

Disasters and Diplomacy: Conflict and Cooperation Between Türkiye and Syria

Ata Kaan Doğan



A thesis presented to the

Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
at Boğaziçi University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

December 2024

Approvals

“Disasters and Diplomacy: Conflict and Cooperation Between Türkiye and Syria,” a thesis prepared by Ata Kaan Doğan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, has been approved on 23 December 2024 by:

THESIS ADVISOR

Professor Sevtap Demirci
Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
Boğaziçi University

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Professor Aydın Babuna
Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
Boğaziçi University

Professor Özden Zeynep Oktav
International Relations
Istanbul Medeniyet University

Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.



Copyright © 2024 Ata Kaan Doğan.
Some rights reserved.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Abstract

Disasters and Diplomacy: Conflict and Cooperation Between Türkiye and Syria

Ata Kaan Doğan, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute
for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2024

Professor Sevtap Demirci, Thesis Advisor

This thesis examines how disasters, such as the 2023 earthquakes, and geopolitical challenges, like water disputes, influence Türkiye's foreign policy with Syria through the framework of disaster diplomacy. Focusing on the post-2021 period, when efforts were made to facilitate constructive changes in bilateral relations, the study investigates how natural disasters and transboundary resource issues can serve as catalysts for dialogue and cooperation. Over the past three decades, the relationship between these two neighboring states has been marked by a highly politicized environment, shaped by unresolved historical disputes and various attempts at rapprochement. In a world increasingly exposed to both natural catastrophes and geopolitical challenges, the role of shared disasters and resources in Türkiye-Syria relations remains underexplored. This thesis analyzes the 2023 twin earthquakes as a disaster with the potential to transcend political barriers and foster goodwill, while examining water disputes as a dualistic factor of conflict and cooperation. Employing a disaster diplomacy framework and drawing on the data collected in the newspapers, policy analyses and historical accounts, this thesis argues that disasters and shared resource challenges can serve as powerful catalysts for diplomatic engagement. However, their impact is contingent upon broader geopolitical tensions, historical grievances, and the prevailing political context.

39.000 words

Özet

Afetler ve Diplomasi: Çatışma ve İşbirliği Arasında Türkiye ve Suriye

Ata Kaan Doğan, Yüksek Lisans Adayı, 2024

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Profesör Sevtap Demirci, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, afet diplomasisi çerçevesinde, 2023 depremleri gibi doğal afetlerin ve su sorunları gibi jeopolitik zorlukların Türkiye'nin Suriye ile dış politikasını nasıl etkilediğini inceliyor. Çalışma, 2021 sonrası döneme odaklanarak, iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerde yapıcı değişiklikleri destekleme çabalarını ele alıyor. Tez, doğal afetlerin ve sınırları aşan su kaynakları sorunlarının diyalog ve iş birliğini teşvik eden birer araç olabileceğini araştırıyor. Son 30 yılda, Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki ilişkiler, çözülemeyen tarihi anlaşmazlıklar ve birçok yakınlaşma girişimi ile şekillenen oldukça politize bir yapıya sahip olmuştur. Ancak, doğal afetler ve jeopolitik zorlukların daha sık yaşandığı günümüz dünyasında, ortak afetlerin ve kaynakların bu iki komşu ülke arasındaki rolü henüz yeterince incelenmemiştir. Bu tez, 2023'teki ikiz depremleri, siyasi engelleri aşma ve iyi niyet geliştirme potansiyeli taşıyan bir afet olarak ele alırken, su sorunlarını hem çatışma hem de iş birliği aracı olarak inceliyor. Afet diplomasisi çerçevesi kullanılarak gazetelerden, politika analizlerinden ve tarihsel kaynaklardan toplanan verilerle yapılan bu çalışma, afetlerin ve ortak su kaynakları sorunlarının diplomatik ilişkilere güçlü bir katkı sunabileceğini savunuyor. Ancak, bu etkinin daha geniş jeopolitik gerilimler, tarihsel anlaşmazlıklar ve mevcut siyasi bağlam tarafından şekillendiği vurgulanıyor.

39.000 kelime





To my grandparents...

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Tables *xiv*

List of Figures *xiv*

Acknowledgements *xix*

1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 The Overview of Türkiye-Syria Relations 5

1.2 Contribution to the Academic Literature 12

1.3 Structure of the Thesis 12

2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW 15

2.1 Case Selection 15

2.2 Methodology 16

2.3 Theoretical Framework 18

2.3.1 Exploring the Impact of Disaster Diplomacy as a Catalyst in Diplomatic Contexts 20

2.3.2 The Role of Transboundary Water Issues in Interstate Conflict and Cooperation 29

2.4 Conclusion 35

3 THE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY WITH SYRIA 37

3.1 Relations in the Pre-2000s 38

3.1.1 Hatay's Accession to Türkiye 39

3.1.2 Case of Water Conflict 44

3.1.3 Tense Relations with Syria's Support of Terrorism 47

3.2 Relations in the Post-2000s 51

3.2.1 Pre-Syrian Civil War 51

3.2.2 The Role of Syrian Civil War in Türkiye's Foreign Relations with Syria 57

3.2.2.1 The Interference Of Türkiye In Syrian Civil War 57

3.2.2.2 Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War 61

3.2.2.3	Türkiye's Military Operations Beyond its Borders	62
3.2.2.4	Engagement in Diplomacy and Negotiations in Light of the Syrian Civil War	72
3.3	Conclusion	85
4	DISASTER DIPLOMACY BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA	89
4.1	The Period of Informal Engagement Between Türkiye and Syria (2021-2024)	90
4.2	The 2023 Earthquake as a Case in the Disaster Diplomacy	100
4.2.1	A Comparative Analysis: Türkiye-Greece Earthquake Diplomacy (1999) vs. Türkiye-Syria Earthquake Diplomacy (2023)	102
4.2.2	The Impact of the 2023 Earthquake on Türkiye-Syria Relations: A Missed Opportunity for Rapprochement?	107
4.3	The Case of Water as a Balancing Conflict and Cooperation Between Türkiye and Syria	111
4.4	Conclusion	120
5	CONCLUSION	125
5.1	Overview of the Study and Implications	126
5.2	Limitations of the Study and the Future Research Areas	130
5.3	Concluding Remarks: Future Trajectory of Türkiye's Foreign Policy in Syria	132
	Bibliography	141

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Scholarly Research on Disaster Diplomacy 25

Table 2.1: Historical Analysis on Turkish Foreign Policy with Syria 38

Table 3.1: Evaluating the Role of Disaster Diplomacy in Türkiye-Syria
Relations 121

List of Figures

Figure 1: Foreign Trade Figures between Türkiye and Syria (1000 \$) 56

Figure 2: Operation Euphrates Shield SOURCE:: TRT World (2016) 64

Figure 3: An illustration depicting the territorial control in Syria's War
SOURCE: TRT World (2017) 68

Figure 4: A map showing the Northern Syria as of October 23, 2019, with
the safe zones marked SOURCE: TRT World (23.10.2019) 70



Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Prof. Dr. Sevtap Demirci, for her invaluable suggestions, unwavering support, and respectful consideration of my ideas. Her ability to offer different perspectives has been instrumental in shaping my research, and her encouragement has been a constant source of motivation throughout this journey.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Dr. Aydın Babuna and Prof. Dr. Özden Zeynep Oktav for their critical insights, thoughtful feedback, and guidance throughout the evaluation of my thesis. Their constructive critiques and encouragement have been instrumental in refining my work and shaping it into its final form, for which I am deeply and sincerely grateful.

My professors at Boğaziçi University introduced me to academic research while I was in college. I was fortunate to have the contribution of the critical perspectives of my professors in both the Department of Political Science and International Relations and the Department of History at Boğaziçi University. Their critical insights and guidance greatly influenced my intellectual development, and I remain profoundly grateful for their contributions.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my family, whose unwavering support and belief in me have been the foundation of my journey. Among them, my sister Gülşen Doğan holds a special place. She deserves special recognition—not only for her tireless efforts in reviewing my writings and enriching them with her insightful suggestions but also for being an inspiration as she pursues her academic journey as a PhD candidate at Koç University. Her dedication and brilliance assure me of her success as a future academician. To all my loved ones, whose presence fills my life with meaning and joy, I offer my heartfelt thanks.

I am also thankful for the support and guidance of my friends. Specifically, I would like to thank Alkan Özdemir, an individual with whom I met during my undergraduate at the university and who has remained a cherished companion throughout my life for his guidance.

Besides, I am equally thankful to the administrative staff of Boğaziçi University Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History for their help during my master's study.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to TÜBİTAK (the Scientific and Technological Research Council) for the financial support provided during my master's studies.

NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made detailed recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, syntax, and style of this thesis.



Introduction

This thesis questions how disasters and geopolitical challenges shape Türkiye's foreign policy with Syria? Rather than addressing why Türkiye pursues a particular foreign policy agenda, this study focuses on the "how" question: how shared crises, such as the 2023 earthquakes, and enduring geopolitical issues, including water disputes, influence the dynamics of conflict and cooperation between these two neighboring states. The concept of disaster diplomacy serves as the central analytical framework, allowing the thesis to explore how disasters can act as both catalysts for diplomatic engagement and reflections of broader geopolitical tensions. While disasters, such as the 2023 earthquakes, provide a focal point, the study also examines the broader geopolitical and historical contexts that shape the interplay of conflict and cooperation in bilateral relations. In other words, this study intends to explore how "disasters can catalyze diplomacy" in the backdrop of Türkiye-Syria relations. By employing this dual focus and integrating the impact of shared crises into this broader context, the research aims to contribute to the academic discourse by connecting disaster studies with the broader domain of international relations, offering a comprehensive perspective on Turkish foreign policy toward Syria.

Theoretically, Türkiye has frequently been characterized as a “regional power” in the realm of international politics¹, with the expectation that the country will build effective coalitions based on normative principles and serve as a mediator between the North and the South². Türkiye is considered a regional power based on its foreign policy strategies because it has a strong determination to transform into a global power in the future³. Türkiye's quest for strategic autonomy and increasing nationalism at home as well as its proactive, multi-dimensional, and constructive foreign policy abroad have played a role in re-orienting its foreign policy in the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and the Horn of Africa⁴. Türkiye has challenged existing partnerships and alliances, resorted to assertive foreign policy, and even used force when soft power strategies do not work⁵. Additionally, Türkiye has mediated among competing interests and benefited from rivalries between regional actors and global powers⁶. For example, Türkiye's decision makers' policy towards the Middle East is influenced by agency factors, domestic politics, and the desire to shape the region with its own cognitive perspectives⁷.

-
- ¹ Mustafa Kutlay, Ziya Öniş, Turkish foreign policy in a post-western order: strategic autonomy or new forms of dependence?, *International Affairs*, Volume 97, Issue 4, (2021), 1085–1104
 - ² Ibid
 - ³ H. Tarık Oğuzlu, "Türkiye as a Restrained Middle Power," *Turkish Studies* 24, nos. 3–4 (2023): 673–690, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2023.2171870>.
 - ⁴ A. Gasparetto, "Transition and Middle Power: Türkiye's Strategic Autonomy on the Atlantic Area Border with the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and the Horn of Africa," in *World Order Transition and the Atlantic Area*, ed. F. Attinà (Cham: Springer, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63038-6_8.
 - ⁵ Ali Emre Sucu, Ivan Safranchuk, Alexander Nesmashnyi & Qosimsho Iskandarov, Transformation of Middle Powers with the Decline of World Hegemony: The Case of Türkiye, *Strategic Analysis* 45, no. 4 (2021): 307–320.
 - ⁶ Hakan, Övünç, Ongur, Hüseyin, Zengin, Transforming Habitus of the Foreign Policy: A Bourdieusian Analysis of Türkiye as an Emerging Middle Power. 1(2) (2016) :117-133.
 - ⁷ Özdamar, Ö., Devlen, B. Man vs. the System: Turkish Foreign Policy After the Arab Uprisings. In: Belloni, R., Della Sala, V., Viotti, P. (eds) *Fear and Uncertainty in Europe . Global Issues*. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91965-2_9.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

In recent years, the foreign policy decisions of Türkiye have increasingly been shaped by a combination of both external and internal determinants. The neorealist paradigm posits that the anarchical characteristics of the external environment, along with the allocation of material power capabilities among states, significantly influence foreign policy orientations.⁸ However, the analysis of occurrences pertaining to Turkish foreign policy suggests that a combination of both external and domestic factors has contributed to the formulation of its course⁹. The transition from external influences to domestic factors, particularly in the post-Cold War era, signifies a profound transformation in the trajectory of Turkish foreign policy.¹⁰ Agency factors like the role of leadership, nationalism¹¹, domestic variables like ideological-identity and military transformations¹² further illustrate Türkiye's evolving decision-making process and its desire to shape the regional dynamics¹³.

The ruling elite in Türkiye plays a significant role in shaping the country's foreign policy. They have undertaken a transition in foreign policy paradigms, moving from an emphasis on interdependence and soft power strategies to an aspiration for strategic autonomy, which is further characterized by interventionist practices and coercive diplomatic

⁸ Tarık Oğuzlu and Ahmet Kasım Han, "Making Sense of Türkiye's Foreign Policy from the Perspective of Neorealism," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 20, no. 78 (2023): 59–77, <https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.1284178>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ahmed Babakr Ahmed and Hogr Ibrahim Hakeem, "National Influences in Turkish Foreign Policy: (The Fountain of Peace Operation as a Sample)," *QALAAI ZANIST JOURNAL* 6, no. 2 (2021): 1–39, <https://doi.org/10.25212/lfu.qzj.6.2.01>.

¹¹ Tarık Oğuzlu, "Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order," *All Azimuth* 9, no. 1 (2020): 127–139.

¹² Levon Hovsepyan, "The Influence of Turkish Domestic Transformations on Turkish–U.S. Relations: Ideology, Identity, Military," *Comparative Strategy* 41, no. 6 (2022): 563–578.

¹³ Paul Kubicek, "Identity Politics Inside Out: National Identity Contestation and Foreign Policy in Türkiye," *Turkish Studies* 20, no. 3 (2019): 468–470, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2018.1555898>.

measures¹⁴. This transition functions as a legitimizing discourse in foreign policy for the government to have popular support¹⁵. The ruling elite has also emphasized the importance of internal transformation and stability in Türkiye, allowing the country to emerge as a guarantor of peace in the Middle East¹⁶. However, the Arab Spring and the subsequent support for opponents of dictator governments have led to problematic relations with many states, moving away from the previous “zero problem policy”¹⁷. The ruling elite’s foreign policy roles have also changed, with a shift towards stricter roles requiring material capabilities in response to the Arab uprisings¹⁸.

Considering external factors, Türkiye's foreign policy decisions have been influenced by its perception of the relative decline of Western powers in global politics and the emergence of a post-American world order¹⁹. This has led Turkish decision-makers to build closer economic, political, and strategic relations with rising powers in the non-Western world, particularly Russia. In other words, there has been a focus on rediscovering Türkiye's self-confidence, with a continuity of orientation towards the West alongside relations with the Islamic East²⁰. The tolerant strategic environment and the rise of a multipolar international system have enabled Türkiye to pursue a more independent foreign policy

-
- ¹⁴ Mustafa Kutlay and Ziya Öniş, "Turkish Foreign Policy in a Post-Western Order: Strategic Autonomy or New Forms of Dependence?" *International Affairs* 97, no. 4 (July 2021): 1085–1104.
- ¹⁵ H. İnaç, and A. Hadji, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East During the Rule of the Justice and Development Party: Interaction of Interests and Future Challenges," *Uluslararası Yönetim Akademisi Dergisi* 5, no. 2 (2022): 307–319.
- ¹⁶ W. Hale, "Türkiye and the Middle East in the 'New Era,'" *Insight Türkiye* 11, no. 3 (2009): 143–159.
- ¹⁷ Ö. Özdamar, Halistoprak, B. T., & Sula, İ. E, From Good Neighbor to Model: Türkiye’s Changing Roles in the Middle East in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring. *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, 11(42), (2014): 93-113.
- ¹⁸ Valerij Špak, The Model of Turkish Foreign Policy: Opening New Horizons, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 12 no. 1 (2014): 91-112
- ¹⁹ H. Tarık Oğuzlu, Türkiye as a restrained middle power, *Turkish Studies*, 24:3-4, 2023: 673-690, DOI: 10.1080/14683849.2023.2171870
- ²⁰ Ibid.

orientation, particularly in neighboring regions in relation to protecting and promoting Muslim interests globally²¹. However, Türkiye's aspiration for strategic autonomy and its intention to interpret international relations through its own lens have jeopardized its conventional strategic-security partnerships with West. This has resulted in an increased strategic overdependence on Russia, impacting Türkiye's ability to implement its plans in various regions such as Syria, Northern Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, Türkiye's ambition has influenced its foreign policy decisions, leading to an over-ambitious middle power strategy. However, this strategy has failed to produce the expected outcomes, prompting the need for a restrained middle power strategy that better serves Türkiye's national interests in the face of a post-Western international order and emerging multipolarity.²²

§ 1.1 The Overview of Türkiye-Syria Relations

Türkiye's foreign policy towards Syria has been shaped by a combination of strategic considerations, regional dynamics, and domestic concerns²³. As Syria has pursued a revisionist foreign policy since its foundation, based on the division of its historical geography, the relationship between two neighbors has been one of the most problematic relations when compared to Türkiye's relations with other Arab nations²⁴. The issues ranging from territorial disputes²⁵, the terror question²⁶, and the

²¹ Paul Kubicek, "Identity Politics Inside Out: National Identity Contestation and Foreign Policy in Türkiye," *Turkish Studies* 20, no. 3 (2019): 468–470, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2018.1555898>.

²² H. Tarık Oğuzlu, Türkiye as a restrained middle power, *Turkish Studies*, 24:3-4, 2023: 673-690, DOI: 10.1080/14683849.2023.2171870

²³ Z. B. Kizilkan, "Changing Policies of Türkiye and the EU to the Syrian Conflict," *Atatürk Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi* 33, no. 1 (2019): 321–338.

²⁴ Raymond Hinnebusch, "Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad," *Ortadoğu Etüdləri* 1, no. 1 (July 2009): 7–26.

²⁵ Particularly with regards to the Hatay Province

²⁶ The housing of PKK leadership and camps in its territory.

water supply²⁷, have long been three significant points of contention between these neighboring countries, exacerbating their already strained relations²⁸.

Contrary to this background, the Turkish-Syrian relations experienced a positive improvement in the later decades. In 1998, these two nations, previously on the verge of war, signed the Adana Agreement²⁹, which marked a turning point in their relationship. This agreement facilitated the resolution of certain contentious matters pertaining to the Hatay Province, water supply, and support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)³⁰. Syria's recognition of the PKK as a terrorist organization and the expulsion of its leader Abdullah Öcalan from Damascus created a more neighborly relationship³¹. This development can be seen as an example that paved the way for Turkish policymakers to establish a strategic cooperation with Syria aligning with Türkiye's foreign policy doctrine of "zero problems" and "maximum cooperation with neighbors"³². The ratification of the Joint Political Declaration concerning the Formation of

²⁷ See Z. Ö. Oktav, "Türkiye's Water Policy in the Euphrates-Tigris Basin". In: Behnassi, M., McGlade, K. (eds) *Environmental Change and Human Security in Africa and the Middle East*. Springer, 2017 and "Transition from enmity to 'common fate' rhetoric: water issue in Turkish-Iraqi-Syrian relations." *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 40 (2009): 71-90 ; A. Kibaroglu, A. 'An analysis of Türkiye's water diplomacy and its evolving position vis-à-vis international water law'. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*. 35(1) (2014): 4-29 ; M. Daoudy, "Back to Conflict? The Securitization of Water in Syrian-Turkish Relations" In *Türkiye-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity* (R. Hinnebusch, Ed.) (1st ed.). Routledge, 2013.

²⁸ Relations between Türkiye-Syria," Republic of Türkiye MFA, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-syria.en.mfa>

²⁹ "Relations between Türkiye-Syria," Republic of Türkiye MFA, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-syria.en.mfa>

³⁰ Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998: A Turkish View," *Middle East Policy Council*, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://mepc.org/journal/turkish-syrian-crisis-october-1998-turkish-view>.

³¹ Relations between Türkiye-Syria," Republic of Türkiye MFA, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-syria.en.mfa>

³² Ibrahim Natil, "Türkiye's Foreign Policy Challenges in the Syrian Crisis," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 27 (2016): 75-84, <https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2016.27.8>.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) in September 2009 also facilitated the arrangement of collaborative cabinet meetings between Türkiye and Syria³³. As part of these developments, a free trade agreement known as the “Levant Quartet” was signed between Türkiye, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, underscoring the importance of regional integration³⁴. The trade volume between Türkiye and Syria increased from \$1.5 billion in the previous year to \$2.5 billion in 2010³⁵. However, the revolts that first began in Tunisia triggered comparable events across Arab nations, leading to a series of events later recognized as the Arab Spring movement, which significantly impacted Turkish relations with Syria, thereby altering the dynamics of the relationship³⁶.

When the Arab Spring began in Syria in 2011, Türkiye perceived the civil uprising in Syria as an advantageous opportunity to enhance its Islamic identity in the region and implement its grand strategy for the Middle East³⁷. As the revolts quickly escalated into a civil war and transformed into an international conflict, the Turkish foreign policy in Syria has gained more prominence and volatility, with Türkiye engaging with various actors through mediation channels³⁸. Türkiye’s initial involvement was intended to convince the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to

³³ “Relations between Türkiye–Syria,” Republic of Türkiye MFA, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-syria.en.mfa>

³⁴ M. Ataman and Ç. Özdemir, “Türkiye’s Syria Policy: Constant Objectives Shifting Priorities,” *Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi* 5, no. 2 (2018): 13–36, <https://doi.org/10.26513/tocd.466046>.

³⁵ “Rakka’ya 280 milyon Euro’luk temel attı, Suriye Türkiye’den yeni yatırımlara davet çıkardı,” *Hürriyet*, January 16, 2011, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/rakka-ya-280-milyon-euro-luk-temel-atti-suriye-turkiye-den-yeni-yatirimlara-davet-cikardi-16775021>

³⁶ M. Ataman, & Ç. Özdemir, 16.

³⁷ Ibrahim Natil, “Türkiye’s Foreign Policy Challenges in the Syrian Crisis,” *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 27 (2016): 75–84, <https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2016.27.8>.

³⁸ “Relations between Türkiye–Syria,” Republic of Türkiye MFA, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-syria.en.mfa>.

respond to the widespread protests by implementing reforms³⁹. Hence, Türkiye initially sought to mediate between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the opposition, hoping for reforms and stability⁴⁰. However, as violence escalated and Assad refused to implement reforms, Türkiye shifted its stance and started supporting the opposition, adopting a policy of opposition to the Assad government⁴¹. The emergence of new actors and unfavorable developments leading to economic losses, the influx of Syrian refugees⁴², and security risks in Syria exerted domestic and external pressures on Türkiye. Eventually, the Syrian crisis had significant implications for Türkiye, both domestically and internationally including exacerbating the Kurdish question and strained relations with neighbor states. Domestically, providing assistance and socio-economic opportunities to Syrian refugees have been a critical financial challenge for Türkiye⁴³. Internationally, the Syrian conflict has had a transformative effect on Türkiye, changing its identity, ethnic and religious composition, foreign policy, and even its place in the international order⁴⁴. In other words, Türkiye's role in facilitating Syrian refugees has positioned it as a rising major power in the Middle Eastern region, although there are concerns about its compliance with international law regarding refugee

-
- ³⁹ Ziya Öniş, "Türkiye and the Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence in a Turbulent Middle East," *Mediterranean Politics* 19, no. 29 (2014): 203–219.
- ⁴⁰ Katerina Dalacoura, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Power Projection and Post-Ideological Politics," *International Affairs* 97, no. 4 (July 2021): 1125–1142, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iab082>; Ş. Kardaş, "Türkiye's Middle East Policy Reloaded: Rise of Pragmatism?" *GMF On Türkiye Analysis*, October 10, 2011.
- ⁴¹ Ataman, & Ç. Özdemir, 16.
- ⁴² Please check the following website for updated statistics on refugees in Türkiye: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113>.
- ⁴³ S. Demir and M. E. Yılmaz, "An Analysis of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Türkiye's Politic-Military, Social and Economic Security," *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 13, no. 26 (2020): 1–19.
- ⁴⁴ B. Balci, "The Syrian Crisis and Its Contribution to Authoritarian Transformation of Turkish Domestic and Foreign Policy Identities," in *Türkiye, Russia and Iran in the Middle East*, eds. B. Balci and N. Monceau, *The Sciences Po Series in International Relations and Political Economy*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

accommodation⁴⁵. Overall, the Syrian crisis has had far-reaching consequences for Türkiye, impacting both its domestic dynamics and its international standing.

Since 2021, Türkiye has been progressively moving towards the normalization of relations with Syria. During a press briefing on August 12, 2022, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlut Cavusoglu, casually mentioned a brief exchange he had with the Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad at a Non-Aligned Movement event in October 2021. Following this, President Erdogan clarified that Türkiye harbors no territorial aspirations in Syria and underscored the significance of continual dialogue between the two states. This demonstration of goodwill gathered momentum in December 2022, as senior officials from both states meet in Moscow, where discussions took place involving representatives from Türkiye and the Assad administration to address the restoration of relations.

Initially, Türkiye's recent conciliatory actions towards Damascus may appear to be in line with its broader regional efforts to reduce tensions. However, the situation in Syria is distinctive and complicated. Despite temporary, Türkiye not only possesses military posts in the northern region of Syria for security reasons but is also extensively engaged in various infrastructural initiatives, including education, healthcare, and security. Nonetheless, Türkiye's main focus lies on the perceived threat emerging from the administration led by the PKK's Syrian branch in northeastern Syria. This modification in Türkiye's stance regarding Syria is predominantly motivated by the significant Kurdish demographic in the northern regions and the unresolved dilemma of Syrian refugees residing in Türkiye, both of which constitute critical issues in Turkish domestic policy.

