

Portraying Immigration in the Media: The Case of Turkey from Different Perspectives (*)

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Abstract: The migration as the most important humanity problem of the 21st century has been widely discussed in national and international arena. One of the regions where current immigration mobility is the most intensely experienced is Syria where the Civil War has continued since 2011. During this immigration mobility, Turkey is one of the main destinations for the immigrants. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the number of migrants has reached over 3.9 million people in Turkey. This issue is constantly covered in the printed and visual media due to its importance. With regard to developments and public policies related with the immigration, the media has an important place to inform public and create public awareness. In this study, we aim to analyse the representation of the migration and of the public policies on migration in the media. Especially for collecting data on the media coverage of public policies on migration, we examine the news which were published in the period between April 2014-December 2016, in which the Agreement on Readmission of Migrants signed by Turkey and European Union was discussed publicly. In line with the aim of the study, the research data is collected from the online editions of four newspapers, *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Cumhuriyet* and *Yeniçağ* newspapers, which have different editorial policies. The data obtained within the study is analysed by quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The concluding part of the study is reserved for evaluations and recommendations based on the findings of the research.

Keywords: Migration, Migrants and Media, Public Opinion, Syrian Issue, Readmission Agreement, Visa Exemption

Medyada Göçün Resmedilmesi:

Farklı Bakış Açılarında Türkiye Örneği

Öz: Göç konusu, 21. yüzyılın en önemli insanlık sorunu olarak ulusal ve uluslararası alanda geniş biçimde tartışılmaktadır. Göç hareketliliğinin en yoğun biçimde yaşandığı bölgelerden biri de 2011 yılından bu yana iç savaşın devam ettiği Suriye'dir. Sözkonusu göç hareketliliğinde, Türkiye, önemli noktalardan biridir. Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteciler Yüksek Komiserliği'ne göre, Türkiye'deki göçmenlerin sayısı, 3 milyon 900 bini geçmiş durumdadır. Göç konusu, önemi nedeniyle, basılı ve görsel medyada sürekli biçimde yer almaktadır. Bu çalışmada, göçün ve göç konusundaki kamu politikalarının medyada temsil edilme biçimlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktayız. Özellikle, göç konusundaki kamu politikalarının medyada ele alınma biçimleriyle ilgili verilere

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ulaşmak bakımından, Türkiye ile Avrupa Birliği arasında imzalanan, kamuoyunda, Geri Kabul Anlaşması olarak bilinen anlaşmanın yeniden gündeme geldiği, 2016 yılı Nisan ile Aralık ayları arasındaki dönem ele alınmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda, araştırma verileri, birbirinden farklı yayın politikalarına sahip olan dört gazetenin, Hürriyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet ve Yeniçağ gazetelerinin çevrimiçi baskılarından toplanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda elde edilen veriler, niceliksel ve niteliksel içerik analizi yöntemiyle incelenmektedir. Çalışmanın son kısmı ise elde edilen bulgulara dayalı olarak, konuyla ilgili yaptığımız değerlendirmelere ve önerilere ayrılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Göçmenler ve Medya, Kamuoyu, Suriye Konusu, Yeniden Kabul Anlaşması, Vize Muafiyeti

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I. Introduction

In recent years, international migration in Turkey has become more complex, varied and multidimensional as in the rest of the world. Turkey has become one of the most important destinations of mass migration especially in the last five years because of the developments in its geography. When called mass migration, migration from Syria to Turkey comes to mind besides immigrants from different countries in Turkey.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees declared that the number of people who had to run away from their homes and countries reached record levels. Over the last five years, at least 15 new or old conflicts have caused a great tragedy for millions of people worldwide. By the end of 2017, 68.5 million people are forced displacement (UNHCR, 2018a <http://www.unhcr.org/tr/>). As of July 31, 2018, there are 3.9 million people who are sheltering in Turkey. Of them, the numbers of Syrians are 3.5 million, Afghans are 164 thousand, Iraqis are 143 thousand, Iranians are 37,500, Somalians are 5,500 and 11,500 of them are from other nationalities (UNHCR, 2018b <http://www.unhcr.org/tr/unhcr-turkiye-statistics>). Today, this number is getting increasing day by day. Besides the vast quantity of the number, one of the important problems is that migration flow towards Turkey is “irregular” in terms of its characteristics. According to Erder and Kaşka, “irregular migration is a problem for both researchers and policy makers in Turkey”. The authors, who have identified that Turkey is facing a different situation from its previous migration experiences, noted the fact as an unexpected situation that Turkey considers itself as a “migrant sending” country (Erder and Kaşka, 2012:113, 115-117).

