Influx of syrian refugees into Turkey and its influence on the Turkish identity

Justyna Szałańska

SGH WARSAW SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, JSZALA@SGH.WAW.PL
ORCID: 0000-0001-9761-1307

Abstract

According to the last updated UNHCR data (as of November 2021), approximately 4 million refugees fled to Turkey, out of which 3.7 million are from Syria. Such a huge influx of people ethnically, culturally and linguistically different from the Turkish citizens can be considered either as a threat or as a challenge to national identity. Although the former view is more popular nowadays, I will focus on the second one in order to present beneficial influence of immigration on building a multicultural society. In this article will I discuss the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey and try to answer the question how the influx of Syrian refugees has influenced the Turkish national identity. Article consists of three parts. The first one presents the Turkish identity in traditional and theoretical understanding. The second one depicts influx of Syrian refugees as a factor that causes changes in social and state relations in Turkey. The third part discusses the already seen impact of Syrian immigration on Turkey's identity and its possible developments. For the aim of outlining the possible developments the identity change category (Todd 1995; Friedman 1994) was used. In order to analyze the possibility of turning Turkey into a multicultural state, as the Ottoman Empire was considered in the past, the concept of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1992) together with the comparative method were applied. The existing secondary data were analyzed for the purpose of presenting the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Key words: Turkish identity, national identity, immigration, Syrian refugees, identity change, multiculturalism
JEL Classification: F22, J15

Introduction

Looking at the history of the Turkish national identity, two factors appear to have a tremendous influence on its shaping and reshaping. First, the decline of the multi-national and multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire and the creation of a homogenous, in principle, nation state – the Republic of Turkey. Secondly, the process of Turkey's Westernization followed by the Europeanization related to the country's aspirations to join the European Union. Since the nineteenth century the Turks have faced a problem of self-identification (Glogowska 2011). Paradoxically, Westernization process complicated considerations of identity even more. The identity politics of a newly born nation-state, namely the Republic of Turkey, aimed at unification of sociologically different ethnic, religious and cultural heritage under a single identity. Rulers tried to construct a new society based on Turkish Sunni identity. The traditional multicultural social structure of the Ottoman Empire that encompassed many ethnic groups, like Armenians, Arabs, Greeks, Kurds, Alevis and Assyrians, did not fit

in the state's new vision. Additionally, the attrition of the two types of identities – secular and Islamic identity, has led to the identity crisis. Yet another occasion to redefine the Turkish national identity was the Europeanisation process after granting Turkey the status of candidate country for EU membership in 1999 and starting the accession negotiations in 2005. The influx of Syrian refugees, which has started in 2011 and led to hosting 3.7 million of Syrians, can be an incentive to rethink the identity problem and resume a discussion. Unexpectedly, the issue of Syrians in Turkey linked two identity aspects mentioned before: a question of the homogeneity of the nation state and the process of Europeanisation related to EU-Turkey cooperation over migration control and border security.

In the Republic of Turkey the national identity is articulated as Turkish. Being Turkish means acceptance of the Turkish identity, speaking Turkish and being Muslim. In theory, due to the secularity principle of the state, the faith remains a personal issue of every individual. The contemporary Turkish Constitution of 1982 defines all inhabitants of Turkey as Turks ("Everyone bound to the Turkish State through the bond of citizenship is a Turk") (Constitution 1982). In practice, the real Turks should be of Muslim religion, preferably of Sunni Muslim. Only Greek Orthodox, Armenian Christians and Jews are defined as legal minorities which is based on the Lausanne Peace Treaty and Turkey's obligation to protect non-Muslim minorities (Lausanne Treaty 1923, articles 37-45). And even if members of the listed minorities speak Turkish, they are not recognized as Turks (they are barred from becoming diplomats or army officers). It is an outcome of long-standing suspiciousness towards religious minorities and an expression of treating them as outsiders. With regard to ethnic minorities of Muslim faith, such as Kurds, Circassians, and Bosnians, they are considered to be Turks, regardless of the language they speak. "This is not simply a matter of semantic: in Turkey, being a Turk has tangible benefits. Since only Turks are full members of the nation and considered loyal citizens, this perception is a key to joining the mainstream society of the country. On the other hand, not being regarded as a Turk leads to the stigma of being an imperfect citizen" (Cagaptay 2006, 1).

