

Representation of Syrian refugees in the Turkish media¹

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In social, economic and political terms, Turkey is playing a key role in the Syrian refugee crisis. The number of refugees crossing its border is now in the millions, which makes Turkey conspicuous as both a destination and a transit country. The social adaptation process is an important component of the refugee crises given that Syrian migrants are not temporary but permanent. Since Turkey has the largest number of refugees compared to any other (western) country, it is important to understand how Syrian refugees are perceived by Turkish citizens. By taking the significant influence of media on the integration process into account, the main purpose of this article was to document how Syrian refugees are represented in the media. To achieve the aim, 1,054 news articles published in the summer of 2015 by Turkey's three largest active news agencies were examined by conducting content analysis. We evaluated temporal milestones and spatial importance in Turkish pattern of reporting refugee-related news and compared the positions of the news agencies. Our findings highlight three issues. Based on the major three codes (refugee policy, illegal crossings, refugee as victim) it is obvious that Syrian refugees in Turkish media are represented as victims struggling to survive. While integration and migration policies are an important part of the solution for the Syrian migration crisis, these topics are the three most reported in the news. Last, but not least, the big chunk of news about humanitarian aid proves that Syrian refugees are evaluated by media in human terms.

Keywords: news, refugee crisis, news agencies, Syrians, refugees, media reflections, Turkey, peace journalism

Introduction

As a result of the Syrian crisis, the world has witnessed one of the worst humanitarian plight since the Second World War. The Syrian Civil War started in 2011 and is predicted to continue for several years. The excessive tragedy has caused massive population displacement, estimated at nearly ten million people, and is expected to increase based on the ongoing war in Syria. Almost half of the displaced fled to other countries while the other half is displaced within Syria. Hence, Syrian refugees are one of the key international topics on the agenda items of the twenty-first century.

The tragic displacement process of Syrians peaked in the summer of 2015. That summer was important in displaying the tragic events to the world. The number of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 was 3784, according to IOM,² although globally the number rose to 5350. Hence, the countless deaths in Syria and its environs, and the image of refugees risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea are phenomena in this refugee crisis. However, European countries mostly read the refugee crisis as their crisis while the question of sharing responsibility obscures the fundamental meaning of the European Union. In fact, the EU preferred to continue its border externalization policy in migration context in the last decade (Casas et al. 2010, 2016; Benam 2011; Lemberg-Pedersen 2012). The people in motion are expected to cross Turkey's borders. The geographical location, being a neighbour to both Middle East and Europe, created a critical situation for Turkey when it comes to discuss the issues related to migration.

In social, economic and political terms, Turkey is playing a lead role in the Syrian refugee crisis. The number of registered Syrian refugees is reported to be approximately five million; they fled mainly to four neighbouring countries, namely, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (UNHCR 2016). Over half of Syrian refugees are registered in Turkey. The registered Syrian refugee population in Turkey is about three million (Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management 2016). The actual numbers of refugees crossing the Turkish border are now stated in millions, which makes Turkey conspicuous as not only a transit country but also as a destination country. Thus, the increasing responsibilities of Turkey to manage Syrian migration has become one of the main themes in its complex national political agenda. Moreover, the number of refugees in Turkey is also foreseen to increase, based on a deal with the EU involving the Readmission Agreement in 2016, which forces Turkey to take migrants back from Europe who crossed through its frontiers illegally – a hotly debated topic in the summer of 2015. This political development demonstrates that the Syrian refugee crisis has become a globally critical topic and Turkey is one of the main actors on the stage.

In recent years, the Turkish government recognized the importance of Syrian refugees in terms of its foreign as well as domestic politics. Turkey at first approached Syrian refugees as their 'guests', giving them a temporary protection status: after six years the Syrians' legal status has not changed, but policy-makers in the current climate recognize that three million Syrians in Turkey cannot be seen as temporary

migrants. Having a deeper understanding of social perception regarding refugees is important to maintain harmony in the rapidly changing social order and demography. According to the national survey of perceptions of local people about Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey, conducted in the second half of 2015 (TMFSP 2016), 42% of Turkish citizens support their government's refugee policy; about 47% approve the existence of Syrian refugees in Turkey. On the other hand, 44% think they cause a negative impact on Turkish local people. More importantly, this national survey also shows that Turkish local people receive most information about Syrian refugees through TV, Internet and other media channels. The most-used information source regarding refugees is TV, with more than 50%, while personal experience comes second with 42%. Together with other media tools and the Internet, it therefore seems that media representation influences Turkish public perception of refugees in Turkey. Thus, it is important to examine how Syrian asylum seekers are represented to local people, and their perceptions about Syrians in their country. Therefore, our focus is not to explain public opinion regarding refugees, but to determine the parameters and dynamics in the Turkish media representation of Syrian refugees that impact public perceptions.

In this study, we aimed to understand how the Turkish media approached, evaluated and covered the topic in the summer of 2015. For this purpose, the representation of Syrian refugees to the Turkish public was assessed with news agencies' practices in these manners. We conducted a longitudinal study of the news content related to refugees' issues by the three largest Turkish news agencies within a period of seventeen weeks to detect weekly developments in the patterns of reporting news in the summer of 2015.

The role of Turkish media in framing the refugee crisis

Hallin and Mancini (2004) describe the media system of southern Europe regions, including Turkey, as the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralistic model. They claim (2004: 89) that the late and contested Transition to Democracy in this region has established distinct patterns of relationship between mass media and politics. The involvement of mass media in political conflicts as means of ideological expressions and political mobilization became a strong tradition. On the other hand, it is also stated that the development of commercial media markets was weak, leaving the media dependent on the state, political parties, religious institutions and wealthy private patrons, and inhibiting professionalization (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 90). Hence, there is supremacy of state-controlled media in Turkey. Since its establishment, Turkey has also experienced a complex political history that has always influenced the media environment. More importantly, the state domination of the media has been particularly pronounced during military coups and states of emergency. Yavcan and Ongur (2016) confirm that AKP's increasing power during the last two decades intensified threats to the media criticism in collaboration with a neo-liberal economy, which has been growing since the 1980 military coup. They also argue that

political polarization and commercial restrictions cause pressure on freedom of the media. In recent years, it has become difficult to find journalistic practice out of the context of state-controlled media.

Influenced by national sovereignties, migration is still one phenomenological feature shaping society. While the world is experiencing an enormous migration flow, it is critical to build an analytical frame to read it through media. Migration can be evaluated as a threat, an opportunity or a challenge. The management of migration flows has major importance in this regard. Moreover, the undeniable relation between migration management and social integration becomes more critical for Turkey than ever before. In this context, we argue that the representation of the current refugee flow in the Turkish media gives an essential substance to this relation.

