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Syrian refugees in Turkish cartoons: a social semiotic analysis

Julie Alev Dilmaç[1]
Özker Kocadal[2]

Abstract: This article examines Syrian refugee- or migrant-themed cartoons in Turkish weekly satirical magazines published between 2013 and 2017. In our analysis, we point out that as the Syrians' stay in Turkey has extended over the years, the refugees have become part of Turkish political discourse. We follow a social semiotic approach and categorize various cartoon representations of both Turkish politicians and Syrian refugees. We observe that cartoonists tend to portray this migrating population sometimes as an alterity, which is threatening the stability of the country, and sometimes as an "own kind", which should be integrated at all costs.

Key words: Turkey, Syrian refugees, migration, social semiotic analysis, political discourse, cartoons.

1. Introduction

The ongoing civil war in Syria has led millions of people to flee their country and seek refuge abroad. Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have thus far received the bulk of Syrian refugees. In August 2018, the total number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey was 3.545.293 (UNHCR, 2018[3]). The actual number of Syrians in Turkey is likely to be much higher, as there is also a substantial number of unregistered Syrian migrants in the country (ICG, 2018: 1[4]). Although the 3.5 million registered Syrians make Turkey the country with the largest community of Syrian refugees, Turkey's response to the

[1] Cyprus International University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social Work; Associate Member of PHILéPOL (Center of Philosophy, Epistemology and Politics), University Paris Descartes, Sorbonne Paris Cité; jadilmac@ciu.edu.tr.
[2] Cyprus International University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of International Relations; okocadal@ciu.edu.tr.
[3] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018), "Syria regional refugee response: Turkey": https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113.
[4] International Crisis Group (2018), "Turkey's Syrian refugees: defusing metropolitan tensions", Report no. 248, Brussels.

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refugee influx has been mostly welcoming. The Turkish government has repeatedly declared Turkey's intent to keep its borders open for people fleeing the Syrian civil war. Since the beginning of this war in 2011, Turkey has backed some opposition groups in Syria. In 2018 Turkish support to some factions of the Syrian opposition continues and the "open door" policy remains largely intact (*Daily Sabah*, 2017[5]). It is not surprising then to observe that cartoonists have satirized this controversial subject (the arrival and settlement of Syrian refugees in Turkey), but the refugees' relationship with political actors also seems to have caught satirists' attention. The cartoonists stir up Turkish public opinion and, in particular their readership, about the "grave" consequences of the Syrian refugees' settlement in Turkey. In this context some Turkish cartoonists employ satirical techniques such as irony, the use of stereotypes and exaggeration. In this article, we aim to analyze, through a social semiotic perspective, the discourse about the "refugee crisis" in Turkey as conveyed by political cartoons. Our main research questions are: How are the Syrian refugees represented in Turkish political cartoons? What are the main stereotypes in "refugee-themed" cartoons? Are the refugees portrayed as a "threat" or as an "alterity"? As will be explained in the next section, we also use the conceptual tools of visual social semiotics to explore how meaning is conveyed and constructed in cartoons. The first part of our analysis is dedicated to irony, used by cartoonists to criticize the regime, and more particularly to the way in which politicians welcome the migrants as "guests". We'll show that the linguistic elements, combined with the visual techniques used, provide the viewer information about the ambivalence of this situation. The second part highlights the metaphor of the tsunami related to the Syrians' arrival. Here again, we examine how multimodality works (the use of colors, the characters' size and postures) to reveal the power relations existing between politicians and migrants. Finally, in the third part, the "burden" metaphor is analyzed: we discuss the repercussion of this migration on Turkish citizens by showing how, by using symbols, cartoonists emphasize the differences between these two populations, implying that total integration of the refugee is impossible.

2. Socio-historical context

The magnitude of the amount of Syrian refugees mentioned in our introduction poses significant challenges for Turkey. While the various needs of the Syrian migrant population (of which only

[5] *Daily Sabah*, "Turkey to continue open-door refugee policy, despite lack of international support, Erdoğan says", December 18, 2017: https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/12/18/turkey-to-continue-open-door-refugee-policy-despite-lack-of-international-support-erdogan-says.

