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Historical Memory of Asylum Policy in Turkey: Ottoman Legacies and Syrian Refugee `Crisis` Challenges

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Abstract

Asylum policies are not only bunch of laws and regulations drawn on the registers by the power institutions. Instead, they are social structures that evolve within certain historical context and under various historical moments and developments. They have their historical memories of social learning and construction. Placed at the crossroad of Europe, Middle East, Eurasia and Africa Turkey has been both country of transit and asylum that accumulated a long and diverse memory of forced immigrations. The following study investigates in what ways Turkey use to approach and manage all these asylum movements and how Ottoman asylum policy and experience found reflection on its current asylum policy towards Syrian refugee flows? Is there historical continuity in its asylum policies? What are the turning points and changes in the historical development of its asylum policies and practices? At what manner Europeanisation encountered the Ottoman legacies in the field of asylum? How all those challenges and continuities found reflection in the temporary protection policy towards the Syrian refugee flow?

Keywords: Turkey, Syrian refugee crisis, asylum, Syria

Introduction

Forced migrations have been one of the pertaining legacies following the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from its 600.000 km2 broad European Shark-I Roumeli (East Roman) lands. During 19th century the European lands of the Ottoman Empire fall to 170.000 km2, while its population diminished from 20 million to 4.5 million people. This territorial and demographic defeat meant more than 70 percent loss of military and economic power.(Kale, 2015:155-190)

As the only inheritor of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has accumulated a long historical memory of forced migrations from all around its neighborhood: the Balkans, Caucasus, and Middle East. Majority of these forced migrants have been approached as kin minorities and legacy of the Ottoman Empire. Thus thousands of Albanians, Bosnians, Caucasians, Chechens, Tatars, Turkmens, Meshketian, Macedonian and Bulgarian Muslims and Turks found refuge and settled in Turkey. Until the end of 60's majority of the forced immigrants from the Balkans and Caucasus were accommodated under the settlement law of 1934. They were provided land or housing from different corners of Anatolia and granted Turkish citizenship under the category of national refugees[2], so called *muhacir* (means person who flees persecution).

Beside the forced kin immigrations Turkey has been a land of transit for thousands of refugees and asylum seekers coming from Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. Each war, conflict or intervention that took place in these regions followed with asylum movements towards the Europe. Thus especially since 1970's Turkey became primarily a country of transit for Iranian, Iraqi, Afghani and Somali refugees. Since than Turkey is known as transit country that provide conditional and temporary protection to non-European asylum seekers and refugees.

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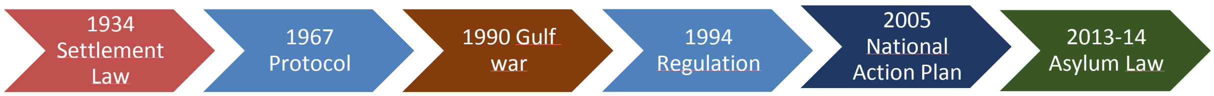
[2] The concept of refugee used along the article is based on the definition of Article 1 of the 1951 Genova Convention for the Rights of the Refugees.

Figure 1: Chronology of Asylum Policy in Turkey



Turkey is a signatory of the 1951 Convention, however, with the Protocol of 1967 Turkey has placed a geographical limitation that foresees permanent refugee status only to applicants who originate from Europe. Later on, this limitation has been clarified as asylum seekers whose countries of origin are members of Council of Europe. For long years Turkey did not have a specific law on asylum and international protection and all asylum policy was coordinated and implemented under the guidance of 1994 Regulation and numerous directives announced under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior.

Two years after the start of the Syrian refugee crisis, in 2013, Turkey enacted its first comprehensive Law on International Protection and Foreigners and afterwards established its first civic institution, the General Directorate of Migration Management. Today the main actors of Turkey's asylum policy are the GDMM and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency AFAD.

So far, this bifocal institutional structure copes with the current asylum issues in Turkey and tries to manage and provide services to more than 3.5 million asylum seekers and refugees. It is not a doubt that there are lots of administrative shortcomings and structural challenges in this management process, however, did Europeanization-led institutional de-securitization of the asylum policy changed something in the traditional practice? What political, legal, institutional, or social continuities or alterations found place in the historical development of the asylum policy in Turkey?

1. Ottoman Past and Legacy in the Formation of the Asylum Policy in Turkey

After the arrival of the Seljuk Turks in the 11th century the demography of the Byzantine Anatolia started to change. By 13th century Anatolia became a land of the Turkic tribes. The Byzantine historians used to call it `Turqia`.(Kaya, Erdogan,2015:17-27) The firs mass refugees who found asylum in the Ottoman Anatolia were the Sephardi Jewish immigrants to the Balkan and Anatolian lands between 14th and 19th centuries.(Güleryüz,2015:49-69) The first mass migrations from the Balkans and Caucasus towards Ottoman Anatolia began by the withdrawal of Ottoman Empire from the Rumelia lands in late Ottoman Empire. Until than the Ottoman lands hosted immigration of slaves from Africa, tribe or colonization settlements at the new conquered lands and regions extending from Hejaz up to Transylvania.

