygu & Şimşek, 2017, p. 89).

“the Turkish way of defining refugee rights, based on ambiguity, uncertainty and unpredictable living conditions”. According to Baban et al. (2017, p. 87), temporary protection regime “institutionalizes uncertainty and the status of being in limbo waiting to return to Syria while making a temporary life in Turkey”. It has now been 9 years since the status of temporary protection was first introduced, and critics agree that temporary protection regime offers just a temporary solution, or from a different angle, turns the lives of Syrian refugees into a state of “permanent temporariness” (İçduygu 2018, cited in İçduygu & Sert, 2019, p. 123).

One important feature of the temporary protection regime is that it prohibits the beneficiary Syrians from applying for international protection outside of Turkey (Kıvılcım, 2016, p. 198; Ilcan et al., 2018, p. 57). In addition, there is no possibility for Syrians under temporary protection to gain permanent residency and legal status after a certain period of time, and as such “their presence is contingent upon the goodwill of the government” (Ilcan et al., 2018, p. 58). Barred from the right to international protection and deprived of the refugee status and the prospect of permanent settlement, Syrian refugees are left stranded in a protracted temporary protection regime in Turkey.

According to Kıvılcım (2016, p. 198), keeping Syrian refugees under the temporary protection regime for an indefinite time, in a far different manner from international law and practice, is an “act of legal violence”, which allows for and legitimizes other forms of violence inflicted on them. In addition, Kıvılcım (2016, p. 200) argues that the policy of confining refugees in the temporary protection regime, of which the termination, and extension as well as the decision of who to grant access to rests solely on the authority of Council of Ministers, should be viewed as “a

political strategy by the government” given its overt involvement in the Syrian conflict.

All in all, the temporary protection regime in Turkey is “marked by expectation of temporariness” (Öner & Genç, 2015a, p. 259); stands as an obstacle to long-term settlement of Syrian refugees, and thus contributes to their vulnerability, which leads them to seek a way to European countries. In an effort to reach a European country, Syrian refugees take perilous routes across land or sea, which took the form of an exodus in 2015 -commonly referred to as ‘European refugee crisis’- when over one million people, 80 percent of whom departed from Turkish shores, crossed the Mediterranean (Clayton & Holland, 2015). This exodus later changed the course of events, eventually giving way to an agreement between the EU and Turkey.

4.1.3. The EU-Turkey Statement: A Big Deal

Through the summer of 2015, news of refugees either reporting several of the many drowning incidents in the Mediterranean or the landing of refugees on some Greek island, often from overloaded inflatable boats made the headlines numerous times, both across the country and internationally. The most iconic image of the Mediterranean crossings of that year was undoubtedly that of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy who drowned, along with his mother and brother, trying to reach the Greek island of Kos on a smuggling boat. In early September 2015, the tragic photographs of Alan went globally viral (Vis & Goriunova, 2015) causing an increased public and media attention to refugees and the Syrian war, which had then been going on for four years, as well as a boost in fund-raising campaigns and refugee policy changes, albeit short-term (Slovic et al., 2017, pp. 640-641).

Analyzing the European media coverage of the so-called “refugee crisis”, Georgiou and Zaborowski (2017, p. 8) argue that media narratives shifted significantly after the publication of Alan’s photos: “For a while at least, Europe appeared from the narrative as a place of (relative) solidarity to the plight of asylum seekers”. However, this welcoming public opinion and the climate of empathy did not last for long (Sohlberg et al., 2018, p. 7; Slovic et al., 2017, p. 641), and neither did the somewhat positive coverage by the media which dramatically shifted towards highlighting security implications of the “refugee crisis” after the November 2015 Paris attacks (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 8)¹¹. Growing concern, particularly after the Paris attacks, that ISIS militants may have mingled with refugees arriving in Europe, coupled with the widespread coverage of sexual assaults on women allegedly perpetrated by migrants and refugees during New Year’s Eve celebrations in Germany, which had received far more Syrian refugees than other European countries that year (IOM, 2016), helped inflame xenophobia and the rise of right-wing anti-immigrant politics (Kirişçi, 2016, p. 1). In January 2016, the image of Alan Kurdi was this time featured in French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* alongside a caption suggesting he would have grown up to be a molester like those alleged perpetrators of the assaults in Germany (“Charlie Hebdo backlash”, 2016) -an instance to show how quickly and sharply the tide turned against refugees.

¹¹ On the night of 13 November, a series of coordinated attacks hit, almost simultaneously, a concert hall, a major stadium, restaurants and bars in Paris, leaving 130 people dead and hundreds wounded (“Paris attacks”, 2015). ISIS later claimed responsibility for the attacks (“Paris attacks: Islamic State”, 2015).

Interesting enough, the year 2015 is framed, particularly in media discourse (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016; Lams, 2018; Fotopoulos & Kaimaklioti, 2016; Berry et al., 2015) largely around the theme of “Europe’s refugee crisis” while Turkey was at the time -and still is- by far the biggest refugee-populated country in the world. As Sert and Daniş (2021, p. 197) assert, the word “crisis” has not made it -not even neared- to the vocabulary of public discourse on Syrians in Turkey, for Turkish authorities avoided using the term unlike their European counterparts. The way officials choose to frame the refugee issue; the absence of the word “crisis” in their discourse, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is closely related to the brand Turkey wants to tailor for itself. It is “Europe’s” refugee crisis, and not Turkey’s, for it is a well-governed country where everything is taken good care of. The “crisis” haunts somewhere else; Europe or Syria, but not Turkey. Discourses over Syrian war and migration, as Sert and Daniş (2021, p. 197) put forward; “consistently emphasize control at home and crisis abroad: Turkey is strong and in this large and important country, everything is under control”.

Polishing the country’s image over the issue of refugees is inextricably interwoven with the explicitly anti-Western discourse of the government (Sert & Daniş, 2021, pp. 206-207). Discursive antagonism *vis-à-vis* the West constructs Turkey as a benevolent, refugee-friendly, humanitarian and moral country (Çevik & Sevin, 2017, pp. 404-406), and strong enough to assume a burden far beyond its share while European countries, which escape from their share of responsibility, are characterized by incompetence, indecency, and indifference, if not hostility, towards refugees. This discursive confrontation of Turkey and the West over the issue of refugees is rooted in a broader context of dichotomy between Islamic civilization and Western civilization in which the former is viewed morally superior and more

virtuous than the latter (Sert & Daniş, 2021, p. 208; Yanaşmayan et al., 2019, pp. 40-42), a line of thought that can be traced back, as discussed in the previous chapter, to Ziya Gökalp, and pretty often rhetorically deployed by the ruling party.

At the rhetoric level, the statement by İbrahim Kalın, then-chief foreign policy adviser to then-Prime Minister Erdoğan, makes perhaps the best epitome of this outlook. In 2013, Kalın described the isolation that Turkey faced in the Middle East as “precious loneliness” to defend the foreign policy decisions, in a manner that rejects to recognize failure (Özkan, 2014, pp. 135-136). In an effort to justify the failed policies in the region, Kalın attributes Turkey’s solitude to “a compendium of values and morality” (Balamir Coşkun, 2015, p. 195). Kalın’s remark is just but one example of a foreign policy discourse, according to which Turkey adopted a “principled, ethical, and righteous” (Gürpınar, 2020, p. 19) stance, and “a values-based” approach (Balamir Coşkun et. al., 2017, pp. 93) as opposed to the “immoral” Western powers not taking on enough responsibility (Çevik & Sevin, 2017, p. 408). Turkey is doing whatever needs to be done for the sake of humanitarian causes, and even when it fails, it is “precious” because the failures -if recognized as such- come as a result of the moral shortcomings of the remaining world; Western powers in the first place (Sözeri, 2017, p. 227). Erdoğan was reiterating this rhetoric when he told, rather than those which accepted only a tiny number of refugees, Turkey should long have been nominated for the Nobel Prize for hosting such a high number of refugees if the Nobel committee were utterly honest and objective (“Bu kez Nobel’i”, 2015).

Around two weeks after the Paris attacks, when the political climate in Europe had sharply turned from relative solidarity with refugees to security fears, at the EU-Turkey Summit on 29 November 2015, parties agreed to follow a Joint Action Plan (JAP). Under the JAP, the two parties were to take actions to prevent irregular

migration flows from Turkey to the EU (EC, 2015). According to the agreement, Turkey would tighten its control over its borders, and better the conditions for Syrians under the temporary protection. The EU would continue providing funding and humanitarian assistance for Syrian refugees in Turkey. The year 2015, and subsequent diplomacy with the EU marks the culmination of a new era in EU-Turkey relations that dates back to the onset of mass migration from Syria in 2011, since when the government has opportunistically used Syrian migration as a foreign policy leverage to strengthen its hand in the relationship (Gökalp Aras, 2019a, pp. 53-55).

In accordance with the JAP, in January 2016, Turkey started building a concrete security wall along its Syrian border, a wall which Gökalp Aras (2019a, p. 55) views as “a component of Turkey’s use of migration as a foreign policy tool against the EU, in that it ostensibly provides Turkey with far more control – to open or close the border at will”. In addition, Turkey started to implement visa restrictions for Syrians who entered the country through air and sea routes to discourage new arrivals and stem the irregular crossings into Europe (Heck & Hess, 2017, p. 44).

Finally, the EU-Turkey Statement, commonly referred as the EU-Turkey “deal”, or the “refugee deal” was signed during a summit in March 2016 (European Council, 2016). The EU-Turkey “deal” has since then been subject to controversy, and critique raised particularly by human rights organizations and NGOs. Amnesty International (AI), for example, describes it as a “historic blow to rights” (Amnesty International, 2016). For Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF-Doctors without Borders), the deal signifies a “historic abdication of Europe’s moral and legal responsibilities to provide asylum to those in great need” (MSF, 2016). From an ethical and human rights perspective, the deal is viewed as contradictory to the founding principles of the EU (Sert & Türkmen, 2017, pp. 37-38; Sert & Daniş, 2021, p. 200).

What makes the deal so disputable in the first place is that it entails the readmission of refugees passing through Turkey to EU countries via irregular means. The first article stipulates that “all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey” (European Council, 2016, 1). The second article specifies a “one in, one out” (Paçacı Elitok, 2019) formula, which requires that “for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU” (European Council, 2016, 2). Although it seems to remind of a bartering agreement, it is actually more of a bargain as the deal entails allocation of 6 billion EUR in total to Turkey in exchange. In addition, the deal mentions lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens by June 2016 provided that criteria for visa liberalization are all met -a “carrot” for Turkey as Paçacı Elitok (2019, p. 5) sees it. Turkey’s EU accession process was also to be re-energized according to the deal.

Even if the EU, which managed to largely curb crossings through the Mediterranean (Şimşek & Çorabatır, 2016, pp. 127-128), seems to be the ultimate “winner” (Sert & Danış, 2021, p. 200), a cost-benefit analysis of the deal would still reveal positive outcomes for both sides. Although most of the promises made to Turkey have remained unrealized, the deal has ultimately produced a “win-win” situation for both sides, at least for a period. The report by International Crisis Group (ICG, 2016) lists the mutual benefits as follows:

the flow of irregular migrants to the EU has been curbed, and European funding and programming have had a visible positive impact on Syrians’ opportunities in Turkey, which is also in the country’s long-term interests. The promise to curb the flow to Europe has likewise increased Ankara’s leverage

and arguably rendered EU counterparts less vocal about human rights and rule-of-law issues. (p. 2)

Heck & Hess (2017) argue that the government has in time learned how to use the “migration card” against the EU, and has gained “some sort of a *carte blanche vis-à-vis* the EU” (p. 52). How this card comes into play was last seen in 2020 when President Erdoğan, following the death of 33 soldiers in İdlip, announced that Turkey would not prevent crossings from its Western borders, and thousands of refugees, including several other nationals along with Syrians, gathered at Pazarkule, Edirne to cross the border to Greece (UNHCR, 2020). Although the crisis was resolved after Erdoğan and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met in Brussels, with refugees evacuated from the border area and transported to the cities where they resided before, Erdoğan’s threats to open the borders have become periodic (Kirişçi & Yavçan, 2020). The deal signed for 5 years expired in 2021. In the meantime, the government has been critical of the EU for not fulfilling its pledges, and brought forward the renewal of terms for more funding (Şimşek, 2021). As of writing, it is informed that on the EU side, a report is being drafted for the continuation of the agreement, which is expected to provide further funding and continue the prevention of crossings over Turkey (Kleist, 2022, p. 24).

4.1.4. Citizenship: Exceptional and Conditional

In 2016, five years after the migration from Syria began, President Erdoğan declared that Syrian refugees settled in Turkey could be granted citizenship, in a manner that acknowledges the permanency of Syrians’ stay in the country (Şimşek & Çorabatır, 2016, p. 128; Köşer Akçapar & Şimşek, 2018, p. 182; İçduygu & Millet,

2017, p. 3). Although the details regarding the criteria and procedure of citizenship acquisition have since remained unclear to a certain extent, it is observed by Köşer Akçapar and Şimşek (2018, p. 177) that selectivity that favors those with “cultural and economic capital as well as mostly those coming from a Sunni background” is implicitly at work in practice. Following this observation, Sert and Danış (2021, p. 209) further argue that this selective citizenship practice involves “deservingness” based on a different ground than it was in the past. While ethnicity or religion were, in the past practice, the major determinants of citizenship and naturalization process, property ownership and investment have recently gained prominence in the policy and practice of granting citizenship, which might be considered to be linked to the economic turndown. For example, through the latest amendments to the citizenship law in 2018, monetary and other relevant requirements to qualify for citizenship were all lowered and stretched to accommodate more foreigners seeking to acquire Turkish citizenship (Sert & Danış, 2021, p. 209).

Soon after President Erdoğan’s statement regarding citizenship for Syrians in 2016, a significant amendment was made to the citizenship law, which introduced the requirements for the acquisition of “exceptional citizenship” (Köşer Akçapar & Şimşek, 2018, p. 180). According to the relevant article of the law, exceptional citizenship can be earned by those foreigners making a fixed capital investment, purchasing real estate, providing employment, having deposits in Turkish banks, and purchasing government debt instruments. As mentioned above, through another amendment two years later, the quantitative limits designated for investments in capital, real estate and employment were significantly lowered to further ease access to Turkish citizenship. Other than those who meet one of these investment and capital requirements, foreigners who have made or have the capacity to make contributions in

the fields of science, economy, social life, sports, culture and arts are also eligible to apply for Turkish citizenship (Köşer Akçapar & Şimşek, 2018, p. 180).

As previously mentioned, the Temporary Protection Regulation, which defines the legal status of Syrians in Turkey, articulates that those living under this status shall not be entitled to apply for Turkish citizenship. As such, applying for exceptional citizenship, which requires either economic or cultural capital, appears as the logical step to be followed for Syrians who seek to obtain Turkish citizenship despite the lack of information about the processes (Erdoğan, 2021, p. 57). Remarkably, the application process does not work in a regular manner as it is the officials that determine who can apply for citizenship and gets directly in touch with those who meet certain criteria such as having entered Turkey legally, being under Temporary Protection status and/or holding a residence permit, having an employment, and not having involved in any criminal activity, and invite them for interviews (Köşer Akçapar & Şimşek, 2018, p. 180). However, there still remains a lack of transparency regarding the conduct of the procedure which causes rumors and speculations that the government is seeking to increase its electoral support by offering citizenship to Syrians (İçduygu & Diker, 2017, p. 20; ICG, 2018, p. 7).

The Interior Minister, Süleyman Soylu declared that as of December 31, 2021, the number of Syrian refugees who obtained Turkish citizenship was 193 thousand 293, including children (“Süleyman Soylu, Türk”, 2022). Based on their interviews with senior officials, Köşer Akçapar and Şimşek (2018, p. 180) inform that this number is expected to eventually reach 300,000. This means that citizenship will remain exceptional and extraordinary for the great majority of Syrians under Temporary Protection status.

4.1.5. Integration: Is There Such a Policy?

The longer their stay in Turkey is, the less likely Syrians are to return. The latest study by Erdoğan (2021, p. 270) shows that the majority (77.8%) of Syrians do not plan to return to Syria under any circumstances, even in the case of a regime change or the termination of war in Syria. Given this, and considering the growing tension against refugees in the country, the issue of integration will become increasingly critical for a peaceful coexistence of the Turkish society and Syrian refugees. As Köşer Akçapar and Şimşek (2018) foresee “it is almost certain that the integration of Syrian refugees will be among the top three agenda items in Turkey in the coming years” (p. 185). However, there is now broad scholarly agreement that a comprehensive, longitudinal, and well-planned governmental integration policy is still absent (İçduygu & Millet, 2016; Erişen, 2018; Batalla & Tolay, 2018; Gürsel, 2017; Kirişçi & Ferris, 2015; Gümüş & Eroğlu, 2015). As Erişen (2018) puts it; “whether we acknowledge the fact now or later, the Turkish Republic has a Syrian minority. These individuals have become a part of the society although we are not sure how the integration process was or has been” (p. 117).

It is not that a vision of integration is completely absent in governmental policy regarding Syrian refugees. On the contrary, there are steps taken, such as the aforementioned citizenship regulation, in terms of the legal integration of refugees. In addition, regulating work permits, and incorporating Syrian children into the national education system can be considered as other steps taken in different spheres of integration (İçduygu & Diker, 2017; Kirişçi & Ferris, 2015). However, the term “integration” is absent from the official vocabulary of the refugee governance (Şimşek & Çorabatır, 2016, p. 18). For example, The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) deploys the term “harmonization” instead of “integration”, which is

interpreted in a rather different and far more limited sense than that of international law (Şimşek & Çorabatır, 2016, p. 18). This lexical choice is not arbitrary but reflect the official approach to the issue that does not prioritize integration as a perpetual solution and that favors resettlement to a third country and voluntary return more as primary policy goals (Şimşek & Çorabatır, 2016, pp. 122-124; Batalla & Tolay, 2018, pp. 19-20). Ideational and political preferences may also be at work here. According to Sert and Daniş (2021, p. 209), one of the explanations to the purposeful use of the term “harmonization” as a substitute of “integration” is that the latter is, in public perception, reminiscent of the experience of Turkish emigrants to European countries which presumably deployed assimilationist policies towards this population. In their account, the adoption of terms “social cohesion” and “harmonization” instead of “integration” is also closely related to how the government seeks to frame the debate in ways that Ottoman notions of hospitality, social harmony and peaceful cohabitation of different communities are brought to the forefront.

Another piece of criticism about how the government approaches the issue is related to the economic dimension of integration. Şimşek (2020) argues that Syrian refugees experience a selective integration process that favors those who make investments and who possess skills but excludes those who lack skills and are deprived of economic capital, which she terms as “class-based integration”. Drawing on all these criticisms, it can be concluded that the official approach to integration falls short of a comprehensive, overarching, rigorous and long-range planning, which is labeled by İçduygu and Millet (2016) as “pseudo integration”.

4.2. Paradigms

Thomas Kuhn (1962) introduces paradigm as a novel and a central notion in his philosophy of science, pointing at the significance of paradigms and paradigm shifts within and for the development of science. Kuhn, himself also uses and defines paradigms in a range of differing contexts. In her essay titled ‘The Nature of a Paradigm’, Margaret Masterman (1970) identifies twenty-one distinct definitions of the notion as offered by Kuhn. Some of these definitions should be mentioned herein to clarify what paradigm signifies within the current study. First and foremost is the definition which describes the paradigm as a device or “a sort of conceptual and instrumental tools” provided by the paradigm itself, since I will be devising and analysing different and competing paradigms in order to explore shifting perspectives towards Syrian refugees (Masterman, 1970, p. 63). The second definition which might assist my formulation explains the concept as a “successful metaphysical speculation” while a third one associates the paradigm with “myths” (Masterman, 1970, pp. 61-62). A fourth definition refers to the usage of the notion as “a new way of seeing” in relation with another which describes the potential of the paradigm as an “organizing principle which can govern perception itself” (Masterman, 1970, p. 65).

Hence, decontextualized and drawn from Kuhn’s notion of the paradigm, focusing on its certain aspects and significations, I offer the term paradigm in understanding and defining the shifting perspectives, discourse, perception, and representations of the Syrian refugees within the limits of the current study.

I have distinguished five main paradigms at the intersections of the public, political and media debate on Syrian refugees in Turkey which are as follows: humanitarian, religious, economic, socio-cultural and demographic, and citizenship and rights.

Three major sources helped identify these paradigms. At the bottom, there lies an overview of primary and secondary sources: scholarly work, reports by NGOs, public opinion polls and surveys, and official statements and policy responses, some of which were mentioned in the first part of this chapter. An overall review of these sources informed me about major themes, areas, and aspects of the refugee debate in Turkey.

On top this, Wodak's (2008) list of the most common 'topoi' in debates about immigration provided a guideline. First, it is necessary to address the definition of 'topoi'. The term is loosely drawn from Aristotle's rhetoric. Wodak (2008) defines 'topoi' as: "content-related warrants" or 'conclusion rules' which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim" (p. 63). Reisigl (2018) gives a similar definition of term, as it is understood in Discourse-Historical Approach: "content-related argumentation schemes" (p. 52). Defined as such, Wodak (2008) lists the most common 'topoi' in debates about immigration as in the following:

1. Usefulness, advantage
2. Uselessness, disadvantage
3. Definition, name-interpretation
4. Danger and threat
5. Humanitarianism
6. Justice
7. Responsibility
8. Burdening, weighting
9. Finances

- 10. Reality
- 11. Numbers
- 12. Law and right
- 13. History
- 14. Culture
- 15. Abuse (p. 64)

Wodak and others inquired these ‘topoi’ in a number of studies that rely on different units of analysis ranging from election campaigns, parliamentary debates, policy documents, and media coverage (Wodak & Pelinka, 2002; Wodak & van Dijk, 2000; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). In Wodak’s (2008, p. 64) account, while most of the above-listed “topoi” are used to legitimize exclusion of migrants, for example, by presenting them an economic burden, cultural threat or abusers of social welfare benefits, some are used in anti-discriminatory discourses (e.g., Justice).

Wodak (2008) does not provide a detailed and accurate account of each item on her list. As it stands, some of the items specified in the list may be considered overlapping or can be grouped under a more general heading. For example, “usefulness/advantage”, “uselessness/disadvantage”, “burdening-weighting”, “finances” and “abuse” seem closely interconnected and complementary to each other inasmuch as they relate to arguments about the economic or financial impact of refugees in broad terms. In addition, some items on the list are broad enough to relate to multiple items. For example, arguments drawing on “danger and threat” may come forward in economic terms as well as cultural terms, or from a security perspective.

At this point, previously informed by an overview of the primary and secondary sources regarding the refugee debate in Turkey, I adjusted and adapted Wodak's list of "topoi" to the Turkish context and research purpose, grouping some items under a more general entry, eliminating some and adding new ones. An important note here should be made about the difference between "topoi" in Wodak's account and paradigms that this research develops. In Wodak's account (2008, p. 64), "topoi" may either be used to justify exclusion or oppose discrimination, so she treats discourses of inclusion and exclusion separately under different "topoi". In this regard, "paradigms" that this research employs are different from what Wodak refers to by "topoi". The word paradigm is loosely borrowed from Kuhn (1962) and employed in this research to refer to discourse hubs or focal points of the refugee debate in Turkey. Discourses that depart from these hubs are not merely inclusive or merely exclusionary. To put it another way, discourses of both inclusion and exclusion as well as those that oscillate between inclusion and exclusion may come forward under the same paradigm. To give an example, operating within the religious paradigm, the discourse of religious brotherhood is inclusive as far as the Sunni Muslims are concerned but exclusionary towards Alevis or non-Muslim refugees.

After adjusting and adapting Wodak's (2008) list based on the background knowledge provided by primary and secondary sources, final stage was a pilot study with a set of randomly selected articles from each newspaper to see the compatibility and feasibility of the paradigms I had identified. This also showed the relevance of news articles to the framework, so I finalized the list of paradigms as in the following: humanitarian paradigm, religious paradigm, socio-cultural and demographic paradigm, economic paradigm and citizenship and rights paradigm.

These paradigms are neither sharply distinct from each other nor meant to be exhaustive. Other aspects and paradigms may well be added to this list, just as they may be joined under different terms or headings. The paradigms elaborated below meet at a point of concurrency between politics, policies, public opinion and perception and the media. They frame the debate - be it taking place in official and institutional arenas like the Parliament, or on TV channels and newspapers columns or in everyday life and settings- and determines our thinking -the way we make sense of 'us' and 'them'- about Syrian refugees in Turkey. These paradigms are not merely discourses but rather like hubs from which political, public or media discourses depart as well as meet and interact with each other. These different aspects of the issue of Syrian refugees in Turkey form the basis of categorization of the news reports in the next chapter.

4.2.1. Humanitarian Paradigm

Batalla and Tolay (2018, pp. 3-7) distinguish three phases of the governance of Syrian refugees from the onset of the migration to Turkey till present. The initial phase of refugee governance covers the first year of migration, and is marked by -both at discursive and policy levels- a humanitarian approach: “one that vindicated a proactive welcome, an open border and open door approach, and a focus on humanitarian needs” (Batalla & Tolay, 2018, p. 3). At this stage, Turkey either rejected or remained reluctant to accept international help, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, for the sake of cultivating an image of “benevolent country” (Çevik & Sevin, 2017, pp. 404-405), which sets an example to the rest of the world with its welcoming attitude and humanitarian aid to those escaping war and atrocity.

Former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (2013) defined the policy goals of Turkey during the period to deal with regional and international matters and crises as “humanitarian diplomacy”, which was best exemplified by the way Turkey tackled the crisis in Syria and Syrian refugees:

(...) in the case of a humanitarian tragedy, Ankara feels obliged to extend its assistance even outside its borders, in line with its conscience-oriented understanding of diplomacy. Over 180,000 Syrian people are hosted in Turkey, due to the humanitarian tragedy in their home country. This all-encompassing approach is the most significant and distinguishing aspect of Turkey’s humanitarian diplomacy. We demonstrate our aim to make a difference through our stance in Somalia and Syria. (p. 867)

Seen through this lens, Syrian refugees are fleeing a ‘humanitarian tragedy’ in their homeland; they are the victims of a catastrophe and seeking security and protection outside the borders of their home country. Turkey cannot help but assume responsibility in this tragedy, no matter if it takes place cross-border since it is guided by a moral vision that ensures the protection and shelter of people who face war and displacement. In conformity with its humanitarian obligation, Turkey embraces, and shows compassion to the suffering of Syrian victims.

In her work entitled “*Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization*”, Malkki (1996) shows how humanitarianism contributes to the dehistoricization, depoliticization and dehumanization of refugees. Malkki (1996, p. 386) argues that drawing on humanitarianism, governments, humanitarian relief organizations and the media alike have produced and circulated stereotypical narratives and images of refugees since the aftermath of World War II. It is through

these standardized representations, which strip refugees of their individuality and political agency, and detach them from their particular contexts that there has emerged an imagined figure of the refugee as needy and desperate victim (Malkki, 1996, p. 378). Malkki (1996) notes that being helpless brings being voiceless: “helpless victims need protection, need someone to speak for them” (p. 388). In much a similar vein, Johnson (2011, p. 1028) notes that “Victimisation removes political agency from the figure of the refugee by establishing a condition of political voicelessness”. From this perspective, victimization of refugees through the lens of humanitarianism reduces them to passive recipients of help devoid of a voice of their own. Refugees are hence recognized with vulnerability, and not as active and competent political subjects who have the ability and the right to demand rights. One of the implications of this victimization along the lines of humanitarianism is that the way refugees are seen and treated is far from a rights-based perspective.

The lack of a right-based approach makes one of the most criticized aspects of the governance of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Özden, 2013, p. 5; Kutlu, 2015, p. 1; Yanaşmayan et al., 2019, p. 48; Baban et al., 2017, p. 93). From this point of view, Yıldız and Uzgören (2016, p. 14), for example, suggest that future policies should address the rights of the refugees rather than highlighting the “services” granted by the government. Refugees’ access to services is seen more of a favor than a right when they are framed along victimhood, and not identified along the rights they are entitled to receive under international law and agreements.

It should also be noted that humanitarianism itself -if not in moral principles, then in discourse and practice- entails a form of selectivity in the sense that it makes a distinction of worthiness, for as observed by Höijer (2004, p. 516); “in international politics as well as in the media, many victims never qualify as worthy victims”.

Worthiness may depend on either which part of the world victims belong to or their age and gender -women, children and the elderly are generally more identified as victims (Höijer, 2004, p. 517). Put bluntly, some victims are deemed to be more deserving of aid and attention than others.

During her fieldwork in a Tanzanian refugee camp resided by Hutu refugees, Malkki (1996, p. 385) observes that “As the visible signs of one’s social refugeeness faded, one’s worthiness as a recipient of material assistance was likely to decrease”. According to Malkki (1996, pp. 383-384), the social construct of the refugee relied on a certain type of person who was imagined as materially deprived and who needed to demonstrate this deprivation to the public viewing through visual means not only to receive aid but, more importantly, to be properly identified as refugees in the first place. This suggests that in order to be deemed genuinely worthy of help, refugees need to display their deprivation and vulnerability. Refugees using smartphones, having fun on the beach, or doing any other pleasurable activity in public life contradicts with the construct of the refugee as a vulnerable victim, and thus may lead to questioning of their refugeehood. On the other hand, the publicly vulnerable refugee, considered worthy of help, contributes to the construct of host community, humanitarian organizations or other actors providing assistance as benevolent and compassionate caretakers.

In the Turkish context, the discourse of humanitarianism is often accompanied by a rhetoric of ‘hospitality’, which serves a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ as ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’. According to Yücebaş (2015, pp. 38-39), the notion of traditional hospitality is a ‘myth’ that cultivates in the articulation of ‘us’ as hosts -respectful, tolerant, embracing and compassionate - towards the guests and as a community of insiders not only distinct from but also superior to ‘them’ -those who need to maintain

and respect the boundaries that set them apart. The rhetoric of hospitality and concomitant treatment of Syrian refugees as beneficiaries of temporary protection, according to Kloos (2016, p. 538), suggests “an attitude of toleration, rather than one of full acceptance into society”. Syrian refugees are tolerated as long as they remain ‘guests’, make no attempt to equally be situated as ‘hosts’, and do not claim more than they are offered.

Kaya (2013) points out that “tolerance involves an asymmetrical, paternalistic relationship between a sovereign party and a subaltern in such a way that the former unilaterally grants tolerance to the latter as an act of benevolence” (p. 9). In this sense, the discourse of tolerance rests on establishing a hierarchical relationship between the host community and refugees. This is why it can conveniently feed into disdain.

Rejecting the claims that Turkey pursued a sectarian agenda on the issue of Syrian conflict and refugees, Davutoğlu (2013) says; “If the ruler were a Muslim who oppressed Christians in Syria, we would equally be against him/her. As a matter of fact, there is no discrimination made in either the refugee policy that we implement or the humanitarian aid that we provide” (p. 860). Contrary to this assertion, there is evidence to suggest that both in discourse and in practice selectivity was entailed in the admission and governance of Syrian refugees (Toğral Koca, 2015; Korkut, 2016). According to Korkut (2016, p. 1), the government favors refugees who have “religiously, ethnically and politically acceptable backgrounds” to the Islamist ideology that it subscribes to. Likewise, İçduygu et al. (2017) argue that the discourse of the government draws on a ‘selective humanitarianism’ which favors cultural and religious ties over rights: “For the JDP, these essential elements of Turkish culture that make the aid and open-door policy inevitable are also a sign of national superiority” (p. 459).

In summary, approaching the issue of Syrian refugees through the lens of humanitarianism, often reinforced by a backdrop of traditional notion of hospitality, relates to the articulation of ‘we’ and ‘they’ in two interrelated ways. On the one hand, inasmuch as it entails the victimization of refugees, humanitarianism relies on a distinction between ‘we’ -the saviors, and guardians endowed with morality and virtues of benevolence, compassion and generosity- and ‘they’ -the victims and sufferers that lack the necessary material means as well as the competence to survive and live in dignified conditions. On the other hand, inasmuch as it draws on the rhetoric of hospitality, humanitarianism establishes a distinction between ‘we’ -the magnanimous and tolerant hosts- and ‘they’, the guests whose stay, temporary in nature, is out of courtesy and goodwill of ‘us’ -for which ‘they’ should pay due respect and gratitude-, and the outsiders who need to be aware of and retain the place they are given so as not to be seen as intruders. In this sense, humanitarianism is inextricably embedded in the way ‘we’ imagine ‘us’ in relation to or as opposed to ‘they’, though the term itself may seem to involve equity and sameness. As such, it is particularly relevant to Derrida’s (2000) notion of ‘hostipitality’, which refers to the inherent presence of hostility in hospitality. In Derrida’s (2000) terms, hospitality already involves having the power to set the boundaries of the space or place offered to the Other, which implies that both inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics are at work in the act of welcoming.

4.2.2. Religious Paradigm

The shared religion is among the major aspects that differentiates the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey from the case of refugees in the Western context. While in much of Europe religious dissimilarity is considered to feed into xenophobia, and

serves as a legitimizing ground, along with cultural and ethnic differences, for securitization policies (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016, p. 18), the case is quite the contrary in Turkey. To explain, sameness along religious lines has been a repository, particularly for the government's discourse, and has been instrumental for both broader political goals and ad hoc practical goals. On the one hand, highlighting the religious identity of Syrian refugees and marking them as religious fellows is inextricably linked to the wider political goals of reconstructing the society and redefining the national identity along religious lines (Karakaya Polat, 2018) -in a much different fashion than it was in the Republican era, as explained in the previous chapter. On the other hand, although it has proven to be futile as evidenced by the rising hostility and violence towards Syrian refugees, the rhetoric of religious fellows was thought to be instrumental in fostering acceptance of the Syrian refugees by the Turkish society (ICG, 2018; Kaya & Nagel, 2020).

Particularly in its first years of existence, the JDP officials deployed the analogy of '*ensar*' and '*muhacir*' from the Islamic history to refer to the Syrian migration to Turkey. For instance, in 2014, addressing the refugees in Islahiye camp in Gaziantep, President Erdoğan said "We, as Turkey, are glad and rightfully proud to have hosted you for 4 years. You have become *Muhacir*. You were forced to leave your homeland. We have become *Ensar* and mobilized every means available for you. No matter what they say, you are by no means a burden to us" ("Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Bizler", 2014). *Ensar*, literally meaning "helper" in Arabic, refers to the local people of Medina who welcomed and helped those Muslim *Muhacir* -literally meaning "migrant"- fleeing from Mecca to avoid the danger of persecution. From the perspective of this religious discourse, 'we' should -and indeed we did- help Syrian refugees because they are our religious brethren, and it is 'our' religious duty to

support those fellow Muslims in need of help. In this sense, ‘they’ are the same as ‘us’: Muslims. However, at the same time, the distinction between ‘we’ and ‘they’ remains, despite the religious sameness, as ‘we’ are permanent settlers, and ‘they’ are transients. In this sense, the dichotomy between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’, to which is added a religious dimension by the rhetoric of ‘*ensar*’ and ‘*muhacir*’, is further reinforced.

According to Karakaya Polat (2018) the purpose of using this analogy is twofold for the JDP actors, they “not only touch upon the emotions and religious beliefs of their conservative constituency but also attempt discursively to construct a society according to their own imagination” (p. 7). Likewise, Kloos (2016, p. 547-550) argues that the religiously oriented discourse towards Syrian refugees is revealing in terms of how the national identity is redefined with a major reference to the shared religion, more specifically the Sunni creed, in accordance with the neo-Ottomanist outlook, which was explored in the previous chapter. Religion, as Kloos argues (2016, p. 547-548), seems to have become a benchmark to those “desirable” and “undesirable” immigrants as evidenced by the preferential treatment of Sunni Muslim Syrian refugees over other Muslim groups, particularly Alawites, who are often referred to as “*Nusayri*” in a derogatory sense by the officials¹². Such differentiation of refugees based on religion which leads to classifying them into discursive categories of the “desirable” and “undesirable” is an extension and reflection of who is imagined as ‘we’ -the desirable- in New Turkey.

¹² Syria’s Alawite population and Turkey’s Alevis are not identical despite the similarities (Çağaptay, 2012).

An occasion to show how the religious identity makes the category of the “desirable” happened when then the Prime Minister Erdoğan condemned the car bombings in Reyhanlı in 2013, which killed dozens, including Syrians, in a statement that said, “Our 53 Sunni citizens were martyred” (“53 Sünni vatandaşımız”, 2013). The death toll included Syrians, who were, apparently, compromised in this perception of “Sunni citizens” (Kloos, 2016, p. 550). In addition to implying that the Alawite regime in Syria could be behind the attack, this wording leads to the othering of Alevis in Turkey, who were accused of siding with the Assad regime in later instances (Kirişçi, 2014, p. 31). It is reported that Alevis find this sectarian discourse that stresses the religious commonality between the majority of the Turkish population and Syrian refugees neither ad hoc nor episodic but rather part of a deliberate strategy to aggravate religious divides in society and underline their marginalization, which in turn fuels their resentment towards both the government and Syrian refugees (ICG, 2018, p. 8).

When it comes to more daily politics and pragmatic goals, the emphasis on the shared religion of Islam, accelerated the active participation of faith-based civil society organizations in providing humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees (Köşer Akçapar & Simsek, 2018, p. 184). In fact, it has been observed that relief organizations that have religious affiliation and close links with the government such as the İHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation and Ensar Foundation are endorsed, promoted and provided support for their activities (Özden, 2013, p. 9; ICG, 2018, p. 20; Sunata & Tosun, 2019, p. 699) while some international and local humanitarian organizations encounter challenges such as obtaining the necessary permits from the authorities (Sert & Danış, 2021, p. 207; Kirişçi, 2014, p. 38). Such an administration of humanitarian assistance and differential treatment of civil society organizations,

according to Saraçoğlu and Belanger (2018), show that “the management of Syrian lives in Turkey has become yet another domain in which the major premises of Islamic nationalism are reproduced” (p. 12).

On another ground, the stress on the shared religion helped -at least for some time- promote the reception of and inhibit adverse attitudes towards Syrian refugees (ICG, 2018, p. 8). In the initial years of the migration, according to Kaya and Nagel (2020, p. 24), “the discourse of guesthood and Ansar spirit as well as the rhetoric of Islamism, neo-Ottomanism and populism made it easier for the Syrians to be received and to be offered all the basic provisions” both in border cities and temporary accommodation centers. However, this discourse has reached its limits and has no appeal to the wider public today. As Lazarev and Sharma (2017) put forth, although an emphasis on the common religion may serve to weaken prejudice and hostility towards Syrian refugees, the impact of religious commonality may be overtaken by economic preoccupations even among the pious. This resonates with the finding that an overwhelming majority of Turkish society now regard Syrians as “dangerous people who will cause a lot of trouble for us in the future” whereas they once identified Syrians primarily as war victims (Erdoğan, 2020, p. 204).

To conclude, in the religious discourse of the government, the distinction between ‘we’ (natives) and ‘they’ (refugees) seems to disappear as ‘we’ and ‘they’ are united in faith: Muslimhood. However, the rhetoric of religious brethren, inasmuch as it draws on the analogy of *Ensar* and *Muhacir*, further contributes to the dichotomy of ‘host’ and ‘guest’, the latter being temporarily aided out of Islamic duty. In addition, there is here an ostensibly exclusionary distinction at work; a distinction between Sunni Muslims and non-Sunni (Alawites and/or Alevis). This distinction divides both categories -‘we’ and ‘they’- further into the subcategories of ‘the desirable’ and ‘the

undesirable'. In line with the vision of neo-Ottomanism, Sunni background makes the desired quality of both the Turkish society and Syrian refugees, and 'they' -the Syrian refugees- inasmuch as they bear this desired feature may at times be viewed the same as and even equal to 'us'.

