

**PROBLEMS OF REFUGEES
AND THEIR FUTURE**

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INTRODUCTION

Güneydogum Dernegi operating in Ankara conducted a workshop entitled “Problems of Refugees and Their Future” on 12 May 2016 with the support and hosting of Ankara Commodity Exchange. Representatives from ministries and public institutions, particularly AFAD and Directorate General of Migration Management, academicians from various universities, local authorities from the provinces hosting refugees, representatives from research centers and NGOs, and representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) attended the workshop. Problems of refugees, particularly Syrians, in Turkey and solution suggestions were discussed in the workshop. Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) contributed to the workshop by paving the way for discussions and conducting a session in which political, socio-economic reasons of refugee issue, its outcomes and policy suggestions were discussed. This study covers notes from this session.

At the first presentation of ORSAM session, Professor Dr. Harun Ozturkler presented a report entitled “Syrian Refugees in Turkey, An Economic Review”. This report includes what is meant by refugee economy, what is included in the scope of refugee economy, what are the refugees’ decisions regarding immigration, socio-political impacts of different decision processes on host countries, and economic policy suggestions. In the second presentation ORSAM researcher Oytun Orhan presented a report entitled “Situation of Syrians in Neighboring Countries”. Orhan pointed out that Syrian refugee issue is the biggest flow of migration in the world, and unlike other migrant flows, it affects the Middle East and North Africa as well as Europe and many other countries in the world. Orhan analyzed Syrian refugee issue in the context of particularly neighboring 4 countries Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq and within the framework of population density, relative strength of resources and expenses which are made for refugees in these countries, current services, solutions and policy suggestions. The last report of ORSAM session was presented by Assist Prof. Başak Yavcan from TOBB University. In her report entitled “Syrian Refugees and Importance of Integration”, Yavcan emphasized that it should be accepted that some Syrian refugees will stay permanently

in Turkey and other countries where they are present because of the prolonging Syrian crisis. Yavcan stated that the acceptance of permanence of refugees is necessary for planning processes of social, political and economic integration.

This session, in which different aspects of Syrian refugee issue was addressed, is also published as a report with the thought that it could be useful for relevant experts. We wish you a pleasant reading.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şaban Kardaş
President of ORSAM

Syrian Immigrants in Turkey: An Economic Assessment

Harun Öztürkler

We can classify the aspects of migration issue as economic, political and legal. Although there is a considerably large literature on the political and legal aspects of the migration, literature on migration economics is still in need for theoretical and applied contributions. Beyond the simple empirical studies in which basic figures are put forth and mostly based on observation, economic aspect of the issue has not been sufficiently analyzed within a theoretical context yet. In Turkey, field works conducted by Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) make significant contributions for the examination of the economic aspect of the issue on an empirical base in both mathematical and descriptive ways. In one of these field works, we calculated economic and social effects in nine provinces of Turkey with mass migrant population using a mathematical/statistical model called as synthetic modelling approach.

Here, the aim is to simply define the migration economics at a conceptual level. Economics literature mostly distinguishes migration of individuals and families and in some cases migration of a group of people from mass migration. This difference is quite important. In the first case, migrating individuals and families make their plans beforehand due to economic, social and, political causes. This migration process may take place in legal and/or illegal ways. However, in most cases, individuals and families – we are at a crucial point here- can move their physical, financial and human capitals to the country they migrate and use them to meet their daily needs there. In case of mass migration, as the one

we face today, people participating in migration perform this action without planning and in most cases, without consent and even by force. Therefore, they can bring a small portion of their physical and financial capitals together with themselves and cannot benefit from their human capitals to meet their daily needs in the country they migrate due to legal and economic reasons. Another important observation in this context is that in almost every case the countries from which the migrations are originated are the less developed countries compared to the countries which allow immigrants according to the economic and social development scales. It means the immigrants are far behind the countries they migrate in terms of both physical, financial and human capitals. Two sine-quo-non consequences of the afore mentioned economic features of immigrants with regard to economic analysis are the effects of it on the economies of both the countries from which migration is originated and the countries which host immigrants. As stated above, the fact that the countries from which migration is originated are generally the less developed countries means the economic activities in these countries are performed in more labor-intensive sectors. Additionally, that the production is done in business units which are small and dependent on one another in sectoral aspect is one of the economic features of these countries. Thus, migration from these countries pose serious problems with regards to themselves. Basic characteristics of the countries which allow immigrants is that they are generally more developed, the production process in these countries is more capital-intensive and have a production structure demanding a labor force with advanced human capital. That's why, due to these economic features of the host countries, economic integration of immigrants requires dynamic transformations in labor markets of these countries. A long integration process causes a dramatic impairment in physical, financial and most importantly human capitals of immigrants. Demographic features of immigrants are quite important especially when the capital formation process is considered. Financing of the fundamental expenditures for immigrants to sustain their lives and economic, social and political integration of them is another field of economic analysis. In case of Turkey, this cost is approximately 20 billion dollar as of today since April in 2011. When it is considered

