THE INTERPLAY OF NAMES: IMMIGRATION POLICIES AND HUMAN NEEDS IN THE CONTEXT OF SYRIANS LIVING IN TÜRKİYE UNDER DIFFERENT LABELS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the intricate lives of Syrians in Türkiye under shifting legal classifications, analyzing how immigration policies impact basic human needs. It argues that labels for displaced populations are not just bureaucratic tools, but powerful instruments of governance that deeply shape their identity, rights, and sense of belonging. The analysis uses the complementary perspectives of Michel Foucault's theories on power and discourse and Simone Weil's ethical framework.

Drawing on Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and governmentality, the thesis examines how terms like "guest" and "temporary protection" have shaped perceptions of Syrians in Türkiye. Weil's concepts of rootedness and affliction provide an ethical lens to assess the human cost and spiritual harm of these policies. The study uses a qualitative method that combines Foucauldian discourse analysis with a Weilian ethical evaluation, drawing on legal documents, media reports, and academic research. This dual approach allows for an examination of both macro-level power dynamics and their immediate, often detrimental, effects on individuals.

Findings show that Türkiye's refugee policies have worsened social and economic conditions, hindered integration, and harmed mental well-being, creating profound rootlessness and suffering. By combining Foucault's critique of power with Weil's ethics, this thesis argues that current refugee management practices are profoundly unethical. It concludes by advocating for a more just, human-centered approach that honors the dignity and needs of every displaced person.

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Keywords: Syrian Refugees; Immigration Policies; Discursive Power; Human Needs; Ethics of Migration

ÖZ

Bu tez, Türkiye'deki Suriyelilerin değişen yasal sınıflandırmalar altındaki karmaşık yaşamlarını inceleyerek, göç politikalarının temel insani ihtiyaçları nasıl etkilediğini analiz etmektedir. Yerinden edilmiş nüfuslara yönelik etiketlerin sadece bürokratik araçlar olmadığını, aynı zamanda onların kimliklerini, haklarını ve aidiyet duygularını derinden şekillendiren güçlü yönetim aygıtları olduğunu savunmaktadır. Analiz, Michel Foucault'nun iktidar ve söylem teorileri ile Simone Weil'in etik çerçevesinin birbirini tamamlayan perspektiflerini kullanmaktadır.

Foucault'nun biopolitika ve yönetimsellik kavramlarından yararlanan tez, "misafir" ve "geçici koruma" gibi terimlerin Türkiye'deki Suriyeli algısını nasıl şekillendirdiğini incelemektedir. Weil'in kök salma ve ıstırap kavramları, bu politikaların insani maliyetini ve manevi zararını değerlendirmek için etik bir mercek sunmaktadır. Çalışmada, Foucaultcu söylem analizi ile Weilci etik değerlendirmeyi birleştiren nitel bir yöntem kullanılmakta; yasal belgeler, medya raporları ve akademik araştırmalardan yararlanılmaktadır. Bu ikili yaklaşım, hem makro düzeydeki iktidar dinamiklerini hem de bunların bireyler üzerindeki acil ve çoğu zaman zararlı etkilerini incelemeye olanak tanımaktadır.

Tezin bulguları, Türkiye'deki Suriyeli mültecilere yönelik söylem ve politikaların sosyo-ekonomik güçsüzlüklerini artırdığını, toplumsal entegrasyonlarını engellediğini ve ruhsal iyi hallerini olumsuz etkilediğini gösteriyor. Weil'in anlayışıyla ifade etmek gerekirse bu durum, mültecilerin köksüzleşmesine ve acı çekmesine yol açıyor. Çalışma, Foucault ve Weil düşüncelerini bir araya getirerek göç yönetiminin etik boyutunu ve insan onuruna saygılı politikaların önemini vurguluyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriyeli Mülteciler; Göç Politikaları; Söylemsel Güç; İnsani İhtiyaçlar; Göç Etiği

To every soul violently torn from its native soil, whose severed roots hang suspended, thirsting for ground in an unfamiliar landscape.

And to those who understand the sacred obligation to be that ground. To those who, with attention and care, offer not pity, but the rich, dark soil of belonging, so that a life, once uprooted, might once again send down the deep taproots of being and learn to grow.

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1.1. What's in a Name? The Echo of Being and the Soil of Belonging

"What's in a name?" a young heart once asked, considering the core of a rose, which "by any other name would smell as sweet." But we, who deal in words and worlds, have to question with a more furrowed brow: what lives in a name when it is not that of a rose, but of a human soul? What scents of identity, what thorns of experience, cling to the labels we give, or find ourselves branded with? To be human is, in its most profound sense, to be situated, to draw life not as an ethereal mist, but as a being tied to the tangible earth by the complex weave of place, history, language, and fellowship. Our roots are formed by this tapestry of belonging, this feeling of a specific 'somewhere,' which are essential channels feeding the self, providing stability to our transient life, and allowing the soul to unfold. The need for roots may be the most important, yet least acknowledged, hunger of the human spirit, as the philosopher Simone Weil (1952) saw with sharp clarity. Being rooted is to share "in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future" (Weil, 1952, p. 43). This dynamic continuity, this anchoring in a shared existence beyond the duration of a single breath, provides the psychic and spiritual loam necessary for our growth.

On the other hand, to be uprooted—déraciné—is to experience one of the most profound, most agonizing desolations known to humankind. When the storm of war, the shadow of persecution, the ravages of nature, or the sharp winds of economic despair tear people from their native ground, it is more than a simple change in geography. It is an existential sundering, a violent rending of the soul from its nourishing soil, leaving it adrift in a disorienting sea, susceptible to a deep spiritual withering (Weil, 1952). Often stripped of the known constellations by which they navigated their lives, the uprooted are thrown into alien environments—both physical and social—driven to plot a path where the compass of the past appears to whirl and the horizon of the future looms loaded with

uncertainty. The uprooted soul, like a plant ripped from the ground and its fragile tendrils cut, runs the danger of gradual desiccation as it fights to draw sustenance from an unrelenting new environment.

This thesis, then, looks into the complex and sometimes dark reality of present-day uprootedness. It aims to highlight a particularly insidious aspect of this condition: the subtle, yet powerful, alchemy by which external categorization and the very act of naming can conspire to perpetuate and deepen this state of déracinement. We will contend that the names given to those displaced—whether "refugee," "migrant," "asylum seeker," "displaced person," "guest," or "beneficiary of temporary protection" —are far from theodyne administrative labels. Rather, they are powerful discursive tools that can unmoor people from their natural sense of self, hide their individual stories, and compromise their holy ability to plant new roots in foreign soil. Defined not by the rich tapestry of their inherent humanity and lived stories but rather by the sharp perspective of their displacement and their relationship to the machineries of government, these externally imposed titles often cause a secondary severance, an echo of the first trauma.

1.2. The Rose by Any Other Name: Abstraction's Power to Unmoor

That double-edged sword, language not only reflects our world but also actively shapes it. Michel Foucault (1972) showed via his careful knowledge archaeology that discourses—those complex constellations of statements, customs, and power's subtle currents—do not only describe but rather methodically create the actual things of which they suppose to speak. The vocabulary used to categorize and control drifting populations is a clear reflection of this early power. Though maybe necessary for the ledgers of law and administration, terms like "refugee" or "migrant" unavoidably set out on a dangerous road of abstraction. They reduce a human being with their universe of personal history, honed talents, web of family, cultural soul, and private constellations of hope to one aspect: the border crossing under duress. The individual runs the risk of being overshadowed, then subsumed, by the uniforming pull of an administrative label in all their irreducible complexity.

This is a question of great existential and political importance, not just a semantic one. These words can quietly rob a person of agency, of positive markers of being, by reducing them to a label defined by absence: absence of citizenship, absence of permanent haven, absence of home. Essentially, they are defined by their subservience to a system of control or by what they are not. Foucault's (1980) concept of power/knowledge fits here; the act of classification is one of command, not just order. Naming itself becomes a strategy of power, making people readable, measurable, and therefore susceptible to the rationalities of the state or ruling powers. The label becomes a weapon, placing people in an exact grid of visibility and control, their horizons of possibility usually sadly limited by the very word that identifies them. "*Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus*" – "the ancient rose remains only in its name; we possess only naked names," mused Umberto Eco's sage, reminding us that often, we are left grasping at mere labels while the true essence eludes or is obscured.

Moreover, this outside christening can foster a slight, internalized oppression. Being constantly addressed, processed, and seen through the lens of a particular, sometimes loaded label can gently change the shape of one's self-concept. The administrative category runs the risk of becoming an existential prison, limiting the creativity and impeding the difficult, holy task of rebuilding a rooted identity in a foreign land. The label, maybe created in the spirit of protection or order, can ironically increase the very feeling of otherness and ongoing suspension it tried to control.

1.3. The Syrian Exodus to Türkiye: A Parable of Uprooting and the Thirst for Soil

Erupting in 2011, the Syrian firestorm set off one of the largest waves of forced migration seen since the mid-twentieth century, driving millions to leave their homes in a frantic search for refuge. In this developing story, Türkiye quickly became the main refuge, absorbing millions of Syrian lives into its political and social landscape. Framed here via the timeless metaphor of a plant's fight for life following a violent transplantation, their journey provides a moving and richly textured parable with which to investigate the complex choreography of uprootedness and the deep influence of naming.

First came the painful uprooting from the ancestral Syrian soil. War's devastation and the specter of persecution cut people and families from their homes, communities, livelihoods, the actual landscapes that had cradled their pasts, and the deep cultural taproots that had shaped their main sense of belonging. This was no gentle migration but a violent ripping away, a leaving behind of the familiar earth that, maybe for generations, had provided sustenance and identity.

Many Syrians found themselves living in refugee camps, usually close to the border, in the early phases of their arrival in Türkiye. Although they provide for fundamental food and a bulwark against imminent danger, these camps could be seen metaphorically as "seedling pots" or "nursery containers." People in these camps were kept in an artificial, segregated environment, separated from the larger society ecosystem, much as young, sensitive, and vulnerable plants placed inside the confines of a temporary plastic pot. These pots allowed for survival but not the real, organic unfurling of roots or actual integration into the surrounding earth; they provided containment, a controlled supply of life's essentials. They were places filled with waiting, with a controlled life, promoting dependency, and naturally emphasizing the idea of temporariness, so preventing the development of deep, strong relationships with the new land. Intended as bastions of protection, the seedling pot, by its very nature, curtailed autonomy and fostered a particular subject position: that of the managed "campee," dependent on outside grace. Most Syrians left these camps or skipped them entirely as the crisis dragged on and in line with Turkish policy promoting dispersal, finding themselves moved into the sometimes harsh and often unknown soil of Turkish cities and towns. Here was where the great difficulties of re-rooting showed in their most obvious forms. Often, this new earth was inhospitable, stony. Legally, their designation as beneficiaries of "Temporary Protection" (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management, n.d.-k), rather than the conferral of full refugee status under the 1951 Convention, acted akin to poor soil quality, fundamentally limiting the depth to which their roots could penetrate. This status, while offering a shield against refoulement and rudimentary access to services, explicitly withheld the promise of long-term security, pathways to permanent residency or citizenship for most, and full incorporation into the socio-economic tapestry (Doğanay & Keneş, 2016).

Metaphorically, these relocated people battled to create themselves often lacking sufficient support systems, much as a plant without enough water or necessary nutrients. The unfamiliar cultural terrain, the great language barriers, the chilling winds of social hostility and discrimination (IAI, 2018; Mesa & Kagnici, 2024), and the widespread economic precarity in the maze of informal labor markets (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2020) all acted as harsh weather conditions or barren ground, stunting their development. The process was further complicated by the term "Guest" (*Misafir*), which was frequently used in official statements and public discourse, especially in the early years (Koca, 2016; Pérouse de Montclos, 2023). Although it seemed hospitable, it subtly emphasized an unavoidable feeling of transience and conditionality by implying a presence dependent on the host's changing goodwill instead of one based in inalienable rights or a growing sense of belonging. Like a plant whose roots are constantly disturbed, denied the comfort of a firm grip, Syrians under this unstable government frequently found themselves unable to send down the deep taproots of security and belonging, unable to completely extend their branches into the social and economic vitality of the host country—unable, in fact, to really thrive. Though physically located inside the larger garden, their existence was tied to the fragility of the temporary pot.

1.4. Art's Attestation: Reflecting the Soul's Severance

Beyond the bounds of academic discourse, the profound and complex tapestry of this uprooted existence, the weight of carrying severed roots while longing for purchase in new, often indifferent ground, frequently finds its most eloquent voice, resonating with particular power in the revered domain of art. Artistic works by those who have traveled the terrain of displacement provide strong, visceral windows into the soul's encounter of déracinement. Rama Aldakkak, a Syrian artist, creates works that grace these pages (Figure 1) and speak silently and profoundly to the subjects driving this investigation.

Figure 1.1. I'm a Moving Tree

(Illustration by Rama Aldakkak, *I'm a Moving Tree*, October 10, 2024, Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/p/DBRgBRcoZ47/)

A single person stands on the flat, bare surface of a cut tree stump in this moving work. Underneath this veneer of death, the thick, vital roots become visible but hang suspended, disconnected, unable to penetrate the surrounding soil, which itself is speckled with little, maybe indifferent, flowers. Though apparently anchored on the stump, the remnant of its past, the figure is actually untethered from the living, breathing soil. With sharp simplicity, this powerful visual metaphor captures the very essence of déracinement as lit by Weil: the terrible condition of being severed from the vital wellsprings of stability and nourishment, of living in a liminal space, cut off from both the continuity of the past and the hope of future development. Even in settings where new life (represented by the flowers) may seem possible, the image's stark beauty emphasizes the existential loneliness that can follow displacement from a severed foundation. A stark reminder of the lived, human verity hidden under the ideas of uprootedness and the difficult journey toward belonging, this piece of art is a moving visual counterpoint to our analytical investigations.

1.5. The Core of Our Inquiry: Unveiling the Questions

The central mystery driving this thesis, the animating force of our search, lies at the crossroads of discursive power, the machinations of government, and the existential and ethical state of forcibly displaced people. Beneath the wide, protective canopy of this investigation, we collect several threads of ideas. This study examines how administrative labels and popular stories shape the lived realities, vulnerabilities, and even the chances of belonging for people who have been uprooted, with the Syrian experience under the *Temporary Protection regime* in Türkiye serving as the primary narrative. It examines the potential, and frequently tragic, dissonance between the state-centric rationalities of management and control and the basic human cry for roots, security, and dignity, especially when seen through an ethical lens sensitive to the subtleties of suffering and the weight of obligation.

This dissertation reveals the following guiding questions—each a lantern to light our way—to help us negotiate this challenging terrain:

1. Particularly the use of labels like "Guest" and the concept of "Temporary Protection," how do certain discursive practices operate as tools of power influencing the administration and social perception of Syrian refugees in Türkiye? Foucauldian emphasis
2. Particularly with regard to socio-economic precarity, social integration, and psychological well-being, how do these macro-level discursive and governmental structures interact with the recorded lived experiences of Syrian refugees?

3. How far do the circumstances experienced by Syrians under Temporary Protection qualify as states of affliction (*malheur*[1]) and uprootedness (*déracinement*[2]) when interpreted in light of Simone Weil's philosophical framework?
4. In light of Weil's ideas about attention, obligation, and justice, what are the ethical ramifications of Türkiye's management of the Syrian refugee population?
5. How does the combination of Foucault's analysis of power and Weil's ethical framework offer a richer, more critical awareness of the difficulties and obligations natural in ruling forced migration?

1.6. The Unfolding Narrative: A Map of the Chapters

Seven chapters make up this thesis. Chapter 2 reviews the pertinent Literature on Syrian refugees in Türkiye, migration governance, discourse analysis in refugee contexts, and the philosophical ideas supporting the study following this Introduction. Chapter 3 then builds the Theoretical Framework by describing the main ideas taken from Michel Foucault (*discourse, power/knowledge, governmentality, biopolitics, subjectivation*) and Simone Weil (*needs of the soul, rootedness, affliction, attention, obligation, justice*) and justifying their synthesis. Chapter 4 talks about the Methodology. It goes over the critical interpretive paradigm, the qualitative secondary analysis design, and the steps that will be taken for the Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis and the Weilian-informed Secondary Qualitative Data Analysis (SQDA). Interpreted via the theoretical prism, Chapter 5 presents the Results from the discourse analysis and the SQDA. Critically

[1] A state deeper than simple suffering, which crushes the soul and involves social degradation, humiliation, and a sense of absolute powerlessness that turns a person into an "object".

[2] Uprootedness (*déracinement*) is a severe spiritual malady resulting from the severing of this connection.

interacting with the results, Chapter 6 offers the Discussion; it combines the Foucauldian and Weilian viewpoints, considers theoretical contributions and constraints, and investigates more general consequences. At last, Chapter 7 presents the Conclusion, which reviews the main points and provides last thoughts on the study.