4.2.3. Economic Paradigm

In the Western context, it has been observed by scholars that a discursive distinction is made -particularly by the media- between "genuine refugees / asylum seekers" -those who are forced to flee conflict zones, war, violence or persecution- and "economic migrants" -those who seek to reach an improved quality of life and better living conditions (Capdevila & E. M. Callaghan, 2008; Lueck et al., 2015; O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2013). Such a discursive distinction, however, has no parallel -neither in media discourse nor at the level of public debate- in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey. It is somehow acknowledged that Syrian refugees by no means arrived due to economic difficulties, in search of economic prospects and living standards that they cannot find in their home country. However, an overview of where the issue stands overall with the public today reveals that the issue of Syrian refugees is increasingly discussed in economic terms. Naturally, the debate centered around economic aspects and impact of Syrian refugees produces two opposing views on whether the refugees are more of a benefit or a burden for the country.

On the one hand side, the government's discourse has shifted from that of humanitarianism with an emphasis on hospitality and religious solidarity to one that highlights the economic benefits of Syrian refugees (İçduygu et al., 2017, p. 471). The dominant political discourse that portrays Syrian refugees as "victims" and "guests" has recently been replaced by one that delineates them, in a selective manner, as

“enterprising subjectivities” (Gürsel, 2017, p. 134). The remarks by Yasin Aktay, the JDP Deputy Chair and the Chief Advisor to the President Erdoğan, endorse this shift in the discourse. Back in 2019, Aktay (2019) stated in his column at the daily *Yeni Şafak* that although Turkey took an entirely humanitarian stance, the situation unfolded in a way that no one could have either anticipated or wished for, and it was high time “to turn what has happened into an advantage” by promoting and removing barriers to Syrian entrepreneurship and labor force participation. Later, in a much-debated public statement, Aktay said “If you take out Syrians from some key workplaces or if Syrians happen to leave the country, Turkey’s economy will collapse” (“Erdoğan’ın danışmanı Aktay”, 2021). The economic benefit of Syrian refugees, as understood from these remarks, comes in two ways; they contribute to the economy both as entrepreneurs and cheap labor force, though the latter is not explicitly referenced, not at least by official accounts.

On the other hand, the discourse of ‘economic burden’ comes forward and finds appeal among the wider public (Kirişçi, 2014). The high amount of government spending on Syrian refugees was several times publicly brought up by the President Erdoğan himself (“Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Mültecilere”, 2019). Laying emphasis on the huge amount of government spending, especially when it is addressed to the international community, has two implications. On a discursive level, it perpetuates the carefully crafted antagonism between generous and virtuous Turkey and hypocritical and irresponsible West. On a realpolitik level, however, it is nothing but a call for more international burden sharing, which the government was not enthusiastic about in the initial years of the Syrian migration, again -interesting though- for the sake of crafting an image of magnanimous country (Çevik & Sevin, 2017; Sert & Danış, 2021).

The sum repeatedly uttered by Erdoğan -“40 billion dollars”- has become generic both to the public and members of opposition parties to underline the burden on the society and to criticize the refugee policy of the government particularly by drawing a comparison between the aid allocated to Syrian refugees and the unfavorable conditions of Turkish citizens. The Chair of Victory Party (*Zafer Partisi*) Ümit Özdağ, one of the most vocal anti-refugee politicians, for example, shared several tweets highlighting the amount of government expenditures, the latest one of which says “The government that spent 40 billion dollars for Syrians and that declared another 40 billion dollars could be spent cannot find work for the young people” (Özdağ, 2021). This point of view that sees Syrian refugees as a burden or threat that hinders the well-being of the native population appears to be more and more widely accepted by the public. As a matter of fact, President Erdoğan himself mostly refers to the ‘burden’ of hosting refugees in his speeches; either to emphasize that Turkey has successfully fulfilled its responsibility and continues to bear this burden, or to underline that the international community did not take on enough responsibility in terms of burden sharing (Lüleci-Sula & Sula, 2021, pp. 3–4). On the public level, Özden (2013, p. 5), as early as 2013, reported from her interviews in provinces with a high population density of Syrian refugees that local people are restless about the government’s resource allocation to the Syrian refugees -for whom they use economically derogatory remarks such as “beggars”, “looters” and “exploiters”- in the presence of citizens, like earthquake victims in Van, who need help.

Toğral Koca (2016) also points out that “Syrian refugees are depicted and/or seen as taking away or stealing jobs, abusing and exploiting the “Turkish” system through, for example, establishing tax-free businesses and depressing wages” (p. 68). Not much seems to have changed over the years. For example, Saraçoğlu and

Bélanger (2019, pp. 369-372) reveal that one of the prevalent discourses among Turkish citizens is that of “economic threat”, which relates to -either perceived or real- worse labor market outcomes such as lower wages and a higher risk of displacement, deterioration of living conditions, particularly because of the increase in rental prices, and economic or material benefits such as monthly payments exclusively granted to Syrian refugees. While the former two anxieties may rest on a factual basis, the latter -economic privileges enjoyed exclusively by Syrian refugees- is based on false or fictional information generally spread either by the print media or social media (Saraçoğlu & Bélanger, 2019, p. 370). An example of this is the widespread misbelief among the Turkish people that Syrians live off the stipends they receive from the government. The study by Erdoğan (2020, p. 204) demonstrates that a vast majority of the Turkish society (84,5 %) believe Syrians depend on the financial support of the state to make a living, whereas in reality a modest monthly payment is available to less than half of the refugee population, and most of them are obliged to work to make ends meet.

In sum, economic parameters have become increasingly dominant both in the government’s discourse and public opinion regarding the issue of Syrian refugees. On the government’s side, while the financial burden that it has assumed illustrates the generosity of Turkey versus the apathy of the West, the economic benefit of Syrian refugees comes either as entrepreneurship or cheap labor force. On the public’s side, Syrian refugees are increasingly seen as a threat on economic grounds; outsiders who exploit the country’s resources, and thus impede the prosperity of its people.

4.2.4. Sociocultural and Demographic Paradigm

At the time of this writing, a short movie entitled *Sessiz İstila* (Silent Invasion) was released on YouTube on the 3rd of May. This half-fictional and half-documentary-like movie was watched by thousands of viewers and topped the trending topics on Twitter within a couple of hours, stirring the already heated debate over Syrians and the recent migrant influx from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The plot of the movie is worth mentioning here because it epitomizes almost all the arguments, fears and anxieties related to the future demographic changes and cultural dissonance in their most extreme, vulgar and overt forms. Set in 2043, the movie tells the story of a young Turkish man whose dream of becoming a brain surgeon did not come true, despite all his hard work, because of the unfair treatment of Turkish people vis-à-vis Syrians, who now make the majority of the country's population. The young man ends up working as a janitor in a hospital owned by a Syrian investor, to whom he should indeed be grateful because most of his Turkish friends are unemployed. It is forbidden to speak Turkish in the hospital where only a handful of Turkish staff -janitors only- are employed. The young man complains that his Turkish friends "dress like them" and "listens to the music they listen to". On his way home from work, going through a shanty Syrian neighborhood, he is harassed by Syrian men because he is Turkish. The Syrian political party wins the majority of electoral votes to rule the country, which is now divided into states, on its own. "We are the real owners of this land" says the newly elected Syrian President of the country on TV and he announces that the official language of the state is Arabic, which he says will help the country assume a prestigious place in the Arabic world. The protagonist blames his parents for not taking action before and letting what has happened happen. Parents regret for the past and wish they could rewind time back to the 2020s when they still had the chance to

prevent all this from happening. When the fictional part of the movie is over, the producer takes the screen and makes a speech about the alarming demographic forecasts referring to the high birth rates among Syrian women and describes the current state of affairs as “deturkification” due to the demographic flooding of Syrians, which she says is now taking the shape of a blatant invasion and not going silently anymore.

Though being highly provocative to the extent that it potentially inflames extreme and violent action, it is for sure that the movie reflects some of the fears and anxieties that Turkish society have particularly regarding the future demographic projections. One of the major frames that shape the public debate about Syrian refugees is that of “demographic threat” (Memişoğlu & Ilgıt, 2016, p. 9). As Bozdağ (2020, p. 723) observe, the potential shift in the country’s demographics causing a “Syrian minority” to emerge frequently comes forward in relation to arguments against granting citizenship to Syrians.

Demographic concerns are raised particularly by Alevis and Kurds living in the Southeastern provinces where majority of the Syrian refugees, most of whom are Sunni Arabs, were settled (ICG, 2016, p. 15). Alevis perceive the settlement policy of the government as part of a deliberate strategy to change the demographic composition of their long-inhabited districts for the favor of Sunni Syrians (Yılmaz, 2019, p. 115). Interviewed by the International Crisis Group, Alevis from Istanbul’s Sultangazi district say; “We cannot help but think Ankara is conducting demographic politics. In a place like Gazi neighbourhood that is around 50 per cent Alevi, Alevis are concerned that Syrians will be settled to reduce the Alevis to a minority” (ICG, 2018, p. 8). Kurds and seculars, alongside Alevis, see Syrians as threatening to disrupt the demographic balance and cultural fabric of their neighborhoods and

districts, voicing fears such as “our women feel like they have to dress more conservatively”, and “they are ruining our social cohesion” (ICG, 2016, p. 15).

Statistics and figures vindicate some of the concerns over demographic balance as the refugee presence has already led to a significant change in the complexion of border provinces such as Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Kilis, and Gaziantep, where a mixed population of different ethnic and sectarian communities live, and which -for this very reason- are susceptible to tensions and conflicts (Çağaptay & Menekşe, 2014, pp. 16-20).

Fertility rates of Syrian women, and the number of kids Syrian families have is quite often referred to in everyday conversations and on social media as well as news media both to justify the concern with future demographic makeup of the country, and, in derogatory terms, to emphasize that Syrians are culturally too different; either ignorant or just laid-back to have that many children even under conditions of displacement and poverty (Erbaysal Filibeli & Ertuna, 2021, p. 2251; Narlı et al., 2020, pp. 11–15).

High population density of Syrian refugees is a major ground for complaints about the worsening quality of life in general and overloaded public services in particular; ranging from the scarcity of affordable houses, soaring rents, jammed public transportation vehicles, disruptions in city services, long queues and wait times in hospitals and other public facilities, to stuffed schools and overcrowded public places -most of which are generally accompanied by references to perceived cultural differences between Syrians and Turkish people (Akar & Erdoğan, 2019, p. 936). Demographic and population-related concerns are often interwoven with cultural and identity-related ones. From their fieldwork in İzmir, Saraçoğlu and Bélanger (2019) observe that Syrian population density in the city is considered an “alarming sign of

the Arabization and Islamization of urban life” (p. 375). Such anxieties and perceptions of cultural mismatch are not peculiar to middle-class and upper-class city dwellers, as might be expected, but also voiced by working class individuals, as in the example of a Kurdish worker who states the following: “They are fond of their comfort. They are not very helpful. Their humanistic traits are not developed enough... On Saturdays the Syrian men come here and smoke water pipe, coffee in the middle of the street. (...) Their culture is quite different” (Saraçoğlu & Bélanger, 2019, pp. 372-373). The latest study by Erdoğan (2021) confirms that the perception of cultural dissimilarity crosses socio-economic lines and other population sub-groups. Despite the repeated emphasis on cultural, geographic, religious and historical proximity by political actors, the overall percentage of those who think that Syrians are culturally not similar is quite high (77,6%), and even surprisingly higher in border cities (83,4%) which have historical, economic, social and familial ties with the region and its people due to their geographic closeness to Syria (Erdoğan, 2021, p. 102).

The number of Syrians residing inside camps steadily decreased after 2016, and a vast majority of Syrians now live together with Turkish people, predominantly in metropolitans and border provinces (Erdoğan & Çorabatır, 2019, pp. 7–8). This means that the visibility of Syrian refugees in urban settings has increased to the extent that daily encounters between Syrians and Turkish people are almost inevitable, which causes discontent among Turkish people (ICG, 2018, pp. 3-5). The growing presence of Syrian refugees in urban settings, and public places is regarded as the infiltration and diffusion of Arabic culture -which is often associated with Islamic conservatism- to the city life and Turkish culture; a “cultural threat” to modern, urban way of living and values (Saraçoğlu & Bélanger, 2019, pp. 374-376). Complaints about the increasing number of Arabic signboards and the growing use of Arabic

language in urban settings and public places take up a significant part of cultural anxieties. These anxieties both contribute to and are partly derived from a wider dislike of Arabs, which may be traced back to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the First World War when Arab nationalists, backed by the British, revolted against the Ottoman rule (Kaya, 2020, p. 76). A sense of mistrust has since shaped the public memory and perception of Arabs, who are accused of “back-stabbing”, and stereotyped in public discourse and media framing alike as “traitors” (al Dakuki, 2008; Jung, 2005).

Erdoğan (2021, pp. 105-106) informs from his interviews that a majority of Turkish society do not only think Syrians are culturally quite different but also believe that Turkish culture is more developed and modern than and superior to the Syrian one. Likewise, Özden (2013) reports from her fieldwork in border cities that local people accuse Syrians of being incompatible to their civilized living and urban culture: “not having manners, speaking and laughing very loudly, being uneducated, having too many children, and harassing women on the streets” (p. 10). On social media, the presence of Syrian men on beaches, and their act of smoking water pipes becomes emblematic for their uncivilized attitudes, shared with comments bordering racism (Özdüzen et al., 2020, p. 14). News media also makes derogatory references to the perceived cultural traits of Syrians and uses discriminatory metaphors that portray Syrians as “filthy”, “morally corrupt”, “disruptive of local order”, and “culturally backward” (Cantek & Soykan, 2018, pp. 13–17; Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016, pp. 175–177).

As opposed to the discourse of “cultural threat” that holds a high ground in public discussion, the government’s discourse underlines “cultural proximity” of Syrian refugees to Turkish people. This discourse of cultural affinity is built mainly

around the notion of shared religion of Sunni Islam, and at times reinforced by references to the common Ottoman past and shared values, which presents Syrian refugees as “religious brethren”, “fellow Muslims”, “guests”, “*muhacir*”, “neighbors”, “God’s entrust”, “part of *ummah*” -all of which, in differing degrees, relate to cultural, religious, and historical links (Karakaya Polat, 2018; Kloos, 2016; Aksel & İçduygu, 2018; Yanaşmayan et al., 2019; Sert & Daniş, 2021). However, it is evident from the current political atmosphere that this discourse has no power to shape a positive public attitude towards Syrian refugees. It is remarkably noteworthy that a large-scale research study comparing the public attitudes toward refugees in five countries - Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Turkey - finds that attitudes toward refugees are most negative in Turkey despite holding the least favorable policies and having a population with the most similarities, among all the other countries, in socio-cultural and religious terms (de Coninck et al., 2021). This result also shows that the political rhetoric of shared beliefs, shared history and common cultural values does not translate into positive public attitudes, at least not any longer, and has little appeal for Turkish society as a whole. As Kaya (2020) rightly points out; “cultural and religious intimacy between the Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees is no longer a matter of distinction for the majority of the Turkish citizens to embrace the Syrians” (p. 12).

4.2.5. Citizenship and Rights Paradigm

Saybaşıllı (2011, pp. 75-77) coins the term “ghost citizens” to describe immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers whose in-between presence, as unsettled inhabitants, is deemed intrusive, uncanny and haunting by those who consider themselves the rightful proprietors of the land / home. Following Saybaşıllı’s conceptualization, Çavdar (2016, p. 35) argues that the presence of Syrian refugees

reminds the native population of Turkey of their own insecure existence -that of ghostly in nature-, deprivations, vulnerabilities, and precariousness. This is why, according to Çavdar (2016, p. 33), any adverse thoughts or feelings towards Syrian refugees talks more about 'us' than the refugees themselves as they arise from 'our' frustrations over the way 'we' imagine 'us' to be, which may translate into acts of discrimination and enmity.

This is even more so considering the popular resentment among the Turkish society: "In our own country now we are second class citizens" (Erdoğan & Semerci, 2018, n.p.). Frustrated over the poor quality of services they receive, the amount of taxes they have to pay, difficulties they face finding employment, the low wages they are paid, their eroding purchasing power, and the growing security issues in the country, Turkish people from all over the political spectrum think and feel as if they were downgraded to the status of second class citizens vis-a-vis Syrian refugees, whom they believe to be enjoying exclusive rights, economic and material benefits, and privileges in services and facilities (Erdoğan & Semerci, 2018).

That being said, it is not surprising that when it comes to the question of issuing citizenship to Syrian refugees, the Turkish society, no matter how divided it is in political terms, almost uniformly has raised an objection since as early as 2014 (Erdoğan, 2015, p. 146). The latest study by Erdoğan (2021, p. 266) informs that those who think none of the Syrian refugees should be given citizenship is at 71.8% while the percentage of those who think they should not be given any political rights is even higher, at 83.8%. Several drivers may be behind this huge objection. One of them is the aforementioned frustration caused by the unfavorable living, working, social and material conditions that are experienced across the Turkish society (Çavdar 2016; Erdoğan & Semerci, 2018). To put it differently, as Saraçoğlu and Bélanger (2019)

elaborate, a “sense of loss” felt by the Turkish population with respect to their perceived social and economic status shapes hostile attitudes against Syrian refugees. This “sense of loss” may well be expected to manifest itself in a strong objection to giving citizenship to Syrians as being equal before the law and having equal rights may be regarded as yet another instance of loss. As a matter of fact, local people interviewed by Saraçoğlu and Bélanger (2019, p. 380) express their concern that granting citizenship to Syrians would lead them to undeservingly enjoy the social and economic benefits that arise from citizenship acquisition.

Another reason for the strong public opposition to issuing citizenship to the Syrians refugees is related to how citizenship has been described and defined in the Turkish context. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Turkish citizenship was defined more on the basis of “duties” that citizens owe to the state than the “rights” they hold (Üstel, 2008). In this sense, it is far more than a purely legal status that guarantees its holders a set of rights and is rather akin to a degree to be attained on the condition that duties and responsibilities towards the state are fulfilled (Kadioğlu, 1998a). In other words, citizenship is understood as something that must be deserved and earned by citizens. It is, therefore, conceivable that the issue of “deserving-ness” is brought up by a great many of those who publicly share their opposition to issuing citizenship to Syrians on social media (Bozdağ, 2020, p. 725). From this point of view, Syrians should not be given Turkish citizenship because they do not deserve it by virtue of citizenly responsibilities and patriotic values such as devotion to and sacrifice for the country, a reasoning that is echoed in widespread anti-Syrian remarks like “Our soldiers die in Syria while they here enjoy themselves” and common perceptions of Syrians as “cowards” and “traitors” who fled their country instead of fighting for it (Erdoğan, 2021, p. 213).

The definition of Turkish citizenship, in addition to being predominantly duty-based, also accommodates ethnic and secular components (Yeğen, 2004; Kadioğlu, 2007). Accordingly, immigration and refugee policies as well as citizenship practices have so far favored those incomers of “Turkish descent and culture” (Kirişçi, 2000, p. 4). Though ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse, the Syrian population is ultimately a community of non-Turkish origin speaking a language other than Turkish. As a matter of fact, Turkey has never faced in its history such an unprecedented number of “foreigners” (Erdoğan & Çorabatır, 2019, p. 28). From a nationalist point of view, granting citizenship to Syrians threatens the national unity and cohesion of the country (Saraçoğlu & Bélanger, 2019, pp. 379-381). In addition, the segments of society that already feel threatened by the growing influence of Sunni Islam in public and political spheres; more specifically, Kurds, secularists and Alevis, may fear that granting citizenship to Syrians will further push the boundaries of religious politics and practice, contributing to their own marginalization (ICG, 2016, p. 11; Saraçoğlu & Bélanger, 2018, p. 1; Kirişçi & Ferris, 2015, p. 6).

On the government’s side, there recently seems to be a careful avoidance of an emphasis on the issue of citizenship, and the option of return seems to be more frequently voiced (İçduygu & Nimer, 2020). As mentioned earlier, there is an implicit practice of selective approach based on the qualifications, economic and cultural capital of Syrian refugees (Köşer Akçapar & Şimşek, 2018; Sert & Danış, 2021). Gürsel (2017) observes that the government’s discourse has changed from one that portrays Syrians either as victims or guests to one that features their enterprising activities and potential. In parallel to this change, what comes forward from the statements regarding citizenship is an emphasis on the increasing cost of humanitarian

assistance delivered to Syrians; a financial burden problem to which citizenship is proposed as an alleviating solution (Gürsel, 2017, p. 147).

On the Syrian refugees' side, citizenship is more about their legal status than a sense of attachment and belonging; the gateway to legal rights and protection, though not necessarily the key to social incorporation to the Turkish society (Köşer Akçapar & Şimşek, 2018, p. 184). Even with citizenship and legal rights, it is foreseeable from the growing xenophobic mood that Syrians in Turkey will remain foreigners in the eyes of most Turkish citizens. In this sense, the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey shares similarities with that of Armenian refugees in the French mandatory Syria in the early 1920s. In her remarkable work, Abrahamyan (2020) shows how the arrival of Armenian refugees -which was then supported by French mandatory authorities- became entangled with the identity politics in mandatory Syria, where the flourishing Arab nationalism was then taking the form of an anti-colonial struggle. In a couple of years after their arrival, Armenian refugees were granted both citizenship and voting rights by the French mandate regime, which prompted anti-Armenian reactions among Syrian nationalists and the press alike that labelled Armenians as "outsiders" threatening the social and economic welfare as well as the national unity and integrity of the country (Abrahamyan, 2020, pp. 48-51). Abrahamyan (2020) uses the phrase "citizen strangers" to describe the systematic otherization of Armenians through labelling and discrimination, regardless of their legal status. The same phrase is likely to be used to refer to the case of Syrians in Turkey in the years to come.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1. Discourse-Historical Approach

This study utilizes Wodak's (2001) Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) method to analyze the front-page news articles in detail and reveal the discursive representations of Syrian refugees as part of the contest over the contents of national identity. The methodological approach employed by Wodak et al. (2009) to explore the discursive construction of the Austrian national identity is called The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) by the authors themselves. The DHA, developed by the Vienna School of Critical Discourse Analysis, among whose members are Ruth Wodak and her colleagues, is acknowledged as one of the major branches of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The DHA also draws on the Critical Theory (more particularly on the Frankfurt School and Habermas's thought), but is differentiated from the CDA (Fairclough, 2010) in the way that it treats language: "For the DHA, language is not powerful on its own – it is a means to gain and maintain power by the use powerful people make of it" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). To explain, the DHA emphasizes the historical as well as the contemporary socio-political dimensions of discourse, and proposes an interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach to study social phenomena:

The DHA considers *intertextual* and *interdiscursive relationships* between utterances, texts, genres and discourses, as well as extra-linguistic social/sociological variables, the history of an organization or institution, and

situational frames. While focusing on all these relationships, we explore how discourses, genres and texts change in relation to sociopolitical change. (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 90, *italics original*)

In line with the approach, this research incorporates the historical as well as the contemporary socio-political (Chapter 3 & Chapter 4) context to the study of media representations of Syrian refugees.

5.2. Research Design

The research design of this study involves, at the bottom level, a content analysis of the frontpage coverage of the selected newspapers: *Sözcü*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Yeni Akit* and *Sabah*. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction Chapter, the purpose was to keep the time frame of analysis as long as possible to be able to capture the changing dynamics, themes and discourses through the years. For this purpose, the arrival of the first Syrian refugee group in April 2011 was taken as the starting point and the mass march of refugees to Edirne to cross over to Greece in March 2020 as the ending point for data collection. More precisely, the dates are from April 11, 2011 to March 15, 2020. The march to Edirne in March 2020 was chosen as the terminal date for data collection for two reasons. First of all, it marked symbolically, albeit not actually, the “return” of Syrian refugees as opposed to their arrival in April 2011. Secondly, it was the last time that the issue of Syrian refugees - as a whole, and not just separate aspects, specific incidents or isolated cases- came to the forefront in the country’s agenda before the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown took

effect, and the virus changed everything from daily life to overall news swiftly and decisively¹³.

Before moving on to the details of the steps of the research design, it is worth recalling the main characteristics of qualitative research processes. Qualitative analysis does not follow a linear path with consecutive steps strictly distinguished from one another but rather follows a circular pattern as Berkowitz (1997) elaborates:

(..) in qualitative evaluation, data collection and data analysis are not temporally discrete stages: as soon as the first pieces of data are collected, the evaluator begins the process of making sense of the information. Moreover, the different processes involved in qualitative analysis also overlap in time. Part of what distinguishes qualitative analysis is a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge, new connections are unearthed, and more complex formulations develop along with a deepening understanding of the material. Qualitative analysis is fundamentally an iterative set of processes. (p. 4)

Discourse-Historical Approach is naturally not exempt from this pattern; it proceeds in a recursive and iterative manner (Wodak, 2015; Reisigl, 2018; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). That is to say, despite being presented under separate subheadings,

¹³ Here, I am referring to the time period when I finished data collection and started the analysis. In the meantime, while I was studying and coding the data and writing this dissertation, the overarching effect of the pandemic was long gone. The year 2020 makes the utmost latest time possible to end data collection for time concerns.

what follows is the steps of an iterative research design, and intertwined processes rather than stages followed in strictly consecutive order. To exemplify, while the data collection involved making a series of choices and judgements, the data selection process was pretty much informed by preliminary assessments.

5.2.1. Data Collection

Collecting data from a ten-year time period could have been both more practical and goal-oriented by focusing on some predetermined thresholds or turning points such as the important dates and incidents mentioned in the previous chapter. However, my preliminary research of the selected key dates informed me that the news items about Syrian refugees did not always make it to the front page to be featured high on the agenda but were mostly carried into inner pages most probably due to the fast-changing news cycle and extremely busy political calendar of the country. For this reason, in order to be able to obtain a satisfying dataset, I performed a daily content analysis of the frontpage coverage of the selected newspapers.

Front pages of national newspapers are digitally archived on several websites and typically stored as JPEG files, which do not allow search by text or keyword. This rather unpleasantly researcher-unfriendly format required me to skim and scan over 30.000 front pages of the five selected newspapers published in the last ten years. Taking the word “Syrian” as my key search term, I stored all the relevant materials and sorted out the irrelevant ones. Albeit quite few in number, a close reading of some news reports informed me that despite the lack of the keyword “Syrian”, they obviously referred to Syrian refugees through other phrases (e.g. “three million people”, “those fleeing Syria” etc.), and were, therefore, included in my corpus. Here it should be noted that inconsistent use of the terms (refugees, asylum seekers,

immigrants etc.) in media coverage was observed by previous research (Erdoğan et. al., 2017; Efe, 2019). Therefore, it seemed more plausible to take the word “Syrian” as my key search term than using a combination of key words like "Syrian + refugees". My preliminary research also informed me that referring to Syrian refugees only as “Syrians”, and without the use of accompanying group words such as “refugees” or “guests” was a common practice.

5.2.2. Data Classification

My first observation during the process of data collection was that the news articles that reported Syrian refugees were of two kinds: those that are directly about Syrian refugees and those that are indirectly related to the issue. The items that are directly relevant to the issue reported, for instance, the number of incoming Syrian refugees, conditions at camps or in cities, incidents they got involved in, the rights they are granted, problems they face, etc. The items that are indirectly relevant to the subject matter are of two types. The first type is the news items where the focus is on the Syrian war or related regional / international political events or policy activities, and where Syrian refugees -most often their numbers or conditions- appear as additional or supplementary information to the main story. As long as they were of reasonable content and relevant to the research purposes, I kept such items in the corpus. The second type of indirectly related news items are the ones where the mention of Syrian refugees was not meant for the purpose of additional information but rather served, for instance, to draw a form of comparison -most often- between the local population / Turkish citizens and refugees, or the West and Turkey. The stories reported in such indirectly related news items varied, from the unjust treatment of a war veteran to the raise in minimum wage. While some of the directly relevant news

articles were not pertinent to the purposes of this study, some indirectly relevant ones were closely relevant to the research purpose. To be more precise; news articles, for example, reporting solely on boat accidents, marine casualties and tragic incidents did not serve the purpose of this work despite being directly relevant to the issue of Syrian refugees; therefore, such pieces were excluded from the corpus unless mentioned otherwise. On the other hand, indirectly related news items, particularly the ones which were framed in a comparative lens, required special attention in that they hinted how nationalism could be manifested with regard to Syrian refugees in ostensible ways even when the topic at hand is not related to Syrian refugees, so I kept them in my corpus. I also eliminated news reports with fewer than three lines as they were too short to be of reasonable content.

My manual content analysis yielded a corpus of a total 730 news articles. I categorized all the news articles collected on a yearly basis. Table 2 shows the breakdown of news articles collected from the selected newspapers for each year.

Table 2*Yearly Breakdown of All the News Articles in the Corpus*

Year	Number of Articles
2011	50
2012	86
2013	59
2014	47
2015	89
2016	80
2017	96
2018	97
2019	101
2020	25

It should be noted that except for the years 2011 and 2020, news articles were searched and collected from a whole year's time period. As mentioned before, I took April 11, 2011 as the starting date for data collection, so the total number of items (50) in 2011 was collected over an eight-month time period. Despite this, the breakdown of 2011 coverage is still not substantially different from that of the following years (except 2012; the coverage is relatively higher in 2012). However, this trend changed in 2015. As mentioned in the previous chapter, 2015 is the year that saw a worldwide steep increase in public attention to Syrian refugees after the boat tragedies in the Mediterranean were reported, particularly after the tragic photo of Alan Kurdi was published on the front page of several newspapers and went viral on social media (Vis & Goriunova, 2015). However, as I have already mentioned, I did

not include the news articles that solely reported boat accidents or marine casualties, including the ones about Alan Kurdi, in my corpus for the research purposes. Despite this, I collected quite a high number of articles from the year 2015, which probably means that the considerable increase cannot be solely explained by Mediterranean crossings and fatalities. It can be suggested that in its initial years, migration from Syria did not receive much media attention, at least was not taken as newsworthy as to be covered on the front page, but this trend began to change from 2015 onwards as the stay of Syrian refugees prolonged; a preliminary observation supported by previous research as well (Erdoğan et al., 2017).

The number of articles collected from the year 2016, when the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement was signed, is relatively smaller than the previous year and the following three years (2017, 2018 and 2019), during which a stable pattern is observed. During my protracted process of data collection, I noticed that -to the misfortune of my research design- news articles about Syrian refugees were rather placed in inner pages than the front page, particularly during these years. The study by the Research Centre on Asylum and Migration (IGAM), prepared by Doğanay (2019), examines the news coverage of immigrants and refugees by the national and local press from 2017 to 2018, and finds that the news about refugees was scarcely placed on the first page of national newspapers, and was predominantly published on the agenda pages (pp. 14-15). Different from the national newspapers, local newspapers published in provinces where the refugee population is dense reported the news about refugees more frequently (almost twice as much) on their frontpages, a finding that the researcher thinks, though it requires further examination, might be explained by “the local press attributing more newsworthiness to news about refugees” (Doğanay, 2019, p. 15), which relates to one of the traditional news values, namely, proximity.

The lengthy data collection process informed me that, newspapers, from 2016 onwards, started to report more on the different aspects of the issue in a way that frames it rather as a domestic phenomenon with far-reaching and multifaceted dimensions, and not just as a matter of foreign policy, international agenda or the war in Syria. In this sense, a shift in perspective and framing of the issue may be the underlying reason for the relatively little frontpage coverage of national newspapers. For example, there was more coverage of matters relating to education, health, economic impact, employment, social cohesion, legal framework, etc., citing NGO reports and surveys, covering investigative news stories, interviewing experts, etc. However, such items made it more frequently to inner pages than the front page due to their more weighty and less attractive nature. On the other hand, controversial statements made by authorities (e.g., statements about citizenship), tragic incidents (e.g., the death of Alan Kurdi), extraordinary events (e.g., cross-border armed conflicts), instantaneous developments (e.g., mass border crossings), matters of international concern (e.g., The Readmission Agreement), for instance, received more frontpage coverage, very much expectedly. Therefore, although it is not quite obvious from the above-presented Table 2, it can be said that the media's attention to the issue indeed increased from 2015 onwards. Indeed, I collected the highest number of articles from the year 2019. It may also be plausible to suggest the public's realization that Syrian refugees were not temporary was reflected upon newspapers' framing and approach to the issue.

As for the year 2020, which makes the smallest contribution to the corpus, it should be noted that news articles were collected from a two-and-a-half-month time period, during which refugees' gathering at the border in Edirne was the most extensively covered topic. More news reports from this period could have been added

to the corpus if they contained the key search term 'Syrian'. However, I noticed that a considerable number of news reports did not mention the country of origin of refugees, and rather used the words 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers' -a trend that I also observed in the news reporting sea journeys and deaths at sea- in a way that frames refugees as an anonymous group of desperate people at the borders of Europe. Despite not being pertinent to the research purposes of this study, it might be of interest to future researchers looking at patterns of linguistic practices in media coverage of refugees.

When the process of data collection was over, I organized the news articles by newspaper and by year. Table 3 shows the breakdown of each newspaper's coverage on a yearly basis. Figure 1 shows the total breakdown of each newspaper's coverage in the corpus.

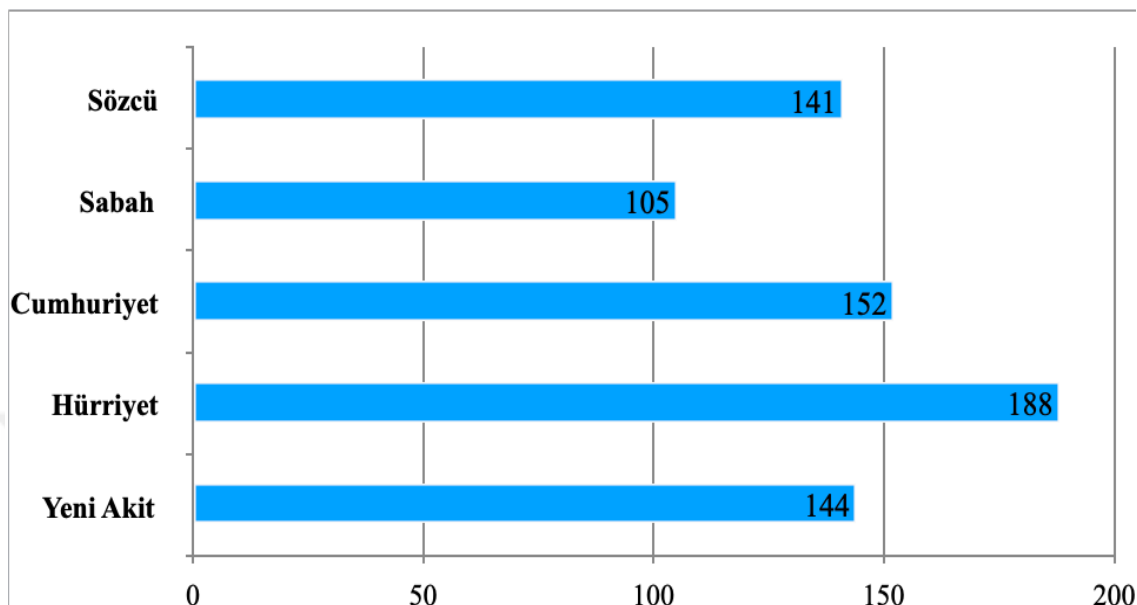


Table 3*Yearly Breakdown of Newspapers' Coverage in the Corpus*

	<i>Sözcü</i>	<i>Sabah</i>	<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	<i>Hürriyet</i>	<i>Yeni Akit</i>
2011	8	9	11	13	9
2012	20	21	19	20	6
2013	16	6	18	11	8
2014	9	4	14	10	10
2015	8	11	28	31	11
2016	17	11	14	27	11
2017	19	8	18	26	25
2018	19	14	12	22	30
2019	20	15	16	23	27
2020	5	6	2	5	7
TOTAL	141	105	152	188	144

Figure 1

Total Breakdown of Each Newspaper's Coverage in the Corpus



As can be seen from Figure 1, *Hürriyet* has the biggest share in the corpus. *Cumhuriyet* is in second place with a relatively higher number of articles than *Sözcü* and *Yeni Akit*. *Sabah* has the smallest share with a considerably lower number of news reports than all the other newspapers. The comparatively small amount of frontpage coverage by *Sabah*, a conservative and pro-government newspaper (Kaya & Çakmur, 2010), is probably due to the reason that the newspaper opted to place news about Syrian refugees in its inner pages. This assumption is somewhat in line with previous research. In the corpus of 2321 texts compiled by Efe (2019, p. 52), who collected news articles from five newspapers (*Hürriyet*, *Posta*, *Sözcü*, *Zaman* and *Sabah*) from 2011 to 2015, the biggest share is taken by *Sabah* while *Hürriyet* comes in the third place (after *Zaman*). Considering the two corpora together, it may be suggested that although *Sabah* gives a great deal of coverage to news about Syrian refugees, such items are not frequently placed on its front page. Although it requires further

evaluation, this may be due to a purposeful avoidance of bringing the issue to the fore of public attention. As for *Hürriyet*, such a considerable difference between frontpage coverage and overall coverage does not seem to exist when the corpora of this research and the one compiled by Efe (2019) are compared. It should also be noted that the newspaper changed hands in 2018, and was purchased by the Demirören Group, known to have close links to the government (Balamir Coşkun, 2020, p. 645). Previously owned by the Doğan Group, the newspaper was from time to time critical of the government (Balamir Coşkun, 2020, p. 644; Yeşil, 2018, p. 246), albeit never as sharply and steadily as *Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü*. From 2018 onwards, the newspaper leaned towards a pro-government character, though again not as explicitly as *Yeni Akit* or *Sabah*. This might be expected to have an impact on the newspaper's framing of the news about Syrian refugees. However, as Table 3 shows, it does not seem to have an effect on the amount of its frontpage coverage of Syrian refugees as the newspaper comes each year either in the first or second place with its share of the total breakdown.

As I mentioned earlier, during the data collection process, I realized that some of the news reports did report stories about topics other than Syrian refugees and used the mention of Syrian refugees generally to make a point; to draw a comparison, to criticize or to praise the government, the West, or the opposition. In this sense, they were indirectly related to the subject matter but quite relevant to the research topic at hand as they hinted how the issue of Syrian refugees was instrumentalized by newspapers. At this stage, I categorized such news reports separately to examine them later. The total number of such news articles is 39, which is equal to approximately 5% of the corpus. Table 4 shows newspapers' breakdown of such indirect news reports in the corpus.

