

‘OUR SYRIAN BROTHERS’: REFUGEES AND ETHNICITY IN TURKISH POLITICAL
RHETORIC

By

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Abstract

In the early years of the Turkish state, national unity along the lines of ethnic identity became crucial and any opposition to unity sparked animosity between the Turkish government and its ethnic minorities leading to policies of forced migration and assimilation. Over the past 20 years, there has been a slow but steady shift towards acceptance of alternative identities in Turkey. However, intolerance and violence is again on the rise and the influx of millions of Syrian refugees into Turkey, due to the social and economic pressures that refugees brings, may be influencing this rise. Thus, I ask, has the Syrian refugee crisis reinvigorated historical tensions between the Turkish government and its minority populations? In order to trace the shifts in political conversations towards Turkish minorities, I analyzed political speeches made by leaders of the top four Turkish parties during the five election cycles that have taken place since 2011, the start of the Syrian Civil War. I looked for tone and message of political themes regarding minorities that were linked to Syrian refugees. I found that concerns with Syrians were not associated with an increase in negative relations with minority groups. However, opposition parties tied Syrian refugees to the loss of democratic rights and problems with foreign and domestic policy of the incumbent party. The incumbent party, on the other hand, utilized Syrian refugees to emphasize the humanitarian efforts the government has undertaken and blamed concerns, both domestic and international, on external forces, including Syrian Kurdish organizations (the Kurdish Democratic Union Party and the Kurdish National Council).

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Syrian Refugees and Turkish Minorities	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	9
Borders and national security	15
Population movements in Turkey	17
Ethnicity in political rhetoric	19
Chapter 3: Content Analysis of Turkish Political Speeches	26
Data selection	26
Data analysis	30
Chapter 4: Political Themes on Syrians	32
Political parties in Turkey	35
Introduction to political themes	37
Syrians in Turkey	37
Turkish foreign policy	42
Democratic freedoms	47
Terrorist organizations in Syria	51
The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on Syrians	53
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion	55
References	62

List of Figures

Figure 1	33
Figure 2	34
Figure 3	44

List of Acronyms of Political Organizations in Turkey and Syria

Acronym	Turkish	English
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi	Justice and Development Party
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi	Republican People's Party
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi	Peoples' Democratic Party
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi	Nationalist Movement Party
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PYD	Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat	Democratic Union Party
YPG	Yekîneyên Parastina Gel	Peoples' Protection Units

Chapter 1: Syrian Refugees and Turkish Minorities

On March 15th, 2011 protests erupted in Syria across three cities in response to government arrests of a dozen minors for writing the Arab Spring slogan, “The people want to topple the regime,” on a school in Daraa (“Timeline,” n.d.). In response to the protests, the government retaliated with swift and brutal force but rather than diminish, the protests grew. As the movement developed, hundreds were killed and the death toll rose to 1100 by May 2011 (“Timeline,” n.d.). As the fighting increased and Syrians found themselves in life or death situations, with homes destroyed, or forced to fight in armies they didn’t support they began to seek refuge in neighboring states. Turkey, as a newly friendly country towards Syrians and a gateway to Europe, became the home of first a trickle and then a flood of Syrian refugees seeking escape. The thousands of refugees that entered Turkey in 2011 grew to 2.5 million by the end of 2015 and as the number of refugees grew, so did the strain on Turkish society.

As concerns with the Syrian Civil War and the numbers of Syrians entering Turkey increased, particularly between 2014 and 2015 when the number of refugees went from 1.5 to 2.5 million, Turkey was also struggling with internal security concerns. On July 24th, 2015, after nearly two years, the Turkish military ended the ceasefire with Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK or Kurdistan Workers’ Party) and attacked PKK strongholds in Northern Iraq immediately setting off a chain reaction that has led to the deaths of hundreds of soldiers, PKK fighters, and citizens. While the PKK and the Turkish government have never had entirely peaceful relations, the ceasefire significantly reduced deaths between 2013 and 2015. Prior to July 2015 there was a buildup of tensions, between the government and both the PKK and the broader Turkish

community. Between 2013 and 2015 unrest spread across the nation as evidenced by the Gezi protests of 2013 and the May Day protests of 2013, 2014, and 2015. What is the cause of this rise in tensions? The PKK is not the sole concern given the number of protests across the country. Larger social issues may be underlying rising tensions. Possibly, in correspondence with the rise of Syrian refugees living in Turkey and the pressures they have brought to the nation, the government is responding to clashes resulting from differing understandings of the meaning of citizenship and democracy in Turkey and the rights that each bestow to Turkey's people.

One component of Turkey's struggles with incorporating Syrian refugees has been due to economic concerns, however Syrians have also reignited a discussion of rights in Turkey based on what constitutes Turkish citizenship. Turkey was born into a period when ethnicity was a central feature of new nations and therefore Turkish elite had to construct a Turkish ethnic identity. Much of the Christian population of the Balkans had recently broken from the Ottoman Empire specifically due to ethnic nationalist movements supported by European powers. Thus, the initial emphasis for inclusion or exclusion in Turkish identity was Islam (Çağaptay, 2002). While the Ottoman Empire had incorporated non-Muslims into the government system, the new Turkey viewed non-Muslims as a threat to national unity, particularly as Christian, European nations, specifically Britain, France, and Italy, had taken control of what Turks viewed to be Turkish territory. Identification of Turks as Muslims with a distinct identity from Christian Europeans became the most obvious foundation of Turkish identity. Thus, Turkey drew on its Ottoman roots and Sunni Islam became central to Turkish identity.

While religion provided a basic foundation for Turkishness, it failed to incorporate all aspects of the diversity existing within Turkish territory. After establishing Turkey as a nation,

culture and language became critical in further uniting the nation and clamping down on social unrest. In the 1920's and 1930's, Turkey dealt with three revolts led by separate Kurdish tribal leaders: the Sheik Said rebellion of 1925, the revolt of Ağrı mountain of 1930-31, and various revolts by Alevi Kurds, known as Zazas, in the mountains of Dersim in 1937-38 (M. Orhan, 2012, p. 349; Yavuz, 2001, pp. 7-8; Zürcher, 1993, pp. 170-171). Though these were not unified Kurdish revolts, they drew government attention to incorporating nomadic and tribal groups, which made up approximately 15 to 20 percent of the population, into the Turkish nation, and encouraged policies aimed at destroying tribal hierarchies and encouraging loyalty to the Turkish nation. Thus nomadic peoples became government targets for aggressive nationalist settlement policies (Yeğen, Kadioğlu, & Keyman, 2010, pp. 231-232). These peoples could either accept Turkish identity and language or the government would view them as enemies of the state and threats to national unity. Inclusion in citizenship of the Turkish nation meant identifying as Turk and eschewing the nomadic lifestyle, and speaking the Turkish language (Aslan, 2007; Yeğen et al., 2010, pp. 231-232). Elites' evolving definition of Turkish identity in the 1920's and 1930's generated conflict between any minority group that sought to maintain alternative cultural and lingual norms and the new Turkish government throughout the 1900's.

The international community is currently struggling with social, economic, and institutional consequences as the incoming Syrian refugee population increases. However Turkey, as a nearby but stable nation-state and a gateway into Europe, has become home to the vast majority of Syrian refugees. As Syrians enter the country, Turkey has encountered cultural differences with the introduction of a large Arab ethnicity and economic concerns as Syrians, both legal and illegal, flood the labor market. The influx of non-Turkic refugees may be placing

significant pressure on old social wounds rooted in the construction of Turkish ethnic identity and citizenship. In addition, historical relations between Turkey and Syria have not always been positive. Prior to the Adana Accord of 1998, Syria and Turkey had a history of enmity (Aras & Karakaya Polat, 2008; Tür & Hinnebusch, 2013). On the one hand, Turkey controlled water that Syria needed and sought rights to while Syria provided tacit support for the PKK against Turkey and was blamed by Turkey for using the PKK as a tool for gaining water access (Aras & Karakaya Polat, 2008; Tür & Hinnebusch, 2013). In addition, Syria has long contested the change in borders that incorporated the Hatay region in Turkey rather than leaving it as part of Syria in the 1940's (Stokes, 1998). Despite a shift towards positive relations between the two countries prior to the Syrian Civil War, these contestations have underlain Turkish-Syrian relations and may reemerge in political discussions on Syria.

Nations, including Turkey, the United States, and now Russia, have chosen sides in Syria in order to insure particular outcomes based on economic and political factors. The Syrian Civil War has presented a threat to Turkey's national security by adding the pressures of a much larger Arab minority as well as consolidating power for a Kurdish-Syrian organization along Turkey's Syrian border. Syrian Arabs cannot be viewed as part of the broader community of Turks and yet they are primarily Sunni Muslim, the official religion of the Turkish state. While Turkey wants to support its fellow Sunnis and offer refuge, it cannot handle the numbers entering the country. Additionally, as Syrian Kurds gain power at the border, Turkey is likely to fear irredentist claims on the part of Turkish Kurds seeking to form a unified Kurdistan and succeed with part of Turkey. Turkish political leaders will likely also draw on historical enmities between Turkey and Syria that make trust in Syrian organizations difficult. Also, as PKK was permitted to work from

Syrian territory in the 1980's and 90's and the Syrian Kurdish organization, the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD or Democratic Union Party) has relations with the PKK, Turkish politicians have legitimate fears of irredentist activity and exchange of support, including weapons, between the PKK and the PYD. Syrian Kurds are likely one reason why the government would turn against Turkish minorities, especially Kurds, as the surge of Syrian refugees continues.

Over the last year, as the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey has risen to 2.5 million, there has been a rise in violent activity by the PKK and an indiscriminatory response towards all Kurdish peoples by the government. Government response has included the maintenance of gendarmerie, or military police, rather than civilian police in the Southeastern, primarily Kurdish, regions of Turkey and the imposition of curfews in those regions. In addition, unwarranted detentions and harassment has increased not only of Turkish Kurds in the Southeast but of anyone perceived as anti-government with a particular focus on military personnel, newspapers publishing anti-government writing, and the pro-Kurdish, leftist People's' Democratic Party (HDP) politicians and supporters. While on the surface the Syrian refugee crisis seems unrelated to the shift in discriminatory policies, given the timing I believe the change in policies and the rise in refugees are intimately linked. Thus, I ask whether the Syrian refugee crisis has reinvigorated historical tensions between the Turkish government and Turkish minority populations and, if so, whether the impact has been due to the Syrian refugee crisis generally, or to the increased presence of Syrian Kurds along the Turkish-Syrian border.

While Turkey is not unique in having to incorporate refugees into the nation, Turkey is an ideal stage for understanding, on a broader level, how an outside refugee population might impact internal minority relations of a nation. First, Turkey is currently handling the bulk of

refugees coming out of Syria: 2.5 million of the 4.5 million registered Syrian refugees are in Turkey (“Syria Regional Refugee Response,” 2016). Thus the impacts that Turkey has experienced on the economy as unemployment rises, and on security as terrorist attacks increase are magnified in comparison with other nations. Secondly, as a nation that has striven actively for a unified ethnic identity, Turkey offers an environment in which any instability is likely to have a significant impact on minorities. Syrian refugees are not Turkish, and incorporating such a significant non-Turkish population represents a challenge to the unified ethnic identity nationalists have striven for since Turkey’s inception. For instance, Turkey must struggle with the education system as Syrians enter schools. Turkish education was designed with the understanding that all learners would speak and be educated in the official Turkish language and cannot currently meet the needs of non-Turkish speakers (Nielsen & Grey, 2013). In addition, Syrian Kurds, both refugees and those fighting within Syria, represent a threat to the balance in Turkey between the government and those Turkish Kurds who seek secession. Turkey, therefore, is a good model for better understanding the impact of an external population on government-minority relations more generally.

In the hands of a political party, ethnic conflict can be a decisive tool for maintaining political backing. In Turkey especially, due to the central role that ethnicity has played in Turkish politics and nationalist history, ethnic conflict can be readily used to reassert control and engage support for a faltering political party. For instance, prior to 2012, any time a political party formed to represent Kurdish interests, it was dispelled by the government. The People’s Democratic Party (HDP) is the first party representative of Kurdish interests that has ever been able to gain access to the parliament as a single party in Turkey. Ethnic violence is renewed by

the use of conflict by elites who seek to, “gain, maintain, or increase their hold on political power” (Fearon & Laitin, 2000a, p. 846). In the case of Turkey, politicians utilize minority concerns in order to gain votes. By excluding parties that directly stand for Kurdish concerns, for instance, Turkey has in effect forced those citizens to give their votes to one of the parties that represent the status quo. The incumbent government might emphasize conflict in order to gain votes and provide a distraction from other pressing economic and social issues, i.e. the Syrian refugee crisis and its impact on the nation. Alternatively, opposition parties may use ethnic concerns not only to gain votes from minorities but to draw on a larger pool of votes from the greater Turkish public. If Syrians are reinvigorating questions around what constitutes citizenship, and particularly given broader protests against the government, it is possible that opposition parties will use ethnicity as a tool to point out larger social and policy issues with the incumbent political party.

