

Does social cohesion solve forced migration riddles? Troubled concepts and constrained practices in Turkey

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Abstract

Amid the epistemic divide about what social cohesion means as a foundational concept, the pursuit of social integration as a policy objective is more desirable than ever among policy makers. While scholarly debates seek to restore conceptual clarity for social cohesion and social integration separately, referring to them interchangeably in policy reports seems to go conveniently unnoticed across different migration contexts. This study seeks answers to the question: how does the concept of social cohesion manifest itself in forced migration contexts? It does so by first reviewing the state of the art on social cohesion-forced migration nexus to identify the recurring themes and substitute concepts in the literature. Secondly, based on an in-depth textual analysis of 327 scholarly articles and policy reports on the forcibly displaced theme in Turkey published between 2011 and 2018, this study presents a classification of conceptual frames on social cohesion in forced migration contexts as security threat-based, humanitarian emergency-driven, policy regime-oriented, and socio-interactional. One of the main findings is that the existing social cohesion models of the settlement countries do not explain what has been unfolding in Turkey in the post-2011 period with the mass influx of the forcibly displaced and ongoing conflict at its borders. The study concludes with a discussion on why integrating policy regime-oriented and socio-interactional approaches are more likely to advance both the quest for conceptual clarity around social cohesion and facilitate the design of actionable policies in protracted large-scale displacement contexts.

Keywords: forced migration, integration, protracted displacement, refugees, social cohesion, Turkey

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1. Introduction

The number of forcibly displaced persons increases by the minute across the globe, and the trend is for those forcibly displaced to remain away from their countries for longer.¹ Understanding how receiving countries respond to both challenges is compelling precisely because research on forced migration is often driven by the principles of humanitarianism, hence not necessarily social inclusion, and temporary solutions thereby avoiding coherent policy strategies aiming at social integration of displaced people within their borders. Research has shown that forced migration studies remain poorly connected to policy strategies and are conceptually detached from research in migration studies (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Erdal and Oeppen 2018). Despite the growing significance of exploring how social cohesion transforms in forced migration debates, there is no consensus around what constitutes social cohesion as a concept, and even less agreement on the implications of social cohesion as a policy target (de Berry and Roberts 2018).

This study aims to bridge the divide between studies on the concept of social cohesion and what transpires in forced migration contexts by (i) carrying out an overview of state of the art on social cohesion-forced migration nexus covering both conceptual elaborations and empirical assessments of various country cases and (ii) exploring the use of the term and conceptual frames on social cohesion within scholarly and policy debates taking place on the experience of Turkey as a critical case study in forced migration research. Turkey is currently hosting the largest number of forcibly displaced people (UNHCR 2018), with a protracted crisis at its border since 2011 and intensifying public debates on return options. The aim of this analysis is to assess alternative conceptualisations and possible policy pathways of social cohesion in a country with an experience in *massive* (large size of refugee population continuing to stay), *acute* (movement across borders intensified within the years 2014–15 leading to a crisis situation), and *protracted* (prolonged duration of stay in the receiving country) forced migration flows. While remaining within the humanitarian action paradigm in the efforts to extend international protection to the forcibly displaced, studies on Turkey have been circulating the concepts of ‘harmonization’, ‘social integration’, and ‘social cohesion’ in studies on migration. Accordingly, the analysis of the data from Turkey provides an advanced understanding of cases coping with multiple dynamics, such as maintaining humanitarian crisis management and border management, on the one hand, and responding to diverse and prolonged vulnerabilities of forcibly displaced people through the prism of social cohesion policy processes between temporariness and permanence, on the other.

The studies on the experience in Turkey could be viewed as presenting rich evidence from a complicated context of humanitarian actorness (Makdisi et al. 2018) that provides protection services or as a transit migration hub (Wissink, Düvell and van Eerdewijk 2013). Studying the work on the experience in Turkey also sheds light on complex responses to migration. This study recognises difficulties, accomplishments, and diversifying problems attributable to the conceptualisation and the practice of social cohesion as it manifests itself in Turkey. However, all these nuances make studying the prevalence and

¹<<https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>> accessed 20 March 2020. World Migration Report 2020, IOM Publications, Geneva, 2019, pp. 39–43.

salience of the concept in this case more appealing. The study accomplishes two tasks, which could be applied by scholars while studying forced migration contexts comparatively. First, it identifies clusters of themes to understand how the conceptualisation of social cohesion manifests itself in the scholarly literature based on the studies covering Turkey. Secondly, it sheds further light on the contestations around the concept of social cohesion while it engages with a complex situation of protracted large-scale displacement observed in the Turkish case.