Table 4*Breakdown of Newspapers' Indirect News in the Corpus*

Newspaper	Number of Indirect News
<i>Hürriyet</i>	2
<i>Sabah</i>	3
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	6
<i>Yeni Akit</i>	12
<i>Sözcü</i>	16
TOTAL	39

As can be seen from Table 4, the Islamist and pro-government *Yeni Akit* and the secular anti-government *Sözcü* have the biggest share in the total breakdown of indirect news articles in my corpus. These two newspapers stand at opposite ends not only in their attitudes towards the government but also in how they underpin the national identity. While *Yeni Akit*, in line with neo-Ottomanism that was explored in Chapter 3, represents and promotes an Ottoman Islamist understanding of national identity that imagines a nation of religiously bonded people, the political stance of *Sözcü* corresponds to Republican Nationalism, which adheres to the founding principles of the Republic; a secular and Western-oriented view of the nation (Hintz, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). Both are at the extremes in their stance, to the extent that their coverage, particularly of their adversaries, sometimes fall into hate speech (Hrant

Dink Foundation, 2013; 2015; 2017). The finding that these two newspapers have the highest number of articles that instrumentalize the issue of Syrian refugees to manifest their own perspective shows how the struggle over the essence of national identity is relevant to the issue of Syrian refugees.

Frontpage headline news (*manşet haberi*) is the news story that the newspaper (meaning the editor-in-chief or editorial board) wants to highlight and bring to the public's attention that day. In this sense, frontpage headline news is crucial to the agenda-setting role of a newspaper. The headline story reflects what the newspaper thinks and how they want the public to think about a particular issue, so the agenda-setting function is fulfilled. In addition, frontpage headline news reaches a far wider audience than newspaper readers; recapped on TV morning shows and radio programs and shared on social media. For these reasons, I paid special attention to headline news as they hinted how the newspapers viewed the issue of Syrian refugees as well as how and in what terms they wanted the public to discuss the issue and classified them separately by newspaper and by year. Table 5 shows newspapers' breakdown of frontpage headline news in the corpus. Figure 2 shows the yearly breakdown of headline news in the corpus.

Table 5*Newspapers' Breakdown of Front-Page Headline News*

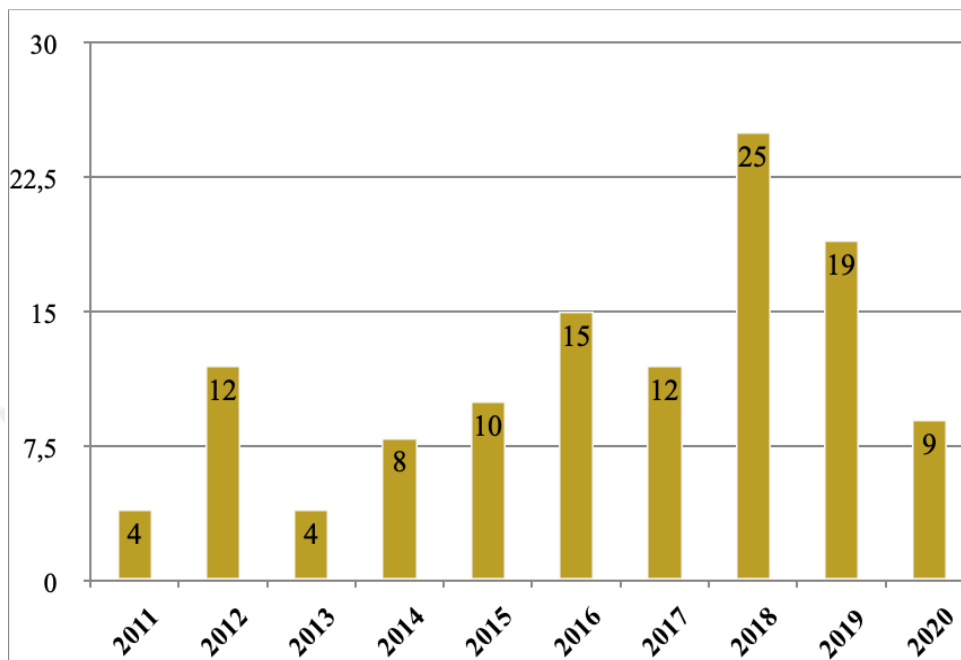
Newspaper	Number of Headline News
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	6
<i>Sözcü</i>	16
<i>Sabah</i>	18
<i>Yeni Akit</i>	21
<i>Hürriyet</i>	57
TOTAL	118

As Table 5 shows, *Hürriyet* has by far the largest number of frontpage headline news related to the issue of Syrian refugees, which means the newspaper brought the issue to the limelight more frequently than all the other selected newspapers. A closer look at the headline news published by the newspaper informed me that a considerable amount was exclusive stories and original articles by reporters in the field. Here it is useful to recall that the viral photo of Alan Kurdi was captured by Nilüfer Demir, a photojournalist working for the news agency that also owned the daily *Hürriyet*¹⁴. The photo was published on the front page of the newspaper

¹⁴ Until 2018, the news agency owned by Doğan Holding was called *Doğan Haber Ajansı* (DHA). After the news agency changed hands, and was bought by Demirören

(September 3, 2015) the next day it went viral on the internet, and the story was covered again on the front-page in the following two days (These three articles were not included in the corpus for the reasons mentioned before). The newspaper also has the biggest number of front-page news articles collected in the corpus (Table 3 and Figure 1). All this means that the newspaper pays a great deal of attention and gives a higher priority than the other selected newspapers to the issue. This is important because *Hürriyet* is commonly referred to as the “flagship” of Turkish media, implying its leading role as agenda-setter of public debates (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2012, p. 311; Kaya & Çakmur, 2010, p. 531). It should also be noted that even after the change in ownership and editorial staff, the newspaper’s readership profile is made up of different social segments, and far from being homogeneous (Cantek & Soykan, 2018, p. 2). It might be said that, as opposed to *Sabah* which presumably opted not to spotlight the issue on its front page as mentioned before, *Hürriyet* preferred to keep the issue of Syrian refugees on the agenda of the country.

Holding, it was called Demirören Haber Ajansı (DHA) while the abbreviation remained the same.

Figure 2*Yearly Breakdown of Front-Page Headline News*

As shown in Figure 2, the highest number of headline news was collected from the year 2018. This is again somewhat in line with previous research. Canteke and Soykan (2018, p. 16) observe in their media analysis that in 2018, “sensational news concerning the problems caused by the refugees began to appear in the media” as the issue got more politicized. In January 2018, Turkish army launched its second major cross-border operation, called Operation Olive Branch (*Zeytin Dalı Harekati*), in Afrin, Northern Syria. Military operation in Afrin, like the previous Operation Euphrates Shield (*Fırat Kalkanı Harekati*) in 2016, was framed on grounds of ensuring national and territorial security as well as creating safe zones in Northern Syria to prevent further migration from the region and enable the return of Syrian refugees, which in turn helped increase public backing for the military action (Kınıklıoğlu, 2020, p. 2; Saraçoğlu, 2018, p. 26). The return of refugees to Syria was

more frequently and explicitly voiced by government officials, indicating a change in the official policy (Gökalp Aras, 2019b, p. 192; İçduygu & Nimer, 2020, p. 7). It was again in 2018 that the government announced its decision to gradually close the camps (Erdoğan & Çorabatır, 2019, p. 7). As a result of this decision, a considerable number of refugees left the camps to settle in cities, which changed their situation to “urban refugees” scattered across the country (Kınıklıoğlu, 2020, p. 2). On one hand, the situation of Syrians was moving faster towards permanence, and, on the other hand, the return of Syrian refugees became increasingly the subject of public and political debate. The peak in 2018 in front-page headline news should be considered against this backdrop.

After this initial stage of categorizing, sorting, classifying and evaluating the news articles in my corpus, retrieving background information, finding patterns and trends, and developing insights for analysis, came the next stage of the research.

5.2.3. Data Selection

After the initial stage of categorization and exploration of the data, I went through the corpus again to filter out the items other than those which mentioned, or referred to, or implied another actor / agent / subject in addition to Syrian refugees. The use of a proper noun (e.g., country name, city name, the name of a politician, etc.), the use of a possessive determiner (e.g., “our” country), and the use of words referring to persons / groups (e.g., “locals”, “citizens”, etc.) were all taken as indicators of a second party involved in the news story other than Syrian refugees. As my research goal was to understand how the issue of Syrian refugees is mediated to contribute to the (re)construction of national identity, those news items which included a comparative component (e.g., the attitude of Turkey versus the West), or a

juxtaposition (e.g., between Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees) required particular attention. After this initial stage of selection, the remaining items (710) were still too many to be analyzed in-depth.

van Dijk (2001) points out that “in any practical sense there is no such thing as a ‘complete’ discourse analysis: a ‘full’ analysis of a short passage might take months and fill hundreds of pages. Complete discourse analysis of a large corpus of text and talk, is therefore totally out of the question” (p. 99). Therefore, he suggests the researcher must be selective, and choose, for more in-depth analysis, the elements that are most relevant to the research at hand. In order not to be overwhelmed by its volume and complexity, and to make the analysis manageable, I chose to narrow down my corpus, too. To decide otherwise would have proven to be an impossible task to achieve in terms of the applicability of the research method and would have forced me to alter my research design altogether. At this point, I followed what (Wodak, 2015) suggests: “it makes sense to be aware of the thorough overall research design, and thus to make explicit choices when devising one’s own project” (p. 13). She also adds that; “In a PhD thesis, for example, one can certainly conduct only a few case studies and must restrict the range of the data collection to very few genres” (Wodak, 2015, p. 13). The range of my data collection was already restricted to one genre only: front-page news reports. I further needed to narrow the range of my data, keeping the overall research design in my mind, to a smaller set of samples. And, for this purpose, I needed to make explicit choices.

My previous exploration of the data had informed me that some news articles did not actually report stories about or focus on Syrian refugees but rather used the mention of the issue to make a statement. I had previously categorized them as “indirect news”. Albeit quite few in number compared to the overall corpus (see Table

4), they were quite relevant to the research purpose, as they hinted by what means the issue was brought to the fore, so at first hand I decided to keep them in my corpus of analysis. In addition, for the reasons mentioned before, headline news required special attention. The number of headline news (Table 5) in the corpus was also quite satisfying, so I decided to keep them in the corpus of analysis, too. Then, however, I had to take the share of each newspaper and each year into consideration. For example, *Hürriyet* had by far the highest number of headline news while *Cumhuriyet* had a remarkably low number of headline news (Table 5). To give another example, the number of headline news collected from the year 2015 was only 10 (Figure 2) while the number of all front-page news collected from the same year was quite high, actually taking the 4th place in the corpus (Table 3). Narrowing down the corpus of analysis to indirect news and headline news only would create an uneven balance of sampling in terms of overall coverage by year and overall coverage of each newspaper. Therefore, I decided to go over all the data again and choose other news articles to include in my corpus of analysis, to strike a balance in terms of a fair composition.

Reisigl and Wodak (2009) point out that in the course of preparing the corpus for analysis, the compiled data are narrowed down in line with certain criteria such as “frequency, representativity, (proto) typicality, intertextual or interdiscursive scope/influence, salience, uniqueness and redundancy” (p. 99).

At this point of data selection, another, and more important, criterion that I followed was relevance to research purpose. More accurately, I focused on eliciting the news that most relevantly addressed my research concern; allowed me to investigate the representation of Syrian refugees in relation to different ‘imagined’ national identities discussed in Chapter 3 and served as good examples of public and

political discourses explored in Chapter 4. This required a process of going back and forth between the corpus, the literature, theoretical perspective, historical background, and public and political discourses. As a result of this process, my dataset was significantly reduced to include 318 items. This allowed me to gather a better insight into the major themes relevant for the study of how the debate and contest of national identity is mediated through the press coverage of Syrian refugees. Table 6 shows the breakdown of each newspaper's coverage in my selected corpus of analysis.

Table 6

Breakdown of each newspaper's coverage in the selected corpus of analysis

Newspaper	The Number of News Items
<i>Sabah</i>	46
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	57
<i>Yeni Akit</i>	61
<i>Sözcü</i>	70
<i>Hürriyet</i>	84
TOTAL	318

5.2.4. Data Coding

Coding was done using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software. The compiled frontpages of newspapers (in JPEG format) were uploaded to MAXQDA and coding was done manually in two steps. The initial coding of the data involved macro-level coding. In Discourse Historical Approach, discourse is linked to a macro-topic; macro-topic relevancy is among the constituent components of discourse (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 89). The analysis of textual content then “depends on the

macro-topics of a discourse” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 114). Wodak (2015) describes the principles of DHA as in the following:

The DHA is three-dimensional: after (1) having identified the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse, (2) discursive strategies are investigated. Then (3) linguistic means are examined as types, and the specific, context-dependent linguistic realizations are examined as tokens. This implies analyzing the coherence of the text by first detecting the macrotopics and related subtopics. (Wodak, 2015, p. 12)



As part of the first dimension Wodak mentions, initial data coding was done to categorize the compiled news articles into macro-topics. These macro-topics were previously identified and elaborated in Chapter 4 under the title “Paradigms”, which are respectively as follows: Humanitarian Paradigm, Religious Paradigm, Economic Paradigm, Sociocultural and Demographic Paradigm, and Citizenship and Rights Paradigm. More specifically, after a pilot coding was conducted on a randomly selected set of news articles to see their inclusiveness and operability as macro-topics of media discourse, news articles were initially coded according to the five paradigms that were distinguished in the previous chapter as the main axes of the public and political debate on Syrian refugees in Turkey. To put it differently, I treated the five paradigms explored in the previous chapter as the macro-topics of the media discourse on Syrian refugees and categorized each item accordingly. This was done both for the purpose of using a priori codes to help guide the thematic macro coding process and integrating wider socio-political context later into analysis which is what DHA is concerned with (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p.93). To expand their inclusiveness of the

news under analysis, the paradigms explored in Chapter 4 appeared as macro-topics of the newspaper coverage under slightly different names as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Paradigms of Public-Political Debate vs. Macro-Topics of Newspaper Coverage

Paradigms of Public/Political Debate (Chapter 4)	Macro-Topics of Newspaper Coverage
Humanitarian	Humanitarianism & Hospitality
Religious	Religion
Economic	Economics & Finances
Socio-cultural & Demographic	Culture & Demographics
Citizenship & Rights	Politics & Rights

To explain, the news reports which describe the conditions, in its broadest sense, of Syrian refugees, to name a few; problems they face, any form of aid they need or receive, relate to the humanitarian paradigm, and were coded under this frame. The ones which emphasize or mention the religious identity of refugees correspond to the paradigm of religion and were coded under this frame. News reports which highlight the economic impact of migration such as expenses for refugees were categorized relevantly. The items which feature the assumed common cultural traits and attributes of the refugees, or the demographic impact of refugees were coded under culture and demographics as they relate to the sociocultural and demographic paradigm. Finally, the ones where the spotlight is on the rights, prospective

citizenship, and the ones which relate to the citizenship and rights paradigm and were coded accordingly. It should be noted that these macro coding categories were not mutually exclusive, which means the same news article was coded more than once. For example, the same news article may relate to both the humanitarian aspect of the issue by featuring the suffering of refugees and the religious aspect by highlighting the religious identity of refugees. The same news article might also mention the government spending on refugees, which relates to the economic aspect of the issue. In such a case, the news article was coded multiple times. Table 7 show the relevant news content for each macro-topic. Figure 3 shows the share of each macro-topic in the corpus of analysis.

Table 7*Macro-topics and News Content*

Macro-Topics of Newspaper Coverage	News Content
Humanitarianism & Hospitality	Conditions at camps
	Conditions of non-camp refugees
	Aid activities by NGOs or state institutions
	Problems / difficulties refugees face
	Mobility of refugees (e.g., border crossings)
	Developments at the border (e.g., restrictions on entry or exit)
	Official policies (e.g., open-door policy)
	Statements by authorities (e.g., praising Turkey's humanitarian aid / criticizing Europe's stance)
	Refugees are defined in religious terms (e.g., <i>Muhacir</i>)
	Mention of religious identity (through words: <i>Muhacir</i> , Muslim, Alevi, Yazidi, Christian, Assyrian)
Religion	

Table 7 (continued)

	Government spending (e.g., cost of the camps, amount of humanitarian aid)
	Refugees in the workforce (e.g., labor market conditions)
Economics & Finances	Impact of refugees on national and local economy (e.g., entrepreneur refugees, rising rental prices in border cities)
	Economic / material gains of or privileges to refugees (e.g., cash grants, free services or products)
	Fertility rates
	Population size & density of refugees
	Leisure practice and references to lifestyle (e.g., beach leisure)
	Cultural /artistic activities of refugees
Culture & Demographics	References to cultural capital of refugees (e.g., qualified / well-educated refugees)
	References to cultural proximity (e.g., shared culture / history)
	Changes in socio-cultural landscape (e.g., increase in Arabic signboards)

Table 7 (continued)

Politics & Rights

Refugees and elections (e.g., estimated electoral impact of refugees)

Estimated impact of refugees on future politics (e.g., autonomy)

Citizenship (e.g., statements about citizenship debate, the number of refugees granted citizenship etc.)

Integration / harmonization (e.g., developments related to integration)

Non-material gains of / privileges to refugees (e.g., placement in universities without examination)

Restrictions on refugees' right of mobility across the country

Figure 3

Share of each macro-topic in the corpus of analysis

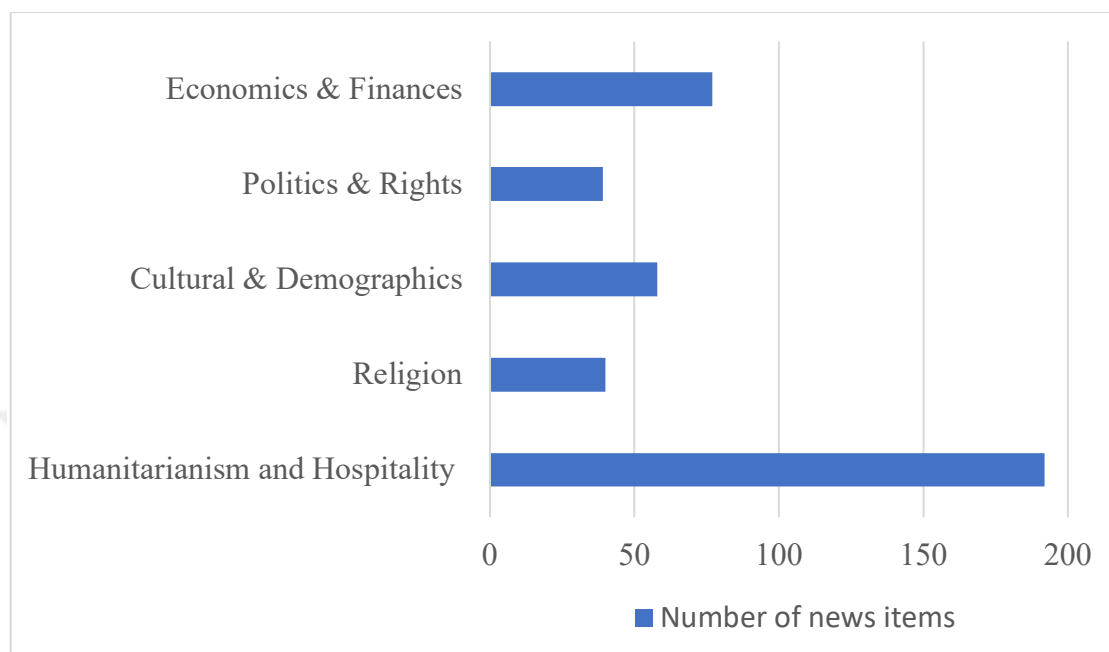


Figure 3 shows that humanitarianism & hospitality has an overwhelmingly high share. This finding suggests that in the frontpage coverage of the selected newspapers during the timespan of April 2011 March 2020, themes and topics relevant to humanitarianism were far more salient than those pertinent to other topics.

The second step of coding involved exploring subcategories for each macro topic. During this process, I did multiple readings of the news reports and took notes of emerging commonalities, patterns and clusters of linguistic means to identify major subtopics. As the coding progressed, these subtopics evolved and diversified. At the final stage, I elicited the ones that were most relevant to the research purpose. These subtopics were benchmarked across the framework of the research. In other words, my aim was not to produce an exhaustive taxonomy of the most recurring themes but to elicit a particular set of themes related to the way ‘we’ and ‘they’ are represented.

Thus, data analysis is by its nature researcher-specific as none of the major steps in the research process; neither coding nor analysis, is a neutral process but reflects the researcher's perspective, in line with Discourse-Historical Approach in particular, and Critical Discourse Studies in general (Reisigl, 2018, p. 49; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 89; Wodak, 2015, p. 5).

5.2.5. Towards the Data Analysis

Analysis in Discourse-Historical Approach has three phases (Wodak, 2007, p. 12). The first one concerns identifying specific contents or topics. This phase was completed through identifying paradigms and treating them as macro-topics of newspaper coverage. Following two phases concern investigating discursive strategies and linguistic means, which requires detecting related subtopics. This was achieved, as mentioned above, through multiple readings and in a recursive manner. Next Chapter will present relevant subtopics under each macro-topic. However, before moving onto the next chapter, it is necessary to note the key tools and questions that guided the analysis. In Wodak's account (2015), the researcher could be oriented by five questions to investigate sampled texts in relation to the discursive construction and representation of "us" and "them":

- 1 How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes, and actions named and referred to linguistically?
- 2 What characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events, and processes?
- 3 What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?

4 From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, and arguments expressed?

5 Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or mitigated? (p. 12)

In general, these were the questions that guided me through the analysis. I paid special attention to linguistic expressions used metaphorically (Question 1), characteristics attributed to social actors including refugees and other actors involved in the news story as well (Question 2), the perspective that attributions are expressed from (Question 4) and whether utterances were intensified or mitigated (Question 5).

CHAPTER 6

DISCOURSES OF THE NEWSPAPERS

Discourses of the selected newspapers are analyzed in this chapter under five macro-topics which do not always categorically differ from or are in conflict with each other, but rather operate in an interrelated and complementary manner. These macro-topics, on one hand, appear to coexist side by side and communicate with one another within any time period. On the other hand, depending on the societal context, important incidents taking place and policies implemented at a particular time, usually one stands out above the rest. These five main -but not exhaustive- macro-topics correspond to the central axes of the media debate around Syrian refugees. Each macro-topic corresponds to a paradigm explored in Chapter 4, albeit named slightly differently (see Table 7). Under each macro-topic, relevant sub-themes are presented. Differences with regard to the coverage of each newspaper are addressed under each sub-theme. It should also be noted that analysis was not strictly restricted with the news reports coded under the relevant sub-theme, and other news items that appeared on the frontpage of the newspaper were also from time to time addressed if they, for example, related to the point under discussion or was complementary to the news item under discussion. In this sense, the frontpage of a newspaper was taken in its entirety in some cases, or the news item under analysis was discussed in relation to the other items of the newspaper.

As far as the first macro-topic, humanitarianism is concerned, four sub-themes come forward. The first one relates to the distinction between the Turkish side as charitable hosts and Syrian refugees as needy victims. The second one relates to the distinction between two sides as tolerant hosts versus ungrateful, overstaying or

unwanted guests. The third sub-theme relates to a distinction between Turkey or the Turkish government as humane actors versus European countries or the West presented as inhumane. The final sub-theme relates to the portrayal of Turkey as an all-encompassing humanitarian actor, which is challenged by the coverage of cases concerning selective humanitarianism and preferential treatment. Some of the points discussed under these four sub-themes are visited throughout the chapter, and relate to or communicate with the other macro-topics and sub-themes discussed later. Therefore, this part of the chapter forms a basis, or sometimes a point of reference for the rest, and thus takes up the most space in terms of volume.

The second macro-topic concerns the religious dimension. Syrian refugees are seen as ‘Muslim fellows’ that ‘we’ need to pay our solidarity to. The discourse of religious solidarity is articulated through the rhetoric of ‘*ensar*’ and ‘*muhacir*’, which contributes to the exclusion of other groups, particularly of Alevis. This distinction of ‘desirable’ Sunni refugees versus Alevi victims is addressed here.

As far as the economic aspect is concerned, the impact of Syrian refugees on the Turkish economy comes forward and refugees become subject to cost-benefit calculations. Within this aspect, the discourse of economic burden, which constructs Syrian refugees as a great cost for an already vulnerable Turkish economy and society as a whole, is mostly anchored. In addition, among other aspects, it is through this discourse that the generosity of Turkey is celebrated while the selfishness of the West is condemned. Finally, refugees as cheap labor force relates to this macro topic. All these are discussed under three sub-themes.

Within the sociocultural and demographic paradigm, attention is on the cultural differences between Syrian refugees and Turkish people and the changing demographics. It is through an emphasis on cultural traits or shared values that

Syrians are presented as intruders and vulgar invaders of public amenities or ‘people like us’.

With regard to citizenship and political rights of Syrian refugees, dichotomies such as ‘citizen vs. refugee’, ‘natives vs. outsiders’, and ‘the privileged vs. the ordinary rest’ come into play. News items discussed here relate particularly to the debate over citizenship. Within this framework, another sub-theme discussed relates to the citizenship criteria that feature qualified and Muslim refugees.

The emergence of these sub-themes in this research underlines the relationship between different discourses and imaginings of the national identity. All these discourses feed into as well as are fed by imaginings of the national identity and shared values as will be addressed in the following.

6.1. Humanitarianism and Hospitality

Exploring media and policy discourses of immigration in Canadian context, Vukov (2003) concludes that two constantly mediated narratives of immigration contribute to Canadians’ common-sense imagining of themselves as a nation: “on the one hand, a celebratory welcoming nation generous to the immigrants and refugees it desires and, on the other, an insecure panicked nation that must protect itself against outside threats that would abuse its tolerance” (p. 347). This seems appropriate for the Turkish context as well. The analysis of the news articles drawn upon a humanitarian perspective shows they tend to position refugees either as victims that need ‘our’ support and solidarity or as overstaying and undesirable guests that push the limits of ‘our’ hospitality and tolerance. In this sense, humanitarianism is an axis which is on one end linked to compassion and intolerance on the other end.

6.1.1. The Charitable / Humanitarian Host versus the Needy Guest /

Victim

Themes of solidarity and welcoming guests relate to a humanitarian discourse which is drawn upon the ethical and humane duty to help the vulnerable. However, the discourse of humanitarianism, as mentioned in Chapter 4, speaks more about ‘us’ than those ‘we’ are morally responsible for helping. The word ‘speaks’ here is used in both metaphorical and literal sense because humanitarianism feeds into stereotyping of refugees as helpless victims that lack the power or capability to speak for themselves (Malkki, 1996). Such news reports predominantly frame Syrian refugees as victims; desperate and innocent people who are seeking safety and protection from war and atrocity and who ought to be saved by ‘us’, in a similar way to the European media coverage of Syrian refugees around the time of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 as observed by several researchers (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017; Dykstra, 2016).

A narrative of the savior, victims and villains intersects through the news reports analyzed under this sub-theme. Sometimes the triangle is complete, and all the three characters are present in the news story, and sometimes one is missing; either a savior-victim dichotomy or a victim-villain contrast is narrated. As Billig (1995) reminds; “what is left unspecified is revealing” (p. 1). If, for example, there are no saviors narrated, this is generally because the story revolves around the villain, and victims are secondary characters whose role is to exemplify the general evil of the villain. If a villain is missing in the narration, this is not because there are no villains involved at all but generally because the focus is on the savior and victims are there to highlight the general benevolence of the savior. What is common to all the news reports analyzed here is that Syrian refugees are portrayed as victims. Who the saviors

are and who the villains are subject to interpretations, and in general depends on who is framed as ‘we’. In other words, who the Syrian refugees are victimized by and who they are saved by is a matter of political judgement and perspective as well as context.

Victims are one but may come under different names. Different phrases depending on the perspective, and actors involved in the news story are used to refer to Syrian refugees. Victimhood of refugees is intensified through phrases like ‘Syrian innocents’ (*Sabah*, January 10, 2017), ‘the oppressed Syrians’ (*Yeni Akit*, October 15, 2016), and ‘civilians fleeing clashes’ (*Hürriyet*, April 5, 2013; *Cumhuriyet*, September 6, 2018). The most commonly used verb to refer to refugees’ victimhood is ‘flee’.¹⁵ Syrians are ‘fleeing civil war’ (*Hürriyet*, November 14, 2013); ‘fleeing violence’ (*Cumhuriyet*, May 1, 2011), ‘fleeing internal turmoil’ (*Sözcü*, April 8, 2012), ‘fleeing massacre’ (*Yeni Akit*, June 17, 2011), ‘fleeing lynching’ (*Cumhuriyet*, August 16, 2014), ‘fleeing death’ (*Sözcü*, June 15, 2015), ‘fleeing imperialists’ war’ (*Yeni Akit*, March 9, 2015), ‘fleeing clashes’ (*Sabah*, June, 18, 2015) and ‘fleeing oppression’ (*Yeni Akit*, June 19, 2011). Other examples may be added; portraying Syrian refugees as victims is common to all the newspapers selected for this study and such examples can be found from every year under analysis.

Before introducing the other characters, it should also be noted that victims are not equal in their victimhood. As mentioned in the previous chapter, ‘ideal victims’ in

¹⁵ Gabrielatos & Baker (2008, p. 21) also reveal in their corpus-driven analysis of the discursive constructions of refugees in the UK press that the words ‘escape’ and ‘flee’, describing refugees’ manner of leaving, are commonly used to refer to the plight of refugees.

media discourse are generally women and children (Höijer, 2004; Moeller, 2002). And Moeller (2002) emphasizes not simply women, but those who are (or who represent) the mothers of children; “make ideal victims” (p. 49). This is especially true for the visual depiction of refugees as most of the photos accompanying the news reports under analysis display either children only or children accompanied by their mothers or other women.¹⁶ Besides, ethnicity or religious affiliation of refugees may come into play to form a hierarchical pattern of victimhood. For example, for *Cumhuriyet*, Alevis are more victims of adverse conditions while for *Yeni Akit*, Muslims (in reference to Sunni Muslims) are oppressed, and thus victimized, because they are Muslims. For *Sözcü*, on the other hand, Syrian Kurds may not qualify as victims when Turkmens are involved in the story, a point that relates to selective humanitarianism which will later be addressed.

Villains are diverse and many and may appear under different names even though they actually refer to the same character. In most of the cases, villains come from external sources: the EU, European countries, the West, the UN, foreign NGOs and such. This is especially true for *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit*, the two pro-government newspapers which intensify the humanitarian aid provided by the government, government agencies and NGOs close to the government by vilifying the West in general, and European countries or organizations in particular. This is part of promoting an image of Turkey as a humanitarian and benevolent country, as

¹⁶ Pandır (2021, p. 357) also finds in her content analysis of large corpora of refugee photographs published in national newspapers that the most frequently displayed images are those of children alone, followed by images displaying children and women together.

mentioned in Chapter 4, and will later be analyzed under a separate sub-theme.

Another source of external villains is Syria: Syrian regime in general, and Bashar Assad in particular, and armed groups in Syria. This group of villains, despite being common to all the newspapers, are either intensified or mitigated depending again on political judgement. For example, *Sözcü* (September 20, 2014) prefers the Turkish acronym (*İŞİD*) for ISIS, calling it ‘religious ISIS’, and its militants ‘beheading terrorists’ and ‘ISIS terrorists’ while *Sabah* (September 9, 2016; January 10, 2017) and *Hürriyet* (August 7, 2017) uses the Arabic acronym *DAEŞ*, without an emphasis on its Islamic character. For *Cumhuriyet* (September 6, 2018), armed Islamist groups in Syria are ‘jihadist militants’, a naming which does not appear in other newspapers. *Yeni Akit* (October 15, 2016; May 28, 2017; February 5, 2019) and *Sabah* (December 31, 2012) incomparably vilify Assad, calling him ‘dictator’, ‘oppressor’, ‘murderer’, and ‘executioner of Damascus’.¹⁷

The internal sources of villains, on the other hand, are derived from the political and ideological line of the newspaper and signify those that are positioned against that line. In this sense, they are the outsiders of the imagined ‘we’ that the political positioning of the newspaper envisages. For example, for *Yeni Akit*, which

¹⁷ *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit* mostly use “Esed” instead of the conventional Turkish spelling “Esad”, copying the way Erdoğan and the JDP actors started to pronounce the word after 2011 (Gürsel, 2014). According to Gürsel (2014), this change in the naming is conscious and results from the change in the course of the relationship between the two governments, from allies to enemies. He argues that the JDP government wants to create a perception that they had ever since been hostile to Assad. Engin (2012) and Bardakçı (2020), on the other hand, note that the correct pronunciation is “Esed”.

has the widest array of such villains among all the other selected newspapers, basically any social or political group that are at odds with the Islamist-nationalist imagination of the nation (Saraçoğlu, 2018), may appear as villains that, in one way or another, victimize Syrian refugees. According to the newspaper's report, "leftist groups" provoke locals in Reyhanlı against Syrian refugees (*Yeni Akit*, May 19, 2013), a secular humanitarian organization works to "break up the families of female refugees" (*Yeni Akit*, June 5, 2018), "feminists" taking the streets to celebrate International Women's Day remain silent to the plight of female refugees (*Yeni Akit*, March 8, 2020), and "secularist segments" discriminate Syrian refugees (*Yeni Akit*, November 30, 2018). Besides, and above all these, the RPP appears as a villain reportedly targeting and discriminating Syrian refugees. "Kılıçdaroğlu bears responsibility for the death of Alan" reads the title of a story, paraphrasing the remarks by Savcı Sayan, who later became the JDP mayor of Ağrı (*Yeni Akit*, September 7, 2015).¹⁸ In another example, the newspaper reports that social media campaigning against Syrian refugees is launched by the opposition RPP supporters

¹⁸ Savcı Sayan was formerly a member of the RPP Executive Board. He was known as one of the closest people to the former RPP Chair, Deniz Baykal. His overly sentimental reaction to the resignation of Baykal from his post was ridiculed in the media ("Baykal'in ardından", 2019). After Kılıçdaroğlu took over in 2010, Sayan several times came up with statements inconsistent with the party line. In 2012, he was expelled from the party, three years before the above-mentioned article was published on *Yeni Akit*. Despite this, he is referred to as 'the RPP Executive Board Member'. In 2015, the same year the article was published, he joined the JDP. He is now one of the most vocal figures of the JDP, and still holding his post as the Mayor of Ağrı.

(*Yeni Akit*, June 3, 2019). The RPP is accused of “fuelling fashism” by siding against refugees, and provoking attacks against refugee-friendly organizations (*Yeni Akit*, July 29, 2019).¹⁹

For *Sözcü*, the aid provided to Syrian Kurds fleeing ISIS is a topic to be brought up to vilify the pro-Kurdish political party, attributing terrorist-like talk to its deputies (*Sözcü*, September 23, 2014). The newspaper also reports Syrian Kurds are given privileged entry while Turkmens are denied entry, in a manner that denounces Kurds for they are supposedly favored by the government (*Sözcü*, June 6, 2015). For *Cumhuriyet*, the JDP government, its policies and agencies lead to the distress of Syrian refugees more than any other actors while for *Hürriyet*, the newspaper with the most diverse population of readers, Turkey as the savior character is far more salient than villain characters from Turkey, and villains generally come from outside the country.

When it comes to saviors, from one point of view, they are diverse characters: Turkey, Turkish people, locals, Muslim fellows / *Ensar*, Turkish philanthropists, the

¹⁹ On the same day, the headline story of the newspaper is the protest against the conversion of a general high school into an İmam Hatip High School (İHL) under the title “İHL Enmity of the Rampant Minority (*Azgın Azınlıktan İHL Düşmanlığı*)” (*Yeni Akit*, July 29, 2019). The newspaper reports that the protestors, referred to as “religion-haters”, are supported by the Istanbul Chair of the RPP, Canan Kaftancıoğlu, who reportedly shares on her Twitter account provocative remarks about the issue. In this sense, the above-mentioned refugee-related news report is complementary to the headline story. The two stories feed into the same narrative which vilifies the RPP for allegedly victimizing Muslims, including Syrian refugees.

government, President Erdoğan himself, government agencies, Turkish army / soldiers, Turkey-based NGOs and civil society organizations, and such. From another point of view, they are the different faces of the same character: ‘we’, in the banal sense of the word, people who live on the same territory, under the same flag, and read the newspapers that daily remind them of “their national place in a world of nations” (Billig, 1995, p. 8), and ‘flag’ the nation in a number of subtle or overt ways as one among other distinct nations, including that of Syrian refugees (p. 86)²⁰. From this point of view, praise for or reference to lifesaving or life-enhancing efforts, activities and actors contributes to a narrative of ‘us’, members of the same community, vis-à-vis refugees. This is ‘us’ versus ‘them’; the natives versus the refugees.

²⁰ As an example of mundane flagging, it is notable that the nameplates of all the newspapers under analysis bear the colors of the Turkish flag. The motto of all the newspapers contains the word ‘Turkey’, except for *Yeni Akit*, which does not have a motto. The logo of *Sabah* displays an image of a Turkey map, under the motto “Turkey’s best newspaper”. The logo of *Hürriyet* displays the image of a waving flag, positioned behind the image of Atatürk, and the motto of the newspaper reads “Turkey belongs to Turks”. The banner of *Sözcü* displays an image of Atatürk and the abbreviation of Turkish Republic (T.C.). The letter C is in the shape of a crescent, with a star next to it, as in the Turkish flag. The slogan of the newspaper is “If *Sözcü* goes silent, Turkey will go silent”. The banner of *Yeni Akit* is the most different of all; it displays an image of the Earth, under which reads the date in Islamic Hijri Calendar. The image of the Earth is then likely to signify the ‘Muslim World’ while the dominant color red in the banner signifies the Turkish flag.

The savior-victim dichotomy appears in different tropes and ventures into different tropes of ‘us’ and ‘them’ through different discursive strategies. The most recurring metaphorical expression used in the news reports analyzed here is ‘*kucak açmak*’ (literally meaning ‘opening a lap’; close in meaning to ‘embrace’ and ‘opening arms’). The use of this expression reinforces the image of Turkey, Turkish people or the government as supportive, protective, caring and compassionate saviors of refugees. Below are some examples:

Excerpt 1:

Gaziantep **embraced** the mayor and the famous lawyer, both of whom are Turkish-friendly and who fled the civil war in Syria. (*Sabah*, May 5, 2013).

*İkisi de Türk dostu olan ve Suriye’deki iç savaştan kaçan belediye başkanı ve ile ünlü avukata Gaziantep **kucak açtı**.*

Excerpt 2:

What made Alhalabi back on the path of his dreams was the **embrace** of the Turkish cycling team called Peloton. (*Hürriyet*, July 23, 2018)

*Alhalabi’yi yeniden hayallerinin yoluna döndürense Peloton isimli Türk bisiklet takımının ona **kucak açması** oldu.*

Excerpt 3:

Turkey has **embraced** nearly 200,000 refugees from Kobani. (*Yeni Akit*, November 11, 2014)

*Türkiye Kobani’den gelen 200 bine yakın mülteciye **kucak açtı**.*

Excerpt 4:

On the one hand, we **embraced** those fleeing the civil war, on the other hand, we are protecting the Syrians who piled up on our border against Assad's oppression. (*Sözcü*, February 12, 2020)

*Bir yandan iç savaştan kaçanlara **kucak açtık**, diğer yandan sınırımıza yığılan Suriyelileri Esad'ın zulmüne karşı koruyoruz.*

In each of the examples above, the verb '*kucak açmak*' is used in conjunction with a different subject. It may be the local people of a refugee-dense province (Excerpt 1), a small group of sport enthusiasts (Excerpt 2), Turkey -in reference to the government that holds the authority to open the border- (Excerpt 3), or simply the vague 'we' (Excerpt 4) that embrace and save refugees from hardship. Despite the differences in context and nuances in emphasis, in all of the examples above, and the many others that could be added, '*kucak açmak*' becomes the verbal expression of 'our' superiority resulting from being in a position of providing support and assistance to Syrian refugees, like a caregiver to dependent infants. In this sense, it contributes to infantilization of refugees, akin to dehumanization (Malkki, 1996) mentioned in Chapter 4, while simultaneously fostering paternalism of 'us'.²¹ Below are more examples of how this relationship of needy infant versus caring parent becomes even more apparent:

²¹ Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017) find in their visual analysis of European news around the 2015 refugee crisis that infantilization of refugees works through the use of child imagery.