Observing the contemporary Turkish nation, which has experienced a phase of reshaping its identity (or its identity being reshaped by the ruling political elites) it is hard not to see an emphasis put on religious factor. During the rule of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*, AKP), which came to power in 2002, it has gradually become even more important than the ethnic factor. Jennifer White named this new Turkish identity a "Muslim nationalism". Although this mixture of religious and ethnic factors seems contradictory, it perfectly applies to the Turkish reality. As White argues "the Muslim national tradition is based on a cultural Muslimhood, infused with a politico-historical Turkish/Ottoman identity, rather than a racialized or language based Turkishness" (White 2013, 97). At least in theory, the new kind of Turkish identity would allow to accept Non-Turkish minorities into community of a Turkish nation. The concept broadens the narrow category of the Turkish nation based on ethnicity on Kurds, Arabs and other minorities existing in Turkey. But the new concept is not free from constraints. This time a boundary of the nation is marked not by ethnicity, but by religion. Nevertheless, the concept of unified Turkish Sunni identity has never corresponded to the Turkey's social structure.

The link between the issues of Syrian refugees, the Turkish identity and the Europeanisation process was, surprisingly, the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, caused by lack of harmonization of the EU Member States' policies towards influx of forced migrants to Europe. In March 2016 Turkey and the European Union signed the EU-Turkey Statement on their cooperation on migration and border control. According to the Statement, Turkey agreed to prevent irregular migration to Europe in exchange for resettlement program for migrants in Turkey[1], financial assistance for dealing with reception and integration of refugees of 6 billion EUR in total, and visa liberalization for Turkish citizens (EU-Turkey Statement 2016). Apart from its strong security dimension, the Statement had also a powerful symbolic aspect. The Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other politicians from the ruling Justice and Development Party often criticized the "wealthy"

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[1] The Statement stipulated that for every Syrian illegal immigrant returned from Greece to Turkey, a Syrian refugee in Turkey would be resettled in Europe (EU-Turkey Statement 2016).

Europe for not taking enough responsibility for refugees (The Times of Israel, 2015) and after agreeing on the Statement they use the latter as the final proof of the hypocrisy of the EU.

National identity and identity change in theoretical perspective

Collective identity is a feeling of belonging to a group by an individual. This identity is created as a result of the process of social comparisons in which the boundaries between "we" and "them" are delineated (Citrin and Sears, 2009, 146-147). A specific type of collective identity is national identity, namely a feeling of distinctiveness felt by members of a given nation based on its language, tradition, religion, and political institutions (Smith 1991). Despite the existence the mentioned premises of national identity, the latter is also constantly (re)interpreted and reshaped for the needs of various interests and, often, imposed from above (Eisenstadt and Gisen, 1995).

In order to analyze the Turkish identity I will use the category of a nation, and, unless otherwise stated, the term "Turkish identity" means "Turkish national identity". I define nation as a social construct and, after Benedict Anderson, "an imagined community". Anderson's gives the following definition of a nation: "it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1983, 6). As he argues, a nation is imagined, because its members do not know majority of their fellow members but, in spite of that, they think of them as members of their communion. The nation is also limited, because regardless of the number of its members, it has its finite boundaries, which separate it from other nations. The boundaries can be more or less elastic but no nation identifies itself with the whole mankind. The nation is also sovereign, as it gives a legitimacy to the rulers and, in some circumstances, it can deprive the rulers of their power. The most significant part of Anderson's definition equates the nation with a community. It is an explanation of illogical behavior performed in the name of a nation:

"[…] regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 1983, 7).

