Securitization and De-securitization: Turkey-Syria Relations since the Syrian Crisis

Rahmouni Fatima ZAHRA

(Department of World History, Shanghai University, China)

Abstract: The article focuses on the nature of the relations between Turkey and Syria during the Syrian crisis. Although the relationship between Turkey and Syria had undergone some ups and downs in the last several years, both countries tried their best to improve their economic, political, cultural, and diplomatic relations. Indeed, Turkey introduced its model, “Moderate Islamic ideologies”, through Syria in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The “Arab Spring” of 2011 was a very good opportunity for Turkey to introduce its democratic Islamic dogmas which were welcomed by the Muslim Brotherhood leaders in some Arab Countries. But, the President of Syria, Bashar Al Assad, and his allies were very critical of Turkey’s policy. Thus, the article mainly explores the role of Turkey in Syria’s internal affairs, in particular, Erdogan’s policy towards Syrian crises. Besides, it examines Turkey’s domestic challenges and how Turkey has presented itself as a big supporter of the Arab Spring in the MENA. However, the article has found out that the current policies of Turkey towards the Syrian crisis are critical within the Middle East region. In other words, the conflicts and the wars against the Islamic State (ISIS) and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) weakened the bilateral relations. The Syrian refugees and the PKK are posing overwhelming challenges to Turkey’s economy and internal security.

Key Words: Turkey-Syria Relations; Syrian Crisis; Turkey’s Foreign and Domestic Policies; Syrian Refugees; Securitization and De-securitization

I. Introduction

The bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria have, largely, included the areas of economy, politics and culture of both countries. Significantly, given their geographical locations, the two countries are connected with each other in their internal situations as well as the external conditions. Turkey is situated at the intersection of three continents and positioned between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. It shares the longest border with Syria, which is about 822 kilometers. This position influenced largely the

---

1 Rahmouni Fatima ZAHRA, PhD candidate in global studies, Department of World History, Shanghai University, China.
diversity of the Turkish population that has Ottoman, Arab, Western and Kurdish descendants. Turkey is known for its multicultural diversities which enables it to have a strong presence regionally and internationally. It is also known for the predominance of Sunni Muslims and supporters of secularism. Besides, because of its long glorious history, Turkey had scope to learn from past and earn the ability of efficient solutions to improve the conditions of its internal affairs. According to Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf and Black Sea country, and can simultaneously exercise influence in all these regions and thus claim a global strategic role”. The Turkish influence on the Arab world was a great opportunity for the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to spread its ideologies and concept of moderate Islam in the region. Indeed, Syria was an important gateway of Turkey to win the hearts and minds of Syrians in particular and Arabs in general. Before the outbreak of the “Arab Spring” in 2011, the Syrian tourist companies were promoting and advertising Turkey’s destinations to the people of their countries. Both Turkish and Syrian universities and institutions incorporated some exchange courses into their education curricula. Additionally, with Syrian collaboration, the spread of dubbed Turkish series and dramas among Syrians had much and positive impact on the Turkish tourism. Turkey used soft power to maintain a good relationship with Syria and later with other Arab states. In fact, the Syrians were taking Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a model who will bring peace in the Middle East region. In reality, AKP had a policy of using its common history, traditions and religion to get close to the Arab region to increase their economic and political engagements without using hard power. Moreover, Turkey used soft power and its popularity in Arab countries before 2010, in Arab countries which perceived Turkey as a friend and a model. Besides, Turkey’s economic growth was also a strong asset in the region. Turkey was also known by its mediating effort in conflicts, and by its “concept of zero problems with the neighbours” considered as a key pillar of AKP’s foreign policy in the 2000s. According to Meliha Benli Altuṇışık, “the coming of power of Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey in 2002 and the transformation of Turkish politics and economy coinciding with the evolution of regional politics in post-2003 Iraq War era led to Turkey’s actorness in the region”. However, according to the Arab states, Turkey did not have an opportunity to become a leading power. In 2010, Turkey’s image was still positive in the Arab world, but one year later, the Arab countries were focusing on the Arab Spring, and because Turkey got involved with the Syrian regime, Ankara’s status has diminished in the eyes of Arab states. Thus, AKP supports the opposition regime and have the mission to get down the Bath party of Bashar Al Assad which have been accused nationally and internationally of the Syrian humanitarian crisis and killing millions of innocent Syrians.