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10% are accommodated in refugee camps) are met, Turkish people have raised a number of economic, social and political concerns about this population (UNHCR, 2017[6]). Hosting the Syrians comes with an economic burden: despite promises from the EU and the UN, the Turkish government provides most of the funds needed for accommodation, food and other necessities (ICG, 2018: 2). As the Syrians' stay in Turkey has extended over a five or six year period, some of the refugees have sought to participate in the "black market" labor force effectively undercutting wages of Turkish workers. On the socio-cultural level, Syrian migrants bring with them their own culture and set of social norms, which in some cases may contradict with Turkish culture and norms. The growing prospect of Syrian refugees acquiring Turkish citizenship appears to be the prime political concern. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's remarks in July 2016 (BBC, 2016a[7]), that the Syrian refugees should be provided with legal pathways through which they can become Turkish citizens fueled the concern that the refugees will acquire citizenship and play a significant role in Turkish politics. Turkish opposition suggested that naturalizing vast numbers of refugees is used as ploy by Erdoğan to expand his political support to a population likely to support him (BBC, 2016b[8]). Thus, the refugees have increasingly become part of Turkish political discourse. Their plight has become less of an issue, while their political impact on the home country's politics, especially in the case of granting citizenship, has gained more publicity.

3. Theoretical framework and methodology

According to Halliday (1978: 192), language is "a semiotic system; not in the sense of a system of signs, but a systemic resource for meaning". In other words, language is a system conveying meaning shaped within a cultural context; the linguistic system is used to create "social" meaning, which is a matter for "social semiotic". This theoretical framework will be used in our methodology and data analysis.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 135-153) proposed a theory of social semiotics, also known as visual social semiotics, and adapted Halliday's tripartite conception of "metafunction" to any semiotic mode. The three metafunctions are the *ideational*, the *interpersonal* and the

[6] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2017), "Turkey factsheet – October 2017": https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-factsheet-october-2017.
[7] BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) (2016a), "Erdoğan'dan Türkiye'deki Suriyelilere vatandaşlık açıklaması (Erdoğan's statement about citizenship for the Syrians in Turkey)", July 3: https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/07/160703_erdogan_suriyeliler.
[8] BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) (2016b), "Suriyelilere vatandaşlığa neden karşı çıkılıyor? (Why is there opposition to granting citizenship to the Syrians?)", July 5: https://www.bbc.com/turkce/turkiye/2016/07/160704_suriyelilere_vatandaslik.

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textual metafunction. A semiotic mode is, first of all, a representation of the world as experienced by humans, and there exists a variety of choices through which objects and their inter-relations and processes can be represented. The interpersonal metafunction concerns the relationship between the producer of the sign and the receiver/ reproducer. Finally, different compositional arrangements, such as the position of the picture or that of the text (on the left or on the right), enable the receiver to interpret the diverse meanings of the signs. Since a broad spectrum of "meanings" is available, visual or textual signs are considered "resources" by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996). The term "resource" is thus the main feature distinguishing social semiotics from the structural semiotics of the Paris School (Van Leeuwen 2005: xi). As opposed to the Paris School's conception of semiotic systems as sets of rules and codes, the social semiotics approach focuses on "resources", such as "point of view". Situating "points of view" as a resource, creates various meaning potentials, depending on whether a thing, person or place is depicted from above, from below or at the eye-level, from the front, the back or the side. At the eye-level, there is the symbolism of equality coming into play, while frontality suggests maximum involvement (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 135). In this article we seek to identify the meaning that the creators of Syrian refugee- or migrant-themed cartoons aim to produce and the potential meanings available to the readership.

The theoretical framework used in this article also draws on multimodality, as cartoons often employ both text and visual semiotic modes, making multimodality an inevitable aspect of our analysis (Tskona 2009). The way in which language and image interact in cartoons about Syrian refugees and the formation of meaning through that interaction constitutes a significant component of our analysis.

The following questions, adapted from Harrison (2003), guide it. In terms of the representational metafunction, i) Who are the participants represented in the cartoons?; ii) Is there indication of any action or story through the use of vectors?; iii) Are the represented human beings facing each other or are there any eye-line vectors?; iv) Is there any complex process indicated through the cartoons to help understand their contexts?

With regards to the interpersonal metafunction, we examine the cartoons according to these questions: i) Do the images suggest any demand or offer?; ii) If there is any demand, is it supplemented with any gestures by the represented humans?

