

T.C.
ISTANBUL KULTUR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

TURKISH-SYRIAN RELATIONS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
TURKISH REPUBLIC IN 1923

Master of Arts Thesis by
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Programme: International Relations
Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Hazal PAPUÇÇULAR

JUNE 2021

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**Nayfeh Ismail Taha
Abualhayjaa**

ABSTRACT

This research thesis aims to examine the Turkish-Syrian relations since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Turkey is part of a large-scale populated country influenced by geopolitical and historical influences as well as local, regional, and international events. On the other hand, Syria is one of the oldest countries, known for its artistry and cultural developments.

Turkish-Syrian relations have shifted significantly over the years, from diplomatic cooperation to military-political rivalry. Despite their differences, Turkey and Syria share a number of shared interests, including the Kurdish issue, regional stability, the uniformity of political events in the Middle East, and trade relations.

The paper is divided into five chapters with detailed analysis of Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria and illustrates the factors that led to changes in the foreign policy of Turkey and Syria. However, focusing on the findings, the thesis states that Turkey's political policies will undoubtedly proceed and be welcomed by all parties as long as the region's quest for peace continues. This research study will provide an insight to future researchers and readers.

Keywords: Foreign policy, stability, diplomatic relations.

KISA ÖZET

Bu araştırma tezi, 1923 yılında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşundan bu yana Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye, jeopolitik ve tarihsel etkilerin yanı sıra yerel, bölgesel ve uluslararası olaylardan etkilenen geniş nüfuslu bir ülkenin parçasıdır. Öte yandan, Suriye, sanatı ve kültürel gelişimi ile bilinen eski ülkelerden biridir. Türkiye-Suriye ilişkileri yıllar içinde diplomatik işbirliğinden askeri-politik rekabete doğru önemli ölçüde değişmektedir. Farklılıklarına rağmen, Türkiye ve Suriye, Kürt sorunu, bölgesel istikrar, Orta Doğu'daki siyasi olayların tekdüzeliği ve ticari ilişkiler dahil olmak üzere bir dizi ortak çıkarları paylaşmaktadır.

Bu tez, beş bölüme ayrılmıştır, Türkiye'nin Suriye'ye yönelik dış politikasının ayrıntılı analizi ile Türkiye ve Suriye'nin dış politikasında değişikliklere yol açan faktörleri göstermektedir. Ancak, sonuçlara odaklanarak tez, bölgenin barış arayışı devam ettiği sürece Türkiye'nin siyasi politikalarının şüphesiz ilerleyeceğini ve tüm taraflarca memnuniyetle karşılanacağını belirtmektedir. Bu araştırma çalışması, gelecek araştırmacılara ve okuyuculara bir fikir verecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dış politika, istikrar, diplomatik ilişkiler.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
KISA ÖZET.....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vi
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.3 The Research Problem.....	5
1.2 Research Objectives & Arguments.....	6
1.3 Methodology	7
1.4 Literature Review	10
CHAPTER TWO.....	26
Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East, specifically Syria	26
2.1 The Internal Transformations That Occurred In Turkish Foreign Policy.....	26
2.2 New Tools In Turkish Foreign Policy.....	30
2.3 During the Arab Spring (2010)	36
2.4 Turkish foreign policy towards Syria and the Syrian crisis.....	40

CHAPTER THREE	44
Development of political relations between Turkey and Syria.....	44
3.1 Development of political relations with the separation of the Hatay Brigade from 1920 to 1939.....	44
3.2 The development of political relations due to the problem of the Tigris and Euphrates waters.....	48
3.3 Damascus' support for the PKK from 1984 to 1998.....	52
3.4 Evolution of political relations since the 1998 Adana Agreement until 2011.....	55
3.5 The development of political relations from the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011 until 2020.....	59
3.6 Turkish military operations in Syria.....	68
CHAPTER FOUR	80
The impact of the Syrian crisis on the Turkish regional relations.....	80
4.1 The impact of the Syrian crisis on the Turkish-Russian relations.....	80
4.2 The impact of the Syrian crisis on the Turkish-American relations.....	88
4.3 The impact of the Syrian crisis on Turkish-Iranian relations.....	97
CHAPTER FIVE.....	102
CONCLUSION	102
REFERENCES.....	108

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviation have been used in the thesis

SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
FSA	The Free Syrian Army
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
UN	United Nations
YPG	People's Protection Units
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PYD	Democratic Union Party
PDK	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria
PJAK	Kurdistan Free Life Party
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WWII	World War Two
WWI	World War One
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
GAP	Southeastern Anatolia Project
P.A.C	Political action committee
CNN	Cable News Network

TRT Turkish Radio and Television Corporation

BBC British Broadcasting Corporation

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkish-Syrian relations have been characterized by fluctuating conflicts over the nature of these relations. Turkey has the longest common border with Syria and shares historical, economic, and social ties with this country. Along with this, both the countries share several developments, growth, apathy, and stagnation (Al-Obeidi, 2010).

During the period between World War I and World War II, relations almost ceased between the two countries. This went beyond the unresolved issues between the two countries and was formalized through the French authorities due to France's occupation of Syria at that time, and its domination of Syria's foreign policy as a mandate power (Moawad, 2009). In regional and international politics, Turkish-Syrian relations were problematic and reached a climax in conflict until they approached the brink of war. These relations changed again when they reached rapprochement when Turkey and Syria signed the Adana agreement in 1998. (Moawad, 2009).

From the independence of Syria in 1946 until the end of the twentieth century, Turkish-Syrian relations were characterized by tension (Al-Sebawi, 1991). One of the most prominent of those problems that faced Turkish relations after the independence of Syria was the water problem that occurred in the late seventies of the last century when Turkey developed a plan linking several huge water projects on the Euphrates River,

which stems from Turkey and flows into Syria, and that project led to great concern from the Syrian part.

As the tension between the two countries intensified the Turkish military forces were mobilized on the Syrian borders, twice; the first in 1957, after the establishment of the Baghdad Pact and the accession of Syria to Egypt, because Syria was on its way to an alliance with the Soviet Union after it signed a loan agreement¹ from the Soviet Union and signed a friendship agreement with it (Murad,, 2001).

The second time was in 1998, when Turkish forces gathered on the Syrian border due to the presence of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan inside Syria, in addition to the presence of training camps for the PKK in Syrian territory, which Ankara considers a terrorist attack. Turkey's goal was to expel the PKK² leader, Abdullah Ocalan, and closed all of their military headquarters (Murad,, 2001).

Since then, the Adana Treaty was signed in 1998, and in return, Syria stopped dealing with the PKK and dissolved the issue. The thorny scene between the two countries began to change with Syria's retreat from its historical territorial demands (Hatay), which was the first point of contention between the two countries in 1923 (Al-Azzawi, 2002).

Here, a new era of rapprochement between the two countries began and the solution to the water problem. Since 2000, there have been major transformations in the normalization of political relations between the two countries (Al-Azzawi, 2002). The Former Turkish President Ahmed Necdet Sezer, in June 2000, offered condolences on the death of former Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, and on the other side, the Syrian

¹ Loan agreement: It is an agreement that included Soviet economic aid to Syria worth 300 million dollars, technical and industrial assistance, in addition to the Soviet Union's willingness to buy Syrian products.

² PKK: It is the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which is a left-wing Kurdish political party that transformed after its establishment into a political organization that leads armed action and was founded on November 27 1978 in a clandestine manner by a group of concentrated students, including Abdullah Ocalan, who was chosen as the party's president and one of its goals is the establishment of the Greater Kurdistan state and witnessed the decade of the eighties and nineties more Periods of conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army

President took over Bashar Al-Assad rule in 2000 and desired to open a new page for relations with Turkey (Mustafa, 2011).

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) assumed power in Turkey in 2002 and the strategic transformation of the Turkish foreign policy in the region that targets zero problems with other countries, here a new stage started for Turkish-Syrian relations that was different from what was previously before the AKP came to power (Mustafa, 2011).

The AKP began with cautious rapprochement, then cooperated, and then began to work on political relations between the two countries. This was especially evident when Turkey played an influential political role in aiding the Syrian government when the Arab countries imposed the political blockade after Syria was accused of assassinating Hariri, the former Lebanese Prime Minister. This led Turkey to stand by the Syrian government politically and assist them in eliminating the political siege and pressures they were subject to by the US and European countries (Mustafa, 2011).

After the period of Iraq's occupation by the USA, when Turkey conducted political mediations between the Syrian government and some European Union countries they were able to overcome the crisis and in 2009 the relations and cooperation between Turkey and Syria reached their best form (Michel, 2010).

In 2011 revolutions erupted in some Arab countries and these succeeded in toppling dictatorial regimes in those countries. The outbreak of demonstrations against the Syrian political system and government practices towards these demonstrations along with the repressive security response worsened the internal Syrian situation. This had repercussions with the nature of Turkish-Syrian relations, especially when the Turkish government supported the popular demonstrations and demands in Syria (Michel, 2010).

Turkey tried to enter the role of mediator between the demonstrators and the Syrian regime and demanded that the Syrian regime respond to popular demands. The popular demands were for political and economic reforms, freedoms, removal of political detainees from prisons, and lifting the state of emergency; to carry out rapid and serious reforms (Zawbaa, 2012). The Syrian regime rejected those demands and refused Turkish mediation. The demonstrators were suppressed and relations deteriorated when the Turkish leadership declared that the Syrian regime had lost its legitimacy. The Turkish leadership called for it to be overthrown and Turkey maintained a logistical and military position to support the revolution (Zawbaa, 2012).

In 2011 the Syrian opposition began to prepare themselves for war and Turkey provided a haven for the Syrian opposition. A meeting was held in Istanbul in the same year and Turkey hosted the head of the Free Syrian Army. In 2012, Turkey closed its embassy in Damascus and organized a conference of the Syrian National Council of Opposition Forces in Turkey and it drew up a unified plan to oust Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. In the same year, the Syrian air defence forces shot down a military plane, which led to further tension between the countries (Salami, 2017).

On the third of October 2013, the Turkish Parliament renewed its approval of military involvement in Syria as an emergency. Almost one year later, on September 22, 2014, Turkey closed a number of its border crossings with Syria due to the escape of seventy thousand Syrian Kurds to its territory, in conjunction with the outbreak of clashes between Turkish forces and Kurdish militants (Zawbaa, 2017).

Then, in February 2016, Syria began calling on the Security Council to intervene to stop the Turkish bombing of Kurdish sites in the north of the country. Syria considered it a "violation of its sovereignty" and accused the Turkish government of allowing the crossing of 100 militants into its territory and there were several factors that encouraged

Turkey to intervene with the military in Syria, among these factors was the direct link between the Syrian crisis and Turkey's national security (Salami, 2017).

The emergence of the Kurdish project on the southern Turkish borders, the internal Turkish situation after the bombing that took place in Ankara, and the expectation of large waves of refugees heading towards its borders all contributed to a reduced sense of security (Togai, 2017).

In 2016, on August 24, Operation Euphrates Shield was launched to retake the border region from the grip of the Islamic State and secure the Turkish border cities (Togai, 2017). In 2018, the Turkish army began its military operations against the People's Protection Units (YPG) in the border city of Afrin, which it called the Olive Branch. Then on October 9, 2019, the Turkish army launched a military operation with the participation of the Syrian National Army called Operation Peace Spring, in the east of the Euphrates River, to cleanse the area of terrorists and create a safe zone for the return of Syrian refugees to their country (Togai, 2017).

Turkish-Syrian relations since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 until today will be the key aim of this study. This study will deal with analysing and clarifying the nature of these relations, the fluctuations, and transformations that these relations have undergone, whether in rapprochement and cooperation or tension and hostility. The analysis will focus on the variables and issues that have affected the nature of relations between the two countries during this period.

1.2 The Research Problem

The research problem revolves around the transformation and development in Turkish-Syrian relations during the period between 1923 and 2020 when relations underwent radical transformations that are worthy of research and study. This research

will analyse the state of fluctuations in the march of bilateral relations, which is characterized by divergence, proximity, and clashes at different times, in the context of analysing the impact of regional and international variables on the relations between the two countries.

The diplomatic political relations between Turkey and the Arab countries in general, and with Syria in particular, are not based on original, well-established foundations. Rather, they are based on circumstantial determinants related to leadership and the consequent regional, and international trends and even ideology. That is, the relations between the countries of the region are not generalised to institutions with political traditions, but to personal relationships between the leaders of these countries, as the Syrian-Turkish relations fluctuated and underwent sharp changes, the problem of political uncertainty in the frameworks for relations between the two countries was prevalent.

1.3 Research Objectives & Arguments

The research objectives in this thesis are to clarify Turkish-Syrian relations over a specific period of time. This research is considered as an introduction to the analysis of internal environments and the extent of their greater impact on the regional and international levels of both countries. I will also deal with the historical development of relations, issues and differences that occurred between the two countries, which lasted for years, and how these issues were resolved after that, such as the water problem.

The research aim of this thesis is to explain the difference in relationships, and how they improved in certain years, soured, and then got better again. Turkish-Syrian relations have a great history for both countries. Through this thesis, I will elaborate on the roles that Turkey and Syria play at the international level, and link this research to

current issues in the international system.

The research argument in this thesis is to examine where the Turkish-Syrian relations have reached its peak and what the future holds for them as the years pass. However, this would be the primary strive in this study but on the other hand, to find out the challenges that both the nations faced during all those revolutions and conflicts that steadily moved their relationship to a whole new shape and form. Nonetheless, the history of the Turkish-Syrian relations is beneficial for the political decision-makers and those interested in political affairs, because this research will shed light on the important changes that occurred between the two countries and their impact on the regional and international levels.

As far as Turkish-Syrian historical relations are concerned, this thesis will follow up on the escalating role of Turkey under the rule of the Justice and Development Party, and how this affected the course of relations between Turkey and Syria and between the rest of the Arab countries, where relations entered a new phase and the arrival of the Justice and Development Party is considered the rise of moderate political Islam.

Further, I will argue in this thesis that why Turkish-Syrian relations have taken a different curve from the rest of the countries since the independence of the Turkish Republic in 1923 to a large extent due to the presence of the French mandate because the mandate limited the common relations between Syria and other countries likewise, in regards to Turkey, cooperation used to be routed through France, which limited direct dealings and normal relations between the Syrian and Turkish governments.

Secondly, this bone of contention between both the countries is the occurrence of the Hatay issue that took the relations to the curve of tension, especially since France handed Hatay over to Turkey without turning to the Syrian government. I will be supporting this argument by the other academic papers to highlight the agreement

between Syria and France that availed for independence, on the contrary, France did not make the decision to hand over Hatay province to Turkey, but Syria's dissatisfaction with the leading events that occurred made the relationship curved in a challenging scene. This issue was not closed because France had other interests and dimensions with Turkey, so it did not pay any attention to Syria's rejection of what happened in the Hatay case.

Another issue emerged as the debate over Turkish-Syrian relations progressed. The water problem on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers was a major issue for Syria, particularly since it arose after the country's independence and the Syrian government assumed responsibility for it. The Turkish-Syrian government's dealings grew stronger, but on an unstable basis.

Thirdly, the relations witnessed another negative issue on the course of relations, which is the presence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on Syrian soil. Turkey saw it as a threat to its national security, while Ankara saw it as terrorism. These relations have deteriorated, resulting in problems and conflicts, as well as numerous involvement to find a solution, particularly since Syria and Turkey share large borders and have much in common historically.

Therefore, these problems, issues, and challenges formulate solid arguments where solutions had to be found such as with the Adana Treaty, there was a solution, but there is still a different position for each of the two countries on all issues. With the arrival of the Justice and Development Party to power in 2002, the party's approach was to reform relations between the country, and specifically Syria, so we say that relations began to improve, and that formalism and tension have become a thing of the past regarding relations. Relations between the two nations improved in a number of aspects and Turkey embraced a new foreign policy strategy that advocated for eliminating conflicts

with its neighbours. However, with the commencement of the Syrian revolution, things began to fall apart, and relations were heated, as this situation continues to be a difficult one.

Finally, these arguments will remain persistent in the thesis because they will show how these relationships changed through time, from tension to collaboration with betterment, and then back to enormous tension, with the cause being difficulties that were not fixed on a stance. The disparities that have arisen are the foundation, and there are no final solutions to all difficulties, or no suitable conditions that have led to these changes in the two nations' relations. There's abundant evidence and documentation researched and written about this matter but we are not sure whether the relationship would be identical as in 2002 or it may get changed for the betterment.

1.4 Methodology

This research is a historical study between Turkey and Syria. It uses the case study approach by linking the variables present in the Syrian-Turkish relations at the internal and regional levels to arrive at a general framework for these relations.

It also uses an analytical and descriptive approach to interrogate each variable in the bilateral relations and to cover the vocabulary of the research and its wide interactive field that includes the concepts of transformations, stakes, political events and the entries of the sub-research used. Its most important sources are articles, books and research papers, as well as academic theses written by prominent academics, writers and journalists, in which they shared the history of political relations between Turkey and Syria for many years now. I went through these articles, books, research studies, and what was published recently and back and it gave me insight.

Concerning the historical relations between the two countries since the independence of the Turkish Republic in 1923, little news was used from international news channels and official reports on the relations between the two countries and secondary sources such as websites have been used to collect numbers and statistics, especially when referring to the demographics.

I have also used them in some details for some of the thorny issues between the two countries. The main focus of the research will be on the analysis of books, articles and research papers in addition to academic theses and these sources helped me understand the issues that have occurred between the two countries and the course of relations since 1923, explain all the influences that occurred on the relations between Turkey and Syria, and reach an unbiased conclusion about those relations.

1.5 Literature Review

In this literature review, I have analyzed books, articles and studies written by Arab, Turkish and foreign academic writers and journalists who have analysed the great influences that have occurred in Turkish-Syrian relations and the various political problems since 1923. This topic has attracted the attention of many researchers, journalists, politicians and writers in the world. This was met with a lot of controversy about the future of relations between the two countries and the facts behind the causes of political differences between them since ancient times. That is why you should consider the different opinions, data and research that have been written on this topic (Ofar 2014, Fahmy 1998, Badr 2012).

However, the literature review deals with the development of Syrian-Turkish relations since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and these studies will help to explain the foreign policies of the two countries because the Turkish-Syrian relations are

characterized by hesitation, indecisiveness and delay. These are considered among the most important studies in terms of analyzing the issue of Turkish-Syrian relations; they are also considered some of the more influential references that researchers, writers and analysts have provided.

Furthermore, the literary review will shed light on the historical background of relations between Turkey, and Syria and also deals with when the great rapprochement between the two countries was on several political, economic and social levels at different points in history. This research will also address historical issues that have influenced the development of relationships between the two nations, the most significant of which being the Hatay problem, the water crisis, and the terrorist issues. Secondly, this paper attempts to show how relations have been harmonized after the Adana Agreement until the beginnings of the Syrian revolution in the twenty-first century and how relations have transformed from 2011 to the present day.

The Hatay problem was one of the first conflicts that occurred between Turkey and Syria since its foundation. Hatay (the Sanjak of Alexandretta at that time) belonged to the Province of Syria during the period of Ottoman rule. When the armistice of World War I was concluded in 1918 between the Ottoman Empire and the Western Allies, it was called Mudros (Fahmy, 1988).

According to Fahmy (1998), the area was in the hands of Turkish forces during this period. This was in line with the National Pact approved by the last Ottoman Parliament in 1920 and this region was within the Turkish borders. However, France concluded a previous secret agreement with Britain in 1916, which was called the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and it aimed to divide the Ottoman territories. The writer adds an important point that what France aspires to have been achieved through the mandate system that was established in 1919 under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and

France used Article 7 of the Charter to occupy Iskenderun and many other areas in southern Turkey. Article 7 of the charter provides for the establishment of an administrative system for Hatay, according to which the Arab population enjoys all the facilities necessary for their cultural development, provided that the Turkish language is considered the official language. During the Liberation War, Turkey and France signed an agreement to leave France in southeast Anatolia. Nevertheless, the writer says that France took from Turkey the privilege to keep Hatay part of Syria in order not to reveal the secret agreement concluded by France. This situation was confirmed by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

Fahmy (1998) focused on this problem that continued until the Adana Agreement in 1998, where he sought to achieve several goals, the most important of which was explaining the background of the relations between the two countries and focusing on the points of contention that affected the relations. The writer did not focus on the internal referendum that took place in the Hatay region, which resulted in annexing Hatay to Turkey.