Fryberg examines the *media as a tool* to influence attitudes and behaviour regarding migration. She claims it is important to criticize common metaphors and writings of the media, which are used to frame the immigration debate.

In theory, the role of the media is to present audiences with a balanced account of social issues that would allow people to develop their own opinions and to make informed decisions. By leaving out these important findings and instead focusing on a representation of immigrants as a threat to economy and to public safety, the prevalent framings utilized by the media have consequences for how Americans perceive immigrants, the role of immigrants in society, and for how they respond to current and future immigration legislation. (Fryberg et al. 2012: 105)

The role of media in shaping public opinion is significant. Hence, it is crucial to have a focus on the representation of immigrants in the media to understand public perception. Moreover, Castells (2003) claims that while the media has become globally interconnected since the circulation of programmes and messages in the global network, we are not living in a global village, but in customized cottages globally produced and locally distributed. Thus, this globalization lays a huge burden on the media to mould public opinion.

There are many studies when it comes to media and migration. However, media studies focusing specifically on Syrian refugees are less common. While there are interesting studies such as the newly shaped social media's effect on the great migration of the twenty-first century (Rohde et al. 2016; Maitland and Xu 2015), which focuses on the use of social media by displaced persons, there are also some traditional studies of the representation of Syrian refugees, which mainly claim that the language used on mainstream media creates discrimination (Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Hoyer 2016; Patraşcu 2016). There are also some studies dealing with the representation of Syrian refugees in the Turkish media. Two units of analysis are used in these studies: *news-papers* (Kolukırık 2009; Efe 2015; Göktuna Yaylacı and Karakuş 2015; Memişoğlu and Başol 2016; Akgül Gök and Gökçearslan Çifci 2016; Kavaklı 2016; Yavcan et al. 2017) and *social media* (Özözen Kahraman 2016; Yıldırım and Tekdemir Yurttaş

2016). Most studies prefer to use content analysis on Turkish newspapers of different political persuasions, looking at the ways in which the news is presented. A clear point of view is that these media tools are owned, and they present news based on their political stance. However, these studies cover the topic with a narrow focus, focussing the analysis on front pages only. Similarly, social media studies are based mostly on the analysis of Twitter and the free online Turkish dictionaries, created and edited by volunteers (Ekşi Sözlük, Uludağ Sözlük).

In his study, Efe (2015) claims that examining the representation of asylum seekers on Turkish media plays a crucial role in understanding the relevant social problems and solving them before they become chronic. By investigating the importance of representing refugees and asylum seekers in Turkish media before the Syrian crisis, Kolukırık (2009: 20) underlines its impact on the public opinion both as a reflector and a supporter. Like Fryberg, Kolukırık argues that by providing resistance against errors woven up by prejudices and myths, media can be one effective tool in the integration process. He explains *media as a determining factor on governments and public decisions*, via a symbiotic relation. He determines the process of displacement with demographic change caused by migration. Migration is associated with cultural and social transformation. In this context understanding the reasons for displacement, picturing problems during migration process and informing society of the struggle for existence in the domain are extremely significant in assisting integration and formation of relevant social policies.

The ability of mass media to affect the culture, communication, politics and the dynamics of a society has been evident since the revolution of mass media in the 1960s, through the transformation of modernism to postmodernism (Harvey 1990). Castells (2003) explains that communication is shaping society through mass media, which leads to the network society. This network is also affecting reality, which has become open to many different alternatives over time. Thus, Castells states that it is necessary for reality to be eye-catching in the mass media network society. On this point of view it is possible to suggest that media is focusing on spectacular news, which is mostly generated by crime and victimization, violent images and sexual offences. Hence, victimization becomes a significant topic in the news media. To understand victimization, it should be known that not every victim attains the same level of attention. The ideal victim on news media is the one who can be showed as vulnerable, innocent and worthy of sympathy, such as a child or a woman. On the other hand, young men, the homeless and others existing on the margin of the society may not achieve the status of being a victim. From this perspective there emerges a hierarchy of victimization that can be explained as an order of representing different types of victims; ideal victims on the top and non-deserving victims at the bottom (Davies et al. 2007).

A strong relation between political polarization/affiliation and perception/attitude towards Syrian refugees in Turkey is realized and its direct reflection in the media and social media is clear. Göktuna Yaylacı and Karakuş (2015) draw an inference that instead of informing about refugees and war, media tools aim to reach target audiences. Yıldırım and Tekdemir Yurtdaş (2016) found out, using critical discourse analysis,

that there are seven different repertoires regarding Syrian refugees in use in the Turkish social media: 'threat', 'othering', 'Muslim', 'empathy', 'normative refugee', 'administration problem' and 'economic burden'. The Turkish government's 'pro-refugee strategy' causes pro-government newspapers to portray Syrian refugees as 'victimized guests' within a religious reference (Ensar–Muhacir dichotomy) instead of a rights-based approach, while anti-government newspapers mostly hold anti-Syrians position by emphasizing their financial burden on the country (Yavcan et al. 2017). Şen (2013) claims that the forms of violence are newsworthy in the media. Therefore, war-related circumstances such as nationalism, racism, ethnicity and religious differences attain wide media coverage. Moreover, the way of presenting the news is expressed through the ideology of media outlets, which is related to professional relations, economic and politic forces. As a consequence, Şen states that the Syrian crisis is represented through dominant nationalistic discourses in the mainstream media. On the other hand, alternative media has a more democratic perspective in accordance with peace journalism. Peace journalism is up to the individual's and the editor's political and ethical choices. In this sense, Alankuş (2016) states that conflicts and disputes can be solved non-violently. Media can be viewed as an organization, as discourse producers or in regards to the audience they are reaching. However, in all that has been mentioned, text can be clarified as contradictory when reading the small print reveals layers of meaning. Thus, the text becomes open to interpretation where its creators start to play a very critical role. The audience shall be taken into consideration twice as much when it comes to news media because news media is in an unending circulation. Bläsi (2004) claims that the meaning of reality of today's media has transformed in a way that increases the importance of the news production process. He clarifies that structure, situation onsite, person, political climate, lobbies and audience are six main factors affecting directly the conflict coverage production. Consequently, the audience does not affect the opinion of the journalist. It rather influences the choice of topic, what to cover at all and the presentation of reports. In conclusion, he claims that only these factors can build effective strategies to develop peace journalism. The theory of peace journalism is examined by Galtung (2003) through its focus on conflict transformation. Moreover, Lynch (2010) clarifies that peace journalism values non-violent response to conflict, which has a major importance when it comes to the relation between media and society. There are numerous studies on peace journalism and its models that recommend alternative ways of conflict reporting, which can contribute to prevent overstating conflicts (Galtung 2003; McGoldrick and Lynch 2007). In the most general terms, Lynch (2010) explains peace journalism in terms of its attention to the background, to contexts and to differing possible perspectives with paying attention to peace stories, creating conflict resolutions, peacemaking and peacekeeping as well as exposing myths.