Finally, the compositional metafunction is analyzed with reference to the following questions: i) How are the represented participants placed to set the context and provide information value?; ii) Which represented human beings are shown as more salient than

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others through the use of size and focus as mechanisms of conveying salience?; iii) Is there any framing through multimodality (i.e. the use of text and image together to guide the meaning making process)?; iv) How does the use of color or the lack of it affect the textual message of the cartoons?

However, if political cartoons can be informative, they are also meant to be persuasive (Kardaş 2012: 205) and convey a message; exaggeration, metaphor, imagery and allegory are some of the techniques used by cartoonists to share their own opinions about an issue. Such methods enable them to impress their point of view upon the public, and, for that reason, illustrators are conceived as "opinion formulators" (Van Dijk 1988). The same techniques can also be used as a "weapon" to ridicule political figures, thus making cartoons a nightmare of the political establishment. This side of cartooning essentially makes it "a destructive art" (Brinkman 1968: 242). Cartoonists seek to contest and undermine authority by imposing their own interpretations of social problems, and also by enlightening the public about issues/decisions they were not aware of and/or kept out of. In a pictorial form, they point out and criticize social affairs, express immediate reactions to events and undermine dominant interpretations. It goes without saying that the government considers cartoonists as "oppositionists" most of the time.

In this paper, we analyze how Turkish political cartoons have treated the Syrians refugees' plight. As political cartoons constitute an important medium for framing social crises (Abraham 2009, Greenberg 2002), this study aims to show how drawings have been used to set "migration" as a social problem. The material is likely to give a negative overview of the refugees, as satire "passes judgment on the object of the attack" (Gray, Jones and Thompson 2009: 13). Yet, cartoons can be used to entertain as well as to denounce and contest political decisions. The public's contesting discourses on Syrian refugees as depicted by the political cartoons constitute the focal point of our inquiry. We seek to analyze the Syrian migration as well as the factors that have caused it. Overall, the political cartoons are examined to show how cartoonists communicate visually about the Syrian migration. Description of the "cast" (Akman 1997: 83) and its analysis is also part of this study: we examine the cartoons to identify stereotypes on the Syrians, or migrants in general, and the political discourse of the Turkish government concerning the migrants. To this end we study how humor and various visual techniques borrowed from/specific to the social semiotic approach (e.g. salience, color, contrast, size) are used in the cartoons to indirectly criticize the regime and its interaction with Syrians, as well as the linguistic elements used to emphasize the rhetoric of "we" *vs* "they", typical of polarizing discourses.

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4. Data and analysis

Our corpus is composed of 23 cartoons published between 2013 and 2017. Political cartoons published in weekly Turkish satirical magazines, such as the top-selling *Uykusuz*, *Penguen*, *Gırgır* and *Leman*, constitute the main part of our empirical materials, although five cartoons from the oppositional press and online media were also included to illustrate the topic's relevance to a wider readership. The focus was on satirical magazines, however, as they represent the most poignant form of Turkish political satire and welcome political cartoonists who have been sidelined from mainstream news media[9]. Since Turkish news media has become increasingly dominated by pro-government business groups over the past decade, independent satirical weekly magazines, some cartoon websites (e.g. www.karikaturdunyasi.com) and a few independent newspapers (e.g. *Evrensel* and *Cumhuriyet*) are the only means through which oppositional views can be expressed freely. Moreover, studying cartoons covering the issue of Syrian refugees in Turkey will help to identify differences between the political discourses of everyday life, which focus on the *sameness* of the Turkish and Syrian populations for political reasons / politically-oriented interests, and the "real" situation, namely the one lived by the citizens, who consider the newcomers as "others" and even as a "threat".

4.1. Irony and humor as resistance strategies

This section presents an overview of how political cartoons portray the Syrian refugees. The typical characteristics of various actors involved in this social phenomenon – but mostly migrants and politicians – are described with the goal of revealing how the protagonists are imagined. The aim of this part is to provide a detailed analysis of 23 cartoons found in various satirical magazines; the cartoons' salient features and generic aspects will be discussed. Latent messages conveyed through these satirical drawings will also be decoded.

