

“ASSESSING U.S.-TURKISH RELATIONS 2011-2016”

(Case Study: The Syrian Crisis)

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ABSTRACT:

This paper will examine the interventions of the U.S. and Turkey in Syria and the impact of these interventions on the U.S. – Turkish bilateral relations. Since this research argues that the U.S. – Turkish relations are not only affected by the decisions of the two states involved but also by other factors, such as conflicts and crises on foreign lands and actions taken by other states, this research will prove this argument through examining the role of the two states in the Syrian crisis and at the same time assessing the impact of the Syrian crisis on the U.S. – Turkish relations. Therefore, the first and second chapters of this research will review and analyze the interventions that have been done by the two states in Syria and how they were reacted upon. While the third chapter will examine how such interventions have affected and still affect the U.S. – Turkish bilateral relations, especially because the two states have different aims in Syria and they do not agree all the time.

Keywords: Syria, US, Intervention, Conflict, Bilateral Relations

Introduction

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, many changes have taken and still taking place not only in Syria but also outside the Syrian territories. The great impact that the Syrian crisis has on the world and on the international system cannot be neglected, and the way it has affected the definition of many concepts such as peace and stability can play a major role in the foreign policy of many states, especially the ones involved in the crisis. It is significant to know that non-state actors have a very critical influence on the Syrian crisis, and this is because of their great effect either on escalating or settling the crisis. The intensity of the Syrian crisis and the huge amount of losses that it is still resulting in, both economic losses and casualties, has made it one of the most horrible crises around the world and taken the first seat amongst the global issues.

The different aspects of this crisis, starting from humanitarian and economic aspects to the political aspect, have created a sense of chaos not only amongst the institutions of the international community but also amongst the power states and the states that somehow are involved in the crisis and its consequences. The state of war that Syria is going through has required and still requires urgent and serious steps and actions to be taken, especially since the crisis started to pose threats to the security of the neighboring countries. However, it is very essential to bear in mind that international relations and politics, in general, revolve around interest and power, and these two elements are the reason behind many changes in the political arena and even changes in the international system. This means that the Syrian crisis and its multiple dimensions require even deeper analysis, not only because of its intensity and complexity but also because it is not a domestic issue anymore and many state and non-state parties are playing major roles in it.

The intervention that is done in Syria by U.S. and Turkey has resulted in both states making many changes in their foreign policy towards the Middle East and towards each other. Regardless of the views of the international community and other states concerning these interventions, one cannot deny that they have a great influence on the way things are going in Syria, whether from a political or humanitarian aspect. The importance of the U.S. and Turkey's role in the Syrian crisis has made it necessary for analysts and politicians to include the role of both states in their examination of the crisis. Nevertheless, the influence of the two states is not only restricted to Syria, in fact, the evolution of events in Syria has also a great impact on the U.S. – Turkish bilateral relations.

Therefore, the first and second chapters of this research will review and analyze the interventions that have been done by the two states in Syria and how they were reacted upon. While the third chapter will examine how such interventions have affected and still affect the U.S. – Turkish bilateral relations, especially because the two states have different aims in Syria and they do not agree all the time.

Research Problem:

The research problem revolves around the fact that the U.S. – Turkish relations are not only affected by the decisions of the two states involved but also by other factors, such as conflicts and crises on foreign lands and actions taken by other states.

Research Questions:

1. What is the impact of the US and Turkish interventions in Syrian on the Syrian Crisis?
2. What is the impact of the US and Turkish interventions in Syria on US-Turkish relations?
3. How is the US intervening in the Syrian Crisis?
4. How is Turkey intervening in the Syrian Crisis?

Research Objectives:

1. Examining the US interventions in Syria
2. Examining the Turkish interventions in Syria
3. Examining the impact of the US and Turkish interventions in Syria on the Syrian Crisis
4. Assessing the impact of the US and Turkish interventions in Syria on the US Turkish Relations.

First Chapter: U.S. Interventions in Syria

The Syrian crisis or the Syrian Civil War as sometimes referred to dates back to March 2011 when a group of citizens, mainly teens, and children, started protesting against the regime, and many of them were arrested. The continued state of protesting has led the Syrian government to take some actions in 2011 in order to ease the rage of the citizens.

For instance, it has planned to increase the incomes of the country's employees (CNN.com, 2017, p.1). Since 2011 the situation in Syria is escalating and many things have gotten out of control because of the serious threats that the civil war is imposing not only on the people living inside Syria but also on the Syrian cities.

