



SOCIAL MENTALITY AND RESEARCHER THINKERS JOURNAL

Open Access Refereed E-Journal & Refereed & Indexed

ISSN: 2630-631X



Social Sciences Indexed

www.smartofjournal.com / editorsmartjournal@gmail.com

January 2019

Article Arrival Date: 02.12.2018 Published Date:18.01.2019 Vol 5 / Issue 15 / pp:156-163

MIGRANT LABOR IN THE GRIP OF THE CHOICE BETWEEN NATIONALISM AND CAPITAL STOCK: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN TOKAT¹

MİLLİYETÇİLİK VE SERMAYE BİRİKİMİ TERCİHİ KISKACINDA GÖÇMEN EMEĞİ: TOKAT İLİNDE NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Assistant Professor Gülçin TAŞKIRAN

Altınbaş University, School of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Department of Social Work, gulcin.taskiran@altinbas.edu.tr, İstanbul/ TURKEY

Research Assistant Taylan ŞENGÜL

Gaziosmanpaşa University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Public Administration, taylan.sengul@gop.edu.tr, Tokat/TURKEY

ABSTRACT

In this study, 12 employers employing Syrians and 6 employers not employing Syrians in service industry in Tokat were interviewed. By these interviews, the reasons of employers who oscillated between social reactions and capital stock to employ or not employ Syrians were tried to be revealed. Some of the employers expressed that although they reacted against Syrian refugees due to nationalist feelings, they employed Syrian refugees ‘compulsorily’ due to the high costs of Turkish workers. On the other hand, employers who got reactions from customers due to nationalist pressures expressed that they had to choose not to employ Syrians or employed them in closed areas such as kitchen and storage so that they could not interact with customers.

Keywords: Migration, Syrian refugees, nationalism.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Tokat işgücü piyasasında hizmet sektöründe işyeri sahibi, Suriyeli işçi çalıştıran 12 ve çalıştırmayan 6 işverenle yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelerle bir yandan toplumsal tepkiler bir yandan sermaye birikimi tercihi arasında kalan işverenlerin Suriyeli işçi çalıştırma ve çalıştırmama nedenleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Suriyeli sığınmacı akımına başta milliyetçi gerekçelerle tepki gösterebilir de, Türkiyeli işçilerin maliyetinin daha yüksek olmasından yakılarak ‘mecburen’ Suriyeli işçi çalıştırdıkları; müşterilerden milliyetçi baskılarla tepki alan işverenlerin ise çalıştırmama seçeneğini seçmek durumunda kaldıkları ya da müşteriyle iletişim kurulmayacak şekilde mutfak, depo gibi kapalı alanlarla Suriyeli işçi çalıştırdıkları görülmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Göç, Suriyeli sığınmacılar, milliyetçilik.

1. DEBATES ON MIGRATION, NATIONALISM AND HEGEMONY

As stated by UN Refugee Agency based on 2016 data, 65.6 million people were forced from home and 22.5 million people were migrants while 2.8 million people were refugees (<http://www.unhcr.org/tr/>). The globalization of “migration” and the intensification of the humanitarian crisis have also revealed various problems for both migrants and “residents”. The existence of a system that goes beyond a number of factors that nurture the situation rather than conciliate the crisis where the effects of national or international initiatives are gradually decreasing shows that at least the adaptation problems in the context of migration will continue for a while².

One of the biggest problems faced by migrants, who are categorized in official status as refugees and asylum-seekers, is that they are pushed to be the “other”. Another factor that deepens the humanitarian crisis is the spread of otherization in the developed/developing countries/economies with the capacity to produce solutions. Numerous examples including the journalist (!) who tripped a refugee while

¹ This study was presented orally in 7th International Congress on Current Debates in Social Sciences- İstanbul on 19-21 Nisan 2018.

² One of the points that Murat Erdoğan especially drew attention in relation to Syrian refugees is the question of the migration to become permanent. See <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2018/saglik/prof-dr-murat-erdogan-suriyeli-multeciler-konusunda-atilmasi-gereken-6-adim-var-2158949/>

recording a refugee group trying to cross from the Serbian border to Hungary in September 2015 and Trump, who promised to stop migrants and migration by building a wall in the Mexican-US border during his campaign have showed the hatred that the migrants face and their otherization repeatedly. Therefore, the issue beyond the legal/technical regulations regarding the status or adaptation of migrants is due to an ethical-political and economic collapse on a global scale.