Two types of discourses are considered: *"visual" discourses* and *speech bubble discourses* (i.e. the characters' discourse). We investigate the themes constructed through the bubble discourses. What words are used by the cartoonists to convey messages about the handling of the migrants issue? Besides explicit messages, we seek to grasp the implicit messages hidden behind the symbolism used by the cartoonists. Recurrent concepts were identified in the collected cartoons, particularly through the language they use (see Table 1).

[9] On the political context of satire and cartoons in Turkey see Aviv (2013), Tunç (2002); also see, in Turkish, Cantek and Gönenç (2017).

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Recurrent concepts	**Frequency** (out of 23 cartoons analyzed)
Syrians	9
Citizenship, citizen, naturalization	7
Begging, beg	3
Giving	3
Voting, ballots	3
Working, work	2
Accepting	2
Refugees	2

Table 1**:** Recurrent concepts in the analyzed cartoons

Visually speaking, the information values conveyed by the composition of the drawings also allow to elucidate recurrent themes (see Table 2).

Left: the "given" and the "familiar"	**Right: "new" and "problematic" elements**	**Centre**	**Top: the "ideal"**	**Bottom: the "reality"**
Migrant(s) (7)[10]	Migrant(s) (10)	Hands (7): begging, giving, welcoming, pointing	Refugee camps (3)	Children/ child (3)
Turkish citizen(s) (4)	Politician(s) (4)	Politicians (3) Erdoğan (3) Police officer (1)	Erdoğan (3)	Feet/ barefoot/ shoes/ sandals (3)
Erdoğan (3)	Turkish citizen(s) (3)	Light bulb (2)	Banderol of Turkey (1) Banderol "migrants are our guests" (1)	Knife (1) Weapon (1)
European Union flag (1) Angela Merkel (1)	Erdoğan (1)	Fat, ugly men (2)	Identification papers (1)	Ballot Papers stamped for AKP[11] (1)
Suitcase full of money (1) Money (1) Lock box (1)	European Union (1)	Suitcases (1)		
Media (1)				

Table 2: Information values conveyed by the composition of the analyzed cartoons

[10] The numbers indicate the frequency of the figures in the cartoons.
[11] Justice and Development Party.

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Information value is concerned with three main visual areas: left and right; top and bottom; center and margin. The right side provides new information about something unknown or requiring special attention (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996), something "not yet agreed upon by the viewer"; the left side is used to highlight "given information", which is assumed to be widely accepted as a point of departure for the message by the viewer. Information can also be on top of the picture presenting the "essential" or "ideal", illustrating a "promise"; or at the "bottom", depicting the situation itself, by real or more specific and practical information.

Our analysis indicates that most of the time politicians and migrants, which are the main characters of cartoons, are depicted as both "given" and "problematic" elements. The *relation* between refugees and politics (and not only the arrival of migrants) constitutes the main problem arising from this migration.

We also observe that a lot of vectors (symbolized by hands) are used in the center of the cartoons, emphasizing the multiple interactions between these two actors. The vectors (*ibid.* 1996) form an oblique line and indicate directionality; they also connect the participants included: the hands of the various characters are in action, begging, welcoming and pointing. Another observation is that the "ideal" information contrasts strikingly with the "real" one: the camps, the houses, the status of "guests" promised by Turkish authorities to migrants, clash with the real context, represented by barefoot or children sitting on the streets. It is thus obvious that the cartoonists point the gap between the two different situations.

The first part of our analysis concerns the political discourse: our aim here is to grasp the relationship between political actors involved in the Syrians' migration. Thus, we can observe that cartoons have a real "mission": to criticize the mainstream authority and the governmental policies related to the refugee problem. The first thing we can notice by looking at the cartoons is that irony is present in the discourse as well as in the images. In semantic theory, irony is described as a rhetorical device as well as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole and litotes, and is a form of non-literal language (Saeed 2009). This device helps the speaker convey the opposite of what his discourse explicitly expresses. Two kinds of irony are used in cartoons: the "verbal irony" and the "situational irony" (Gibbs Jr. and Colston 2007: 4), namely "a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects" (NOAD).