Excerpt 5:

Turkey **embraces** exactly 3 million 900 thousand refugees. Turkey is almost like a father's home and mother's lap for refugees. (*Yeni Akit*, July 23, 2018).

*Türkiye tam 3 milyon 900 bin mülteciye **kucak açıyor**. Türkiye mülteciler için adeta baba ocağı, ana kucağı oluyor.*

Excerpt 6:

Turkey **opened its arms** to us. Turkey gave us a place to stay. It filled our stomachs. (*Sabah*, October 25, 2014)

*Türkiye bize **kucağını açtı**. Türkiye bize kalacak yer verdi. Karnımızı doyurdu.*

Excerpt 7:

Mehmetçik **embraced** tens of thousands of Kurds fleeing the ISIS massacre, fed them, made them drink water, and carried them on their backs. (*Sözcü*, September 25, 2014)

*Mehmetçik, IŞİD katliamından kaçan onbinlerce Kürt'e **kucak açmış**, beslemiş, su içirmiş, sırtında taşımıştı.*

It should also be noted that the Turkish equivalents of the words 'seek asylum / take refuge' and 'asylum seeker'; '*sığınma*' and '*sığınmacı*', respectively are already loaded with the connotations of victimhood and vulnerability; far from being emotionally neutral or purely legal terms. The word *sığınma* is used to describe a situation in which an unprotected susceptible sufferer seeks shelter, protection, or mercy from a mighty, compassionate, or supportive protector. The believer takes refuge in God (*Allah'a sığınma*), the kid takes shelter in mother's arms (*ana kucağına sığınma*), domestically abused women and kids are lodged in women's and children's

shelter (*kadın ve çocuk sığınma evi*) under state surveillance; divorced, abused or impoverished women seek shelter in their father's home (*baba ocağına sığınma*), people trying to avoid danger take refuge in police stations (*polise sığınma*), and locals trying to escape disaster are sheltered in their neighbors' (*komşuya sığınma*). In this sense, victimhood is inherent in the word itself, and the victim seeks protection most often from an omnipotent authority (the God or the state), a figure of compassion (the mother or the father), or someone of their level but with better or safer conditions (the neighbor). In the following example, all these potential hierarchies and relations are evoked, in a manner that contributes to the construction of 'we' as a safe, humane, and trustworthy country. The headline story of *Hürriyet* (May 1, 2011), published around two weeks after migration from Syria started, reads as follows:

Asylum seekers fleeing Syria are begging. The Syrians, who fled Syria, crossing through the border in Hatay Yayladağı, due to the clashes, and took refuge in Turkey, shouted; "We want freedom. Do not send us back. If you do, they will kill us." (*Hürriyet*, May 1, 2011)

Suriye'den kaçan sığınmacılar yalvarıyor. Çatışmalar yüzünden Suriye'den kaçıp Hatay Yayladağı'nda sınırı geçerek Türkiye'ye sığınan Suriyeliler "Biz hürriyet istiyoruz. Bizi göndermeyin. Gönderirseniz öldürürler" diye bağırdı.

Syrians are 'begging' for help, like believers asking God for mercy. They are fleeing 'clashes' to seek safety in Turkey, like disarmed people seeking the shelter of security forces. They crossed the nearest border, into a neighboring country, which is safer and freer. They demand to be taken care of and not to be sent back to their home country where they may be subjected to violence and deprived of their freedom, like victims of domestic abuse seeking state or parental protection. The news story draws a

whole picture of the savior, victims, and the villain: Turkey as a safe and free country, desperate Syrian refugees, and the brutal Syrian regime, respectively.

The headline of *Sabah* on October 15, 2018 reads as follows: ‘Assad Stole My Dreams, Turkey Tied to Life’ (*Esad Hayallerimi Çaldı, Türkiye Hayata Bağladı*). It is the story of a young Syrian refugee, who lost his leg in a bomb blast in Syria. His treatment was carried out in Turkey, and he was given a prosthesis, as the newspaper reports. The byline of the article reads: ‘While Europe kicks refugees out, the latest example of Turkey's compassion is the young Syrian Hasan, who stepped into a new life with his prosthetic leg’ (*Avrupa mültecileri kapıya koyarken, Türkiye'nin şefkatinin son örneği protezli bacağıyla yeni hayata adım atan Suriyeli genç Hasan oldu*). Before even reading the body of the news story, the reader can grasp a whole picture of victims, villains and the savior, respectively as follows: forcibly expelled refugees personified by Hasan, relentless European countries as well as Assad, and the lifesaving, compassionate Turkey. The body text of the news item specifies who Turkey refers to: Turkish people personified by President Erdoğan, who took care of Hasan as well as his family like a parent by showing him affection and finding him a job, and thus tying him to life, all for which Hasan expresses his gratitude. Below is an excerpt from the news story:

Found a Job, Receiving Love

Turkey embraced Hasan, his 7 siblings and his mother. Hasan (15), who settled in Istanbul with his family, clung to life with both hands. He got a job in a shoe workshop. He commutes by shuttle; he receives love and support from everyone.

A Thousand Thanks to Turkey

Hasan described his feelings as follows: “Assad stole my dreams and my future. Turkey tied me to life. I gained a job here. A thousand thanks to the Turkish people and President Erdogan who took care of us. (*Sabah*, October 15, 2018)

İş Buldu, Sevgi Görüyor

Hasan’a, 7 kardeşine ve annesine Türkiye kucak açtı. Ailesiyle İstanbul’a yerleşen Hasan (15) hayata dört elle sarıldı. Ayakkabı atölyesinde iş buldu. İşine servisle gidiyor, herkesten sevgi ve destek görüyor.

Türkiye’ye Bin Şükran

Hasan duygularını şöyle anlattı: “Esad hayallerimi, geleceğimi çaldı. Türkiye beni hayata bağladı. Burada bir mesleğim oldu. Bize sahip çıkan Türk halkına ve Başkan Erdoğan’a bin şükran” (*Sabah*, October 15, 2018)

It is reported that Hasan lost his dad, his uncle and three of his cousins three years ago in a bomb blast in al-Bab, a district in northern Syria where the Turkish military carried out a major operation against ISIS as part of the Operation Euphrates Shield that was ended in 2017, one year before the news report was published. The blast also cost Hasan his limb. It seems reasonable then to infer a reference to the military action of Turkey as a life-saving intervention protecting the lives of civilians who would have otherwise died in terror attacks like Hasan’s family members. Hasan lost his home, his father and his limb, all of which were replaced in Turkey with a new home in Istanbul, a symbolic protective father, and a prosthetic leg. Turkey not only saved his life but also gave him a better quality of life by offering him surgical treatment as well as employment. Despite living with a large family of eight more members and working at a shoe workshop predictably for an unsatisfactory wage,

Hasan has nothing to complain about his material conditions; he takes the shuttle to work and he is surrounded by the love and care of Turkish people. Neither poverty nor discrimination or social exclusion seems to have ever entered Hasan's life in Turkey as *Sabah* narrates it.

A very similar story narrated through a similar perspective with different undertones appears on *Yeni Akit*'s issue of February 5, 2019. Under the title 'I saw in Turks that good people still exist' (*İyi insanların hala var olduğunu Türklerde gördüm*), the news item tells the story of a young Syrian woman, Fida Hasan, who lost a leg in a missile attack, and was given a prosthesis after a year-long treatment in Turkey²². Fida lost her dad and siblings in the same attack which the newspaper reports was launched by "murderer Esed". The villain remains the same but there are more characters of saviors added to the story this time. It is reported that Fida got her prosthesis leg thanks to the aid and support by Alliance of International Doctors (AID), IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, and Zakat House Kuwait, all of which are Islamic organizations²³. The newspaper frequently reports on the aid of similar

²² The story of Fida Hasan previously appeared on the state documentary channel, TRT documentary, and was later shared by the Anadolu Agency (AA) under a very similar title to that of *Yeni Akit*'s (Karacaoğlu & Musa, 2019).

²³ The website of the organization informs on 'About Us' page that AID was founded in Istanbul, in 2011 "based on humanitarian and Islamic values"(AID, n.d.). Sunata and Tosun (2019, p. 698) consider IHH as a faith-based organization (FBO) because of making use of Islam to mobilize. The website of the organization informs on 'About Us' page that Zakat House Kuwait is a public organization with an independent budget and under the supervision of the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic

organizations to Syrian refugees in several examples the corpus yielded. Besides, and above all these organizations, the ‘Turkish people’ appear as the savior helping and treating Fida kindly, for which -again- she expresses her gratitude. Below is an excerpt from the news item:

Stating that doctors and philanthropists in Turkey are family to her and treat her very well, Hasan said, “Turkish people are very friendly and good. They always helped me throughout the 9 months I spent with a wheelchair. When I saw the Turks, I felt that this world was still good. I will be grateful to them for the rest of my life.” (*Yeni Akit*, February 5, 2019)

Türkiye’deki doktorların ve hayırsever insanların kendisine aile olduğunu ve çok iyi davrandığını ifade eden Hasan, “Türk milleti çok güler yüzlü ve iyiler. Tekerlekli sandalye ile geçirdiğim 9 ay içinde bana hep yardım ettiler. Türkleri gördüğüm zaman bu dünyanın hala iyi olduğunu hissediyordum. Hayatımın sonuna kadar onlara minnettar kalacağım” dedi.

Here again, the lost father is symbolically replaced, but this time with Turkish people, represented by Islamic NGOs and organizations.

Sözcü has a different perspective of perpetrators. The headline of the newspaper on October 17, 2013 reads as follows: ‘Victims of Tayyip and Assad’ (*Tayyip ve Esad Kurbanları*). This headline news story deals with the problems faced

Affairs. From the same page: “Establishing Zakat House was a pioneering step to revive one of the Islamic pillars and facilitate its fulfillment” (Zakat House Kuwait, n.d.).

by Syrian refugees living in cities. As reported in the news, Syrian refugees sleep in streets and parks, stay in makeshift tents made from cardboard and nylon, freeze in cold weather, and deprived of a bite of bread, they even make their children beg. According to the news report, the perpetrators of all this misery are the leaders of the two countries, their ambitious politics and political strife. The victims of their politics are the Syrian people who ended up begging on the streets: ‘After all, whatever happened, happened to the pitiful Syrians’ (*Olan gariban Suriyeliye oldu*). However, it is highlighted in the overline that the case of Syrians is just an example: ‘Political ambitions and strife strike peoples... Example: Syrians’ (*Politik hırs ve çekişme halkları vuruyor... Örneği Suriyeliler*). In this sense, the news story carries an implicit sense of warning that ‘we’ may also end up as victims of these policies. The story draws on a narrative of ‘victims’ and ‘villains’, but there are no ‘saviors’ involved. Different from the news stories by *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit* that intensify the aid and services provided either by the government or civil society organizations, *Sözcü* intensifies the incompetence of the government in providing favorable conditions for refugees. From this point of view, refugees are deprived of a caring parent, a narrative conclusion reinforced visually by the news photo displaying a bare-foot little girl begging on the street.

Figure 4

Frontpage of *Sözcü*, October 17, 2013



As mentioned before, the Turkish word ‘*sığınma*’, equivalent of ‘seek asylum / take refuge’ is emotionally charged and evokes victimhood. It is notable that while newspapers do not use the noun form of the word ‘*sığınmacı*’ (asylum seeker) consistently or appropriately, partly because of the legal ambiguity and confusion about the status of Syrians as mentioned in Chapter 4, the use of the verb ‘*sığınma*’ is a quite common practice. The word is sometimes used to refer to the physical act of Syrians’ crossing the border to Turkey, as in ‘2,000 Syrians took refuge in one day’ (*Bir günde 2000 Suriyeli sığındı*). More often than that, the word is used, generally in conjunction with ‘Turkey’, to cover the meaning of ‘seeking shelter / protection’ from

war or oppression, regardless of whether Syrians are legally seeking asylum or not, as in the following examples:

the number of people who fled persecution and **took refuge** in Turkey (..)

(*Yeni Akit*, June 17, 2011)

zulümden kaçıp Türkiye'ye sığınanların sayısı

Syrians who escaped the internal turmoil and **took refuge** in Turkey (..)

(*Sözcü*, April 12, 2012)

İç karışıklıktan kaçıp Türkiye'ye sığınan Suriyeliler (...)

Syrians who fled the civil war in their country and **took refuge** in Turkey (...)

(*Hürriyet*, November 14, 2013)

Ülkelerindeki iç savaştan kaçarak Türkiye'ye sığınan Suriyeliler (...)

In the examples above, Syrians flee their country to seek safety in the first place, not necessarily asylum, in the neighboring Turkey. Turkey then becomes the 'shelter' ('*sığınak*'; derived from the same root as '*sığınma*') of refugees where they find peace and safety as in the following examples by the pro-government newspapers: 'Turkey: The only shelter of refugees' (*Mültecilerin Tek Sığınağı Türkiye. Yeni Akit*, February 5, 2016), 'We are the shelter of the oppressed' (*Mazlumların Sığınağıyız. Sabah*, August 5, 2019).

The headline of the news published by *Cumhuriyet* (April 21, 2013), however, uses the word in a different manner: 'Those who took shelter in 5 square meters' (5 *metrekareye sığınanlar*). The way the word is used here is in stark contrast with how it is used in the above-mentioned examples to evoke an image of Turkey as a safe

shelter. Turkey is neither a life-saving figure nor a comfortable shelter, which becomes apparent in the overline: ‘They escaped the war and saved their lives but could not escape the misery’ (*Savaştan kaçıp hayatlarını kurtardılar ama sefaletten kurtulamadılar*). Refugees saved their lives themselves by escaping, no other saviors are involved in the story other than the refugees themselves. It is the story of a Syrian family with three kids who live in a 5-square-meter apartment in Eminönü, Küçükpazar, a neighborhood in Istanbul which was once famous for its bachelor rooms, as the newspaper reports. Ali and his family live in a building with dozens of small rooms, all resided by Syrian refugees like themselves. The misery of refugees is narrated with precise details. The shared bathroom on each floor is used by too many; the rooms are barely furnished, filled with garbage; the floors are covered with puddles of water, and refugees cook their meals (pasta and potatoes only) in the hallway. The highlight is on the miserable conditions of refugees living in non-camp settings, for which the central authority -the government, albeit not explicitly referred to- can be identified as the responsible actor as more than half of the incoming refugees had to settle in cities because they could not find a place in the camps according to the article. The government’s incompetence does not end there, as reported in the article: ‘Many do not even have a registration’ (*Çoğunun kaydı bile yok*). Refugees, deprived of a decent place to live as well as registration are ‘taking care of themselves’ (*başlarının çaresine bakıyorlar*), without the support of authorities. In this sense, parental care is inadequate or absent in this narrative, as symbolically reflected in the news photo; an image of a distressed mother and four kids while the male parent is not in the frame.

Figure 5

Frontpage of *Cumhuriyet*, April 21, 2013



Unlike all the news items so far analyzed, there is no mention of Assad or the Syrian regime here, let alone portraying them as villains. This can be observed in the newspaper's other articles as well. Assad or the Syrian government is never referred to with derogatory terms or delegitimizing labels. This is, naturally, not surprising for a dedicated secular daily like *Cumhuriyet* when the secular features of the Syrian regime are taken into consideration while the opposition comprises self-identified Islamist groups.

6.1.2. The Tolerant Host versus the Ungrateful / Overstaying / Unwanted Guest

In "Hostipitality", Derrida (2000) says that "perhaps no one welcomed is ever completely welcome" (p. 6). As mentioned previously, the Turkish word '*sığınma*', meaning 'to seek asylum', is used in different contexts, all referring to a victim seeking shelter and protection. There is another word derived from the same root as

‘*sığınma*’ but carries a heavily derogatory meaning; ‘*sığınrı*’ (close in meaning to ‘freeloader’), which refers to someone who is unwelcomed to stay where they are, and whose presence is deemed redundant (TDK, n.d.). It is someone, for example, sheltered under the roof of a house but never considered a true member of the household, mostly despised because of their weakness and inability to sustain a living on their own, expected to be content with what they are offered and not to ask more. Some of the news articles analyzed under this sub-theme, despite never using the word, evoke a perception of Syrian refugees as such. On the one hand, it is acknowledged that they are refugees, or guests that need ‘our’ support; on the other hand, they are addressed as demanding and impertinent guests -sometimes to the extent of being ungrateful- that abuse ‘our’ good-will and tolerance, or menace the well-being of ‘us’, the true owners of the country. Some of the news articles analyzed under this sub-theme, on the other hand, mark Syrian refugees as overstaying people, whose return to their country is for the benefit of both sides.

Hürriyet (April 13, 2012) reports the container city set up for Syrian refugees in Kilis under the headline ‘From death to dream’ (*Ölümden ‘rüya’ya*). The article likens the container city under construction to a ‘dream city’, and reports that refugees have some ‘interesting demands’; some demand support for in vitro fertilization treatment and some complain about the brand of baby food. Here too, the narrative indicates a figure of the savior and victims, albeit the latter is not narrated to evoke sympathy or pity but irritation this time. Turkey saved refugees from death and accommodated them under the roof of a dream-like container city as required by being a caring parent or a benevolent host, which they do not seem to appreciate enough when they ought to be more than thankful. If the refugee figure is being infantilized, it can be nothing but a spoiled child here. In another example from the same year, the

newspaper reports that the refugees temporarily placed in student dorms in Kilis are pleased with their lives while the students that will be accommodated feel increasingly uneasy as the new school term draws closer (*Hürriyet*, August 30, 2012). The photo caption reads: ‘They are delighted, students are worried’ (*Onlar keyifli, öğrenciler tedirgin*). Victims seem to have changed this time. Refugees are settled in dormitories where students are supposed to be staying. They are no longer victims but rather presumptuous guests taking away the host’s place, which is visually reinforced by the news photo. The refugees displayed in the photo do not look like victims at all; a bunch of bearded men in slippers and white undershirts, looking contented; hands on each other’s shoulders, posing in front of the dormitory. The headline of the article, ‘Sceneries from the dorm’ (*Yurttan manzaralar*), has a double meaning since the Turkish word ‘*yurt*’ has two meanings: student residence (*öğrenci yurdu*) and country or homeland. The headline then suggests that this scenery is not peculiar to student dormitories where refugees are temporarily placed but reflects the whole country; guests are overstepping the boundaries of being guests and posing as if they themselves are the hosts.

Figure 6

Frontpage of *Hürriyet*, August 30, 2012



In another example, *Hürriyet* (July 30, 2012) cites the *New York Times* correspondent who witnessed a dialogue between a refugee and one of the local authorities in Hatay. The dialogue is reported -without quotation marks- under the headline ‘You’re eating our bread, don’t complain’ (*Ekmeğimizi yiyorsunuz, şikayet etme*), as in the following:

“Either welcome your guest well or not at all,” says one of the asylum seekers.

He gets the answer from the Turkish local official, “You are eating the bread of this country, don't complain”

“Sığınmacılardan biri, “Ya konduğunuzu iyi ağırlayın, ya da hiç ağırlamayın” diyor. Türk yerel yetkiliden “Bu ülkenin ekmeğini yiyorsun, şikayet etme” yanıtını alıyor” (*Hürriyet*, July, 30, 2012).

Here again, the refugee figure is a guest, with whom ‘we’ share our bread, and thus who has no right to be ungrateful by complaining. It should be noted that all three of the articles by *Hürriyet* were published in 2012, a year after the migration from Syria started.

Another example from the same year comes from *Cumhuriyet* (January 23, 2012), under the headline ‘The people of Hatay got sick and tired of asylum seekers’ (*Sığınmacılar Hataylıya illallah dedirttiler*). The article reads as follows:

Bursa deputy Sena Kaleli, from the RPP delegation that examined the camp where the Syrians were staying, said the townspeople are fed up with the asylum seekers. Kaleli stated that the policy of zero problems with neighbors has become “just problems”.

Suriyelilerin kaldığı kampta inceleme yapan CHP heyetinden bulunan Bursa milletvekili Sena Kaleli, kent halkının sığınmacılardan yaka silktiğini söyledi. Kaleli, komşularla sıfır sorun politikasının “sıfır sorun” haline geldiğini belirtti.

Although the body text of the article cites the RPP deputy’s statements, the headline paraphrases and exaggerates her words, without the use of quotation marks, as if approving them. Different from the above-analyzed items by *Hürriyet*, refugees here are not characterized as ungrateful or presumptuous guests but as unwanted troublemakers. It is important to note that the theme of ungratefulness was not found in the news reports by *Cumhuriyet* included in the corpus of analysis. This finding becomes even more meaningful when it is considered that unlike the other newspapers, marking Turkey as the savior of refugees was not salient in *Cumhuriyet*’s

coverage as analyzed under the previous sub-heading. Gratefulness / ungratefulness comes forward when there is a point of view that suggests refugees were saved by Turkey / Turkish people, or the government. *Cumhuriyet*, on the other hand, has a different perspective; refugees have no reason to be grateful about. In this perspective, whatever is done for refugees is not done out of benevolence or generosity but because the responsibility of governing and holding the authority requires it. Or, the other way around, whatever unfavorable conditions exist for refugees, these point to incompetence in governance. In this sense, *Cumhuriyet* stands apart from the rest of the newspapers whose coverage contributes to a positive self-perception of Turkey, the government or the Turkish people through intensifying the humanitarian aid provided for refugees. In fact, it is the only newspaper that, at times, challenges the notion of Turkish people as tolerant hosts, through, for example, news reports criticizing or even condemning the attitudes and acts of Turkish people towards Syrian refugees, some examples of which are given below:

Even Syrians' being the 'majority' on the beach bothers some. They do not even want to share Menekşe's polluted sea with asylum seekers

Suriyelilerin plajda 'çoğunluk' olmaları bile bazılarını rahatsız ediyor. Onlar Menekşe'nin kirli denizini bile sığınmacılarla paylaşmak istemiyor
(*Cumhuriyet*, July 10, 2016).

Syrian Dünya's Burden is Too Heavy: Think twice before you judge

Suriyeli Dünya'nın Yükü Çok Ağır: Yargılamadan önce bir daha düşünün (*Cumhuriyet*, March 19, 2017)

There has also been a significant increase in the hate speeches in society such as ‘Syrians should return to their homes’

Toplumda ‘Suriyeliler evlerine dönsün’ şeklindeki nefret söylemlerinde de ciddi artış yaşandı (Cumhuriyet, November 22, 2018)

In the examples above, Turkish people -the society as a whole, not a particular social or political group- are criticized for being discriminatory and judgmental, in a way that overturns the notion of tolerant host. This is not to say that refugees never appear in negative terms in the newspaper’s coverage. When they do, it is generally through themes related to security, and by presenting refugees as troublemakers disturbing the peaceful lives of locals as in the above-cited example (‘The people of Hatay got sick and tired of asylum seekers’) or as suspicious people posing a potential threat to the peace in susceptible provinces, especially Hatay.

Security issues and concerns, particularly about the camps, are topics that are often featured in the newspaper’s coverage. The news language used to report on such matters sometimes brings all Syrian refugees under suspicion, contributing to the portrayal of refugees, particularly those staying in camps, as dangerous and threatening people supported by the government. In some of the news items by *Cumhuriyet*, those staying in camps are referred to as ‘Syrian insurgents’ (‘*Suriyeli isyancılar*’, August, 28, 2012), ‘dissident Syrians’ (‘*muhelif Suriyeliler*’, February 7, 2012), ‘regime opponents fleeing Syria’ (‘*Suriye’den kaçan rejim muhalifleri*’, January 21, 2012), and ‘radical Islamists’ (‘*radikal İslamcılar*’, October 7, 2013), in a way that highlights the political stance of incoming Syrians, particularly towards the Assad government, which the newspaper seems to take as the legitimate authority in the country as mentioned before. In the above-mentioned examples, the use of words

like ‘refugees’ or ‘asylum seekers’ to refer to Syrians staying in camps is very limited or they are not used at all. This might be interpreted as a conscious choice made to imply that Syrians staying in camps are not genuine refugees / civilians but suspicious people or armed militants, including members of Al-Nusra Front and Turkey-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA), some of whom go to fight in Syria and return to the camp they reside in according to the newspaper’s reports (*Cumhuriyet*, April 12, 2012; June 22, 2012; May 18, 2013; October 7, 2013). However, there are times when everything gets mixed up, all labels are used together and interchangeably, regardless of their implications, which causes all Syrians to be perceived as suspects, as in the following excerpt:

Armed Syrian ‘guests’ threatening the Alevi citizens created uneasiness in Hatay, the city of peace: ‘Your turn will come’

Syrian dissidents did not leave peace in Hatay, where people from three monotheistic religions and many ethnic backgrounds have lived together for years. It was stated that Syrian refugees, who were stated to have purchased large quantities of hunting rifles in recent months, were involved in more than 300 incidents in Hatay.

Eli silahlı Suriyeli ‘konukların’ Alevi yurttaşları tehdit etmesi barış kenti Hatay’da tedirginlik yarattı: ‘Sıra size de gelecek’

Suriyeli muhalifler üç semavi din ve birçok etnik kökenden insanın yıllardır birlikte yaşadığı Hatay’da huzur bırakmadı. Son aylarda büyük miktarda av tüfeği satın aldığı belirtilen Suriyeli sığınmacıların Hatay’da 300’ü aşkın olaya karıştığı belirtildi. (Cumhuriyet, August 25, 2012)

Described first as ‘armed Syrian guests’ (‘guests’ in quotation marks, probably to remind the official discourse or to underline that they are not proper guests), next as ‘Syrian dissidents’, and finally as ‘Syrian asylum seekers’, Syrians in Hatay, as a whole, are presented as dangerous fundamentalists posing a threat against the locals, especially Alevis, in the city, which is known as the city of peace and tolerance as underlined. That being said, in addition to concerns expressed by Alevis as in the above-cited excerpt, problems faced by Alevi /Alawite refugees have a considerable share in the coverage of *Cumhuriyet*, which will later be analyzed under a separate sub-theme.

Among all the selected newspapers, *Sözcü* has the biggest share of news articles categorized under this sub-theme, with the most overt examples marking Syrians as ungrateful guests. Below are some of the headlines from the newspaper:

Syrian migrants being ungrateful

Suriyeli göçmenler nankörlük yapıyor (Sözcü, August 4, 2012)

Syrians disfavored Turkey’s camp

Suriyeliler, Türkiye’nin yaptığı kampı beğenmedi (Sözcü, April 8, 2012)

Feed the crow let it carve your eyes

Besle kargayı oysun gözüünü (Sözcü, July 23, 2012)

This is ‘feed the crow let it carve your eyes’ news

Bu Bir ‘Besle Kargayı Oysun Gözüünü’ Haberi (Sözcü, February 28, 2013)

Syrians, they ate, they drank, they insulted our ‘Ancestor’

Suriyeliler, Yediler İçtiler, ‘Ata’mıza Hakaret Ettiler (Sözcü, February 21, 2017)

Ungratefulness caused resentment: Refugee: As if we told you to save us,

Ex-JDP Deputy: Send that buffoon to Syria now

Nankörlük isyan ettirdi: Mülteci: Sanki size bizi kurtarın dedik, AKP’li eski Vekil: Şu soyтарыı hemen suriye’ye gönderin (Sözcü, March 3, 2020)

These headlines speak for themselves; Syrian refugees are being ungrateful to ‘us’, to the country that took them in, accommodated them on its land, ensured their safety and nurtured them. It is notable that three of the examples by *Sözcü* above, like the previously analyzed five articles by *Hürriyet* (April 13, 2012; August 30, 2012; July 30, 2012) and *Cumhuriyet* (January 23, 2012; August 25, 2012) are from the year 2012, only a year after Syrians arrived. This shows that as early as 2012, even before the number of refugees increased tremendously, and they spread across the country, discriminatory discourses could be found in newspapers.

It is notable how *Sözcü* adopts the use of ‘we’ in the articles categorized under this sub-theme. Below are some examples:

Excerpt 1:

Syrians, They ate, they drank, they insulted **our** 'Ancestor'

The Syrians, whom **we** have saved from death and looked after for 6 years, opened an account on Facebook for the referendum and slandered **our** history. (*Sözcü*, February 21, 2017)

Suriyeliler, Yediler İçtiler, ‘Ata’mıza Hakaret Etiler.

*Suriyeliler, ölümden kurtarıp, 6 yıldır **baktığımız** Suriyeliler, referandum için Facebook’ta hesap açıp **tarihimize** iftira attı.*

Excerpt 2:

Syrian refugees, to whom Turkey gave 3 meals a day and put money in their pockets, started a riot. The Syrians living in the tent city in Islahiye took **our**

police hostage and lowered the Turkish Flag to protest the arrival of 1500

Turkmen. (*Sözcü*, July 23, 2012)

*Türkiye'nin 3 öğün yemek verdiği, cebine para koyduğu Suriyeli sığınmacılar isyan çıkardı. Islahiye'deki çadırkentte barınan Suriyeliler, 1500 Türkmen'in gelmesini protesto için **polisimizi** rehin alıp Türk Bayrağı'nı indirdi.*

As mentioned before, victimization of refugees works through infantilization.

In the examples above, a similar pattern of infantilization can be observed. However, this time infantilized refugees are not marked by vulnerability but by sassiness resulting from excessive indulgence. 'We' saved them, looked after them, fed them, and gave them pocket money like responsible and caring parents, and yet 'they' do not seem to value all these at all, like spoiled children. Worse than that, they are being disrespectful to 'our' national assets: 'our' ancestor (in reference to Atatürk), 'our' history, the Turkish flag, and 'our' police. The use of 'we' here suggests that it is pretty much determined by nationalist indicators.

It is important to note further how 'we' becomes meaningful and who it covers from the newspaper's point of view. Billig (1995, p. 90) points out the ambiguity of the term; sometimes suggesting a particular 'we'; the nation, the government, the party, and sometimes indicating a universality; 'we' of all the reasonable people of the world. The content in the particular use of 'we' by *Sözcü* varies according to the context, the matter at hand, and who 'they' are. In most of the cases, opposition to the government becomes decisive in specifying who 'we' are. This is generally the case when there are no other parties involved in the story other than Turkish people and Syrian refugees, and when the newspaper brings forward preferential treatment of Syrian refugees over Turkish people. Since this point will be addressed later again,

just a few examples may suffice for now. For example, according to the newspaper, ‘our’ youth is treated like stepchildren in their own country because the government assigns Syrian teachers to schools although there are thousands of Turkish teachers waiting to be hired (*Sözcü*, December 15, 2015). In another example, the government sees Syrian refugees qualified for work while millions of ‘our’ unemployed are waiting for a job (*Sözcü*, July 10, 2016). The government here is the axis that separates the two sides: ‘we’ -as anyone and all disregarded by the government- and ‘they’, as Syrian refugees favored by the government. The dichotomy between ‘we’ and ‘they’ relates to the position vis-à-vis the government; Turkish people / readers of the newspaper on one hand; the government, and Syrian refugees supported by the government on the other hand, as in the following example: ‘Syrian refugees embraced by the government took advantage of **us**’ (*İktidarın kucak açtığı mülteciler, tepemize çıktı*) (*Sözcü*, February 28, 2013).

The frontpage of *Sözcü*, on March 3, 2020, published around the time when refugees gathered near the border in Edirne, is quite remarkable in the sense that it shows how the perspective of the newspaper changes in accordance with the actors involved in the story. The frontpage of the newspaper is almost entirely devoted to refugee-related news, including the headline story. The words of the Good Party Deputy, Fahrettin Yokuş, makes the headline: ‘Let’s train and send the ones eligible to use weapons’ (*Eli silah tutanı eğitip gönderelim*). The article presents the deputy’s statements as a solution proposal to the problem of Syrians, obviously endorsing his proposal of enlisting Syrian refugees, which he justifies as in the following:

We support the return of all asylum seekers to their homeland, without exception. **We** think that their guest period has passed now. **We** fed, enough.

Like **we** go and provide training in Libya, let's train them as well. **We** have been feeding for 9 years. Let them go to Syria and protect their homeland.

***Biz** düşünce olarak istisnasız tüm sığınmacıların kendi vatanlarına dönmelerinden yanayız. Artık misafirlik sürelerinin geçtiğini **düşünüyoruz**. **Biz** besledik, yeter. Nasıl Libya'da gidip eğitim **veriyoruz**, bunları da eğitelim. 9 senedir **besliyoruz**. Suriye'ye gidip vatanlarını korusunlar.*

What comes forward here is 'us' -all of us- against 'they'; Syrian refugees who avoid fighting for their homeland. 'We' here refers to both the Turkish state as it is under the authority of the state to repatriate refugees, to enlist or provide military training to men, and the Turkish people / nation; the entire population, the rightful owners of the land as well as the state, who have had enough of hosting Syrian refugees. This headline news also shows that the newspaper takes the government's decision to open the border to let refugees go to Europe as rightful and supports it. The headline can be viewed as a suggestion to the government in case the current policy of letting refugees go falls short of solving the problem: 'we' can take Syrians under arms to send them to fight in their country.

Another item published on the frontpage of the newspaper on the same day seems to further justify this suggestion: Syrian refugees are ungrateful. This item is about the statements of one of the Syrian refugees interviewed by the BBC while waiting at the border near Edirne. It is reported that "The Syrian refugee who denigrated Turkey with the dream of going to Europe caused a backlash" (*Avrupa'ya gitme hayaliyle Türkiye'yi kötüleyen Suriyeli mülteciye tepki yağdı*). The article then quotes a former JDP deputy, Şamil Tayyar, who is still a party member, addressing the refugee: 'The breath you take in this country is *haram*' (*Bu ülkede aldığın nefes haramdır*). It is noteworthy that while *Sözcü* also covers the unfavorable conditions of

refugees as in one of the previously analyzed examples ('Victims of Tayyip and Assad'), when refugees mention such conditions in front of foreign audience, the newspaper takes it offensive to national pride. Here again, what comes forward is 'we', the people of this country regardless of political affiliation, against 'they'; Syrian refugees who ungratefully complain about 'us' to others.

The last refugee-related item from the frontpage of the newspaper on the same day bears the headline; 'Here is the Greek oppression' (*İşte Yunan zulmü*). The article reports the atrocity faced by refugees attempting to cross to Greece by sea as in the following: 'The Greek, who did not want to take the immigrants to their country, inflicted persecution (*Göçmenleri ülkesine almak istemeyen Yunan zulüm estirdi*). It is interesting to note that while the newspaper sees it rightful to suggest enlisting and sending refugees to fight in war, obviously in complete violation of human rights, it takes it as oppression when the Greek coast guard blows up refugees' boats. Another interesting point to note here is how similarly *Yeni Akit* (November 21, 2015) reports the violence inflicted by the Greek coast guard: 'Greek atrocity in the Aegean' (*Ege'de Yunan vahşeti*). Both newspapers, at opposite ends of the political spectrum, prefer to use the word for the nationality (*Yunan*) instead of the country name (*Yunanistan*), in a manner of generalizing the act of violence to the whole nation. What brings these two normally opposing perspectives together is the historical other of the Turkish national identity; the Greek, as mentioned in Chapter 3 (Ergül, 2009). Although they depart from different ideological standpoints -one from a nationalist, the other from an Islamist angle, they both arrive at a juncture where 'we' -the Turkish and Muslim population of the country- stands against the historical enemy, non-Turkish and non-Muslim Greek. This negative representation of Greece can be

generalized to other media outlets as well; when it comes to Greece, the Turkish press in general seems to share this perspective (Yumul & Özkırımlı, 2000).

Figure 7

Frontpage of *Sözcü*, March 2, 2020

YIL: 13 SAYI: 4633 3 MART 2020 SALI 1.5 TL

#SÖZCÜ SUSARSA TÜRKİYE SUSAR

T.C. SÖZCÜ

ERDOĞAN'DAN ESAD'A SERT UYARI
Çekilmezsen omuz üstünde baş kalmaz
CUMHURBAŞKANI Erdoğan, "Şayet bir an önce Türkiye'nin belirlediği sınırların dışına çıkmazlarsa bir süre sonra omuzlarının üstündeki o başlar da kalmayacak" dedi. S.10
BM: Rusya ve Esad savaş suçu işledi S.10

İYİ Partili vekilden Suriyeliler için çözüm önerisi
ELİ SİLAH TUTANI EĞİTİP GÖNDERELİM
Konya Milletvekili Fahrettin Yokuş, "Türkiye'de eli silah tutan 1 milyon sığınmacı var. Bunları eğitelim, Suriye'ye gönderelim Orada vatanlarını korusunlar" dedi ve şu tespitlerde bulundu:
"BİZ düşünce olarak istenmez tüm sığınmacıların kendi vatanlarına dönmelerinden yanayız. Artık misafirlik sürelerinin geçtiğini düşünüyoruz. Biz besledik, yeter."
9 SENESİ BESLEDİK
"NASIL Libya'da gidip eğitim veriyoruz, bunları da eğitelim. 9 senedir besliyoruz. Suriye'ye gidip vatanlarını korusunlar. Mevcut politikamız ülkeye bir yararı yok."
Deniz AYHAN'ın haberi S.10

"HERKES VATANINA"
İYİ Partili Fahrettin Yokuş, Göç Komisyonu toplantısında bu çağrısı yaptı.

NANKÖRLÜK İSYAN ETTİRDİ
Mülteci: Sanki size bizi kurtarın dedik
AKP'li eski vekil: Şu soyтарыyı hemen Suriye'ye gönderin
BBC, Yunanistan sınırındaki mültecilerle konuştu. Bir Suriyeli, Türkiye'yi kötülemeye kalktı. AKP'li Şamil Tayyar, bu nankörlüğe, "Bu ülkede aldığın nefes haramdır" diye isyan etti ve iktidara başlıktaki çağrısı yaptı. S.11

Koronavirüsten korktu Merkel'le tokalaşmadı

İŞTE YUNAN ZULMÜ
Botlarını böyle patlattılar
Üzerlerine böyle ateş ettiler
EDİRNE'deki 34 geyikden ardından Türkiye'nin gidecek mültecilere sınır kapılarını açma kararı AB'yi sarstı. En çok sarsılan da Yunanistan oldu. Sınırlarına onbinlerce göçmen dayandı.
GÖÇMENLERİ ülkesine almak istemeyen Yunan, zulüm estirmeye başladı. Çoluk çocuk demeden mültecilere gaz sıkıyor, plastik mermi atıyor, yakaladığını tekme tokat dövüyor.
YUNAN sahil güvenliği Bodrum'dan Istanbül'e kadar geçeneye çalışan mülteci botunu batırmaya çalıştı. Bir Yunan askeri mültecilere ateş ederken, bir diğeri botlarını patlattı. S.11

Particularly in matters of security, military operation, and border protection, the distinction between 'we' as the government opponents and 'they' as the government itself or government supporters seems to disappear from the perspective

of *Sözcü*, and the two categories may fuse into one; ‘we’ of the Turkish nation, organized around a central authority; the state, with all its institutions, the military, the police force and such. In case of the military operation in Afrin as part of the Operation Olive Branch, for example, the newspaper takes it as a matter of national security important for ‘our’ country, which will also enable Syrians to return to their countries. ‘If Afrin is cleared, 500,000 Syrians will return’ (*Afrin temizlenirse 500 bin Suriyeli döner*) reads the headline of the newspaper on 18 January 2018, two days before the operation was launched, under which the anticipated benefits are listed citing ex-military ranks.