Considered the legal framework, there are two basic legal documents in Turkey that shape policies for migrants and refugees: the 1934 Agreement Act, the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Additional Protocol on refugee status dated 1967. Turkey is one of the signatory countries of both documents but has given this right only to Europeans. Lack of legal arrangements and the failures to implement consistent policies make it difficult to solve problems caused by the migration from East to Turkey including

Syrian migrants. It is obvious that the migration experiences in the last decade has different characteristics from the migration stories of Turkey and the countries in the world. However, Turkey's policies on migration also add new dimensions to this challenging process. It is stated that the readmission agreement between Turkey and the European Union has also problematic legal aspects (Göçmen, 2014). In his article examining the regulations on readmission and visa exemption, Bozkurt says:

The issue to be taken into consideration in this initiative is that the intention of EU to stop the intense influx of refugees and provided role of Turkey for “visa liberalization”. Of course, this is the fact that Turkey will be able to cope with the increasing number of refugees in return of this provided role. This agreement is not really an agreement that solve the problem. For both counterparties, “interests” are in question so in this respect it is important to see them as attempts to “reducing pressure” and “internal policy” in the EU, in member states and in Turkey. Apart from these undoubtedly, this agreement is a point that can be broken and put aside by the counterparties at any time (2016:397-398).

As the migration allows to monitor the specific dimensions of Turkey, it is important to examine and evaluate the process of regulations known as “Readmission and Visa Exemption” via different disciplines. In this regard, the focus of our study is the reflections of policies and discussions about migration on the media in 2016, when the agreement came into force.

II. How's and Why's of the Study

In this study, besides the news about migration, migrants and refugees, it is aimed to examine the formats of the public policies on this subject and their content under selected topics in the online editions of *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Sabah* and *Yeniçağ* newspapers. The agreement on the extradition of migrants known as the “readmission agreement” in the public was signed on 16 December 2013 between Turkey and the European Union (EU). Approved by the Turkish Great National Assembly in 2014, the agreement came into force on June 1st, 2016. In the negotiation and signing process of the readmission agreement, the issue of “providing visa exemption” to the citizens of the Republic of Turkey is also included between the European Union and Turkey. The issue of visa exemption has attracted great attention and kept the issues related to migration on the agenda. Thus, the period between April 2016 and December 2016, which includes the date of the agreement come into force, is determined as the period of analysis with the assumption that news about migration, migrants and migration policies will have widespread coverage in newspapers during this period. In accordance with the aim of the study, the research data is collected from the online editions of four newspapers with different publishing policies: *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Cumhuriyet* and *Yeniçağ*. The circulated contents of the newspapers about the Readmission Agreement were analyzed by qualitative and quantitative content analysis method.

The content analysis method based on a number of quantitative and qualitative indicators aims to reach some results beyond the information obtained from the content. The researcher logically tries to obtain information to interpret the factors that cannot be observed directly from the results in the contexts thanks to the deduction in other words interferences with reference to the indicators in the text (Gökçe, 2001: 19). In this study, where qualitative evaluation was conducted, it was analyzed by categorizing on the basis of the data, themes, concepts or similar features as required by qualitative research (Neuman, 2006: 663).

III. A General Outlook

From April 2016 to December 2016, totally 134 news were found about readmission agreement within the 9 months period. Regarding the process, the most content was in Cumhuriyet (42.5%) newspaper, while the least content was in Yeniçağ (5.3%) newspaper.

Table 1: Frequency of News in Newspapers

Newspaper	percentage	news frequency
Cumhuriyet	%42,5	57
Hürriyet	%35,1	47
Sabah	%17,1	23
Yeniçağ	%5,3	7
Total	%100	134

However, there are remarkable differences between the formats of the news presentation. In this period, the Cumhuriyet newspaper often prefers to place the European Union dimension of the process about the Readmission Agreement. In particular, it can be said that the assessments of the politicians in EU are heavily focused. Unlike this situation, it is found that the Sabah newspaper gives priority how this situation is evaluated by the Turkish authorities and focuses more on official statements. The newspaper often chooses an expression that affirms the government's approach to the process. Evaluated in terms of the Hürriyet newspaper, it uniformly gives place to the assessments of the European Union as well as the statements of the politicians in Turkey. Like Hürriyet newspaper, Yeniçağ newspaper has similar news practices.