Fahmy (1998) argued about the reasons for Syria's absence while France gave the Hatay region to Turkey, and why the Syrian-French treaty was not implemented immediately when it was concluded. The biggest reason was France's failure to ratify it, so the decision to give the region to Turkey was ruled by France, and there was no presence of the Syrian government, only that it refused

Also, according to the review of Shields (2017) in her book, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II*.

Between 1936 and 1939, the annexation of Alexandretta (İskenderun/Hatay, henceforth Sanjak) from French Mandate Syria to Turkey was investigated by Sarah Shields. Under

the influence of European-based racism, Atatürk's government had an Alexandretta-based and ethno-secularist vision of Syria. The book brilliantly demonstrates how a quantitatively limited region played a significant role in the global political structure of the 1930s, specifically in Turkey's neutrality during WWII. Turkish troops were permitted to access Hatay as part of a Turkish-French deal for an "impartial election." The election's outcome was altered as a result of this pivotal vote. The Sanjak Turks seized the majority, twenty-two of the forty deputies, and the Sanjak parliament decided to enter Turkey at its first meeting. Turkey's last lingering territorial issue has now been settled (Shields, 2017).

Similarly, in a study by the researcher Muhammad (2005), in which he talks about the Iskenderun Brigade (Hatay) between 1921-1939 and aims in his research to shed light on the Iskenderun issue by relying on unpublished British documents. The research includes an introduction to the administrative framework of the Hatay Brigade and its demographic composition, in addition to the French concessions to Turkey that began with the Ankara Agreement in 1921 and continued until 1939. It also includes the international bargaining that began in 1936 when the Franco-Syrian Treaty was concluded and continued until 1939, in order for these bargains to go hand in hand with the French concessions. The result was the annexation of the Alexandretta (Hatay) brigade in 1939 to Turkey.

Rajaei (2005), focuses on the importance of the Iskenderun Brigade or Hatay region because it is located on the Gulf of Iskenderun, which is the only bay on the Syrian coast with outstanding economic and war value, in addition to its importance because it is located on the Mediterranean Sea, which is a natural refuge for fleets.

And the writer Rajaei (2005), argues in his research about the non-existence of the Syrian government and it was completely absent from the scene of the events that

accompanied the Alexandretta case because Syria did not have the reins of its affairs by virtue of the French mandate and that the Syrian-French treaty in 1936 was not implemented and France did not ratify it, and the Syrian government remained absent even from this agreement, and France did not even present it to the French Parliament, so it remained a dead letter.

Rajae (2005), concludes in his research that the Iskenderun region, what is now called Hatay Province, is a Syrian region and an integral part of the Syrian city of Aleppo after the French mandate over Syria, the region was included in the mandate, and it seemed that the Turkish state had become completely satisfied with the situation in which the brigade became after the mandate and after the conclusion of the Ankara Treaty in 1920 this was an opportunity for Turkey to raise the issue of the brigade, by virtue of the majority, they are Turks, but statistics indicated that the demographic composition is complicated. France was unable to stand up to the Turkish pressure, and Turkey succeeded in annexing it, due to the weak position of the League of Nations, Britain's weak position and the absence of the Syrian government from the scene and France has not ratified the Syrian-French treaty ending the French mandate over Syria, this has increased Turkey's ability to achieve the ultimate goal, especially the international conditions that during that period had helped it, which was referring to a new world war. The only concern of France and Britain was to preserve the Turkish friendship and to keep Turkey away from the alliance with Italy and cut off Italian hopes of controlling the eastern Mediterranean.

In research by Bakeer (2012), focusing on shedding light on the French-Turkish-Syrian dispute over the Alexandretta Brigade and recognizing its historical roots, the dispute arose as a result of contradictory interpretations of international agreements that were drawn up for the future of the brigade after the First World War. Turkey began to show

its concern in various ways, which prompted Turkey to open the file of the Iskenderun Brigade. The researcher discussed the beginning of the dispute over the Iskenderun Brigade and its development, then the role of the League of Nations in resolving the issue, which led to an understanding between France and Turkey, and then the League's decision to independence the brigade from Syria. He also shed light on the Syrian position on the issue of declaring the independence of the brigade and the position of the brigade's sons towards independence from Syria, and the application of separating the brigade from the homeland and finally annexing it to Turkey.

Bakeer (2012), concludes that Turkey has two reasons to insist on controlling the Sanjak, one of the strategic and the other political. Strategically, the Turks feared an invasion, as the Italians invaded Anatolia via Sanjak of Iskenderun after World War I and did not want to repeat this. The other reason is that Turkey is in the process of consolidating a state of revolution. By 1936, the regime in Ankara had committed itself to contract a national project that sought to write "Turkish" to all the inhabitants of Anatolia.

During the 1950s, the water problem with the Tigris and Euphrates rivers³ surfaced between Syria and Turkey (Ofar 2014), suggesting the scientific and civil development during this time led to a significant increase in the need for water and energy. As well, the population increase also elevated the water demand. These two factors greatly opened the competition between Turkey and Syria over water, especially Turkey, which is the source of the two rivers.

Ofar (2014), focused on the fact that the Turkish-Syrian relations had been greatly affected since the water issue occurred. The author stated that the ties were already

³ The Euphrates is one of the largest rivers in southwestern Asia and the largest river in the plate. The river originates from the Taurus Mountains in Turkey and consists of two rivers in Greater Asia, namely Murad Sow (meaning the water of the destination) to the east, and its source is between Lake Van and Mount Ararat in Armenia, and the Sow Village (and Qur'ah) Sow) north-eastern Anatolia. To the west and its source in northeastern Anatolia. Oranha meets to the west, and their waters flow southward to the southern Taurus mountain range. Then it is imported from many branches since several video clips in the Syrian lands, to run on Iraqi lands and meet in the Karma region on the Arab painting that flows into the Arabian Gulf.

hostile, and that the water crisis further added to the tensions because relations still hadn't improved since Syria's independence in 1946, making the water crisis one of the issues that had a significant influence on relations between the two nations, although both governments recognize the significance of strengthening connections.

However, it was important to solve the water problem because it affected the relations negatively and significantly and made the improvement of relations between the two countries almost impossible during that period especially since Turkey, in the context of its problematic relations with Syria, may have used the water problem as a means of pressure on Syria to solve the PKK issue or Syria's recognition of Turkish Hatay (Ofar, 2014).

Badr (2012), studied the geopolitical dimensions of the Euphrates basin water problem and its impact on the Turkish-Syrian relation found that this was one of the most vulnerable regions in the world for political blackmail. Badr (2012), explained in his study the phases of Turkish-Syrian relations that arose as a result of sharing water. The establishment of dams and development projects in the Euphrates basin are the most important positive and negative factors in these relations.

Badr (2012), focuses on the main problem that occurred in the late seventies, when Turkey pursued a policy for investing in the Euphrates for irrigation and electric energy. In 1980 Turkey developed a huge water scheme linking a number of huge water projects. This set the stage for the development of Southeast Anatolia, which led to anxiety between Syria and Iraq due to the enormity of the Turkish project. The repercussions of that project led to the formation of a technical committee consisting of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq to help solve this crisis. However, it was unable to reach a tripartite agreement on the use of the Euphrates water, and this problem remained unresolved until 1987.

When the agreement was concluded between Syria and Turkey, Turkey pledged to ensure the flow of water from the Euphrates River to Syria at a minimum rate of 500 cubic millimetre per second. The Syrian government considered this agreement a temporary measure to cover the filling of the Ataturk Dam. However, the crisis on the Euphrates between the two countries reached its climax between Syria and Turkey on January 13, 1990, when former Turkish President Turgut Ozal personally supervised the process of closing the Euphrates River for a whole month, under the pretext of filling the Ataturk Dam. On the flip side, Iraq was generally enraged by Turkey's treatment of it and its seeming disregard for Iraq's well-being. After all, Iraq emphasizes its long-standing historical exploitation of the Tigris and Euphrates water resources as the foundation for its claim to adequate access to these waters (Wilson, 2013).

Badr (2012), believes that this measure came as a method of pressure on both Syria and Iraq to prevent the infiltration of Kurds hostile to the Turkish regime into Turkish territory. Syria condemned this move and organized a massive protest in the Arab world, especially in the media. The response to the angry Syrian media campaign was to block the Euphrates water for an entire month. Turkish President Turgut Ozal stated at the time that spreading rumours would be a motive for conflict between Turkey and its neighbors and distortion of the true voice. In 1995, Turkey signed an agreement with a group of European companies to finance the Bergen Dam on the Euphrates. This ignited tensions between Turkey and Syria, and Syria called on the Arab League to take a unified Arab position against the Turkish actions on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Arab University affirmed at that time Syria's right to the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Badr (2012) believes that the Turkish response to this problem was to reduce the amount of water in Syria for four days on Eid al-Adha. Badr Badr (2012), did not focus

on the solution, which ended this problem through the signing of the Adana Agreement in 1998. This was followed by rapprochement and friendly relations and a radical solution to the water problem and other problems. According to Shalash (2019), Turkey and Syria relationship was greatly affected, and threatened by the presence of the PKK in Syria the national security of Turkey is the conflict between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) extended to the early eighties, when the party adopted slogans with a separatist tendency and armed struggle to achieve its project to establish the Greater Kurdistan and the Syrian regime was the first to provide support to the party outside the borders of Turkey, that Syrian support for the PKK was intended to use it as a means of pressure against Ankara.

Shalash (2019) also focused in her study on analyzing the relationship that has linked the PKK to the Syrian regime since 1980 and its impact on Turkish-Syrian relations. The researcher relied on the historical, descriptive and analytical method in explaining how the presence of this party the (PKK) affected the course of relations between the two countries.

Özlem (2013), examined the diplomatic efforts to tackle the problem of Syrian backing for the PKK failed in 1998, Turkish politicians agreed to toughen Turkey's stance toward Syria. The situation had deteriorated to the point that, on September 30, 1998, the National Security Council adopted a plan of action against Syria proposed by Chief of Staff General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, resulting in the mobilization of an extra 10,000 troops along the border. The conclusion was a tremendous success for Turkey: Damascus capitulated to international pressure by dismissing Öcalan and halting PKK activity on its land, as stipulated in the Adana Accords, signed on October 20, 1998.

However, domestic factors in both nations steered for stronger relations. On the Syrian side, the change of leadership that brought Bashar Asad to power in 2000, due to the

necessity for economic growth, and Syria's international isolation, and secondly on the Turkish side, the shift in Turkish politics that saw the Justice and Development Party come to power in 2002. After all, the Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East following the Adana Accords and the encapsulate of Abdullah Öcalan from 1998 to 1999, as well as the regionally focused foreign policy strategy under Öcalan Dsmaïl Cem's foreign minister. The grounds for the Turkish side's expansion of the connection at home could be seen more clearly with the Justice and Development Party's vision and policy.

Kush (2016) in his study focused on the most important factors affecting the Turkish foreign policy orientations towards the Arab region since the AKP came to power in 2002 until 2012. He looks at the interaction between Turkey's vision of its external political role on the one hand and its awareness of Turkey's regional and international position on the other side , meaning that there is a direct relationship between the Turkish role in foreign policy and the size of Turkey between the major regional powers (Özlem, 2013).

The researcher Kush (2016), explained the transformations that occurred towards the events that are taking place in the neighbouring regions of Turkey, specifically the Arab region, in addition to his reliance on the historical descriptive approach in analysing the facts and the causes that led to the new directions of Turkish foreign policy towards issues of the Arab region. The study concluded that the new trends of foreign policy are linked, some of them, to the internal situation in Turkey, especially the rise of the Justice and Development Party, which has Islamic roots and background to rule in Turkey, while others are linked to the regional situation in the Middle East, such as the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions.

It turns out that the Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab countries and Syria in particular due to the long borders between the two countries does not aim to impose control over the Arab countries, as the decision-makers in Turkish foreign policy tried to overcome the differences between countries and solve the problems between them.

Kush (2016) added an important point that the impact of the tension in Turkish-Israeli relations as a result of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip led to the rapprochement of relations between Turkey and Syria in particular and the Arab countries in general and the occupation of Iraq in 2003 led to a vacuum in the Arab system, which made some Arab countries, especially Syria and the Gulf states, strengthen their relationship with Turkey.

Al-Suwaidani (2015), addresses Turkish-Syrian relations between 1998 and 2011. He focuses on three attempts, including the history of relations between the two countries and the Adana Agreement from 1998 to the end of 2002, and included the stage of relations after the Justice and Development Party entered the revolution in Syria. Also focuses on the Turkish-Syrian relations and the tensest relations of the rest of the Arab neighbourhood countries by virtue of geographical location, history, ethnic overlap, and border problems. This is a distinct point he discussed. But, he did not focus on relations after the revolution. Al-Suwaidani demonstrates that Turkish-Syrian relations did not start amicably at first, but then took a good curve before the outbreak of the 2011 revolution.

An article by Çakmak (2016), focuses on the relations between Turkey and Syria when the revolution in Syria broke out in 2011. Çakmak (2016) discusses the problems that threatened Turkey's borders with the Syrian regime's presence inside Syria. He referred to the fact that Turkey had supported the popular demonstrations and wanted to change the system and most Syrians agreed with this. However, the Syrian regime had another

opinion, and its response came by not accepting the Turkish involvement in the Syrian crisis. This led to threats to the Turkish national security due to the civil war in Syria.

The threat to Turkish national security had become clear due to the Syrian refugee problem and there were many border violations rejected by Turkey (Çakmak , 2016). This included the incident when a military plane was shot down by the Assad regime. In addition to this, Çakmak(2016), identifies the solutions that Turkey wanted in bilateral relations with Syria under the ruling Syrian regime.

Çakmak(2016), did not mention the results of the Turkish military involvement in northern Syria, but focused heavily on brotherhood between the Syrian and Turkish peoples and the open door policy towards refugees.Çakmak(2016), believed that Turkish-Syrian relations would not return to what they were unless the violence and systematic killing ceased. This would help to ensure the voluntary return of Syrian refugees to their country.

Michael (2012) explains the nature of the economic, political, and military relations between Turkey and Syria until 2011. The study focuses on the period in which the Syrian revolution took place and when Turkey tried to be a mediator to solve it as well as trying to persuade President Al-Assad to address the political reform. Moreover, the researcher Michael (2012), addresses the President's attempt to end the use of violence against his citizens. Michael (2012) believes that Turkey and Syria cannot return to a "model relationship" in the future as long as President Assad remains in office. Likewise, Okayay (2017), studied the events in Syria after 2011 that had a significant impact on Ankara's assessment of opportunities and difficulties during this period. Since the beginning of the turmoil in Syria in March 2011, Turkey has adopted an almost unconditional policy of opening its borders to individuals fleeing the crisis, termed the

“open door policy.” This is the key component of Turkey's growing emphasis on human rights, democracy, and humanitarian concerns in its regional foreign policy.

A study conducted by Qais (2015), discusses Turkish-Syrian relations at a time when relations between Turkey and Syria improved. This happened in 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power and the foreign policy was based on zero problems. From the viewpoint of Qais (2015), the arrival of the Justice and Development Party to power has led to strong relations with Syria and Iraq and the improvement of Turkey's image in the Arab region. It is the new approach towards the Arab countries, especially Syria, and reflects the vision of the Justice and Development Party and the Turkish state in its parties and its different politics.

Qais (2015) also adds that one of the most important reasons for the improvement of Turkish-Syrian relations is the increase in Turkish interest in the Middle East region. Turkey has achieved economic success and ranked first in the economy of the Middle East and sixteenth in the world in terms of the size of its GDP.

In addition, the Turkish presence and its activity increased in a number of central issues in the Middle East region with regard to the Iraqi issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict. This helped to present Turkey as a model for reform issues. In the region, this confirms the shift in Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East within the framework of Turkey's restoration of Islamic civilization led by a party with an Islamic reference and Turkey's endeavour to become a regional power in the Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula.

In addition to the provisions mentioned above, the collapse of the Soviet Union is an opportunity for Turkey to move forward and open up to the Arab region and consolidate its relations with its countries through the Syrian gate. Especially after Syria lost its main supporter (the Soviet Union), Syrian leadership had to deal rationally with these

circumstances. The study looks at the relationship between the two countries at the stage of rapprochement by analysing their systems and presenting the higher interests of both countries. The researcher Qais (2015) also looks at the factors and influences surrounding decision-makers in the foreign policy of both countries. The study concludes that the Turkish state sought to play a regional role in the Arab region through the Syrian portal through normalization of relations between the two countries before 2011.

Mahfouz (2012), completed a study that focuses on Syrian-Turkish relations, which were a model for the transformations occurring at the top of political interactions in the Middle East region, with all of their acceleration, ambiguity, personalization, adverse developments and stakes, and it is an attempt to answer the following question: Are relations witnessing a decisive turning point or is that part From an open historical bet on an unspecified horizon?

The author clarifies the most important determinants of the Turkish position.

In a research paper issued by Edraak Centre for Studies and Consultations to Al-Hajj (2016), entitled Determinants of Turkish foreign policy towards Syria. Researcher Al-Hajj (2016) sought in this research paper to lay the foundations and determinants of Turkish foreign policy regarding Syria within a comprehensive vision of the relations between the two countries.

Researcher Al-Hajj (2016), focused on the Turkish position towards the Syrian crisis and the pressure to bring about political reforms in Syria, a position that stems from several considerations, the most important of which is Turkey's previous support for popular movements and its support for the process of change in the Arab world and the good relations that linked Turkey with Syria before 2011, which included tens economic agreements and the establishment of a Higher Council for Strategic Cooperation in

2009, as well as personal relations with President Al-Assad himself. From the beginning of the revolution in March 2011 until the withdrawal of the Turkish ambassador from Damascus in March 2012, this period included the visits of the Turkish foreign minister to Syria and phone calls between President Erdogan and President al-Assad.

In the opinion of Kösebalaban (2020), Turkey's foreign policy was moving steadily toward a more nationalist discourse and direction since 2015. This stands in drastic contrast to Turkey's liberal foreign policy orientation during the Justice and Development Party's first decade in power, as well as its idealistic assertiveness during the Arab Spring. In the Syrian conflict, Turkey's initial goal of assisting the anti-Assad opposition has been replaced by a strategy aimed at limiting the territorial progress of separatist Kurdish groups. Emerging security threats, as well as changes in domestic politics, such as Turkey's new presidential system, have prompted this shift in strategic orientation (Kösebalaban, 2020).

Cengiz (2021) believes that Ankara seems to have had a difficult year in both the domestic and international spheres in 2020. The coronavirus, devastating earthquakes, currency crises, and economic difficulties have dominated the agenda throughout the year, in addition to Turkey's foreign policy issues carried over from 2019. However, Syria along with Libya have been the focal points of Turkey's foreign policy agenda this year, bringing the military dimension to the limelight. When compared to previous years, the use of military tools and methods in the conduct of Turkish foreign policy has gradually increased this year (Cengiz, 2021).

It can be concluded that Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East has been changeable as a result of multiple policies directed at each country separately. However,

Turkey had been working for years to build good neighbourly relations and establish a zone of peace in its neighbourhood.

CHAPTER TWO

Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East, specifically Syria

The Turkish foreign policy varied after the end of the Cold War from complete integration of Western (and American in particular) trends to openness to other countries, and then trying to formulate a new foreign policy aimed at making Turkey an influential regional country in its surroundings dependent on redefining her identity after the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002 (Ziadeh, 2011).

Some Turkish theorists describe this new Turkish foreign policy as based on mutual and multilateral diplomacy, linked to Turkish national interests, and based on the idea of Win to Win (Aydin 2006). Some find that it is different from the period of the Cold War, when it was characterized by non-intervention, whereas, after the US occupation of Iraq, it became more interested in regional projects (Oktav, 2013). Therefore, these discussions imply that Turkey's foreign policy has changed, especially in relation to Syria. This, however, had an effect on Turkish-Syrian relations.