1 Loannis N. Grigoriaidis, “The Davutoğlu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy,” Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, No.8, 2010.
The article studies the changes of Turkish foreign policy toward Syria and shows how AKP is interfering in Syria’s internal affairs. It examines Turkey’s domestic challenges and how Turkey has presented itself as a big supporter of the “Arab Spring” in the MENA region. Moreover, the article explores some main issues and their implications on the relationship of Turkey with Syria. In addition, the article starts with definition on the theories of Securitization and De-securitization referring to Waever, Buzan and Balzacq. This framework has been for a long time a source of discussions and arguments between scholars, and international actors. Indeed, the two concepts allow us to understand the situation of Turkey and Syria since the early years of the post-cold-war. Besides, the article investigates the actions and the position of the Turkish government towards the Arab revolution and its implication on the Turkish-Arab region. Consequently, the “Arab Spring” caused instability and made a lot of people of Syria into refugees in Turkey and other countries.

II. Securitization and De-securitization Framework

Securitization and de-securitization theories are, always, associated with the foreign policy of a specific country or to its domestic affairs. Many researchers from diverse areas have been exploring these two concepts in different perspectives and angles generating many serious debates and discussions. Indeed, when we mention the words of securitization and de-securitization immediately the terms of security and instability come to our mind. But, what are Securitization and de-securitization theories? Going through some works, it is noted that the Copenhagen School is the most influential proponents of these theoretical approaches. This school is mainly composed of Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and others who developed the notions of securitization and de-securitization. The framework is totally related to the security concerns or factors that push the leaders to define a matter as a security issue. Indeed, securitization is “a field of struggle in which the securitizing actors point at a security issue to secure the support of society for a certain policy or course of action”. But, Balzacq said, securitization “is a set of interrelated practices and the processes of their production, diffusion, and reception, translation that bring threats into being; the innovation of securitization theory is important for changing the attitude of security theorists toward language”. Securitization enables policymakers to immediately adopt whatever means they deem appropriate to curb the threat.

Abrahmsen argues that securitization has been employed to analyze the state foreign policy behavior; however, Emmers emphasized the importance of securitization in the...
field of crimes. Moreover, Elbe, Buzan and Roe argued that securitization is an essential element when it comes to diseases, HIV, war on terror and minority rights which are considered as a security Threats. For Waever, “security constituted the opposite of ‘politics’, which implies the possibility for more open engagement and dialogue”.

In fact, securitization of some political matter in the internal affairs of certain countries could create an inflexible ideology, and instability within the region. Based on Balzacq, “security overlooks the objective context in which security agents are situated”. In fact, Balzacq argued that securitization is a strategic practice that happens within, and as part of, an arrangement of situations, including the context, the psycho cultural nature and character of the audience, and the interaction that both the speaker and the listener brought. Furthermore, McDonald stated that “securitization has entered the language of international relations and security studies. Nor should such a development be viewed as a negative one, particularly given the capacity for such a conceptual framework to illuminate key elements of the ways in which security preferences and practices are constructed in international politics”.

From the standpoint of securitization theory, security is not surrounded or formed by objectives. It is a “speech act”. For Williams, “Securitization is not the related to the military sector alone, but it is also produced by the conversational elites, the media, and academia. The weakening role of the army does not automatically bring de-securitization”. Furthermore, Balzacq added “the power of the speech act would appear to be undermined by the full incorporation of the idea that the act itself is only one part of the securitizing process”. Moreover, Behnke argued that “If securitization is a speech act, de-securitization should be marked by the lack of any such speech act”. To put it differently, Williams cited “de-securitization is the procedure of ‘moving issues off the
‘security’ agenda and back into the realm of public political discourse and ‘normal’ political dispute and accommodation”. Some argued that “an issue is de-securitized when nothing is done”. According to Olsner, on the contrary, “a problem is de-securitized when either it loses its threatening image because agent and audience’s perception of the nature of the threat change in a positive manner or they perceive a qualitative change in the relationship between them and securitized threat”. Actually, the Copenhagen school claims that de-securitization is the opposite of securitization. So, whereas securitization is defined as “moving an issue from a situation a, de-securitization refers to the return of the issues from being existential threats to normal politics. They also define the concept of de-securitization as a continuity in which the political actors cease to treat the enemy that they saw before as a treat”. Obviously, people from any society must participate and express their views concerning the issue of security. Waever said that “society never speaks; it is only there to be spoken for”.

