



Turkey and the Weaponization of Syrian Refugees

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By

Arthur Jennequin
Middle East Department

INTRODUCTION

“Hey EU, wake up! I say it again; if you try to frame our operation there as an invasion, our task is simple: we will open the doors and send 3.6 million migrants to you.”¹ These were the words pronounced by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the 10th of October, 2019, as a response to European criticisms of the Turkish offensive in northern Syria.

¹ “Offensive Turquie En Syrie: Erdogan Menace l’Europe «d’envoyer Des Millions de Migrants»,” *Le Soir*, October 10, 2019, <https://www.lesoir.be/252787/article/2019-10-10/offensive-turque-en-syrie-erdogan-menace-leurope-envoyer-des-millions-de?fbclid=IwAR0zHBQpyhvNCTfyud4ocL246RBMzVmTmhXKTifN3fXEzEdOGZXNdX6MU3A>.

AT A GLANCE

This research argues that Turkey behaves as a provocateur which manipulates the Syrian refugee crisis in order to obtain some leverage in its bargaining with the European Union. After considering the theoretical framework of Coercive Engineered Migration, this paper engages in a criticism of the EU-Turkey 2015-2016 migration deal, presented as the direct consequence of a successful attempt of weaponizing refugees.

The research demonstrates how such a strategy is likely to become a pattern which will challenge the European Union. Afterwards, it will examine the concrete methods employed by the Turkish state to blackmail the EU. It will finally suggest some key points to counter the weaponization of refugees.

The head of state appeared as accustomed to the use of such a strong rhetoric against his European partners. On the 5th of September, he already threatened to “open the gates” if the international support for the establishment of a refugee “safe zone” fails to materialize.² On the 7th of November, Erdoğan reiterated his threat: “Whether we receive support or not, we will continue to aid the guests we are hosting. But if this doesn’t work out, then we will have to open the doors”.³ Such aggressive statements illustrate the extent to which the Turkish regime instrumentalizes the Syrian refugee crisis to its own benefits. The ability of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) to exploit the Syrian migration has reached the point where the refugee discourse has become an instrumental component of the party’s identity and strategy.⁴

On the domestic level, the management of the refugee crisis provided the AKP with a convenient discursive tool that has allowed Erdoğan’s administration to claim moral superiority by emphasizing the human feature of an open-door policy, based on generosity and brotherhood.⁵ Within this perspective, the Syrian population displacement has materialized as an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. On one hand, it has permitted the AKP to marginalize the opposition and to flatter its own conservative electorate, framing its “refugee-friendly” policy as a moral obligation derived from the Islamic tradition.⁶ On the other hand, the hosting of Syrian refugees in the Turkish territory has contributed to fuel neo-Ottoman imaginaries by asserting a continuity between Turkey and its past history as an empire, legitimizing Ankara’s

repeated interferences in the Syrian conflict, where :

“What we call Syria and Iraq today was not different from Mardin, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep or Hatay for us in the last century. To see those who live in Syria and Iraq as different from our citizens would shame us in the eyes of our fathers and martyrs.”⁷

Furthermore, Erdoğan insisted: “Turkey is larger than Turkey. We cannot be imprisoned in 780,000 square kilometers. The borders of our hearts are elsewhere. Our brothers in Mosul, Kirkuk, Skopje, may be outside our natural boundaries, but they are within the borders of our hearts, at the epicenter of our hearts”.⁸

However, the instrumentalization of the refugee crisis has far broader implications than a mere self-congratulatory discourse based on the revitalization of the Ottoman imaginaries. Indeed, Erdoğan’s administration has turned its Syrian “guests” into weapons brandished against the European Union. The weaponization of refugees has become a fundamental feature in the definition of the interactions between Turkey and Europe. In this paper, I will tackle this last central issue by analyzing the phenomenon of Coercive Engineered Migration (CEM), the very process that allowed Ankara to reap considerable benefits from his bargaining with the European Union through the instrumentalization of the Syrian refugee crisis.⁹

The aim of such an approach is to provide a critical understanding of the weaponization of refugees through the concrete case study of

² “Turkey’s Erdogan Threatens to ‘open the Gates’ for Migrants to Europe,” *Euronews*, September 5, 2019, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/09/05/turkey-s-erdogan-threatens-to-open-the-gates-for-migrants-to-europe>.