2.1 The Internal Transformations That Occurred In Turkish Foreign Policy

Foreign policy, as an area of expertise with its subject matter, processes, and rules that govern everything, reflects the degree of change. However, the foreign policy has witnessed major developments and transformations at its various levels of knowledge as well as methodology. The foreign policy is one of the main components of public policy in the country, it involves taking decisions related to national security and the territorial integrity of states. Charles Herman believes that the foreign policy tools are eight diplomatic tools, economic tools, domestic political tools, intelligence tools, symbolic

tools, scientific and technological tools, and natural resources, and it's the art of leading international relations with other countries . On the contrary, according to Nouraldin (1998), the Treaty of Lausanne, signed on July 24, 1923, marked the second creation of the Turkish state after the first governorate in 1299, and it was difficult to turn into a modern body after the end of the First World War, yet Turkey became the part of Europe geographically, culturally, and even spiritually, disrupting Islam as a dissenting religion (Nouraldin, 1998).

Accordingly, secularism is the principle of Kemalism. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk adopted a strict secular understanding in building the republic, he changed the old system by isolating and eliminating the Arabic letters and Islamic education, he considered that the religion was a symbol of the old order, reaction and opposition to the republic (Oktav, 2013).

In addition, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk put a greater emphasis on Turkey's geographical and cultural links to Europe than on its association with the Islamic world From these principles it can be said that foreign policy is based on the Kemalist principles moved away generally from the Middle East and sided more to the West.

Likewise, The Egyptian president Gamal Abd-al Nasser was concerned by Turkey's participation in NATO in 1952. Due to the Soviet threat during the Cold War, Turkey joined NATO on February 18, 1952, with both sides agreeing to the requirements. Furthermore, it is necessary to be aware of the level of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the development of the Baghdad Pact in 1955, which he saw as weapons of Western imperialism. These pacts, on the other hand, were recipients of Turkish security against an expansionist Soviet Union for Turkey. However, for Turkey and the nationalist Arab countries, the Cold War (1946-1991) had

varied meanings based on their security concerns and threat assessments. During the Cold War, the contrasting opinions of Turkey and the revolutionary Arab countries resulted in turbulent connections between Turkey and the Arab countries. Turkey did not become an anti-Western state after fighting the Western powers in its War of Independence in the following WWI. Yet, Turkey had little trouble identifying itself with the Western countries once the Cold War broke out. It's also worth noting that Soviet territorial ambitions on Turkey, as well as pressure for installations on the Turkish Straits, drove Turkey into America's hands. The battle for regional hegemony may be seen in the conflict of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq against Turkey. To sum up, both ideologies and interests contributed to the contrasting actions of Turkey and the nationalist Arab republics. Besides this, relevant theories of international relations for explaining the divergent perspectives of Turks and Arabs of the Baghdad Pact include idealism, which focuses on ideals, and realism, responsible for changing foreign policy (Uzer & Uzer, 2005).

Turkey established a pro-Western image by aligning its foreign policy with NATO values and participating in crucial military missions. In reaction to the disturbance, Turkey developed an aggressive foreign policy based on deterrence and military force in NATO and UN operations. Furthermore, raising the national and international standards of democracy and prosperity (Bozkurt, 2018).

Moreover, The True Path Party, led by Süleyman Demirel, won the elections in 1991, and the Long Path Party and the Turkish People's Party formed a coalition government (Aydin, 2006). After that in 2002, the Justice and Development Party ran in the legislative elections and obtained an overwhelming majority with the help of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Abdullah Gul headed his government due to the consequences of

his imprisonment, and in March 2003 he was able to assume the premiership after the sentence was overturned (Spettan, 2012). Until 2006, Turkey was still pursuing full membership of the EU. However, neither any country's foreign policy change has ever been prompt, nor Turkish foreign policy entered a new phase known as the Neo-Ottoman era slowly and steadily (Elias, 2016).

On the foreign policy stage, the Justice and Development Party proposed a pragmatic program aligned with Turkey's past and geographical position, free of preconceptions and arbitrary proposals, and focused on the theory of common interests. The party had also set foreign policy goals in it (Akdağ, 2016).

The Justice and Development Party scored another victory that surpassed the previous elections in 2007 with the approaching end of the term of President of the Republic Ahmet Necdet Sezer and the military wanted the presidential elections to take place alongside the parliament during the last months of the parliament's term, by taking advantage of the text in the constitution (Dalay, 2014).

The transformation of the political system into a semi-presidential system after the direct election of Erdogan by the people in 2014 after the constitutional amendment in 2007 and Erdogan's victory in the presidency encouraged him to call for a change in the presidential parliamentary system with the support of his party and the MHP⁴(Akdağ, 2016).

Members of the AKP believe that this system encourages democracy and accelerates decision-making rather than weak government coalitions in the parliamentary system, and this system supports political stability and also makes sober and strong governments

⁴ The Nationalist Movement Party (translated instead as National Action Party; Turkish: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) is an extreme-right Turkish political party committed to Turkish fanaticism and European nationalism. The group is often described as a fascist and has been associated with some violent militia and paramilitary forces. The party was formed in 1969 by the former Turkish Army Colonel Albarsan Türkçe, who became the leader of the Republican Villagers Nation Party (CKMP) in 1965.

(Salman, 2020).

In 2017, a popular referendum was adopted for constitutional changes to transform the presidential regime, and the amendments were implemented on June 24, 2018, following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's and his Justice and Development Party's victory. In the presidential and parliamentary elections, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President of the Republic, was elected as the head of the executive authority, for a five-year term and two successive terms, and he selected his deputies and stayed with the party he founded (Salman, 2020). The Justice and Development Party, led by Erdogan, has succeeded in changing the system of government from a parliamentary system to a presidential system.

According to Alekseevich (2018), Neo-Ottomanism was an unofficial Turkish foreign policy ideology that entails using "soft power," economic and social advantages, and a supranational concept to extend Turkish influence over neighbouring territories. Neo-Ottomanism was an attempt to create a new supra-identity via social and economic dominance. It represented a geostrategic worldview that underpins all Turkish foreign policy plans and actions. Consolidating the bulk of the Turkish public under the auspices of the aforementioned foreign policy philosophy is critical in order to promote it. On the other side, the subject of whether Turkey is pursuing a Neo-Ottoman foreign strategy has been raised several times in the last two decades. Any increase in Middle East attention was regarded as an indication of Turkish regional ambitions. However, it is unclear what Neo-Ottomans entails beyond strengthening Turkey's relationships with nations that once belonged to the Ottoman Empire (Albayrak & Turan, 2016).

2.2 New Tools In Turkish Foreign Policy

The events of September 11, 2001, and the US-British occupation of Iraq in 2003

and the events that happened in the region after 2010 with the Arab Spring posed a difficult test to Turkey and a great challenge to Turkish foreign policy due to the intensity of Turkish investment in the Middle East region, in the political, economic and cultural level (Fateha, 2015).

Turkey has emerged as a significant and influential participant in the region's events, based on its activities and contacts regarding Arab issues that had ranked relatively marginal among the priorities of Turkish foreign policy during the past decades (Öniş, 2014). After the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002, Turkey embodied its new policy according to the following tactics:

1-The Power of Diplomatic Initiative Based on Economic Relations

Turkey has worked to embody the soft power⁵ since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in November 2002. It moved to the position of the initiator of what is happening in the region (Müftüler-Baç 2011). Numerous meetings with neighbouring countries such as Iraq in February 2003 were initiated as these meetings continued after the occupation of Iraq, and this idea was the first message of Turkish entry according to its new policy to the Middle Eastern arena, and its role to solve problems through dialogue and cooperation between the contradictory parties (Murinson, 2006).

After that, Turkey pursued a policy of mediating in a large number of issues, including : mediating the Lebanese-Syrian crisis after the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2006, Turkey's mediation between Syria and Israel in 2008, during which four rounds of indirect negotiations between the two countries were held

⁵ Soft Power: A concept coined by Joseph Nye of Harvard University to describe the ability to attract and join without coercion or the use of force as a means of persuasion. More recently, the term has been used to influence and change social and public opinion through relatively less transparent channels and lobbying through political and non-political organizations.

in Istanbul, attempts to reconcile the divided Arabs towards the aggression on Gaza at the end of 2008, and to seek an immediate ceasefire there, Turkey's repeated efforts to mediate between President Abbas and Hamas after the dispute between them exploded and continued openness to relations with Greece (Druzy, 2016).

2-Turkish participation in regional and international institutions with greater effectiveness

Turkey has realized the importance of the role of regional organizations in promoting stability and cooperation in its regional environment. If Turkey is primarily a member of Western institutions, its new focus has been on activating the Organization of the Islamic Conference (the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), given the importance of the situation in the Islamic region, especially after the occupation of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, and Turkey's attachment to the Organization of the Islamic Conference became evident in its efforts to elect one of its Turkish citizens to its general secretariat (Hale, 2012).

Turkey has become an observer member of the Arab League. It has also been one of the founders of the Forum for the Alliance of Civilizations, in partnership with Spain. It participated in the "Union for the Mediterranean" that French President Sarkozy called for on July 14, 2009 (Kınıklıoğlu, 2014).

3-Participation in The Peacekeeping Forces

Turkey has not hesitated to have an active presence in some areas of tension. So it participated in the "UNIFIL" forces in southern Lebanon after the July 2006 aggression (Müftüler-Baç, 2011). Turkey also sent peace forces to Somalia, and the Turkish Parliament approved this in February 2009. Turkey participated in NATO forces as part of the counterterrorism operation in Afghanistan (Aras, 2014). Turkey also announced

its willingness to participate and lead any observer force in Gaza for a permanent ceasefire in 2009, and all of this is in order to enhance the Turkish regional role.

However, the new Turkish vision, which had seen Turkey as a regional force with great geographical, human, and economic capabilities, outperformed expectations and accomplished its goals, including enhancing Turkey's relations with the European Union and surrounding states including Syria (Paul & Seyrek, 2011).

4- Openness on The Middle East

Turkish role has emerged strongly on the economic and cultural levels. Although the main axis of the Turkish economy remained with the European Union and Russia, during the era of the Justice and Development Party, the volume of trade between Turkey and the Arab countries grew more than three times (Altunışık, 2020).

This was evident in the volume of Arab investments in Turkey, in terms of communications, transportation, energy, real estate and the construction sector. Turkey also had great economic relations with Syria, and these relations had a major role in the process of Turkish openness to Arab countries (Lenore, 2011). Turkey has signed a bilateral cooperation agreement with most Arab countries, as well as with Arab regional organizations, as the memorandum of cooperation it signed with the Gulf Cooperation Council in 2008 (Khazar, 2019).

The Turkish cultural relations with many regional countries also witnessed aspects of cultural cooperation, which were evident in the opening of many reciprocal cultural centres between Turkey and many Arab countries such as Syria, Egypt and Algeria, in addition to the revitalization of cultural tourism between those countries (Akgün, 2010).

Turkey, through the aforementioned tools, has tried to have an effective role in many countries like Arab countries and in the Middle East, with the aim of serving their

supreme interests, in fact, this policy has achieved many successes at the regional level, especially in its relationship with many Arab countries, and in particular in its relationship with Syria (Kirişci, 2014).

Moreover, wars and conflicts have long been a major factor in the complexity of the global community. The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new period of policy-making and world dynamics for both reasons. Then emerged 9/11, which totally altered people's perceptions of war, and the triumph of American unilateralism formed a security-based regime.

Turkish foreign policy tools also regressed dramatically and negatively after the events that the Arab region has gone through since 2010, and Turkish relations with many countries in the region have worsened politically and economically (Bağcı, 2015). And Turkey's position in the Arab world has deteriorated into a destructive and inciting one. As a result of all of this, Turkey's success in the Arab world declined. Turkish regional foreign policy has likewise fallen short of the goals it set for itself. This is possibly due to no negligence of its own, given the region's disputes are complicated and engrained (Khazar, 2019).

The Arab Spring in 2011 posed a real challenge to Turkey's foreign policy strategy. Several revolutions in the Arab world were desirable, but unexpected for Ankara. This was the reason why, like the governments of most countries of the world, the Erdogan government was initially not decisive about how to respond to these popular uprisings (Murinson, 2012).

However, one thing was clear, and that was to side with the legitimate demands of the people in these countries, and the manner in which this support was demonstrated varied from case to case (Kanat, 2014). This was illustrating how Erdogan has actually responded to the challenges that faced his foreign policy in the region as a result of the

Arab awakening; where he sided with the peoples who were revolting against dictatorships supported by decades from the West (Togai, 2017).

During this period, the challenges facing Turkey were not limited to challenges related to regional stability, the Syrian crisis was directly affecting the bilateral relations between Turkey and Iraq, Iran and Russia at the regional level (Dalay, 2014). In addition to its strategic cooperation with the United States at the international level, however, the fragmentation of the conflict inside Syria was a direct challenge to Turkish societal security at the local level (Kirişci, 2014).

Turkey has stumbled in its quest to resolve the crisis in the region due to the lack of consensus between political parties and various social groups towards both the Syrian crisis and the military coup in Egypt (Kanat, 2014).

In this direction, in detail, the Arab Spring - as the main challenge to Turkey's regional ambitions - has modernized Ankara's strategic discourse in facing the multi-dimensional crisis in the region (Öniş, 2014). Turkey changed its strategy in the new Middle East in light of three connected dimension; in the early stages of the popular revolutions, we find that Turkey's support for regime change, instead of supporting the "de facto" situation, allowed Ankara to formulate its foreign policy discourse with more confidence and courage (Emre & Palmer 2016).

With this in mind, Erdogan's government focused on leading the transformations in the region, but Turkey's position first collided with the deteriorating and worsening situation in Syria, then the military coup in Egypt, which required it to reconsider its strategies towards regional transformation on the basis of the same principles of foreign policy that it followed during the last decade (Khazar, 2019).

Turkey recognized the promotion of democracy as a central philosophy of the Arab Spring, it was aiming at the same time to lead this regional transformation in order to

achieve this process without destroying regional stability (Emre & Palmer, 2016). Since witnessing the Syrian crisis, where children were conscripted as archetypal digital witnesses to actual catastrophic wars that are killing them, Turkey has worked diligently to eradicate rivalries between regional parties and aim to incorporate them into the global geopolitical system as a whole (Togai, 2017).

However, as a result of the conflict in Syria, the strategic vision for Ankara was different from that of Tehran and Damascus, and it recently became different from its counterpart in Cairo (Palmer, 2016). This has had negative effects on the forms of Turkish involvement at the regional level to a degree that exceeds those effects at the international level. Therefore, Ankara was confused in its motives for resolving regional issues between linking itself with the major international parties on the one hand, and exercising the role of the main regional player on the other hand (Al-Fadhli, 2019).

2.2 During the Arab Spring (2010)

Turkey is closely concerned with developments in the Middle East, whether because of the historical, cultural and social ties that it has with the peoples of the region or because it is directly or indirectly affected by these developments. Turkey pursued a multifaceted, constructive, effective, and futuristic foreign policy for peace, security, and development in the Middle East, and vigorously and firmly promoted initiatives to accomplish this aim, as well as programmes to resolve conflicts and solve problems in all areas (Altunışık, 2020). The Turkish approach to the region was mainly focused on establishing peace, prosperity, long-term security, and long-term economic growth. Still, Turkey is working to improve its existing cooperation and ties with Middle Eastern countries on structural grounds, whether at the bilateral or multilateral level, to address the problems that occur in the region (Altunışık, 2020).

1-Arab-Turkish relations tension and estrangement.

Since the establishment of the Turkish state, Turkish-Arab relations have gone through different and varied stages characterized by growth, cooperation, agreement and difference, the nature of this relationship is due to the neighbourhood conditions between the Arab world and Turkey, and the existence of a common border between the two parties and their views of the Mediterranean Sea (Ekinici, 2015).

In the First World War, Arab-Turkish relations went through a lot of tension and estrangement, so the Turks considered the betrayal of the Arabs as a reason for their loss in the First World War when the Arabs allied themselves with Britain against the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Turkish-Arab relations have been fraught for many years, indeed, Turkey was considered the third country in the world hostile to Arabs and Muslims after America and Israel (Rashdan, 1998).

Turkey has followed a secular journey since refusing Islamic development and establishing its republic in 1923 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatuk, a nationalist leader who was so inspired by Europe that he followed its secular constitutions. In addition Turkey was the first Muslim-majority country to recognize Israel in 1949, and Turkey deepened its relationship with Israel through time to reach the level of a military alliance, and continued its rupture with the Muslims (Khan, 2015).

2- Political Changes In The Turkish Foreign Policy Towards The Middle East:

Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East has undergone a number of transformations, in terms of political rhetoric and practice mechanisms that have become more inclined to use military force which was manifested in its military Operations in Syria and northern Iraq, and the conclusion of an agreement for military cooperation with the Government of National Accord in Libya and participation in the balance of power at the regional and international levels (Rumaila & Zagadan, 2019).

A failed coup attempt by a faction inside Turkey's military in July 2016. Officials linked to the Gulen's movement were involved in the conspiracy. Erdogan and other Turkish officials have designated the movement a terrorist organisation and have demanded Gulen's extradition from the United States. On the other side, during Erdogan and the AKP's first years in power, there was a lot of discussion about Turkey's political and economic direction, as well as its leaders' commitment to democracy, market economics, sustained growth, and diversity (Zanotti & Thomas, 2017).

Previously, on 15 March 2011 Turkish political elites also begun to see the region's developments as largely a new threat to Turkey's national security and regional aspirations. Turkey has also suffered from instability along its borders with Syria and Iraq, including large-scale terrorist attacks and massive refugee flows. Therefore, Turkey has become directly involved militarily, in the ongoing civil wars in Syria and Libya (Abdel Azeez, 2020).

Accordingly, the new doctrine of the foreign policy of the Justice and Development Party is the result of the existing interactions in Turkey's geostrategic neighbourhood and parallel transformations at the local level. The developments of the Arab revolutions and the transformations they witnessed contributed to Ankara's adoption of a number of ideas that are reflected in the development of increasing perceptions about threats, in addition to security issues and engaging in the geopolitical polarization of the region (Rumaila & Zagadan, 2019).

The sponsorship of Turkey to the Muslim Brotherhood in the region during the Arab Spring has led to the deterioration of Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt, as the competition between Turkey and this axis was taking place in different parts of the region, but especially in the civil wars in Libya and Syria. With regard to

Turkish-Qatari cooperation in the Gulf, the two sides sought to create a Horn of Africa by adopting a policy of economic aid and political support (Abdel Azeez, 2020).

Turkey generally participated in competition with other regional powers. However, it has formed closer ties with Qatar, where the two countries backed the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, and Ankara built a military base in Qatar in 2015. Relations extended after the Arab walkout in 2017, contributing to a security problem between Ankara and regional forces in the region during this time as a result of their behaviour (Altunışık, 2020).

Since 2016, Ankara has increasingly begun to use military force in Syria to secure its borders and encircle the Kurdish forces stationed in northern Syria. In addition to creating a place for it in Syria to control waves of illegal immigration, it also became involved in Libya, as part of its competition with regional powers, and its support for the Government of National Accord in parallel with the emergence of energy exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean (Abdel Azeez, 2020).

The Turkish political elite in the Justice and Development party believes that the changes in the structure of the global and regional order have enabled Turkey to obtain some opportunities, however, some restrictions were imposed on Turkey as well. And in the context of the disappearance of the old world order and the formation of a new order, the party's political elites make it clear that Turkey has now become more independent with the implementation of a new foreign policy doctrine based on shifting alliances (Kılıçdaroğlu, 2020).

However, according to Altunışık (2020), in terms of Turkey's Middle East strategy, the policy represents a degree of stability throughout various forms of the Justice and Development Party government's global outlook; moreover, it requires shifts in how this is applied in the evolving strategic environment in the Turkish neighbourhood, because

Turkey cannot depend entirely on its conventional alliances to meet its national interests; instead, it must forge new alliances (Altunışık, 2020).