III. The Turkish Foreign Policy from Securitization to De-securitization: A Short Historical Background

Historically, Turkey had a very unstable relationship with Syria, especially, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and in the early years of the post-Cold War period. In fact, Turkey and Syria were in the opposite blocs during the Cold War, which means that Turkey was and still a founding member of NATO and Syria is one of Russia’s allies. In addition, the presence of France in Syria and the uprising of the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War resulted in Syria being put in the Turkish black list. Moreover, in the 1970s, the Syrian government was supporting the Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) which is an army group operating against Turkey. In the 1980s, Syria showed a huge tolerance toward the PKK by offering them a ground for training in the Syrian controlled area of Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley which made Ankara very angry against Syria. In the early 1990s, this is considered as the area of securitization. Hafiz Al Assad claimed the Turkish province of Hatay and demanded a larger share of water from the Euphrates River which runs from Turkey to Syria. Furthermore, Syria had a

---

4. Ibid., p.796.
5. Ibid., p.697; Waever Ole, pp.46–86.
8. Ibid., p.234.
good connection with Greece in that period drawing upon a signed peace agreement which allow the government of Greece to use its planes in the Syrian air bases in case of war between Turkey and Greece. This troubled relationship had led the two governments nowhere. In the 1980s and 1990s, Turkey, therefore, perceived securitization of its Middle East policy.

**Graph 1**: Turkish De-securitization Foreign Policy towards the Arab region.

In 1998, bilateral relations deteriorated when Turkey threatened an invasion into Syria if the latter did not hand over PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. It was a very critical and complex situation that led Hafez Al-Assad to promptly change the decision and to find solutions for the problems. Basically, after Syria withdrew its support to PKK, gradually, the historical disputes were resolved and a new area of warm friendship started. Turkey’s ruling party of AKP came into power in 2002 and helped the Turkish-Syrian relationship to boost mainly during US occupation of Iraq. In the year 2010, the bilateral trade reached $2.5 billion, making Turkey the largest trade partner of Syria. Moreover, both governments collaborated against terrorism in the region through bilateral agreements. Concerning the AKP foreign policy, the Middle East is considered as the main area and target point for AKP to enrich economic and diplomatic affairs. Moreover, since Turkey had many enemies in the region, it tries to bring peace and security, especially with Iran, Syria and Iraq. In 2009, the AKP, therefore, decided to cancel the visa requirement for the Syrians during the

---

1. Christopher Philips, “Into the Quagmire: Turkey’s Frustrated Syria Policy”.
High Level Strategic Cooperation Council. This initiative enriched the Turkish economy and strengthened the diplomatic relationship. It was a big step of Turkey to initiate this initiative inspired from the European Union’s Schengen system. Furthermore, Turkey had intended to reunite the Arab region, taking the model of the European Union in 2010 by making Lebanon, Jordan and Syria to join the “Levant Quartet”. Thus, it was the perfect de-securitization era for the Turks. However, a few years later, these efforts failed due to the Arab revolution in the region, by which the Turkish government took another opportunity to spread its ideology over the region.