In February 2023, Türkiye was hit by two devastating earthquakes, leaving large areas with a population of approximately 15 million people

⁴⁵ For more details, please see: E. Gokcekuyu, Syrian refugees in Türkiye and what the future holds. *Antropoloji*(44),(2022): 1-3. & A. Akdemir, Syrians in Türkiye: a Review of Literature. *Uluslararası Kültürel Ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 5(1) (2019): 323-336.

affected and a death toll of over 50,000 people. The earthquake that hit South-eastern Türkiye also resulted in the displacement of a significant number of people across the northwest Syria. The intricate political environment added to the complexity of providing essential assistance to the affected areas in the northwest Syria. Many countries showed solidarity for Türkiye by providing assistance and rescue teams from all over the world. Despite its strained relations with Syria, Türkiye allowed humanitarian aid to pass through the two border gates normally closed from Kilis to Syria and opened Turkish airspace to provide more effective assistance to the earthquake victims in Syria⁴⁶. This gesture of goodwill underscores the potential of disasters to transcend political barriers, albeit temporarily. Based on this case of disaster cooperation between the rival countries, this thesis explores the role of disaster diplomacy on the relations between Türkiye and Syria over the recent years and its potential as a catalyst in rapprochement.

Disasters like earthquakes can potentially wreak havoc on nations, causing large destruction to communities and infrastructure, substantial loss of life, and economic setbacks. However, amidst the chaos and devastation, disasters also offer unique opportunities for countries to set aside political differences and come together in times of crisis. It is recognized that during and after disasters, hostilities between states may temporarily be suspended and their shared focus may turn to addressing the immediate needs of the affected populations⁴⁷. This window of opportunity can be leveraged to build trust, facilitate communication, and promote cooperation between conflicting parties, creating a common ground for collaboration around shared vulnerabilities and the interdependencies of affected communities. The urgency and magnitude of the crisis often necessitate collaboration and resource-sharing, leading to the possibility of conflict resolution and cooperation⁴⁸.

⁴⁶ "Türkiye Proposed Opening Two Gates from Kilis to Syria for Quake Aid: FM", February 24, 2022. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkiye-proposed-opening-two-gates-from-kilis-to-syria-for-quake-aid-fm-180840>

⁴⁷ See Kelman, 2012; Nelson, 2010

⁴⁸ See Ganapati et al., 2010

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

The abovementioned markings of disasters are well applicable to the context of Türkiye and Syria as two countries with historically strained relationships, unfolding around the unresolved and unconsolidated issues of shared histories, territorial disputes, and security conflicts. The normalization prospects between Türkiye and Syria have been complicated by the lack of diplomatic relations and ongoing tensions between them, particularly with Türkiye's active military presence in Northern Syria against terrorist organizations and continuing support for the Free Syrian Army against the Assad regime, which had a substantial negative impact on Türkiye's relationship with Syria.

Nevertheless, despite the rough path, there have been some attempts to promote dialogue between Türkiye and Syria in recent years. It is highlighted that the notion of solidarity during periods of historical tensions highlights the capacity of disaster diplomacy to mitigate divisions and encourage collaboration. The significance of disaster diplomacy resides in its capacity to surpass political disagreements and emphasize the importance of human lives and welfare. The case of Türkiye-Syria can be an example of the transformative power of disaster diplomacy. The noteworthy "disaster diplomacy" occasion that eased the prospects for diplomatic engagement between the two countries was the twin earthquakes that struck Türkiye in early 2023. The earthquake disaster provided a window for both countries to demonstrate goodwill to support their neighbor in a time of need. However, whether this act of assistance provided tangible aid to the affected communities in these two countries and served as a catalyst for improved relations and potential reconciliation between them will be answered in this study.

Concerning this historical background for Türkiye-Syrian foreign relations, the primary concept of this research is to propose that the cooperative efforts and reciprocal assistance among countries following disasters may result in enhanced diplomatic relations, albeit with constraints concerning their duration and extent. By focusing on the impact of shared disasters, this thesis seeks to elucidate the processes by which such events influence diplomatic interactions. On the whole, the

main argument is that shared disasters might have had a positive effect on the reconciliation process between the two countries, which can be best explained using the disaster diplomacy framework, which also accounts for the constraints imposed by historical grievances and geopolitical tensions.

§ 1.2 Contribution to the Academic Literature

The scholarly discourse pertaining to disaster diplomacy has been notably enhanced through examining Turco-Greek relations, particularly in the context of the 1999 earthquakes. This thesis adds to this scholarly discourse by critically analyzing the reconciliation efforts between Türkiye and Syria. While the prevailing viewpoint in disaster diplomacy literature suggests that disaster events inevitably lead to enduring diplomatic enhancements, this thesis aims to ascertain whether the effects of such diplomatic endeavors are temporary and often fail to yield enduring transformations in interstate interactions. Through a historical analysis, this research highlights the constraints of disaster diplomacy, evaluating whether the example of Türkiye and Syria also indicates that while disaster-related activities might foster short-term cooperation, they do not necessarily culminate in a lasting reconciliation or resolve deeper geopolitical tensions. By addressing these questions, this study provides valuable insights into the factors shaping the impact of disaster diplomacy, offering critical perspectives for policymakers and academics exploring the intersection of natural disasters and international relations.

§ 1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 integrates the research design and theoretical framework, combining the methodological approach with a critical examination of disaster diplomacy. It begins with the rationale for case selection, outlines the methodology employed, and explores the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework includes an analysis of disaster diplomacy as a catalyst for diplomatic engagement

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

and the role of transboundary water issues in interstate conflict and cooperation. Chapter 3 presents a historical overview of Turkish foreign policy toward Syria, divided into two key periods: pre-2000s and post-2000s. It examines critical events, such as Hatay's accession to Türkiye, water conflicts, and Syria's support for terrorism, as well as the impact of the Syrian Civil War on bilateral relations. This chapter provides the necessary historical context for understanding the evolution of Türkiye-Syria relations. Chapter 4 shifts to the core analysis of disaster diplomacy between Türkiye and Syria, with a focus on the reconciliation phase of relations from 2021 to 2024. It examines the 2023 earthquake as a case of disaster diplomacy, comparing it to the Türkiye-Greece earthquake diplomacy of 1999, and investigates water issues as both a source of conflict and cooperation. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with an overview of the study's findings and implications, discusses its limitations, and suggests avenues for future research. This chapter also reflects on the potential future trajectory of Türkiye's disaster diplomacy with Syria, offering insights into how shared disasters and resource management challenges may shape bilateral relations moving forward.



2

Research Design and Theoretical Overview

This thesis explores the significance and evolution of disaster diplomacy in the context of Türkiye-Syria relations. It examines how disasters, such as the twin earthquakes of 2023, and shared resource challenges, such as water conflicts, can influence diplomatic interactions. By investigating these cases, the study aims to uncover the dual role of disasters in providing immediate relief while potentially fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and regional stability. Through qualitative case studies and process-tracing methodology, this research contributes to the existing literature by offering a deeper understanding of how disaster diplomacy might bridge historical grievances and promote a more resilient and cooperative future in international relations. This dual focus on disasters and resource-based disputes highlights the transformative potential of shared crises in shaping Türkiye-Syria rapprochement.

§ 2.1 Case Selection

A critical part of the qualitative research design of this thesis was the selection of case. Within the framework of disaster diplomacy, the case of Türkiye and Greece following the 1999 earthquake has been extensively

examined because of its remarkable significance in showcasing how natural disasters can catalyze diplomatic rapprochement between historically rival states. For this thesis, Türkiye and Syria, whose historically strained relationship is marked by territorial disputes, resource conflicts, and political tensions have been chosen. The 2023 earthquakes offer a unique opportunity to investigate whether disaster diplomacy can meaningfully influence long-standing diplomatic ties. Additionally, the two nations' shared history of water-related disputes further exemplifies the interplay between conflict and cooperation, making them an ideal case for extending disaster diplomacy scholarship.

The occurrence of the 2023 earthquakes, affecting both countries on the same day, presented an exceptional moment of mutual vulnerability and collective tragedy, revealing the capacity of disasters to momentarily bridge profound geopolitical rifts. This phase of 'earthquake diplomacy' is especially intriguing as it challenges the traditional comprehension of international relations by proposing that shared human experiences, like natural disasters, can temporarily repair deep-rooted political and territorial disputes. The research intends to evaluate whether the cooperation and goodwill observed in the aftermath of the earthquakes have had a lasting influence on enhancing bilateral relations or if they represented a temporary detente in an otherwise tense relationship. By concentrating on the post-earthquake relations between Türkiye and Syria, this study contributes to the wider discussion on disaster diplomacy, providing insights into the circumstances in which such diplomacy might result in enduring transformations in international relations. Additionally, the case study explores the constraints and obstacles of upholding such collaboration beyond the immediate aftermath of disastrous occurrences, emphasizing the intricate interplay between natural disasters, and political conflicts.

§ 2.2 Methodology

The thesis employs the qualitative case study methodology and process tracing. Data is gathered by means of online newspaper archives as well

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

as secondary sources comprised of national and international reports on the relationship between Türkiye and Syria. Content analysis of newspaper articles is utilized capturing societal, organizational, and political events that reflect changes in the countries' approaches to each other.

The case study approach is useful to make an in-depth analysis on the case by examining the factors influencing Türkiye's foreign policy decisions and the role of disaster diplomacy in shaping these decisions. It is a commonly used method to study research question of 'how'⁴⁹. Additionally, case study method is applied in this thesis because the aim is to analyze a political process⁵⁰. Moreover, the process-tracing method is applied to trace the sequences of happenings⁵¹ because a country-based analysis without process tracing may lead to ambiguous results. Overall, the thesis aims to contribute in this line of research with an analysis from an agency perspective. The thesis traces the Turkish-Syrian relations and the policy making process both at the systemic and national politics levels.

Consequently, the research methodology relies on a comprehensive case study approach, concentrating on historically analyzing both pre-disaster activities and post-disaster responses to investigate the dynamics of disaster diplomacy between Türkiye and Syria. This methodology is supported by a thorough examination of the literature on disaster diplomacy, which serves to place the 2023 earthquakes in context as a significant event for comprehending the potential of natural disasters to trigger diplomatic reconciliation between Türkiye and Syria. The methodology also examines governmental and non-governmental cooperation levels, highlighting disaster relief initiatives and the broader

⁴⁹ R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018), 33.

⁵⁰ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 115.

⁵¹ Engin I. Erdem, "European Integration and Democratic Consolidation: Spain, Poland, and Türkiye in Comparative Perspective," *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (2011): 24.

diplomatic environment that facilitated such cooperation. Moreover, the study assesses the impact of political transitions and high-level diplomatic interactions on the sustainability of disaster diplomacy endeavors, thus presenting a nuanced comprehension of the intricate relationship between natural disasters and enduring political conflicts. The research methodology also encompasses a survey of disaster diplomacy literature to outline reconciliation efforts post-disasters, thereby situating the Türkiye and Syria case within a wider theoretical framework. Additionally, the research delves into broader diplomatic collaboration and the reconciliation process, offering a comprehensive understanding of the enabling context for disaster-related collaboration. As a result, this multifaceted methodological approach allows for a nuanced exploration of the conditions under which disasters can catalyze cooperation between states in conflict, contributing significantly to the disaster diplomacy literature.

§ 2.3 Theoretical Framework

As noted by Hinnebusch (2016), the relations between Syria and Türkiye have the potential to address various key aspects of International Relations theory. These include discussions on alterations in foreign policy and alliances, transitions from conflict to cooperation, and the impact of regionalism in the context of globalization. Through this case study, it is possible to shed light on the significant arguments within International Relations theory, particularly those among competing paradigms like realism, liberalism, and constructivism. These debates often center around the interplay between tangible and ideological elements, as well as the varying influences of systemic and domestic factors on shifts in foreign policy and alliances. In comparison, this thesis intends to present a theoretical structure in the examination of Türkiye and Syria rapprochement based on the disaster diplomacy hypothesis.

Türkiye and Syria offer a significant case study for disaster diplomacy due to the unique opportunity disasters provide in fostering international collaboration among states that have historically strained

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

relations, providing insights into how shared humanitarian emergencies can serve as a platform for dialogue and collaboration, albeit within the confines of broader geopolitical priorities and the inherent complexities of international relations. This theoretical framework is essential for comprehending the interactions between Türkiye and Syria, where natural disasters might act as catalysts for temporary or prolonged diplomatic interactions, notwithstanding the complexities of their political ties.

The literature on disaster diplomacy highlights its dual nature: while disasters can catalyze cooperation, the process is often temporary and contingent on broader political conditions. Kelman⁵² presents the concepts of "tit-for-tat disaster diplomacy" and "mirror disaster diplomacy" to illustrate this dynamic. The former emphasizes that engaging in reciprocal assistance can facilitate negotiations even in the presence of ongoing disputes. Conversely, the latter depends on the domestic strategies of both parties to prioritize disaster risk mitigation through enhancing self-sufficiency. Kelman contends that for disaster diplomacy to be successful in the long term, it is essential that "disaster-related activities have catalyzed diplomacy with the presumption that the catalysis led to a positive diplomatic outcome which could be a peace deal, augmented diplomatic connections, or further talks.⁵³" In other words, Kelman cautions that lasting diplomatic outcomes require sustained commitment beyond the immediate disaster response.

This thesis critically examines the role of disaster diplomacy in Türkiye-Syria relations, focusing specifically on its ability to catalyze cooperation during humanitarian emergencies. While disasters have been linked to both interstate conflict⁵⁴, and intrastate conflict⁵⁵, this study focuses on the interstate conflict aspect. This hypothesis explores the ways

⁵² See I. Kelman, *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁵³ I. Kelman, "Catastrophe and Conflict: Disaster Diplomacy and Its Foreign Policy Implications," *Brill Research Perspectives in Diplomacy and Foreign Policy* 1, no. 1 (2016): 27.

⁵⁴ See Akcinaroglu, DiCicco & Radziszewski, 2011; Kelman, 2012; Nelson, 2010

⁵⁵ See Brancati, 2007; Drury & Olson, 1998; Nel & Righarts, 2008

in which the response to and recovery from disasters can impact, and be impacted by, the diplomatic interactions among nations, especially those in conflict or with strained relations. The analysis critically assesses the significance of actions taken before disasters, particularly in terms of reducing disaster risks, in addition to the responses implemented after disasters in shaping diplomatic ties between countries. It argues that disasters present distinctive opportunities for nations to participate in collaborative efforts that may not have otherwise materialized, utilizing the shared necessity for aid and solidarity during emergencies to cultivate enduring diplomatic connections.

This framework underscores the potential of disaster diplomacy to foster positive diplomatic outcomes in challenging geopolitical contexts. By applying this lens to Türkiye-Syria relations, the thesis aims to evaluate the extent to which disasters create temporary windows of opportunity for dialogue and whether these moments can lead to enduring conflict resolution. The subsequent sub-sections provide a comprehensive review of disaster diplomacy literature and its relevance to understanding the foreign relations between Türkiye and Syria.

2.3.1 *Exploring the Impact of Disaster Diplomacy as a Catalyst in Diplomatic Contexts*

Kelman and Koukis (2000) introduced disaster diplomacy as a unique sub-field within the realm of disaster studies, focusing on the societal and behavioural dimensions of abrupt collective stress scenarios commonly known as mass emergencies or disasters⁵⁶. This definition expanded upon previous interpretations of disaster diplomacy, which viewed it as the "common interests of nations at a level of scientific understanding of shared risk"⁵⁷.

The scholarly discourse surrounding disasters, conflict, and diplomacy posits the existence of various potential interconnections.

⁵⁶ M.K. Lindell, 'Disaster Studies'. *Current Sociology*. 61(5-6). (2013): 797-825.

⁵⁷ L.K. Comfort, "Disaster: Agent of Diplomacy or Change in International Affairs?" 14, no. 1 (2000): 6.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

Initially, disasters have the capacity to escalate interstate conflicts through the exacerbation of commitment issues⁵⁸. The theoretical framework of the bargaining model of war predicts that nations unable to make credible commitments to peaceful agreements face heightened risks of conflict. Notably, if a nation foresees an increase in its relative power compared to its adversary in the future, it encounters challenges in committing to a pact given the existing balance of capabilities⁵⁹. Disasters possess the capability to substantially reduce a country's overall economic productivity⁶⁰, thereby impacting the military capacities of a state.

Additionally, disasters serve as disturbances to the existing allocation of resources, potentially elevating the likelihood of conflicts. An environmental scarcity resulting from factors such as population growth, competition, or unequal resource distribution has the capacity to lead to conflicts⁶¹. The occurrence of disasters and climate-related incidents can heighten the risk of interstate conflicts by creating shortages in resources. Research by Devlin & Hendrix illustrates that prolonged fluctuations in precipitation patterns and reduced average precipitation levels in specific pairs of states are linked to the initiation of interstate disputes⁶². Moreover, disasters contribute to interstate conflicts by destabilizing established boundaries, for instance, floods that alter the course of rivers, consequently giving rise to new territorial disagreements. Environmental crises lead to conflicts through mechanisms involving both abundance, such as floods, and scarcity, exemplified by droughts⁶³.

Alternatively, disasters have the potential to function as beneficial disturbances that leads to favorable circumstances for diplomatic

⁵⁸ Bas & McLean, 2021

⁵⁹ Bas & Coe, 2012

⁶⁰ Raddatz, 2007

⁶¹ Homer-Dixon, 1999

⁶² Devlin & Hendrix (2014): 27.

⁶³ Schmidt, Lee & Mitchell, 2021.

relations. The scholarly examination of disaster diplomacy scrutinizes both the anticipatory strategies employed prior to a disaster—encompassing research initiatives, preventive frameworks, preparedness protocols, strategic planning, vulnerability reduction, and damage mitigation—as well as the responsive measures implemented afterward, which include emergency response, reconstruction efforts, and recovery processes.⁶⁴ Disasters serve as focal points for fostering collaboration and encouraging greater peace through the cultivation of empathy, the provision of aid, and the amplification of media attention⁶⁵. A disaster can instigate a form of diplomatic interaction characterized by reciprocal gestures of support, leading to the establishment of a virtuous cycle of cooperation⁶⁶. Indirectly, disasters might diminish hostilities by consuming government resources and material capabilities that would otherwise be allocated to assertive pursuits⁶⁷. Nonetheless, the available evidence only offers limited backing for the notion that disaster diplomacy can result in enduring peace⁶⁸. Instead of long-lasting peace, it seems to present an opportunity for peacebuilding, without necessarily guaranteeing a genuine willingness to engage in it⁶⁹.

Kelman proposed four fundamental components for examining disaster diplomacy⁷⁰. Initially, the concept of ‘relationality’ is considered, which explores the impact of disasters on diplomatic connections. Subsequently, the element of ‘novelty’ is examined, focusing on the potential for disasters to introduce innovative diplomatic approaches. Thirdly, the aspect of ‘legitimacy’ is addressed, questioning whether disasters can establish a platform for authentic diplomacy that is not driven by ulterior motives or public image concerns. Lastly, the durability

⁶⁴ See Kelman et al., 2018.

⁶⁵ Kelman, 2016

⁶⁶ Kelman, 2012

⁶⁷ Raddatz, 2007

⁶⁸ Kelman et al., 2018

⁶⁹ Akcinaroglu, DiCicco & Radziszewski, 2011

⁷⁰ See I. Kelman, ‘Acting on Disaster Diplomacy’. *Journal of International Affairs*. 59(2). (2006): 215-240.

factor is discussed, investigating how the duration of diplomatic efforts (whether short-term or long-term) is influenced by the commitment of involved parties and various non-disaster-related factors.

However, disaster diplomacy literature is grounded in three fundamental concepts within the realm of international relations: disasters, diplomacy, and conflicts. The aftermath of disasters is known to evoke feelings of "shock, shared grief, and the humanitarian impulse,"⁷¹ prompting scholars to scrutinize the impact of such events on international relations. Research findings have shown that engagement in post-disaster diplomatic activities is notably heightened, especially among parties with established pre-disaster relations. While disasters can act as a catalyst, they do not inherently foster collaboration between nations in disagreement⁷². Numerous case studies within disaster diplomacy concentrate on conflict scenarios, particularly examining relationship dynamics pre and post disasters at both state and non-state levels⁷³. The selected case studies presented in *Table 1* delve into Greek-Turkish relations following the 1999 earthquakes, collaboration between Cuba and the USA concerning climate threats, Iran-USA relations subsequent to the 2003 Bam earthquake⁷⁴, regional cooperation in Southern Africa, and the impact of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami on conflicts in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Aceh⁷⁵. The scholarly discourse on disaster diplomacy experienced a surge post the 1999 earthquakes in Türkiye and Greece⁷⁶, a period marked by tense relations between the two nations due to disputes over the continental shelf of Cyprus and the Aegean. Despite historical disagreements, the

⁷¹ Rajagopalan, 2006: 454

⁷² See Ganapati et al., 2010; Koukis et al., 2016

⁷³ See Holloway, 2000; Kelman, 2012, 2016; Ker-Lindsay, 2007; Koukis et al., 2016

⁷⁴ Kelman (2007); Ireni-Saban (2014)

⁷⁵ Scanlon (2006); Enia (2008); Beardsley & McQuinn (2009); Stokke et al. (2009)

⁷⁶ Ganapati, et al. (2010); Ker-Lindsay (2000, 2007); Koukis et al. (2016); Keridis (2006); Mavrogenis and Kelman (2013); Evin (2011); Sevin and Jayasinghe (2018))

earthquakes presented an avenue for reconciliation and consequently, an enhancement in relations through disaster diplomacy.

Regarding the case of the 1999 earthquake in Taiwan, there were indications of reduced tensions between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC's offer of aid to Taiwan exemplified the importance of disaster diplomacy in gaining insight into the perspectives of conflicting parties⁷⁷. While the earthquake and aid provision promptly lessened tensions between the two sides, it did not notably enhance their bilateral political relations. In the instances of earthquake disaster diplomacy involving the 2003 Bam Earthquake in Iran and the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake in India and Pakistan, the outcomes were somewhat mixed and not particularly encouraging. In the former case, the US extended assistance to Iran post-disaster, yet Iran declined the offer, possibly due to strained diplomatic ties between the two nations at that time; another reason could be Iran's perception of the US aid offer as a political maneuver rather than a sincere humanitarian gesture, potentially influencing their decision to reject assistance. In the latter scenario, both India and Pakistan encountered significant obstacles in responding to the earthquake and providing aid to affected regions. Despite the prevailing political tensions and hostilities between the two nations, they acknowledged the necessity of cooperating to address the humanitarian emergency. This resulted in a temporary easing of tensions, with both sides indicating readiness to collaborate and support each other. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that the impact of disaster diplomacy on the long-term relations between India and Pakistan was restricted. The fundamental political and territorial disagreements between them remained unresolved, and instances of disaster diplomacy were short-lived and failed to yield substantial progress in resolving broader conflicts. Nevertheless, the episode of disaster diplomacy during the Kashmir earthquake underscores the

⁷⁷ Kelman (2008)

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

potential for humanitarian crises to create avenues for cooperation and dialogue among nations, even amidst enduring conflicts⁷⁸.

Table 1.1: Scholarly Research on Disaster Diplomacy

Disaster	Engaged Countries	Diplomacy Type	Significance	Citations
1999 Taiwan Earthquake	China and Taiwan	Short-Term Diplomacy	Brief cooperation occurred, but longstanding geopolitical tensions limited any lasting diplomatic impact.	Kelman (2008)
1999 Greece-Türkiye Earthquakes	Greece and Türkiye	Short-Term Diplomacy	Led to significant improvements in bilateral relations, showcasing the potential of disaster diplomacy to thaw hostilities.	Ganapati, et al. (2010); Ker-Lindsay (2000, 2007); Koukis et al. (2016); Keridis (2006); Mavrogenis and Kelman (2013); Evin (2011); Sevin and Jayasinghe (2018))
2003 Bam Earthquake In Iran	USA and Iran	Short-Term Diplomacy	Humanitarian aid from the USA created a temporary easing of tensions, though it did not lead to sustained improvements in relations.	Kelman (2007); Ireni-Saban (2014)
2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami	Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, Aceh	Increasing Inter-State Conflicts	While the disaster prompted multinational cooperation, it also highlighted existing regional conflicts, leading to mixed diplomatic outcomes.	Scanlon (2006); Enia (2008); Beardsley & McQuinn (2009); Stokke et al. (2009)

⁷⁸ Kelman (2006); Andrbadi & Das (2017)

2005 Kashmir Earthquake	India and Pakistan	Short-Term Diplomacy	The earthquake created a brief window for cooperation between two nuclear rivals, demonstrating how disasters can temporarily soften adversarial relations.	Kelman (2006); Andrbadi & Das (2017)
2001 and 2017 Hurricanes	USA and Cuba	Long-Term Diplomacy	Shared disaster response efforts created periods of diplomatic calm, which, while significant, did not fully overcome deeper tensions.	Glantz (2000); Kelman (2007)
1991-93 Drought in Southern Africa	Southern African countries	Long-Term Diplomacy	The shared regional challenge fostered long-term cooperation among affected countries, illustrating the potential of disaster diplomacy to build enduring partnerships.	Holloway (2000)

SOURCE Authors Own Compilation

Similar to earthquakes, in instances of other disasters, regions impacted by disasters typically witness offers of support from their conflicting counterparts, as evidenced by occurrences such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, cyclones in Cuba and the United States in 2001 and 2017, and the aridity crisis in South Africa. These diverse occurrences validate the notion that disaster diplomacy can temporarily bridge the divide and foster goodwill between conflicting states. Furthermore, they illustrate that in periods of disaster, humanitarian imperatives can transcend political divergences and pave the way for discussions and collaboration. Nonetheless, obstacles and restrictions persist despite the potential for collaboration. Longstanding historical and political disputes between nations might impede efficient cooperation both during and after disasters. It is imperative to acknowledge that disaster diplomacy represents a multifaceted and politically sensitive subject, with multiple variables influencing the choices made by disaster-affected nations. Each

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

scenario is distinct, and the rationales for accepting or rejecting aid may differ based on the specific circumstances and inter-country dynamics. As emphasized previously, scholarly inquiries into disaster diplomacy explore the extent to which disasters facilitate a fresh framework for collaboration among adversarial states and communities⁷⁹. Certain research examines disasters as geopolitical disruptions distinct from conflicts such as wars⁸⁰; serving as pivotal moments or instigators for socio-political transformations⁸¹. Kreutz contends that disasters can engender prospects for collaboration by fostering dialogues⁸². Collaboration happens through the escalation of formal exchanges that challenge prejudices between states⁸³. In essence, disaster diplomacy operates as a catalyst within diplomatic contexts by furnishing avenues for nations to converge, cultivate trust, and cooperate during periods of emergency.

