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WAR OF POSITION OVER THE REPRESENTATIONS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES
IN TURKISH MEDIA

Tuğba Nur DOĞAN

115611012

Assoc.Prof. Nazan HAYDARI PAKKAN


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TURKISH MEDIA

TÜRK MEDYASINDA SURİYELİ MÜLTECİLERİN TEMSİLİYETLERİ ÜZERİNDEN
GERÇEKLEŞEN MEVZİ SAVAŞI

Tuğba Nur DOĞAN
115611012

Tez Danışmanı: 
Doç. Dr. Nazan Haydari PAKKAN
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyeleri : 
Prof. Dr. Ashı TUNÇ
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi


Yrd/Doç. Dr. Ovünç MERİÇ
Maltepe Üniversitesi

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Foreword

After an intensive period of almost 4 months, it is finally the time to state the importance of this study to me and to thank people who made this thesis possible with all their contributions and support. This study is an extension of my personal experience with Syrian refugees in Turkey working for 6 months as a volunteer English teacher at the Refugee Support Center within the body of a UN supported non-governmental organization. I taught English at the Center and met wonderful people who were still clinging to build a new life after experiencing terrible atrocities in their home country. As I was listening to the stories of Syrian refugees, I came to realize the predicaments they face in Turkey. I was a first year MA student back then and decided to write my thesis on this problem to make my smallest contribution to raise awareness for the problems they face. Therefore, the initial thanks go to the amazing people who inspired me with their determination.

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Abstract

Since the break-out of the civil war in Syria, Turkey has been home to millions of Syrian refugees. First praised for its humanitarian open-door policy by the international community, the government of Turkey has now become the object of criticism by the civil society organizations, both international and local, for its inability to provide effective and rights-based policies for over 3 million refugees in the country. Defined as guests by the authorities in the absence of a legal framework that recognizes them as legal refugees, Syrian refugees have found themselves in a state of limbo awaiting for their fate in Turkey. This uncertainty might have come to an end with the promise made in July 2016, that Syrian refugees will be granted Turkish citizenship. However, the promise failed to meet the expectations.

Drawing upon Gramsci's *War of Position* theory on the interplay between hegemony, ideology and political struggle, this study argues that Turkish news media instrumentalizes Syrian refugees to influence public opinion to serve their own political agenda by justifying or denouncing government policies. Through the news articles on the citizenship discussions in the online editions of four Turkish newspapers with different ideological approaches, it is discussed that citizenship discussions create an instrument of political contestation between oppositional and pro-government media through problematic representations of Syrian refugees, generating the battlefield for the War of Position. As the purpose of War of Position is to capture hegemony over the consent of the public, this study also looks at reflections of the discourses of the War of Position on the public, via tweets posted on the citizenship discussions on Twitter. With the use of Schroder's *Multi-Dimensional Approach*, this study suggests that how media and Turkish public view the citizenship discussions do not point to a potential for a social or political change that will push towards a rights-based refugee policy. A War of Position in media at the expense of undermining refugee rights results in the elimination of commonsensical perceptions towards the refugees.

Keywords: War of Position, Media representations, Syrian Refugees, Multi-Dimensional Approach

Özet

Suriye'deki iç savaşın başlamasından bu yana Türkiye, milyonlarca Suriyeli mülteciye ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Önceleri insani açık-kapı politikasından dolayı uluslararası toplum tarafından övülen Türk hükümeti, şimdilerde etkin ve hak temelli bir mülteci politikası sağlayamamasından dolayı hem yerel hem uluslararası sivil toplumun eleştirilerinin hedefi olmaktadır. Yetkililer tarafından misafir olarak tanımlanan Suriyeli mülteciler, onları yasal bir şekilde mülteci olarak tanımlayan hukuki bir çerçevenin eksikliğinden dolayı, kendilerini Türkiye'de kaderlerinin ne olacağını bekledikleri bir belirsizliğin içinde bulmuşlardır. Bu belirsizlik ise, Temmuz 2016'da yapılan Suriyeli mültecilere vatandaşlık verileceği vaadiyle sona ermiş olabilirdi. Ancak bu vaat, beklentileri karşılamakta başarısız oldu.

Gramsci'nin hegemonya, ideoloji ve politik çekişme arasındaki ilişkiyi irdeleyen teorisi *Mevzi Savaşı*'ndan hareketle, bu çalışma Suriyeli mültecilerin Türk medyasının kendi siyasi amaçları doğrultusunda, hükümet politikalarını haklı göstermek veya eleştirmek amacıyla araçsallaştırıldıklarını iddia etmektedir. 4 Türk gazetesinin online yayınlarındaki haberleri incelenerek, bu tezde, vatandaşlık tartışmalarının hükümet yanlısı ve muhalif medya tarafından siyasi çekişme için bir araç haline getirildiği ve bunun medyayı *Mevzi Savaşı* için bir savaş alanı haline getirdiği iddia edilmektedir. Aynı zamanda, *Mevzi Savaşı*'nın amacı toplumun onayı üzerinden hegemonyayı ele geçirmek olduğundan, bu çalışma medyadaki *Mevzi savaşı*'nın toplum üzerindeki etkisinin seviyesini, Twitter'da vatandaşlık tartışmalarıyla ilgili atılan tweetlerle analiz etmektedir. Schroder'in *Çok Boyutlu Yaklaşımını* kullanarak, bu çalışma Türk toplumunun vatandaşlık tartışmalarını görüş biçiminin, hak temelli bir mülteci politikası oluşması için zorlayacak bir toplumsal veya siyasal bir değişikliğe işaret etmediğini ileri sürmektedir. Medyada mültecilerin haklarına zarar vermek pahasına gerçekleştirilen bir *mevzi savaşı*, mültecilere karşı sağduyulu yaklaşımların körelmesine yol açmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mevzi Savaşı, Medya temsiliyetleri, Suriyeli Mülteciler, Çok-Boyutlu Yaklaşım

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the biggest humanitarian crisis of our times, the civil war in Syria resulted in the displacement of millions of people. Only in Turkey, the number of registered Syrian refugees is 3 million, a number that is enough to ring the bells of catastrophe. In the middle of a crisis with political, sociological and economic consequences, the Syrian people found themselves stranded between living in a war-torn country, and having to flee to different countries with unknown futures. On one hand, the war and millions of people fleeing their homes led the states to establish new restrictions to deal with the large number of people seeking refuge in their countries. On the other hand, the human suffering resulted from the civil war has reached such tremendous levels that it has become inevitable for societies at large not to be affected by it. In other words, it is without any doubt that especially in the host countries, the war and this forceful migration have resulted in social and political changes. Both host citizens and newly arrived Syrian refugees have had to adapt and meet on certain grounds. In Turkey, Syrian refugees continue to face many problems that make the adaptation processes challenging for them. These problems stem from social and cultural differences such as language, ethnicity, traditions and way of living, which may actually be overcome with proper integration policies. However, the very absence of these integration policies which can be the remedy for Syrian refugees if applied systematically, results in a vicious cycle that helps neither Turkey nor the Syrian refugees.

The biggest obstacle on the successful integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey with proper living standards, access to education and health services as well as legal labor market, is the lack of a legal status. According to the Geneva Convention signed in 1951, only those coming from Europe are defined as refugees in Turkey. With the arrival of refugees to the country following the civil war in 2011, Turkish authorities constantly referred to Syrian refugees as guests in the absence of any legal framework. The *Law on Foreigners and International Protection* that was introduced in April 2013

and came into force in 2014 removed the confusion on the legal status of the refugees up to a certain level, yet it failed to provide the necessary legal framework for those forcibly displaced and had to stay in a foreign country for an extended period of time. While Turkey has found itself overwhelmed by the responsibility of hosting numerous people, several social, economic and cultural problems have emerged. As the number of Syrian refugees fleeing to Turkey has increased following the five years of war, the responsibilities it put on Turkey and the presence of the refugees in the country have become more visible not only in the society but in media as well.

Extensive number of literature have highlighted that media representations tend to portray disadvantageous groups in a negative way. Likewise, the visibility of the Syrian refugees in media was also brought the relationship between media representations of Syrian refugees and the way Syrian refugees are perceived in the society to the attention of the academics and researchers. According to a report published by Hrant Dink Foundation (2017) Syrian refugees are the second group towards whom the discourse of hatred is produced the most in media. Nas (2015) found out that Turkish media predominantly portrays Syrian refugees as either criminals or objectifies them as voiceless beings. In addition, Göker and Keskin (2015) discussed that the headlines about the Syrian refugees in Turkish mainstream media are usually oriented towards categorization and stigmatization. These studies managed to demonstrate the problematic representation of the Syrian refugees in the Turkish media, but could not go beyond explaining the biased nature of media when it comes to portraying refugees. The Turkish experience with the Syrian refugees, however, is more complicated than that.

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, the Turkish government sided against the Syrian regime and President Assad, by holding him accountable for the violence towards the civilians and demanded his removal from office. Turkey also had high expectations about the duration of the war, which was thought to end in a short time. Then Prime Minister Erdogan publicly stated that “In a very short time, we will

go to Damascus and embrace our brothers there” (“Erdoğan’dan Önemli Mesajlar,” 2012). Such statements and expectations pointed to the policies with significant consequences for Turkey. The most important one was the open-door policy that defined the current situation in Turkey. In other words, the open-door policy which allowed Syrian refugees into the country laid the foundations of the crisis. On one hand, government policies have been profoundly criticized by the opposition for interfering in the politics of another country and causing a spill-over of problems into Turkey by accepting too many refugees. On the other hand, the government strategically used the refugee policy for its own national interests and electorates. To put it differently, the Syrian refugees have served as an instrument for both the government and the opposition to justify or defy domestic politics. Similarly, Turkish media had different representations of the Syrian refugees based on their own political positioning. Efe (2015) argued that Syrian refugees are instrumentalized by the pro-government and oppositional media to serve the political and ideological interests of the newspapers. This suggests that othering, victimization and criminalization are used as representational strategies to justify different political positions on the domestic and foreign policy. In this political backdrop, Syrian refugees have found themselves living in poor conditions with almost no hope to go back home. Unable to provide a rights-based legal framework, Turkey left the Syrian refugees to the discretion of the authorities with temporary services. Syrian refugees continued to live under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection. However, in June 2016, President Erdoğan’s announcement added more controversy to the refugee discussion.

The discussions started towards the end of 2016 when the President publicly announced that Syrian refugees with “qualifications” would be granted citizenship. The announcement immediately steered controversy in all the domains of the country from politics to public and civil society. Quite expectedly, the pro-government and the oppositional media were divided on their views of citizenship to the Syrian refugees. The discussions marked a turning point in the Turkish domestic policy since it was the

first time that a group of non-European refugees had the opportunity to be granted citizenship collectively. It also marked a turning point for the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government because even highly consolidated electorates were not completely convinced about granting Syrian refugees citizenship and media played a vital role in the justification or delegitimization of this policy.

It has always been the subject of public discussions and academic research whether it is media that sets its own depictions of politics and political events, or it is the politicians who lead the media representations of social and political reality (Schroder & Phillips, 2007, p.890). Therefore, the interplay between media and politics and how and in what way they influence and be influenced by one another is a highly debated issue. Media has the power to not only inform the public, but also to shape the public opinion to steer political change by influencing and pressuring politics. Similarly, politics can also make use of media to shape the public opinion to serve their own political interests. Especially in the case of Turkey where media is mostly controlled by the government, it can be easily argued that media play a crucial role in the justification of the government policies. At the same time, there is also a strong resistance to AKP government with dispersed opposition parties and disconnected opposition media. Thus, it is inevitable for Turkish media with different political views to position themselves differently regarding the citizenship discussions. Therefore, this thesis argues that there is a political contestation between various media representations of refugees, and these representations try to win over the public opinion on the existence and the future of the Syrian refugees in Turkey. The argument of this thesis draws from Gramsci's *War of Position* theory on the interplay between hegemony, ideology and political struggle.

Gramsci's theorization of *War of Position* differs from the Marxist thinkers preceded him in that he argued economic determinism by itself would not explain the class struggle, and therefore hegemony is not only the domination of the bourgeois class over the proletariat. He rather suggested that hegemony is exercised at every

domain of public life with cultural, moral and intellectual leadership and in the economic and administrative fields. In Gramsci's theorizations, hegemony is accumulated in the state power exercised not only with coercion but also with the consent of public that is won through the leadership in the fields of civil society. Dominant groups also need to make use of ideology to justify their domination. Ideology can be argued to be the ensemble of ideas that is determined to be the real material conditions of the ruling dominant group. In other words, ideology is the concealment of the real social contradictions and "normalizes class domination and exploitation" (Cammaerts, 2015, p.525). For Gramsci, hegemony is exercised through not only coercion, but also with consent that is manufactured with the cultivation of the dominant ideology through the institutions of civil society. Most importantly, political struggle taking place through these institutions to win over the public opinion might eventually lead to the conquest of consent. This political struggle, in Gramscian sense, is called the *War of Position*.

Gramsci (1971) argues that wars in the traditional sense, which he calls the war of maneuver, does not take place anymore to seize hegemony. Instead, it is now a political struggle, a war fought in the institutions of civil society that groups competing for the hegemony have to wage. The struggle is now not to gain a military victory to capture the hegemony, but to win over the consent of the masses through civil society institutions as consent constitutes the majority of the hegemonic domination. He describes the war of position as ongoing struggles over symbols that legitimize and transform political and economic structures (Gramsci, 1971). Therefore, for Gramsci, hegemony, for which the war of position is fought, is always incomplete and competed upon (Holmes & Castaneda 2016, p.1). In the case of the refugee representations in Turkish media, we can infer that there is a war of position over the meanings through which the refugee crisis is understood. If we consider that war of position is a mediated war over the symbols, contested to prevail over the other discourses that might affect the public perception the most, then we can also argue that media stands at the center

of this war as discourses and symbols are mostly conducted through media. War of position, therefore, can be approached as a mediatized discursive war that produces real results affecting social reality (Cammaerts 2015, p.523). In the case of the refugee representations, the framing of the Syrian refugees suggests an ideological framing by the hegemonic discourse that deprives the Syrian refugees of their basic right to access a wider range of social, economic and educational services. After all, “media texts are not neutral instruments, but that it matters which words are chosen and how the story is told. [...] and that choosing one way over the other carries a particular meaning” (van Shaik, 2015, p.13). In other words, the choice of words in media can help legitimize or delegitimize certain discourses. The discursive framing also shifts the responsibility from those who are responsible, to the ones who actually suffer from the ordeal, by hiding the real reasons and the outcomes of the crisis (Holmes & Castaneda, 2015, p.2). To exemplify, positive representations of the refugees in the newspapers in line with the government’s view would be problematic as this would still remove the consequences of the crisis away from its social, political and economic reality. The framing of refugees as needy without a reference to the problems ranging from their legal status to the very reasons of the war itself would again serve to the hegemonic discourse (Göker & Keskin 2015, p.8).

By drawing from the citizenship discussions, this study argues that a war of position in the Gramscian sense takes place in the Turkish newspapers through the discourses either exerting consent for granting citizenship to Syrian refugees, or convincing the public about the fatal consequences of granting refugees citizenship. For a war to be waged, there needs to be a battlefield and media is a significant space for a war of position to take place. Gramsci (1971) put an emphasis on the significance of language for the war of position. He described language as “a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just of words and grammatically devoid of content” (p.323). Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) suggest that language is vital in the creation of our social world, and the way we bring words together and use the language shape

representations of reality. Yet, these representations do not really reflect mere pre-existing reality but rather constitutes the reality (as cited in Schroder & Phillips, 2007, p.894). Therefore, media discourses and representations generate a battlefield for the war of position as they are closely intertwined with power and hegemony and they are instrumental for hegemonic powers to construct reality. To discuss the framework presented in the war of position in Turkish media, this study has chosen to analyze the online sources of 4 Turkish newspapers. These newspapers are namely *Yeni Şafak*, *Sabah*, *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet*. The newspapers were categorized as pro-government and oppositional to discuss the particulars of the war of position. The categorization of the newspapers was done by taking the context of media industry in Turkey into consideration.

The main function of media in democratic states is usually defined as to give public enough information to assess the leaders and their governance (Dunaway, 2008, p.1193). Nevertheless, in the case of Turkey, media today is mostly used as a propaganda machine to justify or defy government policies. Different media organizations are divided with distinct political orientations, with close connections to political parties and other political organizations, and with journalists trying to influence public opinion instead of only informing the citizens (Somer, 2010, p.557). Moreover, most mainstream media are controlled by the government as they are owned by pro-government business groups. With the creation of a clientalist relationship between the state and media, the government assures a variety of mainstream media organizations that broadcast and publish in ways to support government policies. *Yeni Şafak* and *Sabah* are owned by *Albayrak Group* and *Turkuaz Media Group* respectively, both of which belong to umbrella corporations that operate in different sectors as well. These sectors include construction and it is significant for them to win the state tenders to continue to operate. As for the newspapers that are categorized as oppositional, we can argue that the reasons are ideological. *Sözcü* has always alienated itself from Erdogan administration with its editorial policy. Furthermore, it is owned

by a businessman whose ideological views might be reflected in the editorial policy of the newspaper as Dunaway (2008) argues “ideological owners are more likely to prefer substantive issue coverage as a tool for pushing an ideology” (p.1195). *Cumhuriyet* does not fit into either of these explanations. It has historically been owned by the non-profit *Cumhuriyet Foundation* with no individual or institutional shareholder and the Foundation defined the editorial policy of the newspaper. Therefore, *Cumhuriyet* continues to maintain its leftist values. After the coup attempt in July 2016, some of its columnists were arrested with charges of attempting to overthrow the government. Thus, while selecting the oppositional newspapers, what was also taken into account was the ideological distance these newspapers have towards the AKP government. News articles from the online websites of these four newspapers were taken from a period of one month starting from the announcement of granting citizenship to Syrian refugees in July 2016. The discourses of the newspapers were then divided into 6 groups through discourse analysis. Online editions of newspapers were taken into consideration for this research due to online editions’ potentiality for dissemination and accessibility.

The second part of the research deals with the reception of these media representations, and how the discussions in the newspapers on granting citizenship to Syrian refugees are perceived by the society as the purpose of the war of position is to cultivate the ideologies of one particular group in the minds of the masses. This part of the analysis draws from *Multi-Dimensional Approach* by Schroder that differs from classical reception studies categorizing the reception as dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional. *Multi-Dimensional Approach* rather allows for the evaluation of how individuals position themselves in an ideological scale that are subjectively and objectively compatible with the hegemonic representations, and whether or not they have a potential for a social or political change. Turkish public has been bombarded with variety of media discourses on the citizenship discussions. After President Erdogan publicly announced the prospective citizenship for the Syrian

refugees, the discussions expectedly spread to Twitter and became trending topics with different hashtags. Therefore, it may be argued that Twitter is instrumental in assessing the public opinion on the citizenship discussions and to what extent the representations of Syrian refugees in both the pro-government and oppositional newspapers are reflected in the users' tweets. Two hashtags of #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilsin (give citizenship to Syrians) and #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilmesin (don't give citizenship to Syrians) were selected for the analysis of public reaction. To see whether the themes of the war of position in the news articles are reflected in the Twitter users' response and to what extent, the tweets were also categorized into 7 groups. They were then analyzed with the Multi-Dimensional Approach to assess the audience response in multiple ways. While enabling this study to analyze how the public perceives the war of position in media on the citizenship discussions in Turkey, the Multi-Dimensional Approach also allowed to position these perceptions in a political spectrum to trace the implications they have for social and political change.

This study argues that there is a war of position in Turkish media as to which media discourses will win the public opinion in their views on granting citizenship to Syrian refugees. The study suggests that pro-government media tries to exert consent from the masses for the government to maintain its hegemony over the refugee policy, while the oppositional media attempts to convince the public otherwise and weaken government's domination as the sole decision maker of the refugee policy. Additionally, the study scrutinizes the public's perception of citizenship discussions to assess the potentiality of a social and political change on the refugee issue. This research is crucial in understanding the motives behind media representations of Syrian refugees and goes beyond the literature that predominantly focuses on the negative portrayals of minority and refugee/migrant groups in the media. The study sheds new light on the discussions on the instrumentalization of the refugees in domestic policies in specific relation to Turkish experience, and how this instrumentalization deprives the refugees of their basic legal rights and leaves them to the discretion of authorities

in the absence of a rights-based system. At the same time, Syrian refugees have become instruments for the opposition to politically attack the government with discourses that shift the responsibility to the ones who actually suffer from government policies. This political war is waged through media with the consolidation of these discourses to influence the public to their own political interests. Also, the study offers some important insights into the reception of these discourses via Twitter posts, and assesses the potential for political and social change on the perception and policies concerning Syrian refugees. Finally, the study is significant with its contribution to the culture of peaceful coexistence between the host Turkish society and Syrian refugees through investigating reasons for intolerance and hatred discourses produced in media.

The first chapter of the study reviews the literature on media and its relation to disadvantageous groups like minorities and refugees in general, and continues with the media representations of Syrian refugees in particular. The second chapter examines the emergence of the Syrian civil war and how different actors ignited and caused the extension of its duration. Then, the study proceeds with Turkey's involvement in the war and the political consequences of the so-called open-door policy. The second chapter ends with the analysis of the condition of the Syrian refugees in Turkey, how the absence of a legal framework results in a service-based refugee policy, and what led to the announcement of granting citizenship to Syrian refugees. The third chapter deals with the theoretical dimensions of the research and the significance of these theories for the study. It gives a thorough explanation of Gramsci's *War of Position*, and Schroder's *Multi-Dimensional Approach*. The study continues with the fourth chapter laying out the methodology of the research, the reason for the selection of online sources of particular newspapers and Twitter. The fifth chapter looks at how and through which discourses the war of position takes place in the newspapers and how the individuals take part in this war via Twitter. The last chapter discusses the implications of the war of position and the potential for social and political change with how individuals perceive this war.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines refugees as “people fleeing conflict or persecution”. As is the topic of this dissertation, refugees are all in the news since they have large impacts on not only the countries they fled from or fled to, but also the world. There is a growing body of refugee studies that is trying to influence government policies in a way they believe to be in the advantage of the refugees. It is argued that the recent studies suggest that refugees are people with needs and therefore need to be acknowledged with purposeful improvement projects, rather than their attempt to flee to industrial global north (Gatrell, 2017, p.1). In addition, Maley (2016) puts forward the idea that states create refugees with their failure to protect their own citizens, or by violating their rights. However, it is not the only thing. The states hinder the ways these people seeking refuge as well. They are left in situations in which they need to convince the immigration officers in their cause, which is never an easy task to do (as cited in Gatrell, 2017, p.2). Migration has always been depicted as a hardship by the refugees, and as invasion, by most, if not all, media organizations. Mannik (2016) states that there is a correlation between cultural representations of refugees and refugeehood, and the political decisions to cope with them (as cited in Gatrell, 2017, p.4). Therefore, the need to understand the role of media in the way refugees are represented is crucial, because it is the media who produces these cultural and social realities. Below, the literature on the role of media as the source of information in relation with immigration and refugeehood in general, and Syrian refugees in particular is going to be discussed.

