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The asylum issue and political mass education in Turkey: How the government imposed the acceptance of Syrian refugees on Turkish citizens?

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Abstract

When governments make far-reaching but unpopular decisions, they may resort to political mass education, in which they impose new political orientations on their constituency. This paper enquires into a process of political mass education that unfolded when Turkey accepted an ever-growing number of refugees from civil-war-battered Syria after 2011. In spite of Turkish society's overall negative attitude toward Arabs, the Turkish government, along with pro-government mass media outlets, succeeded in preventing major acts of violence against Syrian refugees and in persuading Turkish citizens to accept them. By drawing on a discourse analysis, the paper sheds light on the devices and strategies used throughout this educational process.

Introduction

Governments sometimes feel the need to make unpopular decisions. Driven by pragmatic 'necessities,' crises or other 'compelling' circumstances, they may opt for a policy that contradicts rather than expresses the fundamental political orientations of their electorate. In such situations, those politicians who are dependent on votes and public opinion may resort to what we propose to conceptualize as 'political mass education'; that is, the sustainable imposition of a new political orientation on a constituency by means of mass media, political speeches and other public devices.

In 2011, when the civil war in Syria broke out and first drove thousands, then hundreds of thousands and finally millions of people out of the country, the Turkish government did not close its borders, despite the fact that Turkey had no infrastructure to accommodate an instantaneous mass influx of refugees and, moreover, despite the fact that major parts of Turkish society bore an antipathy towards Arabs. What ensued were massive communicative actions taken by the government and pro-government media that aimed to persuade Turkish citizens to welcome the Syrian refugees. This endeavour of what we—in possible disagreement with the political actors—refer to as political mass education was even intensified when unrest rose in Turkish society and some social groups feared the competition on the labour and housing markets and were upset by allegedly increasing crime rates.

Drawing on a discourse analysis, we inquire into the means and strategies that the Turkish government and pro-government media outlets used to politically educate the Turkish electorate; that is, to impose a new political orientation—welcoming Syrian refugees. After a brief account of the refugee influx and Turkish society's attitude toward Arabs, we elaborate on the concept of political mass education and provide an overview of the empirical methods we used. The main chapter then focuses on eight means and strategies of political mass education that could be identified in the data material.[1]

Syrian asylum and hostility towards Arabs in Turkey

The movements during the 'Arab Spring', which first began in Tunisia in 2010 as a protest against the government demanding human rights, led to political radical insurrections of armed groups in many Middle East and North African countries. In 2011, protests started in Syria against the government; this soon led to a civil war in which various organizations with numerous and more or less significant ideologies, the government with its army, and various ethnic groups all fought each other. Those who feared the war or became its victims fled, first to domestic safe regions and later abroad, to some countries in the Middle East, including Turkey. Similar to Jordan and Lebanon, Turkey—led by its prime minister and later president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—quickly turned from a friend of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to an enemy and declared it would accept all fleeing Syrians as part of an 'open door' policy.

According to Amnesty International (2016), by 2016 more than 4.5 million refugees from Syria had fled to just five countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Turkey was hosting almost three million refugees from Syria and had become the world's largest refugee host country (UNHCR, 2016). In the first year of the migration to Turkey (2011), the number of Syrian refugees was very low, but then increased very quickly, to 14,237 (in 2012), 224,655 (2013), 1,519,286 (2014), 2,503,549 (2015), and 2,749,140 (2016) (Al Jazeera Turk, 2016). Around 10 per cent of the Syrian refugees (257,818) were hosted in 26 temporary housing centres in 10 cities in eastern regions of Turkey, where the Turkish government provided them with services such as sheltering, food and social facilities (GİGM, 2016; AFAD, 2016). The

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remaining refugees, some from middle and upper classes who could afford to live in Turkish cities like the native population, lived in various provinces of Turkey among the Turkish population (Deniz et al., 2016).

This unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees—that is, mostly of Arabs—occurred despite widespread hostility towards Arabs in Turkish society, which is rooted in the history of the country and palpable in various milieus of society. The discourse of Turkey's national history has constructed images of Arabs; for example, textbooks depict them as Turks' 'other' (Çiçek, 2012) who betrayed the Ottoman Empire when nationalist movements successfully tried to separate their countries from the empire before World War I. These attitudes continued during the period of the republic in which Mustafa Kemal, founder of modern Turkey, formulated a new Islamic view based on the reduction of religion to each individual's own conscience (Gökaçtı, 2005:122–3) during the secularization policies in many institutions, including educational and cultural areas (Çağaptay, 2005). The Kemalist interpretation of Islam referred to a native and very national understanding and tried to separate the newly emerging Turkish version of Islam from its Arab influence, which was regarded as the source of many social problems such as theocracy (Berkes, 1978:529), ignorance and underdevelopment.[2]

This new version of Islam produced by the elitist cadres of the republic went hand in hand with hostility towards Arabs that was (re)produced as a cultural pattern among Turks, especially government elites and urban people who saw Arabs as a different and inferior population compared to Turks. A survey conducted only three years be-fore the Syrian civil war began found that 39.1 per cent of the interviewees had a negative attitude towards Arabs, varying according to social characteristics. For example (Küçükcan, 2010:15):

> Old generations seem to have a more negative image of Arabs than younger ones … Moreover, as the level of education (48.8%), professional and social status (56.1%) increase, the attitude toward the Arabs becomes more negative. Negative attitudes are higher among males (42.1%) than females (36.2%).