IV. The Turkish-Syrian Timeline Events

The “Arab Spring” in the MENA messed up all Turkish strategies toward the region. Huge mass protests were spreading around the region, especially, in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, and slightly affected other parts of the Arab world. In Syria, it was a totally different story and a very complex challenge for the International community, essentially, for Turkey. In fact, when the rebellions started, AKP had to choose between the Ba’athist party or the people in the streets. It was a big dilemma for AKP about what it should do. The Turkish government tried to convince Bashar Al Assad to carry out the reforms and listen to his people; nevertheless, Assad decided to keep his regime and did not listen to his Turkish friends. This decision led Turkey to take harsh decisions against the Assad’s regime just three months after the demonstrations. Although it is unusual for Turkey to get involved in the internal affairs of another country, the AKP started to support the Syrian National Council, the opposition group which later changed its name to National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and opposition forces. These groups were under the protection of Turkey; it was in the Turkish territory that these groups were founded. Basically, academic researchers and politicians claimed that there are several factors behind this intervention in the Syrian affairs and implementation of harsh actions toward Assad. First, the public opinion of Turkey was pressing the AKP leader to warn Assad’s regime and condemn the crisis that happened in Syria. Second, Turkey had to follow the decision of adopting harsh actions that the international community, foreign governments that belong to NATO, the Arab League and the European Union. Third, Turkey had to break the contacts with Assad as it did in Libya. Fourth, Ankara felt horrified against Assad’s policies and how he did not listen to the advice of the AKP government. It is noticeable that Turkish-Syrian diplomatic relations were broken down by withdrawing the Turkish ambassadors and Turkish representatives from Syria. The previous Özal government believed that the democratic peace theory could be implemented in the authoritarian countries. Turkey has been drowning into illusions of using its powers and having the confidence of using them excessively. “Turkey can be seen somewhere between the traditional middle power and contemporary raising power”. This illusion has made

---

2. Richard Weitz, “Turkey Turns on Syria’s Assad”.
Turkey to fall into very bad mistakes. At the beginning of the civil war, Erdoğan sent several messages to Assad. The first message advised Bashar Al-Assad to undertake new political reforms and implement them with the help of the Turkish government; he could get out from the crisis. The second message was directed to the international community that it is possible to overcome the Syrian crisis through the new reform that satisfies the wishes of the people of Syria. The Syrian crisis was no longer a Syrian matter, but has also affected badly the internal affairs of Turkey. What Turkey did not know and expect that this civil war will take longer; six years of killing and chaos.

On June 22, 2012, a Turkish airplane was attacked by the Syrian forces. On May 11, 2013, a huge massacre and killing happened in the Turkish town, Reyhanlı, near the borders. On September 2014, the “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” (ISIL) attacked a Syrian town of Kobani in the Syrian border. On May 16, 2015, Turkey shouted a Syrian aircraft that violated its airspace. On July 20, 2015, a suicide bomber blew himself in the town of Suruc located to the borders of Turkey and Syria which killed at least 32 people. Furthermore, the unexpected July 15, 2016 failed coup in Turkey that was launched by a group of officers the Fettullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) within the Turkish army, according to the experts and observers, totally reshaped the relations between Turkey and Syria. “Since Erdoğan remains in power-perhaps now with the incident less internal opposition—there is no reason why he should not simply continue to pursue a Syria policy of his own choice, whatever it might turn out to be. But the effects of the coup on Turkey’s foreign alignments and internal politics may still influence the way Ankara approaches its Syrian dilemma”. Moreover, after the failed coup, President Racific Tayyip Erdoğan decided to recover the isolation of Turkey from the international community through revising the foreign policy of the country and improve its respective relations with Israel and Russia for the sake of Syria. On July 31, 2016, in Aleppo, the cultural capital of Syria famous for its long historical civilizations and situated 50 kilometers far from the Turkish border, fights between the government and the rebels and airstrikes killed more than 300 civilians. The international community for Red Cross described “the battle of Aleppo as one of the most devastating conflicts in modern times”. This incident was a continuation or a consequence of Assad’s offensive maneuver that was few months before July when “the Assad’s regime launched an offensive in the north Aleppo countryside which has cut the major rebel supply line from Turkey to Aleppo, leaving Free Aleppo almost completely


\[3\] “Turkey Arrests 9 in Connection with Deadly Bombings,” Times of Israel, May 12, 2013.


\[6\] “Suruc Attack: Suicide Bomber Kills Dozens in Turkey Near Border with Syria”.


\[8\] Ibid., p.1.