1.7. Situating the Inquiry

This overture has sought to frame the existential and political labyrinth confronted by the uprooted soul, a predicament often made more acute by the very language marshaled to categorize and steward their presence. The possibility for administrative nomenclature and government systems to unavoidably hinder the most basic of human needs—the need for roots—has been emphasized by means of the evocative lens of the Syrian experience in Türkiye and the metaphor of the transplanted seedling's tenacious struggle for soil.Deep humanistic worry drives this thesis, whose roots are in philosophical investigation and whose goal is to critically analyze the complex interplay of power, discourse, suffering, and ethics in the chaotic theater of forced migration. Urged by Weil's passionate insistence on attending to the concrete, irreducible reality of the human person, it is an effort to look beyond the stark simplicity of categories; at the same time, using Foucault's sharp critical tools to understand the great forces shaping that very reality. The final goal is to help, in some little way, to a more profound, more ethically attuned knowledge of what it means to govern, and to be ruled, in a world indelibly marked by displacement, and to highlight the deep, sacred need of creating circumstances whereby even the most violently uprooted among us could find fertile ground upon which to grow again.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW: SITUATING THE UPROOTED SUBJECT

2.1. Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the existing academic literature that is relevant to understanding the complicated existential and socio-political situation of Syrian refugees living in Türkiye under the state's Temporary Protection (TP) regime, which was put in place after the Syrian conflict began in 2011. It aims to chart the main academic discussions, empirical findings, dominant theoretical approaches, and major gaps in the body of work that deals with this specific group of people and situation. The review traverses literature on the legal framework controlling Syrians' presence, their precarious socio-economic reality, state governance and service delivery, social integration and exclusion dynamics, and discursive constructions influencing both policy and public perception.

The main point of this critical evaluation is that administrative categories and social labels like "Temporary Protection" and "Guest" are not just words that describe people; they are also tools of power. It is claimed that these tools greatly help people to déracinement—the uprooting—by separating them from stable identities, historical continuity, and safe belonging, therefore compromising their ability to flourish (Weil, 1952). This analysis is based on a theoretical framework that combines ideas from the works of Michel Foucault and Simone Weil. Foucault's ideas about discourse, power/knowledge, governmentality, biopolitics, and subjectivation[3] give us the tools we need to figure out how refugees are sorted, controlled, and made into certain kinds of people. Simone Weil's philosophy from

[3] For the sake of narrative continuity, certain concepts from Foucault and Weil are used in their general understanding. Their detailed conceptualization, including definitions and analytical application, can be found in the Theoretical Framework (Chapter 3).

1951 and 1952 adds to this by providing a deep ethical and existential perspective that focuses on the basic needs of the human soul, especially the need for rootedness, as well as ideas of affliction (*malheur*), attention, obligation, and justice. These ideas help us understand the real-life effects of displacement and governance.

One of the main goals of this chapter is to find and explain a major gap in the current research. There are a lot of studies that look at the situation of Syrians in Türkiye from different disciplinary angles. There are also more and more studies that use Foucauldian and ethical frameworks in migration studies in general. However, there is still a big gap in the integrated analysis of structural power dynamics and deep ethical/existential considerations in this specific context. The literature often splits into two groups: one that looks at state power, discourse, and governance on a large scale, and the other that looks at lived experience, trauma, and moral dilemmas on a small scale. However, there is no consistent theoretical framework that connects these two groups in a way that connects Foucault's critique of power with Weil's deep concern for the human soul.

2.2. The Syrian Refugee Situation in Türkiye: Governance, Precarity, and Representation

Since 2011, millions of Syrians have fled violence and come to Türkiye. This has had a huge effect on the country, making it the world's largest host country for refugees (Kirişci, 2014; UNHCR, n.d.-e). The Turkish government's response has changed from an initial "open door" policy to a more controlled and often restrictive one. This has led to a lot of writing about the legal, social, economic, and political aspects of the situation. This part looks at the main findings and arguments in this body of work, critically examining how issues of power, ethics, and the existential state of being uprooted are often dealt with in these analyses, even if they aren't always made clear.

2.2.1. The Legal Framework: Temporary Protection and Its Ambiguities

The *Temporary Protection Regime (TPR),* which was set up by the 2013 *Law on Foreigners and International Protection* (*LFIP*, Law No. 6458) and the 2014 *Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR),* is the law that governs the presence of Syrians in Türkiye. A lot of people came in, which is why this framework was made (Kaya, 2023). But one important thing about the TPR is that Türkiye has stayed within the geographical limits set by the *1951 Geneva Convention* (Asylum Information Database, 2024b; Kirişci, 2014). Because of this, Syrians are in different legal groups, which are often less safe (Asylum Information Database, 2024b).

The TPR gives Syrians some basic rights, like access to healthcare and education, and it protects the principle of non-refoulement (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management, n.d.-h; UNHCR, n.d.-c). However, the literature has a lot of information about the regime's natural vagueness and weaknesses. One of its most important features is that it is temporary. The TPR does not have a set time frame and does not make it clear how most people can get permanent legal residency or citizenship (Sery, 2016). Over time, strict border controls have also come into place (HRW, 2015).

There are many criticisms of how the TPR was put into action. Severe limits on freedom of movement force Syrians to live in their registered province and get travel permits (Kir, 2025). Some people say this policy could break international rules and make it harder for people to get services and make a living (Kir, 2025). Living or working outside of your registered province can lead to arrest and deportation, which raises concerns about violations of non-refoulement (Çetin, 2020). This legal system makes things unclear and on the edge (Sert, 2016), and there are also gaps between formal rights and how easy they are to get (Kirişci, 2014; Baker Institute, n.d.).

People often look at the discourse that refers to Syrians as "guests" (*misafir*) as a political tool that suggests transience and fits with the structure of the TPR (Koca, 2016; Imrie-Kuzu & zerdem, 2023). This story lets management get around full international refugee law (Sert, 2016).

Critical Review: The literature often looks at legal structures and problems through the lens of how well they work as laws or policies. There are fewer studies that use Foucauldian governmentality to look at how ambiguity works as a way to control people (see Baban et al., 2017). The idea of "déracinement" (uprootedness), which this legal liminality actively created (Weil, 1952), is not often used. People have talked about the political usefulness of the "guest" story (Koca, 2016), but the deeper moral issues it raises about universal obligation (Weil, 1952) have not been fully explored. The literature talks about effects, but it doesn't talk about the power dynamics and moral failures that are built into the TPR's design as much.

2.2.2. Socio-Economic Realities: Labour Market Precarity and Livelihoods

The socio-economic situation of Syrians in Türkiye is mostly unstable. Even though there were rules in 2016 that made it easier for people to get work permits (Gurses & Ozkan, 2016), most of them still work in the informal sector (Baban et al., 2017; WRMC, 2021). Not many people have official permits (Sebestyen et al., 2018). This forces Syrians to work in terrible conditions in fields like textiles and construction (Kirişci, 2014). Informal work usually pays less than the minimum wage, requires long hours, doesn't provide social security, and has low safety standards (Leghtas, 2019; Bermudez, n.d.). People often use refugees as "cheap labor" (Badalič, 2023).

There is debate about how it will affect the native workforce. A lot of people are worried about job competition (Aksu Kargın, 2018). Research shows that native formal employment is not likely to be affected much, but low-skilled workers may have problems in the informal sector (Bayramoğlu, 2021). Some studies say that Syrians help fill jobs that are hard to find (Bayramoğlu, 2021). Permit bureaucracy, employer reluctance, costs, language barriers, and not recognizing qualifications are some of the things that make it hard to get a formal job (WRMC, 2021). Although refugees have made some positive contributions to the economy (Akgündüz et al., 2019), the majority of public discourse views them as a burden (Aksu Kargn, 2018).

A Critical Review: The literature talks about precarity, but it usually frames it as a problem with integrating into the job market. Less often do analyses look at this forced precarity through a Foucauldian biopolitical lens, seeing it as a systemic outcome that pushes people into jobs that make them vulnerable (Baban et al., 2017). The deep pain (*malheur*, Weil, 1951) caused by exploitation is described in real life but not often theorized as a direct result of power structures. It could be even worse to blame refugees for economic problems (Aksu Kargın, 2018) if you frame it as a Weilian failure to pay attention to complicated structural realities (Bayramoğlu, 2021).

2.2.3. Access to Services: Health and Education Challenges

The TPR officially gives people the right to healthcare and education (Merip, 2020; Ekmekci, 2017), but studies show that there is a big gap between what people are entitled to and what they actually get. Language barriers, red tape, discrimination, overcrowded facilities, high medication costs, lack of information, and restrictions on movement make it hard to get health care (Merip, 2020; Ekmekci, 2017; Kir, 2025; Ayhan Baser et al., 2021). Sometimes, the informal health sector fills in the gaps (Merip, 2020). There are reports of serious physical and mental health problems caused by being displaced (Dadzie, 2023; Ayhan Baser et al., 2021).

Getting an education is also hard. Language barriers, bullying, discrimination, economic pressures (child labor), lack of resources, and trauma all make learning harder and cause kids to not go to school (IAI, 2018; Hacioglu, 2018; Ulum et al., 2025; UNICEF, 2024).

Critical Review: This literature does a good job of finding access barriers, and it does so by looking at them through the lens of public health or education policy (e.g., Hacioglu, 2018; Ayhan Baser et al., 2021). But it doesn't often see systemic barriers as structural violence caused by legal status (Foucault's governmentality) and lack of resources. When you look at the ethical implications through Weil's lens of obligation and attention, they are often downplayed. Not giving people meaningful access affects basic human needs (Weil, 1952), which leads to *malheur*.

2.2.4. Social Integration and Host Community Relations: Between Hospitality and Hostility

The relationship between Syrians and the people who live there is always changing. At first, stories focused on hospitality (Kirişci, 2014), but as the number of Syrians increased and economic problems grew, attitudes changed to more tension, xenophobia, and discrimination (Aksu Kargın, 2018; Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2022a). The meaning of the word "guest" changed (Koca, 2016).

Language, perceived cultural differences made worse by bias, lack of interaction, money worries, and legal uncertainty are all barriers to social integration (Aksu Kargın, 2018; Ayvazoglu et al., 2018; Giovanis et al., 2024). Every day, people face discrimination (IAI, 2018). NGOs work to help people and bring them together, but it is still hard to build bridging social capital (Zihnioğlu & Dalkıran, 2022). Shared identities can be hard to understand (Zihnioğlu & Dalkıran, 2022). Refugees have the power to deal with changing situations (Baban et al., 2017). There is a lot of disagreement about what "integration" means because of the TP regime's problems and the fact that society is hostile to it (Sert, 2016; Yükseker & Çeler, 2024).

Critical Review: Scholarship does a good job of showing how social dynamics change (Aksu Kargın, 2018; Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2022a). However, Weil's idea of rootedness as a basic need that integration efforts should be measured against is not often used in analysis (Weil, 1952). Déracinement may get worse because of the way things are now. Sociologists often talk about hostility, but they don't often look at it through Weil's lens as causing *malheur*.

2.2.5. Political and Media Discourses: Constructing the 'Syrian Refugee'

Political rhetoric and how the media portray things are very important in shaping people's opinions and policies (Kentmen-Cin et al., 2025; Onay-Coker, 2019). People often talk about refugees in terms of binaries (victim/threat) or use frames like the "guest" narrative (Koca, 2016; Imrie-Kuzu & Özerdem, 2023). Securitization, which connects Syrians to

crime or economic problems, is common, especially during elections (Kentmen-Cin et al., 2025; Morgül, 2023; Varışlı & Erdi Lelandais, 2024). (Onay-Coker, 2019) These discourses "other" people, make them all the same, and silence refugee voices. These kinds of representations make people feel left out and make discrimination seem acceptable (Aksu Kargın, 2018). These discourses are closely linked to policy; for example, the "guest" narrative supports TPR limits, and security concerns shape controls (Center for American Progress, 2019; Koca, 2016). Even scholarly work can sometimes repeat the stories that are most common (Cvikić, 2024).

Critical Assessment: This literature does a good job of using discourse analysis to show how refugees are portrayed (e.g., Kentmen-Cin et al., 2025; Onay-Coker, 2019). It fits with Foucault's idea that discourse creates "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1980). But the link between these powerful discursive constructions and the lived experience of *malheur* or the violation of *The Need for Roots* (Weil) is more often implied than spelled out.

2.3. Discourse, Power, and Governance in Migration Studies

Using discourse analysis and Foucauldian frameworks, we can see how the Turkish context fits into larger trends.

2.3.1. Discourse Analysis and the Power of Labels

Discourse analysis focuses on language as a social practice that is tied to power (Foucault, 1972). People think of labels like "refugee," "migrant," "illegal," and "guest" as socially constructed groups that sort and rank people (Walters, 2011). Researchers have found that these labels are used in politics and the media to change people's minds, explain how things work, and change people's feelings. Discourse sets limits and makes it okay to treat people differently.

Critical Assessment: Discourse analysis has the power to break down language structures, but it can also get too caught up in making categories and forget about the embodied, moral, and existential weight these labels carry. Without theoretical tools like Weil's to

look at the deep human cost, it may be hard to fully understand the suffering (*malheur*) or the barrier to belonging (*déracinement*).

2.3.2. Foucauldian Frameworks: Governmentality, Biopolitics, and Subjectivation

Foucault's ideas have a lot of power. Governmentality (Foucault, 1991) looks at ways to control people "from a distance" (Walters, 2011). Calculated ambiguity and differential inclusion are often used in migration management, which is similar to Türkiye's TP regime. Biopolitics (Foucault, 1978) is about controlling life (health, safety, productivity), which can be seen in migration through border controls, surveillance, categorization, and resource control. These things help some people live better lives while putting others in danger. Subjectivation (Foucault, 1982) looks at how people become subjects ("vulnerable," "irregular") through their interactions with power structures. This process includes both agency and resistance (Squire, 2017).

Critical Assessment: Foucauldian analyses are great at showing how power works. But they might not think enough about the why from a clear moral point of view (justice, obligation) and the qualitative what (suffering, affliction, destroyed rootedness). The framework might not fully capture the depth of *malheur* (Weil, 1951), even though it does recognize resistance (Foucault, 2007). Integrating Weil is an important moral addition that helps us think about how power affects human dignity.

2.4. Ethics, Suffering, and Rootedness in Displacement Studies

A parallel body of literature centers on ethics, suffering, and belonging in displacement.

2.4.1. Ethical Dimensions of Forced Migration

Scholarship deals with moral issues and debates ideas like asylum, non-refoulement, justice, hospitality, and vulnerability. There is a lot of talk about ethical research practices (Mackenzie et al., 2007; Leghtas, 2019).

Critical Assessment: Ethical discussions are important, but they don't always look at how structural power (Foucault) shapes conditions. Discussions about hospitality or rights might not fully look into how governmentality defines terms or makes people vulnerable. Ethical arguments that focus on what should be may not take into account how power really works, which makes them less useful in practice.

2.4.2. Conceptualizing Suffering and Affliction

It's important to understand suffering. A lot of writing uses PTSD and anxiety as psychological trauma frameworks that are connected to past violence and current stressors (Yilmaz et al., 2024). Researchers look into barriers to getting mental health care (Ayhan Baser et al., 2021).

Critical Assessment: Focusing on trauma makes suffering more personal and hides the fact that it is caused by ongoing structures like legal insecurity and discrimination. Simone Weil's idea of *malheur* (affliction), which includes social degradation and objectification (Weil, 1951, 1991), gives us a more critical view. This framework isn't often used in existing literature to look at how government actions cause this kind of suffering at the level of the soul.

2.4.3. Identity, Belonging, and (Up)Rootedness

Displacement makes people question who they are and where they belong. Scholarship looks at home in a dynamic way, focusing on things like homemaking, translocalism, and negotiating identity (Zihnioğlu & Dalkıran, 2022; Sezgin & Wall, 2024). The precariousness of belonging is acknowledged, as is agency. Simone Weil's idea of

"*enracinement*" (rootedness) gives us a different way of looking at things: the soul's need for a deep connection to community, history, place, and culture (Weil, 1952). *Déracinement* is the loss of these connections, which is a very bad spiritual condition.

Critical Assessment: Research on home and belonging may not fully explain the structural forces (Foucault) that cause people to feel uprooted or stop them from rerooting. People often don't say out loud how subjective homemaking and objective governmentality are related. People don't often talk about the existential need for rootedness (Weil) in depth. Weil's framework sees *déracinement* as a specific harm caused by political systems like Türkiye's TP regime.

2.5. Identifying the Gap: Bridging Foucauldian Power Analysis and Weilian Ethical Critique

This review shows that there is a lot of good research, but there is also a big hole. A lot of research on Syrians in Türkiye doesn't look at both the power structures and the deep moral and existential effects they have on people. Foucauldian analyses are great at figuring out how power works, but they might not have enough theories about why people suffer and what it means. Studies of ethics and experience often don't do a good job of criticizing the structural power that creates the situations they're looking at.

Research tends to break down into two types: macro-level power analysis (Foucauldian) and micro-level experience/ethics (sometimes implicitly Weilian). There is no systematic way to connect government methods (Foucault) directly to their effects on the human soul (*malheur*, *déracinement*, violation of needs) through a consistent ethical lens (Weil).

So, the specific gap this thesis fills is that there aren't any studies that use an integrated Foucault-Weil framework to look at the existential and socio-political situation of Syrian refugees in Türkiye who are under Temporary Protection. This synthesis is needed to look at both:

- How labels and practices work as Foucauldian tools of power/knowledge, governmentality, and biopolitics; and

- How these tools lead directly to Weilian affliction (*malheur*) and uprootedness (*déracinement*).
- Weil's ideas on obligation, attention, and justice are used to evaluate the profound ethical implications.