In order to address the question of whether the Syrian refugee crisis has reinvigorated historical tensions between the government and minority populations, I examine political speeches given by the top four parties during campaigns since the initial emergence of the conflict in Syria in order to provide insight into how politicians might use ethnic conflict as part of a political platform. I analyze political themes that directly link refugees to other internal minorities. I look at speeches during campaigning periods as they offer insight into what politicians deemed to be the most significant issues for gaining votes. Political speeches also touch on current events, and, because politicians are focused on votes during this period, they ought to reflect the response of the public towards the Syrian refugee crisis.

Given the centrality of unified ethnic identity in Turkey, I anticipated a strong correlation between negative framing of minorities in political rhetoric and the influx of Syrian refugees. Turkey has regularly practiced careful migration policies in order to maintain ethnic unity, therefore political focus would be unlikely to remain solely on incorporating Syrian refugees. For instance, while Bulgarian refugees were permitted to enter Turkey throughout the last 50 years in times of Bulgarian nationalist movements given Bulgarian Turkic roots, Iraqi Kurdish refugees presented a significant problem to Turkey in the 1990's during the Gulf Wars as additional Kurds were a threat to internal ethnic stability (Detrez, 2015). As the numbers of Syrian refugees increased and the period of time that they were expected to stay in Turkey also increased, I expected that more political and social attention would be likely to focus on the issue of citizenship and national acceptance. Due to the negative impacts in dealing with such a large population, and the historical animosity and struggle with non-Turks, I predicted, as pressures rose with the increase in refugees, a negative focus on Turkish minorities would also increase. In addition, as the Syrian war and refugees invigorate questions of security and democratic rights, I expected politicians would form a negative linkage between an external population and an internal population viewed as alien.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Understanding ethnic relations in Turkey is fundamental to understanding the power and rights dynamic between the Turkish government and its minority citizens. When addressing ethnic identity, political figures will draw on the structures previously in place in Turkey, therefore it is critical to recognize theoretical approaches to ethnic identity formation. There are three approaches to understanding ethnicity that scholars have taken. One of these approaches, primordialism, in which ethnic identities are viewed as ancient and static, has been debunked and is rarely used by the academic community. The other two, instrumentalism and constructivism, provide a strong theoretical basis for understanding ethnic identity.

Both the instrumentalist and the constructivist approach take a more complex view of the origins of ethnicity. The instrumentalist approach views ethnic identity as a tool in the hands of individuals, groups, or elites, for achieving a specific, often material, goal (Brass, 1985; Lake & Rothchild, 1998; Steinberg, 2001). The constructivist approach views ethnic identity as changeable and national identity, based on ethnic identity, as constructed by groups for non materialistic but rather social reasons (Anderson, 2006; Gellner & Breuilly, 2008; Renan, 1990; Smith, 2008). Initially, the goal of these alternative approaches was to counter claims made by political giants arguing nationality was static and based upon ethnic or religious lines (Renan, 1990). But since their acceptance by scholars, instrumentalist and constructivist literature have explored not whether national ethnic identity is created but *how* ethnicity emerged as the basis of the state and *how* and *why* identity is formed by groups. Both the instrumentalist and the constructivist approaches have something to offer when discussing ethnic identity. In the Turkish context, ethnic identity was constructed over time through a dialectic between Turkish elite and

masses beginning with the early years of Turkish nationalism. However, while ethnicity was constructed by larger group dynamics, individual politicians could still use ethnic identity as an instrument towards gaining power in political speeches.

In order to understand the emergence of ethnic identity in Turkey, ethnicity must be discussed in the context of nationalism. Nationalism as the basis of the state and its causes are much debated, as is the process of identity formation. The concept of the nation-state first emerged in Europe and the spread of the nation-state concept was encouraged by European powers in the early 20th century. One theory understands nationalism as a product of the industrialist revolution (Gellner & Breuilly, 2008). As industrialism became the cornerstone to economic welfare, communication needed to be regulated, therefore education was systematized requiring a centralized state (Gellner & Breuilly, 2008, pp. 19–35). An alternative theory views nationalism as an accidental outcome of a capitalist impulse. With the development of the printing press, printers had to choose a regional language to use to sell the most published work (Anderson, 2006). As specific languages were chosen, more people, encouraged by the print material available, learned to speak and read specific languages in order to gain access to information (Anderson, 2006). Eventually, the use of a single language led to the formation of a large national community sharing the same language (Anderson, 2006). As Turkey developed its own nationalist identity, political leaders, particularly Mustafa Kemal, the leader of the Turkish War of Independence, placed extreme importance on both language and industrialism in order to encourage unity as well as economic development (Zürcher, 1993). While this paper does not analyze the construction of national identity in Turkey, it is critical to understand the choices

political leaders made greatly influenced national outcomes in Turkey and have the potential to do so today and in the future.

Identity formation is a purposeful process individuals and communities utilize for a diverse set of functions including nation building, group belonging, and protection. In order to form a new state, Turkish political leaders of the post World War I period had to quickly unify people under an unfamiliar national banner. Particularly during state formation, new governments, like Turkey in the 1920's, utilize traditions in order to construct identity and national unity (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012). As governments identify unifying traditions, such as the use of national flags, anthems, or even a national language (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012), internal minority groups must determine whether to accept the national identification. Minority ethnic groups will make decisions based on economic returns, in-group status, and out-group acceptance (Laitin, 2007, pp. 29–58). For example, once a majority of a community speaks a specific language or embraces a particular cultural norm, the remainder is more likely to follow the pattern if learning the language will provide individuals with economic returns, status within the group, and acceptance from external communities (Laitin, 2007, pp. 29–58). In Turkey, internal cultural and religious minorities, such as Arabs, Assyrians, Jews, Bulgarians, Kurds, and Alevi, had to make a choice. Minorities could either choose to accept Turkish identity as their own, speak the Turkish language, become settled citizens of the nation, and therefore engage in national life, or could choose to maintain previous ethnic identities. Ethnic groups who were unwilling to quickly assimilate to Turkish identity were expelled or became the focus of aggressive assimilation tactics. Today, any group maintaining an identity other than Turkish remains a threat to national stability and unity therefore the the influx of Syrian refugees,

particularly into the northwest, has the potential to reinvigorate discussions of what it means to be Turkish and what rights Turkishness provides.

Ethnic identity is also a contested concept. The source of its formation is debated, however it is broadly understood to emerge from shared group experience and be shaped by conflict with other identities. National communities seek to form identities incorporating as many individuals as possible (Nagle & Clancy, 2012). Especially in the context of nation building, when multiple ethnic identities exist within a shared national space, creating a unified identity is critical. However, constructing identity given previous conflict is challenging in the face of preexisting consociational identities (Nagle & Clancy, 2012). In other words, when previous conflict exists, individuals are more likely to want to associate with their own ethnic identities, despite unifying tendencies on the part of the nation. In the Turkish context, this leaves two possible concerns with the influx of Syrian refugees. Kurdish Syrians may represent the problem as the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the People's Protection Units (YPG) are both associated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Turkish-Kurdish separatist organization Turkey has been fighting against since the 1980's. Politicians are likely to express concerns with Kurdish Syrians given their association with PYD, YPG, and therefore the PKK. However, Arab Syrians more generally may represent a problem as well as they represent a separate ethnic group not assimilated into Turkish culture and will therefore be more likely to maintain group cohesion thus impacting the national ethnic balance, which may be reflected in political rhetoric.

The Turkish constitution incorporated a distinction between Turkishness as an ethnic category and Turkish citizenship. Article 88 of the constitution states, "the people of Turkey

regardless of their religion and race would, in terms of citizenship, be called Turkish”(Yeğen, 2004). While the article seems inclusive of all ethnic identities in Turkey, article 88 was taken nearly word for word from the Ottoman constitution of 1876 but with a critical difference: the inclusion of “in terms of citizenship” (Yeğen, 2004). The inclusion of “in terms of citizenship” implied while all ethnicities could be citizens of Turkey not all could be ethnically Turk, the more important factor when considering social acceptance. In the 1930’s the government began identifying Turks through the use of three criteria: territoriality, religiosity, and ethnicity (Çağaptay, 2006). In other words, members of the state must live within Turkish borders, be Sunni Muslim, and be ethnically Turk. Ethnic Turks and Turkic groups were most readily accepted whereas non-Turkic Muslims, particularly Kurds given their history of revolt and migratory culture, were not as readily accepted as members of the Turkish nation (Çağaptay, 2006). Arab Syrians, while also excluded from Turkic identity, represent less of a threat than increasing power among Syrian Kurds, which is likely to bolster Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey as well as irredentist claims of the PKK. However, Arab Syrians bring ethnicity to the foreground as refugees have gained in size and therefore visibility. Therefore, I argue, not that irredentism is not an issue given Kurdish Syrians on the Turkish border, but rather that Syrian refugees more generally have also had an impact on minority concerns in Turkey.

Concerns with the PYD, YPG, and the PKK are likely to play a significant role in political rhetoric in Turkey as irredentism is a real and theoretically supported national security concern. Irredentism can be defined as any political or social movement laying claim to a lost homeland occupied by another group. These claims are based on historic, often ethnic, identities. Irredentist conflict is more violent than other forms of ethnic conflict and has a tendency to

increase interstate conflict (Carment, 1993). When a nation reacts to irredentist claims with violence during formative years, the nation is more likely to become a police state, be belligerent towards other states, and is more likely to act when an external threat furthers irredentist claims (Horowitz, 1985). Kurds participated in numerous irredentist revolts during the 1920's as the Turkish state was forming and solidifying Turkish identity (Zürcher, 1993). While the Turkish elite did not specifically target Kurds as an ethnic group, the political elite did utilize violence, forced migration, and cultural assimilation through education as a means of incorporating any groups that fought against the new formed government, or held to cultural norms, such as migration, that went against the Turkish nation building project. Thus, the current gains in power by Syrian Kurds along the Turkish-Syrian border represent a potential irredentist threat should the Turkish and Syrian Kurds align themselves in an attempt to succeed with Turkish territory. I argue irredentist concerns are legitimate, and likely to occur in political rhetoric in Turkey and that Syrian refugees are having a larger impact on discussions regarding ethnicity, separate from concerns with irredentist movements.

The formation of ethnic identity in Turkey arose out of a relationship between the majority Turkish identity and minority identities. In other words, ethnic identity is formed by a group within the context of external structures (Nagel, 1994, p. 152). Because Turkish nation building meant the formation of a single national identity, the space accessible for alternative identities decreased and therefore shaped alternative identities in opposition to, rather than unification with, Turkish identity. The Turkish government actively pursued this dialectic relationship by acting as though Kurdish ethnicity did not exist while at the same time creating policies designed to assimilate Kurds into Turkish identity between the 1920s and 1980s (Yeğen,

1999). Kurds became the focus of nationalist identity formation and thus Kurds continue to be concerning to the Turkish government today as it handles the influx of Syrian refugees.

Borders and national security

Given concerns with PYD and YPG, Kurdish-Syrian organizations, controlling the Turkish-Syrian border, understanding the position of borders in conflict is critical when assessing political rhetoric. Borders are integral to national security regardless of internal ethnic concerns. When conflict is introduced, borders play a crucial role in maintaining sovereignty as well as the economic success of a nation. Conflict is more likely to be violent and borders to become places of contention if irredentist claims for an ethnic or religious homeland are involved (Horowitz, 1985). Particularly when irredentist claims lead to civil war, war is more likely to spread to neighbors (Iqbal & Starr, 2008). In addition, the longer the borders, the more likely a nation is to go to war with a neighboring nation and Turkey has an 822 km border with Syria, longer than with any other nation (Midlarsky, 1975; Starr & Dale Thomas, 2005; Weede, 1970). Given irredentist claims by the Turkish-Kurdish Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), the presence of a Syrian Kurdish organization claiming to follow the leader of the PKK, as well as the presence of a very long border between Turkey and Syria, Turkey must be vigilant and defensive of borders.