Wilson and Sperber (1992) argued that understatements, quotations, interjections and other similar language devices can be used ironically as well. In Picture 1, Erdoğan's sentences end with an exclamation point, reflecting the aggressive personality of the character. This punctuation mark also implies that the politician is not allowing

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any room for negotiation or complaint regarding the citizenship issue. The feeling that "the die is cast", implied by Erdoğan's announcement, is contrasted with the puzzled reaction of the refugee who does not understand it. The failure of the Syrian to understand the relationship between "citizenship" and the armband given to him by the politician is also emphasized by the affixation used here by the cartoonist, namely the four drops around the Syrian's head. It is obvious that the refugee has not understood the direct correspondence between becoming a Turkish citizen and voting for the AKP, information understood, however, by the reader. The dazed and confused looks of the Syrian refugees in cartoons show that the migrants do not comprehend what is happening in their new environment. Here, the cartoonist used situational irony supported by verbal one.



Picture 1: *Erdoğan'dan Suriyeliler'e vatandaşlık açıklaması…*
'Erdoğan's announcement about citizenship to Syrians…'
(*Gırgır*, July 13-19, 2016)

Erdoğan: Artık hepiniz AKP üyesi oldunuz!
The man: Vatandaşlık gibi mi?
Erdoğan: Daha da iyisi!
'Erdoğan: From now on, you all have become members of the AKP!'
The man: Is it like citizenship?
'Erdoğan: It's even better!'

Gratitude is a recurrent theme in the satirical drawings and at the core of the rhetorical irony. Despite the poor living conditions provided by the Turkish government, newcomers are depicted as grateful for being in Turkey; they appear to think that the officials (and the Turkish people) are willing to help them. Ironically, the politicians also anticipate that the migrants will be thankful for their efforts to integrate them into Turkish society. Cartoonists make fun of government representatives by accentuating their pride in being refugee "protectors" and saviors, even though the migration has led to a chaotic environment.

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Picture 2
(*Evrensel*, January 17, 2014)

> The foreign affairs minister of the time, Ahmet Davutoğlu: Suriyeli misafirlerimize kendi evlerini aratmıyoruz 'Thanks to us, our Syrian guests feel at home'

The scenes depicted above contradict with the politician's discourse designating migrants as "guests". The use if this term can be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation can be that the cartoonist makes reference to the "Turkish hospitality" about which Turks like to boast. Considering it as a cornerstone of Turkish culture, Turkish people believe that visitors should be treated as "guests sent by providence". But the scenes from the refugee camps totally contradict this idea. The cartoonist suggests that the Turkish authorities have failed in their efforts to give the "guests" a warm welcome. Secondly, the term "guest" refers to the condition of a non-permanent stay and implies that a guest will not settle and will return home after visiting. The guest's stay is temporary. Moreover, the "guest" is considered a "stranger" who does not share the norms and values of the locals; s/he is not supposed to know the rules that prevail in the host country. These conditions make the guest vulnerable, naive and easily exploitable. This idea is presented in various cartoons within our corpus that show migrants being treated as "slaves" by unscrupulous business men who take advantage of their desperation. An alterization of the Syrians is thus occurring: considered as guests, they are not seen as part of the Turkish society; they are not afforded the warm welcome dedicated to "normal guests" and are hosted in refugee camps instead of "regular" homes (drawn at the very back of the scene). So, they are far from being considered "equal" to typical guests.

Moreover, the eye line and the gaze direction of the depicted officials are other visual clues of the situational and verbal irony present in the cartoons: politicians (except Erdoğan) are depicted as never looking directly at refugees – some even have their eyes closed while interacting with them. Even when standing in front of them and

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talking about them, officials are addressing their remarks to others such as journalists or other officials (Pictures 3 & 4).



Picture 3: *Ülkemizdeki Suriyeli mültecilere vatandaşlık verilmesi gündemde*
'The conferring of citizenship to Syrian refugees of our country remains on the agenda'
(*Penguen*, July 14, 2016)

The migrants: Verdiğiniz vatandaşlık iade etmeye geldik. Cumhurbaşkanlığı bütçesi, ÖTV, dolaylı vergi, TRT katkı payından falan bahsetmemiştiniz bize!
The official: Nihahaha!
'The migrants: We came to give you back the citizenship you gave us. You never mentioned all the taxes such as presidential budget, special consumption tax, indirect taxation, TV license fee…
The official: Nihahaha!