The article is organised as follows: the first section critically reflects on different approaches in forced migration research in order to understand what constitutes social cohesion in forced migration contexts. The second section introduces Turkey, as a critical case to refine our understanding of social cohesion through comparing and contrasting scholarly and policy literature on the Turkish experience with large-scale displacement of the Syrian population in the period between 2011 and 2018. The conclusion discusses the challenges and opportunities of revisiting forced migration debates through the prism of social cohesion and finally offers directions for future research.

2. State of the art: what binds social cohesion to forced migration and why?

The purpose of this section is to explain where the concept of social cohesion stands in the literature on forced migration. To this end, the main debates on the subject of forced migration will be presented starting off with the definition of forced migration as a concept. Even though there is a growing literature, there is no uniform interpretation of what forced migration or forced migrants mean. Very often forcibly displaced people or forced migrants are used interchangeably with refugees, who represent a charged issue in the domestic politics of many countries. According to the legal definition established in the Geneva Convention of 1951, a refugee refers to someone who ‘owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it’ ([Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951](#): 14). Recent academic debates, however, go beyond the conventional legal definition of refugees as people fleeing *state persecution* by including the category of people who feel forced to leave their countries due to *state deprivation* or state failure, also known as survival migration ([Betts 2013](#)). Moreover, studies have shifted their focus to other contexts such as Asia to explore the ‘multiplicities of displacement experiences and mobilities’ ([Ho and Robinson 2018](#): 262)—which ‘can productively inform [a] wider conceptualisation of forced-migration research and refugee studies’ ([Lynn-Ee Ho and Robinson 2018](#): 262) not witnessed in the European context. Overall, the concept of forced migration is more comprehensive today in comparison with the initial conceptualisation of refugee, and serves as ‘a crucial analytical tool to understand the vulnerabilities, rights and needs of forced migrants, transcending the

status-based entitlement of refugee' (Zetter 2018: 38). Despite such efforts to account for the complexity of forced migration through new concepts, issues, and cases, 'there is in general a lack of understanding of the diversity and the range of experiences refugees bring with them' (Robila 2018: 10) to the different contexts they enter and become part of.

An analysis of how forced migration is governed reveals the following patterns concerning host states' responses when they receive forcibly displaced in masses: (i) address the basic needs of survival of the arriving populations, (ii) seek temporary solutions even in cases of prolonged stay, and (iii) engage in a policy debate on 'durable solutions', and even 'social integration' while refraining from implementing sustainable solutions for as long as it is possible. Policy makers uphold a preference for temporariness concerning their international protection responsibilities, and international organisations endorse such preferences through temporary relief efforts with short-term horizons. Consequently, prolonged humanitarian action indirectly undermines considering settlement and social integration among policy options in host states, and leads to 'suboptimal policy choices and to devising programs that could be unsatisfactory, or completely inadequate' (Otonelli and Torresi 2013: 791). One of the main puzzles in forced migration, then, is how to devise long-overdue *policy and institutional responses* that facilitate the adoption of long-term solutions in the receiving country to reduce vulnerability of the forcibly displaced peoples.

A review of the literature on forced migration with a lens on how the concept of social cohesion circulates reveals a complex research agenda. The current theoretical and empirical debates transgress beyond the confines of 'humanitarianism' through the two main analytical pathways. In the first case, forced migration constitutes a starting point for designing refugee-friendly or inclusive policies within the scope of an *integrationist approach* (Mulvey 2010; Smyth, Stewart and da Lomba 2010; Strang and Ager 2010; Valenta and Bunar 2010; Phillimore 2012; Eastmond 2013; Bakker, Cheung Sin and Phillimore 2016; Darling 2017; Baú 2018; Grzymala and Phillimore 2018; Careja 2019; Arnold et al. 2019). In the second case, scholars approach forced migration as an opportunity to conduct ethnographically informed research closer to refugee experiences on the ground, with a focus on issues such as social identity, well-being, and belonging (Colic-Peisker 2005; Spicer 2008; Naidoo 2009; Correa-Velez, Gifford and Barnett 2010; Hatoss 2012; Baak 2016; Hamburger et al. 2018; Scuzzarello and Carlson 2018; Hart 2019) or on issues of social capital and social networks (Lamba and Krahn 2003; McMichael and Manderson 2004; Potocky-Tripodi 2004; Beirens et al. 2007; Boateng 2010; Major et al. 2013; Elliott and Yusuf 2014; Bizri 2017; Hughes 2019), within the scope of a *social interactionist approach*.