\[9\] “Why Aleppo Syria’s Fiercest Battleground?” Times of Israel, August 20, 2016.

\[10\] Ibid., p.1.
encircled and 400,000 civilians potentially trapped”.¹ Thus, one of the consequences of the Aleppo crisis was the killing of the Russian ambassador on December 19, 2016 by a police officer who shouted, “don’t forget Aleppo, don’t forget Syria” before his death.² This incident proved the failure of both Turkey and Russia to end the war in Syria and bring peace to the region. Following this, both the leaders of Turkey and Russia vowed to not let the death of the Russian ambassador worsen the relations of their countries. On the one hand, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, “I describe this attack on Russia’s embassy as an attack to Turkey, Turkey’s state and nation.” On the other hand, the president of Russia Vladimir Putin claimed, “we agreed, this is a provocation and there isn’t any dispute”.³ Both parties tried to take wise decisions not to worse their relations. Furthermore, the Russian foreign minister claimed that the ties between Turkey and Russia “will depend on how we will cooperate on the settlement of the Syrian crisis”.⁴ However, Erdoğan did not show his intention to end his opposition to Bashar-Al Assad. Besides, Iran sought cooperation with Turkey in which both agreed on enhancing trade relations and resolving the issue of Syria. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stated that “despite the differences of Turkey and Iran, the cooperation would strengthen for a lasting peace in Syria”.⁵ Iran is considered as an important actor in Syria and a great supporter of Bashash-Al Assad’s regime; however, it does not have a new position on Aleppo. Iran’s main concern is the humanitarian crisis and the terrorist groups.

The international meeting of Turkey, Russia and Iran in Kazakhstan on January 23 and 24, 2017 was an opportunity to sign an agreement of “safe zones” in Syria which could be a chance to implement peace. To put differently, Turkey, the leader of the Syrian opposition, Iran and Russia agreed to have four “de-confliction zones” which will be surveilled by the international community.⁶ The reason behind the ‘safe zones’ is to enable Syrian victims to flee and receive help and protection. This agreement was disapproved by some of the opposition delegation because it threatens the territorial sovereignty of Syria. Besides, rebels consider Iran “responsible for stoking the sectarian nature of the war in Syria”.⁷ However, Turkey support this agreement because this latter “cannot carry two watermelons under one arm”. This saying means that Turkey cannot handle two big tasks at the same time which are the Syrian crisis and domestic issues. Domestically, Turkey is handling the issue of the PKK and regionally it is problem of Russia with the regime in Syria that could make the PKK and Russia to get together. Erdoğan, in his speeches, always claims the continuity in fighting the PKK and protecting his country from chaos. Furthermore, Turkey is becoming a land of dangerous waves of terrorist attacks and bombings, especially in the big cities, such as Ankara.⁸ These bombings are mainly supported by the Islamic States and the Kurdish Freedom Falcons (TAK), and the latter is

---

² Katie Hunt, “Russian Ambassador Killed in Turkey: What Do We Know about the Assassin?” CNN, December 20, 2016.
³ Ibid., p.1.
⁵ “Turkay, Iran Pledge Greater Cooperation over Syria,” Times of Israel, August 12, 2016.
⁷ Ibid., p.1.
considered as a radical group of PKK. These bombings are only the fruits of the youth depression of finding a suitable job with decent salary. Thus, poverty and unemployment are the factors behind these attacks. According to the report of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), the country’s overall jobless rate stands at 10.3%, while unemployment is quite high at 18.5% in the 15-24 age groups, 22% of females and 16.5% of males. Compared to other regions, unemployment is higher mainly in the Kurdish eastern and southeastern provinces, which have since 2016 been the theater of bloody urban clashes between the security forces and the PKK such as terrorist attacks, lengthy round-the-clock curfews, massive destruction and civilian deaths. Additionally, Turkish politician Erdoğan Toprak claimed that the unemployed people are considered as good potential for the terrorist organizations which the government has huge difficulty dealing with. Besides, there is the issue of Syrian refugees with which whole communities got involved; especially, Turkey that opened totally its doors.