This thesis tries to fill this gap by connecting Foucault's criticism of power with Weil's moral criticism. The methodology (Foucauldian discourse analysis + Weilian SQDA) puts this framework into action and promises a complete, ethically sound understanding that goes beyond the current fragmented approaches.How labels and practices function as Foucauldian mechanisms of power/knowledge, governmentality, and biopolitics.

3 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

When the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011, it caused one of the biggest forced migrations since World War II, forcing millions of people to flee, mostly to neighboring countries. Türkiye quickly emerged as the main host country, navigating the complex social, political, and moral issues brought on by this large-scale migration. The Turkish state adopted a particular legal and discursive framework to deal with this unprecedented situation, classifying Syrians as recipients of a "*temporary protection regime*" rather than under the internationally recognized 1951 Geneva Convention definition of "refugee" because of Türkiye's maintained geographical limitation (Kaya & Yılmaz Eren, 2015). Especially during the early stages of the crisis, this population has frequently been referred to both officially and publicly as "guests" (*misafirler*) (Toğral Koca, 2016).

This chapter argues that far from neutral administrative acts, such decisions in naming and legal categorization shape reality. The lived realities, rights, vulnerabilities, and sense of belonging of Syrians in Türkiye are profoundly shaped by these powerful exercises of power. This theoretical framework engages with the philosophical insights of Michel Foucault and Simone Weil, therefore excavating the deep structures undergirding this reality and moving beyond surface-level policy analysis. Foucault provides absolutely necessary tools for analyzing how power works through discourse, knowledge generation, and governance strategies to shape human subjects and create social realities. His work lets us examine how words like "guest" and "temporary protection" operate inside particular power/knowledge systems to control people and draw the boundaries of inclusion. In particular, his ideas show how these linguistic and administrative actions are ingrained in larger government rationalities meant to organize society and control perceived dangers.

Simone Weil offers a vital ethical and metaphysical perspective to complement and question Foucault's study. Her deep thoughts on the basic needs of the human soul—

especially the need for roots—the ethical need of attention to suffering, the terrible reality of affliction (*malheur*), and the grounding of justice in impersonal duty provide a framework for assessing the human cost of displacement and the ethical sufficiency of society reactions. Weil pushes us to see past political expediency and legalism to the natural dignity and spiritual needs of every displaced person.

This chapter intends to combine Foucault's and Weil's viewpoints into a dynamic conversation. While also probing their notable tensions—notably Foucault's genealogical skepticism of universal truths versus Weil's grounding of ethics and justice in metaphysical realities like the Good and the sacredness of the person—it will investigate their convergences, such as their shared critique of power structures that inflict suffering and dehumanize. This approach aims to clarify the intricate interaction among discursive practices, state power, the creation of subjectivity, and the profound existential and ethical implications involved in the naming and treatment of Syrian refugees in Türkiye by combining Foucault's analytics of power with Weil's ethics of attention and obligation. Mobilizing key ideas like discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary mechanisms, biopolitics, governmentality, and subjectivity (Foucault), as well as roots, attention, affliction, justice, obligation, and grace (Weil), will help to create a philosophically rich, multidisciplinary basis for comprehending the following empirical study.

3.2. Discourse, Power, and the Erasure of the Real: Constructing the "Guest"

The language used to characterize and classify displaced people is never neutral; rather, it is filled with power and plays a crucial role in creating the very reality that it claims to reflect. The work of Michel Foucault offers crucial resources for comprehending how the particular terms used to refer to Syrians in Türkiye—specifically, the original and persistent concept of "guest" and the legal status of "temporary protection"—act discursively to manage populations, justify policies, and influence perceptions. By considering discourse as a controlled system of claims, behaviors, and power dynamics that establishes what can be said with meaning, who has the right to speak, and what constitutes "truth" in a given field, Foucault goes beyond the idea that language is merely

a reflection of reality. The rules and conditions of possibility that permit some statements to emerge and acquire authority while excluding others are examined using an archaeological approach (Foucault, 1972). According to Foucault (1972, p. 49), discourses "are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak."

Turkish authorities' first framing of Syrians as "guests" (*misafirler*) shows such a discursive approach. Although apparently referencing cultural customs of hospitality, this word works, in a Foucauldian sense, to shape the Syrian presence as temporary, dependent on the host's goodwill, and separate from the entitlements linked to formal refugee status. "Avoid the term refugee and its possible political and legal consequences," says Toğral Koca (2016), who uses this language to mean obligations under the 1951 Convention. This naming convention is therefore naturally connected to Foucault's notion of power/knowledge. Power actively creates knowledge, objects of knowledge, and 'regimes of truth' that support its own operations and continuation rather than just repressing (Foucault, 1978, p. 102). Establishing "guest" as the dominant label created and spread a particular "knowledge" about Syrians' status—their alleged transience, their position outside formal rights frameworks—thereby justifying state control and limiting claims under international refugee law. Defining the very field of their possible actions and identities, this discourse positions refugees within a framework of precariousness and dependency, so influencing not only policy but also public perception and maybe their own self-understanding.

From Simone Weil's point of view, though, such discursive constructions risk obscuring a more basic reality: the actual suffering and needs of the people under these labels. Weil gives the practice of attention great ethical importance because she sees it as a challenging, compassionate orientation toward the real, especially the reality of affliction, rather than just cognitive concentration. True attention is "reading" another's suffering by suspending one's own projections and classifications. She says, "Attention is the suspension of our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object" (Weil, 2009, p. 72). Although politically convenient, the discourse of "guest" may be said to work against Weilian attention. It creates a category that can hide the terrible reality of forced migration, trauma, loss, and the great need for belonging and security. It

replaces the complicated, sometimes painful reality of the person's circumstances with a simple label.

Weil was quite critical of abstract language, especially in politics, that separates words from the actual reality they are supposed to denote. In The Need for Roots, she notes how some words, devoid of meaning, turn into simple slogans preventing genuine thinking and ethical involvement (Weil, 2005, pp. 117-123). The word "guest" runs the risk of becoming such a word when used to describe a population experiencing long-term, involuntary displacement; it would distance the observer from the tangible obligations resulting from the other's vulnerability and basic needs. Weil emphasizes the importance of these needs and the obligations they create, which are prior to and unrelated to any political or legal classification (Weil, 2005, p. 1).

This is a really important point of conversation and conflict. Foucault shows how discourse actively creates the object (“the guest,” “the temporarily protected person”) within a field of power, therefore influencing the very conditions of possibility for that person's existence inside the host society. His study reveals the power-laden and contingent character of these categories (Foucault, 1972, Preface). Weil, on the other hand, maintains that a deeper reality—the reality of human suffering, the needs of the soul, the impersonal sacredness of the individual—exists and demands attention and acknowledgment; political discourse often hides or violates this reality. Does the Foucauldian awareness of the productive power of discourse deny the chance of reaching the 'real' suffering Weil refers to? Foucault could contend that even our concept of 'suffering' is historically and discursively formed, reachable only via particular knowledge and power frameworks. Weil's demand for attention, on the other hand, could provide an ethical counter-practice, a means of seeing past the discursive constructions to the human reality power tries to control or erase. Examining the "guest" discourse via both perspectives indicates that although the label actively influences social and political reality (Foucault), it also runs the danger of breaching an ethical imperative to focus on the unvarnished reality of human need and suffering (Weil).

3.3. Governing Life, Inflicting Affliction: Biopolitics and Uprootedness

Beyond the discursive construction of the "guest," the Turkish state's reaction to the Syrian mass influx exemplifies a kind of power Michel Foucault identified as typical of modernity: biopower. Emerging clearly in the 17th and 18th centuries, this kind of power moves beyond the sovereign's conventional right "to take life or let live" toward a power meant to administer, manage, and promote life itself—"a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them" (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). Biopower is mainly an anatomo-politics of the human body (discipline, concentrating on optimizing individual bodies as machines) and a biopolitics of the population, emphasizing the collective biological entity through interventions connected to birth rates, mortality, health, longevity, and the conditions of existence (Foucault, 1978, pp. 137-140; Foucault, 2003, pp. 245-246). Aiming to control the population as a biological and social entity within the host state territory, the management of large displaced populations clearly fits this biopolitical logic.

One may view Türkiye's "*temporary protection regime*" as a complicated biopolitical and governmental tool. On the one hand, it offers fundamental components for maintaining life: protection against refoulement, access to basic healthcare and education, and registration systems (Kaya & Yılmaz Eren, 2015; Makovsky, 2020). These policies reflect the productive side of biopower: controlling the health and fundamental functioning of the population to guarantee order and reduce possible crises like epidemics or widespread destitution that could disturb the host society. On the other hand, Foucault's idea of governmentality—the particular "art of government" that developed alongside biopolitics—also runs this regime. Governmentality is concerned with managing populations using calculated techniques and rationalities meant to achieve particular goals, often framed in terms of security and economic optimization (Foucault, 2007, pp. 87–14). Aiming to shape behavior not only by direct coercion but also by structuring the field of possible actions, governmentality is the "conduct of conduct" (Foucault, 2007, p. 108; Foucault, 1982). The regime shapes the possibilities of life for Syrians in Türkiye: regulating their movement through registration and possible confinement in certain areas,

limiting their access to formal labor markets (often needing permits that are hard to get, pushing many into precarious informal work), and especially, reinforcing their 'temporary' status, so controlling their long-term integration and possible influence on Turkish society and its resources (Makovsky, 2020). According to the logic of the regime, these measures serve as disciplinary mechanisms at the population level, classifying, sorting, and distributing people within the social space. Producing a particular sort of controllable, transient subject, it aims to control not only their physical presence but also their behaviour, expectations, and future possibilities.

Simone Weil draws our attention to the profound existential and spiritual consequences for those who are subjected to it, while Foucault illuminates the mechanisms and rationalities of this governmental management of life. The need for roots—one of the deepest and most ignored needs of the human soul—lies at the core of the refugee experience. For Weil, being rooted is much more than just having a location to reside; it is having a "real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future" (Weil, 2005, p. 43). Rootedness sustains moral, intellectual, and spiritual well-being by means of essential spiritual food connecting the person to a communal life, a history, and a location. By its very nature, forced relocation is a violent uprootedness (*déracinement*) that cuts these essential links. Weil views uprootedness as a serious spiritual disease that leaves people adrift, exposed, and prone to alienation and despair (Weil, 2005, pp. 43–44). While the Turkish government's insistence on "temporary" status may be a sensible political decision meant to control population flows and resources (a major issue in biopolitics), it also runs the risk of institutionalizing and extending this uprootedness, preventing Syrians from establishing new, stable roots in Turkish society.

Moreover, the circumstances created by long-term displacement and uncertain legal status can cause a condition Weil called affliction (*malheur*). Distinct from basic suffering or hardship, this idea is fundamental to her thinking. Often including social decline, humiliation, and a feeling of total powerlessness before impersonal forces, affliction is a deeper, more crushing weight. "Force is that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it

into a thing," she forcefully describes in her essay on *the Iliad*. Exercised to the limit, it turns man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him Suffering amplifies this objectification even to the living soul. It brands the soul with a sense of impotence, silence, and contempt, both from others and often internalized by the afflicted themselves, not only physical suffering but also a "social degradation or the fear of it" (Weil, 2009, p. 79). Weil claims, "Affliction is anonymous before all things; it deprives its victims of their personality and makes them into things. It is indifferent and it is the coldness of this indifference—a metallic coldness—which freezes all those it touches right to the depths of their souls.

Shaped by the biopolitical management of "temporary protection," the Syrian refugee experience in Türkiye has the potential for such suffering or distress. All of these can help to create *malheur*: the reliance on aid, the vulnerability to exploitation in the informal labor market, the unending uncertainty about the future, the possible exposure to social prejudice (Erdoğan, 2014), and the simple fact of being always categorized and managed as a 'temporary' problem instead of as people with inherent value and rights. In Weilian terms, the cold, impersonal logic of population management focusing on statistics, norms, and regulatory apparatuses as examined by Foucault (2007, pp. 67-70 on security mechanisms dealing with populations and norms) can express the "metallic coldness" of indifference that freezes the soul. Emphasizing life statistics and movement control can unintentionally increase the feeling of being an object, a 'thing' under outside influence, so eroding the sense of self and agency.

Here, Foucault's and Weil's analyses fully converge in power while maintaining their separate registers. Both show how big, impersonal systems—whether the state's biopolitical apparatus (Foucault) or the social mechanisms Weil calls 'gravity' (Weil, 2002)—can dehumanize and cause great pain. Meticulously, Foucault maps out the techniques and power rationalities that for political purposes categorize, control, and objectify populations. His genealogical method would track the historical development of these particular population control techniques, revealing their contingency and relationship to certain types of state power and economic rationality (cf. Foucault, 2008 on the rise of neoliberal governmentality). Weil diagnoses the spiritual wound of

uprootedness and the soul-crushing burden of suffering, revealing the inner, terrible experience of being subjected to such forces. The subject controlled by biopolitics finds its experiential counterpart in the suffering soul Weil describes. Still, Weil goes farther, presenting suffering as a spiritual state that ironically opens a possible, if painful, road to grace and the awareness of the sacredness present even, or particularly, in the degraded "thing" (Weil, 2009, p. 83). Her study stands out in this metaphysical aspect; it implies that the needed response transcends political change to include ethical acts of awareness and acknowledgment of natural, holy value—a dimension Foucault's historical power analysis has not addressed much.

3.4. Subjectivity, Justice, and the Needs of the Soul: Beyond Management and Rights

Michel Foucault's study of power goes beyond external influence to look at how power dynamics form the actual constitution of the person as a subject. In his opinion, power is not only repressive but also productive; it actively shapes identities, desires, and self-understandings by means of subjectivation (or subjection) rather than simply forbidding or limiting. Individuals are induced (or compelled) to see themselves in certain ways by means of discourses, disciplinary practices, and government strategies, so internalizing norms and categories that fit with present power relations. Foucault famously examined how the confession, evolving from a religious ritual to a cornerstone of psychoanalysis and legal practice, became a tool for generating 'truth' about the self, linking the person to particular identities, especially about sexuality (Foucault, 1978, pp. 58-65). Likewise, disciplinary power individualizes people by means of techniques such as examination and normalization, so making them visible and manageable by comparison to a standard (Foucault, 1995, pp. 184-194). This logic holds more generally: the ways people are classified, watched, talked about, and handled by institutions shape greatly how they come to know themselves and their position in the world. Power shapes not just behaviour but subjectivity itself by "structuring the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 1982, p. 221).

Using this perspective on the Syrian population in Türkiye, one can see the regime of "temporary protection" and the related narratives ("guest," possible "threat," manageable labor force) as contributing to the creation of a particular type of subjectivity. Being constantly defined by temporariness, subjected to particular rules governing movement and work (often enforced through bureaucratic obstacles and surveillance), and placed within a framework of conditional hospitality can foster an internalized feeling of precariousness, dependency, and limited future horizons. The legal and discursive context actively shapes their experience of selfhood and agency, not only describing their condition. The need to negotiate intricate bureaucratic processes for permits, healthcare, or education strengthens a relationship with the state mostly as managed subjects rather than as rights-bearing people with safe belonging. From a Foucauldian viewpoint, one might wonder: What sort of subject results from the continuous experience of being ruled as "temporary"? How does this affect the very sense of possibility, social interactions, and goals? How do people resist or negotiate these processes of subjectivation?

Grounded not in the study of power's productive capabilities but in the claim of fundamental, inviolable needs of the soul, Simone Weil provides a radically different starting point for thinking about the individual inside the social order. Written as a suggestion for the rebuilding of post-war France, Weil describes these needs in *The Need for Roots* as the fundamental prerequisites for a thriving human life. She contends they should be the foundation of any fair social and political system. Reflecting the complexity of human existence, these needs create pairs of opposites: order and liberty; obedience and responsibility; equality and hierarchy; honour and punishment; freedom of opinion and security; risk and private property; collective property and truth (Weil, 2005, pp. 7-42). Most importantly, she points out that maybe the most important and least acknowledged need is rootedness itself (Weil, 2005, p. 43). As essential as food and water are to the body, these needs are not only preferences or wants but rather constitutive demands of the human spirit.

Weil bases her idea of justice on these requirements, striking a clear break from contemporary discourse based on rights. She contends that the language of rights, which came to dominate after 1789, is secondary, contingent, and finally useless since it lacks a

foundation in the transcendent. Instead, she asserts that obligation comes before right: "Obligation is anterior to right." According to obligations, rights are "subordinate and relative" (Weil, 2005, p. 3). For Weil, an obligation is eternal, unconditional, and aimed at the human being as such, simply because they are human. It comes from the awareness of an unspoken, impersonal, and holy aspect inside every individual:

There is a reality outside the world, that is to say, outside space and time, outside man's mental universe, outside any sphere whatsoever that is accessible to human faculties. [...] Corresponding to this reality, at the centre of the human heart, is the longing for an absolute good, a longing which is always there and is never appeased by any object in this world. [...] That reality is the unique source of all the good that can exist in this world: that is to say, all beauty, all truth, all justice, all legitimacy, all order, and all human behaviour that is mindful of obligations. (Weil, 2005, p. 94).