There are many myths, biased views, stereotypes and negative images in Turkey towards Arab people and their culture that are still reproduced in proverbs,[3] stories and novels; some national newspapers reproduce negative representations and exclusionist perceptions on Syrian refugees (Efe, 2015). It is possible to say that this negative image of Arabs was also used when Syrian refugees in Turkey were turned into "scapegoats" (Göker and Keskin, 2015) for social problems. Even those media outlets that do not portray Syrians in a negative way tend to stereotype them—especially the children—as "victims" (Ardıç Çobaner, 2015) whose voices are not given any space. All of these factors indicate that Syrian refugees are still seen as a living symbol of negatively perceived Arab culture. Field research carried out in Adana, a province in the south of Turkey, reports that Turkish people have widespread prejudices against Syrian refugees (Seyhan Belediyesi, 2015), a point that is also reflected in the experiences of the refugees themselves who "are concerned with the negative imagery of 'dirty' and uncouth' Arabs, commonly articulated by middle-class Turks" (RSC, 2015:4). In addition, many Turkish people wish the Turkish government would stop welcoming the new flux of Syrian refugees (EDAM, 2014).

Given the influx of Syrian refugees into Turkey and the mostly non-violent but out-right hostility towards Arabs of the local people, the government, the republic's president and supporting media outlets started to frame this issue in a way that we wish to analyse here as a

[2] Notably, significant documents that reflect the Kemalist conception of religion and the view on Arabs were published by Turkish military; see Genelkurmay Başkanlığı (1988).

[3] For example, if something becomes complicated, one says "it turned into Arab hair." For other racist proverbs, see Ayrımcı Sözlük (2012).

manifestation of political mass education. Before we begin with our empirical analysis, we will provide a brief theoretical consideration of our analytical concept of political mass education.

Political education as a concept

Political education is a highly contested field with a vast range of controversies. One of them relates to the question of whether schools should provide a "thick, ethically dense education that trains young boys and girls to become citizens of a certain (good) kind" (Fernández and Sundström, 2011:369) or whether the "state should, as far as possible, be a neutral enabler that refrains from promoting certain life projects over others" but "should encourage citizens to choose those projects themselves and of their own accord, rather than having them impressed by the church, the state or any other authority" (ibid., 376).

The first option implies that civic education has to "foster virtuous democratic citizens that will perpetuate and improve their society" (ibid. 374) and that its "method must be pedagogy that is far more rhetorical than rational" (Galston, quoted in Brighouse, 1998:724). Here, civic education "becomes a process of socialisation through which 'newcomers' become part and are inserted into the existing social and political order" (Biesta, 2011:149). However, the second option would necessarily include "autonomy-facilitating education" (Brighouse, 1998:726) in which, for example, "methods for evaluating the truth and falsehood, or relative probability, of various claims about the world" are taught and students are exposed to divergent life projects and ideologies together with their respective critique "such that the students can develop the facility to grasp and think through new ideologies as they uncover them" (ibid. 736). If this "multiperspectivity" (Sander, 2004:9) goes so far as to allow "the 'coming into presence' … of a way of being that had no place and no part in the existing order of things", it may lead to a process of political "subjectivation" (Biesta, 2011:150).

In the present paper, we inquire into processes in which a certain value and orientation (to accept Syrian refugees) is inculcated on both young and old (Turkish) citizens; consequently, our analytical concept of political education ties in with the first option. Stressing the hierarchical and asymmetric notion in the term 'education' (see Brezinka, 1992:40–1), we focus on processes in which educators prescribe values and orientations, which are then, by means of diverse devices and strategies, imposed on the targeted group rather than being exposed to its autonomous choice.

At this point, a fine line needs to be drawn between the imposition of political orientations and indoctrination. Whereas the latter tries to eliminate the decision-making ability of the targeted group (cf. Stross, 1994; Copp, 2016:150–5), imposing political orientations and values in the frame of political education still takes into account possible disagreement from educated persons. More precisely, education has its (sustainable) effects only if the targeted persons take over the imposed orientations within a certain space of autonomy.

Whereas the current debate on political education is focused on liberal democracies—a tendency that is reflected in the popularity of the term 'civic education'—we do not wish to limit our inquiries to education that promotes liberal or democratic values. As the history of education shows clearly, political education existed in various democratic, monarchic, or dictatorial forms of societies and states, among other types. Conceived of as an umbrella term, political education may serve a wide range of political and social values, some of which are even antagonistic. Furthermore, such a general notion of political education enables us to refrain from making a judgment over the ultimate ends of the processes under scrutiny.