We chose the peace journalism perspective for this article and attempted to add refugee-related news production issues to the debate about peace journalism. We preferred to limit our study to look at the media as a media of news agency. In fact, media needs news, pictures and images instantly for their continuity. It is nearly

impossible to reach all items of the real world agenda because of their inability to reach all sources and because of cost. News agencies can provide these needs. Tokgöz (2003: 106) claims that news agencies have better opportunities at collecting and disseminating the news. Thus, in the sector of media, news agencies are the main sources. News agencies are the original producers of news for printed and broadcast media, which select news to publish by their newsworthiness. In order to minimize the manipulation of newspapers to provide more circulation, we prefer analysing news agencies using a scale varying between humane and sympathetic coverage. Moreover, it is clear that newspapers select news to broadcast by analysing their newsworthiness. Thus, we analyse Syrian refugee-related news through news agencies in order to attain a richer knowledge about the approach of the Turkish media on the refugee crisis.

Methodology

The refugee crisis became significantly visible to the global community in the summer of 2015. For this reason, we collected our data during a period of four months between 15 June 2015 and 11 September 2015. This longitudinal study design, following weekly sequences of events and the related news, allowed detection of changes in the characteristics of news-making patterns, not only at the general level of the Turkish media but also at the news agency level.

There are 150 national news agencies and hundreds of privatized news agencies around the world (Şahin 2013). However, in the case of Turkey there are fourteen local news agencies of which three are large news agencies – Anadolu Agency (AA), Cihan News Agency (CHA) and Dogan News Agency (DHA). We have excluded one effective news agency from our data base, which has been closed to access on the third week of the study period. Firat News Agency is an agency that publishes Turkish, Kurdish and English news in Turkey. Firat News Agency broadcasts in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish and also Kurmanci and Sorani dialects of Kurdish. Access to the news agency is restricted periodically.

In our study, we focused on these three news agencies based on their effectiveness and production. We assume that refugee issues require media coverage. In other words, we argue that the news volume of the agencies is an indicator of their attention to the subject. It is clear that how they deal with refugee-related issue is very crucial. Still, we tried to read the significant media coverage according to its substantive manifest message.

To begin with AA, it was founded on 1920 and is a public enterprise. Although its public interest decreased to 47.75 per cent over time, it seems to be official. In fact, it is under the Turkish Prime Ministry in the organizational scheme. In 2015, the total number of news items was 1,414,743 (Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Undersecretariat of Treasury 2015). The average number of daily news items is 3376. AA is the strongest and biggest news agency of Turkey and has a clear pro-government feature. On the other hand, DHA was founded in 1963 as Hürriyet News Agency and got its current name in 1999. DHA is also the first privatized national news agency in

Turkey. The average number of the news items is stated as 6000 news, 3000 videos and 11,000 pictures per month (Doğan Şirketler Grubu Holding A.Ş. 2015 Annual Report). It is the second largest news agency in Turkey and has a mainstream media character.

CHA is a special news agency in our sample. While CHA previously sided with the government, its obvious relationship with the 'FETÖ terrorist organisation', labelled for the Gülen-lead religious community after the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, caused its closure in the last months of 2016. Thus, the reports of the proprietary company cannot be reached. However, the journalist activities of CHA in summer 2015 cannot be ignored. Overall, 51.14 per cent of all Syrian refugee-related news came from CHA. The number of new items produced by CHA in the summer of 2015 demonstrates that this news agency pays more attention to the topic of Syrian refugees in comparison to the other news agencies.

As mentioned above, we preferred to use news agency as a unit of analysis and limited our study to the largest three Turkish news agencies (AA, DHA, CHA) that were active at the related period. We followed up these agencies week-by-week and archived all relevant news. The news consisting of Syrian refugee content were captured and collected in weekly periods from the websites of the related news agencies. Unlike previous studies, we collected all news related with Syrian refugees in Turkey and outside. While the data were collected on Excel, the searched keywords on the news agencies' websites were Syrian, refugee, Syrian refugee, temporary protection and migration. The data have been constructed through date of news, summary of the news, photographs used and location of the news. In our work, we concentrated on substantive features of the news rather than their form features. That is, we attempted to understand what is being said in the news message. In total, 1054 individual news items serving as coding units were examined using content analysis. We aimed to examine the manifest content of the news instead of its latent content. Meanings behind the manifest content are not our concern, which is a limitation of our study.

We preferred to conduct descriptive quantitative content analysis by means of a set of procedures for systematic analysis of individual news. To increase measurement consistency and to avoid engaging in word counting, we determined and developed variables and codes as two coders by means of two-sided persuasion within inductive approach. Although we cannot calculate inter-coder reliability, it was provided qualitatively in the name of purposeful analysis. Like a qualitative analysis, our coding scheme was hence developed inductively from the data. Then, the organized dataset was descriptively evaluated with the help of SPSS.

Findings

Treatment of two milestones by the Turkish news agencies in the summer

In the space of seventeen weeks, CHA held the high ground by making 51.14% of news reports. Following with a rate of 37.48%, AA ranked second. DHA reported the minimum number of news items with a percentile of 11.39%. Taking into consideration

that CHA and DHA have moderately oppositional stances to the government, it is spectacular that one of them reported news about Syrian refugees the most and one of them the least.

Variations in the numbers of news items in the summer of 2015 shows two milestones when the weekly distribution of the Syrian-related news in Turkey is analysed: the phenomena of Baby Aylan and the great walk to Europe.

To begin with the phenomenon of Baby Aylan, the incident surfaced in Bodrum when the dead body of Aylan Kurdi was found by the Turkish military police on 6 September 2015 (week XII). The drowned Syrian child became a phenomenon with widespread media coverage. His photograph was taken by the journalist Nilüfer Demir working for DHA. The image of the lifeless body washing ashore on Turkey's Aegean coast was first shared by DHA and then spread far and wide through social media, drawing society's attention and reaction. Although there were numerous lost and died people in the Aegean Sea during the summer of 2015 before and after the incident while trying to pass to Europe, the image of the Baby Aylan triggers emotions on a global scale and caused a discursive shift not only in the world but, importantly, in Turkey.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the ongoing fluctuation in week XIII (7–13 September 2015) on the mainstream media seems to reflect news about Baby Aylan. In this week,