1.1.The Significance of Media Representations

Van Dijk (2000) argues that media is the primary source through which people’s knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards incidents are informed (p. 36). As a consequence, the discourses created by media have become of great importance for the ordinary citizens to make sense of the events. In other words, media is the determinant

of people's understanding, to a great extent, with its ability to transform and shape public opinion, and even policies. Moreover, media is instrumental in accommodating a communicative bridge between political and social actors, as well as affecting the understanding of critical issues, and shaping people's political views in addition to political participation (Bleich et. al, 2015, p.857). As a result of this very characteristic of media, the discourses produced in the news by media influence individuals' cognitive and behavioral practices. That is why it is inevitable for certain events and phenomena to be understood along with media discourses, as well as representations, since they are produced and disseminated by certain viewpoints and ideologies (Göker & Keskin 2015, p.237). The symbolic power of media is once again confirmed with our increasing dependence on media representations to be informed about the world and each other (Georgiou, 2012, p.792). This is mostly conducted through framing. As Parenti puts it (2008), framing is provided with the way the news is packaged, the part that is revealed, the way it is presented and titles and photographs alongside with it (as cited in Göker & Keskin 2015, p.). When all these factors come together around a certain approach, they influence the audience receiving the news in the expected and the desired way. That's why, news consists of a construction process of reality (Göker & Keskin, 2015, p.234). Media has a vital role to play in building what we understand as "socially normal", by selecting certain depictions of people and places. Various research has pointed out that frames are effective in political decision making, not only with directly providing political elites with information, but also indirectly by shaping public opinion. Certain frames are disseminated so often that they get natural (Wilmott, 2017, p.70). Consequently, understanding the nature of media representations would enable us to understand how the framings of the "us" and the "other" affect our perceptions of both.

1.2.Representing Minority Groups and Refugees

Media representations are even more crucial when it comes to disadvantageous groups in the society, especially minorities and immigrants since they play a key role

in not only reproducing the social reality, but also in constructing a new one. Especially research on migrants and minorities pay high attention to representations of race, religion and legal status in media studies to help different disciplines connect with media and communication (Bleich et. al, 2015, p.861). To put it differently, media representations of such disadvantageous groups tend to produce a different sort of social reality in which these groups are depicted through the ideological lens of the hegemonic group. In this aspect, Van Dijk (2000) talks about the emergence of *new racism*, which is different than the old, *real racism*, which is based on the assumption that one race is superior to the other. The former is implicit as opposed to the latter. He argues that the new racism desires to be democratic and does not accept the fact that it is racism in the first place (p.34). The new racism is therefore, given its implicit nature, created through discourses, that is, “they are expressed, enacted and confirmed by talk such as everyday conversations, laws, parliamentary debates, political propaganda, articles...” (Van Dijk, 2000, p. 34). Racism is defines as the inequality between different races or ethnics and it is based on two constituents. The first one is the social one composed of everyday, institutional and organizational practices, whereas the second one is the cognitive aspect, which includes the beliefs, attitudes and knowledge towards the unprivileged class, that are created and justified through discourses, which Van Dijk (2000) argues that media and political elites should be accountable for (p. 36). It is argued that there are a number of reasons as to why societies should be concerned about the role of media in shaping the beliefs and attitudes towards race and ethnicity especially in liberal democracies (Georgiou, 2012, p.793). In other words, it should be discussed whether the implications of free flow of information to inform the society in an ideal liberal democracy is causing one group of people to be discursively discriminated or not. These forms of new racism are not explicit like real racism, but Van Dijk (2000) claims that it can equally marginalize those groups and even be more hurtful in that these discourses seem “normal” (p. 34). It is argued that media are capable of taking advantage of being the most effective form of public discourse, namely the media discourse, and create the discourses required for

reproduction of new racism when especially there is no alternative discourse for the minority, critics are weak, and there is almost a complete agreement on these discourses (Van Dijk, 2000, p. 37).

In their study on migrants and minorities in relation to media studies, Bleich *et. al* (2015) came up with three points why media studies are important for scholars of minorities and migrants. They argue that media is related to migration and minority studies in that, firstly, it is a source of information about them (p.859). Apart from its discursive power, media is considered to be keeping the initiative of deciding what is public and what is worthwhile to be reported, even if it is sometimes not in line with objective reality (Bleich *et. al*, 2015, p.859). That media continuously reproducing hegemonic racial ideologies and the society accepting it as the truth is a direct consequence of media keeping the monopoly of deciding what to report or not (Georgiou, 2012, p.795). Thus, media has the power to determine which events to cover or ignore some at certain times, whether or not they represent the facts. This, Bleich *et. al* argues (2015), transcends also to the reporting of minority groups and immigrants (p.860). A local example would be Kurdish news in the mainstream Turkish media, in which while reporting news about the Kurds, even the seemingly different newspapers coming from different ideological backgrounds can be similar in reproducing a racist discourse towards the Kurdish (“Türk basınında Kürt sorunu”, 2005). Secondly, media produces certain narratives and depictions about migrant and minorities, which include negative ones as well. Scholars who study negative media representations see them as images of societal representations on the macro level, which affect people and social institutions, the majority of which concerns the scholars in terms of their effects on policies and public opinion. Therefore, for the scholars of migrants and minorities, media representations are crucial to understand as to how they depict these groups and what kind of implications they have on public and politics (Bleich *et. al*, 2015, 862). Lastly, scholars deal with the notion of political participation in relation with media and studies of migrants and minorities. They study the participants of the production

and the dissemination of the news (Bleich et. al, 2015, p. 862), such as the journalists and media corporates as to which ideological backgrounds they are from, as well as discussing the opportunities for social and political debate through media. In addition, media studies are related with studies of migrants and minorities with regard to the possibility of producing an alternative discourse if, and most likely they are, to be excluded from the mainstream (p.863). The relevance of this approach to my study is that media representations of Syrian refugees in Turkey are in line with what Van Dijk calls the politics of *new racism*. In both the pro-government and oppositional mainstream media, we see the representations of *new racism* which takes place in discursive forms and which have direct implications on public opinion. Likewise, the news selection practices of media which Bleich *et. al* (2015) calls the information aspect, are also noteworthy to understand the production processes of these representations. Moreover, discussing the possibilities for an alternative discourse in media might result in creating a different understanding in people's opinions about race, immigration and refugeehood.

1.3.Refugees and Immigrants as Threats to Societies

Various studies have been conducted about the discursive representations of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers and it is argued that they are mostly depicted as “foreigners” and “outsiders” (Lueck et. al 2015, p.612) and Van Dijk (2012) argues that it is done so to marginalize and exclude and even put a limit on the human rights of these groups (p.16). It is also suggested in the previous studies that they are mostly represented in the scope of politics, instead of the many problems they face, which consists of almost no self-representation or humanization (Lueck et. al 2015, p.612). This is further reinforced with Krzyzanowski and Wodak's (2009) study about asylum seekers and refugees in Britain in which they found out that deep discussions about refugees and asylum seekers occur simultaneously with growing political tensions (p.279). It is also suggested that the media representations of asylum seekers in Australia between 2000-2001 were considerably in line with the government's negative

stance towards them (Lueck et. al, 2015, p.612). Apart from being politicized, the media representations of refugees and asylum seekers in the Australian context have always depicted them as threats to unemployment among the host citizens, as well as to border safety and to their culture (Cooper et. al, 2017, p.79). Like Van Dijk argues in his concept of new racism, the asylum seekers and refugees are not explicitly discriminated in the society, but instead discursively marginalized as being alien to the Australian way of life. Similarly, studies about immigration in Britain have shown that hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers is intense and the terminology used by media to frame these groups is problematic in that they are presented as “floods” and “tidal waves” (Leudar et. al, 2008, p.188). Furthermore, it is argued that the hostility is created through a number of discourses like floods, animals, weeds and disease, shows that they are not individual issues, but they are socially produced representations present in the language of a society (Leudar et. al, 2008, p.189). In their study, Leudar et. al (2008) found out that the main contestation for media was to decide whether the refugees really needed asylum, or they were economic migrants which were to be decided around the hostility theme, on the grounds that they are an economic burden who consume the economic sources of Britain, they even lack basic human characteristic of loving one’s own children, they are prospective criminals, and they carry diseases. These representations and framings were not simply only generalized discourses, but they were going hand in hand with the broader socio-political conjuncture. All these representations were being used by media to justify respectively the economic measures the government intended to take, the societal consent to justify the taking of the refugee children into state care, tagging them so that it would be easy to spot them in case of a criminal act and forcibly screening the refugees for potential diseases (Leudar et.al, 2008, p.199). In their study, Leudar et. al (2008) also found out after conducting a number of interviews with asylum seekers in Britain, as opposed to being represented as opportunists, they were actually enjoying a good quality life back in their home countries. Their reason for fleeing from their countries are mostly political and moral in contrast with what was reported in media (p.213).

When analyzing refugee narratives in the UK and Australian print media, Samuel Parker (2015) makes use of what Potter and Wetherell (1987) call *discursive psychology*. He argues that according to Potter (1996), one of the founders of the concept of discursive psychology, the researcher must concentrate on how a certain description can be made to seem real and what is gained by representing the facts in that particular way (Parker, 2015, p.3). In addition, Edley (2001) puts forward that discursive psychology focuses on demonstrating both how identities are constructed on and for certain occasions, and how history and culture influence and be influenced by these performances (as cited in Parker, 2015, p.3). Discursive psychology has been used to explain other areas related to asylum seekers and refugees, such as talks about them. Charteris-Black (2006) found that the water metaphor used to describe the refugees and asylum seekers was present in most of the politicians' speech in the UK, which is a commonality between them and anti-immigrant groups, to justify their opinion on immigration and refugeehood (p.569). Likewise, statements like "I'm not racist but..." is also a discursive strategy both in political and public discourse which is applied to create a perception of not having racist views towards asylum seeking, whereas the truth is actually the opposite (Parker, 2015, p.4). Analyzing the data he collected from both British and Australian newspaper articles about the refugees and asylum seekers between 2000-2001, Parker (2015) concluded that three discursive representations came forward which are "unwanted invaders", "the dishonest asylum seeker" and "the tragic asylum seeker". He argues that representations are not representations of facts but are in fact consciously constructed reality by media (p.5). The most prominent theme, "unwanted invaders", was reinforced by metaphors of criminality and water. The refugees and asylum seekers were portrayed with words and collocations such as "detainees", "isolated", "attack", and "lock up" to emphasize their tendency to commit a crime and also words such as "flood" and "overflowed" to point to their large numbers (Parker, 2015, p.6). In addition, in the second type of representations of refugees and asylum seekers, they were represented as dishonest by being portrayed to be lying about their previous lives, such as lying about their

sexuality in order not to be deported. Also, instead of explicitly showing them as criminals, their honesty is questioned through the apparent mistrust towards their past (p.8). The news would go even further to suggest that young refugees may be lying about their ages to receive better treatment and care. The third type, the “tragic asylum seeker”, is constructed through news in which the hardships the asylum seekers face was portrayed as well as still reminding the readers that they are unwanted (p.9)

In light of his study, Parker (2015) concluded that print media is able to influence their readers through the use of discursively constructed representations which were implemented with the use of metaphors like water and crime (p. 13). This, he argues, supports what Pickering (2001) put forward that asylum seekers were portrayed as an unordinary group of people that reinforced the discourse which differentiate “us” and “them”, just like Van Dijk (1987) who suggested that in discourses of immigration, a distinct difference between “us” and “them” is constructed that reproduces these problems on the grounds of race and immigrants who should be kept out (Parker, 2015, p.13).

1.4.State of Exception

Moreover, Lueck *et. al* (2015) has found close relationship between neoliberalism and nationalism, in terms of the stance both ideologies have towards the refugees and asylum seekers, in their study of two incidents happening in Australia in 2009, with the arrival of two vessels carrying refugees, The Oceanic Viking and Jaya Lestari 5. They argue that even though both right and left wing political parties in Australia have embraced neo-liberal policies, which is based on the assumption of free circulation of goods and freedom of entrepreneurship, both ideologies have maintained a negative view towards refugees and asylum seekers. As a matter of fact, neo-liberal nation-states like Australia have actively been running policies on accepting economically desirable refugees and immigrants, and excluding the ones who are not socially and economically desirable (p. 609). It has been noted by some researchers

(Andreas, 2003; Van Houtum and Van Naersean, 2001) that it is a contradiction, as neoliberal nation-states are getting more open to free trade and economic practices, they are becoming more closed to immigration when it is from people who lack enough economic and social capital (as cited in Lueck et. al, 2015). After analyzing the response of media to the two incidents mentioned above, Lueck et. al (2015) found two prominent repertoires, one focusing on border control, people smuggling and national security, and the other concentrating on the politics of asylum seekers and what they call as *state of exception* (p.616). The discussion surrounding the prevention of people smuggling is that when media refers to it as smuggling, it is understood as something based on consent, as opposed to the term human-trafficking, it suggests that these people chose to come to Australia. In other words, the Australian media represent these refugees as if they had another choice but to come to Australia. As for the second repertoire, the constant delegitimization of the asylum seekers and refugees by media has been based on former's supposed unlawfulness, to justify the use of force towards them by the Australian state and thus initiating "state of exception", since the treatment of Australian state towards the refugees and asylum seekers was a direct infringement of international human rights law. "State of exception" refers to a situation of emergency in which the governments call off the legal order and deprive the citizens of their rights (Wilmott, 2017, p.69). Agamben (1998) explains this in terms of Foucault's concept of biopower in which states discriminate the "lives to be made to live" that are "political beings" from the "lives to be let die" that accounts for "bare life", which are only "bodies" (as cited in Willmott, 2017, p.69). The concept of biopower therefore enables us to understand the power states have over the lives and deaths of refugees. Under the disguise of protecting their citizens, the states legitimize their suspension of human rights law towards the refugees since they represent a security threat (Willmott, 2017, p.69). It is concluded after analyzing the articles regarding these two incidents in Australia, the justification to dehumanize and criminalize the asylum seekers are further consolidated as the readers were not informed about why these people are fleeing from their countries in the first place

(Haynes et al, 2006, p.106). Such representations keep on depicting refugees as outsiders and aim to exclude them from the norm, which legitimates the state of exception (Willmott, 2017, p.69). What is notable in these findings is that how seemingly two different political ideologies can meet on the same grounds when it comes to immigration and refugeehood. While the neoliberal discourse was arguing against immigrant and asylum seekers in terms of their economic and social undesirability in the neoliberal system, nationalists were ensuring that there is a homogenous population circulating at the borders to guarantee the national economic investment (Lueck et. al, 2015, p. 624).

1.5. Media Representations of Syrian Refugees

So far, the role of media in representing disadvantageous/minority groups in general and refugees and asylum seekers in particular has been discussed. Selecting and reporting the news is a complicated process, and it is much more important while reporting on the “other”, since media is our only source to present us what we do not know about “them”. However, Fowler (1991) suggested that the news is politically, socially and economically established, so it should report from a certain viewpoint (as cited in Lueck et. al, 2015, p.615). Therefore, it is argued that news is “end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories” (Hall et al. 1978, p.53). Based on the literature on media studies in relation to refugees and asylum seekers, it is understood that media has largely a negative stance towards the refugees and has chosen to go in line with the political and economic implications of refugeehood rather than humanitarian and sociological consequences. What we see in light of the previous research is that refugees and asylum seekers are exposed to such representations through which they are dehumanized, alienated and “made enemies”. The situations they find themselves in are most of the time decontextualized from its political and historical context, often because of its complexity and the interests of the political and media elites. They are occasionally depicted as threats to the well-being of the host

society. Therefore, there is a causal relationship between refugee/asylum seeker representations and their implications on the society. İbrahim Efe (2015) sums up this causal cycle as four stages. First, media chooses certain representations of these groups because of a number of reasons. Next, these representations depict the refugees and asylum seekers collectively as either victims or problems for the host society. Third, these representations result in certain behavioral patterns towards them. And finally, these representations serve to complete the hegemonic groups' strong policies (p.9). Because of this causal relationship, it is important to analyze the media representations of asylum seekers and refugees to understand and find a solution to this societal problem in the long-run.

Therefore, it is crucial to make sense of the media representations of Syrian refugees. Millions of people are fleeing from their country and from what is now called the biggest humanitarian catastrophe since the World War II. As the crisis has now reached such tremendous levels with millions of people displaced, more than 3 million are located only in Turkey, that states started to apply new policies to cope with it. Consequently, as the studies have shown, the media representations of refugees and asylum seekers have broad influence on the policies and the perception of the society. Specifically, the policies to be adopted to overcome this unprecedented crisis may and will affect us in the short and long run, that is why it is crucial the understand the media representations that shape these policies.

The media representations of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers, like the representations of other disadvantageous minority and immigrant groups, have always been problematic. Göker and Keskin (2015) concluded that in Turkish mainstream media Syrian refugees are represented mostly through war and poverty, rather than the problems with their legal status in Turkey, which suggests that they are victimized but their reasons for being a victim is ignored, but the news is only constructed on their victimhood. In addition, in their study on the use of metaphors to represent the Syrian refugees in the online media in several host countries including Turkey, Abid *et. al*

(2017) drew attention to the power of metaphors. As argued above in the previous studies about refugees and asylum seekers in Britain and in Australia, Abid *et. al* (2017) suggest that they opted to study the metaphors as they are an important source of influence, as well as being so common in media discourse (p.123). They found out that the most frequently used metaphor category was the water metaphor, which indicate the large number of refugees trying to come into their country. Also, the second notable category of metaphors represent how the situation in the host countries are deteriorating with the huge number of refugees living in their country. Words such as “burden”, “pressure”, and “strain”, are used to reinforce the idea of how Syrian refugees are portrayed as scapegoats for the several economic and infrastructural problems the host countries are having (Abid *et. al*, 2017, p.127). Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) pointed out the motive behind the metaphors that depict the refugees as economic burden is that the journalists are intending to portray them as either an “economic burden” on the country because they get state aid, or they are represented as “economic threat” since they fill the job positions otherwise would be filled by the host country citizens (p.21). Like the findings of Abid *et. al* (2017), Syrian refugees in Turkey are largely blamed for the increasing rate of unemployment and increasing number of population in the country. Similarly, they are held responsible for the escalating prices of the rents, especially in the neighboring cities close to the Syrian border.

1.6.Deserving or undeserving refugee?

Moreover, even the distinction between “refugee” and “economic immigrant” can make a huge difference while representing the Syrian refugees. This argument came to light after the August 2015 editorial decision of Al Jazeera English to replace the term economic migrant with the term refugee. Even though AJE received some criticism because of this decision as some argued this would mean depriving the migrants of their justified reasons to migrate, Kyriakides (2016) argues that the discursive shift from economic migrant to refugee does not dismiss both terms’ power to identify the status of “legitimate migrant.”. In addition, people coming to Europe to

seek refuge have to prove that they are victims posing no threat to Europe if they want to be given acknowledgement. Therefore, the political responsibility put on the refugees to legitimize their case deprives them, not empowers them (p.2). The reason for this mistrust towards the refugees is the main policy change from viewing refugees as victims who are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, to threats to security. Moigre (2011) argues that the concept of security shifted from military to non-military concerns that consist of individual security as well as societal and state security, which changed the focus away from assisting the refugees to intervention to protect the host countries (as cited in Kyriakides p.12). Therefore, security discourse in media leads the public to view the Syrian refugees as potential threats such as “ISIS sleeper or “suicide bomber” (Kyriakides, 2016, p.12). Rettberg and Gajjala (2016) claim that negative visual representations of Syrian male refugees in social media by mostly European users reproduce this security discourse by portraying them as potential terrorists and dangerous for Europe (p.179). Möller (2007) argues that it is inevitable for the security policy not to be affected by the world’s “hypersaturation” with images (p.179). Williams (2003) emphasized that visual communication can also be stimuli for securitization, which is likely to influence people’s perception about refugeehood, terrorism and securitization (p.526). Post 9/11 portrayals of Middle Eastern men would largely depict them as terrorists and oppressing women, which was used as a justification for invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. In the portrayals of Syrian refugees, however, the women are mostly absent, but the discourse functions the same way as in post 9/11, suggesting that Syrian men are escaping from the civil war leaving the women behind, which again implies that there are women to be rescued. The concept of biopower can also be applied here in that bare life, which here accounts for the Syrian women who are left behind, can either be killed or be so powerless that an intervention might be required to save them. In addition, one of the tweets posted to the #refugeesnotwelcome hashtag was showing two photos, one is of an African child who is starving, and the other is of two refugee men on a boat, saying the child is the real refugee and the men are not. Rettberg and Ganjjala (2016) argue that the African

child is easy to have sympathy over since he is sufficiently far, whereas the men are trying to enter Europe (p.180). Therefore, these representations reproduce the security discourse which suggests that the refugees are potential terrorists, and threats to host countries.

1.7.Representations of Syrian Refugees in Turkish Media

Göker and Keskin (2015) concluded that the majority of the headlines of the news related to Syrian refugees in Turkish mainstream media oriented towards categorization and stigmatization. Instead of being described as refugees or asylum seekers, they are defined as Syrians, which have a negative connotation in the societal context, and through which their real identities are neglected, and their passivity and objectivity are highlighted (248-9). Thus, it appears the situation in Turkish media is different than the Western one where there is a dichotomy between refugee/immigrant. In Turkish media however, the identity of the refugees is ignored altogether, subordinating the discussion only to ethnic and racial lines. Apart from that, the emphasis on the victimhood of the Syrian refugees come forward in the representations. However, it should be noted that this victimization process is twofold. While Syrian refugees are presented as the victims of displacement, Turkey is depicted as the victim who has been affected by this refugee flow the most. Through these comparisons, the contrast between “us” and “the other” is reinforced which leads to the emergence of a populist discourse suggesting “If they are victims, we are victims, too” (Göker & Keskin, 2015, p.255).

In his paper *Representation of Syrian Refugees in Turkish Media: A Critical Analysis of the News Items*, Alparslan Nas (2015) analyzes the refugee discourse in Turkish media, which he sees problematic in the way the language used to mediate the news. He argues that the way Syrian refugees is represented in Turkish media either criminalizes or objectifies them (p.2). He found a number of examples of the news titled as “Syrian tension” in news agencies, which portrays the Syrians as the source of

problem in the country. In one incident in which the residents of a neighborhood attacked Syrians on charges of assaulting a Turkish girl, the coverage of the news included photographs showing the possessions of the Syrian refugees damaged. Through such representations, the violence over the refugees is legitimized with discourses of power in the news articles (Nas 2015, p.3). Also notable as an example of the exercise of power, Bezen Balamir Coşkun's study is worth mentioning. She analyses the way Syrian refugee women are represented in the mainstream international media as well as Turkish media. She talks about a report prepared by *European Parliament Directorate-General for Internal Policies Department*, which highlights the media ignorance of the trauma and the sexual violence Syrian refugee women face (Coşkun, 2015, p.1). On her research about the news coverage of the Syrian women, she comes to the conclusion that with the exception of BBC, which gives voice to the refugee women and even depict their stories as inspirational ones, most of the mainstream international and Turkish media construct a dehistoricized and depoliticized nature of representations, which most of the time serves the political agenda. For instance, in *Hurriyet Daily News*, the framing is constructed in such a way that the audience would think the refugee women should actually consider themselves lucky to be in Turkey (Coşkun, 2015, p.11). It is argued that the confrontation between the locals and the refugees is represented in such a way that results in the perception of the refugees as intruders and threats to societies' wellbeing. And the way the refugees is dealt with is the manifestation of the exercise of power. In addition, after analyzing the visual representations of Syrian refugees in the UK media, Wilmott (2017) concluded that close-up shots of refugees, which is the type of shots that can elicit empathy from the viewer the most, only constitute 2.34% of all the images. Therefore, the majority of the images were taken from a distance which emphasizes the "otherness" of the refugees for the viewers (p.74). Moreover, the representations lacked any personification in that only in 26% of the photographs the refugees were identified by their names, ages and professions. Therefore, refugees are deprived of any identity that would give their stories a human element, which again brings the concept of bare life

in which they are only reduced to numbers to be managed by biopolitics (Wilmott, 2017, p.75).