2.4 Turkish foreign policy towards Syria and the Syrian crisis

Since the beginning of the unrest in Syria in January 2011, Turkey has become one of the most influential international firms in the country's affairs, increasingly establishing itself as a central player in the Syrian geopolitical game. It shifted Turkey's foreign policy toward Syria to reflect a collection of principles and priorities to strengthen its strategic position in the region while facing a number of threats, some of which endanger Turkey's national security and others the security of the entire region.

In the history of political relations between Turkey and Syria, we saw that the ruling elite in Turkey has followed more than one approach in its policy with Syria. At times, there were conflicts, and at other times, there was unity. As a result of the Egyptian-Syrian reconciliation in 1957 and Syria's failure to join the Baghdad Pact in 1955, Turkey massed its armed forces on the Syrian frontier (James & Özdamar, 2009). However, Syria and Turkey had along a strained relationship owing to historical Syrian claims on Hatay province leading to the Adana agreement between Turkey and Syria in 1998 while Syrian President Bashar al-Assad denied that the deal was reached under extreme stress, saying that he signed it because he believed it was in Syria's best interests "to be friendly with the Turkish people," which he believed was incompatible with Syria's support for Kurdish organizations (Rumaila & Zaghdan, 2019). However, the relations between the two countries returned to development at all economic, security and military levels especially after the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey (Such as the establishment of the Strategic Cooperation Council between Turkey and Syria in 2004) then relations between the two countries returned to

a point of direct collision, following the 2011 Syrian crisis (Moez, 2014). Hence, it's noteworthy that the ruling political elites used different strategies in their relations with Syria during each ruling phase, and as a result, the essence of the relationships changed over time, with periods of conflict and periods of growth (Öniş, 2014).

Therefore, the change of the ruling political elites in Turkey had a role in influencing its foreign policy specifically with its relations with Syria.

Turkey was well received in the Arab world during the first phase of the Justice and Development (AKP) government, which lasted until 2011. Several Revolutions in the Arab world, on the other hand, have shattered all of the region's balances, as well as the region's political roots. Turkey's Territoriality became polarised as a product of its stated positions on revolutions, especially in the case of Syrian revolution (Reuters , 2019).

Since the outbreak of unrest in Syria in January 2011, Turkey has been one of the main international actors involved in the Syrian crisis, it gradually became an important player in the Syrian geopolitical scene. With the continuous development of the Syrian crisis, Turkey, guided by its strategic thinking of “strategic depth” which refers to the years between 2002 and 2016, when Turkey had seven Justice and Development Party administrations, the eighth of which was approved by Parliament on May 27, 2016. Also, International policy has been one of the key fields where major shifts in Turkish politics can be seen under the JDP's rule, above all other policy areas. Thus, the combination of diplomatic and military strikes to make itself an important regional power towards Syria (Özkizljek, 2019). Under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Abdullah Gul, and Ahmet Davutoglu, the JDP has rekindled interest in issues affecting the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The JDP's progressive voting victories in the national elections of 2002, 2007, and 2011 under Mr Erdogan and

Mr Gul illustrate the extent to which this historic modernity has been acknowledged. Turkish foreign policy also saw a transformation under the JDP. The JDP garnered support among non-secular Turkish citizens and grew into a strong political force in Turkey. Turkey's traditional foreign policy has been based on two fundamental pillars: “maintaining the status quo” and “westernism” Ultimately, the new authorities had to deal with a variety of issues while the JDP ruled Turkey, such as the Cyprus issue, the Iraq stalemate, and financial issues. The global vision of the JDP is influenced by two factors at the same time: Islam and liberalism, which combine to form an outstanding mixture (Murshed et al., 2020).

At the same time, Turkey had also become a major factor affecting the political map in Syria regarding the Syrian issue. Turkey has also made major adjustments to its foreign policy based on its understanding and judgment of the geopolitics of Syria and the sectarian pattern in the Middle East and the Kurdish issue (Özkizljek, 2019)..

In addition Turkey established a clear strategic intention consistent with the position of the Western allies to force Bashar al-Assad's regime to step down with restraining and disbanding the Kurdish forces and achieving the strategic goal of enhancing the regional influence and the international image of Turkey. Around this strategic intention. However, in 1998, Turkey's policy against Syria was also dynamically amended (Rumaila & Zaghdan, 2019, 2019).

With the onset of the crisis, the Turkish foreign policy strategy aimed to contain the crisis peacefully, transform it and direct it by strengthening democracy, but this attempt did not lead to any tangible results for its solution, and when the crisis escalated and turned into security repression, with the brutal tactics used by the Syrian regime in confronting the opposition and working to limit it inside the country, the Turkish foreign policy resorted to adopting the leadership strategy from behind, by providing political

support to opposition groups (Rumaila & Zaghdan, 2019).

Turkish foreign policy radically shifted away from this strategy due to the high internal and regional costs of the Syrian conflict, especially because of the PKK, and the threat posed by the Islamic State is not only the Turkish border, but - also - the interior in Syria and this last concern has become one of the most important drivers behind the change of mentality that guides Turkey's foreign and security policies towards the Syrian crisis (Qatrib, 2019).

In the wake of the failed coup attempt, Ankara changed its foreign strategy again radically as it became militarily involved in the Syrian crisis. Then, Ankara launched military operations inside Syria, such as the military operation “Euphrates Shield”, to neutralize the threat of ISIS, followed by Operation Olive Branch to abort the PKK threat, followed by Operation Peace Spring, and this is what happened (TRT Arabic, 2020). We will discuss all of them in the next chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

Development of political relations between Turkey and Syria

3.1 Development of political relations with the separation of the Hatay Brigade from 1920 to 1939

Hatay city is located on the Gulf of Iskenderun in the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea. It is in the far northwest of Syria and connects to the southeast with the governorates of Idlib and Aleppo, from the south the city of Latakia and from the north of the Turkish province of Gaziantep where it is located in southern Turkey (Saadeh, 1996). Hatay extends over an area of 5,678 square kilometres, and its most important cities are Iskenderun and Antakya. The history of life in Hatay goes back to the Bronze Age between 1800 and 1600 B.C (Diab, 1996). Sultan Selim I annexed it to the Ottoman rule in 1516 AD and annexed it to the Wilayat of Aleppo, and this region remained within the Ottoman rule until 1918 (Diab,1996).

The Hatay problem was one of the first problems that occurred between Turkey and Syria since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923(Saadeh, 1996). Hatay belonged (Sanjak of Alexandretta) to the province of Syria during the period of the Ottoman Empire. When the armistice of World War I was concluded on October 30, 1918, between the Ottoman Empire and the Entente Powers, this area was in the hands of the Turkish forces. This was in line with the National Pact approved by the last Ottoman Parliament in 1920, and this region was within the Turkish borders (Al-Mustafa, 2012). France concluded a previous secret agreement with Britain in 1916, called the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Its goal was to divide the Ottoman lands and what it aspired to was achieved through the mandate system in 1919 in accordance with Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations (Khadduri, 2016).

During the liberation war, Turkey and France signed an agreement to leave southeast

Anatolia, which is called the Ankara Treaty⁶. It is a French-Turkish agreement signed in Ankara on October 20, 1921 between France and the government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Turkey to end the French-Turkish War. The signatories to the treaty were the French diplomat Henry Franklin Bouillon and Turkish Foreign Minister Yusuf Kemal Bey (Kinross, 1977).

France used Article Seven of the Ankara Agreement to occupy the Hatay region and many other regions in southern Turkey. Article Seven of the Ankara Agreement stipulates the establishment of a special administrative system for Hatay, according to which the Arab population enjoys all the facilities necessary for their cultural development. This was on the proviso that the Turkish language was considered the official language (Diab, 1996).

This Franco-Turkish treaty stopped the war between the two countries. Its biggest impact was the modification of the border line between Syria, which was under French occupation at that time and Turkey, which drew the new line of the new Syrian border, which starts from the point south of Ban Yas on the Bay of Iskenderun, east to Ikbis Square, then southeast to the train station in Kilis and continues. At the southern line of the Istanbul-Baghdad railway line (Kinross, 1977). The treaty resulted in the placement of northern Syrian sanjaks within Turkish territory and the isolation of the city of Aleppo from most of the northern regions (Kinross, 1977).

As a result of this treaty, the following cities and sanjaks came under Turkish sovereignty: Adana, Othmaniya, Marash, Enteb, Kilis, Urfa, Mardin, Nusaybin and Ibn Omar Island. The area of the lands that was annexed to Turkey amounted to about 18 thousand square kilometers (Stanford, 1977). The Ankara Agreement stipulated that the

⁶ The Ankara Treaty (or the Ankara Agreement; the Franco-Turkish Agreement in Ankara, in Turkish: Ankara Anlaşması), is an agreement signed on October 20, 1921 between France and the government of the Great National Council of Turkey, to end the France -Turkey War. The signatories to the treaty are French diplomat Henri Franklin-Paulin and Turkish Foreign Minister Yusef Kemal Bey.

Iskenderun district be granted a special status in Syrian mandate that the Turkish residents enjoy privileges to preserve their cultures and to make the Turkish language an official language in the district (Jay,1977).This situation was confirmed by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 (Diab, 1996).

In a speech delivered by Ataturk on March 15, 1923 in Adana, he said: "It is unacceptable that the lands that have been for four centuries Turkish territory remain in the grip of the enemy. According to the treaties of Ankara in 1921 and Lausanne in 1923, France established an "Autonomous administration" in Hatay (Mahfooz, 2009).

In 1924, the French military governor Gouraud, ordered that Aleppo and its suburbs be annexed to Damascus, to form a single state of Syria. Thus, Hatay was separated from Aleppo, to be associated with the Damascus government while preserving its own system, and during that period in 1924 a political council was formed in Hatay and they took a decision to declare Hatay political autonomous and separate from the Damascus government formed by France (Khadduri,2016).

In January 1925 after political autonomy the French military governor issued a decree supporting Hatay's special system for financial management to gain economic independence and make the Arabic and Turkish languages equal in the official status in Hatay (Al-Obaidi, 2010).

However, after Hatay state gained autonomous,it was reconnected with the Syrian state in 1926 with the efforts of President Ahmed Nami, and it contemplated the launch of the First Syrian Republic so France did not abide by the agreements and autonomous agreed upon with Turkey and began to rule Hatay state again as if it did not gain autonomous with a colonial logic as part of Syria(Al-Obaidi, 2010).

After trying all diplomatic methods in Kemalist foreign policy, military involvement must come to the Facade as a last resort. Ataturk never gave up a peaceful solution

based on good diplomacy in the Hatay issue. For this purpose, first at the most appropriate time on the eve of World War II, he submitted a memorandum to France in 1936 and demanded the independence of Hatay. In the same year again, he brought the case to the League of Nations (Khadduri,2016).

Then, on January 21-27, 1937, he wrote articles in the Kurun newspaper under the signature of Asım Üs, in which he warned France and the League of Nations and criticized the İnönü government, which slowly took the case. France objected to these proposals and Turkey submitted another proposal to the League of Nations to make the Hatay region a distinct entity and this was approved on May 29, 1937(Al-Obaidi,2010).

In 1938, France took an "unprecedented and provocative step" as it re-granted the brigade autonomy while remaining formally linked to the Syrian Republic, and then abolished this formal bond. In 1938 France and Turkey also signed the General Accord Treaty which was about to face the foreign threat from some countries(Mahfooz, 2009). Through this Treaty, the French and Turkish forces were allowed to enter Hatay, and the Turkish forces entered. This was a turning point in the Hatay file(Mahfooz, 2009)

On January 21, 1939, the Turkish Foreign Minister told France that Turkey wanted to include Hatay, and France agreed to the request. This was made on the condition there would be an exchange for benefits, including the conclusion of an alliance in the Mediterranean (Al-Obaidi,2010) So Atatürk declared Hatay's annexation to Turkey and it was decided to solve this problem with France and the final signature was made in Ankara, which ignited the dispute and tension between Turkey and Syria (Diab,1996).

This was because the agreement violated the purpose of the French mandate on Syria. The Syrian government did not recognize the decision to annex Hatay to Turkey, and this problem continued to disturb the relations between the two countries (Saadeh,1996). In 1998, the Adana Agreement was signed, and one of its provisions

was related to the border dispute. This helped explain how Hatay created continuous tension between Turkey and Syria due to the border dispute over the annexation of Hatay to Turkey (Saadeh,1996).

Since Hafez al-Assad came to power in Syria in 1971, there has been a historical rift in Syrian-Turkish relations. Relations were not in a normal state, there was a state of hostility and tension between the two countries throughout this long period until the end of the twentieth century, against the background of the most important reasons, which was the difference in strategic options and alliances between the two countries ,where Turkey chose the policies and orientations of NATO, while Syria stood with the left and socialist currents (Al-Mustafa, 2012). Historically, as the relations between the two countries improved, the Hatay problem disappeared, when relations deteriorated, it reappeared.

Bashar al-Assad assumed had the power in the country from 2000 until the Syrian revolution in 2011, and the relations improved with the Turkish and French regimes, also removed Hatay region from the Syrian map. After the Turkish government stood with the revolution and the demands of the Syrian people in 2011, the Syrian regime added again the Hatay region to the map in the geographical books (Al-Mustafa, 2012).

3.2 The development of political relations due to the problem of the Tigris and Euphrates waters

The water issue is one of the most complex issues and problems that the Turkish-Syrian relations face. The aspect of cooperation in this issue between Turkey and Syria was weak and this resulted in the failure of both countries to recognize the rights of the other country (Al-Tamimi,1999).

Turkey believed, since the beginning of the water problem, that the running water in the

Tigris and Euphrates basins is Turkish water because it originates from Turkish territory. Turkey also believes that it is not legally obligated to give a fixed share to Syria. Therefore, Turkey believes that the agreement with Syria to supply it with water is provided that this does not conflict with its interests in establishing development projects (Ismail, 2006). On the other hand, Syria believes that it has the right to obtain a fixed percentage of that water, because it considers the Tigris and Euphrates rivers as international rivers. As well, technological and social developments and large increases in population numbers have led to the great expansion of water use while the quantities of fresh water available for use have remained constant. Therefore, the water problem occupies a prominent place at the forefront of modern problems in international politics (Ibrahim, 2019).

The headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates are located on Turkish territory, then the flow of the two rivers continues in two Arab countries, namely Syria and Iraq. The length of the Euphrates River is 215 km, and the annual revenue of the Euphrates is 31.82 billion cubic meters. Since the late seventies of the last century, Turkey has pursued a policy of investing in irrigation and electric power along the Euphrates (Ismail, 2006). In 1980 Turkey developed a comprehensive and general plan linking a number of huge water projects on the Euphrates as a prelude to the Southeast Anatolia Development Project (GAP).

This led to Syria's great concern about the enormity of the Turkish project, which led to the formation of a technical committee from both countries to evaluate the project and hold a meeting for that committee to solve this crisis, but it was unable to reach an agreement on the use of the Euphrates water (Abdel Malek, 1999). In 1987 an agreement was concluded between Syria and Turkey whereby Turkey pledged to guarantee the flow of water of the Euphrates River at the Syrian border at a rate of 500 cubic meters

per second as a minimum. The Syrian government considered this agreement a temporary measure to cover the filling of the Ataturk Dam until a new agreement would be issued (Bader, 2012).

On January 13, 1990, the crisis between Turkey and Syria reached its climax when former Turkish President Turgut Ozal personally supervised the process of closing the Euphrates River for a full month from January 13 to February 13 to fill the Ataturk Dam (Radwan, 2006). The Turkish government justified its position that the water cut was a technical process and had no political intent. However, the Syrian government saw this measure as a method of direct pressure on Turkey to prevent the presence of hostility between the Kurds and the Turkish government on Syrian territory (Radwan, 2006).

The Syrian government stated that the one-month closure process affected the social and economic life in Syria and led to the suspension of the work of 7 out of 8 turbines, which led to an electricity cut in some areas of Syria (Nidal, 2012). The Syrian government did an angry and denounced media campaign to quarantine the water of the Euphrates for a month. In response to the campaign, Turkish President Turgut Ozal stated that spreading rumors about the water would be a motive for conflict between Turkey and its neighbors because of fear that the Turkish government would control the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Ibrahim, 2019).

Turkey's intention was related to the Kurdish issue after cutting off the water for a whole month because Syria was supporting the PKK and therefore the water issue was closely related to the Kurdish issue in Syria, and therefore Turkey was seeking to secure its borders and end the PKK from Syria permanently by using the water issue as a means of pressure on Syria (Al-Mansour, 2000).

In 1995, news agencies reported that the Turkish government had signed contracts with a group of European companies to finance the Burjak Dam on the Euphrates River

(Ismail, 2006). In addition, it also announced a tender for the Qara Qamish Dam, which further strained relations between Turkey and Syria. The Syrian government called on the Arab League⁷ to take a unified Arab position against the Turkish measures on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Arab League confirmed, through its Secretary General Ismat Abdel Majid, its support for Syria and Iraq regarding the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates (Radwan, 2006). And based on the Syrian request, the Arab League confirmed full support for Syria and Iraq's right to the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates. In a meeting with the Turkish ambassador in Cairo in 1996, the Secretary General Ismat Abdel Majid called on the Turkish government to enter into tripartite negotiations as soon as possible with Syria and Iraq to ensure that a final agreement was reached for a fair division. The Arab League called for appeals from international financial institutions to stop providing financial support to the projects based on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Turkish lands. In 1997 Syria hosted the Arab Parliamentary Seminar to study Arab waters, and Arab parliamentarians affirmed their solidarity with Syria in its stance to obtain its water rights in the Tigris and Euphrates (Nazir, 2013). Despite the transfer of the Euphrates problem to the regional level, as a means of putting pressure on the Turkish government, Turkey has not retreated from its positions or projects on the two rivers (Al-Shamry, 2020).

The Turkish side's response to the Syrian and Arab meetings was not silence. Rather, the issue reached to the Turkish Foreign Minister Deniz Baykal threatening, saying: "Some believe that more water is needed to wash hands from the blood of terrorism, but we know that this issue of PKK will not be resolved with such a compromise ", then the

⁷ Arab League: is an Arab body that includes the signatory states to its charter. Its goal is regional cooperation within a national framework. It came as a formal response to Arab national feeling and the demand for Arab unity. As it came in order to strengthen the links between its member states, to preserve their independence, to get rid of colonial domination, to work to prevent the outbreak of internal and external conflicts, to promote Arab relations and to achieve Arab unity, given the necessary qualifications and capabilities of integration these countries possess, whether geographical, Economic, social or historical civilization.

Turkish government made media threats to temporarily reduce Syria's share of the Euphrates, as the amount of water was reduced for a period of four days during the Eid al-Adha holiday in April 1996 (Nazir, 2013).

Since its origins, the water problem between Syria and Turkey has been linked to the equation of "water - the Kurds" meaning that Turkey has begun building the main dams on the Euphrates, a determination since the early 1980s as a means of pressure on Damascus to stop its support for the PKK which fought an open war against the Turkish state for 15 years (1984 -1999)(Muhammed,2004).

Also Turkey believes that the goal of constructing the dams is for storage and hydroelectric projects, and the P.A.C Southeastern Anatolia Project is the largest integrated socio-economic and cultural project established by Turkey with the aim of developing and modernizing agriculture in the area covered by this project (Cihan, 2004).Turkey is seeking, through the establishment of these multiple projects, to revive the region economically, in addition to providing cheap electrical energy for industrial, agricultural and service projects in Western Anatolia(Muhammed, 2004).

At the same time, the "water-Kurds" equation was eliminated by the departure of Abdullah Ocalan from Syria, then his arrest by Turkey and the PKK's abandonment of violence in the summer of 1999, and the signing of the Adana Agreement between the two countries, Syria and Turkey in late October. From 1998, when Syria announced the end of any Syrian support for the PKK (Muhammed,2004).