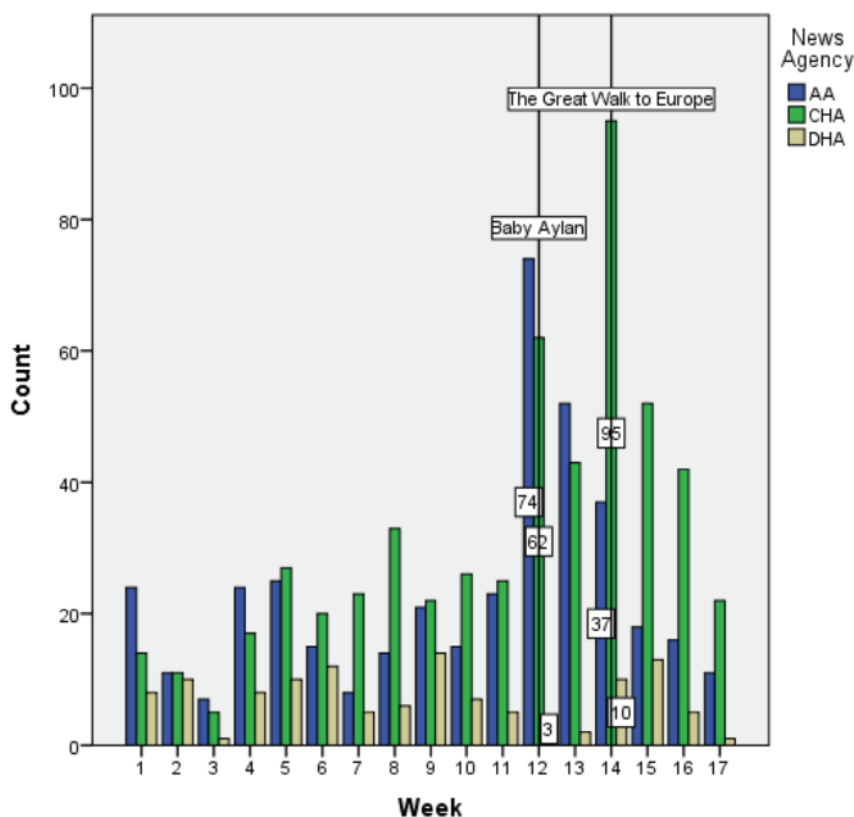


Figure 1: Number of news by news agencies.

the main topic was the debate about political solutions to the refugee crisis, which became eventually visible. The main topic dwelled on the Dublin Regulation, which determines actions to be taken regarding the refugee crisis by the EU. In this week, media coverage was mostly about the migration policy.

The second fluctuation in week XIV (14–20 September 2015) is related with what we labelled ‘the great walk to Europe’. Syrian refugees came from different Turkish cities to İstanbul central bus station in order travel by bus to the European border, but no bus firms sold tickets to them. Then, they walked to Edirne, the European border city of Turkey. This whole story was based on a spread rumour on the social media that Europe was planning to open its borders. The whole world tracked the news and Syrian refugee-related stories were widely covered by media outlets during this week. Examined in detail, while CHA had 95 news items in this week, AA reported 37 and DHA covered only 10 news items on the busy agenda. When reviewed individually, it can be seen that CHA covered the great walk to Europe in 47.4% of its news during the week in question. The other headings prioritized were migration and integration policies. AA reported 37 new items, and instead of the great walk to Europe, migration policy news ranked first with a percentage of 37.8%. The great walk news was covered only in 27% of the items. Lastly, DHA reported the great walk to Europe in 40% (first rank). The interesting point is that in the third rank of DHA’s news was ‘Syrians as victim’ news items.

What the news said

The most widely covered news was examined and categorized by topics. The headlines related to the refugees were categorized as follows: Syrian War as a reason of their displacement; Refugee policy – migration policy and integration policy; Stocks and flows of refugees – refugees, illegal crossing, quantitative, camp and ethnicity; and Different positions of refugees – refugees as receivers of humanitarian aid, refugees as victims, refugees as criminals, refugees as role models. Figure 2 shows the relevant rankings. The news covering the topic of policy has been analysed by two sections: migration policy and integration policy. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration that policy is the most covered topic related to Syrian refugee news in summer 2015.

Syrian War as a reason of their displacement. A total of eighteen news items were reported under the headline ‘Syrian War’. Overall, 66.7 per cent of this news was reported by AA. On number two was CHA, reporting 33.3 per cent of such news. In the summer of 2015, DHA did not report a single piece of news about the Syrian War. It should be added that only refugee-related news were collected on this subject. There will be no further analysis based on the war-related news.

Refugee policy. Policy is the major concept as it is the first step to solving the refugee crisis and the social harmonization of refugees in the host countries. Thus, as it is expected, policy-related news was the most covered news in the time period under consideration. Under this title, the topics covered were as follows: the general policies

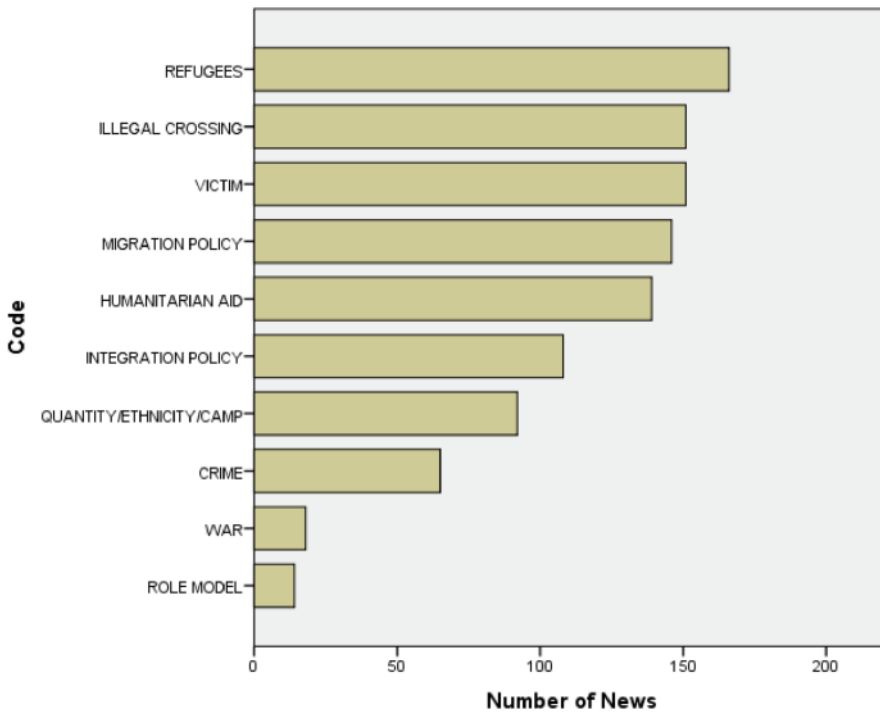


Figure 2: Data binning of news contents.

of Turkey and the world, international relations, international agencies, agreements, press conferences, statements made by ministers and state regulations. The remarkable point is that AA, as the official spokes agency, gave the widest coverage on policy-related news, allocating 24 per cent of its news to this headline, and hence stands out amongst the three news agencies. The migration policy news focussed on policies carried out and discussed by Turkey and other countries regarding the crisis. The topics covered relating to *migration policy* news were as follows: government regulations and descriptions, the agreements made to control the migration and the discussions by governments regarding the number of refugees that should be taken by various countries.