While the former studies conduct research on policies, institutions, and practices that facilitate refugee integration and inclusion, the latter provides an exploration of social experiences during the journey towards and everyday life in receiving countries. Social cohesion is related to both approaches; yet, the term is either used (i) in a heuristic fashion as a middle ground/strategic choice between the ambitious project of integration and the undesirable phenomenon of social exclusion manifested in forms such as social connectedness (Hebbani, Colic-Peisker and Mackinnon 2017); or (ii) in a comprehensive fashion as a catch-all term to include various dimensions of refugee (re)settlement such as

‘belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy’ (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2015: 340). To say the least, social cohesion remains suspended in an ambiguous position between the integrationist and interactionist approaches. Despite recent surge in the literature on forced migration, social cohesion, both as a social pattern and a policy target, remains upon shaky theoretical and empirical foundations.

Social cohesion upholds a strong policy dimension though. In principle, social cohesion serves as a motivation for designing policies that aim to reduce societal maladies such as conflict, discrimination, tension, fragmentation, violence, and hostility among groups. Hence, the tendency has been to associate social cohesion with post-crisis situations, manifested through a set of measures utilised to remedy different forms of social disruption in the context of forced migration. Clearly, social cohesion entails some degree of responsiveness at the policy and institutional level (Ritzen 2000). The policy perspective is more often observed in studies that evaluate social cohesion as an ongoing process focusing on various pathways including strategies and practices that lead to the development of social cohesion over time particularly in countries such as Australia, Canada, or New Zealand (Spoonley et al. 2005; Hulse and Stone 2007). Despite current achievements to study social cohesion through the prism of policy, there is no agreement on concrete policy implications of social cohesion in forced migration contexts. As a result, in recent years ‘[h]ost governments are increasingly seeking advice . . . on how to target and design policy and operations for displaced persons’ (de Berry and Roberts 2018: 1). Policy perspectives on social cohesion attract even more attention in situations where the ‘shock of displacement is often associated with social disruption, tension, grievance, social fragmentation and economic upheaval’ (de Berry and Roberts 2018: 2).

The argument presented here is that the policy dimension of social cohesion overlaps with and is elucidated through the concept of *resilience*. Resilience is based on the assumption that ‘the communities can and should self-organise to deal with uncertainty’ (Welsh 2014: 20). When translated to forced migration research, this rationale empowers refugees to become the main responsible agents for how they adapt to a new environment (e.g. a community, institutions of a host state). Contrary to social cohesion, which is often defined in abstract terms, resilience-building measures are practical tools that can be used to cope with complexity and uncertainty through *adaptive strategies* that can change over time ranging from local integration in the receiving country to return to the country of origin; or through *alternative livelihoods programmes* that offer a wide range of options for self-reliance and development. Therefore, research on resilience can serve as a reference point to craft social cohesion by providing policies and practices that would mitigate the negative effects of decreasing or even withdrawing humanitarian assistance in protracted refugee situations. Considering the limited number of studies analysing the social cohesion–resilience nexus, the need for more scholarly dialogue between two bodies of work particularly in mass displacement contexts, which are becoming increasingly protracted and complex, is imminent.

Besides the policy dimension, social cohesion has a strong social dimension rooted in sociological and psychological disciplines. The prominence of the social and psychosocial approaches in forced migration research is on the rise due to their emphasis on the dynamics of settlement by ‘connecting forced migration with social relations, ideas, institutions and structures at various levels’ (Castles 2003: 22). Within this framework, social

cohesion represents a general *sense of togetherness* and *solidarity* (Demireva 2017) or a *sense of affection* and *fellow-feeling* as first used in the policy jargon of the UK (Cantle Report of the Community Cohesion Review Team 2001, cited in Fozdar 2012: 169). The nature of interactions associated with social cohesion is naturally less ambitious in terms of achievable outcomes primarily due to ongoing presence of tension, trauma, hostility, and often violence in post-conflict situations that have caused massive displacements. Lacking a clear definition, the social aspect of cohesion is either ignored entirely or exaggerated, particularly in cases where social cohesion is described as an imaginary project of national integration. For instance, social cohesion has been defined ‘as the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper’ (Stanley 2003: 5)—a conceptualisation that is too broad to have any practical value. This broad definition has been refined by introducing a situational understanding of social cohesion, which recognises cultural diversity and legitimises ‘a proliferation of voices and versions of national identity and the common good’ (Keddie 2014: 408). Even though it brings some conceptual clarification, this definition does not have clear practical implications for social cohesion processes on the ground.