In another example, the newspaper reports the government’s decision to loosen the control over border crossings, in a manner that legitimizes this decision, as in the following: ‘**Our** being left alone in Syria was the final straw. Turkey decided not to prevent those who want to go to Europe’ (*Suriye’de yalnız bırakılmamız bardağı taşırdı. Türkiye, Avrupa’ya gitmek isteyenleri durdurumama kararı aldı*) (*Sözcü*, February 29, 2020). On the same day, *Sözcü* dedicated its front page to the casualties in İdlib, and ran with a headline that accuses Russia, Europe, the US and NATO of ‘playing a double game’ against ‘us’, which, as stated in the article, once again proved the famous saying that ‘Turks have no friends but Turks’ (*“Türk’ün Türk’ten başka dostu yoktur” sözü bir kez daha kanıtlandı*). What comes forward here is ‘us’- the Turks- against all the rest.

A similar perspective with different undertones is shared by *Yeni Akit*: ‘The West is no friend to Turk’ (*Batı’dan Türk’e dost olmaz*) (March 4, 2020). This excerpt is from the headline article of the newspaper reporting the developments regarding the Operation Spring Shield (*Bahar Kalkanı Harekatı*), under the headline: ‘The Crusader before us, the ummah behind us’ (*Haçlı karşımızda ümmet arkamızda*), published at a

time when refugees were still waiting near the border in Edirne. The article reports that the Turkish military, ‘the last army of Islam’ (*İslam’ın son ordusu*) is fighting in Syria to save Syrians from the ‘murderer Assad’ (*katil Esed*) while the ‘so-called allies’ (*sözde müttefikler*); NATO, the EU, the USA and Russia, expect Turkey to fail in its mission. The article fits perfectly with the frame of victims, the savior, and villains, discussed under the previous sub-heading. The Turkish-Islamic military saves the oppressed Muslims, including Syrians, from the villains, actors of the Christian West as well as Assad. Syrian refugees seem to be absent in this frame but they are added to the picture through a different news item reporting the statements by Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu about the refugees’ gathering in Edirne. ‘We can’t forcibly keep anyone who wants to go’ (*Gitmek isteyenleri zorla tutamayız*) reads the headline of the article. It can be interpreted as a message intended to frighten Europe, or as a gesture of resentment towards refugees who do not appreciate enough -albeit not to the extent of ungratefulness- what Turkey has done for them and force the gates of Europe.

The theme of ungrateful guests, not very much unexpectedly, was not found in the coverage of the two pro-government newspapers, *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit*. However, news items calling refugees to return convey the message that they may not be welcomed forever. In a manner of addressing refugees directly, ‘We brought peace, you shall go home’ (*Huzuru sağladık, evinize dönün*) reads the headline of *Sabah* (October 25, 2019) in the aftermath of Operation Peace Spring (*Barış Pınarı Harekatı*). It is important to note that the call making the headline is by the Kurdish fighters fighting with the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army (SMO), which makes it then a call addressing Syrian Kurds more than other groups, if not specifically. In another example by *Sabah* (October 21, 2019), the headline this time speaks from the voice of refugees: ‘When peace comes, we will all return to Syria’ (*Barış olduğunda*

hepimiz Suriye'ye döneceğiz). This item, published while the military operation was going on, reports interviews with refugees settled in Akçakale, Şanlıurfa, one of the refugee-dense provinces. These headlines can be interpreted as an effort to legitimize military operations on the grounds that it will ensure the return of refugees, in line with the government's discourse which is that safe zones were created in Syria for refugees to return to thanks to the successful operations (Yanaşmayan et al., 2019, p. 47). In addition, similar articles and headlines by pro-government newspapers about the issue of return may be taken as a timid call for refugees to return, hinting they may be overstaying and not be welcomed any longer as the tolerance of the host may be evading. Finally, such items can be considered as an effort to relieve the rising concerns among the public regarding the permanence of refugees. Below are further examples:

They returned happily and joyfully

Güle oynaya döndüler (Sabah, September 9, 2016)

Therapy for return home: Exclusive session for Syrian refugees

Eve dönüş terapisi: Suriyeli mülteciye özel seans (Hürriyet, August 7, 2017)

Farewell Istanbul Hello Syria

Elveda İstanbul Merhaba Suriye (Hürriyet, May 1, 2018)

Accompanying home the returning Syrian

Dönen Suriyeli'ye eve kadar eşlik (Sabah, November 8, 2018)

No Syrians will stay when the war is over

Savaş bittiğinde Suriyeli kalmaz (Yeni Akit, July 30, 2019)

Do not be afraid, one day we will return to our country

Korkmayın, bir gün ülkemize döneceğiz (Yeni Akit, June 3, 2019)

It was previously mentioned that ‘*kucak açmak*’ (embrace, open arms) was the most commonly used expression to intensify the image of Turkey, Turkish people or the government as supportive and compassionate saviors of needy refugees. This metaphorical phrase is replaced with ‘*kapıları açmak*’ (open the gate) in the news reports by pro-government newspapers analyzed here under this sub-theme. This expression used by President Erdoğan himself several times, addressing particularly the European countries, made the headlines several times. Below are some examples:

Refugee stake to Europe: The gates will open

Avrupa’ya mülteci resti: Kapılar açılır (Hürriyet, November 26, 2016)

If we opened the gates, you'd look for a hole to escape

Kapıları açsak kaçacak delik arayacaktınız (Sabah, March 17, 2018)

Warning to the West from President Erdogan: We’ll open the gates

Başkan Erdoğan’dan Batı’ya Uyarı: Kapıları açarız (Sabah, September 6, 2019)

Open the gates, get rid of this burden

Sen de kapıları aç, bu yükten kurtul (Sabah, March 9, 2020)

We’ll open the gates

Kapıları açarız (Hürriyet, September 6, 2019)

We’ll open the gates

Kapıları Açarız (Hürriyet, October 11, 2019)

These headlines echoing the words of President Erdoğan, first of all, contribute to the narrative of Turkey as a strong country ruled by a strong leader, defying and unyielding to European countries which do not assume as much responsibility as Turkey. This is reinforced visually by images of Erdoğan pointing a finger or standing

upright. At another level, they underline refugees as guests that may be expelled through the door when necessary, when, for example, the tolerance of the host evades, a perspective perhaps best crystallized in Erdoğan's remark; 'We open the doors, let them march to Europe' (*Açarız sınırları, yürüsünler Avrupa'ya*) that *Sabah* (October 27, 2019) reported in its headline piece.

Figure 8

Frontpage of Hürriyet, October 11, 2019



Figure 9

Frontpage of *Hürriyet*, September 6, 2019

Figure 10

Frontpage of *Hürriyet*, November 26, 2016

Figure 11

Frontpage of *Sabah*, March 9, 2020



6.1.3. Humane Turkey versus Inhumane West / Europe

Yanaşmayan et al. (2019) argue that the issue of Syrian refugees has become a parcel of the government's civilizationist populist discourse revolving around the rhetoric of Turkey's moral superiority over the West. In a similar vein, Karakaya Polat (2018) argues that the issue has become one of the defining elements of the JDP's identity and is especially instrumental for the party to present itself as morally superior to both its domestic opponents and Western countries. This finds reflection in the coverage of pro-government newspapers as well, particularly of *Yeni Akit*.

It was previously mentioned that the data collection process revealed some news items that were not directly relevant to the issue, reporting in no terms directly refugee-related matters but mentioned refugees generally for comparison purposes and making a statement. The headline story by *Yeni Akit* (March 8, 2020) about March 8,

the International Women's Day is an example of such items. Under the headline, 'Conjury of March 8' (*8 Mart hokkabazlığı*), the article provides a good example of how the issue of Syrian refugees becomes a means of denouncing both Western countries and those challenging the Ottoman-Islamist national identity or Islamist-nationalist project at home, associating both with moral inferiority and hypocrisy (Hintz, 2015a; Saraçoğlu, 2018). The overline says: 'Feminists are celebrating the day while the real women shed tears!' (*Asıl kadınlar gözyaşı dökerken, feministler gün kuthuyor!*). Feminists, accused of not being women, are the first target but not the only. Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Greece, members of the once pro-secular judiciary, LGBTI community and the West of course, subtly or overtly, are all cast as deviants or oppressors in some way; they are the villains in the narrative. Women holding a sit-in protest outside the PDP headquarters in Diyarbakır, female refugees heading to Europe taking their children with them, women from war zones in the Middle East and other Muslim regions, Syrian women who lost their husbands and children in war, mothers and wives of the convicts imprisoned for taking part in the arson attack in Sivas that killed dozens of intellectuals including Alevi are the "real women"; the oppressed (*mazlum*), the innocent victims in this narrative. Below is an excerpt from the article:

Both the West and its Servants Turn a Blind Eye to Oppression

While Syrian, Afghan and Iranian women, who have been subjected to Greek oppression on their way to Europe they set off dreaming of giving their children a better education and better living conditions, demand help from women in the West, they turn a blind eye to this cry. The mothers and wives of the oppressed people of Sivas, who were imprisoned by the briefed judiciary

of February 28 and have sought justice for 27 years, are waiting for their tearshed to come to an end.

Batı da, Uşakları da Zulme Sessiz

Çocuklarına daha iyi bir eğitim aldirmek ve daha iyi şartlarda yaşamak hayaliyle çıktıkları Avrupa yolunda Yunan zulmüne maruz kalan Suriyeli, Afganistanlı ve İranlı kadınlar, Batı'daki hemcinslerinden yarım talep ederken, kulaklar bu çığlığa tıkalı. 28 Şubat'ın brifingli yargısı tarafından zindanlara doldurulan ve 27 yıldır adalet arayan Sivas mazlumlarının anneleri ve eşleri de gözyaşlarının dinmesini bekliyor. (Yeni Akit, March 8, 2020)

The grand narrative here concerns the antagonism between the Christian West -the grand villain- and the Muslim East, the grand victim. Side characters come into play through their relevance to the two sides, adding either a victimizing or a vilifying effect to the grand narrative. Feminists side with 'deviant groups' (*sapkın oluşumlar*, in reference to LGBTI community), and play the role that the West has assigned to them not only by turning a blind eye to the oppression faced by Muslim women including Syrian refugees but also by spreading thoughts that destroy the family and maternal feelings, thoughts that originate from the West, as an academic of Islamic canon law speaking to the newspaper confirms. Other characters, inasmuch as they are distant from the Islamic side of the frontier, they approach the Western side because they, after all, serve the interests of the West whose sole purpose is the oppression of Muslims, a narrative conclusion reinforced by the use of 'crusader barbarism' (*haçlı barbarlığı*) to refer to the violence that refugees face on their way to Europe. The barbaric and inhumane West and its local collaborators (*Batı şakşakçısı*) on one hand, and the Muslims who are oppressed because they are Muslims, and whose moral

superiority stems from being in the position of oppressed *per se*, on the other hand. It should be remembered that the article was published at a time while refugees' gathering in Edirne was still going on, and thus was still high on the agenda. Thus, the newspaper treats instrumentally the refugee agenda in the first place, and the women's agenda (March 8) in the second place to defy the West in the first place and national actors that Ottoman-Islamist understanding of national identity are at odds with in the second place (Hintz, 2015a, 2015b).

The vilification of the West is further reinforced with another news item placed above the headline story, this time reporting directly refugee-related news; Danish patrol boat that refused to obey the order to push back rescued refugees to the Aegean, reported as in the following: 'Crusader Europe, the so-called cradle of civilization, has reached a gruesome level of hostility against refugees' (*Sözde medeniyetin beşiği Haçlı Avrupa'nın mülteci düşmanlığı tüyleri ürpertecek seviyelere ulaştı*). This time, the villain West is specified down to Europe / the EU but the main trait that causes its evil acts remains the same; being crusaders. Precisely for this reason, they lack humane qualities such as compassion, morals and civility despite their claim for being civilized. The way the newspaper portrays the West in general, and the EU or European countries in particular, through refugee-related matters pretty much contributes to the rhetoric of "clash of civilizations", similar to what Ertuğrul (2012) observes for the foreign policy discourse of the JDP with regard to Turkey-EU relations, as mentioned in Chapter 3. In this framework, the wrongdoings by European countries or other Western actors with regard to refugees relate to the civilizational identity. Or the other way round, benevolence or generosity of Turkey towards refugees stems from its distinctive civilizational identity. Western / European Christian civilization on one hand, and the Ottoman / Islamic civilization on the other

hand. The former lacks humanity, high morals like truthfulness, honesty, sympathy and compassion towards others despite the claims for being the cradle of civilization, democracy and human rights while the latter is embracing, tolerant, caring and thus humane.

‘Damn your civilization’ (*Medeniyetiniz batsın*) reads the headline of *Yeni Akit* on January 1, 2017, in another example of a headline story that is in no terms directly related to the refugee issue. It is actually an article criticizing the New Year celebrations, which the newspaper apparently considers belonging to the tradition of Western civilization. General framework is the same as the previously analyzed headline story (‘Conjury of March 8’), except this time there are no other villains involved, other than the ‘crusader West’. The pattern is predictable. The West exploits the Muslim world, oppresses Muslims, drag Middle Eastern countries into bloodshed, and then shamelessly celebrate the New Year in extravagant shows held in their capitals. While they poured money into New Year's Eve celebrations, they still did not send the promised 3 billion dollars to Turkey for refugees, which proves their hypocrisy. Turkey, on the other hand, ‘embraces’ 3 million Syrians, and ‘looks after the oppressed from all over the world with its government and NGOs’ (*hükümeti ve STK'larıyla dünyanın dört bir yanından mazlumlara bakıyor*).

Similar pattern repeats itself when the newspaper criticizes Mother's Day for being one of the ‘so-called special occasions of Christian invention’ (*Hristiyan icadı sözde özel günler*), in its headline story published on the day (*Yeni Akit*, May 12, 2019). Motherhood is ‘the key to heaven for the Muslim, a tool of exploitation for the West’ (*Müslüman için cennetin anahtarı, Batı için sömürü aracı*). Waste, consumerism and hypocrisy on one side; suffering and exploitation on the other side. And a Syrian mother staying in a refugee camp says: ‘No Mother’s Day for us’ (*Bizim*

için anneler günü yok). Examples show that for *Yeni Akit*, antagonism between the ‘inhumane’ West and the humanitarian Turkey with regard to Syrian refugees makes sense in civilizational terms; from this perspective ‘there is a civilizational difference’ (*Arada medeniyet farkı var*) after all, as stated in another news article by the newspaper categorized under this sub-theme (*Yeni Akit*, March 7, 2018). Below are more examples of the headlines by *Yeni Akit* that contribute to the ‘inhumane West’ construct:

Unscrupulous West: Some sank boats, some tripped, and some threw into the river naked

Vicdansız Batı: Kimisi bot batırdı, kimisi çelme taktı, kimisi de soyup nehre attı (*Yeni Akit*, September 26, 2018)

Reyhanlı is greater than Europe in humanity

Reyhanlı insanlıkta Avrupa’dan büyük (*Yeni Akit*, May 21, 2017)

The failure of humanity in the EU: 28 EU countries fell against each other for 160 thousand refugees

AB’de insanlığın iflası: 28 AB ülkesi, 160 bin mülteci için birbirine düştü (*Yeni Akit*, September 13, 2017)

The West kills the innocents to live in comfort, we want to keep alive

Batı, konforlu yaşamak için masumları öldürüyor, biz yaşatmanın peşindeyiz (*Yeni Akit*, March 7, 2018)

The West is killing humanity: Greek soldier killed another refugee

Batı insanlığı öldürüyor: Yunan askeri 1 mülteci daha öldürdü (*Yeni Akit*, March 5, 2020)

The gates opened, the human mask of the West fallen: Welcome bomb to refugees

Kapılar Açıldı, Batı'nın İnsanlık Maskesi Düştü: Mültecilere Bombalı
Karşılama (*Yeni Akit*, March 1, 2020)

Although *Sabah* also contributes to the 'inhumane West' construct with a few examples, the newspaper does not seem to take it to a civilizational context but keeps it in ethical and political terms. The newspaper points to Europe's avoiding responsibility, not taking conscientious and humane actions, and falling behind Turkey in humanitarianism generally through echoing or copying the words of President Erdoğan, like in the below-presented two examples:

The World is insensitive, Europe is unscrupulous

President Erdoğan: The world does not show the necessary sensitivity to terrorism. Europe shares the sin of every refugee who dies.

Dünya duyarız, Avrupa vicdansız

Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Dünya teröre gerekli duyarlılığı göstermiyor. Avrupa ölen her mültecinin vebaline ortak. (Sabah, September 4, 2015)

The West didn't care innocent children's tears

President Erdoğan: Our Western neighbors preferred to hide behind high walls for refugees and seek peace behind barbed wire fences.

Batı masum çocukların gözyaşlarına aldırmadı

Başkan Erdoğan: Batılı komşularımız, mülteciler konusunda yüksek duvarlar arkasına saklanmayı, dikenli tel örgülerin arkasında huzur aramayı tercih etti. (Sabah, June 28, 2019)

Predictably, these intros of news reports are followed by self-praise for Turkey's humanitarianism, or rightful and ethical stance in world or regional affairs in the body text. In her analysis of the news stories by Anadolu Agency (AA), Özdora Akşak (2019) finds that the news outlet typically uses two perspectives with regard to praise; external praise for what Turkey has done for refugees and self-praise by Turkish authorities, with the former occurring almost twice as frequently as the latter (p. 10). This is also consistent with the findings of this research; self-praise and external praise have a considerable share in the corpus. However, nuances with regard to the coverage of newspapers and how self-praise may be achieved through different means should be noted at this point.

Self-praise, in the sense understood in this research, does not necessarily mean praise by Turkish authorities, praising words or statements by government authorities or other actors. Self-praise does not necessarily make the main topic or the headline of the news item but may come as additional detail in the body text (as in the above-cited two examples by *Sabah*), may be achieved through certain linguistic devices (as in the example of previously discussed '*kucak açmak*'), sometimes seen when one reads in between the lines, and is more a matter of perspectivization; "positioning speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance" as defined by Wodak (2015, p. 8). In this sense, self-praise may come in rather implicit forms. The way the news is framed; the way the refugees are portrayed may involve self-praise. For example, previously analyzed news articles that portray refugees as ungrateful guests can be considered in this context. Turkey did it best to fulfill its humanitarian duty, and yet they do not seem to appreciate it. Such a form of self-praise can be found in the coverage of more newspapers; except for *Cumhuriyet*, which does not take humanitarian aid as an act of benevolence as previously mentioned, all the other

selected newspapers provide examples of this, some of which were previously analyzed. Overt forms of self-praise, praise that makes the topic of the news item itself, however, are exclusive to the coverage of *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit*, which treat humanitarian aid as a sign of morality, describing Turkey as a humane, benevolent and conscientious actor, in tune with the discourse of the government for which “essential elements of Turkish culture that make the aid and open-door policy inevitable are also a sign of national superiority” (İçduygu et al., 2017, p. 459). The following examples can be considered in this context:

Turkey, the conscience of the World: Embracing 3.5 million refugees, Turkey is the “Conscience of the World” with its humanitarian activities not only in its region but also all over the world.

Dünyanın vicdanı Türkiye: 3, 5 milyon mülteciye kucak açan Türkiye, sadece bölgesinde değil, dünyanın dört bir yanında yürüttüğü insani faaliyetlerle de “Dünyanın Vicdanı” konumunda. (Yeni Akit, August 19, 2018)

Turkey is the most conscientious country in the World: Regardless of race, language, religion or gender, Turkey reaches out to places in need in every geography.

Türkiye dünyanın en vicdanlı ülkesi: Türkiye ırk, dil, din, cinsiyet farkı gözetmeksizin, her coğrafyada ihtiyaç duyulan yerlere elini uzatıyor. (Sabah, August 20, 2018)

We Give the World a lesson on humanity: Turkey heals the wounds of refugees persecuted by Greece.

Dünyaya insanlık dersi veriyoruz: Yunanistan’ın zulmettiği mültecilerin yaralarını Türkiye sarıyor. (Sabah, March 9, 2020)

While self-praise is predominant in the coverage of *Yeni Akit*, the corpus yielded only two examples of external praise from the newspaper's coverage. 'I was fascinated by Turkey's humanity' (*Türkiye'nin insanlığına hayran kaldım*) reads the headline of the news article reporting the praising words by a Swedish member of the European Parliament (*Yeni Akit*, April 25, 2018). The remarkable point here is that the parliamentarian is quoted for her words of praise for Turkey's humanitarian aid to refugees, which she attributes to the generosity and benevolence of Turkish people and Turkish culture. This frame of reference; the emphasis on culture and values, seems to be in tune with the newspaper's previously mentioned coverage that highlights Turkey's humanitarianism through a civilizational context. The news photo is also noteworthy; members of the IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation -an Islamic NGO whose work is frequently mentioned in the newspaper- distributing aid to a group of refugees including women and children. The IHH is then treated emblematically, representing Turkey's humanitarian aid. The other example by *Yeni Akit* (August 5, 2019) is also noteworthy in showing the 'humane Turkey' versus the 'inhumane West' dichotomy in just one sentence: 'Thanks and praise continue to flow to Turkey from Europe, which has failed in humanity and conscience (*İnsanlık ve vicdan konusunda sınıfta kalan Avrupa'dan Türkiye'ye teşekkür ve övgüler sürüyor*).

While self-praise may come in implicit forms, when there is external praise, that is; when there is someone outside Turkey praising Turkey's efforts, this generally becomes newsworthy on its own, the topic of the news item itself; reflected in the headline as well. In this sense, a great contribution to the 'humane Turkey' construct comes from the coverage of the words or statements of 'others', ranging from celebrities to politicians. Examples of external praise come from *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*, some examples of which are in the following:

High praise from Merkel: Turkey has done excellent work for asylum seekers

Merkel'den büyük övgü: Türkiye sığınmacılar için mükemmel işler yaptı
(*Sabah*, June 29, 2018)

Turkish people are inspirational: Steiner, the head of the UN Development Program (UNDP), expressed his great admiration for the Turkish people, who host 3.6 million Syrians

Türk halkı ilham ışığı: BM Kalkınma Programı (UNDP) başkanı Steiner, 3.6 milyon Suriyeli'yi ağırlayan Türk halkına büyük hayranlık duyduğunu belirtti
(*Hürriyet*, May 30, 2019)

Turkey's incredible sacrifice for refugees: British Foreign Minister spoke to Hürriyet

Türkiye'nin Mülteciler için Yaptığı İnanılmaz Fedakarlık: İngiltere Dışişleri Bakanı Hürriyet'e konuştu (*Hürriyet*, March 26, 2017)

UN Secretary General speaks to Hürriyet: We are grateful to Turkey for Syrian refugees

BM Genel Sekreteri Hürriyet'e Konuştu: Suriyeli Mülteciler için Türkiye'ye Minnettarız (*Hürriyet*, November 15, 2015)

Praise from Bono to Turkey: You are very kind

Bono'dan Türkiye'ye övgü: Çok naziksiniz (*Sabah*, April 4, 2016)

'Turkey is very generous': UN ambassador and film actress Jolie visiting the Syrian camp in Öncüpınar

'Türkiye çok cömert': Öncüpınar'da Suriyelilerin kampını ziyaret eden BM elçisi ve sinema sanatçısı Jolie (*Sabah*, September 14, 2012)

6.1.4. 'Our' All-encompassing Humanitarianism vs. 'Their' Selective Humanitarianism

It was discussed in Chapter 4 that the government is criticized for following a selective humanitarianism; adopting a preferential treatment of refugees based on religious, ethnic and political terms (Toğral Koca, 2015; Korkut, 2016; İçduygu et al., 2017). Rejecting such allegations, the former Foreign Minister Davutoğlu (2013), for example, said Turkey pursued an all-encompassing approach: “there is no discrimination made in either the refugee policy that we implement or the humanitarian aid that we provide” (p. 860).

The news reports coded under this sub-theme concern these opposing views. The pro-government *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit*, in tune with the government's discourse, portray an image of Turkey that provides humanitarian aid to all Syrian refugees regardless of ethnic or religious background, however, findings suggest that this inclusivity has its limits. The anti-government *Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü*, report the allegations of selective humanitarianism, albeit from different perspectives. The case of *Hürriyet* is noteworthy here. Findings suggest that the newspaper's coverage was more in tune with the pro-government camp even before the newspaper changed hands and its pro-government stance became apparent.

News items reporting the case of Syrian Kurds fleeing ISIS contain noteworthy examples for comparable analysis. The first news item reporting the case is that of *Hürriyet*'s (September 19, 2014), under the headline ‘Alert at the border’ (*Sınırdaki alarm*). Framing the issue as an alarming situation that will cause more migration flow, the newspaper reports that 3000 people fleeing the ISIS attack in the Kurdish city of Kobane were not allowed in at the border crossing by Turkish soldiers taking precautions with armed vehicles, the reason for which is explained by citing

Davutoğlu: ‘The goal is aid at the border’ (*Hedef sınırda yardım*). Despite in a manner of justifying it -soldiers were taking precautions against an alarming situation and there is a reason behind closing the border confirmed by an authority- the newspaper still reports that Syrian Kurds were not allowed through the border, a point that does not exist in the coverage of *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit*.

After a 24-hour wait, Syrian Kurds were allowed to cross the border. The day after the afore-mentioned item by *Hürriyet*, on September 20, 2014, all the other selected newspapers covered the issue on their frontpage; *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet*, from a perspective that highlights preferential treatment, and *Yeni Akit* and *Sabah* highlighting Turkey’s embracing attitude, not mentioning the border closing or the long wait.

From the way *Cumhuriyet* (September 20, 2014) sees it, Syrian Kurds fleeing the terror of ISIS were kept waiting at the border, in the minefield, ‘hungry, thirsty and helpless’ (*aç, susuz ve çaresiz olarak*) for 24 hours. Through the eyes of *Sözcü* (September 20, 2014), while the border was immediately opened for the ones fleeing from Assad, Syrian Kurds fleeing ‘religious ISIS’ (*dinci IŞİD*) were kept waiting at the border, and ‘24 hours later, they came to mercy’ (*24 saat sonra insafa geldiler*). While *Cumhuriyet* emphasizes the poor treatment, *Sözcü* draws attention to the preferential treatment of anti-Assad Syrians over Syrian Kurds. Speaking from the voice of refugees, the headline of *Sabah* (September 20, 2014), on the other hand, paints a completely different picture: ‘Glad there is Turkey’ (*İyi ki Türkiye var*). In this picture, Turkey fulfilled its humanitarian duty ‘once again’, opened the border and saved Syrian Kurds, for which they thanked the Turkish government. In *Yeni Akit*’s (September 20, 2014) account, there is no mention of ‘Kurds’; the incoming are ‘Syrian citizens’; they were ‘embraced’ by Turkey, aided by soldiers and authorities.

After that day, the escape from ISIS, the waiting at the border, the opening and closing of the border continued, with things reaching a different point after deputies of People's Democratic Party as well as those who wanted to join the fight against ISIS headed to the border. Four different news items published -again- on the same day reveal that the perspective changed for some. The date is September 23, 2014 this time. *Cumhuriyet* (September 23, 2014) reports that the Kurds, who were kept at the border for five days, were let in at the last moment when the clashes escalated, and a baby allegedly died of hunger. In addition to noting the border closing, *Cumhuriyet* is, this time, the only newspaper to note a preferential treatment: 'Meanwhile, an injured ISIS fighter was let through the closed Akçakale border gate and was hospitalized in Şanlıurfa' (*Yaralı bir IŞİD militanıysa kapalı olan Akçakale sınır kapısından geçirilerek Şanlıurfa'da tedavi altına alındı*). After the involvement of Kurds from Turkey, *Sözcü* (September 23, 2014) gives a different account; Turkish soldiers are aiding Syrian Kurds, carrying their load on their backs, but are treated with ungratefulness by PDP deputies in return; no more mention of border closing or preferential treatment. *Hürriyet* (September 23, 2014) has a similar account: soldiers welcome arrivals and Turkey 'embraces' those reaching the border after walking for days; no more mention of border closing. From the way *Yeni Akit* (September 23, 2014) sees it, 'State and nation in the Southeast embraced their fellow *muhacir* with compassion (*Güneydoğu'da devlet ve millet muhacir kardeşlerini şefkatle kucakladı*); again, no mention of 'Kurds' in the body of the news item. The inference is then, that it is not 'Kurds' but 'Muslim fellows' that are embraced.

This inference becomes even stronger when one takes the coverage of *Yeni Akit* in the following days into consideration. After ISIS intensified its attacks on the Kobane region in early October 2014, street actions started in different cities of the

country, and turned into clashes between demonstrators and security forces, causing the death of dozens. Published at a time after the protests ended, a news report by *Yeni Akit* (October 14, 2014) accuses Kurdish refugees from Kobane and Yazidi Kurds from Iraq, in a manner of generalization, of taking part in the protests, under the headline ‘Refugee-masked traitors exposed’ (*Mülteci maskeli hainler deşifre oldu*). In another example published a month later, Kurdish refugees became a part of Assad’s ‘dirty plan’ of causing turmoil in the country. Below is an excerpt from the news item:

Assad's Dirty Plan

It is stated that Assad, who massacred hundreds of thousands of Syrians, is trying to strike Turkey with refugees. About 2 million refugees came to Turkey in 4 years. It is claimed that Assad will take advantage of this and cause turbulence in the country together with the terrorist organization PKK.

Esad’ın Kirli Planı

Yüzbinlere Suriyeliyi katleden Esad’ın mültecilerle Türkiye’yi vurmaya çalıştığı belirtiliyor. 4 yılda Türkiye’ye 2 milyona yakın mülteci geldi. Esad’ın bu durumdan faydalanıp terör örgütü PKK ile birlikte ülkede karışıklık çıkaracağı ileri sürülüyor. (Yeni Akit, November 12, 2014)

Although Syrian Kurds are not explicitly mentioned in the body text of the news item, the reference to the PKK, and the developments in the country at that time considered, it is explicit that the ‘dirty plan’ addresses them. At other times, Kurds become ‘fellows’ that the all-encompassing Turkey always came to the rescue of, whether in the past as was the case after the Halabja massacre or today as is the case with Syrian Kurds fleeing the civil war: ‘Turkey has always embraced the Kurd fleeing massacre’ (*Katliamdan kaçan Kürt’ü hep Türkiye kucakladı*’) reads the

headline of newspaper, published years after the migration from Kobane (*Yeni Akit*, January 15, 2019).

In a similar vein, in *Sabah*'s (October 25, 2014) account, Turkey saved and embraced the Kurds fleeing Kobane; Turkey is the 'door to life' (*yaşama açılan kapı*) for Kurds, whose thankful voice speaks through the headline: 'If Turkey hadn't let us in, we'd have all died' (*Türkiye almasa hepimiz ölürdük*). For *Hürriyet*, Kurdish refugees from Kobane are welcomed with 'Turkey's warm and considerate care' (*Türkiye'nin sıcak, özenli ilgisiyle karşılanıyor*) right after they pass the border.

Turkey's humanitarianism is all-encompassing to reach out to the medical treatment of injured soldiers of Assad, as the newspaper reports from an interview with the JDP Mayor of Antakya, who says they provide aid to anyone in need without any kind of distinction including the Syrian refugees hosted in the city (*Hürriyet*, April 5, 2013). A similar example is from *Sabah* (March 16, 2012), which reports -below the photo of refugees protesting Assad in the tent city- that when the opposition forces blocked the roads, Assad's soldiers were given meals by *Kızılay*. Turkey's all-encompassing humanitarianism reaches out to Assad's soldiers as well as refugees, and in another example to Syrian Christians, who reportedly chose to go to the local churches instead of the camps (*Sabah*, February 15, 2013). Turkey then took action for a camp exclusive to Christians, where 'refugees will also be provided with the opportunity to fulfill their religious obligations' (*Kampta göçmenlere dini vecibelerini yerine getirme imkanı da sağlanacak*).

In *Yeni Akit*'s account (February 24, 2019), it is the 'West' that adopts selective humanitarianism by admitting refugees after giving them a test of Christianity (*Batı'dan mültecilere Hristiyanlık testi*). And from the way *Sabah* (June 19, 2015) sees it, Turkey 'opened its heart', without any distinction, to all the refugees

arriving at its border while European countries like Bulgaria and Hungary are building walls (*Kalbimizi açtık, duvar ördüler*). As the examples show, Turkey or the government does not act selectively in any way from the perspective of *Yeni Akit*, *Sabah* and also *Hürriyet*.

When it comes to *Sözcü*, the selective approach of the government comes forward particularly with regard to Turkmens. In *Sözcü*'s (June 5, 2015) account, the government allowed '2 million Syrians into the country but does not open the doors to 2 thousand Turkmens waiting at the border' (*2 milyon Suriyeliyi Türkiye'ye alan iktidar, sınırda bekleyen 2 bin Türkmen'e kapıları açmıyor*). This is 'another double standard by the government' (*iktidarın bir çifte standardı daha*) as well as 'remorselessness' (*vicdansızlık*), writes in another item by the newspaper (*Sözcü*, June 15, 2015). In another striking example, the newspaper this time draws a comparison between the treatment of Syrian Kurds and Turkmens. It is notable that in the newspaper's account, the comparison is drawn from an ethnicity-based point of view, Syrians or Kurds versus Turkmens. As reported by the newspaper, 'our Turkmen kinsmen' (*Türkmen soydaşlarımız*) fleeing the ISIS are not let in through the border while the doors are wide open to Kurds, and thus 'thousands of Turkmens say they are Kurds' to pass the border (*Binlerce Türkmen Türkiye'ye girmek için Kürdüm diyor*) (*Sözcü*, June 6, 2015). This last example is particularly noteworthy in showing the relevance of ethnic and kinship ties to the inclusion of refugee groups and how the perspective of *Sözcü* changes within a year. Contrary to the claim here that Syrian Kurds did not encounter any problems in border crossings, the newspaper, in a previously mentioned example, reported that Syrian Kurds were kept waiting at the border for 24 hours (*Sözcü*, September 20, 2014).

For *Cumhuriyet*, the selective approach of the government comes forward with regard to Kurds (as in the previously mentioned examples), Yazidis, Alevis, and in one example Afghans. As the examples regarding Alevis will be presented under the following sub-heading, the remaining ones will be mentioned here. It should be noted that the newspaper explicitly accuses the government of taking sides with the Islamist armed groups, like no other selected newspaper does. Under the headline ‘Passport discrimination at the border’ (*Sınırda pasaport ayrımcılığı*), the newspaper reports that Yazidis are turned away from the border on the grounds that they don’t have passports, which is discriminatory, as highlighted, in comparison to the preferential treatment of Syrian refugees and jihadists: ‘Opening its doors to Syrians fleeing the civil war and condoning the crossing of jihadists, Turkey treats Yazidis trying to save their lives from ISIS differently’ (*İç savaştan kaçan Suriyelilere kapısını açan, cihatçıların geçişine göz yuman Türkiye, IŞİD’ten canını kurtarmaya çalışan Ezidilere farklı davranıyor*) (*Cumhuriyet*, August 20, 2014). Here it should be remembered that most of the Syrian refugees in Turkey are Sunnis, as highlighted in one of the items by *Cumhuriyet* (June 12, 2011), too: ‘Most of the Syrians coming to Turkey are of Arab Sunni and Kurdish origin’ (*Türkiye’ye gelen Suriyelilerin çoğunu Arap Sünni ve Kürt kökenliler oluşturuyor*). Therefore, ‘Syrians fleeing the civil war’ involves a reference to Sunni Syrians, and the comparison is actually drawn between Sunnis / Islamists versus Yazidis. In another example, the newspaper reports the high increase in the number of incoming Afghans and draws attention to their unfavorable conditions through a comparison between Syrian refugees: ‘Authorities point out that one-tenth of the aid given to Syrians is not given to these people (*Yetkililer, bu kişilere Suriyelilere yapılan yardımın onda birinin yapılmadığına dikkat çekiyor*)’ (*Cumhuriyet*, February 23, 2013). The comparison here obviously does not involve a

religious dimension as both sides are Muslims. It is rather the political aspect involved; that the government's aiding anti-Assad Syrians is implied.

One last noteworthy example from *Cumhuriyet* (June 21, 2015) concerns the camps. Under the headline 'Different to Angelina, different to Pelin' (*Angelina'ya farklı Pelin'e farklı*), the news item reports the impressions of Pelin Batu who visited the Yazidi camp in Şırnak and saw a completely different picture than the one that was shown to Angelina Jolie visiting the camp in Mardin, as the headline suggests. As Batu observes, Yazidis suffer from poor conditions in the camp, which, according to her, contradicts the claim that the camps under the surveillance of AFAD offer the comfort of a five-star hotel. In Batu's account, the biggest problem faced by Yazidis is medicine shortage whereas 'truckloads of medicine was handed out to ISIS supporters' (*İŞİD'cilere kamyonlar dolusu ilaç bahşedilmiş*). What comes forward from this observatory report is that the government treats Yazidis differently on a sectarian ground, differently than Sunni Syrians. It is notable that, different from *Sözcü*, the comparison in *Cumhuriyet*'s account is drawn from an Islamists / Sunnis versus non-Islamists / non-Sunnis divide, which brings forth the next sub-theme.

6.2. Religion

It was discussed in Chapter 4 that the government adopts a religious discourse drawing on the analogy of *Ensar* and *Muhacir*, which involves an ostensibly exclusionary distinction; a distinction between Sunni Muslims and non-Sunnis, particularly Alevis. In tune with the vision of neo-Ottomanism, Sunni background makes the desired quality of both the Turkish society and Syrian refugees through this perspective. The rhetoric of *Ensar* and *Muhacir* finds its reflection particularly in the

coverage of *Yeni Akit* whereas Alevis are almost exclusive to the coverage of *Cumhuriyet*.

6.2.1. ‘Our’ Religious Solidarity: *Muhacirs* versus Alevi Victims

Back in 2012, a year after the migration from Syria started, speaking to *Hürriyet* (August 20, 2012), in his famous statement that the critical threshold for the incoming Syrians was 100 thousand, then the Foreign Minister Davutoğlu said “They accuse us of Sunni favoritism in Syria. If we looked at it that way, we wouldn't have said ‘go’ to Mubarak in Egypt” (*Bizi Suriye’de Sünnicilik yapmakla suçluyorlar. Öyle baksak Mısır’da Mübarek’e de ‘git’ demezdik*). The critical threshold announced by Davutoğlu had been far exceeded not very long after this statement, and despite rejecting claims of sectarianism or favoritism in both foreign policy, and migration management or humanitarian aid, the government actors from time to time employed the rhetoric of Muslim fellowship, *Ensar* and *Muhacir*, which contributes to the exclusion of both non-Sunni refugees and natives, particularly of Alevis, as discussed in Chapter 4. Meeting with media representatives including that of *Yeni Akit* (August 3, 2019), the Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, for example, said “I would like it to be known that the main axis of Turkey's immigration policy is our *ensar-muhacir* understanding” (*Şunun bilinmesini isterim ki, Türkiye’nin göç politikasının ana eksenini ensar-muhacir anlayışımız oluşturmaktadır*). Three years later, the most recent use of this rhetoric was by President Erdoğan, speaking at a time when the immigration issue was at the top of the country's agenda, causing heated discussions that almost turned into a ‘duel’ between the Chair of Victory Party Ümit Özdağ and the Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu. In May 2022, President Erdoğan declared that, as the heir of a culture that knows best what it means to be *ensar* and *muhacir*, Turkey

would continue hosting refugees, no matter what the opposition says (“Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’dan”, 2022). Religious discourse seems to have gained prominence again for the government after eleven years. All through these years, *Yeni Akit* may be named among the considerable contributors to this discourse; being the only newspaper among the other selected ones that consistently uses the analogy of *ensar* and *muhaçir*. The fact that the government’s discourse has come to the same point again after many years shows how much the position of *Yeni Akit* coincides with that of the government.