While Turkey is not currently struggling with ongoing civil war, Turkey has a large minority group the government considers a threat to national sovereignty. The closer sub-national groups are to bordering areas with the same sub-national groups, the more likely they are to aim for succession (Deiwiks, 2010). Given the proximity of Syria, Iran, and Iraq to Turkey, all countries possessing Kurdish populations, arguments for succession are a very real threat to Turkey. In addition, if an ethnic group is involved in conflict, as the Kurds are in Syria,

neighboring states are likely to perceive a threat from members of the same ethnic group residing in their home territory (Brathwaite, 2014). As opportunity and willingness to act increases, ethnic groups are more likely to engage in war (Siverson & Starr, 1990; Starr & Dale Thomas, 2005). For Turkey, Syrian Kurds gaining power along the Syrian-Turkish border represents a threat as Turkish Kurds might decide to attempt succession with support from Syrian Kurdish forces.

Turkey has always considered borders to be of critical national security interest due to secessionist claims from the PKK as well as external protections offered to Turkish minorities by European powers. While Turkey has maintained physical and economic security, Turkey's concern has always been security from irredentist movements (Içduygu & Keyman, 2000, p. 396). For instance, during the Gulf Wars of the 1980's and 90's, Turkey did not want Iraqi Kurds to enter the country and negotiated with the international community to implement policies to keep as many Iraqi Kurds out, or in refugee camps, as possible. On the other hand, Turkey allowed Turkish speaking Bulgarians to enter the country around the same period as Bulgarians could be considered ethnically related to Turks (Içduygu & Aksel, 2013). While Iraqi Kurds represented an ethnic challenge to the status quo and could support Turkish Kurds in building a stronger, potentially separatist, community, the state viewed Bulgarians as members of the larger Turkish community (Detrez, 2015). The Turkish State may be experiencing similar concerns with Syrian Kurds today, particularly as they build strength along the Syrian-Turkish border.

On the other hand, Turkey may not have any interest in the ethnicity of refugees entering from Syria, or at least, none beyond concerns relating to irredentist claims of Turkish Kurds and support from Syrian allies. Rather, Turkey may have concerns with the number of Syrians

entering the nation in general and the impact of refugees on border security and national economy. The Turkish-Syrian border was porous before the civil war allowing easy travel between the two nations. Given the increase in civil war violence in Syria, Turkey may be concerned about the spread of violence across the relatively open border with Syria as civil war is the most likely kind of conflict to expand to neighboring states (Iqbal & Starr, 2008). Porous borders during war also offer greater opportunity to groups, such as the Islamic State (IS), to bring violence into a nation (Siverson & Starr, 1990; Starr & Dale Thomas, 2005). Turkey's concerns with Syrian refugees may be based on security and less on Turkish minorities, such as the Kurds.

Population movements in Turkey

Population movement has the potential to place significant pressure on a nation and increase violent activity within. Immigration and population movement offer opportunities for members of violent organizations, such as Islamic State (IS), to enter a country among the groups of people entering legitimately and increases the likelihood of interstate violence (Adamson, 2006, p. 198). For instance, non-state actors involved in civil wars in bordering nations are likely to utilize permeable borders for battle and thus bring violence with them into neighboring nations (Adamson, 2006, p. 198). Turkey has an open door policy to all Syrian refugees making tracking Syrians increasingly difficult as the number of refugees rises. In addition, refugees can increase the possibility of international conflict as the receiving state, Turkey, might take military action in order to stop the flow of refugees while the sending state, or non-state actors, might violate borders in order to chase after dissidents such as deserters of the Syrian Armed Forces in Turkey (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). Thus the massive quantities of Syrian refugees entering Turkey

present a difficult challenge and a threat to national security. The majority of Syrian refugees are Arab, therefore, increased Syrian presence in Turkey, particularly in non-Kurdish regions, may cause the nation to confront questions on ethnic identity including those the rights and level of inclusion of non-Turkish members of the state. Therefore, Syrian refugees bring out a focus on broader relations with minority groups in Turkey.

Historically, Turkey has used population transfer and restricted immigration policies in order to further the Turkish nationalist project. One of the earliest examples of population transfer was the Greco-Turkish population exchange of 1923, in which Turkish Christians were sent to Greece and Greek Muslims brought into Turkey (Içduygu, Toktas, & Ali Soner, 2008; Özsu, 2011). More recently, particularly in 1989, Turkey opened borders to Bulgarians seeking admittance due to waves of anti-Muslim nationalism in Bulgaria (Detrez, 2015; Kirişçi, 2000). Turkey has also used immigration policies in order to restrict ethnic and religious population movement. In 1955, Turkey encouraged Greek emigration including nearly the entirety of the remaining Greek Orthodox population (Içduygu et al., 2008). However, the government has never allowed Greeks to re-enter Turkey. In addition, in 1991 Turkey experienced an unwelcome wave of Kurdish refugees entering from Iraq. This resulted in much international discussion regarding how to handle the Kurdish population. Turkey was unwilling to offer refugee status to Iraqi Kurds as the government feared new Kurds would encourage independence movements among Turkish Kurds (Starr & Dale Thomas, 2005). Turkey shaped its immigration policies in response to the ethnicities of those entering and exiting the country implying a relationship between government population control and concerns with internal ethnic dynamics. At the beginning of the current refugee crisis, Turkey expected Syrians to return to their country in short

order. Due to the continuation of the conflict however, Turkey must now take steps to determine how it will handle this non-Turkish population, which may bring up broader questions on the acceptance of non-Turkish ethnic identities and their inclusion in the state.

Ethnicity in political rhetoric

While Turkish Kurds are not the only internal threat to national identity, Kurds are the largest ethnic population to actively assert an alternative ethnic identity. Kurds must be addressed separately in the Turkish context because preexisting conflicts make Kurds ready targets of negative attitudes towards Turkish internal minorities as Turkish leaders deal with the consequences of the Syrian refugee influx. Kurds have, from the perspective of the state, a history of fighting against the state, beginning in the 1920's with the Kurdish uprisings and more recently continuing with the formation of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and its violent attacks against the state over the past 30 years (Çelebi, Verkuyten, Köse, & Maliepaard, 2014, p. 2). The Turkish government has used the PKK as an excuse for securitizing the regions in which Turkish Kurds live regardless of their actual affiliation with the organization (Güneş, 2013, p. 249). Securitization has continued to this day and diminishes trust between the state and the Kurdish community in Turkey (Çelebi et al., 2014, p. 8). In the midst of the Syrian refugee crisis, as concerns regarding the continued influx of Syrians increase, I hypothesize the government will identify the Kurdish population as a potential threat politically because HDP has gained support during the period of peace and in light of the government's immigration policies and potential economic concerns in dealing with the numbers of incoming Syrian refugees.

A discussion of the Kurdish experience in Turkey over the last five years has continued as part of the larger discourse on Kurds ongoing for decades (Çelebi et al., 2014; Ekmekci, 2011;

Güneş, 2013; Yeğen et al., 2010). Interestingly, scholars have only presented one argument for a relationship between Syrian presence and interethnic conflict thus far: Alevis, a religious minority making up approximately 15% of Turkey's population, oppose the current ruling party, the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or the Justice and Development Party), both for the AKP's religious bent and Syrian policies (Cağaptay & Menekse, 2014, pp. 16–20). Alevi actively support the CHP (Republican People's Party) against the AKP. The influx of Sunni Syrians, causing economic and cultural pressures in regions with relatively high numbers of Alevi Turks, could further encourage Alevi, anti-AKP voting patterns as well as involvement in anti-government protest both regionally and in Turkey as a whole (Cağaptay & Menekse, 2014, pp. 16–20). While the Alevi regional argument only addresses one ethnic group, it indicates patterns of ethnic conflict may exist and could potentially be exacerbated by refugees in the modern Turkish climate.

Thus far the Syrian refugee crisis and internal conflict between the Turkish government and Kurdish population have been treated as two separate concerns in the literature. Many scholars focus specifically on the concerns of Syrians as refugees within a state refusing to grant official refugee status and the shifting politics around refugees but do not address *why* the state may have particular policies in place or *how* dealing with the refugee crisis might impact policies (İçduygu, 2015; Kirişçi, 2015; Özden, 2013). Even more work focuses on the movement of Syrians into Europe and the impact the crisis is having on the Western world. Certainly, the media's primary concern has been the impact of refugees on the West. I did find work on historical relationships between irredentist claims and refugees. For instance, Bulgaria, during the interwar period, utilized Bulgarian refugees in order to support its irredentist claims (Detrez,

2015). However, the Bulgarian context does not address the impact of a refugee population unrelated to internal ethnic conflict, as is the case in Turkey. My work will specifically address the internal circumstances of how Syrian refugees may be impacting previously existing ethnic tensions within Turkey.

Political rhetoric is a central feature of national identity formation and can have a significant impact on the future direction of integration and minority relations. National identity is determined by in-group discussion and agreement. While agreements can be made among a small group of leaders, as happened in Turkey, they must be accepted by the larger nation, a discussion led by politicians (Cruz, 2000). Identity discussions can have major impacts on national outcomes: contestation over identity can lead to violence or greater consensus, and anti-minority rhetoric can lead to greater ethnocentrism in minority communities (Cruz, 2000; Pérez, 2015). Construction of ethnic identity is a complex and contextual process involving multiple participants: voters, politicians, media, national, and international players (de Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999; Fearon, 1994; Gadjanova, 2013; Krebs & Jackson, 2007; Slavíčková & Zvagulis, 2014; Tuladhar-Douglas, 2010). However, political rhetoric, particularly during campaign periods in a democracy, provides insight into the processes behind identity formation, inclusion, and exclusion, because campaigns express an interplay between political leaders and voters (Fearon, 1994). Politicians must consider national audiences in determining political themes aimed at winning the most votes.

Domestic audiences are critical determinants of political rhetoric in democratic countries as politicians seek to gain as many supporters as possible. Democracies have much higher audience costs and therefore politicians must follow through on promises made to the public or

risk losing votes (Fearon, 1994; Partell & Palmer, 1999; Slantchev, 2006). Politicians must also be aware of the public presence in conversations across parties (Krebs & Jackson, 2007). Politicians must constantly balance claims against opponents with responses to counter claims; every message must be both readily agreeable to the public audience and form a dialectic between the party and all others (Krebs & Jackson, 2007). Keeping in mind minority presence in the audience, politicians must determine whether xenophobic rhetoric is likely to mobilize voters by emphasizing concordant values and attracting the uncommitted or if it is more likely to dissuade voters from the party (Jerit, 2004; Pérez, 2015). In addition, by choosing to participate in the political system, ethnic groups can counter unwanted categorical identifications and xenophobic rhetoric used by the majority (Tuladhar-Douglas, 2010). For instance, HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) political figures, focused on minority rights in Turkey, have been involved in the Turkish parliament since 2011 and thus have potentially increased the group's impact by working on pro-minority government policies from the inside. HDP presence has likely altered minority voting patterns in Turkey impacting political expectations of the domestic audience. Given the historical experience of minorities in Turkey and the ever shifting nature of identity, politicians must consider ethnicity in determining platforms.

Ethnicity can emerge in political rhetoric in unexpected ways. Politicians can only afford to engage in directly xenophobic rhetoric if politicians do not expect to draw votes from the ethnicity of focus or if potential gains outweigh the risk of loss of ethnic votes (Pérez, 2015). Xenophobic rhetoric, if used, leads high-identifying individuals of the target ethnicity to become more ethnocentric and engage in policies emphasizing group pride (Pérez, 2015). Often, rather than directly engaging in xenophobic rhetoric, politicians will focus on policies with xenophobic

or ethnocentric undertones. Politicians can combine ethnic group, or xenophobic, claims with rhetoric on rights and entitlements in order to seek particular policies making policies applying to larger national groups ethnically based (Gadjanova, 2013). For instance, in Turkey politicians might discuss anti-discrimination policies generally while knowing discrimination is usually aimed at minority ethnic groups. Politicians carefully manage utilization of minority interests in building political platforms.