IV. Contents of Shared Topics in Newspapers

When a general assessment about the readmission agreement in the online editions of the newspapers is made, two links should be noted: the dimension of EU and the dimension of Turkey of the process. The analyzed newspapers in terms of EU mostly focus on what the process of readmission will be and the expectations of the EU from Turkey, while the news about Turkey mostly focused on the visa exemption of political power in relation to the process. In the period under review, it is seen that the news about refugees who are admitted over Greece were frequently included with the agreement come into force. Most news sharing about the process of the readmission agreement is

made by Cumhuriyet newspaper (54%). It is understood that half of the total shares are about this issue. At least, Sabah newspaper gives place to the process (39%).

Table 2: Contents of Shared Topics

Shared Topics	Cumhuriyet	Hürriyet	Sabah	Yeniçağ
The Process of Readmission Agreement	31 - %54	20- %43	9 - %39	3 - %43
Visa Exemption	19 - %33	23 - %49	13 - %57	3 - %43
The Approach of the Society	2 - %4	2 - %4	-	-
Other	5 - %9	2 - %4	1 - %4	1 - %14
Total	57 - %100	47 - %100	23 - %100	7 - %100

V. Legal Aspect of Readmission Agreement in Press

The readmission agreement and visa exemption legally bind EU and Turkey. If Turkey meets 72 criteria of the readmission agreement, Turkey will be able to travel without a visa in the countries of the Schengen area. In the period under review, it is observed that negative evaluations of the European Union regarding the process are given in the newspapers. Among these are discussions on the legal aspect of the agreement. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has made an assessment about the agreement that pushes international law and even goes over the limits. In the news published on 22 April 2016 by Cumhuriyet newspaper included a report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The report notes that refugees in Greece are under unhealthy conditions and there is no adequate legal protection for those who are denied asylum. The Council's assessment "the agreement has serious questions about the rights of refugees and migrants are present on the paper while it is even more problematic in practice" is included. In the published report, the European Court of Justice requested that the European Court of Justice interpret the concept of "adequate protection" in Article 35 of the EU law on asylum procedure and suspend the resettlement until this has been completed. However, despite all these criticisms, Turkey has accepted the refugees to meet the requirements of the readmission agreement.

VI. The Political Aspect of Readmission Agreement and Visa Exemption in Press

Considering the reviews of newspapers regarding the readmission agreement and visa exemption, the Cumhuriyet newspaper particularly focuses on the political assessments and criticisms in the EU, while Sabah newspaper focuses on political assessments in Turkey. In comparison to these two newspapers, Hürriyet equally focuses on both the statements of politicians in the EU and political assessments in Turkey. In a news dated 13.06.2016, the statements of the president of the EU Commission is included in Cumhuriyet newspaper. Tusk states that the criticism on abusing the freedoms in Turkey is not true with the readmission agreement and also indicates that there is no compromise

against the abusing the freedom of expression and press, and despite hosting hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers, Turkey has the right criticism.

Cumhuriyet newspaper's practice of making news about the readmission agreement has manifested in this way intensively. Sabah newspaper has more informative news about the readmission agreement during this period. There is a news practice produced over the facts like the content of readmission agreement, the gains of Turkey during the process and visa exemption opportunities. In this regard, visa exemption can be considered as an important agreement indicator for Turkey. It is observed that the most news sharing about visa exemption is made by Sabah (57%) and Hürriyet (49%) newspapers. While Hürriyet newspaper has more objective attitude, Sabah newspaper produces contents that strengthens the discourse of the government related to the process. The newspaper published on 17.12.2016 entitled "preparation for visa showdown from Turkey to EU" includes the following interpretation:

If Turkish citizens are not granted a visa exemption by the end of this year, Turkey will have a showdown to the European Union (EU). It will be recalled once again to EU, who demands a change in the anti-terror law that such a change cannot be made. Turkey will want to leave the issue to the joint study group and the European Council. Turkey will submit the final proposal for visa exemption. Turkey will try to set a timetable to practice visa exemption and pass the agreements based on 72 criteria through the Turkish Grand National Assembly of Turkey synchronically. If there is no agreement on a calendar, the Readmission Agreement for refugees will also be abolished.