Therefore, instead of envisioning cohesive societies as a whole, this study adopts a narrow definition of social cohesion manifested through inter-group interactions that can mitigate or resolve conflict in protracted refugee situations. The argument presented here sits well within the debates that emphasise the value of direct contact as a means of reducing out-group prejudice and threat perceptions particularly between immigrants and non-immigrants at the neighborhood level (McLaren 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008; Schlueter and Scheepers 2010; Hewstone 2015). In this context, the value of social cohesion as a social pattern stands in understanding how societies mitigate or resolve small-scale conflicts by maintaining a general atmosphere of diversity rather than projecting more demanding forms of societal interaction involving strategies of acculturation and identity-building. Another comparative advantage of inter-group contact as a method of interaction is its ability to trigger action at the community level (Paluck 2006), which can in turn serve as a drive for pro-active policy-making. Following this logic, more studies should focus on inter-group contact as a method to bolster social cohesion processes in forced migration contexts through pro-active policy-making.

To sum up, an overview of the most recent trends in the literature on forced migration shows that there is confusion about what actually comprises social cohesion. Social cohesion has an ambiguous position; yet, it has a strong social and policy character, which needs to be interpreted as a coherent whole through inter-disciplinary research rather than through separate research registers. Based on the preceding debates, an accurate definition of social cohesion needs to have a hybrid nature combining the social and policy aspects of the term—both minimally defined and less demanding in terms of transformations in the political, economic, and social spheres. The policy aspect of social cohesion can best be understood through those *actionable policies* that enhance resilience of vulnerable groups in the society, whereas the social aspect of social cohesion can best be understood through those *inter-group interactions* that mitigate and reduce tensions in a given society. The rest of the article represents an attempt to contribute to an improved understanding of social cohesion through a careful examination of the experience of forced

migration in the case of Turkey and the millions of forcibly displaced who have been residing in the country for more than eight years.

3. *Betwixt and between: navigating amidst security concerns and social cohesion ideals in Turkey*

This section traces how the concept of social cohesion itself transforms through a crisis-driven experience over time. Studying forced migration would have capitalised on classifying research themes around ‘asylum and refugees in the North, and humanitarian issues in the South’ (Castles 2010: 1570). However, these classifications are no longer neatly applicable, and the post-2011 experience of Turkey with forcibly displaced persons constitutes a striking example strongly emphasising the complexity of migration contexts. Hosting the world’s largest internationally displaced population in the millions comes with multiple puzzles. First, with mass influx of Syrians since 2011, Turkey has pursued humanitarian relief efforts in the framework of international protection. With protracted conflict and increasing numbers, however, while recognising the emergency perspective, the policies began to evolve towards inclusion of the forcibly displaced in mainstream policies mainly on education, health, and working life with all its challenges. Secondly, with geographical limitation to the Geneva Convention as stated in the Law on Foreigners and International Protection in Turkey (Article 61, LFIP 2013), Turkey can extend refugee status only to Europeans, and consequently, Syrians remain in temporary protection, while other nationalities remain in international protection. Therefore, Turkey continues to maintain the legal and institutional uncertainty between the temporariness and permanence of the displaced persons in the country. Thirdly, with the Syrian conflict at its borders, Turkey along with other international actors becomes involved in managing the conflict in a context of growing security concerns. Preceded by the ‘Euphrates Shield’ and the ‘Olive Branch’, the latest example is the ‘Peace Spring’ military operation with the intention of creating a ‘safe zone’ and a policy option of return.

Amidst the legal, institutional, and social paradox in the country around the forcibly displaced, the appeal of circulating social cohesion (and proxy terms) as the relevant concept to inform policies as well as practices is on the rise among scholars and policy makers. In legal terms, ‘harmonization’ (‘uyum’ in Turkish) is used as a substitute of social cohesion, in the LFIP¹:

The Directorate General may, to the extent that Turkey’s economic and financial capacity deems possible, plan for harmonization activities in order to facilitate mutual harmonization between foreigners, applicants and international protection beneficiaries and the society as well as to equip them with the knowledge and skills to be independently active in all areas of social life without the assistance of third persons in Turkey or in the country to which they are resettled or in their own country. For these purposes, the Directorate General may seek the suggestions and contributions of public institutions and agencies, local governments, non-governmental organisations, universities and international organisations. (Article 96, LFIP)