This acknowledgment creates a total responsibility: "The obligation is only performed if the respect is effectively expressed in a real, not fictitious, way; and this can only be done through the medium of Man's earthly needs" (Weil, 2005, p. 6). Justice is thus more about society organizing itself to meet the obligations resulting from the basic needs—physical and spiritual—of all its members than it is about allocating rights.

From this Weilian viewpoint, a fair reaction to the presence of Syrian refugees in Türkiye goes beyond the logic of biopolitical management or the granting of limited, revocable rights linked with "temporary protection." It calls for an acknowledgment of the unwavering obligations owed to them as human beings whose fundamental needs—especially for roots, security, order, freedom, and dignity—have been severely violated by war and displacement. Thus, the following question "How can we safely and effectively control this population?" should be replaced with "What are our responsibilities toward these uprooted human souls, and the following question how can our society satisfy their fundamental needs?" (Foucault's government rationality), should be reformulated as "What are our obligations toward these uprooted human souls, and how can our society meet their fundamental needs?" The continued "temporary" status, which obstructs integration and the formation of new roots, appears to be a failure to fulfill this grave obligation.

The contrast between Foucault and Weil emphasizes a profound philosophical conflict. Relentlessly historicizing ideas like "justice," "human nature," and "rights," Foucault's genealogical approach exposes them not as ageless truths but as historically contingent consequences of power dynamics and discursive formations. Emphasizing discontinuity and struggle rather than linear progress toward universal ideals, genealogy aims to reveal the sometimes ignoble beginnings and metamorphoses of institutions and practices (Foucault, 1977, pp. 139-164). He famously proposed that 'man' itself is a recent creation, maybe approaching its end (Foucault, 2002, p. 422). This position encourages a critical alertness to any assertion of universal truth, viewing it as possibly hiding a new power configuration. By contrast, Weil bases her whole ethical and political vision on the conviction in eternal, universal, metaphysical realities: the Good, the sacredness of the person, the needs of the soul, and the binding character of obligation resulting from these realities.

Does Weil's framework, with its appeal to transcendent truth, provide an essential ethical anchor that Foucault's unyielding emphasis on power dynamics could deconstruct or lack? Her idea of obligation offers a strong moral imperative that appears to resonate strongly with the ethical requirements imposed by mass displacement. But does Foucault's study act as a vital warning against the possibility for even Weil's framework of needs and obligations, if institutionalized, to become another grid of normalization, another way for power to define and control subjects, albeit under a different banner? Maybe integration is in understanding the synergy: Foucault enables us to understand how power functions to produce subjects whose needs (in Weil's sense) are methodically violated or overlooked under particular government policies. Uprooted soul vulnerable to affliction is the subject created by unstable legal status and biopolitical control. Weil, on the other hand, offers the ethical compass to assess these power effects, insisting that justice necessitates not only efficient management or conditional rights, but also the unqualified satisfaction of obligations resulting from the basic, sacred needs of every human being. Focusing on the shared vulnerability and needs that unite people, her stress on the impersonal character of this holiness (Weil, 2009, pp. 98-101) could even provide a means to think about justice outside of individualistic perspectives.

3.5. Attention, Grace, and Potential Counter-Conduct

Should Foucault give the means to analyze the power mechanisms controlling, classifying, and maybe harming Syrian refugees in Türkiye, and Weil reveals the deep needs of the soul damaged by such processes, the question is: what kinds of ethical response or resistance does this combined framework imply? Weil's ideas of attention and grace, set in conversation with Foucault's knowledge of power and resistance—including counter-conduct and ethics as a practice of freedom—provide avenues for reflection in this context.

Simone Weil's attention is an active, rigorous ethical and spiritual discipline rather than just passive observation, as was already mentioned. To be really open to the reality of another, particularly one who is suffering, one must radically decenter the self, suspend judgment and preconceptions. In her article "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies," she connects the growth of this ability to the essence of spiritual life: "Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love" (Weil, 2009, p. 73). It is a "negative effort" (Weil, 2009, p. 72), not straining the will toward a goal but rather emptying the mind to let the truth of the other's condition—their needs, their suffering, their inherent sacredness—to penetrate. Recognizing and reacting to the obligations owed to every human being requires this kind of attention. It contrasts sharply with the classifying eye of biopolitical management or the prejudiced eye formed by securitizing discourses, both of which objectify and categorize instead of really see the person. Practicing Weilian attention toward Syrian refugees would entail striving to look beyond the labels—"guest," "temporary," "burden," "threat"—to perceive the actual reality of their uprootedness, their potential affliction, and their full spectrum of human needs.

Weil's idea of grace complements attention. 'Grace' is the supernatural counter-movement to 'gravity,' which is the deterministic, downward pull of natural necessity, self-interest, and the mechanics of force and oppression that rule the social world (Weil, 2002, pp. 1-3). It is the descending intervention of the divine or the Good into the created world, enabling actions that contradict the logic of gravity: acts of selfless compassion, genuine

justice, forgiveness, and the creation of beauty. Grace lets people and societies transcend the apparently unavoidable dynamics of power, strife, and apathy. Weil claims, "All the natural movements of the soul are governed by laws analogous to those of physical gravity. Only grace can offer an exception. Actions that really challenge the political logic of temporary management or the social 'gravity' of exclusion in the context of Syrian refugees—such as sustained efforts toward meaningful integration, advocacy that insists on their dignity and long-term security beyond mere utility, or simple acts of unconditional welcome that acknowledge shared humanity—could be seen through a Weilian lens as moments where grace disrupts the expected flow of social and political mechanics.

How do these ideas relate to Foucault's framework? Foucault famously claimed that "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Power dynamics are not uniform; they are always negotiated, fought over, and maybe subverted. Resistance can show up in daily activities, rejections, or alternative ways of being—forms of "counter-conduct" that question or change how one is governed, operating under the logic of governmentality itself (Foucault, 2007, pp. 194–196, 201–204). Moreover, Foucault came to see ethics not as following a moral code but rather as the practice of freedom, the reflective labor people do to mold themselves into ethical subjects in relation to power and truth (Foucault, 1984, pp. 281–301). From this angle, might the rigorous practice of Weilian attention be seen as a kind of ethical counter-conduct, a practice of self-formation meant to oppose prevailing modes of perception? Attention actively challenges the objectifying mechanisms described by Foucault by refusing to accept the categories imposed by power and knowledge and insisting on seeing the irreducible reality of the individual's suffering and needs. It is a method that opposes the simplification and instrumentalization natural in government administration.

The link between 'grace' and Foucault's framework is more complicated. Foucault would probably be doubtful of calls to supernatural intervention given his emphasis on immanent power relations and historical contingency. Though Foucault would ascribe them to changing strategies, unanticipated consequences, or the natural instability of power rather than divine intervention, the consequences Weil ascribes to grace—

unexpected changes in behavior, acts of justice or compassion that shatter established patterns—might be visible within a Foucauldian analysis as points where power relations are contingently disturbed or reconfigured, maybe as the emergence of unanticipated lines of flight or new strategic options within the field of power.

The conversation exposes both harmony and conflict. As a practice, Weilian attention fits a Foucauldian view of ethics as a "practice of liberty," a means of actively forming oneself and one's relationship to dominant norms and power structures. It provides a particular ethical strategy to fight dehumanization. But Weil's final grounding of this practice, and of justice itself, in a transcendent, metaphysical reality—the Good, God, the sacred—contrasts starkly with Foucault's unyielding historical immanence and skepticism of universals. Moreover, Weil's concept of grace calls for a seemingly passive receptivity that contrasts with Foucault's focus on resistance and counter-conduct as active forces emerging from power relations.

Combining these viewpoints for the study of the Syrian crisis in Türkiye implies a twofold strategy. Even within apparently benevolent or humanitarian contexts, Foucault's analytics offer vital tools for staying critically alert about how power functions through naming, categorization, and management (cf. Walters, 2011, on the 'humanitarian border'). His work always warns us that subtle kinds of control and subjectification can be hidden or carried out by discourses of care or protection. At the same time, Weil's approach offers a necessary ethical compass. The unquestionable reality of human needs and the unqualified obligations they impose are insisted upon as being beyond the analysis of power. Her plea for attention provides a sensible, if challenging, way to fight the objectification natural in bureaucratic management and social prejudice. Her idea of obligation, based on the sanctity of the individual, offers a strong ethical critique of policies driven only by political expediency or national self-interest, calling instead for a concentration on meeting the needs of the displaced, especially the deep need for roots and safety. Navigating the ethical complexity calls for Foucault's critical awareness of power's ubiquitous operation as well as Weil's unrelenting emphasis on the requirements of justice anchored in the needs of every human soul.

4 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach used to examine the situation of Syrian refugees in Türkiye following the theoretical framework set out in the previous chapter, which combines the viewpoints of Michel Foucault and Simone Weil. Guided by this framework, the research objectives are to critically analyze the discursive practices and power dynamics influencing the governance and perception of Syrian refugees, to investigate their documented lived experiences through an ethical lens centered on suffering and human needs, and to assess the consequences of state policies and societal reactions. This paper uses a qualitative method—combining a Foucauldian-informed analysis of discourse with a Weilian-informed analysis of secondary qualitative data on lived experiences—to reach these goals.

Starting with a description of the theoretical framework, this chapter presents the critical interpretive research philosophy. It then defends the qualitative, secondary analysis research design as the most suitable way to apply the Foucauldian and Weilian perspectives to the accessible data. The heart of the chapter describes the two main approaches: Secondary Qualitative Data Analysis (SQDA) read via Weil's ethical philosophy and a discourse analysis based on Foucault's ideas. The reasons, data sources, and analytical techniques for each are described in direct relation to the theoretical framework. The chapter acknowledges the natural constraints, discusses relevant ethical issues resulting from the theoretical position, and explains more on the integration of these approaches. A last summary emphasizes the appropriateness of the approach for answering the research questions by means of the particular theoretical integration directing this dissertation.

4.2. Research Philosophy and Paradigm

A philosophical viewpoint closely matching the fundamental principles of both Foucault and Weil, this study is located within a critical interpretive paradigm. A central idea in Foucault's work—e.g., Foucault, 1980—this paradigm acknowledges that social reality is discursively created and inextricably tied with power relations. Resonating with Foucault's power analysis, it critiques power imbalances and forms of domination ingrained in social structures and discourses rather than just describing them. Additionally, it shares Weil's deep ethical emphasis on suffering (*malheur*), attention, and obligation (Weil, 1951, 1952) in its dedication to normative issues and social justice. Studying the Syrian refugee situation in Türkiye requires adopting this paradigm since legal definitions, political narratives, and societal attitudes shape their experiences profoundly. These are all issues suitable for Foucauldian critique. At the same time, they raise profound ethical questions of suffering and responsibility that Weil challenges us to face. Accordingly, this philosophical orientation supports the choice of techniques meant to read lived experience through an ethical prism (Weil) and examine discourse as power (Foucault).

4.3. Research Design

In keeping with the theoretical framework and the critical interpretive paradigm, this dissertation uses a qualitative research design. Exploring the complexity of the refugee situation with the depth demanded by both Foucault's emphasis on the subtleties of power/knowledge and Weil's focus on the nuances of human suffering and need requires qualitative approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The particular design employs secondary data source analysis. A range of textual materials—legal documents, policy papers, political speeches, media reports—is examined using a Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis. At the same time, Secondary Qualitative Data Analysis (SQDA) is used to synthesize and interpret current qualitative research results (academic studies, NGO reports, published testimonies) documenting refugee experiences (Heaton, 2004). A large amount of pertinent textual and qualitative

data exists, which justifies this secondary analysis design since it enables a strong analysis guided by Foucault and Weil without the ethical and logistical difficulties of primary data gathering with this population (Mackenzie et al., 2007). Combining these two strategies allows for a multi-layered analysis that critically examines the relationship between the macro-level discursive constructions of power found via the Foucauldian perspective and the micro-level human realities of suffering and need emphasized by Weil's framework.

4.4. Methodology I: Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Rationale This paper uses a discourse analysis explicitly based on Michel Foucault's work to examine how language forms the reality and control of Syrian refugees in Türkiye. Although Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides several tools for studying language and power, this study applies Foucault's ideas by means of the techniques of discourse analysis. Foucault (1972, 1980) showed that discourse is productive rather than only reflective; it creates knowledge objects, molds subjectivities, and acts as a main venue where power/knowledge relationships are played out and challenged. Thus, a Foucauldian perspective on legal, political, and media texts helps to critically deconstruct how Syrians are classified, portrayed, controlled, and ruled, so exposing the underlying government rationalities (Foucault, 1991) and power relations in operation.

Data Origins The data sources were chosen to reflect powerful discourses that, from a Foucauldian viewpoint, form the regime of truth around Syrian refugees in Türkiye:

1. Analyzed as tools of governmentality (Foucault, 1991), legal and policy texts from the PMM defined and categorized Syrians, therefore influencing their subject positions and the field of possible actions open to them. Key legislation—e.g., LFIP, TPR—and policy papers from the PMM were examined as instruments of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) legally defining and categorizing Syrians, so shaping their subject positions and the field of possible actions open to them.
2. Examined as venues where political power is exercised via language, competing discourses fight for supremacy, and particular rationalities for governing refugees

are articulated and legitimized, state officials pronouncements and parliamentary debates were studied (Foucault, 1980).

3. Media Narratives: To comprehend how dominant media frames shape the social construction of the Syrian refugee and support or challenge official discourses, representative examples and results from previous studies on media coverage were examined. This analysis reflected how power and knowledge are used in the public sphere.

Analytical Method Foucault ideas directed the analytical process, which included several important stages:

1. Treating these as Foucauldian discursive formations, i.e., dominant and recurring ways of speaking about and framing Syrian refugees across various text types (e.g., the guest discourse, security discourse, management discourse, return discourse),
2. Examining Power/Knowledge Strategies: Looking at certain linguistic elements—lexical selections, metaphors, naming conventions—and rhetorical techniques helps one to see how they work to create certain truths about refugees, justify particular kinds of intervention, and carry out power relations (Foucault, 1980). This meant looking at how labels and categories create reasonable people.
3. Mapping Interdiscursivity: Examining how various discourses interact, borrow from, or react against one another to expose the strategic power interplay inside the discursive field.
4. Connecting the recognized discursive patterns to the particular historical, socio-political, and economic conditions of possibility in Türkiye that allowed their emergence and circulation (Foucault, 1972).
5. Examining Governmental Rationalities: Interpreting the discourses as reflections of particular governmental rationalities (Foucault, 1991) meant to control the refugee population, evaluate risks, and reach certain political goals (e.g., biopolitical management of life, security, controlled return).

4.5. Methodology II: Secondary Qualitative Data Analysis (SQDA) Informed by Weil

Rationale This study used Secondary Qualitative Data Analysis (SQDA) (Heaton, 2004) to explore the recorded lived experiences of Syrian refugees, which call for ethical reflection from a Weilian viewpoint. This approach lets one combine and interpret current qualitative data describing the reality experienced by Syrians under the TP regime. Using her ethical framework as the main interpretive lens, the rationale—informed by Simone Weil (1951, 1952)—is to practice a kind of 'attention' toward the recorded suffering (*malheur*) and needs of this population. Focusing analytical energy on understanding the relevance of these sensitive experiences in relation to ideas like rootedness, obligation, and justice, SQDA offers an ethically acceptable means (Heaton, 2004; Mackenzie et al., 2007) to interact with them.

Data Origins Data came from existing source records on Syrian refugee experiences in Türkiye, chosen for their richness in depicting elements pertinent to Weilian themes:

1. Studies investigating aspects of refugee life including economic insecurity, social exclusion, mental health, and integration difficulties, offering insights into situations possibly qualifying *malheur* or impeding *enracinement*.
2. Reports from NGOs and international organizations: Publications usually including qualitative data and narratives depicting experiences of vulnerability, rights violations, and the effects of policies on daily life, relevant for determining whether obligations are being met.
3. First-hand narratives providing direct, albeit mediated, access to personal experiences of suffering, resilience, and the quest for stability.

Analytical Method The SQDA method was one of synthesis and interpretation explicitly directed by Weil's philosophy:

1. Data Extraction and Structuring: Methodically pulling results connected to lived experiences relevant to Weilian ideas—e.g., labor conditions, social reception, sense of security, future prospects, psychological state.

2. Thematic Synthesis: Combining extracted results to find common trends suggesting general problems, weaknesses, and coping strategies pertinent to comprehending *malheur* and *déracinement*.
3. Using ideas from Weil (1951, 1952) as the main interpretive tool. This meant examining synthesized experiences for signs of *malheur* (affliction beyond simple suffering); judging policies and societal attitudes according to the ethical need for 'attention'; measuring the degree of 'uprootedness' (*déracinement*) caused by circumstances of temporariness and insecurity in relation to the basic 'need for roots' (*enracinement*); and applying Weil's ideas of 'obligation' and 'justice' to morally assess the treatment of refugees and the sufficiency of reactions to their needs.