The amount of destruction that the war caused and still causing is huge and it has severely affected the economy and life of the Syrian land. Besides the destruction of

buildings, the number of casualties and displaced people is horrifying and it has required urgent action from the international community and its institutions. Inside Syria, a lot of families are fighting to stay alive and find the basic requirements of life. The horror that the Syrian people have witnessed made a lot of people flee the war and start looking for a new home in Europe or in neighboring countries. This has put the lives of those families at huge risk, especially because some people had no choice but to travel using illegal and unsafe

ways. The number of people that were killed since the beginning of the war is

approximately around 470,000, and this number is increasing with all the attacks and bombs taking place in different crowded areas targeting civilians and children. It is important to know that the mass destruction that the Syrian civil war is causing has led many states to take action towards what is happening there (Mercy Corps, 2017, p.2).

The interventions have played and still playing a major role in the crisis, because they are interventions by key states that have clear targets and interests which not all of them are visible. However, not all interventions are useful for dissolving the conflict and this increases the complexity of the Syrian Civil War and imposes more threats on the people living there. U.S. and Turkey are amongst the states that have executed military interventions in the Syrian crisis and they have had a great impact on the sequence of

events. Both U.S. and Turkey agree that Bashar al-Assad cannot stay in his place and the Syrian people cannot accept such a brutal president. Therefore, Turkey has accepted that the coalition that is led by the U.S. against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to use its "air bases" in order to execute attacks on Syria after the ISIS attack in July 2015 (BBC, 2015, p.4).

The U.S. intervention in Syria started the moment things got out of control in Syria and when the stability and security in the Syrian territories started to be severely affected. The intervention officially started in 2011 when President Barack Obama "called on Assad" to withdraw as a president for the benefit and interest of the Syrian people. In

In addition to that, the U.S. has imposed new penalties on the Syrian regime in August 2011.

Other states like France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have asked al-Assad to withdraw as well. In 2012 President Obama has made it clear that if al-Assad uses any chemical

weapons against the Syrian people this will lead to a military intervention from the

American side. He said “We have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus” (Conway, 2017, p.1).

However, in 2013 Ghouta region near Damascus was attacked with chemical weapons killing around 1,000 people mostly children and women. The amount of the chemicals which were used in the attack has been approximately 1,000 kg of the Sarin

chemical (Gordon, 2015, p.1). Many U.S. agencies have examined the situation and they have confirmed that the Syrian government was behind the chemical attack. Furthermore, it was revealed that the chemical weapons were prepared in the Damascus suburb of Adra three days before the attack (BBC, 2013, p.6).

After the chemical attack, President Obama has requested Congress to agree on military intervention in Syria in order to prevent any potential chemical attacks in the future. Nevertheless, the request for military intervention has raised some questions amongst the Congress, and it did not get approved, especially because such an

involvement in the conflict was not seen as a good idea by some members. As a result, in September 2013 America has made an agreement with Russia, a supporter of Bashar

al-Assad’s regime, to assign mid-2014 as the end of the chemical weapons in Syria (Gordon, 2015, p.4).

It is significant to know that such agreements during such deadly and very serious

conflicts like the Syrian conflict have absolutely different dimensions and targets. What makes these deals a very rich substance for analysis is the fact that they are based on situations that cannot be controlled not even for a while and this is because of the many parties involved. The Syrian crisis has many parties involved, whether ones that are present on the battlefield or ones having a huge influence on the events from a distance. Therefore, the nature of the conflict, the parties involved, and the place of the conflict are all very important factors that can be the reason behind changing and creating new interests in the Syrian crisis for some states. Therefore, the deals that are being conducted concerning any aspect of the Syrian crisis need to be studied and analyzed in a way that makes them more fathomed first by normal people and second by politicians and experts of international relations. The rapid developments of the events in Syria have also led to rapid reactions by the U.S. agencies. In 2014, after the American-Russian deal, the watchdog Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has indicated that the last “announced” chemical weapons armory in Syria has been effectively removed in June. In September of the same year, Congress agrees on the project of supplying the insurgents in Syria with weapons and also training them in order to fight ISIS in the area. Besides arming and training the rebels, the U.S. has also executed airstrikes targeting ISIS areas. Those airstrikes were executed with support from an international coalition against ISIS, and the states that were members of that coalition were the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (Gordon, 2015, p.7).

On July 12, 2015, the first group of Syrian insurgents trained by the U.S. enters Syria through the Jordanian borders. Right after entering the Syrian territories two leaders and other members of the group get caught and the whole group gets assaulted by a group related to al Qaeda. The second group of trained rebels was sent to Syria on September 20, 2015. After exactly two days, the group has had to give more than 25% of its U.S. arms to al-Nusra Front, an organization the U.S. categorizes as a terrorist one, in order to have a secure path towards a city in Northern Syria. It is important to know that Turkey has also an important role in the U.S. military interventions, and this is because the U.S. has sought the help of Turkey in order to achieve some of its goals.