³ “Erdogan Says Turkey Will Let Refugees into Europe If EU Does Not Support It,” *Reuters*, November 7, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-turkey-migrants/erdogan-says-turkey-will-let-refugees-into-europe-if-eu-does-not-support-it-idUSKBN1XH26G>.

⁴ R. Karakaya Polat, “Religious Solidarity, Historical Mission and Moral Heart’ as Larger Than Actual Borders,” *Greek Greece Report*, Superiority: Construction of External and Internal ‘Others’ in AKP’s November 10, 2016, Discourses on Syrian Refugees in Turkey,” *Critical Discourse Studies*, <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2016/11/10/turkish-president-defines-turkeys-borders-of-the-heart-as-larger-than-actual-borders/>, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2016.1500925>.

⁵ Karakaya Polat, 3; Recep Gulmez, “The Securitization of the Syrian” *Journal of Gatekeeper: Power and Interdependence in the Migration Nexus International Migration and Integration*, December 11, 2018, between the EU and Turkey,” *The International Spectator Italian Journal of International Affairs* 51, no. 4 (2016), 59. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0637-2>.

⁶ Karakaya Polat, 6.

⁷ Erdoğan addressing the Parliament, 01.10.2015 in Karakaya Polat, 8.

⁸ Mary Harris, “Turkish President Defines Turkey’s ‘Borders of the Heart’ as Larger Than Actual Borders,” *Greek Greece Report*, Superiority: Construction of External and Internal ‘Others’ in AKP’s November 10, 2016, Discourses on Syrian Refugees in Turkey,” *Critical Discourse Studies*, <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2016/11/10/turkish-president-defines-turkeys-borders-of-the-heart-as-larger-than-actual-borders/>, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2016.1500925>.

⁹ Asli Okyay and Jonathan Zaragoza-Cristiani, “The Leverage of the Refugee Crisis Through Political Party Discourses,” *Journal of Gatekeeper: Power and Interdependence in the Migration Nexus International Migration and Integration*, December 11, 2018, between the EU and Turkey,” *The International Spectator Italian Journal of International Affairs* 51, no. 4 (2016), 59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2016.1235403>.

Turkey. For this purpose, I will consider the theoretical framework of CEM. Then, I will examine the implications of the EU-Turkey deal on migration negotiated in 2015-2016 and question Ankara's reliability in the management of the Syrian refugee crisis. Afterwards, I will explain how Turkey is concretely weaponizing the Syrian refugees. Finally, I shall conclude by suggesting some key points to counter the strategic use of weaponized refugees.

CEM: A BACKGROUND IN SHAPING TURKEY'S POLICY

Though Coercive Engineered Migration might appear as an unusual object of study, such phenomenon occurs frequently. Since the establishment of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the precise moment when migration became a political issue, Greenhill observed at least one attempt of this strategy per year.¹⁰ The numerous threats made by Erdoğan to weaponize refugees against Europe, illustrate the very concrete risk of recidivism associated with CEM.

Because the topic of migration has emerged as an instrumental challenge for the European Union, analyzing this process is of critical importance. Coercive Engineered Migration is very likely to materialize as a new pattern that would redefine Europe's relations with its Mediterranean neighbors.¹¹ Indeed, the CEM strategy used by Turkey might inspire other political actors.

The process of CEM may be defined as the instrumentalization of a migratory movement by a challenger in order to obtain concessions from a target. CEM aims at inducing changes in the behavior of the target through the manipulation of a refugee "crisis" as a tool of persuasion.¹² The

potential success of such an exercise relies on two main features. On the one hand, the coercer needs to fruitfully narrow the potential targets' set of policy responses to a movement of population, while on the other hand, they must affect the target's perception of such a movement.¹³ The purpose of this maneuver is to portray the perspective of a deal with the challenger as a far more appealing potentiality for the target than facing the consequences of a migration.

In most of the cases, the favorite targets of CEM seem to be advanced liberal democracies. This might be explained by the higher vocal commitment of such regimes to the international norms that grant protection status to refugees.¹⁴ This is a fertile ground, susceptible to be exploited by more illegitimate states, endowed with a lower reputation, and which may turn refugees to a leverage in the bargaining with their more liberal counterparts. Weaponizing refugees appears as a convenient tactic for a weak state, because it allows it to overcome its pariah status and to gain the position of a legitimate and necessary interlocutor.¹⁵ Moreover, the heterogeneity among the population tends to make these democratic societies even more attractive targets, especially in a context in which migrations materialize as a cleavage.¹⁶

Because the aim of the coercer is to depict refugees as an existential threat, emphasizing the "chaotic" and "harmful" features of migration, the use of the weaponized refugees' metaphor may seem appropriate. Nevertheless, due to its dehumanizing nature, such a figure of speech must be apprehended through a critical stance. From the outset, the metaphor endows the refugees with a particularly negative connotation.¹⁷ This narrative confines migration

¹⁰ Kelly Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*, Ithaca and London (cornell university press, 2010); Kelly Greenhill, "Migration as a Weapon in Theory and in Practice," *Military Review*, 2016.

