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REFUGEE CRISIS NEXT DOOR: TURKEY AND THE SYRIAN REFUGEES¹

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ABSTRACT

While globalization and global security are leading to a people-centered security approach and while Turkey is emerging as a significant regional and international player, the country has become more responsive not only to the conflicts in its region, but also to the resulting humanitarian crises such as the ongoing Syrian humanitarian crisis following the outbreak of the civil war in Syria which completed the severe third year on 15 March 2014 with two and a half million refugees fleeing to neighboring countries and six and a half million internally displaced people within Syria. Tens of thousands of people in a short span of time had to run off the atrocities and massacres committed by the Syrian state to find shelter in bordering countries while leaving their loved ones, homes, and jobs behind which they hoped to return to before too long. Turkey has opened its doors since late April 2011 for safe haven and humanitarian aid to the massive influx of refugees of diverse ethnic, religious, and sectarian backgrounds from all walks of life regardless of age, gender, social status, and political affiliation fleeing from the violent civil war that has been continuing with harsh records of imprisonment, torture, and persecution. Passed only by Lebanon, as a host country for the second largest bulk of the Syrian refugees, Turkey has been endeavoring with legal, social, cultural, political, financial, and security tools to manage the task of providing the Syrian refugees with temporary protection, based on open door policy and the principle of non-refoulement, on a sustainable pattern taking into account the high possibility of the long-tenure of the broader Syrian crisis and the consequent refugee crisis, the worst humanitarian crisis in years. Therefore, this paper will shed some light on the changing dynamics and parameters of the Turkish foreign policy as the country has been burgeoning as an important peace broker in regional conflicts and a key player in the Middle East while putting the Syrian refugees in Turkey in the spotlight.

Keywords: Turkish foreign policy, Syrian refugee crisis, global security, humanitarian assistance

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BİTİŞİKTEKİ MÜLTECİ KRİZİ: TÜRKİYE VE SURİYELİ MÜLTECİLER

ÖZET

Küreselleşme ve küresel güvenlik, insan merkezli güvenlik yaklaşımını beraberinde getirirken ve Türkiye önemli bir bölgesel ve uluslararası oyuncu olarak ortaya çıkarken, ülke sadece bölgesindeki çatışmalara karşı değil, aynı zamanda, 15 Mart 2014 tarihinde üçüncü yılını tamamlayan ve komşu ülkelere iki buçuk milyondan fazla mültecinin sığınması ile ülke içinde altı buçuk milyon insanın yerinden olmasına neden olan Suriye'deki iç savaşın neticesinde ortaya çıkan Suriye insani krizi gibi insani krizlere karşı da daha duyarlı hale gelmiştir. Kısa süre içerisinde on binlerce insan, çok da fazla sürmeden birgün dönebileceklerini umut ettikleri sevdiklerini, evlerini ve işlerini arkalarında bırakarak, Suriye devleti tarafından gerçekleştirilen vahşet ve katliamlardan kaçarak sınır ülkelerine sığındı. Türkiye, 2011 Nisan sonu itibarıyla, tutuklama, işkence ve idam gibi ciddi uygulamaların yaşandığı Suriye iç savaşından kaçan farklı din, etnik ve mezheplerden mültecilere, yaş, cinsiyet, sosyal statü ve siyasi görüş ayrımı gözetmeksizin, güvenli bölge ve insani yardım temin etmek üzere kapılarını açmıştır. Lübnan'dan sonra en fazla Suriyeli mülteciye ev sahipliği yapan Türkiye, Suriye krizi ile bunun neticesi olarak ortaya çıkan ve son zamanların en kötü insani krizi olan Suriye insani krizinin uzun sürebileceğini de gözönünde bulundurarak, mültecilere açık kapı politikası ve geri göndermeme ilkesine dayananan geçici korumayı, tüm hukuki, sosyal, kültürel, politik, finans ve güvenlik araçlarıyla birlikte, düzenli bir şekilde sağlayabilmek için büyük bir çaba sarf etmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, Türk dış politikasının değişen dinamik ve parametrelerini, Türkiye'nin son zamanlarda bölgesel çatışmalarda önemli bir arabulucu ve Ortadoğu'da anahtar bir oyuncu olarak ortaya çıkmasını gözönünde bulundurarak, Türkiye'deki Suriyeli mülteci krizi etrafında ele alacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Türk dış politikası, Suriyeli mülteci krizi, küresel güvenlik, insani yardım

1. INTRODUCTION

In the post Cold War period, upon the collapse of the Eastern Bloc with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, while the political, military, and economic prowess of the United States came forward unrivaled at the world stage, the strategic importance of Turkey and the value of its partnership with the United States were called into question given the likelihood of minimized role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the face of the new realities and historical transformations sweeping the globe. However, in the immediate aftermath of the Second Gulf War of 1991, Turkey played an active role through providing the Iraqi refugees of largely Kurdish stock escaping the violent regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq with safe haven and channeling