A key cause of change in categories of collective identity is social change (Bourdieu 1990). Bourdieu introduced a category of habitus which aims to explain individual's identity. Habitus is "system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (Bourdieu 1990, 53). Deriving the term identity from Bourdieu's category of habitus, Jennifer Todd presents three mechanisms of change in collective categories of identity: dissonances between the social order and the individual habitus, dissonances within the individual habitus, and the moment of intentionality in identity formation. Todd also argues that there are many ways of creating identity in a sense that the same identity can have many meanings to its bearers (Todd 1995, 429-463). The latter is true in the case of Turkey. Being Turkish means different things for a citizen of Turkey born from Turkish parents, different for somebody who has got Arab mother and Turkish father and different for Armenian inhabitants of the country.

In addition to the research on identity, sociologists also deal with the concept of identity change. The theory of identity change was developed, among others, by Jonathan Friedman, who based his reflections on the analysis of evolving cultural systems. Friedman coined the term "identity space" understood as an area in which there are both basic types of collective identities and the processes of change. These changes are based on the replacement of the dominant type of collective identity by one of the others. However, Friedman takes as a subject of his research only the Western culture, which he defined as a civilized one. Friedman divides the culture into three stages: traditionalism, modernism and postmodernism. Along with the socio-economic development and the transition from the stage of traditionalism, through modernism to postmodernism, communities experience changes in their identity. Friedman also notes an interesting

phenomenon of evolution of cultures in both directions. Society at the stage of modernism can go both in the direction of postmodernism or back to traditionalism. During various types of crises appears phenomenon of "ethnification of national identity", which is to build a national sense of "we" by the means of traditional communities. Such measures include: mystified kinship, community of blood, belief in the uniqueness of a given nationality/ethnicity, ritualisation and absolutisation of native culture and spectacular forms of building impenetrable borders against "others" (Friedman 1994).

Influx of Syrian refugees as a factor that causes change on societal and state dimensions

Immigration is one of the factors that can significantly influence the identity of immigrants as well as the identity of a receiving nation. Although the influx of Syrian refugees has been the biggest immigration to Turkey so far, it is not the first one. It is worth to mention them in order to know how Turkey adapted to these developments. Turkey experienced immigration movements after the World War I and World War II, after the collapsing of the Soviet Union and has recently experienced one since 2011, after the uprising in Syria. The Law on Settlement introduced in Turkey in 1934 allowed for entering and settlement of people of "Turkish culture and origin" what in practice encompassed three kinds of groups:

1. the former Muslim Ottoman population from the Balkans, either the Turkish population who settled in the Balkans (such as Bulgarian Turks, the Turks of Kosovo) or Balkan people who converted to Islam (Albanian, Bosnians);
2. the former Ottoman population of Caucasus and Crimea, who were often of the Turkish background (but not from Anatolia) and who shared a part of the Ottoman history;
3. the Turkic people from the Central Asia, who were never under Ottoman sovereignty but existed in a common social imagination as members of a great Turkish community (Kirisci 1991).

Between 1920 and mid-1990' Turkey received more than one and a half million Muslim refugees from the Balkans. Those people were considered as being of "Turkish descent and culture" (based on the 1934 Law) and were given a possibility to acquire the Turkish citizenship. In 1991 around half a million people (mainly of Kurdish origin) fled from Iraq and Saddam Hussein's violence. In the beginning Turkey denied refugees to enter its territory, but eventually agreed to accept them temporarily. Diplomatic efforts led to opening a safe haven zone in northern Iraq, owing to what the Iraqi Kurds could return to their homes. The Iraqi refugees who entered Turkey were treated like guests, without any legal protection of their status (Kirisci 1996).

The newest immigration into Turkey is fundamentally different than the previous ones. It is because of a huge number of refugees and uncertainty of their future. There is no prospect for a swift ending of the war in Syria. Syrian refugees began to cross into Turkey in April 2011, right after the breakout of the Syrian Civil War in March of the same year. Then, in October 2011, Turkey declared an open-door policy towards the Syrians and established a legal framework known under the term of "temporary protection" for them.