that gross domestic product (GDP) of Turkey is about 800 billion dollars, 20 billion dollar implies that Turkey has spent approximately 2.5% of its GDP for the refugees.

Furthermore, theoretical economic rational suggests that the refugee influxes trigger new refugee influxes. That is a crucial point for Turkey; that is, our open door policy and socio-economic and political conditions provided in Turkey have encouraged further immigration to Turkey. In case of Turkey, in spite of the language challenge, similarities in terms of religion and culture are also important factors leading to migration. Another basic issue that is discussed within the framework of literature regarding to refugee economics is about how they affect the economic growth policies and development paths of the host countries. This question is sometimes interpreted as “are refugees an affluence or a burden?”. As discussed above, to answer this question requires a long term dynamic analysis as to both demographic, economic, social and political characteristics of refugees and host countries and also contributions and approaches of the other countries and international institutions. Another important reason for a long term and dynamic analysis is the fact that all kind of activities, economic and social projects and programs regarding the refugees imply that we change national resource allocation, that is, we transfer those resources from alternative uses to refugee related uses. Especially the demands for water, sewerage system, energy, sheltering, health and education, and the regional distribution of these demands at different densities significantly affect the distribution of national and local resources. Kilis province of Turkey will be a good example at this point. Infrastructure in Kilis was built for 90 thousand residents. Now Kilis hosts 120 thousand immigrants and we need to build extra infrastructure to meet immigrants’ needs. However, if all or most of the immigrants return to their country, national resources used for building this extra infrastructure will be wasted. That’s why we need a dynamic analysis. Refugee influxes is also a large part of the labor economics literature, which is an important sub-research area of economics literature. One reason that labor economics gives a large room for the refugee issue is that refugee influxes cause an increase in total supply in labor market and also leads to a substantial change in the quality composition of labor

force. It may be expected that the increase in total labor supply causes a downward pressure on wages. Also, the low wages may promote new investments, and as a result, an increase in labor demand may occur as well. This process also leads marginalized local workers to pass to high-paying jobs, to improve their skills via vocational training, and finally to an increase in their wellbeing. However, government should undertake specific vocational course projects and allocate certain amount of fund for these projects to accomplish afore mentioned tasks. Of course, the issue is the share of funds that can be allocated from the budget. Another short-term economic issue is the effects of refugees on especially food and housing prices, and through this, on purchasing powers of low and fixed income groups and their economic welfares. The indicators such as the numbers of refugees in host countries, how long they stay there, their legal status, and how many of them will go back to their countries constitute basic issues of economic analysis, especially the long-term economic analysis. The change in governments of host countries cause a change in approaches of these countries to refugees and thus economic and social policies related to refugees also change. Existence of such an expectation at micro economic level has an effect on behaviors of enterprisers and investors and especially on their behaviors towards employment of refugees and their work trainings.

Syrian Refugees and the Importance of Integration

Başak Yavcan

Thanks to all participants and the organizers for bringing us together here. I would like to start my presentation with some figures: Currently approximately 250 million people are on the move in the world. In this regard, distinction between forced migration and voluntary migration mentioned by Mr. Öztürkler is very important. People who fled from war are being presented as economic refugees by the media and politicians in the Western countries. In this sense, the approach of “These people are economic refugees, there is no need for policies towards them and they are illegal refugees because they don’t have the documents” has been created. However, it can be seen that this distinction is wrong when we look at their motivation for migration. The definition of a refugee is very clear according to the United Nations Geneva Convention, and almost all countries hosting refugees are giving Syrians a refugee status even without evaluation on a case by case basis. Therefore, making this distinction is very important. There are 65 million people who are subject to forced migration, and this number is increasing with Syrian crisis. (Also migration flow from places like Yemen and Eritrea should not be ignored). We are facing a wave of forced migration with Syrian crisis and cost of this forced migration is mostly burdened by neighboring countries. When we look at all refugee mobility in the world, we can see a similar trend. 80% of refugees are hosted by other developing countries around. In this sense, although it is demonstrated as if refugees were burden to Western countries, in fact, the neighboring countries shoulder the burden. The situation is same for Syrian refugee crisis. Lebanon,

