

T.C.

ISTANBUL KULTUR UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**HOW DID CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA AFFECT TURKEY'S SECURITY
POLICY?**

MA Thesis by

Büşra Sena AYDIN

1403020005

Department: International Relations

Programme: International Relations

Supervisor:

Asst. Prof. Dr. Bora BAYRAKTAR

MARCH 2022

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PREFACE

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Bora BAYRAKTAR for his support and guidance throughout writing this thesis.

I would like to also thank my dear parents who have always been by my side not only in my education life but in every aspect of my life.

Finally, I owe the Istanbul Kultur University for offering the great kind of education and all the facilities



Büşra Sena AYDIN

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ÖZET

Müslüman dünyasında son zamanlardaki önemli zorluklardan birisi de Ortadoğu ve Kuzey Afrika'da “Arap Baharı” olarak gösteriler olmuştur. Aralık 2010'un sonlarında Tunus'taki protestolar, diğer ülkelere yayılmadan önce Cezayir, Ürdün, Mısır ve Yemen'i etkileyen bir karmaşa dalgasını başlatmıştır. Bu ülkeler arasında hükümet ve isyancı güçler arasında en yoğun çatışmaların yaşandığı Suriye'de iç savaşla sonuçlanmıştır. İç savaşla birlikte Suriye, komşu ülkeler ve küresel güçlerin de katılımıyla etnik, dini ve mezhepsel bir savaş alanı haline gelmiştir. Savaş sonucunda çok sayıda insan yaşamını yitirmiş ve birçoğu da başka ülkelere göç etmek zorunda bırakılmıştır. Suriye'nin komşusu olarak Türkiye, Suriye savaşından en çok etkilenen ülke olmuştur. 911 kilometrelik ortak kara sınırı nedeniyle doğrudan güvenlik tehdidine ek olarak, Türkiye şu anda yaklaşık dört milyon Suriyeli mülteciye ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin güvenliğinin krizden nasıl zarar gördüğünü analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, genel olarak Ortadoğu'daki ve özel olarak Suriye'deki son gelişmeleri incelemektedir. Ardından, krizin Türkiye'nin güvenliği için mevcut siyasi, askeri ve sosyal sonuçlarını ayrıntılı olarak analiz ediyor.

Anahtar kelimeler: Arap Baharı, Suriye sivil savaşı, Türkiye'nin güvenliği

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ABSTRACT

One of the recent challenges in the Muslim world has been a series of demonstrations across the Middle East and North Africa, known as the “Arab Spring”, started in 2010s. The protests in Tunisia in late December 2010 spurred a wave of unrest that struck Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen, before spreading to other countries. Among these countries, Syria underwent the most intense clashes between the government and rebel forces resulted in a civil war. With the civil war, Syria has become the venue for an ethnic, religious, and sectarian war, with the involvement of neighboring countries and global powers. As a result of the war, many people died, and many were forced to migrate to other countries. As a neighbor of Syria, Turkey became the country most affected by the crisis. In addition to the direct security threat because of its 911-kilometer land border, Turkey currently hosts nearly four million Syrian refugees. This study, therefore, analyzes how Turkey’s security was damaged by the crisis. The study examines recent developments in the Middle East in general and in Syria specifically. It then analyzes in detail the current political, military, social implications of the crisis for Turkey’s security.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Syria civil war, Turkey’s security.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP:	Justice and Development Party
ASALA:	Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia
DHKP-C :	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front
EU:	European Union
FSA:	Free Syrian Army
ISIS:	Iraq Sham Islamic State
İBDA-C:	Great East Islamic Raiders Front
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PYD:	Democratic Unity Party
SDD:	Strategic Depth Doctrine
SNC:	Syrian National Council
UN:	United Nations
UNSC:	United Nations Security Council
US:	The United States
USSR:	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

INTRODUCTION

Modern Syria is a product of European colonialism after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The country came to existence following the San Remo Conference as a French protectorate. It became independent in 1946 and was in direct military conflict with Israel. After consequent wars with Israel in 1967 and 1973 Syria formed an alliance with the USSR and later Iran to have a working balance in the region. Syria was also involved in Lebanese affairs since mid 1975s and therefore has been an important actor in Middle East politics. Having served as a base for many armed organizations it provided security problems for its neighbors including Turkey.

Having located at the coast of Eastern Mediterranean Sea, Syria has the longest border with neighboring Turkey. Therefore, Syria is strategically important for Turkey because of its location, serving as a bridge between Arabian Peninsula and Turkey (Aras and Karakaya, 2008: 495). Moreover, the Syrian Republic is a central region located at the junction of Asia, Europe, and Africa continents. In this context, it is directly affected by the changes or chaos that occurred in three major continents (Öniş, 2012: 56). Arab Spring was no exception.

When protests swept the Arab World in 2011 challenging decades old regimes many leaders had to resign or leave their positions. Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Zine el Abidin in Tunisia have been overthrown. In March 2011 protest movements spread to Syria and demonstrators demanded resignation of Bashar Al Assad and change of his decades of Baath regime. But, The Bashar Assad administration in Syria resisted these rebellions and the conflicts soon turned into a civil war. The conflict spread to the whole country. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives in the ongoing war, and many were left homeless and forced to migrate to other countries, especially to its neighbors Turkey and Jordan. Migration of Syrians turned to an international issue and even a crisis for Europe in 2015.

The civil war also caused security issues for Turkey. Syria was turned to a hub for radical terrorist groups, attracting extremists from all around the world. ISIS found a fertile ground for their goals of establishing a so called Islamic State. PKK

and its affiliates focused on establishing their own. Turkey's borders were violated by these groups and terrorist attacks wave hit Turkey. Many big terrorist attacks in Turkey's major cities including Istanbul, Ankara, Diyarbakır, Kayseri, Hatay etc.

In fact ruling the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) which came to power in 2001, had different vision for Syria and other neighboring countries. Turkey's vision was based on cooperation and integration of the Middle East countries and she wanted to improve her relations with neighboring countries. Syria was regarded as a pivot country for these policies which was formulated as zero problems with the neighbors. But the security threats arising from Syria changed the direction of Turkey's policy especially after 2015.

This study argues that the Turkish Foreign Policy towards Syria evolved from a Constructivist approach to Realist due to security problems posed by Syria. Briefly, according to constructivism, if we change the discourse and focus on cooperation, reality will also change. Alexander Wendt discusses that anarchy is what states make of it, and he states that anarchy is not inherent in the international system as other schools of international relations theory envision it, but rather it is a construction of nation-states in the system. Contrary to the hypotheses of neo-realism and neo-liberalism, at the core of constructivist thought is the belief that many fundamental aspects of international relations are socially constructed rather than inherently. According to Wendt, there are two basic principles of constructivism. One of them is that the structures of human unity are identified primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces. The other one is that the identities and interests of purposeful actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature (Wendt, 1992: 398-399).

For a long time, Turkey's politics were shaped by former Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's constructivist discourse. Ahmet Davutoğlu preached that Turkey should have been a country that could take the initiative to solve problems rather than being a risk-generating country. At the 5th Ambassadors Conference on January 2, 2013, Davutoğlu stated that Turkey has a humanitarian diplomacy policy in solving problems in different crisis and conflict zones. Davutoğlu stated that what he meant by humanitarian diplomacy was not just humanitarian aid, but embracing everyone without discrimination and establishing relations with a human-centered perspective. At this point, the identity of the state as

a regional and global peacemaker and contributing to peace is one of the important motivations behind these initiatives. In Davutoğlu's speeches, Turkey is described as a country that is at peace with its neighbors, does not accept risks around it, wants to contribute peacefully to its neighbors, and can take initiative to solve problems (Kök and Öner, 2016:72-73).

Attractiveness, moral leadership, and consent are important elements in the concept of power and hegemony in the constructivist. The image of a country that contributes and even builds peace and tranquility can provide the desired consent in the geography where the AK Party tried to be effective. In the statements of Turkish leaders such as Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Ahmet Davutoğlu, or in the official sources of the AK Party, the discourse followed as Turkey was a country that contributed to regional and global peace and order is frequently emphasized. In fact, the "Alliance of Civilizations" was evaluated within the scope of contributing to global peace, and mediation was shown as one of the most important tools that ensure the peace and tranquility of humanity (Davutoğlu, 2013:84). In his book, *Vision for Global Peace*, Erdoğan stated, "In our opinion, it is possible to show inertia or remain indifferent to current problems that harm peaceful relations between nations. It is the worst possible approach and claims that Turkey's aid and peaceful policies are made according to principles and conscience, not religion, ethnicity, ties, or national interest (Erdoğan, 2012: 10).

When Davutoğlu was the Prime Minister, he claimed that Turkey could be influential on the regional states with its soft power, and argued that Turkey should resort to soft power elements and even become a soft power. He also stated that Turkey should use diplomacy to serve to be a soft power in the region. For Davutoğlu, Turkey's most important soft power element was democracy. According to him, Turkey's rising soft power image was also based on a Muslim democracy identity (Davutoğlu, 2013:89). Davutoğlu emphasized that instead of military elements, Turkey's new diplomatic style should be based on civil and economic power. According to him, diplomatic initiatives would serve to make Turkey a soft power in the region (Davutoğlu, 2013: 866). In the following periods, it can be seen that he defined Turkey as a "smart country", and later as a "smart power." Zero problems with neighbors, foreign aid, visa liberalization, mediation, facilitation, and initiatives towards normalizing relations with Armenia can be evaluated within the

framework of Turkey's soft power policy during the Davutoğlu period (Ekşi, 2014: 159). Davutoğlu argued that Turkey should focus on economic interdependence, cultural interaction, and political order against the concepts of deterrence, superiority, and threat (Davutoğlu, 2011: 302).

But especially after 2013 Turkey came under terrorist attacks. Terrorist organizations based in Syria like ISIS and PKK/YPG targeted Turkey with human bombs and missiles. Border towns like Kilis, Akçakale, Reyhanlı were hit by Turkey and the negotiations with Kurdish parties ended due to security problems. Turkey recalibrated its position and reviewed its foreign and security policies.

In May 2016, with Davutoğlu's departure from the prime ministry Turkey returned to realism and hard power. Turkey changed its discourse accordingly. In Realism, security concerns are prior. The AK Party government's policy of developing relations with Muslim Middle East countries within the framework of its soft power vision radically changed with Turkey's new Syria policy.

Based on the question of how the Syrian civil war affected Turkish security policies, this thesis aims to explain the reasons and consequences of the change. I will try to analyse how Turkey reformulated its policy and how she implemented the new power based policy. The thesis will be divided into four sections. The first section is about Turkey's Syria Policy before the Civil War. I briefly focused on the historical background of Turkey-Syria relations beginning from 1923 until 2011 under the sub-titles of Hatay Issue (1939), The Cold War period (1940-1991), The Adana Agreement (1991-1998), and the relations between 1998 and 2011. These are important milestones in bilateral relations and shed light to the change after the Civil War in 2011. In the second section a general review of the Civil War in Syria is given and Turkey's first approach is discussed in detail. In the third chapter, the terrorist attacks and its impact are explained. In the last chapter, Turkey's response is discussed taking into consideration the operations Turkey did in the region.

Secondary data was used in this dissertation. Data was collected from different sources like newspapers, analysis, reports of official institutions. The analysis of this thesis is based on books, articles, speeches of some political figures during Summits. The literature on the subject was searched and the events were explained with a realistic perspective. Although the theoretical background is not

constantly mentioned, it was used throughout the study. The books and articles were examined using the "Literature Review" method. The sources collected in the study were examined separately and the relevant chapters were used. In light of these findings, comments and analysis were also added.

Theoretical Framework

The research will adopt the realism and constructivism theories to understand and analyze “How Did Civil War in Syria Affect Turkey’s Security Policy”. Looking at the relations between Turkey and Syria before and after the Arab Spring, it can be seen that the theories of realism and constructivism shaped the relations between the two countries in general. In this context, these two theories constitute the theoretical framework of the thesis.

Realism is one of the traditions of international relations theory. Realism, which focuses on international anarchy and power politics, is philosophically based on the work of Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli. Realism, as an International Relations approach, emerged in the 20th century in the interwar period (Goodin, 2010: 133).

Realism is basically an International Relations tradition based on four propositions. These are: (Donnelly, 2008: 150)

- According to realism, the international system is anarchic. There are no actors on states that can regulate the behavior and interactions of states. States regulate their relations with other states themselves. According to the anarchy conception of realism, anarchy in the international system is the result of the sovereignty of the states themselves. Accordingly, the absence of anarchy would also mean the absence of the sovereignty of the state. There is a constant state of hostility in the international system.
- States are the most important actors of International Relations.
- Every state in the International System is a unit of the system as a rational actor. States tend to follow their own interests. States work to get as many resources as possible.
- The main problem for states is to exist. States develop their military forces to maintain their existence, which also causes a security dilemma.

States emphasize the importance of power accumulation as an interest in order to ensure their security in the International System, which has an anarchic structure. Power is used here primarily as a concept that is considered in terms of the material resources needed to coerce and hinder other states. The use of force emphasizes coercive tactics and behavior used to achieve a national interest or to prevent anything that threatens the national interest (Goodin, 2010: 137).

In realism, the state is the most important actor of the International System and the power of a state is evaluated in terms of its military capacity. One of the key concepts of realism is the international distribution of power. This distribution indicates the polarity of the system, in other words its polarity. The polarity of the International System is a concept that indicates the number of state blocks in the system. A multipolar International System consists of three or more power blocks. A bipolar system consists of two poles, while a unipolar system is dominated by a single power or hegemon. In a unipolar system, Realism assumes that other states will come together to implement a balance of power policy against the hegemon of the system. According to realism, although each state seeks to establish hegemony as a way to ensure its own security, it also tends to prevent the emergence of hegemony in the International System by balancing it against it (Guzzini, 2004: 539).

States apply the rational decision-making model with the information they have obtained and accepted as correct. The power of the state determines its national interest and sovereignty. Due to the dominance of anarchy in the International System, there is no international authority, and in the international system, states are left to their own devices to ensure their own security (Goodin, 2010: 139).

As to Constructivism, it is seen as a theory that casts doubt on the ideas of neorealists and neoliberals. The basic principle of constructivism is the belief that international politics is shaped by undisputed ideas, collective values, culture and social identity. Constructivism proves that international reality is created on the basis of social values that give new meaning to the material world (ideas close to socialism). This theory arose on the basis of disagreements around the scientific method of international relations and the role of theories in the formation of new international powers (Hopfh, 1998: 176).

The failure of realists and liberals to foresee the end of the Cold War significantly increased the credibility of constructivists. Constructivism criticizes the traditional statistical approach of liberalism and realism in the analysis of international relations, focusing on the fact that international relations is a social construct. While realism in international relations is mainly concerned with security and material power, liberalism is more concerned with economic interdependence and domestic policy factors of states, constructivism is most focused on analyzing the role of ideas in the system of international relations. By “ideas” constructivists mean goals, threats, fears, identities, and other elements of perceived reality that affect states and non-state objects of international relations (Zehfuss and Maja, 2002: 19).

Constructivists believe that ideological factors often have long-term goals and consequences, and this is an advantage over materialist theories (realism, liberalism). For example, constructivists point out that an increase in the US military is more likely to be perceived negatively in Cuba or Russia (historically hostile states), while it will be perceived positively in Canada and Great Britain (historical US allies). As a result, the perception of the same phenomenon in international relations may vary depending on the conditions in which the states are located (Hopfh, 1998: 178).

Moreover, constructivists do not see anarchy as a permanent coherence in the system of international relations, proving, in the words of Alexander Wendt, the extreme inconsistency and subjectivity of this phenomenon: “Anarchy is what states do. Constructivists also believe that social norms shape and change international politics over time in a much more important way than national security issues (the realists’ core concept). Michael Barnett states that the constructivist theories of international relations are concerned with the idea that defines the international structure, this structure defines the interests and identities of states, and the reproduction of this structure by state and non-state actors (Barnett, 1999: 701). Emanuel Adler states that constructivism occupies a middle ground between rationalist and interpretative theories. The failure of realism or liberalism theories to predict the end of the Cold War has increased the credibility of the constructivist theory (Adler, 1997: 329).

Constructivist theory criticizes the static assumptions of traditional international relations theory and emphasizes that international relations is a social structure.

Adherents of constructionist theory speak of "ideas" and threats, fears, identities, and other reality-perception factors that affect state and non-state actors within the international system (Adler, 1997: 331).



CHAPTER 1:

TURKEY'S SYRIA POLICY BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR (1923-2011)

For decades, Turkey and Syria are two neighboring countries that share the same geographical area. Historically, relations between the two countries have been fluctuating for various reasons. In this context, relations between the two countries can be analyzed under five sub-headings, which are important periods that show the relations between the two countries. The period under the rule of Kemal Ataturk between 1923-1939, the autonomy of Hatay Province and its joining to Turkey in 1939 (Hatay Issue), the Cold War era (1940-1991), post-Cold War era and the Adana Treaty (1991-1998), and the recovery after 1998 Adana Agreement to the start of the uprising in 2011. Therefore, this chapter will explain the aforementioned periods in Turkey-Syria relations in detail.

1.1. Historical Background of the Turkey-Syria Relations (1923-1939)

Syria is Turkey's the longest land border (916 kilometers) neighbor, thus it is geopolitically important for Turkey's relations with the Arab countries. It is a gateway to the Arabian Peninsula and Syria serves as a bridge. Historically, the border between Turkey and Syria created problems between the two countries. The first crisis between the two countries was the crisis regarding the borders of Hatay before Hatay declared its independence in 1938 (Bilen, 2009: 81).

Another geopolitical importance of Syria for Turkey is that it constitutes the main link between the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula and Turkey and also forms the corridor between Iraq and Mosul from the East to the West.

Historically, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire initiated a new phase in the relations of both countries, because, after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkey Republic was established, therefore the relations between the two countries began in the shadow of border problems.

Turkey-Syria border was determined mainly with the Ankara agreement signed between Turkey and France. The agreement was signed on 20 October 1921. However, it should be noted that, on October 20, 1921, Hatay was excluded from the

border of Turkey with the Ankara Agreement (Ceylan, 2010: 1). According to Article 3 of the Ankara Treaty, a border was drawn in general terms and it was stated that within two months after the agreement, French forces would withdraw to the south of the said border and Turkish forces to the north. The borderline mentioned in Article 3 was resolved as follows:

“The border would go from the south of Payas to Meydan-ı Ekbez through the Iskenderun Bay. From there, the railway would follow from Karnab in Syria and Kilis in Turkey, until Nusaybin. old road between Nusaybin and Cezirei Ibn Umar would remain in Turkey and would reach Tigris. Both countries would have the same right in railways. Within a month following the signing of this agreement, a commission formed by the representatives of both parties would determine this line”(Aybar, 1986: 291-293).

As can be seen, the railway determines the border. Furthermore, according to Article 9 of the agreement, Suleiman Shah Tomb in the Jaber Castle would be Turkey's property with a Turkish flag and guards. Suleiman Shah's tomb is significant for Turkey because Suleiman Shah was the grandfather of Sultan Osman, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty (Yetim, 2010: 256).

Between the periods 1929 and 1939 border agreements were signed between Syria and Turkey. These are the documents signed in Ankara on 22 June 1929 (Turkey-Syria border delimitation protocol), Friendship Settlement Arbitration Trial dated 3 February 1930, The Restricted Border Final Protocol signed in Aleppo on 3 May 1930, agreement of real estate properties belonging to the Turks in Syria and Syrians in Turkey on 22 October 1932, Hatay-Syria Restricted Border Final Protocol signed in Hatay on 19 May 1939, and Hatay Treaty signed in Ankara on 23 June 1939 (Kurt et al., 2007).

During the first years of the Turkish Republic Syria was an issue between Ankara and Paris because Syria was a French protectorate under League of Nations. Turkey approached Syria file with regards to its relations with other Western nations.

1.2. Hatay Issue (1939)

During the Turkish Liberation War years, founders of the Republic accepted a document called The National Pact, which drew borders of the future state. According to the National Pact, Turkey claimed rights on Hatay province, which remained in French Protectorate Syria after the San Remo Conference.

The province of Hatay was left to the French by 1921 Ankara Agreement, and it became an autonomous unit called Iskenderun Sanjak(Province of Iskenderun). In 1931, nine years after the proclamation of the Republic, a general election was held in which several people of Hatay independently elected deputies and represented Hatay province in the Turkey Grand National Assembly. Therefore, Turkey persistently continued to claim rights in the Hatay province (Akdeniz, 2019: 160). The issue of Hatay was transferred to the League of Nations, and therefore in the meeting in Geneva on January 27, 1937, the League of Nations accepted the independence of Hatay (Magued, 2019: 26).

After Hatay was granted as a separate unit from Syria, the Turkish army entered Hatay on July 5, 1938, under the command of Şükrü Kanatlı. The State of Hatay declared its independence on September 2, 1938, and established the Hatay State National Assembly, where 40 deputies were elected. Turks constituted the majority in the parliament with 22 deputies. Thanks to this majority, the Turks in the parliament adopted the draft laws against Syria and France. With the election held on 29 June 1939, they decided to participate in Turkey, and therefore Hatay Province was officially established on 23 July 1939 as a province of the Turkish Republic and the Turkey-Syria border was determined, and took its current shape (Magued, 2019: 29).

Syria denied this decision and they kept claiming sovereign rights over the province and they showed it in Syria territory for decades. This became one of the most problematic issues between the two countries.