1.8. Media Representations and Hegemony

Media representations, especially when it comes to the disadvantageous groups, result from the hegemonic discourse. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between the media representations and hegemonic ideological structures. The news' level of reflecting the truth is closely related with what ideological sources it comes from. Vandevoordt (2015) argues that the way the news is selected and presented can be linked to the structural position and the editorial identity of the media organizations at first, and second, to the journalists' previous socialization (p.1). Therefore, he suggests that Bourdieu's theorizations about cultural, social and economic capital on the institutional level can be instrumental in understanding the news selection and representation practices of media. *Economic capital* refers mainly to the financial resources of a particular media organization, including their audience ratings. *Cultural capital*, however, can be understood as the higher status mostly credited to quality newspapers and public service broadcasters (Vandevoordt 2015, p.5). Bourdieu (1977) argues that the way individuals behave are affected by their habitus which is informed by the capitals they have accumulated throughout their lives. It can be argued that the way media organizations choose to frame the refugees is informed by their previous perceptions and understandings that may have stemmed from the hegemonic, or alternatively, counter-hegemonic discourses. To exemplify more with the hegemonic and counter hegemonic discourses, the refugee representations in particular and the Syria issue in general are used by media as a way to foster public opinion and consent to a Turkish intervention to Syria, which we have lately witnessed with "*Operation Euphrates Shield*". Dykstra (2016) argues that the representations of Syrian refugees in media show what Puar (2007) defines as the assemblage of meanings, which can account for the contradicting representations of the refugees that depict them as humanized subjects, as well as in ways to justify inaction and embody colonial legacies.

She categorizes the representations as a dangerous burden to host countries, and as humanized subjects and humanitarian *raison d'être* (Dykstra, 2016, p.31). Likewise, the hegemonic discourse in Turkey can be argued to foster the consent to humanitarian intervention on the surface, which arguably has much more deep implications such as regional interests. Moreover, it diminishes all the reasons behind the civil war in the first place, and what potential social, economic and cultural consequences it would produce. At the same time, the counter hegemonic discourse is used to foster the image of the refugees as intruders and threat to the well-being of the society.

1.9.Overview

In short, the literature on the media representations of Syrian refugees has mostly discussed the issue from a power-relations viewpoint that analyzes the representations within their ideological positioning. In addition, they have focused on the objectification of the refugees as the “other” and the one to be “feared from”. Moreover, it is argued that the lack of personal stories has resulted in refugees turning into voiceless beings who are only affected by other decision makers’ actions. Van Dijk (2000) concludes that minority groups are often represented in passive roles, they are depicted the reverse only when they are agents of negative actions and crimes (p.40). Also related with objectification, another emerging theme was a feminist critic of the news stories by Coşkun, who argues that Syrian women are mostly represented as resisting to the situations they found themselves in. And even when they are rarely depicted as influential figures who can make a change and transform, they are bound to actions that are traditionally considered women’s areas of interest, like education and children. The objectification of Syrian women, even in their absence, is also observable in the analysis of visual representations of Syrian refugees in social media. The selection of photos with only refugee men without the women fosters the perception that they are leaving vulnerable women behind, which as Dykstra (2016) and Rettberg and Ganjjala (2016) argue, can stimulate colonial legacies of military intervention in disguise of humanitarian intervention. Next is the apparent imbalanced

power relations in the language of the news, between the refugees and the residents, or the authorities of the host countries. In most of the articles observed, it is argued that the confrontation between the locals and the refugees is represented in such a way that results in the perception of the refugees as intruders and threats to societies' wellbeing. And the way the refugees is dealt with is the manifestation of the exercise of power. Some of the studies concluded that the refugee issue is mostly politicized and reported through the political interests of media and political elites, instead of showing the human side of the catastrophe. Also, they are depicted as the scapegoats in the media of the host countries, and as causing the economic and infrastructural problems in most of them. The de-contextualization of immigration and refugeehood in most media deprives the refugees of their justification to come to the host countries in the first place. The choice of language is also important in de-contextualization, which is present especially in Turkish media in which refugees are most of the time called *Syrians*, instead of refugees, that both de-contextualizes the situation they are in and de-legitimizes their justification to seek refuge in another country, as well as focusing on their "otherness" resulting in alienation.

2. THE WAR IN SYRIA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The Syrian civil war broke out in March 2011 as a result of a series of uprisings started in the Middle East following a street vendor killing himself in Tunisia. Called the *Arab Spring*, these uprisings led to the collapse of some of the authoritarian and militaristic regimes in Middle East and North Africa, such as Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. These regimes had constantly failed to answer the demands of the people on more rights, freedom and prosperity in the region. The uprisings, mostly led by the mobilized youth, succeeded in toppling down the dictators in some of the countries. Undoubtedly, it was inevitable for the uprisings not to spill over into Syria as well, which had been ruled by presidential monarchy for decades. Syria had been governed by the Assad family for forty years when the uprisings broke out, Bashar Assad succeeding his father in 2000 as the elected president after the death of his father. What started as peaceful demonstrations in Syria as protesters demanding more political, social and human rights reforms quickly turned into uprisings after the use of violent force against the protesters by the Assad regime. It is argued that the escalated turmoil which was stirred by the Assad regime that used excessive violence against peaceful protesters, created an armed resistance and a complete war by the summer of 2012 that resulted in international condemnation of the Assad government (Olanrewaju & Joshua, 2015, p.47). The civil war in Syria resulted in unprecedented consequences that destroyed the lives of millions and displaced even more because of politics of interest in the region by both regional and world superpowers. Apart from the domestic sides fighting in Syria, the country has been the scene of proxy wars and clash of interests among different powers. In this regard, these clashes of interests posed significant threats on the capabilities of the UN to intervene in the war, which again leads to the inextricability of the conflict (Olanrewaju & Joshua, 2015, p.44). To understand the nature of this clash of interest, one must briefly overview the historical and political formations of the alignments and enmities of the Arab Republic of Syria.

2.1.Syrian Conflict as a Proxy War

The major clash of interest in the Syrian conflict is that of United States and Russia, whose relations with Syria date back to the independence of the latter from France in 1944. Since the beginning of its independence, Syria was aided by Soviet Russia and the military structure of the former was in line with the latter, as well as its political ideology. This close relationship was consolidated even more with Hafez Assad's coming to power in 1970. It is important to note that the reason for Soviet Russia's support for Syria during the Cold War was mostly to use Syria to propagate its ideology in the Middle East, as well as to assure a secured zone in the region to keep a nuclear balance against the US block (Olanrewaju & Joshua, 2015, p.45). Even though the alignment came to a halt with the end of the Cold War, Russia-Syria relations gained momentum again with Putin and Bashar Assad coming to power in 2000. This acceleration in the relations can be acknowledged with both US involvement in the region, and economic and security concerns (Aghayev & Katman, 2012, p.2068). On the other hand, the relationship between Syria and the USA has always been problematic. To exemplify, while the US was supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur war in 1973, Syria fought alongside Egypt against Israel. In addition, in the 1980s, Syria supported Iran in its efforts to foster Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine. Therefore, the historical ally of the US, Israel, had been the primary enemy for Syria (Olanrewaju & Joshua, 2015, p.46). As mentioned above, the US and Syria enjoyed a brief period of so-called peace after the collapse of the Soviet Union, under whose influence and military assistance Syria had remained for a long time. Syria and US relations improved during the Gulf War against Iraq when Syria allied with the former, which brought prospective economic and political relations for Syria. However, the opposition Syrian regime had against the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was not welcome by the Bush administration, which further led to the deterioration of the relations and economic sanctions on Syria. Therefore, in order not to be left alone in the international arena, Cebeci (2001) argues that Syria was forced to foster its relations

with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas in the region. Thus, as Russia-Syria relations became closer, the relationship between the United States and Syria got more and more intense (as cited in Olanrewaju & Joshua, 2015, p.47). This very brief overview indicates that Syria has been the area of influence and clash of interest between Russia and the United States for years, and the civil war which broke out in 2011 provided grounds for this clash to escalate even more. The participation of the superpowers in the conflict took the matters into a very different level from what could have happened if they had not. In other words, the interference of other states in the conflict made it to be far more destructive and lasting than it would have been without them. To make matters worse, undoubtedly, Russia and the United States were not the only powers to intervene in the conflict. Saleh and Irish (2012) reported that France was the first power to recognize the Syrian opposition as the sole representative of Syria (as cited in Hove & Mutanda, 2015, p.561). On the other hand, Russia was insisting that Assad's government should be involved in the peace talks along with its long-time ally Iran. In addition, Russia and China three times blocked the UN Security Council intervention on Syria which suggested that a unilateral world of American domination is moving towards a multipolar one (Hove & Mutanda, 2015, p.562). To the involving parties' surprise, the Syrian conflict ignited sectarian violence in the region with Sunnis and Shi'ites as well as the Kurds trying to take advantage of the conflict to realize their interests, and the emergence of radical groups like ISIS which not only terrorizes the region but also the world. It is an undeniable fact that the Muslim majority in Syria turned against the Alawite community, which can be considered a sub-branch of Shi'ite sect. On one hand, Iran and Lebanon having considerable Shi'ite population have always had good relationship with Syria. On the other hand, the Sunni-ruled Arab states have been hostile towards Iran and Syria whose ruling elites are from the Shi'ite minority. These Arab nations saw the Syrian war as an opportunity to topple down Assad, through which they would consolidate their regional leadership with the collapse of a regime who has strong ties with their long-time enemy Iran (Hove & Mutanda, 2015, p.564). This exacerbation of sectarian violence in the region led to the emergence of radical

groups, forcing some of the actors in the game to change their policies. Hove and Mutanda (2015) suggest that the US and its allies should reconsider their strategy as to whether they should continue fighting Assad, or back him in the battle against radical groups, which are not part of the Free Syrian Army, the largest and the legitimate oppositional group in Syria (p.560). Moreover, it should be noted that religion has had a major role in the Syrian conflict. Rosen (2012) suggests that it is Islam most of the fighters are fighting for, not for the defense of Assad regime or for the establishment of theocracy. Religious groups are not only playing important parts in the opposition side, but also in the government side as well, like Hezbollah (as cited in Olanrewaju & Joshua, 2015, p. 48). Sectarian violence in the Syrian conflict was exacerbated partly by the regional Sunni powers like Qatar and other Gulf counties who had been in political and historical rivalry with Syria since they have been allies with US and Israel for a long time. They too participated in the conflict to acquire regional leadership, while protecting their interests. (International Crisis Group, 2013, p.5). Hove and Mutanda (2015) argue that Assad's cling to power demonstrated that Western countries should not be too much involved with the political processes of other countries (p.566). As the historical and political evolution of the Syrian war, and the role of participating sides have been briefly discussed, this study will continue with a focus of Turkish interests, role and motives in the Syrian conflict.

2.2.Turkey's Motives

Undoubtedly, Turkey has had its own interests participating in the war in Syria. These interests can be traced back to its accession negotiations with the EU that started by its declaration of official candidacy for membership in 1999. Since the mid-2000s and AKP's accession to power, Turkey has become progressively skeptical of EU policies and tried to apply a more active foreign policy, moving away from a more passive and Western and EU orientated one (Oktav & Celikaksoy, 2015, p.409). One outcome of this critical stance towards EU policies in the region was Turkey's desire to play the part of regional leadership "which would bring a higher moral standard to

global governance and politics” (Dal, 2013, p.717). Oktav and Çelikaksoy (2015) explain that the reason why Turkey is so much involved in the Syrian conflict is that it wants to apply normative power, which Turkey exerted through its relations with the EU. Sjursen (2006) argues that EU’s normative power can be measured with its dedication to the promotion of democracy, the apposition of human rights articles into trade agreements, fostering regional collaboration and empowerment of supranational institutions (p.235). With its candidacy for full membership in 1999, Turkey had to dedicate itself to certain legal frameworks that would enable it to acquire EU norms, which emphasized the inducement of universal values, improving Turkey’s influence and image as well as normative power in the Middle East. However, to increase its normative power in the region, Turkey found itself in a dilemma. While Turkey was trying to improve its image in the region with the values it owes to its EU accession period, it was criticizing EU on the grounds that it failed to condemn the military coup in Egypt and continued to support its autocrat allies in the region (Oktav & Çelikaksoy, 2015, p.410). Also, Turkish policies did not meet the political realities in the Middle East. To be more precise, after the break out of the violence in the region, Erdogan called for democracy and secularism in his visits to Egypt, Libya and Tunisia for which he was condemned by the regional powers like Iran and Saudi Arabia who were afraid that the demonstrations would create a spillover effect in the whole region. They argued that the model of secular Islam Turkey was trying to promote at that time was very much alike with Western liberal democracy, and is not suitable for the countries who are on the edge of Islamic awakening (Oktav & Çelikaksoy, 2015, p.412). Therefore, it can be argued that Turkey entered the Syrian stage with same motives as the other powers did, which is mainly to increase its influence and leadership in the region. As argued above, the involvement of other regional and world powers in the conflict produced unprecedented outcomes, like the conflict’s prolonged duration and the displacement of millions of people. On one hand, inside Syria, 7.6 million people are displaced. On the other hand, almost 5 million Syrian refugees are either registered or waiting to be registered in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey (UNHCR, 2017).

Contrary to other regional actors, Turkey, at least at the beginning, followed a different approach of humanitarianism by allowing the Syrians fleeing from the war into Turkey, which accounts for the so-called *open-door policy*.

According to Turkish officials, Turkey's open-door policy showed that even during times of massive refugee influx, it is still not impossible to have a humanitarian perspective which puts the needs of refugees first, and not to view them as threats to the security of the country (Oktav & Çelikaksoy, 2015, p.413). However, as much as the authorities emphasize its humanitarian aspect, Turkish response to the Syrian war in general and Syrian refugees in particular have never been unproblematic.

2.3.The Immediate Turkish Reaction and Its Challenges

As soon as the war broke out in Syria, Turkey embraced a political stance that was seemingly in favor of democracy and human rights the protestors in Syria demanded. Then Prime Minister Erdogan publicly condemned President Assad for his negligence to people's demands, and excessive use of violence against the civilians. In addition, Turkey applied an open-door policy immediately after the outbreak of the war welcoming Syrian refugees fleeing their country, and now home to 3.4 million registered refugees (UNHCR, 2017). Undoubtedly, interfering with the conflict and allowing refugees in created problems for Turkish politics and society. In other words, Turkey faced several challenges with many refugees coming to the country. The Syrian war and the refuge policy started to dominate not only Turkish foreign policy, but domestic one as well. It has been claimed that Turkish government began to instrumentalize Syrian war to its own political ends which resulted in unrest in the society. Perhaps the first tension in the country resulted from the security responses the government gave to the two major earthquakes in Van. Critics of the government argued that the victims of the Van earthquake were not receiving as much aid as the Syrian refugees were (Memişoğlu & Ilgıt, 2017, p.326). In addition, Hatay, which is Turkey's neighboring city to Syria in the south, was hit by two bomb attacks on May

11, 2013 resulting in the death of 55 people and injuring hundreds more. This attack was thought to be the direct spillover effect of the war in Syria to Turkey that demonstrated Turkey is now part of the war. There even occurred unrest between the refugees in the city and the residents who framed the former to have conducted the assault, attacking the refugees on the street for which the police had to intervene (Derviřođlu, Ezer, Kibritođlu, Aktuđ & Ćelik, 2013). Moreover, Syrian refugees again came about in the stage of Turkish domestic politics during the 2014 local elections. Around that time, the government had recently applied the policy of registering the Syrian refugees and providing them with IDs, and this policy was perceived by many as the government's attempt to turn Syrian refugees into potential voters (Memiřođlu & Ilgit, 2017, p.326). These criticisms might have solid ground in that it is argued while Turkey experiences this mass migration similarly with other countries through discussing the security and control dimension and the legal status of the refugees, the views of the Turkish officials about the refugees are largely informed by their domestic and foreign policy concerns (Memiřođlu & Ilgit, 2017, p.324-5). Another theory for the instrumentalization of the refugees in Turkish domestic policy claims that the real motive behind building new refugee camps in the cities where the government performed poorly in the elections is to change the demographical structure of these cities, making the Kurdish and Alawite population a minority in such cities (Memiřođlu & Ilgit, 2017, p.326). It is even argued that the reason for the open-door policy is to balance the leftist, Kemalist, secularist and Alawite populations who are oppositional to Erdogan administration with the Arab-Sunni population of Syria who have been marginalized by Assad and would feel gratitude towards Erdogan for welcoming them to Turkey (Gümüs & Erođlu, 2015, p.473).

As mentioned before, Syrian refugees have not been only used for domestic interests but have been a foreign policy concern as well. By constantly referring to Turkey's 'generous' and 'responsible' policies towards the refugees, Turkish government tries to shape an image of Turkey as the savior and having a humanitarian

approach, in sharp contrast with the discourse on the generosity of the West. Nonetheless, this rhetoric of generosity is underscored with constant discourse on religion and culture, as to how it is Muslim and Turkish hospitality to accept these people fleeing from the war. Even though this kind of discourse has been responded in cities with religious affiliations, it has also created a sectarian tension as both Alawite Turkish and Syrians fear exclusion as to whether this religious discourse on hospitality only applies to Sunni refugees.

Briefly, Turkey had its own motives to interfere with this war. It wanted to increase its regional influence through its normative power it acquired from the EU accession period. However, these policies did not meet the realities on the ground. Turkey found itself in a big predicament as the war is intertwined with both of its domestic and foreign policy. As the number of people fleeing to Turkey increased due to its open-door policy, so did the challenges Turkey had to face. However, as much as these challenges affected Turkey, it had much more and sometimes devastating impacts on the lives of the refugees who fled a tremendously destructive war. Below, this study will discuss the problems and hardships Syrian refugees have to endure in Turkey.

2.4. Turkey as a Gateway to Europe

Syrian refugees first started to arrive at Turkish borders after the clashes between the government forces and the protestors transformed into a full-blown war following the harsh response by the Syrian government. From the very beginning of the conflict, then Prime Minister Erdogan made it clear that they were not supporting Assad's negligence of the people's demands and that Turkey could host desperate Syrians till the war in their country would reach an end. However, the calculations made on the duration of the war would prove to be mistaken. Therefore, Turkey is now home to more than 3 million registered refugees after more than 6 years of war. Among these people, only less than 10% is settled in the 21 camps in 10 provinces of Turkey (AFAD 2017), while more than 3 million are scattered around in Turkey. Apart from

being concentrated in the bordering cities, Syrian refugees also reside in the coastal cities of western Turkey where they are trying to make their way towards Europe in search of a better life. According to International Organization for Migration (IOM 2015), among the 1 million refugees arriving in Europe by sea, more than 850 thousand came from Turkey. Therefore, the western coast of Turkey which was once infamous for being a tourist attraction, is now linked with an escalating number of desperate refugees who are washed up by the coasts while trying to reach Europe. Specifically, the death of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi revealed the gravity of the situation. Despite the fact that Turkey is accepting refugees under any circumstances thanks to its open-door policy, there are especially three crucial challenges Syrian refugees face in Turkey which are; socio-economic conditions, their integration to and social acceptance by the Turkish society (Yıldız & Uzgören, 2015, p.196).

2.5. Legal Status of the Syrian Refugees in Turkey

One of the most primary challenges Syrian refugees face in Turkey is the confusion in their legal status. In other words, Syrian refugees are not legally defined as refugees which is the source of most of their problems. To be clearer, Turkey signed the 1951 UN Geneva Convention about the status of the refugees, but with a geographical limitation. According to this agreement, Turkey recognizes only those coming from Europe as refugees, and people of non-European origin are only eligible for the status of asylum seeker. The latter can only have ‘temporary protection’ until they are found eligible by UNHCR to be resettled in a third country. Turkey had long been depending on a secondary legislation to cope with migration instead of a far-reaching law until the accession process to EU started. During this process, Turkey asked its migration and asylum policy to be in line with EU standards. After a very long period of law-making, government drafted the *Law on Foreigners and International Protection* in 2011, which the parliament approved in 2013. This was the first far-reaching law to encompass both foreigners and people who need temporary protection. Syrian refugees in Turkey can enjoy temporary protection that includes

three elements; an open-door policy that allows all Syrians to enter, non-refoulment, that is, no forced repatriation, and the permission to stay in Turkey for an unlimited period of time (Gümüş & Eroğlu, 2015, p.470-1). For a long time as the open-door policy was being applied, Syrian refugees were constantly described as guests, rather than a legal term (Ozden, 2013, p.5). By rejecting to grant them the legal refugee status, Turkish government deprives the Syrian refugees of their legal rights they would have if they were officially refugees. It is apparent in Seeley (2012) that using the term 'guests' by the government officials stresses their stay in Turkey would be temporary (as cited in Gümüş & Eroğlu, 2015, p.472). This can also be considered a policy move by the government since the Syrian war and the refugees are largely intertwined with domestic politics as argued before. Therefore, this could also be seen as a policy attempt for the government to appease the public since the presence of refugees in the country is a result of government policies.

Under temporary protection, Syrian refugees may utilize free basic health care, education and social assistance once they are registered with Turkish authorities and receive IDs. All Syrian refugees are permitted to attend Turkish schools and temporary education centers according to the newly issued regulation of Ministry of National Education on foreigners' access to education. Likewise, Syrian refugees can get free medical treatment in all the public hospitals in Turkey as well as emergency services. Legally, there seems to be no limitation to the services Syrian refugees can enjoy. However, it is argued that it is only through profound research if Syrian refugees can really benefit from these services or not (Yıldız & Uzgoren, 2016, p.198). The temporary protection policy does not infringe international law since Turkey has kept the geographical limitation in the Geneva Convention, which is compatible with the EU principals. Most importantly, Turkey assures non-refoulment. However, there are several areas the 2014 regulation becomes insufficient.

Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, Syrian refugees under temporary protection cannot have access to refugee determination mechanisms since the

regulation states that the resettlement process in another country by the UN will not be processed until temporary protection regime terminates (Yıldız & Uzgoren, 2016, p.199). The second loophole is related with the first deficiency regarding the absence of a time limit of temporary protection. It also falls short of clarifying the procedures of refugee status determination when temporary protection terminates (Ciger, 2015, p.34). Thus, Syrian refugees do not know how long this temporary protection is going to last, and when they can actually apply for individual refugee determination process and resettlement in another country. Finally, the fact that the 2014 Regulation refers to access to education, health care and social assistance as services leaves the decision to the hands of individual authorities (Yıldız & Uzgoren, 2016, p.199). Like Erdoğan (2005) argues, creating the legal basis regarding the rights of refugees is as vital as their social acceptance in the country (p.61) since there are serious consequences and difficulties of this service-based approach resulting from the insufficiencies of temporary protection regime. To start with, it leaves the refugees in a state of fragility when it comes to demanding their rights as they also do not know what their rights are. Also, as mentioned above, it leaves the services under the initiative of the political authority, making the refugees even more vulnerable and at the risk of manipulation and keeping them in a constant state of being needy. In addition, a service-based approach renders the continuity of these services provided to refugees at risk, since the political authority can easily decide it is no longer needed. In contrast, a rights-based approach like Erdoğan (2015) suggests can sustain the continuity of the services and cater for an elaborative strategy of inclusion, which would ultimately lead to the acceptance of the refugees by the host population (as cited in Yıldız & Uzgoren, 2016, p.199).

The problem with Turkey's migration policy mostly stems from its geographical limitation to the 1951 UN Geneva Convention. Even though in practice Turkey is home to millions of refugees of non-European origin, especially after the war in Syria, it refuses to legally grant them the refugee status. To some degree, it may be

understandable Turkey does not recognize them as refugees since the West proved to be insufficient in providing assistance and protection to the Syrian refugees (Yıldız & Uzgoren, 2016, p.200). Thus, the West seems to be reluctant in sharing the responsibility as the numbers suggest. According to Yıldız and Uzgoren (2016), only about 800 thousand people have been registered in the EU as refugees in the last five years, whereas the US accepted only 2200 refugees between 2011-2015 (p.200). Turkey also fears to become a destination for refugees if it grants them the refugee status legally and most probably, in light of what the numbers suggest, it will have to have all the responsibility itself due to the reluctance of the international community. Apparently, the EU is attempting to designate non-European territories as primary shelter places, which indicates that it tries to exclude the refugee and asylum issues from its own scope. The signing of an agreement between Turkey and the EU in November 2015 proves how politicized the refugee issue is for the two parties. Especially with the dissemination of the photos of Aylan Kurdi's body, the issue became a major point in discussions concerning the use of media and such photos to implement their policies (Lenette & Miskovic, 2016, p.3). It can be argued that Aylan's photos were instrumentalized to pressurize the EU. While the EU was criticized for bribing Turkey, the latter was criticized for negotiating the lives of desperate refugees for its own political ends.

Also known as the EU-Turkey Deal, this agreement came into force in March 2016 to reduce the mass movement of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe. It basically accounts for sending back the refugees that came to Greece from Turkey. Based on this agreement, Turkey will take back all the refugees including Syrians. In return, the EU is going to accept 72 thousand Syrian refugees as well as giving more money to Turkey, granting visa-free travel for Turkish citizens before accession to the union, and improvement in the accession process. For one refugee deported back to Turkey from Greece, the EU will accept one Syrian refugee (Baban et. al, 2017, p.43). It is understood by Crisp (2016) to be another move towards restricting and managing

the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers (as cited in Baban et.al, 2017, p.43). In reality, however, the deal forces the refugees to resettle in Turkey after they have arrived in Greece through a very perilous and expensive journey. In addition, the agreement compels refugees to go through unpredictability and insecurity by sending them back to a country where their future is unclear with limited opportunities for fair employment and with limited rights (Baban et. al, 2017, p.43). Turkish government was criticized for this agreement for instrumentalizing the lives of thousands of people for its own political ends, with a view to gaining progress in the EU accession process and receiving money from the EU. The fact that the lives of thousands of desperate refugees have been the subject of negotiation indicates that European countries failed in providing humanitarian assistance and protection to refugees as well. With diminishing hopes to settle in Europe, an unpredictable future awaits the Syrian refugees in Turkey where their lives have been the subject of everyday politics.

2.6.Problems Syrian Refugees Face in Turkey

More than 90% of refugees in Turkey live among the host community and poverty remains the primary challenge they face due to the lack of access to a regular income and the high cost of living in urban areas. Thus, many families have turned to negative coping mechanisms, such as child marriage, polygamy, child labor, reduced quality/quantity of food consumption, substandard housing, and street begging. Though the *Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners under Temporary Protection* was passed as of January 2016, Syrian refugees are still faced with the challenge of accessing to the labor market, given the limited number of work permits so far and the limited job opportunities available (“Regional Refugee Resilience Plan,” 2017). This results in Syrian refugees having to work in black economy and in very poor conditions, such as long working hours and low wages. According to an *Al-Monitor* article (2016), 85% of the Syrian refugees in Turkey live outside of the camps and have to work in unrecorded jobs since they do not have work permits. This means they might sometimes have to work with up to 40 percent of lower wages than a Turkish citizen

who would do the same job. Turkish employers exploit the Syrian refugees in such a way that they sometimes have to work up to 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. Yıldız and Üzgören (2016) argue that the regime of temporary protection has reached its limit for Syrian refugees to benefit from proper working conditions they need to survive. Especially for the undocumented refugees, it is almost impossible to get a work permit when it is already difficult for registered refugees who have passports. Even though Article 29 of the *Law on Foreigners and International Protection* calls for work permits for Syrian refugees who have IDs, it issues work permits only for jobs that are determined by Council of Ministers (Gümüs & Eroğlu, 2015 p.480). Also, Syrian refugees are more likely to face social exclusion with the absence of a far-reaching integration policy that includes employment strategy (Yıldız & Üzgören, 2016, p.204). This results in very poor economic conditions for refugees living outside of the camps. While in-camp refugees have access to organized assistance by *AFAD-Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency*, refugees in urban and rural areas face increasing difficulties in accessing basic goods and services (“Regional Refugee Resilience Plan,” 2017). Even though there seems to be a political will to improve the conditions of the Syrian refugees with a welcoming discourse in politics and adoption of more comprehensive laws, the implementation on the ground does not seem to exist. Deteriorating conditions for the refugees especially after having spent most of their savings, force even the children to work for long hours. This, therefore, creates the issue of child labor. Moreover, Syrian refugees having to comply with the work conditions Turkish employers offer them, creates rage amongst the host population, causing the employers to favor Syrian refugees over the Turkish citizens, thus reducing the employment rate of the latter and creating an unfair competition. In return, this rage creates a tension against the refugees, even though it is actually not their choice to work under such inhumane conditions.

In addition to the problem of legal framing and lack of access to official labor market, Syrian refugees also face a barrier that if not hinders, puts great obstacles for

them to integrate into the host society, that is, the language problem. Almost all the Syrian refugees arrive in Turkey not knowing Turkish, which results in them being not able to properly reach the most basic services. As part of the Temporary Protection Regulation, Syrian refugees can get treatment in public hospitals, but the quality of this treatment is not promising. According to a study by Bölükbaş (2016), 16% of the male and 24% of female participants indicated that they have problems while explaining their situations to Turkish doctors in hospitals (p.26). This causes the already poor health conditions of the Syrian refugees to deteriorate even more with the lack of access to a proper treatment. Also related with economic and social problems like language barrier, is the percentage of Syrian children who are able to go to school. According to *UNICEF*, almost half of the 3.4 million registered refugees are children. However, as of March 2016, more than 500 thousand Syrian children do not attend school. As mentioned above, most children try to help their families financially by working for long hours with low wages to afford basic livelihood. In addition, Syrian children have hard time keeping up with the curriculum since they do not speak Turkish. According to the 2015 report by *Human Rights Watch* in which they conducted interviews with 14 families in Gaziantep, a southern city of Turkey neighboring Syria, none of the children of these families go to school because the schools declined to register their children (“Sistemdeki Boşluklar,” para.8). Instead, such children receive education in temporary education centers. These centers are collaboratively funded by UN, Turkish and Japanese governments to help the Syrian children not to be left behind of education. In these temporary education centers, Syrian children receive education under the instruction of Syrian teachers. However, the problem with this type of education is the integration to the formal Turkish education system. As the war is reaching to its 7th year and hopes of return are diminishing, the families of Syrian children and teenagers think of continuing their lives in Turkey, thus the outcome of their children’s education in Turkey gains much more importance.

Syrian refugees also face a growing negative stance in some parts of Turkey, especially in cities neighboring Syria, where in some cases refugee population even outnumbers the host population. Apart from creating an unfair competition in the labor market because of the reasons discussed above, there are other issues Turkish public thinks the Syrian refugees are responsible for. One is the increase in the rents especially in the bordering cities where too many Syrian refugees have settled. The demand for housing the Syrian refugees have created is seen as an opportunity for the landlords to increase the rents. Though they should bear no responsibility, Syrian refugees have been blamed for the increase in housing prices by the Turkish public. Another reason for the negative perception of the Syrian refugees is that they are believed to be damaging the unity of the Turkish family and thus social well-being. To be more clear, due to poor living and economic conditions and given the conservative nature of the bordering cities, there is a demand for Syrian young girls by the Turkish men to have them as their second views. Turkish women have started to accuse the Syrian refugee women of stealing their husbands. In Kilis, where the refugee population is almost as high as the Turkish population, it is believed that 20% of the divorces occur because of Turkish men's orientation towards the Syrian refugee women (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015, p.16). This results in the apparent emergence of child abuse in that young Syrian girls are forced to marry out of the sense of hopelessness in search of better life conditions. Their situations are being exploited by the Turkish men, and Syrian families see these marriages as an only chance to if not totally, at least partly improve their lives.

While studying the extent of integration of Turkish migrants into German society in 1980s, Hoffman and Even (1984) developed the concept of dimensions to measure the level of integration of an immigrant group into a host society. Based on "dimensions concept", the more areas of inclusion migrants desire to participate in, the more likely it is for them to be integrated into that society. These social dimensions are defined as residence, health, the economy, education, labor market, citizenship and voting rights related to political participation (as cited in Gümüş & Eroğlu, 2015,

p.477). For Syrian refugees in Turkey, participation in these areas of inclusion seems to be limited. Especially with the language barrier and their legal situation being vulnerable to exploitation, Syrian refugees find it hard to access services that are on paper accessible for them. With the lack of a rights-based approach which leaves the dissemination of services provided to the refugees into the discretion of individual political authorities, Syrian refugee problem might be and is already being used for political interests. Turkish government is also aware that temporary protection regime has now reached its limits in catering for the needs of millions of refugees who will probably not go back home in the near future. Even if the war in Syria ends, it would take a very long time for a country that has this much torn apart to recover. With no other prospect in sight given that the West is also willing to send the refugees away from their territory, Turkey has to adopt new policies to cope with the growing number of refugees, for which the government announced in July 2016 that the Syrian refugees will be granted citizenship. This was met with both confusion and criticism by the public. The fact that Syrian refugees cannot even become legal refugees but might have the opportunity of being citizens seems contradictory. However, the discussion has been subordinated only to the idea that Syrian refugees will have the same rights as the Turkish people if they are to become citizens. However, the point they miss is that if they are to be granted citizenship, they will also have the same responsibilities as the Turkish citizens. Perhaps one of the biggest proofs of instrumentalization of the Syrian refugees in Turkish domestic politics is that we do not encounter any discussion regarding their legal status now, which is merely not being refugees, not being guests and not being citizens either. What Turkey needs is a thoroughly discussed comprehensive policy that is well-structured and well-thought with strong legal ground (Kirişçi, 2014, p.51). The lack of such thorough discussions about the current situation of the Syrian refugees that include social actors such as non-governmental organizations, universities and academicians, forces the refugees to stay in a position of limbo and uncertainty. Both the government and the opposition should be accountable for this precarity since they view the issue through electoral concerns and

political interests, rather than justly assessing the situation of millions of desperate refugees.

2.7.Civil Society Initiatives

As Turkey faced the biggest refugee crisis in its history, most of the state funds have been used to cater for the needs of the in-camp refugees. Nevertheless, as discussed above, Syrian refugees living in the camps constitute only less than 10% of the total number of refugees. Thus, it is mostly the efforts of the non-governmental organizations that support the majority of the refugees scattered around Turkey. Moreover, these NGOs are vital in producing alternative discourses such as the necessity for rights-based refugee policies as opposed to the political and mainstream media discourses, and in shaping the public opinion positively about the Syrian refugees. As of 2016, there are 42 national and 16 international NGOs in Turkey operating to help refugees (Türk, 2016, p.148). According to a report by Research Center on Asylum and Migration (*IGAMDER*) on the activities of non-governmental organizations for Syrian Refugees in Turkey, many volunteer charity organizations try to distribute assistance in their area of expertise to improve the lives of the refugees (Çorabatır & Hassa, 2013, p.18). They attempt to help the refugees with clothing, food and other basic livelihood. However, the same report also demonstrates that, though such charity organizations lacking the professional competence for refugee-related issues voluntarily assist the refugees with humanitarian motives, they fall short in sustaining their support in the absence of state support and coordination with international organizations like UNHCR (p.20). As much as charity organizations are crucial in catering for the immediate needs of the refugees, it is in fact the rights-based national and international NGOs that could produce long-term effects with reporting, creating public opinion and monitoring activities about Syrian refugees. Such non-governmental organizations on the national level include *Human Rights Association*, *MazlumDer- Organization of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People*, *ISRO – International Strategic Research Organization*, and most importantly

ASAM- Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, which was founded with the efforts and guidance of UNHCR. These organizations not only aid the refugees with basic livelihood from clothing to food, but also with consultation services on legal issues as well as with the establishment of psycho-social centers that help especially refugee women and children overcome the trauma they faced. Particularly, the projects *ASAM* conduct, ranging from *UNHCR-ASAM Counselling Line, Migrant Health Training Centers to Multi-Service Support Centers* that include courses aimed at developing the basic life skills of the refugees, contribute immensely to the establishment of peaceful relationships between the refugees and the host community. Thus, the role of the civil society is incontrovertible in raising awareness for the problems refugees face, recognizing the vulnerable situation they are in, and producing long-lasting solutions for them, through the coordination with supranational institutions, researchers and academicians.

2.8.The Role of Media

Amongst all these socio-economic, legal and political consequences, Syrian refugees have become increasingly visible in the society, which inevitably led to the visibility in media as well. Media has risen, given its inevitable nature, as the apparatus which allowed the Turkish people to make sense of the events unfolding. Therefore, the representations of Syrian refugees in media gained even more prominence as the significant consequences of media representations have started to be understood. After all, “the news media reproduces social reality through ideological case definition, discourse and representation” (Göker & Keskin 2015). In other words, media is of crucial importance for the audiences to make sense of the current situation with its basic power to represent the refugees by means of certain discourses and ideologies. With a growing number of refugees choosing to live outside of the camps in Turkey, they have become not only more visible in the society which makes it inevitable for them to have a social interaction with the Turkish population, but makes the representations in the news media visible as well. This obligates analyzing the ways in which Turkish society

perceives them since the media representations are significant in affecting the behavioral patterns of the host population towards the refugees, through which discourse practices transform into actions (Efe, 2015, p.9). Erdogan (2017) suggests that the discussions in Turkish media about Syrian refugees mostly takes place over the Syria policy and are used by pro-government and oppositional media as an instrument to analyze the foreign policy of the government (p.16). Given its delicate nature of its ability to transform politics, and the politicized context of Turkish media on the refugee issue, understanding media representations of Syrian refugees has become even more important after the government's announcement about granting citizenship to Syrian refugees. Therefore, this study aims to focus on the media representations of Syrian refugees in Turkey on the citizenship discussions because it can be considered a milestone in the history of the 6-year-old conflict. Put forward in July 2016, the announcement made by President Erdogan himself created heated discussions about the future of the refugees. As discussed earlier, minority groups and refugees have always had a problematic relationship with media. What is important in the case of Turkey is that, even though the policies applied by the government have a direct impact on the lives of the refugees, they are not discussed in a healthy and solution-oriented manner either in politics or in media due to the politicization of the issue. Therefore, public opinion is not properly informed, and this misinformation prevents the emergence of commonsensical perceptions towards refugees.

2.9.Overview

This chapter has given a brief summary about the break out of the Syrian war and historical evolution of enmities, alignments and political interests. Then, it continued with Turkish motives for the involvement in the Syrian conflict. The interference of other states in the war made it last longer than it would have lasted, were it not for the involvement of world and regional powers. This also led to the emergence of the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis since the World War II. Embracing an open-door policy from the very beginning of the conflict, Turkish

response started to be insufficient for the unprecedented number of refugees arriving in the country with the lack of a comprehensive legal strategy to cope with the needs and problems of millions of refugees. Discussion of the granting of citizenship to Syrian refugees makes more sense when their current legal status is understood and the role of media to provide genuine information to the public becomes even more important. In light of all the points above, the next chapter will provide a thorough insight to the theoretical framework that will be used to understand the Syrian refugee crisis and its impact on Turkish politics as well as Syrian refugees themselves.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As argued in the previous chapters, the media representations of disadvantaged groups like refugees are even more crucial since they can foster either hateful sentiments in the part of the host society or can be used to apply and justify policies that would be against the well-being of the refugees. The Syrian refugees in Turkey are already the second group towards whom hate discourse is created the most in media (Hrant Dink Foundation, 2017). In addition, they have become instrumentalized in the interests of different political ideologies. Thus, the issue of Syrian refugees in Turkey has become an area of political struggle in Turkey. This study argues that there is a political contestation between different problematic media representations of refugees and these representations try to win over the public opinion on the existence and the future of the Syrian refugees in Turkey. Additionally, it is claimed that similar problematic representations are reproduced through Twitter users' tweets and another social reality about the Syrian refugees is created. To understand and analyze this political struggle over the refugee issue, this study is drawn from the infamous theory of *War of Position* by Gramsci since Gramsci is renowned for his studies on ideology, hegemony and political struggle. Moreover, this study aims to make use of Schroder's *Multi-Dimensional Approach* to make sense of the perceptions of the Twitter users on the discussions of the refugee citizenship, and the potentiality of social change of their tweets towards a rights-based refugee policy.

3.1. Gramsci and His Importance for the Study

Before moving on to War of Position in detail, it would be beneficial to talk about the importance of Gramsci to this study. First, Gramsci's work is so inclusive and covers a variety of subjects that it is feasible to approach it from different fields, be it politics, sociology or cultural studies (Tok, 2003, p.239). Secondly, his theorizations contributed to the discussions of different type of political regimes and the role of civil society in the changing balance of relations among different social

powers in society (Hall, 1986, p.415). Perhaps the most signifying aspect of Gramsci is that his formulations on hegemony somewhat differs from that of other Marxist thinkers. Gramsci proposed that hegemony, which is roughly the domination of one particular class over another, cannot solely be explained with economic determinism (Cammaerts, 2015, p.525) unlike Marxists who argue that hegemony is only exercised by the bourgeois class over the proletariat. For Gramsci, hegemony is performed not only in the economic and administrative fields, but it involves the crucial zones of cultural, moral and intellectual leadership. Therefore, he was against the idea that hegemony is formed merely on coercion. Instead, Gramsci argues that domination is most prevalent when the dominant interests can become the common sense through the rule by consent (Cammarts, 2015, p.526). The success of hegemony results not from force in character but from acquiring an important degree of popular consent (Hall, 1986, p.424). Gramsci suggested that hegemony is accumulated in the state power which has two components; political and civil society, through the conceptualizations of which he conceptualized hegemony.

In Gramsci's theorizations, the idea of the State is a combination of political society which accounts for the coercion aspect of a state through which it has the monopoly of the exercise of power to protect its hegemony. At the same time, state has the apparatus of civil society through which it exerts consent from the masses. Gramsci justly claimed that hegemony cannot only be understood by mere coercion or economic determinism, which led him to explain hegemony in the ancient Greek concept of hegemon that stands for rule by consent with moral and intellectual leadership (Cammaerts, 2015, p.526). Through the civil society, the state exercises its intellectual and moral leadership over the groups that it dominates and exercises its hegemony. Therefore, hegemony is a primary element of state and enables it to fulfill its historical aims (Gramsci, 1971, p.117). As argued before, hegemony is the domination of the ruling elites by powers of consent and coercion. This consent aspect of hegemony can be suggested to be creating discourses through which this hegemony would seem

appealing. In other words, as Tong and Lei (2013) argue, “the masses identify their own interest with the interest of the regime, therefore are willing to preserve the existing system (p.296). To exercise hegemony, dominant groups also need to make use of ideology to justify their domination. Ideology can be argued to be the ensemble of ideas that is determined to be the real material conditions of the ruling dominant group, whose interests and ideas they are compatible with. To put it differently, ideology is the concealment of the real social contradictions and “normalizes class domination and exploitation” (Cammaerts, 2015, p.525). However, ideology cannot only be reduced to class domination in Gramscian sense in that other forms of ideology linked to other types of oppressions such as race, sexuality and gender can also be reflected, as Cammaerts (2015) also argues (p.525). Therefore, for Gramsci, hegemony is exercised in not only economic and administrative spheres but also in spheres that are related to all parts of civil society through consent exerted with ideology and discourses. As a result of this understanding of hegemony, Gramsci argued that the political struggle which would take place in case of a crisis of hegemony would be different than that of previous types of hegemony. In other words, the political struggle of our time which Gramsci calls the *war of position* is a type of struggle being fought across a wide array of fields at the end of which the struggle is determinately over (Hall, 1986, p.426).

3.2.War of Position

Gramsci explains war of position as a war that is fought not only in forward trenches, that is, the state institutions that is absorbed by the hegemonic powers, but also in all the structures of society comprising the structures and institutions of civil society like Hall (1986) suggested (p. 427). In addition, this war of position can also be understood as a war to seize ideological domination. This war would proceed to capture the consciousness of the masses (Tong & Lei, 2013, p.296). Gramsci (1971) put forward that “a state is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level

which corresponds to the interests of the ruling class” (p.258). Therefore, hegemony is not only maintained through state power relying on coercion but on different institutions of civil society from schooling and family to religious life and cultural organizations (Hall, 1986, p.428). The state desires consent and it not only acquires it but actually educates that consent (Gramsci, 1971, p.78). Therefore, consent is something that is manufactured and cultivated in people’s minds by means of different political and societal organizations. This focus on other civil society institutions brings about new zones of political struggle and battlefields which eventually multiply the fronts of politics where the war of position can take place (Hall, 1986, p. 430). These multiple fronts can be in constant struggle to transform the common sense on which the consciousness of the masses is in fact built upon. War of position can therefore be considered a war over the common sense of the masses to justify and sustain hegemony. Cultivating a popular thought on an issue in favor of the hegemony would require the construction of a collective will and an elaborative work of intellectual organization. This understanding of a constant struggle suggests that dominant ideology and hegemony are social, not individual, and that there is no single and complete unified dominant ideology (Hall, 1986, 433). Similarly, Gramsci (1971) himself expresses that common sense is constantly changing itself through new scientific and philosophical ideas that are stepping into its everyday life (p.326). Consequently, it is concurred that hegemony is not stable and uncontested. Rather, there is a constant struggle to win it over.