The analogy of ‘*ensar*’ and ‘*muhaçir*’, in *Yeni Akit*’s coverage, is generally accompanied by the use of the word ‘*kucaklaşma*’ (embrace), which is different from the previously mentioned ‘*kucak açmak*’ as the former involves reciprocity; the two sides mutually embrace each other. Another word is ‘*kardeşlik*’ (brotherhood or sisterhood), which describes a relationship on common grounds, either of kinship ties or shared values. Although the Turkish word ‘*kardeşlik*’ is gender-neutral, the use of the word is more akin to ‘brotherhood’. These lexical choices, coupled with the use of ‘*ensar*’ and ‘*muhaçir*’, convey the meaning that ‘we’ embrace them because ‘they’ are our Muslim brothers, likewise, ‘they’ take shelter in and embrace ‘us’ because we are their Muslim brothers. Outsiders of this relatedness are not close enough to embrace ‘us’ or to be embraced by ‘us’ - an implication perhaps most emblematically reflected on the front page of *Yeni Akit* (October 7, 2014) which displays the image of two men dressed in Muslim outfits embracing each other, under the headline that says ‘Brotherhood has no boundaries’ (*Kardeşlikte sınır yok*).

Figure 12

Frontpage of *Yeni Akit*, October 14, 2014



The earliest example of religious vocabulary by *Yeni Akit* in the corpus dates to 2013, shortly after the twin car bombings in Reyhanlı. It is notable that the newspaper does not use the religious vocabulary, not at least on its frontpage coverage, to refer to Syrian refugees in the first two years of the migration. *Yeni Akit* uses the religious language on its frontpage coverage after the first incident that might be expected to create a reaction against refugees at both the local and national level, which can be considered to show how the religious discourse is instrumentally used in easing social tension. Under the headline ‘Sabotage to brotherhood’ (*Kardeşliğe fitne*), *Yeni Akit* (May 16, 2013) reports that an aid volunteer who headed to Reyhanlı to help his ‘Muslim fellows’ as well as the chair of Syrian Nour Association (*Suriye Nur*

Derneği) were attacked by a group of provocateurs, taking action ‘under the influence of the irresponsible coverage of the cartel media’ (*kartel medyasının sorumsuz yayınlarının da etkisiyle*), and in a way that supports the Syrian regime aiming to cause strife between the local people and refugees. The cartoon accompanying the headline story is also notable; two vultures, dripping blood from their mouths, are standing on the signboard of Reyhanlı. It reads RPP on one, and NMP (Nationalist Movement Party) on the other.

The news article is yet another example of the victims, villains and the savior narrative. Villains here are many, and mostly from internal sources: the two opposition parties of the period (the RPP and the NMP), cartel media (probably in reference to then Doğan Media Group), and provocateurs, all trying to take advantage of the strife after the bomb attacks, and ultimately siding with the external villain; the Syrian regime. Victims are ‘Syrian *muhacirs*’ who cannot even go out because of fear (*Suriyeli muhacirler korkularından dışarıya çıkamıyor*). Aid volunteers acting with Islamic solidarity to save the refugees do also become the victims of the attack by villains. Because the victims are identified as Muslims, the villains are then associated with being non-Muslim. This narrative conclusion can be drawn more clearly from the two headline stories by *Yeni Akit* categorized under this sub-theme, both of which report the activities of non-Islamic organizations.

Under the headline ‘Lessons on breaking up family from the EU and UN’ (*AB ve BM’den yuva yıkma dersleri*), the news article reports the divorce training for refugees offered by Support to Life (*Hayata Destek Derneği*), a secular humanitarian NGO. From the way *Yeni Akit* (June 3, 2018) sees it, divorce training is yet another ‘trick by the Crusader’ (*Haçlı’nın yeni oyunu*); the EU and the UN funding the training that addresses ‘*muhacirs*’. According to the news article, the training is yet

another example of the ‘activities by foreign-funded feminist NGOs to shatter family unity’ (*yurtdışı sermayeli feminist STK’ların aile birliğini sarsıcı faaliyetleri*). Villains here, despite being seemingly diverse (the EU, the UN, feminists, secular NGOs), are actually all-in-one: the non-Islamic / non-Muslim. Divorce is taken as incompatible with Islamic practices, with the life of female refugees, who are taken for granted as Muslims in the first place and as caregivers of children in the second place -a deduction reinforced visually by the news photo and the cartoon both depicting veiled women carrying a baby.

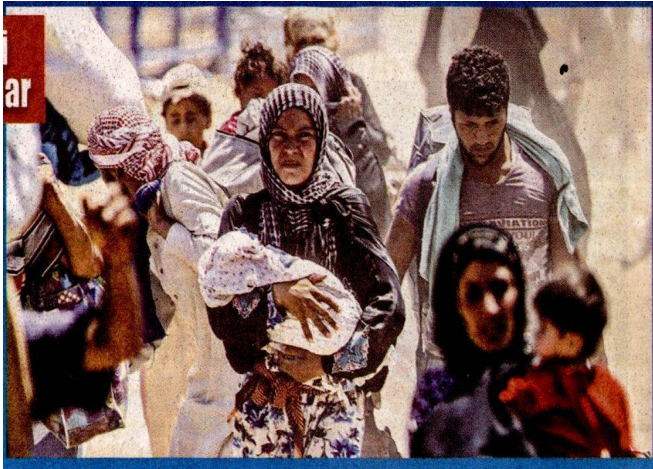
Figure 13

From frontpage of Yeni Akit, June 3, 2018



Figure 14

From frontpage of Yeni Akit, June 3, 2018



Two days later, divorce training by Support to Life again makes the headline of *Yeni Akit* (June 5, 2018): ‘200 million for breaking up families’ (*Yuva yıkmaya 200 milyon*). Although this item was not coded under religion because it did not contain words (e.g., *muhacir*, Muslim) referring to religious affiliation, it is worth to be mentioned here because of its relevance. The headline story defames Support to Life as an organization engaged in activities for refugees ‘under cover of humanitarian aid’ (*insani yardım kılıfıyla*), and the divorce training as ‘insidious project’ (*sinsi proje*), which the story says is heavily funded by the EU and the UN all for the sake of ‘breaking up families of female refugees in Turkey’ (*Türkiye’deki kadın mültecilerin ailelerini dağıtmak için*). The accompanying photo shows a mother -again a veiled woman- washing her baby in what resembles a tent camp.

The next day, Support to Life once again makes the headline of *Yeni Akit* (June 6, 2018); this time calling for authorities to take action: ‘Inspect agent NGOs’ (*Ajan STK’lar denetlensin*). As reported in the article, family platforms demand ‘authorities to take action against foreign powers that aim to break up families in the Islamic geography’ (*İslam coğrafyasındaki ailelerin dağılmasını amaçlayan dış güçlere karşı*

yetkililer harekete geçsin). No refugee voices -neither of men nor of women- are heard; it is the male representatives of two Turkey-based anti-divorce communities speaking to the newspaper. These examples by *Yeni Akit* show how issues related to Syrian refugees, who are defined only and simply as Muslims (Sunnis), become instrumental in disseminating Islamist viewpoints and confronting the opponents (e.g., feminists, seculars) of this ideological line.

Another important aspect here relates to the field of civil society. Sunata and Tosun (2019) point out that activities of NGOs have regained prominence after the Syrian refugee influx, and NGOs motivated by religious incentives play a great role in the provision of aid and assistance to refugees. The activities of such NGOs (e.g., IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Syrian Nour Association), as mentioned before, are frequently reported by *Yeni Akit*. When it comes to the activity of a secular NGO, Support to Life, operating in the same field, the newspaper finds it ‘dangerous’ for refugees, dangerous enough to make the headline three times and ask the authorities to take action against the organization.

However, the case seems quite different for *Cumhuriyet*. For example, from the way *Cumhuriyet* (September 5, 2017) sees it, Support to Life is a ‘Friendly hand for asylum seekers’ (*Sığınmacılar için bir dost eli*) that helps refugees to hold onto life. In another example, *Cumhuriyet* (May 28, 2018) reports a Syrian mother who gave birth at the border was able to give her baby her first bath thanks to the baby kit provided by Support to Life. Support to Life is one of the two civil society organizations whose aid activities for refugees *Cumhuriyet* covers on its front page. The other one is the Peoples’ Bridge Association (*Halkların Köprüsü Derneği*), another secular organization. When the chair of the Association, Prof. Cem Terzi, was expelled from his position at university under an emergency decree law, *Cumhuriyet*

(July 9, 2018) reported it as ‘They destroyed the bridges’ (*Köprüleri yıktılar*), in a way that condemns the decision and highlights the Association’s support for refugees. In the case of a religiously affiliated organization, Damascus Orphans Association (*Şam Yetimleri Derneği*), teaching Quran courses to Syrian kids in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, *Cumhuriyet* (December 19, 2017) reports it as ‘scandalous’. By looking at these examples from *Yeni Akit* and *Cumhuriyet*, it can be said that political cleavages spilled onto the field of civil society as well and are decisive in which organization is featured and how it is featured in news coverage, to the extent that evokes an antagonism between ‘our’ NGOs versus ‘their’ NGOs along the lines of Islamist versus secular divide.

When it comes to the news report by *Cumhuriyet* coded under this sub-theme, it is the only newspaper that reports about problems faced by Alevi refugees, at least on its front-page. In one of the examples, *Cumhuriyet* (September 2, 2013) reports that a group of Alevi Turkmens who received death threats in Turkey had to take shelter in a *cemevi* (Alevi house of worship). In another example by *Cumhuriyet* (October 7, 2013), there is a comparison between Islamists and Alevi Syrians: ‘Al Nusra in camps, Alevis on streets’ (*El Nusra kampta Aleviler kokakta*). The item reports that ‘Alevi Syrians in Turkey prefer living on the streets to staying in camps where radical Islamists stay’ (*Türkiye’deki Suriyeli Aleviler sokaklarda yaşamayı radikal İslamcıların bulunduğu kamplarda kalmaya tercih ediyor*) because of the fear of death and rape.

Frontpage coverage of the other selected newspapers (*Sözcü*, *Yeni Akit* and *Sabah*) did not have any items that mention Alevi Syrian refugees. There is only one example, from *Hürriyet* (April 15, 2014), that tells about another ethnoreligious group of refugees; Assyrians, who took shelter in their community in Mardin. Under the

headline, ‘Stamp the seal, let us go’ (*Vurun mührü gidelim*), the article reports Assyrians cannot get a visa from European countries because their passports lack an entry seal stamped by Turkish authorities, and want the government to find a way of solving this problem. Assyrians’ circumstances in Mardin are reported in detail; they meet in churches, they are accommodated in their community, and helped by community members in Europe, and despite not being ‘hungry or homeless’ (*aç ve açıkta değiller*), they are ‘poor and needy’ (*yoksul ve muhtaç*). Then, the question arises why Assyrians do not want to stay in camps offered by the government and why they want to head to Europe. At this point, the article gives a vague answer: ‘because the tent camp is not healthy’ (*çadırkent sağlıklı olmadığı için*). Compared to the news item by *Cumhuriyet* that states Alevis do not want to stay in camps because of the fear of Islamists, in *Hürriyet*’s account, there is no mention of such concerns about camps or fear of discrimination on religious grounds.

As for the concerns shared by the Alevi community in Turkey with regard to Syrian refugees, Alevis are given voice only in the frontpage coverage of *Cumhuriyet* and *Hürriyet*, with one news item from each newspaper, again reported with differing overtones. In *Cumhuriyet*’s (August 25, 2012) account, Alevis in Hatay feel threatened and insecure by the presence of Syrians in the city as in the example of a shopkeeper who says to the newspaper he was threatened by a ‘bearded Syrian’ asking him whether he was Alevi or not. Islamists (implied by the word ‘bearded’) posing a threat against Alevis is quite salient in *Cumhuriyet*’s account while there is no such an emphasis in *Hürriyet*’s (April 7, 2016), which reports an interview with Alevi villagers of Kahramanmaraş where a refugee camp is planned. Villagers say ‘We’re not against Syrians but we’re concerned’ (*Suriyelilere karşı değiliz ama kaygılıyız*) but what exactly makes them feel concerned goes unmentioned.

6.3. Demographics & Culture

It was discussed in Chapter 4 that “demographic threat” is among the major frames that shape the public debate about Syrian refugees (Memişoğlu & Ilgıt, 2016). Potential shift in the country’s demographics causing a “Syrian minority” to emerge frequently comes forward particularly in relation to arguments against granting citizenship to Syrians (Bozdağ, 2020). Such concerns are most overtly voiced in the frontpage coverage of *Sözcü*. Below are some examples of the headlines reflecting these concerns:

What will you do if the number of Syrians in Turkey reaches 6 million and they ask us for ‘autonomy’ 10 years later?

Türkiye’de Suriyeli sayısı 6 milyon olursa ve bunlar 10 yıl sonra bizden ‘özerklik’ isterse ne yapacaksınız? (Sözcü, March 9, 2016)

There are 3 million Syrians in Turkey... What if Assad wants hold a rally here?

Türkiye’de 3 milyon Suriyeli var... Esad gelip miting yapmak isterse ne olacak? (Sözcü, March 8, 2017)

Ümit Özdağ: Syrians say Kilis is ours, you go

Ümit Özdağ: Suriyeliler Kilis bizim, siz gidin diyor
(Sözcü, November 29, 2018)

The use of numbers and numerical words in news media coverage of immigration creates a sense of threat and arouses fear (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Khosravini, 2010). Items from the corpus that report the demographic development,

population density and fertility rates of Syrian refugees can also be considered in this context. Below are some examples of the headlines from *Sözcü*, *Hürriyet* and *Cumhuriyet*.

The number of Syrians exceeded 70 provinces

Suriyeli sayısı 70 ili geçti (Hürriyet, September 23, 2014)

30 thousand Syrian babies born (Hürriyet, September 8, 2014)

30 bin Suriyeli bebek doğdu

RPP's Toprak: 5 million immigrants are too many

CHP'li Toprak: 5 milyon göçmen fazla (Cumhuriyet, August 12, 2014)

Syrian population exceeded 11 provinces: 1 million 858 thousand refugees

Suriyeli nüfusu 11 ilimizi geçti: 1 milyon 858 bin sığınmacı (Cumhuriyet, March 2, 2015)

No one knows where 80 thousand Syrians are (Sözcü, December 17, 2012)

80 bin Suriyeli nerede bilen yok

There are more births than those who returned to Syria

Suriye'ye gidenden çok doğan var (Sözcü, September 30, 2019)

Media's display of numbers to report on immigration may well evoke positive responses and establish positive meanings like the economy is doing so great that the country can let in more immigrants (Chavez, 2013, p. 29). It is a similar case with regard to the use of numbers by *Yeni Akit* and *Sabah*. The two newspapers do not use numbers, or report population density and fertility rate of Syrians in an alarming sense. As a matter of fact, the corpus did not yield any examples of news items from *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit* the topic of which is concerned with the population density of

refugees across the country or their fertility rates. In the coverage of these two newspapers, the number of refugees settled in the country generally come forward to support the story and for the purposes of self-praise like in a previously cited example by *Yeni Akit* (August 19, 2018): Embracing 3.5 million refugees, Turkey is the “Conscience of the World”. Population density of Syrian refugees in certain provinces such as Reyhanlı and Kilis is also a matter of self-praise as well as criticism towards the West as in the following extracts:

120 thousand Syrians in Reyhanlı with a population of 92 thousand, while in England with a population of 53 million it is 140!

92 bin nüfuslu Reyhanlı’da 120 bin Suriyeli var, 53 milyonluk İngiltere’de ise 140! (Yeni Akit, May 21, 2017)

We host 127 thousand Syrians with a population of 92 thousand. A woman in Lesbos is nominated for a Nobel prize for smiling at a refugee. We are the ones who should get the Nobel.

92 bin nüfusla 127 bin Suriyeli’yi misafir ediyoruz. Midilli’de bir kadın, bir mülteciye gülümsedi diye Nobel’e aday gösteriliyor. Asıl Nobel alması gereken biziz. (Sabah, February 18, 2016)

Demographic and population-related themes are often interwoven with cultural and identity-related ones. Threat and closeness are two distinct themes to be found within this paradigm. Cultural and demographic threat versus cultural closeness. In this sense, Syrian refugees may either be viewed and represented as ‘people dissimilar to us’ or ‘people like us’. Relevant examples from the frontpage coverage of the selected newspapers will be discussed under the following two sub themes.

6.3.1. Mannerly Citizens versus Vulgar Syrians Flooding the Beaches

As discussed earlier, the presence of Syrian men on beaches, and their act of smoking water pipes becomes emblematic for their uncivilized attitudes on social media posts (Özdüzen et al., 2020, p. 14). Previous research on news media also informs that derogatory references to the perceived cultural traits of Syrians, and discriminatory metaphors that portray Syrians as “filthy”, “disruptive of local order”, and “culturally backward” are common (Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016, pp. 175-177; Cantek & Soykan, 2018, pp. 13-17). The corpus yielded similar examples of news items particularly from the frontpage coverage of *Sözcü* and *Hürriyet*.

It was previously noted that the data was collected from front page news items and opinion content was not included in the study. The only exception of this is an editorial piece by *Sözcü*, published anonymously. Editorials of the newspaper commenting on the current issues on the agenda used to appear as a column under the header ‘*Tokmak*’ (mallet) and under the signature of *Sözcü*. After 2013, the column under the header ‘*Tokmak*’ started to be published under the signature of Rahmi Turan, thereby losing its editorial character and becoming a column written by the chief columnist of the newspaper. The item included in the corpus is from 2012 and was included because it was published anonymously. Under the title ‘Dark guests’ (*Karanlık misafirler*), the editorial piece by *Sözcü* (August 27, 2012) tells about the problems that emerged in Hatay after the arrival of Syrians. The article starts with a description of the city and locals: ‘Our city of Hatay, where beautiful, lovely and decent people live (*Güzel, sevimli, düzgün insanların yaşadığı Hatay ilimiz*). In a comparative mind-set, these positive adjectives naturally call for their antonyms for the other side of the comparison and evoke the opposite for Syrians. Hatay has

recently become, the second part of the sentence says, ‘a restless, dark, stressful, and troubled city (*huzursuz, karanlık, stres yaratan, belalı bir kent haline geldi*)

‘Beautiful’ and ‘lovely’ locals versus ‘dark’ guests. The word ‘dark’ here, first of all, implies suspicious and dangerous activity; they are ‘armed refugees’ (*silahlı mülteciler*) who rest in camps during the day, cross to Syria at night to join the fights, and terrorize the locals in their free time. ‘Dark’ is also used as the opposite of the word ‘beautiful’, with reference to physical features like skin tone and facial hair: they are ‘bearded men’ (*sakallı adamlar*), so they have a ‘dark’ face. ‘Decent’ locals versus ‘troubled’ guests: they have no manners, show no respect for the locals, and they often make a scene in an attempt to patronize the locals. The article ends with a warning addressed to the government: if necessary measures are not taken, undesirable incidents between refugees and the locals who do not want them are likely to occur.

The news item by *Hürriyet* (August 26, 2012), published the day before *Sözcü*’s editorial, says locals in Hatay, particularly villagers, are uncomfortable with refugees. ‘Our kids are afraid of bearded Syrians’ (*‘Çocuklarımız sakallı Suriyelilerden korkuyor’*) reads the headline, speaking from the voice of locals. Random photos of bearded men walking on the street and sitting together accompany the news item which describes Hatay as the ‘city of peace’ where diverse religions have lived for centuries and established a culture of coexistence. Although the exact number of incidents (157) Syrians living in the city got involved is given, it is not specified what kind of incidents they are. It is then conveyed that Syrians -a bunch of bearded and troublesome men- threaten the common culture of the city’s inhabitants based on respect for each other. It is here useful to recall that as shown by recent research, a majority of the society, even a greater majority of people living in border

cities such as Hatay think Syrians are culturally dissimilar from Turkish society (Erdoğan, 2021, pp. 102–103).

News items also note that Syrians are culturally different from Turkish people in diverse aspects. For example, *Hürriyet* (November 2, 2017) reports ‘although they come from two different cultures’ (*iki farklı kültürden olsalar da*), Syrian kids and Turkish kids are now getting the same education and studying in the same class.

Another news item by *Hürriyet* (August 7, 2017) says ‘child marriage and second wife is common among Syrians’ (*Suriyelilerde yaygın olan çocuk gelin ve ikinci eş*), which is why Syrian women are trained on their legal rights by Turkish authorities.

‘Syrians each have 3 to 5 kids’ (*Suriyeliler 3’er 5’er çocuk yapıyor*) says *Sözcü* (July 4, 2016). Syrians have a particular way of dressing according to a news report by *Hürriyet* (February 27, 2017), which says FETO fugitives trying to cross into Greece mingle with Syrian refugees; fugitives ‘dress like them’, and men grow beards to look like them.

If the most emblematic image of the ‘vulgar Syrians’ construct is bearded men, their most emblematic activities are barbecue picnics and group fun by the seaside. Syrians having fun at the beach in Florya make noise and disturb others, turn the place into a dump site, picnicking and having barbecue (*Sözcü*, July 9, 2016). They ‘invade’ the beaches in Mudanya, setting up makeshift tents (*Sözcü*, June 9, 2019). These items also involve a comparison, either implicitly or explicitly, between the lives and conditions of Syrians and those of Turkish people. ‘Life in Turkey is easy for Syrians’ (*Türkiye’de hayat Suriyeli’ye rahat*) says *Sözcü*, implying Turkish people experience difficulties while Syrians have laid-back fun at the beach. More overtly, Syrians staying in makeshift tents in Mudanya lead a life of pleasure ‘while our children are

martyred' (*Bizim çocuklarımız şehit olurken Suriyeliler sefa içinde yaşayamaz*). Even if it is for shelter, Syrians' presence at the beach shows that they live in pleasure.

Figure 15

Frontpage of *Sözcü*, July 9, 2016

TÜRKİYE'DE HAYAT SURIYELİYE RAHAT

Misafir olarak aldığımız 3 milyon Suriyeli mülteci, Türk vatandaşlarının sahip olmadığı haklara sahip... Kendi ülkelerinde bile bu hakları yoktu

BURASI FLORYA SAHİLİ
Suriyeli 200 erkek, Mersin'de Florya sahilinde piknik yapıyor. Denize giriyor. 'Burada, Suriye'de olduğu gibi rahat ediliyor' diyorlar. Burası Florya sahilidir.

BURASI YESİLKÖY SAHİLİ
Herkesin her akşam sahilde bir Suriyeli aile var. Mangal yakıp piknik yapıyorlar. Burası Yesilköy sahilidir.

Deniz ve piknik keyfi!

TÜRKİYE'deki 26 kasırga 254 kişi hayatını kaybetti. 7 milyon 750 bin Suriyeli ise Türkiye'de hayat buldu. Türkiye'de hayat buldu. Türkiye'de hayat buldu.

Mültecilerin dınyası yüzde 5 büyümüş!

BAKAN Erdoğan'ın verdiği bilgi: Türkiye, mültecilerin dınyası yüzde 5 büyümüş. 5 milyon 750 bin Suriyeli Türkiye'de hayat buldu.

H. Türkyilmaz

Figure 16

From frontpage of *Sözcü*, June 9, 2019

Bizim çocuklarımız şehit olurken Suriyeliler sefa içinde yaşayamaz

Mudanya'da Suriyeliler'in sahildeki derme çatma çadırları sökülerek iç kesime taşındı.

H. Türkyilmaz

Reporting the statements by then the Deputy Prime Minister Veysi Kaynak about the incidents Syrians got involved in, *Hürriyet* (July 5, 2017) calls the readers to keep calm: ‘Let’s not forget about tolerance’ (*Hoşgörüğü elden bırakmayalım*). Yes, they do have barbecue picnics by the seaside, smoke water pipe on the bench and do not keep their environs clean -this is all what the news photos show- but we mustn’t forget that they are temporarily here, as reminded by Kaynak, and keep on being good hosts in line with our traditional hospitality. If they go ahead and push the limits of our tolerance, there will be consequences, as the next day’s headline of *Hürriyet* (July 6, 2017), this time speaking from the voice of then the Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım says: ‘We will deport those who overstep’ (*Haddini aşanı sınır dışı ederiz*). When read retrospectively, it is not possible to understand from this headline article what exactly happened; what kind of incidents Syrians got involved in. Something happened; Syrians’ outrageous behavior of some sort at some time led to some public reactions but it is all taken care of by top authorities, so there is no need to worry. Even if they exhibit some uncivilized behavior -the news photo shows some random men sitting topless on the beach- we need to maintain our tolerance and show a civil face. And this is what differentiates the perspective of *Hürriyet* from that of *Sözcü*. While the former assures readers that authorities are taking necessary action, the latter calls for the need to take action.

Figure 17

Frontpage of *Hürriyet*, July 5, 2017



Figure 18

Frontpage of *Hürriyet*, July 6, 2017



6.3.2. People like ‘us’

As discussed in Chapter 4, the government’s discourse underlines “cultural proximity” of Syrian refugees to Turkish people. This discourse of cultural affinity is built mainly around the notion of shared religion of Sunni Islam, and at times reinforced by references to the common Ottoman past and shared values (Karakaya Polat, 2018; Kloos, 2016; Aksel & İçduygu, 2018; Yanaşmayan et al., 2019; Sert & Daniş, 2021). In this sense, Syrian refugees are actually like ‘us’ because we have a common religion and history and share a geography.

A news article by *Yeni Akit* (July 8, 2016) epitomizes this view: ‘Syrians are the people of this geography’ (*Suriyeliler bu coğrafyanın insanı*). Published at a time when issuing citizenship to Syrian refugees was fresh on the agenda, the article reports that academics give full support to the plan. Justification of this support comes from history: ‘We embraced not only Muslims but also non-Muslims in our history’ (*Biz tarihimizde sadece müslümanlara değil gayrimüslimlere de kucak açtık*). ‘Our history’ here obviously refers to the Ottoman times. ‘Non-muslims’ is most probably in reference to the Jews who fled from persecution in the Iberian Peninsula and took shelter in the Ottoman Empire, a commonly used example in refugee debate by the government actors, too (Karakaya Polat, 2018, p. 7). The current welcoming attitude towards Syrian refugees, thus, takes its reference from Ottoman history. Why should we not accept Muslim Syrians when we accepted even non-Muslims in the past? They are, after all, not different from us, as underscored by a pro-citizenship academic cited in the article: ‘First of all, we have to accept the fact that Syrians are not different from us, they are the people of this geography’ (*Herşeyden önce Suriyelilerin bizden farklı olmadığı, bu coğrafyanın insanı olduğunu gerçeğini kabul etmemiz gerek*). Seen through this lens, Syrians are among the peoples -like us- of the Muslim geography,

once ruled by the Ottoman. Citizenship is thus, celebratory news for both sides as the news photograph mirrors: a crowd of men dancing, clapping and waving Turkish and Syrian flags in a celebratory mood.

A similar example with slightly different undertones comes from *Sabah* (July 14, 2016), published again while the debate over citizenship was fresh and lively. The article features the responses of refugees whose voice speaks the headline: ‘Turkey is our homeland, we are ready to serve’ (*Türkiye vatanımız, hizmete hazırız*). It is noteworthy that all the refugees speaking to the newspaper are high educated professionals; a doctor, a journalist and an ex-cosmonaut. Readers are thus assured that refugees who are to be naturalized comprise educated and skilled individuals. In addition, they are people like ‘us’ because we share a common history: ‘We lived together for 400 years. We fought together’ (*Biz 400 yıl beraber yaşadık. Birlikte savaştık*). The sense of affinity is again derived from Ottoman history but different from the example by *Yeni Akit*, shared religion is not salient here. Another difference concerns gender representation. Female refugee is typically a veiled woman and a suffering mother for *Yeni Akit* as earlier examples have shown. In the example of *Sabah*, however, there is an unveiled young career woman (journalist) posing with a slight smile. In this sense, while the coverage of *Yeni Akit* produces a uniform image of female refugee, *Sabah* can be said to allow for more diversity in its representation of female refugees.

Getting back to the textual level, as portrayed in the article by *Sabah*, Syrian refugees are not only people like ‘us’ but they also feel part of ‘us’, calling Turkey ‘our homeland’, and expressing their willingness to serve for the country. A pattern of featuring refugees through their relationship with symbols of national and cultural identification or aligning them with such symbols can be observed in the coverage of

Sabah, particularly when reporting personal stories. For example, a six-year-old Syrian boy moves the emotions of everyone by singing the national anthem (*Sabah*, April 20, 2014). ‘Mahmud is our hero, our *Hızır*’ says the survivor of the 2020 Elazığ earthquake, rescued by a Syrian refugee named Mahmud (*Sabah*, January 27, 2020). A Syrian girl wears a necklace with a crescent and a star, which she says symbolizes hope (*Sabah*, November 8, 2018). It is not only that they are like ‘us’, but they also feel part of and act like ‘us’.

‘I don’t know Syria, I’m a Turk’ (*Suriye’yi bilmem, ben Türk’üm*) reads the headline of *Hürriyet* (January 20, 2019), reporting the stories of Syrian kids who were born and raised in Turkey. One of the kids explains why she likes the city where she lives: ‘There were photos of Atatürk and flags everywhere’ (*Her yerde Atatürk fotoğrafları ve bayraklar vardı*). Similar to the above-mentioned stories reported by *Sabah*, adoption of national symbols is at stake here, too. Overall, the article underscores that Syrian kids who have never been to Syria feel here at home, feel they belong to Turkey, as epitomized in the following line: ‘These kids say they feel Turkish now’ (*Bu çocuklar artık kendilerini Türk hissettiklerini söylüyor*). This means that they are now more than ‘like us’, they are ‘one of us’.

‘We are now Turkey’s future’ (*Biz artık Türkiye’nin geleceğiyiz*) reads the headline of another news item by *Hürriyet* (November 26, 2016), again reporting on Syrian kids. The schooling rate of Syrian kids remains low at 30%, as reported in the article, and this is an important problem because they will build the future. Because the kids are now ‘one of us’, we need to provide necessary education to them. What is noteworthy here is how contradictory discourses coexist and appear on the front page of the newspaper. The news item that considers Syrian kids as part of the society is placed right below the headline item that conveys an exclusionary message restating

the words by President Erdoğan to call for more burden sharing: ‘The Gates will Open’ (*Kapılar Açılır*). Syrian refugees are, on one hand, persons to be sent through the gates if deemed necessary because they create a burden that Turkey cannot handle alone, and on the other hand, they are an integral part of the future society. Both a burden to be relieved and an inseparable part of the future. Which one outweighs is symbolically indicated by the size, graphic design and placement of the two news items. ‘The Gates will Open’, typed in bold capital letters makes the headline of the day while ‘We are now Turkey's future’ appears in lowercase letters, and the item takes up a very small space compared to the headline news.

It is noteworthy that while *Hürriyet* is one of the two newspapers (alongside *Sözcü*) that contribute most to the construct of bearded, vulgar and disruptive Syrians as discussed earlier, it is also the newspaper that features success stories, personal stories, cultural events, and media practices of the refugee community more than any other selected newspapers. The refugee image portrayed through these items -both textual and visual-wise- is quite different from the previously discussed ones (Needy Victims, Ungrateful Guests and Vulgars). Refugees in these stories are not defined through vulnerability, dissatisfaction or gracelessness. On the contrary, these refugees are confident, and satisfied; they are engaged in a profession or an activity, involved in their community, and they are neither disturbing nor disruptive of social order. In this sense, they are the ‘other Syrians’ as one of the headlines by *Hürriyet* (July 10, 2016) explicitly names: ‘Here are the other Syrians’ (*İşte öteki Suriyeliler*). These ‘other Syrians’ comprise educated and qualified individuals: film director, journalist, lawyer, and publisher. In this sense, as the article says: ‘They are all names far beyond the refugee profile we have in mind’ (*Hepsi de kafamızdaki mülteci profilinin çok ötesinde isimler*). To put it another way, they don’t look like ‘refugees’. They don’t

look like, for example, bearded men sitting topless or smoking water pipes on a bench by the seaside. They don't look like suffering and devastated refugees dressed in ragged clothes, either. And, they don't look like pious Muslims dressed accordingly.

A group of modern-dressed young male and female refugees, who stage a theater performance about their own experiences, pose together on the stage, and say: 'We are not different from you' (*Sizden farklı değiliz*) (*Hürriyet*, December 23, 2017). Likewise, a group of refugees who started a radio station pose together in the studio, looking all delighted (*Hürriyet*, November 14, 2013). Syrian artists who established in Kadıköy district of İstanbul an art gallery, which they say they would not have the opportunity if they were in Syria, pose with a smiling face, and tell how they made a life in the city, coping with challenges like everyone else does (*Hürriyet*, July 24, 2017). Ravda Nur Cuma, who refused to be married at 14 years old, is now a university student, and says she wants to become an independent individual and part of society (*Hürriyet*, January 2, 2018). These refugees all have a modern look and lead a modern way of life. Seen through this lens, the less they look like refugees, the more they look like 'us', and the closer they get to become part of 'us'.

Figure 19

From frontpage of *Hürriyet*, July 10, 2016



Figure 20

Frontpage of *Hürriyet*, July 24, 2017



Figure 21

Frontpage of *Hürriyet*, November 14, 2013



Figure 22

Frontpage of *Hürriyet*, December 23, 2017



What comes forward from these stories by *Hürriyet* is that a modern lifestyle brings Syrian refugees closer to the people of Turkey, closer to ‘us’. From the perspective of *Cumhuriyet*, what brings Syrian refugees and Turkish society closer together is not necessarily a modern lifestyle or a modern look, but rather challenges that they both have to cope with. In an article that appeared on March 8, Women’s Day, voices of women from different segments of society are heard, under the headline: ‘Women don’t give up’ (*Kadınlar vazgeçmez*). A gang-rape victim, an activist (also an ex-RPP Deputy), a textile worker, and a Syrian clerk are brought together by their struggle to survive in the patriarchal society. Each of these women fight a different facet of life through different means. Nurhan Masir, an art teacher from Halep, who now works informally as a clerk for a low salary, is in no sense different from the other women from Turkey who also fight for their lives. Overall, the article signals that she is one of the women in Turkey -whether they be veiled or unveiled; qualified or not, and from different social classes- who have to deal with all kinds of challenges, from male violence to economic violence, and she is, in this sense, one of ‘us’.

In a women’s empowerment story (*Cumhuriyet*, April 30, 2018), Pervin Bozui from Kobane, a single mother of three, says she managed to stand strong in Istanbul, posing confidently and smiling standing with arms crossed in modern outfit. Her future dream is to become a stylist. She has endured hardships as a woman and like the other women. The motif of enduring hardship and togetherness can be traced in another news item (*Cumhuriyet*, January 16, 2017) reporting on an art exhibition by Syrian and Turkish artists: ‘Despite the war, artists are together’ (*Savaşta rağmen sanatçılar birlikte*). Non-stereotypical refugee portraits of the newspaper extend to the LGBTI community. Mr. Gay Syria, a documentary about the lives of gay Syrian

refugees in Istanbul, is reported (*Cumhuriyet*, May 14, 2018) under ‘Being Syrian and gay’ (*Suriyeli ve gay olmak*).

Figure 23

Frontpage of Cumhuriyet, March 8, 2017



6.4. Economics & Finances

As discussed in Chapter 4, the debate centered around economic aspects and impact of Syrian refugees produces two opposing views on whether the refugees are more of a benefit or a burden for the country. Findings suggest that the latter is far more salient in the overall media discourse. Examples from both the pro-government and the anti-government camps show that the issue of migration and Syrian refugees is treated more often as a burden particularly through news items reporting on the amount of government spending.

Expenditures on refugees and the overall impact on the economy are, more often than not, a matter of ‘cost’, ‘burden’, ‘bill’, and ‘balance sheet’, and expressed in figures. The difference here, with regard to the coverage of the government

spending, between the pro-government *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit* and anti-government *Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü* is that figures do make the headline of the news item in the coverage of the former while examples from the latter reveal that cost calculations, total sums, and figures are intensified; presented in the headline or appear as the main subject of the news items. The position of *Hürriyet* is two-sided. The coverage of the newspaper involves examples similar to those of both camps. Below presented headlines from *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, and *Sözcü* involve a critical undertone regarding the amount of government spending:

We spent 200 million liras for the camps

Kamplar için 200 milyon lira harcadık (Hürriyet, July 24, 2012)

The balance sheet of Syria: 900 million liras

Suriye bilançosu: 900 milyon lira (Hürriyet, December 21, 2013)

Tayyip spent 4 billion liras for Syria

Tayyip Suriye için 4 milyar lira harcadı (Sözcü, September 16, 2013)

RPP: Syrian burden is 17 billion dollars

CHP: Suriye yükü 17 milyar dolar (Cumhuriyet, April 27, 2015)

We spent 25 billion dollars for Syrians

Suriyeliler için 25 milyar dolar harcadık (Sözcü, September 21, 2016)

The cost of the Syrian crisis to us is 200 billion dollars

Suriye krizinin bize faturası 200 milyar dolar (Sözcü, August 1, 2019)

It may be the case that ‘we’ (in reference to the country and its citizens / taxpayers) spent a certain high amount of money for ‘they’ (Syrians), or ‘they’ cost us a certain vast sum, as in the following example: ‘We spent 25 billion dollars in total’ (*Toplamda 25 milyar dolar harcadık*). It may as well be the case that ‘they’ (the

government) spent a precise amount of ‘our’ (citizens’/taxpayers’) money for someone not ‘us’, as in the following excerpt: ‘They spent 4 billion liras on Syrians’ (*Suriyelilere 4 milyar lira harcadılar*). If this is the case, that is, if ‘they’ refers to the government, the news item almost always contains a comparison between the conditions of Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees; the former being disfavored or disregarded by the government and the latter favored by the government. News involving such a comparison creates an antagonism of ‘burden-laden’ Turkish people versus ‘burden-free’ Syrian refugees and will be discussed under the relevant sub-theme.

Previously discussed contrast between Turkey and the West / Europe (Humane Turkey versus Inhuman West) is also relevant to the economic paradigm. The framing of government spending in the frontpage coverage of pro-government newspapers generally comes with a comparison to the financial support allocated by Western / European actors, in a manner that creates an antagonism of generous Turkey versus the selfish West, which will be discussed under the relevant sub-theme.

The final sub-theme that will be discussed under the macro-theme of economics and finances concerns labor market conditions. News items that will be discussed under this sub-theme deal with the exploitation of Syrian refugees in the labor market and reveal that refugees serve as a cheap labor force. Examples of such are predominantly from the coverage of *Cumhuriyet*, and also from *Hürriyet*.