This collapse, described by Appadurai as the “democracy fatigue”, is most fundamentally reflected by the rejection of liberal democracies worldwide and by the rise of populist-authoritarian governments. In this context, the fact that the relationship between the leader and the followers is based on the intersection between the strategy of the leader and the followers’ “fears, wounds, and rage” rather than a ground including charisma, propaganda, and ideology as it used to reinforced the emergence of administrators who are xenophobic, patriarchal, and authoritarian. At the same time, as the “national economy” claim of today's nation states lost its reality, the emphasis of “cultural sovereignty” (Appadurai, 2017: 17-19) of populist-authoritarian leaders has emerged as a socio-economic reason for the expansion of discrimination against migrants.

The fundamentalist attitude of the emphasis on cultural sovereignty towards moral values can also lead to the identification of migrants as “ethnic minorities”, but may also open the way to perceiving them as a threat to economic well-being, public order, and national identity. Therefore, the phenomenon of ethnic minority because of migration involves both the definition of the “other” of the sovereign groups and the definition of “self” of minority group containing a collective consciousness, which means that it is produced as a “product of people who are afraid of themselves” (Castles and Miller, 2008: 45).

The conflict between us and the other that emerged in the phenomenon of migration is not, of course, a problem specific to globalization, where it is only accelerated by various aspects of migration. As Schmitt emphasizes, the friend-enemy dichotomy (2012: 49- 58), which defines the potential of the politics and the state as a political unity to struggle against the “other” as a foreigner for its existence¹, is at the root of the systematization of the distinction faced by immigrants. Thus, the association between the nation states’ reactions against the globalization and migration as a form of state and the “democracy fatigue” that was mentioned previously becomes clear.

As Castles and Miller draw attention, the nation states, which derive their legitimacy from the claim that they reflect the aims of their citizens, approve the existence of a cultural consensus that allows for an agreement on the interests or values of people, and accept the validity of the democratic system for the continuity of this consensus. However, the cultural difference of migrants and the problem of harmony lead the nation state to a dead end because the acquisition of citizenship by newcomers damages the cultural homogeneity while the unachieved harmony increases the division due to the increase of inequalities and conflict (Castles and Miller, 2008: 55). Therefore, against the foreigners which is defined by friend-enemy dichotomy as a constituent element of the political, “who” the “friend” is very decisive in shaping the formation and dimension of the humanitarian crisis faced by the migrants in general. When considered within the context of the current study, this dichotomy is seen to be more effective than the state policies in various problems faced by Syrians in Turkey. The Syrians are protected by the discourse of “our Syrian brothers and sisters” of the administration but “fellowship” discourse does not prevent Syrians from poverty, precariousness, and helplessness in daily life. So, how these two situations occur simultaneously? It is necessary to emphasize the economic-political aspect of the system that operates despite the distance between the experiences of the otherness of the Syrians and the discourses and policies of the state. The nation state's ethical-political content was replaced by political Islamism, and the concept of the people, which emerged as a new category of friends, became a discourse that allowed fraternity with the Syrians, while on the other hand it became a kind of keyword that met the requirements of neoliberal economics and

¹ At this point, it should be noted that Schmitt does not define what is related with the state as the “political” and even rejects that definition.

politics. It can be stated that the structure or the superstructure that emerged within this context or the “historical block” as Gramsci expressed corresponds to the neoliberal hegemony and it lies in the foundation of adaptation problems and discrimination that the Syrians faced in Turkey.