On July 23, 2015, the U.S. has declared that Turkey has approved to give the U.S. military access to the Incirlik airbase so it can attack ISIS through executing airstrikes from that base (Zenko, 2015, p.5). This is clear proof that common interests concerning another state have a great impact on the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relations and their strength.

However, it is significant to bear in mind that interests can change in a blink of an eye and they can never be considered as fixed elements because as long as there are conflicts and crises around the world the interests will stay in constant change.

On October 9, 2015, the American plan to create a new group of insurgents to fight ISIS in Syria has had to be changed after the previous ineffective results. Obama administration has announced that the money that was used to train new groups of rebels will be instead used to provide the ones who are already fighting on the battlefield with munitions and weapons. Therefore, the training sessions which have taken place in different locations including Turkey and Jordan were stopped. The new plan has assured that the rebels groups engaged in the conflict are well equipped and armed with enough weapons and munitions. However, it is important to know that the decision of nullifying such a significant plan proposed by President Obama and has exceeded many obstacles to get approved, was not taken till making sure that the results were not as sufficient as they are supposed to be. Realizing that the number of fighters who have gone through training by the U.S. was not enough was one of the main reasons behind considering a new strategy. Furthermore, during the time the U.S. was sending the trained insurgents to Syrian and executing its plan, Russia was also taking steps towards intervening in the Syrian crisis. The strong Russian intervention has shed the light on the weak points in the U.S. coalition (Shear, Cooper, & Schmitt, 2015, p.1).

As mentioned earlier, the fact the Syrian crisis has many actors involved, state and non-state actors, has made the crisis a very complex one with different factors playing role in it. Having many actors involved means having more different interests than common ones, and this leads to nothing but delaying the end of this crisis that has been the reason behind killing and displacing millions of innocent people. When the interests of the actors involved or the actors that are only intervening in the crisis temporarily do not meet the chance of having chaos and mistakes in the way some states intervene becomes high. The U.S. has declared that it aims to fight ISIS in Syria and it has taken many steps towards this issue from training and equipping rebels who are fighting ISIS to executing airstrikes on the ISIS areas. However, in September 2016 the U.S. has executed airstrikes that were supposed to be against ISIS, but then it turned out that the U.S. military has unknowingly executed airstrikes against the Syrian regime instead of ISIS. The airstrike has targeted the eastern city of Deir el-Zour, where many groups of ISIS are around, and it has killed 62 members of the Syrian military. Nevertheless, whether intentionally or not this airstrike has been considered as the first American attack against al-Assad's regime. Furthermore, it is important to know that the Syrian military has announced that such airstrikes assist ISIS to move forward and control more areas in Syria (Stanglin, 2016, p.1).

On April 4, 2017, the Syrian regime has executed a deadly attack of chemical weapons on the town of Khan Shekhoun in Idlib. The attack has killed more than 70 people and it was condemned by many states and institutions of the international community.

Surprisingly enough, Trump's administration has decided to act upon this, and orders were given to execute a missile attack on the airbase from which the airplanes that dropped chemicals on Idlib have taken off. The attack has demolished some constructions but it did not affect the roads. Moreover, the attack was kind of a strict note for Russia to keep its forces and warplanes away from that area in the future. President Trump has given the last command to execute the attack while he was in a meeting with Chinese Communist Party Chairman Xi Jinping, and this is not the first time Trump takes such an important decision during a meeting that has nothing to do with the issue concerned. The same thing has happened regarding the decision of not allowing Muslims to enter the U.S. when Trump has made this decision during the visit of the British Prime Minister Theresa May to America. These actions were criticized and have been considered as proof of the unilateral nature of the Trump administration (Anderson, 2017, p.1).

Even though the U.S. has executed airstrikes on certain areas in Syria, mainly on ISIS, and has condemned publicly the brutality of the Syrian regime, its involvement in the Syrian crisis is not as much as the Russian or Turkish intervention for instance. According to the U.S., the actual and direct intervention in the Syrian crisis holds more hazards and undesirable results than taking a neutral attitude towards the crisis. Despite the fact that the situation in Syria has kept deteriorating and the number of attacks and victims has not

stopped from increasing, for the U.S. the negative aspect of the intervention is still visible and clear. The White House has always seen the advantage of the involvement as vague and unstable, and the benefit as insufficient and not that high. Furthermore, Obama has explained the U.S.' attitude towards a limited involvement in Syria by clarifying the point that any involvement would increase the chances for the forces to drag out. Besides that, The U.S. believes that even if the plan would be to intervene in certain areas the chance for things to get out of control and to have problems and negative effects that cannot be fixed or solved is very high (Heydemann, 2016, p.2).