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them humanitarian aid and assistance. Accordingly, Turkey as well as the Middle East have proved to be of enduring importance given the realpolitik of the post Cold War era renovating the strategic importance of the NATO and the new parameters and dynamics of the global affairs. In the post 9/11 world, subsequent to the end of Cold War, the United States was in pressing need to repair its badly damaged relations with the Muslim world due to its War on Terror as articulated upon the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks of al-Qaeda, targeting the financial and political centers of the United States, and the succeeding American military operations in Afganistan and Iraq as implemented by US President George Bush (r.2001-2008). Concurrently, the rapprochement between the United States and Turkey, spotted as a model country for the union of Islam and democracy, provided the latter not only with a venue to better and vary its relations with the former, but also with a precious prospect to pursue an effective and independent track in the Middle East. This came at a time when the United States appeared to be retreating from the region towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century following the disastrous financial and political outcomes of the two successive wars.

Global and comprehensive character of foreign policy in an age of rapid and comprehensive changes as well as being located at the epicenter of diverse regions of importance and complexity urged the Turkish decision makers in early 2000s under the rule of Justice and Development Party, JDP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*) to acquire an international and multidimensional perspective. Representing a secular democracy with Muslim majority, Turkey mobilized all its means and abilities to conduct an active, effective, and holistic foreign policy based on its soft and hard power capacities including primarily close dialogue and collaborative partnership at regional and worldwide level. Globalization has been offering opportunities and initiatives as well as risks and challenges for the Turkish decision makers while the country has been adopting itself to the evolving conditions and realities of the post Cold War and post 9/11 world and has been proving itself as a prevailing asset for and as an integral part of international affairs and global security. Syrian refugee crisis of 2011 has been one of those venues attaching Turkey to both opportunities and threats.

Arap Revolutions, the wave of public uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region from Tunisia to Bahrain starting in late 2010 and the subsequent overthrow of autocratic regimes of decades one after another in North Africa, introduced new parameters not only to the global affairs, but also to the Turkish foreign policy in terms of developing its relations with the United States on a sustainable pattern and becoming a hegemonic power in the Middle East. US-Turkey bilateral relations have largely been on the rocks since early 2000s, given Turkey's initially not

allowing the US troops for Iraq on the eve of the US invasion of the country in March 2003³ and the Joint Declaration signed by Iran, Turkey, and Brazil on nuclear weapons in May 2010 which was followed by the Gaza flotilla aid crisis the same month and Turkey's no vote in the United Nations Security Council against sanctions to Iran in June 2010. The problematic nature of relations appeared to have a break with the cool and brief, yet promising meeting between US President Barack Obama and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan⁴ in the summit of G-20 in Toronto in June 2010. Subsequently, the two countries enjoyed the prospect of a common ground for new channels of dialogue and cooperation when the Obama and Erdoğan administrations took place on the same side with the Arab revolts and made calls against the despotic regimes. Cognizant of Turkey's high capacities and abilities in the face of new realities in its region and the world, Turkish foreign policy makers kept the country's active policy intact. Endorsing the people movements and sharing their legitimate demands to change their respective despotic systems for democratic rules based on justice, freedom, and welfare, the Turkish government positioned itself with the streets despite its strong political, cultural, and financial ties with the regimes of the Arab world. Where the center of gravity was shifting towards

³ Despite the generally tumultuous nature of the Turkish-American relations in the first decade of the twenty-first century, bilateral relations did not miss moments like when President Obama, upon taking office in the White House, made his first official overseas visit to Turkey in April 2009 and became the first American President to call to the Turkish nation in the Turkish Grand National Assembly with a quite constructive and promising speech. In his speech, Obama recognized Turkey as a "critical ally" while manifesting the determination of the United States to rebuild its ties with the Muslim world. For the speech text of President Obama at the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 6 April 2009, see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament> date of access: 02.03.2014. During his visit, President Obama formulated the concept of "model partnership," based on new and multiple venues of cooperation and collaboration and this was welcomed by the Turkish decision makers. The new formulation of bilateral relations was not only an attempt to strengthen and diversify the relations between the two countries, but also an indication to acknowledge the rising of Turkey as a significant player in its region and the world, thereby displaying the will and resources to consolidate the relations based on mutual respect and interests. At the top of all, the new concept, indicating the American pledge to maintain and develop the relations between the United States, a "predominantly Christian and [Western] nation" and Turkey, a "predominantly Muslim nation [straddling two continents], was a microcosm to the bettering of relations between a world, which is largely shaped by Western and Christian values and a world, which is mainly shaped by Eastern and Islamic values. This was an attempt to defy the clash of cultures through the establishment of a common ground transcending the cultural boundaries and embracing the diversity in all respects at a time when the parameters of the post 9/11 world were in need of urgent amendment. For the introduction of "model partnership," see <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2009/04/06/obama-in-turkey-model-partnership-can-send-message-to-world/> date of access: 02.03.2014.

⁴ Turkish person names are provided with their original spelling.