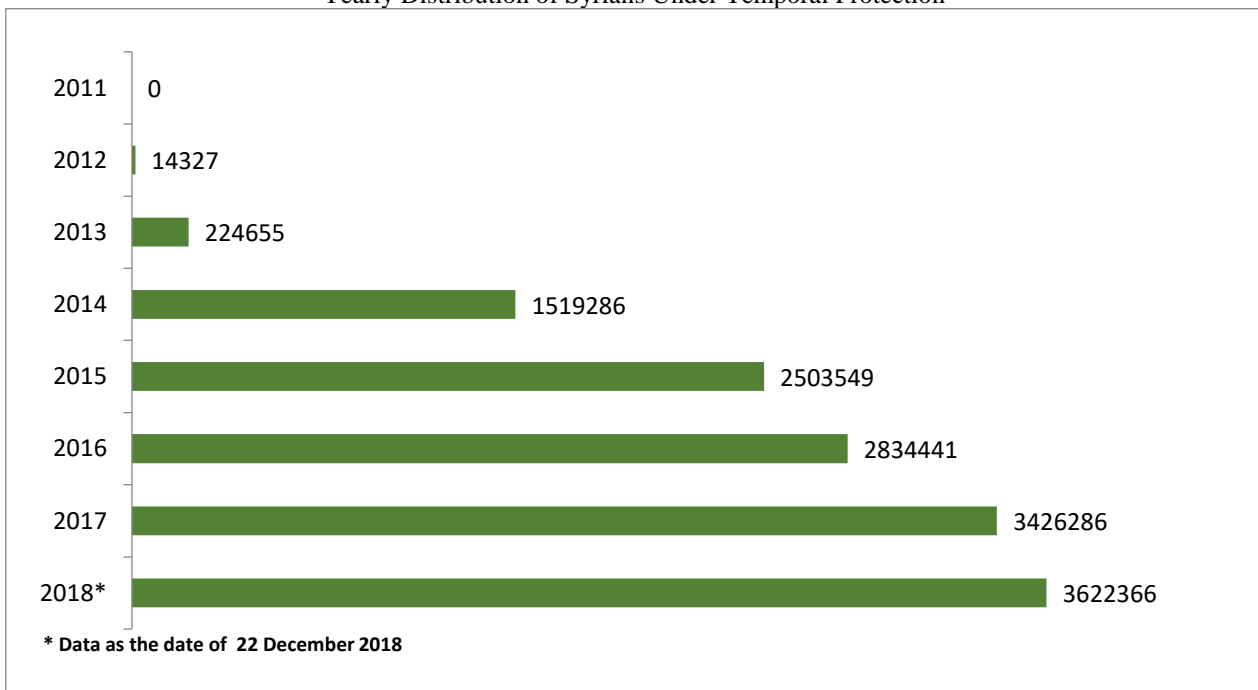
“Common sense”, which is called by Gramsci as “widespread conception of life and morals” (Gramsci, 2011: 212-213) is used to create the consent for the construction of neoliberal hegemony as emphasized by Harvey. The basis of the consent involves not the “good sense” that is sourced from the critical mind but the “common sense” where the real problems are hidden by the “cultural prejudices”. Within this context, non-governmental organizations such as media, companies, and universities are used as a tool for the (neoliberal) freedom, and tradition and culture are benefited as another ideological source. For this reason, in order to provide the material basis of consent, some countries have activated the common sense through daily practices in addition to using force (Harvey, 2015: 47-49).

Considering the Turkish context, as a popular and populist concept at the intersection of nationalist-conservative politics, the position of the “people” in the name of the establishment and operation of the neoliberal hegemony is precisely because of the fact that it addresses the common sense. Thus, the people, which is the political and economic building block of the nation state, is channeled into a kind of production and capital relation through nationalism. Therefore, it is seen that the line of distinction between the national and non-national enters this relationship through cultural characteristics.

2. SYRIANS IN TURKISH LABOR MARKET

According to International Settlement Law Article 3/3, “those who take refuge in Turkey due to a necessity without the intention of permanent settlement” are defined as refugee. Based on the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management data, there were 3.106.932 Syrian refugees in Turkey on 27 July 2017. Of these Syrian refugees, 228.299 were staying at temporary refugee centers while 3.318.895 were living in 81 different cities. Of the Syrians who mostly lived in Şanlıurfa, İstanbul, Hatay, and Gaziantep, 10% were in camps while 90% were living in cities (Göç İdaresi, 2017). According to Directorate of Migration data of 22 December 2018, the number of Syrians under temporary protection was 3.622.366 (Göç İdaresi, 2018).

Yearly Distribution of Syrians Under Temporal Protection



Source: Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management

The number of Syrian refugees coming to Turkey rapidly increased to approximately 3.622.000 from 2011 to December 2018.

Several important steps have been taken regarding the Syrian refugees over time. These are taking effect of the Law no. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection as of 2014; arrangements relating to the rights of Syrians in the fields of education, health, and employment introduced by the Regulation on Temporary Protection; and possibility of granting work permit to those without residence permit (ILO, 2016: 2).