After the 1853 Crimea war the Ottoman lands became a land hosting millions of war refugees from Caucasus and the Balkans. Hundreds thousands of Crimean Tatar refugees were followed by the great exodus of one million Circassia people in 1864.(Kaya,2015:135-151) The mass arrivals of Abkhazian, Circassian, Tatar, Nogai, Laz etc. refugees from the Caucasus. The high epidemic deaths amongst those immigrants led to the establishment of the so called Refugee Commission. The name of the commission was called `Muhacirrin` which means the Muslim exile into Muslim lands. Being the first social policy institution in the Middle East, this commission was responsible for the reception, registration, accommodation, resettlement and all related social policies in regard the health and education of the refugees.

ForcedMigrationsto/viaTurkey[3]

YEARS	Caucasus&Middle East	Former Yugoslavia	Romania	Greece	Bulgaria
1859-1922	4.000.000	1.445.000			
1919-1929		255.878	117.095	384.000	198.688
1940-1945	100.800 GermanJewish	1.671	4.201	-	15.744
1946-1970	Caucasus 50's: 10.023	182.505	329	25.889	169.112
1971-1980	Iran Revolution: 1.500.000 1979- Bahai transit	1.797	136	-	116.104
1981-1990	Chechnya: 2.000 Iran-Iraq: 85.767 Afganistan: 7.285	2.623	760	-	265.000
1993-	GulfWar: 500.000Iraqi Meshketians: 32.577	Bosnia 20.000 Kosovo 17.746			77.000
		304.023	122.521	409.889	749.648
TOTAL		1.445.000 + 2.026.081			

After the enactment of the 1857 Migration and Settlement Directive and the 1869 Ottoman Citizenship Law, all refugees that were born from Ottoman parents or Ottoman father were granted Ottoman citizenship. Thus almost all of the Ottoman refugees who arrived after 1869 were granted land or immovable propertyin Anatolia and registered as citizens as well. The only condition for granting land and citizenship was the obedience to the Sultans law.(Kale,2014:252-271) With its liberal immigration policy, the commission managed to handle the overwhelming mass immigrations until the end of the century.

During the 19th century the Ottoman lands hosted also Hungarian, Polish and Russian refugees from the Russian and Austrian Empires. (Deleon,1996; Andrews 1989:137)|The most traumatic and extensive forced immigrations to the Ottoman Anatolia took place during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-8 and the First and Second Balkan Wars between years 1912-13. More than 1.445.000 war refugees arrived and settled in Turkey before the Balkan wars. (Eren,1993:298) While the Russian-Ottoman war forced millions of Ottoman Muslims from the Eastern Balkans, i.e. Romania and Bulgaria to flee into Anatolia, the Balkan wars followed mass migrations from the Western Balkan lands involving more than 2.5 million displaced people.

All those forced movements were closely related to the Ottoman defeat and retreat from its European lands, thus lacked any structured strategy and coordination. The ethnic cleansing of the former Ottoman territories resulted in mass forced displacement and a long run historical trauma among the Balkan refugees in Turkey.(Aganoglu, 2017)On the other hand the hundred year long wars had ended up with feminization of the Ottoman population, i.e. the rate of the men in the population decreased. Thus the Ottoman Empire needed especially masculine immigration for military and labor purposes. There were no men to serve military service, make trade or work the land and pay taxes. Forced immigrations from the Caucasus and the Balkans brought the needed men power for the forthcoming World War I. Indeed, thousands of the Balkan and Caucasus refugees lost their life at various fronts in the Middle East, Dardanelles and Eastern Anatolia during the WWI.

[3]Data arecollectedfrom(Ozgur Baklacioglu, Nurcan,2012) and (Kaya, Erdoğan,2015)

So, the liberal immigration policy compensated the war-effected Ottoman economy and military force. The empty lands were reutilized and unpopulated regions were settled through refugee villages.(Tekeli,2011) As a result of the arrival of millions of refugees between the Ottoman-Russian war and Balkan wars,the population of the Ottoman Empire had reached approximately 40 million in 1908. (Kale, 2015:162) Together with the economic backlash the abrupt growth in the population resulted in structural insufficiencies in the implementation of the liberal immigration policies. The social policies and humanitarian aid became poor and insufficient, while lands became almost populated. The historical and geopolitical identity trauma of the Balkan wars empowered the nationalist feelings and expectations in regard to immigration. The multicultural liberal immigration policy was slowly replaced by nation-building policies. The Christian population was not approached as loyal as used to be before.