3.3 Damascus' support for the PKK from 1984 to 1998

The Turkish-Syrian relations were characterized by constant tension, especially in the period of the Cold War. During this time Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization while Syria was an ally of the former Soviet Union and then Russia

(Al-Droubi, 2016). Their relations went through a state of constant tension. The state of tension reached its climax in 1998 in an unprecedented way. Turkey mobilized its military forces on the Syrian border and threatened to invade Damascus if Damascus did not stop harboring the PKK. Syria was one of the first regional countries to provide support to the PKK during the era of former Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad, in the early 1980s. The Syrian government allowed the PKK to establish training centers on Syrian lands and allowed the leader of the organization Abdullah Ocalan to reside in the capital, Damascus (Shalash 2019).

The Syrian government opened training centers for the PKK in the Lebanese Bekaa Valley in 1992 (Hussen,1998). They also opened three camps in the Damascus countryside where thousands of fighters were trained under the protection and supervision of the Syrian intelligence. It can be suggested that the relations between the Syrian government and the PKK were based on mutual interest(Al-Droubi, 2016).

Hafez al-Assad used the PKK to control the Kurds of Syria. Also Hafez Al-Assad provided facilities to the Kurds by exempting Kurds belonging to the Kurds of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) from compulsory service in the Syrian army(Mimoni, 2017).On the other hand, the Syrian government used the PKK as a means to strike the Kurdish national struggle in Syria, especially since the PKK used to view the Syrian Kurdish parties as classic parties that cannot offer anything to the Kurdish cause.(Mimoni, 2017).

PKK benefited from this relationship, built itself military bases and trained thousands of fighters who became ready to fight against the Turkish state as part of the large party project that seeks to separate from the Turkish state and establish self-rule for the Kurds in the region (Al-Droubi, 2016). This increased the tension in relations between Turkey and Syria. At the beginning of 1996, Turkey, during the era of President Suleyman

Demirel, gave warnings to the Syrian regime to stop supporting the PKK, otherwise Turkey would have to take what is necessary to preserve its national security (Hussen, 1998). It was one of the most intense cases of tension between Turkey and Syria in 1998, when Turkey mobilized 10,000 soldiers on the borders of Syria and its army spoke of imposing economic, political and military sanctions on Damascus (Abdalqader, 2012).

Iran has provided great support to the Syrian government, including logistical, technical and financial support, training the Syrian army and sending some Iranian combat forces to Syria. Iran considered the Syrian government a guarantee for its regional interests (Abdalqader, 2012). On the 20th of October 1998, Turkey and Syria signed the Adana Agreement. The agreement included 4 annexes, including the Turkish demands and pledges. It also stipulated that Turkey would retain its natural right to self-defense in demanding "fair compensation" for its loss of life and property, if Syria does not stop its support for the "PKK" immediately (Shalash, 2019).

The text of the agreement signed on 10/20/1998: "In light of the messages transmitted in the name of Syria through the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency President Hosni Mubarak, and through the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kamal Kharazi, the representative of the Iranian President, his Excellency Mohamed Sayed Khatami, and through Mr. Amr Moussa, he met the Turkish and Syrian envoys, their names are mentioned in the attached list (Appendix No. 1), in Adana on 19 and 20 October 1998 to discuss the issue of cooperation in combating terrorism" (Al Nahar, 2019).

The Turkish side reiterated the Turkish demands that were presented to the Egyptian President (Appendix No. 2), to end the current tension in the relationship between the two parties. Moreover, the Turkish side alerted the Syrian side to the response received

from Syria via the Arab Republic of Egypt, which involved the following obligations: Abdullah Ocalan will not be in Syria, and he will certainly not be allowed to enter Syria, members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) abroad will not be permitted to enter Syria, the PKK camps will not operate [on Syrian soil] and certainly will not be allowed to become active, and several PKK members have been arrested and taken to court. Regulations have been prepared regarding their names. Syria submitted these regulations to the Turkish side (Al Nahar, 2019).

The Syrian side confirmed the aforementioned points. As of October 20, 1998, the two parties consider that the border disputes between them are ended, and that neither of them has any claims or rights owed in the lands of the other side. The Syrian side understood that if it had failed to take the security measures and duties stipulated in this agreement, it would give Turkey the right to take all necessary security measures inside Syrian territory, up to a depth of 5 km (Shalash, 2019).

3.4 Evolution of political relations since the 1998 Adana Agreement until 2011

The political landscape in Turkish-Syrian relations for the first time began to completely change from what it was before the Adana Agreement. The Turkish and Syrian sides continued the procedures of exchange and social relationships. In addition, the then Turkish President Ahmed Necdet Sezer visited Syria to attend the funeral of former Syrian President Hafez al-Assad in 2000, contributing to pushing relations forward (Al-Fadhli, 2019).

Turkish-Syrian relations witnessed a great development when the AKP came to power in 2002. This improvement in relations was due to the understanding between the Turkish and Syrian governments and Turkey's vision of the new geopolitical and strategic changes lies in the AKP's will to turn Turkey into a major player in the

regional and international arenas (Al-Fadhli,2019).

In addition to adopting a policy of solving problems at the external level and establishing good relations with all neighbouring countries and solving problems with them, Turkey wanted to activate relations with neighbouring countries, including Syria (Al-Suwaidani, 2011).

On the other hand, Syria realized that it did not have the causes of political, economic and strategic power that Turkey possessed. Syria wanted to change approaches and trends in line with developments in the region and to immunize itself from external interference and pressures (Al -Qidra, 2013).

In 2002, the Syrian Chief of Staff, Hassan Turkmani, visited Turkey and signed two agreements for military cooperation with Turkey in the fields of military training and military industries (Al-Suwaidani,, 2011). This Turkish-Syrian military agreement was the first of its kind between the two countries since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. In addition, Erdogan received a delegation from the anti-Israel Hamas movement led by Khaled Meshaal, and these steps increased Turkish-Syrian rapprochement because Syria was hostile to Israel, and there were no peace treaties between the two countries (Youssef, 2017).

The Syrian President considered that relations were improving and reaching their best levels despite the difficult conditions in the region, and political observers stated that the Turkish-Syrian talks showed points of agreement between the two countries about the Middle East circumstances (Youssef, 2017). During the visit of President Al-Assad, the two countries signed two economic agreements aimed at developing tourism, trade, and mutual investments.

Trade between the two countries had achieved great growth, reaching 400 billion dollars, in addition to security cooperation between the two countries in the field of

combating terrorism, extraditing criminals and stopping and smuggling drugs (Faris, 2014). This cooperation was embodied in the case of Syria's extradition of a suspect related to the Istanbul bombings in 2003, and this matter met with great satisfaction to Ankara (Faris, 2014). This led the Turkish initiative to send a number of its parliament members to thank the Syrian government for its cooperation.

In 2004, Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, officially visited Damascus and he signed a free trade agreement between the two countries. The Turkish side stated that the signing of this agreement showed how deep the relations between the two countries had become (Mahfooz, 2012).

In another step in 2004 that contributed to a positive change in Turkish-Syrian relations, Bashar Al-Assad made an official visit to Turkey; he was the first Syrian president to visit Turkey since the independence of Syria in 1946 (Bu-Sobeh, 2015). This was received with great welcome by Turkish officials, and was a new beginning to help restore relations.

In 2005, the then Turkish President, Ahmed Necdet Sezer, visited Syria and held talks with the Syrian President about the regional issues and bilateral relations between them (Youssef, 2017). The Syrian government newspaper, Tishreen, wrote that the Turkish president's visit was of great importance after the courageous and bold stance he took when he confirmed his intention to visit (Faris, 2014). The implementation of the Free Trade Agreement was initiated in 2007 which included the agreement to open the borders between the two countries (Youssef, 2017).

The volume of trade between the two countries increased rapidly and reached about two billion dollars annually within a few years (Bu-Sobeh, 2015). The expectations for the volume of trade in the coming years of that period were \$5 billion, and joint projects in terms of industry, infrastructure, and service had increased. On the cultural side, Syria

began to teach the Turkish language in Damascus and Aleppo, and the Arabic language in Ankara and Istanbul. Cultural associations such as the Arab Society for Sciences, Culture and Arts were established in Ankara (Bu-Sobeh, 2015).

The Syrian and Turkish sides have been keen to institutionalize inter-relations, that is, to lay down an institutional framework to regulate relations between them, by signing the joint political declaration that has been completed under the terms of the establishment of a high-level council for strategic cooperation. It was established during the visit of President Bashar al-Assad in September 2009. This council consisted of the heads of the governments of the two countries. The main ministers in the two governments would meet twice a year. The most prominent achievement of this council would be the abolition of entry visas for citizens of both countries, in October 2009 (Youssef, 2017).

In another Turkish step, the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, paid an official visit to Damascus, in which he met with President Al-Assad in 2009. At the meeting they discussed developments in the region, especially with regard to the Palestinian and Iraqi issues, and the role that Turkey could play in bringing peace to the region. The change included the Syrian-Turkish relations in the political sphere and the economic sphere between the two countries. Turkey had achieved significant economic growth, and it wanted Syria to be its Arab gateway to the Gulf countries (Egypt and elsewhere) (Al-Suwaitani, 2011).

At the end of March 2010, Syrian and Turkish cooperation increased in terms of both the military and security aspects, through other military manoeuvres, in order to make the border security cooperation on the ground (Youssef, 2017). In October 2010, a security meeting was held between the two countries, in which ten ministers from the two countries participated, including the defense and interior ministers. As a result of this meeting, three committees were formed for cooperation in the fields of combating

terrorism, training and manoeuvres, and the defence industries(Youssef, 2017).

Turkey began to increase the amount of water flowing from the Euphrates River to reach 575 cubic meters per second, and there was also an agreement that allowed the passage of gas pipelines exported from Azerbaijan to Syria, and that Turkish lands also be a passage for the Arab gas network to be exported from Egypt to European countries (Mahmoud, 2012).

In addition to this, the visa abolition agreement allowed entry of Syrians and Turks to these countries without the need for consular procedures. This rapprochement was the result of a strategic understanding with high levels of cooperation between the two countries (Bu-Sobeh, 2015). The development of this level of strategic cooperation enabled Turkey to enter the Arab world through the Syrian gate .

Therefore, it was necessary to reconsider Turkey as a neighbour that could play an important role in supporting Syria and standing by it. In addition, Syria needed Turkey in the regional politics, to break the isolation imposed by the West on it since the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on February 14, 2005.

Through its rational policy, Syria wanted to deal with neighbouring countries such as Turkey, and for resolving problems with Turkey to enhance Syria's economic, political and security interests, in addition to internal security interests (Jalal, 2018).

3.5 The development of political relations from the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011 until 2020

After the success of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, it seemed as if the Syrians had been waiting for the spark of revolution against the excesses of the Syrian government for more than 40 years. On March 18, 2011, on a day called Friday of Dignity, demonstrations spread in various parts of the country, the most prominent of which was

in Daraa, where a mass demonstration took place (Abdul Razzaq, 2013).

Thousands of people participated in a protest against the arrests and repression handled by the Syrian regime against peaceful protesters. They chanted slogans calling for freedom and dignity and denouncing authoritarian figures in the state, such as businessman Rami Makhlouf, the cousin of Bashar al-Assad (Abdo, 2018). The security forces confronted the demonstrations with live bullets, and the first martyrs of the revolution were seen in Daraa, the ignition point for the revolution (Abdo, 2018).

Demonstrations took place in Damascus, Homs, Baniyas and several other cities with the official position of the regime denying the existence of a popular movement against it. The Syrian regime described the demonstrations as acts of chaos and rioting, and called the demonstrators infiltrators, saboteurs and rioters. The regime insisted on this story for a whole year (Abdul Razzaq, 2013).

Since its inception in 2011, the Syrian revolution has received great Turkish attention because it had an important impact and repercussions on Turkey itself . It also had significance from a geopolitical perspective. Its importance lies in a number of factors and contexts, the most important of which is that the Syrian-Turkish border is the longest land border, this linked the two countries to the common and mutual political, social, economic and security interests. Syria was considered the gateway to the Arab and Islamic world for Turkey (Togai 2017).

Since the early days of the Syrian revolution in 2011, Turkey has had its position in trying to solve this crisis because it could not ignore a problem of this size in a neighbouring and important country like Syria (Abdelkrim, 2014). We can divide the Turkish positions according to their chronology:

The first was the stage of pressure put on the Syrian regime to undertake political reforms in Syria. After Turkey supported popular movements in several previous

countries and the process of change in the Arab world, it should have tried to pressure the regime to introduce reforms before the outbreak of the Syrian crisis. Turkey's position stemmed from several considerations, including the good relations that linked it to Syria and the Assad regime before 2011(Mimouni, 2019).

Between Turkey and Syria there were a lot of economic agreements. In addition to establishment of a Higher Council for Strategic Cooperation⁸ In 2009 and the establishment of a free trade zone, Turkey feared that events would slide and lead to overwhelming chaos that would harm Syria and Turkey and their communicative project with the Arab world (Mimouni,2019).

The Turkish government had taken several measures to warn the Syrian regime of the negative repercussions if the existing situation was not dealt with realistically, practically, and quickly with this crisis (Togai, 2017). The then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, visited Syria, followed by his foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, in addition to the frequent visits of the Head of Turkish intelligence, Hakan Fidan. All the visits, messages and contacts were to convince President al-Assad to adopt the idea of reform and change as soon as possible and take the Turkish advice and demands seriously It is worth noting that Ankara had put forward a set of proposals and demands, the most important of which was the announcement of a new government that would bring all of the political and social parties in Syria together (Jalal, 2018).

This phase extended from the beginning of the peaceful demonstrations in March 2011 in Syria until the withdrawal of the Turkish ambassador from Damascus in March 2012.

Although Turkey hosted two conferences for the Syrian opposition in 2011, the aim of hosting the opposition was to put pressure on the Syrian regime to bring about political

⁸ Higher Council for Strategic Cooperation: This included the signing of 47 agreements, cooperation protocols and memoranda of understanding in several areas in a number of fields. These agreements include security and military fields in addition to defense, education, trade, investment, health, agriculture, energy, culture, tourism and the environment.

reforms in Syria (Al-Hajj, 2016).The Turkish position changed due to the lack of confidence in President al-Assad, and the failure to implement the reforms he promised, and the pressure to accelerate those reforms .

There was also criticism of the security practices against the demonstrations, and then the call for a peaceful change of the regime after the regime's evasiveness, deception and failure to meet popular demands and its choice of an oppressive security solution (Al-Hajj, 2016).

The second stage was to support the opposition to bring down the Syrian regime, after it became established in Ankara that Assad was unable to make real reforms to solve the crisis. It was too late for such a step, especially after Turkey lost the means of pressure on the Syrian regime after the diplomatic break with the withdrawal of ambassadors from both countries Turkey and Syria (Omar, 2017).

Also, it seems that Turkey entered into a new bet, in terms of abandoning the Syrian regime, which for a whole decade had been in a partnership (Abdo, 2018).

Ankara realized that its regional influence has become limited, especially in the continuing the violence in Syria, which reflected on Turkish role as a regional influence in the region. As well as the correlation between Turkish foreign policy and Western strategy towards the Middle East in the regional politics in the region and the clear and frank regional competition between Turkey and Iran to shape the future of the Middle East region.(Bahralzein, 2019).

In addition to the progress of the Syrian opposition on the ground in confronting the regime, in 2012 Turkey considered that the Syrian regime lost its legitimacy and regarded it as a fatal regime for its people. They called for the need to bring down the regime to save the future of Syria and the right of the Syrian people to choose their leadership. This would help draw a roadmap for the future of their country (Bahralzein,

2019).

Also Turkey wanted to preserve the unity of Syrian and the vision of its government with individuals or groups that are ideologically and strategically allied with Turkey. However, since September 2015, when Russia intervened militarily in Syria, it gained a dominant position there. Ankara realized that its desires were unrealistic. Therefore, Turkey's aspirations have tended towards ensuring that the allied non-jihadist rebel forces maintain the largest possible area of land and impose a greater opinion on the future of Syria (Bahralzein, 2019).

The Syrian regime committed the "Houla massacre" on May 25, 2012, it was among the events that contributed to widening the gap between the two sides, as the crisis between Turkey and the Syrian regime intensified in 2012 as a result of the Syrian regime's arrest of the Turkish journalist "Junaid Onal," who remained in Syrian prisons for nearly three months, he was released on November 19, 2012, through mediation by Turkey's first opposition party, the Republican People's Party. (Salami, 2017).

Survivors of the Houla massacre in Syria revealed the details of the killing of dozens of people, nearly half of them being children, in a scene that sparked growing global anger. Survivors of the massacre that killed 108 people said that armed men arrived shortly before sunset, some wearing military uniforms and others in civilian clothes. They take entire families to rooms and kill them in cold blood. An apparently wounded woman said in video footage released by activists that armed men in military uniforms entered her home, took her family members like sheep and started shooting at them (Aljazeera,2012).

The woman - who was lying next to another wounded woman near an infant with chest injuries - said that her father, only brother and seven of her sisters were killed. Activists and survivors said that the soldiers and "Shabiha" militia loyal to President Bashar

al-Assad - made up of his minority Alawite community carried out the attack on the village's Sunni residents (Aljazeera, 2012).

A woman said that they came from nearby villages, but the UN observers say that the evidence appears to contradict the Syrian government's denial that its forces and allied militia were responsible for the massacre. The video footage and accounts of activists, survivors, human rights organizations and UN observers in Syria all provided a harrowing account of the violence in the Hula region, which is about twenty kilometres northwest of the city of Homs (Aljazeera, 2012).

In this year, Syrian regime also arrested the Turkish journalist Junaid Onal,” who remained in Syrian prisons for nearly three months, and was released on November 19, 2012. This was achieved through the mediation of the main opposition party in Turkey, the Republican People's Party (Marzouq,2018).This period that Ankara wanted to take down Bashar Al-Assad lasted nearly three years, and Ankara also provided support to the Syrian opposition on several levels, including the media, logistics and politics.(Bahralzein, 2019).

Turkey contributed to the formation of international recognition of the Syrian political opposition and tensions increased between Syria and Turkey when Turkish military aircraft forced a Syrian airliner that was on its way from Moscow to Damascus to land in Ankara (Jalal 2018).

The third stage was Turkey's transition to the stage of defending its borders and national security and accepting a political solution, that is, abandoning the slogan of overthrowing President Assad and accepting the transitional period plan and its timetable in accordance with the US-Russian agreement in Vienna in 2015. There were several factors imposed on Turkey at this stage (Al-Sayed, 2016).

First, the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which is known for

short as ISIS, played a role. It is an armed organization that follows the ideology of the Salafi-jihadi groups, and whose members aim - according to their belief - to restore the Islamic caliphate and the application of Sharia. The leader of this organization was Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (Al-Sayed, 2016).

ISIS became known for its videos of beheading civilians and soldiers alike, including journalists and aid workers, and for its destruction of antiquities and archaeological sites. The United Nations holds ISIS responsible for human rights violations and war crimes starting in 2014.

ISIS has spread significantly and gained support in Iraq due to the alleged economic and political discrimination against Sunni Arabs, and they had a large presence in the Syrian governorates of Raqqa, Idlib, Deir Ezzor and Aleppo, after entering the Syrian Civil War. ISIS's original goal was to establish a caliphate, as they claimed, in the predominantly Sunni areas of Iraq (BBC, 2016).

Its goal expanded to include controlling Sunni-majority areas in Syria. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi declared the leadership of the organization on June 29, 2014, the organization fought all civilians and soldiers who breached its views and interpretations, describing them as apostasy, polytheism and hypocrisy (BBC, 2016).

The Turkish government came under severe pressure during 2014, accused of cooperating with "ISIS" and refuted these accusations. On October 20, 2014, Turkey opened its borders for the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces to cross into Syria through its territory, with the aim of fighting ISIS in the city of Ayn al-Arab "Kobani"(Al-Sayed, 2016).