1.3. Turkish-Syria Relations during the Cold War (1940-1991)

France mandate over Syria lasted until 1946. As soon as France took the administration under its control in Syria, it made all the administrative arrangements in line with its own interests. French colonial rule divided Syria into provinces based on ethnic and religious diversity. Six provinces were formed, namely Damascus,

Aleppo, Latakia, Jebel-i Druze, Hatay (Iskenderun) and Lebanon. Thus, first of all, Arab independence supporters were prevented from gaining strength by stalling. In addition, sectarian ties were deliberately fueled in order to prevent and suppress the rise of Arab nationalism. In this process, religious and national differences were stimulated by granting autonomy status, especially to places where minorities formed the majority. France followed a policy of "divide and rule" in Syria. The social structure of Syria was a facilitator in the implementation of this policy because of Syria having various ethnic populations in the Middle East (Öztürkci, 2016: 117).

Despite the oppressive administration of France, nationalist movements became stronger in the region. The Syrian people constantly marched to become independent. There were also protests against France in the Syrian Assembly. During the period until 1936, many negativities and turmoils arose due to the pressures of the French on the Syrian government and its people. As a matter of fact, the struggle of the people intensified in 1936. Thereupon, France signed the Visnot Treaty, which recognized the independence of Syria in the region. According to this agreement, Syria would seek the advice of France in foreign affairs and France would have two military bases in Syria (Fildis, 2011: 137).

After the start of World War II, Syria's full independence process accelerated. At the beginning of World War II, Syria came under the control of the Vicky Government, which was pro-German. However, in May 1941, Britain and France, which organized a joint action, recaptured Syria. After this operation, the head of the French forces, General Catroux, declared the independence of Syria. Although Syria was accepted as an independent country by the USA and Russia, it did not become fully independent until 1945 in reality. At the end of the 1945 elections, Şükrü El-Kuvvetli was appointed to the Presidency. After the League of Nations security negotiations, Britain and France agreed to withdraw from Syria and Lebanon at the same time, and Syria became a fully independent state on April 12, 1946. On April 15, 1946, all French forces left Syria (Öztürkci, 2016: 124).

After it became independent, Syria determined its own foreign policy. Syria was aware that the post-war bipolar world order had a significant role in the Middle East leg. Syria, where Arab nationalism was strong, moved away from the west with the revolution. The fact that Egypt and the surrounding countries elected the

communist regime, that is, the eastern bloc led by the USSR, increased the influence of the USSR in the region (Kanat, 2012: 235).

As a western bloc country and being pro-NATO, Turkey's relations with Syria deteriorated. In 1957, the pro-Communist Syrian army chief and the shipment of weapons to the border forced Turkey to pile up its troops to the border. The US declared that they would not take responsibility for a possible war. However, the Soviet communist party leader threatened Turkey. Perceiving the Turkish soldiers at the border as a national threat, Syria brought the problem to the UN. Soldiers withdrew from the border under UN mediation, and the two countries returned from the brink of war (Kanat, 2010 217).

Despite a long period of intertwined historical heritage, Turkey-Syria relations have not been developed at the desired level for many years as a result of the problems such as mutual distrust, prejudices, Hatay, and water-sharing problems. In addition, Turkey turned to the Western Bloc and developed relations with western countries. On the other hand, Syria, instead of the West Block where Turkey took part in, developed its relations with the Eastern Bloc countries USSR after the Baath Party came to power (Kanat, 2012: 237).

After World War II, Turkey sided with the European states and the USA and started to carry out its foreign policy based on these countries. Therefore, in 1948, Turkey supported the independence of Palestine in the United Nations General Assembly, but when the partition decision was taken with the majority of votes, it became one of the thirteen countries that rejected this partition. Diplomatic relations were established between the two countries as a result of Turkey's political recognition of the State of Israel in 1949. After the 1949 Arab countries and Israel disarmament agreement, Turkey officially recognizes Israel and sends a charge d'affaires to Tel Aviv. Turkey's political recognition of Israel negatively affected Turkey's relations with Arab and Muslim countries (Hale, 2000:29).

During the Cold War period, the Middle East was also parceled out between the USA and the USSR, like other regions. While Turkey and Israel were pro-US; Egypt, Syria and Jordan followed a pro-USSR foreign policy. However, Turkey opposed the "non-alignment" movement with the support of Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon at the Asia-Africa Conference held in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955. With

the 1955 Baghdad Pact, Turkey formed a line of defense for the Middle East, which was under British control. Thus, Iraq, Pakistan, England, Iran and Turkey set up a barrier against the USSR alongside the USA. This pact divided the Arabs into three groups: Iran, Iraq and Pakistan in the first group; Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen in the second group, and Jordan and Lebanon in the third group. This situation strained Turkey's relations with Arab countries, first with Egypt and then with Syria (Dursunoğlu, 2000: 83).

Turkey supported the Arabs in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. United Nations Security Council resolution 242 advocated Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Syria and Iraq trusted the USSR and supported the terrorist group PKK after the 1980s. A PKK camp was established in Beirut and this organization was managed from here for years. Syria also constantly used Greece and Bulgaria against Turkey, and the Turkish minority in Syria was under pressure. Syria always stood by Greece and Bulgaria in the conflicts between Turkey and Greece on the continental shelf and Cyprus. Thus, while Greece and Bulgaria played the Arab trump to Turkey, Syria played the Greek and Bulgarian trump card. Therefore, Turkey developed its relations with Israel during this period. In the following period, the water issue emerged between Syria, Iraq and Turkey and continued for a long time (Hale, 2000:29). With the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s and the end of the cold war period, Syria lost the support of the USSR. When Syria was left alone in foreign policy, it took the PKK terrorist organization out of its country and cut its support (Salvarcı, 2003: 47).

1.3.1. Water Issue

Mesopotamia region has become an important region throughout history. The region gets its richness from two rivers, especially the Euphrates and Tigris. Syria, Iraq, and Turkey use these rivers for their crops. For this reason, the water problem has become an important issue among the mentioned countries (Yetim, 2010: 266).

There are four critical water resources for Syria. One of them is the water resources in the Golan Hills, and the other three are the Asi River, Tigris River, and especially the Euphrates, all of which are associated with Turkey. Euphrates River is a river formed by the merger of Karasu Stream and Tuzla Stream. It is located in the

Akyurt town of Erzincan. In addition, the Euphrates River joins the Tigris River that formed Mesopotamia and flows into the Persian Gulf (Mines, 2012: 91).

The Euphrates River is the life source of the Middle East. For this reason, it has an important role. The starting point of the Euphrates River is from the Akyurt town of Erzincan. The Euphrates River, which starts from here, passes through many provinces such as Erzincan, Tunceli, Elazığ, Malatya, Diyarbakır, Adıyaman and Gaziantep. After the river leaves the borders of our country, it passes over Syria and Iraq. It joins with the Tigris River in Basra and flows into the Persian Gulf (Pehlivanoglu, 2004: 118).

Water-sharing issue between Turkey and Syria first emerged in 1960. As both countries started using Euphrates and Tigris basins, it becomes an agenda item in their relations. Both Turkey and Syria used the rivers for irrigation and energy projects in the same period. While Turkey was beginning making the Keban dam, Syria had already started to take the Tabqa dam, a dam on the Euphrates River, in the northwestern part of Syria. The city of Tabqa is located near the dam, which is approximately 50 km from the city of Raqqa. With a height of 60 meters and a length of 4.5 km, it is the largest dam in Syria. Both countries completed the construction of their dams in 1973.

Three crises affected the relations between the two countries adversely. The first crisis in the basin occurred in this period, and Iraq threatened Syria to bomb the dam, claiming that it was without water. The second major crisis was during the process of filling the Ataturk Dam in Turkey in the 1990s. After constructing the Keban dam, Turkey entered into the process of constructing the Karakaya and Atatürk dam projects, respectively. Turkey turned to international institutions for the financial resources needed to build large dam projects. Iraq and Syria, with the support of Arab countries, affected Turkey's loan process and conditions, with the fear that Turkey's projects would cut off the Euphrates-Tigris river waters. The biggest problem with the loan process was during the construction period of Atatürk Dam, which was built by Turkey for hydroelectric and irrigation purposes. As a result of the lobbying activities of Syria and Iraq, Turkey could not get the credit necessary for the construction of the Atatürk Dam and built the dam with its own resources. During the construction of the Atatürk Dam, Turkey signed two protocols with Syria in 1987. One of the signed protocols is about security and Syria's end of

support to the terrorist organization PKK. The other protocol involves Turkey leaving 500 cubic meters/sec of water per year at the Turkey-Syria border until a final agreement. Following this protocol, Syria and Iraq signed an agreement in 1990 that left 58 percent of the average annual 500 cubic meters/sec water left by Turkey to Iraq's use. On the other hand, within 10 years after the 1987 protocol, Syria did not withdraw its support to the PKK. The third crisis occurred while starting the construction of the Birecik Dam on the same river basin in Turkey (Mines, 2012: 90). Syria and Iraq associated the dams built by Turkey with their countries' water security and therefore their existence and created a perception of a security problem. Syria and Iraq, claiming that Turkey had full sovereignty over the Euphrates and Tigris despite receiving 500-600 m³ of water per second, and that it had no right to do so, demanded that the three countries come together and sign an agreement after determining the equitable distribution of water. In this context, the water issue was a vital problem between the countries' relations.

The importance of the Euphrates River increased for Syria when it lost its rich water resources Golan Hills to Israel in 1967. Within the scope of the Southern Anatolia Project (GAP), the construction of Atatürk, Karakaya, Birecik, and Karkamış dams made both countries' relations even worse (Yetim, 2010: 269). GAP was carried out by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Southeastern Anatolia Project Regional Development Administration (GAP-RDA) with the European Union financing, in cooperation with the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), Gaziantep Municipality, Gaziantep Chamber of Industry and Şanlıurfa Municipality. GAP caused deep concern that it would cause a reduction in the flow of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in Turkey's down neighbors Syria and Iraq, which would harm the agricultural and energy projects of these countries. The hydropolitical phases of the GAP were described in the Arab media as a threat to the balances in the region, and this culminated with the construction of the Atatürk Dam and was seen as an aggressive move (Gökcan, 2018: 182).

The 109th article in the Lausanne Peace Agreement is about the water problem. It states that: In default of any provisions to the contrary, when as the result of the fixing of a new frontier the hydraulic system (canalization, inundation, irrigation, drainage or similar matters) in a State is dependent on works executed within the territory of another State, or when use is made on the border of a State, in

virtue of pre-war usage, of water or hydraulic power, the source of which is on the territory of another State, an agreement shall be made between the States concerned to safeguard the interests and rights acquired by each of them (Mines, 2012: 92).

Against the reactions of Syria and Iraq on using the water of trans boundary rivers, Turkey developed a plan in 1984 about ensuring the rational and efficient allocation of waters between the three countries for using the water of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. For this purpose, Turkey presented a three-stage plan called "Three-Stage Plan for Equitable, Rational and Optimum Utilization of Euphrates-Tigris Basin Transboundary Waters." With this plan, it was estimated to collect data for water and soil resources for the entire Euphrates-Tigris basin, make use of these resources, and provide the allocations that would enable the highest benefit for all users in the basin. However, Syria and Iraq rejected such a solution (Maden, 2012: 89).

Economically, the assessed annual hydropower potential is estimated to be 140 billion kWh in Turkey. %50 of Turkey hydraulic energy is produced from the GAP dam. This figure accounts for %10 percent of Turkey's total energy production. Keban Dam, completed in 1973, and Karakaya Dams, completed in 1987 escalated the problem. Turkey assured that it would leave 500 m³ / s of water during filling Karakaya Dam. In the following years, Syria's water demand increased to 700 cubic meters. The same problems were experienced during the filling of the Atatürk Dam. During the filling of the dam, the water was cut off for one month. Despite the warnings of Turkey, and although the filling of the dam was being performed in the winter months, it caused reactions from Iraq and Syria. These reactions reached a peak in the 1990s with the completion and filling of the Atatürk Dam. Despite Turkey's attempts to solve the problem, these attempts were rejected by Syria and Iraq (Eroğlu, 2014: 5-6).

Another important river is the Asi River. The Asi River is formed by the confluence of the Rasul-Ayn and Al-Labwah rivers in the Beka Valley between the Lebanon mountains and Jebelussarki. The total length of the river is 571 km, 88 kilometers of which flows through Turkey. Its annual average flow is 2.5 billion m³. Almost all of the water is consumed due to the projects. Turkey uses it only for irrigation in agriculture. However, due to the use of Syria, its flow rate decreases to 3

m³ / sec in the summer months. This creates problems for the farmers in Hatay (Yetim, 2010: 269).

As a result, although the water crisis between the two countries was not solved clearly, it was not brought up on the agenda because of the relations that improved after 1998, and other problems broke out after 2011¹. But it should be noted that water resources of the Euphrates-Tigris Basins, two of the most important basins of the Middle East, play a critical role in the relations of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. In particular, when examining the history of Turkey-Syria relations, policy development related to basin waters directly affects the relations between the two countries.

1.3.2. Syria's Support to PKK

The PKK has been a never-ending issue that has been linked to the Kurdish problem in Turkey after 1978. Abdullah Öcalan is the leader of the organization which is regarded as terrorist by Turkey, EU and the US. The organization has affected Turkey in a negative way both materially and morally until today. Syria has been the most important supporter of the PKK terrorist organization. Syria supported the PKK during the 1980s and 90s. The support was ensured from various angles. Syria enabled the PKK to shelter, receive training and establish camps both in its territory and in the Lebanese border under its control. In addition to using its lands, Syria also provided aid such as money, weapons, intelligence, and border crossing. The leader of the organization, Abdullah Öcalan, resided in Damascus until his capture in 1999.

¹ Until 2009, there was no joint agreement between Turkey and Syria regarding the Asi River. However, due to the good relations between the two countries, the Minister of Environment Prof. Dr. Veysel Eroğlu and Syrian Irrigation Minister Nadir El Bounni signed a memorandum of understanding. The 51 signed memorandum of understanding included the construction of the "Friendship Dam" on the Asi river. It was planned that the two countries would benefit from the dam planned to be built on the Turkey-Syria border with the "50%-50%" model. The foundation of the dam, which was planned to irrigate 8 thousand hectares of agricultural land, was laid on 6 February 2011 with the participation of the prime ministers of the two countries. This dam would be one of the 8 important dams in the Asi river basin. This cooperation, which was created with the joint dam to be built on the Orontes river, brought together the riparians of the Euphrates-Tigris basins, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, and established a technical committee to solve the problems related to the use of the basin waters in 2008. It is important both in terms of developing and benefiting from and in terms of Turkey's transboundary water policies.

There are various reasons behind Syria's support of this terrorist organization. With Hafez Assad coming to power in 1970, a change in concept was made in Syria since 1975. The "Greater Syria" project was brought to the agenda again, and it began to leave the socialist line and even to abandon "Arab Nationalism". With the "Greater Syria" project, which was also on the agenda in the 1940s and 1950s, it was thought that Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan would become a single and larger state. The "Greater Syria" project, reminiscent of the Umayyad Empire, meant the emergence of a Syria that was not limited to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, but dominated a region that included the Sinai Peninsula, Cyprus and some provinces in the south of Turkey.. However, Syria, which lost all the wars it waged against Israel in particular, preferred to wait for its opponents to be weak and to ensure this, rather than waiting for it to be strong in order to achieve its dream of "Greater Syria". Syria continued its terrorist threat to Turkey, which started with the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), by increasing it with the PKK (Yavuz, 2005:361).

According to Erciyes, three strategic objectives lie under the terrorist threat from Syria to Turkey. The first was to prevent Turkey from becoming a political and military power in the region by preventing its economic development. The second was to export its own Kurdish problem abroad by exploiting the Kurdish citizens it oppresses. The third was to prevent the realization of the GAP by putting pressure on Turkey's water resources (Erciyes, 2004:99).

There are also some other prominent reasons for Syria's support of PKK. According to Hinnebusch, Turkey did not support the Iraq War, which changed Syria's Turkey perception. Moreover, Syria had an eye on Turkey's territorial integrity because of Hatay. Therefore, Syria, along with Iraq, supported the PKK by trusting the USSR after the 1980s. A PKK camp was established in Syria-controlled Lebanon, and the organization was administered from there. For this purpose, Syria hosted Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) for years and even provided arms and ammunition aid to ASALA militants in Europe with its secret organization "Mukhabarat." In the following process, while trying to establish good relations with Turkey, Syria also hosted PKK and its leader. The reason for Syria's support for terrorism was claimed to prevent the control of Turkey on the

water resources. (Hinnebusch, 2002: 160; Lawson, 2014: 1350). Therefore, it can be said that due to the Hatay issue and water issue between the two countries, Syria used PKK as an actor against Turkey. Thus, the Syrian region has played a vital role in terms of organizational structuring, personnel, logistics, and finance supply and operational capability of the PKK since its foundation years.

In the camps in the Beka Valley under the control of Syria, Syria provided support to terrorist and anarchy organizations against Turkey and turned a blind eye to their training, causing the relations between the two countries to become tense.

In addition, some of the decisions taken at the Second Congress held by the PKK on 20-25 August 1982 clearly showed Syria's support for the terrorist organization PKK. Some of these decisions were as follows: It was decided to train PKK members in Syria and to conduct the training in places close to Turkey, and it was also decided that the PKK would open a representative office in Syrian cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, Qamişlo and Afrin. 38 Turkey reacted PKK's activities in these camps with support from Syria. Therefore, in March 1983, the Turkmen Foreign Minister made an official visit to Damascus and warned the Syrian authorities, but the response received was that the Syrian government had nothing to do with the terrorist acts against Turkey. In the following low-level visits and messages, Turkey gradually hardened its stance and gave the message that it would use force if necessary. Therefore, Syria took a step back and removed PKK forces from its territory and sent them to Iran, Northern Iraq and the Bekaa Valley.

The attempts for a solution between the two countries also continued. Indeed, in 1987, the Turkish Prime Minister visited Syria, and during this visit, Turkey requested Syria to withdraw its support for the PKK. But Syria demanded from Turkey to agree on sharing the waters of the Euphrates. In 1987, Turkey signed two protocols in Damascus. According to the first protocol, Turkey assured that it would leave 500 cubic meters of water per second from the Euphrates to the Syrian border. Being a security protocol, in the second one, Syria promised to end its support to the PKK. However, neither was implemented in real terms (Maden, 2012: 89).

In 1993, a new protocol was signed between Turkey and Syria. In 1995, PKK militants attacked Akbez town of Hassa district of Hatay with rocket launchers. 8 people, including 3 children, were killed and 4 injured in the armed attack. After the

attack, the Chief of General Staff of Turkey stated that "these problems stem from Syria." Later in 1995, Mesut Yılmaz, the Turkish foreign minister at the time, urgently asked Syria to cease its support for terrorism and accept an 8-item list of demands. He stated that otherwise, they would have to invade Syria. In 1998 Syria admitted Turkey's demands, and Abdullah Öcalan was deported. As a result of this step, Turkey-Syria relations entered a period of rapprochement, which had not been seen before (Yavuz, 2005: 361-362).

In conclusion for Turkey, Syria had been a country that hosted terrorists, and this was the main subject of controversy between Turkey-Syria throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Between these years Syrian administration supported PKK activities directly or indirectly. Abdullah Öcalan's move to Syria in May 1979, thinking that he would not be able to operate in the political chaos that emerged in Turkey, and the PKK's decision to manage its activities from Syria, was the period when the Syrian administration would use the PKK as a political trump in relations with Turkey.

1.3.3. Policies of Turkey and Syria State on Border

In 1953, as a result of a clash between customs protection officers and smugglers in Mardin's Kızıltepe district, two customs guards of Turkey were killed. Therefore, with the command of prime minister Adnan Menderes, Turkey and Syria border was mined (Salık, 2011: 29). Turkey mined the 877-kilometer border with Syria to prevent smuggling between the years 1956-1959 unilaterally. Located along with the territories of Turkey and Syria, Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Mardin, and Şırnak were unilaterally mined with a total of about 23 347 hectares and covered with barbed wire. In other words, these fertile lands were made idle without agriculture since 1959. 75% of these lands in the mentioned area can be cultivated and consists of lands with high agricultural potential (Çullu et. al., 2015).

Both the PKK and smugglers infiltrated the mined areas using different methods. From 2004 to 2011, 204 Turkish Armed Forces personnel were killed and 742 Turkish Armed Forces personnel were injured due to mines.

In December 2011, it was decided to clear the mines on the Syrian border. This process was quite painful. Israeli companies won the tender, and as the Constitutional Court canceled this tender, the Ministry of National Defense was

authorized for these cleaning works. In May 2013, the Minister of National Defense, İsmet Yılmaz, announced that 1 million 150 thousand 297 square meters of land mines were cleared. 10 thousand 951 mines were cleared by the Turkish Armed Forces. The cleared routes became the routes used by Syrian refugees to come to Turkey (Tuksal, 2015: 224).

1.4. Adana Accord and Détente (1991-1998)

Until the signing of the Adana Protocol in 1998, Turkey-Syria relations were substantially the problem of water sharing and terrorism. According to Turkey, Syria was a country with constant problems in water sharing and was hosting terror. On the other hand, Syria regarded Turkey as a country that did not share water resources fairly, a pro-Western country, and a country claiming rights in their territories. Syria and Turkey signed protocols on terrorism, but as mentioned before, Syria ignored these treaties.

