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Syrian refugees in Turkey: from "guests" to "enemies"?

Burcu Toğral Koca

Abstract

Since the war erupted in Syria in 2011, Turkey has followed an "open door" policy toward Syrian refugees. The Turkish government has been promoting this liberal policy through a humanitarian discourse that leads one to expect that Syrian refugees have not been securitized in Turkey. This article, however, argues that a security framework that emphasizes control and containment has been essential to the governance of Syrian refugees in Turkey, despite the presence of such non-securitarian discourses. To develop this argument, the article first builds an analytical framework based on a critical engagement with the theory of securitization, which was originally developed by the Copenhagen School. Unlike the Copenhagen School's theory emphasizing "speech acts" as the vector of securitization, this article applies a sociological approach to the analysis of the securitization process by focusing on both discursive and non-discursive practices. In carrying out this analysis, securitizing practices, both discursive and non-discursive, are defined as those that: (1) emphasize "control and containment," especially in relation to societal/public security concerns (here, specifically, the labor market and employment); and (2) establish a security continuum about various other issues—including criminality, terrorism, socioeconomic problems, and cultural deprivation—and thereby treat migrants as "risky" outsiders. Subsequently, in line with this analytical framework, the article seeks to trace the securitization of non-camp Syrian refugees, especially in the labor market. Finally, the article demonstrates that this securitization process is likely to conceal structural and political problems, and to close off alternative public and political debate about the refugees.

Keywords: *Immigration*; *Syrian refugees*; *Turkey*; *securitization*; *labor market*.

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The United Nations (UN) states that "the civil war in Syria resulted in the worst refugee crisis in the world in the last two decades."[1] Since March 2011, close to five million Syrians have fled their home due to the civil war and have sought refuge mainly in neighboring countries, such as Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon.[2] From the very beginning of the civil war, Turkey has followed an "open door" policy and become the leading country in welcoming Syrian refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of June 2016, the number of registered Syrian refugees was 2.7 million,[3] though the actual number is likely to be higher due to incomplete registration.[4] Only around 260,000 of these refugees are currently staying in refugee camps.[5] The rest are spread throughout the country.

Although initially welcomed by the wider public and dealt with through humanitarian discourses, Syrian refugees have recently been framed in security terms. They have increasingly been associated, in the public discourse, with crime, socioeconomic problems, "cultural deprivation," and internal security.[6] This securitization process at the discursive level has developed in parallel with racist and violent attacks against Syrians. On the other hand, the government has continued its "humanitarian" stance and sought to support its "open door" policy by reference to narratives of "historical and geographical necessities," "religious fraternity," and "ethnic kinship."[7]

Against this backdrop, according to theories of securitization that focus on the role of "speech acts" in the process of securitization, Syrian refugees have not been securitized. However, this article argues that focusing exclusively on the statements or "speech acts" of authorities would mask the integration of Syrian refugees into a security framework. In order to capture this process

1 Yavuz Güçtürk, *The Loss of Humanity: The Human Rights Dimension of the Civil War in Syria*, trans. Handan Öz and Gülgün Köse (İstanbul: SETA, 2014), 78.

2 Western countries have been widely criticized for not sharing responsibility in this refugee crisis. Only Sweden and Germany have accepted a small number of refugees from Syria since the war started in 2011.

3 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Syria Regional Refugee Response," http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224.

4 Amnesty International, *Struggling to Survive: Refugees from Syria in Turkey* (London: Amnesty International, 2014), https://www.amnesty.de/files/2014-11-20_Final_report_Struggling_to_Survive.pdf, 6–7.

5 Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı, "Barınma Merkezlerinde Son Durum," https://www.afad.gov.tr/tr/IcerikDetay1.aspx?ID=16&IcerikID=848.

6 See, e.g., Doğuş Şimşek, "Anti-Syrian racism in Turkey," *openDemocracy*, https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/dogus-simsek/antisyrian-racism-in-turkey.

7 Murat Erdoğan, "Syrians in Turkey: Social Acceptance and Integration," Hacettepe Üniversitesi Göç ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Merkezi (November 2014), http://www.hugo.hacettepe.edu.tr/HUGO-REPORT-SyriansinTurkey.pdf.

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properly, it is therefore necessary to analyze both discursive and non-discursive practices in a contextual manner.

To this end, first, the article develops an analytical framework based on a critical engagement with the theory of securitization, which was originally developed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. Yet unlike the Copenhagen School's theory, which focuses on "speech acts" as the vector of securitization, this article applies a sociological approach to understanding the securitization process. More precisely, rather than overemphasizing the performative role of language, this article analyzes both discursive and non-discursive practices. In doing this, the aim is not to offer "objectivist" claims as to whether Syrian refugees constitute a "real" or "imagined" threat for Turkish society, but rather to question how they are administered and framed as such. Second, the rising number of Syrian refugees in Turkey currently raises concerns about various issues, including access to basic services such as health and education, exploitation in the labor market, the boom in child labor, violence against children and women, early marriages, and low school enrollment of the non-camp refugees. As it is not possible to touch upon all these issues here, the article restricts itself to the securitization of Syrian refugees in relation to the labor market and employment and seeks to trace the securitization process within the context of the narrative wherein refugees are framed as a threat to the domestic market and to the employment opportunities of "native" workers. This empirical part of the study is carried out through document analysis of official statements, policy, and legal documents; reports from NGOs and media sources; and academic works. Finally, the article comes to two important conclusions. Firstly, even though the authorities have not utilized a language of security and have followed a "liberal" policy towards Syrian refugees, the latter have nonetheless been integrated into a security framework that emphasizes control and containment. Secondly, this securitization process is likely to conceal such structural and political problems as racism, exploitation, discrimination, and inequalities, and thereby it closes off alternative public and political debate about the complex and variable character of migration issues.