Picture 4
(*Evrensel*, July 13, 2014)

The begging woman: Allah tuttugunuzu altın etsin… Allah ne muradınız varsa versin… Allah…

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> The Minister: Bak bak Esed'in zulmünden kurtardığımız için bize nasıl dua ediyorlar.
> 'The begging woman: May God change into gold whatever you hold… May God fulfil your wishes… May God…
> The Minister: Look look how they are praying for us for having saved them from Asad's persecutions.'

Although migrants are the talking point, which is symbolized verbally and visually by the hand of the politician serving as a vector to show the subject of his conversation, they seem not to be taken into account by the speaker. Politicians and authorities talk about migrants without "seeing" them or the conditions in which they are living. The politicians' blindness is then a source of irony: it emphasizes the duality between "we" and "they", polarity also marked by the contradiction between the phrase "our Syrians guests" and the reality pointed out by cartoonists – namely that they are a population that Turkish people refuse "to look in the eye".

The gratitude theme totally contradicts the real conditions in which the migrants are living. What cartoonists aim to draw attention to is that politicians are "selling dreams" (dreams about a new and better life and citizenship, for instance) to the migrants. The satirical drawings indeed aim to alert the readership about the grim realities of the situation. The latent message conveyed by the cartoons is that the Syrian migrants have been fooled by the Turkish government. The promise for a better life in Turkey has not been kept; instead, migrants are crammed into camps that look more like their own country in wartime without their physiological needs (Maslow 1943) being met. They have no other choice but to beg for survival, which is a common theme weaving through these cartoons. Even children are involved in this degrading activity. "Poverty" is part of the refugees' everyday life: they have lost everything while fleeing from war and this state persists in the host country.

4.2. Political manipulation and "submissive" migrants: Syrian refugees as a "mass" and the tsunami metaphor

In the cartoons, politicians are depicted as referring to migrants as "they", as if there was no need to clearly designate them as Syrian refugees, this group being the main migrant population living in Turkey. This "naming" strategy can be interpreted as showing "disdain" from representatives towards migrants: politicians consider migrants as a "mass" in which individuals have no particularities or distinctive traits. The cartoonists thus emphasize the "dehumanization" of migrants by the Turkish government. Some visual and linguistics elements used here recall the metaphor of a tsunami, or of waves, to represent the arrival of newcomers. The pale colors used to depict migrants, their collective

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representation (Pictures 1, 2, 4) and their indistinct faces (Picture 4) reinforce the idea that this "overwhelming shapeless mass" has come to invade the country. Moreover, the migrants are depicted on the left side of the cartoon in 10 of the 23 cartoons analyzed. This recurrent composition shows that the cartoonists consider them to be a "new" and "problematic" issue.

In terms of some of the actors in the cartoons being represented as more salient than others, the politicians appear to be more important than other characters by virtue of their relative size; the statespersons are drawn as taller than migrants (e.g. Picture 1), and if not, the black color of their suits, their ties and the "fatness" of the portrayed government representatives catch the viewer's attention. The salience markers of magnitude and individuation (Marcellesi and Gardin 1974) are then present in the cartoons and permit the viewer to identify the actors, as well as their importance, without having to name them.

The duality between politicians and migrants is also emphasized by the distance displayed between these two groups. Even if vectors exist in the drawings (most of the time represented by "hands"), the interaction seems compromised due to unequal power dynamics, the politicians' immorality, or prejudiced attitudes.

The punctuation and bold fonts used in the official's speech bubble show the disdain and lack of sympathy he feels for the refugees after having fooled them. The speech bubble of the migrants, listing the numerous taxes Turkish citizens have to pay (i.e., contributions to the budget of the president's office, the consumption Tax, indirect taxes and the fees supporting the national broadcaster), contrasts with the official's bubble: the only answer migrants get to their complaint is raucous laughter, emphasized here by all capital letters and bold font. The politicians' lack of morality is emphasized once again.

The power dynamic between officials and migrants is also marked by the **social distance** between actors. Throughout the cartoons featured in this analysis cartoonists depicted excessive social and public distances when representing politicians and migrants, and the environments in which they interact (e.g., refugee camps, tents, streets). This detail implies that a gap always will persist between these two populations, even when they are interacting. It also reveals their different "statuses" in Turkish society, the official one of the politicians contrasted with the illegal or temporary one of the refugees. Politicians are, in most cases, represented as the active "doers" while migrants are more passive. The power of statespersons upon migrants is also symbolized by their posture, standing in front of refugees, who are sitting on the floor (Pictures 2 & 4). The social distance illustrated in these cartoons diminishes, however, when politicians are portrayed as interacting with the media, the European Union and the United States (personified). In this situation, the closer personal distance is used to emphasize their sameness and equality.