¹¹ Okay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, 64.

¹² Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*.116.

¹³ Greenhill, "Migration as a Weapon in Theory and in Practice." 130.

¹⁴ Greenhill, p 135, refer to footnote 10.

¹⁵ Kelly Greenhill, "Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War," *Civil Wars* 20 (2008).

¹⁶ Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*. 130.

¹⁷ Lev Marder, "Refugees Are Not Weapons: The 'Weapons of Mass Migration' Metaphor and Its Implications," *Oxford University Press, International Studies Review*, 20 (2018), 577. <https://doi.org/doi:>

to the restricted area of security and overshadows the human right aspects derived from the condition of refugee.¹⁸ Therefore, while the analysis of a weaponized lexicon is a of crucial importance to understand the maneuver of the coercers, it must be put aside when considering the way to “disarm” the political actors engaged in the manipulation of refugees as weapons. An appropriate response to CEM should, by no means, be constrained within the limited frame of security in order to dispossess the coercer of his leverage.

It is within this theoretical framework than one should analyze the EU-Turkey deal on the migration crisis, negotiated in 2015-2016, as well as its significant consequences. Such a deal might be considered as the result of a fruitful attempt of CEM since it has officially endorsed the role of Turkey as Europe’s gatekeeper.¹⁹ Therefore, the deal has increased the bargaining power of the Turkish government and has paved the way for further uses of the weaponized refugee’s strategy. This agreement reinforced Erdoğan’s room of maneuver by endowing Turkey with a hybrid status; not quite an insider, nor an outsider on the European political scene. As a matter of fact, the Turkish president demonstrated how the very survival of the Schengen area relies on his own willingness to cooperate with a European Union increasingly marked by a fear psychosis of migration.²⁰ One must acknowledge the extent to which Erdoğan’s administration capitalizes on the rise of populist leaders and the spreading of far-right ideologies across Europe to reap benefits of considerable magnitude in exchange for managing the crisis. The Turkish government has been able to take advantage of the situation, with benefits for Turkish citizens such as the lifting of visa requirement, the promise of re-energization of the accession process,²¹ and the allocation of €6 billion in aid to alleviate the burden derived from the welcoming of the Syrian refugees.²² In return for this, Turkey has committed itself to prevent

migration flows to the EU and agreed that “All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey.”²³

Nevertheless, the agreement has broader implications. Through this deal, the European Council implicitly recognizes Turkey as a safe country.²⁴ The definition of this specific status relies on four main criteria; a safe country must not produce its own refugees, it must be a country where refugees may apply for asylum, it must be a place devoid of persecutions, tortures and degrading treatments, and it must respect the principle of non-refoulement.²⁵ Yet, the Turkish state fails to meet every one of those necessary requirements. Firstly, the country produces its own refugees; as in 2014, 11,202 asylum seekers originated from Turkey.²⁶ Secondly, while Turkey has ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, it has imposed a very specific geographical restriction on the notion of refugee; only European asylum seekers may be granted the status of refugee and may obtain the consequent rights.²⁷

As the AKP’s approach toward the Syrian crisis is based on generosity and Islamic principles, rather than finding its basis in human rights and international norms, it paves the way for legal uncertainty and arbitrary practices.²⁸ For these reasons, the members of the AKP carefully avoid the term “refugee” and label the migrants as “guests”, underlining the temporary nature of the Syrian presence within the national territory.²⁹ Thirdly, the 2016 attempted coup has contributed to the rise of an atmosphere of police and judicial impunity in Turkey and has provided a fertile ground for the persecution of

10.1093/isr/vix055.

¹⁸ Marder. 581.

¹⁹ Okayay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, 51.

²⁰ Okayay and Zaragoza-Cristiani. 54.

²¹ Okayay and Zaragoza-Cristiani. 56.

²² Greenhill, “Migration as a Weapon in Theory and in Practice.”