Reflections on the theories of securitization

Over the last two decades, there has been increasing interest in the migration/security nexus. A vast literature has emerged that seeks to understand the transformation of migration policies and discourses, focusing mainly on the EU level.[8] Among this literature, the most prominent is the securitization theory of

8 See, e.g., Didier Bigo, "When Two Become One: Internal and External Securitizations in Europe," in *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration*: *Power, Security and the*

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the so-called Copenhagen School, proposed mainly by Wæver and Buzan. This approach argues that, through the "speech acts" of certain actors like politicians, the media, and the public, migration can be designated as an "existential threat" to societal security/identity. It further argues that extraordinary measures, which were previously not "legitimate," can be put into place if this securitizing move is accepted by a "significant" or "certain" amount of audiences.[9] Undoubtedly, the Copenhagen School's securitization theory, which is based on the assumed role that the performative power of language plays in structuring social and political relations, builds on the "linguistic turn" in the international relations scholarship. Rather than dwelling on a materialist explanation of "realities," it sheds light on the use of discursive practices to socially construct "realities," both in general and in the area of security in particular. Even though the Copenhagen School has introduced a crucial intellectual space through which to explore the discursive construction of migration as a security threat, especially through the "speech acts" of politicians, its theory of securitization has been subject to criticism. At the center of these criticisms is the reduction of securitizing practices to discursive practices[10] due to the theory's exclusive focus on "speech acts" as a vector of securitization.[11] It is contended that a given issue, without being explicitly discussed as a security issue or accepted by certain audiences, can be transformed into a security question. Scholars, especially those following a more Foucauldian approach, draw attention to the role of the context and the concrete practices of security through which migration can be securitized. More precisely, Bigo, one of the protagonists of the Paris School of Security Studies, argues that it is not discursive practices or "speech acts" that are the driving forces behind securitization processes, but rather security technology, professional security knowledge, and bureaucratic practices.[12] In this context, by establishing a security continuum between migration and various security issues like crime, terrorism, and drug trafficking, "[i]t is possible to [securitize migration]

Community, ed. Morten Kelstrup (London: Routledge, 2000): 203–241; Didier Bigo, "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease," Alternatives 27, no. 1 (2002): 63–92; Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala, *Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006); Jef Huysmans, *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Thierry Balzacq, "The Policy Tools of Securitization: Information Exchange, EU Foreign and Interior Policies," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46, no. 1 (January 2008): 75–100.

9 See Barry Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynee Rienner, 1998), 23–24.

10 Thierry Balzacq et al., "Security Practices," in *The International Studies Encyclopedia Online*, ed. Robert A. Denemark (Blackwell Publishing, March 18, 2010). doi: 10.1111/b.9781444336597.2010.x.

11 Sarah Leonard, "Studying Migration as a Security Issue: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges," paper presented at the SGIR Fifth Pan-European International Conference, The Hague, September 9–10, 2004, 16.

12 See Bigo, "When Two Become One" and "Security and Immigration."

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without speech or discourse … The practical work, discipline, and expertise are as important as all forms of discourse."[13]

Leonard puts forward another critical contribution to the securitization approach. She posits that an analysis of discourses would be "misguided" in cases where securitization has already been institutionalized as a result of the persistent and continuous political framing of an issue as a security threat.[14] In such cases, there is no need for further discursive securitizing moves. On the contrary, the issue might be addressed through desecuritizing discourses, but it would continue to be actually dealt with using securitizing practices. Hence, again, analysis of practices in a wider context is of the utmost importance in revealing the dynamics of the securitization process.

The most fundamental contribution to securitization theory is offered by Huysmans. Drawing again on a Foucauldian approach, he directs attention to the relation between discourses and practices in the process of securitization. Huysmans argues the following concerning the Foucauldian lens that he utilizes in his analysis:

> [It] differs from more discursive readings of Foucault's work which use it to introduce a discourse analysis that brings out the historically specific nature of discourse and its constitutive role. The "Foucaultian lens" that is introduced here tries to move the analysis beyond simply focusing on the location of discourse in a historical time and a competition between discourses in that time. It seeks to embed discourse in technologies of government that are practically realizing … security modalities of governing free movement.[15]

In accordance with this Foucauldian lens, he further claims that "even when not directly spoken of as a threat, asylum [and immigration] can be rendered as a security question by being institutionally and discursively integrated in policy frameworks that [emphasize] policing and defense."[16] For Huysmans, securitizing practices that include both discursive and non-discursive practices attempt to secure the "host community" against the "collective dangerous force" of migrants.[17] In particular, he demonstrates that securitization is much "messier" than the Copenhagen School's emphasis on "speech acts." More precisely, for him, "the construction of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees into sources of societal fear follows from a much more multidimensional

13 Bigo, "When Two Become One," 194.

14 Sarah Leonard, "EU Border Security and Migration into the European Union: FRONTEX and Securitisation Through Practices." European Security 19, no. 2 (2010), 236.

15 Huysmans, "The Politics of Insecurity," 93.

16 Ibid., 4.

17 Ibid., 56.

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process in which immigration and asylum are connected to and float through a variety of important political debates."[18] For instance, he delineates how migrants, particularly those originating from the "poor" and "underdeveloped" world, are transfigured as "threats" to societal security, including socioeconomic well-being and employment opportunities, cultural identity, and the internal security of Europe. In this way, they become subject to containment and to control-oriented practices.