In 1998, terrorism became one of the tensest periods of the Turkey-Syria relations, because the actions of the PKK on the side of Syria territory were a clear threat to Turkey's security. President of that period Süleyman Demirel and Chief of General Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu hardened their rhetoric against Syria and signaled that military intervention would start if necessary. Turkey's political and military stability threw a step back to the Syrian government. Therefore, the Adana Protocol was signed with the mediation of Egypt in 1998 (Tür, 2016: 83-86):

The main points indicated in the Adana agreement were that Öcalan and PKK elements definitely would not be permitted to enter Syria, PKK camps in Syria would not be allowed to become active. In addition, many PKK members were arrested and brought to court. Moreover, the two countries also agreed on the following points:

1. Syria, based on the principle of mutuality, would not allow any action which arises from its region aimed at endangering the security and stability of Turkey. Syria would not supply weapons, logistic elements, financial assistance, and promotion actions of the PKK on its territory.
2. Syria admitted that the PKK is a terrorist organization. Syria banned any actions of the PKK and its associated organizations in its region.

3. Syria would not permit the PKK to set camps and additional facilities for training and shelter or have financial activities on its territory.
4. Syria would not permit PKK affiliates to use its land for transition to third countries.
5. Syria would practice all required steps to restrict the chieftain of the PKK terrorist organization from entering into Syrian territory and would direct its authorities at border points to that effect (Kibaroglu, 2008: 187-189).

Both sides agreed to install certain mechanisms for the effective and transparent implementation of the steps mentioned above. In this context, a direct phone link would be installed and performed between the high-level security officials of the two countries. The sides would appoint two special representatives for their strategic purposes and these administrators would be presented to the authorities of the host country by the heads of mission. Within the context of fighting terrorism, the Turkish side offered to the Syrian side to install a system that would enable the monitoring of security-enhancing actions and their effectiveness. The Syrian side declared that it would give this offer to its authorities for approval and would respond as soon as possible. In the light of the above, unless Syria rescinds from these acts, Turkey reserves the right to exercise its inherent right of self-defense. The memorandum also enabled the parties to set up some mechanisms to ensure and monitor the fulfillment of these commitments. Establishment of a direct telephone line between the high-level security officials of the two countries and the appointment of special representatives for security affairs at diplomatic representations are just a few of them. In addition, both Turkey and Syria will constantly monitor the sources, environments and methods of terrorist organizations in order to monitor and prevent terrorist organizations and their activities, and will take the necessary measures in this context. (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 1998).

During this period, with Syria's expulsion of Abdullah Öcalan from its territory, the relations between the two countries entered a normalization process. In 2000, the participation of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in Hafez Assad's funeral took the relations one step further. The beginning of the Bashir Assad period in Syria in 2000, AK Party's coming to power in Turkey in 2002, and AK Party's zero

problem policy against neighboring countries led to the relations between the two countries reaching a very different dimension (Tür, 2016: 94).

1.5. Turkey-Syria Relations between 1998 and 2011

In 2002, with the AK Party government, the development of relations with neighboring regions, economic interdependence, the desire to mediate between different actors, and putting soft power to the forefront emerged as the main objectives of Turkish foreign policy (Altunışık and Martin, 2011: 569). In this important transformation, the role of the system and the formation of the institutional infrastructure in previous years, as well as the new identity provided by the AK Party and the effects of this identity on foreign policy were the main factors. As a result of the intellectual transformation in terms of foreign policy, Turkey's relations with the region have improved both in the Middle East and in Syria in particular. With the AK party's search for new grounds in the Middle East region, Davutoğlu's "Strategic Depth Doctrine" (SDD) became fundamental to Turkish foreign policy (Gökcan, 2018: 172).

According to Davutoğlu who was appointed as Foreign Minister of Turkey in 2009, history and geography are of central importance for every actor and new paradigms can be built on these variables (Kalın, 2011: 10). Therefore, after the redefinition of interests, Turkey's role in international relations can be transformed and Turkey will become a central actor with the effect of historical, geographical and psychological factors besides its financial power. In order to achieve this, Turkey must redefine itself and leave its role as a bridge between the West and the Muslim world, and become an active actor in the East and the West in the East. In this way, problems with neighboring regions that do not arise only from material reality and in which psychological factors play an important role can be overcome. The way to do this is to discover Turkey's historical and geographical "identities" (Murinson, 2006: 953).

With Turkey's new role definition, cooperation and trust with other actors belonging to the same cultural regions as Turkey would increase, and as a result, it would be easier to build collective identities with these actors. In addition to this intellectual transformation in terms of foreign policy, the AK Party government's views on both the Middle East and Syria as a result of their own identities also

contributed to the increased cooperation with the region and Syria. According to the AK Party government, as a result of the re-discovery of historical and cultural ties with the influence of the Ottoman past, the prejudices between the parties could be destroyed, and with policies such as economic, humanitarian, and cultural interactions and economic and cultural interdependencies, Turkey could become a pioneer of regional security cooperation and an actor that provides security and stability in the region. (Öniş and Yılmaz, 2009: 9). The most important reflection of the positive role played by the Middle East in terms of the AK Party and foreign policy elites came to the fore in the example of Syria. For Turkey, Syria was one of the central actors of opening up to the Middle East. Emphasizing cultural and geographical proximity, the AK Party defined Syria as an actor where economic and cultural interdependence could be built more easily and Turkey could open up to the Middle East (Demirtaş, 2003: 115). In this context, in 2000s, Turkey attached great importance to developing its relations with Syria, which Turkey has radical social, historical, and cultural ties within every respect, within the framework of its policy of zero problems with its neighbors (Hinnebusch, 2015:16). Turkey-Syria High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, established to contribute to the peace, security, and stability, the sustainable economic development process of the region, and the mutual abolition of visas are concrete steps in this direction. While doing these, the main purpose was to establish mutual trust and cooperation between the people of the two countries. The parties sought ways to improve cooperation instead of highlighting the problems that could lead to conflict. (Şakar, 2006:58).

The most important example of the intellectual change in Turkish foreign policy in the first decade of the 2000s and the transformation of interests by this intellectual change has emerged with “the Davutoğlu Doctrine.” His doctrine was based on constructivist reading of the world affairs. In the SDD, Davutoğlu introduced the restructuring of Turkish foreign policy by reinterpreting Turkish history due to Turkey's geopolitical, geo-cultural, and geo-economic position in the world (Davutoğlu, 2001: 33). In SDD, Davutoğlu emphasized on the cultural and historical heritage of the Ottoman Empire, and investigated the geopolitical situation of Turkey, and suggested a re-interpretation of the Turkish identity, in which the religion of Islam and the history of the Ottoman Empire is given a pivotal role for cultural affinity with the Middle East. As the new Turkish society cherished this

newly defined Ottoman heritage, he believes that Turkey has a chance to become a regional power by improving its relations through cultural interaction and promotion of economic development and promote stability in the region (Davutoğlu, 2001:34-36).

According to Davutoğlu's SDD, Turkish-Syrian relations were affected by changes in Turkey in the AK Party period. As a result of the changes in Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan succeeded to establish a close relation with Syria. He managed to combine the constructivist features of the Turkish foreign policy (Aslan, et. al., 2016: 14). Examples of this can be that Turkey participated in political, cultural, and economic cooperation with Bashar Assad, mediated the peace talks between Israel and Syria, which will be analyzed in detail below (Grigoriadis, 2010: 6).

After President Bashar Assad came to power, Syria experienced a short period of democratization in human rights and freedom of expression. During this period, which is called the Damascus Spring, groups and parties that were not on the national progressive front were allowed to hold public meetings and express different views (Miş, 2009:213). However, this period ended when two independent members of parliament (Mumin Homsî and Riad Seif) were imprisoned on charges of attempting to change the Constitution illegally for demanding political reforms. From this date, President Assad left the political reforms aside and turned towards gradual reforms in the economic field, putting forward the problems faced by Syria in foreign policy (Gökcan, 2018: 178).

When Hafez Assad passed away in June 2000, he left behind a state with the undisputed supremacy of the Nusayris in the Ba'ath Party, an army and intelligence services. His son, Bashar Assad, who took over the power, continued his father's pragmatic foreign policy vision. Bashar Assad, like his father, followed a strategy of developing various alliances to save his country from isolation and strengthen his hand against Israel in times of regional and international crisis. In this context, Bashar Assad's policy of rapprochement with Turkey began and official visits were made between the two countries (Keskin, 2013). In this context, in particular, Turkey's President Ahmet Necdet Sezer made his first official visit to Syria for Hafez al-Assad's funeral in 2000. This visit had a positive impact on Syria and was regarded as the beginning of a new era in Turkey-Syria relations. (Ayhan, 2011: 7).

Moreover, according to Şakar, both our country and the Syrian President Bashar Assad attached importance to the development of bilateral relations in all areas. The efforts made by both sides in this direction were effective in the development of relations. In this context, mutual visits and contacts between the two countries at the president, prime minister, minister, and other levels also increased (Şakar, 2006:59).

Moreover, Abdul Halim Haddam, Syria's first Vice President, came to Ankara in 2000 to revive relations with Turkey. During his two-day visit, Haddam conveyed Assad's goodwill messages to President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and stated that they were determined to increase the relations in political, economic, military, and cultural fields (Kanat, 2012: 239).

The ground, softened by political visits, spread to the military areas in the following periods. The Syrian military delegation, which made official visits to Turkey twice in 2001, had taken the first step of a strategic change in the region (Aras, 2012: 43). Turkey announced that there could be joint military exercises in the following years. Thus, after Abdullah Öcalan's deportation from Syria, relations between the two countries began to return to normal in almost every field (Atlıoğlu, 2009: 72).

After 2002, when Syria had problems with the US and Europe, it needed relations with Turkey, and Turkey also believed that cooperation with Syria was necessary to improve economic ties with the states in the region (Eskioğlu, 2019: 75). Therefore, with AK Party, Turkey began to change its foreign policy and especially the paradigm of the Middle East. With this policy, Turkey abandoned its policy of being close to the West and keeping itself apart from east countries. For this reason, close relations started to be established with eastern countries as well as western countries (Aslan, et al., 2016: 19). This approach developed as a result of building foreign policy on different alternative axes instead of the West. More importantly, this approach became a prominent element of Turkey's new vision, as relations with the United States, including European Union membership and NATO membership, were weakened on the one hand, while relations with Turkey's neighbors in the Middle East and Central Asian republics strengthened on the other hand. The AK Party, which adopted its zero-problem foreign policy with neighbors as its primary approach towards the Middle East, gave particular importance to relations with Syria in this context (Eskioğlu, 2019: 78).

Against a possible US intervention in Syria, Bashar Assad made his first visit to Turkey in January 2004 to establish relations with its neighbors. This initiative was welcomed across the region. Adopting a zero-problem foreign policy, the AK Party gave importance to relations with Syria in this context (Hinnebusch, 2015: 14). Thus, Syrian President Bashar Assad's visit to Turkey in 2004 constituted a turning point in relations between the two countries. This visit of Bashar Assad has historical significance since it was the first visit from Syria at the level of the head of state and was a critical move that shaped the relations between the two countries. In December 2004, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a two-day visit to Syria, strengthening the rapprochement between Turkey and Syria. As a result of the visits that took place in the same year, developments ranging from increasing the trade volume between the two countries, facilitating visa procedures, clearing the border mined areas, and decision of a free trade agreement between the two countries were carried out (Ari, 2008: 639).

After the assassination of Rafic Bahaa El Deen Al Hariri in 2005, a Lebanese business tycoon and politician who served as the Prime Minister of Lebanon from 1992 to 1998 and again from 2000 until his resignation on 20 October 2004, Syrian President Bashar Assad and Lebanese politicians were shown as responsible for the assassination by the US and international forces. This assassination not only isolated Syria against the West, but also some Arab countries reacted to Assad. Being alone after the Hariri assassination, Syria found its way out in Turkey. The visit of the President of the time, Ahmed Necdet Sezer, right after the assassination, relieved Syria and caused it to get closer with Turkey. In the face of the political process that developed with the Hariri assassination investigation, the Turkish Government remained unresponsive for a long time and displayed an ineffective foreign policy behavior. The Turkish Government felt the need to make a statement only after the Security Council's final decision on Syria. In this statement, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul invited Syria to cooperate closely with the prosecutor and that they closely followed the developments after the Mehlis Report (Çelik, 2012: 139).

In 2008 Turkey did not hesitate to improve its relations with Syria and hosted the 2008 Syrian-Israeli peace talks, acting as a mediator. But in the same year, Israel's attack on Gaza led to the deterioration of relations between Israel and Turkey. Turkey-Israel relations with the Davos crisis in 2009 came to an almost breaking

point. The result of Turkey-Israel relations gained new momentum in Turkey-Syria relations. The two states organized a joint military exercise in April 2009 that disturbed Israel (Eskioğlu, 2019: 81).

Turkey-Syria relations developed rapidly in social and economic areas, including in the political sphere, as well. Developments in the political sphere softened problematic issues between the two countries. In other words, the cooperation between Syria and Turkey was not only limited to the political and economic fields; In addition, joint projects were developed in the energy field. The most concrete example of this is the establishment of Arab Pipeline and joint oil exploration companies. Therefore the political reasons, the economic partnership also benefited the positive development of the relations (Davutoğlu, 2010). Syria, which had difficulties in trading and attracting investment, started to pay more attention to Turkey in terms of economic output. Likewise, Turkey gave importance to Syria with its desire to open a market for Turkish goods in the Middle East. Developed relations between the two countries contributed to the development of relations in such areas as trade, investment, and tourism. In this context, with the Free Trade Agreement on January 1, 2007, there was a significant increase in the bilateral trade volume, and the trade volume, which was 796 million in 2006, rose to 2.5 billion dollars in 2010. Likewise, there was a significant increase in the investments of Turkish companies in Syria. Similarly, as a consequence of the Visa Exemption Agreement signed in 2009, the number of tourist visits between Turkey and Syria increased more than two times (the number of Turkish citizens who visited Syria in 2010 was 1, 6 million, and the number of Syrian citizens who come to Turkey was approximately one million). Moreover, President Abdullah Gül's visit to Syria confirmed that Turkey and Syria would act together on many issues, including security and the economy, ensuring energy and transport cooperation (Eskioğlu, 2019: 83).

During President Assad's visit to Turkey in September 2009, the joint political declaration signed between the two countries regarding the establishment of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council constituted a new turning point in the relations between the two countries. The first ministerial meeting of the council, which was established under the chairmanship of the Prime Ministers and had more than ten ministers from both countries, was held on 13 October 2009 in Aleppo and

Gaziantep, and the first meeting at the Prime Ministerial level was held in Damascus on 23 December 2009. During the Aleppo-Gaziantep meeting, Visa Exemption Agreement was signed. In the meeting held in Damascus, a total of 50 agreements were signed in political, security, health, agriculture, trade, energy, transportation, water, education, science, culture, environment, and some other fields (Benek, 2016: 176).

In October 2009, the parties mutually lifted the visa applications and removed the obstacles to humanitarian mobility and the acceleration of commercial relations. In 2010 council meetings at the level of Ministers (2-3 October, Latakia) and Prime Ministers (20-21 December, Ankara) a total of 13 more documents were signed. In a meeting held at the level of Foreign Ministers in Istanbul on 10 June 2010, a High-Level Quartet Cooperation Council was established among Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. With this mechanism, it was aimed to ensure the free movement of the citizens and goods between the four countries and establish more cooperation in political, economic, cultural, and other fields. Close relations of cooperation with Turkey and Syria regarding the use of transboundary water also entered a new process. In 2009, the Syrian Minister of Irrigation and the Turkish Minister of Environment signed a memorandum for the construction of the 'Friendship Dam' on the Turkey-Syria border. The agencies responsible – the Turkish General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSİ) and the Syrian General Company for Hydraulic Studies – met in January 2010 and agreed that the feasibility studies and final design proposal be ready by October 2010. In this context, the Friendship Dam is the best example that shows the peak in relations before the civil war in Syria (Benek, 2016: 177-178).

Turkey-Syria relations in 2010 and 2011 continued to improve in every aspect. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu declared the common slogan of the two countries as "Common destiny, common history, and common future". At the construction of the Turkey-Syria Friendship Dam in February 2001, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that "We are the nations that history has made us brothers to each other. Throughout history, our destiny has always been common; our hearts beat together" (Benek, 2016: 179).

But a month after, anti-regime demonstrations began in Syria in March 2011. Turkey was left in dilemma in its relations with Syria. The Arab Spring forced the

AK Party, which pursued a zero-problem policy with its neighbors, to elect among the people who demand democracy from the regimes ruling countries such as Egypt, Libya, and Syria with which they had good relations. At this point, although Turkey remained silent in explaining its policy towards these countries, it took a stance against the opposition fighting against the regime (Keskin, 2013). However, The Syrian Uprising of March 2011 interrupted the deepening of an amicable relationship between Turkey and Syria. With renewed Turkey-Syria hostility, the relation of the two states was sharply securitized, and mutual threat perceptions reemerged (Hinnebusch, 2015: 15).



Chapter 2:

SYRIA CIVIL WAR (2011)

The process that started in Tunisia in 2010 and called the "Arab Spring / Awakening" affected many countries in the Middle East. One of the countries was Syria. The uprising caused thousands of deaths, forced immigration of millions and collapsed state institutions to a wide extent. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria and, and determine the process how Turkey involved in this civil war and its consequences on Turkey's security.

2.1. Arab Spring in the Middle East

People saw the Arab Spring as an opportunity to get rid of harsh and dictatorial governments. In some countries, people were able to get what they demanded but in some countries, the onset of the Arab spring made the bad situation even much more difficult and led countries into civil war, which resulted in millions of death. As in other Middle Eastern countries, the people in Arab countries harbored grudges against the state governments for years because of the oppression inflicted on them. Therefore, the Arab Spring can be seen as a reflection of the hatred accumulated in these years (Öztekin and Akkas, 2014: 82).

In 2010, the so-called Arab Spring protests broke out in Tunisia and spread to North Africa and Middle East countries. It caused the overthrow of governments in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, civil war and foreign intervention in Syria and Libya, and reforms in Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.

Mohammed Bouazizi, a Tunisian peddler, set himself on fire in protest for his ill-treatment by the security forces, lighting up the events. Educated and unemployed young people quickly organized through social media, and riots spread. It initiated a wave of revolt known as the Arab Spring, whose consequences continue still today. The so-called indestructible powers were destroyed. The Arab Spring changed the dynamics that were considered immutable in the Middle East region (Oğuzlu, 2011: 9). The leaders, who could not predict that the events would reach this point, were caught unprepared. Changes in the countries were far beyond the anticipated. These changes were supported by many developed countries and were described by different names such as the Arab Spring, the Arab Awakening, the Arab Revolution, the Arab Revolt, or the Arab Transformation (Bingöl, 2013: 25).

Three main topics can be considered for the transformation in the region where Arab Spring spread. These are getting rid of the established regime, transition to democracy, and consolidation of democracy. This is not a definitive model, but a guide for changing the political structure. In fact, transformation does not necessarily have to be with revolution, it can be the administration's response to the public's dissatisfaction with reforms. We can see this transformation in the Arab Spring. In some countries, the regime was overthrown by changing the administration, while in others, reforms were applied (Rozsa, 2012: 2).

Arab peoples experienced a profound change in which they would have a say in the administration for the first time by overthrowing the monarchical Regimes. Dynasties in Morocco, Jordan left their places to representative governments. However, with the failure of legitimate governments to replace the destroyed governments, permanent sectarian, political, and ethnic conflicts were fueled.

There are many reasons for Arab Spring, but the most important ones can be referred to as historical causes, economic causes, and sect and ethnic causes (Öztekin and Akkas, 2014: 77).

Historical causes: After the September 11 attacks, while increasing its presence in the Middle East, the US introduced the Great Middle East Project. It is claimed that the project, which has been debated more since 2002, aims to democratize the countries of the region in general, integrate them with capitalism through moderate Islamist governments, and control radical Islamic movements against the West and the US. As Bingöl states, the majority of the Arab world sees the Greater Middle East Project as a covert game of Islamophobia and imperialism. According to them, subjects such as freedom, democracy, and human rights are being used to cover up this hidden purpose (Bingöl, 2013: 30-34). The US provided the continuity of the regional leaders and regimes for many goals one of which is Israeli. The US supported leaders who establish relations to protect Israel's integrity and sovereignty (Oğuzlu, 2011). Other important reasons are the safe and affordable sale of oil to the West and prevent other influential forces in the region.

Instead of building democracy here, the US preferred to strike a balance in favor of the status quo to ensure its security. Antidemocratic leaders are supported as

long as they serve US politics. All these caused the public to adopt anti-American and anti-Israeli views and strengthen radical Islam (Oğuzlu, 2011).

Islamic revolution in 1979, rose in the Middle East and became one of the fundamental dynamics. Iran's gaining power in the region, exporting its ideology, adopting the US as an enemy, and intimidating Gulf countries that cooperate with it caused Iran to be considered the biggest threat in the region (Oğuzlu, 2011). After the US lost its strong friend in the region, it used Iraq as a shield to block political Islam. This situation deepened the Arab-Persian distinction. However, with Iraq's attack on Kuwait in the second Gulf War, a serious separation between the Arabs for the first time began, and Iraq was injured in this hegemony race. These events caused the USA to become more involved in the region and enabled the US to keep its permanent troops in the Middle East (Uysal and Gökçen, 2015: 113).

Economic reasons: The Middle East is in a strategic location where many great powers have political and economic interests. For years this region has been referred to with instabilities, financial difficulties, despotic governments, radical currents. The Middle East is rich in natural resources. However, the social tension is very high, as there are imbalances in the revenues of these natural resources. The income obtained from natural resources is not reflected equally to society. While the state and its supporters live in luxury, most of the people live in poverty (Göçer and Çınar, 2015: 51).