We assume that governments, when making decisions that are not only venturous and unexpected, but also unpopular and far-reaching (such as accepting an unprecedented number of Syrian refugees in Turkey), may feel the need to resort to political education as the

imposition of certain political orientations. Certainly, such endeavours do not rely on classroom communication in schools or in adult learning facilities. Instead, they are based on public media and can be understood as "mass education" (Prange and Strobel-Eisele, 2015:203).

Supported by strategic communication, such education may comprise of two components: On one hand, the leaders impose new political orientations on their constituency through several devices and strategies, which we shall explore below. This component is about the ideological and normative content of the policy newly pursued. On the other hand, education only works on the basis of trust.[4] Therefore, the leaders also resort to confidence-building measures, such as taking into account the concerns of their constituency. Confidence is generally an important point since citizens always have to make political decisions whose logic and consequences they do not fully anticipate. In such instances, voters' confidence in specific politicians leads to a "legitimization through personalization" (Sarcinelli, 2010:274).

The possibility to refuse the imposed values and orientations delimits political education, not only from indoctrination but also from propaganda, because the latter aims to enforce an "ideological system that is related to an *entire* society" (Arnold, 2003:74, italics added). Although propaganda shares the threat of sanctions with political education, propaganda tends to be "totalitarian" (Merten, 2010:150). In contrast, (political) education is always situated in the "latent conflict" between the individual's decision-making process and the norms of collective entities (Grube, 2015:180).

Furthermore, concerning the strategies of political leaders we must distinguish be-tween "manipulation" (Elsen, 2008) and "persuasion," the latter of which may be conceived of as the attempt to "aim at changing or affecting the behaviour of others" (Virtanen and Halmari, 2005, 5). In this sense, political education is a specific form of persuasion insofar as it is not only (and not even primarily) concerned with short-term influences on political opinion and behaviour, but rather with the long-term establishment of political orientations. Elements and traces of persuasive communication with its euphemisms and metaphors (cf. Heyne and Vollmer, 2016: 29–33) can also be found in the texts analysed in this paper.

The strategic communication of political leaders serves to establish "a socially, temporally and factually comprehensive orientation frame that provides the classification of various political decisions in a larger meaning context" (Raschke and Tils, 2013:426–7). Such forms of communication are an "integral component of political action," especially in the phases of "problem articulation" and "political decision" (Sarcinelli, 2010:270). Both forms influence mass media (Seiffert and Fähnrich, 2015:264) and tie in with the latter insofar as they take over the "frames" (Goffman, 1986) used by the former. These frames underpin specific aspects of an event and thereby "promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993:52).

Research methodology

In order to empirically inquire into political mass education in Turkey—that is, into how the government imposed on Turkish citizens the political orientation to accept Syrian refugees—we worked with the Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1969) and with elements of discourse analysis (Nohl, 2016). Instead of using random sampling, we have selected the relevant texts within a "theoretical sampling" (Glaser and Strauss, 1969:45), which focuses on minimal contrasts but excludes maximal contrast (ibid. 101–15). We took 31 texts, published in pro-government newspapers, internet outlets or delivered as speeches by the prime minister and republic's president, into the sample step by step. These texts, which were published between

[4] We owe this point to Emre Arslan, who had previously been working on the general topic of this paper together with its second author.

2011 and 2016, were directed to the Turkish public and concerned the subject of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

The texts have been analysed following a three-step research plan. First, three core categories have been constructed as analytical tools that reflect the "manner in which" the author "views an object [the influx of Syrian refugees; the authors], what one perceives in it, and how one construes it in his thinking" (Mannheim, 1954:244). We then analysed the texts in which we could identify these categories, with regard to the latter's relationship. The purpose of this gathering and analysis of the data was to develop an empirically based theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) on the subject-matter (for a detailed report on the empirical results, see İnal and Gezgin, 2018). In a third step, we used these core categories and, by making comparisons among the relevant texts, analysed how they related to political mass education. Rather than summarizing the content of the data material, we reconstructed the modus operandi of education; that is, how the politicians and pro-government media imposed a new political orientation on the Turkish citizenry (Nohl, 2016).

Findings: main components of political mass education

The theoretical sampling strategy and time constraints hindered us from empirically covering all discourses that emerged after the Syrian refugee influx to Turkey. Instead, our analysis focuses on those discourse contributions that we considered theoretically significant for analysing political mass education.[5] It is for the same reason that we do not provide a historical account in this section of how these (educative) discourses evolved over time. Given our interest in theoretically and empirically grasping important elements of political mass education, we decided to structure this section according to a systematic analysis of the elements of this mass education process. Within this systematic structure, we do, of course, take into account the historical and social situatedness of our subject matter.

We start our inquiry by asking how the new political orientation was actually imposed on Turkish citizenry, then analyse how it was integrated into a general frame. Next, we look at how it was contrasted against negative stereotypes and made attractive, and analyse how the new political orientation was presented as feasible, how concerns of the people were taken into account and what kind of national identity was developed in the course of this political mass education.