In the light of these theoretical and analytical discussions about the securitization of migration, this article agrees that the Copenhagen School's securitization theory provides an important venue for the analysis of the migration/security nexus. However, its exclusive focus on the linguistic practices of politicians, without paying due attention to the role of non-discursive practices, limits the sociological applicability of the school's approach. In other words, securitization cannot be studied solely through the analysis of discursive practices; it is, instead, a more elaborate process that links non-discursive and discursive practices to each other. It is for these reasons that this article takes into account both discursive and non-discursive practices, inasmuch as they are mutually influential and are both constitutive in the construction of the security/migration nexus. In carrying out this analysis, securitizing (discursive and non-discursive) practices are defined as those which: (1) emphasize "control and containment," especially in relation to societal/public security concerns (here, specifically the labor market and employment); and (2) establish a security continuum between migration and various other issues—including criminality, terrorism, socioeconomic problems, and cultural deprivation—and thereby treat migrants as "risky" outsiders.

Syrian "guests" in Turkey: legal and policy framework

Even though Turkey is one of the drafters and original signatories of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it signed the convention with both "time" and "geographical" limitations, on August 29, 1961. In line with these limitations, and as a Western ally, during the Cold War years Turkey received refugees from the Communist bloc countries in close cooperation with the UNHCR.[19] Later, Turkey ratified the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and lifted the time limitation, but continued to maintain the geographical limitation, meaning that non-European asylum

18 Ibid., 64.

19 Kemal Kirişci, "Turkey: A Transformation from Emigration to Immigration," *Migration Policy Institute Profile* (November 1, 2003), http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/turkey-transformation-emigration-immigration.

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seekers were not granted refugee status. Since the 1994 legal changes,[20] people from outside of Europe have been allowed to apply for "temporary asylum" in Turkey. Put differently, such asylum seekers are provided with "temporary protection" until the refugee determination process ends. If such asylum seekers are recognized as "refugees," they are resettled in a third country with the support of the UNHCR. This system has attracted considerable criticism from both the international community and human rights organizations. This is mainly because, on the one hand, Turkey has been steadily transforming into a country of asylum, but, on the other hand, it also excludes thousands of asylum seekers from international protection due to the geographical limitation. Moreover, those asylum seekers recognized as "refugees" have to wait for years to be resettled in a third country, as only a small number of countries—like the United States of America, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia—accept refugees from Turkey. During this waiting period, Turkey undertakes "a very limited responsibility on the fundamental rights and basic needs of these people such as accommodation, healthcare and working … refugees were abandoned to take care of themselves in the cities they were sent to reside."[21] Under such conditions, cities where refugees have been living turn into "open prisons" for them.[22] Despite the long-lasting criticisms relating to these problems, the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection (No. 6458; hereafter LFIP)—which was adopted on April 4, 2013 by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey—sticks to the geographical limitation.[23] In accordance with this limitation, Syrians are not officially recognized as "refugees"

20 In 1994, the Regulation on the Procedures and Principles to be Applied to Foreign Individuals who Took Refuge in Turkey or who Demand a Residence Permit from Turkey to Take Refuge in a Different Country; to Foreigners who Arrived at Turkish Borders *en masse* to Seek Asylum; and to Possible Population Movements went into effect.

21 Oktay Durukan, "Turkey's Refugee Policy and Practices from the Civil Society Perspective," in *Refugee-Asylum Seeker Policy in Turkey in the Light of Recent Developments: Workshop Proceedings* (Ankara, April 25, 2013), ed. Engin Akçay and Farkhad Alimukahmedov (The Journalists and Writers Foundation Press, 2013), 31.

22 Taner Kılıç, "The Role of Civil Society in the Field of Asylum, Situation in the Satellite Cities and Syrian Refugees in Turkey," in *Refugee-Asylum Seeker Policy in Turkey in the Light of Recent Developments: Workshop Proceedings* (Ankara, April 25, 2013), ed. Engin Akçay and Farkhad Alimukahmedov (The Journalists and Writers Foundation Press, 2013), 85.

23 The LFIP has also introduced a more comprehensive legal and institutional framework for refugees and asylum seekers. The law offers a more clear legal base to the principle of *non-refoulement* and to the rights and obligations of asylum seekers and refugees. For example, under Article 55 of the LFIP, it is clearly stated that foreigners cannot be deported to places where they could be subjected to the death penalty, torture, or cruel or degrading treatment or punishment. The same article excludes victims of human trafficking from deportation measures. This represents important progress, as the *non-refoulement* principle is secured under a legal framework. Under Section Three of the LFIP, the rights and obligations of the beneficiary of international protection are detailed and expanded as compared to previous years' insufficient and vague legal framework. However, the LFIP has also integrated and replicated the EU's securitization approach. To be more tangible, the principle's "first country of asylum" and "safe third country" are included within the law. As in the case of the EU and

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because they come from a non-European country. The legal and policy instruments applied to the Syrian refugees can be summarized as below.