As is obvious in Figure 3, the number of reported migration policy news items shows a fourfold increase in week XII (31 August–6 September). In this week, the major covered topic was the phenomenon of Baby Aylan. Even though it depreciated over the long term, migration policy-related news was a topical issue for three weeks and the topic *migration policy* had relatively more coverage compared to the time before Baby Aylan phenomenon.

When comparing news agencies, the most migration policy-related news was reported by AA. More than 50 per cent of the news was reported by AA compared to the other news agencies during busy weeks (XII, XIII and XIV). From this, it is clear that AA approached the subject in a solution-oriented manner. We noticed a positive interrelation between AA's coverage of topics related to policy development and the

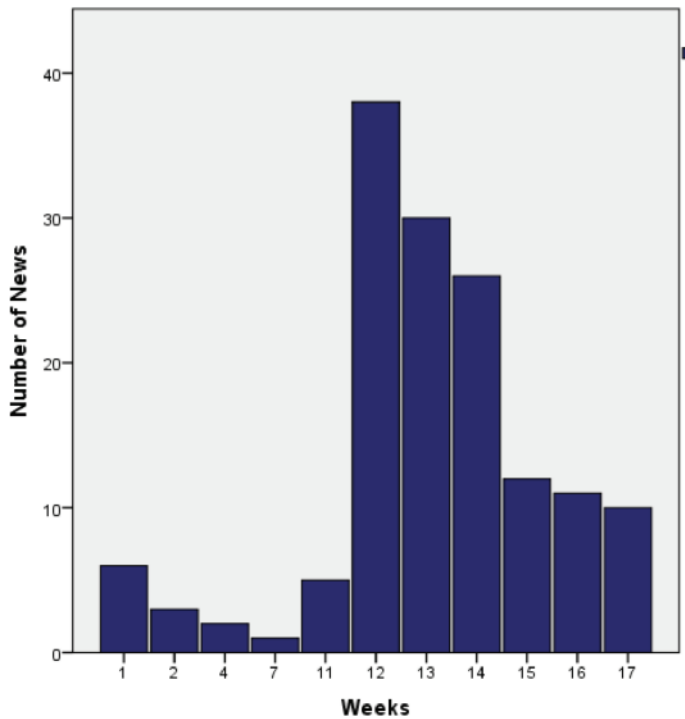


Figure 3: Migration policy-related news among weeks.

Turkish refugee policy. AA plays the role of being the voice of Turkish government to its audience and presents issues dealing with national and international attempts to develop a refugee policy as a public service. While CHA attached average importance to this headline, it should be mentioned that DHA reported *migration policy*-related news only twice.

The covered subjects under the headline *integration policy* were local problems-solutions, news related to education, news related to working order, news related to health and the impact of the Syrian refugee issue on Turkish politics. The locations of the news, displayed in Figure 4, should be examined based on the importance of integration. News about integration policy were reported from various regions of Turkey, but mostly from the metropolizes in Turkey, Ankara, İstanbul and İzmir. These results show there are substantial studies in the three largest cities in Turkey to provide integration.

Agencies reported not only news about stories located in Turkey but also news located in Europe. It appears that Germany, in front of the rest of Europe and the United States, reported a significant amount of integration policy-related news. This should be evaluated through its history and experience of migration.

The headline was regularly a subject for media outlets except for weeks XII and XIV (phenomena of Baby Aylan and the great walk to Europe). The news agencies showed varying rates of interest during the four-month period.

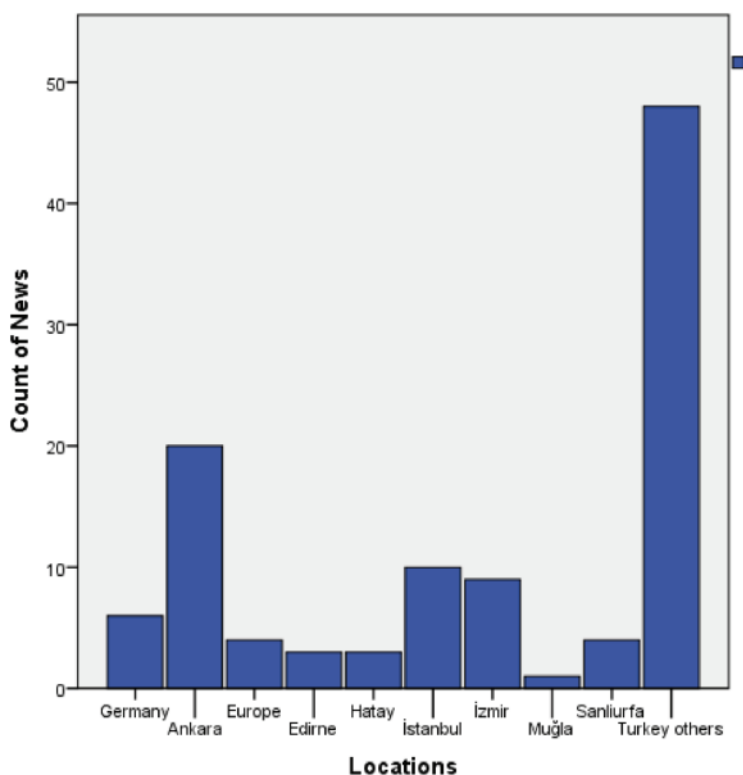


Figure 4: Integration policy-related news among regions.

From another perspective, the matter in hand should be examined in the context of news agencies. Despite *migration policy*, CHA reported the most news on this topic with a ratio of more than 60 per cent. This proves that CHA has a more local perspective, while AA approaches the Syrian refugee crisis from a universal perspective. In addition, DHA placed the importance of this issue in the third rank among its headlines, after *refugee as victim* and *refugees as criminal*.