What does it mean to allow the Peshmerga to enter Ayn al-Arab? "That Turkey was concerned that all Kurdish areas in Syria would fall under the control of the Democratic Union and the People's Protection Units, and that it preferred the presence of other

Kurdish forces that have a good relationship with Turkey, which has not been permitted over the past years (Al-Sayed, 2016). In response, the Syrian government accused Turkey, ten days after the entry of the Peshmerga, of “violating its sovereignty” by allowing “foreign” peshmerga forces to enter through its borders into the city of Ayn al-Arab .

The organization carried out several terrorist operations in Turkey, one of them was the Suruc bombing in 2015, which was a suicide attack that took place in the city of Suruc in the Turkish state of Urfa in the middle of the day on July 20, 2015, according to Turkey's local time (Al-Droubi, 2015).

As a result of this attack, 32 people were killed and more than 100 wounded. The bombing targeted a gathering of 300 people from the Socialist Youth Union in the garden of the Amara Cultural Centre; it was later announced that Abd al-Rahman al-Oghuz, was the bomber, and he was linked to ISIS (CNN, 2016).

On January 12, a suicide attack carried out by a Syrian in the square of the Sultan Ahmed neighbourhood in Istanbul, killed 10 people, most of them being Germans. Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said in a brief television statement: "We have verified that the perpetrator of this terrorist attack in Sultan Ahmed is a foreigner from ISIS operatives (CNN, 2016)."

Second, the context of the advance of the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the crossing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) to the other side of the Euphrates was a red line for Turkey that could not be allowed by the Turkish officials, they saw this as a major threat to Turkey's national security, but the People's Protection Units (YPG) received unprecedented support from Russia and they were getting closer and closer to crossing the river with Russian air cover (CNN, 2016).

Also, the People's Protection Units (YPG) is supported by the United States, as the

international coalition of the United States formed a new Syrian force of 30,000 soldiers to be led by the People's Protection Units, and the Turkish President's spokesman considered Washington's training of Kurdish fighters unacceptable, this inflamed Turkey's anger at US support for Kurdish-dominated forces in Syria and a senior Turkish official told Reuters agency that the US training of the new border security force was the reason for summoning the US Charge Affairs to Ankara (Reuters, 2018).

Third, Ankara shot down the Russian fighter plane on October 24, 2015 that penetrated Turkish airspace, while Moscow denied this, followed by strong-language statements from the Russian side. The Turkish Chief of Staff issued a statement on the morning of the incident on its website, explaining that an unidentified fighter plane (later it turned out to be Russian), continued to violate Turkish airspace despite the warnings (10 times within five minutes), and as a result two F-16 aircraft shot it down (Al Jazeera Turk, 2017).

While the Turkish leadership provided information confirming the safety of its position, based on its right to defend its borders according to the rules of engagement that it had previously announced, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the downing of the plane as a stab in the back by accomplices with terrorism, stressing that the consequences would be dire. All these factors contributed to Turkey's transition to the stage of defending its borders and national security and accepting a political solution, such as abandoning the slogan of overthrowing Assad (Al Jazeera Turk, 2017).

In addition to the apparent decline of the Turkish role in Syria and the shift that occurred in Turkish foreign policy after the resignation of former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (PUT year) after the direct Russian military involvement and the US-Russian agreement to resolve the Syrian crisis (Jmeel, 2015).

At this stage, Ankara lost its hope that the Syrian situation would change regarding the

overthrow of Bashar Al-Assad's regime, or the balance of power in favour of the Syrian opposition. The Turkish focus has become on protecting its borders and national security as a result of the developments of the Syrian crisis on two levels as mentioned below:

The first level is the general context related to the punitive measures imposed by Moscow against Ankara at all political, military, commercial and economic levels. Moscow prevented Turkish aircraft from flying over Syria and made the idea of a safe zone that Turkey advocated impossible (Sleem, 2019). The second level is the remarkable progress of the People's Protection Forces, which is the military cultivator of the Democratic Union Party, which Ankara considers the Syrian extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), where these forces prepared to establish a Kurdish strip on the Turkish-Syrian border.

The Syrian crisis is no longer a border state problem, but rather an internal Turkish issue for several reasons (Sputnik, 2019).

3.6 Turkish military operations in Syria

After the recent developments in Syria, the Syrian crisis was no longer just a crisis of a country neighbouring Turkey, but rather an internal matter for Turkey because of several factors, including developments in the Aleppo city in Syria, which was targeted by the Syrian opposition and it was separation from the geographical, political and logistical contact with Syria and repercussions this developments in the Aleppo on the Syrian crisis and on the supportive regional countries, like Turkey (Hayel,2020).

In addition to the Kurdish project in northern Syria, which threatens Turkey with partition scenarios, the Syrian crisis was also directly linked to Turkey's national security and Turkey's expectation of future waves of Syrian refugees towards its

borders.

These developments provoked the supposed Turkish military involvement. At this stage the Turkish involvement in the Syrian crisis shifted from indirect to direct military involvement. The Turkish government had to secure the Turkish border cities from ISIS bombing, in addition to expelling the SDF⁹ from the region and avoiding the establishment of a border strip (Hayel, 2020). The Turkish government carried out two military operations in cooperation with the Syrian opposition:

1-Euphrates Shield Operation

Euphrates Shield was launched by the Turkish government on August 24, 2016, to support the Syrian opposition factions in their efforts to expel ISIS from the northern Syrian region, starting with Jarablus, and then was expanded to include the removal of Kurdish fighters east of the Euphrates River, in addition to the expulsion of the Syrian Democratic Forces (Cobaran, 2018).

The city of Jarablus was of strategic importance to Ankara because controlling it would prevent the Kurds from linking the two banks of the Euphrates River (Arkan, 2019). This would help to avoid the Kurds establishing a border strip along the Syrian-Turkish border that connected the Kurdish control areas to the east and west. In addition to preventing a new entering of Syrian refugees into Turkish territory, and working to deliver humanitarian aid to civilians in Syria, as well as preparing the way to establish a safe zone inside the Syrian territories for the returning refugees to it (Cobaran, 2018).

The Euphrates Shield Operation forces consisted of military battalions of the Syrian opposition factions, mostly Free Syrian Army (FSA)¹⁰. The most prominent FSA factions participating in Operation Euphrates Shield were the Levant Legion, the Sultan

⁹ The Syrian Democratic Forces is an alliance in the Syrian Civil War composed primarily of Kurdish, Arab, and Assyrian/Syriac militias, as well as some smaller Armenian, Turkmen and Chechen forces. The SDF is militarily led by the People's Protection Units, a mostly Kurdish militia

¹⁰ The Free Syrian Army is a loose faction in the Syrian Civil War founded on 29 July 2011 by officers of the Syrian Armed Forces whose stated goal was to bring down the government of Bashar al-Assad.

Murad Division, the Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement and the Levant Front. The Syrian opposition forces received significant ground and air support from the Joint Special Task Force of the Turkish Armed Forces, and from the International Coalition Air Force(Qatrib, 2019).

During the first phase of the operation, the Turkish forces crossed the Syrian border and took control of the city of Jarablus. In addition to controlling the city of al-Bab in the eastern countryside of Aleppo, Operation Euphrates Shield continued for about 7 months, and the Turkish army announced security in the areas near the Turkish border. Operation Euphrates Shield ended with the elimination of ISIS in the countryside of Aleppo, blocking the path of the SDF's dream of reaching the city of Ayn al-Arab and the city of Afrin. The operation imposed a safe zone from the Syrian and Russian raids and provided a safe haven for thousands of displaced civilians (Ibrahim, 2020).

On the part of the Syrian regime, the Syrian Foreign Ministry condemned the "Euphrates Shield" operation launched by the Turkish army in northern Syria, and considered it a blatant violation of its sovereignty. Damascus insisted that the fight against terrorism on Syrian soil from any party must be done through coordination with the Syrian government and the Syrian army, and Damascus stressed that "fighting terrorism does not mean expelling" ISIS "and replacing it with other terrorist organizations that are directly supported by Turkey" (RT Arabia, 2016).

The Syrian Foreign Ministry added: "What is happening in Jarablus now is not a fight against terrorism as Turkey claims, but rather a replacement of another terror in its place, and in this regard, Syria is calling for an end to this aggression(RT Arabia, 2016)." The Syrian Foreign Ministry also called on the UN, to implement its decisions related in particular to respecting the sovereignty of states and their territorial integrity, it also called for the need for the Turkish side and the American coalition to respect

international decisions, especially those related to closing borders and drying up the sources of terrorism (RT Arabia, 2016).

As for Russia's position on the operation, the Russian Foreign Ministry expressed its concern about the situation on the Turkish-Syrian border and the possible deterioration of the security situation and escalation of differences between Arabs and Kurds after the launch of a Turkish military operation in Syria, Including the possibility of civilian casualties and the escalation of sectarian differences between the Kurds and Arabs (Ibarhim, 2019).

As for America's position, US Vice President Joe Biden affirmed that Washington fully supports Turkey as its ally, and that the Democratic Union Forces and the People's Protection Units (YPG) will not get any support from the United States if they move to the west of the Euphrates, also Washington will not accept a compromise regarding the security of the Turkish borders and the unity of Syria, and the American side has informed the relevant authorities of this in Syria(Hayel, 2020).

Germany also confirmed its support for Ankara in the operation it launched in northern Syria,German Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Schafer said that Berlin "respects" Ankara's decision to transfer the battle against Kurdish fighters to Syria stressing that the fight against ISIS dimension in the process is consistent with the goals and intentions of the coalition against the "jihadists".He added, "Turkey considers, whether wrongly or rightly, that there are links between the PKK - which we also consider a terrorist organization - on the Turkish side and at least some of the Kurds are on the Syrian side that. We respect this matter and consider that Turkey has a legitimate right to act against these terrorist activities(Qatrib, 2019)."

2-Operation Olive Branch

Operation Olive Branch began on January 20, 2018, and it was a military operation launched by the Turkish Armed Forces in cooperation with the Free Syrian Army. Among the most prominent FSA factions participating in Operation Olive Branch were the Nasr Army, the Levant Front, the Jabal Suqour Brigade, the Ahrar al-Sham Movement, the Nour al-Din al-Zanki Movement, the Hamza Brigades and the Sham Legion with the aim of controlling the Syrian city of Afrin and ridding Afrin from the PKK militants and the People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara classifies as terrorist organizations (TRTArabic, 2019).

This operation its within the context of protecting Turkish national security and Turkey's right to self-defense, as Operation Olive Branch was based on international law and Security Council resolutions related to combating terrorism, and the aim of this operation was to strengthen the territorial integrity of Syria (TRTArabic, 2019).

Turkey considered the Olive Branch operation important to provide security for the Turkish border states, protect the Euphrates Shield areas, and also expel the People's Protection Units from Afrin, which considered Afrin an important port towards the Mediterranean, especially since the People's Protection Units (YPG) were working to expand outside the Syrian borders, specifically towards Iraqi lands in the east, along the border road with Syria. Turkey also considered Afrin a center for the two organizations (YPG / PKK) to smuggle militants, weapons and ammunition across the Afrin-Amanus line, in order to feed and support terrorism on Turkish territory (TRTArabic, 2020).

One of the most important points of Operation Olive Branch was the Turkish forces' control of the strategic Mount Bursae. This mountain was considered strategic for the terrorists, as they were targeting civilians in the Turkish province of Kilis, and civilians living in the Syrian city of Azaz, which was under the control of the moderate opposition . After 3 days, Olive Branch forces were able to take control of the center

town of Bulbul, north of Afrin, and on February 1, the Olive Branch forces advanced from the northern, western and eastern sides of the town(BBC, 2018).

On February 26, the Olive Branch forces were able to separate the center of Afrin city by road from Idlib governorate and the areas of the Euphrates Shield operation, which were under the control of the Syrian opposition. After clearing the areas bordering Turkey from the (YPG / PKK) the advance towards the interior of Afrin began very quickly. On March 3, 2018, Turkish forces and Free Syrian Army personnel were able to clear the center of the town of Raju, northwest of Afrin from the YPG / PKK organizations (Al-Elkeh, 2020).

In parallel with clearing the areas of YPG / PKK, the Olive Branch forces were working to restore security in the liberated areas, and on the fourth of March, the center of Sheikh Hadid town was cleared of (YPG / PKK) organizations (Al-Hajj, 2018). The Olive Branch forces did not wait for long until they entered the town of Shiran, northeast of Afrin, on the sixth of March. After only two days, on the eighth of March, the Olive Branch forces took control of the most important town in Afrin, the strategic Jenderes. After clearing the centers of 5 towns of YPG / PKK organizations, the road was opened for the Olive Branch forces to march towards the center of Afrin, where the operation began to take a faster pace. Commenting on the course of the operation, the Turkish Chief of Staff stated that Afrin city center has been surrounded on all sides as of March 12 (Al-Hajj, 2018).

In a speech on March 18 in the province of Çanakkale, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said: “I would like to bring you good news that our armed forces, in cooperation with the Free Syrian Army, have taken control of Afrin city center”. The Turkish Ministry of Defense announced the neutralization of more than 4,500 militants, and the control of more than 200 residential areas taken from the Kurdish organizations

during the operation. After the military operation achieved its objectives, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu announced the end of Operation Olive Branch 4 months after its launch (Al-Hajj, 2018).

Before clearing the entire region from the YPG / PKK organizations, Turkish civil organizations rushed to deliver humanitarian aid to all populated neighborhoods and villages, because of the security that returned in that area after the Olive Branch operation. The return of civilians to their homes began on March 20, and the population of Afrin within a year reached 350 thousand people (Al-Elkeh, 2020).

After the Olive Branch operation, 7 local councils were formed to manage the affairs of Afrin city and its towns, and Turkey provided consultations and tangible support to these councils in the fields of health, education, sports, trade, industry and agriculture. With the support of the local councils, the people of the Afrin region started to manage their affairs themselves, as Turkey provided the councils with fertilizer and seeds with the aim of encouraging agriculture and reviving this sector in Afrin, which is famous for olives (Al-Elkeh, 2020).

As for the Syrian regime's position on the Olive Branch operation, despite Turkey's keenness to coordinate, even indirectly, with Damascus and its emphasis on respecting the unity of Syrian opinion, the Syrian Foreign Ministry described the Turkish operation as "representing the latest step in the Turkish attacks on Syrian sovereignty" (Turkpress, 2018).

Also the Syrian Foreign Ministry demanded the international community to take the necessary measures to stop it, as Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu confirmed that "Turkey informed the regime through a written memorandum of the Afrin process (Turkpress, 2018)." Most likely, this note arrived via Russia, but sources close to the regime denied this.

As for the position of the United States of America towards the Afrin operation, it informed Ankara to withdraw from the implementation of the Afrin operation, and asked it to focus instead on fighting the "ISIS" organization. As for Iran, which is one of the three guarantor countries for the de-escalation zones in Syria, along with Turkey and Russia, it asked for the Turkish operation to be halted, saying that it might help those it described as terrorists by Turkey. While Russia announced, in the words of France Klintsevich, First Vice Chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Council of the Russian Federation, It will not intervene militarily in the event of a confrontation between the Syrian regime and Turkey in Afrin (Al-Elkeh, 2020).

3- Operation Peace Spring

On October 9, 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that the Turkish forces, in conjunction with the Syrian National Army, had begun a military operation in the eastern Euphrates region, called Operation Peace Spring. The aim of this operation was to establish a safe place for civilians at a depth of 30 km within the framework of the safe zone that Turkey worked to establish in northern Syria for refugees and Syrian civilians (Al-Najjar, 2020)

Turkey also wanted to initiate a demographic change process in the region by returning one million refugees to that region. There were more than a million Syrian refugees present in Turkey, because The "SDF" forces - the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party - displaced them from their areas of Al-Raqqa and Al-Hasakah (Al-Najjar, 2020).

The "SDF" forces sought to apply forced conscription and practice racism, and committed human rights violations that Amnesty International and a lot of human rights organizations documented, in order to reach a separatist project away from the wishes

of the region's residents. The majority of the Syrian refugees in Urfa and Mardin - and the border strip adjacent to that area - have moved to the other side during the "SDF" forces' control period (Al-Najjar, 2020).

The main objectives of the operation were to retake the areas between the east of the Euphrates River to the city of Malikiyah in the far northeast of Syria from the grip of ISIS and PKK / YPG terrorists, and to secure the Turkish border cities from the bombing fire that was affecting residential areas and communities (Qatrib, 2019).

The Peace Spring Operations Room was formed from military battalions that merged with other opposition factions under the name of the Syrian National Army, and the military operation began with Turkish artillery and rocket launchers. The Turkish special forces and the Free Syrian National Army began carrying out ground offensive operations against terrorist organizations' targets and groups; on the other hand, the PKK and the terrorist People's Protection Units (YPG) worked to target civilians by firing rockets at the Turkish border cities, which resulted in the death and injury of dozens of Turkish citizens (Qatrib, 2019).

The Russian position, which expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in northern Syria after the start of the Turkish military operation peace spring, and the Kremlin added in a statement that "the situation will be part of Putin's and Erdogan's talks in Sochi, and the Russian Foreign Ministry stressed the importance of setting specific standards between the Syrian and Turkish armies for practical cooperation on the ground (TRT Arabic, 2019)."

On the one hand, the French Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, considered that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan "will bear a tremendous responsibility in front of history", regarding the attack by the Turkish army against the Syrian Democratic Forces in northern Syria, which Ankara has designated a

terrorist organization, The French minister also said in a statement to the French television network "Public Sina"."What is happening in northeastern Syria is unacceptable,We must not give in to impotence, and we will continue to push for the Security Council to intervene "in this crisis.(Hayel, 2020)"

In a related context about the American reaction to Operation Peace Spring, the US President, Donald Trump, signed an executive order authorizing the US Treasury Department to "impose major sanctions" against Turkey,and a US State Department official affirmed that his country will not be silent in the face of "inhuman" or "inappropriate" activities by the Turks in the operations announced by Ankara within the Syrian borders.

On October 17, 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that he had reached an agreement with US Vice President Mike Pence to suspend the Peace Spring operations for a period of 120 hours , in order to allow to withdrawal the elements of the People's organizations from the area, because there is no need for new military action after the implementation of the agreements signed with Russia and America, and the withdrawal of the units to a distance of 30 kilometers south of the Turkish-Syrian border"(Hayel, 2020).

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs added, "America confirmed, at the end of the deadline, to complete the withdrawal of the Protection Units." Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that,According to Turkey's agreement with Russia, a joint operations center will be established in the areas not covered by Peace Spring operations, which means that no new military operations are needed outside this area (Hayel, 2020).

The ministry stressed that "Turkey will never allow the establishment of a terrorist entity on its southern borders and will fight that with great and continuous

determination." The ministry concluded, "in this case, the safe zone in this region was formed in the form of a corridor for peace, which would provide a safe and voluntary return for the Syrian brothers to their homes and areas" (Al-Awdat, 2019).

On October 22, the city of Sochi hosted a Turkish-Russian summit that ended with an agreement to withdraw Kurdish units with their weapons and Russian military forces from the Turkish borders up to a distance of 30 km within 150 hours, to expel the PKK / YPG terrorist organizations outside the "Peace Spring" area (Al-Awdat, 2019).

In addition, the US President Donald Trump said, commenting on the Turkish-Russian agreement on Syria: "It seems that there is good news about Turkey, Syria and the Middle East and there is more information to come (TRT Arabic, 2019)." This came in a tweet that Trump posted on his personal Twitter account, commenting on the agreement reached by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin (Al-Afandi, 2019).

Among the most important achievements made by Operation Peace Spring was the return of more than 250,000 displaced persons and refugees thanks to the Turkish support provided in various fields. Many hospitals, schools and furnaces were opened and restored, and many curative and medical services were provided in the region. This was made through building two hospitals in Ras al-Ain with a capacity of 200 beds, and in the city of Tal Abyad with a capacity of 75 beds, in addition to establishing and restoring dozens of health centers and dispensaries that would serve the people of the region (Turk Press, 2019).