As result of the Christian emigrations and Muslim immigrations the religious structure of the Ottoman Empire had changed as well. While the Muslims constituted 60 percent of the population in 1820's, their percentage increased to 80 percent in 1890's.(Karpat, 2010: 176-7) This change found reflection in the political ideology which shifted from Ottomanizm to Islamism, and after the Arab uprisings towards Turkish nationalism. After the Balkan wars Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire initiated crossborder voluntary population exchange program which displaced 90.000 Bulgarian and Muslim refugees living along the Bulgarian-Ottoman border.(Önder,2000:342-347)The nationalist policies in the Balkans and Middle East triggered ethnonational movements and population exchanges across the region. In the post-Balkan War years of 1914-1915 the nationalist Young Turk government fostered mass exile of the Christian population from Thrace and Aegean Anatolia. This trend increased during the national independency war in Anatolia during 1919-1922. About 900.000 Anatolian Greeks found protection in Greece.(Macar,2015:173-189)

After the First World War and the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, Ankara also initiated a fast top-down nation-building and modernization project. This project was fostered by the colonization and nationalization of the former Ottoman lands situated under the authority of the Bulgarian and Serb-Croat-Slovene kingdom. Dedicated to the idea of full emancipation from the Ottoman past and legacy, the corporatist nationalist governments of the SCS Kingdom launched broad nationalization of the Croat-Catholic and Albanian-Bosnian Muslim lands in the so called Great South Serbia lands, i.e. Macedonia, Kosovo, Sanjak, South Bosnia. Muslim and Catholic villages were set under fire or forcefully emptied through mass attacks collaborated with the local gendarmerie. Serbian *Chetnic* (hajduc, vagabonds) paramilitary groups were often instrumentalized by the local land owners who abused the policies to enlarge their lands through misuse of the nationalist aspirations. This forced nationalization of the land was supported by Serbian colonization policies. Ethnically cleansed lands were colonized through bringing Serbian migrants from Montenegro and Serbia. Granted with the lands of the Muslim and Croat emigrants those immigrant colonies were to prevent the return of the Croat or Muslim refugees by appropriating their immovable and all properties and agricultural tools. The seized lands and properties were immediately sold or registered to the gendarmeria men, local landowners, colonizators or Chetnics.

According to the Ottoman Asylum Commission register between years 1919 and 1926 Turkey accommodated 131.000 refugees from SCS Kingdom and 198.688 refugees from Bulgaria.(Ozgur Baklacioglu, 2010) The Albanian and Serbian population migration registers point to much higher number of Muslim and Catholic refugees who left Serbian lands. Belgrade sources point to 255.878Albanian and Turkish speaking Muslims that left the South Serbian lands during the interwar years. The available data shows that considerable part of the Muslim refugees who left the former Ottoman lands could not reach the Turkish borders and settled down in various Muslim villages in Bulgaria or north Greece on the way to Turkey. This first refugee flow followed by a second wave of mass forced migration to Turkey as a result of the ethnic cleansing commenced by the so called `Bela Ruka` (White hand) fascist paramilitary groups spread around the Yugoslav Kingdom.(Kingdom of South Slavs)The attacks of these groups led to mass migrations from the territories of the `Great South Serbian` lands. Those movements headed towards North Bosnia, Croatia, Albania and Turkey. According to Turkish official register only 116.487forcedimmigrantsfromYugoslavia hadsettled in Turkeybetween 1923-1940.

During these years Turkey and Greece signed the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and its protocol for the exchange of Orthodox and Muslim populations in Anatolia and Greece. During the implementation of the Lausanne exchange of populations Turkey resettled to Greece 1.200.000 Orthodox Greeks and received 384.000 Muslims from Greece. This population exchange was approached as necessary policy for reaching sustainable peace in the Near East region, i.e. the Balkans and Middle East.

On the other hand this was a tough experience of population displacement policy that organized the emigration of million people and relocation of hundreds of thousands. The Representative Office for Exchange Construction and Residence was the second important migration management institution that left important legacies and experiences in the Turkish asylum system. It had arranged detailed health check, temporary accommodation, tax-free exchange of the movable and immovable properties across the Greek-Turkish border and coordinated the compensation and final settlement of the migrants. For example, while majority of the immigrants were provided with house, gardens and lands, by 1924 the Government organized the construction of 14 immigrant villages. Nevertheless many communications also point to the poor economic policies and lack of coordination during the settlement of the immigrants, as well as the high commercial cost of the Greek emigration from Anatolia. Upon these critiques the Representative Office was closed and changed with Directorate for General Settlement. (Macar, 2015:174-182)

The Lausanne population exchange led to religious homogenisation of the populations in both Greece and Turkey, however, it also brought ethnically and linguistically diverse populations to both Greece and Turkey. This ethnic diversity served as a ground for the interwar nation-building policies in the region. The religious migrations were replaced by ethnic forced migrations.

2. From Land of Kin Immigrations to Transit Crossroad of Conditional Asylum Seekers and Refugees

The raise of the pro-Nazi governments to power in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Albaniabrought about mass deportations of pro-Kemalist Turks from Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia to Turkey. In 1934 Bulgaria deported almost all teachers with Turkish descent to Turkey. Those deportations led to panic among the Turkish population in Bulgaria and another wave of migrations headed towards Turkey.The number of Bulgarian Turks and Muslims who found refuge in Turkey between 1923-1939 had reached 198.688.(Şimşir,1986) These immigrations followed those from Romania, Yugoslavia and Caucuses. The intensification of the mass immigrations during the interwar years raised the need for a specific settlement and migration law.