Jordan and Turkey are the countries which host most Syrian refugees. In Lebanon 1 out of 4 people is refugee, in Turkey 1 out of 27 people is refugee, and in Jordan 1 out of 10 people is refugee. On the other hand, in Europe, where there is the saying “refugees are occupying us” and where xenophobic far-right parties are rising, only one out of 580 people is refugee.

It should be noted that in 2015, hundreds of thousands refugees have gone to Europe both because of not very promising living conditions in neighboring countries or countries they live and because of their expectations regarding the countries such as Germany and Sweden where they plan to go. In this process legal asylum, ie. immigration applications to the UNHCR mostly remain inconclusive. European countries have accepted very small numbers of refugees. Those which accept refugees require quite high professional/education criteria and demand, for example, “30 IT technician this year”, which is against the nature of asylum and humanitarian aid as they choose refugees according to specific criteria. This situation has paved the way for illegal and risky passes. During the year 2015 Syrian refugees fleeing war travelled in dangerous ways, mostly through human traffickers. While hundred of thousands of refugees arrived in Europe, about 3,000 refugees including little children like Aylan Kurdi died during these travels.

These developments have brought the issue to the top of the agenda in Europe both because of humanitarian reasons and rapid increase in arriving refugees. Subsequently both discussions regarding the issue and attempts for cooperation have increased. The process of cooperation between the EU and Turkey has been the result of this situation. In this sense, when we look at the motivations of the EU, it can be seen that they do not want refugees to come to their countries and they are searching ways to avoid refugees. For this reason, we can see that the issue is being securitized and that there is an emphasis on issues like increasing border security. However, when we look at the numbers, conditions of refugees in countries of asylum, their security and their approach to local people and institutions, it can be seen that the best way to prevent refugees to migrate Europe is improving the conditions of neighboring countries

where the refugees are already staying, in other words, eliminating the driving factors which lead refugees to the secondary migration.

This situation, which is called 'European Refugee Crisis' by European Union countries and was brought to the agenda last year, has been on the agenda of neighboring countries of Syria for more than four years. Because all of the host countries at the beginning thought that the crisis would end in a short period of time and the refugees would return their home countries, the policies towards the refugees have mostly focused on protection, ie. shelter and food- oriented humanitarian aid that improves the current situation. In Turkey, 26 camps, which have good education, health and shelter facilities, have been built for refugees. However, it should be pointed out that only 10% of Syrian refugees live in the camps, and 90% of them try to survive in the cities with their own means. This an inevitable result as the crisis has lasted too long. Living in a camp for 5 years neither sociologically nor economically beneficial. After a point, most of the refugees want to make a life for themselves and be integrated to the society by earning money and supporting their families.

Another reason for this transition from temporary situation to permanent one is extension of crisis and decrease in expectations of returning to home country. When we look at the similar crisis in the world, we can see that refugees' motivation for returning decreases as the crisis prolongs, and even the crisis ends maximum 50% of the refugees return their countries. Thus, we should accept that we have population of at least 1,5 million Syrians and we need to develop policies towards this issue. We can see that this kind of an understanding is prevalent on discourse and actions of policy makers for the past 1-2 years and they have begun to develop lasting policies.

At this point, issue of adaptation can be analyzed through education, economic and social integration. Although integration has different branches, such as social and economic integration, these different branches are linked to each other and sometimes they follow up each other. For example, enrollment in education and integration to labor force are intertwined issues. When we analyze enrollment in education we can see that there is a high fertility rate and young population. In fact, about

125 Syrians are born each day in Turkey and this shows that developing policies towards this young population has become an urgency.