4.6. Integration of Methodologies and Theoretical Framework

The main methodological contribution is the interaction of the Weilian-informed SQDA and the Foucauldian discourse analysis. The discourse analysis, directed by Foucault, shows the macro-level power, knowledge, and governance structures shaping the circumstances under which Syrians live. Focusing on suffering, ethical needs, and justice, the SQDA read via Weil offers insight into the documented human effects of these circumstances. Foucault's ideas show how discursive and governmental strategies shape and control the Syrian refugee subject.

The study contends that the former helps to clarify the circumstances leading to the latter and that the latter offers the ethical foundation to criticize the former by linking the results of the Foucauldian analysis—such as identifying discourses of securitization or temporary management—with the results of the Weilian interpretation of SQDA—such as documented experiences of *malheur* or *déracinement*.

4.7. Ethical Considerations

The theoretical framework's critical and ethical commitments shaped ethical behavior in this study:

1. Foucault-informed discourse analysis ethics: Rigorously addressing the consequences of power natural in language, the critique of strong discourses—legal, political, media—acknowledged the duty that results from examining possibly damaging depictions.
2. SQDA ethics (Weil-informed) Representing results from prior studies called for accuracy and respect for the recorded experiences (Heaton, 2004). The Weilian idea of "attention" directed the reading, stressing the ethical duty to interact compassionately and fairly with stories of suffering even when accessed second-hand. Original studies' anonymity was rigorously preserved.
3. Ethical Stance (Weil-informed): Using Weil's ideas of obligation and the sanctity of the human person as a guide, the study took an ethical position stressing these to critically evaluate policies and practices impacting refugees, especially with relation to basic needs and protection from harm.
4. Critical interpretive work seeks for openness and analytical rigor all through by means of acknowledgment of the researcher's positionality and possible biases.

4.8. Limitations of the Methodology

Methodological rigor depends on acknowledging boundaries.

1. Lack of direct involvement restricts the depth of investigation and dependence on current records (Heaton, 2004).
2. Text selection for discourse analysis and SQDA studies involves researcher judgment and is limited by accessibility, therefore possibly affecting results.
3. Scope of Analysis: The discourse analysis is necessarily selective rather than exhaustive.

4. Applying both Foucauldian and Weilian theoretical lenses calls for great interpretation.
5. Results are context-specific, although the theoretical and methodological approach could be relevant elsewhere.

5 RESULTS: DISCURSIVE GOVERNANCE, LIVED AFFLICTION, AND ETHICAL CONTRADICTIONS

This chapter discusses the findings of a thorough investigation into the complex governance of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, the real problems they face, and the deep moral conflicts that come up when state narratives and lived realities clash. There are three main themes that the findings are based on. The first is the structure of discursive governance used by Turkish authorities and other actors. The second is the landscape of lived affliction, which describes the social, economic, psychological, and rights-based problems that Syrians face. The third is the ethical problems that come up when there is a gap between the stated policies of protection and the harsh realities on the ground. With special attention to the effects of the February 2023 earthquakes and the reported fall of the Assad regime in Syria in December 2024, the analysis covers the time period from the start of the Syrian crisis to early 2025.

5.1. The Architecture of Discursive Governance: Narratives, Policies, and Power in Türkiye's Refugee Regime

Discursive practices have a big impact on how Syrian refugees are governed in Türkiye, not just how things are done. These actions include making up stories, putting certain policies into action, and using power dynamics that all work together to define the refugee regime. This part breaks down these components and looks at how official discourse, political maneuvering, legal frameworks, and media portrayals all play a role in governing this vulnerable group of people.

5.1.1. Crafting the Narrative: Official Discourse on "Temporary Protection," "Voluntary Return," and Humanitarianism

The Turkish government's treatment of Syrian refugees has been backed up by a carefully crafted and changing official story. At first, this story was full of religious and cultural

themes, calling Syrians "guests" (*misafir*) and using the Islamic historical example of *ensar-muhacir* (the helpers of Medina and the migrants from Mecca) to get people to accept them (Çoban, 2024). This discourse, which stressed "brotherhood" and a "open-door" policy, tried to make the government's welcoming stance seem legitimate in the early years of the crisis (Apaydın, 2024). President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's 2016 proposal to give Turkish citizenship to "qualified and educated Syrians" sparked a lot of debate and wasn't widely put into action. However, it did help improve Türkiye's humanitarian image around the world, which is different from the European Union's more strict stance (Dinç & Capoluongo, 2016).

The *Temporary Protection* (TP) regime, which was created by Article 91 of the *Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP)* No. 6458 and explained in the *Temporary Protection Regulation* (TPR), is the legal basis for Türkiye's response (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Interior, Presidency of Migration Management [PMM], 2014; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], n.d.-a). This framework gives some rights, but it also makes it clear that the Syrians' stay is only temporary and that they are expected to return rather than permanently integrate into the host country (UNHCR, 2025a).

The idea of a "voluntary, safe, dignified, and orderly return" has become very important in recent years, especially after the fall of the Assad regime in Syria in December 2024 (Davatzes, 2025). High-level officials, like Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya in April 2025 and President Erdoğan in December 2024, have made statements that show the government's commitment to making these returns happen. They often mention UNHCR's monitoring role to make their statements more credible (PMM, 2025). Minister Yerlikaya said that the fall of the Assad regime would speed up "voluntary, safe, honorable, and regular returns." He said that there had been 175,512 of these returns between December 9, 2024, and April 2025, and a total of 915,515 since 2017. UNHCR (2025a) itself said that between December 8, 2024, and February 2025, 81,576 people returned to Syria voluntarily. This was in addition to the start of "Go and See" visits to Syria. By May 2025, UNHCR (2025c) numbers showed that about 472,963 Syrians had come back from neighboring countries (including Türkiye) since December 8, 2024.

President Erdoğan said that about 200,000 people had come back from Türkiye during the same time.

The discourse surrounding "*Türkiye's Migration Management Model in the Century of Türkiye*," put forth by Minister Yerlikaya, further shapes this changing narrative landscape. This discourse aims to project an image of control, efficiency, and success in managing migration flows, especially returns, in order to counter accusations of rights abuses or administrative chaos.

The development of official discourse, from an initial focus on "guests" and "brothers" to a more managerial and return-oriented narrative, shows a strategic adaptation. The first humanitarian language, based on ideas like *ensar-muhacir* (Çoban, 2024), was in line with a time when many people thought that Syrian refugees would only be in the country for a short time. This helped get support for the open-door policy (Apaydın, 2024). But as the displacement went on for a long time and the costs kept going up (Ferris, 2025), and as the Turkish people became more anti-refugee, the story changed. "Temporary protection" always meant that people would eventually go back home (UNHCR, n.d.-a). However, the political and discursive focus on repatriation grew much stronger because of how the refugee issue was used for political gain in the US (Apaydın, 2024) and because of changes in Syria's geopolitical situation in December 2024 (PMM, 2025). The recent announcement of a complex "*Migration Management Model*" seems to be meant to calm people in the country who are against refugees and people outside the country who are worried about rights and order.

Additionally, the ongoing official discourse that supports "voluntary, safe, and dignified return" serves important legitimizing purposes, attempting to normalize and validate repatriation efforts, especially in light of the new Syrian political landscape. A key part of this plan is to keep bringing up UNHCR's role in monitoring these returns, which is meant to give them an international seal of approval (UNHCR, n.d.-a). However, this official story is very different from what human rights groups and researchers are finding. Reports from the International Policy Digest (Human Rights Watch, as cited in Davatzes, 2025), Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ, 2025), and the Association for Migration Research (GAR, 2025) show that refugees are being forced to sign "voluntary return"

forms, are being held in bad conditions, and are being pressured to leave. There is a big gap in the discourse because people talk about their ideals while there are reports of duress and bad conditions waiting for returnees in a still-fragile Syria (GAR, 2025). The sheer speed and scale of returns since December 2024, along with the ongoing instability and humanitarian needs in Syria, make it even more questionable whether many repatriations are truly "safe and dignified."

5.1.2. The Politicization and Securitization of Refugees: Domestic Agendas and International Posturing

Millions of Syrian refugees living in Türkiye have become deeply linked to the country's politics and relations with other countries. This has become more political, especially around election time, and refugees are often blamed for bigger social and economic problems (Apaydın, 2024). Opposition parties have started using more critical and often openly anti-refugee language (Saylan & Aknur, 2023) because they sense that the public is unhappy. This has led the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) to change its policies to be more restrictive and focus more on return. The debate got a lot worse during the 2023 presidential elections. Opposition candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu took a tougher stance, and the anti-immigrant Victory Party (ZP) made the issue very important.

Along with politicization, there has been a clear trend toward refugee securitization. Some politicians and media outlets are framing Syrians not as vulnerable people but as possible threats to national security, demographic stability, and economic well-being (Saylan & Aknur, 2023). Policies that reflect this story include more surveillance, "*Shield*" operations that target irregular migrants, and a general tightening of controls (GAR, 2025).

Türkiye has skillfully used the refugee crisis to its advantage in its relationship with the European Union on the world stage. The 2016 *EU-Türkiye Statement* is a great example. Türkiye agreed to stop irregular migration flows to Europe in exchange for financial aid, unfulfilled promises to ease visa restrictions, and new talks about joining the EU (Tantardini & Tolay, 2020). This made Türkiye a gatekeeper for Europe, which had a big

impact on its refugee policies (Akmehmet, 2015). Part of the reason people thought President Erdoğan's earlier proposal for Syrian citizenship was to show that he cared about people, in contrast to the EU's willingness to accept refugees (Dinç & Capoluongo, 2016).

Media narratives have a big impact on how people think, and they often use negative stereotypes that lead to xenophobia (Cevik, 2025). Government control over mainstream media can make this worse by limiting counter-narratives (The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, 2025). Refugees try to fight back against these discourses, often on social media, but they run into big power gaps (Kasapolu & Kalmus, 2020).

Politicians have made refugees a political issue, which has led to a bad cycle: rising anti-refugee sentiment, fueled by economic worries and false information, is used by politicians to get votes, which puts pressure on the government to make policies that are tougher (Apaydın, 2024). This dynamic is shown by the rise of parties like ZP and changes in the rhetoric of mainstream opposition figures, which makes refugees even more marginalized and unsafe (Ferris, 2025).

Also, the securitization discourse, which is based on political calculations in the home country, has a big impact on the daily lives of refugees. According to Saylan and Aknur (2023), framing refugees as threats justifies more surveillance, movement restrictions, and aggressive enforcement (GAR, 2025). This leads to discrimination, limited access to rights and services (Cevik, 2025), and "lived affliction" in a climate of fear.

5.1.3. Legal and Administrative Frameworks as Discursive Instruments: The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR), and their Contested Implementation

The *Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP)* No. 6458 (2013) and the *Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR)* (2014) (PMM, 2013; PMM, 2014) are the laws that govern how Türkiye treats Syrian refugees. Article 91 of LFIP gives Syrians temporary protection, and Article 4 protects them from being sent back to places where they will be tortured, treated inhumanely, or threatened with death or freedom (European

Council on Refugees and Exiles [ECRE], 2021). The TPR outlines SuTPs' rights (identity documents, healthcare, education, social assistance, and limited work permits) and obligations (residing in certain provinces and reporting changes).

Even with this framework, implementation is often full of inconsistencies, administrative discretion, and obstacles for refugees (The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, 2025). Even with work permit rules, getting a formal job is still very hard. The cumbersome and discretionary travel permit (yol izin belgesi) system makes it harder for people to move around (UNHCR, n.d.-a). It has stricter controls and many "implicit withdrawal decisions" for people who don't follow reporting rules.

The Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) uses restriction codes like "*V87*" ("voluntarily returned foreigner") and "*V71*" ("unknown location") to stop people from re-registering or getting their rights back (ECRE, 2021). Internal circulars often make it hard to understand the rules for applying and removing. A PMM circular from January 7, 2019 told PDMMs to lift *V87* for some vulnerable people who came back after signing "voluntary return" documents and to better inform SuTPs about what these documents mean. While this may have had some good effects, there are still problems with *V87*-coded people not being able to get their rights back.

Administrative de-registration, which can happen through codes like *V71* or not meeting strict address update requirements, officially lowers the number of SuTPs, hiding the true size of the refugee population in precarity or forcing people into irregularity.

The legal framework seems to cover everything, but it could be seen as a powerful tool for discursive governance that gives the impression of order and rights protection. However, many reports of problems with implementation, administrative issues, and coercive practices in areas like return processing (GAR, 2025) show that there is a big difference between the law as it is written and how it is actually carried out. Non-transparent administrative tools like restriction codes (ECRE, 2021) and discretionary rule application give the government a lot of freedom to manage the refugee population according to changing political priorities. This makes refugees feel uncertain all the time, which is a form of governance that keeps them in a state of precarity.

Also, administrative actions like de-registration or strict enforcement of residency and travel permits, which are often defended by bureaucratic efficiency or national security, can put pressure on refugees to "voluntarily" return or make their lives even more unstable. If you don't follow the rules, you could lose your temporary protection status (UNHCR, n.d.-a) or have restrictive codes activated (ECRE, 2021). This would take people off of official lists and make it harder for them to get legal rights and services (PMM, 2014). It would also make them more vulnerable to exploitation, arrest, and deportation (GAR, 2025). The GAR blog clearly links stricter rules for government workers to making a "unbearable environment" that forces "voluntary" returns. This suggests a plan to deal with refugees by letting them leave through administrative attrition.

5.1.4. The *EU-Türkiye Statement* (2016): A Case Study in Externalized Governance and Discursive Justifications

The ***EU-Türkiye Statement*** of March 18, 2016, is very important for managing migration in the region and is a great example of externalized governance and the ideas behind it (European Parliament, n.d.). The main goal was to stop illegal migration from Türkiye to the EU, especially to the Greek islands. This included sending new illegal migrants and asylum seekers whose applications were denied back to Türkiye. In return, for every Syrian sent back to Türkiye, another Syrian would be moved to an EU member state (the "one-for-one" scheme) (Tantardini & Tolay, 2020). Türkiye also promised to stop new illegal migration routes from forming.

EU and Turkish officials framed the Statement as a practical response to a "migration crisis," a way to "break the business model of the smugglers," and a way to offer safer ways to travel. It was connected to a lot of EU money going to refugee support projects through the *Facility for Refugees in Türkiye (FRiT)* and other promises of easier visa rules and renewed talks about Türkiye joining the EU (Akmehmet, 2015).

However, a lot of people have criticized the Statement. According to academic studies, migration control goals have only been somewhat successful, with political leaders often

using metrics to claim success (Tantardini & Tolay, 2020). More importantly, many people see it as a way for the EU to let Türkiye handle border control and asylum processing. Some studies show that it mostly stopped "likely refugees" from coming to Europe, which may have pushed "likely irregular migrants" to more dangerous routes, putting refugee protection principles at risk. The European Parliament welcomed it but had some concerns. They said that outsourcing asylum responsibilities was not a credible long-term solution and stressed the importance of upholding non-refoulement and proper use of the *FRiT* fund.

The *EU-Türkiye Statement* shows how international agreements can be used as powerful tools for discursive governance. By framing a complicated refugee situation mostly in terms of "crisis management," "irregularity," and "combating smuggling" (European Parliament, n.d.), it made it okay to take away asylum seekers' rights and put them in more restrictive situations. This plan let the EU get away from directly handling asylum claims and put the "problem" and the work on Türkiye, with financial incentives like *FRiT* (Akmehmet, 2015). Some scholars say that this framing hid important human rights issues and downplayed how well it worked to find long-term solutions or uphold protection standards (Tantardini & Tolay, 2020). Policies that focus more on "irregularity" than "protection needs" are typical of externalization policies. These policies frame people looking for safety as a control problem and show how geopolitical concerns can overshadow refugee rights, which creates moral contradictions in migration governance.

5.2. The Landscape of Lived Affliction: Realities of Syrian Refugees in Türkiye

Official stories and legal frameworks paint a certain picture of how refugees are governed, but the reality for many Syrian refugees in Türkiye is very different. They face a lot of hardship, are vulnerable, and are always fighting for their dignity and safety. This part goes into more detail about this lived affliction, using information about their demographics, socioeconomic status, access to services, experiences of discrimination, mental health, and other vulnerabilities that make them more vulnerable.

The demographic data gives important information about the size and traits of this group of people. As of May 1, 2025, the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) reported by Mülteciler Derneği (2025) that there were 2,758,039 Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTPs). This huge number shows how hard it is to host them. One thing that stands out about this group is the high number of women and children (0–17 years old), who made up 73.3% of all SuTPs (2,014,719). This shows how vulnerable they are when it comes to child protection, education, maternal health, and gender-specific needs. A large number of refugees live in major cities, such as Istanbul (481,011), Gaziantep (385,894), and Şanlıurfa (238,475). This has a big effect on the infrastructure, public services, job markets, and social cohesion in these areas. As of August 2024, about 238,768 Syrians had been granted Turkish citizenship (Mülteciler Derneği, 2025). This is a small percentage of the total SuTP population, which means that citizenship is not a common way for most people to permanently integrate into Turkish society. According to the UNHCR's number of 2,901,478 at the end of 2024 (UNHCR, n.d.-b) and PMM's number of 2,938,261 for November 2024 (IOM, 2024), the officially registered SuTP population may have gone down a little bit in late 2024 and early 2025. The official discourse and reported actions surrounding Syrian returns have intensified, which is consistent with this decline.