V. Syrian Refugee Crisis since 2015

The generosity of Turkey and its open-door policy resulted in a large number of Syrian refugees on its territory. According to the United Nations reports, in March 2015, the number exceeded 1.7 million; this huge number of refugees created some problems for Turkey. As for Murat Erdoğan, “The crisis affects Turkish society socially, politically, economically and psychologically, and especially security concerns prevail. Turkey’s “open door” policy, which was implemented in accordance with international law has resulted a serious risk regarding the level and duration of the residence of Syrians”. In fact, in the beginning of the civil war, Turkey and the international organizations were funding refugee camps by providing them the daily life necessities. However, nowadays, most of the Syrian refugees are living in the villages, some of whom in cities, and some are relying on their own income. But, many refugees are facing difficulties to access suitable accommodations and other necessities due to their financial situations and poor integration in the job market. At the same time, Turkish people are expressing their concerns about the increase of Syrian refugees in their cities. They claim that they make the rising cost of the houses as well as the increase of unemployment. In the early 2015, the Turkish government spent more than $5 billion and only 3% were covered by the international community. According to İçduyu, “Turkey will need to redefine the status of Syrian refugees, taking into account the likelihood of their protracted displacement and prioritize integration policies (like socio-cultural and labor market integration) to offset the growing hostility of the host population”. This crisis should make the states, nongovernmental organizations and governmental ones to contribute and work together on the social, political, financial

---


© Erdoğan Toprak is a Turkish politician from Republican Peoples Party (CHP).


© M. Murat Erdoğan, “Perceptions of Syrians in Turkey,” pp.65-75.

© Ibid., p.1

© Ibid., p.2
and Medical levels to solve the humanitarian crisis which Turkey was the first to protect the Syrians. Indeed, millions of refugees need huge assistance and protection because the continuity to stream over the countries resulted in many deaths and injuries. According to the regional refugee and resilience of 2015-2016, at least, 190,000 have been killed and over 3.2 million who have escaped to the neighboring countries and among them, 1.7 million are displaced children. These figures present the inhuman conditions of the war which the international community failed to end; however, since the outbreak of the conflict, this latter did not stop providing some basic facilities to the Syrian refugees. To illustrate this, according to statistics of 2015-2016, there are 4,270,000 Syrian refugees registered, 18,000 individuals trained in child protection, 2,337,000 individuals receiving food assistance, 830,000 targeted boys and girls from the age of 5 to 17 years old enrolled in primary and secondary education, 423,000 targeted boys and girls enrolled in non-formal and informal education and 482 educational facilities were constructed and renovated. In health sector, 439 health facilities are existing and 13,000 health staffs are working. In regard of the basic needs, 252,000 households are receiving core relief items and 106,000 households are having assistance for shelter. Furthermore, 270,000 are accessing wage employment opportunities. Though, there are several people that suffer from limited livelihood opportunities and stretches of housing and social services. In fact, Turkey’s Syrian refugees are the most populous neighbor in the region that spread in urban areas and in 22 camps. “Refugees from Syria need international protection with access and admission to safety continuously, and protection from refoulement cornerstones of the protection response. Continuous registration, verification and renewal of documentation are critical tools to determine those who are in need of protection and assistance; to maintain accurate records of numbers, locations and profiles of refugees; to ensure refugees have documents essential to facilitate their eventual return; and to enable access by refugees to humanitarian aid and services in host countries. Women, girls, boys and men with specific needs and those most at the risk are systematically identified and their needs addressed through specialized services and intervention, in close cooperation with host governments and through national systems.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As of</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>148,000</td>
<td>180,000</td>
<td>168,000</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>583,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>562,000</td>
<td>905,000</td>
<td>575,000</td>
<td>216,000</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>2,403,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,165,279</td>
<td>1,146,405</td>
<td>619,777</td>
<td>228,484</td>
<td>137,000</td>
<td>3,297,449</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) Ibid., p.11.
\(^3\) Ibid., p.18.
This disaster has a big implication in the region; the flow is mainly directed to Turkey and to the rest of the world of which the European countries are receiving a great number of the population. Turkish actors have implemented informal approaches to decrease the number of refugees for domestic and political reasons. The government has given support to the non-governmental organizations that are responsible for managing camps, but near the Turkish border humanitarian assistance are in a total dispensation for the Syrians. The problem is that there are so many Syrian refugees in Turkish cities that are not registered to get these needs without any difficulties. Moreover, no working permission could cause them to have a bad life situation. So, most the refugees prefer to work in some informal sectors to avoid working under inappropriate conditions with very low wages. Based on İçduygu, “Despite the relative comfort and security of camps, more than 1 million Syrians have chosen to become urban refugees for several reasons: First, the unprecedented number of refugees has exceeded the overall camp capacity; second, family ties and financial independence have enabled some refugees to access shelter in other ways, often arranged by relatives; and third, those Syrians whose entry is considered illegal are not allowed to register for entering into camp”. According to the findings from the interview with Turkish people, Syrians are welcomed to live in Turkey; however, it would be better if there are no more Syrians coming to Turkey because the “uncontrolled” Syrians are considered as a threat to the economy and security of the country. The emergence of such crisis is only the result of the failure of the Syrian government to find accurate solutions for their internal conflicts. Furthermore, the inability of the international community to prevent such violence pushed the majority of Syrians to flee from their homes. Both Assad’s regime and anti-government groups are responsible for destroying Syria. Thus, the questions are: How will these refugees survive in the Turkish camps or other neighbor’s camps in such conditions? And how long will they live in such condition? What are the plans that the international community has to integrate these refugees into a new suitable environment? Drawing upon the urgency of redefining the status of Syrian refugees, the questions which are raised through analysis of the paper can be left for further research, and discussion for international community.