Stock and flows of refugees. Among the headlines, the second-most reported subject was *refugees*, after the headline of *refugee policy*. This headline focused on the Syrian refugees outside Turkey, Syrian refugee children and most importantly the great walk to Europe. While the first two topics showed an average level of representation, the great walk to Europe upset the balances. The communication between refugees, provided through social media, was based on a rumour that Europe was opening its borders at that time. This myth caused a great walk of Syrians in Turkey which kept track by the whole world. The walk started from various regions of Turkey. It gathered in İstanbul to walk the route to Edirne and Greek borders. While CHA showed great interest on this headline with 67.5%, AA with 26.5% and DHA with 6%. Out of this point, it can be said that CHA was mostly interested in this topic and gave a wide coverage up to 20.8% among its news. Hence, the other media outlets were not

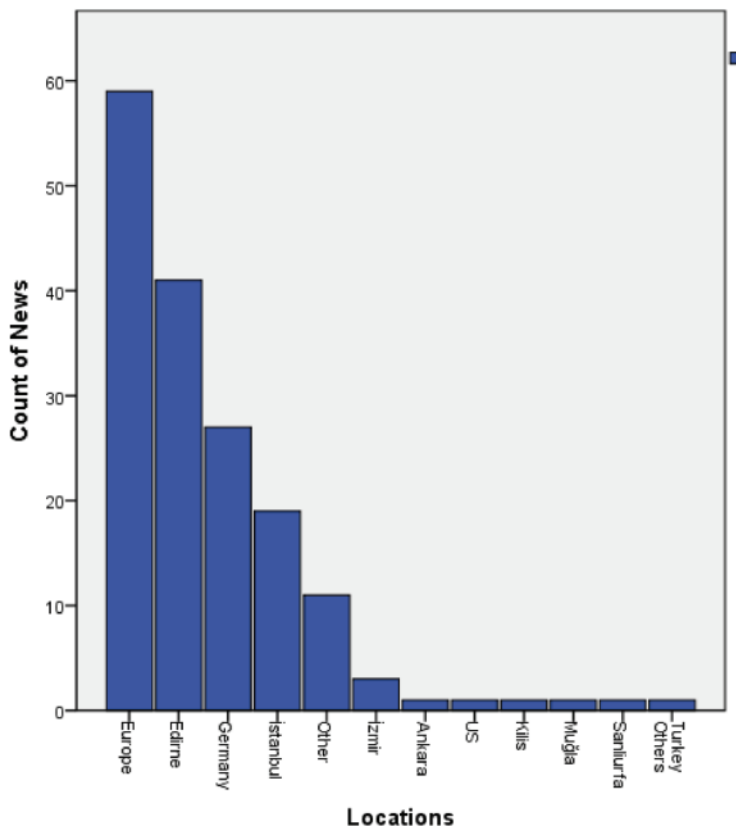


Figure 5: Refugees-related news among regions.

interested in this issue and did not cover it as much as CHA. All in all, this headline was the second-most covered subject across the four-month period.

In terms of the number of news items, the subject follows the media coverage of the phenomenon of Baby Aylan. Thus, the analysis has to be based on the locations of the news. As seen in Figure 5, European countries showed a great interest. Moreover, in Turkey, the news stories were mostly located in Edirne, as expected. Despite involving a wide range of refugees and multiple refugee camps, it is clear that cities like Kilis and Şanlıurfa are not seen as home by refugees. In addition, it can be said that refugees at İzmir and Muğla use these places as temporary settlements.

Another fundamental heading is *illegal crossing*, which was covered 150 times during the four-month period. The news coded by illegality are mostly about refugees trying to cross the borders by sea and human trafficking. Those who lost their lives, precautions taken to prevent loss of life and the market of lifejackets are also covered beneath the headline *Illegal Crossing*. Furthermore, the terminology used to represent this news is also a significant topic that should be taken into consideration.

More than 50% of the covered news was reported by CHA, followed with 35% by AA and lastly a percentile of 9% by DHA. However, for DHA this headline ranked third in its own news after the news about *refugee as victim* and *refugees as criminal*.

The heading *quantitative, camp and ethnicity* is a combination of topics such as refugee numbers in Turkey and the world, refugee numbers that cross borders, refugee numbers sent to camps and news from camps. Additionally, under the headline *ethnicity*, the news covered includes ethnic factors related to Turkmen, Circassian and Armenian groups. Overall, 44.6% of the news under the headline was reported by CHA. AA was second ranked with 40.2% and DHA reported the least news with 15.2% under the news related to Quantitative, Camp and Ethnicity. On the count-based data, the weeks that most often featured this headline were I, XIII and XIV. When examined, these weeks are related to the key event of the great walk to Europe. It should also be added that the media discourses of Turkmen groups in Turkey were crucial. It has been found out that news related to Turkmen groups are covered more tolerantly than news about Syrians in general.

Determining different positions of refugees

Refugee as a receiver of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid-related news crucially remained on the agenda, as seen in Figure 6. The undeniably positive approach should be noted when the impact of media on society is taken into consideration. This headline consists of the news of *help* organizations, all kinds of support provided by Turkey, economical support from all countries, support provided by international aid agencies and donations during the religious holidays. The Muslim religious holidays of 'Greater Eid' and 'Ramadan' fell during the summer of 2015. News related to helping the Syrian refugees rose in considerable fluctuations. More than 50% of this news had been reported by AA. This was followed by CHA with 41% and DHA with 8.6%. Syrian refugees were often represented as receivers of humanitarian aids. Thus, it is important to understand that refugees are seen as needy, which frames perceptions of the crisis in human terms.

Refugees as victims. The subject of being represented as a victim on the Turkish media involved the following topics: Syrian children in Turkey, Syrian families, accidents, sheltering issues among Syrian refugees, Syrians exposed to crime and Syrians as war victims. However, the most covered topics are Syrian children, accidents and sheltering.

The examination of the news agencies' coverage of *refugees as victim* is mainly framed by CHA with a percentage of 43.7, followed by AA with 34.4 per cent. In the third rank, DHA covered Refugees as Victim in 21.9 per cent of the news items. The generally unconcerned stance of DHA was easily identifiable. However, interest shown by DHA to the headlines Refugees as Victim and *refugees as criminal* reveals the concern of DHA to boost its circulation.