Imposing the new political orientation

When the first Syrians crossed the border to Turkey at the southern Hatay province, nobody realised that this was the beginning of a mass emigration from the Levantine country. Moreover, the refuge that Syrians took in Turkey was not seen as a political problem that needed debate and decision. On one hand, the number of refugees was relatively negligible; only a few thousand. On the other hand, Turkey saw itself bound by international treaties that obliged it to accommodate the refugees "until they were transferred to a third country", as one newspaper article put it (Karaaslan, 2011).

Conceived of in this way, the refugee influx confronted not only Turkish society but also its government with a fait accompli. Hence, the basic political orientation to accept and accommodate refugees that was later imposed on Turkish society in a pro-cess of political mass

[5] An analysis by a think tank close to the Turkish government shows that it is not only our arbitrary conclusion that there was a political mass education process concerning Syrian refugees. As this think tank claimed, in a report on the political discourse, "the JDP government, first of all, as well as several civil society organizations, have followed a discourse that, by defining the Syrians as 'guests,' 'siblings' and 'friends' prevented violence, hate and discrimination that could be entertained against them" (SETA, 2015).

education had its origin in a political development that was perceived as beyond the scope of decision-making of the Turkish government itself. The refugee problem and the implied political orientation emerged silently and imposed itself on Turkey as an "exogenous shock" (Hogan and Feeney, 2012:1). Given these circumstances, the political orientation to accommodate refugees from Syria did not initially appear as a demand by the Turkish government but as imposed by the historical course of events.

Integrating the imposed orientation in a general frame: from the ambiguous "Brotherhood and Sisterhood" to the religious concepts of "Muhajir" and "Ansar"

Although Turkey (if it did not wish to opt out of international treaties) was obliged to at least temporarily take care of the Syrian refugees, the government soon started to give this political problem its own frame. That is, rather than legitimizing its policy by referring to the international treaties, the Turkish government adopted a form of strategic communication by developing, step by step, an "orientation frame" (Raschke and Tils, 2013:426–7) that allowed the problem—and its solution—to be formulated in the government's own terms.

One of the first documents in which this new political orientation frame is indicated is the speech delivered by then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 28th May 2011 at a rally in Hatay, which is in the very province that had initially accomplished the ground work of accommodating the refugees. The respective part of his speech started with the following words (Viki Kaynak, 2011):

> Dear brothers and sisters, I know that your eyes, ears and hearts in these days are with our neighbour Syria, with our brothers and sisters over there. I know that with every life wiped out there, life is taken out of your life as well. Here in Hatay we have opened our arms to the brothers and sisters who had to flee from Syria until now, we have put forth our helping hand to them. As Turkey we take all efforts so that in Syria the deaths stop, the street [fights; the authors] are stopped and the rights and freedoms are restored in the broadest way.

With these words, Erdoğan did not only appeal to the Hatay people's solidarity for Syrians, he even presumed that his audience should feel an existential empathy with the fate of those whose "lives" have been "wiped out." By pointing to the bloodshed in Syria, he also underpinned that Syrians fled for good and legitimate reasons. Furthermore, when he said that "we" help the refugees and "we take all efforts" to re-store peace in Syria, Erdoğan made sure that the people of Hatay knew that they were not alone and that all necessary measures were taken by the state.

The points mentioned above will be further discussed in the following sections, but the most significant framing device documented in this paragraph is the labelling of the Syrian refugees as "brothers and sisters." In a clear parallelization, Erdoğan first addressed his audience as his own siblings and then included—in the same sentence—the people in Syria in this virtual family circle, and finally added the refugees to it. The nature of this 'siblinghood' —the Turkish language does not distinguish between 'brother' and 'sister' and hence does not need a more inclusive alternative for 'brotherhood'—is not defined in a more detailed way but remains open. The audience might be reminded of ethnic bonds to Syria (Hatay is inhabited by a significant Arab autochthone population) or—as the non-Arab Erdoğan included himself into the circle—of a solidarity of Middle Eastern peoples or Muslims. However, none of these identities was directly referred to here.

The political situation changed dramatically in the following months. Not only did the Turkish government's depiction of the Syrian ruler, Bashar al-Assad, alter from that of a difficult negotiation partner to that of a "despot" (AKP, 2012), the number of refugees multiplied by more than twentyfold. Nevertheless, the Turkish government party AKP—the Justice and Development Party (JDP)—did not revise its frame of denoting the refugees as

"siblings." In a speech on the occasion of the 4th party congress on 30th September 2012, Mr Erdoğan again addressed his audience as "my dear brothers and sisters" and then spoke of the "one hundred thousand brothers and sisters from Syria" whom Turkey had taken "care of as guests" (Erdoğan, 2012).

Although "siblings" or "brother and sisters" refer to commonalities within a virtual family circle, the Turkish language makes a distinction between older and younger siblings. The word "kardeş", used in the discourse, refers both to younger siblings and to siblings in general. However, the context of the wording indicates an asymmetric and hierarchical relationship; therefore, the Syrian refugees are treated as "guests" (not as equal persons) and are "helped." Such a hierarchy also exists be-tween the prime minister and chairman of the JDP and his citizenry/party members. In the context of the Turkish language, the asymmetric and hierarchic relationship between older and younger siblings in itself implies tolerance and assistance provided for the younger by the older ones. For example, even infants are generally asked to treat younger "brothers" and "sisters"—whether they are relatives or not—with the utmost care.