According to the UNHCR data, until November 2021 more than 4 million refugees entered to Turkey. The number of registered Syrian refugees surpassed 3.7 million (UNHCR 2021a). It means that approximately 17 percent of the Syrian population currently live in Turkey. It corresponds to 4.5 percent of the population of Turkey (including refugees). The overall majority lives in the border provinces of Gaziantep, Hatay, Sanliurfa, Adana and Mardin, whereas the highest Syrian population in a single city lives in Istanbul (546 thousand) (Doganisik 2019). By December 2019 costs of Turkey's help for refugees amounted to 40 billion USD (Reuters 2019). According to the UNHCR data (2021b), Turkey is now the largest recipient of refugees in the world. There is an anticipation that the crisis in Syria will not end in the near future and therefore the Syrian refugees will stay in Turkey for a long time, maybe even forever.

Influx of Syrian refugees resulted in a change of Turkey's practice of granting a refugee status. For the first time in its history Turkey granted a refugee status to people coming from the Middle East. Until the Syrian war, Turkey has assigned this status to Europeans only (the roots of this policy laid in the Ottoman

history and Cold War politics) (Cagaptay 2014, 8)**.** When it comes to legal issues, the citizens of Turkey have a higher degree of protection. Turkish Citizenship Law (Law 5901, 2009) allows naturalization for those who have been residents of Turkey without interruption for five years, and have income or profession to provide for the maintenance of himself/herself and his/her dependents in Turkey.

In October 2011 a vast immigration from Syria made Turkey implement a "temporary protection" law for the Syrian refuges. Turkey could stop referring to the Syrian refugees as "guest" and committed itself to the principle of "non-refoulement" and to provide Syrian refugees with basic humanitarian services such as health and shelter. There is no time limit for the "temporary protection" policy. However, the policy is based on the regulation on the Ministry of Interior from March 2011 and is kept in secret (Kirisci 2014: 14).

In April 2013 Turkey adopted a new Law of Foreigners and International Protection, which came into force in April 2014. The law aims to improve Turkey's refugee policy and to provide protection and assistance for asylum-seekers and refugees, regardless of their country of origin. In order to implement the new law a special institution was established – the Directorate General of Migration Management under the Ministry of Interior. The law of 2014 introduced three categories of protection: a refugee status, a conditional refugee status and a subsidiary protection. Since the refugee status applies only to Europeans and the conditional refugee status applies to nationals other than Europeans who are about to be resettled to a third country, the status of subsidiary protection can be granted to Syrians. According to the Article 63, a status of "subsidiary protection" can be granted to a foreigner or a stateless person who could neither be qualified as a refugee nor a conditional refugee, yet who is unable or, due to the threat concerned, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of his or her country of origin or the country of habitual residence where, upon return, she or he would face:
1. the death penalty or execution,
2. torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,
3. serious threat to his or her person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict (Law of Foreigners and International Protection: Article 6).

There is no established plan of mass naturalization of Syrian refugees. As for now, there are three ways to being granted a Turkish citizenship:
1. birth (to a parent or parents that have a Turkish citizenship),
2. five years of residency,
3. marriage (after three years of the wedding, and the marriage has to still exist).

Although in January of 2019 over a million Syrian refugees became entitled to apply for Turkish citizenship (those having residency permit), only 79 thousand acquired it (Doganisik 2019). The explanation of such a low number of naturalized Syrians is twofold. Firstly, they perceive the naturalization procedure as a long and complicated process, therefore they refrain from starting it. Secondly, they do not feel that they belong to the Turkish society, which can also stop them from applying for citizenship (Jancewicz 2021, 12).

In the south-eastern provinces there are also frequent marriages between Turkish men and Syrian women, which gave them a possibility to apply for a citizenship faster than after five years of residency. Not naturalised Syrians face difficulties since current law does not allow for a permanent settlement of Syrian refugees. Under the current Law on Settlements of 1934, settlement of refugees in Turkey is possible, but only for those with the "Turkish descent and culture".