The following figure shows the percentages of news agencies' victim-related news. The first attention-grabbing point is that AA is specifically interested in refugees as

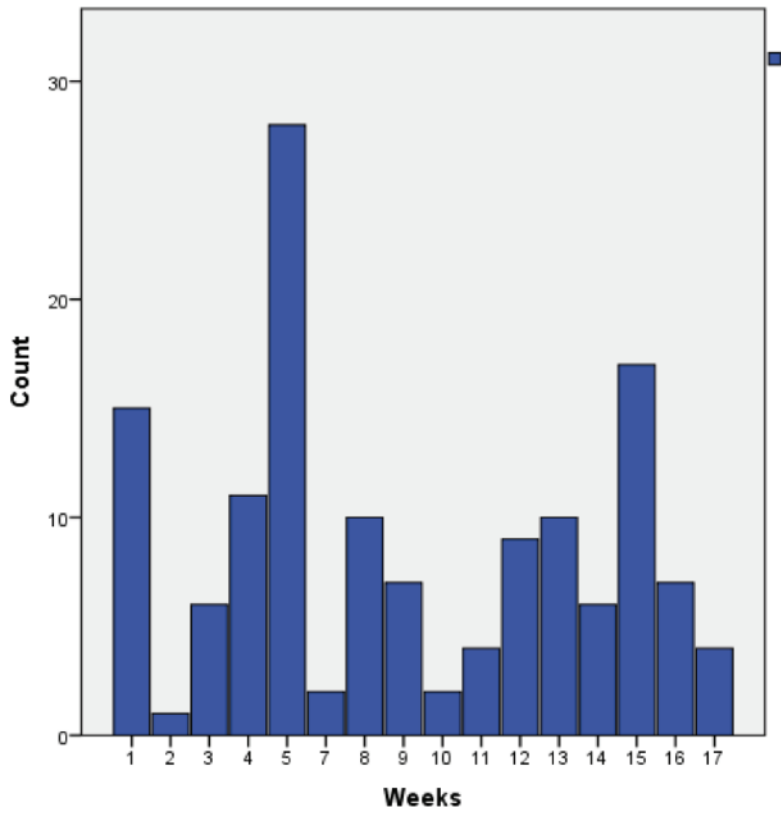


Figure 6: Humanitarian aid-related news among weeks.

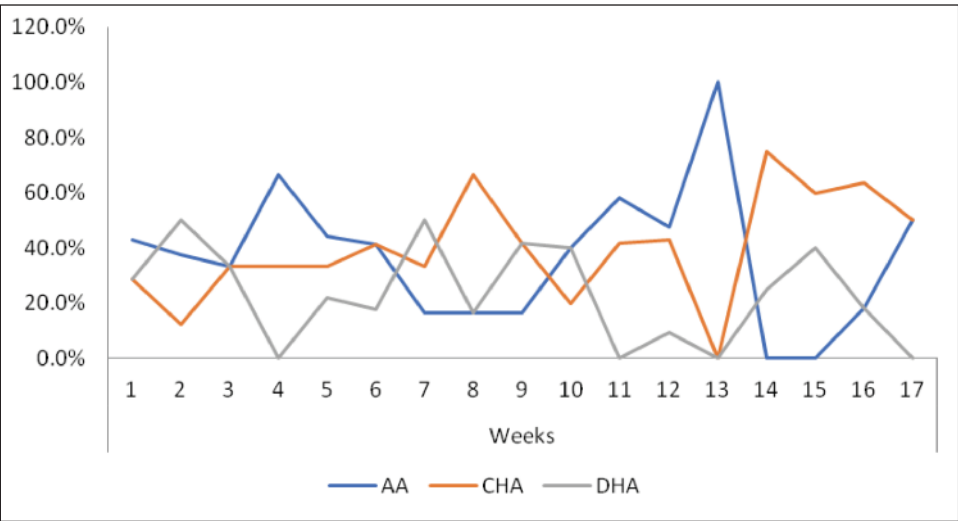


Figure 7: Weekly activity of news agencies on victim-related news.

victims at specific times. After the phenomenon of Baby Aylan (week XIII) only AA has represented Syrian refugees as victims, an interesting point. Moreover, in week IV, AA showed interest in this topic. While CHA is seen to have average interest in this topic, the interest of DHA is seen to be unsteady. There are more ups and downs when compared to the other news agencies, which displays the insufficiency of DHA. Furthermore, while DHA was uninterested in Syrian refugees in general, it is important to perceive its willingness to represent Syrian refugees as victims. Second, it is also clear that almost every week DHA has reported news on this topic consistently. It has already been mentioned that in week III the main topic was policy related.

Refugees as criminal. The coding based on the criminology of Syrian refugees includes news about crimes committed by Syrian refugees. Begging, beating, fights, lynch attempts, terror, abuse and rape are the main topics of these crimes. It should be added that the news related to Refugees as Victim was covered twice as much as the news related to Refugees as Criminal. The interesting point is the number of reported new items in DHA's headlines.

Being often uninterested on Syrian refugees, DHA showed an average rank on representing Syrian refugees as criminals. While CHA covered refugee as criminal in 58.5 per cent of news items, DHA follows with a percentage of 30.8 per cent. AA has the least interest in reporting news about refugees as criminals (small percentage).

Refugee as a role model. Positive-oriented news items under the headline of 'role model' are based on achievements of Syrian refugees and their performances in different special fields, such as sports or the arts. This headline was used on only fourteen reported news out of 1054.

Different urban contexts

The location of news reports is crucial. They facilitate understanding where Syrian refugees are more visible and where the theme is outstanding. On the other hand, it also allows the regional political stances of the government or local authorities to be seen. When examined, the outcome is that, of Europe-located news, which includes 230 items, a great part relates only to Germany, with 60 news items. More importantly, more than 41.3 per cent of the news in Turkey is reported from four cities – İzmir (101), Ankara (94), Şanlıurfa (73) and İstanbul (72). This gives the possibility of deducing that, in Turkey, the three biggest metropolizes and a big city in the south-eastern region in Anatolia are the top cities. We should underline that Şanlıurfa and İstanbul are among the four biggest Syrian refugee-hosting cities in Turkey; news about the other two top refugee-hosting Turkish cities – Hatay and Gaziantep – are relatively low. It can be argued that there is a positive relation between refugee population and amount of news, but refugee size does not directly cause newsworthiness. The headlines indicate circumstances of Syrian refugees, as shown in Table 1.

| Codes | | Four Major Cities on News Reporting | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| | | İzmir (%) | Ankara (%) | İstanbul (%) | Şanlıurfa (%) |
| Syrian War | War | 0.0 | 1.1 | 4.2 | 0.0 |
| Refugee policy | Migration policy | 3.0 | 18.1 | 1.4 | 2.7 |
| | Integration policy | 8.9 | 21.3 | 13.9 | 5.5 |
| Stock and flows of refugees | Refugees | 3.0 | 1.1 | 26.4 | 1.4 |
| | illegal crossing | 39.6 | 26.6 | 2.8 | 0.0 |
| | Quantity/ethnicity/camp | 2.0 | 12.8 | 1.4 | 30.1 |
| Four different positions of refugees | Humanitarian aid | 4.0 | 10.6 | 20.8 | 23.3 |
| | Victim | 31.7 | 2.1 | 19.4 | 21.9 |
| | Crime | 7.9 | 2.1 | 6.9 | 11.0 |
| | Role model | 0.0 | 1.1 | 0.0 | 4.1 |

Table 1: Headlines among the four major cities in Turkey.