Majority of the forced migrants who found asylum in the early Turkish republic were approached as refugees (multeci or muhacir), thus registered and granted certain piece of land and later on citizenship. While the mass flows usually were managed under this category, the immigrants or refugees who had invitation for immigration or those who wanted to be registered at the residence addresses of their relatives in Turkey were considered as volunteer immigrants (serbestgocmenler). The volunteer immigrants were not being granted land and properties and were allowed to settle in the cities (Izmir, Bursa, Edirne, Canakkale, Eskisehir etc.) where their relatives used to live.In 1934 Turkey erected the 2510 numbered Settlement Law that approached the forced immigrants of Turkish roots as national refugees to be granted citizenship and registered as refugees under settlement program of the General Directorate for Rural Service. In practice, refugees who did not have sufficient resources were being resettled to various corners of the country and provided certain amount of land. Those who had own economic funds were left to settle to the cities of their choice. The implementation of the 1934 Settlement Law was interrupted in 1970 and later on canceled in 2006 when the contemporary 5543 Numbered Settlement Law has been put into force.

During the WWII and the Cold War, Turkey hosted100.800 Jewish refugees from Europe,182.505 Albanian, Turkish and Bosnia refugees from SF of Yugoslavia, 184.300 Turks and Pomak refugees from Bulgaria,25.889 Turkish refugees from Greece, and at least 10.023 Caucasian, Uygur, Uzbek, Azeri, Abkhaz and Tatar refugees fleeing Stalinist ethnic resettlement policies.(Kocaoğlu, 2006:152-158)While majority of the Jewish refugees continued their travel towards Israel, the other refugees remained and settled in Turkey. They were provided humanitarian aid and when possible accommodation, as well as citizenship.

After 1970 there was not further provision of land or immobile properties. Moreover, the immigrations from the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia were not approached as refugees, but volunteer immigrants or forced immigrants. They were being provided only humanitarian aid or temporary rent assistance upon their admittance to the Turkish citizenship. This change in the asylum policy was convenient with the change in the profile of immigrants in Turkey after 1960`s. During 1960`s and 1970`s Turkey hosted 116.104 Turkish immigrants coming to Turkey under the Bulgarian-Turkish agreement for family reunification. After 1979 Turkey became a transit country for more than one million Iranian and Bhai refugees fleeing the new Islamist regime. The UNHCR registered 11.495 Iranian asylum applications between1980-1990. (Jefroudi,2014:324) In the meantime, after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan 7.285 Afghani refugees found refuge in Turkey. Soon after the beginning of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war forced millions of Iraqi and Iranian refugees and internally displaced persons to flee these countries.(Danış, 2014) 85.767 of those refugees found protection in Turkey.

The highest refugee crisis took place at the very end of the Cold War, in 1989. The Bulgarian government forced 350.000 Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks to leave the country within 3 months. Turkey hosted those refugeespartly in camps, but majority relied on the temporary support of their relatives in Turkey. Majority of these refugees were well skilled with knowledge of Turkish, Russian, Bulgarian, s well as some of them knew English or German. Because of their ethnic identity those refugees were approached as kin forced immigrants. They were provided temporary humanitarian aid and rent assistance, granted citizenship, years after cheap credit housing, and all were employed by the local business. Thanks to these refugees, the Turkish market established easy connection and blowout to the Former Soviet and Eastern European markets. Moreover, very well educated and skilled the Turkish refugees from Bulgaria filled thousands of professional positions in strategic sectors such as education, health, engineering, agriculture, foreign policy, international trade, and physical sciences. Similarly to the WWII Jewish refugees who established important educational and scientific institutions in Turkey(Guleryuz,2015:47-74), Turkish refugees from Bulgaria(Hacısalihoğlu&Ersoy,2012)as well as Iranian refugees (Jefroudi,2014:303-337)brought valuable knowledge and experience to various public and private sectors in Turkey, because both of those groups included well educated and skilled people.

The turning point in the Turkey`s asylum history had been the 1991 Gulf Crisis and the U.S. intervention in Iraq which displaced millions of Iraqi people especially from the north of Iraq. About 500.000 Iraqi refugees attempted to cross the borders of Turkey, but were stopped because of the ongoing fight against PKK in Southeastern Turkey.(Aksel, Danış, 2014:277-337)The Kurdish ethnic identity of the majority of the Iraqi refugees raised national security concerns among the asylum and immigration decision makers in Turkey. The political elites were cautious about infiltration of hundreds of PKK Peshmerga among the refugees and feared of suicide bombings and deterioration of the public security in Turkey. Against the strong international pressure to let in the Iraqi refugees, Turkey insisted on `safe zones` and encampment of the Iraqi refugees outside the Turkish borders. However, between 1989-1992, thousands of Iraqi refugees passed Turkey`s borders illegally, moved to Bulgaria or Romania by the use of tourist visas, and continued their journey up to Germany or Belgium.