Behind the Arab Spring, there are economic difficulties and people's demands for democracy (Springborg, 2011: 85). In these countries, imbalances in income distribution, widespread poverty, corruption, and corrupt management systems are among serious problems (Bingöl, 2012: 541). In addition, nepotism, the passing of management from father to son, and the inability of the people to have a say in the administration are the other causes (Arı, 2012: 73). The high unemployment rate, especially among educated youth, has caused social tensions in Tunisia and Egypt.

Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Syria, and Morocco are relatively poor countries in terms of natural resources. In these countries, which lost significant income with the effect of the 2008 global economic crisis, the increase in food and energy prices in 2010 increased the unrest (Öztürkler, 2012: 54). Although countries such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Algeria are rich in natural resources, the income is not equally

shared among its citizens. Therefore, large masses have been deprived of this (Şensoy, 2012). In this context, the continuing deficiencies in infrastructure, education, and health services benefited by large masses of people have led to the consolidation of negative feelings against the administration in society.

Ethnic and sectarian differences: According to Rozsa, considering the Arab Spring from a sectarian perspective, the Sunni-Shia difference and tension deepened. In this sectarian division, although Shiites and Sunnis are from opposing political formations, they do not rely on solid foundations (Rozsa, 2012:9). For example, although Iran and Syria are formed under the Shiite roof, Iran is an Islamic state governed by Sharia, while Syria is a secular dictatorship. There is not an obvious alliance in Sunni countries either. While Saudi Arabia was firmly against Iran, Egypt preferred the way of dialogue. In short, sectarianism is an important concept for the Middle East. It played a role in the Arab Spring process, but it did not completely shape the Middle East alone (Springborg, 2011: 86).

The protests that started in Tunisia with the emergence of the corruption allegations included in the Wikileaks documents spread rapidly when Mohammad Bouazizi burning himself on 8 December 2010. After its outbreak in Tunisia, protest and marches began in Algeria on 28 December 2010, in Lebanon on 12 January 2011, in Jordan on 14 January, in Mauritania, Sudan, and Oman on 17 January, in Yemen on 18 January, on 21 January in Saudi Arabia, in Egypt on January 25, in Syria on January 26, in Djibouti on January 28, in Morocco on January 30, in Iraq on February 10, in Bahrain on February 14 and Iran, in Libya on 17 February, in Kuwait on 18 February and in Western Sahara on 20 February (Diriöz, 2011: 81).

While in some countries the government changed hands, for example, in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Kuwait, Yemen, and Jordan; Some countries on the other hand makes some revolution in their countries. In this context, economic and social rights were given to the people in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Bahrain (Altundeğer and Yılmaz, 2016: 296). But In Syria, the civil war started and continues today. The number of people who have lost their lives so far has exceeded half a million.

2.1.1. Syria Civil War

Since Hafez Assad came to power with a coup, an authoritarian regime with a democratic appearance has been founded in Syria. The Assad Family, who placed members of his family and sect in the strategic locations of the country, ensured his continuity until his death. After he died, his son came to his place and continued the same bullying. Although the hopes of some interest groups and opposition groups emerged with the new administration, they disappeared within a few years. Bashar Assad took socioeconomic steps from 2000, when he came to power. But he neglected political reforms and continued to keep the opposition under pressure. All opposition groups (Muslims, Christians, Kurds, and Secular Groups) united and declared the Damascus Declaration in 2005. Thereupon, Assad took a stand and suppressed all opponents (Şen, 2013: 57-59).

The popular uprisings that started in Tunisia worried the Syrian Government. The regime argued that this wave would not affect them and claimed that Syria was different from other countries (Şen, 2013: 60). But after the overthrow of the authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, the Syrian city of Daraa witnessed the first protest in March 2011. While the protesters initially demanded reforms, they later demanded that President Bashar Assad resign. Assad first implemented some reforms in March 2011 when the events began, and in this context, the state of emergency, which had been going on for 47 years, was lifted. The Syrian Army, which responded vehemently to the peaceful protests, increased hatred. Assad likened the opposition to armed criminal gangs and accused them of using the country's heterogeneous population and inciting sectarian differences to turn to violence. The repression, arbitrary arrests, and disproportionate use of force by the security forces did not decrease. However, Elections were held in February 2012, and for the first, the opposition was able to enter parliament with 10% deputies, but this was not regarded as an adequate reform (Bingöl, 2012: 3-4). Assad described these events as "conspiracy." The regime, therefore, tried to suppress the uprisings by using violence (Rozsa, 2012: 11).

As mentioned above, there were various reasons for the protests in the Syria. The most common reasons for the civil war in the Syria can be referred to as economic and social reasons.

We can summarize the economic and social reasons for the civil war in Syria as follows: Syria has a fragmented ethnic structure and religious identity. Economic and political resources are in the hands of the Nusayris, which is about 12% of the Syrian society. Large amounts of military expenditures and financial corruption are the main reasons for the war in Syria. Instead of investing and reforming in industrialization, the country concentrated on service sectors such as banking, tourism, and trade. Nepotism has reached a high level, and the system has turned into crony capitalism (Şen, 2013: 60-63). Huntington explains the reason for all this violence and instability in Syria as follows: Even though the groups that have recently entered the political arena demand a rapid change, instability, and disorder arise due to the slow development and change value of the political structures and institutions and this causes conflict (Huntington, 1996: 4). All this caused the middle and lower classes to become even more impoverished and slumped into an impasse.

The overthrow of the 30-year rule of Hosni Mubarak with the Arab Spring, deeply affected not only Egypt but also the peoples of the region. This historical revolution affected Bahrain, Libya, Morocco with the domino effect and even caused the death of Gaddafi. In this period when popular movements led to great revolutions, two female doctors were talking on the phone in the city of Dera in Syria; They expressed their intention as Hosni Mubarak has fallen, and wished the same for Syria. With the wiretapping of the telephones by the intelligence agents, female doctors were arrested and punished. For this reason, 12-13 children, relatives of one of the women, wrote on the walls the slogan "The people want the order to be destroyed", which is chanted the most in the Arab world. Upon the complaint, these children were taken in and subjected to various tortures. Thereupon, the tribal chiefs asked the children to be released, but they also faced insults. The first protests in Syria were due to these events. The people who were subjected to harsh interventions and those who were killed caused the incidents to grow and the riot wave to expand to Damascus, Latakia, Humus, Banyas, Hama, Qamishli, and Aleppo (Oğuzlu, 2012: 42). Regime opponents were supported by the US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, and they stressed that Assad is not the legitimate representative of the people in Syria. On the other hand, Russia, China, and Iran support the Regime in Syria (Şen, 2013: 63-66).

In the first year of the uprisings, more than 9000 people were killed in the fight of the Free Syrian Army and the National Syrian Council against the Syrian Regime. These violent struggles spread to all provinces except Aleppo and Damascus until 2012. However, after 2012, the war affected the two cities and caused thousands of people to migrate. These actions, aimed primarily at political freedoms, later turned into bloody conflicts. In 2012, international committees stated that the events in Syria turned into a civil war. The Arab League canceled Damascus's membership and, from 2011, it focused on resolving the events by sending international arbitrators. The Arab League also called on the United Nations Security Council, which was vetoed by Russia and China. The United Nations Secretary-General was appointed as the "Peace Envoy" and in March 2012 he submitted a six-point peace plan to be accepted by both the government and the Free Syrian Army. (Rozsa, 2012: 11).

As the humanitarian situation worsened, the international community was divided over how to act. While the European Union and the US called Assad to resign, Russia and China continued to support the Regime and blocked the efforts of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and other countries. Moscow attaches importance to Syria as it is a naval base in the Mediterranean and an important arms market for Russia. Syria has very few supporters in the region. Iran and Lebanon Hezbollah stand close to Assad, and Tehran is trying to reduce the impact of sectarian disadvantage by offering military and economic aid while Saudi Arabia and Qatar armed the opposition (Rozsa, 2012: 11; Bozkurt, 2014: 622). Turkey, at first, tried to be cautious, but as a result of its security policy, and thousands of refugees, Turkey found itself in the events.

Although all groups united under the roof of opposition against Assad in the first days of the civil war, this roof was dissolved in the following days, and new actors emerged. The parties of the Syrian civil war can be divided into four main groups. These are Assad Regime, Opposition, Kurds, and Radical Islamic Groups (Duran and Özdemir, 2012: 190).

With the onset of the events, Assad forces gave a harsh response to the opposition and after a while, the first opposition military organization, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), was established. It was founded in July 2011 by Riyad al-Assad, who resigned from his post as a colonel in the Syrian army.

The policy of zero problems with neighbors and the goal of becoming a regional leader state in the Middle East left Turkey in a tight but complex tangle of relations with its neighbors and other Arab states. In order not to lose the support of its supporters and to neutralize the opposition, the Bashar Assad administration on the one hand lifted the 48-year-long state of emergency, declared a general amnesty for political prisoners, accepted the law that allowed the transition to multi-party life, on the other hand, continued harsh interventions with violence. The fact that many Syrian citizens died, caused the reforms to be meaningless and ineffective. The use of military force to suppress the rebellions in the cities of Hamah - Homs - Latakia and Dayr Az Zaw led to an influx of refugees to Turkey. This situation, on the one hand, caused political problems between the two states, on the other hand, it caused Turkey to support the parallel state organization in Syria, namely the Syrian National Council. Syria's political stability and territorial integrity are important for Turkey. Because, as a result of the political instability that may occur in Syria, a Kurdish-dominated autonomous state may be established on the territory of Northern Syria. This situation will create a suitable environment for the terrorist organization PKK in line with its goals. The realization of such a formation will cause a troubling environment for Turkey, which has been fighting against the terrorist organization for years and whose sensitivity on this issue is known by all states. On the one hand, Turkey wanted an end to the violence in Syria, the establishment of a democratic regime that respects human rights, and economic integration with Arab states, on the other hand, it experienced uneasiness on issues such as socio-cultural, economic, political, humanitarian, PKK, Sunni-Shiite conflicts.

The Syrian Opposition, which met in Antalya for the first time in June 2011, established the "Syrian National Council (SNC)" in Istanbul at the end of August of the same year, and Abdulbasit Seyda was elected as its leader. Political formations included in SNC were Muslim Brotherhood and Supporters, Damascus Declaration, Syrian Local Coordination Committees, Syrian Supreme Revolutionary Council, Mass of Independent Liberals, Secular, and Democratic Syrians Coalition, Syrian Revolution General Commission, Damascus Spring (Rabii El-Demashk), Nationalist Personalities. The emergence of these actors constantly changed the balances (Oğuzlu, 2012: 46)

The Syrian Opposition in which there were the soldiers, who left the Syrian army, was recognized by many countries as the legitimate opposition of Syria. The political wing of the group is the Syrian National Council. It is stated that in 2013 it had 40,000 fighters. It aimed to overthrow the Assad Regime. The Council took weapons, logistical, and intelligence support from the United States, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey (Ulutaş, and et. al., 2015: 24).

Failure to reach a political solution at the Geneva Meetings brought the military opposition to the fore. However, the FSA, which emerged to represent the entire opposition, failed to do so, and many opposing groups emerged independently.

Jihadist groups dominated the opposition over time. Especially the rise of ISIS in the field had a significant effect on the transformation of the opposition. ISIS, which declared war on the opposition in January 2014, captured many big cities such as Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor. As a result of the emergence of ISIS, the opposition began to lose its power. Positions were lost in areas of Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus against Assad and had to withdraw from the east of the country completely (Ulutaş, 2015: 9). With these difficulties, the opposition fought among themselves on the one hand, and on the other hand, they tried to establish a unit organization called the Damascus Front. Founded in 2014, this coalition is still not sufficiently integrated. The group carried out attacks against the Assad Regime. It signed a joint agreement with YPG (Eskioğlu, 2019: 83).

In short, at the beginning of the war, SNC was recognized as the sole representative opposition by Turkey, the United States, but SNC could not control the process in Syria successfully. It was criticized in the international arena because it could not cover all segments of the Syrian society and could not affect the solution process sufficiently. A few months later, it convened at the Doha Congress and tried to cover all the opposition in Syria under the name of the Syrian Revolution and the National Coalition of the Opposition Forces, but could not survive the disintegration (Göçer and Çınar, 2015: 67).

Undoubtedly, the civil war in Syria had regional and global effects. The most obvious were the terrorist attacks of ISIS and the problem of Syrian migrants (Duran and Özdemir, 2012: 191).

2.1.2. Turkey's First Approach to the Syrian Regime

According to the AK Party administration, as a result of mutual prejudices, relations with Syria followed an irrational course throughout history, and the cooperation between the two sides could not reach its real potential. In other words, as a result of the negative definition of the "other" by both actors, the cultural and historical realities between the parties were ignored. Therefore, diplomatic, cultural, and social interactions to be developed with Syria would increase Turkey's role and prestige in Syria and the Middle East. For the AK Party, positive views about the change in power in Syria and the Bashar Assad administration would play an important role in achieving the desired results of these interactions. In terms of AK Party management and Davutoğlu, Bashar Assad, who came to power in 2000, differed from other leaders in the region in terms of being the representative of the new generation and emphasizing the implementation of reforms. Therefore, in terms of the AK Party administration, Syria's transforming institutional identity had an effect that would facilitate cooperation with Syria (Oğuzlu, 2011: 34).

As Hinnebusch stated, after the death of Hafez Assad in Syria, Bashar Assad replaced him and the Bashar Assad administration redefined the interests of Syria as the representative of the younger generation and as a new identity (Hinnebusch, 2003: 190). When Bashar Assad came to power, he explained that Syria needed a new economy, administration, and international relations in order to be a part of the "outside world" and stated that these goals would be possible with new approaches in the administration and society. However, it is difficult to say that the Bashar Assad period is a sharp break from the Hafez Assad period. Nevertheless, Syria developed new initiatives under Bashar Assad's rule, and its transformed corporate identity was also transformed its social identity to a certain extent. In the Bashar Assad period, even though the reforms were generally aimed at domestic politics, it became an important goal for Syria to have minimum problems with its neighbors, and the transformation experienced in Turkey throughout the 2000s was started to be taken as an example for Syria as well. During the Bashar Assad period, both the technocrat and limited liberal identities of the new administration and the reforms in Syria transformed Syria's institutional identity, although not radically. This transformation contributed positively to Syria's relations with Turkey.

In the first decade of the 2000s, with the influence of regional developments, Syria tried to establish close relations with western actors, especially the European Union, in order to continue the reform process and end the international isolation in Syria, and for this purpose, Turkey became a door opening to the west for Syria. In the context of relations with the EU, Syria signed a cooperation agreement worth 200 million dollars with the EU in 2006 (Miş, 2008: 313), a cooperation and partnership agreement in 2008 (Miş, 2009: 243), and a memorandum of understanding worth 170 million dollars in 2010 (Yetim, 2012:266). In addition, after Turkey's EU membership process, Syria got closer to Turkey and Turkey became a linking country for Syria both in terms of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership program (Larrabee and Lesser, 2003: 146) and in terms of relations with the EU and Syria (Miş, 2006: 241). Beyond the rapprochement of both countries with the EU, the military intervention of the US in Iraq in 2003 strengthened the tendency of cooperation between the two actors. Syria's concerns about the possible military intervention of the US in Syria, the concerns of both Syria and Turkey about the territorial integrity and instability of Iraq, and the developments in Northern Iraq motivated the parties for cooperation and increased regional cooperation between the parties. This cooperation has contributed positively to the transformation of the perception of the other. But Turkey's attitude towards Syria completely changed with the outbreak of the 2011 crisis (Okyay, 2017: 829).

In terms of Turkey's foreign policy, the stability of neighboring countries and the Middle East region is significant. For this reason, recent social events in Syria pose a threat to the peace and the stability of both Syria and the Middle East region in general. Therefore, from the moment the crisis started in Syria, Turkey suggested the Syrian regime compensate people's demands and make reforms, and expressed its readiness to provide the necessary contribution and assistance to the Syrian administration in this regard (Okyay, 2017: 837).

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu started to give suggestions to the Syrian leader Assad to stop killing the opposition and implement the expected political reforms. These suggestions continued throughout 2011. At this stage, Turkey-Syria relations deteriorated with increasing momentum. President Gül stated that the operation that caused deaths in Syria during Ramadan could not be accepted and said "it cannot remain silent about

this "; British Foreign Secretary Hague, also expressed support by saying, "Of course, for it to be effective, pressure must come not only from Western states but also from Arab states and Turkey." EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Ashton also announced that the EU would impose new sanctions on Syria (Çağlar, 2012: 40).

Prime Minister Erdoğan, making a remarkable statement on the intensification of the conflicts, said that Syria is a "domestic policy issue" for Turkey. This statement demonstrates how much Turkey is involved in the Syrian issue and its determination. Erdoğan, in a program, devoted most of his speech to the Syrian issue and said, "I wonder if we can handle many issues so far. We were very patient, wondering if what was said would find its place." Indicating that Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu would go to Syria on August 9, he continued as follows: "They will hold the necessary meetings with them there. In these meetings, our messages will now be delivered decisively to them. The next process will be shaped according to the answer to be given. But now we have come to the last moments of patience, and for this, I am sending the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Syria on Tuesday in this process. They will make the necessary negotiations with them there. Because we do not see the Syria issue as an external issue, as an external problem. The Syrian issue is our internal issue. Because we have 850 kilometers of border with Syria, we have ties of kinship, history, and culture. Therefore, what is happening here will never allow us to remain spectators. On the contrary, we have to hear the voices there, we do, and of course, we have to do what is necessary." (Milliyet, 2012)

Prime Minister Erdogan, at the Second African Continent Muslim Countries and Communities Religious Leaders Summit held in Istanbul Dolmabahçe Palace, hosted by the Presidency of Religious Affairs, underlined that in response to the violence that Syria inflicted on his people "the persecution of Muslims against Muslims cannot be tolerated." Erdogan also sends Assad the message: "We never consider it humane to fire tanks, artillery, and guns against those who demand their rights and a humane life in Syria. Power with tanks and artillery is up to a point. The day will come, you too will go; because that seat is not permanent, it is temporary. Sooner or later the oppressed will win. God is always on the side of the righteous." (Milliyet, 2012).

The turning point in Turkey's intense diplomatic contacts with the aim of persuasion came in the summer of 2011 (Kohen, 2011) Foreign Minister Davutoğlu went to Damascus for the last time in August 2011 for a diplomatic solution, and tried to persuade the Syrian leader Assad to end the violence and start implementing reforms. Prior to this trip in August, Prime Minister Erdoğan evaluated Secretary-General Moon's statement in June regarding the long-standing efforts of the United Nations as follows: "These are also the signs that a new process will begin." (CNN Türk, 2012). Therefore, the last tour of persuasion in August took place despite the hopes from the United Nations beginning to fade. However, Turkey also considered this trip as the last chance of persuasion since it saw the United Nations' solution horizon as closed.

In addition to the obstruction of the United Nations process, as a result of the fact that its persuasion process did not lead to a change in the administration in Syria, Turkey switched from the persuasion process to the initiative process for change. It is possible to summarize Turkey's definition of the situation or perception of crisis at this stage as follows: In an environment where the Syrian leader, who is reported to have caused thousands of deaths and is also condemned by the United Nations that Assad does not listen to the "friendly advice", on the contrary, he escalated the violence by driving his tanks on the people, and therefore diplomatic negotiations had to be terminated. This kind of perception was effective at the level of decision-makers, despite the lack of concrete international support.

Apart from the moral support statements, whether at the UN, NATO, or individual state level, Turkey could not find concrete support. However, decision-makers who saw the Syria policy as a subset of the 'new Middle East' policy that came with the Arab Spring wave continued to act decisively, although international support was weak. Touching upon how the Arab Spring affected the political geography, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu also stated Turkey's policy within this framework: "The new Middle East is emerging. We will continue to be the owner, pioneers, and servants of this Middle East. In the new Middle East, the will of the people, the voice of the people, the voice of justice will dominate instead of oppression, and dictatorship. Turkey will be the staunch defender of this voice everywhere. With the new Middle East, there will be a new generation of peace, stability, and prosperity around Turkey. We will develop our economic development,

democratization, and international reputation together with this new Middle East”(Milliyet, 2012) The 'new Middle East, which is described as a reflection of the values of the European Union in the Middle East, was depicted as needing the 'strong defender of the voice of the people as well as the values mentioned, and the direction of the Arab Spring was drawn and its protector was determined. But in many such statements, there is hardly any sign of strategic calculation. Political weight comparisons, system and sub-system balance of power, and post-invasion developments were not mentioned.

In this context, the Arab Spring forced the AK Party, which pursued a "zero problems policy with its neighbors" to support dictators or the people who demand democracy. At this point, at first, Turkey remained silent before taking any steps and emphasized the territorial integrity of Syria. Later, Turkey supported people who demanded freedom and democracy (Ataman and Özdemir, 2018: 17). Therefore, Arab Spring deeply affected the relations between Turkey and Syria.

When the developments in the Syrian crisis are considered in terms of Turkey, in 2011, with the outbreak of events, Turkish authorities tried to persuade Bashar al-Assad to make reforms in his country. In this context, some Turkish Foreign Affairs bureaucrats, especially Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the period, had negotiations with Bashar Assad on the crisis. Despite all these talks, Bashar Assad's unwillingness to reform became the first bearing to halt Turkey's relations with Syria dynamics (Okuy, 2017: 839).