In this sense, integrating the imposed political orientation of accepting refugees from Syria into the more general frame of siblinghood connected the new political orientation both to very practical experiences of the audiences who were subjected to political mass education and to a universalist humanitarian discourse that is directed to the entire Turkish citizenry, regardless of their political, religious or ethnic affiliation.

However, as the influx of Syrians grew, the JDP, the Turkish government and pro-government mass media all perceived growing unrest among its supporters, leading to decline in ballot outcomes. Consequently, a new frame was invoked that, by appealing to a religious (Muslim) rather than to a general secular human identity, narrowed the scope of and thereby strengthened the new political orientation. While documents from as far back as 2012 included instances when the "siblings" were defined as "Muslim" (AKP, 2012), Erdoğan—presumably taking up a discourse already entertained in Islamic circles—started to liken the situation of Syrians and their hosts to a religiously connoted historical archetype. Again speaking to the people of Hatay, where only a few days before a bomb attack had cost the life of 51 citizens, Erdoğan referred to the growing resentment towards Syrian refugees and invoked a new frame (NTV, 2013):

> Now never pay attention to those who struggle to kick them [the Syrian refugees; the authors] out. You should know that they are our siblings. They are here because they believe in us. They are here because they trust in us. Otherwise nobody would leave his house and go to another country. Would you go? Heaven forbid, if some evil like this would happen to you what would you do? What you would do we would do the same and become Ansar, we embrace them.

In the same speech, Erdoğan reminded his audience that earlier inhabitants of Turkey had been refugees themselves in the past and said: "When we go back to the times hundreds of years before we then had been Muhajir, now the time has come and we have become Ansar" (NTV, 2013). This new frame evolving around the concepts of "Ansar" and "Muhajir" has a double reference. On the one hand, it refers to the times when Mohammed, the prophet, and his followers had to flee from Mecca to Medina as "Muhajir" (which in Arabic means 'emigrant') in order to live safely and were welcomed by the people of Medina, who thus became "Ansar" (Arabic: 'helper'). On the other hand, all those Muslims (not necessarily ethnic Turkish) who fled after 1783 (that is, after the Balkan wars) from regions that had once belonged to the shrinking Ottoman Empire and found refuge in the Anatolian heartland were named "Muhajir" as well (however, the term "Ansar" was not used).

After Erdoğan had introduced the notions of Muhajir and Ansar into the discussion on Syrian refugees, it was frequently used by government representatives and the mainstream

media. For example, columnist Recep Koçak (2013), in an article dated 3rd September 2013, wrote: "It is our obligation to show our approximately 500.000 Muhajir siblings from Syria who stay in our country that we are 'Ansar' for them." In 2016, a newspaper put its own actions right into this discourse by wishing that "Allah may approve our being Ansar" (İşbilen, 2016).

Whereas the ambiguous frame of siblinghood in principal made it possible for every Turkish citizen to feel addressed, the invocation of being an Islamic or Ottoman 'helper' (Ansar) clearly appealed only to those parts of the citizenry who felt positively about either the Islamic tradition or the Ottoman past (or both). With this change in discourse, the targeted group of political mass education was apparently reduced from the whole Turkish society to those who related themselves to the Ottoman or Islamic traditions. However, this reduction of scope not only gave the political mass educators the chance to appeal to the (supposedly stronger) religious feelings and convictions of their supporters, but also underpinned the imposed political orientation's importance by contrasting it with the standpoints of those secular powers who allegedly resented the refugees from Syria.

Contrasting the imposed orientation with negative stereotypes

Although the imposed political orientation of accepting Syrian refugees had also previously been reinforced by drawing attention to the negative examples of, for example, European countries and Turkish parties that refused asylum seekers, this point was most vividly made after President Erdoğan announced in 2015 that he wanted to grant citizenship to the newcomers. (Granting citizenship added another political orientation to the already imposed orientation of accepting Syrians as refugees.) In a commentary of the Diriliş Postası, for example, two opposition parties (the pro-Kurdish HDP and the pro-Kemalist CHP) and the (then) outlawed religious organization of Fethullah Gülen, as well as the illegal armed Kurdish separatist organization PKK, were denoted as one "group" that "again started to speak with an Al-Assad-like mouth." Columnist Sabri İşbilen contrasted the concepts of 'Muhajir-Ansar' not only with the alleged resentment of the opposition but also with the ascribed attitude of European countries (İşbilen, 2016):

> If we asked them I am very sure that they would have said let's put up a razor wire at our borders like Hungary, let's confiscate all their belongings like Denmark, let's only take the educated ones, the rest shall die, like Germany. […] What do they understand of being Ansar, how shall they know that Allah has declared all Muslims siblings!