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the public demands, Turkish decision makers adjusted its pose towards those demands. The Arab Revolutions, irreversibly transforming the MENA region in social and political terms, added a new dynamic to the Turkish foreign policy which has been undergoing its own transformation over a decade not only in content, but also in terms of tools and methods applied as a manifestation of the country's rising activism and search for functionalism at regional and global level.

2. SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

The management of the Syrian refugee crisis has been the reflection of both basic tenets of the decade-old active and effective Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East and worldwide in general and also how the Turkish decision makers have been approaching the Syrian crisis since the outset in particular. In the new age of Turkish foreign policy, the foreign agenda has been backed by a self-confidence given the economic boost that Turkey has been enjoying for a decade and has been seen as a venue by the JDP government to display itself to the world and to raise its strategic position in global affairs. Therefore, geographical boundaries of foreign policy have been extended globally stretching from the Caucasus to Australia including areas like Latin America, Africa, and East Asia that have not been previously covered by the foreign policy makers and thereby achieving a bona fide amalgamation of the Western and Eastern worlds. Turkish foreign agenda has no longer been confined to the conventional issues of membership to the European Union, relations with Greece and Bulgaria, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Those issues certainly have yet been excluded, but have become the peripheries in the newly shaping foreign policy outline. The newly-fangled Turkish stance in the Middle East has demonstrated Turkey's vivid distancing itself from Israel to the extent of callous rhetoric exchanges between Ankara and Tel Aviv and carving it out from the parameters of Turkey's relations with the United States. Given the deep historical, cultural, religious, and social ties in the region, new policy has been articulated within the terms of "zero problems with neighbors" and has aimed at achieving the effective implementation of the tools of economic interdependence, high-level political dialogue, development assistance, and cultural and public diplomacies (Fidan, 2013). Therefore, Turkey managed to take positive steps such as the visa exemption agreements in order to develop and diversify its relations with the Middle East to the most possible extent.

Syria was no exception to this newly shaping Turkish foreign policy despite the fact that bilateral relations were complicated in 1990s even to the degree that the two countries returned from the blink of a war in 1998. Following the death of his father, Hafez al-Assad, who ruled the country

with an ironclad since his coup d'état under the Baath Party in 1970, Beshir Hafez al-Assad took office in 2000 and became the new President of the country. Thanks to the efforts provided by Premier Erdoğan and the new Syrian President al-Assad, a chain of meetings were held at Presidential, Prime Ministerial, and Ministerial level in different locations of both countries and bore fruits in social, political, and financial venues, such as the abolition of visa requirements, economic interdependence, and further strategic relations. However, things started to take a sharp turn in late 2010 with the Arab Revolutions and the Turkish government's taking a side with the justifiable demands of peoples against their own oppressive rules in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. The case of Syria, when the popular uprisings burst out in March 2011, was the hardest to handle given the stage of deepened bilateral relations even to the extent that Erdoğan and Assad families became friends. However, the streets in Syria were also asking President Assad to resign. The futility of multiple visits of Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoğlu, to the Syrian capital to urge the Assad regime to make reforms and mainly the usage of chemical weapons on opposition groups along with the resultant amassing of people alongside the Syrian borders with a high possibility of affecting Turkey before too long urged the Turkish decision makers to alter their stance towards the Assad regime from a cautious mode to an anti-regime one.

The booming industrial economy, being ranked the world's largest sixteenth economy, and commercial opportunities were crowned with successive victories in national elections with continuously increasing votes including a third term in June 2011. This encouraged the JDP government to dominate the political sphere during the Arab uprisings comprising those in Syria. The self-confidence of the new Turkish stance was evident in the words of Davutoğlu: "Turkey would henceforth lead the movement for change in the Middle East and we will be its owner, leader, and servant...Irrespective what others say, the new order's leader and spokesperson will be Turkey" [Mecliste Gergin Suriye Oturumu (*Tensed Syria Session in the Assembly*), 2012].⁵ Turkish decision makers wanted to stand against the wind blowing neither in the MENA region nor in Syria with much optimism that Assad like Ben Ali of Tunisia, Mubarak of Egypt,

⁵ In the same Turkish Assembly session on Syria overlapping with almost the first anniversary of the accomodation of the Syrian refugees in Turkey, Davutoğlu further stated, "to explain the events through conspiracies would be a disgrace to the people of the region. We are taking side not with minority governments, but with people who have been trying to determine their own future....According to us, the roots, which are based on ethnicity, religion, and sect in this region, are richness....Turkey's taking side with people who demand elections in Syria is praise-worthy. We will not show the impotence to ask those to return [to Syria] who have taken refuge in our country fleeing from persecution" (translated). Ibid.

and Gaddafi of Libya would disappear soon sans showing any resilience which would otherwise unleash disastrous inter-sectarian and inter-ethnic clashes in the region that might engulf Turkey as well. The fact of the matter is that the ongoing civil war in Syria with an ever escalating violence resulting in the worst humanitarian and refugee crisis in years, the Syrian refugee crisis, which has been pressing Turkey in financial, political, and social terms, has proved the Turkish optimism wrong with unpredictable consequences in an unforeseen future.