It is estimated that currently there are approximately 800,000 school-age Syrian refugee in Turkey. When we look at the rate of accessing to education in the camps, we can see that refugee children have access to schools at the rate of 90-100%. However, as it was mentioned before this rate is valid for only 10% of refugees. When we look at the cities where 90% of refugees are living only 30% of refugees have access to schools by 2015. A progress was made in 2015 by establishing more than 300 temporary education centers in Turkey. By establishing schools for refugees schooling rate has been increased to 50%. Currently, 250,000-300,000 students have access to schools and 78,000 of these students study in Turkish school with Turkish schoolmates. Schooling is very significant in terms of protecting a lost generation from threats and from being exploited as child labor. However, another important point regarding schooling is about social adaptation. It is difficult to make progress as Syrians study in Syrian schools and Turks study in Turkish schools. Under these circumstances it seems difficult for these two groups to socialize with each other, know each other, eliminate their stereotypes about each other and increase their trust in each other. The ministry of national education has made an important statement regarding this issue and expressed that from now on, first grade Syrian students will be encouraged to register to the public schooling system so that they can study together with the Turkish students.

The last adaptation criteria I want to mention is about social integration, relations between groups and reciprocal perceptions. It should be pointed out that racist attacks which have been prevalent in Europe have not occur in Turkey since the beginning of the crisis, and there has been relations based on toleration. However, this situation does not mean that there is a great pro-refugee approach in Turkey as it is expressed in Zaytung jokingly which states that people from Yozgat are welcoming refugees with ceremonies. In fact, this is all about showing tolerance, in other words, people are discontented with the presence of Syrian refugees and their increasing number, but they do not speak this out. According to surveys,

about 80% of Turkish people are against refugees' gaining economic, social and political rights, and avoid communicating with refugees, which indicates a huge social distance. There is a high-level resistance against being neighbours, co-workers, relatives with refugees. One of the major reasons of this situation is probably that the refugee image in our minds is made up of beggars on the streets, and we are unaware of success stories of many Syrians who have learnt Turkish, studied in our universities, established companies and contributed economy. On the other hand, there are important findings regarding Syrian refugees' approach to local people. The report no. 200 published by ORSAM puts forth the findings of a survey for Turkish Red Crescent community center in Şanlıurfa. According to this study which I conducted, while Syrian refugees' trust in Turkish institutions is very high, finding a job and discrimination at work is one of the major areas of complaints after food and shelter issues. With the new regulations regarding employment of foreigners we are hoping that integration to the labor market will be easier. However, the current data shows that the numbers are below the mark. This is the end of my presentation, thank you for your participation. I'm hoping that we can discuss the issue thoroughly in question and answer session.

The Status of Syrian Refugees in Four Neighboring Countries of Syria

Oytun Orhan

First of all, I would like to express my thanks to both Güneydoğum Association and Ankara Commodity Exchange for assembling this vital and well-timed meeting. I hope this meeting will contribute to solution of Syrian refugees' problems. With the intent of forming a basis for the following discussions, I am going to try to explain the status of Syrian refugees in four neighboring countries of Syria comparatively in my speech.

I want to start my speech by giving basic information about the Syrian refugees. It is seen that Turkey is the most burden-sharing country about the Syrian refugee issue. According to official figures, as of mid-2016s, it is seen that there are 2 million 749 thousand Syrian refugees living in Turkey. However, it is also known that there are other Syrians who are unauthorized located in Turkey for different reasons and with them, it is believed that the number has exceeded 3 million. Moreover, in the recent period, Turkey has become a country that hosts the largest refugee population in the world. Lebanon is ranked as the second in terms of Syrian refugee number. There are 1 million 55 thousand registered refugees in Lebanon. There are 639 thousand Syrian refugees in Jordan and about 246 thousand in Iraq. The population-based rates could be more important than these numbers because this makes more sense in terms of bearing that population within the context of those countries' capacities. When we look at the population in proportion, Turkey hosts a Syrian around 3.5% of its total population. Although Lebanon hosts small numbers of Syrian than Turkey, the count emerges around 23-

24% of Lebanon's population which is extremely striking in terms of understanding the pressure created by Syrians on Lebanon. The ratio of Syrians for general population is 9.7% in Jordan and 0.71% in Iraq. Considering Syrians in-camp and out-camp rates in four countries, we see that they are similar.

Especially Jordan's and Lebanon's refugee experiences were decisive in determining Syrian refugee policies. From past to the present, these two countries have become target countries of refugee floods because of their instability in Middle East. Even before Syria crisis, both countries had been hosting refugees intensely, due to the instability in Iraq and particularly in Palestine. With the concern of that Syrians would not return their countries just like Palestinians, camps were not built by the government in Lebanon. All Syrians in Lebanon live outside the camp except very small camps established by civil society. The concern which they would be permanent if the camps were built is dominating. There are two major camps and apart from that there are minor camps. Approximately 20% of Syrians in Jordan live in camps and the rest of them live in cities and mostly in border towns. About 91% of Syrians in Turkey live in cities. Out of nearly 3 million, only 246 thousand of Syrians live in camps.