Since the Syrian crisis has become a global issue the states and actors who are playing major and minor roles in the way things are going there must understand that their attitudes will raise many questions. Whether gaining support for their decisions or criticizing their attitude, those states have to realize the importance of their moves towards the Syrian crisis, not

only because the crisis is very serious and escalating but also because their actions might have a great impact on the interests of other states. Whether politicians or international organizations, the opinions of both parties can have a great influence, if not to make a real change in some states' actions, they will absolutely shed the light on hidden points and draw the attention of the public opinion to certain issues that can make a big

change.

When it comes to the U.S. and the steps it has taken towards the Syrian crisis, many have criticized the attacks it has executed on Syria, especially the one that has been ordered to be executed on the airbase after the chemical attack. The reason behind the criticism is the fact that many believe that the U.S. has had enough from its intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and the consequences should be a good lesson for not making a similar mistake.

Furthermore, the legal aspect of the airstrikes has also been criticized and this has imposed more questions concerning the decisions of the Trump administration. Gene Healy, a vice president at the Cato Institute explains that the airstrikes Trump has ordered to execute lack the legal cover and therefore there is no dominion to give commands to execute them.

Furthermore, when it comes to executing airstrikes the constitution states that the president has the authority to fend off airstrikes targeting the U.S., but he does not have the authority to give orders to execute them (Healy, 2017, p.1). On the other hand, some of the Syrian people have supported the decision of Trump regarding attacking the airbase, and they have seen it as a strong response to the brutality of Bashar al-Assad.

Second Chapter: Turkish Intervention in Syria

Turkey is also one of the states that have an important role in the Syrian crisis, and its interventions in the events there has a great impact on the way the crisis is viewed.

Geographically, Turkey is close to Syria and this is one of the reasons that make Turkey very concerned about the crisis and its escalations. Even though fighting ISIS is one of the most important goals of the states involved in the Syrian crisis, one cannot ignore the fact that the individualistic interests will surface up at some point. Whether such interests are being declared or not, their influence will always be clear and be the reason behind some changes in the crisis. When it comes to Turkey, combating and fighting ISIS is the declared goal, but there is also another target for Turkey in Syria, which is halting the Kurds from expanding in the area (Chulov, 2016, p.1).

The hallmark of Turkey's connection to the Syrian crisis is the fact Turkey's relation with Syria was so much dependent on Syria's attitude towards the Kurdistan Workers'

Party (PKK). After the cold war, the relation between Syria and Turkey has witnessed some tension not only because of Syria's backing for PKK, but also on other issues like their conflict concerning the Turkish province Hatay, and the dispute over the waters of Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Nevertheless, these disputes were settled and the relations started to get stronger with time. It is important to know that the relations have become firmer when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey in 2002. The Arab Spring is considered a drastic change in the Middle East and its consequences have exceeded the Middle East region. When the Syrian crisis has started Turkey's plan was based on giving Bashar al-Assad time to make the enhancements he wanted to make, but after the huge increase in the number of victims and the brutality of the regime things for Turkey has changed. Turkey started to threaten to take action towards what has been happening in Syria and it also mentioned the notion of creating no-fly zones and imposing sanctions. The escalation of events in Syria has led Turkey to menace to use its power in NATO, especially after the Syrian regime has executed an attack on the Syrian refugees on the Turkish-Syrian borders. The complicated situation in Syria has made the Syrian territories a place not only of misery for the Syrian people, but also a territory of opposing foreign parties to prove their power and strength (Tziarras, 2012, p.131).

As previously mentioned, since the beginning of the Syrian crisis Turkey has refused to take action and instead wanted to give the chance to al-Assad and to the regime to implement all the reforms promised to be implemented. Turkey's attitude during that time can be referred to for two reasons: first, the development of Turkish-Syrian relations in the previous years has made Turkey more cautious about its attitude towards the Syrian crisis.

Second, Turkey's evolving relations with the parties that the Syrian regime has good ties with, like Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah, is also another reason behind Turkey's careful steps at the beginning of the crisis. Moreover, Turkey did not want to make a fast judgment on the consequences of the upheaval in Syria, especially because Turkey wanted to make sure of the economic, diplomatic, and strategic aspects to stay stable (Tziarras, 2012, p.132).