²³ Okayay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, 60.

²⁴ Emanuella Roman, Theodore Baird, and Talia Radcliffe, “Why Turkey Is Not a ‘Safe Country’” (Statewatch, February 2016). 18.

²⁵ Roman, Baird, and Radcliffe. 10.

²⁶ Roman, Baird, and Radcliffe. 15.

²⁷ D. Simsek and S. Koser Akcapar, “The Politics of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: A Question of Inclusion and Exclusion through Citizenship,” n.d. 177.

²⁸ Giray Sadik and Hilal Zorba, “Humanitarian Diplomacy for Syrian Refugees and Turkey-EU Relations,” *GÖÇ ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ THE JOURNAL OF MIGRATION STUDIES* 3, no. 2 (2017); Simsek and Koser Akcapar, “The Politics of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: A Question of Inclusion and Exclusion through Citizenship.” 28.

²⁹ Karakaya Polat, 3.

the opposition and minorities.³⁰ Finally, through the arbitrary deportation of Syrian refugees into war zones, Turkey has violated the principle of non-refoulement on multiple occasions.³¹ Thus, one may question the legality of the deal, especially regarding the international norms which grant protection to asylum seekers, as the agreement certainly lowers the standards required to determine the notion of a safe country.³² These considerations may also generate some doubts regarding Turkey's reliability as a suitable partner in the management of a refugee crisis because its reluctance to comply with humanitarian law is tangible.

Additionally, the agreement may raise another kind of concerns because it spells the end of the European monopoly over a putative claim of moral superiority based on a pseudo unwavering commitment to human rights and international laws.³³ By externalizing the Syrian refugee crisis on Turkish soil, the European Union demonstrated its failure to fulfil its moral obligations to its own professed values. Worse still, the European leaders provided Erdoğan with a shield to deviate their criticisms on Turkey's poor human rights record. Indeed, the "open-door" policy towards Syrian refugees might appear as an antidote against the international concerns over the deteriorating situation of democracy in Turkey. As Said Yüce, a member of the Turkish Parliament affiliated to the AKP, stated: "In the past, they used to come to Turkey to investigate "human rights". Now, Turkey is the best with regard to human rights."³⁴ The Turkish president himself has proven to be very efficient in the exposure of European hypocrisy and the EU's failure to meet its own standards:

"Today there are around two million siblings within our borders who fled from Syria and Iraq. Two million here, 130,000 in the whole of

Europe. Where is your commitment to human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Wasn't it you who were protecting the oppressed? What happened to the European Union acquis? Where are you?"³⁵

It seems noteworthy to point out that, while deliberately refraining from using a human right-based lexicon to refer to its own migration policy, Ankara abundantly mobilizes such a jargon in order to humiliate and delegitimize the European Union.³⁶ By doing so, the Turkish regime confiscates European rhetorical weapons and uses it to backfire on its counterparts.³⁷ Thus, through the ratification of the migration deal, the European Union has clearly prioritized its obsession to counter irregular migration over "its consistency with its self-perceived image as a normative power".³⁸ Because the deal has provided Erdoğan with the convenient role of Europe's gatekeeper, one may be certain that he will regularly exploit his position to threaten his European homologues to "open the doors", in order to counter any criticisms addressed against his regime, as he did when several states condemned his offensive in Syria. In this perspective, the deal has considerably damaged the credibility and legitimacy of the European Union.

CONFRONTING TURKEY AND ITS POST-2016 REFUGEE POLICIES

In order to properly apprehend Erdoğan's bargaining skills, a necessary step to understand how the Turkish state has been able to weaponize the Syrian refugees, one must deal with the context in which the migration agreement was negotiated in 2015 and ratified in 2016. In this period, the vicissitudes of Turkish

³⁰ Roman, Baird, and Radcliffe, "Why Turkey Is Not a 'Safe Country.'" 16.

³¹ Simsek and Koser Akcapar, 182.

³² Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, 63; Simsek and Koser Akcapar, 63.

³³ Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, 59.

³⁴ Said Yuce, Member of Parliament for Isparta, Member of Sub-commission on Refugee Rights, 08.02.2016 in Karakaya Polat, 10.

³⁵ Erdoğan, 18.02.2015 in Karakaya Polat, 10.

³⁶ Karakaya Polat, 10.

³⁷ Karakaya Polat, 10.