VI. Conclusion

The relationship between Syria and Turkey was considered as “enemy-friendly” relations. In other words, before the uprisings of 2011, Turkey’s engagement policy towards Syria was effective. However, in the last several years, Turkey’s engagement policy shifted to the isolation policy because of Bashar’s decisions and actions. Now, the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1,700,000</th>
<th>1,500,000</th>
<th>700,000</th>
<th>250,000</th>
<th>120,000</th>
<th>4,270,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**The Source:** The regional and resilience plan 2015-2016 in response to the Syria Crisis Regional Strategic Overview.

Ahmet İçduygu, “Syrian Refugees in Turkey: The Long Road Ahead”.
M. Murat Erdoğan, “Perceptions of Syrians in Turkey,” pp.65-75.
relations between the two countries are deteriorating due to Syria’s instability and insecurity. Besides, the cost of the civil war affected Turkey badly in a way the PKK is making Syria a source of gaining power and strengths and from which they recruit new members, experience and arms. The worse scenarios that we could expect are: First, the dominance of the PKK in the Syrian territory could bring the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Second, the use of the PKK by the Russians to keep in check Turkey could diminish Turkey’s interest over the region. Third, the terrorist organization could remain in the near future and may get stronger if the international community did not find effective ways to divest them. Fourth, the issue of Syria will surely cause more harm to the economy of Turkey and its domestic security.

Generally, people do not escape or leave their homes, which are the symbol of their identity and traditions unless their states do not offer them the basic needs or listen to their demands or fail to give them the security and protection they need. There is no smoke without fire. This is the case of Syria and a number of non-democratic countries. The Syrian regime has totally failed from the beginning to evaluate and find adequate solutions for its people. The government had to listen to its people and give up some of its policies by implementing new reforms and regulations that could satisfy the different ethnic groups and regimes in the country. From this article’s point of view, the International Community did not work as hard as it needed to avoid such catastrophe and human crisis. Turkey and Syria’s neighbors Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon were generous in applying the open-door policy for the refugees; however, these refugees are not only from Syria but also from Palestine and Iraq. Obviously, there were different arguments and suggestions that could be implemented to avoid the war in Syria in the beginning of the revolution. The deaths and injuries will increase if the war do not end. The Middle East region is an unrestricted playground of the “Islamic State” and other terrorist organizations that commit barbaric actions. In a nutshell, Turkey-Syria relations and the Syria crisis are the perfect cases to illustrate and apply the theories of secularization and de-secularization.