In this period, when negative statements increased due to the failure to meet the expectations for visa exemption, the newspaper emphasized the statement made by the President as follows:

The readmission agreement reveals your hypocrisy. You are going crazy because Erdogan has revealed your ugly face. This nation does not chase the visa or acceptance, actually you chase the Turkey.

In almost all of the news about visa exemption, the Sabah newspaper includes the assessments of the government about the process and ignores the statements of the EU side of the agreement. The statements of the EU have been able to go into circulation in the context of the criticism of the government. Generally considering the statements about visa exemption and the Readmission it is often emphasized that if there is no visa exemption there will be no readmission agreement. For example, in a report published by Hürriyet on 27.08.2016, the statements of EU Minister and Chief Negotiator Ömer Çelik are included.:

Neither the promises of acceptance of refugees nor the commitment to provide financial support to Turkey have been kept, so we will not put the readmission agreement into force. Without visa exemption, we will not proceed in any matter. Thanks to one to one agreement, we have protected Europe from one of the biggest crises. We're doing this for humanitarian reasons. Instead of thanking, Turkey is almost sat on the dock.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan makes the most remarkable comment about the process. “If you keep practicing such policies, the border gates will be opened. You should know that empty threats do not scare me and my nation.” (Hürriyet, 2016). The expectations for visa exemption during the readmission agreement with the EU are seen as an important bargaining factor in the exchange of refugees. Similarly, the newspaper *Yeniçağ* also includes the statements of Numan Kurtuluş and use the title “The refugee threat to Europe”. In the news in which readmission agreement and visa exemption is mentioned as parallel and equal, it is reported that if Europe do not abolish visa requirements, we will allow refugees to enter Europe. *Yeniçağ*, which separates from other newspaper with its nationalist tendency, has a different news practice. In the news published on September 28, 2016, 7 out of 72 criteria that Turkey should fulfill for visa exemption is considered as “scandal” and it is stated that the EU demands that the military operations of the Turkish Armed Forces against the PKK should be terminated.

VII. Presentation of Readmission Agreement and Visa Exemption from the Perspective of Refugees and Local People

Almost no news has been found about refugees, who are thought to be remarkable and directly affected by the agreement in this process. In a few reports, news has been found that refugees do not want to return, and that they have organized various protests. However, there has been no news of why refugees, who are the subject of this process, do not want to return or protest. For instance, *Cumhuriyet* newspaper reported on April 3, 2016 that refugees on the island of Chios have “revolt” in order not to be sent back, and therefore there may be some problems in the process of repatriation. In the news article, there is no interpretation of why refugees take such actions. In addition, the practice of negative language usage in relation to the process in which the refugees’ “revolt” is remarkable. Evaluating the local people's approach during the period under review, negative discourses are emphasized by ignoring the situation of refugees who were the victims of the war. The refugees are seen as a “problem” in this period and the “negativities” that Turkish tourism will experience in the tourism season are mentioned and it is stated that holiday regions of Turkey are the stops of people who are coming from Greece. For instance, in the news of *Hürriyet* newspaper on April 2, 2016, it is reported that the people of the district, workers, holiday makers and citizens coming from nearby districts indicate their unwillingness of a refugee camp in the district by issuing a press statement in case of making a refugee camp in Dikili, district of Izmir.

VIII. Conclusion

Readmission agreement and visa exemption, which is brought into force between Turkey and Europe with many problems they have, occupy the agenda both in Turkey and Europe. The statements made by politicians both in Europe and in Turkey by the way they are reflected in the press are by no means a solution of the problem. The agreement, as well as the assessments and reports published by some politicians in the European Parliament, contains many problems, even in the form of text.

It should be seen as an important problem for millions of people leaving their living spaces and become homeless, and the refugees to be deprived of their rights in the context of international law. So, millions of Syrians living in Turkey and Europe lack the rights that refugees should have. They are sometimes shown as “guests” and sometimes as “migrants”.

In general, the media do not have the broadcasting practice that demonstrate the rights of Syrian refugees on this issue. Within the scope of the study, the contents and their formats of reflection in the press of online editions of the newspapers are analyzed in terms of the legal, political and social aspects of the issue and the results are shared under related topics. As the findings of the study show generally it can be said that, there are news about the social concerns of migrants in Turkey, while there are hardly any problems of migrants, including the Syrians.

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