³⁸ Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, 63.

politics put the

AKP in a very precarious position.³⁹ While the 2015 legislative elections spelled the end of the AKP's absolute majority in the parliament, the advent of a considerable rift occurred within the party and challenged Erdoğan's authority.⁴⁰ This breach was initiated in 2014 and was further confirmed in 2016 when Ahmet Davutoğlu, considered in many regards as the AKP's grey eminence, as he was the architect of Turkey's foreign policy, offered his resignation. The former Prime Minister justified his decision as a denunciation of President Erdoğan's arrogation of his own prerogatives as the head of the government, such as the appointment and dismissal of ministerial positions.

Davutoğlu voiced his opinions against the president's tangible violation of the Turkish Constitution. As a matter of fact, the presidential system was not yet legally approved. In this perspective, Erdoğan's rule over Turkey from 2014 to 2018 may be qualified as unconstitutional. Not to mention the 2016 attempted coup, these considerations illustrate how the Turkish administration found itself impaired while negotiating with the EU. Moreover, this period corresponds to the advent of the authoritative trend that has profoundly marked Turkey's political landscape until this day. This context, which has witnessed Turkey's reach of a breaking point in meeting the Copenhagen criteria, required for the accession process to the EU, did not prevent the European leaders signing the migration deal with a state, in which democratic structure has been sorely lacking.⁴¹ The way in which Erdoğan has "managed to reap considerable benefits under unfavorable terms" is highly "indicative of EU's low leverage".⁴²

It appears as a further manifestation of European inconsistency in guarantying the respect of democracy and human rights. In this regard, the migration deal critically exemplifies the

incompetence of European leaders, who have sacrificed human decency and legal responsibilities for the sake of xenophobia and hysterical obsession over migration. Additionally, one may argue that Turkey's use of the CEM strategy was conditional to this specific context because it destabilized Erdoğan's position, making him desperate to extract significant concessions from the EU in order to regain and confront his status as the regime's strong man. As Greenhill pointed out, the weaponization of refugees is rarely a strategy of the first resort and is the prerogative of weak political actors.⁴³

Hitherto, my research has demonstrated how the successful instrumentalization of the Syrian refugee crisis by the Turkish regime relies less on Erdoğan's qualities as a negotiator and more on European low leverage and ineptitude. However, this consideration should not overshadow the set of methods employed by Turkey. Apprehending such tactics appears as a critical matter to understand how Ankara has weaponized the Syrian refugees so far, and how it continues to do so. The first technique is what Greenhill labels as "swamping capacity".⁴⁴ It is a way of affecting the ability of the target to address a migration crisis by actively increasing the flow of refugees. Nevertheless, this strategy entails considerable risks for the coercer because it may irritate the target and would, consequently, negatively impact the success of CEM. For this reason, the use of such a tactic by Erdoğan would restrict the desirable effects. Indeed, Turkish swamping capacity would concretely materialize as a deliberated negligence of Ankara to fulfil its obligations as Europe's gatekeeper, through the alleviation of its naval surveillance, rather than engaging in an active deportation of Syrian refugees on the European soil. This latter perspective would infuriate the EU so much that it would compromise Turkey's bargaining endeavor.

The second method is called "political agitating" and operates as the exploitation of the heterogeneity constitutive of European

³⁹ Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani.59.

⁴⁰ Suraj Sharma, "Référendum En Turquie: Ce Que Pensent Les Anciens Poids Lourds de l'AKP," *Middle East Eye*, January 29, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/reportages/referendum-en-turquie-ce-que-pensent-les-anciens-poids-lourds-de-lakp>.

⁴¹ Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, 58.

⁴² Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani.59.

⁴³ Greenhill, "Migration as a Weapon in Theory and in Practice." 123.

⁴⁴ Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*. 210.

democratic and liberal societies.⁴⁵ The recent rise of far-right leaders and xenophobic ideologies in Europe has not gone unnoticed by the Turkish government and provides it with a fertile ground for the use of CEM. As a matter of fact, migration has developed into a fundamental cleavage that divides the European Union in two camps defined through irreconcilable positions on refugees. Through CEM, Turkey provides the European states with a convenient solution; the externalizations of “the problem” in return for concessions that may seem, at first glance, more appealing than directly confronting the crisis. The success of this strategy is based on two pillars. Firstly, the cultivation of close relations with some European political actors able to generate a paralysis if their counterparts fail to comply with Turkish demands. It is, for instance, the case of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán who appears as an indefectible ally of the Turkish regime in the bargaining process with the EU. Secondly, the fruitful use of this method relies on the abundant use of a negative lexicon associated with migration in order to produce anxiety-inducing effects. The aim of such an exercise is to obliterate the humanitarian feature of migration, to circumscribe the refugees within a securitized constraint and to depict migrants solely as a burden for the hosting state.

