

Turkey's Syrian Refugees Dilemma between the Triangle of Violence

Devrim Şahin¹ and Safiye Kocadayı²

Abstract

This paper studies the worsening relations between the Syrian refugees and the citizens of Turkey and argues that the current state of relations can be understood as an example of the renowned pacifist Johann Galtung's negative peace concept. While no military dispute exists in Turkey, the relationship between refugees and the people of Turkey lacks the behaviour, institutions, and organizations sine qua non (essential) to make and survive the peace that Galtung identifies as positive peace. Turkey is not a kind of advanced democracy with cosmopolitan culture. Maintaining this kind of all-embracing peace in Turkey requires a comprehensive settlement including efforts to get the international community to be involved more, avoiding political rhetoric that securitizes the issue, furthering training and education programs for the orientation of the refugees, clarifying the statute of the refugees and preparing the ground for the return of refugees to their country, if possible.

Keywords: Reugees; Syrians; Turkey; institutions; Galtung; positive peace

Introduction

The concepts of “migrant” and “refugee” are often used interchangeably to define people who are on the move, who have from one place to another with intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily.³ Yet it is important to distinguish between them as there is a legal difference. A refugee is a person who has fled their own country to survive and they have a right to international protection. The legal status of Syrians in Turkey deserves attention given that Turkey does not accord Syrians full refugee status. Although Turkey signed the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention or the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951) in 1954 and approved it in 1962,⁴ it stipulated that its use of the term refugee status applied “only to people originating from Europe”⁵.

Due to the geographical limitations imposed on the Geneva Convention, refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey have no access to full protection. After legal regulations made by

¹ Devrim Şahin, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. E-mail: devrimomersahin@gmail.com

² Safiye Kocadayı, Department of Public Law, Near East University, North Cyprus. E-mail: safiye_kocadayi@hotmail.com

³ UNHCR 2010.

⁴ UNHCR 2015.

⁵ UNHCR 2010.



Turkey in 2013 and 2014, non-European refugees such as the Syrian refugees in Turkey became eligible for temporary asylum and protection but this temporary protected status differs from having refugee status. However, Turkey cannot force Syrian refugees to leave Turkey and in 2014, Syrian refugees did acquire conditional refugee status under the newly established General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM).⁶ It is important to note that while current state and future prospects of Syrian refugees complicate the debate on their legal status, it also raises issues of social and economic cohesion.⁷

This paper examines the research question of the causes of the change in the perception of the refugees. The following section reviews studies on the worsening relations between the Syrian refugees and the citizens of Turkey. The subsequent third section pays particular attention to socio-political problems that resemble renowned pacifist Johann Galtung's triangle of violence that suggests different types of violence -- direct, structural, and cultural, for example – can and do affect peace.⁸ The hypothesis of the study argues that the current state of relations between Syrian refugees and the citizens of Turkey can be understood as an example of negative peace what Galtung defines as the absence of the behaviour, institutions, and organizations essential to ensure a lasting peace.⁹ Finally, the study presents its recommendations and concludes for a situation of positive peace that can be achieved only through democratic processes and freedoms, practices by which everybody enjoys social services and social justice.¹⁰

Socio-economic and political problems faced by Syrian Refugees in Turkey

Scholarly attempts on the adaptation of Syrian refugees to their new society do not cast hopeful figures.¹¹ A deeper look towards the scholarly studies held in order to analyse the conditions Syrian refugees and their integration provides significant insights on the level of adaptation and Turkish peoples' changing perceptions towards Syrian refugees.¹² According to a public survey held by Turkish-German University's Migration and Integration Research Centre indicates that while 82 percent of Turks regard Syrians as aliens that belong to a completely different culture, nearly three in four Turks believe that Syrian refugees will harm Country's socioeconomic structure.¹³ Similarly, another poll that conducted in September 2018 indicates that 83 percent of Turks regard Syrian refugees negatively.¹⁴

Apart from these, it should be noted that there are also important differences among political party bases in this regard.¹⁵ According to a survey carried out by EDAM, figures illustrate a consensus among the governing Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) supporters that the number of refugees has to be constrained.¹⁶ On the other hand,

⁶ İçduygu and Millet 2016, 4.