Therefore, it can be said that, at first, Turkey used the method to convince the Assad regime to make reforms. But these methods did not work out. Thus, Turkey had to take a clear stance against Syria for its security. As a result of various terrorist actions that originated in Syria, the civil war of Syria spread to Turkey and resulted in the deaths of Turkish citizens, especially in Hatay. With its moral support to the Syrian people and opening the borders to Syrian guests, and more importantly, paving the way for the opposition to organize in Turkey are the concrete steps Turkey took in this process against the Syrian regime (Duran and Özdemir, 2012: 196).

2.2. Turkey's Support to Syrian Opposition

Turkey's policy towards the Syrian opposition was created to eliminate the clutter of legitimate opposition. In this context, Turkey attached importance to the continuation of negotiations with the opposition to achieve lasting peace in Syria. For this reason, Turkey constantly emphasized that the legitimate opposition should be supported on international platforms by holding talks with the civilian wing of the opposition at the highest level. In this context, four important meetings were held under the name of "Friends of Syria Group" the first in Tunisia and the others in Istanbul, Paris, and Marrakech (Walker, 2012: 3).

As a result of the UN's inability to realize an initiative to facilitate the solution in Syria due to the veto of Russia and China, the "Friends of Syria" meetings, first held in Tunisia on February 24, 2012, initiated a new process. These meetings aimed to intensify the efforts to strengthen the Syrian opposition and ensure that these groups are gathered under a single unit by ensuring the legitimacy of the opposition to assist the opposition at various levels. In this sense, four large meetings with international participation were held in Tunisia, Istanbul, Paris, and Marrakech in 2012 (Çağlar, 2012: 42).

Representatives from more than 70 countries attended the first meeting in Tunisia. Russia and China did not send representatives to the meeting. At the meeting, attention was drawn to the humanitarian tragedy and civilian massacres in Syria, and a call was made for an urgent solution. In addition, it was emphasized that the sanctions on the Assad administration be continued. At the meeting, it was agreed that The Syrian National Council is one of the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people. Although establishing an "Arab force" for intervention was proposed in the meeting, no concrete result was obtained. It was proposed to hold elections under the supervision of the Arab League for Syrian leader Bashar Assad to hand over power and establish a transitional government. The countries participating in the meeting were declared "Enemies of Syria" by Bashar Assad (Çağlar, 2012: 48).

The second meeting of Friends of Syria was held in Istanbul on 1 April 2012, and a total of 83 countries and many international organizations, including representatives of the United Nations, the Arab Union, the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Gulf Cooperation Organization and the

African Union, participated in the meeting. On the eve of the meeting, the explanation that the Syrian administration accepted the Kofi Annan's Peace Plan, announced on 27 December 2011, was met with suspicion by the international community (Akpınar, 2015: 256).

Stating that the meeting was a clear message to both the Syrian administration and the UN Security Council, Davutoğlu indicated that such a meeting was held because he could not receive the necessary support from the Security Council for the protection of the Syrian people and fulfillment of their legitimate demands. One of the most important decisions taken at the meeting was the call for the Syrian opposition to be recognized as the official interlocutor. In addition, a general framework for how the transition process should be was shaped at the conference. Accordingly, it was emphasized that the institutions of Syria should be protected, and the new Syria should be a parliamentary democracy. In addition, after the meeting, assistance to the Free Syrian Army in certain areas was also put into practice (Can, 2017: 186)

The third meeting of Friends of Syria was held in Paris on July 6 2012 with the participation of representatives from more than 100 countries and Syrian opposition groups. At the end of the meeting, it was decided to work together to tighten the sanctions against Syria and increase the support given to the opposition. At the meeting held in Geneva on June 30, 2012, it was emphasized that Russia and China should end their support to the Syrian administration, and it was called for the implementation of Article 7 of the UN convention (Walker, 2012: 4).

One of the most important agenda items of the Friends of Syria meetings was the support for the Syrian national opposition. However, the Syrian National Council, which was accepted as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people at the Friends of Syria meetings, could not achieve what was expected in terms of effectiveness and inclusiveness despite all efforts. For this reason, the organization was accused of not being inclusive and being influenced by certain groups. In addition, many opposition groups and actors, especially the Syrian Kurdish groups, did not participate in the Syrian National Council for various reasons. With the ineffectiveness of the National Council, the efforts to establish an organization with broad participation yielded as a result of the meetings held in Doha on 8 and 11 November under the name of the National Revolution Initiative. The organization

aimed to create a common platform that would unite all Syrian opponents. After the Doha meeting, the new organization worked intensively to bring the Syrian opposition together, to end the conflicts between the opposition, and to be recognized as legitimate by the international community (Doocy, et. al., 2015:33).

The new organization was recognized as legitimate at the fourth meeting of Friends of Syria in Marrakech on 12 December 2012. The most important result of the meeting, in which 114 countries and 13 international organizations were represented, was the participation and official recognition of the "National Coalition of Syrian Opposition and Revolutionary Forces." During the meeting, issues of how to ensure the political transition process of Syria were discussed. Moreover, the framework of the issues that would support the opposition was re-shaped (Doocy, et. al., 2015:36).

National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces which can be described as the civilian wing of the Syrian opposition, is a formation accepted as Turkey's official interlocutor. On January 19 2013, Turkey enabled the discussion of the establishment of a transitional government in Syria by hosting this institution meeting in Istanbul. However, the establishment of the provisional government was postponed, because the institution was not a homogeneous structure and the conflicts within the group slowed down the decision-making mechanism. The military wing of the institution was Free Syrian Army (FSA). Turkey supported FSA and provided equipment assistance (Akpınar, 2016: 259).

In conclusion, Turkey tried to re-establish its relations with Syria after the death of Hafez Al Assad. The outbreak of the civil war in the country forced Turkey to take a position in this conflict. At the first days of the conflict Turkey tried to persuade Bashar Al Assad to meet the demands of the people. However as the violence escalated Turkey sided with the opposition and this attitude had its consequences on Turkey.

CHAPTER 3:

CIVIL WAR and SECURITY ISSUES for TURKEY

The civil war in Syria has not only local but also international effects and consequences. Millions of people were displaced from their homes, and millions of people have lost their lives. Having the longest land border with Syria, all the actions occurring in Syria directly affected Turkey's security. The involvement of the various terrorist groups in the civil war and their terror attacks near the border forced Turkey to intervene. In this context, as a result of various terrorist attacks that took place in Syria, Turkey intervened in different terrorist acts in Syria both to protect its border and to ensure the security of the country. Therefore, in this part of the thesis, the effects of terrorist attacks on Turkey, and Turkey's response to those events will be discussed.

As a result of the crisis in Syria, Turkey security was affected negatively. Especially the cities on the Syrian border were adversely affected by the bombs and bullets dropped by Syria. Some of these are those:

Fall of Artillery Shells on Akçakale: In October 2012, during Syria's conflicts with the opposition in the area of Tal Abyad, cannonballs fell in Turkey's neighborhood. Five people died, and ten people were injured. Thereupon, some Syrian targets determined within the framework of the rules of engagement were damaged by the Turkish Armed Forces (Çetin, 2012).

Cilvegözü Border Gate Attack: On February 11, 2013, eighteen people died, and twenty-four people were injured as a result of the explosion of the vehicle left in the buffer zone at the Cilvegözü border gate. The attack was carried out because the border gate was under the control of the opposition. It is thought that the explosion was carried out by the secret intelligence service of the Syrian regime (Karakoç and Doğruel, 2015: 361).

Syria's Downing of Turkish Aircraft: On June 22, 2012, a Turkish RF-4 reconnaissance plane was shot by Syria. Upon the downing of the plane, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that the plane took off for a test flight and was unarmed and was shot down without any warning. At a distance of 13 miles from Latakia in international airspace, it fell into Syrian territorial waters. Syria, on the other hand, handled the incident differently and announced that the plane was shot

down by anti-aircraft batteries in Syrian airspace after the airspace violation. In his statement, Assad said that they learned that the plane belonged to Turkey after it was shot down. This incident worsened relations and escalated tensions between the two countries. After this incident, Turkey changed the rules of engagement for Syria. According to the new rule, if Syrian military elements approach the Turkish border, these actions will be perceived as hostile actions and as a security threat and will be hit from a point close to the border. Turkey stated that the rules of engagement would be applied on land, air, and sea. In the ongoing process, on September 16, 2013, a Syrian M-17 helicopter entered the Turkish border from the Hatay border region and made a two km border violation; therefore armed forces acted within the framework of the rules of engagement, and helicopters were shot down by 2 F-16 warplanes departing from Malatya. Another important development was that a Syrian MiG-23 warplane was shot down by Turkish warplanes as a result of border violation (Engin, 2019: 149).

3.1.The Effect of Open Border Policy on Turkey's Security

The Arab Spring, which started in North Africa in 2010 and spread to the Middle East, mobilized global and regional actors with the concern that it could harm regional stability. Although there were bloodless transformations, a civil war broke out in Syria.

With the emergence of the civil war in Syria, millions of people had to leave their country and seek refuge in other countries. As a result, the "refugee crisis" emerged. Turkey, which had an open-door policy to Syrian refugees, has been the country most affected by the refugee crisis. A month after the conflict in Syria, Turkey began to host the Syrians. Turkey stated that in accordance with the Article 10 of the 1994 Regulation of the Ministry of Interior of Turkey, it would accept Syrians within the scope of the "temporary protection regime" which includes principles such as open-door policy, non-refoulement principle, non-determination of individual status, shelter in camps, and provision of basic services (Ekici, 2019: 698).

In this context, as a result of Turkey's open border policy, over three million people fleeing civil war in Syria took refuge in Turkey. The wave of immigration began in April 2011. It is regarded that the existence of Syrian refugees includes social, economic, and cultural problems as well as national and international security problems (Ağır and Sezik, 2015: 98). According to Ağır, Turkey's open-door policy

is an exceptional example in terms of both control and blocking. Especially in the first days of the crisis, where humanitarian values were at the forefront and accepting everyone who reached the border without the necessary control, which would create security weakness, Turkey created insecurity in migration issue at the beginning of the crisis (Ağır and Sezik, 2015: 98). At first, Turkey was sure that the Assad regime would end in a short time, but as of today, the civil war continues under the shadow of great powers. Therefore, Turkey's open border policy is becoming more and more insecure.

Foreign Minister of the time Ahmet Davutoğlu stated that the critical threshold for Syrians was one hundred thousand, and if the threshold is exceeded, the buffer zone may come to the fore. However, the number increased faster than expected, exceeding three and a half million as of December 2019 (Ekici, 2019: 713). According to Ekici, the policy of Turkey towards refugees can be handled in two phases. The first one involves 2011 and 2015. In this phase, from the arrival of Syrians until the issuance of identity documents, Turkey defined security threats as "outside the boundaries" when applying its open-door policy, and emphasized that there was a violation of human rights in Syria and highlighted that there was an obligation to protect these people. After 2015, which Ekici defines as the second phase, Turkey implemented a more controlled open-door policy. For this reason, Turkey increasingly started to deal with the issue of Syrian refugees with security concerns, because not all refugees were victims of war. There were also members of various terrorist organizations planning to carry out terrorist attacks on Turkey or Europe. The terrorist attack on Reyhanlı is one of the examples. As a result of the explosion of two bombs in Hatay's Reyhanlı district center, 52 people died and 155 people were injured. It was thought that the attack was supported by the Syrian intelligence, and that the THKP-C Emergency Organization and its leader Mihrac Ural were behind the explosion. Therefore, the uncontrolled numerical increase, the excess of emerging problems, social and political reactions, concrete attacks on security have been effective in overcoming the critical threshold and in the transition from the policy of insecurity to the solution process (Ekici, 2019: 716). So it will not be wrong to say that terrorists who took advantage of the open door policy with asylum seekers posed a threat to national interests. It would not be wrong to claim that the most important security threat created by the open door policy is at the

border security point. While opening the 911 kilometer border to people fleeing war is a positive attitude for humanity, it also means weakness when it comes to security. The inability to be sure that the refugees from Syria are bona fide refugees and the possibility of terrorists infiltrating the border by taking advantage of Turkey's humanitarian aims are security threats created by the open-door policy in the context of border security. After the explosions in political concerns began to be expressed more. The number of terrorist attacks which took place in Turkey between 2011 and 2017 also indicates a serious security threat in this context (Erdoğan, 2015: 445).

3.2. Terrorists Groups That Declared War on Turkey

Terrorism is one of the most important security problems of the modern World. It causes damages not only civilians but also economic, social, and cultural life. Turkey has been fighting with terrorist organizations since decades. The PKK group became one of the worst of these but there have been many others. The prolongation of the civil war in Syria provided a fertile ground for terrorist organizations targeting Turkey. Having the longest border with Syria, Turkey has been affected by the turmoil in the country in this regard.

3.2.1 The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)

Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) is a Marxist-Leninist party founded in 1994 under the leadership of Dursun Karataş. The party is considered terrorist in Turkey. While the party is responsible for political activities and propaganda, the Front is responsible for military organization and armed actions; It carried out attacks against Turkish security forces and civilians. DHKP-C is on the terrorist organization list of countries such as Turkey, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Japan, and the European Union (Ekici, et al., 2010: 39).

It is claimed that the organization has camps in Lavrion, Kinesa and Dileysi in Greece, Lebanon and Syria, and that the militants of the organization receive training there (Sabah, 2012). DHKP-C supports the Assad regime in Syria. Yılmaz states that DHKP-C's sympathy for Assad is based on their belief that the Syrian leader is waging an anti-imperialist struggle. Turkey, on the other hand, openly supports the opponents of the regime in Syria and thinks that DHKP-C may carry out attacks on behalf of Assad in Turkey (Yılmaz, 2016: 779). Since the Syrian war, the

organization has been involved in many terrorist activities in Turkey. Some of them are as follows: On 16 June 2012, a police officer named Zekeriya Yurdakul, was shot and killed by DHKP-C members named Hasan Gönen and Sultan Işıklı in Gaziosmanpaşa. On September 11, 2012, a suicide attack was carried out by DHKP-C member İbrahim Çuhadar against the Istanbul Sultangazi 75th Year Police Station. In addition to the suicide bomber, police officer Bülent Özkan lost his life and 7 people were injured. As a result of the suicide attack on the US Embassy in Ankara on February 1, 2013 by an organization member named Ecevit Şanlı, security guard Mustafa Akarsu, who worked at the embassy, died, and journalist Didem Tuncay was seriously injured.¹⁹

In March 2013, the Ministry of Justice and the AK Party Ankara Headquarters in Ankara Kızılay Square attacked with an interval of fifteen minutes. One person was slightly injured. On September 21, 2013, two DHKP-C activists attacked the General Directorate of Security and its annexes with rockets in Dikmen, Ankara. While 2 of the 3 rockets hit the buildings in the attack, Muharrem Karataş, one of the activists, died and Serdar Polat was injured in the armed conflict between the police and the protesters. On May 11, 2013, fifty-two people died, and one hundred fifty-five people were injured as a result of the explosion of two bombed vehicles in the Reyhanlı district center. It is thought that behind the attack were Syrian intelligence and that the People's Liberation Party-Turkey Front (THKP-C) (Karakoç and Doğruel, 2015: 365).

As can be seen the terrorist organization, which has undertaken various attacks since its establishment in 1994, is mostly known for the assassination of Özdemir Sabancı, the Gazi District events, the murder of Prosecutor Mehmet Kiraz in 2015, and the death fast they carried out against F-Type prisons. This organization also founded a ground in Syria and they used Syrian territory as a base for action.

3.2.2 The PKK

PKK is a terrorist organization founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan in Diyarbakır. The first action of PKK in Turkey was carried out in 1984. It has been the terrorist organization that Turkey has fought the most since then. For years, PKK has damaged Turkey both economically and morally, but Turkey has never given up on its struggle. The PKK operates under the names Kongra-Gel, KADEK, HPG, JYA

STAR, KCK, TAK. The Syrian extensions of the organization are PYD and YPG. They are trying to seize northern Syria, which can be regarded as a security risk for Turkey (Kerman and Efegil, 2017: 171).

In 2009, the AK Party government started to make important reforms to integrate Kurdish population more. The first state-run Kurdish channel TRT Şeş started broadcasting. Apart from this, Turkish settlement names were changed into Kurdish, partial amnesty was declared for some PKK members, citizenship was offered to Kurdish refugees again, the rights granted to local governments were expanded, and regulations were made to increase freedom of expression. The PKK also declared a “ceasefire” on 13 April 2009. However, with the closure of the Democratic Society Party and the subsequent demonstrations, and finally the Reşadiye attack by the PKK, the ceasefire was broken (Yeşiltaş ve Özçelik, 2016: 29).

On December 28, 2012, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that meetings were underway with the representatives of the PKK to end the violence. A "Solution Process" was implemented for the first time, and as a result of months of negotiations, the letter of imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was read to the public at the Nevruz meeting held in Diyarbakır on March 21, 2013. He called on the PKK to leave its armed forces abroad. On March 23, the leader of the PKK's armed wing, Murat Karayılan, stated that they would comply with the call and announced that the PKK had made a ceasefire as of March 21. After this decision, apart from a few incidents, the conflict de-escalated. However, during this process, the PKK continued its activities such as blocking roads, establishing local courts, kidnapping the headman, collecting extortion, sabotaging state investments in the region, mine-traps and storing weapons in cities. The PKK even established its own public order units called YDG-H in the cities during the resolution process (Talha, 2017: 17).

In 2014, ISIS besieged the Kurdish city of Kobani(Ayn Al Arab) in northern Syria. The attack of ISIS on Kobani, which did not recognize any moral and legal principles and carried out massacres of civilians in the place it previously captured, caused the Kurdish public to react. Kurds in Turkey also reacted to the AK Party government, stating that Turkey does not help the Kurds in Kobani. HDP Co-Chair

Selahattin Demirtaş also made a call to the people and demanded that they take to the streets. In the Kobani protests that started after this, Turkey experienced painful events between 6-8 October 2014. More than 50 people were killed by the mob. Especially in the Southeastern Anatolia Region, the cities turned into a place of war. These events led to important results in Turkish politics: The solution process stalled. The distrust that existed from the beginning between the parties to the process grew. During the Kobani protests there was a concern that the ceasefire would come to an end. However, after the meetings with the Kurdish wing, especially with Abdullah Öcalan and HDP, and government officials, tensions were eased (Talha, 2017: 23)

The ceasefire, which had been in place since 2013, was broken on July 22, when the PKK blamed the Turkey for the Suruç explosion and murdered two police officers at home to take revenge, and a day later another Turkish soldier was killed on the Syrian-Turkish border. Later, in a statement given to the BBC Turkish, KCK claimed that the PKK did not carry out this attack (Coşkun, 2014: 17). With the Broken Solution Process, Turkish warplanes simultaneously struck both PKK and ISIS targets (Coşkun, 2015: 2).

Warplanes bombed Qandil and other PKK camps in Iraq for the first time after three years. The PKK also carried out attacks on police and soldiers in Southeastern and Eastern Anatolia. Police raided many points and detained The People's Defence Forces (PDF) members. PDF members also tried to prevent police and soldiers from entering certain areas by digging trenches in some districts, which is known as Hendek attacks (Gerim, 2020: 7).

Hendek Attempt: At a time when the events in Kobani were escalating and ISIS was carrying out intense attacks with heavy weapons, the concern that there would be civilian massacres in the city started. The PYD, and HDP political party, which allegedly has ties to the PKK, called for help (Gerim, 2020: 8). The developments in Kobani were discussed at the HDP Central Executive Board's regular meeting on 6 October. In a written statement made after the meeting, HDP claimed that ISIS attacked Kobani to commit "genocide" and called on the people to hold active demonstrations in the streets of Turkey (Yeğen, 2015: 157). After this call, the events that started in Diyarbakır, Mardin, Şırnak, Batman, and Van quickly spread to a large number of people and turned into street clashes. The events that first started with

stones and sticks were later moved to another dimension with the use of weapons. In the cities where the events took place, especially in Diyarbakır, life came to a standstill. PKK members restricted people's freedom of life by digging trenches in the neighborhoods. Unable to get what it wanted on the mountains, the PKK landed in the cities. As a result of these events, fifty-five people were killed, two hundred twenty-one citizens, and one hundred thirty-nine police officers were injured. During the events, one hundred forty-four private buildings and workplaces, sixteen public buildings, seventeen private and public banks, four schools, eighty-eight private vehicles, forty public vehicles, and a party-building were destroyed (Gerim, 2020: 11).

On February 17, 2016, an explosion occurred during the passage of military service vehicles of the Turkish Armed Forces in the Çankaya district of Ankara, in the region where the General Staff, the soldiers' lodgings and the Land Forces Command are located. In Merasim Street As a result of the explosion of a bomb-laden vehicle by a suicide bomber, 29 people, including civilians, were killed and 61 injured. Following the attack, on 18 February 2016, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated that the bomb attack was carried out by the YPG (Demiray, et. al., 2021: 4).

Another attack carried out by the PKK in Ankara is the attack on Güven Park. On March 13, 2016, a terrorist attack was carried out in Güvenpark, Kızılay, Ankara, close to the bus stops. In the attack, 38 people, including 2 assailants, lost their lives and 125 people were injured. The Kurdistan Freedom Hawks organization claimed responsibility for the attack. However, it was revealed that the perpetrator of the attack was Seher Çağla Demir, that Demir was a PKK member since 2013, then moved to Syria (Syrian Kurdistan) and received training in YPG camps during this time (Söğüt, 2018: 168).