Syrian refugee crisis is not the first massive influx of people that the Turkish government faced in the history of Republic of Turkey. In 1989 and 1991, Turkey accommodated a great number of people forced to leave or take refuge on its territories. On the eve of the fall of the Eastern Bloc, given the systematic policies of the Bulgarian state under President Todor Hristov Zhivkov imposing the Turkish population to leave the country, nearly more than half a million Turkish Bulgarians in 1989, through the initiatives of Turgut Özal government, passed the Turkish border while leaving their histories and belongings behind to start a new life in Turkey. In the immediate aftermath of the Second Gulf War in 1991, Turkey once again opened its doors, this time, to Kurdish refugees, leaving their homeland and fleeing in mass from the defeated Iraq and the brutal policies of its despotic leader, Saddam Hussein, to find safe haven in Turkey arranged by the Özal government. In 2011, the Erdoğan government allowed nearly, announced officially as of now, 800,000 Syrian refugees to cross the Turkish border to find shelter in the country escaping the atrocities and massacres committed by the Assad regime. Syrian refugee crisis distinguishes from those earlier massive influxes of people in certain aspects. First, Syrian refugees have been fleeing from a country with which Turkey has its longest border, nearly 900 km, which makes it imperative to handle the refugee question cautiously and delicately. The number of the refugees, according to the numbers of February 2014, with a daily passage of more than 500 people, sometimes as many as 1,000-2,000, makes the situation more complicated (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, 2014a).⁶ It is essential that Syrian refugees in Turkey be taken into consideration in a broader context including those, nearly more than two and a half million refugees in other neighboring countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt and nearly

⁶ See also, Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Assistance Presidency (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetim Başkanlığı, AFAD*). (2013a). Barınma merkezlerinde son durum 30 Aralık 2013 tarihi itibarıyla (*Current status in accomodation centers as of 30 December 2013*), www.afad.gov.tr/TR/IcerikDetay1.aspx?IcerikID=848&ID=16 date of access: 14.03.4014. Information on the websites of UNHCR and AFAD is updated on a regular basis. Most of the statistical information presented by UNHCR is based on the information provided by AFAD.

7 million “internally displaced people”⁷ within Syria (United States Agency for International Development, USAID, 2014). Those who find refuge in Turkey live either in refugee camps operated by the leading Turkish governmental agency, namely, the Disaster and Emergency Assistance Presidency (*Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetim Başkanlığı, AFAD*) under the auspices of the Prime Ministry or in urban locations as varied as Kilis and Istanbul⁸ either as registered or unregistered refugees based on meeting the requirements for legal documentation.⁹ In the case of non-camp refugees, the number has reached to an alarming level that it has become more of a national concern rather than a local problem. Second, Syrian refugees have been of all ethnic, religious, and sectarian backgrounds including Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen as well as Sunnis, Nusayris, and Syriac Christians and have been from all walks of life regardless of age, gender, occupation, social status, and political affiliation. Third, these refugees, particularly at the outset, have been provided by the Turkish officials with safe passage in high numbers without being asked to meet the legal requirements, such as valid passports. Therefore, with 2 billion US dollars so far, excluding the expanses and expenditures met by various municipalities and NGOs, in venues such as health care, education, and food, the Syrian refugee crisis is the one to which the Turkish government has committed the largest amount of humanitarian aid and assistance through the active and efficient involvement of AFAD. Last, but not least, Syrian refugees have been provided temporary protection status (European Union, 2001) based on open door policy and the principle of non-refoulement without being forced to return to Syria for any given

⁷ By definition, an internally displaced person is someone who is forced to flee his or her country, but continues to remain within the borders of his or her country. This term is often confused with “refugee,” yet do not fall into the category of the latter as these two terms are legally different from each other with different implied legal obligations.

⁸ Turkish place names are provided with their Turkish spelling such as Şanlıurfa instead of Sanliurfa except those which are provided with their widely used spelling such as Istanbul instead of İstanbul.

⁹ Registration, in principle, depends on the valid documents such as passports and results in the issue of IDs by the Turkish Police Department in collaboration with AFAD which enables the holder to have access to health and education facilities as well as to aid and assistance, such as food, clothing, and other basic life supplies provided by the Turkish authorities. Unregistered Syrians generally live in border cities like Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Gaziantep, and Kilis. Syrians, who generally cannot afford renting apartments in cities, usually live in camps and receive governmental assistance, which is not extended to non-camp refugees, who are, aside from their personal savings, assisted to a variety of degree by various local organizations and, mostly, by Turkish NGOs. It is reported that people who are left behind in Syria are generally those who even do not have the means to make to the border. Özden, Şenay (2013). Syrian refugees in Turkey: MPC research report 2013/05. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute.

reason.¹⁰ As an innovation of the Turkish government, “zero point humanitarian assistance delivery” policy further makes it possible to extend the humanitarian aid and assistance from the Turkish side to the dozens of make-shift camps established in northern Syria alongside the Turkish-Syrian border packed with internally displaced people and sometimes to areas beyond within Syria as distributed by the Syrian locals. Given this innovative system, which serves as a de facto safe haven on a daily basis, the Turkish aid and assistance of the aforementioned amount expand to the region of the northern Syria as well which is the closest area to the Turkish border.