Accordingly, disasters can serve as catalysts in diplomatic relations through various mechanisms: Initially, following a disaster, the delivery of assistance to the impacted nation has the potential to foster trust and goodwill among states, consequently sparking additional diplomatic interactions. Subsequently, disasters often necessitate a collaborative approach that involves multiple nations, the sharing of information, resources, and expertise to mount an efficient response. Collaborating during a crisis can promote cooperation and lead to enhanced diplomatic ties. Thirdly, disasters can impact countries irrespective of their political or ideological stances. The shared vulnerability experienced can cultivate empathy and solidarity among nations, fostering a willingness to transcend differences and collaborate for the collective benefit, thereby positively influencing diplomatic relations. However, the achievement of

⁷⁹ Pelling and Dill, 2010; Kelman and Koukis, 2000; Olson, 2000

⁸⁰ Akcinaroglu et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2022

⁸¹ Pelling and Dill, 2010

⁸² J. Kreutz, "From tremors to talks: Do natural disasters produce ripe moments for resolving separatist conflicts?" *International Interactions* 38.4 (2012): 482-502.

⁸³ Akcinaroglu et al., 2011

this potential is closely tied to the wider diplomatic environment and the strategic factors of the parties concerned. Fourthly, disasters typically attract substantial media attention, both domestically and internationally, thus the reactions of nations to such events can mold public perceptions and attitudes. A prompt and effective response has the potential to bolster a country's reputation and elevate its standing within the global community. Lastly, post-disaster, countries may progress beyond immediate aid exchanges, engaging in enduring partnerships to reconstruct infrastructure, fortify disaster readiness, enhance resilience, and even broaden collaboration into other domains⁸⁴.

In brief, disaster diplomacy can create a pivotal moment in interstate relations. However, numerous inquiries persist, including the methods for assessing disaster diplomacy, the appropriate analytical scope, and the emphasis on public diplomacy versus grassroots movements in conceptualizing diplomatic efforts. Previous empirical research indicates that disaster diplomacy could enhance diplomatic ties between adversarial nations, given the existence of pre-disaster relations and diplomatic endeavors. Nonetheless, these studies underscore short-term cooperation and solidarity across various levels between such nations due to non-disaster-related factors. Within this context, this thesis delves into disaster diplomacy within the context of Turkish-Syrian relations, centering on state-level diplomacy between Türkiye and Syria to propose a novel analytical framework for the literature. To gain deeper insights into the mechanisms of disaster diplomacy, the following section will provide an overview of scholarly studies on longstanding and ongoing natural disaster disputes between Türkiye and Syria: water issues.

⁸⁴ For details on how disasters serve as catalysts in diplomatic relations see I. Kelman, "Catastrophe and Conflict: Disaster Diplomacy and Its Foreign Policy Implications" 1, no. 1 (April 9, 2016): 7-8.

2.3.2 *The Role of Transboundary Water Issues in Interstate Conflict and Cooperation*

Water diplomacy plays a vital role in the realm of international relations, especially in areas where water sources cross international borders. Therefore, this section will offer a concise analysis of both the theoretical and applied aspects of water diplomacy, underscoring its importance in managing disputes and promoting collaboration among countries that share transboundary water sources.

Freshwater reserves exhibit an unequal distribution across the globe, with various sources crossing national borders, transforming into transboundary water reserves⁸⁵. With nearly 60% of the available freshwater concentrated in less than 10 nations, certain areas benefit from water abundance, while others experience a scarcity of water⁸⁶. Considering the vital place of freshwater in human life, it is expected to see interstate conflicts arise from the competition for limited water resources⁸⁷. Recognizing that the phenomenon of water scarcity is particularly evident in arid and semi-arid regions, including the Middle East, numerous academic inquiries have identified freshwater resources as a potential instigator of conflict within the specific context of the Middle East, which remains the primary domain of conflict research⁸⁸. Studies have depicted freshwater reservoirs as potential triggers for conflicts between states in the future⁸⁹. The assertions made by political

⁸⁵ *Handbook On Water Allocation In A Transboundary Context*. Geneva: United Nations Publications, 2021. <https://www.routledge.com/Disaster-Diplomacy-How-Disasters-Affect-Peace-and-Conflict/Kelman/p/book/9780367669645>.

⁸⁶ L. Ohlsson, *The Role of Water and the Origins of Conflict. Hydropolitics*. London, Zed Books. 1995.

⁸⁷ P.H. Gleick, Water and Conflict: Fresh Water Resources and International Security. *International Security*, 18(1), (1993) 79–112. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539033>

⁸⁸ Frey 1993, Gleick 1993, Lowi 1995, Schultz 1995

⁸⁹ Starr 1991, Bulloch and Darvish 1993

figures, media discussions, and research findings all hint at the possibility of 'water wars' in the MENA region⁹⁰.

The discipline devoted to examining interstate conflict and collaboration concerning transboundary water issues manifested in the late 1970s was initially characterized by a pronounced focus on empirical analysis⁹¹. The intensity of transboundary water challenges has significantly increased since the onset of the twentieth century⁹². As a result, numerous comprehensive case studies have been published, centering on water-related disputes, the sharing of water resources, and the intricacies of water governance.

Numerous studies have been conducted across various fields aiming to address the challenges arising among nations that share common resources. Starting from 1990s, academics have shown a growing interest in the correlation between water scarcity and interstate disputes⁹³. Studies advocate the notion that water scarcity can trigger interstate tensions, with water emerging as a crucial factor in interstate relations, sometimes leading to violent clashes.⁹⁴ In other words, water scarcity can be a factor contributing to conflict rather than cooperation in interstate relations. According to Haftendorn (2000), various causes, such as water usage (such as for navigation), water quality issues (such as pollution and environmental concerns), the unequal distribution of water resources, and the overall availability of water can lead to conflicts between states⁹⁵. Furthermore, in certain instances, an abundance of water (such as flooding) can also lead to tensions at the interstate level⁹⁶. Conversely, numerous scholarly studies demonstrate that communal water

⁹⁰ Alam 2002, Ravnborg 2004, Selby 2005

⁹¹ Elhance 1999; LeMarquand 1977

⁹² Kibaroglu and Ünver, "An institutional framework for facilitating cooperation in the Euphrates-Tigris River basin," *International Negotiation* 5.2 (2000): 311-330.

⁹³ Ö. Z. Oktav, "Türkiye's water policy in the Euphrates-Tigris basin." *Environmental change and human security in Africa and the Middle East* (2017): 240.

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ V. Haftendorn, "Water and International Conflict." *Third World Quarterly* 27(1), (2000): 53.

⁹⁶ Kundzewicz 2001: 883.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

resources primarily promote collaborative efforts rather than engendering conflict⁹⁷.

Most of the freshwater resources are transboundary lacking political boundaries. Hence, the positions held by riparian states also play a significant role in shaping conflict dynamics within inter-state relations⁹⁸. Frey (1993) posits that a higher likelihood of conflictual relations exists in basins where the downstream co-riparian state demonstrates greater power and interests, while the upstream co-riparian state(s) hold a certain level of interest⁹⁹. As an opposite, basins characterized by a powerful upstream co-riparian state with limited interest in the watershed are more likely to experience stabilized relations¹⁰⁰. In relation to the influence of power in transboundary water relationships, the distribution of power among neighboring states plays a crucial role in shaping either conflicting or collaborative interactions. Lowi (1999) contends that the relative power dynamics, known as power configurations, are instrumental in determining whether transboundary water relationships result in conflict or cooperation on an interstate level¹⁰¹. In this context, the likelihood of cooperation diminishes when the upstream neighboring states hold a position of power dominance over their downstream counterparts. This assertion by Lowi elucidates the presence of agreements in the Jordan and Nile River basins, in contrast to the absence of such agreements in the Euphrates and Tigris regions¹⁰². Additionally, instances from empirical studies demonstrate scenarios where water resources are utilized to fulfill specific objectives¹⁰³, or where a neighboring state perceives another state's

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Naff and Matson 1984

⁹⁹ Frey 1993, "The Political Context of Conflict and Cooperation Over International River Basins"

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Lowi 1999

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Gleick 1993, Dinar 2002

water-related actions as a strategic tool or a form of political leverage. The collective outcomes of these analyses view power as tangible capacities encompassing military strength, economic resources, and technological capabilities.

The function of the broader political context is regarded as a pivotal factor influencing the dynamics, whether adversarial or collaborative, amongst states that share water resources¹⁰⁴. Hence, scholarly investigations in hydro politics highlight the importance of extensive political environments as a vital element in matters pertaining to transboundary water resources¹⁰⁵. It is posited that while issues related to transboundary waters may lead to conflicts, the likelihood of such disputes escalating into violent confrontations remains minimal¹⁰⁶. Lowi (1995) further delineates water-related challenges as residing within the domain of 'low politics' and emphasizes the critical role of high-profile issues in shaping hydro-political interactions among co-riparian nations involved in transboundary water affairs¹⁰⁷.

The established principles of international water law and water diplomacy, which involve negotiation processes and the application of legal frameworks. In addition to these, strategies of 'coercive diplomacy' are occasionally employed in water-related issues, particularly within transboundary river basins in the Middle East¹⁰⁸. Coercive diplomacy encompasses tactics such as using force threats in foreign policy, issuing ultimatums, implied threats, gradual pressure, or a policy of testing boundaries¹⁰⁹. A notable instance dates back to the early 2000s when Israel deemed any alterations by Lebanon in the Wazzani River as a *casus*

¹⁰⁴ Gleick 1993; MacQuarrie 2004

¹⁰⁵ Yoffe et al. 2003

¹⁰⁶ M. R. Lowi, "Water and Conflict in the Middle East and South Asia: Are Environmental Issues and Security Issues Linked?" *The Journal of Environment & Development* 8(4) (1999): 376-396.

¹⁰⁷ M. R. Lowi, *Water and Power: The Politics of a Scarce Resource In The Jordan River Basin*, No. 31. Cambridge University Press (1995), 9 & 74.

¹⁰⁸ Kibaroglu, 2023

¹⁰⁹ Kibaroglu, 2023

*belli*¹¹⁰. The underlying principle is that the coercing party compels its opponent to decide by openly expressing or intimating the use of force¹¹¹. Furthermore, the framework known as Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus (TWINS), which was formulated by Naho Mirumachi, provides a comprehensive analytical instrument for assessing the conflicting and collaborative interactions among riparian states within transboundary water contexts¹¹². This framework represents a notable addition to the wider body of literature concerning transboundary water politics, offering valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of these interactions. The TWINS framework explores the methods for recognizing conflicting and cooperative interactions among riparian states in transboundary water contexts. It proposes a shift away from the simplistic categorization of hydro-political interactions as purely conflictual or cooperative, emphasizing instead on the analysis of 'speech acts' that reveal the conflicting and collaborative hydropolitical interactions among stakeholders. By examining the speech acts carried out by influential figures engaged in discourse, which demonstrate both conflictual and collaborative tendencies, the TWINS framework contends that transboundary water relations between riparian states encompass elements of both conflict and cooperation. Contrary to the notion that relationships within transboundary hydropolitics inevitably progress from conflict towards cooperation in a linear fashion, the TWINS framework asserts that conflicting and collaborative interactions develop concurrently over time.

The TWINS framework investigates the factors influencing either conflicting or cooperative relationships among co-riparian states in transboundary water politics. Mirumachi contends that understanding cooperative versus conflicting interactions in transboundary water

¹¹⁰ M. R. Lowi, *Water and Power: The Politics of A Scarce Resource In The Jordan River Basin*, No. 31. Cambridge University Press (1995): 317.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Naho Mirumachi, *Study of Conflict and Cooperation in International Transboundary River Basins: The Twins Framework*, King's College London (University of London), 2010.

contexts is significantly influenced by basin asymmetries/symmetries¹¹³. Nevertheless, the TWINS model does not delve deeper into the significance of power in transboundary water politics. Instead, it references the prevailing literature surrounding the hydro-hegemony framework¹¹⁴, and the counter hydro-hegemony framework¹¹⁵.

The identification of conflictual relations does not necessarily indicate a lack of cooperation, nor does the presence of cooperation imply the absence of conflict; rather, these two concepts exist simultaneously¹¹⁶. In support of this notion, Allan asserts that individuals who are involved in close relationships, such as marriage or similar partnerships, understand that conflict and cooperation are ongoing concurrently¹¹⁷. Empirical instances can be drawn from various transboundary water scenarios that demonstrate the coexistence of conflict and cooperation. For instance, Daoudy (2009) examines the persistent negotiation process among the co-riparian states of the ET basin and characterizes the interactions between Türkiye, Syria, and Iraq as having "relations.... with peaks of conflict and periods of cooperation"¹¹⁸. By employing the TWINS framework, it is common to anticipate outcomes such as high conflict-low cooperation and low conflict-high cooperation in transboundary water relationships between riparian states.

Grounded in this theoretical framework, the following chapters will thoroughly investigate the transformations in Turkish-Syrian water relations throughout history, emphasizing the cyclical characteristics of interstate interactions related to water issues. Distinct patterns of high conflict coupled with low cooperation and low cooperation combined with high conflict can be distinguished during various phases of the Turkish-Syrian water relations. Nevertheless, low conflict and low

¹¹³ Mirumachi, 2010: 62.

¹¹⁴ Zeitoun and Warner 2006; Daoudy 2008; Saleh 2008; Warner 2010

¹¹⁵ Cascao 2009; Cascao and Zeitoun 2010

¹¹⁶ Mirumachi, 2010: 43

¹¹⁷ Allan 2007 in Mirumachi, 2010: 44

¹¹⁸ M. Daoudy, "Asymmetric Power: Negotiating Water in the Euphrates and Tigris." *International Negotiation* 14(2) (2009): 362.

cooperation are frequently observed in cross-border interactions. In such circumstances, minimal to nonexistent engagement exists among the riparian states. Similarly, this configuration is apparent within the water dynamics between Türkiye and Syria.

§ 2.4 Conclusion

Events like hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and droughts are considered regional, with risks beyond national boundaries. The consequences of these severe events also extend regionally, leading countries exposed to such risks to work together to reduce the impact of these hazards. Even in cases where a natural disaster offers a chance for collaboration and conflict resolution, the existing hostilities serve as an impediment to altering societal perspectives and governmental strategies toward reconciliation. Conversely, in scenarios where such hostilities do not exist, as evidenced in the Türkiye-Greece instance, disasters can stimulate favorable changes in public opinion and facilitate diplomatic initiatives. Consequently, the concept of disaster diplomacy could potentially prevail over longstanding political hostility in the case of Türkiye and Syria.

Chapter Two has established a crucial theoretical foundation for comprehending the intricate dynamics that shape the foreign policy, particularly in the context of Türkiye-Syria relations. By examining disaster diplomacy, this chapter has highlighted its potential to catalyze cooperation during crises, creating opportunities for collaboration that might otherwise remain unexplored. At the same time, the analysis of trans-boundary water issues has emphasized the fragile balance between conflict and cooperation in shared resource management, where geopolitical and societal tensions often dictate outcomes. These theoretical approaches enhance our comprehension of international relations and pave the way for the historical examination in Chapter Three. Transitioning from theory to practical application will involve a focus on Türkiye's historical engagements with Syria, analyzing the progression of

relations from the pre-2000s era to the post-2000s period, with a specific focus on the repercussions of the Syrian Civil War on these bilateral dynamics .



3

The Historical Overview of Turkish Foreign Policy with Syria

This chapter examines the historical context underpinning the diplomatic interactions between Türkiye and Syria during two distinct time frames: pre-2000s and post-2000s (See Table 2). With a focus on the limited diplomatic exchanges before the year 2000, the accession of Hatay to Türkiye in 1939 represented a critical juncture of contention, given that the province had been a contested territory between the two nations. This development was succeeded by the water conflict during the 1980s, which centered on the Euphrates River and served to intensify existing tensions further. Furthermore, the 1990s were characterized by escalating discord attributable to Syria's endorsement of terrorist organizations, which Türkiye perceived as a direct jeopardy to its national security. Transitioning to the post-2000s era, the relationship initially exhibited improvement, as evidenced by augmented diplomatic initiatives, trade agreements, and collaborative endeavors, particularly in the early 2000s. Nonetheless, the onset of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 dramatically changed the course of the relations. The civil war emerged as a crucial determinant in Türkiye's foreign policy, culminating in a more complex and challenging regional environment. This transition underscores

the significant ramifications of the conflict on bilateral relations, with Türkiye navigating to maintain an uncertain equilibrium between humanitarian concerns, security threats, and regional stability. As the conflict escalated, Türkiye found itself increasingly involved, supporting various factions while simultaneously grappling with the influx of refugees and the rise of extremist groups along its borders.

Table 2.1: Historical Analysis on Turkish Foreign Policy with Syria

Period	Key Events	Description
Pre-2000s	Hatay's Accession to Türkiye (1939)	Hatay Province, historically disputed, formally joined Türkiye, causing friction with Syria.
	Case of Water Conflict (1980s)	Disputes over water resources, particularly the Euphrates River, escalated tensions.
	Tense Relations with Syria's Support of Terrorism (1990s)	Syria's support for Kurdish terrorist groups strained relations with Türkiye.
Post-2000s	Pre-Syrian Civil War (2000-2010)	Relations improved with diplomatic efforts, trade agreements, and increased cooperation.
	The Role of Syrian Civil War (2011-Present)	The civil war in Syria became a pivotal factor in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy, affecting regional dynamics.

SOURCE Authors Own Compilation

§ 3.1 Relations in the Pre-2000s

The relations between neighbouring Türkiye and Syria have been fluctuating since the day Syria gained its independence. The initial issue arose concerning Hatay's accession to Türkiye, followed by a subsequent matter post the Treaty of Lausanne, focusing on transboundary waters. Particularly following Hafez al-Assad's rise to power, the interactions between Türkiye and Syria escalated in significance due to factors like the 'Greater Syria' concept encompassing Hatay and Cyprus, as well as the 'Water Problem' stemming from Türkiye's dam projects on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. The water predicament resurfaced in the 1970s

with the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) implementation between the two nations. In order to gain the upper hand in these problems, Syria forged a strong partnership with Russia, aligned with Kurdish factions in the area against Türkiye, and harbored the PKK terrorist group for an extended period. Syria extended support to Abdullah Öcalan and his Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which sought refuge within its borders in 1979, utilizing the group and its leader as a bargaining tool against Türkiye through both material and moral means. Consequently, Syria self-inflicted a third major issue with Türkiye and compounded the existing problems between the two nations. Furthermore, Syria leveraged the PKK to undermine Türkiye and sow instability within the country.¹¹⁹

3.1.1 *Hatay's Accession to Türkiye*

Hatay, being among the oldest settlements in the world, has accommodated diverse cultures and civilizations over an extensive period of time; moreover, it has served as a pivotal point on trade and energy routes for several centuries. During the Ottoman Empire period, Antakya, which came under Ottoman rule after the Egyptian expedition in 1516-17, was connected to Aleppo Province. During the First World War, Britain and France partitioned the region with the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement they made in 1916. After the Armistice of Mondros, despite all the efforts of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, the British occupied the Port of Iskenderun on 9 November 1918 and the French on 12 November 1918¹²⁰. In May 1920, Tayfur (Sökmen) Bey, a prominent figure in the Kuva-yı Milliye movement, dispatched a telegram to Mustafa Kemal Pasha inquiring about the territorial jurisdiction outlined in the National Pact. The response confirmed their inclusion within the boundaries of the National Pact, directing them to establish communication

¹¹⁹ Ö.Z. Oktay, "Water dispute and Kurdish separatism in Turkish-Syrian relations." *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 34 (2003): 91-117.

¹²⁰ B. Yavuz, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Döneminde Türk-Fransız İlişkileri*, TTK, Ankara, 1994: 5; S. Tansel, *Mondros'tan Mudanya'ya Kadar*, C. I, MEB, İstanbul, 1991: 48-49; V. Payaslı, *Sancak'tan Vilayet'e Hatay (1921-1960)*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2017: 7-9.

with Selahattin Adil Bey, who commanded the 2nd Corps in Maraş¹²¹. Meanwhile, amidst intense struggles against the French forces in the Sanjak of İskenderun, the Battle of Sakarya was won, and negotiations for an agreement with the French began. Tayfur Bey went to Ankara to represent İskenderun Sanjak's residents and meet with Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Due to the reconciliation between the involved parties with the conditions of the National Struggle, Sanjak was left to the governance of France through the signing of the Ankara Treaty on 20 October 1921. Although the territory remained distinct from the boundaries of Türkiye, Mustafa Kemal Pasha assured Tayfur Sökmen of the future liberation of Hatay. During the discussions surrounding the delegation for the Lausanne negotiations in November 1922, a delegation from Antakya went to Ankara and asked Mustafa Kemal Pasha not to forget Hatay¹²². During the interruption of the Lausanne negotiations, a group from Antakya was among those who welcomed Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who arrived in Adana on 15 March 1923. During his speech, Mustafa Kemal Pasha addressed this group with the words, "The forty-century-old Turkish homeland cannot remain a prisoner in the hands of the enemy!"¹²³.

In 1936, France encountered a series of challenges domestically and within its overseas territories. The conflict between the far right and far left factions in Europe, alongside the revolts in Africa, Iraq, and Egypt, served to diminish France's desire to be a central power. Within this context, the Socialist politician Léon Blum emerged victorious in the 1936 elections and started the implementation of his pre-election promise to the French people regarding the withdrawal of French military forces

¹²¹ Tayfur Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, TTK, Ankara, 1992: 35-69; Bige Yavuz, "1921 Tarihli Türk-Fransız Anlaşması'nın Hazırlık Aşamaları", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 8(23) (1992): 273-308

¹²² Tayfur Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, TTK, Ankara, 1992: 35-69; Bige Yavuz, "1921 Tarihli Türk-Fransız Anlaşması'nın Hazırlık Aşamaları", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 8(23), 1992: 273-308

¹²³ İsmail Habib Sevük, *Atatürk'le Beraber*, İşbank Cultural Publications, İstanbul, 2017: 25-26.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

from the colonial territories¹²⁴. Indeed, in accordance with the agreement concluded between Syria and France in Paris on the 9th of September 1936, Syria was designated to attain independence and become a member of the League of Nations within a span of 3 years, with all commitments and agreements assumed by the French administration on behalf of Syria to be handed over to Syria. In contrast, Türkiye, while welcoming Syria's independence, also indicated that the matter concerning the Sanjak of Iskenderun needed to be resolved through mutual discussions between the two countries¹²⁵.

After the resolution of the regime of the Straits with Montreux Convention in favor of Türkiye, Atatürk turned his entire focus to the independence of Hatay. Upon Afet İnan's statement that Türkiye had no more problems after the conclusion of the Straits Regime in favor of Türkiye, Atatürk said, 'Now there is the problem of Iskenderun and Antioch! We will focus on it!'¹²⁶. Following these developments, the delegation that signed the Syrian-French treaty in Paris was welcomed by Şükrü Saraçoğlu in Istanbul on 23 September. Saraçoğlu told Syrian Prime Minister Hashim El Atasi that they were pleased that Syria was an independent state and would solve the Hatay issue with the French, not Syria. Syrian Prime Minister Hashim El Atasi's visit to Türkiye had wide publicity in the press. In particular, to the question 'What will the situation of Antakya and Iskenderun be?' posed by journalists, he replied: 'Antakya and Iskenderun had sovereignty under the French mandate. Now, it has been transferred to the Syrian government with the same rights and powers.'¹²⁷ His

¹²⁴ Melek Fırat-Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Sancak (Hatay) Sorunu", *Türk Dış Politikası, (1919-1980)*,1, Baskın Oran, İletişim: İstanbul, 2009: 283.

¹²⁵ Hasan Rıza Soyak, *Atatürk'ten Hatıralar*, Yapı Kredi Publications, (İstanbul, 2016): 609-610;

Serhan Ada, *Türk -Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu (1918-1939)*, İstanbul Bilgi University Publications, (İstanbul, 2005): 104-109.

¹²⁶ Afet İnan, *Atatürk'ten Mektuplar*, TTK Publications, (Ankara, 1989):34; Afet İnan, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ve Türk Devrimi*, TTK Publications, (Ankara, 1998): 135; *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri*, 28, Kaynak Publications, (İstanbul, 2015): 297.

¹²⁷ "Paris'ten Gelen Suriye Heyeti'nin Sözleri", *Cumhuriyet*, 24 Eylül 1936, 1, 7.

answer soon caused reactions in the Turkish press and domestic politics, and protests against the situation in Iskenderun and Antioch, where Turks were the majority, increased¹²⁸.