On 10 December 2016, at least 44 people, 36 of them security personnel and eight civilians, were killed in two separate bomb attacks carried out near the Vodafone Arena Stadium in Istanbul Dolmabahçe. The attack took place after a Turkish Super Football League game, when thousands of people were leaving the stadium. The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) organization claimed responsibility for the attack. Government officials announced that the targets of the attacks were riot police. TAK also said in a statement that it carried out the attack because of PKK

leader Abdullah Öcalan's detention and operations in the Southeastern Anatolia Region (Demiray, et. al., 2021: 5).

On 17 December 2016, a suicide attack was carried out with a bomb-laden vehicle near Erciyes University in Kayseri's Melikgazi district by the PKK terrorist organization. As a result of the attacks, 15 Turkish Armed Forces personnel and the suicide bomber lost their lives and 56 people were injured (Demiray, et. al., 2021: 5).

On June 7, 2016, a suicide attack was carried out with a bomb-laden vehicle in the Vezneciler district of Istanbul's Fatih district. As a result of the explosion, 13 people, including 5 police officers, 7 civilians and 1 attacker, lost their lives and 36 people were injured (Gurcan, 2016: 61).

On 12 May 2016, a bomb attack was carried out by the PKK in the Dürümlü hamlet of Diyarbakır's Sur district. As a result of the attack, 16 people lost their lives and 23 people were injured (Anadolu Agency, 2020).

3.2.3 Revolutionary Party of Kurdistan (PŞK)

Founded in 1960, the Kurdistan Revolution Party, which operates in Turkey, is an illegal separatist political party. The aim of the party is to establish an independent Kurdish state based on Marxist-Leninist principles (Kerman and Efeğil, 2017: 171). The terrorist of the organization were trained in the camps in Northern Iraq, and they were directed to actions that would bring resounding effects, especially in Diyarbakır, Batman and Şırnak (Kerman and Efeğil, 2017: 171).

3.2.4 Hezbollah

It is claimed that the foundations of Hezbollah in Turkey were laid in three meetings held in Diyarbakır, Batman, and Istanbul in 1980 and 1981. After the intense political conflicts and the closure of associations and parties in those years, Islamist groups started to operate within the National Turkish Student Association¹³⁸ and Akıncılar Association. Some of these groups came together in the middle of 1980 at Abdülvahap Ekinci's Vahdet Bookstore in Diyarbakır and held the first meeting¹³⁹, the second meeting was held at Ekrem Baytap's Cem Bookstore in Batman in 1981, and the third meeting was held in the Kasımpaşa district of Istanbul with the participation of eight members of the Akıncılar Association¹⁴⁰ (Faraç, 2002: 15-16). According to Çitlioğlu, publications covering the years 1979-1980, played an important role in the organization of the religious movement in

Turkey and the religious radicalization in Turkey. These bookstores, which brought together people and segments with strong religious feelings made a kind of "pioneering paper" by creating an atmosphere of conversation and discussion (Çitlioğlu, 2001: 69-70).

Hezbollah had a total of 264 acts of violence recorded between 1991 and 2001. When these actions are classified, it is understood that there are 199 acts of armed attack, 49 acts of kidnapping, 9 acts of bombing, 5 acts of beating, and 2 acts of arson. One of the biggest acts of the Hezbollah terrorist organization in Turkey was the assassination of Diyarbakır Provincial Police Chief Gaffar Okkan on January 24, 2001. 5 Police Officers were martyred along with Gaffar Okkan in the assassination.

After Iran's military intervention in the Syrian Civil War, there were many non-state armed proxies involved in the civil war, and one of the most prominent among them was Hezbollah. Although the role of Hezbollah in Syria was shaped on claims and contradictions in the first years, it became more evident and increased its importance. Syria became an important training area for Hezbollah. The aims of Hezbollah in Syria can be listed as follows: The existence of the Assad regime against the so-called takfir and terrorist organizations and the increase of Iran's influence in the region, as well as the financial support that can be provided to Hezbollah, Syria's bridge position between Iran and Lebanon is one of the main requirements for Hezbollah (Gelvin, 2018: 119).

On February 27, the forces of the Damascus regime carried out an airstrike against the Turkish military forces, whose presence was guaranteed within the framework of the Astana Agreement in Idlib, despite the fact that Turkey had reported their positions before, and 33 Turkish soldiers were martyred as a result of this attack. After this attack, on February 28, Turkey launched a military operation called the Spring Shield against the Damascus regime forces in Idlib. In this operation Hezbollah fought on the side of the Damascus regime (Gelvin, 2018: 134).

3.2.5 Al-Nusra

Due to the power vacuum after March 2011 radical groups gained territorial control in different places. Especially in the North, near Turkish borders Al Nusra

and ISIS terror groups took over. These two terrorist organizations attracted radicals from all over the world. Although Al Nusra and ISIS have similar organizational structures and basic objectives, their ways of recruiting personnel and achieving the objectives are different (Weimann 2019: 34).

The structure of the Al Nusra organization consists of three separate wings: military, political, and religious. In addition to these, there is a council of local representatives who perform tasks such as setting strategic goals and providing religious guidance (UN, 2014). Under this main structure, there are many military and religious sub-organs. There are two main administrative units, at least ten different administrative bodies and nine military headquarters are in eight cities in Syria (Cengil and Aydın, 2014: 63). Since Al Nusra continues its activities as the Syrian branch of Al Qaeda, it cannot be said that it acts independently of the general strategy of Al Qaeda.

The organization carried out a series of terrorist attacks against the Syrian regime and civilian targets that include minorities. While Al Nusra was concentrating on the war with the government forces in Syria, ISIS was trying to be effective in both Iraq and Syria by keeping its target wider. Despite their differences, both groups supported the goals of the central government of Al Qaeda (Cengil and Aydın, 2014: 65). The organization also fought against Turkey in Idlib, which resulted in an intense migration from Idlib to Turkey.

3.2.6 ISIS

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or the Islamic State as its official name since 2014, is an illegal, armed organization with no legitimacy in the territory it occupied. It operated in Iraq and Syria and took actions against security forces and civilians to establish a caliphate state in this region (Wood, 2015: 79).

There are much data on the structure of ISIS organizations. One of them is the report named "UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team" prepared by the UN Security Council dated 2014. According to this report, the organization consists of three main bodies. The first group is the management staff of the organization. In this cadre dominated by Iraqis, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi leads both this staff and the organization with the title of "Caliph." The second main body is composed of Iraqis and Syrians, which deal with military and administrative affairs.

The last group includes the armed force of the organization consisting of foreign terrorist fighters with citizens of more than eighty different countries (UN, 2014).

It is possible to evaluate the strategic goals of ISIS under the following headings: To protect the 'Caliphate', to expand the Caliphate as Dar'al Islam or to include all Muslim lands, to maintain the authority of the Caliphate undisputed, (holy/revelation) to fight the West (Cengil and Aydın. 2014: 56).

Turkey has been a target for ISIS from the very beginning. While hundreds of Turkish citizens lost their lives as a result of ISIS attacks, many of citizens were injured. The suicide attacks of SIS against Turkey led to the death of many civilians. 14 major terrorist attacks were carried out in Turkey by the ISIS terrorist organization (10 suicide bombers, 1 bomb attack, 3 armed attacks). As a result of the attacks, a total of 304 people, including 10 police officers and 1 soldier, lost their lives, and a total of 1,338 people were injured, 62 of whom were police officers and 7 were soldiers.

Three of the suicide attacks carried out by foreign terrorist fighters belonging to ISIS in Turkey took place in Istanbul, while the other five took place in Diyarbakır, Suruç, Ankara and Gaziantep. Looking at the periods of attacks (2011-2020), it can be seen that the organization's ability to identify targets and select targets appropriate to the sensitivities of that period is high.

The first event of ISIS was carried out in Niğde on March 20, 2014. In the incident in which three ISIS militants were tried to be stopped by the security forces in Niğde, two security guards were killed and eight people were injured (Hürriyet, 2016).

In 2015, ISIS increased terrorist attacks and targeted security forces and civilians. On January 6, 2015, one police officer was killed in a suicide attack on the Tourism Branch police station in Sultanahmet, Istanbul. As a result of the explosion of bombs dropped on the region in the election meeting organized by the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Diyarbakır on 5 June, four people were killed and more than one hundred people were injured. While a press statement was made in front of the municipal cultural center in Şanlıurfa's Suruç district on July 20, a suicide bomber attack was carried out, thirty-four people died and sixty-nine people were

injured. On September 1, one soldier was killed and one soldier was kidnapped in the attack on the police station on Syria's Kilis border. One of the biggest terrorist attacks of ISIS in Turkey was carried out in Akara. On October 10, 2015, during the preparations for the demonstration organized by various non-governmental organizations, an explosion occurred at Ankara Train Station, which was the meeting point, at 10:04, and a second explosion occurred at a distance of 50 meters after 3 seconds. As a result of the suicide action, a total of 102 people, including 2 members of the organization, lost their lives, and 417 Turkish citizens were injured, including the security forces. In the clash that broke out in the operation against the ISIS cell house in Diyarbakır on October 26, two police officers were killed (Milan, 2016: 28-29).

The attacks carried out by ISIS in 2016 continued to increase. From the beginning of 2016 to May, a large number of artillery-rocket-mortar shells fell from the ISIS-controlled Al-Bab region to the city center of Kilis. In these attacks, at least twenty-one people died, and many were injured. Turkey, with its troops on its border, responded to these attacks by hitting ISIS targets. During this period, airstrikes could not be carried out due to the aircraft crisis with Russia. In addition, due to the crisis with Russia, it became difficult for Turkey to make a direct land invasion (Engin, 2019: 145).

Ten German tourists died in the attack on Istanbul Sultanahmet on 12 January. As a result of the explosion of a suicide bomb on İstiklal Street in Istanbul on March 19, four foreign tourists died and thirty-nine people were injured. Three police officers died and thirty-four people were injured in the attack on Gaziantep Security Directorate on 1 May. In the attack on Istanbul Airport on 28 June, forty-five people, nineteen of whom were foreigners, died and two hundred thirty-nine people were injured. On 20 August, fifty-two people were killed and ninety-four people were injured in a bomb attack on a street wedding in Gaziantep's central Şahinbey district. On 16 October, two ISIS militants who raided the ISIS cell in 500 Evler district opposite to the Gaziantep University blew themselves up, and three police were killed and eight people were injured as a result. Two police died and nine people were killed and more than a hundred people were injured in the bomb attack that took place in Diyarbakır Bağlar on 4 November. Thirty-nine people died in an armed attack on a nightclub in Istanbul's Ortaköy district on New Year's Eve 2017.

In the attacks carried out by ISIS, especially civilians were targeted and aimed to disrupt social peace. Apart from ISIS, terrorist organizations such as PKK-YPG-TAK also increased their attacks regarding the Syrian crisis (Bıçakçı, 2019: 124).

The organization carried out acts of assassination against journalists in Turkey. Al Jazeera news agency reporters Ibrahim Abdulkadir and Firaz HAMADI were assassinated by the members of the ISIS terrorist organization in Şanlıurfa on 30 October 2015. The ISIS terrorist organization reported that it took responsibility for the incident with the video footage it published on social media. Journalist Naji ALJARF, who presented a documentary against the ISIS terrorist organization, was shot on 28 December 2015 in Gaziantep. The perpetrator of the incident, Yusuf Hamed ESVERIHI, admitted that he received the instruction from a senior commander in the ISIS terrorist organization named Mohammed, and carried out the action. The ISIS terrorist organization claimed responsibility for the murder of Muhammed Zahir Al ŞARKAT in Gaziantep and announced in the Amaq News Agency, which broadcasts in connection with the organization, that it carried out the murder on the grounds that he was presenting anti-organization programs (Yayla, 2017: 4).

Due to Turkey's strong position in the region, and the measures against its terrorist strategy, ISIS has been in an effort to threat and attack Turkey at every opportunity. ISIS declared the State, Government and organs of the Republic of Turkey, its citizens and public officials as “infidels” in order to legitimize the attacks among its own base. ISIS made actions to create internal turmoil and authority vacuum in Turkey, like the ones in Middle Eastern countries, but it has never been successful. For example, with the Istanbul/Sultanahmet and Taksim attacks, the organization carried out actions aimed at creating the perception that "tourists are not safe in Turkey" and putting Turkey in a difficult situation economically and politically in the eyes of the international public. In this direction, Operation Euphrates Shield was launched on 24.08.2016 to prevent the activities of the ISIS terrorist organization in the country and in northern Syria that threaten Turkey's security, and it was announced to the whole world that the attacks against the Republic of Turkey would not go unanswered (Parlar, 2016: 1399).

Apart from the attacks by ISIS, it threatened Turkey via its magazine named "*Dabik*", one of the important publications of ISIS. It was published from July 2014 to June 2016 and has a total of 15 issues. Although the organization uses many communication channels at the same time; *Dabik* magazine is an important tool in which the organization can reveal itself in a systematic way. Announcing the declaration of the caliphate in June 2014, the organization established itself as a state, unlike other armed organizations in the region. Immediately after this announcement, the first two issues of *Dabik* magazine were published in July 2014. One of the main agenda items of the magazine was the qualifications of the caliphate and the Islamic State. In this context, many different elements such as the state's judicial system, finance, health system, infrastructure services were introduced, and Muslims from all over the world are called to emigrate to the Islamic State. There are threats against Turkey in the magazine (Parlar, 2016: 1401).

Another ISIS magazine published threatening articles against Turkey was *Konstantiniyye*. In this magazine, harsh statements were made especially towards the Turkish government, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other Turkish officials.

3.2.7 PYD/YPG

The Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Syrian branch of the PKK/KCK terrorist organization that operates within Turkey's borders for many years, has recently been trying to present itself as a legitimate actor in the international arena. It tries to turn the internal turmoil in Syria into an opportunity with the political and logistical support provided by some international powers. The PYD, through its armed elements called the People's Defense Units (YPG), presents itself as an organization fighting against ISIS in the international public opinion, but in reality, it is known that the PYD/YPG is the Syrian wing of the PKK/KCK terrorist organization. With its purpose, structure, and functioning, it is not a different and independent entity from the PKK/KCK. Contrary to those trying to be portrayed, the PYD is an extension of the PKK, which is registered as a "terrorist organization" in the international terrorist organizations' lists, operating in Syria (Parlar, 2016: 1399).

There is a lot of evidence for the organic link of the PYD with the PKK terrorist organization. First of all, the PYD, in line with the decisions taken at the 8th PKK Congress to establish new organizations in Iran, Iraq, and Syria as well as in

Turkey and with the instructions, given by the leader of the PKK terrorist organization Abdullah Öcalan from İmralı was established on 17 October 2003. In this context, the PKK/KCK terrorist organization, which aims to unite the so-called self-government regions in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria under the name of KCK and to establish an independent state, deployed some of its cadres in Syria in order to implement the KCK project by taking advantage of the conditions in Syria (Kanat and Ustun, 2015: 92).

The power vacuum created by the political developments and civil war conditions in Syria after 2011 provided the PKK/KCK terrorist organization with a wide range of action, and the armed wing of the PYD terrorist organization, the YPG (People's Defense Units), was established as a result. As the ISIS terrorist organization increased its effectiveness in Syria, the PYD/YPG terrorist organization, the Syrian structuring of the PKK/KCK, started its activities to create an autonomous structure in the areas it controlled over the claim of "fighting against ISIS" and took advantage of the regional instability to seize some of the lands in northern Syria. The PYD/YPG terrorist organization continued its activities to change the demographic structure by providing control through terror and pressure in these regions, which it described as "cantons" in Syria. The PYD/YPG ignored the settled peoples such as Arabs, Turkmen, etc. in the region, and forced them to migrate, confiscated their properties, set fire to the buildings where the title deeds and population records were kept, destroyed the existing documents, and armed the children under the name of compulsory military service with oppressive methods. The YPG is led by the military officers of the PKK and includes many terrorists from outside Syria (Parlar, 2016: 1402).

Some terrorist attacks against Turkey were carried out by the PYD/PKK Terrorist Organization. These attacks are direct attacks on Turkey's security by Syria. Some of these attacks are (Parlar, 2016: 1411):

- An armed attack was carried out on the Şirintepe Border Post in Mardin-Nusaybin district at around 17.50 on Monday, 13 February 2017, from the Mollaabit Oil Wells region in the North of Syria, by the members of the PYD/PKK Terrorist Organization. No casualties occurred. As a result of the shootings, 1 member of the PYD/PKK terrorist organization was killed.

- In the Mursel Border Police Station of Mardin-Kızıltepe district, on Tuesday, January 24, 2017, at 16.30, 4 workers working in the construction of the wall on the Syrian border line, was kidnapped by PKK/PYD Terrorist Organizations in the Syria-Hareze village.
- On Wednesday, March 22, 2017, an attack was carried out on the Bükölmez Border Post in Hatay-Reyhanlı district by the PKK/PYD Terrorist organization with sniper rifle, and 1 personnel was martyred.
- In Hatay-Reyhanlı and Kırıkhan districts, armed attacks were carried out on the Yağmur Border Post, Sucu Border Post, Bayraktar Border Post, security forces in the region and the Bükölmez Border Post from the areas under the control of the PYD/PKK Terrorist Organization in Syria on Wednesday, 22 March 2017. No casualties occurred.
- Harassment fire was fired at the Aleppo Border Post in Hatay-Kırıkhan district on Sunday, March 26, 2017 from areas under the control of the PKK/PYD Terrorist Organization. No casualties occurred and 4 PKK/PYD Terrorist Organization members were killed in response.
- An armed attack was carried out on the construction machine working on the border line on Thursday, March 30, 2017, against the Bayraktar Police Station in Şırnak-İdil district, from the Syria-Tel Hatun Police Station region, and no casualties occurred. The attack was responded immediately and 3 terrorists were killed.

As a result, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Syrian branch of the PKK/KCK terrorist organization that has been operating within Turkey borders for many years, has recently tried to present itself as a legitimate actor in the international arena, and with the political and logistical support provided by some international powers. It tries to turn inner turmoil into opportunity. In this context, the PKK/KCK terrorist organization, which aims to unite the so-called autonomous administrations in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria under the name of KCK and to establish an independent state, has deployed some of its cadres in Syria in order to implement the KCK project by taking advantage of the conditions in Syria.

3.2.8 July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey

Deteriorating security environment created opportunity for another group to topple the government of Turkey by using illegal methods. A group later called as FETO, which infiltrated Turkish civil and military bureaucracy, receiving orders from their exiled leader Fethullah Gulen, attempted a military coup. On 15th of July 2016, members of FETO movement-which later was classified as a terrorist organization-, tried to overthrow the government, attempted to assassinate the Turkish President and control government buildings. The members of this illegal organization defined themselves as the Peace at Home Council within the Turkish Armed Forces. In a statement they said the army had seized the administration, and that martial law and a curfew were declared in the country. The Bosphorus and Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge in Istanbul were closed by a group of high-ranking soldiers and Military Academy students. While the President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly İsmail Kahraman and about 50 deputies were in the parliament, F-16 warplanes flew over the parliament and bombed the parliament building four times. They also bombed the Presidential Compound in Ankara's Beştepe district. An assassination attempt was made against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was in a hotel in Muğla's Marmaris district. Chief of the General Staff Hulusi Akar, Land Forces Commander Salih Zeki Çolak, Air Forces Commander Abidin Ünal, Gendarmerie General Commander Galip Mendi, 2nd Chief of General Staff Yaşar Güler, Presidential Secretary General Fahri Kasırga and some senior commanders were taken hostage by the soldiers who carried out the coup.

Upon the developments, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in his contact on a private television station via FaceTime, stated that the putschists would not be allowed in any way, and invited the public to take to the squares and airports to react to the coup. After the call, anti-coup protest demonstrations were held in many provinces of Turkey (Alkan, 2016: 259).

On the morning of July 16, as a result of the operations carried out by the personnel of the Turkish Armed Forces and the General Directorate of Security, the military coup attempt was suppressed and the soldiers surrendered with their weapons. As a result of the events, more than 300 people, including 104 pro-coup soldiers, lost their lives, 1491 were injured, and 8036 soldiers from different ranks were detained. The total number of detentions, including members of the judiciary

and civil politics, reached 10 thousand as of July 22. In addition, many people were dismissed from military, administrative and judicial institutions (Alkan, 2016: 260).

After the National Security Council meeting on 21 July, a state of emergency was declared for three months by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in accordance with Article 120 of the Constitution. The declared state of emergency was extended to cover the period of 2 years after the coup attempt. During the purge initiated after the initiative, as of April 2018, 160 thousand people were detained, 50 thousand people were arrested on charges of FETO members, and 152 thousand public personnel were dismissed from their duties (Ataman and Shkurti, 2016: 59).

After the coup attempt, political and diplomatic crises were experienced with the United States of America and many European Union member countries, including Germany and Greece, on the grounds that the US did not extradite Fethullah Gülen. In addition, relations with the United Arab Emirates became tense due to the alleged financial support of FETO members who carried out the coup attempt and being behind the coup attempt (Alkan, 2016: 263).

Chapter 4:

TURKEY'S RESPONSE

Upon increasing security threats Turkey changed its foreign and security policy concept and left Davutoğlu's constructivist agenda. After resignation of Davutoğlu in 22 May 2016, Binalı Yıldırım became Prime Minister and Turkey moved more hard-power and security-based policy in the region. This also affected Turkey's Syria policy. In this context, Turkey took measures to strengthen its border control, limit movement and carried out military operations in Syria to ensure its own security. Turkey also recalibrated its foreign relations and formed new alliances whose time and place have been limited. In this part of the thesis, these operations were discussed.