The nature of war of position that allows war in a number of different and varying fields leads us to see the components of civil society as battlefields, which is an indispensable aspect of the war of position. It is these battlefields where the actual struggle for ideological hegemony takes place. Holmes and Castaneda (2015) argue that war of position can be considered to be the political struggle to challenge and transform political and economic structures (p.1). Clarifying it as “a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just of words and grammatically devoid of

content” (p.323), Gramsci (1971) appreciated the significance of language at the center of this struggle. This relates to the discussion of discourse mentioned above, through which the aspect of exerting consent from the dominated groups by the hegemony is sustained. Not necessarily acknowledged by the Marxist theorists in general and Gramsci in particular, media stands out as an eligible battlefield where a war of position can take place.

As for the emergence of Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey as a war of position, it is argued that it created a crisis of hegemony in the political spectrum in the country. It can be implied that the AKP government (Justice and Development Party) and the Erdogan administration infiltrated to most components of both political and civil society, which account for the exertion of both coercion and consent. However, this hegemony and dominance started to shatter when the refugee crisis began to emerge as not a foreign but also a domestic policy issue. As argued in the previous chapters, the expectations of Turkish government regarding the civil war in Syria did not meet the realities on the ground and the war took much longer time than expected. Therefore, the open-door policy that allowed millions of Syrian refugees to enter the country produced significant consequences for Turkish society and politics. By accepting an unprecedented number of people in the country without having a comprehensive refugee and replacement policy as a result of the geographical limitations in the Geneva Agreement (see Chapter 2), Turkey could not cope with the large number of refugees and the challenges it brought. Therefore, the more the refugees and their problems are visible in the society, the more visible they become in media too. As the war has continued for more than 6 years now, Syrian refugees seem to be planning to live in Turkey for more years to come. Undoubtedly, this results in some vital implications in politics as well as in the society. The legal deficiencies in the refugee policies of the government and recently announced citizenship grant to the Syrian refugees indicated that Turkish domestic policy is largely intertwined with its foreign policy which might result even in a demographic change in the country. This has led to serious criticism by

the opposition towards the government as the sole responsible of the Syria policy and it is argued in this study that it became an area of political struggle in the wake of a hegemonic crisis in the Gramscian sense. Since government policies on Syrian refugees are found questionable by many, the opposition, which can be argued counter-hegemonic in Gramscian terms, found an opportunity to attack the government to shake its hegemony. Simultaneously, government tries to use its own influence in the civil society institutions to exert and sustain the consent of the public on the refugee issue. However, it is the refugees themselves who find themselves in the middle of discussions of policies they have no power over, but who are directly influenced by them. And at the center of this political struggle, media has stood out as a space this war of position is waged.

3.3. Media as a Battlefield in War of Position

Sometimes referred to as the 4th estate, media is perhaps the most important and effective cultural transmitter. As much as it has the power of foregrounding diversity and cultural differences, it has the ability to normalize and disseminate the contestation as well. Media is the main source by means of which people's perceptions and attitudes towards incidents are shaped (Van Dijk, 2000, p.36). Thus, media discourses are very crucial for the ordinary citizens to make sense of the events with them having the power to challenge, change and transform policies. Moreover, media is instrumental in accommodating a communicative bridge between political and social actors, as well as affecting the understanding of critical issues, and shaping people's political views in addition to political participation (Bleich et. al, 2015, p.857). Media has the potential to influence the public so that certain events, phenomena and crises are understood in specific ways in which the news are ideologically created. As a consequence, the power of media has been indorsed once again with our escalating dependence on media to be informed about the world and each other (Georgiou, 2012, p.792). Media has a very vital role to play in building what we understand as "socially normal", by selecting certain depictions of people and places. Owing to all these components, media can be

instrumentalized in the war of position as an area for political contestation. Media discourses and representations are socially constructed realities and they can be instrumental in cultivating consent from the people for the interests of the hegemony. Likewise, they can also be used by the counter hegemonic forces to shape the public opinion in such a way that would enable people to abandon their consent for the hegemony.

Media representations are of greater importance regarding the minority groups and refugees since media not only mediates what is real but it also constructs a social reality as what people would accept as real. Especially on a sensitive issue like migration and refugeehood to which publics are mostly skeptical, media has an important role to play in shaping people's understanding about the issue, as well as fueling the existing fear and concerns. It is ordinary that the refugee policies of the countries attract the attention of the public and that different political ideologies have different views about them. What is peculiar to Turkey is that the refugee crisis is argued to be stemming from the failure of Turkish foreign policy and it is being instrumentalized in the domestic policy as another means for polarization and it creates a political contestation, especially with regard to discussions about granting citizenship to Syrian refugees.

3.4. Multi-Dimensional Approach

As already mentioned before and in previous chapters, while the power of media representations is reflected in both policy changes and vice versa, it is also reflected in the perception and behavioral patterns of the public who is exposed to these representations, which brings us to the second part of this study. Analyzing solely media representations takes us nowhere in understanding the effects of media discourses. Therefore, this study also aims to analyze tweets that were posted around the time the citizenship discussions first emerged officially with the announcement of the President. As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the tweets will be

analyzed using the Multi-Dimensional Model proposed by Schroder (2000). Therefore, this section will describe Schroder's concept in-depth to understand what the Multi-Dimensional Model of audience reception research is and how it is relevant for this study.

With regard to the necessity of formulating such a model, Schroder (2000) concludes that most reception studies focus too much on the concepts of "polysemy" and "preferred reading" as pointed out by Hall (1973) and Morley (1980). The concept of polysemy accounts for the fact that a media text can have multiple meanings that the audience can exert. In other words, it points to the capacity of having more than one meaning. Nevertheless, the concept falls short in that it does not account for conscious opposition to a text but rather talks about diversity of social and cultural meanings that are already present in the text. Moreover, it foresees mostly the class struggle in this meaning making process towards a hegemonic text and it disregards the potential for an oppositional reading towards a counter-hegemonic text. Accordingly, the concept of preferred reading stands for the intended message to be given by a media text. However, it is also not sufficient in that the audience may interpret a totally different message than what the text intended. Thus, it raises the question of whether the preferred reading is a feature of the text or the audience reception. These shortcomings as Schroder argues result in the necessity to formulate another approach in the research of audience reception. A multi-dimensional approach that takes into account these shortcomings. As Schroder (2000) points it out, his approach focuses on the processes of audience reception, that is why it takes the production moment of the media texts for granted. In addition, multi-dimensional approach, given that it is comprised of different dimensions, is not a sequential one but rather the one that signify processes of reception that may happen concurrently. Lastly, instead of dealing with the factors that constitute the processes of constructing meaning and how these meanings are realized by the audience, multi-dimensional approach is coping with the classification of realized interpretations of the audience regardless of how they emerge (p.242).

Having discussed the point of departure, this study will now move on to the dimensions of the approach. It is comprised of six dimensions of reception which are namely Motivation, Comprehension, Discrimination, Position, Evaluation and Implementation. The first four are categorized as the reading dimension which are associated with the texts and each other. They apply to the subjective meanings produced by the audience themselves. The last two, on the other hand, are classified as implications which account for their potential to be analyzed by the researcher according to their social importance since they are positioned in the socio-ideological formation and can be utilized as a source of political action (Schroder, 2000, p.243). The significance of this approach for this study is that it does not limit itself to the power of the text and argues that reception is a different process even if it is related to the production processes. In addition, the approach allows the researcher to ideologically position the reception processes, thus allowing for political analysis and potentiality for social change as Schroder argues (2000) that “the model takes for granted that both media and audience discourses, and the academic discourses that analyze them, are constituted by and constitutive of sociocultural practices in the wider society (p.242). Therefore, while enabling this study to analyze how the public perceives the war of position in media regarding the citizenship discussions in Turkey, the Multi-Dimensional Approach allows to position these perceptions in a political spectrum to see what kind of implications they have for social and political change.

Turning now to the dimensions, the first one is Motivation situated in the Reading category. It accounts for the idea that whether an individual is interested in a media text. As a concept, motivation is considered a cognitive and affective process that determine whether a media text is worthy of the time allocated for the audience (Schroder, 2000). However, the concept of motivation is argued to transcend the interestedness in the media text to the practice of consumption. As for the Twitter users’ reading about the discussions of citizenship to Syrian refugees, the motivation of these users to read and be informed about this policy might stem from the fact that it will

have direct consequences on their lives and that it is a very significant policy that requires to be discussed. Barker and Brooks (1998) point to the “investment” made by the audience to the media text that helps us conceptualize “how much people care about their participation or involvement in a leisure activity (as cited in Schroder, 2000, p.244). Accordingly, it can be argued that Twitter users read and then tweet about the citizenship discussions since they believe it is an important policy. The fact that they tweet about it demonstrates how much they invest and care about their participation into the discussions in Twitter.

As for the second dimension Comprehension, Schroder argues that it is related to sign at the basic level. Thus, to understand Comprehension, it is crucial to understand what sign is in the field of media reception. Pierce (1985) describes sign as “something that stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” which includes the aspect of the user into the definition as well as the link between sign and representation. By putting sign in this way, it is argued that making sense of the signs in a media text is related to the interpretants’, in this case the audience’s, discursive socialization and the social factors such as class, gender and ethnicity. In this regard, it can be said that sign is polysemic with the potential to have multiple meanings (as cited in Schroder, 2000, p.245). Therefore, Schroder defines the comprehension dimension as the concept that accounts for the different denotative and connotative decoding of encoded meanings by the audience based on their subjective experiences with social factors such as class and gender. Therefore, comprehension can be perceived as a decoding practice which may be totally distinct from or related to either the meanings intended by the producers of the text or the readings by other audience members (Schroder, 2000, p.246).

Turning to the next dimension, Discrimination deals with the fact that some of the audience can have a critical perspective towards the media text which raises the question that whether the audience is aware of the constructedness of the media text. While some of the audience can receive a media message as the pure representation of

reality without questioning, the other might recognize the human element in the construction of the message (Schroder, 2000, p.247). This necessitates the formation of a media reception approach that appreciates this critical stance towards the text and investigates the reasons why if and how the audience does not adopt a critical stance if they are aware of the constructedness of the media message.

Having defined the first three reading dimensions, I will now move on to the last one called Position dimension. Schroder argues that the need to develop such a dimension resulted from the short-sightedness of the classical media reception studies. Schroder talks about a study conducted by Morley (1992) about a TV program named Nationwide. During the study, Morley encountered two focus groups whose readings of the same TV program are completely incompatible with each other. The first group which was consisted of young managers perceived the program as very pro-union socialist, while the shop stewards group read it as anti-union. After analyzing these two different readings, Morley is said to have positioned the young managers' reading as right-wing oppositional and that of the shop stewards as left-wing oppositional. Nevertheless, when these readings are analyzed in the framework of classical reception studies, the readings of young managers are positioned in the dominant category. This, Schroder argues, results from the inability of the classical media reception framework to differentiate between the recipients' subjective and objective positioning towards a media text. It is suggested that the Position dimension consists of processes of responses towards the text, from acceptance to rejection. It is notable here to emphasize that the concept of acceptance does not suggest embracing the preferred reading of the text whose message is hegemonically dominant. Rather, it means the acceptance by the recipient of the message what the recipient thinks the text is promoting. Accordingly, in the example of the two focus groups in Morley's study, both the readings of young managers and shop stewards can be positioned in the rejection continuum. Another point notable in the Position dimension is that in most cases the audiences accept the

media message unconsciously, whereas the ones who reject it are aware of the power relations in it (Schroder, 2000, p.249).

Now that the four reading dimensions of the Multi-Dimensional Approach have been described, this study can continue with the Implication Dimensions. As argued before, the previous Position dimension deals with the subjective positioning of the recipients and how they perceive a given media text in a continuum of acceptance to rejection. In the Evaluation Dimension, however, the researcher is concerned with the “objective” positioning of the recipients that accounts for their ideological positions in the social formation and in the conflict between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces (Schroder, 2000, p.250). Therefore, in Evaluation, what matters is the objective field of social and political discourses where the researcher takes the readings of the audience and position them in the ideological continuum from hegemonic to oppositional. The distinction between the related dimensions of Position and Evaluation is crucial to refrain from the conceptualization of classical media reception framework that categorizes reception as negative accepting of the hegemonic discourse on one hand, and the positive rejecting oppositional reading on the other. Lastly, what the Evaluation Dimension allows the researcher is to subjectively position himself/herself in the political- ideological continuum to decide whether a given media message is hegemonic or counter-hegemonic and whether the readings of the audience would help create or prevent the social change the researcher desires, if readings are put into social practice (Schroder, 2000, p.250-1).

Implementation, which is the last dimension of the Multi-Dimensional Approach, applies to the potential for social and political change if the audience readings were put into practice. It seems inadequate to analyze solely audience readings on grounds that whether they are accepting or rejecting, and to appreciate the oppositional positioning. Instead, Condit (1989) claims that to actualize social and political change, celebration of resistance should make way for the appreciation of analysis of specific historical actions (as cited in Schroder, 2000, p.252). In other

words, the mere focus on the readings that are rejective of the hegemonic media texts should be replaced with analyses that look for the potential for social and political change. Yet, some theorists have doubted the potential of the rejective readings in the objective positioning and dismissed their potential for political action since they are not used as a political resource. The idea that the oppositional readings are not being used as a political resource stems from the view that they are not realized and put into practice in the institutions of political life (Jensen, 1990, p.73). However, Schroder (2000) argues that even watching or reading the news and being informed can mean engaging in political life since we talk about it in our daily conversations, suggesting that we are using the news as a political resource (p.252). In other words, using news as a political resource that would turn into a social and political change, does not only require participating in the political life in the conventional and institutional sense. Even engaging in political conversations can be counted as a potential for social change since there is always a chance for political mobilization to occur. Accordingly, Schroder (2000) also argues that to see the relationship between oppositional readings and social change, one may look at the institutionalized readings, that is, the readings of people that have institutional positions, that perceive media message in an oppositional way. Such oppositional readings of hegemonic media messages can be turned into political action given the position of the recipient (p.253).

4. METHODOLOGY

This study argues that a war of position takes place in the Turkish media over the discussions of the decision to grant citizenship to Syrian refugees and how the individuals make sense of it has clear implications for the potentiality of political change. Since the purpose of the study is twofold, the methodological approach is a mixed methodology based on selecting and analyzing different newspapers that position themselves differently towards government policies to assess the extent and the means of the war of position, and analyzing the tweets posted to two different hashtags in favor of and against the decision. Therefore, there were 4 steps in the methodology of this research. First, 4 newspapers, namely *Yeni Şafak*, *Sabah*, *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet*, were selected based on their positions in political spectrum. Then, *Yeni Şafak* and *Sabah* were categorized as pro-government while *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet* were categorized as oppositional. Second, 22 news articles about citizenship in the online editions of these newspapers were chosen and categorized under 6 groups in total. Next, two different hashtags, #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilsin (give citizenship to Syrians) and #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilmesin (don't give citizenship to Syrians), were chosen to find the tweets posted about the citizenship discussion. Finally, 27 tweets in total were selected from both hashtags and categorized into 7 groups in total to analyze the potentiality for political change on the refugee and citizenship policy. To understand the purpose of the methodology of this study, it is important to have a grasp of the current situation of Turkish media.

4.1. The Situation of Turkish Media and the Selection of the Newspapers for the Study

For the last couple of years, the independency of Turkish media is highly questionable. The 2017 report published by Freedom House demonstrated a dramatic decline in press freedom in Turkey, which was ranked 163 out of 199 countries. The deterioration in press freedom resulted not only from an aggressive use of penal code

towards independent media organizations, but also from the emergence of a new media environment in the past decade. In Turkey, the structure of media has never been distinct from the political changes (Türkan, 2012, p.24). Moreover, different media organizations are divided with distinct political orientations, with close connections to political parties and other political organizations, and with journalists trying to influence public opinion instead of only informing the citizens (Somer, 2010, p.557). The current situation of media in Turkey can be traced back to the beginning of Erdogan administration in 2002 which led to a new period for the media industry in the country, with the media becoming more of an area for contestation and political polarization. In today's Turkey, media organizations of opposed camps compete not only to express their own interests, but also to oppress other views by being aggressively partisan in their editorial policies (Kaya& Çakmur, 2010, p.533). After years of interplay among media, state and military in Turkey, the 2001 economic crisis marked a new era in which media organizations owned by banks that went bankrupt in the crisis were taken over by the state. According to Yeşil (2016), by 2005, these media organizations were ready to be auctioned by the state to the businessmen who were willing to join the field of media. It would not only enhance the domination of these businessmen in media but also their influence on economic and political affairs of the state. The selling of these media organizations to pro-AKP businessmen helped Erdogan administration to have an army of media support so to speak. AKP government consolidated its media power also by distributing state tenders and cheap credits by state-owned banks to these businessmen who were also prominent in other sectors (Yeşil, 2016, p.90-1). The fact that these businessmen operating originally in different sectors and now also managing media organizations gave them the opportunity to profit out of media and to establish close relationships with political agents (Türkan, 2012, p.27). Furthermore, the fact that media conglomerates owning businesses in different sectors and benefiting from government contracts resulted in a more pro-government approach as well as an increasing atmosphere of self-censorship in the Turkish media (Yılmaz, 2016, p.151). With the creation of such a clientalist

relationship between the state and media, Erdogan administration assures a variety of mainstream media organizations that broadcast and publish in ways to support government policies.

In light of the context of media industry in Turkey, the reason for the selection of the newspapers *Yeni Şafak* and *Sabah* as representing pro-government media is because of their close relationship with the government. *Sabah* was bought by *Çalık Holding* in what might be called as the largest media gain by a pro-AKP corporation. The accusations that AKP actually masterminded the change in ownership are supported by the fact that *Çalık Holding* was the only bidder in the auction run by the state and Erdogan's son-in-law was the CEO of the company at the time of the selling (Yeşil, 2016, p.90). Kaya and Çakmur (2010) suggest that the government gained the control of the second largest media group in Turkey with the selling of *Sabah* (p.532). As for the selection of *Yeni Şafak*, it is owned by *Albayrak Group* who operates in construction sector as well as being a receiver of state tenders. Also, as Yeşil (2016) argues, an AKP deputy was purposefully placed in two pro-government newspapers as a columnist to propagate government narratives one of which is *Yeni Şafak* (p.91). Therefore, while selecting *Yeni Şafak* and *Sabah* as pro-government newspapers, the current situation of media industry in Turkey was taken into consideration.

As for the newspapers that were categorized as oppositional, we can argue that the reasons are ideological. *Sözcü* has always alienated itself from Erdogan administration with its editorial policy that puts emphasis on secular nationalist values. Furthermore, it is owned by a businessman, Burak Akbay, whose ideological views might be reflected in the editorial policy of the newspaper as Dunaway (2008) argues "ideological owners are more likely to prefer substantive issue coverage as a tool for pushing an ideology" (p.1195). The newspaper has also been criticized for inciting xenophobia and racism towards Syrian refugees after the announcement of the granting of citizenship ("Sözcü, Suriyelilere vatandaşlık üzerinden ırkçılığı körükledi," 2016). The position of *Cumhuriyet* differs from all the other newspapers. It has always been

owned by the non-profit *Cumhuriyet Foundation* that determines the editorial policy of the newspaper and which has no individual or institutional shareholder. The newspaper gained a respectable ground by alienating itself from the conglomerate tendencies in the Turkish media industry (Tunç, 2005, p.2). Therefore, *Cumhuriyet* continues to maintain its leftist values and oppositional positioning which is different than that of *Sözcü*. While *Sözcü* promotes nationalist values, *Cumhuriyet* has an editorial policy which is more aligned with universal leftist ones. However, both newspapers have received lawsuits and even the arrest of some of their managers and journalists for allegedly being linked to terrorist organizations in what might be called as an assault of the Turkish government on freedom of expression. Thus, while selecting the oppositional newspapers, what was also taken into account was the ideological distance these newspapers have towards the AKP government.

The effect of media on public opinion is an undeniable phenomenon. Jordan (1993) found out that there is a direct link between a “pro” news story in a newspaper about a policy and a positive public opinion change on it (p. 196). Thus, newspaper articles are effective means to affect public opinion in ways to serve the political agenda of the newspapers. In the case of the war of position in Turkish newspapers, the news articles about the citizenship discussions promote the position of the newspapers towards the decision to grant refugees with citizenship. In this study, online editions of the newspapers were analyzed for their potentiality for accessibility and dissemination. The articles were searched via the “search” button on the websites of each newspaper using the key words “suriyelilere vatandaşlık” (citizenship to Syrians). 22 articles were analyzed in total and categorized under 6 groups in total, according to what kind of discourses and representations they promote about Syrian refugees.

Table 4.1. The Titles of the News Articles Selected from the Newspapers

YENİ ŞAFAK	SABAHA	SÖZCÜ	CUMHURİYET
<p><i>Biz de Osmanlı Torunlarıyız</i> July 17, 2016</p> <p>We Are Also Descendants of Ottomans</p>	<p><i>Suriyeliler Erdoğan İçin Sokaktaydı</i> July 21, 2016</p> <p>Syrians Were on the Streets for Erdoğan</p>	<p><i>Saman İthal Eden Türkiye Seçmen İthal Edecek</i> July 3, 2016</p> <p>Turkey Importing Straw Will be Importing Voters</p>	<p><i>İthal Milli İrade</i> July 5, 2016</p> <p>Imported National Will</p>
<p><i>Gurur Kaynağı Oluruz</i> July 10, 2016</p> <p>We Would Be a Source of Pride.</p>	<p><i>ABD ve Avrupa Vatandaşlığından Daha Değerli</i> July 15, 2016</p> <p>It is More Valuable Than US and EU Citizenship</p>	<p><i>Kendi Geleceği İçin Ülkeyi Ateşe Atıyor</i> July 5, 2016</p> <p>He is Sacrificing the Country for His Own Interests</p>	<p><i>Ufuktaki Tehdit: Muhacir Vatandaş Sorunu</i> July 5, 2016</p> <p>The Threat on the Horizon: The Problem of Refugee Citizen</p>
<p><i>İki Kardeş Olmak Gibi</i> July 7, 2016</p> <p>It is Like Being Two Siblings</p>	<p><i>Türkiye Suriyelilerin Vatandaşlığına Hazır Mı?</i> July 16, 2016</p> <p>Is Turkey Ready for the Syrians' Citizenship?</p>	<p><i>Suriyelilere Vatandaşlıkta Siyasi Rant Amaçlanıyor</i> July 6, 2016</p> <p>The Real Intention Behind Syrian Citizenship is Political Interests</p>	<p><i>Suriyelilere Karşı Kampanya Faydasız</i> July 11, 2016</p> <p>The Campaign Against the Syrians is Useless</p>
<p><i>Suriyelilerin yüzde 35'i Kalıcı</i> July 11, 2016</p> <p>35% of the Syrians are Permanent in Turkey</p>	<p><i>Kaç Suriyeli Vatandaşlık Alacak?</i> July 9, 2016</p> <p>How Many Syrians Will Be Citizens?</p>	<p><i>Suriyelileri İstemiyoruz!</i> July 12, 2016</p> <p>We Don't Want Syrians!</p>	<p><i>Erdoğan Başkanlık İçin Oyunu Buldu</i> July 3, 2016</p> <p>Erdoğan Found His Electorates for the Presidency</p>

<p><i>Suriyeliler İş Piyasasına Nitelik Katar</i> July 14, 2016</p> <p>Syrians Would Increase the Quality of the Job Market</p>		<p><i>Mülteciler vatandaş olursa milli gelir sert düşecek</i> July 13, 2016</p> <p>If Refugees Will be Citizens, National Income Will Drop Sharply</p>	<p><i>Burada Hayat Zor Abi</i> July 30, 2016</p> <p>Life is Difficult Here Brother</p>
		<p><i>Suriyeli Vatandaş!</i> July 12, 2016</p> <p>Syrian Citizen!</p>	
		<p><i>Suriyeliler İçin Referandum Yapılmalı</i> July 4, 2016</p> <p>There should be a referendum for Syrians</p>	
		<p><i>Suriyelilere Vatandaşlık Verilmesi Birçok Sorun İthal Eder</i> July 11, 2016</p> <p>Giving Citizenship to Syrians Will Import Many Problems</p>	

Table 4.2. Discourses Produced in Pro-Government Newspapers

SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION STORIES	BEING GRATEFUL TO TURKEY FOR BEING A GREAT HOST	BENEFICIAL FOR TURKEY
<i>Biz de Osmanlı Torunlarıyız</i> We Are Also Descendants of Ottomans	<i>İki Kardeş Olmak Gibi</i> It is Like Being Two Siblings.	<i>Suriyelilerin yüzde 35’i Kalıcı</i> 35% of the Syrians are Permanent in Turkey
<i>Gurur Kaynağı Oluruz</i> We Would Be a Source of Pride.	<i>Biz de Osmanlı Torunlarıyız</i> We Are Also Descendants of Ottomans	<i>Suriyeliler İş Piyasasına Nitelik Katar</i> Syrians Would Increase the Quality of the Job Market
	<i>Suriyeliler Erdoğan İçin Sokaktaydı</i> Syrians Were on the Streets for Erdoğan	<i>Türkiye Suriyelilerin Vatandaşlığına Hazır mı?</i> Is Turkey Ready for the Syrians’ Citizenship?
	<i>ABD ve Avrupa Vatandaşlığından Daha Değerli</i> It is More Valuable Than US and EU Citizenship	<i>Kaç Suriyeli Vatandaşlık Alacak?</i> How Many Syrians Will Be Citizens?