Following these events, Atatürk brought the Hatay issue to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) for the first time. During the session on 1 November 1936, he stated that the future of Antakya and Iskenderun, predominantly inhabited by Turks, should be monitored closely, and the following day, he named the region "Hatay"¹²⁹. Upon Atatürk's request, the name of the 'Iskenderun-Antakya and its Vicinity Society of Mudafaa-i Hukuk' was changed to 'Hatay Sovereignty Society'¹³⁰. Although the dispute was brought to the League of Nations, both Türkiye and Syria stood by their respective arguments. Consequently, Sandler, the Swedish representative, was designated as the rapporteur by the League of Nations to mediate the conflict. It was agreed that he would lead a delegation to the area for an inquiry. Furthermore, it was decided that the agreement between France and Syria, acknowledging Syria's independence, would not be approved by the French Parliament until the Hatay dispute was resolved¹³¹. The Sandler Report, published on 27 January 1937, largely confirmed the Turkish arguments establishing Hatay's "separate existence" legally¹³².

While these developments were taking place, İsmet İnönü had a meeting with British Foreign Minister Eden on Hatay during his visit to London on 8 May 1937 to attend the coronation ceremony of King George VI of England¹³³. The negotiations produced outcomes swiftly, with Britain notifying its French counterpart about the need to comprehend Turkish demands. As a result, the Constitution of Sanjak was ratified on

¹²⁸ Hasan Rıza Soyak, *Atatürk'ten Hatıralar*, (İstanbul, 2016): 533; Hasan İzzettin Dinamo, *Kutsal Barış 4*, Tekin Publications, (İstanbul, 2010): 418-419.

¹²⁹ *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, ATAM, (Ankara, 2006): 410.

¹³⁰ Tayfur Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu*, 95.

¹³¹ Selim Çelenk, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluş Mücadelesi Anıları*, (Antakya, 1997): 84-85.

¹³² İsmail Soysal, "Hatay Sorunu ve Türk-Fransız Siyasal İlişkileri (1936-1939)", *Belleten* 49, no. (1985): 87-89.

¹³³ İsmet İnönü, *Günlükler*, Yapı Kredi Publications, (İstanbul, 2017): 177-178.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

29 May¹³⁴. Subsequently, the Syrian Assembly convened on 3 June, issued a statement declaring their refusal to accept the treaty and status, and asserting that Sanjak was an indivisible part of Syrian territory. Following the removal of the Syrian flag from Hatay, both the Syrian Assembly and the media strongly criticized the League of Nations, Türkiye, and France¹³⁵.

On 23 June 1939, during the Refik Saydam government, the first Turkish-French friendship treaty was signed in Paris, effectively settling the territorial dispute between Türkiye and Syria. The signatories of this crucial agreement were Suat Davaz, the Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Paris, and Bonnet, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France¹³⁶. Concurrently, another accord was formalized in Ankara between Şükrü Saraçoğlu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, and Massigli, the French Ambassador to Ankara. This treaty stipulated that Hatay would become part of the Turkish territory. Consequently, following the referendum, the Hatay National Assembly unanimously decided to unite with Türkiye on 29 June 1939¹³⁷. Although the Syrian Assembly asserted its refusal of the decision, the outcome remained unchanged. Nevertheless, the Hatay matter persisted as a notable issue in the bilateral relations between Türkiye and Syria. Stimulated by the surge of Arab nationalism in 1945, the Syrian media actively urged Arabs to engage in the struggle for the nation's liberation to reclaim the Iskenderun region, contending that it had been unjustly seized from Syria. Despite enhancing Turkish-Syrian relations until the 2000s, Syria persistently maintained its historical demand over Hatay, viewing the region as an integral part of its sovereign territory. Even today, the Hatay issue resurfaces periodically, reigniting debates over its status. The declaration by the Syrian parliament in 2021

¹³⁴ Tayfur Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 10.

¹³⁵ Hamit Pehlivanlı, *Türk Dış Politikasında Hatay (1918-1939)*, ASAM, (Ankara, 2002): 84.

¹³⁶ İsmail Soysal, "Hatay Sorunu ve Türk-Fransız Siyasal İlişkileri (1936-1939)", *Belleten* 49, no. (1985): 102.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 103.

advocating for the retrieval of Hatay to be reintegrated into Syrian territory serves as evidence of this stance¹³⁸.

3.1.2 *Case of Water Conflict*

The water resources of the Euphrates-Tigris Basin represent a major factor impacting the relations between Türkiye and Syria. Considered one of the primary basins in the Middle East, it holds a crucial role in the interactions among the riparian nations of Türkiye, Syria, and Iraq. When analyzing the Türkiye-Syria historical relations, it reveals that policies concerning the basin's waters have a direct link to the bilateral relations between these two countries. Given the substantial water volumes present in the basin, the rivers serve as indispensable resources for riparian nations, primarily for agricultural irrigation and hydroelectric power generation¹³⁹.

Beginning in the 1960s, a shift in focus towards water resources as a prominent topic in their mutual foreign relations starts to be seen. Türkiye, Syria, and Iraq have initiated large-scale dam projects, with Türkiye constructing the Keban Dam while Syria was building the Tabqa Dam¹⁴⁰. The Keban dam, which represents the initial large-scale project in the upper region of the Euphrates and Tigris basins, was initiated in 1965. Simultaneously, in the 1960s, feasibility assessments were carried out in the lower Euphrates and Tigris basins to actualize this potential. These assessments served as the precursor to the Southeastern Anatolian project, commonly referred to as the GAP, which was identified as a regional development initiative in 1980¹⁴¹.

¹³⁸ "Türkiye rejects statement by Assad regime targeting its territorial integrity" Anadolu Agency, (02.12.2021), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/Türkiye/Türkiye-rejects-statement-by-assad-regime-targeting-its-territorial-integrity/2437175>

¹³⁹ A. Kibaroglu and W. Scheumann. "Euphrates-Tigris rivers system: Political rapprochement and transboundary water cooperation." *Türkiye's water policy: National frameworks and international cooperation*. Berlin, 2011: 280-282.

¹⁴⁰ T. E. Maden, "Kriz Dönemlerinde Su Politikaları: Türkiye-Suriye", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, 4(44) 2012: 90.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 90.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

Another basin with a significant position in Turkish-Syrian relations is the Orontes River basin, also known as the Asi River in Turkish and Nahr el-Assi in Arabic¹⁴². Both Syria and Türkiye are riparian entities of the basin alongside Lebanon, and the basin stands out as a critical area of contention between downstream Türkiye and upstream Syria¹⁴³. The Orontes River basin has emerged as a focal point for negotiations and tensions due to the riparian nations' different water requirements and priorities, thereby resulting in intricate diplomatic dialogues and agreements in pre 2000 period. Türkiye has raised concerns about Syria and Lebanon consumption of all the water from the Asi River, contrasting it with the Euphrates River's consistent flow of 500 cm/s even at lower velocities of 100 cm/s. Conversely, Syria has been hesitant to reach an agreement on sharing the Asi River on the grounds that such an agreement would imply recognition of Hatay as Turkish territory¹⁴⁴.

The activities of the riparian states in enhancing their water resources to boost hydroelectric capacity and expand irrigated agricultural lands led to conflicts among them. By the 1980s, the water issue had evolved into a matter of political significance. The initial results of the Euphrates and Tigris basin hydraulic projects by riparian states led to discussions on a bilateral and trilateral basis during the 1960s and 1970s. This transition quickly shifted the water matter from a non-political to a politicized and securitized realm¹⁴⁵. Türkiye witnessed a notable rise in water management and control in the Euphrates and Tigris basins with the onset of the GAP project in the early 1980s, accompanied by the construction of several large dams throughout the

¹⁴² W. Scheumann, I. Sagsen, & E. Tereci. "Orontes River Basin: Downstream challenges and prospects for cooperation." Türkiye's water policy: National frameworks and international cooperation (2011): 301.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ö. Z. Oktav, "Water dispute and Kurdish separatism in Turkish Syrian relations", Turkish Yearbook of International Relations, 34, (2003): 98.

¹⁴⁵ M. Daoudy, "Asymmetric Power: Negotiating Water in the Euphrates and Tigris." *International Negotiation* 14(2), 2009: 374.

1980s and 1990s. Consequently, Iraqi and Syrian policymakers promptly viewed the GAP initiative as a risk to their existence, prompting a unified stance against Türkiye's developmental efforts during that period¹⁴⁶. Türkiye, in fact, funded the South-eastern Anatolia Project (GAP) solely through its domestic finances after facing rejections from international financial institutions due to objections from Syria¹⁴⁷.

The divergence in terminology, indicating a significant level of polarization, became more evident at this time. While Türkiye favored naming the basin as 'the Euphrates and Tigris Transboundary Basin,' Iraq and Syria administrations inclined towards referring to it as 'the Euphrates and Tigris International Basin(s)'. Additionally, Türkiye's use of 'allocation' contradicted Syria and Iraq's preference for 'share' concerning the rivers. Through 'allocation,' Türkiye emphasized the states' sovereign rights over their territories. Conversely, 'share' implied viewing the Euphrates and Tigris basins as an 'international' basin, suggesting joint ownership. The ongoing 'basin vs. basin(s) debate' highlights the primary divide between upstream and downstream co-riparian states¹⁴⁸.

During the early 1980s, Syria cultivated ties with the PKK, granting them refuge on Syrian soil to counter Turkish influence; this move sparked tensions with Türkiye regarding river utilization in the area, as Syria aimed to secure a competitive edge. Consequently, the emergence of a terrorism-related concern marked the third most critical point of contention between Türkiye and Syria.

¹⁴⁶ Serdar Güner, 'The Turkish-Syrian War of Attrition The Water Dispute,' *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 20(1), 1997:107.

¹⁴⁷ Ö. Z. Oktav, "Türkiye's water policy in the Euphrates-Tigris basin." *Environmental change and human security in Africa and the Middle East* (2017): 242.

¹⁴⁸ A. Kibaroglu, & O. Ünver "Firat ve Dicle'de Isbirligi Icin Yeni Acilimler " *Stratejik Analiz* 80 2006: 37.

3.1.3 *Tense Relations with Syria's Support of Terrorism*

Syria has consistently provided backing to the terrorist group PKK in a systematic manner in order to undermine Türkiye¹⁴⁹. In May 1979, the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, decided to relocate to Syria due to his perception of the unsustainable conditions for political operations within the tumultuous environment of Türkiye¹⁵⁰. Subsequently, this transition initiated a phase where the Syrian government strategically leveraged the PKK as a tool for political leverage in its interactions with Türkiye¹⁵¹.

In the late 1980s, the PKK's assaults on civilian and military targets escalated, posing a significant security challenge to Türkiye's territorial integrity¹⁵². Amid Syria's persistent backing of the PKK and various political dilemmas, Turgut Özal, the Prime Minister of Türkiye at the time, initiated efforts to improve Turkish-Syrian relations. In 1987, he conducted a crucial visit to Damascus, accompanied by a sizable delegation, primarily focusing on terror and water-related issues¹⁵³. Following Türkiye's request for Syria to cut its backing for the PKK in 1987, Syria proposed that a treaty be established concerning the distribution of the Euphrates River's waters¹⁵⁴. Accordingly, two protocols were signed by Türkiye and Syria, which hold particular

¹⁴⁹ U. Karabulut and E. Eryılmaz. "PKK Terör Örgütü ve Türkiye-Suriye İlişkilerine Etkileri (1991-2003)." *Belgi Dergisi* 11 (2016): 17-40 ; G. Özkan. "Türkiye-Suriye İlişkilerinde Bir Kırılma Noktası: Ekim 1998 Krizi Veya Diğer Bir İfadeyle." *İlan Edilmemiş Savaş*, Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi, Yıl (2018): 171; M. Orhan, "Transborder violence: the PKK in Türkiye, Syria and Iraq." *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 7.1 (2014): 30-48 ; H. Reimer-Burgrova, "'War on Terror' in Türkiye and Syria." *Politics of Violence and Fear in MENA* (2022): 191-226.

¹⁵⁰ G. Özkan, "Türkiye-Suriye İlişkilerinde Bir Kırılma Noktası: Ekim 1998 Krizi Veya Diğer Bir İfadeyle." *İlan Edilmemiş Savaş*, Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi, Yıl (2018): 171

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 171.

¹⁵² Ibid, 174.

¹⁵³ Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt II 1980-2001)*: 137.

¹⁵⁴ Ö. Z. Oktav, "Water dispute and Kurdish separatism in Turkish Syrian relations", *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 34, (2003): 104.

significance for the Euphrates and Tigris basin. While the first protocol focused on security, entailed mutual agreement on cooperation and the commitment to prevent any activities that may compromise the security of either nation, the second protocol outlined collaboration across various economic sectors. As per the second protocol formalized by both parties, Türkiye committed to releasing 500 cubic meters of water per second from the Euphrates to the Syrian border, with Syria reciprocally agreeing to terminate its backing of the PKK¹⁵⁵. Nevertheless, Syria has persisted in its assistance to the PKK. The rationale behind this support for terrorism encompassed three critical strategic objectives. The first objective hindered Türkiye's advancement as a political and military force in the region by impeding its economic progress. The second objective was externalizing its Kurdish problem by leveraging its Kurdish populace and exerting pressure on them. The third objective was to stop the implementation of the GAP initiative by restricting Türkiye's water resources access¹⁵⁶. Hence, the protocols signed between Türkiye and Syria did not seem to avoid the water crisis between the neighbors, primarily due to the evident and active backing extended to the PKK and its leader, Abdullah Ocalan. This backing significantly undermined the bilateral relations between Türkiye and Syria.

Throughout the 1990s, the PKK emerged as a significant security challenge for Türkiye, resulting in a considerable number of civilian and military losses¹⁵⁷. Thus, Turkish policymakers faced challenges in negotiating any agreements with the Syrian authorities, particularly concerning water resources and other unresolved conflicts. Turkish authorities engaged in multiple meetings with their Syrian counterparts, urging the stop of support to the group and asking for Syria's collaboration in counterterrorism efforts¹⁵⁸. Still, Syria persisted in providing logistical assistance to the PKK and offering shelter to its

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 104.

¹⁵⁶ U. Karabulut and E. Eryılmaz. "PKK Terör Örgütü ve Türkiye-Suriye İlişkilerine Etkileri (1991-2003)." *Belgi Dergisi* 11 (2016): 22-23.

¹⁵⁷ Ö. Z. Oktav, 2003: 103.

¹⁵⁸ G. Özkan, 182.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

leader, Abdullah Ocalan. It was not until 1994 that Syria officially designated the PKK as a terrorist group for the first time¹⁵⁹. Despite this recognition, the PKK organized a meeting in Syria in 1994, leading to a surge in terrorist attacks in Türkiye in subsequent periods¹⁶⁰.

Türkiye and Syria came to the brink of war in the autumn of 1998 because of Syria's ongoing support for the PKK and the presence of the PKK's founder Abdullah Öcalan in Syrian territory. Despite security agreements signed in the early 1990s, these circumstances and Syria's stance caused discomfort in Türkiye¹⁶¹. When diplomatic efforts between the two nations failed to yield any positive results, General Atilla Ateş, the Commander of the Turkish Land Forces at the time, announced on 16 September 1998 that patience had worn thin¹⁶². Subsequently, President Süleyman Demirel made a statement regarding the 1998 Türkiye-Syria crisis as follows:

‘Syria pursues a policy of open hostility towards Türkiye and continues to support the PKK terrorist organization actively. I declare once again to the world that we reserve the right to retaliate against Syria, which has not given up its hostile attitude despite all our warnings and peaceful approaches, and that our patience is about to run out.’¹⁶³

This statement led to concerns about the potential outbreak of war, with Egypt, Iran, and Kuwait voicing their opinions in an effort to prevent a war between the two states. Egyptian officials, including President Hosni

¹⁵⁹ U. Karabulut and E. Eryılmaz, 2016: 31.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Fahir Alaçam, 'The Turkish-Syrian Relations', *Turkish Review of Middle East Studies Annual 1994—1995*, İstanbul, OBIV, 1996:16; F. Aksu, *Türk Dış Politikasında Zorlayıcı Diplomasi*. İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2008: 258-259

¹⁶² “Terörist başının Kenya’da paketlenip Türkiye’ye getirilmesinin üzerinden 21 yıl geçti” Anadolu Agency, February 14, 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/terorist-basinin-kenyada-paketlenip-turkiyeye-getirilmesinin-uzerinden-21-yil-gecti/1733834> Anadolu Ajansı, 2020

¹⁶³ Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclis, 1988

Mubarak, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, and Omar Suleiman of the Egyptian Secret Service, engaged in discussions with authorities in Damascus and Ankara respectively¹⁶⁴.

During the crisis in October 1998, in addition to the explicit warnings issued by the Turkish military chief of staff Kıvrıkoğlu and the diplomatic efforts led by President Demirel and Foreign Minister İsmail Cem, such as engaging in shuttle diplomacy with Arab leaders and corresponding with foreign ministers, Türkiye deployed 10,000 troops ready to pass the border¹⁶⁵. The heightened military presence and strategic maneuvers by Türkiye underscored the seriousness of the crisis and sent a strong message to Syria regarding Türkiye's stance on the escalating situation¹⁶⁶. Realizing that war was imminent, Syria expelled Abdullah Öcalan from Syrian territory. The expulsion of PKK leader from Syria and Syria's assurance that they would not endorse the PKK prevented an imminent conflict between the two nations. As a result, diplomatic channels were reopened, underscoring the necessity for terrorist organizations not to find refuge or receive assistance within Syrian borders and emphasizing the importance of reaching an accord on collaborative efforts against terrorism¹⁶⁷. Consequently, the Turkish and Syrian delegations met in Adana on the 20th of October, 1998. They signed the Adana Protocol (or Adana Memorandum), a text on the joint fight against terrorism, which yielded positive results between the two countries for a long time¹⁶⁸.

The matter concerning Öcalan and the PKK posed a substantial challenge between the two nations. Syria comprehended the significance of this issue for Türkiye, and Syrian authorities, notably President Hafez al-Assad, leveraged this matter against Türkiye as a strategic advantage

¹⁶⁴ F. Aksu, *Türk Dış Politikasında Zorlayıcı Diplomasi*. İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2008: 255.

¹⁶⁵ Ö.Z. Oktay, "Water dispute and Kurdish separatism in Turkish-Syrian relations." *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 34 (2003): 106.

¹⁶⁶ Ö.Z. Oktay, 107.

¹⁶⁷ Oran, 2011; Korgun, 2020: 9; Karaağaç ve Acar, 2020: 79; Karabulut ve Eryılmaz, 2016: 33

¹⁶⁸ T.C. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998

to meet their demands and address the water problem¹⁶⁹. It was underscored that resolving the water matter would also lead to the resolution of the Öcalan and PKK dilemmas¹⁷⁰. Hence, it is evident that the Öcalan and PKK issue was strategically utilized against Türkiye in the context of the water problem. An interview conducted by Journalist Mehmet Ali Birand with Abdullah Öcalan shed light on Syria's stance regarding this matter¹⁷¹. In response to Birand's inquiry, '*Could Syria impede your actions if it chose to do so?*' Öcalan stated, '*It can stop us through a specific decree.*' This response elucidates Syria's use of Öcalan and the PKK issue as a strategic advantage. Following his expulsion from Syria, Öcalan sought asylum in various countries. Ultimately, upon attempting to travel from Kenya to the Netherlands, he was captured on 16 February 1999 due to a successful operation facilitated by the collaboration of the USA and Kenya with Türkiye, extradited to Türkiye, and subjected to judicial proceedings¹⁷². Following a period of extended strained relations, particularly concerning terror and water issues, a significant political reconciliation took place in the context of Turkish-Syrian relations after the implementation of the Adana Security Protocol.

§ 3.2 Relations in the Post-2000s

3.2.1 Pre-Syrian Civil War

The end of the Öcalan crisis, along with the implementation of the Adana Security Protocol, can be identified as a pivotal moment in the process of

¹⁶⁹ Ö.Z. Oktay, 2003: 102.

¹⁷⁰ M. Fırat, and Ö. Kürkçüoğlu, "1990-2001: Küreselleşme Ekseninde Türkiye: Ortadoğu'yla İlişkiler". B. Oran (Ed), *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Cilt II. İstanbul: İletişim (2001): 551-568

¹⁷¹ Birand, 1993.

¹⁷² Tahincioğlu, G. (15.02.2013), "Kenya'dan İmralı'ya 14 Yılın Öyküsü". Milliyet Gazetesi, accessed on 12.05.2024. <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/kenya-dan-imrali-ya-14-yilin-oykusu-1669010>

normalization of Turkish-Syrian bilateral relations¹⁷³. After the Adana Protocol, there was a noticeable positive change in the course of the relations concerning water-related issues. A significant initial step in this direction was the agreement reached between the Southeastern Anatolian Project Regional Development Agency and its Syrian counterpart, the General Organisation for Land Development, on 23 August 2001¹⁷⁴. The primary objective of this agreement was to enhance the expertise of Syrian professionals through the facilitation of international training initiatives, bilateral programs, expert exchanges, and collaborative water development projects¹⁷⁵.

With leadership transitions taking place on both fronts and the 2003 invasion of Iraq generating overlapping security interests, there was a significant surge in top-level engagements among the policymakers in 2003. The visit of Bashar al-Assad, whose father Hafez al-Assad passed away in 2000, in Türkiye on 6 January 2004 can be interpreted as a pivotal moment that accelerated the improvement of relations following the Adana Memorandum, which effectively resolved the PKK issue between the two nations, marking the initial official visit of a Syrian President to Türkiye in 57 years¹⁷⁶. In contrast to his predecessor, Bashar prioritized the cultivation of bilateral relations and the pursuit of a policy driven by mutual interests rather than becoming entangled in recurring problems. His visit to Türkiye holds significant importance at this juncture. Indeed, in the interviews he gave during his visit, he focussed on solutions rather than problems. He made statements regarding the problems between Türkiye and Syria:

‘I believe the best solution to this problem is to leave it aside at this stage. Secondly, we have to make our existing relations so intertwined that steps can be taken more easily towards solving the problem. Thirdly, when they rise to that level, these relations will already be much stronger than the existing borders. Then this

¹⁷³ Maden, 2012: 94

¹⁷⁴ A. Kibaroglu and W. Scheumann, 2011: 290.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ U. Karabulut and E. Eryılmaz, 2016: 36.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

problem will be solved much more easily and spontaneously. However, the solution to this problem will ultimately be between the governments. It should not be forgotten that a great mutual trust has now been established between Syria and Türkiye, and our duty is to strengthen this trust continuously.¹⁷⁷

In his interview with Mehmet Ali Birand, Bashar Assad answered Birand's questions about water and gave the following answer:

'Regarding the water problem, every country undoubtedly wants to have more water. Moreover, we live in a region that has water problems in general. However, we cannot discuss a water problem between Syria and Türkiye. Besides, one of the factors that will determine the water problem is humanitarian relations as well as international law. For example, when there was an earthquake in Iran, even many hostile countries rushed to help. Similarly, if we ask a Turkish citizen living by the Euphrates today whether he would want his Syrian brother to suffer from thirst, he will definitely say no. This is why I always emphasize the humanitarian importance and dimension of the issue. In my opinion, Syria does not have a water problem with Türkiye, neither as a people nor as a state. As for the legal framework of the issue, the governments, i.e., officials from both countries, come together to discuss this issue. However, once again, as the relations between the two countries develop, we will see that we have common interests, even in the water issue.'¹⁷⁸

To Birand's question about maps in the context of the Hatay issue, he responded as follows:

'This problem is not today's matter and has been on the agenda for almost 60 years. Like the water issue, this subject did not arise out of nowhere. I have just tried to explain where our relations have come from. We have seen that the points on which we have reached agreements in the relations between our countries are

¹⁷⁷ Fehmi Kuru, (5/01/2004) "Esad: Türkiye ile ilişkilerimiz stratejik perspektife oturmalı" accessed on <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/esad-turkiye-ile-iliskilerimiz-stratejik-perspektife-oturmalı-2678956>

¹⁷⁸ 32. Gün Arşiv, 2004

more than the issues on which we disagree. Therefore, when it comes to improving the relations between two countries, we start from the positive points on which we can reach an agreement. That is why, as the relations between our countries develop, the issues of dispute will gradually decrease. In this case, the approach to the borders between our countries will cease to be a problem. That is why it is pointless to say much more, as there are no details, and we have yet to discuss this issue with Turkish friends. Both sides are determined to push aside our existing problems in order to find a solution to all problems. However, this should not mean we neglect these problems or turn a blind eye to them. We must solve this problem in the interests of both countries. Both countries should be satisfied with this solution. However, we should also give each problem the necessary time because such problems need more time and cannot be solved immediately. However, I am personally hopeful that our relations and all our problems can be solved because we have goodwill as much as the Turkish authorities and the Turkish people.¹⁷⁹

From this point of view, it is evident that the contentious issues between the two nations have been set aside, paving the way for an expansion of cooperative efforts and the enhancement of bilateral relations. Mainly, the economic underpinnings of the relations have created a mutually beneficial scenario, prompting advancements in this realm. The revision of the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) in 2007 could significantly advance the bilateral relations between Türkiye and Syria regarding water-related issues. The JTC sessions were halted in 1993 due to the inability of the riparian nations to achieve a tangible outcome during the 16 JTC meetings spanning from 1983 to 1993¹⁸⁰. With enhanced political ties between Türkiye and Syria, it was collectively decided to reinstate the JTC as a platform for discussions between the two neighbors in 2007. Consequently, three JTC meetings paved the way for the parties agreeing to exchange information on historical, current, and projected meteorological

¹⁷⁹ 32. Gün Arşiv, 2004

¹⁸⁰ Kibaroglu and Ünver, 2006:35-36; Kibaroglu and Scheumann, 2011:284

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

trends and water quality concerns in the Euphrates and Tigris basin¹⁸¹. Following the third gathering, Türkiye and Syria opted to reconvene during the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul, excluding Iraq from participation¹⁸². Notably, in 2009, pivotal agreements were signed during Bashar al-Assad's trip to Ankara. These include the agreements of 18 September 2009 concerning the 'lifting of visas' and 16 September 2009 regarding establishing a 'High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council'¹⁸³. Concurrently with the revitalization of the JTC, the Turkish and Syrian governments established the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Councils (HLSCC) to enhance their interstate relations.

The Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) that underpin the cooperative water-related relations were also developed through the JTC sessions. The initial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) introduced collaborative measures concerning the Tigris River, encompassing establishing a pumping facility where the river forms the boundary between Türkiye and Syria. This facility aimed to enable Syria to utilize water from the Tigris to address its increasing demands¹⁸⁴. Noteworthy is that this MoU serves as the primary arrangement that temporarily allocates water resources until a comprehensive resolution for the Euphrates-Tigris basin is achieved¹⁸⁵. The second MoU focused on the construction of a joint dam on the Asi River, named as the Friendship Dam, symbolizing of a fresh chapter in Turkish-Syrian diplomatic relations, especially

¹⁸¹ A. Kibaroglu, "Fırat-Dicle Havzası Sınırşan Su Politikalarının Evrimi: İşbirliği İçin Fırsatlar ve Tehditler (The Evolution of Transboundary Water Politics in the Euphrates and Tigris Basin: Opportunities and Threats for Cooperation) " *Ortadoğu Analiz* 4(43), (2012): 78.

¹⁸² A. Kibaroglu and W. Scheumann, 2011:295 ; Maden, 2011:37

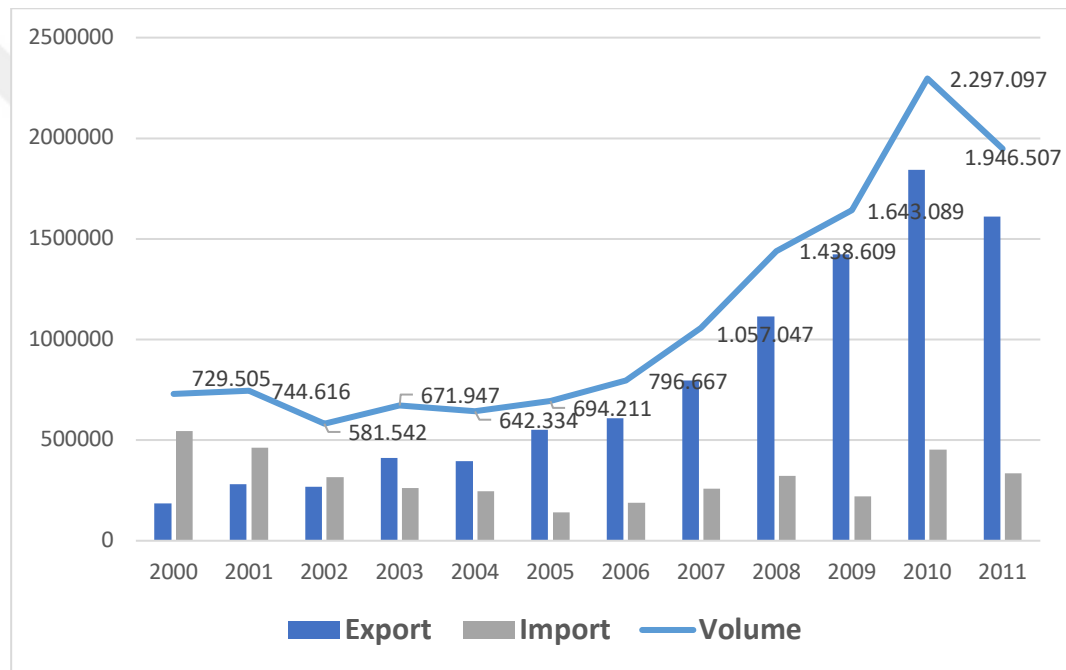
¹⁸³ "Türkiye ve Suriye artık vize sormayacak", <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/turkiye-ve-suriye-artik-vize-sormayacak,-UzbXQwtCk-Oezl115y5MQ> (16.09.2009)

¹⁸⁴ A. Kibaroglu, and W. Scheumann. "Evolution of Transboundary Politics in the Euphrates-Tigris River System: New Perspectives and Political Challenges." *Global Governance* 19, no. 2 (2013): 290-291.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

concerning water-related issues¹⁸⁶. Moreover, this MoU holds significance not solely due to its water issue relevance but also because it signifies the first legally enforceable pact between Türkiye and Syria concerning the enduring disagreement regarding the acknowledgment of Hatay as discussed previously¹⁸⁷. The agreement concerning the Asi River can be seen as a milestone in Turkish-Syrian collaboration, furnishing a foundation for future joint endeavors on transboundary water-related concerns. These agreements, aimed at fostering economic integration, have also led economic initiatives to gain momentum.

Figure 1: Foreign Trade Figures between Türkiye and Syria (1000 \$)



SOURCE Compiled by Data from TUIK Foreign Trade Statistics Database

¹⁸⁶ A. Kibaroglu, and V. Sumer, "Türkiye's foreign policy orientation in the water context and the Orontes Basin." *Science Diplomacy and Transboundary Water Management the Orontes River Case* (2015): 74.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 73-74 ; E. L. Jörum, *Beyond Syria's Borders: A History of Territorial Disputes in The Middle East*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014: 139.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

As seen in the figure above, the export values exhibit a consistent upward trajectory, experiencing a significant surge starting from the year 2009, reaching its peak in 2011 at around \$2.297 billion. The overall volume of trade has displayed a steady growth over time, particularly witnessing a remarkable ascent from 2009 to 2011, implying a deepening economic partnership in those specific years. The notable rise in both trade volume and export values in the subsequent years may be seen as a reflection of Türkiye's expanding influence and strategic economic interests in Syria.

Consequently, the trajectory of bilateral relations, progressing in alignment with these developments after the Adana Memorandum of 1998, was disrupted by the eruption of the Syrian civil conflict in 2011. The unforeseen escalation of the Syrian civil conflict in 2011 not only toppled the economic cooperation between Türkiye and Syria but also led to significant geopolitical developments in the region, altering the dynamics of their relationship fundamentally. The geopolitical landscape in the region underwent a profound transformation due to the Syrian civil conflict, reshaping alliances and power dynamics among neighboring countries. The consequences of the civil conflict in Syria had a far-reaching impact not only on economic and geopolitical domains but also on humanitarian situations and refugee crises in the area, leading to a ripple effect that resonated worldwide.

3.2.2 *The Role of Syrian Civil War in Türkiye's Foreign Relations with Syria*

3.2.2.1 The Interference Of Türkiye In Syrian Civil War

Spanning now over a decade, the Syrian Civil War presents many factors contributing to its origins and outcomes, with a broad sphere of influence. This conflict has yielded political but also economic, social, military, humanitarian, sectarian, regional, and global impacts. The involvement of diverse regional and global parties in Syria has turned the war increasingly complex due to the presence of conflicting interests. Originating as an internal conflict among various factions, the Syrian conflict has

evolved into a multifaceted proxy war involving multiple actors, with no clear resolution in sight.

At the onset of the conflict in Syria, Türkiye aligned itself with the Syrian government and endeavored to initiate a dialogue concerning the demands for reform by the Syrian populace and the requisite aid. However, due to the uncontrollable progress of the process with Syria's disproportionate use of force and the differences in the expectations of the two countries, Türkiye abandoned the point reached in relations and chose for an alternative trajectory in its approach towards Syria. In this period of increasing tension between the two countries, Türkiye implemented a series of punitive measures against the Assad regime. These resolutions entailed the declaration of forthcoming sanctions by Türkiye, encompassing the freezing of Syrian financial assets, the termination of ties with Syrian governmental banks, freezing trade and economic relations and stopping the supply of arms and military equipment to the Syrian army¹⁸⁸. On the 21st of September 2011, at the 66th UN General Assembly General Meetings convened in New York, Erdoğan met with President Obama and said: 'We have terminated our discussions with the Syrian authorities. This outcome was not our desired course. But the actions of the Syrian government have compelled us to this resolution. We have lost confidence in the Syrian administration'. Furthermore, he underscored the intention to collaborate with the United States in enforcing sanctions against Assad¹⁸⁹.

With this change in the course of the relations, the objective of Turkish foreign policy has shifted towards the removal of Assad and the establishment of a new regime in Syria. Türkiye defined the deterioration of the war as a “crime against humanity” and called on the UN Security Council to show more sensitivity and active participation in the situation

¹⁸⁸ Aljazeera, 2011

¹⁸⁹ “Erdoğan: Suriye ile görüşmelerimizi bitirdik” (21.09.2011) <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/erdogan-suriye-ile-gorusmelerimizi-bitirdik-1441276>; “Zirveden Suriye'ye yaptırım kararı çıktı” (21.09.2011) <https://t24.com.tr/haber/zirveden-suriyeye-yaptirim-karari-cikti,169887>

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

in Syria¹⁹⁰. The regime's disproportionate use of force and Türkiye's attempts at peace efforts proved fruitless. On March 22, 2012, the Turkish Embassy in Damascus suspended its activities. Although the official website of the Embassy announced that “Our Embassy will temporarily suspend all activities as of March 26, 2012”, this was later turned into a permanent situation. The Damascus Embassy was evacuated entirely after the last Turkish Ambassador to Damascus, Ömer Önhon, was asked by Prime Minister Erdoğan to return to the country¹⁹¹. The relations between the two countries became even more strained after the Syrian regime shot down a Turkish plane in June 2012¹⁹². Türkiye's stance in the Syrian conflict has prompted disapproval from Iran¹⁹³. Iran's reproach towards the Syrian National Council was articulated through allegations of Türkiye serving as a proxy for imperialism, whereas the Syrian regime accused Türkiye of being a conspirator, interpreting its actions as a declaration of war¹⁹⁴.

During the period spanning from 2012 to 2015, Türkiye made an effort in various intervention negotiations to remove Assad from power. Nevertheless, these negotiations encountered different problems, and the strengthening of ISIS in the region led to a change in the strategic priorities of the United States and NATO. Subsequently, Türkiye's endeavor to orchestrate a collaborative intervention proved unsuccessful¹⁹⁵. Due to the growing threat of ISIS in the region, the US and Western countries formed a coalition and engaged in a military struggle against ISIS¹⁹⁶.

¹⁹⁰ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012

¹⁹¹ “Şam Büyükelçiliği Kapatıldı” (26.03.2012) <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/sam-buyukelciligi-kapatildi-34092.html>

¹⁹² “Savaş uçağını Suriye düşürmüş” (23.06.2012) <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/savas-ucagini-suriye-dusurmus>

¹⁹³ Sandıklı and Semin, 2014

¹⁹⁴ Cumhuriyet, 2012

¹⁹⁵ Öztop, 2019, p. 118

¹⁹⁶ See Can Kasapoğlu, F. Doruk Ergun, “Türkiye Joins the Anti-ISIS Coalition: Safe-Zone Plan Revisited”, EDAM, 2016. accessible on: https://edam.org.tr/Uploads/Yukleme_Resim/-8-10-2023-01-28-06.pdf

During this period, different views on the Damascus regime emerged. While the US side believed that terrorist organizations would strengthen and benefit from the vacuum that would be created in the absence of Assad, the idea that Assad was the main factor of the problem persisted in Turkish policy¹⁹⁷. In the same period, while the Russian Federation, which considered the events in Syria as a plot, protected the Syrian regime in this process, problems started to emerge in Turkish-Russian relations¹⁹⁸.

The year 2015 saw a shift that prompted diversification and a notable evolution in the foreign policy objectives of Türkiye. The situation in Syria was marked by the growing influence of the PYD, the expansion of the terrorist organization PKK in Syria, and the ability of the terrorist organization ISIS to carry out attacks on Turkish territory. The transformation of Syria into a terrorist hub has deeply unsettled Türkiye. The rise of regional influence along Türkiye's borders and the operation of these terrorist organizations with their units in Türkiye were considered events that required urgent measures. The prioritization by the United States, a longstanding ally of Türkiye, of combating ISIS in its Syrian strategy and its collaboration with the PYD - an issue of sensitivity for Türkiye - required Türkiye to set new targets¹⁹⁹. The strained relations with the Russian Federation, the other power in the Syrian civil war, deteriorated significantly after the jet crisis, and Türkiye was isolated for a while²⁰⁰. Türkiye has successfully overcome this isolation and re-established its interests in the region. It has tried to return to the Syrian civil war as an influential and active player by improving its relations with Russia. These initiatives brought new crises to the already strained relations between

¹⁹⁷ Kiraz, " Suriye İç Savaşı Sırasındaki Türk Dış Politikasının Neoklasik Realizmin Bakış Açısından Analizi (2011-2017)", .65-67.,

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 65-67.

¹⁹⁹ Aytaç Kadioğlu, "Suriye İç Savaşı ve Türkiye: Çatışma, Güvenlik ve Sığınma", OPUS International Journal of Society Researches, 2020, C.16, S.29, s.2184.

²⁰⁰ See Hasan Selim Özertem, "Türkiye and Russia: A Fragile Partnership." Turkish Policy Quarterly, Winter (2017).

Türkiye and the US, and Türkiye's overall foreign policy principles came into question²⁰¹.

From 2015 to 2021, Türkiye participated in the Astana Platform, established in 2015 as a guarantor alongside Russia and Iran, aiming to explore international resolutions with two significantly influential entities to end the war in Syria, ensuring its territorial integrity and establishing and implementing a peaceful constitution²⁰². Throughout this timeframe, Türkiye engaged in diplomatic discussions while simultaneously conducting military operations to ensure border security, protect Syria's territorial integrity, and counter potential threats to its national security.

3.2.2.2 Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War

The eruption of uprisings in Tunisia in December 2010 marked the initiation of a period of significant transformation in the Arab World. The protests and demands for change started with the self-immolation of a Tunisian university graduate, Mohamed Bouazzizi, in response to unemployment and economic challenges. The momentum for change spread to Egypt, Libya, and Yemen resulting in governmental transitions. Furthermore, citizens in various Arab nations-initiated demonstrations against their ruling authorities. This collective series of movements has been collectively termed as the "Arab Spring". Over a brief span of time, the region has entered a process of rapid change and transformation²⁰³.

In the preceding section, the advancement of Türkiye-Syria relations is observed to be favorable due to the collaboration in the spheres of economic, political, and regional affairs. Particularly, the economic-oriented relations have had a beneficial impact on the economies of both

²⁰¹ Kiraz, " Suriye İç Savaşı Sırasındaki Türk Dış Politikasının Neoklasik Realizmin Bakış Açısından Analizi (2011-2017)", s.78

²⁰² Mitat Çelikpala, "Viewing Present as History: The State and Future of Türkiye-Russian Relations," EDAM, (April 2019), pp. 25-28

²⁰³ Please see: D. Lesch, and Mark L. Haas. *The Arab spring: The hope and reality of the uprisings*. Westview Press, 2016; C. Henry, and J. Ji-Hyang, *The Arab spring: Will it lead to democratic transitions?*. Springer, 2013.

nations. Despite the promising trajectory of the bilateral relations, a significant setback occurred with the eruption of the 'Arab Spring' and its spread to Syria in March 2011. This marked a crucial juncture in the evolution of relations between the two countries. During the first phase of the revolts, Türkiye expressed solidarity with the regime while also proposing reforms. This dual approach aimed at avoiding a direct conflict with the Syrian government and addressing the calls for reform. An initial step taken in this direction involved sending Hakan Fidan, the Director of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), to engage in discussions with the Syrian authorities in Damascus. Through Fidan, Türkiye emphasized the imperative for the Syrian government to refrain from violence and to open the doors of a new era, offering full support in this process²⁰⁴. Nevertheless, as the developments did not proceed normally and the violence of the incidents increased accordingly, international reactions against Syria increased and sanctions decisions were taken and started to be implemented.

3.2.2.3 Türkiye's Military Operations Beyond its Borders

As a result of the increase in ISIS and PKK attacks, Türkiye's military intervention in Syria has become a necessity. Operation Shah Fırat, carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces on 22 February 2015, resulted in the relocation of the Tomb of Suleyman Shah, Türkiye's only territory outside its borders²⁰⁵. The intense clashes between DAESH and YPG terrorist groups over Ayn al-Arab have gradually shifted towards the south and have become a threat in the Karakozak area where the Tomb of Suleyman Shah was located. Two simultaneous operations were carried out covering the transfer of the tomb, the evacuation of the security forces in the region and the security of the Eşme region, the temporary new area of the tomb. In the operation, 39 tanks, 57 armoured vehicles and many

²⁰⁴ "MIT Müsteşarı Suriye'ye gitti" 29.3.2011 https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2011/03/29/mit_mustesari_suriyeye_gitti (Accessed on April 21, .2024)

²⁰⁵ TSK (22 Şubat 2015). "TSK Basın Açıklaması NO:BA-02 / 15". https://web.archive.org/web/20150222181748/http://www.tsk.tr/3_basin_yayin_faaliyetleri/3_1_basin_aciklamalari/2015/ba_02.html (Accessed on April 21, .2024)

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

construction equipment entered through the Mürşitpınar border gate with the help of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and reached the Karakozak area, which is approximately 37 km away from Türkiye. The operation was successfully completed without any clashes²⁰⁶.

In the process in which the Syrian civil war continued with a stalemate, ISIS has targeted Türkiye with 12 January 2016 Sultanahmet Square attack, 20 August 2016 Gaziantep attack, 28 June 2016 Atatürk Airport attack and many other attacks. These assaults were orchestrated by ISIS with the aim of expanding its influence in Syria and establishing a lasting presence in the region. On 24 August 2016, Ankara declared the initiation of Operation Euphrates Shield, justified under the principle of 'self-defense' as outlined in the United Nations Charter, with the objectives of safeguarding Türkiye's borders, eliminating ISIS from the area, and prevent the YPG's control over the northern corridor²⁰⁷.

-
- ²⁰⁶ “Şah Fırat Operasyonu” ile Türkiye'deler” Anadolu Agency, April 21, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/sah-firat-operasyonu-ile-turkiyedeler/72924> ; Acun, C., Kanat, B. K. ve Ulutaş U. (2015). “Sınırları Aşan Kriz Suriye”. SETA Analiz, Sayı: 120.
- ²⁰⁷ Özçelik N., Seren M. ve Yeşiltaş M. (2017). “Fırat Kalkanı Harekâtı, Harekâtın İcrası, İstikrarın Tesisi ve Alınan Dersler”, SETA.

Figure 2: Operation Euphrates Shield



SOURCE:: TRT World (2016)²⁰⁸

The primary goals of the operation were articulated during a meeting convened by the National Security Council (MGK) on 30 November 2016. As defined by the MGK, the overarching aim of Operation Euphrates Shield was to fortify border security, prevent potential attacks on Türkiye, eradicate ISIS and similar extremist factions from the region, safeguard the territorial integrity of Syria, and prevent the PKK/PYD-YPG elements from establishing a terrorist network²⁰⁹. In this operation, A statement was made by the Turkish Armed Forces subsequent to the liberation of Jarabulus from ISIS. Within the aforementioned statement, the Turkish Armed Forces articulated: ‘During the course of the Euphrates Shield Operation, which has been executed under the umbrella of the coalition since August 24, the Syrian National Army (SNA) forces have cleared a total of 32 settlements within the operational area from extremist factions²¹⁰. On 31 March 2017, Operation Euphrates Shield

²⁰⁸ “What the Turkish operation in Syria means” TRT World, 2016. <https://www.trt-world.com/turkey/what-the-turkish-operation-in-syria-means-2566>

²⁰⁹ MGK Genel Sekreterliği. (2016, Kasım). <https://www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/30-kasim-2016-tarihli-toplanti-E.T:05.03.2024>

²¹⁰ “TSK'dan Fırat Kalkanı Harekatı Açıklaması” <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/turkiye/tskdan-firat-kalkani-harekatı-aciklamasi-269938.html>

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

ended with the realisation of the objectives of expanding safe zones and clearing the region of terrorist organisations such as ISIS and PYD/YPG, as announced after the MGK meeting²¹¹.

After Türkiye launched Operation Euphrates Shield, Iran, Russia and Türkiye announced that they had reached an agreement on a ceasefire in Syria. On 29 December 2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement titled 'Declaration of a Nationwide Ceasefire between the Conflicting Parties in Syria'. In this statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that 'Efforts have begun to provide assistance against the acts of violence in Syria. As a result of these efforts, an agreement was reached to declare a ceasefire on 30 December 2016'²¹².

In 2018, Türkiye initiated Operation Olive Branch targeting the PYD, a Syrian faction linked to the PKK. The rationale provided by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) for the mission was grounded on the principles outlined in various UN resolutions. It was stated that the operation adhered to the sovereignty of Syria while upholding Türkiye's entitlements derived from international law, specifically citing UN Security Council Resolutions 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014), and 2178 (2014), as well as the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter²¹³. Article 51 of Chapter 7 of the United Nations is as follows:

'Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take

²¹¹ MGK Genel Sekreterliği. (2017, Mart). <https://www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/29-mart-2017-tarihli-toplanti>

²¹² T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı; 29 Aralık 2016, *Suriye'de Çatışan Taraflar Arasında Ülke Genelinde Ateşkes İlanı*, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-333_-29-aralik-2016_-suriye-de-catisan-taraflar-arasinda-ulke-genelinde-ateskes-ilani-hk_.tr.mfa

²¹³ TSK (March 16 2018). "TSK Basın Açıklaması: <https://www.tsk.tr/Home/Detay/594>

at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.²¹⁴

In terms of international law, it is a matter of debate whether force should be used against global terrorism within the scope of the right to self-defence. Due to the multilateral nature of international terrorism, this debate is about the legal justification for the fight against it²¹⁵. According to one point of view, it should be fought within the context of the right to self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter²¹⁶. Accordingly, force can be used against terrorism within the conditions of being subjected to an armed conflict, the armed conflict being in contact with another country, and the action taken against terrorist attacks being in accordance with the criteria of proportionality and necessity²¹⁷. According to another point of view, states should implement strategies to flexibilise the existing rules on the use of force in counter-terrorism measures²¹⁸. If these strategies can be categorised under three headings, the first one is the narrow interpretation of the obstacle to the use of force in the context of counter-terrorism. Secondly, the right to use force against terrorism should be considered as a limited exception to the

²¹⁴ Chapter VII — *Action with respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression*, Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, 1945: 10-11.

²¹⁵ See Thomas M. Franck, "Terrorism and the Right of Self-Defense." *American Journal of International Law* 95, no. 4 (2001): 839-842; Daniel Bethlehem, "The Use of Force against Non-state Actors under International Law: The Law and Politics of Self-defense." *American Journal of International Law* 107, no. 2 (2013): 569-575 ; Kenneth Anderson, "Using Force Against Terrorists 'Outside Areas of Active Hostilities'—The Obama Approach and the Bin Laden Raid Revisited." *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*. Oxford Academic. <https://academic.oup.com/jcsl/article/21/2/359/500852>.

²¹⁶ P.S. Rao, Non-state actors and self-defence: a relook at the UN Charter Article 51. *Indian Journal of International Law* 56, 127-171 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40901-017-0049-4>

²¹⁷ See Tom Ruys, "Armed Attack' and Article 51 of the UN Charter: Evolutions in Customary Law and Practice." Cambridge University Press (2010) ; See Christopher Greenwood, "International Law and the Pre-emptive Use of Force: Afghanistan, Al-Qaida, and Iraq." *San Diego International Law Journal* 4 (2003): 7-37.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

prohibition of the use of force that is not specified in the UN Charter. The third is the reformulation of the right to self-defence against the threat of terrorist elements²¹⁹.

The authorization granted to member states by UN Security Council Resolution 1624 of 2005 pertains to the prevention of terrorist activities within national territories as well as beyond borders²²⁰. In 2014, Security Council Resolution 2170 underscored the notion that various manifestations of terrorism pose the most substantial threat to global peace and security²²¹. Similarly, Security Council Resolution 2178, also issued in 2014, highlighted the necessity of addressing circumstances that foster the proliferation of terrorism and the implementation of legal measures at the international level to counteract terrorism²²². The Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordination Office explained the objectives of the Olive Branch Operation in accordance with the decisions mentioned above, as follows: "To ensure the inclusion of a 10,000 square kilometres area into the regions controlled by the Free Syrian Army (FSA), to prevent the PKK from achieving its goal of reaching the Eastern Mediterranean, to secure the borders with Syria, to prevent the PKK from infiltrating Türkiye, to ensure the stability and security of the Euphrates Shield, to facilitate the return of refugees to their homes by taking control of Tel Rifaat, to obstruct the support given by the U.S. to terrorist organizations, and to prevent the possible merging of the Afrin and

²¹⁹ Utku Yapıcı, "Uluslararası Hukukta Terörizme Karşı Kuvvet Kullanımı Sorunu." *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika* 07 (2006): 21-40.