The naturalization can also be a political issue. The refugees expressed their gratitude to the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*), as well to the president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. There were many cases of naming new-born children in refugee camps after Recep Tayyip or his wife Emine (Cagaptay 2014, 10). Therefore it was an anticipation that new-naturalized refugees would support AKP in elections. However, with such a low number of naturalization this anticipation failed.

Over the last ten years, Turkey has witnessed a growing hostility towards Syrian refugees. In some cities refugees choose to stay in the same district or area in order to be close to their compatriots. In a longer perspective it may lead to creation of "ghettos" and spatial segregation (Kavas and Kadkoy 2018).

According to the RESPOND survey among Syrians approximately 10 percent of them felt unsafe in their new places of inhabitation (Jancewicz 2021, 50). They gave the following reasons for their feeling of unsafety: racism and discrimination, fear of deportation, bad people their encountered and problems with Turkish locals (Jancewicz 2021, 51). Although the anti-refugee discourses in Turkey have not been as powerful as in some European countries (Poland or Hungary), the recent economic crisis may contribute to an increase of hostilities towards refugees. The incidents of attacking refugees' homes and looting their shops in Ankara in August 2021 after a Turkish youth was allegedly killed by refugees in a group street fighting proves the increasing tensions (Bianet 2021).

Impact of Syrian immigration on Turkey's identity and its possible developments

It is definitely too early to give an answer for the main question of this article – has influx of Syrian refugees changed the Turkish identity? Nevertheless, it is possible to see heralds of the future change. I will discuss three factors that are the biggest challenges for the Turkish government and society considering the influx of Syrian refugees. They are: a shift in ethnic balance, employment and education. It is important to see positive effects of the current developments, because, if badly managed, the challenges can easily become threats.

Although Syrian refugees stand for approximately 4.5 percent of the whole Turkey's population, in some provinces bordering with Syria they surpassed the 20 percent mark. Since the vast majority of refugees are Arabs, their presence changes the ethnic balance of the border provinces. According to the survey conducted by KONDA in 2006, 1.38 percent of the Turkey's population declared their mother tongue to be Arabic (KONDA 2006). It is estimated that, along with the current Arabic speakers from Syria, nearly 6 percent of Turkey's population speaks Arabic as their mother tongue.

Although the main cause of change in ethnic balance is the influx of Syrian refuges, a high birthrate among ethnic Arabs cannot be ignored. An increase in percentage of Arabs in the population of five provinces, especially in Kilis and Şanlıurfa, will have long-term effects on social relations in Turkey. If refugees stay in Turkey for a longer time or forever, the number of people of Arabic roots surpassing 4 million and inhabiting south-eastern region of Turkey would pose a challenge to the Turkish government. The main question is whether the government should implement an integration policy immediately. Lack of such policy could have negative effects what is seen in case of the Kurds living in Turkey. Apart from the integration policy there are more challenges to deal with, that is employment and education.

Currently a majority (estimated up to three-quarters) of Syrian refugees in Turkey work illegally. Despite the fact that Syrians under temporary protection can obtain the work permit since 2016, due to being it bureaucratically difficult, a very small number of work permits has been issued to Syrians. According to the governmental statistics, in 2018 only 34,573 permits for Syrians were issued (Jancewicz 2021, 65). Due to the fact that Syrian refugees are in need of money, since they have already spent all their savings, they are forced to work for much lower wages than Turkish nationals (ex. the daily rates in Kilis in 2014 declined from 60 lira to as little as 20 lira) (Kirisci 2014, 21-22). NGOs frequently call for mitigating working regulations for Syrians, as they frequently become subjects of exploitation by their employers. The other thing is that

Table 1. Change of the ethnic balance in selected Turkish provinces

Province	Ethnic Arabs percentage of the population before 2011	Ethnic Arabs percentage of the population in 2018
Mardin	21%	31%
Şanlıurfa	13%	32%
Kilis	1%	51%
Hatay	34%	56%

Source: Own compilation based on Cagaptay and Yalkin 2018.

the Syrian refugees are well-educated and could positively contribute to the Turkish economy. Among the refugees are orthodontists, engineers, teachers and nurses, but the situation made them work as non-qualified workers (Ferris and Kirisci 2015).