Based on the above definition, ‘harmonization’ refers to a process where ‘the migrant group can keep its cultural identity but live in “harmony” with the host society’ (Hoffmann and Samuk 2016: 10), which does not require any substantial cultural adaptation. The use of the term ‘harmonization’ in legal documents ‘reflects a very cautious approach to integration issues’ (İçduygu and Şimşek 2016: 62), without direct implications for policy processes and outcomes. When Turkey adopted the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR) in 2014,² the Syrians who arrived were granted formal access to all public services, while non-Syrians remained in the grey area of international protection. The EU–Turkey Refugee Deal signed in 2016 formally stipulates a critical gatekeeping role for Turkey at the southeastern corridor of Europe. Ironically, as part of the Deal, efforts to be performed within Facility for Refugees in Turkey paved the way for Turkey to ‘develop practical actions towards providing them [displaced people] with better settlement and integration opportunities’ (İçduygu and Şimşek 2016: 1). In other words, the EU–Turkey Refugee Deal epitomises the paradox of ‘gate-keeping’ internationally while moving from the short-term ‘guest’ towards permanent settlement and citizenship acquisition (İçduygu and Şimşek 2016: 6) of displaced people in Turkey.

Since 2016 the official texts published by the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM) have reflected the consistent use of the word ‘uyum/sosyal uyum’ (harmonisation–cohesion/social cohesion) replacing the previously common term ‘acil durum’ (emergency situation). The rhetorical shift away from emergency measures towards social cohesion processes was coupled with a renewed policy and institutional framework designed to address the challenges facing immigrants in general and the displaced population in more particular during their stay in Turkey. Several examples for the ensuing legal and institutional transformation are as follows: the clear shift of steering of international protection policies from Emergency and Disaster Management Directorate to DGMM Law on International Labour Force (2016), the establishment of the Department of Education for Migration and Emergency operating under the General Directorate of Life Long Learning in the Ministry of Education (2016), the establishment of the Department of Migration Health operating under the General Directorate of Public Health in the Ministry of Health (2017), and the inauguration of the Migration Policy Council under the Ministry of Interior (2018) in charge of developing policies and strategies in the area of refugee integration and social cohesion together with DGMM. The post-2016 gradual yet steady evolution of policies addressing the forcibly displaced in the direction of social cohesion promotion can be explained by (i) the lack of previous experience and weak institutional capacity to pursue policies around social cohesion until 2016 and (ii) the cautious choice of the government for incremental policy change towards social cohesion intended to prevent abrupt transformations that could lead further tension in the country in response to ever-increasing arrivals from Syria as well as other countries and a social backlash against all seeking refuge in Turkey.

While the popularity of the concept is detectable in policy rhetoric and policy documents, whether the concept itself or practices assigned to be representing its manifestations solve proliferating forced migration puzzles in the country remain unexplored. The rest of the study includes an in-depth textual analysis of the published policy documents and scholarly work on the Turkish experience with forced migration during 2011–18.

This study excludes mainstream media and social media sources from the analysis. The rationale for such selection is that there is a stark de-coupling between media debates and representations of the forcibly displaced persons in Turkey, on the one hand, and the ongoing transformation in the international protection policies in the country, on the other. By excluding print media and social media sources, and focusing on published policy documents and scholarly work, the study accomplishes the following methodologically: (i) surpasses the problem of presenting highly skewed and biased results towards heightened security concerns vis-à-vis displaced persons in Turkey, (ii) accurately captures where the substantive debates on social cohesion take place, (iii) collects data on the usage of the term social cohesion where it most frequently circulates, (iv) conducts a robust analysis on the frequency and salience of the use of the terms by the scholarly and policy literature, (v) identifies the transformation of the conceptualisation, and (vi) offers a cluster of themes to identify and classify the variety of conceptual frames through which social cohesion has been presented in policy and scholarly documents in studies on forced migration in Turkey, which could be used for research on social cohesion in other forced migration contexts. The study does not claim that any country, including Turkey, presents and pursues a coherent social cohesion policy. To the contrary, the study aims to clear a path to understand and explain how the concept transforms as it travels across contexts with forcibly displaced migrants and their challenges.