²²⁰ UN Security Council, 14 September 2005. Resolution 1624 (2005). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/556538?ln=en&v=pdf> (Accessed on 07.02.2024)

²²¹ UN Security Council, 15 August 2014. Resolution 2170 (2014). Web: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/777420?ln=en&v=pdf> (Accessed on 07.02.2024)

²²² UN Security Council, 24 September 2014. Resolution 2178 (2014). Web: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/780316?ln=en&v=pdf> (Accessed on 07.02.2024)

Kobani provinces, which is considered a crucial step in the creation of a 'Kurdish corridor'...'²²³

Figure 3: An illustration depicting the territorial control in Syria's War



SOURCE: TRT World (2017)²²⁴

Until the start of Operation Olive Branch, Türkiye had refrained from implementing a direct military strategy against the PKK. Nevertheless, the PKK's acts of terrorism within Türkiye, its attempts to infiltrate through Syria, and its ambitions to establish a presence along the Syrian border have evolved into a critical concern for Türkiye, framing the situation as an issue of national security. Within this framework, based on the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, the Turkish government announced that the primary goal of the operation was to eradicate PKK and ISIS elements in the Afrin region located in northwestern Syria. Concurrently, the Turkish government emphasized

²²³ "Başbakanlık açıkladı, işte Zeytin Dalı Harekatı'nın 12 nedeni" CNN Türk, December 11, 2018. <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/basbakanlik-acikladi-iste-zeytin-dali-harekatinin-12-nedeni?page=1>

²²⁴ "Türkiye's operation in Afrin: Five things you need to know" TRT World, <https://www.trtworld.com/Türkiye/Türkiye-s-operation-in-afrin-five-things-you-need-to-know-14469>

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

the operation's aim to liberate the civilian population in the region from terrorist oppression²²⁵.

It is important to note that Türkiye demonstrated a commitment to minimizing civilian casualties during Operation Olive Branch, focusing on facilitating the safe return of refugees to their homes in areas cleared of terrorist groups post-operation. This approach sets Türkiye apart from other entities by showcasing a 'model' behavior characterized by constructive engagement over destructive actions, alongside military deterrence²²⁶. Ankara's strategic efforts effectively pushed the terrorist organization's presence 35 km away from its border, thus neutralizing the security threat posed by the PKK in Afrin. On the other hand, its determination that it will not allow the formation of a terror corridor on its border has weakened the unity between the US and the PYD²²⁷.

On 9 October 2019, Türkiye initiated Operation Peace Spring in the northern region of Syria to eliminate terrorist elements that present a risk to its national security. This military action aimed to safeguard the well-being of the Syrian populace, prevent the activities of the terrorist group PYD/YPG and ensure Syria's territorial unity²²⁸. The operation had two primary objectives. The initial objective was to remove terrorist entities along the border that jeopardized Türkiye's security, while the second goal was to establish a safe zone for Syrian refugees in their homeland who sought refuge in Türkiye amidst the civil conflict²²⁹. Similar to prior military endeavors such as the Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch, this initiative was conducted under international law, demonstrating respect for Syria's territorial integrity as outlined in

²²⁵ "5 soruda Türkiye'nin Afrin'e yönelik Zeytin Dalı Harekatı". BBC News. January 21, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-42766283>. 19.06.2024

²²⁶ Özçelik, N., Acun, C. "Terörle Mücadelede Yeni Safha: Zeytin Dalı Harekatı". SETA (2018), 35-36.

²²⁷ Ibid, 48.

²²⁸ T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı; 11 Ekim 2019, Uluslararası Toplumda Barış Pınarı Harekâtı'nı Hedef Alan Bazı Yorumlar Hk, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_297_-baris-pinari-harekati-ni-hedef-alan-yorumlar-hk.tr.mfa (Accessed on 20.06.2024)

²²⁹ Ibid.

the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions about counterterrorism, notably resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2249 (2015), and 2254 (2015), as well as the principle of 'right to self-defense' enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter²³⁰.

Figure 4: A map showing the Northern Syria as of October 23, 2019, with the safe zones marked



*SOURCE: TRT World (23.10.2019)*²³¹

During the military operation, PYD/YPG elements and their shelters, bunkers, positions, weaponry, vehicles, and equipment were specifically targeted, with meticulous attention given to avoiding any harm to the civilian population, historical sites, cultural landmarks, religious structures, infrastructure facilities, as well as elements belonging to friendly and allied nations that might be located within the operational area²³². Operation Peace Spring was executed within a region spanning 120 kilometers between the Rasulayn and Talabyad borders, concluding on the 25th of November 2019. This military endeavor led to the establishment

²³⁰ MSB, (09.10.2019) Barış Pınarı Harekâtı ile İlgili Basın Açıklaması, <https://www.msb.gov.tr/SlaytHaber/9102019-02880>

²³¹ "Operation Peace Spring in a nutshell" TRT World, 2019. <https://www.trt-world.com/turkey/operation-peace-spring-in-a-nutshell-30779>

²³² Ibid

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

of two significant agreements: the Ankara agreement, indicating the US recognition of Turkish control over Ras al-Ain and Talebyad, and the Sochi agreement, wherein Russia committed to withdraw the YPG forces 30 kilometers away from the Turkish border. Consequently, Türkiye substantially enhanced its military and diplomatic standing, reshaped the dynamics in Syria, and emerged as a pivotal actor in the Syrian conflict after Russia's involvement²³³. Following Operation Peace Spring, Afrin and Talabyad were transformed into secure zones under Turkish control, where 22 healthcare facilities, including two hospitals, commenced offering complimentary medical services and a variety of educational and infrastructural amenities to the local populace. Additionally, numerous non-governmental organizations such as AFAD, Turkish KIZILAY, and IHH initiated humanitarian aid assistance in the region²³⁴.

On 27 February 2020, a total of 34 soldiers from Türkiye lost their lives due to an airstrike carried out by the Syrian government on a military battalion belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces. This was caused by the Russian-backed Bashar al-Assad regime in Idlib. Subsequent to this offensive, Hulusi Akar, the Minister of National Defence, announced the launch of Operation Spring Shield²³⁵. Similar to previous military endeavors, this particular operation was scrutinized through the lens of the 'right of self-defence' as outlined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. Notably, Türkiye emerged as the sole nation to engage in a substantial conventional military campaign against the regime, effectively limiting the regime's progress with the support of Russia.

²³³ Burhanettin Duran, "Soçi Mutabakatı Sonrası Ne Beklemeli?", SETA, 2019.

²³⁴ Ömer Yılmaz, "Türkiye's Buffer Zone in Northern Syria and Its Impact on Irregular Migration" *Insight Türkiye* Vol. 24 / No. 1 (2022): 64-67. <https://www.insighttürkiye.com/commentaries/Türkiyes-buffer-zone-in-northern-syria-and-its-impact-on-irregular-migration>

²³⁵ Türkiye announces Operation Spring Shield in Idlib, Syria Anadolu Agency (01.03.2020), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/Türkiye/Türkiye-announces-operation-spring-shield-in-idlib-syria/1750711>

Türkiye's cross-border operations in Syria have been conducted in the national interest, and have culminated upon achieving predetermined objectives. Operation Euphrates Shield focused on eradicating the ISIS threat, while Operation Olive Branch and Operation Peace Spring were primarily directed at the PYD/YPG. Conversely, Operation Spring Shield was exclusively aimed at countering the military forces of the Assad regime.

3.2.2.4 Engagement in Diplomacy and Negotiations in Light of the Syrian Civil War

Türkiye has played a significant role in the Syrian crisis, not only through its military actions but also through its diplomatic efforts. The country has actively participated in various diplomatic discussions on the Syrian conflict globally. Given its proximity to Syria and the impact of the crisis on its security and migration patterns, Türkiye has strategically utilized diplomatic channels to resolve the conflict and achieve a peaceful outcome.

Geneva Conferences on Syria

On 30 June 2012, the Geneva-1 Summit took place in Geneva under the direction of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, bringing together representatives from all members of the United Nations Security Council, EU member states, and the Arab League. Notably, neither the Syrian regime nor opposition factions were present at this gathering. The summit attendees, referring to themselves as the "Geneva Action Group," made significant resolutions, including the formation of an interim government that would encompass representatives from both the regime and the opposition²³⁶.

²³⁶ "Cenevre: Suriye'de hükümet ve muhalefet ilk kez anayasa taslak metnini hazırlamak için toplandı" (18.10.2021) <https://tr.euronews.com/2021/10/18/cenevre-suriye-de-hukümet-ve-muhalefet-ilk-kez-anayasa-taslak-metnini-haz-rlamak-icin-topl> (erişim tarihi:19.06.2023)

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

Following the lack of success at the Geneva summit, the second round of negotiations in Geneva was initiated in Montreux, Switzerland in 2014. This particular negotiation concluded without success as a result of the challenge in determining whether to proceed with or without the Assad government in Syria. Subsequently, the third round of talks in Geneva, which faced multiple postponements, eventually commenced in February 2016, only to end unsuccessfully once more. After the 3rd Geneva talks failed due to the conflicts in 2016, the 4th Geneva talks started on 23 February 2017. The "war on terror" was included in the 4th Geneva negotiations after the ceasefire came into effect with the participation of Türkiye, Iran and Russia²³⁷. The Geneva Five Talks were initiated on 22 March 2017, with a focus on the theme of "combatting terrorism" once again taking precedence. The UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, conducted separate meetings with opposition factions and the government council under the leadership of Nasser Hariri. Mistura encapsulated the meetings by highlighting that despite the significant challenges faced by the region, no party has withdrawn, stating, "In the previous round, we mentioned that the train was prepared at the station; however, now we can confirm that the trains have commenced their journey."²³⁸ It was also emphasized that the negotiations have produced favorable outcomes and that there is a promising opportunity to address the four key aspects of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, specifically: Inclusive transitional management, multilateral and independent transitional environment and countermeasures²³⁹.

The sixth round of discussions in Geneva, which did not result in tangible progress towards resolving the situation in Syria, took place from 16-20 May 2017. Throughout this procedure, Mistura engaged in private meetings with the opposition council under the leadership of Nasser al-Hariri and the council representing the Bashar al-Assad regime. The focus of the meeting was on taking steps to implement

²³⁷ "Suriye konulu Cenevre 4 görüşmeleri sona erdi" Anadolu Agency (05.03.2017)

²³⁸ Suriye konulu Cenevre 5 görüşmeleri sona erdi" Anadolu Agency (31.03.2017)

²³⁹ Ibid.

United Nations resolution 2254. Participants, who had previously held individual meetings with the United Nations Special Envoys for Syria during past negotiations, indicated their intention to convene in person for the first time during the Geneva-7 talks. The Geneva-7 discussions deliberated on matters concerning ceasefire, counterterrorism efforts, constitutional reforms, and the process of political transition. The outcome of the Geneva-7 talks did not lead to a conclusive resolution; however, the signals of face-to-face talks were considered as a positive development²⁴⁰.

The Geneva-8 talks on Syria, initiated on 28 November in Geneva, were declared unsuccessful by Staffan de Mistura, the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria²⁴¹. Following separate meetings with the regime and opposition committees during the Geneva-8 talks on Syria, Mistura held a press briefing at the UN Geneva Office after the discussions. Mistura highlighted that the opposition groups discussed critical agenda items such as succession, constitution, elections, and counterterrorism, whereas the regime solely concentrated on the 'terrorism' matter. Special Envoy Mistura underscored that the meetings failed and they “missed a golden opportunity”²⁴².

Astana Talks

As a result of the Syrian regime's and the opposition's inability to achieve a favorable outcome in the Geneva talks, Türkiye, Iran, and Russia came together with the goal of ending the Syrian conflict and initiated a new series of international meetings in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. The Astana talks started in parallel to Geneva meetings. The first Astana

²⁴⁰ “Cenevre: Suriye’de hükümet ve muhalefet ilk kez anayasa taslak metnini hazırlamak için toplandı” (18.10.2021) <https://tr.euronews.com/2021/10/18/cenevre-suriye-de-hukumet-ve-muhalefet-ilk-kez-anayasa-taslak-metnini-haz-rlamak-icin-topl> (erişim tarihi:19.06.2023)

²⁴¹ “U.N. calls Syria talks a 'big missed opportunity', seeks new ideas” Reuters (15.12.2017) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un/u-n-calls-syria-talks-a-big-missed-opportunity-seeks-new-ideas-idUSKBN1E82TD/?il=0>

²⁴² “‘Golden opportunity’ missed for progress on intra-Syrian talks, says UN envoy” UN News (14.12.2017) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/12/639502>

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

meeting took place on 23 January 2017 in Kazakhstan's capital, facilitated by UN representatives, with Türkiye and Russia acting as guarantors and Iran as a participant²⁴³. The noteworthy aspect of the Astana Talks was the participation of opposition commanders at the negotiation table, marking a significant development in the resolution process. Another feature of the Astana meetings is that the Syrian government and opposition leaders started negotiations, and Damascus and Ankara came together for the first time since the beginning of the Syrian civil war. Following the talks, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kayrat Abdrakhmanov delivered a statement outlining that the Syrian conflict could be resolved through the political process. He also stated that it was agreed that civilians would be defended against dangers, the right to free movement would be ensured, a trilateral organization would be established to monitor the ceasefire, and ISIS and al-Nusra would be fought jointly²⁴⁴.

The Astana-2 talks were convened on the 16th of February 2017. At the end of this round of talks, the formation of a task force comprising Russia, Iran, and Türkiye was approved. Türkiye, Iran, and Russia agreed to strengthen the mechanism they established to ensure the continuation and implementation of the ceasefire in Syria²⁴⁵. The third round took place on the 14th of March 2017 through bilateral negotiations between the United Nations and the Russian Council since Syrian opposition refused to attend talks²⁴⁶. During the fourth round of Astana talks on the

²⁴³ "Türkiye, Russia, Iran agree to ensure Syria cease-fire" Anadolu Agency (24.01.2017) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/Türkiye-russia-iran-agree-to-ensure-syria-cease-fire/733940>

²⁴⁴ Ibid ; Please see the full statement "Astana joint statement by Iran, Russia, Türkiye: in full" Al Jazeera (24.01.2017) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/1/24/astana-joint-statement-by-iran-russia-Türkiye-in-full>

²⁴⁵ "Second round of Syrian talks in Astana adopt mechanism to monitor ceasefire" The Astana Times (17.02.2017) <https://astanatimes.com/2017/02/second-round-of-syrian-talks-in-astana-adopt-mechanism-to-monitor-ceasefire/>

²⁴⁶ "Syrian opposition says won't attend Astana talks" Reuters (14.03.2017) <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/syrian-opposition-says-won-t-attend-astana-talks-idUSKBN16K1L7/>

3rd and 4th of May 2017, a decision was made to create 'de-escalation zones' in the most volatile regions of Syria. A memorandum was signed to establish de-escalation zones covering the entire Idlib province, parts of Latakia, Aleppo, and Hama provinces, parts of Homs province, Damascus/East Ghouta region, and parts of Der'a and Quneitra provinces on the Jordanian border²⁴⁷. The primary aim of the trilateral meeting involving Türkiye, Iran, and Russia was to enhance security by promptly implementing the 'de-escalation zones'²⁴⁸.

At the 5th Astana conference convened on July 4-5, 2017, matters pertaining to the delimitation of the boundaries of the 'de-escalation zones' and the security areas to be established were discussed. It was decided to establish a 'Joint Working Group' for the implementation of the 'de-escalation zones' in Idlib, Homs and Damascus²⁴⁹. The main topics of the 6th Astana Talks held on 14-15 September 2017 included the deployment of observers from Russia and Iran to counter a potential operation in Idlib, as well as the setting of the borders of the de-escalation zones in Idlib. A consensus was reached to dispatch 500 observers from Iran, Russia, and Türkiye to the Idlib operation. The declaration of the Idlib de-escalation zone constitutes the final stage of the implementation of the memorandum signed to minimise the tension in Syria²⁵⁰.

The 7th Astana discussions, which commenced on 30th October 2017, deliberated upon matters such as violations of ceasefire by the regime, demining operations at historical locations, the release of prisoners from

²⁴⁷ Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic (06.05.2017) <https://peacemaker.un.org/node/2951>

²⁴⁸ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 May 2017, Press Release Regarding the Signing of the Memorandum on the Creation of De-Escalation Areas in Syria, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-139_-4-may-2017_-press-release-regarding-the-signing-of-the-memorandum-on-the-creation-of--de_escalation-areas-in-syria.en.mfa

²⁴⁹ "Russia: No deal on de-escalation zones in Syria talks" Al Jazeera (06.07.2017) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/7/6/russia-no-deal-on-de-escalation-zones-in-syria-talks>

²⁵⁰ "Russia, Türkiye, Iran agree on Syria de-escalation zones" Reuters (15.09.2017) <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN1BQ1DD/>

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

governmental prisons under the Assad administration, and the distribution of humanitarian assistance by the regime. Nonetheless, no progress was made regarding the liberation of prisoners and the provision of aid to the blockaded regions²⁵¹. During the 8th Astana negotiations conducted on 21-22 December 2017, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kayrat Abdrahmanov stated in the concluding declaration that two decisions were ratified concerning the liberation of captives and individuals who have been forcefully taken, as well as regarding the implementation of humanitarian demining operations. Furthermore, the "Syrian National Dialogue Congress" was announced to take place in Sochi on the 29th and 30th of January in the year 2018²⁵².

At the 9th Astana Talks, an announcement was made by Türkiye, Russia, and Iran regarding the reached agreement to uphold the de-escalation zones and the ceasefire regime, leading to the decision to convene the subsequent meeting of guarantors in Sochi²⁵³. The onset of the 10th round of the Astana talks in Sochi witnessed the presence of the Syrian delegation, under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad al-Jaafari, alongside the guarantor countries and representatives from the United Nations. Particular emphasis was placed on the humanitarian situation in Syria

²⁵¹ "Latest Syrian peace talks in Astana focus on humanitarian issues" The Astana Times (02.11.2017) <https://astanatimes.com/2017/11/latest-syrian-peace-talks-in-astana-focus-on-humanitarian-issues/>

²⁵² Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 December 2017, Press Release regarding the Conclusions of the 8th High Level Astana Meeting, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-396-sekizinci-yukse-duceyli-astana-toplantisinin-sonuclari-hk.en.en.mfa> ; "Syrian National Dialogue Congress set for Jan. 29-30" Anadolu Agency, (22.12.2017) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syrian-national-dialogue-congress-set-for-jan-29-30/1012485>

²⁵³ "First day of 9th round of Astana talks completed" Anadolu Agency (14.05.2018) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/first-day-of-9th-round-of-astana-talks-completed/1145413>

and the repatriation of Syrian refugees and internally displaced people during the 10th round of discussions²⁵⁴.

At the 11th Meeting of the Guarantors in Astana, Türkiye, Russia, and Iran expressed their concern about the violations of the agreement in Idlib. It decided to increase joint efforts to revise the ceasefire²⁵⁵. The 12th session of discussions in Astana took place on the 25th and 26th of April 2019. The communique issued after the meetings highlighted that the senior-level Astana talks concerning Syria were held in the city of Nur Sultan, focusing on the regional dynamics and the initiatives aimed at achieving a political resolution to the conflict within Syria²⁵⁶.

In the final declaration issued after the 13th round of the meetings held on 1-2 August 2019, the guarantor countries stated that they rejected attempts to establish autonomous administration in Syria. Türkiye, Iran, and Russia stated their collective decision to implement tangible actions by international humanitarian law to safeguard the well-being of civilians within the Idlib de-escalation region²⁵⁷. The 14th Astana talks took place on 10-11 December 2019 in Nur Sultan, the capital of Kazakhstan. After the meeting, Russia, Türkiye, and Iran voiced their objection to the unlawful confiscation of Syria's oil earnings in a unified declaration. The guarantor countries expressed their satisfaction with the stabilization agreement of

²⁵⁴ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "31 July 2018, Press Release regarding the High Level Meeting held on 30-31 July 2018 in Sochi in the Astana format" https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-205_-30-31-temmuz-2018-tarihlerinde-socide-astana-formatinda-duzenlenen-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa

²⁵⁵ "11th round of Syria peace talks starts in Astana" Anadolu Agency, (28.11.2018) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/11th-round-of-syria-peace-talks-starts-in-astana/1323856>

²⁵⁶ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press Release Regarding the High-Level Meeting on Syria Held in Nur-Sultan on 25-26 April 2019" 26 April 2019, Accessed on https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_114_-nur-sultan-da-yapilan-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa

²⁵⁷ "Talks continue on Syrian constitutional committee" Anadolu Agency, (03.08.2019) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/talks-continue-on-syrian-constitutional-committee-/1547857>

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

22 October 2019 and underlined the importance of the Adana Agreement of 1998²⁵⁸.

The 15th round of the Astana talks was held via teleconference between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the guarantor countries on 22 April 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The topics on the agenda that had been addressed in earlier meetings were revisited. Furthermore, Türkiye emphasized its commitment to ongoing humanitarian assistance to Syria as part of the pandemic response efforts²⁵⁹. During the 16th Astana talks held on 7-8 July 2021²⁶⁰, the 17th Astana talks held on 21-22 December 2021²⁶¹, the 18th Astana talks held on June 15-16 2022²⁶², and the 19th Astana talks held on November 22-23 2022²⁶³, discussions centered around the prevailing situation in Syria, humanitarian aid, the work of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, the political process, as well as the events in the region especially the situation in Idlib and the northeast of the Euphrates.

²⁵⁸ “14th round of Syria talks discusses latest developments” Anadolu Agency, (11.12.2019) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/14th-round-of-syria-talks-discusses-latest-developments/1670867>

²⁵⁹ “Astana guarantors Türkiye, Russia, Iran discuss latest situation in Syria amid COVID-19 crisis”, Daily Sabah (22.04.2020), <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/astana-guarantors-Turkiye-russia-iran-discuss-latest-situation-in-syria-amid-covid-19-crisis>

²⁶⁰ “Parties to Syrian conflict hold main session of Astana talks” Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/parties-to-syrian-conflict-hold-main-session-of-astana-talks/2298856>

²⁶¹ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Press Release Regarding the High Level Meeting on Syria Held in Nur-Sultan on 21-22 December 2021” 22 December 2021, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-430_-21-22-aralik-2021-tarihlerinde-nur-sultan-da-yapilan-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa

²⁶² “Meeting on Syria in Astana process held in Kazakhstan's Nur Sultan” Anadolu Agency 16.06.2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/meeting-on-syria-in-astana-process-held-in-kazakhstans-nur-sultan/2615478>

²⁶³ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Press Release Regarding the High Level Meeting on Syria Held in Astana on 22-23 November 2022” 23 November 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-353_-22-23-kasim-2022-tarihlerinde-astana-da-duzenlenen-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa

The Astana format talks continued with the the 20th Astana talks held on June 20-21, 2023²⁶⁴, and the last 21st Astana talks held on January 24-25, 2024²⁶⁵. The 20th and 21st Astana talks demonstrated a significant departure from previous discussions, as the revival of restoration of Syrian-Turkish relations have started to be underscored²⁶⁶. In other words, compared to the previous meetings, the importance of normalizing relations between Türkiye and Syria was underscored in the last two Astana meetings. As it was seen in the second chapter of this thesis, natural disasters have the potential to act as catalysts for political reconciliation as they create shared challenges that necessitate collaborative efforts between parties²⁶⁷. Accordingly, the new addition in the rhetoric in the last two Astana talks can be predominantly attributed to the devastating earthquakes of 6 February 2023 that hit the southeast Türkiye near the Syrian border²⁶⁸, intensifying the humanitarian crisis affecting both nations.

During the 21st Astana meeting, discussions progressed significantly, with a primary focus on the reestablishment of relations between Türkiye and Syria. The importance of this reestablishment was emphasized for the purpose of combating terrorism, creating conditions

²⁶⁴ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press Release Regarding the High-Level Meeting on Syria held in Astana on 20-21 June 2023" 21 June 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-152-20-21-haziran-2023-tarihlerinde-astana-da-duzenlenen-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa#:~:text=The%20twentyeth%20High%20Level%20Meeting,Deputy%20Minister%20of%20Foreign%20Affairs.>

²⁶⁵ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Statement by Representatives of Iran, Russia and Türkiye on Outcomes of the 21st International Meeting on Syria in the Astana Format, Astana, 24-25 January 2024" 25 January 2024, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/iran--rusya-ve-turkiye-temsilcileri-terafindan-yapilan-astana-formatindaki-suriye-konulu-21-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-ya-iliskin-ortak-bildirisi.en.mfa>

²⁶⁶ "Astana meeting on Syria stresses importance of Türkiye-Syria normalization" Anadolu Agency, 21.06.2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/astana-meeting-on-syria-stresses-importance-of-turkiye-syria-normalization/2927879>

²⁶⁷ See I. Kelman, *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict*, Routledge, 2011.

²⁶⁸ "UN agencies launch emergency response after devastating Türkiye and Syria quakes" UN News, 06.02.2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133177>

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

for the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of Syrians, revitalizing the political procedure, and guaranteeing the continuous provision of humanitarian assistance to all Syrians. The endeavors of the guarantors of the Astana format, functioning within a quadrilateral structure, were especially well-received²⁶⁹. This transition towards conciliation and collaboration emphasizes the significant influence of the earthquake on regional dynamics and the priorities of the Astana negotiations. The catastrophe not only underscored the pressing requirement for humanitarian support but also offered an occasion for diplomatic interaction and the reconstruction of trust among conflicting nations.

Sochi Summits

On 22 November 2017, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Vladimir Putin, and Hassan Rouhani met at the Sochi Summit²⁷⁰. In contrast to the Geneva talks, the Astana talks represented a significant international meeting where Türkiye, Iran, and Russia made tangible progress toward resolving the Syrian conflict. The Sochi Summit was deemed a crucial advancement towards ending the civil war, and positive outcomes emerged²⁷¹. Deliberations were made for the Syrian National Dialogue Congress to convene and establish the future trajectory of Syria. The summit addressed the topics of conducting impartial and transparent elections and revising the current constitution, but the three countries could not reach a consensus on this issue. While Iran and Russia opposed any

²⁶⁹ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Statement by Representatives of Iran, Russia and Türkiye on Outcomes of the 21st International Meeting on Syria in the Astana Format, Astana, 24-25 January 2024" 25 January 2024, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/iran--rusya-ve-turkiye-temsilcileri-terafindan-yapilan-as-tana-formatindaki-suriye-konulu-21-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-ya-iliskin-ortak-bil-dir.en.mfa>

²⁷⁰ "Putin, Erdogan and Rouhani meet in Sochi" Middle East Monitor, (24.11.2017) <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171124-putin-erdogan-and-rouhani-meet-in-sochi/>

²⁷¹ Mitat Çelikpala, "Viewing present as history: The state and future of Türkiye-Russia relations." *EDAM Foreign Policy & Security* 6 (2019): 25-26.

leadership besides the Assad regime, Türkiye advocated for a government without Assad as a solution²⁷².