As mentioned before, the initial response of Turkey was to open the borders to refugees from Syria and providing them with shelter in camps as well as free healthcare. Here, before proceeding, some important points should be mentioned. Although Turkey still maintains the "open door" approach, various NGO reports reveal that Syrians without valid passports and Palestinian refugees from Syria who are not in possession of visa are denied entry into Turkey by the border authorities.[24] What is more, since August 2012, in response to the increasing arrival of refugees, Turkey—together with Iraq and Jordan—has restricted the entry of refugees: tens of thousands have been prevented from crossing the borders.[25] This means that many of the refugees are forced to resort to dangerous "irregular" routes and human smugglers to cross the border between Syria and Turkey.[26] It should also be noted that this border is highly militarized with minefields, walls (such as the one in Nusaybin, Mardin), barbed wire, the deployment of military personnel and vehicles, and "push-back" operations by Turkish border guards. In such a context, all these practices are likely to clash with the highly praised "open door" policy.[27]

Turning to the official side of the "open door" discourse, Syrians have been considered and/or depicted, by the government and—in the beginning—by the public, as "brothers/sisters in religion," "friends," and "victims" who need to be welcomed with a "humanitarian" outlook. However, it is argued that this "humanitarian" approach by the government rests on a shortsighted political understanding of the Syrian crisis.[28] In other words, as Kirişci states:

> Turkey's expectation, which was in line with a good part of the international community, was that the Assad regime would not last long. It was against

member states, these principles are to provide Turkey with important "legal" means to deport refugees and asylum seekers into third countries.

24 Amnesty International, *Struggling to Survive*, 12.

25 Güçtürk, *The Loss of Humanity*, 81.

26 It has also been stated that only Lebanon has maintained the "open door" policy; see, e.g., Güçtürk, *The Loss of Humanity*, 81. Moreover, according to the UNHCR, "While countries have largely kept their borders open to Syrians fleeing the conflict, access to territory is increasingly constrained. The introduction of a visa regime in July 2013 in Egypt, the staggered arrival policy in Turkey, an increasingly managed admission policy in Jordan, together with fewer safe crossing points have contributed to relatively lower numbers of Syrians arriving in 2014." See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview Mid-Year Update*, http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/midyear/docs/syria-rrp6-myu-strategic-overview.pdf, 16.

27 For a detailed analysis of the human rights violations, including torture, ill treatment, and the forceful return of refugees from Syria, see Amnesty International, *Struggling to Survive*.

28 Burcu Toğral Koca, "Deconstructing Turkey's 'Open Door' Policy towards Refugees from Syria," *Migration Letters* 12, no. 3 (2015), 210.

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> such a background that Turkey declared in October 2011 an open door policy towards refugees fleeing Syria.[29]

This argument also explains why these refugees have been referred to as "guests" from the very beginning: it was expected that Syrians would return home in the near future. However, the term "guest" does not have any legal meaning under national or international law, and thus does not provide a secure status to refugees. In relation to the problem with the term "guest," Özden states that "the Turkish state has not carried out a policy towards Syrians based on a discourse of rights, but rather one based on 'generosity'."[30] Taner Kılıç—the chairman of the board for the Association for Solidarity with Refugees (*Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneği*), also comments that:

> If not used as a result of a lack of knowledge, it means [the term "guest"] was used deliberately and insistently for manipulation purposes. Perhaps the aim was to cover all the costs of Syrians taking refuge in Turkey and treat them in any manner that was deemed appropriate.[31]

As the war has continued with the growing number of arrivals from Syria, a so-called "temporary protection regime" was introduced in October 2011. It was decided that all Syrians, Palestinians, and stateless persons living in Syria and seeking protection would benefit from this regime. The regime provided these refugees with indefinite residence, protection against being sent back under coercion, and emergency supplies for essential needs.[32] For those staying in the camps, the regime guaranteed access to education, water, food, shelter, and health services.[33] However, non-camp refugees were allowed to enjoy only the right to free healthcare and medication for as long as they were registered.[34] With the adoption of the LFIP, this temporary protection regime gained a more solid legal basis and clarity. Article 91.1 of the LFIP defines "temporary protection" (*geçici koruma*) as a protection status granted to foreigners who, having been forced to leave their country and unable to return to it,

29 Kemal Kirişci, "Syrian Refugees and Turkey's Challenges: Going beyond Hospitality," The Brookings Institution (May 2014), http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2014/05/12-turkey-syrian-refugees-kirisci/syrian-refugees-and-turkeys-challenges-may-14-2014.pdf, 1.

30 Şenay Özden, "Syrian Refugees in Turkey," Migration Policy Centre (MPC), MPC Research Report 2013/05 http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/MPC-RR-2013-05.pdf, 5.

31 Kılıç, "The Role of Civil Society," 88.

32 Oytun Orhun and Sabiha Şenyücel Gündoğar, "Effects of the Syrian Refugees on Turkey," Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, Report No: 195 (January 2015), http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/enUploads/Article/Files/201518_rapor195ing.pdf, 12.

33 Ibid., 13.

34 Ibid.

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have arrived at or crossed the borders of Turkey in masses seeking emergency and temporary protection. Article 91.2 further states that the implementation of temporary protection shall be governed by a regulation to be issued by the Council of Ministers. This means that the terms of this protection were not detailed in the LFIP. Based on Article 91, an attempt was made to close this loophole with the Directive on Temporary Protection adopted by the Council of Ministers and going into effect on October 22, 2014. The document specifies the terms of protection, including the scope of temporary protection; the rights and obligations of persons under this protection; criteria for their stay in the country; and the possible limitations on their rights.[35] The directive maintains the previously guaranteed rights and approaches: "(i) An open border policy; (ii) No forcible returns (*non-refoulement*); (iii) Registration with the Turkish authorities and support inside the borders of the camps."[36] The directive also[37] prohibits people for being punished for irregular entry and stay (Article 5); provides for free translation services (Article 30); and removes the requirement to obtain exit visas for those slated for resettlement in other countries (Article 44). In regards to access to the labor market, Article 29 states that "Principles and procedures regarding the employment of persons benefiting from temporary protection shall be determined by the Council of Ministers upon the proposal of Ministry of Labor and Social Security after receiving the opinion of the ministry."[38] It is further noted: "Persons, who hold a Temporary Protection Identification Document, may apply to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security for receiving work permits to work in the sectors, professions, and geographical areas (provinces, districts, or villages) to be determined by the Council of Ministers."[39]