Politicians' primary and most powerful rhetorical tool is framing. Politicians frame by using different but logically equivalent phrases to impact audience preferences (equivalency framing) or by discussing an issue in different contexts (issue framing) (Druckman, 2004a; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). For instance, equivalency framing would be if the public reject a proposal discussed in terms of unemployment numbers while supporting the same proposal discussed in terms of employment numbers (Druckman, 2004a, p. 671). Alternatively, some politicians might frame citizenship for illegal immigrants (an issue) in terms of human rights in opposition to others describing illegal immigrants as a bane on society. Under public circumstances, politicians have an incentive to use framing and counter-framing in political rhetoric (Druckman, 2004a). If politicians can appropriately frame issues or impact preferences, then they will have an advantage at the polls (Druckman, 2004a, p. 671). Politicians' goal is to not only frame discussions appropriately but also to prime voters to engage with particular concerns when they decide which party to vote for (Druckman, 2004b). Both politicians and media can utilize framing and decontextualization of events in order to shift public perception of minorities (Slavíčková & Zvagulis, 2014). For instance, politicians are likely to use the PKK as a tool for shifting perceptions of Turkish Kurds.

Politicians might also use emotional appeals and negative campaigning in discussions of ethnic minorities in order to gain votes. An emotional appeal allows the politician to emphasize consensual values and attract uncommitted voters (Jerit, 2004). Emotional appeals often inspire fear, anxiety, or anger, all emotions media play up, therefore attracting media attention and increasing endurance of the politician's initial message (Jerit, 2004). Politicians can utilize emotional appeals when discussing party pillars or engaging in negative campaigning. However, politicians are more likely to deal in negative campaigning when the number of competing parties increases, the ideological span of the party system widens, or the degree of political conflict increases at the time of election (Elmelund-Præstekær & Svensson, 2013). In the 2015 elections analyzed, there was both an increase in the number of officially competing parties, as the HDP (the People's Democratic Party) competed for parliamentary seats on the party rather than individual politician level, and the degree of political conflict increased.

In the Turkish context, the question is not so much whether political leaders will use ethnicity in their rhetoric, but *how* ethnicity is framed, *why* political leaders use ethnicity, and *what* ethnicities are incorporated in political discussions. There are many reasons why a political leader might frame rhetoric on minorities using ethnic conflict. Politicians seeking political power can gain from ethnic violence as a political frame as ethnicity provides a source for powerful emotional appeals (Fearon & Laitin, 2000b, p. 846). For instance, a moderate political figure facing more nationalist challengers might turn towards ethnic conflict in order to emphasize an internal threat, inspire fear, and thus gain votes in an election (Fearon & Laitin, 2000b, p. 864). Alternatively, members of a marginalized ethnic group may seek to counter assigned assumptions and categories through framing, thus altering their own identities as a

social group in the nation (Fearon & Laitin, 2000b). Identity change can then lead to political or physical attack by individuals with an interest in maintaining privilege given the previous understanding of ethnic identity (Fearon & Laitin, 2000b, p. 846). In Turkey, this may be exhibited in political rhetoric through an emphasis on the superiority of Turkish identity.

In the case of Turkey, I argue the conception of citizenship in Turkey, and thus the existing tensions between Turkey's political and ethnic elite and its ethnic minorities, makes minority issues a useful tool for politicians. Politicians might emphasize ethnic conflict in order to gain votes and provide a distraction from other pressing economic and social issues, such as the Syrian refugee crisis and its impact on the nation. Alternatively, politicians might also frame minority issues positively in order to gain minority votes as the political landscape shifts and more voters turn towards the minority rights focused HDP. Finally, it is possible that politicians will emphasize broader issues that concern both minorities and the larger Turkish community. Issues that have become more visible as the number of Syrian refugees has grown, and the country questions how it will handle social concerns relating to incorporating Syrians.

Chapter 3: Content Analysis of Turkish Political Speeches

In order to determine if and how Syrian refugees are impacting interethnic relations in Turkey, I utilized political speeches as my unit of analysis. I used keywords in conjunction with politicians' names in order to identify speeches. I then translated analyzed speeches from the original Turkish into English for my analysis. I performed content analysis of 33 randomly selected speeches given by political leaders in Turkey during the five election cycles between 2011 and 2015 to infer the impact of Syrian refugees on ethnic tensions within Turkey. Analyzed speeches came from locations across the country and often, though not always, took place at political rallies. Content analysis is used to analyze data, often in text but also in other formats, in order to discover patterns pointing to a given cultural, political, economic, or other underlying theme (Krippendorff, 1989). As content analysis seeks to identify patterns, I identified political themes in the speeches relating to minorities and Syrian refugees and then coded speeches by references to each theme in order to uncover the relationship between refugees and discussions of minorities in Turkey. Content analysis provided a flexible framework for determining the scope and shifts in political rhetoric on ethnicity in Turkey as Syrian refugees were entering the country.

Data selection

I specifically focused on political speeches for several reasons. First, politicians will say what is necessary to gain votes. Politicians address political themes the people share concerns on if themes will buy a win in elections. Therefore, a politician is likely to discuss the question of ethnicity in Turkey if ethnicity is of concern to the Turkish people. In addition, politicians are likely to directly address contemporary events during election periods. At times when events,

such as bombings or economic failures, were occurring concurrently with campaign periods, politicians directly addressed the Turkish public's concerns. Therefore, political speeches allowed me to link specific events with the political and social concerns addressed in speeches. Finally, political speeches allowed me to determine the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the intensity and importance of ethnicity in political discussions over time.

Election cycles offer a temporal frame during which politicians make numerous speeches and are likely to directly address perceived national threats. In addition, election cycles help to control for the context in which speeches were given. Political speeches could answer the question of whether ethnic minorities are considered national threats and could express changes in the intensity and tone of the discussion around ethnic minorities over time due to the increasing presence of Syrian refugees. Therefore, I analyzed speeches from the five election cycles occurring between the start of the March 2011 Syrian Independence Movement and today. I gathered speeches during the 45-day period before each election. The five periods were the 45 days before the June 12, 2011 general elections, the March 30th, 2014 local elections, the August 10, 2014 presidential elections, the June 7, 2015 general elections, and finally the November 1, 2015 snap general elections. The November 2015 elections took place because the elected parties were unable to form a government after the June election.

I gathered speeches given by the leaders of the top four political parties in Turkey. These leaders represented the top four parties for all election cycles analyzed and more than 95% of Turkish voters chose one of these parties for each election cycle. Each of the four parties has a unique political base. The Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP (Justice and Development Party), the reigning political party since 2002, is a religious conservative party led by Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan as the Prime Minister between 2003 and 2014 and as President since the 2014 presidential elections, and by Ahmet Davutoğlu as Prime Minister since Erdoğan became president. The Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, or CHP (Republican People's Party), has consistently come in second to the AKP and is a secular, center left party led by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. The Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, or MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), is a right wing nationalist party led by Devlet Bahçeli. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu ran in the 2014 presidential elections for both the CHP and the MHP, therefore I included him as a political leader of both parties. Finally, the Peoples' Democratic Party or HDP (Halkların Demokratik Partisi) is a left leaning party supportive of Kurdish rights in Turkey and is led by Selahattin Demirtaş. While HDP did not officially exist before 2012, its leadership was still active in the 2011 election cycle, running as independents, and thus HDP was included in my analysis of 2011 elections. From these four parties I was able to gain access to the concerns of the people since 2011, at least from the perspective of Turkish politicians.

Newspapers in Turkey are a strong source of text for political speeches as newspapers publish parts of, if not complete, political speeches for readers. Therefore newspaper articles provided access to the majority of the original texts of political speeches. I refer to these texts as speeches rather than as articles in my analysis. I used three Turkish language newspapers as sources for political speeches: *Radikal*, *Milliyet*, and *Hurriyet*. These newspapers all maintain accessible online databases and tend to lean towards different political parties. *Radikal* incorporates a broad range of political views and therefore includes most political speeches during the periods analyzed. *Milliyet* supports the current leading party in Turkey, the AKP, while *Hurriyet* has been more willing to publish discontent with AKP leadership. I gathered articles by

performing a keyword search for the words *Suriyeli* (Syrian) and *mülteci* (refugee) in conjunction with the names of each politician included. The term *Suriyeli* provided a more specific search than *Suriye* (Syria) would have by maintaining a focus on the Syrian people rather than on international concerns with Syria as a nation. Initially, I did not intend to use *mülteci* as politicians did not regularly use the term between 2011 and 2013, however I noticed politicians began to use *mülteci* more often in conjunction with Syrians beginning in late 2014 and throughout 2015, therefore I chose to use it as a search term.

Using the search terms *suriyeli* and *mülteci* in conjunction with politicians' names, I gathered a total of 375 articles: 164 from *Milliyet*, 124 from *Radikal*, and 87 from *Hürriyet*. I discarded 36 articles as they were duplicates. Of articles gathered, 60% focused on speeches given by AKP leaders, either Erdoğan or Davutoğlu, 33% were on speeches given by CHP leaders, Kılıçdaroğlu or İhsanoğlu, 5% were on MHP speeches, given by Bahçeli or İhsanoğlu, and 3% were on HDP speeches, given by Demirtaş. I organized the speeches by date and, using a random number generator, chose the 6th speech as my starting point before selecting every 10th speech in the pool. In order to analyze each speech in depth, I translated the Turkish texts into English, therefore it was critical that I identify a manageable number of speeches. After random selection, I analyzed 33 speeches after discarding 1 article that was not a speech. AKP speeches represented 54% of the speeches analyzed, 10 by Erdoğan and 9 by Davutoğlu, CHP speeches made up 37%, 12 by Kılıçdaroğlu and 1 by İhsanoğlu, and MHP made up 9% or 2 by Bahçeli and 1 by İhsanoğlu. İhsanoğlu's speech is counted twice as he represented both CHP and MHP in the 2014 Presidential election. As a result of the data selection process, I did not analyze any speeches by Demirtaş of the HDP and I only analyzed one speech by İhsanoğlu. However, given

the focus on minorities in Turkey and HDP's emphasis on minority rights as the basis of its political platform, I included a section in my results and analysis specifically focused on HDP's response to Syrians. In my analysis, I addressed AKP leadership separately from the opposition, made up of CHP and MHP leaders, as this separation appeared within political themes.

Data analysis

Content analysis provides two critical components for answering my question. First, content analysis can be qualitative, quantitative, or both in nature. Therefore, I could analyze how often politicians addressed ethnic concerns in speeches over time while at the same time connecting contemporary events in Turkey with discussions of ethnicity. In addition, content analysis allowed me to analyze how politicians were using ethnic identity as a tool in political speeches. The initial step in my analysis consisted of translating each speech from Turkish into English and drawing out the political themes that emerged across the speeches. I discovered four common themes that related to minority in the political speeches: Syrians in Turkey, problems in Turkish foreign policy, democratic freedoms, and terrorist organizations in Syria. While ethnicity was not explicitly used in every political theme, the conjunction of particular events with the emergence of the themes formed patterns indicating a relationship between minority and ethnicity and each of the themes. Therefore, using content analysis, both the breadth of the conversation around ethnicity and minority and the nature of the discussion could be determined.

I was also able to determine the relationship between Syrian refugees and ethnicity within the themes that emerged in Turkish political discourse. Because there have been multiple election cycles in Turkey since the initial arrival of Syrian refugees in 2011, it was possible to analyze how refugee arrival has impacted the conversation around ethnicity in Turkey in both intensity

and tenor. While I only analyzed a small number of speeches, I was able to trace political themes as they emerged over time and therefore detect the impact of and relationship between ethnicity and particular events. For instance, minorities being blamed for specific economic or social concerns related to refugees or at specific times, such as when an Islamic State attack occurred, would be a strong indication that politicians were framing minorities negatively in light of the refugee crisis. Drawing connections between political rhetoric on minorities and contemporary events shed light on possible political reasons for politicians' use of particular rhetorical tools as well as why specific themes emerged at particular times.

Chapter 4: Political Themes on Syrians

The situation for Syrian refugees spiraled out of control very quickly after the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. While the Turkish government maintained refugees would be heading home once the conflict ended, the government soon realized Syrians were either in Turkey permanently or would have to be placed in other countries. Politicians did not anticipate the increasing number or extended period of refugee presence in 2011 during the campaign running up to the June 12 general election. Refugees became clearly visible in Turkish social and political contexts as numbers increased at a staggering rate. In addition, factors such as the rise in terrorist activity and economic concerns emerged influencing the development of political themes. However, politicians utilized Syrian refugees in the struggle for votes. The AKP framed the refugee issue as a positive humanitarian effort, and blamed problems on foreign factors, while opposition parties framed the refugee crisis as a problem directly related to AKP foreign and domestic policy.