In the joint press statement issued at the end of the summit, Türkiye, Iran, and Russia stated that they would continue to cooperate effectively with each other, and thus, they agreed that they would continue to work together until the ISIS terrorist organization is eliminated²⁷³. It was added to the statements that the sovereignty and existence of the Syrian Arab Republic would be preserved, opposition groups would be invited to the Syrian National Dialogue Congress, and Türkiye would not participate in the congress if the PYD participated²⁷⁴. At the Sochi Summit, Türkiye drew attention to the fact that border security is its red line, and that the territorial integrity of the country should be ensured by all terrorist elements, particularly the PYD and ISIS, to safeguard the nation's territorial sovereignty²⁷⁵.

Türkiye, which has always emphasized that it will not allow the terror corridor to be established in the northern region of Syria, strongly reacted to the announcement regarding the formation of a 30,000-strong army led by the US and composed of the PYD terrorist organization²⁷⁶. On 20 January 2018, Operation Olive Branch, mentioned in the previous section, was launched. Following the completion of Operation Olive Branch, the second trilateral Sochi format summit was held in Ankara on 4 April 2018. During the joint press release after the summit, the leaders

²⁷² "Türkiye, Russia, Iran agree on Syrian dialogue summit" Anadolu Agency, (23.11.2017) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/Türkiye-russia-iran-agree-on-syrian-dialogue-summit/974517>

²⁷³ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Final Statement of the Congress of the Syrian national dialogue," 30 January 2018, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/final-statement-of-the-congress-of-the-syrian-national-dialogue_en.en.mfa

²⁷⁴ "Erdoğan, Putin satisfied with results of Sochi summit" Daily Sabah, 31.01.2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/01/31/erdogan-putin-satisfied-with-results-of-sochi-summit>

²⁷⁵ "Soçi Zirvesi: Türkiye'nin kırmızı çizgileri ve Rusya'nın olası önerileri neler?" Euronews, (21.10.2019), <https://tr.euronews.com/2019/10/21/soci-zirvesi-turkiyenin-kirmizi-cizgileri-ve-rusyanin-olasi-onerileri-neler-suriye>

²⁷⁶ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press release regarding the statements on the establishment of a so-called "Syrian Border Security Force" under the PYD/YPG terrorist organization's command" 14 January 2018, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-15-teror-orgutu-pydypg-komutasinda-sozde-suriye-sinir-guvenligi-gucu-kurulacagi-yonundeki-beyanlar-hk_en.en.mfa

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

of the three guarantor nations underscored their commitment to safeguarding Syria's territorial integrity by adopting an impartial stance towards all terrorist factions²⁷⁷. This particular outcome might be seen as a direct result of Türkiye's achievements in Operation Olive Branch. At the Ankara summit, discussions revolved around the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity, with Türkiye emphasizing its determination to stand against the PYD/YPG terrorist organization in the region, which was not mentioned among the terrorist groups to be fought²⁷⁸.

One of the most important agenda items of the third summit, held in Tehran on 7 September 2018, was the military operation in Idlib conducted by the Assad regime, which would directly affect the Syria-Türkiye border region, leading to new waves of migration²⁷⁹. Ankara's expectation at the summit was to stop the operation of Russian and Syrian military units together with Iranian militias in Idlib and to organize an operation against the terrorist elements in Idlib²⁸⁰. President Erdoğan advocated for a 'ceasefire' in Idlib; however, Russian President Putin and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani opposed Erdoğan's suggestion for a truce on the grounds that "destructive elements, terror elements continue provocations in the region"²⁸¹. Conversely, Erdoğan's proposition to

²⁷⁷ Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Statement by the Presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Türkiye, 4 April 2018, Ankara" (04.04.2018), https://www.mfa.gov.tr/iran-islam-cumhuriyeti-rusya-federasyonu-ve-turkiye-cumhuriyeti-devlet-baskanlari-nin-ortak-aciklamasi_en.en.mfa

²⁷⁸ "Erdoğan urges distance from all terror groups in Syria" Anadolu Agency, (04.04.2018), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/erdogan-urges-distance-from-all-terror-groups-in-syria/1108448>

²⁷⁹ "Erdoğan urges global community to avert Idlib assault" Anadolu Agency (11.09.2018), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/erdogan-urges-global-community-to-avert-idlib-assault/1251667>

²⁸⁰ "Summit in Tehran calls for political solution in Syria" Anadolu Agency (07.09.2018), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/summit-in-tehran-calls-for-political-solution-in-syria/1249211>

²⁸¹ "Russia urges disarmament in Syria upon Erdoğan's call" Anadolu Agency 07.09.2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/russia-urges-disarmament-in-syria-upon-erdogans-call/1249398>

urge terrorist groups to disarm was approved and incorporated into the 12-point Tehran Declaration issued after the summit²⁸². The summit held in Tehran revealed the differences between the trilateral parties on Syrian Conflict. As in the other summits, Türkiye continued to emphasize the call for a ceasefire and border security in a consistent manner in the Tehran summit, whereas the disagreement of the parties on this issue was revealed most clearly.

After meeting in Tehran, the leaders met in Sochi on 14 February 2019 for the 4th Summit. At the summit, the latest situation in Idlib, terrorism, and the US withdrawal from Syria were discussed. The collective stance of all leaders underscored the significance of upholding Syria's territorial integrity, with Russia, Iran, and Türkiye concurring on the return of Syrian refugees²⁸³. During this summit, conditioned their support for Türkiye's counter-terrorism operation, especially in the east of the Euphrates, on cooperation with the Syrian regime. Nonetheless, Türkiye underscored the necessity for such collaboration to materialize only under a new Syrian government after the elections in Syria²⁸⁴. Both Türkiye and Iran have asserted their roles as key regional actors in the Syrian conflict, emphasizing that no decisions concerning Syria can be taken without their involvement. Iran, while either explicitly or implicitly expressing discomfort about Türkiye's military operations, continued to advocate for cooperation with Syria. In an interview after the Sochi Summit, President Erdoğan stated that Iran has a discomfort over

²⁸² Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Statement by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the President of the Russian Federation and the President of the Republic of Türkiye" 7 September 2018, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/iran-rusya-turkiye-ortak-aciklamasi_en.en.mfa

²⁸³ 'Suriye'de siyasi çözüm umutları hiç bu kadar filizlenmemiştir' Anadolu Agency (14.02.2019), <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-suriye-kri-zine-siyasi-cozum-umutlari-daha-once-hic-bu-kadar-filizlenmemisti/1392900>

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

Türkiye's presence in Syria, noting that although they did not express this openly, it was easy to understand from their statements²⁸⁵.

On 16 September 2019, during the 5th Türkiye-Iran-Russia Trilateral Summit held in Ankara, a consensus was reached, providing momentum for establishing a constitutional committee and maintaining territorial integrity aimed at fostering peace and stability within Syria²⁸⁶. As discussed in the previous section, Türkiye launched Operation Peace Spring on 9 October 2019 to eliminate terrorist groups along the border that present a threat to national security, safeguard the well-being of inhabitants residing in the eastern Euphrates region, prevent the illegal activities of terrorist elements PYD/YPG and to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria.

§ 3.3 Conclusion

Until the 2000s, when relations began to improve, Türkiye's relations with Syria had been influenced by key issues such as the Hatay dispute, water management concerns, and the challenge of terrorism. After the 20 October 1998 Adana Agreement, the two countries entered into a normalization process. In the same period, the dynamic between the two nations began to evolve favorably after changes in government leadership co-occurred. Turkish foreign policy began to prioritize concepts of "history," "culture," and "Islam," operating within a framework that aimed for harmonious relations with neighboring states. Addressing the Hatay dispute, water crisis, and terrorism took on a more cooperative tone as a platform for dialogue was established. This allowed for the resolution of longstanding conflicts through high-level engagements and discussions.

²⁸⁵ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan Soçi Zirvesi dönüşü önemli açıklamalar" CNN TURK 16.02.2019, <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-recep-tayyip-erdoganin-soci-zirvesi-donusu-aciklamalari>

²⁸⁶ "Ankara summit to add dimensions to Astana process" Anadolu Agency (16.09.2019), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/Türkiye/ankara-summit-to-add-dimensions-to-astana-process/1585527>

Both countries undertook goodwill steps, engaged in multilateral cooperation, and formalized agreements such as visa-free travel and the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council to bolster economic ties. The period marked by a focus on fostering good neighborly relations and enhancing economic prosperity came to an end unexpectedly in 2011 with the spread of the Arab Spring in Syria. Initially, Turkish authorities urged the Assad regime to cease hostilities and enact reforms, characterizing the Syrian conflicts as internal affairs. However, the reforms were not actualized, leading to a deterioration in relations that culminated in a complete breakdown by 2012. Consequently, Türkiye advocated for the removal of the Assad regime as the sole viable solution for the Syrian crisis. This stance positioned Türkiye against the Assad regime in the Syrian War, incurring substantial economic, political, social, and military consequences.

The civil conflict in Syria has resulted in a power vacuum, leading to the resurgence of terrorist organizations within Syrian borders, posing a significant risk to the national security of Türkiye. In 2016, Türkiye initiated cross-border military campaigns in order to safeguard its national security in response to escalating terrorist attacks from ISIS and PKK/YPG and relocating the Syrian refugees to secure de-militarized zones, given the high economic, social, and political burden. Despite feeling deserted by its allies during these endeavors, Türkiye underscored on various occasions its unwavering commitment to preventing the formation of a terrorist stronghold along its southern frontier and its determination to eradicate terrorism at its root. Türkiye has pursued diplomatic resolutions to the deadlock in Syria while also engaging in military offensives. The withdrawal of the United States from Syria in 2019 facilitated Russia and Iran's consolidation of power and influence. Assisted by these two nations, the enduring grasp of the Assad regime on authority has demonstrated that a resolution without his involvement would be unattainable. Within the framework of the Astana Peace Talks and Sochi Summits, initiated by Türkiye, Iran, and Russia, Türkiye's principal position has evolved from advocating for the removal of Assad to preventing the emergence of a Kurdish corridor along its southern border.

DISASTERS AND DIPLOMACY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA

In 2021, Turkish foreign policy underwent changes, and steps were taken to normalize relations with countries in the region. Despite the normalization with the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, there has been no specific approach towards Syria. However, it became evident later that the uncompromising stance was unsustainable. The Turkish leadership, consistently affirming their commitment to preserving Syria's territorial integrity, underwent a necessary policy shift due to the ramifications of the Syrian conflict on Türkiye's domestic and foreign policies. This shift in Türkiye's stance not only reflected the complex web of geopolitical interests at play in the region but also underscored the intricate balancing act required to navigate the multifaceted dynamics of the Syrian conflict.

Consequently, discussions that commenced at the intelligence level with the Assad regime in 2020 have gradually started to move to higher levels, especially following the twin earthquakes that affected both nations. The twin earthquakes not only brought about a shared sense of vulnerability but also highlighted the importance of cooperation in addressing common challenges, paving the way for a shift in the dynamics of Türkiye-Syria relations. Building on this chapter, which delved into the historical background of Türkiye-Syria foreign relations, the next chapter will explore whether the disasters played a role in the reconciliation between the two countries. Considering the recent normalization concerns in the relations, twin earthquakes and water issues will be the main focus of the next chapter.



Disaster Diplomacy Between Türkiye And Syria

This chapter examines the concept of disaster diplomacy as a crucial framework for interpreting the evolving dynamics between Türkiye and Syria, exploring whether natural disasters acted as catalysts for diplomatic engagement or were simply coincidental to the broader political developments. Disaster diplomacy investigates the impact of natural disasters, often considered apolitical occurrences, on diplomatic ties, which can either enhance cooperation or intensify underlying conflicts. The chapter initiates by placing the evolving dynamics of Türkiye-Syria relations in context, paving the way for a comprehensive analysis of their diplomatic interactions during shared crises. It focuses specifically on the 2023 Türkiye-Syria Earthquake, evaluating it as a pivotal event in disaster diplomacy that unveiled both opportunities for collaboration and challenges to achieving diplomatic stability. Furthermore, it explores the historically contentious issue of shared water resources, examining the extent to which disaster diplomacy shaped this complex dynamic of conflict and cooperation. By evaluating these interactions, the chapter seeks to determine the extent to which disaster diplomacy has shaped the Türkiye-Syria relationship, providing insights into the nuanced interplay between disasters and diplomacy in their bilateral context.

§ 4.1 The Period of Informal Engagement Between Türkiye and Syria (2021-2024)

During the initial phase of the Syrian Civil War, Türkiye displayed hesitance towards relinquishing the advancements achieved in its bilateral ties with Syria from 1998 to 2011. Nevertheless, the surge in demonstrations advocating for reforms, the hostile approach of the Damascus government towards diplomatic efforts, and the disproportionate use of force compelled Türkiye to alter its position. The aspirations of the Syrian opposition emerged as a central concern for Türkiye, culminating in the adoption of the stance asserting 'Assad must go' and a subsequent shift in policy. In the year 2014, ISIS/DAESH witnessed a growth in its influence, posing a threat at both local and global levels, thereby persuading the US and Western powers to alter their approaches. As they began backing the PYD/YPG in the anti-terrorism campaign against ISIS, Türkiye began viewing these groups, considered a threat to its national security, as a top priority.

Russia's participation in the Syrian civil conflict to combat ISIS has led to a shift in the regional equilibrium. Amidst this development, while the Assad government has seen an increase in influence, the United States and Western nations have directed their efforts towards eradicating ISIS. Despite this, Türkiye has maintained its position on the removal of Assad but has engaged in collaboration with Russia and Iran, Assad's primary allies, in the pursuit of resolving the crisis. Russia has repeatedly emphasized the significance of the 1998 Adana Accord as a foundational framework for addressing Türkiye's security concerns in northern Syria. Moscow has urged both Ankara and Damascus to adhere to the provisions of this agreement, arguing that it offers a practical basis for mutual cooperation on issues such as border security and counterterrorism¹. Within this framework, Türkiye has frequently voiced disapproval towards the

¹ "Russia: Turkey-Syria cooperation must be based on cross-border Adana accord" Reuters, 22.10.2024. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/russia-turkey-syria-cooperation-must-be-based-on-cross-border-adana-accord-ri-idUSKBN1WV0ZB/>

United States and Western nations for their backing of the PKK/PYD, who were seeking to establish a terrorist corridor in northern Syria.

As seen in the previous section, Türkiye has played a significant role in shaping all the developments in Syria and the decisions taken regarding the crisis. Considering that many Syrians experienced displacement and were compelled to migrate due to the conflict, Türkiye emerged as the nation most impacted by this surge in migration. As of August 1, 2024, excluding those non-registered illegal migrants and those who acquired Turkish citizenship, Syrians are under temporary protection, with official statistics 3,103,606². Within this framework, the dual factors of threats to national security and the refugee challenge can be regarded as the primary drivers that prompted Türkiye's engagement at each phase of the Syrian crisis. Nevertheless, the continuity of the Assad regime since the onset of the conflict, coupled with the engagement in peace negotiations via international diplomatic forums involving its major allies like Russia and Iran, creates an inquiry into the absence of a direct diplomatic engagement between Ankara and Damascus during that period. Within this context, the aggressive attitudes and discourses exhibited by both nations towards each other may also be regarded as contributing factors that hindered such interactions.

By 2020-2021, Arab countries that have engaged in a process of normalization with the Assad government started to express interest in contributing to the reconstruction of Syria during the post-war era, primarily focusing on economic benefits. In addition to the wealthy Gulf countries, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon aim to revitalize mutual commercial cooperation with Syria³. 2021 was also a year of significant transformations for Türkiye, as it worked towards normalizing its

² Republic of Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management, "Distribution Of Syrians Under Temporary Protection By Year", Accessed on August 10, 2024 via <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27>

³ "Arap ülkeleri Suriye'de Esed rejimi ile normalleşme yolunda ilerliyor" Anadolu Agency, (24.09.2021), <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/arap-ulkeleri-suriyede-esed-rejimi-ile-normallesme-yolunda-ilerliyor/2373812>

relations with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates while also commencing normalization efforts with Egypt⁴. The developments involving high-level visits marking the initiation of a new phase in diplomatic relations have attracted significant attention. The normalization process occurred most swiftly and initially with the United Arab Emirates. The reason for this rapid normalization can be attributed to the prompt resolution proposals to tackle strategic and economic factors presented by the high-level politicians⁵.

High-ranking officials led Türkiye's efforts towards reconciliation, facilitating rapid progress in positive advancements. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's constructive approach was apparent throughout all stages of the reconciliation process. This diplomacy driven by leadership was similarly manifested in Türkiye's interactions with Israel, resulting in notable advancements. A significant turning point was witnessed during the visit of Israeli President Isaac Herzog to Ankara on March 9, 2022, denoting the conclusion of almost a decade of strained relations and the commencement of a new phase in bilateral connections⁶. After this event, the visit of previous Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu to Israel and Palestine on May 24-25, 2022, further highlighted the dedication to normalizing relations, ultimately leading to the mutual appointment of ambassadors⁷. Erdoğan stressed the significance of Türkiye-Israel relations by expressing, "Türkiye-Israel relations are crucial for the stability and security of our region. We are ready to develop our

⁴ B. Duran, "Türkiye and the Future of Normalization in the Middle East," *Insight Türkiye* 24 /2 (2022): 167.

⁵ İsmail Numan Telci, "From Rivalry to Rapprochement: What's Behind UAE and Türkiye's Meeting?", TRT World, 21.08.2021. <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/from-rivalry-to-rapprochement-what-s-behind-uae-and-türkiye-s-meeting-49345>

⁶ "Israel's President Visits Türkiye in Sign of Thawing Relations" The New York Times 09.03.2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/09/world/middleeast/israel-isaac-herzog-türkiye-visit.html>

⁷ "Türkiye, Israel demonstrate 'common will' to improve relations: Turkish foreign minister," Anadolu Agency (25.05.2022), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-israel-demonstrate-common-will-to-improve-relations-turkish-foreign-minister/2597740>

cooperation and to better utilize our high potential. I am convinced that maintaining communication and dialogue is mutually beneficial"⁸. Recently, after a phase characterized by enhanced diplomatic relations, as evidenced by the reciprocal exchange of ambassadors and top-level diplomatic visits, the situation deteriorated sharply following Israel's cruel policy towards Palestinians in Gaza since 7 October 2023⁹. As a result, Türkiye decided to cease all trade activities with Israel and call back its ambassador until a "permanent cease-fire" is achieved in Gaza¹⁰. This decision significantly strained the diplomatic relations that had been started to be rebuilt over the past few years.

Saudi Arabia has become a central point of interest in Türkiye's recent efforts towards normalization, particularly following the resolution of the Jamal Khashoggi case, which had strained bilateral relations significantly. Transferring the case to Saudi jurisdiction facilitated a notable improvement in relations¹¹. The visit of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Riyadh in April 2022, where meetings were held with King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman¹². During his visit to Saudi Arabia, Erdoğan oversaw the conclusion of numerous agreements pertaining to energy, foreign direct investment, defense that led to a substantial growth in economic collaboration, evidenced by a surge of

⁸ "Turkish-Israeli relations vital for stability of region: Erdoğan" Hürriyet Daily News, 23.12.2021, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-israeli-relations-vital-for-stability-of-region-erdogan-170282>

⁹ "Türkiye Halts Trade With Israel Amid Deteriorating Relations," The New York Times 02.05.2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/03/world/middleeast/Türkiye-israel-trade-ties.html>

¹⁰ "As Türkiye Cuts Trade Ties, Israel's Isolation Grows" The New York Times, 03.05.2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/03/world/middleeast/Türkiye-israel-gaza-cease-fire.html>

¹¹ "Turkish prosecutor requests transfer of Khashoggi trial to Saudi Arabia," Reuters, (31.03.2022), <https://www.reuters.com/world/turkish-prosecutor-seeks-halt-trial-saudi-suspects-khashoggi-killing-2022-03-31/>

¹² "Erdogan visits Saudi Arabia hoping for new era in ties" Reuters, 29.04.2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/Türkiyes-erdogan-travel-saudi-arabia-thursday-2022-04-28/>

over 600% in Turkish exports to Saudi Arabia in the first half of 2023¹³. This revitalized partnership enhances economic connections and carries broader regional implications, potentially offsetting Iran's influence in the Middle East¹⁴. The normalization is viewed as a strategic adjustment by both countries in reaction to evolving global and regional dynamics, including uncertainties in U.S. policies in the Middle East, as they aim to broaden their alliances and decrease dependence on traditional Western partners¹⁵.

The gradual normalization process observed between Türkiye and Egypt reflects the longstanding mistrust that has characterized their relationship since 2013. In contrast to Türkiye's relatively swift efforts to normalize relations with other nations, the approach taken towards Egypt has been more cautious and slow-moving. This cautious and slow-moving trajectory is attributed to the enduring nature of the disputes between the two countries, which stem from political disparity and strategic discord¹⁶. Despite encountering these obstacles, significant advancements have been made. Notably, the meeting between President Erdogan and President Sisi in Qatar, characterized by handshakes and a display of sincerity, had extensive media coverage¹⁷. Another notable

¹³ "Normalization in full swing as Türkiye's Saudi exports leap by 630%" Daily Sabah, (09.08.2023), <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/economy/normalization-in-full-swing-as-turkiyes-saudi-exports-leap-by-630>

¹⁴ "New chapter in Türkiye-Saudi Arabia relations," Daily Sabah (09.05.2022), <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/new-chapter-in-Türkiye-saudi-arabia-relations>

¹⁵ "Major steps ongoing to normalize ties with Saudi Arabia: Turkish foreign minister," Anadolu Agency, 31.03.2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/major-steps-on-going-to-normalize-ties-with-saudi-arabia-turkish-foreign-minister/2551111>

¹⁶ "Erdogan says seeks further normalisation with Egypt after Sisi handshake" Reuters, 21.11.2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/erdogan-says-seeks-further-normalisation-with-egypt-after-sisi-handshake-2022-11-21/>

¹⁷ "Türkiye's Erdogan shakes hands with Egypt's Sisi at World Cup" Reuters 20.11.2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/Türkiyes-erdogan-shakes-hands-with-egypts-sisi-world-cup-2022-11-20/> ; "Egypt hails el-Sisi, Erdogan handshake as new beginning in ties" Al Jazeera 21.11.2022,

development was Erdoğan's visit to Cairo in February 2024, the first of its kind in nearly ten years, signifying a crucial juncture in the continuous endeavor to restore diplomatic ties fully¹⁸. Both leaders have expressed a commitment to advancing the process, particularly with Erdoğan underscoring the significance of high-level dialogues in propelling this normalization forward. Furthermore, the reconciliation has been underpinned by strategic and economic motivations, along with shared apprehensions regarding regional matters such as the situation in Gaza and the Eastern Mediterranean¹⁹. Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that the normalization process will take some time as both sides address their enduring grievances. While the progress achieved thus far is promising, the pace is expected to remain cautious as both nations strive to reestablish trust and cooperation²⁰.

Türkiye has been progressively working to rebuild relations with Syria since 2021. On 12 August 2022, Cavusoglu made statements during the press briefing on the last day of the 13th Ambassadors Conference held in Ankara. The most notable aspect of Cavusoglu's statements was the public announcement of his meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad at the Non-Aligned Movement event held in Belgrade in October 2021²¹. Cavuşoglu said he told Mekdad that "we need to somehow come to terms with the opposition and the regime in Syria. Otherwise,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/21/egypt-hails-el-sisi-erdogan-handshake-as-new-beginning-in-ties>

- ¹⁸ Mohamed ELDoh, "Erdogan in Egypt: Strategic Implications for Türkiye and Egypt," Geopolitical Monitors Situation Reports 16.02.2024, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/erdogan-in-egypt-strategic-implications-for-Türkiye-and-egypt/>
- ¹⁹ B. Duran, "Türkiye-Egypt normalization: Erdoğan and el-Sissi meeting" Daily Sabah, 24.11.2022, <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/turkiye-egypt-normalization-erdogan-and-el-sissi-meeting>
- ²⁰ Mohamed ELDoh, "Erdogan in Egypt: Strategic Implications for Türkiye and Egypt," Geopolitical Monitors Situation Reports 16.02.2024, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/erdogan-in-egypt-strategic-implications-for-Türkiye-and-egypt/>
- ²¹ "Çavuşoğlu'nun Suriye Dışişleri Bakanı Mikdad'la görüşüğünü açıklaması ne anlama geliyor?" BBC News, 12.08.2022, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/c72d5eqx3850>

there will be no lasting peace"²². The necessity of a political resolution in Syria has been underscored by Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, highlighting the significance of fostering reconciliation between the Syrian government and opposition factions²³.

Türkiye has initiated steps toward reconciliation with Syria, but the progress has been slow and characterized by limited observable advancements. Although the display of goodwill gained momentum, as senior officials from both states meet, recent discussions between the two nations have primarily occurred at the intelligence level, reflecting a cautious approach to re-engagement. These intelligence-level discussions, notably those convened in Damascus²⁴, demonstrate the sophistication of the ongoing procedure, as highlighted by the last Turkish Ambassador to Syria, Ömer Önhon²⁵.