Initially endorsed as “guests,” Syrian refugees have only recently been admitted as such, that is, refugee (*mülteci*) by the Turkish authorities (Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, 2014a:5) and have always been asked to get registered with and to receive IDs issued by the Turkish police in collaboration with AFAD in order to be eligible for support inside the camps in Turkey.¹¹ For the refugees living outside the camps, there established in the field, as of now, 12 mobile registration centers by AFAD for residence permits issued by the Turkish officials upon meeting the official requirement for legal documentation. Turkey is a signatory of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and initially accepted the Convention with reservations on both time and geography. However, upon the adoption of the 1967 Protocol, Turkey, while taking off the reservations on time, but keeping them on geography, accepted to grant the status of refugee only to asylum seekers (*sığınmacı*) who have become refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe. Accordingly, those, who are granted refugee status, will be resettled in a third country in cooperation with UNHCR while those, who seek asylum from outside of Europe, will be evaluated in collaboration with UNHCR and will be granted temporary protection until a decision is reached.¹² Therefore,

¹⁰Turkey has been applying the terms of the European Council Directive, 2001/55/EC, of the European Union since October 2011. See, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/133124_en.htm date of access: 13.03.2014.

¹¹ As of now, reported by AFAD, there are 22 camps in 10 provinces, namely, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Kilis, Mardin, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Adana, Adıyaman, and Malatya in the order of the largest number of refugees. See, <file:///C:/Users/Devrim%20Umit/Downloads/UNHCRTurkeySyriaSitrep03April2014.pdf> date of access: 04.04.2014.

¹² Refugee and asylum seeker are often confused and sometimes, inaccurately, employed interchangeably. “[A]n asylum-seeker is someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated.” See, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c137.html> date of access: 04.04.2014. Therefore, under the terms of 1951 Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees, an asylum seeker will remain as such unless his/her application to become a refugee is accepted by national and international authorities provided he/she has a well-founded fear of persecution on the account of race, religion, nationality, political belief or membership of a particular social group upon return to his/her country of origin.

technically speaking, neither the Syrian “refugees” are refugees nor the “refugee camps” are refugee camps in the sheer legal framework. The Turkish authorities, thus, prefer to employ “tent city,” “container city,” “center” or merely “camp” instead of “refugee camp” per se and make it crystal clear that they use the term, refugee, for “[t]he Syrian citizens under temporary protection status in Turkey.”¹³

Furthermore, Turkey, in the midst of massive influx of people into its territories, managed to adopt a migration law for the very first time in its history. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (*Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu*) of April 2013, which in general comes into effect in April 2014 [Resmi Gazete (*Official Gazette*), 2013],¹⁴ carries particular importance for being the first of its kind while ruling the establishment of General Directorate for Migration Management (*Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü*) under the auspices of Ministry of Interior Affairs and for being accepted while Turkey has been accommodating large number of Syrian refugees in its territories. Despite the fact that the new Law keeps the temporary protection status as well as the geographical limitations of the 1951 Convention, it attracts international applause, first and foremost from the UN Refugee Agency (Turkish law on protection of foreigners wins UN praise, 2013).

On 29 April 2011, the first 252 Syrian refugees of Kurdish origin passed the Turkish border (Seven and Karataş, 2011). Currently, with nearly 650,000 registered refugees both in camps run by AFAD and in urban areas outside the camps, Turkey, subsequent to Lebanon, has been hosting the second largest bulk of Syrian refugees to be followed by Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt in that order. 22 camps have been built in 10 cities close to the Syrian

¹³ However, it is reported that Syrian refugees are not treated like those coming from outside of Europe as they cannot register with UNHCR despite the initial processing of their files by the organization for asylum in a third country because of the interception of the Turkish authorities for absolute Turkish state control over those camps without the interference of UNHCR or other international bodies. See, Şenay, 2013: 10. On one hand, in accordance with the Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, people have the right to seek asylum in another country. On the other hand, there might be an intention on the part of the Turkish decision makers to integrate the Syrian refugees gradually into the society of Turkey in the long run except those who might choose to go back to Syria or to settle in a third country.

¹⁴ The Law on Foreigners and International Protection came into force on 11.04.2014, a year from its publication in the Official Gazette (*Resmi Gazete*) on 11.04.2013 except a few articles which have been in force starting from the date of issue in the Gazette. For the text of the Law, see <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/04/20130411-2.htm> date of access: 04.04.2014. For a discussion of the Law while it was in draft, see Soykan, C. (2012). The new draft law on foreigners and international protection in Turkey. *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration*, II (2), 38-47, <http://oxmofm.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Cavidan-FINAL.pdf> date of access: 04.04.2014.

border.¹⁵ Despite the contrary requirements of UNHCR, some camps were built to a very close distance to the border and it is reported that in spite of the lack of monitoring provided by UNHCR except for those voluntarily returning to Syria, national and international human rights organizations are encouraged to visit the camps and the city locations (Osman Bahadır, Vittoria, Elizabeth, Sema, Kemal & Elif, 2013: 10-11). Urban areas outside the camps which the refugees have opted for living instead of camps have also been those same cities where the camps are built, but have included concentration spots in other metropolitan areas such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Bursa. Family and ethnic ties as well as religious affiliations have played as a pull factor when the refugees chose living in the cities outside the camps such as Arabs deciding on Şanlıurfa and Kurds bordering areas.