News about Syrian refugees was mostly located in İzmir, the biggest city of the Aegean Region of Turkey. Looking deeper, it is seen that approximately 40 per cent of this news concerns illegal crossings. This number is not unexpected given İzmir is both a transit hub city and one of the main destination points in Turkey. Following this topic, refugees represented as victims rank second. The news classified as 'victim' are mostly about Syrian refugee children and sheltering problems in İzmir. In week VIII the main topic of the news from İzmir was refugees' attempts to live in the park in front of Basmane Rail Station.

The second-most reported news items are from Ankara. Refugee policy-based news was most frequent, as expected. The interesting point is that when the location of this city is considered, it will be seen that it is not a city for refugees who want to leave Turkey. It indicates that Turkish government takes this problem seriously and searches for political solutions.

In third rank is Şanlıurfa, a border city. The reported news was mostly about the stocks and flows of refugees. The following headlines where the news was coded deal with 'humanitarian aid', which is not surprising as Şanlıurfa is the first stop in Turkish borders for most Syrians. Close to this rank, with a percentile of 21.9, the next headline is refugees as victim. When previous years' news, like lynch attempts in July 2014 in the south-eastern part of Anatolia, particularly border cities such as Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, are examined, it is clear that the media tries to integrate Syrian refugees by representing them as victims, rather than as criminals.

Lastly, in İstanbul the reported news are unremarkable, mostly concerning the great walk to Europe. Instead, the remarkable point is the news about humanitarian aid. It shows a rank of 20.8 per cent. Following this rank the news about refugees represented as victims shows 19.4 per cent and is mostly based on Syrian refugee children.

Discussion

The four categories used to analyse the Syrian refugee-related news – Syrian War-related news, refugee policy-related news, stock and flows of refugees and four different positions of refugees (criminal, humanitarian aid receiver, victim, role model) – demonstrate that Syrian refugees are represented in the Turkish media as victims who experience a struggle to survive. We find a significant relation between our coding scheme emerging from individual news datasets by news agencies and the seven repertoires of the Turkish social media as determined by Yıldırım and Tekdemir Yurtdaş (threat, othering, Muslim, empathy, normative refugee, administration problem and economic burden). The general reflection of Syrian refugees as victims shall be considered in depth. Building a structure portraying them as victims reflects the political and humanitarian perspective of the Turkish state. Thus, it is important to have a perception from the point of view of the Turkish media.

As Davies et al. (2007) mentioned, victimization works in the frame of deserving vs non-deserving victims dichotomy. When the image of Baby Aylan by DHA was globally released, it created a possibility of questioning and publicizing the refugee crisis worldwide. It is apparent that Baby Aylan as the model victim was symbolized to show the necessity of change migration policy paradigms in the world due to its contradiction with human values. Dissemination of the image seems a postmodernistic milestone in the new media, referring to a world facing the truth of desperation despite all human development. In other words, a concrete step about this humanitarian plight has not been eventually taken with this local event, but its global dissemination re-demonstrated the power of media creating a conceptual change in individual minds handling the subject.

The theme of our study was the reflection of Syrian refugees in the Turkish media. In terms of our analysis, the importance derives from the similarities and differences in news-making patterns of the leading Turkish news agencies. All these biggest agencies are not ideologically neutral sources. As a mouthpiece of the Turkish government, AA proved its serious approach through its most frequently covered topics. It has been demonstrated that refugee policy-related news had been tackled the most. Additionally, the second-most frequently used code by AA was humanitarian aid, indicating the importance attached to the humanitarian perspective of this massive crisis. Moreover, paying attention to both inside and outside of Turkey, it can be said that the news reported is not national but international. In other words, AA's coverage of policy-related and humanitarian issues implicates the international community and not merely Turkish policy-makers. To continue with CHA offering the most refugee-related news in that summer, the determined news policy is mainly on reporting every relevant issue as news. It should be added that one of the emphasized codes, humanitarian aid, is mostly related to holidays. and charity organizations such as 'Kimse Yok Mu', known for their links to the Gülen community (FETÖ), and İHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation of Turkey). On the other hand, DHA, which can be identified as a Turkish mainstream broadcasting corporation, represented Syrian refugees mostly as victims or criminals. This attitude of DHA displays the point of

view on this agenda in the summer of 2015. Differentiation of the Turkish news agencies in all ideology-loaded, state-controlled, economically dependent journalistic practices still confirms the description of the media type as Mediterranean model by Hallin and Mancini.

The different political stances among news agencies are indeed effectual. News agencies' ideologies provide self-consistent pictures and create compact resources for newspapers partisanship. It is crucial to underline that the refugee representation dynamics are all related to the ideologies and political stances of the news agencies. For instance, the great walk to Europe and illegal crossings are mostly thematized by CHA, while AA seems to shy away from reporting this news. Still, both news agencies prefer to talk of refugees as Humanitarian Aid Receiver by emphasizing religious unity. The most popular headline of Refugee as Victim is run at most by CHA, but AA displays more attention to it following the Baby Aylan phenomenon. DHA brought the image of Baby Aylan to the agenda and caused its circulation at the global level, although it attaches importance to Refugees as Criminals.

Media is one powerful tool for integrating society, which is experiencing a massive change in the twenty-first century. We claim that Turkish news agencies' representation of refugees is important as it shapes the news media in the name of framing the refugee crisis. The study shows that Turkish news agencies resemble media that is used as a tool to influence decision-makers at the international level in refugee-oriented issues, but also to influence public perception. The non-negligible importance of news media on the integration process, which may change the whole process of politics and perception of society, must be considered carefully. In spite of Refugee as Victim, Criminal and Humanitarian Aid Receiver, there is still a big gap in reporting news of Refugees as Role Models. We conclude that peace journalism offers an alternative representation of refugees as opposed to pro-government, anti-government and mainstream media of Turkey. That is why peace journalism becomes more significant when it comes to the humanitarian crisis. Therefore, journalists and media members should be well-educated on this topic to prevent myths, speculations and conflicts in society.

Notes

1. The preliminary version of this article was presented at the *Turkish Migration Conference 2016* in Vienna and awarded with the best paper prize. The special issue editors and two anonymous reviewers of *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies* provided generous and constructive feedback on earlier versions of this article. The authors also express their gratitude to Dr Oliver Wright for copyediting.
2. Recorded Migrant Deaths by Region; <http://missingmigrants.iom.int>.

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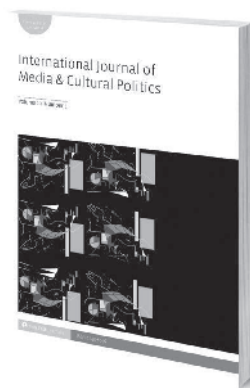
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