To this end, this study systematically reviews, analyses, and classifies a sample of (i) policy literature including publications and reports disseminated by international organisations (IOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), and state authorities, and (ii) scholarly literature including published academic research on the waves of forced migration in Turkey since 2011 including articles and books both in Turkish (with keywords ‘uyum’ and ‘sosyal uyum’) and in English (harmonisation, integration, social integration, and social cohesion). The dataset consists of 327 sources focusing on the Turkish experience with forced migration during the 2011–18 period. The analysis of the dataset suggests that the concept of social cohesion (translated as ‘harmonization’ in LFIP) is the most commonly used term in the scholarly and policy literature in the Turkish language (used as ‘sosyal uyum’ or ‘uyum’). These publications reproduce the jargon used in Article 96 of the LFIP, which sets the legal boundaries concerning the status of those under international protection in Turkey. Among texts published in the English language, ‘integration’ constitutes the number one term choice, primarily due to the attempts to incorporate Turkey into broader refugee integration debates. However, the problem with this term lies in the legal and practical discrepancies between what the term refers to in Turkey in contrast to other refugee-hosting countries including the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Nordic countries. Hence, the scholarly and policy literature in the English language tends to avoid the term ‘social cohesion’ without really accounting for the intricacies of the Turkish case. Overall, these cases suggest the presence of not only a mismatch between English and Turkish language texts but most importantly a possible conceptual inconsistency in the usage of ‘sosyal uyum’ (which would mean social cohesion), which represents a catch-all term without clear conceptual underpinnings.

Besides the literal usage of the word, an in-depth textual analysis has been used to map out conceptual frames detected from several texts within the scholarly and policy

literature. In this study, conceptual frames are analytical tools used for understanding the manifestations of social cohesion in forced migration context in Turkey. These conceptual frames have been constructed inductively consisting of clusters of themes identified largely through a literal reading of ‘repeated words’ or ‘explicit claims’ stated by the authors. The assignment of the texts under each conceptual frame has been carried out through a three-stage categorisation process that involved three researchers, who worked on validating the match between the conceptual frames and the themes appearing in each text. Each text reflects a specific conceptual frame with only a few uncertain cases that contain elements from more than one conceptual frame. Texts with concurrent frames were classified under the frame with which they best identify. As a result of the three-stage categorisation process, four conceptual frames on social cohesion in forced migration context in Turkey have been identified: (i) security threat-based; (ii) socio-interactional; (iii) humanitarian emergency-driven; and (iv) policy regime-oriented (Table 1).

First, the security threat-based frame is the least encountered frame in studies on integration and social cohesion; it is almost completely avoided within publications and reports by IOs, NGO/INGOs, and government institutions/agencies. This conceptual frame focuses on challenges and concerns stemming from the presence of forcibly displaced in Turkey. The key aspect of this conceptual frame is viewing forced migration as a source of insecurity both at the state and individual levels, including Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees alike. It is worth noting that the literature classified under this frame characterises Turkey as oscillating between two diametrically opposed positions that are not translatable to concrete policies for social cohesion. On the one hand, Turkey is portrayed as a ‘safe third country’ or ‘safe first country of asylum’ (Fine 2018: 1751). On the other hand, Turkey faces harsh criticism as a country where ‘multiple pathways of precarity’ (Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel 2017: 41) persist though lingering insecurity, instability, irregularity, and unpredictability. The former scenario leads to policy inertia in the area of integration of forcibly displaced, whereas the latter scenario leads to a heightened awareness of threat and eventually reactive policy decisions through countermeasures. Either of these perspectives in the same classification impedes any coherent policy framework development around social cohesion, even with the minimalist of definitions.

Secondly, despite the strong social character of social cohesion, the socio-interactional frame has not been given significant attention within the scholarly and policy literature on forced migration in Turkey except for a few ethnographic studies. The rationale behind the socio-interactional frame is to explore both intra- and inter-group/community interactions at the local level. However, studies on forced migration experience in Turkey focus more on the separate experiences of the various groups of forcibly displaced and host communities and less on the attempts to build cross-community alliances translatable to local-level action and/or policies. In the study of social cohesion, intra-group/community interactions are often spontaneous, and inter-group/community interactions are particularly important to understanding channels of participation (Valtonen 2002). Hence, the research would be expected to focus on the common activities of the forcibly displaced with other groups/communities through different manifestations of inter-group contact, and whether, and if so how, they lead to actionable policies at the local level. When correctly applied, this frame may help identify channels that facilitate pro-active and innovative action at the community level and, therefore, positively influence social cohesion

Table 1. Conceptual frames of social cohesion in forced migration context in Turkey