Another challenge is the education of refugees. It is the most important factor to prevent social exclusion and a crucial one for the future integration of Syrians into the Turkish society. Education is primarily aimed at child refugees and, since over a half of Syrian refugees are believed to be children, it means that the number of refugee children is more than 1.8 million. When it comes to statistical data, 53% of the population are children (0-18 years) and of that 1.2 million (65%) is expected to be of school-age (6-17 years) (Hurriyet Daily News 2021). It has to be underlined than perceiving Syrian children as a part of Turkey's society was partially accepted by the Turkish government. From the very beginning the Turkish education officials emphasized the importance of Syrian children's inclusion into educational system: "whether the refugees stay or return to Syria, we simply cannot afford to allow for a lost generation" (Ferris and Kirisci 2015). A lost generation is not only a problem for itself, but also for the country that the members of the generation live in due to the risk of creating poor, unprivileged groups, marginalized by the society. The government, after a series of terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016, knew that education is also a means of maintaining security, since marginalized people often become a target of fundamentalists and their populist slogans. As the Turkish education official pointed out: "without a chance of education, they risk falling victim to radical and terrorist groups" (Ferris and Kirisci 2015).

Although there is no obligation for Syrian refugee children to attend schools in Turkey, since 2016, Syrians as migrants under temporary protection have been eligible to attend schools, including universities (Sobczak-Szelc, Szalanska and Pachocka 2021, 20). Even if the situation of participation improved since then from 10% of Syrian children having access to Turkish schools in 2014 (UNICEF 2014) to 66% in 2021, still about one third of Syrian children (400 thousand) are not participating in the educational system (Hurriyet Daily News 2021). The participation number is particularly low for high school students (Rottmann 2020, 40). As Rottmann (2020, 41) argues, the biggest problem is that some Syrian children have to work in order to support the family. UNICEF tries to change the situation of child labour in Turkey through reaching children's parents with information campaigns (Hurriyet Daily News 2021). However, due to the pandemic and a worsening economic situation of many Syrian refugees, such actions are insufficient.

Despite the recently used by president Erdogan and the Turkish government about the need of sending Syrians back to their country,or to the safe zone in Northern Syria, the integration of Syrian children in Turkish schools is based on the presumption that Syrians will stay in Turkey for good. Primary and high school students can get their education in public schools with Turkish students. Syrians start their first grade with Turkish children in mixed groups and follow the Turkish curricula.

Considering political challenges of the influx of Syrian refugees into Turkey, there are two developments which seem to be the most serious: facing the change of the ethnical balance and security issues. Vast majority of Syrian refugees are Arab Sunni Muslim, whereas the region of south eastern Turkey is ethnically and religiously diverse. The immigration of Syrians has had a significant influence on ethnic and language division of Turkey. In 2006, it was estimated that ethnic Turks stand for 78 percent of population of Turkey, whereas the rest 22 percent comprises of many diverse nationalities or identities (KONDA 2006). Adding to the numbers 3.7 million of Syrian refugees the percentage of non-ethnic Turkish identities increased from 22.4 percent in 2006 up to 26.5 percent in 2021. It means that currently (as of November 2021) one quarter of the whole Turkish population does not have a Turkish descent. Therefore, Turkey immediately needs to implement a new integration policy, ideally aiming at creating a multicultural society.

Although a majority of Syrian refugees are Sunni Muslims and Arabs, they are not a homogenous group. Apart from Sunnis they comprises of Alawites, Syrian Christians (Assyrians), Yezidis, Kurds and Turkmens. Ethnic composition of refugees creates difficulties regarding perception of local communities in Turkey. For example, in the province of Hatay lives a significant minority of Alawites that are close to their co-believers in Syria. Those Alawites show sympathy toward Assad's regime (as traditionally, in Syria, Alawites support

Assad, who originates from Alawite sect). Therefore, they perceive Sunni Syrians as traitors and show resilience toward them. Camps construction in Hatay induced suspicions about conspiracy of the Turkish government and its alleged plans of changing ethnic balance in Hatay. Emphasizing the Sunni aspect of the Turkish identity by the government only added fuel to the fire. The words of the then Prime Minister Erdoğan about the killed "53 Sunni brothers" after the bomb attack in Reyhanli in 2013 only affirmed Alawites in their conviction about AKP' sectarian attitudes (Kirisci 2014, 31).