Table 4.3. Discourses Produced in Oppositional Newspapers

POTENTIAL VOTERS	CHEAP LABOR FORCE	THREAT TO SOCIETY
<i>İthal Milli İrade</i> Imported National Will	<i>Mülteciler Vatandaş Olursa Ucuz İşgücü Olarak Kullanılacak</i> Refugees Will be Cheap Labor Force if Given Citizenship	<i>Suriyeli Vatandaş!</i> Syrian Citizen!
<i>Ufuktaki Tehdit: Muhacir Vatandaş Sorunu</i> The Threat on the Horizon: The Problem of Refugee Citizen	<i>Burada Hayat Zor Abi</i> Life is Difficult Here Brother	<i>Suriyeliler İçin Referandum Yapılmalı</i> There should be a referendum for Syrians
<i>Saman İthal Eden Türkiye Seçmen İthal Edecek</i> Turkey Importing Straw Will be Importing Voters		<i>Suriyelilere Vatandaşlık Verilmesi Birçok Sorun İthal Eder</i> Giving Citizenship to Syrians Will Import Many Problems
<i>Kendi Geleceği İçin Ülkeyi Ateşe Atıyor</i> He is Sacrificing the Country for His Own Interests		<i>Ufuktaki Tehdit: Muhacir Vatandaş Sorunu</i> The Threat on the Horizon: The Problem of Refugee Citizen
<i>Suriyelilere Karşı Kampanya Faydasız</i> The Campaign Against the Syrians is Useless		
<i>Suriyelilere Vatandaşlıkta Siyasi Rant Amaçlanıyor</i> The Real Intention Behind Syrian Citizenship is Political Interests		

<i>Suriyelileri İstemiyoruz</i> We Don't Want Syrians!		
<i>Erdoğan Başkanlık İçin Oyunu Buldu</i> Erdoğan Found His Electorates for the Presidency		

4.2. Discussions on Twitter Hashtags

As the second part of this study pertains analyzing how individuals make sense of the war of position and whether this understanding points to a push for policy change, Twitter was chosen as the best media to assess the implications of online political expression as it can be considered a modern public sphere. Public sphere accounts for spaces in society that allows for the dissemination of information, ideas and discussions as well as public opinion (Yang et. al, 2017, p.1986). The emergence of ICTs led to the increase in political participation and expression with citizens accessing a variety of materials from a wide range of sources (Wiring& Horrocks, 2001, p.191). Colleoni *et. al* (2014) argue that social media platforms are considered eligible to provide for open debate thanks to their high level of interactivity, rapid dissemination of information and possibility for fostering debates in real time without geographical limitations (as cited in Yang et. al, 2017, p.1986). Of all the other social media platforms, Twitter is considered vital for the exchange of information in the field of political communication thanks to some of its distinct features. To start with, tweets are seen by everyone unless they are purposefully made private. Also, the retweet option allows the dissemination of information as many times as possible and very quickly. Lastly, unlike other social media sites, Twitter does not obligate mutual relationships which enables dissemination even easier (Yang et. al, 2017, p.1986). Considering all the points above, it can be argued that Twitter is a beneficial tool to assess public opinion since it can replace traditional public sphere as providing a space to engage in political discussions. Moreover, social media play a very crucial role in the dissemination of information in Turkey as the country has the world's highest Twitter penetration rates (Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2015). The report demonstrated that 31% of the respondents in Turkey engage in political discussions online and 68% of these respondents use Twitter for news sharing and political discussions.

Political discussions are helpful for boosting useful political learning. Yamamoto *et. al* (2015) argues that implementing what is acquired by the news sources into interpersonal discussions make individuals consider current events, rethink problem viewpoints and enable political engagements (p.882). Therefore, since it is significant to understand how media representations are perceived by the individuals to evaluate whether they can result in positive policy changes for Syrian refugees, using Twitter to analyze public opinion in Turkey is essential given the high rates of participation in political discussions on Twitter.

Moreover, Yang *et. al* (2017) draws attention to the hashtag feature of Twitter, arguing that it is a key characteristic allowing for discussions about certain topics without forming restricted groups (p.1986). Due to this specific feature of Twitter, 2 hashtags were chosen to analyze the tweets posted to discuss the decision of citizenship. From the first hashtag #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilsin (give citizenship to Syrians), 10 tweets were chosen. These tweets were in favor of the decision to grant refugees with citizenship. In fact, there were other hashtags that supported the decision such as #suriyelidegilOsmanlı (not Syrian, Ottoman). However, such a hashtag would see the discussion one dimensional and it was obvious from which viewpoint it supported the decision, namely not from a rights-based stance but an ideological one. Contrarily, the first hashtag allowed the researcher to see the other reasons for support as well. The second hashtag, #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilmesin, (don't give citizenship to Syrians), was comprised of tweets that were against the decision. 17 tweets in total were chosen from the second hashtag to see over which arguments the decision was rejected. The reason for the selection of two seemingly opposite hashtags was to see how the two poles of the discussion see the decision, over what discourses they object to and agree with Syrian refugees' getting Turkish citizenship, and whether they are compatible with the media representations of the Syrian refugees on the citizenship discussions. The tweets chosen were posted in the summer of 2016 and 2017. The reason for the former is that it is the period when the citizenship discussions first started with the

announcement of the President. As for the latter, the tensions between the Turkish public and Syrian refugees escalated in summer 2017 with a number of attacks towards the refugees, which brought the citizenship decision back to the agenda of the public.

Table 4.4. Tweets Posted to Two Selected Hashtags on Citizenship Discussions

<p>#suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilsin give citizenship to Syrians</p>	<p>#suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilmesin don't give citizenship to Syrians</p>
<p><i>@mstopdemir: ensar-muhacir edebiyatı yapmaya değil icraatine davet</i></p> <p>We invite {people} not to only talk about being ensar-muhacir but to execute it.</p>	<p><i>@SemihCgtyAcba: Devşirme oylar ile kimse benim kaderimi belirleyemez!</i></p> <p>Nobody can determine my destiny with imported votes!</p>
<p><i>@YasenyaCaner: Resullahın yüzüne bakacak yüzümüz olsun Ensar olamadık insan olalım</i></p> <p>Let's have the face to look our Prophet in the eye, we couldn't be ensars, let's be humans.</p>	<p><i>@iAvcOfficial: Devlet kendisine "Geçici" Oy potansiyeli yaratmak amacıyla böyle bir şey yapıyor.</i></p> <p>The government is doing such a thing to create a temporary potentiality of voters</p>
<p><i>@YasenyaCaner: Türkiyede o kadar Yahudu Ermeni Süryani Yezit PKKlı yaşıyorken DİN kardeşlerimize mi dar geliyor</i></p> <p>When there are too many Armenians, Assyrians and people from PKK, is Turkey only small for our brothers of religion?</p>	<p><i>@Sen95M: Kendi vatanlarını savunmaktan aciz ve korkak insanlardan bize fayda gelmez. Oy uğruna vatani satmayın!</i></p> <p>The people who are incapable of defending their own country are no use for us. Don't sacrifice the country for the sake of votes!</p>
<p><i>@nesli4123: Üstad Cemil Meriç'in dediği gibi "Bizler ki aynı kitaba baş eğmiş insanlarız. Bizden ala akraba mı olur?"</i></p> <p>Like what master Cemil Meriç said "We are people who believe in the same god, would there be better relatives than us?"</p>	<p><i>@iAvcOfficial: Herkes, hepimiz uyuyoruz.! ülkenin demografik yapısı değişiyor, değiştiriliyor.</i></p> <p>Everyone, all of us are sleeping. The demographic structure of the country is changing, being changed.</p>

<p><i>@ortanccapatron: Çanakkale'de en çok şehit veren 3 Osmanlı Şehri.. 1- Şam 6.000 şehit 2- Humus 4.000 3- Bursa 3.400 şehit</i></p> <p>The 3 cities who had the highest rate of martyrs in Çanakkale War: Damascus 6000 martyrs, Homs 4000 martyrs and Bursa 3500 martyrs.”</p>	<p><i>@serenmuyan: Kalifiye kimyager Suriyeliler deney (bomba) yaparken evi patlatmışlar.</i></p> <p>Qualified chemist Syrians blew up their house while making experiments (bombs)!</p>
<p><i>@cayciyizbiz: eşit hale gelince o sorun çıkarırlar kendisi gider zaten</i></p> <p>When we become equal, the ones who create problems would go anyway.</p>	<p><i>@iumathiashae: Ülkemize sokuyoruz, onlar insanımıza, hayvanımıza zarar veriyor!! Çıkın gidin. Yaptığınız hainlik.</i></p> <p>We let them into our country, but they harm our people and animals. Go away. What you do is treason.</p>
<p><i>@tramvayy: kötüyle iyi suriyeli nasıl ayrılıyor bak o zaman</i></p> <p>They will see how the good and the bad will be shelled after the citizenship.</p>	<p><i>@MthnKsdr: İçimizde bomba patlatsınlar diyemi vatandaşlık veriyorsunuz?</i></p> <p>Are you giving them citizenship so that they can blow up bombs in our country?”</p>
<p><i>@asinadegiliz: biz bu kadar zorlukla boşuna mı duruyoruz bu ülkede seninle eşitlensin nasıl gidiyor</i></p> <p>Are we staying here for nothing with all the difficulties? You will see how they will leave when we become equal.</p>	<p><i>@oguzhan_demiroz: Gelip ülkemde kedi yavrusu gibi çoğalıyorlar. Doktor, Eczane, hayat bedava. Sosyal dokumuzu bozuyorlar</i></p> <p>They come and multiply in my country. Doctors, pharmacies, life are all for free. They are destroying our social structure.</p>
<p><i>@ibiresort: en azından vergiyi dayadın mı çalışmaya götü yemeyen gider. İyileri kalır</i></p> <p>If they have to pay taxes, at least the ones who don't want to work will go, only the good ones will stay.</p>	<p><i>@abubekir_r: Türklüğü her omuz her baş ve her yürek kaldıramaz.</i></p> <p>Not everyone can handle to be Turkish.</p>

<p><i>@PES2017TR: Yıllarca teröre lanet okuduk, pkkya hayır dedik. Olayı çarpıtarak Irkçı faşist dediniz.</i></p> <p>We condemned terrorism and said no to PKK for years. You distorted the facts by calling us fascists.</p>	<p><i>@frhtcnrky: Aşımızı paylaşıyoruz. Sevgimizi paylaşıyoruz. Ama ÜLKEMİZİ PAYLAŞMAYIZ!</i></p> <p>We share our meal and love but WE DON'T SHARE OUR COUNTRY!</p>
	<p><i>@myylifee42: Ne bu ya sınıflarda öğrenci değişikliği yapıyoruz .biz Türküz herkes Türk olamaz</i></p> <p>Are we changing classrooms? We are Turkish, not everyone can be Turkish.</p>
	<p><i>@AtszYldrm: Araplar puta taparken Türkler göğe bakıyordu</i></p> <p>While the Arabs were worshipping icons, the Turks were examining the sky</p>
	<p><i>@blueparadise02: Bu ülke yatarak kazanılmadı.Dedelerimizin cephede savaşıyla ,Mustafa kemal'in komutanlığıyla kazanıldı</i></p> <p>This country was saved thanks to our ancestors' fighting and commanding of Mustafa Kemal, not by doing nothing.</p>
	<p><i>@Kemalist_MKemal: Benim savaşarak kazandığımı onlar savaştan kaçtıktan sonra kazanamaz!</i></p> <p>They can't gain by fleeing what I gained after fighting in the war</p>
	<p><i>@sinanuzumcu: kalifikasyonmuş sanırsın almanlara araba yapmayı,hintlilere yazılımı suriyeli ustalar öğretti</i></p>

	You would think Syrians taught Germans how to produce cars and Indians how to write a software!”.
	<i>@erdemdemirkilic: Bizim nitelikli vatandaşlarımızdan faydalanamazken neyin Suriyelisi.</i> Why Syrians when we can’t make use of our own qualified citizens!
	<i>@meteanl: Suriyelilere vatandaşlık ver, asgari ücretin yarısına çalıştır ve kendi işçini mağdur et.</i> Give Syrians citizenship, have them work for half of the minimum wage and make your own worker vulnerable!

Table 4.5. Discourses Produced in Tweets in Favor of Citizenship Decision

ENSAR-MUHACİR	RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP AND HISTORICAL BONDS WITH OTTOMANS	GOOD SYRIANS/ BAD SYRIANS
<i>@mstopdemir: ensar-muhacir edebiyatı yapmaya değil icraatine davet</i> We invite {people} not to talk about being ensar-muhacir but to fulfill it	<i>@YasenyaCaner: Türkiyede okadar Yahudu Ermeni Süryani Yezit PKKlı yaşıyorken DİN kardeşlerimize mi dar geliyor</i> When there are too many Armenians, Assyrians and people from PKK, is Turkey only small for our brothers of religion?	<i>@tramvayy: kötüyle iyi suriyeli nasıl ayrılıyor bak o zaman</i> They will see how the good and the bad will be shelled after the citizenship.

<p><i>@YasenyaCaner: Resullahın yüzüne bakacak yüzümüz olsun Ensar olmadık insan ola</i></p> <p>Let's have the face to look our Prophet in the eye, we couldn't be ensars, let's be humans</p>	<p><i>@nesli4123: Üstad Cemil Meriç'in dediği gibi Bizler ki aynı kitaba baş eğmiş insanlarız. Bizden ala akraba mı olur?</i></p> <p>Like what master Cemil Meriç said "We are people who believe in the same god, would there be better relatives than us?"</p>	<p><i>@cayciyizbiz: eşit hale gelince o sorun çıkarırlar kendisi gider zaten</i></p> <p>When we become equal, the ones who create problems would go anyway.</p>
	<p><i>@ortancapatron: Çanakkale'de en çok şehit veren 3 Osmanlı Şehri. 1- Şam 6.000 şehit 2- Humus 4.000 3- Bursa 3.400 şehit</i></p> <p>The 3 cities who had the highest rate of martyrs in Çanakkale War: Damascus 6000 martyrs, Homs 4000 martyrs and Bursa 3500 martyrs."</p>	<p><i>@asinadegiliz: biz bu kadar zorlukla boşuna mı duruyoruz bu ülkede sizinle eşitlensin nasıl gidiyor</i></p> <p>Are we staying here for nothing with all the difficulties? You will see how they will leave when we become equal.</p>
	<p><i>@PES2017TR: Yıllarca teröre lanet okuduk, pkkya hayır dedik Olayı çarpıtarak İrkçi faşist dediniz.</i></p> <p>We condemned terrorism and said no to PKK for years. You distorted the facts by calling us fascists.</p>	<p><i>@ibiresort: en azından vergiyi dayadın mı çalışmaya götü yemeyen gider. İyileri kalır</i></p> <p>If they have to pay taxes, at least the ones who don't want to work will go, only the good ones will stay.</p>

Table 4.6. Discourses Produced in Tweets Against the Citizenship Decision

REFUGEES AS POTENTIAL VOTERS REPRODUCED	REFUGEES AS THREAT TO SOCIETY REPRODUCED	REFUGEES AS NOT WORTHY OF TURKISH CITIZENSHIP	REFUGEES AS NOT QUALIFIED WORKERS
<p><i>@SemihCgtyAcba: Devşirme oylar ile kimse benim kaderimi belirleyemez!</i></p> <p>Nobody can determine my destiny with imported votes</p>	<p><i>@iAvcOfficial: Herkes, hepimiz uyuyoruz.! ülkenin demografik yapısı değişiyor, değiştiriliyor.</i></p> <p>Everyone, all of us are sleeping. The demographic structure of the country is changing, being changed.</p>	<p><i>@Sen95M: Kendi vatanlarını savunmaktan aciz ve korkak insanlardan bize fayda gelmez. Oy uğruna vatani satmayın!</i></p> <p>The people who are incapable of defending their own country are no use for us. Don't sacrifice the country for the sake of votes!</p>	<p><i>@sinanuzumcu:sanırsın almanlara araba yapmayı, hintlilere yazılımı suriyeli ustalar öğretti</i></p> <p>You would think Syrians taught Germans how to produce cars and Indians how to write a software!?"</p>
<p><i>@iAvcOfficial: Devlet kendisine "Geçici" Oy potansiyeli yaratmak amacıyla böyle bir şey yapıyor.</i></p> <p>The government is doing such a thing to create a temporary potentiality of voters</p>	<p><i>@serenmuyan: Kalifiye kimyager Suriyeliler deney (bomba) yaparken evi patlatmışlar.</i></p> <p>Qualified chemist Syrians blew up their house while making experiments (bombs)!</p>	<p><i>@abubekir_r: Türklüğü her omuz her baş ve her yürek kaldıramaz</i></p> <p>Not everyone can handle to be Turkish.</p>	<p><i>@erdemdemirkilic: Bizim nitelikli vatandaşlarımızdan faydalanamazken neyin Suriyelisi</i></p> <p>Why Syrians when we can't make use of our own qualified citizens!</p>
<p><i>@Sen95M: Kendi vatanlarını savunmaktan aciz ve korkak insanlardan bize fayda</i></p>	<p><i>@oguzhan_demiroz: Gelip ülkemde kedi yavrusu gibi çoğalıyorlar. Doktor, Eczane,</i></p>	<p><i>@frhtcnrky: Aşımızı paylaşıyoruz. Sevgimizi paylaşıyoruz. Ama ÜLKEMİZİ PAYLAŞMAYIZ!</i></p>	<p><i>@meteanl: Suriyelilere vatandaşlık ver, asgari ücretin yarısına çalıştır ve kendi işçini mağdur et.</i></p>

<p><i>gelmez. Oy uğruna vatani satmayın!</i></p> <p>The people who are incapable of defending their own country are no use for us. Don't sacrifice the country for the sake of votes!</p>	<p><i>hayat bedava. Sosyal dokumuzu bozuyorlar</i></p> <p>They come and multiply in my country. Doctors, pharmacies, life are all for free. They are destroying our social structure.</p>	<p>We share our meal and love, but WE DON'T SHARE OUR COUNTRY!</p>	<p>Give Syrians citizenship, have them work for half of the minimum wage and make your own worker vulnerable!</p>
	<p><i>@iumathiashae: Ülkemize sokuyoruz, onlar insanımıza, hayvanımıza zarar veriyor!! Çıkın gidin. Yaptığınız hainlik.</i></p> <p>We let them into our country, but they harm our people and animals. Go away. What you do is treason.</p>	<p><i>@myylifee42: Ne bu ya sınıflarda öğrenci değişikliği yapıyoruz, biz Türk üz herkes Türk olamaz</i></p> <p>Are we changing classrooms or what? We are Turkish, not everyone can be Turkish.</p>	
	<p><i>@MthnKsdr: İçimizde bomba patlatsınlar diyemi vatandaşlık veriyorsunuz?</i></p> <p>Are you giving them citizenship so that they can blow up bombs in our country?"</p>	<p><i>@AtszYldırım: Araplar puta taparken Türkler göğe bakıyordu</i></p> <p>While the Arabs were worshipping icons, the Turks were examining the sky</p>	
		<p><i>@blueparadise02: Bu ülke yatarak</i></p>	

		<p><i>kazanılmadı.Dedelerimizin cephede savařmasıyla, Mustafa kemal'in komutanlıęıyla kazanıldı</i></p> <p>This country was saved thanks to our ancestors' fighting and commanding of Mustafa Kemal, not by doing nothing.</p>	
		<p><i>@Kemalist_MKemal: Benim savařarak kazandıęımı onlar savařtan kaçtıktan sonra kazanamaz!</i></p> <p>They can't gain by fleeing what I gained after fighting in the war</p>	

5. DISCUSSION

In his analysis on the Turkish media perception of Syrian refugees, Erdogan (2017) found out that refugee issue is discussed through the contexts of the future of Assad regime as it is directly intertwined with Turkish foreign policy, sentimentality that ignores the socio-political dimensions of the conflict, generosity that highlights Turkey's help to the refugees and the quality of the camps, and ideological stance of different newspapers that discusses the Syria policy rather than the refugees and their problems (p.16). In other words, newspapers from different ideological viewpoints instrumentalized the refugees to consolidate their own political stance. Efe (2015) highlighted that the pro-government newspapers like *Yeni Şafak* and *Sabah* emphasized Turkey's tremendous effort to host and take care of the refugees to legitimate the government's policies;

“Turkey is hosting 1.5 million asylum seekers and it is doing it in an amazing organizational success that makes the whole world jealous.” (Gayberi, 2014).

On the other hand, *Cumhuriyet* reported news on the victimization of the refugees by not only the war in their countries but also by the policies of the Turkish government;

“Both the Syrian refugees and our people are paying the price of AKP's dreamy and mistaken Syrian policy.” (“AKP'yi Uyarıyoruz! Sorunlar Sistemik Linçlere Dönüşüyor,” 2014).