This step was welcomed by civil society, as it was believed to improve the living conditions of refugees through granting identification cards and access to a range of rights and services.[40] However, the directive has attracted criticisms as well. One of them is that it "is too focused on the regulatory aspects of the refugee influx, such as entry and registration, and that it has failed to address the needs of refugees that are essential to meeting longer-term integration goals."[41] Metin Çorabatır, former external relations officer of the UNHCR in

35 Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, "The Temporary Protection Directive Has Been Published," http://www.sgdd.org.tr/en/The-Temporary-Protection-Directive-has-been-published-i74.

36 Özden, "Syrian Refugees," 5.

37 Amnesty International, *Struggling to Survive*, 21.

38 "Temporary Protection Regulation," Article 29.1, http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/_dokuman28.pdf, 11.

39 Ibid., Article 29.2.

40 Ibid., 20.

41 Ceylan Yeğinsu, "Turkey Strengthens Rights of Syrian Refugees," *The New York Times* (December 29, 2014), http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/30/world/europe/turkey-strengthens-rights-of-syrian-refugees.html?_r=0.

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Turkey, further states that "the regime does not provide enough assistance and protection for those outside of the camps."[42] Other criticisms are related to the vague and imprecise language that informs certain clauses of the directive. For example, Amnesty International comments that the directive "is framed principally in terms of opportunities rather than obligations; governorates, for instance, are permitted but not obliged to provide housing for at-risk groups of refugees (Article 21), or to grant refugees access to state social assistance programmes (Article 30)." Another shortfall is that the directive prevents refugees under such "temporary protection" from being considered for resettlement in third countries as "recognized refugees." In other words, Syrian refugees in Turkey are not allowed to apply for transfer to third countries that accept "recognized refugees" from Turkey. Last but not least, the directive has been criticized for failing to "define the time frame for the temporary protection—in theory it could be repealed at any time."[43]

Other steps taken by the government are the separate regulation[44] to govern working conditions for the refugees, which was prepared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security and submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval, as well as the draft law on the employment of foreigners.[45] Under current Turkish labor law, it is extremely difficult for Syrian refugees to obtain work permits and look for employment in the formal sector: they have to be in possession of valid passports and residence permits and the employer has to prove that a Turkish citizen does not fulfill the position.[46] Even though both the separate proposal and the new draft law are claimed to facilitate refugees' access to the labor market, the restrictions mentioned under the terms of temporary protection are maintained. For example, as regards to the separate regulation, Nurcan Önder, the Deputy Director General for Labor, has said: "The regulation will clearly define specific sectors and locations where Syrians can apply for work permits, and quotas will be applied in workplaces to manage the supply and demand."[47] On the other hand, according to the new draft law, "Syrians can only apply for work permits six months after they have received residency permits."[48]

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 The details of the regulation have not yet fully publicized.

45 International Labour Organization, "The ILO Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis (February 2016 Update)," http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—dgreports/—exrel/documents/publication/wcms_357159.pdf, 7.

46 Kirişci, "Syrian Refugees," 21.

47 Yeğinsu, "Turkey Strengthens Rights of Syrian Refugees."

48 Fair Labor Association, "'Participation of Foreigners in the Turkish Labor Market Under the Temporary Protection Act' Roundtable – Summary & Outcomes Report", http://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/march-2015-fla-eti-roundtable-syrian-refugees.pdf.

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The legal and policy framework shows that Syrian refugees are governed under a security architecture that emphasizes containing and controlling "risky" groups. An imprecise legal framework, militarized border controls, limited secure "legal" status, restricted access to social rights, and the encampment of refugees all have preventive and security aspects. Moreover, under this framework, Syrians are seen as "guests" who must return "home" as soon as the war ends in Syria. In this context, the policies put forward as a response to Syrian refugees offer neither long-term solutions nor secure "legal" living conditions in Turkey. However, it has become clear that the war is not likely to end, and Turkey has already become a "home" for Syrians.

Non-camp Syrian refugees: the new "others" in Turkey?

As stated above, around 260,000 Syrian refugees are currently accommodated in the camps, meaning that a significant fraction of refugees—around 85 percent—are living outside of the camps.[49] Various studies have shown that these refugees are living in precarious situations, facing human trafficking and economic exploitation, and are forced into prostitution and begging.[50] Many of them are either living with relatives, or else on their own. Some of them are not able to afford rents, and thus have to live in parks and unoccupied or derelict buildings.[51] These problems, coupled with rising anti-Syrian attitudes and hate speech, have become salient in parallel to the increasing visibility of the refugees in urban centers. In his analysis, Erdoğan depicts the situation as follows:

> As these people became more visible, so did a previously hidden problem: the intolerance of Turkish citizens toward immigrants. Syrian immigrants have become frequent targets of physical violence, especially in the southeastern regions of country and suburbs of larger cities. They have replaced Africans and Eastern Europeans as targets of "hate speech" in written and social media from almost every segment of society.[52]

This assertion should be read in parallel with the numerous demonstrations and attacks against Syrian refugees that have occurred. In Hatay in 2012,

49 Amnesty International, *Struggling to Survive*, 7.

50 Güçtürk, *The Loss of Humanity*, 82.

51 Osman Bahadır Dinçer et al., "Turkey and Syrian Refugees: The Limits of Hospitality," The Brookings Institution (November 2013), http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2013/11/18-syria-turkey-refugees/turkey-and-syrian-refugees_the-limits-of-hospitality-%282014%29.pdf, 17.