⁷ Akçiçek 2015.

⁸ Saatcioğlu 2019.

⁹ Galtung 1969

¹⁰ Arslan 2015.

¹¹ Nielsen 2016, 103; Hoffman, Werz and Halpin, 10; İçduygu 2015, 3; Coşkun and Nielsen, 34.

¹² Kirişçi 2014, 1; Erdoğan 2014, 48; Batalla and Tolay 2018, 21–23; Kınıkoğlu 2020, 3; International Crisis Group 2018; Halpin and others 2018, 17–018; Edam Report 2014; Hoffman, Werz and Halpin 2018, 10.

¹³ Kınıkoğlu 2020, 3

¹⁴ Halpin and others 2018, 21.

¹⁵ Hoffman, Werz, and Halpin 2018, 10.

¹⁶ Edam Report 2014.



participants from the opposition parties mostly declared the immediate repatriation of asylum seekers to their countries as their solution to refugee problem.¹⁷ The alienation of Syrian refugees as well as differentiating positions of opposition parties on refugees that are not taken into consideration by the AKP government contribute to negative peace in Turkey.¹⁸ A situation can be defined as negative peace when authorities enforce stability even though people are unhappy with what is going on knowing there is little they can do since they are powerless – being neither military nor possessing weapons. This is the current state of affairs in Turkey wherein the ruling AKP takes decisions without any search for consensus.¹⁹ This type of peace can give rise to some cultural misperceptions and clashes about national, religious or traditional aspects linked to differences in history, language or identity – just like in the current state of affairs between Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens.²⁰

Serious concerns about refugees widely shared among the government and the people contributed to the AKP's shifting policy towards refugees only after the issue played significant losses to the main opposition party in the 2019 local elections.²¹ Once AKP's loss of votes added to the enormous challenges brought by the large scaled migration and settlement of the Syrian refugees, considerable impacts have been observed in the Turkey's political stance in overall contents of the country's major media outlets and Turkish peoples' stance towards Syrian migrants.²² In the early phases of the refugee crisis, Turkey followed an open-door policy, welcoming the refugees within its borders.²³ However, the open-door policy towards refugees has since shifted.²⁴

As a result of the afore-mentioned national security concerns, the government started to stop new refugees from entering Turkey.²⁵ The changing behavior of Turkey is evident in policies such as the construction of a concrete wall along its 822 km border with Syria, the increase in security forces at entry points as well as the increase in refugee surveillance and measurement filters in refugee camps.²⁶ The wall project is clear evidence that illegal border crossing by smugglers, terrorists, and refugees present security risks.²⁷ These security risks include factors of direct violence which refers to acts such as war, violence, human rights violations, corporal punishment, rape, sexual assault, torture and intractable/protracted conflicts.²⁸

Faced with a growing number of troubling activities involving Syrian refugees, the Turkish Government has started to take measures which can be defined as structural violence such as “social injustice, oppression, and discrimination”.²⁹ Structural violence arises when the political, economic system oppresses a class or a gender. This type of violence includes

¹⁷ Erdogan 2019; Erdogan 2018; Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016, 3; Hoffman, Werz and Halpin 2018, 1; Tuğsuz and Yılmaz 2015, 4.

¹⁸ Schinkel 2010.

¹⁹ Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kirişçi 2014, 38.

²² Hoffman, Werz and Halpin 2018, 10.

²³ Okyay 2017, 829.

²⁴ Nielsen 2016.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch 2016.

²⁶ Kirişçi 2014, 38.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kirişçi 2014, 39.