Towards the beginning of the winter of 2011, Turkey has requested from al-Assad for the first time to withdraw and started to plan to impose sanctions on the Syrian regime, sanctions that include economic, political, and military aspects. Though Turkey's attitude towards the chaotic situation in Syria was at the beginning a neutral attitude based on giving a chance for the regime to realize the importance of changes and reforms that must be done, the fact that the situation started to get out of control and the way the protests were suppressed have required an action to be taken. It is important to know that the sanctions that were planned to be imposed would afterward affect the good relations that Turkey and Syria have built (Chulov, 2011, p.1). In spite of Turkey's involvement in Syria later on, the former Turkish President Abdullah Gül has announced that Turkey is against any foreign military interventions, and that anyways of settlement should come from the Syrian people and according to their own needs. Furthermore, the way Turkey's attitude towards the crisis has witnessed many changes is an indication of how much the Syrian crisis is a critical issue for Turkey and how it needs cautiousness while making any decisions regarding it.

Besides that, the notion that there might be a Western intervention in Syria has created a sense of stress between international powers like the U.S., Russia, Iran, and China. For Turkey, such foreign involvements would be the reason behind unpredictable outcomes for Turkey's domestic security and the security of the region (Tziarras, 2012, p.131). The continued threats by Turkey and the stress that was caused by them has led Syria to think of using the Kurds located in northern Syria as a way to trigger Turkey. The PKK, a Kurdish group assigned by Turkey as a terrorist group, has a good deal of backing from the Kurds

who live in Syria, that is why Turkey is concerned about the fact that Syria might use this to fuel strife in the area against Turkey (Chulov, 2011, p.1).

Since 2011 the Syrian crisis has become sort of a test for Turkey's foreign policy and its methods of protecting its national security. The fact that the crisis has not had and still does not have a clear map or plan for a solution makes it even harder and more complicated not only for Turkey but also for the other parties to realize how critical the Syrian crisis is for Turkey. In addition to that, the rapid evolution of events in Syria and the more victims that the war is resulting have made Turkey realize that its previous restrictive attitude won't be efficient anymore. Turkey's policy towards the Syrian crisis at the beginning is not going to provide it with the security it needs for its borders, especially because of the rapid spread of jihadist groups and the "Kurdish autonomy" in the northern parts of Syria. Nevertheless, Turkey's preventive policy can be justified by explaining the two reasons behind it: first, Turkey is avoiding the outcome of a direct encounter with al-Assad's army and it cannot depend on any act of support whether from its own people or its Western friends. Second, Turkey lacks the required amount of endorsement from al-Assad's opposing parties, which is a very important factor that can have a great influence during any military involvement from Turkey's side. However, since the hazards are increasing day by day, any plans of Turkey to intervene militarily in Syria at that time would have been considered as a chance of creating a source of distraction to drive away from the observation of people from the political issues that the Justice and Development Party is trying to handle and settle inside Turkey, and such an issue is considered of great interest for the Turkish people (Ananicz, 2014, p.1).

As mentioned earlier, Turkey has taken its time before making any moves towards intervening militarily in Syria, because of many reasons that made any intervention a risky decision. However, the patience and cautiousness has become useless for Turkey, and it has had to take action at some point. August 24, 2016, marks the beginning of the Turkish intervention in Syria; on this day Turkey has sent equipped forces with air backup in order to back the Syrian opposition attack that targeted the border of Jarablus. Right after the town of Jarablus has been seized by ISIS, Turkey sent off a warning to the Syrian

Democratic Forces, which most of its main pillar's members come from the Kurdish People's Protection Unit (YGP), the Syrian affiliate of the Kurdistan Worker's Party.

The warning has included giving the Syrian Democratic Forces 3 days to retreat to the east of the Euphrates river. However, this came after the YGP succeeded, with air support from the international coalition, to recapture the town of Manbij from ISIS, which is a town of high strategic importance. Furthermore, it is important to know that Turkey has taken advantage of the disaffection of people towards the hazards imposed by ISIS and PKK in order to establish a military operation. The military operation strives to bring an end to the campaign that is targeting the Turkish territories with bomb attacks and being

controlled from Syria. The operation that took place after the attempt of the coup in Turkey has aimed to show Syria and the parties involved in the crisis that Turkey is still able to defend its land from any threats and the chaos that was caused by the attempt of the coup is not going to stop the Turkish military from doing its job. The Turkish involvement in Syria has also been justified legally because of the dangers imposed by ISIS and PKK which require self-defense from the Turkish side (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2016, p.2).

Since the battlefield in Syria has many parties involved with many different interests, the chance that the interests clash might bring more complications to the crisis is very high.