With this statement it was supposed that there was no alternative to the imposed political orientation to accept Syrian refugees. Not only were those politicians who were allegedly opposed to refugees put into the same basket with illegal organizations, they were also accused of pursuing the inhumane strategies of some European countries. The hidden supposition of this statement is that if you do not want to behave like a terrorist or a stone-hearted European country, you have to welcome the Syrian refugees. Excluding any differentiated position between pro- and contra-refugees, the commentator forced his readers to take sides, preferably his own.

This is not the only case in our sample in which the imposed political orientation is sharpened and intensified by contrasting it to the (alleged) standpoints of political enemies. Abdurrahman Dilipak, an infamous columnist of an Islamist daily newspaper, not only accused the Kemalist opposition party of following an anti-refugee policy, but also suspected it of fuelling racism (Dilipak, 2016):

> Most of the allegations concerning our siblings from Syria are wrong and a lie. The coalition of CHP and the Parallel Structure [the outlawed Fethullah Gülen movement; the authors] organize the people for this issue and struggle to produce political profit over the sufferings of our siblings. They lie, they defame, they pervert the facts.

Whereas the focus of the previous quote was on the attitude and policy of those who allegedly opposed accepting Syrians, Dilipak went a step further and accused the opposition of perverting the facts about their refuge. In doing so, he insinuated that anyone who did not accept the imposed political orientation had fallen victim to the lies of the opposition. Anyone who trusted the columnist had no option but to accept the truth; that is, the imposed political orientation.

Making the new political orientation attractive

Whereas the sharpening of the imposed political orientation vis-à-vis contrasting political standpoints only took place after the government had adopted the Muhajir-Ansar discourse and had thus narrowed the target group of its political mass education initiative, various strategies to render the new political orientation more attractive can be observed from the very beginning of this issue. One important strategy was to foster empathy and sympathy for the refugees. For example, President Erdoğan, in a speech to the 4th congress of his party in 2012, drew his audience's attention to the "very mournful incident" of three Syrian siblings aged 8–13 whose parents had been killed by "the planes of Al-Assad." Subsequently, these siblings travelled to Turkey by car and finally by foot. Erdoğan continued this story by saying: "The three siblings walked for a full 10 hours. When they arrived at the Turkish border, when they delivered themselves to the security of Turkey, one could see that blood dropped from their feet due to the walking" (Erdoğan, 2012). These words not only triggered the empathy of the audience by drawing its attention to the fate of these children. Erdoğan, pointing to the "security of Turkey," also connected the children's fate with a positive image of the audience's own country—that is, Turkey—of which his party members could be proud.

In the same vein, Ahmet Davutoğlu, who followed Erdoğan as prime minister when the latter became president, mentioned a Turkish doctor's conversation with a young Syrian child. The doctor had asked the boy what he wanted to become when he grew up, and the boy replied that he wanted to become a "Turk." Davutoğlu (2016) commented on this by saying: "Because in his mind a Turk is a merciful, kind, competent person." Again, fostering sympathy for Syrians here was combined with constructing a positive national identity of Turks.

Apart from the tragic stories of individual refugees that were used to create empathy and reproduce Turkish national identity, and were published in Turkish media and used frequently by governmental politicians, another strategy to foster the new political orientation's attractiveness was to focus on (alleged) similarities between the Syrian refugees and the mainstream Turkish citizen. For example, when Erdoğan told his audience that one of these Syrian siblings changed his career plan from being a teacher to studying medicine (Erdoğan, 2012), it was tacitly suggested that Syrians, like Turkish citizens, follow typical bourgeois, middle-class career plans.

Other similarities between the 'standard Turkish citizen' and the Syrian refugees were frequently mentioned, albeit mostly in passing, in many of the documents that we examined. Syrians were shown as people who care for their family, are faithful Muslims and are so thankful for being received in Turkey that they name their children "Recep," "Tayyip," and "Erdoğan," referring to the then-prime minister's name (Habervitrini, 2012). After the attempted coup d'état of 15th July 2016, a newspaper owned by supporters of Erdoğan drew attention to the political action taken by Syrian refugees. Under the headline "Syrians were on the streets for Erdoğan", the *Sabah* newspaper (2016) reported how refugees took active part in the anti-coup protests and shared their war experience (such as taking shelter) with Turkish citizens in or-der to cope with the coup.

However, the new political orientation was not only rendered attractive by appealing to the empathy and sympathy of Turkish citizens. It was also emphasized by giving it a practical

twist. In our research we encountered quite a few instances in which civil society organizations, the government party and official bodies organized solidarity campaigns and asked Turkish citizens to join in. For example, a platform of civil society organization in Ereğli, a town in the Black Sea region far away from the Syrian border, "declared that we will do our best to help the Syrian people … and cover its needs" (Vahdet Haber, 2013). The mufti (chief imam) of Osmaniye in southern Tur-key invited all Muslims to make their traditional post-Ramadan donation to the Syrian refugees in town (Takvim, 2013). The JDP organization of Istanbul asked Istanbulians to help Syrians through the cold winter months by donating heaters, winter clothing, etc. The party officials reported this under the headline "turn from individual Ansar to collective Ansar" (Ensonhaber, 2014), thus connecting this practical dimension to the general frame of the asylum issue. In doing so, they also gave Turkish citizens the opportunity to perceive themselves as good Muslims.