4.1. Strengthening Border Security

Border security is the prevention of entry and exit to the borders without the knowledge and will of the state. In this respect, the purpose of border security requires preventing illegal entry and exit of people, animals, products, equipment, weapons, drugs, terrorism, etc. With the civil war in Syria, the borders shared with Syria became much more important, because any threat from the borders affects the security of Turkey equally. Therefore, in terms of internal and external security, the events in Turkey's southern border in the last 5 years have made it necessary to take military measures at the highest level.

Turkey has both land and sea borders with its southern neighbor Syria. The Turkey-Syria land border, which was determined as 665.5 km with the Lausanne Peace Treaty on July 24, 1923, reached 911 km with the arrangements made with the annexation of Hatay to Turkey. This border corresponds to approximately 1/3 of Turkey's total land border. Therefore, the country with which Turkey shares the longest land border among its neighbors is Syria. Hence, any threat from Syria affects Turkey's border security, as it did in the Syrian civil war (Lawson, 2014: 1352)

The civil war between the Assad administration and the opposition left the civilian population defenseless between two fires. In such an environment, the Syrians, whose lives were in danger, were forced to migrate to their neighbors

Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and mostly Turkey, which they saw as the safest and closest place. For this purpose, the first mass population movement from Syria to Turkey took place on April 29, 2011, when nearly four hundred Syrians took shelter at the Cilvegözü border gate in the Yayladağı district of Hatay (Öztığ, 2019: 118).

Turkey has not only opened its doors to the Syrian refugees but has mobilized all its means to heal the wounds of the refugees. In line with the “open-door policy” followed by Turkey, the number of Syrian refugees who took refuge in Turkey is increasing day by day and has reached approximately 3 million (Parlar, 2016: 1398).

There are a total of 160 border gates in Turkey, of which 30 are by land, 7 by rail, 63 by sea, and 60 by air. On the Turkey-Syria land border, there are a total of 13 border gates, 3 of which are railway and 10 are land. Except for Şırnak, all provinces bordering Syria have border gates. 9 of the border gates were opened permanently and 4 were temporarily opened; Of these, 10 are active and 3 are passive (Lawson, 2014: 1355).

Except for the metropolitan cities, Syrians in Turkey are mostly populated in Hatay, Gaziantep, Kilis, Şanlıurfa, Mardin, and Şırnak provinces, which border their own country. The population density of Syrians in the provinces bordering their own countries is directly related to both the internal and external security of Turkey (Öztığ, 2019: 120). Therefore, the population density and high number of Syrians in certain cities of Turkey cause a change in the demographic structure of the cities, as well as many problems related to internal and external security, which naturally increases the security risks of the region and worries the people in the region (Parlar, 2016: 1399).

People living in the cities on the Syrian border face serious security risks for many reasons. They are in a position to be primarily affected by the attacks as well as being the direct target of the conflicts in the regions close to the border (Lawson, 2014: 1356). The bullets bouncing off the clashes that took place just a few kilometers from the Syrian border pose a serious threat to the residents of the region. Therefore, the activity of terrorist organizations of ISIS and PKK/PYD/YPG close to the Turkish border causes the residents to feel vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Similar concerns are also experienced by Syrians living in shelters and areas close to the Syrian border. The possibility of being a member of a terrorist organization among

the Syrian refugees in Turkey also causes the residents to worry. Because in addition to the terrorist acts originating from Syria, dozens of Turkish citizens died and hundreds were injured due to bullets, bombs, mortars, etc. fell from Syria (Öztiğ, 2019: 124).

To give an example, a Turkish soldier was killed as a result of the fire opened by ISIS on 23 July 2015 on the Gaziantep border. When the material damage and the fear experienced by the residents of the region are included, the balance sheet becomes quite heavy. Moreover, people who had been living in areas close to the border for decades had to leave the areas they live in and migrate to the inner regions as their life safety was endangered in their own countries due to the events.

While threats to Turkey's border security have changed throughout the history of the Republic in terms of both scope and dimensions, it is possible to say that there has been a significant transformation in the understanding of politics and security mechanisms aimed at ensuring security at the borders, in the face of these threats. With the deepening of the civil war in Syria after 2011, many different new challenges have emerged for Turkey's border security. The fact that the instability in Syria and Iraq gradually turned into an uncontrollable and unmanageable regional crisis shook Turkey's border security paradigm and mechanism by introducing a series of new dynamics and creating serious security problems. As a matter of fact, there was a rapid transition from a "border security paradigm" that was tried to be demilitarized before the Arab Spring to a border security regime that "needs to be re-secured".

Turkey has also activated new security mechanisms to ensure border security. Due to the geographical structure and length of the southeastern border, which makes it difficult to control, technology-intensive new generation vehicles have started to be used more. In short, Turkey started to follow a "zero tolerance policy" in order to ensure border security, especially as a result of the increase in security risks arising from the Syrian border and the new dynamics created by ISIS, and introduced a border security policy in which security priorities are at the top of the list.

Trenches, which are at the forefront of physical measures, are applied throughout many border provinces. In this context, it is possible to say that trenches are more prevalent in Reyhanlı, Kilis, Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa regions. It can be said

that the trenches constitute an important obstacle in terms of border security and serve as a deterrent. The barbed wire barrier, which is 2 meters high, consists of 2 wide wire fences and has razor wire on it, is located on the entire Syrian border. However, it should be said that these can also be overcome in cases where there is no living human control. In other words, these obstacles can be overcome in parts where there is no actual surveillance and control of the military (Akdemir, 2019: 118).

In addition to these, many military and physical measures can be mentioned. For example, in February 2015, a trench with a length of 1 kilometer, a width of 2 meters and a depth of 3 meters was dug in the direction of Kızıltepe on the border line between Nusaybin and Kamışlı (Wei, 2019: 468).

On March 9, 2015, Turkey closed the Öncüpınar and Cilvegözü border crossings, with the exception of commercial trucks and emergency medical aid vehicles. In addition, controls along the border have been tightened. Police intensified patrol activities along the border, making illegal crossings more difficult. On 12 March 2015, it was stated that a person who tried to violate the border was killed by a Turkish soldier. In addition to this situation, on March 16, 2015, the government announced that compulsory photo control and fingerprint scanning will be implemented when crossing the Syrian border. On May 12, 2015, a trench of 1,300 meters in length was dug in the area where the Öncüpınar border gate is located, and cameras were placed at the crossing point. On the road between Kilis and Azez town, 3 additional control points were established. Again, on June 22, 2015, a trench with a length of 300 meters, a width of 2 meters and a depth of 3 meters was dug in the area between Kamışlı and Nusaybin. All these measures have greatly reduced illegal crossings from Syria to Turkey (Akdemir, 2019: 122).

4.1.1. No Fly Zone

As a result, at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Turkey offered the Assad administration to take convincing steps to the demonstrators and made attempts in this direction. Following the Assad administration's failure to take the expected steps and the attitude that paved the way for the events to drift into war, Turkey called on the United Nations to establish a no-fly zone in northern Syria which was also reflected in the press as "neutral zone", "safe zone", "no-fly zone", "humanitarian aid corridor." President Erdoğan at the UN General Assembly in 2016 emphasized that a determined stance should be taken towards declaring a no-fly zone in places that

Turkey made safe and that they should work together on this issue. However, the Western world, especially the USA, did not take kindly to this plan. After the advance of ISIS, there were some talks between Turkey and the USA, and although the USA gave positive signals for the safe zone, it was cold to the no-fly zone plan. The biggest reason for this was that the jihadist organizations in the region were also targeted by the Syrian Army. Accordingly, in an environment where the Syrian Army would be blocked, operations called 'fighting terrorism' would come to a more difficult position for the US. The US was also concerned about which forces would be active in safe zones. Moreover, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that 'NATO is not part of these efforts. He stated that NATO is not interested in the safe zone by saying that it is the subject of the bilateral talks between Turkey and the US (Juneau, 2015: 481). On the other hand, US. Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham drew attention to the no fly zone issue. They stated that President Barack Obama should establish a no-fly zone to opponents of Bashar al-Assad. McCain met with opposition leaders in Syria, and they pushed Obama to go even further. They wanted a no-fly zone and Patriot missiles to ensure the civil war in Syria doesn't spread to other areas of the Middle East. The main aim was to end the war, and he stated that the only way this war was going to end quickly is to neutralize the air assets that Assad enjoys. He also indicated that The United States should assist the Turks and Arab League partners to create safe zones in Syria from which the U.S. and its allies can train, arm, and equip vetted opposition forces (Kanat and Ustun, 2015: 92).

As a country primarily affected by the war in Syria, Turkey took individual measures and supported international initiatives in this regard. The Syrian state, which stood as the only actor beyond the border before the war, left its place to terrorist organizations with different ideologies, structures, and long-term strategies claiming sovereignty. The increase in the activities of terrorist organizations in the region necessitated Turkey to take more security measures (Yeşiltaş, 2015: 20).

4.1.2. Legal Actions Against Terrorist Organizations

Another factor that threatens the security of Turkey is the reality of "foreign terrorist fighters." The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee states that there are 30 thousand foreign terrorist fighters in Syria. Since Turkey is on the transit route of foreign terrorist fighters to Syria, it continuously increased the measures it takes

within the scope of border security. For example, Turkey contributed to the international list (no-entry list) created to prevent the entry and exit of potential foreign terrorist fighters, and also prevented the people on the list from entering the country. By establishing risk analysis centers, Turkey aimed to detect such people when they enter the country. As a result of the measures taken, Turkey imposed an entry ban on 20,394 foreign terrorist fighters from 112 different countries as of October 1, 2015. In 2015 alone, 10,309 people were banned from entering Turkey. Again in this direction, 2,337 foreign terrorist fighters from 85 different nationalities were deported from Turkey, and 913 foreign terrorist fighters from 54 various countries were captured in the border region. Within the same year, more than 1,000 foreigners were deported because they were suspected of foreign terrorist fighters (Öztiğ, 2019: 124). Therefore, while Turkey took the necessary steps to pacify the war in Syria; At the same time, tries to ensure its border security. Becoming the target of terrorist organizations, loss of life, security of residents in areas close to the border, the number of refugees shows how important Turkey's border security is.

4.2. Rapprochement with Russia and Iran Alliance: Astana and Sochi

After the July 15th coup attempt Turkey reviewed its position vis a vis her allies. Having not received enough support to its democracy from the West, Turkey decided to go its own way and focused on finding new allies to secure its territorial integrity.

The civil war in Syria caused a big rift between Turkey and Russia since both sides supported conflicting sides. Russia stood behind the Assad regime whereas Turkey supported opposition. The relations soured as a result of the downing of a Russian warplane by Turkey in November 2015. For the first time since the 1950s and after the Cold War, a Russian plane was shot down directly by a NATO member country. Russia suffered its first serious loss since its involvement in the Syrian Civil War as a result of this event. According to the statement made by the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff, despite being warned ten times within five minutes, when it did not stop the border violation, it was shot down by two Turkish F-16 planes in accordance with the rules of engagement. The plane crashed into the Bayırbucak region under the control of the Syrian Turkmen Army. The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that the plane did not violate Turkish airspace. Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that "the Russian plane did not pose a threat to Turkey, it was

1 kilometer away from the Syrian-Turkish border when it was hit by Turkish F-16 planes and crashed to a point about 4 kilometers from the border." He said that "it will cause very serious problems in terms of relations between Russia and Turkey". In another statement, he said that "Turkey has deliberately dragged the relations between Russia and Turkey into a dead end and they are still waiting for an apology from Turkey." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov canceled his visit to Turkey on 25 November 2015 after the downing of the warplane. Since Russia's expectation of an official apology was not met by Turkey, Russia imposed some sanctions such as restrictions on the import of Turkish-made products, restriction on the recruitment of Turkish citizens in Russian companies, cancellation of Russian tourists' holiday packages in Turkey, and suspension of visa-free entry of Turks to Russia. Relations with Russia, which gradually eased the sanctions, entered a normalization phase with President Erdoğan's letter to Vladimir Putin (Ayvaz, 2020: 49).

The tension with Russia was another dimension of the security threat that was posed by Syria. However after the coup attempt Turkey recalibrated its position vis a vis Moscow and President Erdogan visited St Petersburg and met with his Russian counterpart. The elimination of the tension between Turkey and Russia and the normalization of relations were important for both countries because Turkey was one of the biggest energy consumers for Russia. Moreover, weakening Turkey-US relations enabled Turkey-Russia to get closer and cooperate in Syria due to their common interests (Erşen, 2016: 162).

After the crisis, Turkish tourism was hit hard, Turkish companies in Russia faced great difficulties. In addition, the deterioration of relations with Russia left Turkey in a difficult situation in its fight against the PKK and PYD. However, after the 15 July coup attempt, while the West left Turkey alone, Russia announced its full support to the Turkish government and people. After this incident, more decisive steps were taken for the improvement of relations and cooperation. Deteriorated relations between Russia and Turkey due to the Russian SU-24 crisis began to improve after President Erdogan's meeting with Russian President Putin in St Petersburg on August 9, 2016. During the meeting, both heads of state said that their main aim is to first bring the relations to the level before the crisis and then start cooperation on energy. Putin gave instructions to accelerate bilateral trade agreements with Turkey (Durdağ, et. al., 2016: 501). President Erdogan also said that

they have plans to increase the volume of trade relations between the two countries to 100 billion dollars and that this goal will open a new page in the history of both countries. In his speech, Erdoğan underlined that both Turkey and Russia have a lot of work to do together to ensure the security of the region. Although this meeting was planned within the framework of the diplomatic process that gained momentum after Erdogan's letter to Putin at the end of June, it should be noted that it gained special importance after the failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15. Despite Putin's support to Turkey's elected government in this process, the hesitancy in the reactions from EU and US officials and the disappointment caused by the criticisms they directed afterward also increased the importance of the Putin-Erdogan summit (Şahin, et. al., 2017: 478).

After the relations between Russia and Turkey were normalized, on December 19, 2016, Russian ambassador Andrey Karlov was assassinated by Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş, an officer in Ankara Riot Forces Branch Directorate, during the opening of the photography exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Center in Ankara. As a result of the assassination, the Russian ambassador was killed (Koltuk and Tuğçe, 2020: 482).

The assassination of Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov on 19 December created the impression that the long-standing negative atmosphere in Turkish-Russian relations could be revived. This was just one of the indicators of how "slippery" the ongoing bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia were. At the time of the incident, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu was on his way to attend the summit between Turkey, Iran and Russia. After the plane crisis on November 24, 2015, an event that once again tightened the ropes frustrated those who were waiting for the two countries to come to a showdown with each other. The leaders of both countries interpreted that the incident was an assassination and that this action was a sabotage carried out in order to undermine the renewed bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia (Koçak, 2017, p. 16). In this context, the Prime Minister of the time, Binali Yıldırım, emphasized that this attack was a provocation aimed at harming Turkish-Russian relations. In addition, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized that this assassination was a provocation aimed at disrupting the normalization of Russian-Turkish relations, and a provocation to disrupt the peace process in Syria, which was actively advocated by Russia, Turkey, Iran and other

countries interested in resolving the conflict between the Syrian parties (Yeltin, 2021: 48).

On 20 December 2016, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran signed the Moscow Declaration on the Agreed Steps of the Foreign Ministers to Revive the Political Process to End the Conflict in Syria. According to declaration, the three countries agreed on the issues following (Turkish Foreign Minister, 2016):

1. Iran, Russia and Turkey reiterate their full respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and its multi-ethnic, multi-religious, non-sectarian, democratic and secular state structure.
2. Iran, Russia and Turkey are convinced that there will be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. It recognizes the essential role of the UN in its efforts to resolve the crisis within the framework of UNSC Resolution 2254. Ministers call on all members of the international community to cooperate in good faith to remove obstacles to the implementation of the agreements contained in these documents.
3. Iran, Russia and Turkey welcome joint efforts to allow voluntary evacuation of civilians from eastern Aleppo and the departure of armed opposition from the city. Ministers also welcome the partial evacuation of civilians from Fua, Kafer Haya, Zabadani and Madaya. Ministers declare their commitment to ensure that the process is completed in an uninterrupted, safe and secure manner. Ministers express their gratitude to the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Health Organization for their support in the evacuations.
4. Ministers agree on the importance of extending the ceasefire, uninterrupted humanitarian assistance and the free movement of civilians throughout the country.
5. Iran, Russia and Turkey express their readiness to be facilitators and guarantors of the hypothetical agreement being negotiated between the Syrian Government and the opposition. It invites all countries with influence over developments on the ground to do the same.
6. Iran, Russia and Turkey strongly believe that this agreement will help create the necessary momentum for the political process in Syria to resume as per UNSC Resolution 2254.

7. Iran, Russia and Turkey reiterate their determination to jointly fight ISIS and Al Nusra and to separate armed opposition groups from these organisations (Turkish Foreign Minister, 2016).

As one of the main actors in Syria along with Russia and Iran, Turkey also participated in coalition air operations by carrying out ground operations aimed to limit Kurdish terrorist groups' territorial gains. As a result of the operation, Turkey mediated the evacuation of civilians in eastern Aleppo, and with the complete capture of Aleppo, a ceasefire was declared with Russia and Iran on 29 December 2016. Turkey and Russia, together with Iran, later announced that they would host direct talks between the opposition and the Syrian regime in Astana, Kazakhstan, on January 23, 2017. For the first time, the United States and its western allies participated in the talks as observers rather than formally. The Astana talks on the implementation of the ceasefire showed its impact in the global political arena with the three states acting together. When a smaller-scale analysis is made for Central Asia and the Middle East, which have become the playground of global powers, it is seen that the meeting of the three states on common ground in Syria primarily serves to ensure their security and stability (Polat, 2020: 82).

Since the beginning of the Syrian Crisis, Turkey, Russia, and Iran have become vital powers playing a role in the region. Although the aims of the three countries were different, the common goal was the realization of the solution. Turkey's primary goal is to ensure security on its border and not allow separatist movements of terrorist groups on Syrian territory. Because Turkey has a long land border with Syria and any problem that may arise here would create a "security threat." However, Turkey, which has embraced millions of Syrian refugees, also wants to prevent new refugee flows. Russia's primary purpose is to ensure security in Syria because Syria has a strategic point for Russia. Russia sees Syria as its gateway to the Mediterranean and wants to keep other great powers away from there. Thus, Russia aims to shape the balance of power in the Middle East in its favor (Kofman and Rojansky, 2018:12). As for Iran, it can be stated that the reasons underlying Iran's support for Syria are based on ideological interests, regional influence, establishing a direct communication channel between Tehran and Damascus, and national interests that reduce the influence of regional rivals (Wastnidge, 2017: 151).

Turkey and Russia launched the Astana and the Sochi processes with Iran. In both processes, which are considered to be complementary to each other, Turkey and Russia took important steps in the region. Another significant dimension of these two processes is the cooperation between Turkey and Russia. In addition, the fact that both processes have not yet been completed is also important in terms of bilateral relations. Meetings continue at regular intervals.

4.2.1. Astana Process

Turkey's initiatives with Russia and Iran grew into cooperation in the international arena. In this respect, the Astana Process is undoubtedly the longest-running meeting for the solution to the Syrian Crisis (Köstem, 2020:16). The Astana talks are one of the most critical initiatives to achieve lasting peace in Syria. Since the first talks in early 2017, many steps have been taken to stabilize the region. The continuation of the first talks that started in Astana turned into a process. There have been 17 interviews until the end of 2021. During the Astana talks, in which Turkey and Russia played an important role, noteworthy decisions were taken to resolve the crisis (Ayvaz, 2020: 59).

The Astana Process aims to end the conflicts in Syria and achieve lasting peace. With the deep cooperation of Turkey and Russia, it achieved its first success with the ceasefire agreement signed on 30 December 2016. Later, with the addition of new participants to the Turkey-Russia bilateral meetings held on 23-24 January 2017, it gained a new dimension (Ari, 2017: 506).

The primary purpose of the Astana talks is to consolidate and maintain the ceasefire between the Syrian regime and the opposition. In the process that started in line with this goal, Turkey and Russia had the most responsibility. The two states acted as guarantors together with Iran. In addition to the group belonging to the Syrian regime, the opposition also took part in the talks. Among the dissidents were groups that received the support of Turkey. Among those attending Astana were representatives from France, Germany, and England, members of the "Friends of Syria" group. Apart from this, there was also a representative of the host Kazakhstan, where the negotiations were held (Ari, 2017: 506). In addition, Turkey did not want the PYD (Democratic Unity Party) to participate in the negotiations and Russia

accepted this request (Abboud, 2021: 17). This demand is one of the indicators that Turkey and Russia can take a step in the Syria Crisis and act together.

The negotiations, which started in Astana as a neutral zone, hosted firsts in terms of the Syrian Crisis. The Syrian Regime and the opposition came together for the first time in the same place. In addition, it was clearly stated that this crisis cannot be solved by military means. For this reason, it was stated that the ceasefire should definitely be continued.

When we consider and evaluate all of the Astana processes, it is possible to talk about some implications, especially in terms of cooperation between Russia and Turkey. These are:

- Although Turkey and Russia individually have different aims on Syria, both play a major role in solving the problem. At this point, Turkey and Russia successfully carry out the cooperation mechanism.
- The common goal is Syria's territorial integrity and a military solution will not yield results. Both countries agree that the political process will lead to a solution.
- Idlib has been the most important part of the Syrian Crisis in the last period. For this reason, the Idlib issue has become important in terms of Turkish-Russian relations and cooperation.
- In the final stage, the Syria Crisis forced Turkey, Russia and Iran to take sides and cooperate, and this has largely been achieved with the Astana Process.