The stances of foreign countries and international organizations regarding the Turkish "Peace Spring" operation inside the Syrian territories differed, while the Syrian regime remained silent. Observers suggested that Russia would prevent the regime from making statements about the operation led by its ally Turkey, and it had previously

prevented it from confronting the "Olive Branch" operation in the Afrin region. In the first official Russian statement in this regard, the spokesman for the Russian President Dmitry Peskov confirmed that the Kremlin is aware and understands Turkey's actions "aimed at ensuring security and combating terrorists hiding in Syria(Al-Afandi, 2019)."As for Iran, its foreign minister, Muhammad Javad Zarif indicated that the operation in the east of the Euphrates "will not achieve any of its objectives" (Al-Afandi, 2019).

CHAPTER FOUR

The impact of the Syrian crisis on the Turkish regional relations

The ongoing Syrian crisis since 2011 was a point of clash between regional and international regimes, and the diplomatic rivalry between the international parties was mixed with an organic fight on the Syrian scene (Szymański, 2017). The difference between the policies of managing daily diplomatic activity and the diplomatic activity in the moments of strategic transformations became clear (Szymański, 2017).

The actors in the Syrian crisis were divided into many opposing parties: one of them (Federal Russia) in favour of the Assad regime's survival as an active member of a larger coalition system, which sought to arrange regional interactions to counter Western influence and its vision, as well as to re-engineer regional interactions (Ibrahim, 2020). Another of them was Turkey, so Turkish government rejected the Syria regime, as they saw this opponent as a way out to regional challenges that had previously not been addressed, whether politically or militarily (Ibrahim, 2020).

Therefore, we note that the Syrian crisis is the most difficult one of the Arab Spring crisis, as it is the most severe in the criterion of the use of force in its management, and it is the most complex in the Arab region, which led to the entry of international powers on the line of management (Ghoneim, 2017).

4.1 The impact of the Syrian crisis on the Turkish-Russian relations

There was a history of hostility between Turkish-Russian relations and the wars that were between Russia and the Ottoman Empire left bitter memories. The period (1500-1800) was characterized by regional and international conflict and tension over influence, as 17 wars occurred between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire during 300 years (Kınıklıoğlu, 2006). The fragmentation of the Soviet Union in 1991 led

to a re-competition between Russia and Turkey in many strategic areas such as the Balkans and the Caucasus(Kınıklıoğlu, 2006).

However, at the beginning of the 21st century, relations between the two sides witnessed a historical convergence, and the economic factor played a vital role in easing tensions between them (Köstem, 2018).

Russia is always seeking to restore its international status and protect its strategic interests, especially in the Middle East region. On the other hand, we find the Turkish ambition aimed at playing the role of the main regional powers by building a bridge for cooperation with countries in their regional surroundings and trying to control the files of some cases in light of the principles of their foreign policy (Köstem, 2018).

Here, the interests of Russia and Turkey converge on many issues and differ in others, and despite the geopolitical transformations of the Arab Spring that began in 2011, the Syrian crisis appears as a distinct relationship in the course of Turkish-Russian relations (Kasım, 2014). And the importance of Syria for each of them has made this crisis a turning point in these relations, as the common interests of Russia and Turkey in the region require political understanding on many issues, especially the Syrian crisis (Warhola, 2016).

The Syrian crisis is the most prominent example of the contradiction of interests between Russia and Turkey, as Russia seeks to preserve its interests with its most important allies in the Middle East region (Seçkin, 2018) This led Russia's opposition to any foreign military involvement in Syria, but rather Russia supported the Syrian regime politically and militarily, but at variance Turkey, which opposed the presence of the Syrian regime (Warhola, 2016).

Syria occupies an important geopolitics in the Middle East as it represents the center of power balances for the region and its global strategic calculations. Syria constitutes

Russia's only foothold in the region, as Syria's location overlooks the Mediterranean, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan(Özbay, 2015).

In addition to the presence of the only Russian military naval base in the port of Tartus, which is the only one on the shores of the Mediterranean. Russia is trying to use the conflict in Syria as an effective tool for its foreign policy towards the great powers that want to confront American hegemony and search for a multi-polar world, Syria is also considered one of the most important Arab partners of Russia (Özbay, 2015).

Russian investments in Syria amounted to \$ 20 million, as in 2007-2010, Russian arms sales to Syria amounted to \$ 7.4 billion. Hence, the Russian perception of supporting Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad is not limited to the importance of the Tartus base or to the growth of bilateral relations between the two countries, but is based on geostrategic calculations and decisions (Lund, 2019). Russia believes that bringing down the regime in Syria is a prelude to bringing down the regime in Iran, and this constitutes a major strategic loss for Russia, as it loses its only allies in the Middle East region (Popescu, 2018).

The role that inevitably affects the aspirations of Russia, which is to emerge as a major force in global balances, and this made Russia push with all its political and military weight to stand by the Syrian regime because its fall will lead to Russia losing its influence in the Middle East region (Lund, 2019).

Here we understand why Russia is used all its political ways at the United Nations to prevent the fall of the Syrian regime and preserve its interests and its strategic position in Syria and ensuring arms deals with it and preserving its naval base in the port of Tartus, also Russia signed in 2017 a document allowing Russian forces to use the Hammim air base in Latakia for a period of 49 years, and this means strategic influence of Russia in the Syrian arena (Hanna, 2017).

During the period of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Turkish-Russian relations witnessed instability and tension due to competition for interests, whether political, security, or even economic,

Given the strategic importance of Syria in Russian foreign policy and Turkish foreign policy (Christopher, 2016).

The Syrian crisis included many issues that formed a difference between Russia and Turkey, and some of them were issues that increased the tension of bilateral relations between the two countries, and they are still a matter of difference between them despite the improvement in relations at the present time (Popescu, 2018).

Russia is one of the great powers in the global system and has extended interests in it, as the heir to the Soviet Union and enjoys power factors, it possesses nuclear military power. Likewise, Russia has an advanced judicial system and military deployment in Syria, and therefore it is in Russia's interest to establish its military presence in Tartus and at the air base at Hammim Airport, as it is the two main bases for Russia in the Mediterranean (Has, 2013).

But the most severe crisis between them came against the backdrop of the incident of the Russian Sukhoi 24 fighter jet being shot down when, on November 24, 2015, the Turkish Air Defense Forces fired on a Russian Sukhoi Su-24 fighter. As a result, it fell near the Syrian-Turkish border, on the Turkmen Mountain in the Syrian province of Latakia(Özbay, 2015).

This made Russia furious with Turkey, and even vowed revenge. In response to the incident, Russia announced the cancellation of a visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to the Turkish capital, Ankara, to protest the incident of the downing of the Russian plane(Özbay, 2015),Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has apologized for the downing of a Russian military plane on the Syrian-Turkish border, a

Kremlin spokesman said, and Russia imposed trade sanctions and stopped tourist trips to Turkey ,the Turkish authorities arrested the pilot who shot down the plane and his assistant, which prompted President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to present an official apology to the Russian government after that (Bahralzein, 2019).

Critical moments passed after the killing of the Russian ambassador in Ankara, Andrei Karlov, by the Turkish security man, Mouloud Mourt, on the evening of December 19, 2016(Larrabee, 2018).Many feared an angry Russian reaction to Turkey, but it was not hours before Russian President Vladimir Putin came out and the conspirators were disappointed, and he dealt with the incident with the logic of an intelligence security and a professional and wise politician, as he demanded the formation of a joint security investigation committee between Russia and Turkey to uncover the truth of those involved, which was approved by Turkish President Erdogan immediately, to calm the situation, and to reassure the Russian side that there are those who are planning to harm Turkish-Russian relations(Kostem , 2018).

The Russian and Turkish leaderships are sure that the assassination of the ambassador aimed to sabotage the Turkish-Russian bilateral relations and the Turkish-Russian relations in Syria in general and Aleppo in particular firstly. (Kostem, 2018).

Finally, the assassination took place at a moment when Turkey succeeded in finding a basis of understanding between Russia and the Russian opposition in Aleppo that angered Iran and its militias in Syria , and this is what "Maria Zakharova", a spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, warned that "Andrei Karlov" was the mediating name in communication with the Syrian opposition, and that he was always seeking to create means of dialogue with them, meaning that Iran was on the list of accused, as some put it. If the investigation does not prove that the assassination is a

purely individual act, then one of the former accused will be held responsible (Mobarkah, 2020).

Moscow and Ankara share a vision of a multipolar world in which each occupies a prominent place, in light of the relative power of Western countries today, which are seen as hostile and in decline. Nevertheless, it is clear that the ambitions of the two countries, despite the sometimes converging positions - global for the former and regional for the other - are practically entering into competition, especially on the Syrian file (Mobarkah 2020).

When we compare the Turkish and Russian policies towards the Syrian file, we can notice many similarities and differences. While the two countries differ on the future of the existing regime in Syria, the fight against terrorism there, and the methods of their involvement in the ongoing internal war there, we believe that they agree on the necessity of preserving the integrity of the Syrian territories, and the path of a political solution to end the existing crisis (Bahralzein, 2019).

Looking at the goals of both countries in Syria, we find that the Russians are seeking to maintain their military presence in Syria and expanding this presence, while Turkey seeks to obstruct the transformation of the Syrian territories into a base for terrorist organizations.

It is noticeable that Russia's policies towards "PYD / PKK" are full of contradictions, The Russians are still avoiding admitting the PKK terrorist, and they always try to leave the door open for the PKD / YPG organization (Lund, 2019).

On the other hand, Moscow does not wish to neglect its bilateral relations with Ankara, especially since these relations have witnessed a great development in recent years, it also sometimes takes steps to satisfy Ankara with regard to organizing "PYD", with the aim of preserving the progress it has made with Turkey on the tracks of Astana and

Sochi. Perhaps Russia's taking a few steps towards the "PYD", because of the organization's preference for cooperation with the United States of America, as the Russians are dissatisfied with this cooperation (Lund, 2019).

In addition, Moscow's position on the "Olive Branch" operation carried out by Turkey in Afrin, Syria in 2018, is the best evidence of Russia's contradictory policies, when Moscow saw the extent of Ankara's seriousness in combating the PKK / PYD, Moscow gave the green light to the process, and perhaps this is a result of its unwillingness to strain its relations with Turkey (Popescu & Secieru, 2019).

Perhaps Russia's consideration of Turkey's sensitivity towards the issue of combating terrorism is one of the most important factors that contributed to maintaining good relations between the two countries. There is no doubt that Russia's desire to activate the Adana Agreement concluded between Ankara and Damascus in 1998 is evidence of Moscow's taking Ankara's sensitivity with regard to combating terrorism very seriously (Mobarka, 2020).

And since it was Moscow that reminded the activation of the agreement, which stipulates the Syrian regime's pledge not to support the PKK, this indicates that Russia will not allow the PKK / PYD to establish itself in the Syrian territories. The Russians are also aware that clearing the Syrian lands from the PKK / PYD presence is crucial to the relations with Ankara and the preservation of the Syrian territorial integrity (Mobarka, 2020).

It is noticeable that there is convergence and opposition in the policies of Turkey and Russia towards the US military presence in the Syrian territories. Ankara considered Washington as one of its main partners with the beginnings of the internal war in Syria, but Ankara was forced to change its view, after it saw that Washington tends to support the "PKK / PYD" more than the Syrian opposition (Mobarka, 2020).

We noted that Ankara and Moscow opposed the American policies pursued in northern Syria, both countries consider the PKK / PYD efforts as a real threat to establish an autonomous region, stretching from the east of the Euphrates to the south of Deir Ezzor Governorate, as a real threat(Popescu & Secrieru, 2019).

And the differences between Ankara and Moscow regarding US policies towards Syria, it appeared when the United States of America targeted sites of the Syrian regime under the pretext of the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. Turkey, which views "Bashar Al-Assad " as killing his own people, so Turkey supported the American raids, while Moscow strongly opposed Washington's targeting of the regime's sites(Popescu &Secrieru, 2020).

Turkey also views the American presence in western and southern Syria positively, and considers this presence an important factor in contrast to the Russian-Iranian Assad alliance. Naturally, this position of Turkey raises Moscow's dismay(Bahralzein, 2019).

With regard to the positions of Ankara and Moscow regarding the power struggle in Syria between Iran and Israel, we also note here the rapprochement and difference between Turkey and Russia, as both countries do not want Israel to have a presence in Syria. We can say that Israel's attempts to limit the growing influence of Iran and Hezbollah Inside the Syrian territories, will yield positive results for Turkey, the reason for this is that Iran and Hezbollah are adopting hostile attitudes towards the opposition supported by Ankara(Lund, 2019).

As for Russia, on the one hand it views positively that Israel has targeted Iran and Hezbollah, and considers this targeting an important factor to reduce Iran's influence on the Syrian regime, on the other hand, Moscow saw that the raids carried out by Tel Aviv against targets located within the areas controlled by the Syrian regime distort its image, especially since Moscow claimed to protect the Syrian airspace.

There is no doubt that the issue of managing Syria in the future is one of the most important points of contention between Turkey and Russia. Ankara sees Bashar al-Assad as he lost his legitimacy, It insists that the opposition have a say in the country's future, while Russia sees "Assad" as the legitimate president, and Russia demands from the opposition to lay down arms and search for ways to participate in governing the country through elections (Lund, 2019).

Turkey, which carried out the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations, with the help of the Free Syrian Army, seeking to secure guarantees for the opposition in the new constitution agreed to be written in the Astana and Sochi paths. As for Russia, it seeks to extend the "Ba'ath" regime in Syria, and to control it over the entire country (TRT Arabic, 2020).

Regarding the military policies of both countries towards Syria, Russia is following the same method that it followed in Chechnya, as it works to disperse civilians and break the resistance of the armed opposition through intense raids. On the other hand, Turkey is keen not to harm civilians in its military operations in Syria, even if this costs it to prolong the process (TRT Arabic, 2020).

4.2 The impact of the Syrian crisis on the Turkish-American relations

Given the importance of Syria in the Turkish-American context, it is necessary to adopt a broader view of the evolution of the Syrian crisis and its repercussions for Turkish-American relations.

For seven decades, Turkey has been a major component of America's strategy in Eurasia and the Middle East. After joining NATO in 1952 - only three years after its founding - Ankara became the only Muslim country in the Western military alliance (Cagaptay, 2015). During the Cold War, Turkey occupied a central place in US defence and security

policy, providing it as a forward base for the West on the border with the Soviet Union for US interests in the Middle East. In general, the Middle East issue occupied the forefront between the two countries (Cagaptay, 2015).

In the nineties of the twentieth century, Turkey was assigned the task of deterring the regional influence of Iran and Iraq and developing military and political relations with Israel within the regional strategy of Tel Aviv and the implementation of US energy policy in the region (Ifantis, 2013).

However, in those years already, in an effort to maintain a balance between its regional priorities and the interests of the states and NATO, the country's leadership demonstrated time and again that Turkey's national aspirations in the region prevailed over the alliance's solidarity. In particular, the military bases on Turkish territory cannot participate in US or NATO military operations without special permission from Ankara (Ifantis, 2013).

During Barack Obama's first term in office, cooperation between the United States and Turkey was, according to the American president, a "model partnership"(Kanat, 2015).In the first phase of the Arab revolutions, Ankara and Washington had common interests and similar views on the events taking place in the region(Kanat, 2015).

The White House supported the Turkish authorities' desire to play a major role in regime change in North African countries and Syria, where the American leadership considered Turkey a model for a Muslim country Islamic state, it that was able to build a democratic system in a Western way (Katzman, 2015).

On the other hand, the Turkish strategists also evaluated positively the rapprochement with the United States on the Middle East track, because it was supposed to help the consolidation of Ankara's influence on the changing geopolitical space in the region (Ertugrul, 2012).

However, due to the protracted nature of the Syrian conflict, and the change that took place in the US President's policy in September 2013 towards the search for political solutions in Syria, the situation changed and led to an increase in the contradictions between the two countries (Peerzada, 2016).

The American media began accusing Turkish leaders and personally Erdogan of supporting the jihadists, violating the democratic rights of citizens, and tyranny. Journalists described Turkey as a "sworn friend and lost ally" and concluded that it was necessary to review the principles of bilateral cooperation (Katzman 2015).

For its part, Ankara refused to join the international coalition against ISIS that was established by the United States in September 2014, despite great pressure on it from the White House (Peerzada, 2016).

For Turkey, the battle against the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad remained of the utmost importance, and thus Turkish leaders were disappointed that Washington and the international community's focus shifted from Damascus to the war against terrorism (Peerzada, 2016). During the first phase of the Arab revolutions, the great blame for Turkey was on the United States, which was its perceived hesitation and inaction in the face of regime change in Syria (Sayarı, 2013).

In fact, the Syrian crisis and the war against ISIS have shown that the gap is widening between what both Turkey and the United States see as a threat and how they deal with it (Sayarı, 2013).

For example, Turkey has seen that the United States' assistance to the People's Protection Units (YPG) reflects its indifference to Turkey's security, with the fall of the siege imposed by ISIS on the Syrian Kurdish city of Ain al-Arab (Kobani) in early 2015, which US air support had a vital role in its collapse (Barkey, 2016). The People's

Protection Units (YPG) has increasingly become the United States' number one domestic partner in the battle on land against ISIS (Barkey, 2016).

The United States gradually shifted its focus and resources from the Syrian opposition groups to the PYD and the People's Protection Units (YPG), which later became the Syrian Democratic Forces with the Arab forces joining them in the east of the Euphrates and Manbij (Erhan & Siviş, 2017).

The United States' assistance to the Syrian Democratic Forces and the People's Protection Units (YPG) has caused great concern to Turkey. This concern increased after the failure of the local Kurdish peace process in Turkey in the second half of 2015, which made Turkey re-secure the Kurdish issue at the local and regional levels (Erhan & Siviş, 2017).

Given the PKK's association with the People's Protection Units (YPG), the failure of the peace process in Turkey immediately changed the way Turkey views the YPG (Harunoğlu, 2019). Despite Turkey's great concern at this point, it has not completely abandoned the United States in Syria, but rather was among the few countries that warmly welcomed the election of Donald Trump as president. Most of the frictions in bilateral relations, particularly those caused by the Syrian civil war, were considered the result of Obama's ineffective policy in Syria (Harunoğlu, 2019).

Therefore, by describing the rift in relations as such, Turkey hoped to be able to write a new chapter in relations with the Trump administration. It turned out later that this hope was disappointing because Trump has preserved to some extent the general orientations of Obama's Syria policy (Barkey, 2016).

The maintenance of the United States' alliance with the Syrian Democratic Forces and its consolidation after the defeat of ISIS has dispelled any expectations in Ankara about the emergence of a change in US policy on the issue of the Syrian Kurds. Ankara sees

this alliance as an evolution of the Syrian Kurdish partnership with the United States to take a more strategic and stable form, thus overcoming these relations as a mere interest (Harunoğlu, 2019).

In this context, Turkey considers that the United States' recent open commitment is to maintain a military force in Syria and the endeavour to establish a border control force consisting of 30,000 personnel is expected to come mostly from the Kurds in the People's Protection Units (YPG) (Katzman, 2015), and these developments have prompted Turkey to search for other options, especially with Russia, instead of trying to persuade the United States to cut ties with the Syrian Kurds. Turkey's ongoing operation in Afrin is an example of this (Ibrahim, 2020).

It seems that the triangle of Russian-Turkish-American relations has determined the format, nature, and certainly scope of the operation in Afrin. While it was Turkey's disappointment with the United States' policy of cooperating with the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces that partly pushed it to work more closely with Russia, rather, Russian policy is what will generally determine the limits and nature of the Turkish operation in Africa (Al-Elkeh, 2020).

Turkey and Russia are both benefiting from their cooperation in Syria. While Turkey needed Russian approval for its two operations in Syria (the Euphrates Shield and the Olive Branch in Afrin), Russia wanted to keep Turkey close to it to preserve its path in Syria (Al-Elkeh, 2020).

However, the danger to Turkey is that its excessive dependence on Russia may limit its ability to pursue strategic independence in its foreign policy, especially in Syria. According to some, Russia is surrounding Turkey more and more, as it extends not only to northern Turkey, rather, it is from the south (due to its presence in Syria and Libya) and from the east as well (due to its presence in former Soviet republics such as

Armenia). This may constitute a strategic threat to Turkey in the medium to long term (Khatib & Al-Barsneh, 2020). Therefore, as a result of all these factors, one can anticipate further deterioration in the Turkish-American relations (Khatib & Al-Barsneh, 2020).