The Gulf refugee flow placed instant pressure on Turkey`s foreign and security perception and policy. There was no law on international protection and the all immigration and asylum system was coordinated by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) through a bunch of regulations and directives that formed a porous legal system open for subjective explanations and abuses. In 1994 Turkey introduced regulation for management and control of mass influx of asylum seekers. Together with the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the security-based Regulation of 1994 became the chief legal instrument for managing mass movements across Turkey. The regulation demarcated Turkey`s red lines of its subsequent policy towards mass movements from the Middle East and Asia. These red lines reviewed Turkey`s historical memory of Turkish identity by highlighting the Turkish and Ottoman roots, instead of the Islamic identity. Indeed, the `new` refugees and immigrants were of Islamic origin but did not belong to any Turkic kin minority abroad.

During 1990`s and 2000`s Turkey allowed 2000 `guest` refugees from Chechnya to stay in Turkey (Salomoni,2014:371), but did not grant them refugee status under the 1951 Convention because of its delicate bilateral relations with Moscow at that time. Turkey provided residence, and later on citizenship to 32.577 Mesketian Turks(Salomoni,2014:373) and hosted 20.000 Bosnian and 17.746 Kosovar refugees. Majority of the Bosnian and Kosovar refugees returned back to their countries. Since the beginning of the interventions and conflicts in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia in early 90`s,Turkey has been transformed into a land of transit for millions of Iraqi, Afghani, Somali, Iranian, Bhai, Uzbek, Caucasian (Salomoni,2014:339-374)etc. refugees. Keeping the geographical limitation as primary criteria for the access to international protection, Turkey offers only temporary or conditional protection to the refugees who escape countries that are not members of the Council of Europe.So far Turkey recognized the Convention refugee status and provided full protection to only 45 refugees coming from Council of Europe member states. For long years Turkey provided a right to temporary stay to thousands of African(Yukseker,Brewer,2009), Iraqi, Afghani etc. refugees and asylum seekers registered or undergoing asylum procedure at the UNHCR in Ankara.

The growing numbers of non-European refugees and irregular immigrants blocked the already destabilized asylum and immigration policy in Turkey. The legal barriers and structural insufficiencies broadened the opportunities of the informal and black sectors. Irregularization of immigration and asylum provided cheap informal immigrant labor to the growing informal market in Turkey.

The reconstruction of immigration and asylum as a security issue, i.e. the securitization of immigration and asylum on the other hand led to shift in the immigration and asylum policy from the domain of nation-building and kin protection to the domain of national/public security and deterrence policy. For long years, Turkey `managed` asylum movements in the country through proportional distribution of asylum seekers to various satellite cities in Turkey without providing clear access to the basic rights. The vague legal framework led to numerous problems in the implementation thus increased the clandestine passages and the presence of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in Turkey. Official data shows that more than 800.000 irregular immigrants were apprehended in Turkey between 1995 and 2010, while 150.000 were rejected clandestine entry attempts through the Turkish borders. During 2000`s Turkey evolved as one of the most intensive transit routes in the region.(İçduygu,2015:283)

Under the pressure of the legal and structural problems Turkey initiated the Europeanization of its asylum system by launching the 2005 National Action Plan. Under the EU conditionalities and directives related to asylum and immigration, Turkey started to carve its first Law on International Protection and Foreigners and set up its institutional ground. (Baklacıoğlu, Özer, 2010) The contemporary perceptions, policies and institutional forms of reception, registration, and access to protection, evaluation and detention constitute an amalgam of downloaded EU directives, conditionalities, practices and experiences and Turkey`s national security concerns.

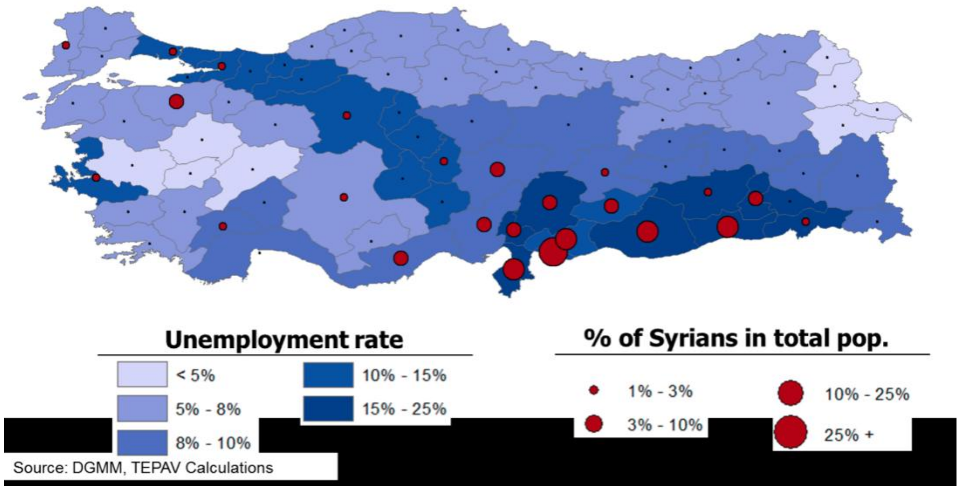
The start of the war in Syria and the rigorous Syrian refugee flow after 2011 intensified the Europeanisation of the Turkey`s asylum and migration system. The General Directorate for Migration Management has been established as the first civic institution designing the asylum and migration policy. Indeed, the Syrian refugee flow became the first mass refugee flow accommodated under the clauses of the first Turkey's Law on International Protection and the General Directorate for Migration Management.