Turning the new political orientation into practical action and strategies not only fostered the practical involvement of those who the government targeted in its mass political education campaign. As soon as one had taken part in any such solidarity campaign, his or her commitment to this cause—to accept and accommodate Syrian refugees—increased. Hence, this practical dimension of the political orientation fostered the binding character of adopting the new political orientation. However, as we wish to show in the following section, this practical dimension also underpinned the principal feasibility of the general asylum policy.

Fostering trust in the feasibility of the new political orientation

Even in the early days of Syrians' refuge to Turkey, the government party JDP took the utmost care to show its party members and the citizenry that the imposed political orientation—that is, to accept Syrian refugees—is not only ethically good but also politically feasible. In one of its manifests on the issue, the JDP gave a detailed account of how the state took care of Syrian refugees (AKP, 2012):

> By 29th August 2012, 11,164 are sheltered in Hatay,12,653 in Gaziantep (8286 of them in the camp of İslahiye, 875 in that of Karkamış, 3492 in schools, gyms and boarding schools), 13,058 in Kilis (785 of them in schools), 26,526 in Şanlıurfa (16,603 of them in Ceylanpınar, 9923 in Akçakale). Furthermore, 7757 Syrians are hosted temporarily in Kahramanmaraş, 3026 in Adana, 959 in Adıyaman, 1447 in Osmaniye and 2938 in Malatya in boarding schools. The shelter, food, health, security, social activity, education, worship, translation, communication, banking and other services are provided in the tent or container camps. All the coordination in the camps is provided by AFAD [the disaster and emergency department] of the prime ministry, the institution which is authorized for all national and international disaster and emergency situations.

By going into such detail, the party underpinned that everything is under the full control of the government and that the state is capable of accommodating the Syrian refugees without negatively affecting Turkish citizens. This was not only conveyed by showing that every individual Syrian had been counted, but also by drawing attention to the non-improvised, institutionalized form of help for the refugees provided by the "AFAD."

Even after more than 2 million Syrians had fled to Turkey within three years, a news-paper article, apparently based on press releases of the above-mentioned governmental unit, underpinned the feasibility of the new political orientation by again providing detailed information on how many Syrians had been provided with assistance. This time, however, it was also stressed that the refugees as people were under control: "In an activity organized by AFAD, finger prints, personal identity and residence information were taken from 2,138,977 Syrians who were given biometric identity cards and thus taken under control" (Yeni Asya, 2015).

Responding to the concerns of the people

Creating trust among those whom you wish to politically educate also makes it necessary to respond to these people's suspiciousness. As newspaper articles speak volumes, concerns among Turkish citizenry grew that Syrian refugees became involved in crime and illegal practices. Taking up such concerns, the official press agency of Turkey issued a long article in 2014 that gave detailed material on the crime rate of Syrian refugees, concluding that only 0.33 per cent had become involved in crime since 2011 (Anadolu Ajansı, 2014). Moreover, this article not only gave voice to an official document that emphasized that "any incident [of crime by Syrians], affected by a discriminatory perspective, receives broad echo in public" (ibid.). The article also quotes a scientist who argued that "a certain section" of society—he was presumably insinuating the opposition—had actively made an "effort" in "developing a reaction" against Syrian refugees (ibid.). Here, the concerns of the Turkish citizenry are not only considered and devaluated, but these people are also warned not to be taken in by the opposition.

Another frequently raised concern was related to the labour market, where some people in Turkey believe that the drop in wages and growing unemployment are due to the Syrian refugees' involvement in the respective sectors of labour (Deniz et al., 2016:32–3). Many Turks, even the supporters of the governmental JDP, feared that Syrians take away jobs from native Turks and also cause wages to drop. An influential columnist of the *Sabah* newspaper tried to disprove such concerns (Kütahyalı, 2016):

> The Turkish workers voice that the Syrians take their jobs. But in most situations this is not valid because, according to research, the Syrians usually work in jobs that the regional people do not wish to work in. By doing so they meet the regional need for unqualified labour or they set up their own companies. The employment of Syrians in sectors which need low paid and unqualified labour, on the other hand, opens up opportunities for parts of the regional people to be employed in better-paid jobs.

Similar to the case of criminal offences, the columnist here did not totally exclude the possibility that Syrians take "Turkish workers" jobs. However, he argued, based on unspecified "research," that this is an exception. Moreover, the concern of "Turkish workers" is not only refuted, but turned into a positive argument: As Syrians work in a stratum of jobs refused by Turks, they allegedly elevate the latter, who have the opportunity to seek "better-paid jobs." The concern here is turned into the promise of economic profit as the pragmatic dimension of the migration.

Displaying the profits of the new political orientation

The economic profits to be gained from the Syrian refugees were especially highlighted when president Erdoğan started to talk to the Turkish citizens about granting citizenship to the newcomers as well, thus adding a new political orientation to be imposed. The Diriliş Postası (2016), for example, published an interview with a Syrian opposition leader who underscored that citizenship "will very much contribute to the commerce and industry of both countries." An interviewee in another newspaper drew attention to the fact that approximately 1,500 companies had been founded by Syrians in Istanbul alone and that they "contribute to the economy by working" (Hilal Haber, 2016).