U.S. and Turkey's interventions in Syria are a good example of how interests can conflict and impact the escalation of the crisis. Turkey's worries started to surface when the Kurds forces' interests were diverted to Jarablus, which has been captured by ISIS for 2 years after they succeeded in recapturing the town of Manbij from ISIS. The importance of Jarablus lies in its location which is in the west of the Euphrates River. For Turkey, that area is very significant and critical because it considers it as the separating line between the forces that the U.S. backs to the east and Turkey's own interests. Moreover, the U.S. considers the Kurds as the most capable group for fighting ISIS, and this is one thing that Turkey for sure does not agree with because of its attitude towards the Kurds (Chulov, 2016, p.2).

Another significant military intervention in Syria by Turkey is the Syrian town al-Bab operation. On February 23, 2017, the Turkish forces and the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which is a proponent of the Turkish army, have succeeded in capturing a very important Syrian town, al-Bab town. Al-Bab town is in the northern fraction of Aleppo and it has been under the domination of ISIS for more than 2 years. Despite the fact that the Turkish military intervention in Syrian has raised many questions and uncertainty regarding if it will be restricted to specific areas or not, the capture of al-Bab town is without any doubt considered a big achievement for Turkey. Moreover, the value of al-Bab has been boosted after the Syrian Democratic Forces, mainly the Kurdish YGP, seized Manbij, which is a very important city for ISIS that has assisted in the process of transporting jihadists from Turkey to Syria and vice versa, also the shipment of oil and weapons (South Front, 2017, p.1).

The fact that Turkey has taken and still taking advantage of the threats imposed on her, especially the PKK threats, in order to achieve its goals in Syria indicates that it has a smart and flexible foreign policy. When the state does not focus only on the negative side of the threats and tries to view the bigger image it will be able to build a strong and smart foreign policy. In the case of Turkey, it has widened its horizon through viewing not only the empty half of the cup but also the full half. Since Turkey considers the PKK a terrorist organization, then it has the right to combat it and fight it if there is any slight possibility the PKK will threaten Turkey's national security. Therefore, having supporters for the PKK in Syria is considered for Turkey as a gateway to intervening. Moreover, fighting ISIS in Syria has also paved the route for many power states like U.S. and Russia to intervene militarily in Syria. And even though the interventions are all aiming to fight ISIS and reduce the number of attacks in Syria, there are still some unannounced goals and interests of the states, and this is considered part of the diplomacy and foreign policy of the state.

However, any state whether Turkey or the U.S. must be aware that the Syrian crisis is a very complex crisis with many parties involved that pursuing their goals is a priority even above the safety of civilians. Furthermore, the role that the non-state actors play has a great impact on the interests of some parties, especially ISIS and other groups with a big influence in the crisis like the opposing groups to the Syrian regime. This indicates that the different angles that the Syrian crisis has and can be viewed from can actually be considered as good and bad factors, depending on the party viewing those angles.

Third Chapter: The Impact of The Syrian Crisis on The U.S. – Turkish Relations

It is not easy to come up with an accurate description for the Syrian battlefield since it is one with many unusual characteristics and contexts. It is not only about having many parties involved in the Syrian crisis, it is also the fact that every party is trying to have the strongest and most significant influence which makes things harder for any party to reach a plan of solution for the crisis. Turkey and U.S. are states with great influence on the Syrian crisis, and one cannot deny their impact on the way things are going there. Inside the Syrian territories, there are many divisions and fractions which all mainly revolve around al-Assad regime. Some people are with the regime and some are against it. Nevertheless, the external parties' aims are different and they are about guaranteeing the permanence of their essential interests. It is important to know that having states like Russia and Iran who are backing the Syrian regime means that the crisis is imposing hazards on the interests of both U.S. and Turkey. If one would review the interests of Turkey and the U.S. in Syria, they would notice that their interests are different and they conflict when it comes to certain aspects. U.S.' goals and interests in Syria include: decreasing the control of political Islam, depriving ISIS from having a shelter in the Syrian lands, forbidding the utilization of any

chemical weapons, and minimizing the hazards on Israeli security. While when it comes to Turkey the things are different. For Turkey, the insecurity in Syria embodies very critical foreign policy defiance. Moreover, the impact of the Kurdish groups who reside in Syria and the Kurds generally is a big concern for Turkey. And not to mention the state of war that has caused and still causing a huge influx of refugees to the countries surrounding the Syrian lands, and Turkey is one of them. The huge influx of refugees to the Turkish lands imposes great pressure on the Turkish economy and social life, and not to forget the impact of refugees on the domestic policy of the state (Ahmad, 2015, p.12).

The validity of Bashar al-Assad's regime is what most of the parties' interests revolve around. At the beginning of the Syrian Crisis, both Turkey and U.S. agreed that the Assad regime is not valid anymore. Nevertheless, things started to change later, and the different points of view between the two states started to surface. The divergence in opinions between Turkey and U.S. is embodied in the way things can be managed in Syria, and how such chaos caused by the brutal regime can be addressed. The People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria is considered one of the most significant reasons behind the stress between

U.S. and Turkey.