At the outset of the Syrian refugee crisis, all refugees amassing the Turkish border were allowed to go into Turkey without being asked to provide the legal documentation, such as valid passports and were sent directly to the temporarily built refugee camps, which were numbered only a few then. Since October 2011, while those passing the Turkish border have been granted temporary protection, legal requirements have started been applied more strictly. However, as the flood of refugees went on in an escalating pattern, the Turkish government confined the number of refugees

¹⁵ Out of 2,658,902 registered Syrian refugees, while 679,697 (last updated 09.04.2014) refugees have been living in Turkey, 1,014,070 (last updated 10.04.2014) in Lebanon, 589,792 (last updated 10.04.2014) in Jordan, 219,579 (last updated 30.03.2014) in Iraq, and 136,067 (last updated 10.04.2014) in Egypt have found safe haven respectively For the statistical data on Syrian refugees in Turkey, see <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> (information provided by AFAD on 9 April 2014) date of access: 13.04.2014. According to the Turkey Syria Refugee Daily Sitrep, dated 10 April 2014, out of an estimated total number of 800,000 refugees, 679,697 refugees are either registered or with appointments to register 223,585 of whom are in the camps and 456,112 of whom are in locations outside the camps while the number of refugees outside the camps cannot be updated on a daily basis. See, file:///C:/Users/Devrim%20Umit/Downloads/UNHCRTurkeySyriaSitrep17March2014.pdf date of access: 17.03.2014. It is expected and reported that number of the refugees outside the camps could be twice the number of camp-refugees especially given the question of registration and the consequent difficulty to follow the track of the Syrian refugees inside Turkey. See, Dinçer, O. B., Federici, V., Ferris, E., Karaca, S., Kirişçi, K., & Çarmıklı, E. Ö. (November, 2013). Turkey and Syrian refugees: limits of hospitality. The Brooking Institution, Washington D.C. & International Strategic Research Organization, [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/11/18%20syria%20turkey%20refugees/turkey%20and%20syrian%20refugees_the%20limits%20of%20hospitality%20\(2014\).pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/11/18%20syria%20turkey%20refugees/turkey%20and%20syrian%20refugees_the%20limits%20of%20hospitality%20(2014).pdf) date of access: 09.03.2014. Camps, where the registered Syrian refugees are located, were built in border cities as well as in cities close to the border area, namely, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Kilis, Mardin, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Adana, Adıyaman, and Malatya in the order of number of refugees, camp and non-camp refugees, hosted starting from the highest. See, file:///C:/Users/Devrim%20Umit/Downloads/UNHCRTurkeySyriaSitrep17March2014.pdf (last updated on 10.04.2014 by UNHCR based on information provided by AFAD on 09.10.2014) date of access: 13.04.2014.

which resulted in “make-shift camps” established on the Syrian side of the Turkish-Syrian border such as the city of Qah in the province of Idlib in northern Syria where many Syrians, escaping the fatal clashes between the Assad forces and the rebels, come on a daily basis to receive humanitarian aid and assistance distributed by the Turkish Crescent in coordination with AFAD. The latter also organized aid centers in cities close to the Syrian border, such as Kilis, Gaziantep, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa for the accumulation of aid and assistance to be directed to those make-shift camps (Republic of Turkey, Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, 2013b). The Assad regime’s growing brutal deal with the opposition groups, which have been fighting among themselves as well, and the increasing role of the Islamists among those groups have been the preliminary reasons for the increase in refugee numbers. It is reported that despite the strains of the Turkish government on the quantity of refugees and the existence of the make-shift camps, many Syrians have managed to cross the border to Turkey using illegal means, such as crossing the border through unofficial points or getting the help of smugglers. This is also in contrast to citizens of Turkey who have not been allowed into Syria for security reasons [Suriye’ye çıkış yok (*No way out to Syria*), 2012]. It goes without saying that the violent civil war in Syria along with the ever-increasing flux of Syrians into Turkey as well as the rapid increase in the number of camps in Turkey, especially in areas close to the border with Syria, and make-shift camps alongside the Syrian border in northern Syria puts Turkey in a more delicate and insecure position open to high prospects of threats and attacks. In fact, in the first half of 2013, there occurred, only with couple of months apart, three car bomb explosions in areas akin to the Syrian border, one was a border crossing at Cilvegözü in Reyhanlı¹⁶ and the other two was in Reyhanlı, both located in the province of Hatay, currently host to the fourth largest Syrian refugee body with five camps among ten camp cities, while leaving 70 people dead in total with many injured. Successive bombings with high casualties in Hatay not only indicated the irrefutable vulnerability of Turkey in the midst of the Syrian refugee crisis that cannot be separated from the broader Syrian crisis, but also manifested the deeper risks even to the extent of taking the country to the very heart of the civil war in Syria for taking place in a city like Hatay. The city is known for its exemplary harmonious and deeply-rooted ethnic, religious, and sectarian diversity and for its contentious place