²⁹ Oxford Economics 2020, 5.

indirect violence types such as “illiteracy, inequality in access to education opportunities, poor infrastructure” as well as repressive violence types such “the absence of democracy and participation opportunities in schools for pupils and others”.³⁰ Therefore, in course of time impacts of such an influx have become equally serious and consequently led to the creation of many problems and novel situations in social, cultural and political spheres of Turkey. Before accessing economic, social and cultural rights, there were difficulties in accessing even basic rights such as health care.³¹

Among signs of structural type of violence in the context of Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens, the most obvious ones are the AKP governments increased measures after which the challenges faced by Syrian have become even more complicated, after crossing Turkish border.³² A new legislation effective from 1 January 2020 was approved obliging people with temporary protection in satellite cities to pay for their health insurance.³³ Turkey's increased measures towards Syrian refugees were influenced by the worsening of Turkish economy, even before the pandemic, which suffers from high unemployment rate, rising inflation, and the devaluation of the Turkish Lira since 2018.³⁴ Nevertheless, structural violence can be further worsened as a result of famine, poverty, or pandemics causing widespread death.

Refugees, like many Turkish citizens, lost their jobs as several times economic activities came to a standstill during the pandemic process.³⁵ However, refugees were more affected than normal citizens because of their independence on daily work and daily income.³⁶ In other words, the lack of even a day's earnings caused them to have serious financial difficulties. And there were many problems ranging from paying their rent to accessing basic necessities to hygiene items. There are many refugee families who do not have the necessary opportunities to access the education that is provided online due to pandemic conditions. Many of them do not have access to internet or educational TV channels due to financial difficulties. Therefore, many of the children of refugees cannot benefit from online education.

Turkey's increased measures towards Syrian refugees reflect serious demand of policy adjustment by Turkish people and beg the question as to what dynamics and reasons caused Turkey to perceive refugees as a threat.³⁷ At the outset of the refugee crisis, the Turkish community respected the refugees and treated them with empathy.³⁸ However, a growing number of social disagreements plus mounting tensions and hostility add to the obstacles that make it more difficult to bring about compliance and integration of these two societies in a peaceful atmosphere.³⁹

To date, there has been no bloody intercommunal conflict in Turkey between Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees. Yet, differences when it comes to social acceptance, lifestyles, cultures, histories, and other functions lead to more clashes, provoking cultural and structural violence

³⁰ Stetter 2020, 4

³¹ Kirişçi 2014, 39.

³² Official Gazette 2019.

³³ Ministry of Interior 2020.

³⁴ Taskinsoy 2019.

³⁵ Açıköz and Günay 2020.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Dagi 2020, 201; Development Initiatives 2020.

³⁸ Yıldız 2016. 102

³⁹ International Crisis Group 2019.



in response to efforts to promote social acceptance and integration of them – proof that there exists a negative peace in Turkey.⁴⁰ There are Turkish citizens who increasingly perceive the refugees as a threat to their daily life.⁴¹ This demands a proper analysis of the kind of problems that lead to worsening perceptions of the citizens of Turkey about Syrian refugees.

The Problems that Caused Turkey to Perceive Refugees as a Threat

Public opinion in Turkey holds two contrasting images of Syrian refugees. On the one hand, there are unfortunate refugees in desperate need of humanitarian help. On the other, there is the perception that some people, Jihadist groups entering Turkey illegally, for example, exploit refugee status and identity to mask their intent to carry out terrorist activities (direct violence).⁴² There are registered and unregistered refugees. Registered refugees come under government control and live in refugee camps.⁴³ However, as evidence of structural violence, some Syrians lack the legal status of refugees even though they have lived in Turkey, interacting with the people, for seven years and longer.⁴⁴ Those who enter illegally are subject to no such filtering system making it almost impossible to determine who are real refugees or who might be terrorists!