Unfortunately, even the international institutions, which supposedly guarantee the protection of refugees as a vulnerable population, fail to address the refugee question within a coherent frame. Simultaneously with the premises of a critical deterioration of refugee protection that started in the nineties, the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has transformed the topic of asylum seeking as a securitized issue. This reversal has contributed to increase the complexity of establishing a sincere cooperation between policy makers on the migration issue. Within this perspective, the welcoming of refugees materializes as the object of a competition based on a zero-sum thinking. Such a perception has nurtured the double language of the democratic states, which in turn,

has provided weak political actors such as Turkey with the “refugee weapon”.⁴⁶

Eventually, the third strategy used by Turkey to weaponize the Syrian refugees may be described as “shaming”.⁴⁷ Its purpose is to inflict “hypocrisy cost”⁴⁸ through the exposure of a gap between the target’s ostensible and advertised commitment to the respect of human rights and the actor’s actual behavior.⁴⁹ The success of this method depends on the use of international norms to affect a behavioral change. Such a technique might be exemplified in the words of Atay Uslu, AKP member of the Turkish parliament:

“There is panic in Europe. Xenophobia is on the rise. There were 871 attacks against refugee houses in Germany only in the last year. Belgium, Netherlands is no different. Denmark passed a new law to confiscate their valuables. Britain puts a red bracelet to them. We don’t do any of these. We have legal, historical, conscientious responsibility. We manage this process in the best way.”⁵⁰

Through the enunciation of EU’s misdeeds against refugees, he effectively exposed Europe’s failure regarding its involvement in the field of human rights. Thereupon, most of the methods effectively used by Ankara to weaponize Syrian refugee take their roots in the accurate observation of EU’s cynical attitude toward human rights as well as its inconsistency in fulfilling its legally constrained role as a liberal protector of highly vulnerable populations.

⁴⁶ Anne Hammerstad, “UNHCR and the Securitization of Forced Migration,” in *Refugees in International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2010). 256.

⁴⁷ Kelly Greenhill and Joshua Busby, “Ain’t That a Shame? Hypocrisy, Punishment, and Weak Actor Influence in International Politics,” in *The Politics of Leverage in International Relations Name, Shame, and Sanction* (New York: Palgrave Studies in International Relations Series, 2015). 105-106.

⁴⁸ Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*. 132.

⁴⁹ Greenhill and Busby, “Ain’t That a Shame? Hypocrisy, Punishment, and Weak Actor Influence in International Politics.” 105-106.

⁵⁰ Atay Uslu, Member of Parliament for Antalya, Chair of the Sub-commission on Refugee Rights, 22.03.2016 in Karakaya Polat, 9.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, as the 2015-2016 EU-Turkey migration agreement exemplifies European weaknesses on migration issues, and as it materializes as a concrete exposure of the EU to further uses of Coercive Engineered Migration, strong stances must be adopted. A constructive solution to the weaponization of refugee should, by no means, be rooted in far-right fantasies and populist fairy tales. The appropriate answer is to be conditioned by a significant reversal of the apprehension of migration.

The question of the benefits of migration must be raised since it is instrumental for the EU to stay consistent with its legal obligations derived from the 1951 Refugee Convention and international humanitarian law. If Erdoğan has been able to seize the Syrian refugee crisis as an opportunity, the European Union should be capable of doing so, but in a manner compatible with its democratic principles as well as its role as a vocal defender of human rights. Otherwise, the externalization of the refugee issue will damage the EU's credibility and legitimacy.

Through the ratification of the migration deal, the EU has opened a Pandora's box which must be sealed forthwith. A considerable part of the success of the Coercive Engineered Migration strategy employed by Ankara relies on Erdoğan's disclosure of European contradictions. The EU must return the courtesy by positioning Erdoğan in front of his very own contradictions; he cannot send 3.6 million Syrian refugees to Europe and at the same time use them to concretize his "safe-zone" plan in northern Syria. The only adequate response to the weaponization of refugees is precisely to refuse to play the coercer's game through the careful observation and exploitation of its own inconsistency.

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AUTHOR

Arthur Jannequin
Middle East Department