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4.3. The burden metaphor

In addition to the metaphors discussed above, another metaphor emerges from the cartoons: the burden metaphor. Cartoonists strive to open the audience's eyes to the possible dangers of integrating Syrian refugees at all costs. A cartoon showing two women drinking tea and discussing about getting Turkish citizenship is typical: if the first character seems skeptical the second seems even more reluctant to "become Turkish" as she will have to get a job (like the other Turks) (Picture 5). Here, the cartoonist implies that the citizenship granted by authorities to migrants is not considered "profitable" by refugees and that being a "migrant" in Turkey appears to be more advantageous than being recognized as a "legal member" of the nation.



Picture 5
(www.karikaturdunyasi.com, July 11, 2016)

Woman 1: Bizi vatandaşlığa alacaklarmış kabul edicez mi?
Woman 2: Yok ya! Türk olup da kim çalışacak şimdi? Önce ev versinler, çocuğu üniversiteye alsınlar, bakarız.
'Woman 1: They say they will grant us citizenship. Are we going to accept?
Woman 2: No! Who is going to become Turkish and start to work? Let them first give us a house and accept the kid at the university then we will see.'

The discussion between these two characters gives information about the position of Syrian migrants in Turkish society and communicates the perspective that Turkish politicians' warm welcome of the refugees and all the benefits offered to them (without even having to ask) seems to have emboldened them in bargaining with the Turkish government. Despite being lower in social status, they have enough power to refuse nationality and ask for more benefits (here, the second character thinks of asking for a house and for her son to go to university). Implicitly, the cartoonist suggests that migrants are being turned into "spoiled", "lazy" and "calculating" individuals. They are then presented as greedy persons who will take advantage of the help provided by the state and start new lives to the financial detriment of Turkish citizens. This argument is also

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present in another cartoon showing a Syrian child begging for money (Picture 6). When one of the two characters angrily asks the young boy how he could be involved in this shameful activity, the other answers him with "Do not worry, they will have their own offices soon."



Picture 6
(www.karikaturdunyasi.com, February 25, 2017)

Man 1: Oğlum ayıp değil mi? Neden sokaklarda dileniyorsunuz?
Man 2: Merak etme, bürolarını da açarlar yakında.
'Man 1: Son, aren't you ashamed? Why are you begging in the streets?
Man 2: Do not worry. They will open their own offices soon.'

Here, the emphasis is on risks the current situation may lead to in *the* future: if migrants hold all the cards, negotiating with them will be difficult and, in all likelihood, they will end up in a better socioeconomic position than the locals. Here, the metaphor of the "burden" of this migration is reinforced. The outstretched hands of the refugees, always at the core of the cartoons, suggest that this population is only in Turkey to "take" all the advantages without "giving back" to the society.



Picture 7
(*Leman*, May 9, 2015)

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The child: Suri… Suri… Allah… Rıza…
The man: Sapasağlam bebeksin savaşsana…
'The child: Syri… Syri… Allah… will…
The man: You are a very healthy toddler… Join the war…'

If some cartoonists solicit the audience's empathy towards the population who has fled from war, others draw attention to the future social and economic consequences that Syrian migration entails for the Turkish society. As depicted in the cartoons, refugees are migrating with their relatives, which can be considered a characteristic specific of this movement. This family detail observed in the cartoons is not trivial: it indicates that Turkish society will be forced to provide for large, needy families, for example, by creating a new (or adjusting the current) welfare system (e.g. health and education services, housing, family and employment policies). Newcomers are depicted in cartoons as making plans and projects about their future in the host country but never as preparing for their return to the home country. Such details in the cartoons are crucially important as they point to potential major changes, not only in the refugees themselves, but also in the lives of Turkish people. The cartoonists then imply that native inhabitants will have to pay more taxes for the migrants' integration, taxation that represents a burden.