Radical terrorist groups, including Jihadists who infiltrated from Syria into Turkey since the Syrian conflict began, have raised fear levels among the people of Turkey about the Syrian refugees in their midst.⁴⁵ The southern provinces of Turkey that border Syria are especially vulnerable and feel under threat of the massive refugee influx of refugees and potential terrorists who might be among them. Such fears are seen by many as having been validated by terrorist attacks organized by groups who infiltrated Turkey in the guise of refugees.⁴⁶

Terrorist acts aside, tensions and insecurities are mounting within society as a result of the other forms of direct violence committed by some refugees. These include murder, rape and/or sexual assault and robbery as reported in the media.⁴⁷ A significant part of the refugee population is perceived to be responsible for high crime rates, the causative motivation being attributed to the unfavorable economic conditions they face as well as an overall loss of morality.⁴⁸ Due to the massive influx of refugees in Turkey, it has become very costly for the state to provide them with the conditions for a better life.⁴⁹ So, some refugees, discontent with the limitations of what is officially available, opt to meet their needs by resorting to illegal measures that bypass official channels.⁵⁰

Were they in a position to acquire a clear cut legally-defined status, it is likely they would stay within the legal framework provided.⁵¹ However, the harsh conditions Syrian refugees find

⁴⁰ Orhan and Gündoğar, 2015: 8-10 ; Koyuncu, 2014: 132.

⁴¹ Saatcioğlu 2019.

⁴² Greenhill 2016, 328.

⁴³ İçduygu 2015, 7.

⁴⁴ Dagi 2020, 207.

⁴⁵ İçduygu 2015, 3.

⁴⁶ Greenhill 2016, 329.; Dagi 2020, 208.

⁴⁷ Erdoğan, Kavukçuer, and Çetinkaya 2017.

⁴⁸ Özaşçılar, Narlı and Öztürk 2019, 1997.

⁴⁹ Batalla and Tolay 2018.

⁵⁰ Özaşçılar, Narlı and Öztürk 2019, 1997.

⁵¹ Ibid.

themselves exposed to induce some to become involved in criminal activity.⁵² Struggling to survive on insufficient income, faced with limited educational opportunities, coping with alienation and culture shock in addition to the psychological and physical trauma inflicted by the civil war in Syria, all factor into an implicit assumption that the ever-increasing refugee population will have negative consequences for Turkey's security that will include higher crime rates.⁵³

Many people in Turkey have to contend with negative aspects of the Syrian refugee crisis such as cultural violence. There are substantial social, historical and cultural differences between the Turkish population and the Syrian refugees.⁵⁴ For example, Turkish communities and the Turkish legal system have a different view of marriage than that of Syrians. As Kirişcioglu maintains, "Turkish civil law does not allow for multiple wives and child marriages".⁵⁵ However, this does not mean that there is no polygamy in the Eastern part of Turkey. The number of child marriages and instances of having multiple wives have increased since the Syrian refugee influx causing considerable social tension, especially given the consequent rise in the percentage of divorce cases.⁵⁶ The flow of refugees from Syria has resulted in thousands of second and third wife marriages in Turkey, in situations where the first wife is Turkish.⁵⁷ Some Turkish men now tend to favour polygamy, even though it is prohibited by law.⁵⁸ Moreover, monetary difficulties lead to child marriages within the Syrian refugee community.⁵⁹ People in Turkey consider this aspect of Syrian culture to be a threat to social security, one that fuels cultural and structural violence.

Another social security problem arising from the refugee situation is the high rate of inflation in the housing sector, especially in cities affected by the massive influx of Syrian refugee populations.⁶⁰ In addition to poor refugees, some wealthy refugees seek a comfortable and secure life in Turkey. This latter group has raised demands in the housing sector and caused inflation that poses a threat to the economic security of the local community.⁶¹

On the other hand, many poor refugees as a source of cheap labour have given rise to an unemployment crisis and growing discontent in affected local communities.⁶² While there are refugees who are relatively secure, there are many seeking jobs in the streets just to get by.⁶³ Desperate for work, they are often exploited by employers and underpaid as refugees hardly obtain the required work permit that brings bureaucratic and financial burden upon employers.⁶⁴ This, in turn, leaves Turkish personnel at risk of having to settle for lower pay scales lest they be completely locked out of the workforce.⁶⁵ The Turkish experience can be

⁵² Demir 2018.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Koyuncu 2014, 132.