Apart from the fact that both representations are problematic in the subordination of the refugees to the status of victims and voiceless beings as well as objectification, they both instrumentalize the refugees to consolidate their own political agenda. Efe's findings also point to the concept of discursive psychology that focuses on what is gained by constructing certain discourses. For instance;

“Of course, it is a humanitarian responsibility to help the people who fled the war. We need to help and secure the lives of those people. That’s what Turkey did. But Turkey did something else too. It miscalculated when Assad will be toppled down and ignited the war. Migrants were not hosted in the camps and they were dispersed all around Turkey.” (Yılmaz, 2015).

The construction of “we” in the example above, through which the writer of the article tries to justify his position towards the refugees, is different than most of the examples in the literature. In other words, media representations largely draw a line between “us” and “them” which refer to the host society and the refugee/migrant or the minority groups. Chavez (2008) argues that this differentiation constructs an imaginary nation (as cited in Efe, 2015, p.61). In the Turkish case however, it refers to the distinction, in the opposition’s part, between the political authority and the ones who oppose it. Therefore, it is not only the refugees that the writer differentiates himself from, but also the government and its policies on the issue. This demonstrates how the refugee policy creates a political division in the society and how media plays a key role in sustaining and legitimizing this division and struggle. The construction of imaginary nations is therefore shaped according to the ideological positioning and the closeness of the media organization to the government. As a result, the refugee issue is being instrumentalized in the domestic policy and used to oppose or legitimize the policies concerning the refugees. This makes the issue to be politicized and rooted even deeper, and causes the construction of the same, cliché representations to linger.

5.1.Citizenship Discussions

As for the topic of this dissertation, even if the discussions of citizenship to Syrian refugees in Turkey started before July 2016, the first public announcement made by the head of the state coincides this date. President Erdogan publicly declared in an İftar dinner in July 2016 that the Syrian refugees in Turkey could be granted citizenship if they are to meet certain criteria. This immediately sparked a heated debate among

the different political wings as to whether it is possible or not. Citizenship discussions are crucial in the sense that it marked a turning point and a moment of crisis in the hegemony since even the AKP electorates are not truly certain about the decision to grant refugees citizenship (Arslan, 2016). According to a survey conducted in March 2016, 83% of Turkish people are against the idea of Syrian refugees becoming Turkish citizens (Metropoll, 2016). It is also important in the history of the Turkish domestic politics, since the granting of collective citizenship to a group not from Turkish descent has never been witnessed before. The positioning of media signifies the war of position at the wake of a crisis in hegemony and a political struggle to absorb the weakness of the political authority. If we consider the war of position as a mediated war over symbols, contested to prevail over the other discourses as to which will affect public opinion the most, then we can argue that media stands at the center of this war since this contestation of discourse and symbol is mostly conducted through media. The crisis of hegemony can be argued to be emerging from the discussion of citizenship and the moment it signifies in the Turkish politics.

5.2.War of Position in Turkish Media Over the Citizenship Discussions

In previous chapters, the importance of media discourses has already been talked about. In addition, Gramsci put an emphasis on language concerning the waging of the war of position. To impose cultural and political hegemony, Gramsci claimed that an accepted language should be established as well. Despite the fact that he never openly coped with rhetoric, Williams (1977) pointed that Gramsci associated persuasive communication with the power of shaping the social order through social and cultural basis manufactured by a common space of meanings and by controlling social groups through the execution of a dominant grammar (as cited in Briziarelli, 2016, p.289). Therefore, for Gramsci, the dynamics of power and hegemony are related with language, rhetoric and discourse which can argued to be articulated mostly in media. As for the media representations on the Syrian refugees in Turkey, to establish the political hegemony for their interests, pro-government and oppositional media are

in a constant struggle using different discourses, language and rhetoric to portray the refugees.

After analyzing the different language and discourse patterns in the pro-government and the oppositional newspapers, 3 representational strategies for each have emerged over which the war of position is waged concerning the citizenship discussions. Syrian refugees are represented in the pro-government newspapers to affect the public opinion in ways to serve the political agenda of the government. Likewise, oppositional newspapers represent the refugees in ways to criticize and prove wrong the decision of the government to grant refugees with citizenship. Below, these 6 representational strategies will be discussed in detail with the examples from the news articles analyzed, starting with the first three of the government and then moving with that of the opposition.

5.3. Syrian Refugees as Having Successfully Integrated into Turkish Society

After the emergence of citizenship discussions, we encounter in the pro-government media the successful integration stories of Syrian refugees. This is notable in the sense that most of the time Syrian refugees are objectified to ones who are only affected by the policies they have no control over. Only after their stories can be instrumentalized in government interests, then are they given voice to tell their stories of successful integration without disrupting the well-being of the Turkish society. The pro-government newspapers try to focus on individual success stories which is not present in the news related to refugee problems. As a news article from *Yeni Şafak* states;

“The businessman Gazi Mısırlı of Syrian descent is among the many who left their country and settled in Turkey. To get his university degree, he wanted to move to Turkey. Mısırlı, who stated that he became a Turkish citizen 4 years after coming to Turkey, explains “My mother is Turkish and my father is Arab. That’s why I wasn’t unfamiliar to Turkey. When I started university, I began

trading as well. But since I wasn't a citizen, I couldn't go out of the city and do trade. After becoming a Turkish citizen, I started travelling to Arab countries and trading. I've been doing international trade for 33 years. I'm now a successful businessman because I became a citizen. God bless Turkey for that (Saka & Özleyen, 2016).

In this news article, the constant emphasis is on being a *citizen* and how being a citizen helped him become a successful businessman that improves Turkish economy. What the news chooses to ignore however is the fact that Mısırlı had already Turkish roots in his family, and he had not been a refugee who had no means to start a business. Therefore, he did not face most of the problems Syrian refugees have faced in Turkey so far. The pro-government media constructs the news in such a way to show the readers such stories of successful integration after citizenship exists and that they can be beneficial for Turkish economy.

5.4.Syrian Refugees as Being Grateful to Turkey

Moreover, the pro-government media constructs the narratives of how Turkey is successful at hosting the refugees and how the Syrian refugees are grateful to Turkey for being a philanthropic and humanitarian host. We see the discourse on Turkish hospitality and success in hosting the Syrian refugees and how Turkey is a very good place for Syrian refugees. In a news article in *Sabah*, we encounter the expressions of several Syrian refugees who feel gratitude towards Turkey for accepting them;

“Living in İstanbul for 2 years, Ahmad al-Shahabi who is a translator, states that giving citizenship to Syrian refugees is a rightful decision and Turkish citizenship is more valuable to him than the US and EU citizenship. [.....] A war pilot Abdulkadir al-Hidr says “Turkey protected and embraced us. This is all the West’s doing that they don’t want us in Turkey.” [.....] Abdullah Ibrahim, who is a dentist also claims that the future of his children lies in Turkey. [.....] Architect Aziz Hamdan lives in Urfa. He first went to Jordan

during the war. Hamdan “But Turkey is the best. If we are given the right to become a citizen and work, we wouldn’t consider going to Europe. I would rather be a Turkish citizen than a European citizen” (Altun & Yıldırım, 2016).

The narrative in the pro-government media suggests that Turkey is a safe haven for the refugees with the choice of expressions such as *Turkey protected us*, or, *future of his children lies in Turkey*. Additionally, the emphasis on the claim that Turkey is better than the US and EU demonstrates how the Syrian refugees are instrumentalized to justify the Turkish policies in accepting refugees into the country. It also hides the real challenges Syrian refugees face in Turkey and the accountability of the government for these challenges, by not completely providing context for the reason why refugees want to acquire citizenship.

Similarly, in *Yeni Şafak*, an interview with a Syrian family of four demonstrates how grateful they are to Turkey for hosting them so far. Imad Ahmed who is a doctor living in Batman now, states that they have been welcomed with hospitality since the day they arrived Turkey. Ahmed says “We thank Turkey for embracing us and our children. We are grateful to the authorities for their help. The President’s announcement made us really happy. It’s very great to be a Turkish citizen. Being both a Syrian and Turkish citizen is like being two siblings” (“İki Kardeş Olmak Gibidir,” 2016).

The use of words such as *hospitality* for Turkey’s part and *grateful* for that of Syrians, aims to provide the readers with the sense that Syrian refugees are not ungrateful to the help given to them so far. Contrarily, the news tries to convince the public that the refugees are actually trying not to be a burden for Turkey like in the other *Yeni Şafak* article Gazi Mısırlı says “Don’t worry, Syrians won’t be a burden for anyone (Saka & Özleyen, 2016).

5.5.Syrian Refugees as Beneficial for Turkey

In the pro-government media newspapers, the discourse after the announcement of granting citizenship to the refugees largely focused on how the Syrian refugees would be beneficial for the Turkish nation. In other words, the Syrian refugees have been objectified to realize the political goals of the government by the pro-government media which is to shape public opinion in favor of the policy of granting citizenship to Syrian refugees;

“After President Erdogan announced Syrian refugees will be granted citizenship, all eyes are now on the business world. The representatives who gladly welcomed the news said that granting citizenship especially to eligible and qualified refugees will positively contribute to the markets [.....] “It is logical to choose and employ the eligible and qualified ones” [.....] I think the ones who have technical and vocational success should be sorted out and they should be treated in a special way” (“Suriyeliler İş Piyasasına Nitelik Katar,” 2016).

As in the article in *Yeni Şafak*, the language that is used to describe the refugees is constructed in a way to appease the Turkish public that only the very *eligible* and *qualified* refugees are to be accepted into citizenship which would *contribute* positively to the Turkish *markets*. The language is also problematic in the way how it otherizes the Syrian refugees with the use of *they* and *the ones*. It also segregates the refugees among themselves as qualified and unqualified, and creates a discriminatory selection process of citizenship.

Likewise, Syrian refugees are put as economic burdens when they are not citizens to whom the government has to provide financial aids. For instance:

The 11.5 billion liras cost of Syrian refugees has reached the levels that might undermine the spending of the government to low-income people and the interaction with them, as well as the burden it brought to the public budget (“Kaç Suriyeli

vatandaşlık alacak?” 2016). Therefore, Syrian refugees are represented as burdens given their current condition, who will be economically beneficial for Turkey once becoming citizens.

As seen with the construction of the news in the pro-government media, the war of position is waged through attempts of producing discourses trying to legitimize the government move on granting citizenship to Syrian refugees. One of the most effective civil society organizations in shaping public opinion, media is used by the hegemonic power to manufacture consent of the public on the citizenship issue. The emergence of this war in the first place results from the fact that refugee policy in general and citizenship discussions in particular mark the point of crisis in hegemony as even the AKP electorates are not fully convinced about the citizenship decision. In order not to be weakened by this crisis, AKP government makes use of media discourses in pro-government newspapers that promote the ideas that these refugees would be beneficial for the Turkish economy and Turkey needs to consolidate its image as the successful host by granting citizenship. In contrast with these arguments, oppositional media newspapers construct their own discourses to wage the war of position against the government in which they try to influence the public to be against this policy of the government.

5.6.Syrian Refugees as Potential Voters for AKP

The most prominent representation of the refugees in the oppositional newspapers is the narrative that argues Syrian refugees will be used by the AKP administration as potential voters. The argument proposes that Syrian refugees are seen as potential voters and it is the real cause of the decision to grant them with citizenship, as citizenship discussions coincided with the campaigns during the run-up to the referendum to change the country's regime into an executive presidency. The opposition and the oppositional media argue that citizenship decision is an instrument for the President to create a potency of voters which would be in favor of changing the

regime of the country. To consolidate their arguments, the oppositional media newspapers provide a platform for the opposition figures to make their claims heard they might not have otherwise, given their exclusion from most of the mainstream media. However, it is also important to make a distinction between *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet* in their representation of refugees as an instrument in the war of position, as will be discussed below.

In one of the interviews he gave to *Sözcü*, the head of the main opposition party Kılıçdaroğlu stated that “Erdogan wants to change the regime with the votes of the people of foreign origin. This means treason against Turkey.” (Öztürk, 2016). Accordingly, an MP from opposition, Altay argued that “Unfortunately we can infer that the President does not have a grasp of what is going on in Syria now since international powers seem to have agreed on restoring peace in Syria again. Likewise, it is understood that Syria will be in peace in a short time. [.....] It is possible to say Turkey is going to export voters” (“Saman İthal Eden Türkiye, Seçmen İthal Edecek”, 2016). In addition, Necat Karataş who is an MP from the opposition party Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) expressed that “What we had to do was to embrace the victims, help them with shelter, food and health until peace is restored again in their countries. This has been and still being done. However, we believe there is another reason behind this policy. For us, the reason for this insistence is that Syrians will vote when they become citizens” (“Suruyeli'lere Vatandaşlıkta Siyasi Rant Amaçlanıyor,” 2016)

The language used by all the opposition figures demonstrate the claim that Syrian refugees are instrumentalized for the interests of the government. The constant use of the words *Syrians*, *foreigners*, and *vote* suggest that the discourse is primarily constructed on the potential fear that Syrian refugees, who are “foreigners”, will vote for President Erdogan. The language used, and the discourse created are problematic in a couple of ways. First, the opposition arguments such as the war in Syria coming to an end and that Turkey provided everything for the refugees are far from the truth.

Putting the situation this way not only misinforms the public but also decontextualizes the crisis and undermines the responsibilities of the authorities. Secondly, the pre-assumption that refugees are going to vote in favor of the regime change clearly undermines the political subjectivity of the refugees and subordinates them into toys in the hands of the government so to speak. While criticizing the government for instrumentalizing the refugees, the opposition and *Sözcü* do exactly the same thing by decontextualizing the refugee crisis and praising Turkey for its help so far, thus overlooking the problems refugees are facing. Therefore, war of position is waged through the citizenship discussions while undermining Syrian refugees at the same time.

Contrarily, we come across the same argument in *Cumhuriyet* as well, but it constructs this argument in a more responsible way. By acknowledging the fact that Syrian refugees are not legally recognized as refugees and it undermines their rights and puts them in a vulnerable situation, it is also argued in *Cumhuriyet* that Syrian refugees will be used to generate votes for Erdogan and AKP government:

Erdogan is calculating that refugee citizens of Syrian origin will be his firm supporters and support him in a constitutional referendum or parliamentary elections. If they collectively support him, this will account for a 3% raise in votes, which is a rate that can have serious results. If Erdogan's true intention were to solve the refugee crisis, he would evaluate the possibility of giving these people refugee status before citizenship (Gürsel, 2016).

Here, it can be argued that *Cumhuriyet* acknowledges the necessity for legally recognizing Syrian refugees as refugees, while at the same time criticizing the President and the government for instrumentalizing the refugees for their own political ends.

5.7.Syrian Refugees as Cheap Labor Force

The second argument found in the oppositional media newspapers raises concerns for fear that Syrian refugees will be legitimately used as a cheap work force

who the employers will prefer over Turkish nationals since Syrian refugees would still agree to lower standards and wages. Repeatedly, it can be argued that the arguments found in *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet* differ from each other in their representations of the refugees as a cheap labor. In one of the articles, *Sözcü* claims that the government aims at reducing the cost of labor force by employing qualified but cheap workers. The article suggests that:

“There are 1 million 35 thousand people below the age of 15. We see that almost 1 million 700 people can be potentially employed. President Erdogan announced citizenship to a limited number of work force. Therefore, their goal is to propose a policy of qualified but cheap labor force. Their attempt is to create a competition with the Turks and reduce the cost of work force. The education level of most Syrians is so low and not every educated worker is a qualified one. If these are to be given citizenship, there needs to be important changes in the current laws” (Büyüksahin, 2016).

Here, the absence of the refugees in the news as individuals demonstrate that, in order to criticize government policies, *Sözcü* subordinates refugees into mere numbers which are threat to the Turkish legal work force, whereas in fact it is not the responsibility of the Syrian refugees. Also, by referring to the refugees as *these*, not *they*, shows the extent of othering taking place towards the refugees. Contrarily, in a *Cumhuriyet* article, we encounter individual stories of refugee children who are described as cheap work force while at the same time it is made clear to the readers that they are not the agents:

Syrian children have become the cheap labor force in the textile machine shops in basements. The children who work for 12 hours a day to earn 15-20 liras a day, left their dreams in their country from where they had to flee. A Syrian child: Back in Syria when a one person works, he could feed 5 people. Here, everybody has to work. Life is so expensive (Çelikkan & Avşar, 2016).

By giving voice to individual stories of hardships, the article acknowledges the predicaments Syrian refugees go through as cheap labor force as well as criticizing the conditions that made them become so. It can be argued that war of position takes place not only between the pro-government and the oppositional media newspapers to criticize the government in its decision to give citizenship to refugees, but also takes place between different newspapers in the oppositional media as well, in terms of acknowledging the conditions Syrian refugees are in.

5.8.Syrian Refugees as a Threat to Turkish Society

The last argument found in the oppositional media newspapers, especially in *Sözcü*, resonates with the nationalist ideals and the politics of identity through which they emphasize the fears of distortion in the social structure of Turkey and its safety. It promotes the idea that granting citizenship to Syrian refugees will distort the structure and threaten the well-being of Turkish society. *Cumhuriyet* on the other hand, focuses more on the potential political and security related consequences for Turkish society.

Turning to *Sözcü*, in one of the articles, the writer compares the Syrian refugees with the refugees who fled Nazi Germany during the World War II and who were accepted to Turkish citizenship. These German refugees, unlike the Syrian refugees as the writer suggests, were educated and contributed to the Turkish nation and society. After listing the German refugees, the writer continues:

“Who are these people? They are some of the refugees who sought asylum in Atatürk’s republic instead of the US and Canada. All of them were scientists. But what about these? Al-Nusra, ISIS, Rahmi Hadad... 3 million unemployed ignorant people, 300 thousand of whom are pregnant and 2 million of whom are illiterate” (Özdil, 2016)

The language used in the article is already problematic with the usage of words that describe the refugees as ignorant and illiterate. Apart from that, the writer purposefully tries to associate the refugees with ISIS terrorism by listing them

altogether. This clearly demonstrates that the war of position is waged at the expense of generating xenophobia towards Syrian refugees. In a similar article in *Sözcü*, the writer states that “Syrians are not our siblings. Let’s just say they are our guests. Let’s give up on this before it’s too late. Let’s not turn the country into hell” (Muratoğlu, 2016). Here, also likening the country into hell if Syrian refugees are to be accepted as citizens shows that Syrian refugees are seen as a danger that will turn the country into hell.

As for *Cumhuriyet*, the criticism towards the government regarding security concerns goes hand in hand with the recognition that these concerns result from government policies, not directly from the existence of the refugees. In one of the articles, the writer argues:

“Besides, sectarian conflicts in Syria that laid the foundation of the war have strong reflections in Turkey. The majority of the Syrian refugees are Sunni Arab. The fact that there have been no violent conflicts between the locals and the refugees does not guarantee it will continue so after the Syrian refugees become citizens. Therefore, it is very important where the 400 thousand refugees living in the camps will be resettled after being granted citizenship” (Gürsel, 2016).

It can be seen here that the objectification of the refugees, which is present in the narrative of resettlement, serves to the acknowledging of the government as the main authority who is responsible for the potential security threat, but not the refugees themselves.

5.9. Discussions on Twitter Hashtags

Having discussed the discourses over which the war of position occurs in the Turkish newspapers, this section will now move on to the analysis of the tweets posted around the time when the citizenship discussions were first publicly and officially announced. The tweets to be analyzed were selected among the hashtags

#suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilmesin (don't give citizenship to Syrians), and #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilsin (give citizenship to Syrians). The reason for the selection of the tweets posted with these hashtags is that they directly reflect the view of the user about what he or she thinks about granting citizenship to the Syrian refugees. Moreover, they are instrumental in understanding the war of position in media on the same discussion to see whether similar discourses that represent the refugees in certain ways will also emerge in the tweets.

Regarding both hashtags, 7 categorizations emerged in total about how Syrian refugees and granting them citizenship are viewed. For the first hashtag #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilsin, which is in favor of granting citizenship, the discourses were categorized into 3 groups, while for the second hashtag #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilmesin that denounces the decision, 4 categorizations came forward.

The first group that emerged under #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilsin (give citizenship to Syrians) hashtag is the metaphor of *ensar-muhacir*. The discourse on *ensar/muhacir* is a reminiscent of the story of Muslims in the 7th century who had to flee Mecca to go to Medina because of the mistreatment by the non-believers after embracing Islam. The word *ensar* refers to the hosts in Medina who opened their doors to their Muslim brothers. Accordingly, the word *muhacir* refers to the people who fled Mecca. This discourse likens the Syrian refugees to Muslims in Mecca in the 7th century and the Turkish people to the ones in Medina who helped them.

@mstopdemir: “We invite {people} not to talk about being ensar-muhacir but to realize it”.

@YasenyaCaner: “Let's have the face to look our Prophet in the eye, we couldn't be ensars, let's be humans”.

As the examples in the first group demonstrate, the representation of the Syrian refugees as *muhacir* and the Turkish people as *ensar* suggests that after fulfilling their

humanitarian duties so far, Turkish people have one more step to finalize their religious duties which is to fully accept their Muslim brothers and sisters into their society. This understanding of accepting refugees to citizenship disregards the right of the refugees, and promotes the idea that it is a blessing from Turkey to Syrians to accept them as citizens. Moreover, it does not foresee a universal approach of accepting refugees as citizens, but embraces one that will be exclusive only to certain refugees, in this case, the Muslim Syrians.

The next grouping emerged in the tweets is compatible with the narratives of pro-government newspapers suggesting our closeness with the Syrian refugees found in their own stories. The users argue that Syrian refugees should be given citizenship since we have been brothers in religion and historically related to each other since the Ottoman Empire.

@nesli4123: “Like what master Cemil Meriç said “We are people who believe in the same god, would there be better relatives than us?”

@ortancapatron: “The 3 cities who had the highest rate of martyrs in *Çanakkale War* are: Damascus 6000 martyrs, Homs 4000 martyrs and Bursa 3500 martyrs.”

The war of *Çanakkale* has a very important part in Turkish history as it was one of the few fronts Ottoman Empire managed to protect during World War I. Associating it with Syrian refugees suggests that accepting Syrian refugees is not a security issue but in fact is a sign of gratitude to and a continuation of Ottoman identity. Concerning especially the security policies, several constructivist theorists argue that security policies are legitimized in the eyes of the public with the use of locally familiar narratives of history, culture and identity (McDonald & Merefiefield, 2010, p.189). Althussers’s concepts of articulation and interpellation can be applied in claiming representations of strategy, in this case justification of certain policies, might put the individuals into subject positions if they acknowledge themselves in the identity of the groups that are being represented (Weldes, 1996, p.287)). As for the security and

identity discourse in the politics of citizenship and refugees, the Turkish government and the pro-government media newspapers argue that accepting the Syrian refugees into the country and granting them with citizenship resonate with the Ottoman ideals who are historically believed by pro-Ottomans to be tolerant and accepting of different minorities. The government's positioning of itself as the successor of the Ottoman Empire finds reflections with its rhetoric on how it is the responsibility of the Turkish people to embrace the Syrian refugees since it is an Ottoman tradition and they fought for the Ottoman Empire in the World War I. This narrative is reproduced in the social media as well, as seen in the users' tweets.