Refugees under Temporary Protection in Turkey			
Country of Origin	**Number**	**Syrian Refugees**	
Iraq	119.933	Total:	3.285.500
Afghanistan	96.032	Age	Children
Iran	24.597	0-17	1.445.400
Somalia	3.981	0 – 4	459.000
Conditional Refugees and Asylum Seekers	244.543	5 –11	525.600
Age of 0-17:	84.424	12 - 17	492.750
	Women&Children: %75.2 (2.310.000)		
Sources: www.goc.gov.tr; www.bmmyk.org.tr			

3. **Asylum Policy after the Syrian Refugee Crisis Era: From Europeanisation to Ottomanization of the Asylum Policy?**

Since 2011 The General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM) and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) have registered 3.285.000 Syrian refugees under temporary protection in Turkey. Under the Article 91 at the 2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection and the 2014 Temporary protection regulation Syrian refugees are approached as `foreigners forced to leave their country, cannot return back, and crossed the borders of Turkey in a mass influx situation seeking immediate and temporary protection, but cannot be granted individual international protection status`. Under this regulation the Syrian refugees are provided with 99 numbered Temporary Protection ID cards, which opens their access to temporary residence, public health services, public education and legal employment.

According to the official data access to health services has been provided to27.019.750 Syrian patients, of whom 953.466 undergone surgeries. Since 2011, the public hospitals in Turkey assisted the birth of 224.750 Syrian babies. According to the data of the Ministry of Education from 1.445.400 Syrian children, 588.846 children have been registered at public/private schools. More than half of the registered children follow the so called `Syrian schools`, i.e. temporary education centers, while the majority of the remaining ones do not follow the schools at all. The official data claim that 225.000 Syrians have been provided various certificate or/and language education.



In January 2016, the Work Permit Regulation arranged facilitated conditions for Syrians` legal access to employment. According to the regulation, the Syrian refugees who hold the 99 numbered registration can apply for legal employment, 6 months after the acquisition of temporary protection residence. The regulation promotes employment of Syrian workers in certain fields of the Turkish market such as agriculture, livestock production, construction, manufacturing etc. The employment legalization procedure is initiated and completed by the employer via online application. The regulation orders that the employers have to pay at least the minimal salary of $350 USD. Until the midst of 2017, the Ministry of Labor issued only 13,300 work permits.[4]The number remains low because of the high supply of cheap migrant labor in the country. The 40 percent large informal market has normalized informal employment as a common practice in the country. Because of this migrants who ask for legalization of their employment face with discharge.

According to the settlement data, majority of the Syrian refugees live in border cities and Istanbul, cities with high unemployment rates. They use to spent the summers and autumns at working camps situated around agricultural lands and farms across Anatolia. The average monthly salary changes from 40 US Dollars for 10-14 years old kids up to 150 US Dollars for youths and elder ones. Majority of the Syrian refugees survive with 2 US Dollars per day and live below the poverty line. Because of the low and unsustainable income and high rents Syrian refugees face constant risk to fall out of housing. There are lots of refugees who are not paid for months. This they often get out of sources.(Erol et all.,2017)

Moreover, about 77 percent of these refugees consist of women and children. Majority of the boys above the age of 9 work in informal manufactures, girls above age of 16 use to work as well. The poverty and the hard living conditions keep children away from their childhood and education. Girls are being married at the age of 13 as a measure for safety: "I pry for my daughter to have her menstruation as late as possible, otherwise I will have to marry her… in order to save her…" says a mother in Fatih, a quarter of Istanbul. Although Turkey introduced and implemented rather liberal approach in providing the basic access to some very basic human rights,insecurity and social abuse are the main features of their life in exile.

Conclusion: Neither Europeanisation, nor Ottomanization

Sociological and oral history studies about different immigrant generations show that majority of the refugees undergo similar problems as the ones Syrian refugees face. My personal conversations with refugees from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan Mesketians, Africa and Afghanistan, all of them touch upon an intensive social exploitation, poverty, exaggerated rents, low salaries, gender based insecurities and cultural conflict. So, the human cost of the forced migrations is an everlasting one.