The distinction draws attention when the refugee policies of four neighboring countries of Syria are looked at. Specifically, it is possible to distinguish Turkey from other 3 countries. From the beginning of the Syria crisis, Iraq did not carry on open-door policy and did not accept Syrians to its territory. On the contrary, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon accepted Syrians by carrying out open-door policy. However, it is witnessed that except for Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon also placed serious limitations in open-door policy with the deepening of the crisis and the reaching of the number at improbable dimensions. In recent times, it is seen that Syrian refugees are not accepted to the territory by Lebanon and Jordan apart from humanitarian emergency. While the border crossing to these countries was approximately one-two thousand in the past, this count has dropped to two-digit numbers now. Furthermore, there is a decline in the total Syrian number because of the checkouts in Jordan and Leba-

non. Some parts of Syrians in Jordan and Lebanon have started to pour in Europe through Turkey. Although some limitations are placed for security issues in Turkey, the open-door policy continues to implement. The number of Syrians in Turkey keeps rising or remains stable at least. When we look at Iraq, there is a special case. It is possible to define Syria migration for Iraq as immigration of Kurdish-rooted population in Syria to Iraqi Kurdistan. Federal government of Iraq did not accept Syrians to its country, by implementing a separate policy, only Kurdistan Region accepted people who migrated from Kurdish regions of Syria. Nearly 250 thousand Syrians live in Iraqi Kurdistan and it is seen that Syrians in Iraqi Kurdistan became a burden for this location because of the accumulation. When we look at the tendency of increase/decrease in Syrian number, there is still an increase in Turkey. Especially with the increase of the conflict in North Syria front, Aleppo and its circle, conflict in Idlib and its circle, it is seen that the immigration of Syria to Turkey is continuing. Although there has been a migration from Turkey or through Turkey, the number has been increasing due to new check-ins.

From the point of expenses for Syrians, Turkey is in a particular place among 4 countries. According to officials, Turkey has spent approximately 10 billion dollars for Syrians in total. Moreover, according to President Erdoğan's statement, when civil society's expenses are also considered, the count reaches to 20 billion dollars. Only 5% of this number is absorbed by international institutions and foreign charities. Thus, Turkey has absorbed the large part of the expense locally. When we look at Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan, we see that these countries have been trying to absorb the expenses of Syrians largely with the subsidies of international institutions, Gulf countries and various countries. Notwithstanding, it is stated in the negotiations which we made with the officials in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, grants were insufficient and they needed more. Although the number of Syrian in Jordan is officially 600 thousand, officials of Jordan state the actual number is 1.3 million. They also state that even before Syria crisis there were nearly 700 thousand Syrians in Jordan for labor and because of the fact that they were unable to return their homeland after civil war, they should be accepted as a refugee. However United Nations do not accept these as a refugee and

grants have been made for the 600 thousand fraction. Thus it is indicated that Syrian refugees put heavy pressure on Jordan.

Finally, when we look at the impacts of Syrians to neighboring countries of Syria in terms of social, political, security and economic issues, we generally see similar effects. Depending on each country's state capacity, institutional capacity, social structure and demographic structure, the response to the Syrian refugee crisis and how it is affected is differential. Especially, the problem of Syrian integration in Jordan and Lebanon is completely seen as a taboo and is accepted on no account. These countries have a consideration that Syrians should be returned as soon as possible. However, there is a popular belief in Turkey that Syrians are accepted as permanently or the half of them will stay in Turkey at least. Policies are identified based on this truth. Depending on this, it is seen that there is a change in relevant organizations for Syrians in Turkey. The thought of "How to make Syrians adapt with the society?" is much stronger in Turkey. Work permit is important in terms of economic integration. Providing training for Syrian children is a very important step for social adaptation. Recent numbers show that nearly 400-500 thousand children out of 600-700 thousand Syrian children will be provided training by the end of the year. Thus, it is possible to say that the thought of Turkey's "How to turn refugee crisis into an opportunity and how to synchronize Syria and Turkey?" is prevalent.