⁵⁵ Kirişci 2014, 29.

⁵⁶ Zencir and Davas 2014, 62.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Coşkun and Nielsen 2018, 35.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Erdoğan and Semerci 2018.

⁶³ Bosswick 2009.

⁶⁴ Akar and Erdoğan 2019; Pelek 2019.

⁶⁵ Coşkun and Nielsen 2018, 33.



found in Europe as well where employers farm out relatively low-skilled jobs, to immigrants and/or refugees willing to work for less pay.⁶⁶ Thus in Turkey and countries like it, where wages have stagnated or declined, the refugee influx has given rise to structural violence, which, in the case of Turkey, has increased resentment against the Syrian people.⁶⁷

It is important to note that employment figures are regarded as important indicators of refugees' integrative orientations.⁶⁸ Still, regarding the employment of Syrian refugees, the numbers portray a hopeless picture. Nearly half of the Syrian refugees seem to be unemployed as an indication of structural violence.⁶⁹ According to Gürsoy and Ertaşoğlu, due to the patriarchal nature of Syrian families, figures on the employment of female population are much worse.⁷⁰

What adds to structural and cultural violence is that the language used by political actors does not always reflect respect for universal values and human rights when addressing refugee cases. Rather, it seems calculated to reflect specific political considerations, notably those of the opposition parties which play a key role in shaping Turkish perceptions of the Syrians among them.⁷¹ Their rhetoric and behaviour and the language they use with reference to Syrian refugees are designed to promote their respective parties' views and to influence their constituencies and followers. Additionally, President Erdoğan, the leader of the ruling AKP party, took to using the refugee issue as a threat to seek leverage against the EU leaders, his rhetoric having further worsened the widely held negative perception of refugees among the people of Turkey.⁷²

The longer the Syrian crisis went on, with it feelings about the refugee situation hardened and sentiment soured and shifted among Turkish society. The growing social fragmentation and heightened security risks within society associated with this deterioration signaled a shift towards not only structural and cultural violence but also some forms of direct violence. The change is attributable in part to differences between the two communities in terms of language, culture, and lifestyle, all of which have contributed to the aforementioned rise in the illegal practice of polygamy and higher divorce rates, symptoms of cultural violence. However, this does not necessarily mean that people with different cultural backgrounds cannot live together peacefully. The following section offers several recommendations that might help promote social acceptance and integration of refugees while eliminating the risks of negative peace.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The more evidence there is of a growing negative peace between Turkish people and Syrian refugees, the more the focus on the position, role and strategies of the Turkish government in dealing with the issue.⁷³ The AKP government has recently formulated an exit plan to create

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Erdoğan 2019.

⁶⁸ Halpin and others 2018, 23.

⁶⁹ Gürsoy and Ertaşoğlu 2019.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁷¹ Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016, 51.

⁷² Ibid., 55.

⁷³ Dagi 2020, 210.

conditions that would induce the refugees' return to their homeland.⁷⁴ In order to do that, nevertheless, a safe environment in refugees' countries has to be assured. This presents a complicated challenge in the case of Syria with so many internal and external actors and rivalries provoking the key parties and seeking to push the conflict at a higher level. As the Syrian conflict continues, this demonstrates that the solution to the conflict and achieving a positive type of peace will not be easy and will not happen soon.⁷⁵ In other words, Syrian refugees cannot return to their homeland any time soon.⁷⁶ That is why if the massive numbers of refugees become an even more integral part of Turkey's reality as a hosting country, it will need to develop more integration and compliance programs in order to take precautions against possible outbreaks of conflict arising between domestic society and Syrian refugees in Turkey.⁷⁷