52 Emre Erdoğan, "Unwanted, Unwelcome: Anti-Immigration Attitudes in Turkey," The German Marshall Fund of the United States (September 10, 2014), http://www.gmfus.org/file/3491/download, 1.

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"ethnic" tensions between Syrians, mostly Sunni Muslims, and the local population, of which more than one-third is of Arab Alawite descent, resulted in anti-Syrian demonstrations.[53] Following the explosion of two car bombs in Reyhanlı, Hatay, on May 11, 2013, the local population attacked Syrians' cars. In the face of increasing attacks against Syrian refugees, some of them were transferred to Syria under police escort on May 13, 2013.[54] Among the other violent incidents were attacks on Syrians' shops in Adana, Manavgat in Antalya, and Küçükçekmece in İstanbul; on their tents in Şirinevler in Adana; and the burning of their houses in Altındağ in Ankara. Demonstrations in Gaziantep following the murder of a Turkish landlord by a Syrian refugee and protests in İzmir using the slogan "We do not want Syrians" were among the other signifiers of a rising anti-Syrian sentiment across the country. These are only the reported or publicized incidents; there may be other unreported events. In reference to such events, the International Crisis Group stated that "much of the problem appears to be based on misperceptions and fears—including probably exaggerated reports that rival communities are arming."[55] Similary, Kılıç argues that certain rumors and false reports about Syrians have served to "make them targets of a hate discourse."[56] For example:

> Some column writers and politicians spread negative propaganda about the construction of Reception, Accommodation, and Screening Centers in seven provinces which were planned in the National Action Plan of 2005, far before the eruption of the conflict in Syria, alleging that Syrian terrorists would be placed in those centers and that the centers could be used as a pool of votes.[57]

Another motif structuring public and media discourses on Syrian refugees is that the crime rate is on the rise due to the increasing number of Syrians. It is believed that Syrian refugees disturb the public order and security, even though "the numbers of criminal cases in which refugees are directly involved are very

53 International Crisis Group, "Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey," Europe Report No. 225 (April 30, 2013), http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/225-blurring-the-borders-syrian-spillover-risks-for-turkey.pdf, 1.

54 Güçtürk, *The Loss of Humanity*, 84. According to field studies conducted by the Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed (*İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar İçin Dayanışma Derneği*, MAZLUMDER) in the aftermath of the events in Reyhanlı, "ultranationalist party members began to attack, batter and lynch every Syrian they [came] across and to attack cars with Syrian and foreign license plate[s] in the aftermath of the attack." Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Kılıç, "The Role of Civil Society," 89.

57 Ibid.

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low and, in most cases, Syrians living in Turkey are the victims."[58] Most strikingly, given their access to free healthcare and education, Syrians are seen as illegitimately living off state benefits that are perceived to belong to Turkish citizens. On the other hand, Özden's fieldwork draws attention to the link between anti-Syrian attitudes and opposition to the government's policies:

> [D]ue to the Turkish governments' openly hostile position to the Syrian regime, Syrian migration became closely linked with Turkish domestic politics and foreign policy. Those individuals and political bodies critical of the Turkish government assumed an anti-immigrant position accusing displaced Syrians of being armed, sectarian rebels.[59]

In short, both discursive and non-discursive practices show that Syrians are seen and administered as a "threat," as "risky" outsiders. They are transfigured as a threat to societal and internal and/or public security. What is more, a security continuum between migration, terrorism, and criminality is evident in these representations. Among these securitarian frameworks, the most visible and emphasized is the construction of Syrians as a "threat" in the field of the labor market. The following section will illuminate this securitarian framework in detail.

Syrian refugees as a "threat" to the labor market

There are two main frameworks relating to Syrian refugees' impact on the domestic market. One of them is twisting the securitization of Syrian refugees so as to present it as a threat to the labor market and the employment opportunities of the native population. As mentioned above, current Turkish law makes it very difficult for Syrians to work "legally." As a result, many of them have turned to the informal labor market to make ends meet. Undoubtedly, Syrian refugees offer a cheap and flexible labor force in various sectors, such as agriculture, construction, and textiles. Employers in these sectors stand ready to take them into the (informal) workforce. As reported frequently in the media and academic research, this development has attracted a great deal of anger from native workers.[60] In particular, 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. According to a study conducted by the Hacettepe University

58 Orhun and Şenyücel Gündoğar, "Effects of the Syrian Refugees," 8–9.

59 Özden, "Syrian Refugees," 1.

60 For a detailed analysis of the situation of Syrian refugees in the labor market, see Ercüment Akdeniz, *Suriye Savaşının Gölgesinde Mülteci İşçiler* (İstanbul: Evrensel, 2014).