In a report entitled as Population Influx from Syria to Turkey: Life in Turkey as a Syrian Guest and published by Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) in 2014, it was expressed that 34.8% of Syrians in Turkey were primary school graduates while 8.7% had an education level of university or higher. Of the Syrians living out of the camps, nearly half had no occupation while 80% of males and 10% of females had an occupation.

The regulation on Work Permit to Foreigners under Temporary Protection went in effect on 15 January 2016, which made it possible for Syrian refugees to be granted work permit. By this regulation, an employment quota has been put in place to ensure that the number of people under temporary protection cannot exceed 10% of the number of Turkish citizens working in the workplace. However, it is stated that the employment quota may not be applied if the employer prove that he/she cannot find a Turkish citizen who can do the same job as the foreigner in the four-week period prior to the date of the application for work permit.

According to ILO report, major issues related to the integration of Syrians into the labor market are identified as unregistered work, low-skilled employment, unfair competition, withdrawal of wages, and the spread of child labor (ILO, 2016: 3).

Syrian workers face many problems in the labor market. The main problem areas are Turkish language education need, diploma equivalence and proficiency problem, vocational mapping requirement, implementation-related problems, dissemination of vocational training, child labor, and problems in access to education (ILO, 2016: 5).

In terms of working conditions, Syrian refugees are exposed to low wages, long working hours, poor housing conditions, unpaid wages, and occupational safety problems (Kaygısız, 2017: 16- 18).

In addition to the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkish labor market, workers reactions to lower-wage earning Syrian refugees and employers' preferences whether to employ or not to employ Syrians are other problem areas. In this study, which focuses on the contradiction between employers' choice of Syrian workers based on the need for capital stock and their nationalist feelings which postpone their choice to employ them, their reasons regarding the nationalist feelings and capital stock were discussed based on the data obtained through the deep interviews with employers who employ and do not employ Syrian workers in Tokat labor market.

3. FIELD STUDY

3.1. The Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the employers' reasons regarding their nationalist feelings and capital stock choices in Tokat labor market and to discuss this issue through the findings of interviews with employers employing and not employing Syrian workers.

3.2. The Method and Scope of the Study

As a data collection technique of qualitative method, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were carried out. Within this scope, 12 employers employing Syrians and 6 employers not employing Syrians in service industry in Tokat were interviewed between January 2018 and February 2018. A voice recorder was used during the interviews, and the recordings were transcribed. The interviewees

involved 2 female employers, one of whom employed Syrians, and 16 male employers, 11 of whom employed Syrian workers. The mean age of interviewees was 42.

3.3. Findings

3.3.1. Syrian Workers in Tokat Labor Market

Syrian workers whose numbers are increasing in Tokat labor market are intensively working in the kitchen of service sector, in the constructions, and in seasonal agricultural works. There is no standard on their working hours. Although most of the interviewees used the expression that “unfortunately, due to high taxes, we are employed them unregistered”, their employees are not able to benefit from the legal minimum working conditions in Tokat.

3.3.2. Employers’ Reasons to Employ Syrian Workers: The Need of Capital Stock

In general, Syrian workers’ low wages is the leading reason of employers to prefer them. A 40-year-old woman explained that she employed Syrian workers due to the low costs as:

“There are people who just want to have somewhere to sleep and something to eat without getting paid. It does not become a problem when they work without being seen. However, the costumers does not perceive it positively to see them in service.”

A gross market owner, who explained that he employs Syrian workers because of the economic crisis, complains about the high tax costs and expresses the situation as following:

“How can we employ someone costing two thousands TL in this crisis? We are constantly cutting costs to avoid money loss.”

A 40-year-old male restaurant owner notes that unregistered workers are already widespread in Turkey and expresses that the state should tolerate them for employing unregistered workers by stating the following sentences:

“Now, I want to ask you something. How many people in Turkey are insured? Then, why do you give Syrians work permit to employ them at insured jobs? The half of Turkey already have uninsured jobs. Now that you opened the gates for millions of people. Then, think about us and do not intervene by asking them to be insured or something else.”

A 44-year-old male roadside restaurant owner expresses that the reason of employing Syrian workers is totally economical by stating:

«We also reacted in the beginning. How the state would look after them when there are already many poor people? However, Turkish Lira lost its value much. The shops are shutting down one after another. You cannot survive if you do not employ low-paid workers. Perhaps, Syrians are a chance for Turkey in this crisis. Most of my friends survive by employing Syrians. We go bankrupt if we do not consider the costs.»