The Turkish Government has developed and implemented a set of strategies to help manage the integration process of Syrian refugees into Turkish society and the administrative system.⁷⁸ Under the Temporary Protection provisions, the authorities provide the Syrian refugees with the requisite access to education, health services, e-vouchers for food and the labour market.⁷⁹ Added to these strategies are Social Support and Services for Syrians. The Immigration Ministry, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies are chief among the institutions charged by the government with delivering appropriate social and psychological support to the refugees.⁸⁰ However, these efforts notwithstanding, in order to eliminate the various types of violence between the people of Turkey and the Syrian refugees, the Turkish government should develop and enhance Turkey's existing integration process with a view to meeting the "education, employment, health, shelter and other needs of Syrian refugees"⁸¹.

The integration process should be given greater priority in the Turkish government's agenda, preferably by increasing the capacity and number of the existing schools. There are many difficulties and obstacles despite current compliance programmes that have been developed to take account of the background of the Syrians so that they can adjust to them more readily.⁸² According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report, 72 per cent of Syrian children are unable to attend school.⁸³ There are curriculum and language differences between the Turkish and the Syrian education systems. Turkish education is more secular than the system in Syria, for example, and allows boys and girls to be in the same class. While the *refugee* male population seem advantageous regarding their integrative orientation, female refugees remain to be isolated in their new society.⁸⁴ Similar to the gender-based

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 213.

⁷⁶ T.C. Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu 2018, 195.

⁷⁷ Erdoğan 2014, 48.

⁷⁸ Erdoğan 2017.

⁷⁹ Kirişçi and Yavçan 2020.

⁸⁰ Uygun 2020.

⁸¹ Kirişçi 2014, 1.

⁸² Aktürk 2010, 633.

⁸³ UNICEF 2017.

⁸⁴ Gürsoy & Ertaşoğlu 2019, 129.



differentiation, seemingly moderate figures in terms of ‘interest towards adaptation’ among young age groups significantly decline as the age of the refugees increases.⁸⁵

Various government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are organizing language courses.⁸⁶ The Government should yet organize more frequent Turkish language courses for the Syrian refugees to strengthen communication between the Syrian refugees and the people. It should be noted that asking refugees to learn the language of the places they are hosted or to adopt a lifestyle similar to the lifestyle of those who live there often carry a hidden risk in the context of freedoms.⁸⁷ Those who do not meet such requests for integration or harmony are likely to face open or hidden pressure – as an instance of structural and cultural violence.⁸⁸ The acquisition of a new language should not be a precondition for a new life, but an opportunity for the adaptation of refugees to their new environment.⁸⁹

Then, adequately dealing with the refugee crisis raises the issue of the language used by political actors and the media about refugees which entails structural and cultural violence towards refugees.⁹⁰ In this instance, media and politicians would do well to moderate and monitor their use of language to ensure compliance with human rights and universal values.⁹¹ In particular, rhetoric should not be loaded as any weapon. Political leaders should avoid aggressive rhetoric to help curtail derogatory characterizations of Syrian and other refugees with the eventual aim of prohibiting defamatory language designed to incite hostility and mistrust.⁹²

The widespread negative image of refugees held by many people can be attributed in large part to either reckless or targeted use of language that is deliberately demeaning and misleading by media and/or political actors when reporting or commenting on issues to do with the Syrian refugees.⁹³ In this way, politicians can manipulate the Turkish public to believe the negative image of the Syrians which serves to raise tensions even further between two cultures. This makes it all the more important that the people of Turkey should be able to put themselves into the shoes of the Syrian refugees and be aware of their circumstances and their blameless intentions. They must empathize with the refugees and show more tolerance and understanding for the situations the refugees face. In sum, regardless of how it may be portrayed in media or in the heat of political rhetoric, people should approach and question what lies behind the refugee situation in order to understand it before they jump to conclusions and judge it.