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Center for Migration and Political Studies (*Hacettepe Üniversitesi Göç ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Merkezi*, HÜGO), the perception that "Syrians took the jobs of local people is a serious concern."[61] Similarly, the latest field study conducted by the Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (*Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi*, ORSAM) confirms this tendency by stating that "40% to 100% of the people who lost their jobs in border cities believe that they lost their jobs because of the Syrians."[62] Even important public figures have voiced their concerns regarding the employment of Syrian refugees. For example, Ergün Atalay, head of the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (*Türk-İş*), stated: "There are enough unemployed people in Turkey. […] Let's solve the unemployment problem and then we can look at the Syrians. First we should solve our own domestic situation."[63] Similarly, Erdal Ata, the governor of Gaziantep, a southeastern city that hosts one of the largest Syrian refugee populations, said that by not registering their businesses, Syrian refugees were fostering unfair competition that bothered small-business owners in Turkey; pointing out that unregistered businesses pay no taxes or social security fees for their employees, he went on to say: "Our citizens who do business in the same sectors are harmed by certain Syrian businesses."[64] In such depictions, Syrian refugees are directly framed as unwelcome "outsiders." Rather than emphasizing possible opportunities or growth in relation to the integration of Syrian refugees into the domestic market, these discourses highlight their "possible destabilizing" effects.[65]

On the other hand, a more positive framework has also informed discussions about the Syrian refugees' effects in the domestic market. The discourses and statements within this framework emphasize the economic benefits stemming from Syrian refugees. In various reports, it is claimed that Syrian refugees contribute to the Turkish economy by filling labor shortages in certain sectors.[66] Especially in the textile and construction sectors, it is asserted that Syrians accept jobs that are not preferred by local populations—these are the so-called "3D jobs" that are dirty, dangerous, and difficult.[67] Moreover, there is

61 Erdoğan, "Syrians in Turkey."

62 Orhun and Şenyücel Gündoğar, "Effects of the Syrian Refugees," 17.

63 "Türk İş Başkanı'ndan İşsizlik Çıkışı," Doğan Haber Ajansı (October 13, 2014), http://www.dha.com.tr/turk-is-baskanindan-issizlik-cikisi_778485.html. The translation is mine.

64 "Gaziantep governor: Syrian refugees creating unfair competition," *Today's Zaman* (July 18, 2014), http://www.todayszaman.com/national_gaziantep-governor-syrian-refugees-creating-unfair-competition_353438.html.

65 Huysmans, "The Politics of Insecurity," 6.

66 See, e.g., Erdoğan, "Syrians in Turkey," 18 and Orhan and Şenyücel Gündoğar, "Effects of the Syrian Refugees," 8.

67 Orhan and Şenyücel Gündoğar, "Effects of the Syrian Refugees," 18.

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also an emphasis on how the Syrians, bringing their capital into the Turkish market, seem to have a positive effect on the domestic economy.[68]

Whether framed positively or negatively, both positions tend to treat Syrian refugees as outsiders, and both "share a desire to control [Syrians' presence within the country] for the purpose of optimizing [Turkish society's] 'well-being' by keeping the unwanted out and integrate the needed into the labour market."[69] Furthermore, as in the case of more positive portrayals, Syrian refugees are still viewed as a meta-issue to be commodified, and their presence is assessed in terms of their economic input into the economy rather than through humanitarian approaches.

The latest attempts by the government to regulate the work permits of refugees in general and Syrians in particular reflects this approach as well. As stated above, the current plan is to restrict the employment of Syrian refugees to certain sectors. This plan would be a crucial step forward in preventing the exploitation of Syrian refugees in the informal market, but this "benign" approach is also likely to control and contaminate the "destabilizing" effects of Syrians. In other words, following Bauman, Syrian refugees here constitute the "volume of humans made redundant by capitalism's global triumph … [They are] the superfluous, supernumerary and redundant population—the excess of the rejects of the labor market, and the refuse of the market-targeted economy, over the capacity of recycling arrangements."[70] They are the "human surplus." The Turkish government's strategy here is "the mobilization of support and institutional means to reduce the destabilizing effects" of this human surplus.[71] However, this strategy and its accompanying discourses mask structural deficiencies as well as unfavorable economic policies, and provide an easy way to cover up the complexity of the problems by scapegoating refugees. For example, the problems of the boom in child labor and exploitation in the informal market are not properly discussed under the rubric of this securitization process. As the UNHCR emphasizes:

> Although statistics are unavailable, child labour involving refugee children appears to be visibly increasing. Work in the informal sector generally offers little or no protection from exploitation and exposes children to grave physical and legal risks and deprives them of educational opportunities.[72]

What is more, as already mentioned, Syrians are taking the so-called "3D jobs" that the native population are not willing to do. In these sectors, "those Syrians

68 Ibid.

69 Huysmans, "The Politics of Insecurity," 48–49.

70 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 28–29.

71 Huysmans, "The Politics of Insecurity," 6.

72 UNHCR, "2014 Syria Regional Response Plan," 45.

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willing to take lower wages and work longer hours face a higher risk of exploitation with little recourse while provoking resentment among locals."[73] They are forced to work in inhumane conditions, are sometimes not paid, and because of the fear of deportation they cannot resort to judicial appeals should their rights be violated.[74] To put it differently, they now constitute a kind of "army reserve," a flexible labor force that can be exploited much more easily. This is well confirmed by Hikmet Tanrıverdi, the president of the İstanbul Textile and Apparel Export Associations (*İstanbul Tekstil ve Konfeksiyon İhracatçı Birlikleri*, İTKİB), who has stated:

> We could not find Turkish blue-collar workers to hire in our factories at the minimum wage, as a majority of them prefer to work in the services sector for the same amount of money in a cleaner working environment … Syrian workers have saved our sector for now. Many sector players had been planning to bring cheap labor from Bangladesh before, and sooner or later we will call them to Turkey to work in our sector … Our sector players have been hiring Syrian workers for a couple of years, especially in the Marmara region. There are now many Syrian workers in our sector and they play a great role in fostering the sector.[75]