One columnist even went so far as to foresee that the Syrians, with their good connections not only to their home country but to the "entire world," would make these economic relations available for Turkey, too (Dilipak, 2016):

> To grant our siblings citizenship is not only a fortune for them but also for us. … These people will be productive. More importantly, they will found joint ventures with the tradesmen here. When tomorrow the war is over it will be them who will build up Syria. They will bring us to

> Africa and the entire world. There is a very powerful diaspora of Palestinians and Syrians in the world. These Syrians are a favour of Allah for us.

An economic reward is promised for adopting the imposed political orientation. This reward not only contradicts the allegations that Syrians are a burden for Turkey, but also draws the picture of a better future for the country. It is interesting to note that this promise of an economic reward is not perceived as a contradiction to the religious reward (to become 'Ansar' who is promised paradise). In the same article, Dilipak (2016) voiced the Ansar-Muhajir metaphor, connecting it to the importance of showing "charity" to the refugees.

Responding to the concerns of the people

The rewards for the new political orientation are not limited to religious and economic aspects; they also include a new national identity for the Turkish citizenry. The JDP initially argued that by caring for the problems and crises of other countries (such as Syria), Turkey would become one of the "big states" (AKP, 2012) that, through its active humanitarian help would challenge the respective claims of Europe who accepted so few refugees from Syria. However, when the Ansar-Muhajir metaphor was introduced, this rather general collective identity that was closely related to the "siblings" metaphor was turned into the idea of what could be called a "Neo-Ottoman identity" (see also Kloos, 2016).

In his speeches, Erdoğan liked to greet the "heroic peoples of Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya" (Erdoğan, 2012)—referring to the Arab spring—and who did not neglect to mention all those people from the Balkans that Turkey had welcomed. In a speech in 2016 he made it clear that Turkey assumes a leadership that goes beyond the borders of the country (Habertürk, 2016):

> I say it always and repeat it here, one thing is the official borders of our country, the other thing is our borders of the heart. The borders of our heart include all those places where people live who see us as siblings.

Keeping in mind that Erdoğan always mentioned those Arab and Balkan countries that formerly belonged to the Ottoman Empire, it becomes clear that he was alluding here to the borders of the perished state. Pro-government commentators of his speech make this far more explicit. Underpinning that the president "has the horizon of an empire that Turkey deserves," Kütahyalı (2016) argued that Turkey had the "aim to become a regional power." In the same vein, İşbilen (2016) stated that "Turkey had shown its thousand-year-old patronage in the region." Even more out-spoken, Dilipak (2016) proposed to tear down the borders between Turks, Kurds, and Arabs and to turn the "national state" of Turkey into the "Umma"[6] again.

While such ideas of a collective identity may or may not be realistic, they provide the imposed political orientation with a broader meaning. Thus, the discomfort of being exposed to a new political orientation—that is, of accepting Syrians as refugees—is overarched by a comprehensive identity promise that allows those who undergo this political mass education to freely accept what has been imposed on them.

Conclusion

Political mass education, conceptualized as the imposition of new political orientations on a social group or (a section of the) society, may include other elements and strategies than those reconstructed in this article. In the case of the Turkish government, it was just as important to persuade its citizens to host Syrian refugees, integrate the new political orientation into a meaningful cultural superstructure (such as the Ansar metaphor), and contrast it with negative

[6] The word that expresses the imaginative unity of all Muslims in the world.

national stereotypes, make it at-tractive and foster trust in its feasibility as it was to respond to the concerns of the people, display the material and religious profits of the new orientation and overarch it with a new collective identity.

Although it is impossible, on the basis of our empirical data, to assess the efficacy of this political mass education, there are certain indications for its success. In spite of widespread hostility towards Arabs in Turkish society, and despite the competing presence of Syrian refugees on the labour and housing market, especially of cities in southern Turkey, only a few incidents of violent attacks on refugees and minimal political protest were reported between 2011 and 2016. Hence, even if the electorate may not have fully adopted the political orientation of welcoming Syrian refugees to Turkey, the political mass education at hand seems to have been successful, at least to a certain degree.

The analysis of political mass education both necessitates and enables a normative discussion on the respective issue. This starts with the goal of education—in this case, making Syrian refugees accepted—which can be discussed from different points of view (humanitarian, political, demographic, and so on). However, as soon as one has deciphered the devices and strategies of the political mass education process, the normative evaluation must also cover how this education process was conducted, what means were employed and whether they were justifiable vis-à-vis the respective goal. We do not have space to engage in such a discussion here. However, to give an idea of how the discussion expands if one includes means and ends of the education process, we wish to note that it makes a huge difference if you educate people to accept refugees on a humanitarian basis (as the JDP did at the beginning of the influx) or if you use this imposition to divide the society into infidels and true Muslims who become 'Ansar' by helping refugees and thereby help build a new Ottoman identity.

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