It is important to know that the YPG is a Kurdish group, and the Kurds, in general, are a big concern for Turkey and are considered a challenge in its foreign policy. However, both Turkey and the U.S. realize that the YPG is an obstacle in the future of the bilateral relations of the both states. At the Insight Turkey annual conference in 2016, it was confirmed that the YPG is going to be the reason behind ruining U.S.-Turkish relations. The same point was also stressed by the American side during the Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research (SETA) second annual conference, and it was highlighted that YPG is one of the most critical issues that will face the two states (Kanat, 2016, p.1). Nonetheless, each state still has its own way to deal with this issue, whether according to national interests or foreign policy. Therefore, admitting that the YPG in Syria is going to be the barrier in the bilateral relations does not mean that Turkey and U.S. will have the same views and share the same methods of addressing this issue.

As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the crisis Turkey's plan was to give time for al-Assad to implement the reforms, but after the brutal oppression that he has practiced and still practicing on his people, Turkey has decided to stand with al-Assad's opponents who are struggling to have freedom and democracy in the country. Nevertheless, Turkey's choice to stand against al-Assad is in fact the outcome of arrangements and cooperation with President Obama during the Arab Spring. In 2011 the U.S.-Turkish relations were mainly revolving around figuring out a way deal with the complex and hard transmission far from tyrannical regimes in the Middle East, and the fall of al-Assad regime was viewed by both Turkey and U.S. as an inevitable result. It is important to know the Turkish government has shown so much interest in the Middle East affairs more than other earlier governments. This interest has been suitable for Turkey's relation with the U.S., especially when President Obama has set an important mission for Turkey which includes enhancing the relations between the U.S. and the Islamic world. This part of the U.S.-Turkish relations that the U.S. has shaped has become more important with the start of the Arab spring (Aliriza, n.d., p.2). This is another proof that the U.S.-Turkish relations are having other factors to be affected and impacted by, and the fact that it is not only about the foreign policy of the U.S and Turkey when it comes to the bilateral relations highlights the point that the two states must be aware that their bilateral relations can be influenced by other parties and external actions. Therefore, both states have to create a ground of common interests even during conflicts, because this will guarantee to a certain extent having firm and not easily shaken bilateral relations.

The fact the case in Syria is different and things have not ended the way they did in the states who witnessed protesting against the regime like Egypt and Tunisia is very important. In other words, if Bashar al-Assad had been overthrown like Hosni Mubarak and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the role of Turkey in the Middle East that was assigned by the U.S. could have been more affective and sufficient. Thus, al-Assad's existence in this powerful position puts more pressure on Turkey concerning its influence in the Middle East region and the sequence of the events, which also detracts from the core of the "joint approach" between the U.S. and Turkey, and that includes a mission which the U.S. believes Turkey is capable to accomplish in the Middle East as a strong influencer in the region. Nevertheless, it is significant to know that even if al-Assad gets overthrown the long and brutal process that will probably increase the number of victims is going to have a great impact on that approach and the Turkish-U.S. relations. Furthermore, this highlights the fact of how important not only during this phase but also in the future to prevent creating or feeding sources of extremism in the region and especially in Syria. However, the atrocity of al-Assad regime and its unlimited sectarianism has created and still creating a reaction with the same features of sectarianism from the side of rebels. As a result, this makes it definite for the phase after al-Assad to have this fever of sectarianism with its all unpredictable effects (Aliriza, n.d., p.3).

Analysis

Turkey and U.S. are both considered states of great interest in the political arena. Their foreign policy and significant decisions not only towards each other but also towards issues they both have an interest in are what make their relation complicated. The amount of attention and interest that the Middle East is occupying in the foreign policy of Turkey and The U.S. is also another reason to realize how special and different the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relations are. The Syrian crisis serves as a very clear example of how both states are seeing that crisis as one of the main pillars, at least in the meantime, that shape their bilateral relations. I believe that the chaotic situation in the Middle East in general and in Syria in specific, has shed the light on the importance of the sequence of events in the Middle East when it comes to the foreign policy of significant states in the world like the U.S. and Turkey. The interests of both states in the Syrian war have made Turkey and U.S. build stronger ties and at the same time build more interests in each other's foreign policy and attitudes towards global issues especially the Syrian crisis. In fact, the times when their interests and goals have reached a point of conflict their response and reaction have gained more attention from the media of the political arena including the attention of other states. Nevertheless, this attention can also be the reason behind imposing more pressure on Turkey and Syria and may require them to be more cautious and aware of any steps they take concerning the Syrian crisis. The Syrian crisis with its complexity has created for U.S. and Turkey a ground of cooperation and disagreement at the same time. For both states, I view the Syrian crisis as a chance to prove to what extent each party is ready to intervene and take seriously and sometimes risky in Syria just to protect their interests and achieve their goals. The difference between the interventions of Turkey and the U.S. lies in the fact that Turkey has been determined at the beginning of the Syrian crisis to give al-Assad regime a chance to make some changes before executing any military intervention in the Syrian lands. On the other hand, the Obama administration has been sure of the need and the importance of intervention from the beginning, though it took time for the interventions to get approved by the Congress. For the U.S. the interventions at the beginning were not directed by U.S. military, but by insurgents trained and equipped by the U.S., and the training sessions took place in different states. When it comes to Turkey the case was different because the interventions and operations executed in the Syrian lands were by the Turkish military.