In a similar vein, key public figures have brought forward certain proposals offering a "legal" basis for a more "formal exploitation" of Syrians in line with the rules of the market necessitating a flexible and cheap labor. For example, the Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce proposed as follows, as outlined by Kirişci:

> Syrians [should] be given formal and legal short-term working permits, vocational training and social security benefits. Their proposal includes a quota for local businesses to employ Syrian refugees, an assessment on the skill profile of Syrian workers as well as the introduction of industrial zones to be set up near the border for public-private partnerships that would employ Syrian refugees and produce goods that could then be sold to Syria.[76]

73 Kirişci, "Syrian Refugees," 21–22.

74 For a detailed analysis, see Akdeniz, *Suriye Savaşının Gölgesinde*. Akdeniz conducted his fieldwork in İstanbul (Çağlayan and Bağcılar), Gaziantep, İzmir, Kayseri, Hatay, and Adana, and asserts that Syrian refugees have become the "new others" in the labor market, after the Kurdish people and migrants from the former Soviet Union and African countries.

75 "Turkish Textile Sector Eyes Bangladeshi Workers," *Hürriyet Daily News* (October 18, 2014), http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-textile-sector-eyes-bangladeshi-workers-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=73131&NewsCatID=347.

76 Kirişci, "Syrian Refugees," 21–22.

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The governor of Antalya, Muammer Türker, introduced a more controversial plan: he ordered that notifications be sent to more than 1,500 Syrian refugees demanding that they leave the province, on the grounds that they had caused social and economic tensions and damaged the tourism industry. He stated as follows:

> We are determined not to let Syrian refugees take shelter in Antalya permanently. But this is a privilege for Antalya because of its function as Turkey's main tourism hub. We need to counter the negative impact of refugees on tourism. Those who try to come and settle in the province will be prevented and current inhabitants will be transferred to different cities in Turkey.[77]

He then added:

> But our food producers are demanding to hire Syrians because of cheap labor and that they are [trustworthy] people. We do not want to be involved in a policy that will contradict the country's macro policies. We want them to work in proper jobs and to not be involved with begging. We are looking for ways to enable living together with them. But in principle, we do not plan for them to stay in Antalya permanently.[78]

All of these discursive and non-discursive practices demonstrate that Syrian refugees have been framed and administered as a societal security issue. Moreover, they are associated with various different security issues, including crime and terrorism. These practices transfigure Syrian refugees as "destabilizing" and "risky" factors to be controlled and contained for the sake of Turkey's well-being. However, this process also reveals that it is not the Syrian refugees who are abusing the "Turkish" system, but rather that they are being abused by that system. The current crisis of capitalism—characterized by high inflation and unemployment rates, an increasing gap in income levels between the poor and the rich, and sub-standard and flexible working conditions—has not been mentioned as the cause of current economic problems; instead,

77 "Antalya Governor's Office Orders Syrian Refugees to Leave Province," *Today's Zaman* (December 24, 2014), http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_antalya-governors-office-orders-syrian-refugees-to-leave-province_367929.html.

78 "Syrian refugees attacked, urged to leave in Antalya," *Hürriyet Daily News* (December 24, 2014), http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syrian-refugees-attacked-urged-to-leave-in-antalya.aspx?pageID=549&nID=76056&NewsCatID=341. It should also be noted that "Syrian families who worked as agricultural workers in the southern province of Antalya were attacked by a group of locals on December 23 upon rumors that local workers were beaten by Syrians, following the Antalya governor's recent statements concerning deporting Syrians from the city." Ibid.

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artificial arguments blaming refugees for all of these problems have become much more popular in the ongoing discussions on the issue.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how, despite the "open door" policy and humanitarian discourse of the government, Syrian refugees have been integrated into a security framework of control and containment. Through an analysis of both discursive and non-discursive practices, the article has explored how the refugees are framed and administered as a "threat" and a "destabilizing" factor within the context of a narrative wherein refugees are framed as a threat to the domestic market and to the employment opportunities of "native" workers. Although there are also positive frameworks that focus on Syrian refugees' possible or actual contributions to the Turkish economy and labor market, the article has argued that this stance also treats the refugees as a societal security issue, as something to be controlled and contained in line with market needs. Hence, both the negative and the positive approaches to Syrian refugees are likely to contribute to their insecure status and hardships. Moreover, the analysis has also revealed that a security continuum was established linking Syrian refugees to such internal security issues as criminality and terrorism. On the other hand, this securitization process tends to mask structural and political problems like racism, exploitation, discrimination, and inequalities, and it closes off alternative public and political debates concerning the complex and variable character of migration issues. As stated above, the issue of Syrian refugees currently touches upon various problems, ranging from child labor to anti-Syrian sentiments and even physical attacks. However, under the rubric of the process of securitization, all of these problems are hidden or disregarded in public discussions. The recent violence around the borders of Turkey and various European countries reflects such deficiencies very clearly. Syrian refugees, who are living in precarious circumstances without any secure legal status, are risking their lives in an attempt to reach Europe in hope of better opportunities. However, escaping from the inhumane conditions they face in Turkey, they are effectively left in limbo by some European states' often draconian anti-immigrant practices. In order to stop such human tragedies from occurring, it is first necessary to challenge statist and shortsighted approaches, as well as to stand against securitization processes that impinge on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

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