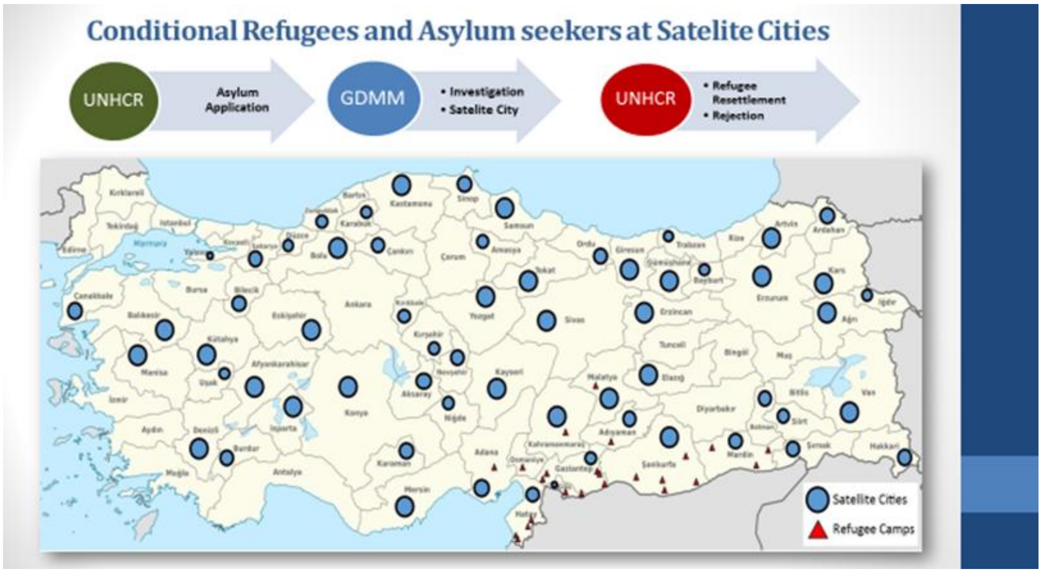
[4]Allofficialdataareretrievedfromthe AFAD and GDMM web sites: www.goc.gov.trandwww.afad.gov.tr

The privileged access to citizenship weakened this human cost, but The Ottoman legacy of asylum seekers and immigrant settlement continued until 1970`s when the 1934 Settlement Law was disabled, and the forced kin immigrations were replaced by the non-Turkic asylum movements from Middle East and Asia. After the end of the Cold war and the Gulf War refugee crisis, and the enforcement of 1994 Regulation, the national security concerns elevated to the fore of the asylum policy in Turkey. The MoI outpaced the General Directorate on Settlement and Residence and became the only institution responsible for managing immigration and asylum flows to Turkey until 2013.By initiating the Europeanisation of the Turkish asylum system the 2005 National Action Plan constituted the third important turning point in the institutional and legal development of civic asylum system in Turkey. In 2013 MoI was replaced by a civil institution, i.e. General Directorate for Migration Management (GDMM). Since 2013 GDMM, AFAD and numerous national and international humanitarian NGO's (UNHCR, IOM, ASAM, UNICEF, UNDP etc.) constitute the institutional architecture of the modern `asylum management system` in Turkey.

While all those institutional and legal changes present the outward effects of the forced migrations on the asylum policy in Turkey, the real challenges and outcomes of these movements lie in the ongoing identity crisis in the historical formation of the modern Turkish society(Canefe,2008). The major legacy of the past forced immigrations is not ethnically homogenized nation, but, the ethnic diversification and Islamization of the nation, i.e. nation that is constituted of 99 percent Muslims. Indeed, the first census of 1927 found out that 14.184.381 out of the total of 14.589.149 citizens were of Muslim origin. As we mentioned above, under the code of the *millet* system (based on religious identity) the Ottoman Refugee Commission used to register the arrivals of the various Caucasian and Balkan refugees based on their religious identity. The coexistence of various ethnic identities of Muslim origin was considered to empower the Ottoman imperial identity based on the power of the Halifat. Indeed, Halifat became important tool in the Sultan Abdulhamit`s Pan-Islamist strategy towards the Middle East during the 19th century.

