

## SYRIAN “GUESTS” IN TURKEY: BETWEEN EXCLUSION AND ASSIMILATION<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The Syrian crisis made Turkey the country with the largest refugee population in the world. However, Syrian immigrants in Turkey are not granted refugee status and are called symbolically “guests”, enjoying “temporary protection status”. The economic, social and cultural issues related to the large number of Syrians triggered mixed, mostly negative reactions in Turkey, transforming the newcomers into an undesirable alterity and excluding them from the society. Yet, Erdoğan’s promise to grant Turkish citizenship to Syrian immigrants reminds us of the fate of the *Muhajirs*- Muslim immigrants from the Balkans, Caucasus, Russia and Middle East – who were assimilated into the Turkish culture a century ago. Given that Sunni Islam is one of the fundamental pillars of Turkish identity, shared by Turks and the great majority of the refugees, Syrian “guests” might become the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’s *Muhajirs*, providing that they overcome linguistic barriers and are assimilated into the labour market. The paper analyses the political and social implications of Syrians’ presence in Turkey.

**Keywords:** Tatars; Turks; Emigration; Dobrudja; Crimea; Turkey;

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