Moreover, in cartoons it is suggested that the Syrian migration will end with the installation of the whole Syrian population in Turkey. The link to temporality cannot be denied: in their drawings, cartoonists illustrate a *current* social and political issue that will last into the *future*, bringing new ways of living, thinking and acting. Due to the high number of migrants who supposedly will be granted Turkish citizenship, there is a fear in Turkish society that rather than being assimilated into the Turkish culture, the newcomers will irrevocably alter it by imposing their own values, mores and traditions within the cultural framework of the country. Cartoons highlight these fears of Turkish citizens about their ethnic heritage being altered by the Syrian culture.

"Temporality" appears to be another theme in the cartoons that intertwines with cultural incompatibility. It is interesting that cartoonists, while mentioning the migrants, predominantly used the present tense: 24 sentences in the speech bubbles refer to the present, six to the future and three to the past. These discourses were accompanied by terms such as *now*, *soon*, *first*. These references to the present contradict with the "outdated" characteristics emphasized in the Syrian characters and serve to underscore how the refugees do not fit in Turkish society: if their migration represents a current issue (demonstrated by the use of the present tense), their outdated outfits (sandals) and their religious beliefs (symbolized by the veil, the

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moustache) clash with the modern, secular Turkish social norms. The cartoonists thus suggest that integrating the Syrians into Turkish society will be challenging because it will require pulling the past into the present.

These "outdated" characteristics of the Syrian migrant population also serve to reinforce their exclusion by the locals. Even if partly imagined and exaggerated in the cartoons, these stereotypes play a role in their refusal to accept migrants, as they connote the Turkey from "before Kemalist reforms". In social representations, integrating migrants into the country seems risky as it might return the Turkish population to the "old days", namely before Mustafa Kemal Atatürk introduced broad reforms in the social, political, economic and legal spheres. Syrian migrants are considered and depicted in cartoons as a group of people ("They") who are still connected to the past and who think and act in an old way impervious to democratic principles. They have an "outdated" mode of thinking and are considered different from Turkish citizens ("We"), as represented by cartoonists in their drawings.

Two different discourses appear in the cartoons concerning the relative difference and sameness between Syrian migrants and Turkish society. On one hand, the migrants are depicted as a population trying to adapt to the host country but facing prejudice from the native inhabitants. At the same time, the fear of "colonization" or "assimilation" of Turkey by Syrian refugees, reinforced by the granting of Turkish citizenship to migrants, is a recurrent theme presented in the cartoons. In these cases, the *dissemblance* between the two populations is mainly highlighted via negative discourses that refer to migrants as an "alterity" or even a "threat". An othering process is thus occurring. On the other hand, the will of the politicians to integrate, at all costs, the newcomers into Turkish society as the "new" population of the country is based on the so-called "sameness" of the Syrians and the Turks. This discourse about the refugee population seems *positive* (and politically motivated). The Turks are likened to Syrian migrants, which doesn't correspond to the point of view of the majority of the Turkish population nor to the position of the main political opposition. Rather, this push to integrate the Syrians is due to the fact that politicians view them as having the same "way of life" as a specific segment within Turkish society: Turkish citizens who voted for the AKP. Looking at the way Syrian refugees are depicted in cartoons clearly shows that their religious identity is emphasized: they are presented as "Muslims who practice religion", men are drawn wearing *takke* (i.e. Muslim prayer cap) and women veiled; they have several children, likely in reference to Erdoğan's three-child campaign. To sum up, they fit into the "way of life" promoted by the AKP government.

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5. Conclusion

The influx of Syrian refugees into Turkey since 2011 has had a substantial impact on the Turkish society. The cartoons studied indicate the main concerns of the Turkish public and point out how such concerns are illustrated with a sense of alarmism by the cartoonists. We have also explored, through a social semiotic lens, how multimodality works as various visual and textual techniques are combined to shape meaning and form certain discourses. The main critical discourse is that the Syrians will settle in Turkey, acquire citizenship and become AKP supporters, and thus the secular segment of the Turkish society will be marginalized. The Turkish government is also portrayed as politically abusing the Syrians to further its own objectives, for example, to get visa-free travel for Turkish citizens to the EU. Overall, the cartoons aim to remind the public that the Turkish government's policy concerning refugees is ill-motivated and that the Syrians' influence in the country is set to grow.

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