Although the need of capital stock is considered the focus of capital, it is an important issue for employers who are not in a position to react to “Syrian labor” to focus on meeting the need of capital stock instead of humanitarian consideration.

3.3.3. Employers’ Reasons to Employ Syrian Workers: Submission

As in all forms of unequal relations where there is no balance of power, “submission” is a decisive factor in employer-employee relations. The submission of a worker can be considered as positive for the employer but a “compulsory condition” for the worker, such as accepting what the employer wants without objection, tolerating bad working conditions, and not reacting to low wages or unregistered work.

A 39-year-old male appliance store owner explains this situation as:

“In fact, when someone has no place to go, she/he does all the work you want and does not resist the employer. Now, if you treat a local man like you treat the Syrians, he/she will quit the job.»

A 45-year-old male roadside restaurant owner indicates the reason of employing Syrian workers in terms of submission as:

“Should not we give dislocated people a job? If I employed a local person, I would have went bankrupt by now. They have mouths but they do not talk. They do whatever job you give. They are poor fellows. I wish I could have paid more to them but I barely run this place.”

3.3.4. Employers’ Reasons of not Employing Syrian Workers: Social Reactions or Nationalism

Since the arrival of the Syrians to Turkey, social reactions have been one of the most discussed issues. Some news that was frequently presented in press and social media and most of which involved false information (e.g. Syrians have a regular financial aid from the state, they enter the university without an examination, etc.) increased these reactions.

A 45-year-old male roadside restaurant owner who employed Syrian workers expressed his customers’ reactions as:

“The customers do not want Syrians in the restaurant. They are partially right. Everyone is unemployed. When the Syrians came, they started to work for 300-400 TL in many places.”

A 48-year-old male restaurant owner who do not employ Syrian workers (who has a great amount of rent income at the same time) emphasizes the national aspect of it and explains the situation as:

“It is partly caused by the state. If the state did not give that many rights to Syrians when it opened the gates for them, the people would not react. We, as a people, already have many troubles. Unemployment rate is high. External powers are pushing on us. 15 July was a test. Among these issues, the health issues of Syrians, their work permits ... people have right to react.”

It is remarkable that the employers not employing Syrian workers are those who had large capital and did not have financial worries. A 52-year-old male and the distributor of an appliance brand states his reactions as:

“Our own people are already poor. When the country is in such a situation – 15 July Process – see what we are dealing with. While our own people die because of the war, we are feeding those who escaped the war.”

The employers especially who do not have financial worries demonstrate more nationalist attitudes and they note that they have a chance not to employ Syrians but employers with low profit employ Syrian workers because they have to.

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study aiming to determine the employers’ reasons regarding their nationalist feelings and capital stock choices and to discuss this issue through the findings of interviews with employers employing and not employing Syrian workers, interviews were carried out with 12 employers who employed unregistered Syrian workers in Tokat labor market and 6 employers who refused to employ Syrians. According to interview findings, it was observed that the reason of employers who did not employ Syrian workers was their “nationalist” attitudes. While some employers indicated that they did not employ Syrian workers because of their nationalist attitudes, some stated that they were unable to employ Syrian workers due to customers’ reactions and did not want to lose customers. It was

observed that these employers had a large capital and their need of capital stock was lower than the employers who employed Syrian workers.

On the other hand, it was determined that the reasons of employers to employ Syrian workers were that the Syrians were easier to be employed with low and unregistered payments and they worked harder than the local people due to their submission. All of the 12 employers expressed that they had small-scale companies and they had to employ Syrian workers due to economic reasons. In order to reduce the social reaction and prevent the customer lose, they employed them at places where they did not interact with the customers such as kitchen and stores.

Dominant capital stock motivation of the capital that is observed throughout the history can get ahead of the nationalism. It cannot be denied that employers with strong capital power were able to behave in a more nationalist way but their avoidance of social reactions had an economic reason. In this situation, it is possible to express that employers who did not employ Syrian workers did not take the risk of losing customers. Employers with lower capital indicated that the state should not monitor the working conditions of Syrians and unregistered work was normal in this area. They expressed that they had to shut down their companies if they did not employ low-paid workers. Moreover, they had the opinion that employing Syrians without being monitored would contribute to economy in the economic crisis that Turkey has been experiencing.