The third discourse, even though not really prominent but still present, focuses on the idea that the Syrian refugees who threaten the peace of the Turkish society will be sorted out since they will most likely leave Turkey because they would not want to fulfill the requirements of being a Turkish citizen.

@tramvayy: "They will see how the good and the bad will be shelled after the citizenship."

@cayciyibiz: "When we become equal, the ones who create problems would go anyway."

Such discourses reproduce the discriminatory understanding of accepting refugees based on their being beneficial or not to Turkish society. Promoting citizenship on grounds that it will sort out the deserving and undeserving refugees are far from accepting the reality that it is not the refugees who caused what the majority of the Turkish public consider as negative consequences. This understanding is reminiscent of what Moigre argued to be a shift in security politics from humanitarian assistance to help the refugees, to intervention to protect the host (as cited in Kyriakides p.12). It can be argued that even granting citizenship to Syrian refugees is seen as sorting out of the "undeserving" and "bad" refugees at the expense of protecting the Turkish.

All these discourses are compatible with both government and the pro-government newspaper discourses that emphasize the religious bonds with the refugees and how, after successfully fulfilling their duties as hosts, Turkish people now have to accept the refugees as citizens to finalize the requirements of being proper Muslims. In addition, the media representations and the discourses emerged in the tweets alike are problematic since both promote the idea that giving the rights of Syrian refugees is not perceived as an obligation for Turkey to fulfill, but as a blessing for the Syrian refugees to be grateful for. Such representations justify the lack of right-based policies to be adopted to improve the lives of the refugees.

As for the tweets that are opposed to the citizenship of Syrian refugees, the first categorization demonstrates the discourse that argues Syrian refugees will be given citizenship only to be used as electorates to support President Erdogan in the upcoming presidency elections. The reproduction of the most prominent discourse in the oppositional media is evident in the first group of tweets that denounce the citizenship. @SemihCgtyAcba: “Nobody can determine my destiny with imported votes!” @iAvcOfficial: “The government is doing such a thing to create a temporary potentiality of voters”.

Such arguments are directly compatible with the statements of opposition figures and the discourses in the oppositional media newspapers that suggest Syrian refugees are instrumentalized for government interests. Also, it is evident that the subjectivity of the refugees is completely disregarded as Syrian refugees are thought to be collectively voting in favor of President Erdogan.

The next discourse emerging in the opposing tweets is the idea that Syrian refugees are a threat to the peace and well-being of the Turkish society and that they would distort the social structure of Turkey.

@MthnKsdr: “Are you giving them citizenship so that they can blow up bombs in our country?”

@serenmuyan: “Qualified chemist Syrians blew up their house while making experiments (bombs)!”.

@oguzhan_demiroz: “They come and multiply in my country. Doctors, pharmacies, life are all for free. They are destroying our social structure.”

@iAvciOfficial: “Everyone, all of us are sleeping. The demographic structure of the country is changing, being changed.”

While emphasizing language and rhetoric in the formation of foreign and security policy, McDonald and Merefield (2010) argue that security in particular, is a socially constructed reality and representations are just as important as the reality itself in this regard. They claim that security is perceived by different societies in different conditions and it is made meaningful by contests and negotiations among different actors in which communication is crucial and it is closely intertwined with specific narratives about the identity and the priorities of those societies (p.188). We can see with the comments of the users the power of media representations especially when the refugees are associated with terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Nusra. Such collective representations result in a perception that ignores the subjectivity of the refugees altogether.

The third discourse found in the tweets opposing the citizenship decision is that Syrian refugees do not deserve to be Turkish citizens for nationalist reasons. To start with, the users have a very contemptuous point of view towards the Syrian refugees on grounds that being Turkish is not a value that can be acquired by everyone. Secondly, Turkish people view Syrian refugees as having fled from the war and not defended their own country.

@Kemalist_MKemal: “They can’t gain by fleeing what I gained after fighting in the war”, which he refers to the War of Independence of Turkey in which Turks fought against the Allied Forces after World War I.

@frhtcnrky: “A nation who fled a war can be hosted as guests but cannot be accepted into the citizenship of a nation who wrote its history by blood.”

@abubekir_r: “Not everyone can handle to be Turkish”

@myyliffee42: “We are Turkish, not everyone can be Turkish.”.

As seen with the comments of the users, being Turkish is attributed a considerable significance and with narratives about identity and the priorities of the society, the exclusion of Syrian refugees is trying to be justified. Like Van Dijk argues in his concept of new racism, the refugees are not explicitly discriminated in the society, but instead discursively marginalized as being alien to the values of Turkish people. Syrian refugees in Turkey are represented in the social media as fleeing from the war just like Afghan refugees are represented as fleeing and leaving their women to be rescued as Rettberg and Ganjjala (2016) argue. What is not really told in social media is that refugees are not fleeing from a war that is fought with foreign forces as nationalists promote. Rather, there is a civil war in Syria in which people are forced to fight with their relatives, friends, neighbors and people they know. Therefore, with the reproduction of the nationalist discourse in social media, we see the distortion of reality and the decontextualization of the civil war in Syria.

Finally, the last dominant discourse in the opposing tweets is that Syrian refugees will cause the Turkish employees to lose their jobs in contrast with the argument by the government that suggests mainly the qualified Syrian refugees will be given citizenship.

@sinanuzumcu: “You would think Syrians taught Germans how to produce cars and Indians how to write a software!”.

@erdemdemirkilic: “Why Syrians, when we can’t make use of our own qualified citizens!”.

@meteanl: “Give Syrians citizenship, have them work for half of the minimum wage and make your own worker vulnerable!”

As has been noted by some researchers (Andreas, 2003; Van Houtum and Van Naerseen, 2001) that it is a contradiction, while neoliberal nation-states are getting more open to free trade and economic practices, they are becoming more closed to immigration when it is from people who lack enough economic and social capital (as cited in Lueck et. al, 2015). It is understood from the way Twitter users consider the discourse of qualified refugees, Syrian refugees are not seen qualified enough to come and work in Turkey, whereas it is doubtful whether the users think of the same way about those coming from the West or other developed countries to work in Turkey. The discourses about Syrian refugees constituting cheap labor force result in the public perception that views Syrian refugees as not having enough social and economic capital to replace Turkish citizens.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing 22 news articles from online sources of 4 newspapers categorized as pro-government and oppositional, this study suggests that 3 different discourses emerge from each side, over which the war of position is waged. The pro-government newspapers mostly construct their narratives on grounds that granting citizenship to Syrian refugees will be beneficial for Turkey and Turkish economy, since the “qualified” refugees will be favored while assessing the suitability of the candidates. This not only demonstrates an attitude of blessing towards the refugees, but also creates discrimination among them. Moreover, we encounter individual refugee stories of successful integration who eventually became citizens. While individual stories of refugees are mostly not apparent in Turkish media, with the emergence of citizenship discussions, such stories have been given coverage, which suggests that they can find themselves space in the pro-government newspapers as long as it fits their political agenda. Lastly, the representations of Syrian refugees as being so grateful to Turkey for being such a great host provokes the public into thinking Turkey serves a greater cause by protecting the victim Muslims, and should continue to do so since these refugees are appreciative of Turkey and its help. All these representations are far from explaining the reader why the government thinks granting citizenship to refugees is necessary. On the contrary, the representations are constructed in such a way to decontextualize the reasons of the policy, and the conditions that brought refugees to Turkey. As for the oppositional newspapers, it is possible to argue that there is no collective oppositional media mindset. While it can be suggested that pro-government newspapers *Yeni Şafak* and *Sabah* have a collective viewpoint to justify government policies, oppositional newspapers *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet* somewhat differ from each other in that sense. To put it differently, as the study suggests, opposition newspapers are comprised of different political and ideological backgrounds from nationalist *Sözcü*, to liberal leftist *Cumhuriyet*, which have positioned themselves differently in their stance towards the refugees. One of the most notable things with the news articles

in *Sözcü*, is that they tend to focus more on the statements of opposition figures who have the tendency to construct a negative refugee image. The first argument oppositional newspapers propose is that refugees becoming citizens of Turkey will harm the serenity of the society, since it is not known for certain whether there are terrorists among those who fled to Turkey. This discourse is a reminiscent of xenophobic policies and media representations of refugees in the Western and Australian contexts. The second argument focuses on what they argue is the real motive behind the government policy, which is to exert an electorate potential from Syrian refugees. As much as it may seem a justified concern, arguing that Syrian refugees will collectively vote for President Erdogan undermines the political subjectivity of Syrian refugees altogether. Lastly, oppositional newspapers claim the legal participation of Syrian refugees in the labor market will create the demand for cheap work force that will be provided by Syrian refugees.

All these different narratives and representations between pro-government and oppositional newspapers with different political affiliations suggest that a *War of Position* in Gramscian sense takes place in Turkish media. That even the AKP electorates are not sure about the decision to give Syrian refugees citizenship, marks the point of a crisis of hegemony. At the center of this crisis, media stands out as the battlefield where the war of position is waged, through language and discourses created to shape the public opinion, which can account for manufacturing consent for policies in Gramscian sense. It is crucial to understand these discourses and representations since it points to a collapse in ethics of media and politics. One possible implication for this study is that we may argue the hegemonic discourse would be that of the government and the pro-government media, whereas the counter-hegemonic one is that of the oppositional media. However, we may also claim that, given the way the newspapers deal with the citizenship discussions, another spectrum of hegemonic/counter-hegemonic discourse may also arise. In the newspapers *Yeni Şafak*, *Sabah* and *Sözcü*, the subjectivity of the refugees is ignored, which constitutes the

hegemonic discourse, while in *Cumhuriyet*, we see examples of humanitarian approaches to refugees which can determine the counter-hegemonic discourse. Even though the refugee crisis and the citizenship discussions should be approached from a humanitarian point of view especially when the civil war in Syria has reached its 6th year and there is no peace in horizon, the state of the refugees in Turkey should have been considered urgent and humanitarian, instead of being instrumentalized in daily politics, which is also fostered through media.

Turning to the analysis of the tweets, what is notable for both views is the use of the word “suriyeliler” in the hashtags, which means “Syrians”, showing the perception of the Turkish public towards the Syrian refugees that does not view them as legitimate refugees. In other words, the choice of words in media that predominantly avoids defining Syrians as refugees in the absence of a legal framework is also reflected in the perceptions of the public on social media. As for the analysis of the tweets using *Multi-Dimensional Approach*, the *Motivation* of the users who tweeted under the hashtag #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilmesin (don't give citizenship to Syrians) to read the news on citizenship discussions, and be informed about it, can stem from the importance of the policy in the impact on the users' lives. Granting citizenship collectively to a large number of refugees should be discussed in depth and it is an area of concern and should be consulted not only to the politicians, but also civil society organizations. In the absence of such democratic inclusiveness and participation, social media can serve as the public sphere for the public to participate in the political life and to make their voices heard. Public sphere accounts for spaces in society that allows for the dissemination of information, ideas and discussions as well as public opinion (Yang et. al, 2017, p.1986). Colleoni *et. al* (2014) argue that social media platforms are considered eligible to provide for open debate thanks to their high level of interactivity, rapid dissemination of information and possibility for fostering debates in real time without geographical limitations (as cited in Yang et. al, 2017, p.1986). Of all the other social media platforms, Twitter is considered vital for the exchange of information in

the field of political communication thanks to some of its distinct features. Thus, it is a convenient platform to serve as public sphere to participate in the discussions concerning all citizens and a beneficial tool to measure the public opinion. Moreover, social media play a very crucial role in the dissemination of information in Turkey as the country has the world's highest Twitter penetration rates (Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2015). The report demonstrated that 31% of the respondents in Turkey engage in political discussions online and 68% of these respondents use Twitter for news sharing and political discussions. Therefore, we can argue that the users who tweeted against the citizenship decision are highly motivated to read about and participate in the citizenship discussions via Twitter.

As for the *Position* of the users, which accounts for the subjective positioning of the readers towards the message intended by the media texts, it could be argued that they have an accepting position towards the news constructed by the oppositional newspapers, especially *Sözcü*, and rejecting position towards the message given by the pro-government newspapers. However, the argument is twofold for the *Evaluation* dimension that analyzes the objective positioning of the audience in the socio-political domain to see where they are positioned towards hegemony. On one hand, it may be claimed that since the discourses in the pro-government newspapers dominate the socio-political domain in Turkey, the objective positioning of the Twitter users that are against the citizenship decision can be in a position of rejecting, now that they are against the discourses in the pro-government newspapers. On the other hand, if we accept that both pro-government and oppositional newspapers are compatible in terms of the misrepresentations of refugees, and that both are hegemonic in that sense, we can argue the users who are opposed to citizenship are accepting of the hegemonic message.

To analyze the receptions of the users who posted tweets to the hashtag of #suriyelilerevatandaşlıkverilsin (give citizenship to Syrians), it can be argued that their *Motivation* is not much different than the users who are against the policy. The reading

of the news about citizenship and posting tweets about them can be explained by the willingness to be informed about and to participate in the discussions about it. In addition, in contrast with the motivation of the users who are against the policy, the motivation of the users who post tweets in favor of the citizenship can be explained by their wish to support and justify government policies. Moreover, their position towards pro-government newspapers can be accepting of the message newspapers intend, in this case, the justification of the citizenship decision. As for the *Evaluation* of their position by the researcher in the ideological domain, it may be put forward that their objective positioning is accepting if we consider the pro-government newspapers' discourses as hegemonic. Likewise, if we consider that both the pro-government and the oppositional newspaper discourses as hegemonic, their positioning is still accepting.

It has already been mentioned before, that the importance of Multi-Dimensional Approach for this study is that it allows the researcher to look for the possibility of a social and political change according to how individuals perceive the media messages, through the dimension of *Implementation*. In light of the *War of Position* in Turkish media over the representations of Syrian refugees on particularly the citizenship discussions, and the tweets posted at the time of the discussions, it is concluded that the way Syrian refugees are portrayed in the mainstream Turkish newspapers and the way Turkish people perceive them, are very problematic. First and foremost, it is understood from the tweets that support for citizenship results not from a rights-based understanding towards the refugees, but from an identity narrative which sees granting citizenship to refugees as the last step of completing that identity. In other words, the rhetoric of the government as the successor of the Ottoman Empire promotes religious and Ottoman ideals that gather the peoples of the Sunni world under the leadership of Ottoman rule. Agreeing to the decision of citizenship on such grounds clearly undermines a rights-based policy, and puts non-Sunni and non-Muslim Syrian refugees in a vulnerable position. Furthermore, the idea that refugees who threaten the society

will leave Turkey after the citizenship, reproduces the discriminatory understanding of accepting refugees based on their usefulness for Turkish society. Such discourses also promote discussions of deserving and undeserving refugees as argued before. As for the tweets who are opposed to the decision, most of the users are against the citizenship of the refugees on nationalist grounds. Just like the Ottoman identity narrative that foresees the acceptance of refugees, the opposing tweets construct an identity rhetoric which is based on a Turkish identity that praises fighting for the homeland. Thus, Syrian refugees are criticized and not found worthy of Turkish citizenship for fleeing their war-torn country instead of fighting and killing their fellow countrymen. Moreover, it is understood from the tweets that the argument of potential Syrian voters for the government has reflections on the society, which undermines Syrian refugees' political subjectivity. Also, the users object to the decision for security concerns as Syrian refugees are seen as a threat to Turkish society with their potentiality to be terrorists. We can see with the comments of the users the power of media representations especially when the refugees are associated with terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Nusra.

Therefore, considering the dimension of *Implementation* for both of the views in the tweets, it is argued that at the mainstream level, there seems to be no real possibility for a social change that will push for a rights-based policy change for the Syrian refugees. Turkish public who receives the media message that centers around a war of position seem to internalize it, and not to have developed a sense of *Discrimination* in Schroder's sense, that would recognize the constructedness of the representations. Rather, they have chosen to go along with the portrayal of the media they feel ideologically close to. Thus, however dismal it may seem, at least at the mainstream level, this study concluded that even if some policies seem to be positive for the Syrian refugees, the adoption of a rights-based policy and the social will to push for it seem unlikely.

Undoubtedly, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive analysis of all the mainstream newspapers in Turkey and how they viewed the citizenship discussions. Similarly, not many tweets have been analyzed due to practical limitations. Also, the twitter users were not asked whether or not they read the newspapers selected by the study. Therefore, the power of media representations of refugees in their ability to affect public opinion was taken for granted. However, the study is still beneficial in understanding how very prominent newspapers position themselves differently in the citizenship discussions, and how they create a War of Position to exert public consent for their views on the citizenship decision. Moreover, this study offers insights as to how individuals make sense of this War of Position. Distinct from previous studies, it sheds new light on the potentiality of a social will to push for a political change in the refugee policy, and how it might be possible with commonsensical media representations of Syrian refugees, which can result in positive behavioral attitudes and political participation about Syrian refugees. The potentiality of non-governmental organizations in Turkey in producing commonsensical representations about Syrian refugees could be the topic of future studies as they have an important role in raising awareness for the problems refugees face. Moreover, social media, particularly Twitter, could be used in future studies to make sense of and analyze in-depth the public perception on Syrian refugees. The uniqueness of media representations of Syrian refugees in the case of Turkey is their instrumentalization to justify different ideological views and its high level of politicization. As opposed to classical negative representations of refugees such as threats to society, reasons for unemployment, and the problems of integration, there is no collective type of problematic representations of Syrian refugees. Instead, Turkish media representations of Syrian refugees generate a political contestation with both seemingly positive and negative representations, through which the rights of refugees are undermined, thus creating a War of Position.

Since the beginning of the citizenship discussions, according to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, approximately 10 thousand Syrian refugees have been identified as eligible for Turkish citizenship based on the criteria announced by the government. The cases are still processed. Even though there still seems to be a long way to go for Turkey to adopt and implement a comprehensive rights-based refugee policy, with the emergence of a responsible political will and commonsensical media representations, public opinion to push for it could still emerge.

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Annexes

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Table A.1. Twitter Posts

Tweet Item ID	User Name	Hashtag	Tweet	Date
750107718229299200	@SemihCgtyAcba	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Devşirme oylar ile kimse benim kaderimi belirleyemez.</i>	July 4, 2016
750309650210455552	@iAvcOfficial	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Devlet kendisine "Geçici" Oy potansiyeli yaratmak amacıyla böyle bir şey yapıyor..</i>	July 5, 2016
750069151192973314	@Sen95M	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Kendi vatanlarını savunmaktan aciz ve korkak insanlardan bize fayda gelmez. Oy uğruna vatani satmayın!!!</i>	July 4, 2016
750310380849758208	@iAvcOfficial	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Herkes, hepimiz uyuyoruz.! ülkenin demografik yapısı değişiyor, değiştiriliyor..</i>	July 5, 2016

751003900568821760	@serenmuyan	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Kalifiye kimyager Suriyeliler deney (bomba) yaparken evi patlatmışlar.</i>	July 7, 2016
752172875440947200	@iumathiashae	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Ülkemize sokuyoruz, onlar insanımıza, hayvanımıza zarar veriyor!! Çıkan gidin. Yaptığınız hainlik.</i>	July 10, 2016
752526726270443521	@MthnKsdr	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>İçimizde bomba patlatsınlar diye mi vatandaşlık veriyorsunuz?</i>	July 11, 2016
898878453209903104	@oguzhan_demiroz	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Gelip ülkemde kedi yavrusu gibi çoğalıyorlar. Doktor, Eczane, hayat bedava. Sosyal dokumuzu bozuyorlar</i>	July 11, 2016
751694701984673792	@abubekir_r	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Türklüğü her omuz her baş ve her yürek kaldıramaz</i>	July 9, 2016

753141378494988288	@frhtcnrky	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Aşımızı paylaşıyoruz. Sevgimizi paylaşıyoruz. Ama ÜLKEMİZİ PAYLAŞMAYIZ !</i>	July 13, 2016
753157994007949312	@myylifee42	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Ne bu ya sınıflarda öğrenci değişikliği yapıyoruz .biz Türküz herkes Türk olamaz</i>	July 13, 2016
751803318226345984	@AtszYldrm	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Araplar puta taparken Türkler göğe bakıyordu</i>	July 9, 2016
753552445926731776	@blueparadise02	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Bu ülke yatarak kazanılmadı. Dedelerimizin cephe savaşmasıyla, Mustafa kemal'in komutanlığıyla kazanıldı</i>	July 14, 2016
752100241210544128	@Kemalist_MKemal	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Benim savaşarak kazandığımı onlar savaştan kaçtıktan sonra kazanamaz!</i>	July 10, 2016
750803525920288270	@sinanuzumcu	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>kalifikasyonmuş sanırsın almanlara araba yapmayı,</i>	July 6, 2016

			<i>hintlilere yazılımı suriyeli ustalar öğretti</i>	
752147078520930304	@erdemdemirkilic	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Bizim nitelikli vatandaşlarımdan faydalanamazken neyin Suriyeli</i>	July 10, 2016
753233642646867968	@meteanl	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilmesin	<i>Suriyelilere vatandaşlık ver, asgari ücretin yarısına çalıştır ve kendi işçini mağdur et.</i>	July 13, 2016
753229644577505280	@mstopdemir	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>ensar-muhacir edebiyatı yapmaya değil, icraatine davet</i>	July 13, 2016
751098450192850945	@YasenyaCaner	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>Resullahın yüzüne bakacak yuzümüz olsun Ensar olamadık insan ola</i>	July 7, 2016
751096003948871680	@YasenyaCaner	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>Türkiyede o kadar Yahudi, Ermeni Süryani Yezit PKKlı yaşıyorken Din kardeşlerimize mi dar geliyor</i>	July 7, 2016
751017191219273728	@nesli4123	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>Üstad Cemil Meriç'in dediği gibi Bizler ki aynı kitaba baş eğimiş</i>	July 7, 2016

			<i>insanlarız. Bizden ala akraba mı olur?</i>	
751384816038338560	@ortancapatron	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>Çanakkale'de en çok şehit veren 3 Osmanlı Şehri.1-Şam 6.000 şehit 2-Humus 4.000 3-Bursa 3.400 şehit</i>	July 8, 2016
882018799444275200	@cayciyizbiz	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>eşit hale gelince o sorun çıkarırlar kendisi gider zaten</i>	July 3, 2017
882018125969072128	@tramvayy	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>kötüyle iyi suriyeli nasıl ayrılıyor bak o zaman</i>	July 3, 2017
882017478460792832	@asinadegiliz	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>biz bu kadar zorlukla boşuna mı duruyoruz bu ülkede seninle eşitlensin nasıl gidiyor</i>	July 3, 2017
882016864540536833	@ibiresort	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>en azından vergiyi dayadın mı çalışmaya götü yemeyen gider. İyileri kalır</i>	July 3, 2017

751373302145384448	@PES2017TR	#suriyelilerevatandaşlık verilsin	<i>Yıllarca teröre lanet okuduk, pkkya hayır dedik. Olayı çarpıtarak Irkçı faşist dediniz .</i>	July 8, 2016
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