In August 2015, after repeated calls from the United States to join the Anti-Terrorism Coalition, the Turkish Air Force participated for the first time in airstrikes against ISIS militants in Syria (Abramowitz & Edelman, 2017). Although Turkish-American military cooperation developed due to the fight against ISIS, differences between the two countries continued to widen.

Ankara's support for radical Islamists in Syria made the Pentagon wary of Turkey, accusing it of failing to prevent the spread of jihadist organizations (Abramowitz & Edelman, 2017).

The Turkish authorities, in turn, saw the origins of the growth of extremism in the absence of sufficient American support for the moderate Syrian opposition; at the end of the Obama presidency, Erdogan defined the US President's policy in the Middle East as muddy and unclear. According to him, America's position on Syria and the Arab-Israeli conflict has caused destabilization of the situation in the region and an increase in the number of victims, including among civilians (Al-Awamleh & Alkhalaileh, 2019). Relations between the two countries worsened after the attempted coup in Turkey in the summer of 2016.

According to Ankara; the conspirators acted with tacit support with Washington's approval. The US's refusal to hand over the Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen, whom Turkish leaders considered the main instigator of these events, exacerbated these suspicions (Al-Awamleh & Alkhalaileh, 2019).

For its part, the White House administration was concerned about the actions of the Turkish authorities after the coup attempt(In particular, the uproar that occurred following the arrest of the American priest Bronson in 2016, which led to a diplomatic scandal between the two countries(Khatib & Al-Barsneh, 2020).

As Ankara arrested the American pastor Andrew Branson in Turkey, and the accusation of "terrorism and espionage, the arrival of Trump to power and the change of the American administration in Turkey raised expectations of renewed cooperation and solving the problems that arose during the Obama presidency"(Aydintaşbaş & Kirişci, 2017). However, the calculations of the Turkish leadership in a quick restoration of relations with the United States did not materialize. Despite the intense high-level contacts, the differences between Washington and Ankara continued to worsen. In fact, President Trump inherited from his predecessor a set of outstanding issues between the two countries (Lesser, 2018).

There was some positivity in the horizon of the relationship between the two countries, after Trump announced in December 2018 that he decided to withdraw American forces from Syria (Moawad, 2018). This decision was received positively by Ankara, however later some members of the US administration began to focus on the fact that the US military must remain in Syria to counter the Iranian expansion (Moawad, 2018).

In Turkey, this shift in priorities has raised concerns that the continued presence of the United States, even after the defeat of ISIS, will mean more funding and training for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Kurdish units under its banner (Lesser, 2018).Once again, Erdogan began to put pressure on the White House, demanding the establishment of a safe zone in north eastern Syria, and threatening a military campaign in the border areas east of the Euphrates (Canan, 2019).

In early August 2019, Washington and Ankara announced that they had reached an agreement on establishing a joint operations centre to manage a safe zone located in the border areas with Turkey east of the Euphrates (Canan, 2019).

In September they began patrolling the region together, and in October 2019 President Trump unexpectedly announced the withdrawal of the US military from the north eastern regions of Syria, with his decision practically paving the way for the start of the Turkish forces in this region, the Turkish forces began their military operations, which they called "Peace Spring", immediately after the American withdrawal (Idiz, 2020).

Shortly before that, by order of the Pentagon, Kurdish forces withdrew heavy weapons from the border with Turkey, dismantled the fortifications and left the border posts. In March 2019, a report was published in the American Middle East Institute indicating that the Salafi-jihadi group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham had granted the Turkish army access to part of the Syrian territory under its control, although its leaders tried to avoid direct military cooperation with Turkey, they welcomed the presence of the Turkish army as an additional force against the Syrian regime and moderate opposition groups (Idiz, 2020). Turkey's purchase of the Russian S400 missile defence system exacerbated controversy between the two allies (Harunoğlu, 2019).

Before the Russian anti-ballistic missile system was delivered to Turkey, the American political circles prevailed in the opinion that the possible settlements by Washington along with the application of diplomatic pressure methods will persuade or force Turkey after the deal with Russia is concluded (Köstem, 2019).

In May 2019, Trump lowered the tariffs to the previous level, at the same time, however, Turkey was excluded from the GSP, which allows Turkish companies to import certain goods from the United States (especially cars, auto parts, and jewellery) without paying fees (Idiz, 2020).

In response to the hostile measures taken by Washington, Ankara also began to continuously increase or decrease import duties on a number of goods imported from the United States. In addition, Turkey has significantly reduced the supply of steel and aluminium to the United States and redirected its exports to other markets (Idiz, 2020).

This "trade war" or "as they call it" along with the increasing political tension has not yet seriously affected the trade and economic relations between the two countries. The volume of trade between the two countries over the past five years (from 2014 to October 2019) has remained stable and ranged between 17 and 20 billion dollars (Al-Awamleh & Alkhalaileh, 2019). Despite the apparent contradiction in the policy of the American president in general, he aims to keep the Turkish leadership in the orbit of American influence and prevent the final strategic contradiction.

Many American think tanks that have an influence on the political decision-making process often resort to the issue of bilateral interaction between Ankara and Washington, while giving instructions and recommendations on additional tactics to build relations (Idiz, 2020). Most American analysts express their concern about the strategic estrangement with Turkey, believing that this will have a negative impact on the two countries (Lund, 2019).

Thus, experts at the Washington Institute M. Singh and J. Jeffrey, who also hold the position of the US Special Representative for Syria are saying that Turkey and the United States are separated by a large number of problems. Ankara's actions in north eastern Syria confirm the extent of the controversy that the relations between the two countries have become and how close they are to a final rupture (Al-Awamleh & Alkhalaileh, 2019).

But analysts are convinced that refusing to ally with Turkey and impose sanctions on it will seriously harm the United States, because Turkey is not only Erdogan, but is a

regional country that is geographically, politically and economically important, and it is the link between Europe and the Middle East, as well as between the Middle East and Russia (Khatib & Al-Barasneh, 2020).

Analysts believe that maintaining the Turkish-American alliance is of strategic importance and requires reorienting common threats and seeking compromises on those issues where there are differences. In their view, if the United States abandoned all of its difficult allies in the Middle East, it would have no allies at all. Given the years of tension between the United States and Turkey, it will not be easy to restore a common language with Ankara but in a world of strategic competition with more dangerous forces it is necessary to do so (Khatib & Al-Barasneh, 2020).

4.3 The impact of the Syrian crisis on Turkish-Iranian relations

Iranian-Turkish relations have witnessed periods of ebb and flow that have not been interrupted for hundreds of years. History has witnessed the conflict between the two projects, Iranian Safavid on the one hand and the Ottoman Turkish one on the other hand (Uzun, 2013). Relations between the two countries had dramatic changes as the successive wars between them took place. In subsequent centuries and with numerous treaties the borders between the two countries were established. As well, each of the two countries housed one of the Islamic sects, Iran had the Shiites and Turkey had the Sunnis (Demirta, 2013).

The Syrian crisis appears in its tracks as a regional crisis, and perhaps the reason for that is that Iran and Turkey constitute the pillars of the regional balance of this crisis and the Arab Mashreq region in general. (Uzun, 2013).

Despite the clear differences between Turkey and Iran, both in terms of the nature of the political system or in terms of foreign policy, the relations between the two countries

seem to be governed by geography and history ties that produce common interests despite the conflict and bloody legacy between the heirs of the Safavid and Ottoman empires (Aaron & Bleek, 2012). Therefore, the points of convergence, competition and discord are many between the two sides in a region inflated with crises, as well as interests and aspirations.

When the Syrian crisis began, Turkey and Iran stood in contrast to each other. Each side has its own reasons, motives, and different strategies towards the region (Demirta, 2013). Tehran announced its full support for the Syrian regime, and this is natural and understandable in light of the existing alliance between the two sides for more than three decades. Based on this vision, Tehran has moved at all levels to support the Syrian regime in its war against its opponents at home and abroad (Gunes & Lowe, 2015)

On the contrary, Ankara moved in all directions to bring down this regime, and the Turkish leadership took an unprecedented tone of giving time and opportunities. The Syrian crisis turned into a cold war between Tehran and Ankara in many moments, each side saw that what is happening in Syria affects its national and national security, and even considers it an internal matter in one way or another (Gunes & Lowe, 2015).

Therefore, the survival or departure of the Syrian regime would determine the rules of the game in managing these files regionally, amid an Iranian-Turkish competition to map the regional scene in the region (Efret, 2016). Tehran saw what was happening in Syria a collusion, and that the goal was to transfer the battle to the Tehran, so Tehran collected all the weapons and capabilities to be ready for war, while Ankara saw what was happening in Syria as an internal revolution, and Turkey linked the Turkish regional project to the change of the Syrian regime (Efret, 2016).

Turkey believes that changing the Syrian scene will be in the interest of the AKP's strategy towards the Middle East region, especially in light of his sense of the

importance of his model in governance as a moderate model that achieved compatibility between Islam, secularism and economics, and has Western support (SaadAllah, 2017). Therefore, Iran announced its support for the Syrian regime and provided it with the strength to overcome its crisis, also the hope of repeating the experience of what happened with the Iranian regime after the huge protests that happened against the announcement of won the President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's in the recent presidential elections (SaadAllah, 2017).

In fact, it is clear that the difference in the Turkish and Iranian roles in the Syrian scene has to do with the strategic axes and the struggle over the region. Iran sees that the overthrow of the Syrian regime constitutes a fatal blow to its strategy and its solid alliance with Damascus, reaching Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and besieging it with regional powers close to the Western strategy without a doubt, each side has its own justifications regarding the Syrian crisis. The two parties, Turkey and Iran, are involved in the crisis and are following it carefully and with concern (SaadAllah, 2017).

There are many issues of cooperation between Turkey and Iran, although they take the form of competition in many areas and locations, from Central Asian countries to Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria to common borders, there are issues that take the form of security cooperation and coordination in the face of forces and groups that pose a common security challenge, these are issues closely related to borders, energy security, economics and geography that carry social, national and sectarian problems (the Kurds are on both sides of the border, as well as Iraq and Syria) and the Sunni-Shiite dispute. All these issues have accounts for the politics of the two countries and the security and stability of the region (Aykan, 2017).

In fact, it is clear that the base of common interests governing Turkish-Iranian relations began to advance again after receding from the repercussions of the Syrian crisis,

perhaps the rapprochement between the two countries regarding the political solution to the Syrian crisis, and the role of each party in the stability of the region, and the commitment to cooperation and coordination between them, constitute the titles of this consensus (Yakubovich, 2019).

Away from the dilemma of the Syrian crisis in straining Turkish-Iranian relations in many moments, these relations seem to be facing a new phase full of interests, where each side has aspirations that may push it to search for a common axis that would change many regional equations (Aykan, 2017).

There are those who believe that the Turkish-Iranian relations will not be greatly affected by the Syrian crisis, given the size of the great interests that connect the two countries after the volume of trade between them reached more than ten billion dollars, as well as many of other vital issues that bring them together (Yakubovich, 2019).

Among the most important of these issues is the Kurdish issue and the common concerns about the birth of a Kurdish national state in the region, the two sides are fighting a joint war against the PKK, with its Turkish (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and Iranian (PJAK) branches (Hamid, 2019).

Undoubtedly, the Iranian-Turkish conflict has affected the course of the Syrian crisis. At the level of the Syrian street, a kind of division occurred regarding the Turkish and Iranian positions, between supporters and opponents of this or that party, based on each party's position on the Syrian crisis (Kazem & Karim, 2020).

In depth, this equation produced a state of social sectarianism in a Sunni Alawite manner, which seriously affected the movement calling for change. In fact, it is clear that Tehran is betting that the security solution will enable the regime to overcome its crisis, accordingly, Tehran provided the necessary support to the Syrian regime, but this led to popular resentment among those calling for change in Syria (Baquer, 2020). On the

other hand, Ankara believes that it is not possible to go back and that time is in favour of the movement of peoples aspiring to freedom and democracy, which would support the forces demanding change (MacGillivray, 2020).

In the end, this equation affected the pace of the Syrian crisis, up or down, at the same time, it made it a complex crisis dependent on regional determinants. In sum, Ankara and Tehran are quarrelling with contradictory analyses of what the situation in Syria will lead to, at the same time, they realize that there are interests or losses for them that now depend on how this crisis ends (MacGillivray, 2020).

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

As I come to the end of this thesis, I explained the Turkish-Syrian relations since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The findings and arguments of this research study revealed that Turkish-Syrian relations have made significant changes to the foreign policies of both countries respectively. Syria has also served as a link between the Eastern and Western continents, as well as a birthplace for several civilizations. However, the internal, regional, and international factors that influenced Syrian foreign policy are all included in the perspective of the Arab world.

To illustrate the internal and external relations of both countries, the thesis's research problem surrounds the transformational growth of Turkish-Syrian relations between 1923 and 2020. In this respect, these relations experienced significant changes that have been researched and explained with historical events in this paper. It explained the state of oscillations in bilateral relations, defined by divergence, closeness, and confrontations at various periods, as well as the influences the regional and international factors had on the two nations' relations.

This thesis discussed deeply the history of Turkish-Syrian relations since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. It dealt with several basic issues that affected the political relations between the two countries, the first of those issues discussed in this thesis was the issue the Hatay which lasted from 1920 to 1939. The problem began when France occupied Syria, including the Iskenderun Brigade, which is currently called the Hatay province and many other areas in southern Turkey. In 1936, Atatürk declared that the province of Hatay belonged to Turkey, and the problem of Hatay with France should be resolved. In 1939, France agreed to Turkey's request to

hand over Hatay to Turkey, which ignited the dispute between Turkey and Syria.

The thesis concluded that the problem of the Hatay region became one of the most dangerous stages of relations due to the absence of balance in all its forms between Syria and Turkey, and established problematic future relations in a spiral of tension. The thesis also examined the relations during and after the Cold War period, where the issue of water was the core of the dispute between the two countries. When both countries began to use the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the 1960s , Turkey started building irrigation and energy projects and focused on using water resources, this raised fears in Syria.

The relations were strained during the construction of the Keban, Karakaya and Ataturk dams on the Euphrates, then Syria began to play its cards with the support of the PKK. A military training camp for the PKK was established in Syria in 1993. The tensions escalated further when Turkey embarked on the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) and in the mid-1990s. At that time, war became a real possibility between Turkey and Syria when Turkey threatened military action if Syria continued its support for the PKK.

This eventually led to the signing of the Adana Agreement in 1998, that Syria would not allow any activity emanating from its territory that would threaten the security and stability of Turkey, Syria also recognized the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as a terrorist organization. In addition Syria banned the supply of weapons, logistical materials, and financial support to the PKK on its soil, and expelled Abdullah Ocalan, a founding member of the PKK, which Damascus hosted for more than ten years.

The thesis concluded that Turkey was using the water problem as a means of pressure on the Syrian government due to the presence of the PKK on Syrian territory, on the other hand, the Syrian government used the PKK as a means of pressure to solve the

water problem. The Adana Agreement helped to rebuild balanced and equal relations between Syria and Turkey.

In addition, the thesis explained the development of relations since the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey in 2002. The improvement of bilateral relations between the two countries came within the context of the Turkish and Syrian governments' understanding about redefining each country's regional role in the region. Turkey's policy towards Syria was related to Turkey's attempt to get out of the reality of the regional blockade it has reached, because in this period Turkey wanted to be a regional power and wanted to get better its relations with the neighbours, such as Syria. Ultimately, in 2011, when the Arab uprisings began in Tunisia and extended to Libya and Egypt, Turkish decision-makers could see a narrative that was substantially different from what the rest of the world observed. The world regarded the uprisings as a historic moment in which Arab masses overthrew rulers in the name of a more equal and democratic government system. The revolution of 2011 has shifted relations in a new and challenging direction.

The internal Syrian situation was aggravated by the advent of demonstrations against the Syrian political system and government actions toward these demonstrations, as well as the oppressive security reaction. This had an impact on the development of Turkish-Syrian relations, particularly when the Turkish government supported Syrian protesters and their demands. This thesis discussed extensively, the Syrian crisis and its impact on the relations between Turkey and Syria.

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in March 2011, and with the development of events and the control of the Islamic State (ISIS) over large parts of Syria and Iraq in addition to the control of the People's protection units (YPG) on the Syrian territories

liberated from ISIS (and declaring them autonomous areas), the Turkish position on the Syrian crisis has changed by started bombing ISIS and PKK positions. The cleansing of the entire region east of the Euphrates from the Islamic State has heightened the Turkish government's concerns about Kurdish ambitions,so the Kurds established a strip along the borders of Turkey.

At the same time, Turkey began in 2016 a direct military involvement in the Jarablus region in an operation called Euphrates Shield, which was carried out in Turkish cooperation with some of the army's factions, the Free Syrian Army, and lasted for seven months, as its stated goals were to fight terrorism and clear the border areas of ISIS ,and PYD / PKK militias. In 2018, Turkey carried out another military operation launched by forces from the Syrian opposition and the Turkish army, against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Syria and the objective of the operation was to control the city of Afrin, which the Kurdish forces were seeking to control. In 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced his country's launch of Operation Peace Spring in northern Syria to cleanse it of the PKK/YPG and ISIS terrorist organizations, and to establish a safe area for the return of Syrian refugees to their country.

We conclude that the Turkish foreign policy towards Syria has become clear, especially after the Syrian crisis and the requirements of Turkish national security in the current developments in Syria were represented as a direct strategic threat to Turkey.Furthermore,The Kurdish units in the Syrian territories also declared that the areas under their control are autonomous areas, which will lead to the establishment of a Kurdish state, which will directly affect Turkish national security, especially since Turkey has the highest Kurdish nationalism in the region, and Turkey will not let this

happen establish a Kurdish state on the Turkish borders.

In addition, in this thesis we reached that Any Turkish decision regarding Syria, will take into account the priority of Turkish national security before anything related to Syria regarding its revolution or its people. Also avoid establishing a connected geographical entity on Turkey's borders opposite the southern provinces inhabited by a Kurdish majority, that means preventing the establishment of a Kurdish state on the Turkish borders, in Syria.

The thesis also dealt with the impact of the Syrian crisis and relations between Turkey and Syria on Turkey's regional policy. The Syrian crisis had an impact on Turkish regional relations with Iran, Russia and America because every country supports a party on Syrian soil. The Turkish-Iranian relations have witnessed a decisive reflection in the course of the existing relationship between them as well as for the Turkish-Russian relations , and this is the result of the divergence in attitudes and visions towards the Syrian crisis .

Whereas, Turkey supported the opposition and provided it with support, and vice versa, with regard to Iran and Russia , it supported the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and also provided him with full political support and support, and the Syrian crisis had a significant impact on the course of Turkish-Iranian relations, where they separated, after we knowing that their relationship rapprochement in some periods as well as for the Turkish-Russian relations

As for the Turkish-American relations, the Syrian crisis also had a significant impact on them, especially after America's support for the People's Protection Units, which Ankara considers a terrorist units , which led to the deterioration of Turkish-American relations.

This thesis tried to focus on Turkish-Syrian relations covered a century of events between Turkey and Syria by examining and understanding the concept of these relationships historically, politically and socially as well as the fluctuations and alterations in the relations between the two countries that led to the reconciliation and collaboration in some historical times or conflict and animosity in others historical times .

Finally, this thesis has brought knowledge about the relationship between both the countries, Turkey and Syria that have evolved over time due to the changing circumstances. As it has been observed that conflicts, tensions, strategic planning, and progress have all been prevalent in both countries since 1923. Both countries have attempted to create strong strategic planning in the past, but this has changed due to a number of internal and external issues.

However, it could be concluded that Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East particularly with Syria has been flexible as a result of different policies directed at each nation differently Turkey, on the other hand, had been trying for years to establish excellent neighbourly ties and to build a region of peace in its neighbourhood in the future.

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