Another urgent issue is the status of the refugees, which needs to be clarified in Turkey by deregulating its geographical limitation and by adhering to the 1951 Geneva Conventions for refugee rights and status. Once people get refugee status, they have the same legal right in terms of international law as any other refugee elsewhere in the world. In this way, structural

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, .

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Orhan and Gundogar 2015, 16,

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Munthe 2011

⁹⁰ Dykstra 2016, 32

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Dagi 2020, 201; European Commission 2015; Migration Watch UK 2016.

violence against refugees can be eliminated and they can legally seek their rights. If Turkey can promote and develop the necessary conditions so that they can meet their aspirations for a decent life, the majority of refugees will have no need to be tempted by any illegal or criminal activities (in the form of direct violence); apart from that is from Jihadist and other terrorist activists who may have crossed into Turkey from Syria.⁹⁴ By providing the necessary conditions and an effective screening system, it would be easier to know whether the Syrians among them are indeed innocent refugees or whether they are terrorists masked as refugees. Difficult as it may be for the hosting countries, especially those dealing with massive numbers of refugees like Turkey, they must be able to regulate the system in a structured orderly fashion if cultural and structural violence is to be avoided.

The last but not least, there is a need for greater involvement of opposition as well as non-state actors. The helplessness or haplessness of state-centric politics, when confronted with real crises, are exemplified by their attempts to deal with the coronavirus pandemic.⁹⁵ The fact that states close their borders to each other and maintain no meaningful collective security with one another, illustrates their inability to solve problems within or among themselves. Whatever services states may provide their citizens, an equally important factor remains the other actors in the state, such as NGOs, and thorough re-organization of state systems⁹⁶ This decentralized approach should be in such a way that all other actors can participate and play more important roles in the uncertain times ahead yet this is an unpopular and controversial approach when contemplated by populist-nationalist regimes.⁹⁷

Since the refugee influx from Syria started in the early 2010s, Turkey has been one of the countries that have attempted to do its part. In doing so, it hosts millions of Syrian refugees. At the outset, the refugees were welcomed by the government and people alike. However, once it became apparent that the situation would be prolonged and not short-termed, people started to get concerned about the long-term consequences, especially the adverse impact of hosting an ever-expanding number of refugees. Some of those adverse fears were realized with the onset of terrorist attacks and/or other forms of direct violence. Media and opposition parties especially began interpreting issues related to refugees as a threat to social life and stressed the need to treat the refugee influx as a security matter. These adverse events risk stirring up direct violence between the Syrian refugees and the people of Turkey.

Regrettably, the lack of the required behaviour, institutions and organizations in Turkey to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of resources, being a case in point, impedes refugees' access to most fundamental needs as evidence of structural violence. The vulnerability of refugees in Turkey and the current state of negative peace between them and Turkish citizens demand some urgent remedies in order to facilitate the social acceptance and integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey while eliminating cultural violence.

Turkey needs to effectively bring the issue before the international community to ensure its greater involvement. However, the political authorities, including both ruling and opposition parties and President Erdoğan in Turkey, also should avoid using political rhetoric that raises public alarm about the security implications of the issue or using the refugee situation it as a

⁹⁴ Bosswick 2009.

⁹⁵ Rustin 2020.

⁹⁶ Doh and Teegen 2002, 667.

⁹⁷ Rustin 2020.



bargaining chip against the EU. Additionally, there is the question of how to help better orientate the refugees by increasing the number of training and education programs; also the legal aspects require clarification as to the status of the refugees. These are important issues that require consensus; thus, responding to the coronavirus pandemic demands an inclusive approach. The ruling government needs to encourage all actors, including opposition parties as well as NGOs, to contribute in a constructive way for building positive peace. Finally, Turkey needs to consider the groundwork required for the return of the refugees to their country, if possible.

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