Conceptual frame	Coding scheme	Publications
Security threat-based	Publications within this frame involve themes such as (i) assessment of refugee movements as a foreign policy issue or international crisis that puts Turkey into a conflictual/war situation, (ii) citizen and media threat perceptions where refugees are often perceived as marginalised subjects prone to violence and crime, (iii) decreasing quality of life due to the massive flow of refugees, (iv) negative consequences or harm coming from the urban presence of refugees such as increasing rent prices, overcrowded hospitals, sectarian tensions, etc., and (v) anticipatory anxiety and risk perception.	Overall: 11/327 Percentage: 3 per cent
Socio-interactional	Publications within this frame involve themes such as (i) refugees as a sociological term rather than a legal status, (ii) individual experiences of trauma, psychological disorder and stress, and tools to deal with it (e.g. art therapy intervention), (iii) the impact of language and other cultural differences on interactions at the local level, (iv) establishment of inter-religious/inter-faith contact at the community level, (v) perception of refugees as agents who can negotiate their position rather than victims trapped in a position of vulnerability, and (vi) neighborhood-level engagements among different groups/ethnicities.	Overall: 72/327 Percentage: 22 per cent
Humanitarian emergency-driven	Publications within this frame involve themes such as (i) the duty/obligation that the international community, individual states, and organisations have to provide humanitarian assistance to victims, who have been forcefully displaced from their countries of origin, (ii) criteria for refugee status and other issues related to their legal protection, (iii) evaluation of the immediate refugee needs such as basic survival and temporary shelter, (iv) 'temporariness'	Overall: 101/327 Percentage: 31 per cent

Continued

Table 1. Continued

Conceptual frame	Coding scheme	Publications
Policy regime-oriented	<p>aspect of refugees as guests in Turkey including the right of resettlement to a third country, (v) evaluation of guest–host relations through the lenses of refugee hospitality, and (vi) assessment of the role of international donors and sustainability of humanitarian assistance.</p> <p>Publications within this frame involve themes such as (i) general implications of the Turkish immigration policy regime, (ii) positive returns associated with having a centrally designed, coherent immigration policy, (iii) refugee integration in the areas of health, education, and employment, (iv) benefits or the concrete contribution of the immigrants to the economy and society of the host country, (v) state’s ability to redistribute resources based on concerns about rising domestic inequality, (vi) ethnographically informed policy analysis based on refugee need assessment, and (vii) the role of local governments, especially municipalities in managing the refugee and migrant crisis.</p>	<p>Overall: 143/ 327 Percentage: 44 per cent</p>

processes. An interesting example to illustrate this conceptual frame is the study by [Jacoby, Mac Ginty and Şenay \(2019\)](#), which explores the connections between Muftiate employees and refugees at the community level not in terms of building a shared understanding of religion but in terms of finding solutions for specific challenges of the forcibly displaced in the area of housing, employment, and education. As the authors note, ‘the Muftiate has... constructed sophisticated religious narratives aimed at realizing a wide range of policy objectives’ (2019: 253).

Thirdly, the humanitarian emergency-driven frame dominates the narrative within IO reports with a focus on social protection services, training programmes, and humanitarian aid offered to the forcibly displaced. This frame emphasises the humanitarian emergency-driven aspects of migration governance. The humanitarian emergency-driven frame is expected to contribute to the alleviation of problems among the forcibly displaced and other vulnerable groups through measures designed to mitigate pressures which become more intense through migration ([Nyberg–Sørensen, van Hear and Pedersen 2002](#)). Turkey’s track record presents a focus on mitigation measures, particularly with international donor involvement. However, the question remains whether such measures can be transposed into a common understanding around social cohesion or

into sustainable social cohesion policies. To the contrary, overemphasis and prolonged on emergency, survival, protection, and temporary protection status can be counterproductive for social cohesion processes at all levels in the long run. While aid schemes may meet short-term needs, the very same policy may lead to dependency on aid, which harms any prospect of 'self-reliance' and dignity which are at the core of social cohesion processes. Some studies classified under this conceptual frame suggest that a prolonged approach on humanitarianism in Turkey may reinforce existing vulnerabilities instead of contributing to the resilience of refugee communities (Sözer 2019). Within this frame, mostly represented by the work of IOs, the role of international donors further adds to the paradox of social cohesion in forced migration contexts. While financing forced migration governance through international support is indispensable in cases of mass influx, the questions around sustainability of such governance models to foster social cohesion in the country in the long run remain unresolved. Coherent social cohesion policy strategies have no prescription for the timing and the processes through which proper exit of, or transforming of cooperation with, international organisations can be designed and implemented. The studies classified within this conceptual frame display the pattern of remaining benignly indifferent to the complex relationship between social cohesion and forced migration while reporting on how they carry out their work.