At this point, although it is a phenomenon that contradicts neoliberal theory according to Harvey, a certain kind of nationalism is vital for the continuity of the neoliberal state. People are functional in neoliberal market and competition conditions because creating “temporal winners and losers” becomes effective in the search for a national pride and spirit (Harvey, 2015: 92-93). Therefore, “nationalist common sense” created by nationalism in neoliberal conditions through the “friend-enemy” line facilitates the adaptation to neoliberal market conditions.

On the other hand, it is necessary to indicate that the relationship between the globally increasing nationalist discourse and liberalism is not one-sided but reciprocal. In some situations, nationalist policies are consistent with neoliberal values while these values depend on certain nationalist policies in some situations. Neoliberal nationalism is especially sourced from the will to restrict the forms of social democratic state interventions. On the other hand, a neoliberal nationalism can react against the international regulatory institutions to implement the market policies within the country and can support financial and regulatory policies at a national level. From this perspective, there is a relationship in which nationalism supports the neoliberal values (Harmes, 2012: 71-72). This reciprocal relationship between nationalism and neoliberalism gained power during the AKP period in Turkey, which problematized the 1990’s coalition of right-left wings and created a novel nationalist discourse through this problem as emphasized by Öztan. This novel “reasonable nationalism” adapted into market conditions and reduced the tension with conservative and religious mass. The reasonable nationalism developed through discourses such as “desire to serve the people” shapes the nationalism based on neoliberal needs (Öztan 2014: 82-86). In short, the reproduction and reuse of nationalism in accordance with the neoliberal values, which is available to create a friend-enemy dichotomy between the migrants and the citizens, have become a requirement for the creation of common sense and the continuity of hegemony and solutions regarding this need have been found.

The increasing number of Syrian refugees in Turkey since 2011 caused some changes in Turkish labor markets. It became more important to support Syrians to provide for themselves and have a job that is consistent with human dignity. With the Regulation on Work Permit to Foreigners under Temporary Protection, an important step was taken for Syrians under temporary protection to have legal jobs but giving work permit to Syrians exposed to unregistered working conditions caused some social reactions. The reactions regarding the local people’s jobs are taken by the Syrians, which were developed based on the nationalist feelings, have an effect on employers’ choices about employing Syrian workers.

REFERENCES

- AFAD (2014). Suriye'den Türkiye'ye Nüfus Hareketleri: Kardeş Topraklarında Misafirlik, Ankara.
- Appadurai, Arjun (2017), Demokrasi Yorgunluğu, Heinrich Geiselberger, Büyük Gerileme (s. 17-29), 2nd. Edition, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları
- Castles, Stephen ve Miller, J. Mark (2008), Göçler Çağı, (Bülent Uğur Bal, İbrahim Akbulut, Translator), İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü (2017), Türkiye Göç Raporu, Yayın No: 40, Ankara Gramsci, Antonio (2011), Hapishane Defterleri-I, Joseph A. Buttigieg (ed.), (Ekrem Ekici, Translator), İstanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları.
- Harmes, Adam (2012), The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism, Review of International Political Economy, 19 (1), 59-86, (Accessed: 17.03.2018), Scopus.
- Harvey, David (2015), Neoliberalizmin Kısa Tarihi, (Aylin Onacak, Translator), 2nd. Edition, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık.
- ILO (2016), Suriyeli İşçi, İşveren Ve Girişimcilerin İşgücü Piyasasında Karşılaştıkları Sorunlar Ve Çözüm Önerileri Çalıştayı Genel Değerlendirme, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--europe/--ro-geneva/--ilo-ankara/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_533055.pdf (Accessed: 12.02.2018)
- Kaygısız, İ. (2017), Suriyeli Mültecilerin Türkiye İşgücü Piyasasına Etkileri, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Öztañ, Güven Gürkan (2014), The Struggle for Hegemony Between Turkish Nationalisms in the Neoliberal Era, Turkey Reframed: Constituting Neoliberal Hegemony: Constituting Neoliberal Hegemony (75-91), İsmet Akça, Ahmet Bekmen, Barış Alp Özden (ed.), London: Pluto Press.
- Schmitt, Carl (2012), Siyasal Kavramı, (Ece Göztepe, Translator) 2nd. Edition, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.