5.2.1. Precarious Lives: Socio-economic Vulnerability, Poverty, and Exploitation in the Informal Labor Market

For a lot of Syrian refugees, their socio-economic situation is very unstable. Many of them are poor and in debt because they can't meet their basic needs (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] & 3RP, 2024). The earthquakes in February 2023 made these problems much worse, especially in areas with a lot of refugees. Many more people became homeless (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2025). One report said that 83% of people who were affected, including refugees, saw their financial situations get worse (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC], 2025). While accurate and regularly updated poverty rates are hard to come by, a lot of evidence points to widespread economic hardship. The COVID-19 pandemic had an economic

effect that caused 1.5 million people in Türkiye, many of whom were refugees, to become poor (3RP, 2023). Research also shows that many Syrians in Türkiye want to move to a third country, often because their living conditions are bad (Imrie-Kuzu & Özerdem, 2023).

A big part of the problem is that people depend too much on the informal labor market. Even though the law says that SuTPs can apply for work permits (PMM, 2014), most working Syrians do so without a permit (International Labour Organization [ILO], n.d.-a). The ILO said that only a small number of Syrians (3% in earlier reports) work legally. There are about a million Syrians in the labor market, most of whom work in low-skilled, low-paid jobs with bad conditions, long hours, and wages below the minimum wage. Because of this informality, refugees can't get social security, legal protections, or job security, which makes them very vulnerable to being fired for no reason and having their wages stolen (3RP, 2023).

Türkiye's economic problems, like high inflation (47% by November 2024, 48.6% by October 2024) and a big drop in the value of the currency (Ferris, 2025), make refugees' already bad financial situations even worse. These macroeconomic pressures have reduced purchasing power for refugees and vulnerable host communities, increased competition for jobs and resources, and exacerbated social tensions and xenophobia.

The widespread use of informal work keeps people in precarious situations and makes them more vulnerable. This limits their access to social safety nets, legal recourse, and career advancement, which goes against the stated goals of refugee self-reliance (UNHCR, 2025c) by creating structural barriers to socio-economic stability. This dependence is a problem with the system that comes from limited access to formal jobs, how employers treat their workers, and the economy as a whole.

Also, host communities that are struggling financially, especially during national crises, have a big impact on how people feel about refugees, who can be blamed for bigger economic problems (Ferris, 2025). This dynamic, which politicians and the media often use to their advantage, spreads xenophobic stories, which makes society less stable and

makes refugees feel unsafe and unwelcome, which goes against official stories of "harmonious participation" (UNHCR, n.d.-a).

5.2.2. Barriers to Well-being and Integration: Access to Essential Services, Systemic Discrimination, and Social Exclusion

SuTPs in Türkiye have the legal right to use important public services like healthcare and education (UNHCR, n.d.-a), but they often can't because of practical and systemic problems. Official statistics from 2023 showed that 96.37% of people had access to healthcare (UNHCR, 2024), but qualitative evidence suggests that language barriers, lack of information, administrative hurdles, and discrimination make it harder to get care on time (Kaplan Zamanov et al., 2025). This problem got worse after the earthquakes, with some Syrians facing even more discrimination when trying to get help and healthcare (Kaloti et al., 2024).

In the same way, a UNICEF report from 2024 says that almost a million Syrian refugee children are going to school in Türkiye (Ferris, 2025), but about 400,000 are still not in school. The UNHCR's 2024 Education Report showed that almost half of school-aged refugee children around the world are not in school. Türkiye has worked hard to fix this, but problems like poverty (which forces children to work), language barriers, and possible discrimination still exist (USA for UNHCR, 2024). The Turkish government and UNHCR have promised to make it easier for people to get formal and vocational education.

Social exclusion and systemic discrimination are huge problems. Syrians say they face discrimination at work, in housing, when dealing with public services, and in the community as a whole (Ferris, 2025). This is often fueled by xenophobic language and negative stereotypes (Cevik, 2025), which makes them feel very alone and unsafe. Some studies show that Syrians change their names or behavior to avoid discrimination, which shows how hard it is on their mental health (Cevik, 2025; Ulum, 2025).

Integration through Turkish citizenship, which 86% of those surveyed in 2024 wanted (Ferris, 2025), is still complicated and political (Dinç & Capoluongo, 2016). By August 2024, about 238,768 Syrians had become citizens (Mülteciler Derneği, 2025), which is a

small number. For naturalized Syrians, being a citizen can mean better protection from deportation and possibly better access to formal jobs and travel (Ziss, 2024). However, research shows ambivalence: naturalized Syrians may lose humanitarian aid, face new financial obligations, and still be the target of racist discrimination, which can make them feel "stuck" and limit their options for moving or resettling (Ziss, 2024).

High-level statistics suggest widespread coverage, and official discourse frequently emphasizes service access (UNHCR, n.d.-a). However, this frequently hides significant qualitative barriers—language, discrimination, lack of information, and administrative complexities—that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable. This can lead to de facto exclusion even though de jure inclusion is there, where formal entitlement doesn't mean fair access.

So, "integration" for Syrian refugees in Türkiye seems to be very different for each group and very unclear. A small number of people may be formally included, but a large number of people are still in a liminal state of prolonged displacement where even temporary protection doesn't protect them from systemic discrimination, economic instability, or guarantee belonging and safety. Persistent xenophobia (Ferris, 2025) and widespread economic vulnerability (ILO, n.d.-a) for most people suggest that deeper integration is still out of reach, even though it has been more than ten years since the first wave of immigrants came to the country. This challenges simple stories and points to a complex, often contradictory lived experience.

5.2.3. The Psychological Toll: Mental Health Challenges and the Trauma of Protracted Displacement

The Syrian refugees in Türkiye have a lot of mental health problems because of trauma from the war, stress from being displaced, and the fact that things are still uncertain and hard (Kılıç et al., 2024). Studies show that a lot of people have mental health problems, like PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Kurt et al., 2025). The earthquakes in February 2023 made this trauma even worse, causing a lot of grief, secondary trauma, and urgent mental health needs for both Turkish citizens and refugees.

Even though mental health problems are very common among Syrian refugees, they have very little access to and use of formal mental health services. A study in Ankara found that even though a lot of people are having serious mental health problems, only 14.8% of them thought they needed mental health care since they got there, and only 1.4% of them had called a mental health service (Kılıç et al., 2024). Some of the main barriers that have been found are language problems, not having enough information, being afraid of being judged, having problems with daily life that make mental health concerns less important, and cultural differences in how to deal with mental health.

These burdens are made much worse by the fact that people have to move around for a long time. Living in a state of constant uncertainty with few chances for long-term solutions, along with constant social and economic pressures, discrimination, and worries, has a huge effect (Ferris, 2025). These stressors are made worse by negative stories and a hostile environment.

The huge difference between the high number of people with mental health problems and the very low number of people who use mental health services shows that the system is failing to provide culturally appropriate, accessible, and non-stigmatized mental health care. Mental health problems that aren't treated can become long-term, making it harder to work, learn, parent, and socialize. This makes it harder to integrate into society, increases the need for help, and harms the stability of families and communities. Mental health seems to be a low priority in the larger refugee response, even though it is very important. To fix this, we need to reach out to people, use culturally appropriate methods, hire professionals who speak both languages, and work to fight stigma.

5.2.4. Compounded Vulnerabilities: The Intersectional Experiences of Women, Children, Persons with Disabilities, and Earthquake Survivors

Some groups of Syrian refugees are more vulnerable than others because they are refugees and also have other factors like gender, age, disability, or specific traumas like surviving the 2023 earthquakes. Policies often don't do a good job of dealing with these overlapping problems.

Syrian refugee women with disabilities face a "multiplicity of insecurities," such as being more likely to be a victim of violence, having trouble getting around, having trouble getting their rights and services, and having to deal with huge daily survival problems (Karadağ Avci & Şengül, 2024). Laws at both the national and international levels often ignore this intersectionality, which makes these women feel left out.

Refugee women and girls are more likely to be victims of gender-based violence (GBV), such as domestic violence and sexual exploitation. This risk is even higher in unsafe living situations like overcrowded temporary shelters that are common after earthquakes (The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, 2025). Türkiye's decision to leave the Istanbul Convention is said to make things worse for all women, including refugees.

Children, who make up a large part of SuTPs (73.3% are women and children under 18) (Mülteciler Derneği, 2025), are at higher risk. Many of them are still not in school, which puts them at risk of child labor, early marriage (for girls), and not having enough chances to grow up healthy (Ferris, 2025). They also have mental health problems. The TPR (PMM, 2014) says that unaccompanied minors are especially at risk and should get special care.

The earthquakes in February 2023 destroyed areas that were home to more than 1.7 million refugees (UNHCR, 2024). At least 7,700 foreigners, many of whom were Syrian, died in Türkiye. Survivors went through a lot of loss and had to move again (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2025). Reports say that Syrians often had a harder time getting emergency help, shelter, and healthcare than Turkish citizens did (Kurt et al., 2025). Many of them ended up in temporary sites with few resources (IFRC, 2025). The earthquakes made their trauma and unstable situations even worse.

Big problems like the earthquakes in 2023 tend to make problems that were already there worse and patterns of discrimination stronger. The earthquakes made things worse for Syrian refugees, who were already struggling with instability (UNDP & 3RP, 2024). They showed how social biases can make it harder for people on the fringes of society to get help. Reports of unfair distribution of aid (Kurt et al., 2025) show how underlying biases can get in the way of humanitarian goals.

5.2.5. Navigating a Hostile Environment: Xenophobia, Violence, and the Erosion of Safety

The social environment for Syrian refugees in Türkiye has become more and more hostile. There is more xenophobia, violence, and a lack of safety (Cevik, 2025), which is often caused by worries about the economy, inflammatory political speech, and negative media scapegoating (Ferris, 2025). Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that Türkiye's high cost of living and the use of anti-refugee sentiment for political gain were both linked to this trend (The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, 2025; HRW, 2025a). UNHCR (2024) said that discrimination and harassment were getting worse before the May 2023 elections.

Direct physical violence, such as pogrom-like attacks in places like Altındağ, Ankara (Cevik, 2025), targeted attacks on Syrian-owned shops and vehicles, and the deaths of Syrians, including a 17-year-old boy in Antalya and violent incidents in Kayseri (GAR, 2025), have resulted from this hostile discourse.

There are many reports of illegal deportations to northern Syria, which often involve forcing people to sign "voluntary return" forms and mass summary pushbacks at borders (Davatzes, 2025). This makes things even less safe and goes against non-refoulement. Amnesty International (n.d.-b) said in its 2024 reporting period that some refugees and migrants were still at risk of being sent back to their home countries illegally. Earlier AIDA reports also documented these deportations (ECRE, 2021).

It has been said that conditions in detention and deportation centers are terrible. A report from the STJ in April 2025 said that centers like Şanlıurfa, Tuzla, and Oğuzeli were severely overcrowded, had poor sanitation, inadequate healthcare, widespread physical violence, psychological pressure from guards, and denied legal representation. It also said that five Syrian refugees died because of alleged malnutrition, lack of healthcare, and torture, and that there were EU-logoed items in these facilities (STJ, 2025).

The protection space is shrinking because of rising xenophobia, regular illegal returns, and terrible conditions in deportation centers. This seems to be a sign of a systemic change in Türkiye's approach, moving away from earlier humanitarian pretenses and toward a

more openly hostile, deterrence-focused strategy, likely driven by political calculations at home and a weakening commitment to international protection principles. This has fundamentally changed the lives of refugees.

5.3. Ethical Contradictions at the Nexus of Discourse and Affliction

The sections before this one talked about how to talk about the issues of Syrian refugees in Türkiye and the often grim realities of their lives. This comparison shows that Türkiye's refugee policy is deeply unethical because it doesn't live up to its stated humanitarian goals and protection obligations, while many Syrians are suffering and having their rights taken away.

5.3.1. The "Voluntary Return" Conundrum: Coercion, the Principle of Non-Refoulement, and the Elusive Prospect of Safe and Dignified Return

"Voluntary return" is a big ethical issue. Official Turkish discourse, especially since the Assad regime fell in December 2024, always stresses that returns are voluntary, safe, dignified, and orderly, often pointing out the UNHCR's role in monitoring them (Davatzes, 2025). Minister Yerlikaya said that the process is "managed transparently" and that there is "no room for any doubts" (PMM, 2025). President Erdoğan said that "no one will be forced to leave" (Nordic Monitor, 2025).

However, this story is completely wrong. Many reports show that refugees are forced to sign "voluntary return" forms under duress and live in "unbearable" conditions in Türkiye because of restrictive measures and poor detention conditions. This makes refugees "choose" to return (ECRE, 2021). The STJ (2025) report says that torture, abuse, and extreme psychological pressure are used in deportation centers to get people to sign these forms. According to GAR (2025), the hardships people face and policies that focus on security make returns only voluntary in name.

This tension directly affects non-refoulement, which is a key part of international refugee law found in Article 4 of Türkiye's LFIP. However, reports of forced returns to Syria,

where conditions are still very unstable and dangerous for many, raise serious concerns about violations (Davatzes, 2025). Syria still has a bad humanitarian situation, destroyed infrastructure, an economy that is falling apart, and ongoing human rights violations (GAR, 2025). UNHCR's May 2025 report (2025b) said that more people were returning to Syria, but it also talked about the big problems that returnees were facing there, like damage to property, bad infrastructure, and uneven access to services. A UNHCR intentions survey from early 2025 found that more people wanted to return (80% someday, 27% within a year), but they also wanted to check out the situation first (Ferris, 2025). "Go and See" visits (UNHCR, 2025a) are meant to help people make informed decisions, but some people are worried that going could mean losing temporary protection or social assistance in Türkiye, which would put pressure on people to return.

The government's stronger push for "voluntary returns" after December 2024, which is framed as a response to new opportunities, is morally wrong because Türkiye is still using coercive measures and many potential returnees in Syria still don't have safe, dignified, and sustainable living conditions. This makes things difficult because "voluntariness" might mean desperation, a lack of good options, or pressure, not a real free choice. This could lead to constructive refoulement.

UNHCR's role in keeping an eye on these returns is meant to protect them and give them legitimacy, which is something that Turkish officials often say (PMM, 2025). If monitoring isn't strong enough, independent enough, or empowered enough to challenge state narratives, this may unintentionally hide underlying coercion. With so many reported returns (UNHCR, 2025b) and documented pressures (GAR, 2025), it's hard to know how deep, wide, and effective monitoring is at stopping non-voluntary returns. This puts humanitarian workers in an ethically tricky spot.

5.3.2. Rights in Principle versus Rights in Practice: The Chasm Between Legal Entitlements and Lived Realities

There is also a big moral problem with the fact that Syrian refugees in Türkiye have rights that they can't actually use. The TPR lists rights such as identity documents, healthcare,

education, social assistance, and possible work permits (PMM, 2014), which creates a discourse of protection.

But a lot of Syrians have big problems that make it hard for them to fully enjoy these rights. Access to the formal labor market is still hard to come by; most people work in the informal sector, where they are taken advantage of (ILO, n.d.-a). Healthcare is technically available, but it has problems like language barriers, a lack of information, red tape, and discrimination (Kaloti et al., 2024). A lot of kids still aren't going to school (Ferris, 2025). The *yol izin belgesi* (travel permit) system, which is often not applied consistently and is hard to understand, limits people's freedom of movement (UNHCR, n.d.-a).

This problem is made worse by the bigger picture of the rule of law in Türkiye. Reports show that the independence of the courts is declining and that people are ignoring ECtHR decisions (The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, 2025). Refugees have a hard time getting justice for rights violations like illegal deportation attempts, abuse, and discrimination because they don't have enough legal help, are afraid of getting in trouble, don't speak the language, and the process is hard to understand (ECRE, 2021). A ruling by the Constitutional Court in 2020 confirmed that administrative appeals against deportation have a suspensive effect. This made some protections stronger, but people are still worried about how easy it is to get help in general.

Widespread xenophobia and discriminatory practices make it harder for people to not be discriminated against, which is a basic human right (Ferris, 2025). The state's failure to effectively counter this, and perceptions that political rhetoric may fuel it, erode refugees' ability to claim rights equally.

This ongoing gap between de jure rights and de facto realities is not just a bureaucratic mistake; it is a fundamental moral contradiction. It suggests that a system is keeping up the appearance of legality while allowing or even encouraging widespread disenfranchisement. This difference, which has been around for years and received help, calls into question the state's true commitment to its own laws and international standards.

Also, the documented decline of the rule of law and judicial independence has a bigger effect on vulnerable groups like refugees, who depend on strong legal protections. It is

harder to get legal help or fight deportations (ECRE, 2021), which shows how this decline leads to specific harms and makes it easier for rights violations to happen without punishment, which makes the ethical deficit worse.

5.3.3. The Instrumentalization of Protection: Geopolitical Calculations and the Subordination of Refugee Welfare

There is also an ethical problem with how Syrian refugees are governed because protection is used for political purposes, and refugee rights and welfare seem to be put behind bigger geopolitical and domestic political goals at times.