¹⁶ For the first car bomb explosion at Cilvegözü border crossing in Reyhanlı town of Hatay taking place on 11 February 2013, see <http://www.cnnturkTe.com/2013/turkiye/02/11/cilvegozunde.buyuk.patlama/696063.0/> date of access: 15.03.2014 and for the two massive car bomb explosions occurring in Reyhanlı on 11 May 2013, see <http://www4.cnnturk.com/yazarlar/metin.gunes/reghanli.londra.new.york/103.6783/index.html> date of access: 15.03.2014.

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in the official history of Syria laying the blame on Turkey for carving out the city from Syria following the disputable referendum of 1939 on the eve of which Turks were arguably located in the city by the Turkish state for a favorable outcome.

Regarding the mobility of the refugees, given the freedom of movement as a fundamental human right, registered refugees can choose to live outside the camps or can go from one camp to another, yet the latter is not encouraged by the Turkish authorities.¹⁷ Non-camp refugees do not receive governmental aid and assistance like camp refugees. Rather, they mainly live on their savings and since the beyond is an uncertainty, unless they are able to find jobs, they may end up living in parks, mosques or abandoned buildings and sometimes depend on the hospitality of their relatives or acquaintances for an unforeseen future. Therefore, some NGOs¹⁸ have begun to develop aid programs, though in modest portions, to assist the non-camp refugees basically for food and rent. Refugees living outside the camps may also risk the social tension to the extent of stirring anti-Arab and anti-immigrant sentiments for a variety of reasons such as increasing the rents, lowering the wages at the expense of local residents upon entering the labor market as competitors, taken of young Syrian women as second and beyond wives or, given the hardships they have to endure, begging and committing the minor crimes.¹⁹

Camp refugees, since they are registered as such, are entitled to governmental aid and assistance which has been managed by AFAD and the Turkish Red Crescent in the amount of 40-50 US dollars per household basically for food and other basic life supplies. Due to the difficulties experienced in the process of registration, it has not been uncommon that some refugees got registered in more than one camp in order to receive

¹⁷ Given the security and intelligence aspects of the subject matter, registration is carried out by the Turkish Police Department in cooperation with AFAD. For non-camp refugees, 23 mobile registration units are procured by UNHCR throughout Turkey to assist AFAD in registering the non-camp refugees. See, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> date of access: 17.03.2014.

¹⁸ Hayata Destek (*Support to Life*), Ortak Akıl Programı (*Common Mind Program*), Orda Kimse Yok mu (*Isn't There Anybody [to Help]?*), Uluslararası Mavi Hilal (*International Blue Crescent*), Deniz Feneri (*Lighthouse*), and the most renowned one, İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı, IHH (*Human Rights and Freedoms Humanitarian Relief Endowment*) are just a few to name.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the social aspects of the Syrian refugee crisis in the case study of Hatay, see Reçber, K. and Ayhan, V. (December, 2013). Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki krizin Hatay bölgesi üzerindeki etkileri (*The effects of the crisis between Turkey and Syria on the region of Hatay*). *Alternatif Politika*, 324-340, <http://www.alternatifpolitika.com/page/docs/aralik-2013/tammetin/recber-ayhan.pdf> date of access: 16.03.2014.

multiple aids. Next to the governmental means, the World Food program has also been a source of assistance for camp refugees.

Education, particularly the education of the children, and health care are the common problems in camps and in urban areas outside the camps. For camp and non-camp refugees, to benefit from the facilities of education and healthcare in rule depends on the condition that they hold valid IDs issued by the Turkish authorities upon providing the required legal documents. Regarding education, refugee camps, given the high number of children at school age,²⁰ are providing educational facilities. Some of these camps are further offering vocational training programs like the one in Adiyaman that gives carpet courses for women in the end of which they can make a modest earning of their own while gaining and developing a talent and ability in the handicraft.²¹ In camps such as the one in Kilis, there are primary and secondary schools opened by the Turkish authorities where Turkish as medium of instruction and curriculum in accordance with the Turkish Ministry of Education (Şenay, 2013: 12) are employed and in most of the camps, primary and secondary education in Arabic are offered by the Syrian refugees themselves according to the Syrian national curriculum (Osman Bahadır, Vittoria, Elizabeth, Sema, Kemal, & Elif, 2013: 12). In the latter case, non-recognition of the diplomas, given by the Syrian schools, by the Turkish authorities poses a serious problem for the Syrian schools.²²

²⁰ 53.3% of the Syrian registered refugees in Turkey is composed of children under the age of 18. 27.5% and 25.8% of these refugees are composed of male and female respectively. See, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> date of access: 14.04.2014. In the entire camps run by AFAD, 45,696 children and youth, male and female, have been provided with primary and secondary education in 693 classroom since late 2013. See, Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Assistance Presidency (AFAD, *Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetim Başkanlığı*). (2013c). Introduction, <https://www.afad.gov.tr/EN/IcerikDetay1.aspx?ID=16&IcerikID=747> date of access: 14.04.2014.