6.4.1. The Burden-Laden Citizen versus the Burden-Free Refugee

News that presents Syrian refugees as a threat on economic grounds, as outsiders who exploit the country’s resources, enjoy economic privileges, and thus

impede the prosperity of Turkish people are predominantly relevant to the coverage of *Sözcü*, and to a lesser extent that of *Hürriyet*, and in one example that of *Cumhuriyet*.

The comparison of conditions in refugee camps to those of earthquake victims in Van is a case to start with. According to *Cumhuriyet*'s (January 21, 2012) report, refugees in camps have 'envious comfort' (*Kıskandıran konfor*) with all the possible opportunities from internet access to the cinema available while earthquake victims in Van have simply been forgotten by the government. Two years after the earthquake, such a comparison is still relevant for *Sözcü* (May 12, 2014) that puts forward the amount of government spending on refugees to highlight the poor conditions of earthquake victims still staying in tents, as in the following: 'They spent 4 billion on Syrians... They saw a house for these children a lot' (*Suriyelilere 4 milyar harcadılar... Bu çocuklara bir evi çok gördüler*). 'They', in reference to the government, are generous to Syrians but ignore the needs of the citizens. This is a recurring pattern of comparison for the news items by *Sözcü* categorized under this sub-theme. It should also be noted that the unfavorable conditions of earthquake victims in Van came to the fore at the time after the speech of Metin Feyzioğlu, then the Chair of Union of Turkish Bar Associations (TBB), at the opening ceremony of the judicial year. The news article at hand features extracts from Feyzioğlu's speech, which does not involve a mention of Syrian refugees. It is, therefore, a conscious editorial choice to bring up the government spending on refugees in order to point out the deprivation experienced by earthquake victims.

The case of retirees is another point of comparison. According to *Sözcü* (July 11, 2015), retirees are disappointed at the unsatisfactory pay rise while Syrian refugees are joyful because they are each given by the government an Eid allowance of 300 liras, for which they form long queues as the news photo shows. Likewise,

‘Syrians have it but why not retirees?’ (*Suriyeli 'ye var da emekliye niye yok?*) asks the headline of *Hürriyet* (October 23, 2018), echoing the RPP leader Kılıçdaroğlu, who criticizes the government over allocating billions of dollars for Syrians but not for retirees. Kılıçdaroğlu’s statements appear under a very similar headline on the front page of *Sözcü* (October 23, 2018): ‘There is money for Syrians, not for retirees’ (*Suriyelilere para var, emeklilere yok*).

Cash benefits to the needy is another point of comparison both in terms of the quantity and manner of distribution. ‘Is this your justice, JDP? (*Adaletin bu mu AKP?*)’ asks the headline of *Sözcü* (November 3, 2012), to spotlight the disparity in cash benefits given to citizens and camped refugees. Citizens receive less than refugees, which as the headline suggests, is not justice. However, not just the less amount of money but also the hardship they go through to receive it makes citizens more burdened than refugees. On the one hand, there is ‘our people’ who have to crawl over each other to get a very small amount of aid from the bank (*Bizimkiler banka önünde izdiham yaşıyor*), and on the other hand, ‘they’ can conveniently spend money using their the ATM cards given by Kızılay (*Onlar banka kartıyla rahatça para harcıyor*). This ‘on the one hand and on the other hand’ discourse is reflected visually, too, on the visual design of the news item. The left-hand side is reserved for citizens, featured in the photo that shows the crowd in front of the bank, and the right hand-side is reserved for refugees, below the photo of Turkish officials holding a magnified Kızılay card.

There is then the case of non-appointed Turkish teachers: ‘Syrians appointed while 400 thousand teachers were waiting to be appointed’ (*400 bin öğretmen atama beklerken Suriyeliler atandı*) (*Sözcü*, December 15, 2015). There is also the case of the unemployed: ‘Where did these Syrians come from when there were 6 million

unemployed?’ (*6 milyon işsiz varken bu Suriyeliler nereden çıktı?*) (*Sözcü*, July 8, 2016). Simply, almost all economically or materially disadvantaged groups in Turkey come into play in a comparative framework to present Syrian refugees as an advantaged and privileged group, favored by the government over Turkish citizens.

When President Erdoğan announced that Syrian refugees may be accommodated in unoccupied apartments built by the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ), this prompted criticism from the opposition, including Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of NMP which later allied with the ruling JDP. Bahçeli’s critical words, reported by *Hürriyet* (July 13, 2016), are as follows: ‘If there were TOKİ houses to be given to Syrians, why were they denied from the genuine children of this nation? (*Suriyelilere verilecek TOKİ evleri var idiyse bu milletin asil evlatlarından niye esirgenmiştir?*). Nationals of the homeland versus refugees; the former are denied from what they genuinely deserve while the latter are bestowed with what truly does not belong to them. *Sözcü* (July 12, 2016) takes the comparison to a further level: ‘Syrians who fled the war in their homeland’ versus ‘families of *our* children who shed their blood for the homeland’. According to the article, the government uses every means available for Syrians but disregards the families of martyrs most of whom do not complain and raise their voices although they live in ramshackle houses in poverty because they do not want to be a burden on the state. A series of photographs accompanying the article show modest houses, each with a flag hanging from it. The comparison here, in the first place, concerns material conditions -material gains enjoyed by refugees versus material deprivation experienced by natives- but it also goes beyond and incorporates other dimensions of contrast. Syrians chose to flee rather than fight for their homeland like ‘cowards’ and ‘traitors’ while ‘our children’ are brave and honorable to fight and even die for the homeland, and

their families are virtuous enough not to ask for material aid or complain about their deprived conditions. In this regard, ‘we’ are morally superior to them while ‘they’ are favored by the government over ‘us’. As the example shows, comparison of natives and refugees on economic and material grounds is supplemented with nationalist motifs. This is all the more so when *Sözcü* features martyrs and veterans on the native side of the comparison.

A noteworthy example in this sense appears under the headline; ‘The martyr is not even worth as much as the Syrian refugees’ (*Şehidin Suriyeli mülteciler kadar bile değeri yokmuş. Sözcü, August 31, 2012*). The family of the martyred soldier receives a foreclosure notice due to their electricity debt. The Energy Minister then intervenes, ensuring that the debt is cleared and the lien lifted. This is one of the items that were coded as ‘indirect news’. The story reported is in no sense related to refugees, or the issue of immigration. Despite this, *Sözcü* prefers to spotlight Syrian refugees in the bold headline, and the standfirst in a comparative frame: ‘There is free electricity, water, food and even a salary for Syrians who have become a trouble for us’ (*Başımıza bela olan Suriyelilere elektrik, su, gıda bedava hatta maaş var*). Camp facilities like electricity and water, food aid, and cash aid become indicators of the preferential treatment of Syrian refugees; favors denied to citizens like the family of the martyred soldier: ‘They see this a lot for the martyr's family’ (*Şehidin ailesine ise bunu çok görüyorlar*). ‘They’ obviously refers to the government; the martyr and his family are not seen deserving such a treatment, not ‘even’ as deserving as Syrian refugees in the eyes of the government. The word ‘even’ says more than enough. Syrian refugees who are normally supposed to be less valued than Turkish citizens are valued over citizens. The other way round, Turkish citizens, who are normally supposed to be esteemed and valued more than refugees do not receive the care they

naturally deserve. Favored and burden-free refugees enjoying free services on one hand, and undervalued burden-laden citizens who cannot even cover their expenses, on the other hand.

This pattern repeats itself when the newspaper (*Sözcü*, September 20, 2013) reports the story of a veteran who lost both eyes and a leg. Only a very small part of the total cost of the wheelchair and a pair of prosthetic eyes he needed was covered by the state. The comparative frame is at work in the standfirst again: ‘The government, which spent 4 billion liras for Syrian refugees, ignores the problems of veterans’ (*Suriyeli mülteciler için 4 milyar lira harcayan iktidar, gazilerin sorunlarını görmezden geliyor*). Three days later, the story of the veteran is once again on the front page of *Sözcü* (September 23, 2013), this time under the heading: ‘Wheelchair is priced for veteran, free to Syrian’ (*Tekerlekli sandalye gaziye parayla, Suriyeli’ye bedava*).

Martyrs and veterans are, like flags and national anthems, among the key symbols and common values of a nation that all citizens are expected to pay highest respect to. They are the figures of bravery and symbolize supreme self-sacrifice for one’s homeland, which evokes feelings of ultimate sympathy and compassion. Comparing the treatment that veterans and families of martyrs receive to that of Syrian refugees might be expected to increase resentment towards both the government and refugees. Such a frame of comparison intensifies the antagonism of ‘burden-laden citizens’ versus ‘burden-free refugees’ by adding a nationalist sentimentality to it.

It is also noteworthy how national symbols are brought into play by *Sabah* and *Sözcü* for different purposes. While *Sabah* features refugees that adopt national symbols (e.g., Syrian girl wearing a crescent star necklace; refugees calling Turkey

‘our homeland’) to suggest refugees are close to ‘us’, feel part of or become one of ‘us’, *Sözcü* makes use of such symbols to emphasize refugees are different from ‘us’, and not part of ‘us’.

As opposed to the comparative lens that places citizens and refugees on two opposing sides as economically burdened and unburdened, a noteworthy example from *Cumhuriyet* (December 31, 2014) equates the two sides on the same plane, on the basis of their economic and material deprivation. ‘Some in the street, some in the tent’ (*Kimi sokakta kimi çadırda*) reads the headline. A family from Konya who were evicted because they could not pay their rent, Syrian refugees whose tents were flooded due to heavy rain in Antalya, and homeless people living in Istanbul are all brought together on the lines of the same news item, on an equal plane, on the ground of poverty and deprivation, without any difference from each other. The implication here is that refugees and citizens are no different in poverty.

Claims of economic gains enjoyed by Syrian refugees are often brought forward by *Sözcü*, more often than any other selected newspaper. Below are some of the headlines from the newspaper that spotlight such claims:

They handed out 400-dollar credit cards to refugees

Mültecilere 400'er dolarlık kredi kartları dağıtmışlar (*Sözcü*, May 15, 2012)

Jobs and money will be given to those coming from Syria

Suriye'den gelenlere iş ve para verilecek (*Sözcü*, July 22, 2012)

Shopping cards for asylum seekers

Sığınmacıya alışveriş kartı (*Sözcü*, October 15, 2012)

Syrians receive a monthly salary of 22 million lira

Suriyeliler aylık 22 milyon lira maaş alıyor (*Sözcü*, September 19, 2016)

As opposed to such claims brought by *Sözcü*, *Cumhuriyet* (February 20, 2018) reverses the narration of ‘burden-free’ and ‘privileged’ refugees. Below are two examples of the headlines from *Cumhuriyet* that spotlight the economic and material deprivation of Syrian refugees:

800 thousand Syrians are waiting for jobs and food

800 bin Suriyeli iş aç bekliyor (Cumhuriyet, March 6, 2017)

Report on Syrians from the RPP: One in three immigrants is hungry every day

CHP’den Suriyeli raporu: Üç göçmenden biri her gün aç:

(Cumhuriyet, March 15, 2019)

One example from *Cumhuriyet* (February 20, 2018) is particularly noteworthy. The life of Syrians in Turkey is ‘Not a life of ease’ (*Ekmek elden su gölden değil*) as the headline of the article counterclaims. The article cites Prof. Cem Terzi, the Chair of the previously mentioned Peoples’ Bridge Association (*Halkların Köprüsü Derneği*), to counter the prevailing misperceptions that Syrians live an easy life and receive monthly stipends from the government. Contrary to widespread assumption, as Terzi notes, one-third work in mines and agricultural fields, and most live in substandard settlements. Overall, the article points out the misperceptions held in society but does not address a particular social group responsible for holding or spreading such misperceptions. The overall point is that ‘we’, all of us, the entire society need to empathize with refugees, as crystallized in Terzi’s words: ‘We need to realize that these people are forced to come here’ (*Bu insanların zorunlu olarak buraya geldiklerinin farkına varmamız lazım*).

Yeni Akit also counters the claims of economic or material privileges to Syrians, albeit from a different perspective than that of *Cumhuriyet*. ‘Lies about privileges to Syrians exposed’ (*Suriyeliye imtiyaz yalanları deşifre oldu*) reads the headline of an article (*Yeni Akit*, April 6, 2018) that says fake news about ‘Syrian *muhacirs*’ are promoted and circulated on social media by ‘bigoted mindset’ (*bağnaz zihniyet*), which evidently refers to opponents of the ruling party, and seculars in particular, considering the other previously examined items by the newspaper, and the use of the religious vocabulary (*muhacir*).

The government as well as the local administration treat citizens and refugees equally, as another item by *Yeni Akit* (October 28, 2019) claims under the headline; ‘No privileges for Syrians’ (*Suriyelilere imtiyaz yok*), which again states that misperceptions about refugees are purposefully cultivated by particular groups in society. Unlike *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Akit* holds a particular group of society responsible for spreading misperceptions about Syrians; it is ‘they’ that lie about Syrian ‘*muhacirs*’ but ‘we’ are Muslim brothers with them. This is yet one more example of how inclusiveness towards refugees is constructed through othering political dissidents and seculars. That Syrians are exempt from the motor vehicle tax, their phone bills are paid by the state, and that they are paid monthly salaries, all of these are lies; confirmed to be fake news by authorities, as the article says. It is also noted that some of these practices arousing disputes are funded by the EU. What is noteworthy here is that the newspaper normally highlights the government spending on refugees to cultivate an image of ‘generous Turkey’ versus the ‘selfish West’, which does not provide sufficient financial support. However, when it comes to practices that cause public controversy, the newspaper underscores that they are funded by the EU, not by the government.

6.4.2. Generous Turkey versus the Selfish West

The high amount of government spending on Syrian refugees was several times publicly brought up by President Erdoğan himself. Laying emphasis on the huge amount of government spending perpetuates the antagonism between generous and virtuous Turkey and hypocritical and irresponsible West. News items by *Sabah*, *Yeni Akit* and *Hürriyet* under this sub-theme contribute to the government's discourse that Western / European countries fall behind Turkey in assuming responsibility, they do not fulfill their promises and refrain from their financial share of the burden. In this regard, the coverage of matters of economic relevance (e.g., The EU - Turkey Deal) further contributes to the positive self-representation versus negative other-representation. That being said, the news articles categorized here under this sub-theme can be considered complementary to the previously examined 'Humane Turkey versus Inhumane West' construct.

A great deal of the news that contributes to the image of 'generous Turkey' comes under headlines that repeat President Erdoğan's words addressing European countries and cautioning them about the possibility of 'opening the gates' if they do not assume more financial burden. Below presented two extracts, both reporting Erdoğan's words, are from two different articles from *Sabah* and *Hürriyet* that appeared under a very similar headline:

Extract 1:

Refugees will end up at Europe's gate

Some say I am the richest in the world. No, you are not number 1 in the world. Turkey is number one in the world in terms of providing support to underdeveloped countries relative to national income (*Sabah*, February 20, 2019).

Mülteciler Avrupa kapısına dayanır

Bazıları dünyanın en zenginiyim diyor. Hayır dünyada 1 numara değilsin. Milli gelire oranla az gelişmiş ülkelere destek vermek noktasında dünyanın bir numarası Türkiyedir.

Extract 2:

We'll Open the Gates

They were not going to send the second installment, 3 billion Euros.

We have already walked the path without your help until now. We spent 40 billion dollars. We will spend as much money and continue on our way, but we will also open the gates (*Hürriyet*, October 11, 2019).

Kapıları Açarız

İkinci taksit olan 3 milyar Euro 'yu göndermeyeceklermiş. Biz zaten sizden birşey alarak yürümedik. 40 milyar dolar harcadık. Biz bir o kadar daha para harcar yolumuza devam ederiz ama kapıları da açarız

In both these extracts self-praise for Turkey's generous expenditures come forward in a comparative framework. In extract 1, Turkey's humanitarian spending makes it the most generous country in the world, more generous than any other wealthy countries which have remained too ungenerous with their aid despite their high national income. In extract 2, there are exact figures mentioned. Figures serve as evidence to Europe's selfishness versus Turkey's generosity: 3 billion Euros versus 40 billion dollars. Figures also come as a justification for Turkey's decision to open the gates. Turkey has already spent more than enough; it is high time for Europe to take

on more financial burden, as Erdoğan makes it explicit in other instances as in the following:

Let Europe shoulder the burden of refugees

Mültecilerin yükünü Avrupa da üstlensin (Hürriyet, October 9, 2015)

Are we the only ones to bear the burden of refugees?

Mülteci yükünü sadece biz mi çekeceğiz? (Sabah, September 6, 2019)

We are looking for partners to share this burden

Biz bu yük paylaşımına ortak arıyoruz (Sabah, March 9, 2020)



There is also external praise for the generosity of Turkey in comparison to rich countries. For example, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, speaking to *Hürriyet* (June 19, 2015), praises Turkey's open-door policy as well as the high-standard camps, and adds: 'Unfortunately, rich countries do not show the same generosity' (*Maalesef zengin ülkeler aynı cömertliği göstermiyor*). In another example (*Hürriyet*, July 24, 2019), former US Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is astonished at the high number of refugees hosted by Turkey relative to its population size. This brings a burden of billions of dollars to Turkey as Zinke acknowledges, and 'this generosity should be expressed more widely' (*Bu cömertlik daha çok anlatılmalı*).

One noteworthy example relates to the negotiations at the EU - Turkey Summit in Brussels. 'We drove a Kayserili bargain with the EU' (*AB ile Kayserili pazarlığı yaptık*) reads the headline of *Hürriyet* (March 9, 2016), echoing the words of then the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who headed the negotiation on behalf of Turkey. People from Kayseri are popularly known as hard bargainers. What Davutoğlu implies is that Turkey, driving a tight bargain, made the EU accept its terms, albeit reluctantly. While the EU proposed 3 billion Euros to be delivered in two

years, Davutoğlu insisted that the delivery be made within a year and that all the expenses of the readmission process be covered by the EU, too. It was, after all, a ‘good bargain’ (*Kayserili pazarlığı iyi oldu*); Turkey managed to get the maximum of what it could get from the EU, which had not been generous at all until then.

6.4.3. Cheap Labor versus Even Cheaper Labor

Poor working conditions and exploitation of Syrian refugees in the labor market is the most salient in the frontpage coverage of *Cumhuriyet*, which covers such content in an empathizing tone. *Hürriyet* also brings up the Syrian laborers in the informal sector, though sometimes what may be called an alarming tone. The corpus did not yield any items from *Sabah* and *Sözcü* that deal with the position of refugees in the labor market and the problems they face. Only one item from *Yeni Akit* addresses the working conditions of refugees, without framing them as a cheap labor force. This means that Syrian refugees as a cheap labor force are absent in the frontpage coverage of the pro-government newspapers and *Sözcü* as well. This is somewhat consistent with previous research. Focusing on the class-based representation of Syrian refugees, Artar (2019) finds that when economy-related news items are examined, two themes prevail: refugees as individuals ‘in need of aid’ and refugees as ‘cheap labor’. While refugees almost exclusively appear as people ‘in need of aid’ in the coverage of right-wing and Islamist newspapers, including pro-government ones (including *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit*), refugees as cheap labor force predominantly appear in the coverage of leftist newspapers (including *Cumhuriyet*) (Artar, 2019, pp. 47-48).

Previously examined examples by *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit* in this research also show that refugees are portrayed as needy guests / victims, aided either by the

government or Islamist NGOs. The image of Syrian refugee exploited under heavy labor market conditions contradicts the image of the generous, benevolent, and protective country and government that the two newspapers craft in their coverage. The refugee as cheap labor is, thus, simply overlooked. When it comes to *Sözcü*, as can be seen from the previous examples, Syrian refugees are predominantly portrayed as having better conditions than citizens in the coverage of the newspaper. In line with this framework, it might be expected that the newspaper chooses not to cover labor market exploitation of refugees, not at least on its frontpage. Although they depart from different perspectives, both the pro-government *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit* and the anti-government *Sözcü* overlook the fact that refugees work under harsh conditions in the labor market, which then leads to an insufficiently inclusive representation of refugees, and a partial reflection of the reality that refugees live in.

It is noteworthy that Syrian child labor is a prominent theme of the news items coded under this sub-theme. Syrian kids became cheap labor in basement workshops, according to a news report by *Cumhuriyet* (September 24, 2015), in what the headline calls ‘Slavery order’ (*Köle düzeni*). Another item by *Cumhuriyet* (June 6, 2016) about child labor appears under a very similar headline: ‘Syrian children work like slaves’ (*Suriyeli çocuklar köle gibi çalışıyor*). Compared to this heavily critical tone of *Cumhuriyet* evident right from the headline, *Hürriyet* (February 20, 2017) reports on the migrant child workers, including Syrian kids, in Küçükpazar neighborhood of Fatih district under the headline ‘Child workers of Küçükpazar’ (*Küçükpazar’ın çocuk işçileri*), in a milder tone.

The tone may even be considered alarming when *Hürriyet* (December 8, 2015) covers the report prepared by Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TİSK), under the headline ‘400 thousand Syrian illegal workers’ (*400 bin Suriyeli*

kaçak işçi). The word choice of ‘illegal’ is noteworthy. ‘Illegal’ evokes a sense of criminality on the refugees’ part and a sense of danger on the natives’ side. Most of the ‘illegal’ Syrian workers are kids employed under low wages and unsatisfactory conditions, as the article reports. The sense of threat is somewhat reinforced by the implication that refugees are preferred over Turkish workers because they settle for very little of what their Turkish counterparts receive. In this framework, informally employed Syrian workers appear more like rivals of Turkish workers than a vulnerable population widely exploited by employers. Afterall, the article makes reference to an employers’ organization (TİSK), and the voices of laborers -both those of refugees and their Turkish counterparts’- go unheard. Syrian workers therefore come to the fore from the employers’ point of view.

In addition to Syrian child labor, *Cumhuriyet* gives coverage to Syrian seasonal agricultural workers, in an empathizing tone and critical of their conditions. In *Cumhuriyet*’s (June 8, 2016) account, Syrian seasonal agricultural workers remain at the lowest level of social stratification and economic deprivation: ‘Syrian seasonal agricultural workers join the struggle for survival in Turkey from the lowest strata’ (*Türkiye’deki yaşam mücadelesine en alt tabakadan katılan Suriyeli mevsimlik tarım işçileri*). They work for ‘inhumane’ wages and under ‘inhumane’ conditions, according to another item by the newspaper, published in summer when seasonal workers are typically employed (*Cumhuriyet*, June 19, 2016). Different from *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet* draws attention to the vulnerability of refugees and how this vulnerability is exploited by employers: ‘Their despair is exploited by profiteers as a competitive element’ (*Onların çaresizlikleri fırsatçılar tarafından rekabet unsuru olarak kullanılıyor*). In this sense, refugees here appear as a group of heavily exploited

laborers, more exploited than any other groups, which is visually reinforced by images of women and children.

Figure 24

From frontpage of Cumhuriyet, June 8, 2016



Figure 25

From frontpage of Cumhuriyet, June 19, 2016



6.5. Politics and Rights

As far as the rights granted to Syrian refugees are concerned, citizenship comes forward as the most disputed issue. This is where almost all the discourses so far examined come into force. As with any debate, citizenship debate also comes with supporting and opposing views. Roughly put, the ‘for’ side of the debate is represented by *Hürriyet*, *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit* while *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet* take an opposing stand, albeit at varying intensities and also voicing different arguments from each other. *Sözcü* is incomparably the most frontally and vehemently opponent to the idea of citizenship by bringing the issue to the fore on its front page several times in a row. *Cumhuriyet* is cautious and addresses political exploitation of refugees by the ruling party. *Hürriyet* finds citizenship celebratory news for refugees and gives far more coverage to the issue than *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit*, which are also supportive of the

idea, and denigrate the political opposition for spreading anti-refugee rhetoric.

Overall, objection to citizenship feeds into an antagonism of ‘ordinary citizens versus privileged citizens-to-be’ whereas support to citizenship delineates refugees as ‘Muslim fellows’ and ‘qualified individuals’.

6.5.1. Ordinary Citizens versus Privileged Citizens-to-be

With regard to the citizenship debate, that refugees are subject to privileges and benefits compared to Turkish citizens comes forward, particularly in the coverage of *Sözcü*. In addition to economic and material benefits, Syrian refugees enjoy other privileges and rights according to *Sözcü* (July 9, 2019). Rights that Turkish citizens do not have; rights that they did not even have back in Syria, in their home country, as the article claims under the headline ‘Life in Turkey is easy for Syrians’ (*Türkiye’de hayat Suriye’liye rahat*). A comparative table under the heading ‘How happy it is to be Syrian in Turkey’ (*Türkiye’de Suriyeli olmak varmış*) presents the civil services that refugees are allegedly privileged to benefit from. For example, while Turkish citizens have to sit for a university exam to enroll at university, refugees do not have to, a claim that was brought up by the newspaper at other times as well (*Sözcü*, February 15, 2017). In addition, while Turkish citizens have to pay the social security premium, refugees can benefit from health care services just for free, as the newspaper claims. The theme of privileged access is supplemented with other details: beaches, parks and seashores are all ‘flooded with’ Syrians having a barbecue picnic and leaving behind their trash and having fun too raucously like the group of topless men that the news photo shows. Objection to citizenship is thus supported by cultural (they are ‘vulgars’) and demographic (they are ‘too many’) related themes.

That Syrian refugees have priority in hospitals (*Sözcü*, December 19, 2018), and that Syrian children were given the same privilege of choosing the school they want as the children of the martyrs (*Sözcü*, November 12, 2018) are among the claims of non-economic privileges that the newspaper raised at other times, not specifically in relation to the citizenship issue.

Burden-laden ordinary citizens versus burden-free and privileged Syrian refugees as citizens-to-be. This is how the ‘JDP’s New Turkey’ (*AKP’nin Yeni Türkiye*) looks like in *Sözcü*’s (July 8, 2016) account. While Turks are burdened with taxes, unemployment, and military service that may cost their lives, Syrians live just ‘for free’ (*beleş*). In addition, they pose a security threat both at a local and national level: ‘there is whatever you call a thug, murderer, fundamentalist, religious terrorists’ (*iti kopuşu, katili, yobazı, dinci teröristi ne ararsan var*). What actually makes the topic of the article is that two Syrian chemists died while making bombs in Hatay, so the bold headline asks: ‘Shall we make these Turkish citizens?’ (*Bunları mı Türk vatandaşı yapacağız?*). This time the theme of privileged access is supplemented by security risks (there are ‘murderers’ and ‘terrosists’ among them) as well as secular concerns (there are ‘fundamentalists’ among them).

‘Look at your own citizens before the Syrians’ (*Suriyelilerden önce kendi vatandaşına bak*) says the bold headline of *Sözcü* (July 10, 2016), this time bringing the problem of unemployment forward to present its objection to citizenship for Syrians: ‘The government presents Syrian refugees as a “skilled workforce”. Yet, our skilled and qualified people have been unemployed for years (*İktidar, Suriyeli mülteciler “nitelikli işgücü” olarak sunuyor. Oysa bizim meslek sahibi, diplomalı insanımız yıllardır işsiz geziyor*). ‘Our’ unemployed people deprived of job opportunities despite their qualifications versus Syrians who will be undeservingly

provided with jobs as well as citizenship. Objection here is voiced over themes related to economy.

Economy-related themes may also coexist with military-related themes to feed into the ‘ordinary citizens versus privileged Syrians’ construct formed to object to citizenship as in the following words by the RPP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, reported by *Cumhuriyet* (March 1, 2017) under the subheading ‘Why citizenship? (*Neden vatandaşlık?*):

Our youth and children are martyred in Syria for Syria. Their young people are in Turkey. Our children are unemployed, they have a job.

Unemployed young friend, won't you still rebel?

Bizim gençlerimiz, çocuklarımız Suriye için Suriye’de şehit oluyor.

Onların gençleri Türkiye’de. Bizim çocuklarımız işsiz, onların işi var.

İşsiz genç arkadaşım hala isyan etmeyecek misin?

Sözcü (July 5, 2016) takes this perspective to a different level; most of the refugees that the government intends to grant citizenship are ‘traitors as they fled the war in their country’ (*pek çoğu ülkesindeki savaştan kaçtığı için vatan haini*). It is not just that Syrians should not be given citizenship because of cultural, demographic, economic and security-related reasons but also that they do not deserve it. They did not fulfill their citizenly duties for their own country, and do not adhere to patriotic values, a perspective that is best crystallized in the following social media post that *Sözcü* (July 7, 2016) shared on its frontpage alongside other posts that are against citizenship for Syrians: ‘How come the man fleeing the war in his own country benefit Turkey after he becomes a citizen?’ (*Kendi ülkesindeki savaştan kaçan adamın*

vatandaş olduktan sonra Türkiye'ye faydası olur mu?). This, and several other social media posts about the citizenship debate appear on the front page of the newspaper, under the bold headline that reads: 'We do not want Syrians as citizens!' (*Suriyelileri vatandaş olarak istemiyoruz!*). 'We' here speaks for the Turkish society as a whole, not just in the name of government opponents, as the article cites the results of a survey that shows the majority of voters from each political party are against citizenship for Syrians.

What is common to the coverage of *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet* is that both treat the citizenship move as an election investment strategy by the government, particularly with regard to the constitutional referendum that was held in 2017. The difference here regards how the two newspapers relate this election strategy to Syrian refugees. From the perspective of *Sözcü*, refugees appear as readily government supporters. The following headline (*Sözcü*, March 21, 2016) reveals this perspective: 'New voters ready for presidential referendum: Syrians count the days for citizenship' (*Başkanlık referandumu için yeni seçmenler hazır: Suriyeliler vatandaşlık için gün sayıyor*). In another example (*Sözcü*, February 21, 2017), the newspaper reports that Syrians opened a Facebook page in support for Erdoğan in the referendum. *Cumhuriyet*, on the other hand, highlights the political abuse of refugees by the government. For example, the newspaper covers Erdoğan's statement about granting citizenship to refugees as in the following headline: 'Found his ballot box for presidency' (*Başkanlık için 'oy'unu buldu*). In a play of words, the word 'vote' is fused into the word 'game', so citizenship becomes a game set by Erdoğan for the sake of raising votes in the referendum. Right below this headline, there is a picture of a Syrian boy, reportedly dressed in a girl's clothes because of poverty, posing in front of the makeshift tent he temporarily stays with his family members working as seasonal

farm workers in Bursa. Poverty and deprivation of seasonal farm workers are described in detail under the sub-heading that reads: ‘Here is the scene desired to turn into votes’ (*İşte oya çevrilmek istenen tablo*). Economic exploitation is coupled with political abuse. In this framework, the government sees refugees as potential voters but ignores their misery.

Another difference between the coverage of *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet* relates to future predictions. In *Sözcü*’s (July 4, 2016) account, if Syrians are granted citizenship, they will also raise demands for mother tongue education, exclusive rights, and autonomy sometime in the future. In this account, peaceful coexistence does not seem possible anyway. *Cumhuriyet* (November 6, 2018), on the other hand, emphasizes the need for integration policies such as facilitating Turkish acquisition and introducing Arabic as a language option on government websites for peaceful coexistence, stating in the absence of such policies, future may bring social conflicts.

6.5.2. ‘Our’ Qualified Muslim Fellows

On the government’s side, there recently seems to be a careful avoidance of an emphasis on the issue of citizenship, and the option of return seems to be more frequently voiced (İçduygu & Nimer, 2020; Kaya, 2020). This is somewhat reflected in the coverage of pro-government newspapers. It is noteworthy that citizenship is not a salient topic in the frontpage coverage of *Sabah* and *Yeni Akit*, both of which had quite a few news items addressing citizenship.

The corpus yielded only one item from *Yeni Akit* (July 8, 2016) that addresses the citizenship debate, which communicates a supportive tone, as might be expected. Reportedly, granting citizenship to Syrian refugees is fully supported by academics

who make references to Ottoman history, shared geography and common values to justify how rightful the decision is. It is rightful for Syrians to obtain citizenship because they are after all ‘the people of this geography’ (*bu coğrafyanın insanı*). Objection to citizenship, on the other hand, means having a fear of or even hatred of Syrians; ‘Syriaphobia’ (*Suriyefobia*), a word possibly derived from ‘Islamophobia’. Likewise, ‘There is a coalition of hatred against Syrians’ (*Suriyelilere karşı nefret koalisyonu var*) says *Sabah* (July 14, 2016), reporting the remarks of then the Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, who associates objection to citizenship with hate crime:

We see that an alliance has been formed, like committing hate crime. As if the Syrians came yesterday, they are storming in a teacup. Our hearts are rich. If necessary, we will increase the number of our citizens in order to raise the bread of this country.

Nefret suçu içler gibi ittifak kurulduğunu görüyoruz. Sanki Suriyeliler dün gelmiş gibi bir kaşık suda fırtına koparıyorlar. Bizim gönlümüz ganidir. Bu memleketin ekmeğini büyütmek için gerekirse vatandaşlarımızın sayısını artıracאız.

What comes forward from these examples is that objection to citizenship is equated with hatred (‘phobia’ or ‘hate crime’) towards Syrians. Granting citizenship to Syrians is a positive step because they can contribute to our society (‘raise the bread of this country’), and they are our Muslim brothers (‘people of this geography’). In addition, refugees that will be granted citizenship comprise qualified individuals who are willing to serve for Turkey. In another item (*Sabah*, July 14, 2016) placed right above Binali Yıldırım’s words, high-skilled refugees speak: ‘Turkey is our homeland, we are ready to speak’ (*Türkiye vatanımız hizmete hazırız*).

Figure 26

Sabah, July 14, 2016



On July 2, 2016, when he brought up the issue of citizenship for the first time, in his speech after the iftar dinner in Kilis, Erdogan also referred to refugees as ‘our brothers / sisters’. A part of his speech was covered on the frontpage of *Sabah* (July 3, 2016) the next day, under the headline ‘Citizenship path opened for Syrians’ (*Suriyelilere vatandaşlık yolu açıldı*):

I believe there are, among our Syrian brothers / sisters, those who would like to be citizens of the Republic of Turkey. (...) we will help these brothers and sisters, giving them the opportunity of citizenship.

Suriyeli sığınmacı kardeşlerimizin içinde inanıyorum ki Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşı olmak isteyenler var. (...) bu kardeşlerimize bu yardımı yaparak vatandaşlık imkânı vereceğiz.

Compared to *Sabah*'s rather neutral tone, *Hürriyet* (July 3, 2016) proclaims Erdoğan's statement in excitement in its bold headline: 'Gospel of citizenship to Syrians' (*Suriyeliye vatandaşlık müjdesi*). Next day, criteria for citizenship makes the frontpage of the newspaper (*Hürriyet*, July 4, 2016) under the headline 'Harmonization is a must for citizenship' (*Vatandaşlık için uyum şart*). It is not just anyone, but those who meet certain criteria -the most important of which is to have a clean criminal record- will be accepted to citizenship, *Hürriyet* assures its readers. Word choice is important here; 'harmonization' reflects the official policy, which promotes the term over 'integration' as the latter involves a more comprehensive approach and implies a more perpetual solution (Şimşek & Çorabatır, 2016, pp. 122-124; Batalla & Tolay, 2018, pp. 19-20).

Two days later, *Hürriyet* (July 6, 2016) assures its readers, in its bold headline, that those involved in criminal activity will not be granted citizenship but will simply be deported: 'We will deport those who overstep' (*Haddini aşanı sınır dışı ederiz*). It is then the Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım speaking about the citizenship criteria: 'We will give citizenship to our qualified brothers/sisters, whom we scrutinize' (*ince eleyip sık dokuyarak belirlediğimiz nitelikli kardeşlerimize vatandaşlık vereceğiz*). There is, thus, no need for public concern; authorities are taking care of the entire process. And only 'qualified' individuals will be granted citizenship, not troublemakers or 'vulgars' like the men sitting topless by the sea that the news photograph shows.

'Qualified' Syrians appear, a few days later, on the front page of the newspaper (*Hürriyet*, July 10, 2016): publisher, lawyer, film director, journalist -all educated and civilized: 'far beyond the refugee profile we have in mind' (*kafamızdaki mülteci profilinin çok ötesinde*). And when asked about what they think about

citizenship, most of them reportedly say they would like to return to Syria when the war is over, so -again- there is no need for public concern.

Next day, President Erdoğan speaks in the bold headline of *Hürriyet* (July 11, 2016): ‘We may accommodate them in TOKİ houses’ (*TOKİ evlerine yerleştiririz*). Erdoğan’s statements about citizenship receive wide coverage under this headline. First of all, this is not an extraordinary practice: ‘Practiced in Germany, the USA’ (*Almanya’da, ABD’de oluyor*), the subheading reads. Secondly, Syrian refugees are victims of forced emigration, and ‘Muslim brothers’, as Erdoğan puts it: ‘They emigrated from their homeland and took refuge in us seeing us *ensar*’ (*Onlar vatanlarından hicret ederek, ensar olarak bizi görmüş bize sığınmışlar*). Thirdly, qualified individuals who can contribute to ‘our’ country will obtain citizenship: ‘There are doctors, engineers, lawyers among them. Our country can benefit, they can be given citizenship’ (*İçlerinde doktoru var, mühendisi var, avukatı var. Ülkemiz istifade edebilir, bunlara vatandaşlık verilebilir*).

Overall coverage of the issue by pro-government newspapers reflects the government’s selective approach that primarily targets refugees who possess a cultural or economic capital as well as those with a Sunni background (Köşer Akçapar & Şimsek, 2018; Şimşek, 2020).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1. Making Choices

Every research study, from the very beginning, requires making a set of choices. The researcher chooses to study a particular topic, first of all. Or, the other way round, the researcher may choose not to study a particular research topic. The researcher may choose to focus on a particular aspect of the topic through a particular theoretical lens and look at particular cases or phenomena only. The researcher chooses, or at least tries to choose the most appropriate research method to study the topic at hand, if such a thing is ever possible. It is a matter of choice who to cite, what sources to use, which points to emphasize and which to omit, and what wording to use to present an argument. Even whether to use the first-person singular pronoun or not is a matter of choice. In what follows, I will present how the choices I have made led me through all the way and what they led to at the end.

7.2. Making Connections

The issue of Syrian refugees in Turkey is definitely not a straightforward one; clearly not an easy issue to address or discuss whether in academic environment or elsewhere. Extremely polarized political atmosphere, the ongoing economic crisis, and further worsening of women's social conditions all add to the challenge of already-challenging debate. Sometimes in daily life, it seems like there is no other choice but to keep silent to avoid bitter polemics with whoever is involved in the conversation. Admittedly, this is what I sometimes chose to do in daily contact. I

chose just to keep silent when I sensed that the person I was talking to would process whatever I said into the polar categories in his or her mind. I sometimes pretended that I did not hear; sometimes just ignored the talk around or changed the topic of the conversation. There were instances when I got involved in arguments, too. Some people would never leave any gray areas. Good refugees, bad refugees. Embracing refugees, kicking refugees out. Oh, those poor refugees; ah these damned refugees. Speaking from a different point of view or speaking of a multiplicity of perspectives and dimensions did not communicate to the listener. Labels came quickly. Cultural-phobic or a naïve humanist, if not worse. This was the personal level at the bottom; daily conversations and personal choices they brought that drove me to the path in the first place.