The 2016 *EU-Türkiye Statement* is an example of how refugees have become a key part of geopolitical negotiations (Tantardini & Tolay, 2020). In this case, Türkiye agreed to control migration flows in exchange for money and political support. These kinds of agreements, which are said to be practical, run the risk of treating refugees as political bargaining chips, with their protection needs coming second to the state's strategic interests. This would shift the focus from individual rights to border control.

Turkish officials often talk about how much it costs to host refugees, saying that it costs tens of billions of dollars (Akmehmet, 2015). This is a common discourse used to ask for help from other countries. It's okay to call for solidarity, but framing refugees mainly as a "cost" can make them less human and support policies that aim to lower their numbers, even if that means lowering protection standards. Since 2016, the EU has given a lot of money, almost $11 billion (Coşkun & Kirişci, 2023).

Also, there is a clear conflict between Türkiye's initial "open door" policy and humanitarian rhetoric (Çoban, 2024) and later restrictive measures, rising anti-refugee sentiment, and reports of abuse (GAR, 2025). This suggests that Türkiye is practicing selective humanitarianism, where compassion can be set aside in favor of changing domestic political pressures or foreign policy goals.

This use of refugees as tools changes them from people with basic rights who deserve protection because they are human and vulnerable into strategic assets or liabilities. Such

a change goes against the moral principles of refugee protection, which say that responses should be based on human dignity, international law, and humanitarian need, not on how useful they are for achieving other state goals. Protection loses its credibility when it becomes a tool rather than an obligation.

5.3.4. Deficits in Accountability and Justice: Impunity for Abuses and Obstacles to Redress

A last important moral problem is the lack of accountability and justice for human rights violations against Syrian refugees in Türkiye and Turkish-controlled parts of Syria. Human rights groups have credible reports of people being mistreated in detention, being forced to return to their home countries, being deported illegally, and violence by security forces or armed groups backed by Türkiye in Syria. However, it seems that accountability is very rare (The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, 2025; HRW, 2025a). HRW cited the UN Committee against Torture, which raised concerns about mistreatment in Turkish detention centers and said that these types of abuses are often reclassified as lesser crimes, which could make it harder to hold people accountable.

This lack of accountability is part of a larger problem with the rule of law in Türkiye, where the government often ignores binding ECHR decisions. This kind of defiance shows a weakening commitment to established legal standards, which makes it easier for people to get away with things.

Refugee-led organizations (RLOs) and other civil society groups help, but they often can't hold the system accountable because they don't have enough money or the right policies at home (Refugee Studies Centre, 2023).

There is de facto impunity because there is a widespread lack of accountability for abuses against refugees, as well as systemic weaknesses in the rule of law, a lack of independent oversight, and restrictions on civil society. This is unfair to the victims and sends the message that these kinds of crimes may be tolerated, which could give the criminals more power and lead to more crimes. This kind of systemic failure is a serious moral failure

that shows that refugees' lives, rights, and dignity are not being valued or protected enough. This breaks down trust and keeps injustice going.

6 DISCUSSION: INTERROGATING POWER AND EXISTENCE IN THE GOVERNANCE OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

This chapter takes a philosophical look at the results from Chapter 5 and tries to put together a critical synthesis of how Syrian refugees are governed in Türkiye by using the complementary and sometimes conflicting ideas of Michel Foucault's power analytics and Simone Weil's ethical-metaphysical framework, which were set up in Chapter 3. The analysis always focuses on Syrians under Temporary Protection (TP), who make up the majority of displaced Syrians in Türkiye. However, when appropriate, comparisons will be made with naturalized Syrians. This is because formal citizenship may change some bureaucratic or mobility issues, but it does not always solve problems that have been around for a long time, like being excluded from the labor market, facing bias in society, or having trouble getting services. So, this discussion goes on by carefully looking at important parts of governance and experience, combining real-world data with strong theoretical engagement to reach this important synthesis.

6.1. The Foucauldian Architecture of Discursive Power: "Guest" and "Temporary Protection" as Governmental Technologies

This section starts by looking at how certain ways of talking, like using terms like "Guest" and the idea of "Temporary Protection," work as tools of power that affect how the government and society see Syrian refugees in Türkiye.

The Turkish government's treatment of Syrian refugees is a great example of Foucauldian discursive power. For example, the term "guest" (*misafir*) was widely used during the early stages of the influx, and their legal status was later formalized under a "*Temporary Protection regime*." These are not neutral administrative categories (Kaya & Yılmaz Eren, 2015; PMM, 2014; Toğral Koca, 2016). In fact, Foucault (1972, p. 49) says that these kinds of discourses "are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak." So, the first framing of Syrians as "guests," which seemed to draw on cultural

traditions of hospitality and religious solidarity like the *ensar-muhacir* narrative, worked in a Foucauldian way to make the Syrian presence seem temporary and dependent on the host's goodwill. This set it apart from the rights that come with formal refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention (Apaydın, 2024; Çoban, 2024; Kaya & Yılmaz Eren, 2015; Toğral Koca, 2016). This naming is therefore closely related to Foucault's (1978) idea of power/knowledge, in which power creates and spreads a certain "knowledge" or "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1978, p. 102) about Syrians, such as their supposed transience and their position outside of traditional rights frameworks. This, in turn, makes certain forms of state control legitimate and limits their ability to make claims under international refugee law.

The "Temporary Protection" regime, which was set up under Article 91 of the *Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP)* No. 6458 and explained in the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR), is another way that this idea of impermanence is becoming more institutionalized. Its name alone shows that the state wants to avoid long-term integration and keep the possibility of return as a central goal (PMM, 2013, 2014; UNHCR, n.d.-a, 2025a). This legal and discursive framework is a sophisticated form of governmentality, which is a type of power that manages populations through planned techniques and rationalities aimed at achieving certain political and social goals, like controlling population flows and keeping social order (Foucault, 1982; Foucault, 2007, pp. 87-14, 108). The official discourse moving toward "voluntary, safe, dignified, and orderly return," which has been especially strong since December 2024, along with the promotion of "*Türkiye's Migration Management Model*," are more examples of these government strategies. They want to project an image of control, efficiency, and humanitarian legitimacy while also actively shaping the "field of possible actions" for refugees toward repatriation (Davatzes, 2025; Foucault, 1982, p. 221; PMM, 2025). These discursive practices not only affect how the government works, such as how people register and get services, how they can move around, and how they can get protection, but they also have a big effect on how people see each other. This creates a situation where Syrians are often seen through the lens of their temporary and conditional status, which affects how they interact with others and their sense of belonging in Turkish society

(Cevik, 2025; ECRE, 2021; PMM, 2014; Saylan & Aknur, 2023; Toğral Koca, 2016; UNHCR, n.d.-a).

6.2. The Nexus of Governance and Existence: How Discursive Structures Shape Syrian Lived Realities

Based on this, the conversation now looks at how these big-picture discursive and governmental structures affect the real-life experiences of Syrian refugees, especially when it comes to their social and economic instability, their ability to fit in, and their mental health.

6.2.1. Socio-Economic Precarity as a Governed Condition

Many Syrian refugees in Türkiye are very vulnerable in terms of their social and economic situation. This is not just an unfortunate side effect of being displaced; it seems to be linked to the way they are managed by the government and the way people talk about them (3RP, 2023; IFRC, 2025; UNDP & 3RP, 2024). The "*Temporary Protection*" regime and official discourse put a lot of emphasis on temporariness. At the same time, a strict legal and administrative framework makes it very hard for most Syrians to get formal jobs. This forces them into the informal labor market, where they have to deal with bad conditions, low pay, long hours, and no social security or job stability (3RP, 2023; ILO, n.d.-a; PMM, 2025; UNHCR, 2025a). This situation, which is made worse by Türkiye's own economic problems, can be seen as a result of biopolitical management, a type of power that tries to control and improve the lives of populations (Ferris, 2025; Foucault, 1978, p. 136; Foucault, 1978, pp. 137–140; Foucault, 2003, pp. 245–246). In this situation, this kind of power seems to create a refugee population that is economically useful as a flexible, low-cost labor source. At the same time, it manages the refugees to limit their long-term claims on state resources and discourage permanent settlement, which conditions the "temporary subject" to live in a precarious way. Even for naturalized Syrians, citizenship may protect them from deportation and give them better access to formal jobs, but they still face big problems in the job market and discrimination, which

shows that precarity is deeply rooted in social and economic structures beyond just legal status (Ziss, 2024).

6.2.2. Barriers to Social Integration as Discursive and Administrative Constructs

The dominant discursive and administrative frameworks make it very hard for Syrian refugees to really integrate into society, since the official and societal focus on their "temporary" status works against long-term integration efforts (Cevik, 2025; PMM, 2025; UNHCR, 2025a). Administrative barriers, such as the complicated and often inconsistent travel permit system (yol izin belgesi), housing restrictions, and problems with registering or keeping registration, act as Foucauldian disciplinary mechanisms that not only control physical presence but also subtly control behavior and limit opportunities for building stable lives and stronger community ties (ECRE, 2021; Foucault, 1995, pp. 184–194; UNHCR, n.d.-a). Also, the politicization of the refugee issue and the use of negative stereotypes in some media and political discourse make discrimination and social exclusion much worse, as shown in the "Results" chapter (Apaydın, 2024; Cevik, 2025; Ferris, 2025; Saylan & Aknur, 2023). These barriers, which are not random, can be seen as the result of a governmentality that, whether on purpose or by accident, keeps the refugee and host societies separate to some extent, reinforcing their unique and controlled status (Foucault, 2007). Giving citizenship to a small number of Syrians has some benefits, but it doesn't mean that most people can easily integrate, and it doesn't completely protect people from ongoing discrimination (Mülteciler Derneği, 2025; Ziss, 2024).

6.2.3. Psychological Well-being under the Gaze of power

The high rates of PTSD, depression, anxiety, and trauma among Syrian refugees are directly related to the uncertainty, socio-economic instability, discrimination, and lack of future opportunities caused by the current government and media structures (Kurt et al., 2025; Cevik, 2025; Ferris, 2025; Kılıç et al., 2024; UNDP & 3RP, 2024). Living under a "*temporary protection*" regime that stresses eventual return, dealing with constant

financial problems, a complicated and often unresponsive bureaucracy, and social exclusion and hostility all add up to chronic stressors that hurt mental health (Cevik, 2025; ECRE, 2021; Ferris, 2025; UNHCR, 2025a; UNDP & 3RP, 2024). This erosion can be seen as a result of Foucauldian power on the production of subjectivity, where the refugee subject is shaped not only by outside controls but also by an internalization of their unstable and conditional status, which makes them less able to act, hope, and feel safe (Foucault, 1978, pp. 58-65; Foucault, 1982, p. 221; Foucault, 1995, pp. 184-194). The fact that there aren't enough mental health services that are easy to get to and culturally appropriate, even though there is a clear need for them, shows how this group's well-being can be overlooked in larger biopolitical calculations that may put other aspects of population management ahead of holistic psychosocial support (Foucault, 1978, pp. 137–140).

6.3. The Weight of Existence: Syrian Experiences as Weilian Malheur and *Déracinement*

The next step is to use Simone Weil's philosophy to look at how much the situations that Syrians are in while they are under Temporary Protection are like states of affliction (*malheur*) and uprootedness (*déracinement*).

6.3.1. Defining Déracinement (Uprootedness) in the Turkish Context

Simone Weil says that rootedness is a basic human need. She describes it as "real, active, and natural participation in the life of a community that preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future." On the other hand, uprootedness (*déracinement*) is a "serious spiritual disease" that cuts these important connections, leaving people adrift, alone, and spiritually malnourished (Weil, 2005, p. 43, pp. 43–44). The documented experiences of Syrian refugees in Türkiye are a powerful example of this Weilian idea, starting with the violent cutting of their roots when they were forced to leave Syria. The way they are received in Türkiye makes this situation worse and keeps it going. The official label "temporarily protected," which implies that

they will eventually leave, makes it harder for them to put down new, stable roots in Turkish society (UNHCR, 2025a). Restrictive policies about formal employment, limits on freedom of movement and choice of residence, problems with finding safe housing, and a general feeling of social exclusion and discrimination all contribute to a state of prolonged *déracinement*. This often keeps refugees from fully participating in the life of the host community in a way that fosters genuine belonging or lets them draw sustenance from its "particular treasures" and future expectations (Cevik, 2025; Ferris, 2025; ILO, n.d.-a; UNHCR, n.d.-a). This long state of suspension keeps people from getting the "essential spiritual food" that rootedness gives them, which makes them very unstable and makes them feel like they don't have a future (Weil, 2005, p. 43).

6.3.2. Manifestations of *Malheur* (Affliction) in Daily Life

Many Syrian refugees' lived experiences are very similar to Simone Weil's idea of *malheur*, or affliction. She says that *malheur* is a deeper, more crushing weight than simple suffering, and it often includes social degradation, humiliation, and a deep sense of helplessness before impersonal forces that turn a person into a "thing" (Weil, 2009, p. 79). The "Results" chapter shows many examples of this affliction. For example, Weil's description of objectifying force is similar to the socio-economic exploitation that is common in the informal labor market, where people are often treated as disposable (ILO, n.d.-a; Weil, 2009, p. 79). The constant uncertainty about legal status, the fear of deportation, and the arbitrary nature of bureaucratic decisions can make people feel very powerless. Documented experiences of xenophobia, public hostility, and even physical violence cause not only physical harm but also the social degradation and humiliation that are at the heart of *malheur* (Cevik, 2025; Davatzes, 2025; GAR, 2025; HRW, 2025a). In addition, the terrible conditions reported in detention and deportation centers—overcrowding, poor sanitation, violence, and psychological pressure—are places where human dignity is taken away and people are subjected to objectifying force (STJ, 2025). According to Kurt et al. (2025; Klç et al., 2024), the widespread psychological distress, such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety, can be understood not just as a medical condition but also as the soul's reaction to enduring affliction. Weil (2009, p. 79) talks about the

"metallic coldness of indifference" that comes from impersonal mechanisms of force. This is similar to how the refugee population is often managed in an impersonal, bureaucratic, and security-focused way. In Weilian terms, this management style "freezes all those it touches right to the depths of their souls," which is a form of affliction (Foucault, 2007, pp. 67-70).

6.4. The Ethical Imperative: Weil's Call for Attention, Obligation, and Justice

After that, Simone Weil's ideas about attention, obligation, and justice are used to think about the moral effects of Türkiye's handling of the Syrian refugee population.

6.4.1. The Deficit of Weilian Attention

Simone Weil gives the practice of attention a lot of moral weight. She doesn't see it as just focusing on something cognitively, but as a difficult, compassionate, and sustained orientation toward the real, especially the reality of another person's suffering and unique humanity. True attention means "suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object," which means that we have to radically de-center ourselves in order to really "read" another person's affliction (Weil, 2009, p. 72). The way Türkiye treats Syrian refugees often lacks the kind of deep attention that Weil talks about. For example, the way they are labeled as "guests" or "temporary," the focus on managing large numbers and controlling population flows, and the politicization of their presence all work against this kind of attention (Apaydın, 2024; PMM, 2025; Saylan & Aknur, 2023; Toğral Koca, 2016; UNHCR, 2025a). These ways of framing tend to make groups that can hide or even erase the complicated, personal, and often traumatic reality of forced migration, replacing it with simple, useful, or impersonal labels (Weil, 2005, pp. 117–123). Focusing too much on abstract categories and managerial imperatives—what Foucault calls the "classifying eye of biopolitical management" or the "prejudiced eye formed by securitizing discourses"—prevents a genuine encounter with the irreducible reality of each displaced person's suffering, needs, and inherent sacredness, preventing an ethically appropriate response.

6.4.2. The Unmet Duties to Uprooted Souls

Weil's ethics are based on the idea of obligation, which she says is unconditional, eternal, and "anterior to right." These obligations are owed to every human being simply because they are human, because they recognize an unspoken, impersonal, and sacred part of themselves. To fulfill these obligations, we must meet the "earthly needs" of both physical and spiritual human beings (Weil, 2005, p. 3, p. 6, p. 94). When looked at through this Weilian lens, the way Türkiye handles Syrian refugees shows many important ways in which these deep obligations seem to be unmet. The obligation to provide for fundamental human needs like rootedness, security, order, liberty, and dignity is not met by policies that institutionalize temporariness and precarity, restrict access to secure livelihoods, impede the formation of new roots, and contribute to an atmosphere of insecurity and fear. Similar to this, the increased push for "voluntary returns" is a failure of this Weilian obligation if it is motivated by political expediency or a desire to lower the number of refugees rather than by a primary concern for the genuine, informed, and safe choice of people returning to conditions of true stability. It seems that the focus is more often on the Foucauldian question of "How can we safely and effectively control this population?" than on the Weilian imperative of "What are our responsibilities toward these uprooted human souls, and how can our society meet their basic needs?"