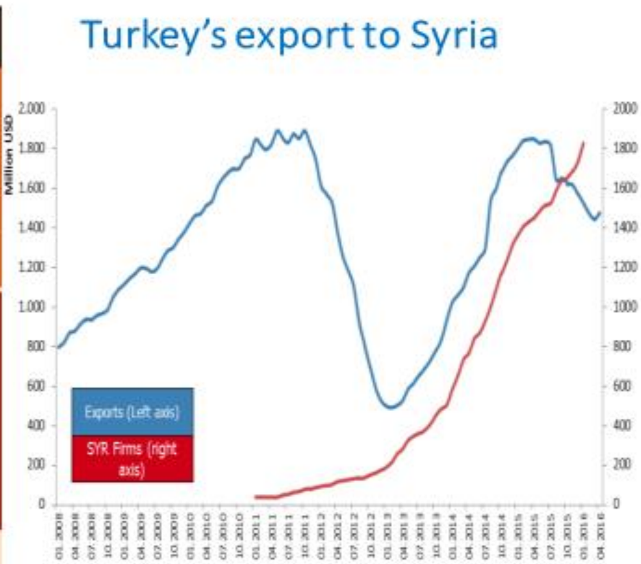
The ethno-linguistic identity came to the scene after the Young Turks government, but gained prevalence after the rise of Germanofil wave among the political elite in 1930`s. Until the first census of 1927 the major characteristic of Turkishness was the non-Arabic Islamic identity. After the 1927 census the Ottoman emphasis on the Islamic identity was replaced by Turkishness and belonging to Ottoman or Turkic kin minority abroad. The Muslims who inhabited the Ottoman lands were and are still considered as inheritance of the Ottoman culture.

Religious identity was at stage during the Cold war immigrations as well, especially in regard to the immigrations from former SF of Yugoslavia and Central Asia. Turkey did not reject the immigration of those Macedonian Albanians and Bosnians who signed a written declaration of being Turkish. Turkey still retains its tradition of approaching those national refugees under a facilitated registration, accommodation, humanitarian aid, employment, education and citizenship. All this policy is institutionalized under the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Kin Minorities in Ankara. On the other hand, Turkey does not provide permanent protection to the Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian or Afghani refugees who have also Muslim identity. Instead, under the geographical limitation it has provisioned conditional temporary protection, residence and integration opportunities to all those asylum seekers and refugees who come from the similar neighborhood. The asylum seekers and refugees who come from Africa, Middle East, and South Asia are strategically scattered among the satellite cities to wait for their asylum application under police-coordinated monthly presence control. In 2016 there were registered 244.000 conditional asylum seekers and refugees mainly from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia appointed to more than 74 satellite cities across Anatolia. So far, the strategically proportionate distribution of the asylum seekers and immigrants seems to be the most perpetual legacy of the Ottoman asylum policy.



One of the most durable legacies of the Ottoman asylum system is its gendered character. Both during the immigrant registration and population censuses women and children are being usually left behind the masculine hierarchies in the private space. They are not vivid on the official data. Still the refugee women and children constitute the main figures representing the vulnerabilities of the whole immigrant communities. They are subjects to the media coverages and posters, yet, not at the center of the asylum policies. The gender-based character of the Syrian refugee movement interrupted this impaired vision through numerous studies bringing to the light the gendered face of the exile.(Ozgur, Kivilcim, 2015)

Usually overlooked continuity since the Ottoman past rests in the economic profit that forced immigrants have brought to Turkey. Both asylum seekers without residence as well as the Syrian refugees under temporary protection constitute important source of cheap labor. Many Turkish businessmen confessed that the arrival of the Syrian refugees saved their companies from bankruptcy. Almost all Turkish textile sector depend on the cheap Syrian labor employed at the informal manufactures. Five years after the war in Syria began, Turkey's legal and illegal/suitcase export to Syria increased.



Source: TEPAV, 2016

After 2011 the value of the export to Syria undertaken by the Syrian companies situated in Turkey increased up to 2000 million US Dollars. (TEPAV, 2016) Indeed, since the beginning of the war in Syria, thousands of Syrian employers brought their investments and capital to Turkey. The registered amount of Syrian investments is above 360 million US Dollars and represents 14 percent of the total foreign investments in Turkey. The Ekonomistler platform detected 6322 registered Syrian-Turkish companies in 2011-2017. (Ekonomistler, 2017) However, there are thousands of Syrian manufactures in the informal market as well. So, as in the past, Turkey devoted significant resources for humanitarian aid to the forced immigrants, however, each wave of forced immigrants brought cheap labor, foreign capital, crossborder investments and trade.

On the other hand, beside this continuity, there is change in the official discourse in regard to the economics of forced immigrations. While Ottoman governments approached forced immigrations as source of agricultural labor, trade enterprises, tax payers and consumers, the semi-Europeanized Turkish asylum policy has started to approach the asylum seekers and refugees as social burden. Why and how Turkey appropriated the social burden approach? Although the literature on economics of immigration in Turkey concludes that the immigrants from the Balkans and Caucasus had positive impact on the Turkish economy(Karpat,2012; Pamuk,2012), the perception of refugees and asylum seekers as social burden seems memorized throughout the decade long Europeanization in the asylum discourse and policy in Turkey.(Ozgur Baklacioglu, Ozer, 2010) The high number of Syrian refugees empowered this perception and discourse at the public space. Before the 21st century, there was no such budgeting in the asylum discourse in Turkey. Indeed, the cost discourse around the reception and accommodation of the Bosnian and Kosovo refugees, as well as conditional refugees from Africa, Iraq and Afghanistan never agglomerated to such extend. Both Europeanisation of the asylum system and the Syrian refugee wave provided fertile ground for financial growth of a charity based humanitarian aid market in Turkey.

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