Another group of refugees, Syrian Kurds, is considered a threat to the state security. Although the Syrian Kurds at the beginning of the crisis chose Northern Iraq as a destination of their refuge, now they also enter Turkey. In the beginning the Turkish government showed reluctance towards receiving Syrian Kurds, as Turkey was in the process of finding a solution and political agreement with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The Syrian Kurds are believed to be under the influence of Democratic Union Party, which is considered as an extension of PKK in Syria. The situation has changed after the attack of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, now referred as IS – Islamic State) on northern parts of Syria inhabited by Kurds. Turkey, not without reluctance, decided to allow the Kurds fleeing from ISIS fighters to enter its territory.

Conclusion

Multicultural society is a "society where the political organization of the multi-ethnic components permits clear expressions in public life as seen by each ethnic group separately" (Kymlicka 1995). As Will Kymlicka argues, "older models of assimilationist and homogenizing nation states are increasingly contested and often displaced by newer 'multicultural' models of the state" (Kymlicka 2007, 585–597). In southern bordering provinces there are symptoms of reviving a multicultural society. Some scholars even found components of the Ottoman old millet system in Hatay (Dogruel 2013, 275). Millet was a social system in which each minority, equalized with the confessional community, was ruled by its own religious legislation and its religious leader(s). In other words, each religious community of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, that is Muslims, Christians, Jews and Armenians, had the right to be governed by its own religious legislation and religious leader, regardless their ethnic background. Additionally, each community was specialized in different sectors within the economic market. Each millet had the legal right to use its own language, develop its own religious, cultural and educational institutions, collect taxes and maintain courts for trying members of the community in all cases, except those involving in public security and crime. If it comes to the numbers, according to the census held in the years 1881-1883, the population of the Ottoman Empire was 17.4 million people. 72% of them were Muslims, 23% Christians, 1% Jews (180,000) and 0.7% foreigners (135,000) (Inalcik 1994, 675-681). If we compare religious composition of the Ottoman Empire to the ethnic composition of nowadays Turkey, the numbers are similar. In the Ottoman Empire 28% of the population were not Muslims (as the identity was described by confession), in Turkey 26% of the population are not ethnic Turks (as the identity is described by the national affiliation based on ethnicity). But, as opposed to the situation in the Ottoman Empire, the one-quarter of the population of Turkey that identify itself in categories others than the main identity, namely ethnic Turkish, have no minority rights and no possibility to self-determination even in a local dimension.

Existence of multi-ethnic society does not implicate the existence of multiculturalism per se. There also needs to be a demand for recognition and a response for this demand. Charles Taylor points out a link between recognition and identity. According to him, "identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (Taylor and Gutmann 1994: 25). Not surprisingly, a lack of recognition or misrecognition is often perceived by the minority group as a form of oppression, since they are not in equal position with the dominant or ruling majority. Therefore, the calls of the Turkish government for *uyum*, the social harmony based on peaceful coexistence of all different ethnic and religious group, is not enough for bringing to life the real multiculturalism.

Nevertheless, there is also the other side of the coin. The existence of minorities or diverse ethnic and language groups is not enough to introduce multiculturalism at a state level. Other important factor is a de-securitization of state-minority relations. If a state does not feel secure in geopolitical terms, if it fears external enemies and neighbours, it is hardly probable to treat its own minorities in a fair way (Kymlicka 2007, 585–597). Considering the situation in the Turkey's south-eastern neighbourhood it is hard to imagine friendly relations with its neighbouring countries in the near future. It is even less possible to expect that Turkey would grant and respect group rights of the newly arrived, seeing as the state is opposed against granting more rights to already existing ethnic minorities.

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