The Astana Process has been complementary to Geneva process. While the negotiations were continuing in Astana, a new process started in Sochi with the initiatives of Russia. For this reason, the Geneva, Astana and Sochi processes in the Syrian Crisis can be expressed as complementary processes in a way (Cengiz, 2020: 213).

4.2.2 Sochi Process

The Sochi talks, which started while the Astana talks were continuing, were coordinated with Astana and constituted another important step in the resolution of the Syria Crisis. Therefore, it can be said that it is one of the resolution stages of the Syrian crisis. Astana's guarantor countries held the 10th Astana meeting in Sochi with the initiative of Russia. Afterward, the Astana talks continued, and the meetings

were held in Sochi. However, what makes Sochi important is the memorandum regarding the Syria Crisis (Baharçiçek and Ağır, 2020: 9).

The memorandum, which is also of great importance in terms of relations between Turkey and Russia, was signed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin on October 22, 2019, consisting of 10 articles. The articles of the memorandum mostly included the territorial integrity of Syria and the elimination of terrorism from the Syrian territories. In this context, it was decided to preserve the current situation of the region within the scope of the "Peace Spring Operation" conducted by Turkey at a depth of 32 km², which includes Tel Abyad and Ras Al-Ayn (Ergün and Kurban, 2020: 73).

Considering the memorandum, Syria's territorial integrity was emphasized by Turkey and Russia as in the previous negotiations. As a result, it was emphasized that separatist movements would not be allowed on Syrian territory. Operation Peace Spring, which was the relocation operation carried out by Turkey in this context, is important. The ultimate aim of the operation is to ensure security by removing terrorist groups (PKK-YPG) from the region and ensure the safe return of displaced civilians. To implement this memorandum, it was decided to establish an inspection system with the cooperation of Turkey and Russia (Ergün and Kurban, 2020: 76). Another issue discussed and agreed upon in Sochi is that it was stated that the Astana Process should continue to resolve the crisis in Syria (Baharçiçek and Ağır, 2020: 14).

4.3. Border Cross Operations

With the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, to ensure its border security, Turkish army carried out cross-border operations against ISIS, and the PYD, the Syrian branch of the PKK. In this context, Turkey accepted a new doctrine of fighting with terrorist organizations without interruption to establish regional peace and tranquility. Turkey's cross-border operations contributed significantly to the protection of civilians and the prevention of new migration waves (Polat, 2020: 55). Since 2015 Turkey did several operations in Syria and also in neighbouring Iraq.

4.3.1. Shah Euphrates Operation

The only piece of land that Turkey has sovereignty over outside its borders is the Caber Fortress and the Tomb of Suleiman Shah in Syria. The Turkish Armed Forces carried out an operation to move the Tomb of Süleyman Shah due to the

threats from ISIS, located in the Karakozak region of Syria, to a safer area and bring the soldiers in the Saygı Police Station to Turkey. With the Shah Euphrates operation, the Turkish Armed Forces entered Syria to bring back 38 personnel from the Süleyman Shah Tomb. 572 soldiers and 50 M-60 A3 type tanks of the 20th Armored Brigade took part in the operation, as well as F-16 aircraft that patrol the border. After the corpse of Süleyman Shah and other items of sentimental value were taken from the tomb, the tomb of Süleyman Shah and the police station nearby were blown up with explosives. The operation, which was carried out on the night of February 21, 2015, lasted for 9 hours and was completed without any conflict with any element. After the tomb was destroyed, Turkish soldiers in the region entered Turkey via Şanlıurfa. During the operation, a soldier died as a result of a work accident. The reason for the operation was that the conflicts intensifying in the region would spread to the grave or the possibility of an attack on the grave increased. Such a possibility meant that Turkey would be a part of the conflict inside Syria. The tomb was moved to the Eşme region, which is about 250 meters away from the Turkish border, within the Syrian territory (Polat, 2020: 59).

Different criticisms were made about the operation, both from abroad and from within the country. Iran claimed that Turkey violated Syria's territory by using the siege of the outpost as an excuse. The Syrian government said that they were informed of the operation but did not receive their approval, and used the term "open aggression" for the operation. While the US State Department saw the operation as successful, it also mentioned that the US acted in coordination with Turkey as an ally regarding ISIS. Gursel Tekin, secretary general of the main opposition party CHP, interpreted the operation as Turkey's "first loss of territory" without a fight in its 90-year history. MHP and CHP party leaders evaluated the operation as surrendering to the terrorists and "escaping" at the first threat (Özalp, 2018:177). However, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that the Shah Euphrates operation was successfully carried out without any conflict.

4.3.2. Euphrates Shield Operation

On August 24, 2016, Turkey announced that it had launched the "Operation Euphrates Shield" taking advantage of the right of "self-defense" recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Convention. Article 51 declares that if a UN

member is the target of an armed attack, member states can maintain their individual or collective self-defense rights until the Security Council takes the necessary measures to maintain peace and security. Referring to this provision, Turkey aimed to eliminate the threats directed to Turkey by the terrorist organizations in Syria. For this reason, Operation Euphrates Shield aimed to maintain area control to seize and control a large geographical area and prevent this area from being reused by hybrid elements of terrorist organizations such as ISIS, PKK, PYD, YPG (Polat, 2020: 62).

In line with the operations carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces in the Al-Bab region with its ally Free Syrian Army, the ISIS terrorist organization was removed from the border region of Turkey. In this context, Operation Euphrates Shield was successfully concluded with the superior effort of the Turkish Armed Forces. With the Euphrates Shield Operation, Turkey made the region a protected and secure region for Syrian citizens trying to return to their country or seeking a safe zone in their country.

In the operation, ended on March 29, 2017, Turkey lost 71 soldiers and 245 Turkish soldiers were injured. More than 3,000 terrorists were killed as a result of the operation. Within the framework of this operation, Turkey cleared the Syrian border region east of the Euphrates River and south of it, excluding Afrin, from terrorists. At the end of this operation, Turkey, together with the FSA, captured the cities of Al Rai, Azez, Jarablus, Çobanbey and Al-Bab triangle (Polat, 2020: 66).

This was the first land operation by a NATO member against the ISIS. The organizations' territorial sovereignty was forcefully ended by Turkey.

4.3.3. Idlib Operation (2017)

Idlib, a strategic city in Syria, next to the Turkish border, is one of the critical points as it is a key region opening to Mediterranean ports. It acts as a bridge between important cities such as Latakia, Hama, and Aleppo. In this context, Idlib has been one of the most important bastions of the Syrian crisis. After Russia's involvement in Syria, and Idlib, known as the region where the most conflicts took place, became the region where airstrikes were carried out (Polat, 2020: 68).

The Turkish army deployed in the Idlib region and established observation points. In this context, the Turkish Armed Forces entered the region, no conflict was

carried out. The Turkish Armed Forces aimed to eliminate ISIS terrorism from its border (Acun and Salaymeh, 2018: 16).

Idlib locates on the Hatay border of Turkey. One of the main reasons for Turkey to carry out the Idlib operation was to eliminate the effects of terrorism on the border and protect it from terrorist organizations. Other targets of Turkey were to prevent the possible strengthening of terrorist organizations that may occur in the region, prevent migration from Syria. In this context, after the positive result of Operation Euphrates Shield, Turkey started operations in the Idlib region to ensure the stability of the ceasefire in the region. In this context, Turkey entered the Syrian region for the third time after two operations (Kadioğlu, 2020: 213).

In addition to the loss of regions such as Aleppo, Eastern Ghouta and Northern Homs, the fact that the opposition was forced to leave Daraa and Kuneytra in the last period made the opposition presence in Idlib more important. As a result of its negotiations with Russia, Turkey created a living space for civilians as well as Syrian opposition by increasing its presence and effectiveness in the field, as in the example of the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations. As a result of the Astana process and the de-escalation agreement, Turkey, which established twelve different observation points in the Idlib region, saved the region, where approximately 3 million civilians live, from a major humanitarian crisis, with the negotiations to be carried out with the Russians on Idlib and the steps to unite the opposition on the ground and eliminate the radical elements. In this context, Turkey established the first of its observer points on Bereket Mountain, located within the borders of Aleppo and on the border of Afrin, in October 2017. After that, Turkish soldiers were deployed in a total of twelve observation points to encircle Idlib, respectively. These observation points, the last of which was established in May 2018 within the scope of the Astana agreement reached with Russia and Iran, are important for the fate of the region (Acun and Salaymeh, 2018: 19). The Idlib operation was later expanded as Operation Spring Shield, which started on February 27, 2020.

4.3.4. Olive Branch Operation

Operation Olive Branch, also known as Operation Afrin, is the operation carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces in the Syrian region on January 20, 2018,

together with the Free Syrian Army. After the Euphrates Shield and Idlib operations in Syria, Turkey entered Syria. In the context of protecting the border security of the Turkish border, which was cleared of ISIS terrorists with the Euphrates Shield operation, the PKK extension YPG, KCK, PYD, and ISIS terrorists were cleared within the scope of the Afrin operation, because the terrorist groups that emerged after the civil war in Syria were deployed to the borders of Turkey. Within the scope of the Afrin operation, the Turkish Armed Forces and the Free Syrian Army, with which they were allied, united to clear the Afrin, Azez, and Jarablus regions of Syria from terrorists. Thus, the Syrian people escaped from oppression and persecution returned to Afrin, which was cleansed of terrorists (Kadıoğlu, 2020: 213).

Within the framework of Operation Olive Branch, great success was achieved both on the political and military ground. The city center and countryside of Afrin were cleared of PKK-YPG elements within 58 days. In this respect, Operation Olive Branch is one of the most successful military operations in the history of Turkey's cross-border operations (Demir, 2018: 27). In the press statements made by the Turkish Armed Forces; It was announced that 4,608 PKK/YPG/PYD and ISIS members were killed, 320 SMO soldiers and 54 Turkish soldiers lost their lives and 236 soldiers were injured.

As a result, Operation Olive Branch enabled Turkey to protect its border and increase its weight in the region. Terrorist groups standing with the support of the US and Russia were defeated with Operation Olive Branch (Polat, 2020: 72). By providing border security, Turkey prevented PKK/PYD terrorist attacks in the Hatay-Osmaniye-Kilis-Islahiye region and removed the terrorist organization's presence 35 km from the borderline. By disarming the PKK/PYD in Afrin, Turkey reduced the possibility of their becoming a threat again. By connecting the Euphrates Shield and the Idlib operation areas, Turkey united the territorial dominance of the Syrian opposition and provided the conditions for ideological and military unity among the opposition (Kadıoğlu, 2020: 216).

4.3.5. Peace Spring Operation

On 9 October 2019, Turkey launched the Peace Spring Operation in northern Syria in to clear the terrorist elements from its border, ensure the safety of the people living in the north of Syria, prevent the illegal activities of the terrorist organization PYD/YPG, and protect the territorial integrity of Syria (Polat, 2020: 77).

According to Çelikiz, the purpose of the operation can be stated as below (Çelikiz, 2019: 6):

- To prevent the foundation of a terror corridor in the south of the Turkey-Syria border,
- To create a safe living space for the people of the region living in northern Syria by ensuring their safety,
- To neutralize terrorist organizations and terrorists that pose a threat to Turkey's security, especially ISIS and PKK/KCK/PYD-YPG,
- To provide suitable conditions for the return of displaced Syrians to their homes and lands.

During the operation, PKK's Syrian branch PYD/YPG elements and shelters, weapons, tools and equipment belonging to these elements were targeted. Upon various criticisms regarding the operation, Turkey stated that its main expectation from the international community is to support its fight against terrorist organizations, and indicated that it will continue its fight against all kinds of terrorist organizations resolutely, as in the past (İnce, 2020: 66).

From the beginning of the operation, both NATO and the EU reacted to the operation of Turkey. After intense discussions with the US delegation consisting of Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien, and Syria Special Representative James Jeffrey, an agreement was reached on October 17, 2019. In this context, a ceasefire decision was taken for the terrorist organization PKK/YPG to withdraw from the Safe Zone within 120 hours, collect their heavy weapons and destroy their fortifications. At the end of the 120 hours, the US reported that the PKK/YPG's withdrawal from the region was complete. Thus, the Peace Spring operation, which was carried out in the 120-kilometer region between Rasulayn and Tel Abyad, came to an end (İnce, 2020: 69).

4.3.6. Operation Spring Shield

Operation Spring Shield was a cross-border military operation carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces against the Syrian Armed Forces and allied militias in the Idlib Governorate in northwest Syria on February 27, 2020, in response to the Balyun airstrikes. The attacks resulted in the death of 34 Turkish soldiers. Following the airstrike in Balyun, Turkey formalized its military intervention and announced the

start of Operation Spring Shield, aimed at stopping the advance of Syrian government forces against Syrian rebels in Idlib and returning them to the pre-offensive front lines. Minister of National Defense Hulusi Akar said that the operation aims to reach a ceasefire agreement in the Second Northern Syria Buffer Zone and prevent migration from Idlib to the Turkish border, within the framework of the Astana talks. On March 5, Turkey and Russia signed a ceasefire agreement in Moscow. The terms of the ceasefire included a 6-kilometer safe corridor on both sides of the M4 highway, which would be jointly patrolled by Russia and Turkey from March 15 (İnce, 2020: 73).

On February 27, 2020, Turkey suffered the heaviest loss since the beginning of the war, during the transfer of the Turkish soldiers tasked with guarding the border to the observation points in the region. The Russian-backed Syrian air force bombed the convoy of the Turkish Armed Forces and killed 34 Turkish soldiers. As a result, Turkey inflicted heavy losses on the Syrian regime through armed unmanned aerial vehicles, medium-range artillery batteries deployed on the border, and FSA forces inside Syria. The Assad regime's desire to seize Idlib, the most important living space for civilians in northern Syria, was seen as a serious threat to Turkey due to both the possible massacre threat in the city and a potential migration wave to Turkey (Çelik and Aldemir, 2020: 1046).

After the attack, the Turkish authorities declared that the Syrian troops were "legitimate targets", and it was announced that 329 Syrian soldiers were neutralized by the Turkish Armed Forces, with more than 200 artillery hits. Artillery units of the TAF also struck targets of the Syrian army and Hezbollah in the Nubl-Zehra region to the north of Aleppo. Since the beginning of Operation Spring Shield, totally 59 Turkish soldiers were killed, and 3 aircraft, 8 helicopters, 151 tanks, 47 cannon/howitzer, 52 MLRA, 8 air defense missile systems, 12 anti-tank guns, 4 mortars, 24 armored vehicles, 27 armored combat vehicles, 34 armed pickups, 60 military vehicles, 10 ammunition depots of Syria were destroyed and 3138 Syrian soldiers were killed (İnce, 2020: 71).

CONCLUSION

Although there is a strong social geography bond between Turkey and Syria in the historical background, the relations between the two countries have been strained for many years due to various reasons. The relations started to change after the death of Hafez Al Assad in 2000. Turkey developed its relations with the new president and Ak Party government which took over Turkey in 2002 adopted this policy.

Ak Party made vital changes in Turkish foreign policy strategy within the framework of “zero problem policy with neighbors”, and a constructivist approach was adopted in relations. Accordingly the relations between Syria and Turkey, which had been intense relations for many years (1921-1998), improved in a short time. The trade volume between the two countries, which did not reach even 1 billion dollars, reached 2.5 billion dollars in 2010.

However, after the Arab Spring, relations between the two countries deteriorated again. Especially since 2016, Turkey abandoned its constructivist approach and acted with a realism approach on Syria. The main reason for this is that the Syrian civil war came to the point of threatening Turkey's security.

As a result of the Arab Spring, democratic demonstrations and protests started in Syria, which was ruled by the Baath Regime. As a result of demonstrations and protests against the Syrian regime, many people were killed and many were forced to immigrate to other neighboring countries. In the country, many armed groups formed after the crisis. Therefore, the crisis in Syria enabled armed groups in the Middle East region to gain ground in this region.

When the crisis in Syria is evaluated in terms of Turkey, the civil war in Syria created an authority vacuum in certain regions, and these areas came under the influence of terrorist organizations. Especially, these regions became suitable grounds for ISIS, PYD/YPG-PKK terrorist organizations to plan and implement their actions. Turkey, on the other hand, was the primary interlocutor of these organizations as a result of attacks on Turkey's border cities. The terrorist threat on the Turkish border reached the level of violating the sovereignty and the necessity of intervention arose, therefore. In this context, Turkey carried out cross-border operations in the region to protect its national security and sovereignty. In this context, Turkey carried out Operation

Euphrates Shield, Operation Idlib, and Operation Afrin to ensure its security against attempts to establish a terrorist state on its border. With these operations, Turkey's border security was ensured.

AK Party elites saw themselves close to Muslim countries, and for the first time in the 2000s, Turkey developed a policy for Islamic countries. The AK Party government transformed the traditional Turkish foreign policy focused on hard power and security based on soft power. In this context, Turkey followed a foreign policy aiming to become a model country by transforming Turkey's relations with Middle East countries through soft power. In this context, Turkey, with the Arab Spring process that started at the end of 2010, wanted to manage the transformation in the Middle East with soft power tools and to be a model for the countries in the region. However, Turkey's soft power to manage change and become a model country was insufficient. Therefore, since 2012, Turkey's Syria policy has turned from soft power to hard power, and at the same time, Turkish foreign policy has been reduced to military instruments. In this sense, the Syrian crisis has become the ultimo ratio (last resort) of Turkish foreign policy in terms of reducing it to military instruments. Therefore, in the context of reducing foreign policy to military instruments, it can be said that Turkey's Syria policy theoretically gravitates towards realism.

Before the Arab Spring, historically, the relations between Turkey and Syria had worsened in general terms since the establishment of Syria, but these relations began to improve during the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in Turkey in 2002 with the policy of zero problems with neighbors. Therefore, it can be said that the foreign policy of Turkey regarding Syria was changed beginning from 2002. The relations between the two countries were improved which can be interpreted that these relations were based on constructivism theory. But from 2016, Turkey has changed its constructivist approach towards Syria and applied a realist approach as a result of its security policy.

To explain both countries' relations in the light of constructivism, it is necessary to know the main principles of constructivism in details. Constructivism can be defined as the conceptual construction of the world that each individual experiences. Social constructionism deals with the social environment rather than the individual (Young and Collin, 2004). The important thing in this concept is the

perception of the environment by the individual (Hammersley, 1992). Wendt conceptualized social constructionist theory as a theory of international relations. The point that distinguishes Wendt from other social construction theorists in international relations literature is that he treats the system as a level of analysis. When looking at Wendt's social constructionist theory, the first thing that draws attention is his emphasis on role, identity, and culture, which constructivists argue that these identities are constructed within the social environment of international and domestic politics. According to Barkin, the core feature of constructivism is the focus on the social construction of international politics (Barkin, 2003: 325). Constructivism sees international politics as a social reality. The social reality reflects upon every aspect of international politics, including national interests which constructivists would argue that the state interests are set through social interaction and it is constructed by the very same society.

Taking the above-mentioned points of constructivism into consideration, it can be said that Turkey's relations with Syria, especially between 2001-2016, can be regarded within the principles of constructivism, as the new elite in Turkey set new norms and interests through relations and interaction with international and domestic actors.

The principles of constructivism can be seen with Turkey Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's emphasis on the countries common role, identity, and culture. Turkish foreign policy towards Syria was at first driven by reconstitutions of Turkish foreign policy's role identity as a pro-Eastern, pro-Muslim state, which promotes political, economic, and cultural rapprochement with the Arab countries. Once this role identity was established by the AK party, Turkish foreign policy changes can be explained by the persistence of this role identity in the context of geopolitical changes (Eskioğlu, 2019: 73). The leaders of the two countries developed relations and took part in common policies. These relations were felt in many areas, especially in the trade volume between the two countries. However, this did not last long. Since 2016, Turkey has gone through a revision of its foreign policy towards Syria and the Middle East, prioritizing its security instead of pursuing regional hegemony which requires the toppling of Assad in the first place. Rapprochement with Russia to conduct military operations in northern Syria, which is under the control of Kurdish groups, served as a defensive

agenda for Turkey, while the anti-Assad discourse came to a point of non-existence amongst the ruling party elite. Turkey acted accordingly with what realists would argue and Turkey aimed to seek an appropriate amount of power to ensure its survival and establish a balance of power in the region, acting as a security maximizer. Because realism highlights the role of the nation-state and makes a broad assumption that all nation-states are motivated by national interests. National interest can be defined that all states try to protect their political autonomy and their territorial integrity. Therefore, realist theories emphasize state and national security issues.

In light of all these developments, Turkish-Syrian political relations will be discussed in detail. To conclude, Turkey-Syria relations have witnessed many transformations throughout the years and the relations between the two countries played and still play an important role both in regional and international politics. The relations between the two countries were troublesome since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 due to territorial and resource-related disputes. The relations almost hit rock bottom in the 90s only to witness a radical transformation from enmity to amity in the early 2000s.

The identity part of the subject constitutes the first theoretical framework of this thesis project; constructivism. This thesis pursued to analyze the construction of the national interests of Turkey to rationally explain the changes in Turkish foreign policy towards Syria. The quest for power constitutes the second theoretical framework which is realism. In the context of realism, Turkey's national interests were explained from the perspective of seeking power in the Middle East to establish its regional hegemony which, in accordance with the neorealist theory, would grant its security in an unstable region.

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