Such differences indicate that even if some states have similar interests concerning certain issues, it does not mean that the way those interests will be acted upon or pursued will be similar or share the same strategy. Therefore, despite the fact that U.S. and Turkey meet at the point of fighting ISIS inside the Syrian lands, the two states are adopting different strategies when it comes to achieving their common goal. Besides the different foreign policy of U.S. and Turkey, the difference in their strategies can be referred to the fact that there are sub interests lying under the major goal which is fighting ISIS, and such sub interests can change the way a state is acting upon its goals. For instance, Turkey's goal in Syria is not only revolving around fighting ISIS, it also includes fighting the Kurds in Syria. However, the Kurds for U.S. are considered the best party to fight ISIS and this is a reason to have unlike policies of U.S. and Turkey concerning the Syrian crisis. It is important to know that sub interests are not necessarily hidden specially because of the major changes that the media has witnessed lately and has created a sense of openness to the political arena and its agendas. Moreover, the easy access to such important information concerning the policies and strategies of states, especially with the emergence of virtual diplomacy, has paved the way for the people to get the information they want.

The escalation of events and the increasing number of victims in Syrian have made the Syrian crisis gain global attention and have raised many questions concerning the validity and efficiency of the efforts exerted by the international community. Having many parties involved and many concepts and sects represented, the Syrian crisis has uncovered and exposed the interests of many states and non-state actors that were not declared before.

U.S. and Turkey are good examples of the states who got involved in the Syrian crisis not only to achieve the goals of the international community but also to achieve some individualistic objectives. Both states have high importance in the political arena because of the role they play in the international community, and their domestic affairs which have a great impact on their foreign policy. When it comes to the Syrian crisis, one cannot deny that Turkey and U.S. have always been amongst the states that influence the Middle East area strongly. Especially when Erdogan came to power, Turkey has become the main topic of the media because of its significance to the Islamic world and the Middle East. For U.S., it has always been a key state in the world and its role and interest in the Middle East has become clearer and more significant with the rise of ISIS and Islamophobia. Therefore, the role of Turkey and U.S. in the Syrian crisis and the sequence of events are very important and their interest in making interventions has not emerged just at the spot of the crisis, but it has its own deep roots and motives. Nevertheless, I believe that the severe consequences of the Syrian crisis require both U.S. and Turkey as significant states nothing but to put their efforts together and cooperate to achieve the most important goal of all, which is

bringing an end to the Syrian crisis. This critical phase that Syria is going through should be addressed by overcoming the individualistic interests and focusing on the major goals of bringing peace to the area and resolving the crisis.

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الملخص:

يدرس هذا البحث تدخلات الولايات المتحدة وتركيا في سوريا وتأثير هذه التدخلات على العلاقات الثنائية بين الولايات المتحدة وتركيا. وبما أن هذا البحث يجادل بأن العلاقات الأمريكية التركية لا تتأثر فقط بقرارات الدولتين المعنيتين ولكن أيضًا بعوامل أخرى، مثل النزاعات والأزمات على الأراضي الأجنبية والإجراءات التي تتخذها الدول الأخرى، سيتم إثبات هذه الحجة من خلال دراسة دور الدولتين في الأزمة السورية وفي نفس الوقت تقييم تأثير الأزمة السورية على العلاقات الأمريكية التركية. لذلك، سوف يستعرض الفصل الأول والثاني من هذا البحث ويحلل التدخلات التي قامت بها الدولتان في سوريا وكيف تم الرد عليها. بينما سيبحث الفصل الثالث كيف أثرت هذه التدخلات ولا تزال تؤثر على العلاقات الثنائية بين الولايات المتحدة وتركيا، خاصة وأن الدولتين لهما أهداف مختلفة في سوريا ولا يتفقان طوال الوقت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سوريا، أميركا، تدخل، نزاع، علاقات ثنائية