6.4.3. The Nature of Weilian Justice Beyond Rights and Management

For Weil, justice is more fundamentally about society organizing itself to meet the unconditional obligations arising from the basic physical and spiritual needs of all its members (Weil, 2005, p. 3, p. 6). Weil's conception of justice differs significantly from modern discourses centered on rights, which she frequently found to be shallow, contingent, and lacking a firm foundation in the transcendent. So, a fair response to the presence of Syrian refugees in Türkiye would go beyond the logic of just managing them biopolitically or giving them limited, revocable "rights" associated with "temporary protection." Instead, it would require a strong and unwavering commitment to meeting the deep obligations owed to them as human beings whose basic needs have been severely

violated by war and displacement (Foucault, 1978; Weil, 2005, p. 3, p. 6). According to a Weilian perspective, there is a significant injustice when rights in principle, as stated in the TPR, and their frequently inaccessible reality in practice for many Syrians (Ferris, 2025; ILO, n.d.-a; Kaloti et al., 2024; PMM, 2014; UNHCR, n.d.-a). The "voluntary return" problem, which is full of reports of coercion and questionable conditions for returnees, also indicates a failure of Weilian justice because it appears to prioritize state objectives over the genuine well-being and freely determined future of individuals. True Weilian justice requires a societal orientation that continuously works to alleviate affliction and foster conditions for rootedness for all, especially the most vulnerable.

6.5. Toward a Critical-Ethical Synthesis: The Combined Power of Foucault and Weil

This chapter concludes by looking at how Weil's ethical framework and Foucault's analysis of power can work together to create a deeper, more critical understanding of the challenges and obligations that come with governing forced migration.

6.5.1. Foucault's Analytics of Power: Revealing How suffering is Produced and Managed

Michel Foucault's conceptual toolkit includes discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary mechanisms, biopolitics, governmentality, and the production of subjectivity. These are all important tools for breaking down the often subtle and widespread ways that power works in governing forced migration. His analysis goes beyond just legal ideas of power as repressive. It shows how power can also shape realities, define categories, manage populations, and make subjects (Foucault, 1972, p. 49; Foucault, 1978, p. 102; Foucault, 1982, p. 221). Foucault's ideas help us understand how labels like "guest" or "temporary" are not just words that describe people, but also ways of exercising power that make Syrians into certain types of manageable subjects with limited rights (Kaya & Yılmaz Eren, 2015; Toğral Koca, 2016). It also shows that legal and administrative systems, while they may seem to provide order or help, are also disciplinary and governmental

technologies that control behavior, limit movement, limit opportunities, and keep people in a state of conditionality and precarity (ECRE, 2021; Foucault, 1995; Foucault, 2007; ILO, n.d.-a; UNHCR, n.d.-a). Foucault's work helps us understand critically how the "uprooted soul vulnerable to affliction" is not an accidental result but can be a subject created or made worse by certain government strategies and rationales, even those framed in humanitarian terms. This lets us see how categories and practices that cause suffering or deny human flourishing have changed over time and how they can be used strategically.

6.5.2. Weil's Ethics: Providing the Compass to Evaluate Power's Effects

Simone Weil's ethical and metaphysical philosophy offers the crucial normative compass to assess these effects from the point of view of profound human need and moral obligation, while Foucault's analytics excel at diagnosing the mechanisms and effects of power. Her ideas about the "needs of the soul," such as rootedness, order, liberty, security, responsibility, equality, honor, and truth, along with the terrible reality of *déracinement* and *malheur*, the moral need for attention, the importance of unconditional obligation, and her own view of justice, provide a strong way to look at the human cost of the power dynamics that Foucault uncovers (Weil, 2005, pp. 3, 6, 7-42, 43; Weil, 2009, pp. 72, 79). Weil forces us to move our attention away from just managing populations and toward the real pain and sacredness of each person. So, while Foucault shows how categories are made and subjects are controlled, Weil asks whether these processes violate basic human needs and moral obligations. She says that "unqualified satisfaction of obligations resulting from the basic, sacred needs of every human being" is a higher standard by which to judge policies and practices, no matter how rational or efficient they claim to be (Weil, 2005, p. 6).

6.5.3. The Productive Tension and Richer Understanding in Governing Forced Migration

Foucault's critical analysis of power and Weil's deep ethics of obligation and attention work together to create a dynamic and productive tension that helps us understand the complexities of governing forced migration in a deeper and more nuanced way. Foucault's constant historicizing of ideas like "justice," "human nature," and "rights," along with his doubt about universal truths, is a crucial check against the possibility that even well-meaning ethical frameworks, if they are made into institutions, could become new grids of normalization or subtle forms of power. His work encourages constant critical vigilance about how power works behind the scenes in discourses of care, protection, or rights. Weil's unwavering grounding of ethics in metaphysical realities—like the Good, the sacredness of the person, and the unchanging needs of the soul—on the other hand, gives us an essential moral anchor that keeps us from falling into relativism and gives us a strong moral reason to fight against power structures that cause suffering and dehumanize.

These frameworks work together to allow for a multi-layered analysis. For example, Foucault helps us break down how state power and discursive practices affect the lives and identities of refugees, which often leads to situations of precarity and control. Weil then gives us the moral standards by which to evaluate these situations, calling for a steadfast commitment to easing suffering, restoring dignity, and upholding the deep obligations owed to every uprooted person. So, this combined theoretical approach goes deeper than just looking at policies on the surface or making simple criticisms. It digs into the deep structures of power and their effects on people's lives, which leads to a more critical, morally sound, and human-centered understanding of the huge problems and moral obligations that come with dealing with forced migration in the modern world.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1. Recapitulation: The Echoes of Uprootedness and the Gaze of Power

This thesis looked into the complicated and often sad realities of modern uprootedness, using the Syrian exodus to Türkiye as a powerful and deeply layered example. It started with the question, "*What's in a name?*" (Shakespeare, n.d., *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2), which looked at how the labels given to displaced people, like "guest" and "beneficiary of temporary protection," are not just administrative conveniences but powerful discursive tools that can take people away from their sense of self and make the sacred human task of re-rooting in foreign soil more difficult (Weil, 1952). The core of our inquiry, as articulated in Chapter 1, sought to unveil how such naming, intertwined with governmental rationalities and power dynamics, shapes the lived experiences of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, particularly when viewed through the combined, critical lenses of Michel Foucault and Simone Weil.

The main questions that drove this research were:

- How do specific discursive practices, notably the use of labels like "Guest" and the concept of "Temporary Protection," function as Foucauldian technologies of power, influencing the governance and social perception of Syrian refugees in Türkiye?
- How do these macro-level discursive and governmental structures intersect with the documented lived realities of Syrian refugees, especially concerning socio-economic precarity, social integration, and psychological well-being?
- To what extent do the circumstances experienced by Syrians under Temporary Protection in Türkiye align with Simone Weil's philosophical conceptualizations of affliction (*malheur*) and uprootedness (*déracinement*)?
- What are the profound ethical ramifications of Türkiye's governance of its Syrian refugee population when assessed through Weil's notions of attention, obligation, and justice?

- Ultimately, how does the synthesis of Foucault's analytics of power and Weil's ethical framework provide a richer, more critically nuanced understanding of the challenges and responsibilities inherent in governing forced migration?

This final chapter tries to bring together the main results of this study, explain how this integrated approach adds to the existing body of knowledge, discuss possible policy and practical implications, acknowledge the study's limitations, and suggest directions for future research. It will end with a thought that echoes the humanistic concerns that started this intellectual journey.

7.2. Synthesis of Key Findings: Discursive Governance, Lived Affliction, and Ethical Imperatives

The study, which combined a Foucauldian discourse analysis with a Weilian-informed secondary qualitative data analysis, has revealed a complicated and often contradictory picture.

Chapter 5 of The Architecture of Discursive Governance, which was supported by the discussion in Chapter 6, showed how the discourse surrounding Syrian refugees in Türkiye has strategically changed over time. The "Temporary Protection" (TP) regime (PMM, 2013, 2014) came after an initial story that focused on religious solidarity and "guest" status (*misafir*) (Toğral Koca, 2016; Çoban, 2024). More recently, especially after the reported fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, this discourse has become more focused on "voluntary, safe, dignified, and orderly return," often using UNHCR monitoring to make it seem more legitimate (PMM, 2025; Davatzes, 2025). As Foucault (1972, 1978) would say, these stories don't just describe things; they also actively shape the "refugee subject" as temporary and manageable, which justifies certain types of government that put state control and eventual repatriation ahead of long-term integration for many. The *Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP)* and the *Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR)* are examples of governmental technologies (Foucault, 2007) that set rights in principle while also putting in place mechanisms—like restrictive movement permits (yol izin belgesi) and unclear de-registration codes (ECRE,

2021)—that keep people in a state of precarity and subtly force them to make "voluntary" choices. The politicization and securitization of refugees, especially during elections (Apaydın, 2024; Saylan & Aknur, 2023), and the use of the refugee issue in international relations, especially the *EU-Türkiye Statement* (Tantardini & Tolay, 2020), show even more how discursive power affects policy and perception, often to the detriment of refugees' well-being.

The Landscape of Lived Affliction: The real-life experiences of many Syrians are very different from what these official stories say. As detailed in Chapter 5, a significant majority face profound socio-economic vulnerability, with widespread poverty and reliance on informal, exploitative labor (ILO, n.d.-a; UNDP & 3RP, 2024). Even though TP gives people the right to access basic services like healthcare and education, they often can't do so because of practical and systemic problems, such as discrimination (Kaloti et al., 2024; Ferris, 2025). This widespread instability, along with social isolation and a dangerous environment full of xenophobia and violence (Cevik, 2025; GAR, 2025), takes a heavy toll on mental health, with high rates of trauma and mental health issues (Kılıç et al., 2024; Kurt et al., 2025). Simone Weil's ideas of *déracinement* (uprootedness) and *malheur* (affliction) are perfectly aligned with power under these conditions, as discussed in Chapter 6. Weil (2005) says that denying people the chance to put down new, stable roots and subjecting them to objectifying forces, social degradation, and deep powerlessness (Weil, 2009) are not just bad side effects but also systemic outcomes of their governance.

Ethical Contradictions and Imperatives: The clash between discursive governance and lived affliction brings up a lot of ethical contradictions. The government's focus on "voluntary return" is at odds with credible reports of coercion and the ongoing dangerous situation in Syria. This raises serious questions about the principle of non-refoulement (STJ, 2025; GAR, 2025). A systemic failure to meet fundamental obligations is indicated by the gap between rights outlined in law and their inaccessibility in practice (Weil, 2005). From a Weilian point of view, the way Türkiye treats Syrian refugees often shows a lack of "attention"—they don't really see and respond to how much they are suffering and what they need as humans (Weil, 2009). The use of protection for political ends and the

widespread lack of accountability for abuses are both damaging the ethical foundations of the refugee system.

7.3. Theoretical Contributions: Synthesizing Foucault and Weil

This thesis adds to the body of theory by carefully and consistently combining Foucauldian power analysis with Weilian ethics in the context of Türkiye's forced migration governance. As mentioned in Chapter 2, both frameworks have been used on their own in migration studies, but using them together in this case gives us a better and more critical understanding.

Foucault's theories (1972, 1978, 1991, 1995) gave us the tools to figure out how power works through discourse, legal frameworks, and administrative practices to define, control, and ultimately make the "Syrian refugee" a specific type of subject—temporary, conditional, and often unstable. This point of view goes beyond the simple idea that power is only repressive in the state, showing how it shapes realities and subjectivities in more subtle ways.

On the other hand, Simone Weil's philosophy (1951, 1952, 2005, 2009) gave people a moral compass that they couldn't live without. Her ideas about the "needs of the soul," especially rootedness, affliction (*malheur*), attention, obligation, and justice gave us a way to judge the effects of these Foucauldian power dynamics on people. Weil's insistence on the sacredness of the human person and the unconditional nature of obligations that come from it goes against governance models that are mostly based on security, political expediency, or managerial efficiency.

As explained in Chapters 3 and 6, the real theoretical contribution comes from the productive tension and complementarity between these two thinkers. Foucault's doubts about universal truths and his desire to put things in historical context are important checks against the idea that any ethical framework, even Weil's, could become a new way for power to normalize itself if it is put into institutions without thinking about it. On the other hand, Weil's deep moral and metaphysical insight protects against a purely cynical or relativistic view of power by stressing unchanging human needs and moral imperatives.

They work together to make an analysis that is aware of how power works while still being ethical and focused on people. This synthesis shows not only that refugees are suffering, but also how certain government policies and ways of talking can consistently create or make worse situations of uprootedness and affliction, and why this is a serious moral failure.

7.4. Practical and Policy Implications

The results and the theoretical framework used to look at them point to a number of policy and practical implications:

- Re-evaluating "Voluntary Return" Frameworks: Policymakers need to do more than just say they support "voluntary return"; they need to set up processes that are truly non-coercive. This needs strong, independent monitoring that can question what the government says, make sure that people are giving their full consent without any pressure (including economic and administrative pressure), and carefully look at the real conditions that returnees will face in Syria. The focus must change from setting numerical goals for return to making sure that any repatriation is safe, dignified, and long-lasting, in line with international non-refoulement principles (UNHCR, 2025a; GAR, 2025).
- Bridging the Rights-Reality Gap: We need to work to turn Temporary Protection's legal rights into real-life rights. This involves simplifying administrative procedures, providing accessible information in refugees' languages, actively combating discrimination in access to employment, housing, and services, and strengthening legal aid mechanisms (ECRE, 2021).
- Promoting Conditions for Rootedness: Policies should try to create a sense of stability and belonging, even if they are only "temporary." This includes making it easier for refugees to get formal jobs, helping them find long-term housing, investing in education that includes everyone, and making it easier for refugees and host communities to interact in meaningful ways. Weilian's need for roots (Weil, 1952) shows that being in a state of constant uncertainty is bad for you.

- Taking Action Against Xenophobia and Discursive Harm: The government has a duty to actively combat xenophobic stories and hate speech, including in the media and political discourse. Telling stories that emphasize our common humanity and respect for each other is very important for keeping refugees safe and bringing people together.
- Putting Mental Health First: Because moving and living in a state of constant instability can have a big effect on mental health (Kılıç et al., 2024), mental health and psychosocial support services need to be greatly expanded, made culturally appropriate, and made less stigmatized.
- Ensuring Accountability: There need to be independent and effective ways to look into and hold people accountable for reported human rights violations against refugees, such as mistreatment in detention and illegal deportations (STJ, 2025; HRW, 2025a). This is vital for upholding the rule of law and restoring trust.
- De-instrumentalizing Protection: Humanitarian principles and international obligations, not mainly geopolitical calculations or domestic political agendas, should guide refugee protection.

7.5. Limitations of the Study

Despite its best efforts, this research has some weaknesses, as explained in Chapter 4:

- Using secondary qualitative data and textual sources is necessary for this study for ethical and logistical reasons, but it also means that the analysis is based on research and documentation that already exists. It doesn't have the immediacy and depth that primary fieldwork could provide.
- Selection Bias: The choice of texts for discourse analysis and studies for SQDA is always based on the researcher's judgment and is limited by what is easy to get to, which could affect the results.
- Interpretive Nature: Using Foucauldian and Weilian theoretical lenses is an act of interpretation. Even though they are based on the texts, there are always other ways to look at them.

- Scope and Generalizability: The focus on Syrian refugees under Temporary Protection in Türkiye means the findings are context-specific. The theoretical framework may be useful in more situations, but it is important to be careful when applying empirical findings to other refugee situations.
- The situation is always changing: The situation for Syrian refugees, especially the political situation in Syria and how it affects return dynamics, is always changing. This study gives us a picture of things as they are now, but things may change in the future.

7.6. Avenues for Future Research

Several new areas of research come to light as a result of this study:

- Longitudinal Studies on "Returnees": Look into the long-term experiences of Syrians who have "voluntarily" returned to Syria from Türkiye, focusing on their safety, socio-economic conditions, and perceptions of the return process, especially in the time after December 2024.
- Comparative Analysis of Naturalized vs. TP Syrians: Do in-depth research on the lived experiences, sense of belonging, and integration paths of Syrians who have become Turkish citizens and those who are still under Temporary Protection. Look into how their legal status affects their experiences of instability and discrimination (building on Ziss, 2024).
- Refugee Agency and Counter-Conduct: Explore more deeply the forms of agency, resistance, and "counter-conduct" (Foucault, 2007) employed by Syrian refugees in navigating and challenging the discursive and administrative power structures they face in Türkiye.
- Analyze how digital technologies and social media affect discourse about refugees, make it easier for refugees to tell their own stories, and affect how people can get information and services.

- The Weilian Concept of "Attention" in Humanitarian Work: Look into how humanitarian groups and people who work with refugees think about and use (or don't use) Weilian "attention" in their daily work, and what that means for ethics.

7.7. Closing Reflection: The Unfolding Obligation

This thesis started by thinking about how deeply humans need roots and how sad it is to be uprooted. It has tried to show how the words we use, the laws we pass, and the power structures we keep can either help people find their roots again or make their situation worse. The experience of Syrians in Türkiye, which shows both great suffering and great strength, is a powerful reminder of our moral duties as a group.

If, as Simone Weil (2005, p. 3) contended, "obligation is anterior to right," then the presence of millions of uprooted souls on our shared earth calls forth an unwavering duty—a duty to see beyond administrative categories, to attend to the reality of their affliction, and to strive relentlessly for a justice that honors their irreducible humanity. The challenge is not merely to manage a "crisis" but to cultivate a world where every uprooted seedling, against all odds, might find fertile ground in which to grow again. True hospitality, or meeting the needs of the soul, is still an urgent, ongoing, and sacred obligation.

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