As an early career researcher in the field of media studies, academic interest in the topic followed these personal experiences. A review of the scholarly work on media representation of Syrian refugees from Turkey, some of which was mentioned in Chapter 1, informed me that there was a general tendency to approach representation in positive and negative terms, and a shared tendency to code news content accordingly. Researchers drawing on the data sampled from different time spans, and from different news outlets, of different types either found an overall positive representation (Pandir et al., 2015; Paksoy & Şentöregil, 2018), or a negative representation (Göker & Keskin, 2015; Boztepe, 2017; Cantek & Soykan, 2018; Onay-Çöker, 2019; Doğanay, 2019) of Syrian refugees in media discourse. In this sense, academic studies relied on a similar pattern of polar ends. ‘Positive’ and ‘negative’, first of all, hinder the view of gray areas. ‘Gray’ here is not in the sense of ‘balanced’ or ‘neutral’; not in the sense that existing studies use to code news content

other than ‘positive’ or ‘negative’, but in the sense of complexities and intrigues interwoven in discourse.

Approaching discourse and representation through these terms and treating media content in this manner may cause the broader social, political and historic context that discourses are embedded in or produced by to be overlooked, confining discourse to the level of literal interpretations. This is not to say that such a frame of reference is totally invalid, or such categories have no place in matters of representation. It is rather that ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ has limited explanatory power in terms of inclusion and exclusion dynamics that work through discourse.

Further inquiry into the field guided me through the works of Ruth Wodak and Vienna School of Discourse Analysis that aims to transcend the limits of textual-based analysis by integrating information about historical, political, sociological and other contexts into the analysis (Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 2015; Reisigl, 2018; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Methodology-wise, Discourse-Historical Approach provided a firm ground to go beyond the limits of dealing with media representation through opposing frames of ‘positive’ versus ‘negative’. This explains the reason for the choice of research method in the first place.

In addition to this, Wodak and her colleagues have been engaged in studying discourses of nationalism, discursive construction of national identity and discursive dimensions of inclusion and exclusion particularly in relation to immigration (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Wodak et al., 2009; Wodak 2008; Wodak 2018). An overall review of these studies further guided me through constructivist theories of nationalism (explored in Chapter 2) because this school of approach is above all draws on Anderson’s (1983) theorization of the nation as a mental construct, an ‘imagined community’ (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 3).

The nation, as an ‘imagined community’ rests on the collective projection of people who feel a connection to one another even without knowing each other (Anderson, 1983). This sense of connectedness is fostered through the ‘invention of tradition’; fabrication of symbols, narratives, cultural practices and images to define the markers of the collective identity (Hobsbawm, 1983). Such practices are particularly important to promote homogeneity among members of the nation, which is what nationalism seeks to create, especially in linguistic and cultural terms (Gellner, 1983). In this regard, nationalism is the process of creating a sense of national identity “for those who are said to inhabit or deserve to inhabit” their own national homeland (Billig, 1995, p. 24). Nationalism and national identity are produced and reproduced daily through banal forms and practices, in schools, newspaper reports, weather forecasts and so on (Billig, 1995). Immigration, at this point, serves as a key site “through which national communities are institutionally imagined and materially constructed” (Vukov, 2003, p. 336). In this respect, the borders of national identity are redrawn and redefined in relation to immigration. Immigrant communities may become ‘internal significant others’ and may be discerned as outsiders threatening the unity and cohesion of the nation through their different cultural or religious identity, language or social conduct (Triandafyllidou, 1998).

Two more insights also proved to be guiding light in my research design. First, national identities are “produced and reproduced, as well as transformed and dismantled, *discursively*” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 4, italics original). And that “there is – in an essentialist sense – no such thing as *one* national identity”; that different or maybe contested identities are discursively constructed according to context (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 4, italics original). National identity is neither uniform nor monolithic in nature and its content is subject to discursive construction as well as reconstruction,

and contestation. These two insights then let me to the Turkish context to explore different narratives of national identity (explored in Chapter 3).

Two major works proved particularly fruitful and further guiding. First, White's (2013) *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks* reveals how national identity has undergone fundamental changes in contemporary Turkey in comparison to the one that the Republican history sought to produce. In White's (2013) words:

The emblematic citizen was a Turkish Muslim with a secular lifestyle, dedicated to a state-led program of modernization believed to be Atatürk's design. (...) The AKP and its pious supporters, in contrast, have developed and implemented an unorthodox alternative definition of Turkishness and the nation that imagines Turkey not as a nation embattled within its present political borders but as a flexibly bounded Turkey that is the self-confident successor to the Ottomans in a rediscovered (and reinvented) past. (p. 9)

White (2013) refers to the contemporary national identity project as what she terms 'Muslim nationalism', so she relates the new national project under the ruling JDP to nationalism, characterized by an increased salience of Islam as a marker of identity. Saraçoğlu and Bélanger (2019) point out the connection between this newly formulated conception of national identity and nationalism under the JDP rule and the party's portrayal of Syrian refugees as part of an imagined Ottoman community that needs the guardianship of the Turkish state (p. 381). In this sense, the issue of Syrian refugees is inextricably linked to the new national identity project. This rearticulation of national identity has met opposition from members of society who do not self-identify as Sunni pious Muslims and who opts for a secular lifestyle, which is why they remained skeptical, or rather anxious about Syrian refugees. In such a context, the issue of Syrian refugees in Turkey, as Saraçoğlu and Bélanger (2019) put, has

emerged as “one of the battlefields on which two historically conflicting conceptions of nation collide” (p. 382). It is this connection that oriented me towards exploring media representations of refugees in relation to broader politics of nationalism and national identity in Turkey.

Having followed such a path of reading and exploration, it is from this point of view that I then went all the way back to the research question to finalize it as in the following: “How do the print media in Turkey construct their accounts of Syrian refugees in relation to different narratives of national identity?”

Discourse-Historical Approach requires to incorporate “a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded” (Wodak, 2001, p. 65). For this purpose, I explored policy responses and political discourse that paralleled these policies to obtain background information regarding the governance of Syrian migration and refugee settlement (explored in the first part of Chapter 4). This exploration involved reviewing a wide range of texts and sources on the subject, a process which helped gain a sense of the main axes of the public, political and media debate about the issue. This a priori knowledge later combined with Wodak’s (2018) list of most common ‘topoi’ in debates about immigration. Wodak’s (2018) list provided a guideline to draft a list of paradigms (elaborated in the second part of Chapter 4) that were finalized after a pilot study of news items in the corpus and were later treated as the macro-topics of the frontpage news coverage under analysis. This choice, above all, stemmed from the consideration to integrate wider socio-political context into analysis and to transcend confinement to textual analysis, which is what Discourse-Historical Approach is concerned with (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 93). In addition, I was guided by the effort to offer an alternative reading of media texts on

Syrian refugees in Turkey, an alternative perspective to the field of media representations of Syrian refugees that is more revealing of inclusionary and exclusionary discourses and that goes beyond the polarity of ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ frames. In this regard, this study opts for a from-context-to-text approach and offers the following list of paradigms to make sense of and engage with media discourse on Syrian refugees: humanitarian paradigm, religious paradigm, economic paradigm and socio-cultural and demographic paradigm, and citizenship and rights paradigm. These paradigms are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. What differentiates the paradigms that this study offers from Wodak’s (2018) ‘topoi’ is that they are not identified with merely exclusionary or merely inclusionary discourses. These paradigms are akin to discourse hubs where both inclusionary and exclusionary discourses as well as those that oscillate between inclusion and exclusion depart from and communicate with each other. This is also what marks the contribution of this study to the existing literature; offering a different framework for reading media texts on Syrian refugees.

Humanitarian paradigm, on one hand, relates to the victimization of refugees inasmuch as it relies on a distinction between ‘we’ as the saviors or guardians of refugees and ‘they’ as the sufferers and passive receivers of aid. On the other hand, backed by a rhetoric of hospitality, a distinction between ‘we’ as the tolerant hosts and ‘they’ as the temporary guests who may be considered overstaying or unwanted when they trespass the limits or boundaries is at work under this paradigm. Religious paradigm, on one hand, draws on the religious and sectarian similarity between Syrian refugees and Turkish society. On the other hand, religious and sectarian divides among refugees as well as the ones among Turkish society become more salient in this context. Economic paradigm harbors discourses that relate to the ‘economic

burden' of refugees on one hand, and 'economic benefits' of refugees on the other hand. Sociocultural and demographic paradigm relates to the discourse of 'cultural proximity' as well as the discourse of 'cultural dissimilarity' between Syrian refugees and Turkish society. Under citizenship and rights paradigm, discourses relate to selective deservingness as well as non-deservingness.

Frontpage coverage of the newspapers was analyzed in relation to and under these paradigms. The analysis aimed to explore the thematic threads related to the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. The analysis shows that inclusionary and exclusionary discourses of the newspapers are informed by whoever the newspaper refers to by 'us' and whatever content of national identity it endorses. To start with the pro-government *Yeni Akit*, 'us' takes its major reference from Sunni Islam. Discourses of inclusion towards Syrian refugees appear in this plane. It is the only newspaper that consistently uses the religious metaphor of '*ensar*' and '*muhacir*'. Discourses of inclusion towards Syrian refugees come forward inasmuch as they are identified as Sunni Muslims. On the other hand, inasmuch as they come to the fore with identity markers other than religious identity of Sunni-Muslim (e.g., Syrian Kurds), discourses of exclusion may come into play in the frontpage coverage of *Yeni Akit*. In addition, inclusionary discourses towards Sunni Muslim refugees are interwoven with and become instrumental for discourses of exclusion towards societal groups (e.g., feminists and seculars) that do not agree with the religiously based national identity. For *Sabah*, support for the government appears a more decisive marker of 'us' than anything else. Inclusionary discourses towards refugees come forward particularly with regard to praise for government policies. In line with this framework, the figure of the refugee as a cheap labor force contradicts the image of benevolent and generous government, so it is simply overlooked. It is the figure of the qualified refugee that

becomes salient in the frontpage coverage of *Sabah*, particularly with regard to the citizenship debate. Low-skilled and cheap laborers, in this sense, are beyond the discourse of inclusion. The metaphor of religious brethren, albeit occasionally salient, is also adopted for discourses of inclusion in the frontpage coverage of the newspaper. In addition, symbols of national identification are at play for defining ‘us’, and are accordingly used for inclusionary discourses towards refugees. When it comes to *Sözcü*, being Turkish appears a more decisive marker of ‘us’ than anything else. Discourses of inclusion towards Syrian Turkmens, for example, come forward on the grounds of kinship ties. *Sözcü* is the newspaper that discourses of exclusion towards refugees become the most salient. These discourses are supplemented with several details and themes including cultural, economic, and demographic related ones. In this sense, discourses of exclusion by *Sözcü* are not based simply on opposition to the government. As a matter of fact, there are instances that the discourse of *Sözcü* coincides with that of the progovernment newspapers, particularly with regard to military operations. Except for such cases, opposition to the government is among the significant markers of ‘us’ and this is yet another domain that informs the discourse of the newspaper on refugees. Secularism makes one other marker of ‘us’ for *Sözcü*, and it also relates to exclusionary discourses towards refugees. For *Hürriyet*, having a modern look, leading a modern way of life, and speaking Turkish are among the markers of ‘us’ and discourses of inclusion and exclusion are shaped accordingly. Finally, for *Cumhuriyet*, being disadvantaged in terms of access to economic resources and social rights is among the markers of ‘us’. In line with this framework, refugees as cheap labor force and Alevi refugees come forward as part of discourses of inclusion. One other significant marker of ‘us’ is being secular and it is in this

framework that discourses of exclusion become salient in the frontpage coverage of the newspaper.

Existing studies that rested on ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ polarities generally overlooked exclusionary facets of discourses produced by pro-government media. For example, in Efe’s (2015, p. 53) account, the discourse of religious brotherhood that he found salient in the coverage of pro-government newspapers is ‘positive’ representation of refugees. In a similar vein, Boztepe (2017, p. 110) treats the ‘brotherhood’ discourse that came prevalent in the broadcast of the pro-government TV channel *Kanal 7* as a ‘positive’ representation. This can be said when the political context or when the implicit exclusionary facet of this discourse is disregarded.

The discourse of religious brotherhood, inasmuch as it relies on the fellowship of Muslim / Sunni refugees and natives, contributes to the exclusion of non-Muslim / non-Sunni refugees in the first place. This can be observed in the non-coverage of Alevi refugees by *Yeni Akit* and *Sabah*, the two newspapers that used references to shared history and values and referred to the analogy of ‘*ensar*’ and ‘*muhacir*’. In addition to religious ones, there are gendered codes at play as well. In this discourse, the refugee figure is predominantly a Sunni ‘brother’ whereas the female refugee is reduced to a suffering Muslim ‘mother’. On a broader political level, the religious discourse of brotherhood contributes to the exclusion of those who do not identify as Sunni or pious Muslims (e.g., Alevis and seculars). In this sense, this discourse is closely related to the way ‘desired’ or ‘ideal’ citizens make sense in the imaginary of the newly formulated national identity.

In addition to this, the issue of Syrian refugees is treated instrumentally by pro-government newspapers to vilify societal groups that are at odds with this new form of national identity. For example, seculars, feminists, leftists and supporters of the main

opposition party come to the fore in news coverage of refugees. In this sense, discourses of inclusion towards refugees are intertwined with discourses of exclusion towards other social groups.

Portrayal of refugees as overstaying guests can be found in the coverage of pro-government newspapers, too. Discourses of inclusion and exclusion oscillate between ‘opening arms’ and ‘opening the gates’. Depiction of refugees as economic burden is not less exclusionary in nature than other discourses. Reducing the ‘desired’ refugee to either a Muslim brother, or a qualified individual is not less exclusionary, either, given the fact that refugees are diverse in religious background, and most have become cheap labor force.

Anti-government media come to the fore for harboring negative representations in the existing literature (Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016; Esmer, 2017; Paksoy & Şentöregil, 2018). According to Çağlar and Özkır (2014, p. 499), this results from a superficial anti-government stance, and not from a solid ideological-political base. This, first of all, does not explain variations among the different news outlets from the anti-government camp. *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet* have clearly different perspectives. Discourses of exclusion in the coverage of *Sözcü* has several grounds ranging from ethnicity-based approach to arguments in economic terms, which cannot be solely explained by a superficial anti-government stance. In addition, such a view presupposes a given relation between anti-government stance and an overall discriminatory discourse towards or negative representation of refugees. The analysis of frontpage coverage of *Cumhuriyet* shows that this is not the case. Discourses of inclusion particularly towards less advantaged groups such as Alevis and seasonal farm workers are notable in the coverage of the newspaper, which has no parallel in the other selected newspapers.

As has been argued, representation of Syrian refugees in media relates to wider political dimensions at play, particularly with regard to the reformulation of national identity in recent years. There are contradictory, counter or perhaps competing views of who ‘we’ are, which is closely related to how media outlets construct their accounts on Syrian refugees.

It may be argued that Syrian refugees have come to be, borrowing from Triandafyllidou (1998), the new ‘internal significant others’ for the Turkish national identity that is in the process of reformulation. As was previously mentioned in Chapter 2 of this work, Triandafyllidou (1998, pp. 600-601) argues that immigrant communities may become ‘internal significant others’ when they are perceived to pose a threat to the unity of the nation, particularly in cultural and ethnic terms. In Triandafyllidou’s account (1998, p. 603), during times of crises, when the national identity is contested, significant others may serve either as scapegoats or as a means for clarifying the boundaries of the nation through fostering the feeling of belongingness among the nationals. I believe this frame perfectly fits the case of Syrians residing in Turkey and argue that all the discourses I explored in Chapter 6 contribute to the construction of Syrians as the new ‘internal significant others’.

To continue with the set of choices regarding the research design, I chose to focus on the frontpage coverage of newspapers mainly because frontpage plays an important role in understanding the level of attention an issue receives from a newspaper. In addition, frontpages of newspapers reach a wider audience than the actual number of readers; archived and circulated on the internet and shared through other channels as well. This choice brought both obstacles and opportunities. The major obstacle concerned the format that frontpages of newspapers are digitally stored: JPEG. Digital keyword search is not possible in this format. Due to this

constraint, collecting and storing frontpages and coding the news items proved to be an arduous task to perform individually, without benefitting from a professional media monitoring service.

However, keeping data in this format also brought an opportunity to see the relevant news items on the actual site that they appear; placed next to, near or in comparison to other items on the same page. In other words, instead of retrieving content from a dataset of textual or visual items that were removed from their site of appearance -and thus context- stored separately from other news items that they co-appear with on the same page, this format let me see the frontpage in its entirety. Because the data analysis process did not rest on a quantitative method of content analysis which requires measurement, percentage and frequency calculations, I did not need to transcribe the news articles, and kept the original format of JPEG. This let me see the size and placement of the selected refugee-related news item on the actual page it appeared and how it relates to other items on the frontpage that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. This ultimately enriched the analysis, adding further dimensions to it.

This is how the present research set out to explore the media representation of Syrian refugees. First moving from personal choices and experiences, then arriving at a critique of existing studies, and finally searching for alternative frameworks, approaches, and tools is what led the whole research to where it is now.

7.3. Limitations of the Study

The choice of frontpage for data sampling brought challenges in terms of research purpose. To explain, restricting data collection to the frontpage coverage,

first of all, meant keeping the types of news articles limited, leaving out opinion articles and feature articles which generally appear on inner pages. As mentioned before in Chapter 5, data collection process informed me that news articles about Syrian refugees were rather placed in inner pages than the frontpage, particularly from 2016 onwards. This is in line with the previous research by Doğanay (2019, pp. 14-15), which discovers that the news about refugees was predominantly published on the agenda pages. This did not bring a challenge in terms of collecting a considerable set of data because news articles were collected from a period that extends to 10 years. That is to say, the challenge did not concern the quantity but rather the quality. To explain, some of the frontpage news stories did not go beyond straight news reporting that is designed to give concise information and lacked interpretative angles. This was generally the type of news that merely reported boat accidents and marine casualties. Foreseeing that they would not provide meaningful content for the research purpose because of their straight style and simple language, from the very beginning, I chose not include such news in the corpus. Later, for consistency purposes, I extended this to all the tragic incidents including murder, traffic accidents that involved Syrian refugees or other individual tragic stories. However, even when such news stories discarded, frontpage coverage of all the selected newspapers displayed a considerable number of items written in a similar manner that did not go beyond being informative. In this sense, investigative, interpretative, and in-depth news stories that appear more often in inner pages than the frontpage might have been more revealing in terms of political considerations and how these considerations influence the way refugee debate is narrated and framed.

Another choice regards the treatment of news visuals. A separate visual analysis of the data, that is, collecting, coding and analyzing visuals independently

from the textual content would have gone far beyond the scope of this research. The research would have likely benefited from a more systematic analysis of the visuals, however, this had to be skipped due to time constraints and to keep the analysis manageable. One of the limitations of the study is that images occupy limited space.

7.3. Making Conclusive Remarks

Syrian refugees is still a relatively new phenomenon in Turkey, not that little time has passed since the onset of migration from Syria but because new dimensions, conflicts and complexities are added to the phenomenon in time. Currently, the issue of refugees tops the agenda of the country, getting even more heated after the arrival of those fleeing Afghanistan and Pakistan. It should also be noted that regarding an ever-changing and intricately linked to internal and international politics subject like this one at hand, it is almost impossible to put an end to the analysis, discussion and findings. Especially considering the upcoming elections in Turkey, it is foreseeable that there will be more conversations and debates on the extremes.

The existing literature, despite having flourished abundantly in recent years, still lacks comprehensive approaches particularly in the field of media studies. That being said, this research is expected to have provided an alternative perspective on the representation of Syrian refugees in the Turkish media that highlighted the multiple paradigms involved and multiple inclusion / exclusion dynamics generated. Embedded within a broader sociopolitical and historical context of the representation of Syrian refugees in media, this study is expected to contribute to different fields, including nationalism studies, discourse studies, and media studies.

Future studies may use the paradigms offered here to study discourses at other sites or levels. For example, considering that it is more than obvious the refugee issue will come to the fore more frequently in the upcoming elections, future research can

study political party discourses using these paradigms. Other paradigms may well be added to the ones that this research offers. Recently, gender and security seem to have become prominent themes in refugee debate, particularly after the video footages of mass crossings of the border, and videos of Turkish women in public places secretly filmed by immigrant men flooded on social media. Future studies may look at the intersections of public, political and media discourses by adding gender and security to the five paradigms that this research offers.

This study contributes to the knowledge about refugee representation in Turkish media within a particular time and with a focus on the coverage of selected newspapers. For future research, it would be interesting to explore how the discourses of the same media outlets have changed over time or whether they have been influenced by other political events and developments both at home (e.g., upcoming elections) and in the international arena (such as the situation in Syria and Ukraine).

It may also be interesting to look at the case of Syrian refugees in a comparative manner. For example, future research may investigate the media discourse on Bulgarian Turks who emigrated to Turkey in 1989 in comparison to the media discourse on Syrian refugees. Despite the many differences, the two cases share similarities in terms of liberal reception policies and political discourse that calls for inclusion, albeit with different motives. Such a comparative frame may be revealing in terms of the changing dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in relation to immigration policies and national identity.

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APPENDIX: DATA BIBLIOGRAPHY

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İlk ABC Nizip’te [The first ABC is in Nizip]. May 26, 2018.

İstanbul’da mini Suriye [Mini Syria in Istanbul]. May 28, 2018.

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Göçe karşı M-60 kalkanı [M-60 shield against immigration]. September 4, 2018.

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Suriye'yi bilmem ben Türk'üm [I don't know Syria, I'm a Turk]. January 20, 2019.

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Miço unuttu arşiv unutmadı [Mitso forgot, archive did not]. March 4, 2020.

Yunan sınırı Filistin gibi [Greek border like Palestine]. March 5, 2020.

Sabah

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Esat artık sınırı aştı [Assad has now crossed the line]. April 10, 2012.

Esad'ın askerine Kızılay yemeği [Red Crescent dinner for Assad's soldiers]. March 16, 2012.

'Bu yükü sadece biz taşıyamayız' ['We alone can't carry this burden']. August 28, 2012.

En çok mülteci Türkiye'de: 74 bin [Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees: 74 thousand]. September 1, 2012.

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'İyi ki Türkiye var' ['Glad there is Turkey']. September 20, 2014.

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Kalbimizi açtık, duvar ördüler [We opened our heart, they built walls]. June 19, 2015.

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Suriyelilere karşı nefret koalisyonu var [There is a coalition of hatred against Syrians]. July 14, 2016.

Güle oynaya döndüler [They returned happily and joyfully]. September 9, 2016.

Batı darbeciye sahip çıkıyor [The West takes care of coup plotters]. January 10, 2017.

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Türkiye bize kucak açtı [Turkey embraced us]. January 15, 2018.

Kapıları açsak kaçacak delik arayacaktınız [If we open the Gates, you'd look for a hole to escape]. March 17, 2018.

Merkel'den büyük övgü: Türkiye sığınmacılar için mükemmel işler yaptı [High praise from Merkel: Turkey has done excellent work for asylum seekers]. June 29, 2018.

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Esad hayallerimi çaldı, Türkiye hayata bağladı [Assad stole my dreams, Turkey tied to life]. October 15, 2018.

İnsanlık Türkiye'de nefes alıyor [Humanity is breathing in Turkey]. November 7, 2018.

Dönen Suriyeli'ye eve kadar eşlik [Accompanying home the returning Syrian]. November 8, 2018.

Mülteciler Avrupa kapısına dayanır [Refugees will end up at Europe's gate]. February 20, 2019.

Batı masum çocukların gözyaşlarına aldırmadı [The West didn't care the innocent children's tears]. June 28, 2019.

Mazlumların sığınağıyız [We are the shelter of the oppressed]. August 5, 2019.

Yeni evinize hoş geldiniz [Welcome to your new home]. August 15, 2019.

Başkan Erdoğan'dan Batı'ya uyarı: Kapıları açarız [Warning to the West from President Erdoğan: We'll open the gates]. September 6, 2019.

Barış olduğunda hepimiz Suriye'ye döneceğiz [When peace comes, we will all return to Syria]. October 21, 2019.

Huzuru sağladık evinize dönün [We brought peace, you shall go home]. October 25, 2019.

Destek vermezlerse sınırları açarız [If they do not share burden, we'll open the borders]. October 27, 2019.

Mahmud bizim kahramanımız [Mahmud is our hero]. January 27, 2020.

Kahraman Mahmud'a Türk vatandaşlığı [Citizenship to heroic Mahmud]. January 28, 2020.

Sen de kapıları aç bu yükten kurtul [Open the gates, get rid of this burden]. March 9, 2020.

Suriye'deki kriz Avrupa için tehdit [The crisis in Syria is a threat to Europe]. March 10, 2020.

Sözcü

1 milyon Suriyeli sınırımıza dayandı: Esad zulmünden kaçıyorlar [1 million Syrians have reached our border: They are fleeing Assad's persecution]. June 12, 2011.

Suriyeliler, Türkiye'nin yaptığı kampı beğenmedi [Syrians disfavored Turkey's camp]. April 8, 2012.

Mültecilere 400'er dolarlık kredi kartları dağıtmışlar [They handed out 400-dollar credit cards to refugees]. May 15, 2012.

Suriye'den gelenlere iş ve para verilecek [Jobs and money will be given to those coming from Syria]. July 22, 2012.

Besle kargayı oysun gözünü [Feed the crow, let it carve your eyes]. July 23, 2012.

Suriyeli göçmenler nankörlük yapıyor [Syrian migrants being ungrateful]. August 4, 2012.

Karanlık misafirler! [Dark guests!]. August 27, 2012.

Hatay halkı şikayetçi, Vali bey çok memnun [The people of Hatay are complaining, Mr. Governor is very pleased]. August 29, 2012.

Şehidin Suriyeli mülteci kadar bile değeri yokmuş [The martyr is not even worth as much as the Syrian refugees]. August 31, 2012.

Cirit atıyorlar! [They are swarming]. September 2, 2012.

Sığınmacıya alışveriş kartı [Shopping card for asylum seekers]. October 15, 2012.

Adaletin bu mu AKP? [Is this your justice, JDP?]. November 3, 2012.

80 bin Suriyeli nerede, bilen yok [No one knows where 80 thousands Syrians are]. December 17, 2012.

Bu bir, 'besle kaygayı oysun gözünü' haberi [This is 'feed the crow let it carve your eyes' news]. February 28, 2013.

Suriyeliler geldi, dertler çoğaldı [Syrians came, troubles increased]. March 11, 2013.

Tayyip Suriye için 4 milyar lira harcadı [Tayyip spent 4 billion liras for Syria]. September 16, 2013.

Devlet beni PKK'dan daha beter yaraladı! [The state hurt me worse than the PKK!]

September 20, 2013.

Bu nasıl devlet! [How on earth this is a state!]. September 23, 2013.

Tayyip ve Esad kurbanları [Victims of Tayyip and Assad]. October 17, 2013.

Bu mu edepsizlik! [How on earth this is rudeness!]. May 12, 2014.

24 saat sonra insafa geldiler [24 hours later, they came to mercy]. September 20, 2014.

Nedir bu Mehmet'in çektiği! [What is this that Mehmet endures!]. September 23, 2014.

Nankörler [The ungrateful]. September 25, 2014.

Sınırdaki Türkmenleri almıyorlar [They do not let Turkmens at the border in]. June 5, 2015.

Binlerce Türkmen Türkiye'ye girmek için Kürdüm diyor [Thousands of Turkmens say they are Kurds to enter Turkey]. June 6, 2015.

Bu nasıl vicdan böyle! [What kind of conscience is this!]. June 15, 2015.

Emekliler zam bekliyor, Suriyeliye para veriliyor [Pensioners are waiting for a raise, Syrians are given money]. July 11, 2015.

400 bin öğretmen atama beklerken Suriyeliler atandı [Syrians appointed while 400 thousand teachers were waiting to be appointed]. December 18, 2015.

Türkiye'de Suriyeli sayısı 6 milyon olursa ve bunlar 10 yıl sonra 'biz'den özerklik isterse ne yapacaksınız? [What will you do if the number of Syrians in Turkey reaches 6 million and they ask us for 'autonomy' 10 years later?]. March 9, 2016.

Suriyeliler vatandaşlık için gün sayıyor [Syrians count the days for citizenship]. March 21, 2016.

Suriyeliler vatandaş yapılırsa yandık [If Syrians are made citizens, we'll be doomed]. July 4, 2016.

Suriyeliler için referandum yapılsın [Hold referendum for Syrians]. July 5, 2016.

Suriyelileri vatandaş olarak istemiyoruz [We don't want Syrians as citizens]. July 7, 2016.

Bunları mı Türk vatandaşı yapacağız! [Shall we make these Turkish citizens?]. July 8, 2016.

6 milyon işsiz varken bu Suriyeliler nereden çıktı? [Where did these Syrians come from when there were 6 million unemployed?]. July 8, 2016.

Türkiye'de hayat Suriyeli'ye rahat [Life in Turkey is easy for Syrians]. July 9, 2016.

Suriyelilerden önce kendi vatandaşına bak [Look at your own citizens before the Syrians]. July 10, 2016.

TOKİ evlerini Suriyeliler yerine şehit ailelerine verin [Give TOKİ houses to the families of martyrs instead of Syrians]. July 12, 2016.

Esad'dan özür dile de 3 milyon Suriyeli ülkesine geri gitsin [Apologize to Assad and let 3 million Syrians go back to their country]. July 13, 2016.

Suriyeliler aylık 22 milyon lira maaş alıyor [Syrians receive a monthly salary of 22 million lira]. September 19, 2016.

Suriyeliler için 25 milyar dolar harcadık [We spent 25 billion dollars for Syrians]. September 21, 2016.

Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler gelsin ülkesi için savaşsın [Let the Syrians in Turkey come and fight for their country]. January 22, 2017.

Suriyeliye sınavsız üniversite [Syrians take no exam for university admissions]. February 15, 2017.

Suriyeliler, yediler içtiler Ata'mıza hakaret ettiler! [Syrians, they ate, they drank, they insulted our 'Ancestor'!]. February 21, 2017.

Türkiye'de 3 milyon Suriyeli var. Esad gelip miting yapmak isterse ne olacak? [There are 3 million Syrians in Turkey. What if Assad wants to come and hold a rally here?]. March 8, 2017.

Afrin temizlenirse 50 bin Suriyeli döner [If Afrin is cleared, 50 thousand Syrians will return]. January 18, 2018.

Sefer görev emrini Suriyelilere çıkarın [Issue the military service orders to the Syrians.]. February 27, 2018.

İran kapılarını açtı, Afganlar Türkiye'ye kaçtı: Bir siz eksiktiniz [Iran opened its gates, Afghans fled to Turkey: You were all missing]. April 5, 2018.

Duvara merdiven dayayıp geçiyorlar [They climb up the ladder against the border wall]. September 7, 2018.

Suriyelilere para var emeklilere yok [There is money for Syrians, not for retirees). October 23, 2018.

Ümit Özdağ: Suriyeliler Kilis bizim, siz gidin diyor [Ümit Özdağ: Syrians say Kilis is ours, you go]. November 29, 2018.

Suriyelilere şehit çocuğu ayrıcalığı [The martyr's child privilege for Syrians]. November 12, 2018.

Suriyeli hastaya yasal öncelik [Legal priority for Syrian patient]. December 19, 2018.

Mersin caddeleri Suriyeli dolu [Mersin streets are full of Syrians]. December 19, 2018.

MHP'li vekillerden Suriyeli isyanı [NMP deputies cry out against Syrians]. December 28, 2018.

Suriyeliler konusunu bir de benden dinleyin [Listen from me, the issue of Syrians]. April 14, 2019.

Bizim çocuklarımız şehit olurken Suriyeliler sefa içinde yaşayamaz [While our children are martyred Syrians can't lead a life of pleasure]. June 9, 2019.

Suriyeli sorununu iktidar yeni gördü [The government has just realized the Syrian problem]. July 24, 2019.

Suriye krizinin bize faturası 200 milyar dolar [The cost of Syrian crisis to us is 200 billion dollars]. August 1, 2019.

Erdoğan'dan Avrupa Birliği'ne mülteci tehdidi: Kapıları açarız [Erdogan's refugee threat to the European Union: We'll open the gates]. September 6, 2019.

Suriye'ye gidenden çok doğan var [There are more births than those who return to Syria]. September 30, 2019.

Eli silah tutanı eğitip gönderelim [Let's train and send the ones eligible to use weapons]. March 3, 2020.

İşte Yunan Zulmü [Here is the Greek oppression]. March 3, 2020.

Nankörlük isyan ettirdi [Ungratefulness caused resentment]. March 3, 2020.

İçerde Suriyelileri besleyip dışarda Suriye ile savaşan tek ülkeyiz [We are the only country that feeds Syrians inside and fights Syria outside]. February 12, 2020.

Kendi göbeğimizi kendimiz keselim [Let's pull ourselves by our bootstraps]. February 29, 2020.

Türkiye kapıları açtı mülteciler akın akın kaçtı [Turkey opened the gates, refugees flocked to flee]. February 29, 2020.

Yeni Akit

Krizde umut Türkiye [Turkey is the hope amidst the crisis]. June 17, 2011.

Ya Meclis, ya Kandil [Either the Parliament or Qandil]. September 6, 2012.

CHP darbelerin arkasında [CHP is behind the coups]. February 8, 2013.

Kardeşliğe fitne [Sabotage to brotherhood]. May 16, 2013.

Reyhanlı'da sol tahrik [Leftist Provocation in Reyhanlı]. May 19, 2013.

Fitnecilere asla prim vermeyin [Never give credit to intriguers]. May 26, 2013.

5 bin Suriyeli'de daha kucak açtık [We embraced 5 thousand more Syrians]. September 20, 2014.

Muhacir-ensar kucaklaşması [Muhacir-ensar embrace]. September 23, 2014.

Ensar-muhacir kucaklaşması [Ensar-muhacir embrace] October 18, 2013.

Kardeşlikte sınır yok [Brotherhood has no boundaries]. October 7, 2014.

Bize ensar olmayı bahşettiniz [You have given us the privilege to be ensar]. October 8, 2014.

Mülteci maskeli hainler deşifre oldu [Refugee-mask traitor exposed]. October 14, 2014.

Kobani'ye 820 TIR yardım [820 truck aid to Kobani]. November 11, 2014.

Esad'ın kirli planı [Assad's dirty plan]. November 12, 2014.

Bu nasıl müttefik? [How on earth this is an ally] June 16, 2015.

Aylan'ın ölümünde Kılıçdaroğlu'nun vebali var [Kılıçdaroğlu bears responsibility for the death of Aylan]. September 7, 2015.

Mülteci sorunu Suriye'de çözülür [Refugee problem can be solved in Syria]. September 17, 2015.

Ege’de Yunan vahşeti [Greek atrocity in the Aegean]. November 21, 2015.

Mültecilerin tek sığınağı Türkiye [Turkey: The only shelter of refugees]. February 5, 2016.

Yeni bir göç dalgası AB’yi vurur [A new wave of immigration will hit the EU]. February 12, 2016.

Kilis’te misafir nüfustan fazla [Guest population is larger than native population in Kilis]. February 22, 2016.

Avrupa’nın maskesini düşürdük [We unmasked Europe]. March 9, 2016.

Suriyeliler bu coğrafyanın insanı [Syrians are the people of this geography]. July 8, 2016.

Medeniyetiniz batsın [Damn your civilization]. January 1, 2017.

YPG ve PYD’ye ihtiyaç yok [No need for YPG or PYD]. May 15, 2017.

Reyhanlı insanlıkta Avrupa’dan büyük [Reyhanlı is greater than Europe in humanity]. May 21, 2017.

Mazlumların korunağıyız [We are the shelter of the oppressed]. May 28, 2017.

Türkiye mazlumların sesi [Turkey is the voice of the oppressed]. June 12, 2017.

Suriyeliler sadaka değil iş istiyor [Syrians want jobs, not benefaction]. July 19, 2017.

En cömert ülke Türkiye [Turkey is the most generous country]. August 5, 2017.

AB’de insanlığın iflası [The failure of humanity in EU]. September 13, 2017.

Firavun, PYD zulmünü görse utanırdı [Pharaoh would be ashamed if he saw the persecution of the PYD]. February 2, 2018.

İşte Batı’nın insanlığı [Here is the humanity of the West]. March 6, 2018.

Batı, konforlu yaşamak için masumları öldürüyor: Biz yaşatmanın peşindeyiz [The West kills the innocents to live in comfort: We want to keep alive]. March 7, 2018.

Suriyeliye ‘imtiyaz’ yalanları deşifre oldu [Lies about privileges to Syrians exposed]. April 6, 2018.

Mülteci cefada BM’ciler sefada [Refugees are in pain; the UN people are at ease]. April 22, 2018.

Türkiye’nin insanlığına hayran kaldım [I was fascinated by Turkey’s humanity]. April 25, 2018.

AB ve BM’den yuva yıkma dersleri [Lessons on breaking up family from EU and UN]. June 3, 2018.

Yuva yıkmaya 200 milyon [200 million for breaking up families]. June 5, 2018.

Ajan STK’lar denetlensin [Inspect agent NGOs]. June 6, 2018.

AB’de 96 bin mülteci çocuk kayıp [96 thousand refugee children missing in EU]. July 23, 2018.

Dünyanın vicdanı Türkiye [Turkey, the conscience of the World]. August 19, 2018.

Mazlumların yüzü gülüyor [The oppressed are smiling]. August 19, 2018.

Vicdansız Batı [Unscrupulous West]. September 26, 2018.

Suriyelilerden ekonomiye 1 milyar dolar [1 billion dollars from Syrians to the economy]. November 30, 2018.

Katliamdan kaçan Kürt’ü hep Türkiye kucakladı [Turkey has always embraced the Kurd fleeing massacre]. January 15, 2019.

İyi insanların hala var olduğunu Türklerde gördüm [I saw in Turk that good people still exist]. February 5, 2019.

Batı’dan mültecilere Hristiyanlık testi [Christianity test for refugees from the West]. February 24, 2019.

Muhacirlere yemeği kesen CHP’li başkana suç duyurusu [Indictment against the RPP Mayor who cut the food for muhacirs]. April 19, 2019.

Batı’nın ‘anneler günü’ tiyatrosu [Mother’s Day theatre by the West]. May 12, 2019.

Korkmayın bir gün ülkemize döneceğiz [Don’t be afraid, one day we will return to our country]. June 3, 2019.

CHP ve İP faşizmi körüklüyor! [RPP and WP are fueling fascism!]. July 29, 2019.

Savaş bitiğinde Suriyeli kalmaz [No Syrians will stay when the war is over]. July 30, 2019.

Düzensiz göç önlenecek [Irregular migration will be prevented]. July 31, 2019.

Ensar-muhacir anlayışıyla hareket ediyoruz [We act with the understanding of ensar-muhacir]. August 3, 2019.

Suriyelilere imtiyaz yok [No privileges for Syrians]. October 28, 2019.

Mültecilere bombalı karşılama [Welcome bomb to refugees]. March 1, 2020.

Azgın azınlığın iki yüzlülüğü [The hypocrisy of the rampant minority]. March 1, 2020.

Haçlı karşımızda ümmet arkamızda [The crusader before Us, the ummah behind us’]. March 4, 2020.

Merhamete sizin de ihtiyacınız olabilir [You may need mercy too]. March 5, 2020.

Batı, insanlığı öldürüyor: Yunan askeri 1 mülteciyi daha öldürdü [The West kills humanity: The Greek soldier killed another refugee]. March 5, 2020.

Türkiye’ye sözünü tutmayanlar Yunanistan için seferber oldu [Those who did not keep their promise to Turkey mobilized for Greece]. March 5, 2020.

8 Mart Hokkabazlığı [Conjury of March 8th]. March 8, 2020.