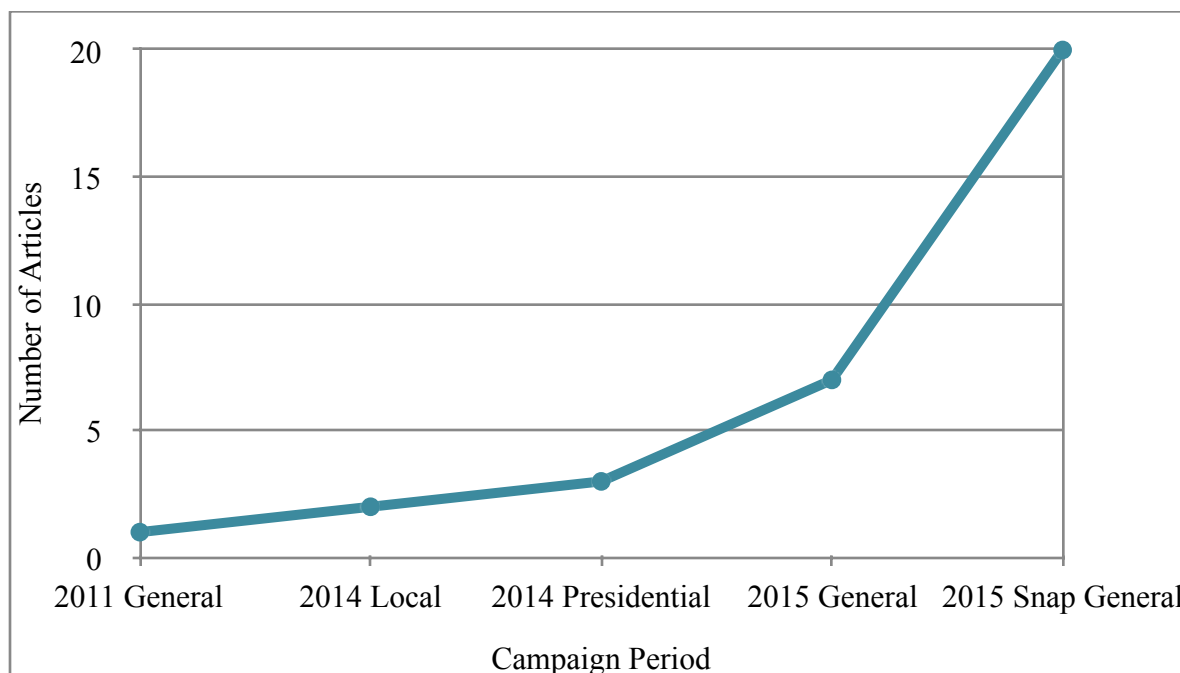


Figure 1. Number of analyzed articles, out of 33 total, referring to *Suriyeli* (Syrian) or *mülteci* (refugee) by campaign period.

The presence and impact of Syrian refugees in Turkey became more pressing for politicians over time. Over the course of the five campaign periods analyzed, I noted an increase in the number of analyzed speeches utilizing the terms I searched for: *suriyeli* (Syrian) and *mülteci* (refugee). I used these terms, in conjunction with the names of key political figures, in order to identify speeches during each campaign cycle and then randomly selected 33 speeches to analyze. Figure 1 reflects the pattern I noticed in the 33 analyzed speeches over time. In the 2011 general elections, only 1 speech used either term while by the fall 2015 snap, or unexpectedly early, general election, the number of speeches using a search term increased to 20. The increase in political focus on Syrians over time was reflected in the initial pool of more than 300 speeches I found containing one of my search terms. During the 2011 election period politicians made only 9 speeches that incorporated one of the search terms while they made 230 during the 2015 snap election campaign period. Clearly Syrian refugees were becoming more

central to political discussion, and were being used more often as a political tool in the fight for votes.

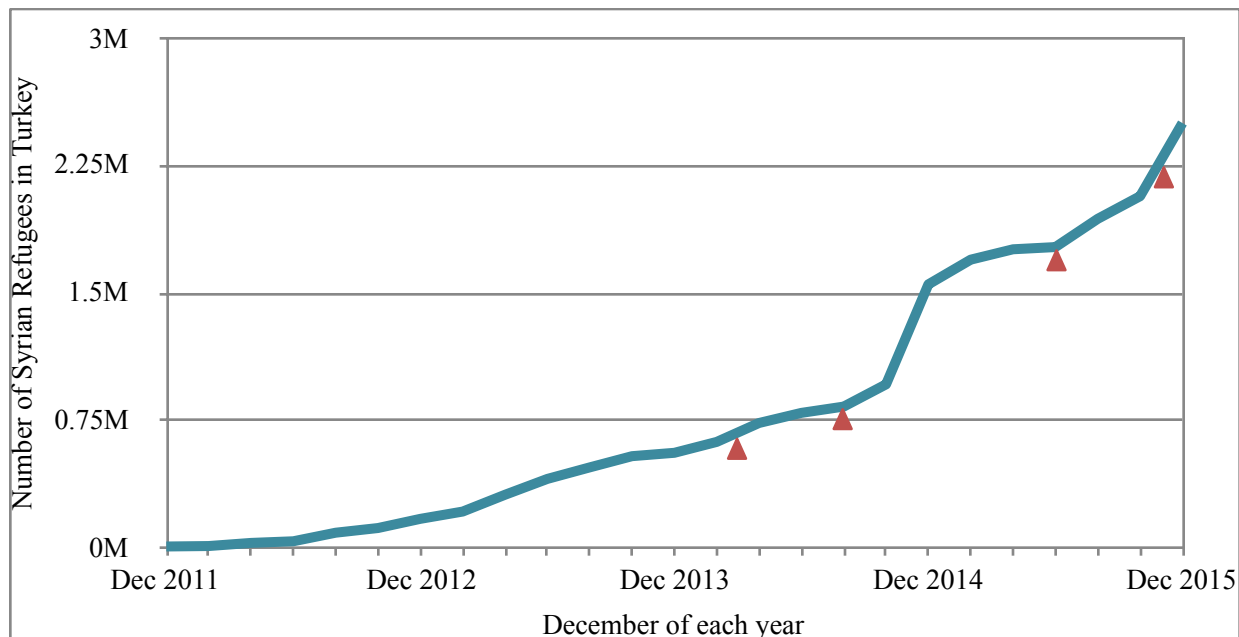


Figure 2. Number of millions of Syrian refugees in Turkey between December 2011 and December 2015. Triangles represent analyzed elections. As initial data collection occurred in December 2011, the June 2011 general election is not labeled. Data obtained from the UNHCR Syrian Regional Refugee Response.

The increasing importance politicians placed on conversations surrounding Syrians can be correlated with the ever increasing number of Syrians entering Turkey between 2011 and 2015. Figure 2 shows the dramatic increase of refugees, particularly between 2013 and 2015. By the end of June 2011, nearly 10 thousand refugees were already inside Turkey, primarily housed within four refugee camps, though the bulk of them came after the June 7 election (Kirişci, 2014; ODN, 2011; UNHCR, 2016). By November 2014 over one million documented Syrian refugees lived in Turkey (UNHCR, 2016). By November 2015, the number of Syrians more than doubled to 2.1 million. This dramatic increase in numbers brought Syrian refugees into the limelight in Turkey. Several political themes emerged in campaign speeches related to refugee numbers.

However, political parties utilized the issue of Syrian refugees in diverse ways in order to gain support in elections.

Political parties in Turkey

Positions and approach of each political party in government influenced the political discussions on national concerns. The ruling party, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), or Justice and Development Party, focused on security concerns, expressed sorrow over the Syrian plight, and emphasized Turkey's openness to Syrian refugees and the lives the government has saved in being open. The AKP was the ruling party in all five analyzed elections. The AKP was a right leaning party with Islamist roots and aimed to increase visibility of Sunni Muslim identity in Turkey. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan acted as Prime Minister for the party in the 2011 general and 2014 local elections and then ran for and became President in the 2014 presidential election, a position he held through the 2015 elections. Ahmet Davutoğlu has officially held the position of Prime Minister since the 2014 presidential election. The AKP has held the majority of seats in parliament with nearly 50 percent of the popular vote since 2011. The AKP also made the majority of analyzed speeches and addressed different themes than the opposition, therefore I often refer to the AKP separately from opposition parties addressed in my analysis.

The two opposition parties I analyzed had very different perspectives than the AKP. Opposition parties emphasized problems with AKP foreign and domestic policy in relation to Syrians and brought up issues of democratic rights. The Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP), or Republican People's Party, maintained its position as the second most popular party in Turkey in all five elections analyzed. The CHP is a center left, secularist party with a history leading back to the first party established in Turkey and was the leading party before the AKP rose to power.

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu led the CHP in all five analyzed elections. Politicians formed the second opposition party, the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) or Nationalist Movement Party, in the 1960's in opposition to the leading party of the time, the CHP. Nationalist political leaders believed the CHP had moved away from Turkey's nationalist origins. MHP is an ultra-nationalist party critical of the currently leading AKP's attempts to engage with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish separatist organization, in peace talks. Devlet Bahçeli led the MHP in all analyzed elections. In addition, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu ran for president in the 2014 presidential election for both CHP and MHP. While these opposition parties had very different political views, the speeches I analyzed showed both parties had similar messages when discussing Syrians, therefore I often refer to both parties together as the opposition in my analysis.

In randomly selecting speeches to analyze, I did not select any speeches given by the Kurdish opposition party, the Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP). However, other politicians discussed the HDP in political conversations and the party has been influential as a representative of minorities in Turkey. Therefore I include a description of the party here and I include a section devoted to the 4 total HDP speeches I found at the end of this chapter for comparison. The HDP, or People's Democratic Party, has been officially operating since 2012 though party leaders were active in the 2011 general elections. HDP was a left wing party representing minority rights and was most closely affiliated with Turkish Kurds. All parties in Turkey must be officially recognized by the state in order to participate in elections and HDP's predecessors were all closed down by the state due to their affiliation with Turkish Kurds. Therefore, the formation and relative success of the party is noteworthy in discussions on Turkish-minority relations. Selahattin Demirtaş led the HDP in all five analyzed elections since

2011. Political parties represent a diverse set of voices in Turkish society, therefore speeches by each leader are a good indicator of Turkish national interests during elections.

Introduction to political themes

While conversations around Syrian refugees covered multiple topics, politicians repeatedly addressed four themes. Politicians overwhelmingly focused on a discussion of continued Syrian presence in Turkey, however, each party took a different approach to framing Syrian presence. AKP focused primarily on positive results of the policy towards Syrians: support of a larger Muslim community, maintaining positive relations with the Syrian people, and decreasing loss of life due to the Syrian Civil War. In addition, AKP blamed negative aspects of the Syrian presence in Turkey on external security factors. For instance, in the period leading to the second 2015 election, AKP politicians discuss the theme of terrorist organizations along the Turkish-Syrian border, specifically the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD) or Democratic Union Party, a Syrian Kurdish organization currently maintaining much of the Syrian side of the border. Opposition parties focused instead on failures in Turkish foreign policy and democratic freedoms in Turkey. In other words, opposition parties utilized the Syrian refugee crisis as a means of emphasizing problems with AKP policies and larger concerns with a loss of democratic rights.

Syrians in Turkey

Politicians referenced the position of Syrian refugees in Turkey more often than any other subject related to Syrians throughout all campaign periods. When I say referenced, I mean that politicians moved beyond simply mentioning Syrians in speeches. Rather politicians built arguments and platforms on concerns for Syrian refugees. Politicians made a total of 31

references to Syrians in Turkey. All parties were engaged in conversation on Syrians in Turkey, however AKP politicians were responsible for the majority of references. Politicians discussed Syrians in depth in a majority of speeches analyzed: 20 of the 33 analyzed speeches directly addressed the Syrian conflict and refugees in Turkey. Following the established pattern, while the conflict in Syria was taken seriously and addressed by politicians from its start in 2011, the Syrians in Turkey theme was not a significant portion of overall political discussion until late 2015.