²¹ It is not uncommon that schools outside the camps may close down due to the very low attendance and students may be transferred to camp schools such as in the case of Adiyaman camp, where school attendees, therefore, make 35% of the camp population following the transfer. See, [file:///C:/Users/Devrim%20Umit/Downloads/UNHCRTurkeySyriaSitrep10April2014%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Devrim%20Umit/Downloads/UNHCRTurkeySyriaSitrep10April2014%20(3).pdf) date of access: 14.04.2014.

²² While the recognition of diplomas, provided by the Syrian schools, by the Turkish Ministry of Education awaits a fair settlement, the fact that Turkish, in general, is the medium of instruction in primary and secondary education as well as in higher education in Turkey may further complicate the integration of the Syrian children to Turkish higher education system and Turkish society in the medium and long run. Therefore, teaching Turkish to Syrian children and youth seems to carry particular value in terms of educational and societal needs and Turkish authorities are increasingly extending their efforts to provide Turkish language courses in cooperation with Turkish universities, particularly with those close to the camp areas, such as Gaziantep University and with international organizations, such as UNICEF. However, given the suggestions by some scholars, who have done extensive research on the ground, for the foundation of a bilingual Turkish-Arab University in Hatay, Syrian schools may well pave the way to this end. "It is essential that local businessmen be encouraged for the establishment of private primary and secondary schools with Arabic-Turkish as medium of instruction. When the infrastructure is ready [for the foundation of those schools], it would be useful to provide economic stimulus for the opening of a 'Turk- Arab University' in Hatay" (translated). See, Reçber and Ayhan, 340.

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However, the recognition of certain number of diplomas of Syrian high school graduates for an access to university education is not uncommon and expected to be more in the days ahead. As for the non-camp refugees, only refugees with residence permits given by the Turkish authorities upon meeting the requirement for legal documentation are, in rule, entitled to have an access to schools in Turkey and given the fact that Turkish, most of the time, is the medium of instruction in those schools renders a handicap for Syrian school children. Therefore, education is largely a community business for non-camp refugees as Syrian schools, run by Syrian teachers in Arabic in accordance with the Syrian national curriculum, are in charge of the education of the children and the youth. Both groups of refugees, camp and non-camp alike, though on a quota, are granted with access to university education, especially in border cities, without having to prove that they have attended universities in Syria, yet upon meeting certain official criteria [Suriyeli Gençlere Sınavsız Üniversite İmkamı (*Opportunity for the Syrian Youth for University Education without Examination*), 2013].²³ Regarding the health care benefits, for camp-refugees, there exist health clinics and for non-camp refugees, this benefit in rule depends on the residence permit. However, in the first half of 2013, upon the issue of two successive governmental decrees, access to health care facilities for both groups of refugees, regardless of the status of registration, were initially provided in 11 bordering cities from Hatay to Batman and, later on, were extended accordingly to all 81 provinces in Turkey while some non-governmental agencies have been offering aid and assistance in healthcare to non-camp refugees as well. Overcrowded hospitals, particularly in border cities given the free access and the prospect of access to university education for Syrian refugees are other areas of source of social tension and constitute the adverse impacts of the refugees on everyday life in cities.

3. CONCLUSION

In the post Cold War and post 9/11 world, newly shaping Turkish foreign policy along with its basic tenets has enabled Turkish decision makers to pursue an active and efficient foreign policy in the midst of Arab revolutions transforming the MENA region, while the Syrian refugee crisis, resulting from the peculiar case of Syria engulfed by a devastating civil war, has manifested to Turkey, the host county to the second largest bulk of the Syrian refugees, currently presumably amounting to 1,000,000, that an

²³ Given the fact that medium of instruction in those universities is Turkish, access to university education in Turkey for Syrian refugees seems to be a higher prospect for those of Turkman origin in comparison to those of Arab origin and this may harbor the risk of ethnic tension both within the Syrian refugees and the hosting Turkish society as well. However, the expansion of Turkish language courses provided by the Turkish authorities in cooperation with various national and international organizations may well cut down this risk.

opportunity without a risk is not viable whilst putting the ever increasing political, social, cultural, and financial strains of the Syrian refugees upon the country [Türkiye'deki Suriyelilerin Sayısı 900.000'ni Aştı (*Number of the Syrians in Turkey Exceeded 900, 000*), 2014]. In its almost fourth year, what has been accomplished by the Turkish state on the accomodation of the Syrian refugees through a multitask scheme carried out by governmental agencies as well as NGOs is worth appraising, yet this should not eclipse the fact that international share burdening at governmental and non-governmental level is a must and that the settlement of the Syrian refugee crisis cannot be separated from the settlement of the broader crisis in Syria.

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