Finally, the policy regime-oriented frame is the most common frame adopted in the studies on integration of forcibly displaced and social cohesion in Turkey, particularly among scholarly work. Within this frame, many studies highlight the structural weaknesses inherent in the existing immigration policy regime that becomes even more visible with the processes of forced migration (Ozcurumez and Yetkin, 2014; İçduygu and Şimşek 2016; Korkut 2016; Unutulmaz 2018). These studies note the lack of a solid policy and legal framework that link social cohesion and international protection, limited expertise in the area of refugee law as well as lack of consistent policy responses by both central and local level governments further exacerbated by the scale of financial as well as institutional capacity required to cope with mass influx adequately. Another group within policy regime-oriented frame studies the needs, perceptions, and attitudes of forcibly displaced as well as local communities (Cantekin 2018; Erdoğan 2018; Hohberger 2018), and again cites the need for designing coherent policies and fostering governance capacity in the areas of housing, health, employment, education, and municipalities in Turkey. Very few studies attempt to analyse the impact of existing policies on the daily lives of refugees (Norman 2019); however, all adopt a variety of conceptualisations of social cohesion and, similar to the other frames discussed in this article, present no clear links or pathways between social cohesion and forced migration.

Based on the findings from the studies and reports addressing the themes of social cohesion and forced migration, this study suggests that only by integrating the socio-interactive and policy regime-oriented frames can researchers find a path out of the maze of how to link social cohesion and forced migration conceptually, theoretically, and empirically. Contexts of protracted displacement are where the most intricate attention needs to be paid to debates on social cohesion. Research already suggests that local communities emotionally and materially unprepared for receiving unprecedented numbers of forcibly displaced may react negatively to their presence. The remedy for conflict and tension lies within pursuing meaningful social cohesion policies. The main advantage of this

integrated framework is that it strives to establish a *conceptually informed policy link* that goes beyond mitigating security concerns and/or promoting humanitarian action exclusively. While policy regime-oriented frame contributes towards designing actionable policies in order to enable those in need to resume their self-sufficiency and build resilience, socio-interactional frame contributes to pro-active policy development particularly through instances of constructive cross-community alliances and inter-group contact. Drawing on this integrated framework, social cohesion can be defined as a process at the core of which is the well-being of all individuals in society through promoting meaningful social interaction anchored in human-centred design of comprehensive policies and practices generated through innovative collaboration among state and non-state actors over time and across geographies.

4. Conclusion

An overview of the current state of the art in forced migration research reveals that the concept of social cohesion stands on shaky grounds and relies on evidence from settlement countries. Lack of agreement on conceptualisation of social cohesion causes confusion among researchers, policy makers, policy practitioners, and the public, which translates into an ambivalent attitude towards social cohesion as a policy goal. Attempts to transfer the concepts and policies from settlement countries without taking into account intricacies of forced migration contexts complicate matters even further. In order to overcome this confusion, this study proposes to classify the studies on social cohesion along four conceptual frames based on the evidence emerging from the Turkish experience with forced migration: security threat-based, the humanitarian emergency-driven, policy regime-oriented, and socio-interactional frames. One of the main findings is that both the security threat-based and the humanitarian emergency-driven frames present challenges to conceptualising social cohesion and designing policies that promote social cohesion goals. However, the policy regime-oriented and socio-interactional approaches present possibilities for adopting social cohesion as a concept in the most unlikely settings. The evidence from what transpires in the particular forced migration context of Turkey suggests that many social cohesion models can be identified. However, all would need to recognise the significance of policies relevant for promoting social interaction.

This study shows that it is very difficult to transfer social cohesion as a concept and as a policy target across migration contexts. However, considering the rising contempt for the forcibly displaced in many countries, more studies are needed on how social cohesion may be realised across forced migration contexts to respond to a variety of challenges. As for policy makers, social cohesion is the most promising conceptual and empirical medium to bridge the differences across debates on social inclusion and foster debates for willingness to overcome constraints due to existing international protection governance preferences. This study suggests that strengthening and merging the existing policy regime-oriented and socio-interactional conceptual frames in forced migration research would improve our understanding of social cohesion processes as researchers as well. Within an integrated framework, policy regime-oriented frame can be improved by focusing more on the role of social interactions in promoting social cohesion. Socio-

interactional frame can be improved by analysing further the nature of inter-group contacts with the potential of generating solutions against challenges encountered at the community level through channels of pro-active policy processes. One salutary feature of an integrated framework is that it shifts the understanding of social cohesion away from abstract categories and closer to practical measures with an impact on long-term policy and societal processes in forced migration contexts. In addition, this framework generates a parsimonious definition of social cohesion transferrable across various forced migration contexts and experiences. Finally, the study proposes to facilitate interdisciplinary research to understand and explain how the concept of social cohesion manifests itself in a variety of forced migration contexts.

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Notes

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2. TPR (2014) <<https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/10/20141022-15-1.pdf>>accessed 20 March 2020

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