Politicians discussed Turkey's responsibility to care for Syrians who crossed the border focusing on Syrians in primarily positive terms. AKP politicians especially expressed the good Turkey had already done in allowing Syrian refugees into the country but sought to remind Turkey to continue to care for the Syrian people crossing the border. Politicians referred to Syrians as, "Suriyeli kardeş(ler)imiz," or, "our Syrian brother(s)" several times. Both Erdoğan, of the AKP, and Kılıçdaroğlu, of the opposition party CHP, used *kardeş* (brother) as a term of endearment towards Syrians. In the earliest speech referring to Syrians as "Suriyeli kardeşlerimiz," given in May of 2011 less than an hour from the Syrian border in Antakya, Erdoğan clearly expressed concern and appreciation to the people of the region for taking in Syrian refugees:

In Hatay, we have embraced our brothers who are forced to emigrate from Syria. In Turkey, we are working sincerely for the end of death and quieting of the streets, for the delivery of rights and freedoms in the broadest sense in Syria....With great sensitivity, we continue our initiatives to stop massacres, such as of Hama and Humus in Syria, from

happening again. The pain of our Syrian brothers is our pain....We still desire peace, tranquility, and hope dominate in Syria. (Kibritoğlu, Ezer, Aktuğ, & Öztürk, 2011, p. 1)

Already in 2011, Erdoğan chose to refer to Syrians as brothers rather than as members of a separate ethnic identity or as outsiders. From the earliest moments in the Syrian civil war, Turkish politicians incorporated Syrian refugees positively in discussions. All politicians used the term *kardeş* in reference to Turkish audiences when speaking. The use of *kardeş* in reference to Syrians indicates inclusion within the Turkish community and draws a surprisingly familial relationship given the Arab ethnicity of most Syrian refugees.

In the speech given in Antakya, Erdoğan also addressed a second aspect politicians discussed in relation to Syrians in Turkey: the goal of concluding the violence in Syria so Syrians can return home. In 2011, Erdoğan was careful to clarify AKP's reliance on diplomacy to end the crisis but was still critical towards Syrian leadership for massacres that had already taken place by May 2011. The conclusion of violence in Syria became more important in political speeches in 2015 and both Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu regularly addressed the best approaches to ending the war, no longer focused on diplomacy alone as an option. Erdoğan and Davutoğlu emphasized the good that Turkey has done in support of the Syrian people. For example, Erdoğan stated in one speech in September 2015: "the solution to this [refugee] problem is not to close borders or to abandon people to the sea but to make their country a place where they can live again" ("Erdoğan tüm dünyaya," 2015). Here Erdoğan points out how he has supported Syrian people, by leaving borders open, while at the same time criticizing foreign powers for "abandoning" people at sea. Erdoğan frames the Syrian refugee situation as a humanitarian crisis where Turkey is playing the hero.

While Kılıçdaroğlu is similarly supportive of Syrian refugees. He approaches Syrian concerns from a very different perspective. Kılıçdaroğlu, in October 2015, stated: “If we bring peace to our own country, we will also bring peace to the Middle East; we will send 2 million 225 thousand of our Syrian brothers to their home country” (“CHP’nin Alanya mitingi,” 2015). Notice while Erdoğan focused on the good Turkey has done and the impact of external forces on Syrians, Kılıçdaroğlu’s emphasis is on solving problems at home. Kılıçdaroğlu was referencing problems with rising unemployment and democratic rights. In the same speech he discussed rising arrests among journalists in Turkey. While Erdoğan framed Syrian refugee protection as a successful policy, Kılıçdaroğlu was pointing out continued violence in Syria as a failure of both domestic and Middle East policy on the part of Turkey. Each politician framed the Syrian refugee crisis to better suit the goal of increased votes for their respective parties. Both Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu, recognized a critical component of their message to the Turkish people must be Turkey will do what is necessary to send Syrians home. However, the discussion was framed differently in order to garner support for each.

The increase in discussions on ending the Syrian Civil War and sending refugees home in the second 2015 campaign could be an indication public concern with the Syrian presence in Turkey was rising. By the end of April 2015, 1.75 million Syrian refugees were in Turkey and by October the number of refugees had increased to nearly 2.1 million, more than double the number of refugees only a year earlier in fall 2014 (UNHCR, 2016). In addition, economic concerns were growing in 2015 and unemployment was on the rise, reaching 10.5% by November (“Turkey Unemployment Rate,” n.d.). Kılıçdaroğlu’s list of problems with the government was long by the end of October 2015: “Tourists don’t come, we cannot export

goods, we have imported terror, unemployment is on the rise, more than 2 million Syrians have arrived, and we are more than 78 million dollars in debt” (Başaran & Ordu, 2015). The public was likely very interested to hear how politicians would address removing Syrians from Turkish soil and handling the list of stresses Syria’s instability was placing on the nation. It was also in Kılıçdaroğlu’s best interest to emphasize current problems in Turkey as problems could be blamed on the AKP.

One last focus of politicians was the relationship between Syrians and religion. AKP politicians brought up this relationship in 4 separate speeches in 2014 and 2015. In the 2014 presidential election Erdoğan argued,

Stop saying, ‘this is a Shia or a Sunni issue.’ 200,000 people have been killed in Syria. You are not looking at the man who killed them and is still murdering people. Is a murderer defensible for the sake of a denomination? Is it possible to stand with him? But the likes of Kılıçdaroğlu would [stand with him]. (“Başbakan Erdoğan, MHP ve CHP’yi,” 2014)

By arguing a separation by religious denomination existed and was false, Erdoğan used the plight of Syrian refugees to encourage unification in the Muslim community against Assad. Erdoğan was framing the Syrian issue as a Muslim issue, a call to his supporters to rally behind a politician who will emphasize Muslim concerns. In another speech in October 2015, Erdoğan lamented:

5 million [Syrians] are in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, and unfortunately 7 million have left their homes within their own country...The world is shrinking with the development of tools of communication and transportation and borders have lost their meaning.

Unfortunately though, new walls and limits are being woven between the Muslim community. (“Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan o örgütlere,” 2015)

Erdoğan used Syrian refugees as a tool for unification of Muslims. In other speeches, Erdoğan related other suffering Muslims, such as the Palestinians, to Syrian refugees as he made a case for Muslims to band together against oppression. Erdoğan and Davutoğlu were the only politicians to link the Syrian crisis to Muslim concerns more generally. Both Erdoğan and Davutoğlu likely drew on religion in order to gain support from AKP’s religious base. The AKP use of religion as a unifier also indicated Erdoğan and Davutoğlu sought to incorporate Syrians regardless of their Arab ethnicity and perhaps in order to engage with a broader range of minority voters as well. Opposition politicians focused more on free speech, democratic rights, and antidiscrimination rhetoric in order to engage minorities.

Turkish foreign policy

Opposition politicians framed Turkey’s foreign policy as a complete failure due to an increase in economic and unemployment concerns and a rise in terrorist activity. All three opposition politicians (Kılıçdaroğlu, İhsanoğlu, and Bahçeli) attacked the AKP for its poor foreign policy in Syria and then with the EU and Russia: 9 separate speeches touched on foreign policy, 8 of them were given by opposition politicians. The first speech to touch on the subject, given by İhsanoğlu in the 2014 presidential election, discussed one of the most pressing concerns for opposition parties: an increase in terrorism. İhsanoğlu used the increase in terrorism as a rallying cry against AKP:

They said we raised borders [between here and Syria] but instead they made something like a colander. Terrorists come and go at the borders. They use the borders to kill people.

This is the work of which ingenious strategy?....Are you responsible for these errors, or if not are the Syrians? No, bad politics, black ambitions are responsible. We want to end these ambitions. The people of this region want to be rescued from fear and strain. We too want this for all of Turkey. We have to protect this land of our unity and peaceful life.

(“İhsanoğlu’ndan ‘Çarkçı ekmele’ye yanıt,” 2014)

In his speech given in Hatay, a region directly bordering Syria, İhsanoğlu discussed topics emerging from several critical moments between 2011 and 2014. First, Turkey began an open border policy to all Syrian refugees in October 2011 with the goal of providing immediate support to anyone needing to cross the border, though in practice soldiers stopped refugees from entering when incoming refugee numbers were high (Kirişçi, 2013; Koca, 2015, p. 216). In addition, İhsanoğlu termed the Turkish-Syrian border a colander, suggesting the open door policy allowed terrorist organizations to actively maneuver between Turkey and Syria with little dissuasion from Turkey. İhsanoğlu’s statements on terrorism were a reflection of anger, frustration, and sorrow on the part of the Turkish people towards terrorist activity.

Like the AKP, İhsanoğlu and other opposition politicians used contemporary events in order to gain support through emotional appeals. İhsanoğlu had some cause to focus on terrorism by the 2014 presidential election. Several major terror attacks had occurred within or near Turkey and evidence emerged for a “jihadist highway” running between Europe and Syria through Turkey allowing terrorists access to both supply and human capital (Gursel, 2014). In May 2013, terrorists detonated two car bombs in Reyhanlı, a Turkish city very close to the Turkish-Syrian border killing 52 and injuring 146 in the worst attack in Turkish history (Daloglu, 2013). Erdoğan initially blamed the attack on Assad and officially maintained the theory despite

evidence the attack was staged by al-Qaeda (Daloğlu, 2014). The bombings were still very fresh by the August 2014 presidential elections as a trial for 33 individuals involved in the bombings began in February 2014 and discussion continued over what organization was responsible for the attacks (Daloğlu, 2014; “Syria absolutely behind Reyhanlı,” 2014, “Turkey opens trial,” 2014). In addition, terrorist attacks along the Turkish-Syrian border, particularly at border crossings, were becoming increasingly common and IS had begun openly targeting Turkey, including kidnapping Turkish diplomats at the fall of Mosul, Iraq by Islamic State forces in June 2014 (Hawramy, 2014; “Syria conflict: Deadly blast,” 2014). Terrorism had become a very real issue for the Turkish people and the opposition did not miss the opportunity to draw on the emotions Turks were already feeling and frame terrorist events as the responsibility of the AKP.

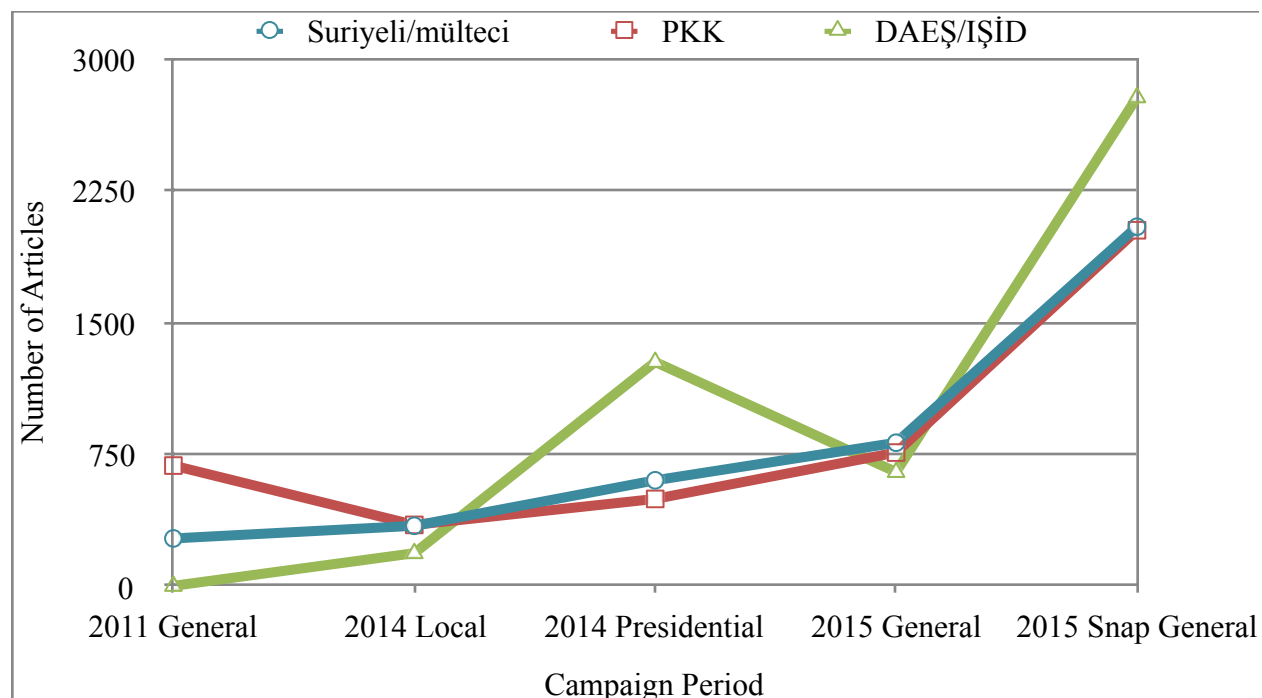


Figure 3. Total number of articles from *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, and *Radikal* that refer to *Suriyeli* (Syrian) or *mülteci* (refugee) compared to articles referring to the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party), and articles referring to DAEŞ or IŞİD (both refer to Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) by campaign period.

Given rising tensions between Turkey and IS, opposition politicians had good reason to criticize AKP foreign policy. Figure 3 shows the total number of articles from *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, and *Radikal* referring to *Suriyeli* or *mülteci* as compared to the total number referring to the PKK and the total number referring to DAESH or IŞİD (both Turkish abbreviations for IS). Figure 4 expresses a correlation between media focus on Syrians and concern with terrorist organizations, including attacks. Two thirds of references opposition parties made to concerns with Turkish foreign policy were made in the 2015 snap campaign period. Opposition parties recognized and utilized the fear of terrorism and increasing pressures of the Syrian refugee crisis as an opportunity for gaining votes by distinguishing opposition platforms from the AKP in terms of foreign policy.

Politicians addressed several themes touching on increasing concern over terrorist organizations, one being foreign policy. Kılıçdaroğlu engaged in concern over terrorists and foreign policy in Turkey on several occasions in 2015:

They have been responsible for this country for 13 years...Why did this happen? ‘PKK deceived us’....‘Your syrian policies are wrong’ we said, ‘Assad deceived us,’ they said. Are you children? Is the country conceded to people who are mislead? Are they able to manage the country?...There are 2 million more syrians here and there, living in parks. In Syria thousands of children have died. Now they are bearing down on Europe’s door. Europeans are asking me how to solve this problem. First, the Syrian Civil War must be stopped. Second, Syria must be rebuilt. Then, Syrians must be sent to their home country. (“CHP Genel ,” 2015)

Kılıçdaroğlu emphasized concerns with terrorism in addressing rising challenges with the PKK, lack of support for Syrian refugees, and the inability of the AKP to offer solutions to national problems. After PKK-government talks were placed on hold in July 2015, in between the 2015 elections, and Turkey officially went to war with IS in the same month, the government initiated attacks on PKK bases, not just IS. In October, Turkey admitted to attacking Syrian Kurdish fighters as well (“Turkey confirms shelling Kurdish,” 2015). Thus when Kılıçdaroğlu addressed foreign policy he not only discussed policies with other nations but also relations with the PKK. However, Kılıçdaroğlu said in other speeches clear evidence of the AKP failure can be found in meetings between Putin and Assad and support for Assad by the Russian military (Başaran & Ordu, 2015). Kılıçdaroğlu repeatedly stated, “AKP leadership has been saying the Syrian issue will be resolved for several years but nothing has happened” (“Kılıçdaroğlu: Bize açıkça rüşvet,” 2015, ““Türkiye kapının dışında,”” 2015).

AKP politicians did not so much defend policies as much as pointed out opposition parties have not taken responsibility for any policies. Davutoğlu addressed criticism of the AKP in October 2015:

...Critics who say, ‘Turkey’s policy was wrong, it was this, it was that’ need to look at themselves first....They will not come, they will not take responsibility and then they will turn around and criticize our policies. These are the people who are wrong (“Davutoğlu korkutan iddia için,” 2015).

Both Davutoğlu and Erdoğan tended to go on the offensive when responding to criticism of foreign policy. While opposition parties focused on the human aspect of foreign policy (e.g. the impact of terrorist violence on Turkish people, the impact of foreign policy on Syrian refugees),

AKP politicians treated alternative viewpoints as inimical to their efforts for the nation. Though politicians did not directly address minorities in the foreign policy theme, each had unique tones lending parties to concessions or reservations towards minorities. Opposition politicians made no distinction between the Turkish citizenry they sought to run for and minorities within the population while AKP politicians drew clear lines between the Turkish base and anyone opposed to the party on religious or ethnic grounds.

Democratic freedoms

Between 2011 and 2015, Turkey experienced a decline in democratic freedoms, particularly in civil liberties and freedom of the press. Since 2013, the government has engaged in a high rate of unwarranted detention of citizens, from a wide variety of backgrounds, including Kurdish activists (Freedom House, 2013a, Freedom House, 2014, Freedom House, 2015a). Government crackdowns increased in 2014 as did political interference in anti-corruption processes and the judiciary in 2015 (Freedom House, 2013a, Freedom House, 2014, Freedom House, 2015a). In addition, government interference in the media led to a decline in Turkey's freedom of the press from partially free to not free (Freedom House, 2015b). Recognizing the loss of democratic freedoms was impacting both opposition parties and the base, democratic freedoms became a key pillar to the opposition's political platform.

As conflict between the government and the people due to loss of democratic freedoms increased, opposition parties began framing their platform around democracy. Beginning in August 2014, İhsanoğlu and Kılıçdaroğlu emphasized the importance of democracy and freedom of the press and criticized the AKP government for acting against democracy. Some particular instances İhsanoğlu and Kılıçdaroğlu addressed in their speeches included the July 2014

statement, by AKP Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç, that women should not laugh in public but should instead remain the image of chastity (Dearden, 2014). İhsanoğlu responded to this statement saying,

We do not want to interfere in the laughter of women. We do not want anyone to interfere in our private lives...Should private life be interfered with to this extent? Where is such a thing seen? They are mad. They are disoriented. For this, my dear brothers, go to the polls on August 10th. Use your vote; claim your vote. (“İhsanoğlu’ndan ‘Çarkçı ekme’ye yanıt,” 2014)

İhsanoğlu played on the concern private citizens should have had with government interference in daily life. Government interference was already impacting both anti-government Turks and minority citizens as evidenced by the increase in arrests of Kurdish activists. Kılıçdaroğlu continued this focus on government interference loudly condemning the September 2015 attacks on newspapers, including *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*, both prominent newspapers in Turkey, by mobs left unchecked by police. Kılıçdaroğlu also addressed the firing of journalists at *Milliyet* for publishing anti-government material (“CHP’nin Alanya mitingi,” 2015, Human Rights Watch, 2015, “Impunity for attacks,” Sept 10, 2015). In addition, Kılıçdaroğlu subtly linked the AKP with an increase in terrorist attacks in Turkey saying, “terrorism will be resolved in Turkey as democracy increases” (“Kılıçdaroğlu: Bize açıkça rüşvet,” 2015). In other words, he implied the government was responsible for a decrease in democratic rights and was therefore responsible for a rise in terrorism in Turkey. Kılıçdaroğlu utilized concerns with terrorism, emerging from Syria and fighting with the PKK, as a tool for emphasizing the negative impact on democratic

rights the AKP is having in Turkey. CHP attempted to attract support using concerns around loss of democratic rights that increased dramatically between 2013 and 2015.

A cornerstone of both İhsanoğlu and Kılıçdaroğlu's political program on democratic rights was the right to freedom of religion and the separation of ethnic identity from politics. Negative campaigning against the AKP for breaking down the secularism fundamental to Turkish nationalism was a significant portion of the conversation on democratic rights. Though opposition parties did not mention specific minorities impacted by AKP policies, the loss of democratic freedoms was impacting minorities more than Turkic voters. Opposition acknowledgement of the loss of rights was indicative of recognition and inclusion of minorities in the discussion. Therefore, while no clear focus on specific minorities emerged, an awareness of minority presence and importance in the political realm was evident.

The earliest instance of direct ties between democracy, religion, and ethnic identity occurred in 2014 during İhsanoğlu's presidential campaign. In one speech he emphasized secularism saying,

Secularism is first, democracy is second. What does secularism mean? I will give the most beautiful description of secularism. Secularism means, 'to each his own religion.' It has no other meaning than this. Everyone's religion is their own. The state should be respectful of this. My denomination is mine, my religion is mine, your denomination and religion are yours. That's it. Why do you struggle with this...What does democracy mean? The idea of liberty, freedom of religion and conscience, freedom of expression. Everyone has these rights. No one can interfere with this. When you protect these freedoms, when we apply the rule of law through democracy, there will be peace in our country, what

happens inside Turkey will happen outside of Turkey. (“İhsanoğlu’ndan ‘Çarkçı ekmele’ e yanıt,” 2014)

While it appears İhsanoğlu is not discussing the Syrian crisis when discussing secularism and democracy, it is critical to understand the context of the quote. İhsanoğlu’s concern is not only with democracy and secularism in Turkey. Directly before these words he emphasizes the need to be at peace with international neighbors while maintaining security and directly after the discussion on secularism and democracy İhsanoğlu discusses the plight of Syrian refugees. In addition, the speech takes place in Hatay, a region directly bordering Syria. Therefore, while İhsanoğlu is not directly discussing Syrians, he is using issues that have emerged with the Syrian presence in order to point out flaws with the AKP administration.

İhsanoğlu’s focus on the need for secularism and democracy was in direct contrast to the AKP’s platform of social conservatism and religious expression. İhsanoğlu not only cut to the heart of Erdoğan’s religious platform, but also pointed out one way the AKP is excluding members of Turkish society, especially minorities, by emphasizing Sunni Muslim identity and excluding other forms of religious or secularist identity. İhsanoğlu also directly linked the AKP platform to deteriorating democracy in Turkey. In the 2014 local election, Erdoğan went so far as to shut down Twitter in Turkey in order to stop anti-government rhetoric and gathering to spread via the Twitter platform. İhsanoğlu spoke in the presidential election of 2014, just months after Twitter was turned off emphasizing the link between anti-government rallies and anti-democratic backlash from the government in the presidential election speech.

İhsanoğlu’s speech was an excellent example of the opposition’s emphasis on democratic freedoms, which only became more emphatic in the most recent 2015 snap election. The focus

on freedom of religion, openness to new cultures, anti-discrimination, and equality in Turkey was discussed repeatedly by Kılıçdaroğlu in 2015 and was even touched on by Davutoğlu, although the AKP did not emphasize religious freedoms to the same extent. By using democratic rights as a political platform, Kılıçdaroğlu and İhsanoğlu capitalized on rising tensions between the government and a significant portion of its people as freedoms decreased. Particularly given the decrease in freedom of press in Turkey, opposition politicians pointed out a clear and visible violation of rights. As a larger group of Turks were influenced, the issue became prominent in political discussions.

Terrorist organizations in Syria

Tension between the Turkish government and Kurdish forces in Syria was evident in the speeches I analyzed. Both Erdoğan and Davutoğlu of the AKP drew a clear negative relationship between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), the Turkish-Kurdish separatist organization, and the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD) or Democratic Union Party, the Syrian-Kurdish organization as well as the Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG) or Peoples' Protection Units, the PYD's military wing. Referring to U.S. potentially working with the PYD and the YPG in September 2015, Erdoğan stated:

From our point of view, PYD and YPG are terror organizations. America is not paying the price in this Syria business at the moment. We are the ones paying the price. We are also the ones who know what the PYD and the YPG are doing. Therefore, I think [the U.S. will probably re-evaluate its incorrect view, its incorrect assessment. We also see IS, PYD, and similar kinds of organizations, including the PKK, as terrorist organizations. The EU has also declared the PKK as a terrorist organization. We are uncomfortable

seeing American weapons in the hands of terrorists. (“Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: PYD ve YPG,” 2015)

AKP criticism aimed to paint the PYD as a terrorist organization alongside the PKK. Given its relationship with the PKK and Erdoğan expresses legitimate concerns that weapons provided to the PYD may end up in PKK hands. Additionally, the AKP expressed extreme concern with U.S. willingness to work with the PYD in Syria. In his speech, Erdoğan possibly used PKK-PYD links as an emotional appeal to the Turkish public in order to gain support for AKP foreign policy in Syria, for actions taken against the PKK, and towards further securitization of Kurdish regions in Turkey. The opposition did not refer to the PYD-U.S. or PKK link at all.

Part of the tensions coming out in speeches were a result of the end of PKK-Turkish government peace talks in July 2015. Both Davutoğlu and Erdoğan soundly condemned PKK actions in Turkey as evidenced by Davutoğlu’s statement, “We will not make promises to anyone who betrayed us,” in reference to the end of PKK-government peace talks and the Syrian PYD’s continued expansion across Northern Syria (“Davutoğlu: Türkiye’ye düşmanlık göstereni,” 2015). While the PKK and Turkish Kurds cannot be equated, and Davutoğlu points out he is not speaking of all Kurds only of PKK and PYD when he speaks negatively, government actions to stop PYD, sometimes at the risk of strengthening IS, have turned some politicians and voters against the AKP. The AKP addressed concerns with PYD and its growing strength and support from the U.S. in four of the speeches I analyzed indicating, from the AKP’s view, the PYD along its borders is a concern.

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on Syrians

While I did not randomly select any speeches by Demirtaş, of the Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP) or Peoples' Democratic Party, it is critical that I discuss the HDP's perspective on Syrian refugees in relation to minority concerns as they are the only party with an actively pro-minority platform in government. Of all speeches collected, five were given by Demirtaş of the HDP and two of those were the same speech reported by two newspapers. In three of the speeches, Demirtaş focused exclusively on the legal and welfare status of Syrian refugees in Turkey, including their citizenship status. In the fourth speech, Demirtaş states that HDP will do everything in its power to destroy IS in order to protect Syrians and Turkey. The interesting component of Demirtaş's discussion around Syrians is his focus on the question of citizenship in Turkey.

While Demirtaş did not outright criticize the AKP administration for policies towards Syrians, he made remarks regarding their status in Turkey that can be viewed as criticisms of current policy. For instance, on October 2nd, 2015 Demirtaş stated:

In the person of Aylan Kürdi, we remember all those who lost their lives. The refugee problem has become a matter of universal humanity. Those who fall to years of migration pay the highest price of war. You know we cannot get refugee status for anyone coming to us from the east officially and legally. Those migrating from Europe can [get refugee status].... We will ensure safe passage, safe refuge, and the easing of visa regulations to all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. (Gürcanlı & Alp, 2015)

Though Demirtaş does not directly criticize the current government for not providing the rights necessary for Syrian refugees to live well in Turkey, by indicating there is a serious problem with

how rights are distributed ensures that the criticism is present. In addition, Demirtaş invokes a sense that there is a separation between those who come from the West and those who come from the East in Turkey. It is even possible that Demirtaş is utilizing Syrian refugees as an example to emphasize this differential in allocation of rights, including other minorities within Turkey.

At two additional points, one on May 11, 2015 and one on May 27, 2015, Demirtaş directly address the issue of citizenry and Syrian refugees. On May 11, 2015, in response to a question on how Turkey should handle Syrians who want to stay in Turkey for the long term or even want to become citizens, Demirtaş said, “In case [of a ceasefire and peace agreement in Syria], Turkey must support those who wish to return to their homes. Those who want to stay here need the protection of the law, including the rights of citizenship” (Arslan, 2015). Again on May 27th, Demirtaş repeated this refrain: After [peace is established in Syria], our Syrian brothers who wish to return to their homeland should be supported. If they want to stay, they are citizens of this country. The world is our country” (“Demirtaş: Taksim Kabe’ mizdir,” 2015). Though Demirtaş is focusing on Syrian refugees, his emphasis on inclusion, particularly in the terms of citizenship and legal status in Turkey, is important given the history and evolution of the terms of citizenship in Turkey and particularly given the struggle of those living in Turkey who have not accepted Turkishness as part of their ethnic identities. As Demirtaş is leader of the pro-minority, and pro-Kurdish, party in Turkey, his focus on rights of citizenship may again be an emphasis on larger questions of democratic rights in Turkey and what it means to be incorporated as a citizen of the nation that have been awakened by the Syrian refugee crisis today.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

In recent months, Turkey has been on the international stage over discussions on the Syrian refugee crisis and the impact the crisis is starting to have on Western countries. Turkey is also struggling with rising violence between the national government and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) as well as attacks on Turkish soil by IS (Islamic State). As both internal and external tensions increase, pressures from the continuing swell in the number of Syrian refugees have altered the political landscape. I sought to understand the impact of Syrian refugees on political rhetoric relating to minorities in Turkey given both PKK's involvement in recent events and a long history of animosity between the government and Turkey's minorities, particularly Kurds. While several researchers have analyzed early nationalist movements in Turkey and the impact of nationalism on Turkish minority identity (Aslan, 2007; Çağaptay, 2002; Çağaptay, 2006; Yeğen, 2004, 2009; Yeğen et al., 2010), few have begun to consider modern relations between Turkey's government and minority populations given the Syrian refugee presence (Çağaptay & Menekse, 2014). A refugee population places significant pressure on any government, particularly when the size of the population is more than 2.5 million and rising. My analysis, therefore, sheds light on the shifting relationship between political leaders and Turkish minorities but does so within the modern context.

In order to answer my question, I analyzed 33 speeches given by politicians in Turkey during campaign periods before elections over the last five years. I noticed a shift in the ongoing conversation on minority rights. The conversation did not directly speak to or about minorities but argued the AKP government has compromised democratic and human rights in Turkey, including the rights of non-Turkic ethnicities. I cannot speak to whether politicians will follow

through with policies based on promises made during these campaign periods. However, I can speak to the major themes emerging over the last five years as well as to the relationship between major themes and ongoing current events both in reference to Syrians and minorities in Turkey.

Overall, politicians framed Syrians and the refugee plight positively by encouraging Turkish people to care for Syrians running from violence, actively addressing the need to support an end to the Syrian war, and sending a message of brotherly communion along the basis of religion. Politicians' use of the term *kardeş* (brother) and emotional appeals in describing the violence Syrians face at home as well as the responsibility of Turks to care for refugees is further indication politicians are positively framing the refugee crisis. Politicians did not address Syrians as a minority group, nor did politicians tie specific minority groups to any concerns with Syrians. However, the opposition utilized Syrian refugees as a means of pointing out weak policies of the current administration as well as more general concerns with democratic rights and freedoms in Turkey. While politicians coupled Syrians with domestic economic concerns, particularly unemployment, they did not blame Syrians, or other ethnic minority groups in Turkey for unemployment. Given concerns with ethnicity in early nationalist history, I expected politicians would develop more negative themes in relation to Syrians. While I did find evidence of social unrest and frustrations towards Syrian refugees in cities taking in the bulk of the refugees (Demir, 2015; Kirişci, 2014; O. Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015), the political speeches did not specifically demonize Syrian refugees or any other minorities.

Politicians did associate Syrians with domestic problems in Turkey, such as economic concerns. However politicians most often made economic concern statements in association with a list of other concerns within Turkey: the rise in unemployment, the fall in tourism, and the need

for better support for refugees. The association between other failures and Syrian refugee concerns may be a reflection of negative responses towards Syrians and Arab ethnic identity, however politicians could have used much more derisive language in discussing Syrians and chose not to. Politicians also did not express any interest in the Arab ethnicity of Syrians entering the country. In fact, only the AKP discussed specific examples of ethnicities in negative contexts. For instance, the AKP regularly pointed out links between the PKK and PYD and though AKP politicians specified the difference between the PKK and Turkish Kurds more generally, the separation was not always clear. In addition, AKP politicians' reference to the Armenian lobby backing terrorists and to the *beyaz toroslar* (white toros) period indicates some subtle negativity towards ethnic minorities in Turkey. However, minority references were scarce, therefore, while nationalism has clearly impacted Turkey's relationship with internal minorities, aside from the PKK-PYD relationship, nationalist tendencies do not seem to be at question in the case of Syrians.

Turkish government struggles with the international community emerged as a major theme in the snap election in 2015. Most of the refugees entering Turkey seek to move into Western Europe either through the Balkans or by boating to Greece ("Migrant crisis," 2015). Syrian relocation has caused contention between the Turkish and the European community as Turkey continues to spend money on refugees seeking to live elsewhere. In addition, Turkey does not wish to maintain a Syrian population within Turkish borders given a choice, as exemplified by the recurring references to ending the Syrian war so Syrians can go home. Turkish politicians on both sides of the table utilized framing in order to lay partial blame for the refugee crisis on the European Union's (EU) doorstep. Negative framing of the refugee issue, not

in terms of refugees themselves but rather in terms of the EU, proves determining the cause of anger towards the international community challenging. Turkey could be expressing outrage towards the EU because of increased pressures from the Syrian war on the country's economy and border stability, or Turkish politicians may be using this frame in order to deflect blame from Turkey's own government, alternatively Turkish politicians may be frustrated the EU is not allowing the exportation of the non-Turkic Syrian population in Turkey.

Given a history of using immigration policy to maintain the balance of majority Turkish peoples in Turkey, Turkey's frustration with EU policies to keep Syrians from entering Europe, and in effect stopping Syrians from leaving Turkey, is not surprising. In the past, Turkey has regularly returned refugee populations to home countries after brief stays, particularly when populations have not been of Turkic descent (Cağaptay & Menekse, 2014, pp. 8–9; Demir, 2015; Detrez, 2015). However, clearly Syrians will likely remain in Turkey indefinitely, particularly as the EU recently returned several hundred Syrians, who came by boat to Greece, to Turkey in exchange for taking other refugees at a later date and opening up access to the E.U. for Turks (Afanasieva & Tagaris, 2016). By returning refugees, Europe has forced Turkey into a gatekeeping position. At the same time Turkey is under pressure to either increase military actions in Syria or continue to take in refugees Turkey cannot afford to care for.

The political opposition, including CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu, MHP leader Bahçeli, and İhsanoğlu, utilized negative campaigning in the conversation on Turkish foreign policy on Syria. Opposition parties stated the Syrian war should be concluded by now and Turkey ought to have been intimately involved in finding a peaceful end, possibly indicating tensions exist with Syrians in Turkey. While no one outwardly stated Syrians are unwelcome, and in fact all parties

argued the opposite, the opposition also argued the Syrian crisis would not be a problem if the war were over as Turkish AKP leadership promised. While Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria and the war does not outwardly appear to relate to minorities, politicians may have been speaking to tensions between Syrian refugees and the larger population. However, it is also possible that negative campaigning on foreign policy was a critical tool for the opposition in garnering votes. Foreign policy was a visible and increasingly challenging issue for Turkey, making AKP policies fertile soil for drawing undecided voters.

The conversation around democratic rights and anti-discrimination was the most fascinating discussion in the speeches as the conversation incorporated both smaller ethnic groups and the larger Turkish population. Opposition politicians focused on civil liberties, particularly freedom of the press, a significant issue in fall 2015 as pro-AKP supporters attacked newspapers printing anti-AKP articles. However, the conversation on democracy also directly incorporated freedom of religion and anti-discrimination, particularly based on ethnicity. Politicians aiming anti-discrimination arguments at ethnicity likely indicates a shift in Turkey. Turkey was making progress in terms of democratic freedoms between 2003 and 2013, however a downward trend began in 2013 with the pretrial detention of thousands of individuals for political reasons and continues today with renewed violence between the government and the PKK and terrorist attacks by IS (Freedom House, 2013b, Freedom House, 2016). The loss of democratic freedoms is not only affecting ethnic minorities alone, it is affecting a broader population of voters within Turkey.

Opposition parties drew on Syrian refugees as a means of pointing out an extreme deficiency in governance in Turkey. In 2007, Davutoğlu, the current prime minister of the AKP, wrote an article on Turkey's foreign policy in which he stated:

...if there is not a balance between security and democracy in a country, it may not have a chance to establish an area of influence in its environs. The legitimacy of any political regime comes from its ability to provide security to its citizens; this security should not be at the expense of freedoms and human rights in the country. (Davutoğlu, 2008, p. 79)

Since 2013, the government has turned towards securitization and it would appear the government has done so at the expense of its citizenry, at least in the eyes of opposition parties. Syrian refugees became a tool in the hands of opposition parties to point out major holes in foreign and domestic policies in Turkey as well as to call Turkish citizens to vote for parties that could provide an alternative to the securitization and diminishing of freedoms that has occurred led by the AKP.

While my work gives a broad overview of the political discussions taking place in Turkey, it is not a comprehensive guide to political rhetoric on minorities in Turkey. The 33 speeches provide answers to some significant questions on how the conversation on minorities has shifted due to Syrian refugees, however analysis of additional speeches would further our understanding of ongoing conversations. In addition, more quantitative analysis of all political speeches of the period would provide greater insights into the timing of shifts in the discussion as well as how they link with particular events. For instance, the rise and fall of particular keywords related to each conversation and specific events that produced the shifts would provide a more detailed picture. Increasing the time period analyzed to include the entirety of the last five years,

rather than only campaign periods, would provide additional insight into the impact of events on political rhetoric over time as greater numbers of Syrians have entered the country. In addition, an analysis of speeches by the HDP would further our understanding of the party's impact on politics in Turkey.

An analysis of particular educational, security, and resource driven government policies and how policies have played into minority conversations would also be useful. For instance, have government policies tended to be more liberal towards minorities over the last five years or remained exclusionary, as in the 80's and 90's? Democratization towards minorities and later renewed government restrictions on parts of the country with greater numbers of Kurds, would be a strong indication of why a discussion around Kurds might be growing in strength. On the other hand, previous policies providing further democratic rights for all in Turkey in conjunction with recent exclusionary government behavior towards larger numbers of Turkey's population, perhaps along religious lines for instance, would speak to the increase in discussion around democratic and civil rights.

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