In December 2022, Turkish Defence Minister and Intelligence Chief came together with their Syrian counterparts in Moscow²⁶. This meeting of the Turkish and Syrian delegations hosted by Russia is noteworthy in terms of revealing the positions of the parties as they seek a political resolution to the Syrian civil war. Although no concrete consensus emerged from the meeting between these delegations, and the parties conveyed their own demands and red lines to the other side, this meeting held notable importance as it signified the first high-level engagement

²² "Türkiye's Cavusoglu says he met Syrian foreign minister in October" Middle East Eye, 11.08.2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/Türkiye-syria-cavusoglu-says-met-foreign-minister>

²³ "Turkish foreign minister, Syrian opposition officials meet in Ankara" Anadolu Agency, 24.08.2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkish-foreign-minister-syrian-opposition-officials-meet-in-ankara/2668546>

²⁴ "Turkish and Syrian Spymasters Held Multiple Meetings in Damascus: Report", Middle East Eye, September 15, 2022.

²⁵ "Don't expect Türkiye and Syria to normalise relations any time soon" *Middle East Eye* (13.08.2022), <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/Türkiye-syria-normalise-relations-dont-expect-soon>

²⁶ "Turkish, Russian, Syrian defense chiefs agree to continue talks to ensure stability in Syria" Anadolu Agency, 28.12.2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/turkish-russian-syrian-defense-chiefs-agree-to-continue-talks-to-ensure-stability-in-syria/2774734>

since the breakup of political relations between two countries in 2011 and seen as “a clear sign of normalisation between Ankara and Damascus”²⁷.

The diplomatic rapprochement between Ankara and Damascus was part of broader efforts to stabilize the region and was influenced by Russian efforts to normalize relations between Türkiye and Syria²⁸. Due to these efforts, a quadrilateral meeting involving the deputy foreign ministers of Russia, Iran, Syria, and Türkiye was held in Moscow on 3-4 April 2023. The meeting was considered a crucial part of the diplomatic efforts to ease the tensions between the two countries, especially since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011²⁹. The main agenda items of the meeting included the establishment of a lasting peace in Syria, the fight against terrorist organizations, and the safe return of refugees. Cooperation against the PKK/YPG and the threats posed by these groups in the region were among the issues jointly discussed by the parties. In addition, the steps to be taken on humanitarian aid to Syria were also discussed during the meeting, and issues such as Türkiye's humanitarian aid efforts towards Syria, the opening of airspace, and the passage of aid trucks were discussed. The participants reached a consensus to continue discussions³⁰.

Following the deputy ministerial meetings, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdullahiyan, and Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal

²⁷ “Turkish, Syrian officials meet in Moscow after years-long chill” Reuters 28.12.2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-syrian-officials-meet-moscow-after-years-long-chill-2022-12-28/>

²⁸ Francesco Schiavi, “Türkiye and Syria: The Road to Normalisation Runs Through Moscow”, *Med This Week*, April 6, 2023. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/turkiye-and-syria-the-road-to-normalisation-runs-through-moscow-124780>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “Rusya, Türkiye, İran ve Suriye arasındaki dörtl  toplantı sona erdi” H rriyet, 04.04.2023, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/rusya-turkiye-iran-ve-suriye-arasin-daki-dortlu-toplanti-sona-erdi-42245879>

Mikdad met in Moscow on May 10, 2023³¹. The discussions centered around the Syrian Civil War, Türkiye's support for opposition groups, and the intention of President Erdoğan and Bashar al-Assad meeting. This was the first official meeting between the foreign ministers of Türkiye and Syria since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. The participation of the foreign ministers of Russia and Iran once again demonstrated the critical role of these states in the Syrian conflict in general, both on the ground and on the diplomatic side, such as the Astana and Sochi Summits, for regional cooperation. One of the main topics discussed at the meeting was the return of Syrian refugees. Hosting more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, Türkiye emphasized the importance of cooperation in facilitating their safe and voluntary return. The need for cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the importance of preserving Syria's territorial integrity were other topics on the agenda. The discussions also included Russia's suggestion to formalize cooperation under the Adana Accord framework, specifically focusing on collaborative mechanisms for border security and counterterrorism operations. Russia argued that operationalizing the accord could serve as a trust-building measure between Türkiye and Syria while addressing core concerns of both nations³². At the end of the Moscow talks, it was agreed to continue high-level contacts and technical discussions to draw up a roadmap for normalizing Turkish Syrian relations³³.

When asked about the possibility of meeting with Assad, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan responded, "A meeting with Assad is possible. There is no resentment or bitterness in politics. Sooner or later, we can

³¹ "Quadripartite foreign ministerial meeting on Syria held in Moscow" Anadolu Agency, 10.05.2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/quadripartite-foreign-ministerial-meeting-on-syria-held-in-moscow/2893563>

³² "Rusya Dışışleri Bakanı Lavrov: Türkiye ve Suriye'ye Adana Mutabakatı'na dönmelerini önerdik", Hürriyet, 22.10.2024. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/rusya-disisleri-bakani-lavrov-turkiye-ve-suriyeye-adana-mutabakatina-donmelerini-onerdik-42324041>

³³ Ibid.

take steps"³⁴. Bashar al-Assad confirmed the discussions between Ankara and Damascus, during which meetings at the intelligence level took place. He stated that the scope of these discussions was limited to information sharing and still stressed that these interactions played a role in enhancing bilateral relations. He pointed out that Türkiye was striving to meet Syria's expectations, with an expectation for tangible outcomes rather than mere rhetoric. Assad also emphasized that the contacts with the PYK/YPG should be considered as 'tribal relations' and that these relations are formed around problems such as services and livelihood³⁵.

After such a series of notable improvements in the relations between Türkiye and Syria, a catastrophic earthquake hit both nations in February 2023. The earthquake, originating in southern Türkiye, led to extensive devastation, affecting millions of individuals in Türkiye and northern Syria. The tragedy resulted in more than 50,000 deaths and numerous others being wounded or displaced, significantly impacting areas already affected by ongoing conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. However, it remains unclear whether this tragic incident had a notable impact on the advancement of normalizing relations between the two nations. The actual influence of the earthquake on diplomatic relations will be analyzed in the next section.

³⁴ "Erdogan says meeting with Syria's Assad is 'possible'" *Al Monitor* (24.11.2022), <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/11/erdogan-says-meeting-syrias-assad-possible>

³⁵ "Esad'dan Türkiye'ye normalleşme çağrısı: Sözler değil, pratik adımlar bekliyoruz," *Cumhuriyet*, (26.11.2022), <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/dunya/esaddan-turkiyeye-normallesme-cagrisi-sozler-degil-pratik-adimlar-bekliyoruz-2006370> ; "Syria resisting Russia's efforts to broker Türkiye summit, sources say" *Reuters* (02.12.2022) <https://www.reuters.com/world/syria-resisting-russias-efforts-broker-Turkiye-summit-sources-say-2022-12-02/>

§ 4.2 The 2023 Earthquake as a Case in the Disaster Diplomacy

On the 6th of February 2023, a devastating earthquake with a magnitude of 7.7 struck the southern Türkiye, signifying the most powerful earthquake hit the country since 1939³⁶. This earthquake, which was followed by a series of aftershocks and an additional significant tremor measuring 7.5 in magnitude, resulted in extensive destruction throughout southern Türkiye and northwestern Syria. The initial effects of the disaster were severe, and Türkiye issued a Level 4 alert calling for international assistance to mitigate the overwhelming extent of the devastation³⁷. In parallel, northwestern Syria, which was already confronting with a humanitarian crisis exacerbated by the ongoing civil war, a cholera outbreak and severe winter conditions, confronted even greater destruction as the earthquake intensified the pre-existing challenges³⁸.

Providing aid to the affected areas faced significant difficulty due to the destruction of roads. Despite these obstacles, the initial cross-border aid convoys reached Syria by 8 February³⁹. The circumstances, however, persisted in being severe, with the mortality rate in both Türkiye and Syria escalating dramatically, surpassing 11,000 by the third day following the earthquake. The humanitarian response was further complicated by the extensive magnitude of the destruction, with over 9,000 buildings demolished in northwest Syria and tens of thousands of individuals becoming homeless⁴⁰. As rescue teams worked tirelessly to locate survivors trapped in the rubble, international organizations mobilized resources, calling for urgent donations and support to address the

³⁶ “Earthquake: Türkiye and North-west Syria Flash Update No. 1”. Reliefweb, February 6, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/earthquake-turkiye-and-north-west-syria-flash-update-no-1-6-february-2023>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “North-west Syria: Situation Report (19 February 2023)”, Reliefweb, February 19, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/north-west-syria-situation-report-19-february-2023-enar>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

growing crisis. As the situation unfolded, neighboring countries and many others began offering assistance and sending medical supplies and personnel to aid recovery⁴¹. In the weeks following the earthquake, the international community, led by the United Nations and various humanitarian organizations, intensified their efforts to provide relief to the affected populations.

In Türkiye, the February 2023 earthquake resulted in displacement of millions of individuals, with 53,537 recorded deaths reported in total⁴². In Syria, this disaster worsened an already vulnerable situation, resulting in extensive destruction and significantly undermining the infrastructure. While 8,476 people lost their lives, the earthquake intensified food insecurity and damaged initiatives aimed at epidemic control, thereby placing additional strain on the region's healthcare systems⁴³.

A catastrophe of this scale brings to mind a comparable disaster in 1999 that impacted Türkiye and Greece, two neighboring nations historically marked by tumultuous relations. The earthquakes of 1999 provided an unforeseen opportunity for diplomatic engagement and collaboration between these two rival states. In the following section, this thesis will undertake a comparative examination of Türkiye-Greece Earthquake Diplomacy in 1999 and Türkiye-Syria Earthquake Diplomacy in 2023. This analysis aims to enhance understanding of how crisis environments due to natural disasters can influence interactions between neighboring countries with complex and problematic bilateral relations.

⁴¹ "Rescue teams from Europe help in relief efforts in quake-hit southern Türkiye", Anadolu Agency, February 8, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/rescue-teams-from-europe-help-in-relief-efforts-in-quake-hit-southern-turkiye/2811563>

⁴² "Türkiye remembers Feb. 6 earthquake victims" Anadolu Agency, February 6, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkiye-remembers-feb-6-earthquake-victims/3128724>

⁴³ "Devastating Earthquakes in Southern Türkiye and Northern Syria, Situation Report" Reliefweb, April 6, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/devastating-earthquakes-southern-turkiye-and-northern-syria-april-6th-2023-situation-report-20-entr>

4.2.1 *A Comparative Analysis: Türkiye-Greece Earthquake Diplomacy (1999) vs. Türkiye-Syria Earthquake Diplomacy (2023)*

The concept of earthquake diplomacy emerged as a significant focus of scholarly attention following the 1999 İzmit earthquake in Türkiye. The earthquake occurred on August 17, 1999, registering a magnitude of 7.6, resulting in over 17,000 fatalities and extensive infrastructural devastation⁴⁴. Merely one month later, on September 7, a 6.0 magnitude earthquake impacted Athens, Greece, inflicting considerable destruction and leading to 143 deaths⁴⁵. These concurrent earthquakes occurred within the context of historically tense relations between Türkiye and Greece, characterized by territorial disagreements in the Aegean Sea, the Cyprus conflict, and an atmosphere of mutual distrust exacerbated by decades of competition⁴⁶.

Despite these tensions, the earthquakes of 1999 paved the way for an unparalleled era of rapprochement between the two nations, frequently characterized as "earthquake diplomacy"⁴⁷. In the aftermath of the İzmit earthquake, Greece emerged as one of the first nations to extend assistance to Türkiye, deploying rescue personnel, medical resources, and financial support⁴⁸. The Greek populace's vast backing for Türkiye signified a notable transformation in public sentiment, nurturing a sense of solidarity that transcended the historical hostilities between the two

⁴⁴ "20 years on after Marmara earthquake razes NW Turkey" Anadolu Agency, August 17, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/20-years-on-after-marmara-earthquake-razes-nw-turkey/1558325>

⁴⁵ "Athens: One Year On, Earthquake Effects Linger – Greece" Reliefweb, August 18, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/athens-one-year-earthquake-effects-linger> N. E. Ganapati, I. Kelman, and T. Koukis. "Analysing Greek-Turkish disaster-related cooperation: A disaster diplomacy perspective." *Cooperation and Conflict* 45.2 (2010): 162.

⁴⁶ J. Ker-Lindsay, "Greek-Turkish rapprochement: The impact of disaster diplomacy?." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 14.1 (2000): 217.

⁴⁷ D. Keridis, "Earthquakes, Diplomacy, and New Thinking in Foreign Policy." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2006): 212-14.

⁴⁸ N. E. Ganapati, I. Kelman, and T. Koukis. "Analysing Greek-Turkish disaster-related cooperation: A disaster diplomacy perspective." *Cooperation and Conflict* 45.2 (2010): 170.

nations⁴⁹. Later, when the earthquake hit Athens, Türkiye responded by delivering aid and rescue teams, thereby reinforcing the growing goodwill between the two countries⁵⁰. This reciprocal assistance contributed to goodwill between the two countries, encouraging diplomatic rapprochement that later coincided with high-level diplomatic interactions and the ratification of several bilateral agreements.⁵¹

In the context of Greek-Turkish disaster diplomacy, a consensus among numerous scholars posits that the rapprochement between Greece and Türkiye in 1999 did not stem directly from the earthquakes. For instance, Kelman (2012) contends that officials from both nations exhibited hesitance in advancing diplomatic relations but were “dragged along by their constituents and the media”⁵². In contrast, Ker-Lindsay (2000) claims that two significant earthquakes produced “a multiplying and legitimizing effect on diplomatic rapprochement,” which was already in progress, mainly due to the initiatives undertaken by the respective Foreign Ministers⁵³. While the foundational elements for rapprochement were being established before the earthquakes, the disasters significantly contributed to the acceleration and legitimization of these initiatives, affording both administrations a politically acceptable rationale to seek reconciliation⁵⁴. According to Ker-Lindsay, Greece has been the main driver of the rapprochement initiative as opposed to Türkiye⁵⁵. The principal evidence that Ker-Lindsay claims is Türkiye's

⁴⁹ J. Ker-Lindsay, "Greek-Turkish rapprochement: The impact of disaster diplomacy?." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 14.1 (2000): 220.

⁵⁰ N. E. Ganapati, I. Kelman, and T. Koukis. "Analysing Greek-Turkish disaster-related co-operation: A disaster diplomacy perspective." *Cooperation and Conflict* 45.2 (2010): 172.

⁵¹ Ahmet O. Evin, "Changing Greek perspectives on Türkiye: An assessment of the post-earthquake rapprochement." *Turkish Studies* 5 (2004):6-7.

⁵² I. Kelman, *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict*, Routledge, (2012): 138.

⁵³ J. Ker-Lindsay, 2000: 225-26.

⁵⁴ Ker-Lindsay, 2000: 229; Evin, 2004: 8-9

⁵⁵ J. Ker-Lindsay, *Crisis and Conciliation: A Year of Rapprochement Between Greece and Turkey*, I.B.Tauris, (2007): 115.

refusal to extend a gesture, such as the opening of the Halki Seminary, in exchange for Greece's reversal of its veto concerning Türkiye's EU candidacy at the Helsinki European Council⁵⁶.

Comparing the 1999 Türkiye-Greece case with the 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake reveals several contextual differences. First, the pre-existing diplomatic conditions in the Türkiye-Syria scenario were more strained compared to the relations between Türkiye and Greece in 1999. Whereas the relationship between Türkiye and Greece was lacking in active hostilities in 1999, Türkiye's relationship with Syria has been profoundly damaged due to the ongoing Syrian civil war. These already strained diplomatic ties created additional challenges for disaster diplomacy to facilitate immediate diplomatic engagement in the aftermath of the 2023 earthquake.

Secondly, while the 1999 earthquakes took place in regions characterized by a degree of political stability, the 2023 earthquake occurred in territories of Syria that had already been ravaged by civil conflict, significantly constraining the potential for a robust disaster response. As articulated by Kelman (2012, 2014), the efficacy of disaster diplomacy is maximized in contexts where a diplomatic framework is already in place and can be activated by the occurrence of a disaster⁵⁷. In the case of Türkiye and Syria, the absence of such a diplomatic framework and the mistrust between the two states constrained the potential for the earthquake to generate immediate positive impacts on their relations.

Furthermore, an analysis of the influence of non-state actors and public perception following the 2023 earthquake reveals that these factors played a less pronounced role in Türkiye-Syria relations compared to the Türkiye-Greece scenario in 1999. In the Turkish-Greek case, the engagement of civil society, media, and public sentiment proved

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ I. Kelman, *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict*, Routledge, (2012): 14; I. Kelman, "Does Disaster Diplomacy Improve Inter-State Relations?" *E-International Relations*, November, 4 2014, <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/11/04/does-disaster-diplomacy-improve-inter-state-relations/>

to be instrumental in constructing a narrative characterized by reciprocal support and empathy, thereby promoting diplomatic initiatives. According to Louise Comfort, the frequency of interactions between the Greek and Turkish populations experienced a significant escalation following the two earthquakes⁵⁸. From this perspective, disaster diplomacy is conceptualized as a mechanism of 'citizen diplomacy' that has validated, and fostered popular endorsement for, an official initiative that anticipated the catastrophe⁵⁹. Citizens of Greece and Türkiye, alongside non-governmental organizations and media outlets, played crucial roles in fostering a narrative of mutual assistance and solidarity, which contributed to the continuity of the diplomatic energy generated by the earthquakes⁶⁰. By comparison, the fragmented political climate in Syria limited the potential for similar public diplomacy efforts, thereby reducing opportunities for public-driven disaster diplomacy.

Additionally, the perception of aid delivery in both countries has been influenced by the complex interplay of domestic and international politics. This fragmentation has further complicated the challenges associated with establishing a unified public diplomacy framework that could bolster disaster diplomacy initiatives. In Türkiye, the government's management of the catastrophe and the ensuing aid initiatives have been the focus of investigation, both within the nation and in the international arena⁶¹. The Turkish government's choice to facilitate aid distribution to Syria, notwithstanding the strained diplomatic relations, can be interpreted as a strategic maneuver aimed at improving its regional influence and showcasing its soft power⁶². Nevertheless, this action has

⁵⁸ L. Comfort, "Disaster: agent of diplomacy or change in international affairs?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 14.1 (2000): 289.

⁵⁹ Ker-Lindsay, 2000: 216

⁶⁰ N. E. Ganapati, I. Kelman, and T. Koukis. "Analysing Greek-Turkish disaster-related co-operation: A disaster diplomacy perspective." *Cooperation and Conflict* 45.2 (2010): 176-177.

⁶¹ B. Yinanç, "Deprem Diplomasisi Türkiye'de Yabancı Düşmanlığını Geriletir mi?", daktilo 1984, February 18, 2023. <https://daktilo1984.com/yazilar/deprem-diplomasisi-turkiyede-yabanci-dusmanligini-geriletir-mi/>

⁶² Ibid.

not resulted in a transformation in public perception or a relaxation of the official posture toward the Assad regime⁶³.

In the context of Syria, the dynamics surrounding the reception of humanitarian assistance present considerable complexity. The ongoing civil war in Syria has resulted in a fractured societal landscape wherein disparate regions and communities exhibit varying levels of access to essential information and aid resources. The Assad regime has strategically leveraged the earthquake as a means to increase its control over the distribution of aid, thereby reinforcing its claims to legitimacy⁶⁴. This situation has generated concerns regarding the politicization of humanitarian assistance and its potential to function as an instrument of coercion rather than a vehicle for promoting reconciliation⁶⁵. The Syrian government has faced significant criticism for impeding aid to territories held by opposition forces, most notably in Idlib, in the aftermath of the earthquake⁶⁶. Government representatives attributed the deficiency of aid to U.S. and EU sanctions, with President Bashar al-Assad accusing Western nations of exhibiting "no regard for the human condition"⁶⁷. Additionally, The UN has condemned Russia's efforts to hinder aid and has urged the Security Council to authorize aid flows into Northwestern Syria, with the U.S. advocating for improving humanitarian assistance through all available crossings⁶⁸. The obstacles to ensuring that aid

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Jeremy Konyndyk and Jesse Marks, "Foreign Affairs: How Assad Weaponized a Disaster" Refugees International, March 21, 2023. <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/foreign-affairs-how-assad-weaponized-a-disaster/>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "Why the earthquake caused a "perfect storm" of a crisis in Syria" Vox, February 12, 2023. <https://www.vox.com/world/2023/2/12/23594720/earthquake-aid-crisis-syria-united-nations>

⁶⁷ "Syrian President al-Assad criticizes Western countries in first televised comments since Monday's earthquake" CNN, February 10, 2023. https://edition.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/turkey-syria-earthquake-updates-2-10-23-intl/h_84be5d5c70a0b901d5f800b6033fc97a

⁶⁸ "Frustration at UN ahead of likely row with Russia on Syria aid" Reuters, February 10, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/frustration-un-ahead-likely-row-with-russia-syria-aid-2023-02-10/>

reaches vulnerable populations, particularly in opposition-held areas, have further complicated the viability of disaster diplomacy as a pathway to fostering improved relations.

Despite these challenges, the 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake provides significant insights into the expansive domain of disaster diplomacy. It emphasizes the critical significance of pre-existing diplomatic frameworks and non-state entities' influence in determining disaster diplomacy outcomes. Moreover, it elucidates the constraints of disaster diplomacy within scenarios characterized by active conflict and entrenched political rifts, indicating that while disasters may create opportunities for diplomatic interaction, these prospects are profoundly dependent on the broader political landscape⁶⁹.

4.2.2 The Impact of the 2023 Earthquake on Türkiye-Syria Relations: A Missed Opportunity for Rapprochement?

While the 2023 earthquake offered a potential pathway for reconciliation between Türkiye and Syria, its impact on the trajectory of bilateral relations remains notably uncertain. As seen in the case of Türkiye and Greece in 1999, earthquakes have triggered diplomatic interaction in the past. Nevertheless, within the framework of Türkiye-Syria relations, the geopolitical complexities posed significant challenges to disaster diplomacy in facilitating a sustainable rapprochement.

As both governments contended with the immediate aftermath, there were indications of increased cooperation in relief efforts, which could potentially pave the way for more sustained dialogue in the future. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, Türkiye provided significant support to ensure that humanitarian aid reached the affected regions in Syria, despite the strained relations between the two governments⁷⁰. In a press briefing, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu discussed the

⁶⁹ I. Kelman, 2012

⁷⁰ "First UN convoy since quake enters northwest Syria from Turkey" Al Jazeera, February 9, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/9/un-aid-convoy-syria-turkey-earthquake>

ongoing humanitarian aid efforts to Syria in the aftermath of the earthquake⁷¹. Çavuşoğlu stated that the earthquake had damaged several roads on the Syrian side, complicating the flow of assistance from Türkiye and the international community. For years, only Security UN Council-approved aid corridor Cilvegözü Border Gate has remained operational for aid delivery by the United Nations and civil society organizations. Accordingly, Türkiye has authorized two additional border gates from Kilis for humanitarian crossings to enhance the effectiveness of aid to the earthquake victims in Syria. Çavuşoğlu highlighted Türkiye's role in facilitating international aid to Syria, including the use of Turkish airspace for flights to Syrian airports, emphasizing that this effort is purely humanitarian and not political. He assured that despite the technical difficulties on the ground, Türkiye remains committed to ensuring that aid reaches its intended recipients in Syria⁷². This assistance was crucial given the severe impact of the earthquake on northwest Syria, where millions were already in desperate need of humanitarian aid due to the ongoing civil war.

Despite these efforts, the political realities on the ground have limited the scope for any significant diplomatic thaw. While Türkiye's facilitation of aid to Syria can be seen as a form of pragmatic cooperation, broader diplomatic breakthroughs between the two governments remained constrained by existing geopolitical realities. The earthquakes caused widespread damage to critical infrastructure across the region. Roads, bridges, and buildings have suffered extensive damage, resulting in not only a catastrophic humanitarian crisis but also significant economic

⁷¹ "Dışişleri Bakanı Çavuşoğlu: Gelen yardımların Suriye'ye de ulaşması konusunda gerekli desteği veriyoruz" Anadolu Agency, February 8, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu-gelen-yardimlarin-suriyeye-de-ulasmasi-konusunda-gerekli-destegi-veriyoruz/2812215>

⁷² "Dışişleri Bakanı Çavuşoğlu: Gelen yardımların Suriye'ye de ulaşması konusunda gerekli desteği veriyoruz" Anadolu Agency, February 8, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu-gelen-yardimlarin-suriyeye-de-ulasmasi-konusunda-gerekli-destegi-veriyoruz/2812215>

disruption⁷³. As a result, the disaster also affected the diplomatic dynamics in the region. It led to a re-evaluation of sanctions, particularly in the construction and energy sectors, which are vital for Syria's recovery. As international actors reassessed their positions, the earthquake facilitated Syria's diplomatic re-engagement with the Arab world and reduced the urgency for Assad to reconcile with Türkiye⁷⁴.

The situation surrounding the UN-mediated agreement to resume operations at the principal border crossing between Türkiye and Syria for humanitarian aid distribution highlights the limited role of disaster diplomacy in achieving broader reconciliation. Despite Türkiye's endorsement of the passage of aid through the two additional border crossings on February 8, UN agencies exhibited hesitance to utilize these routes without prior consent from either the Syrian government or the UN Security Council⁷⁵. The Syrian government approved the proposition of utilizing alternative border crossings from Türkiye into northwest Syria after 13 days following the earthquake. The reason for the long wait was Assad's insistence that humanitarian aid destined for Syria be routed through areas under his control⁷⁶. The Syrian government gave authorization to the operation of two additional border crossings—Bab al-Salam and Al-Ra'ee—into northwest Syria for a preliminary duration of three months. These crossings were vital for the region's aid distribution, which relied on relief efforts for over four million individuals. In August 2023, the United Nations disclosed an accord with

⁷³ "Two weeks after the earthquakes: Urgent needs and prolonged vulnerability - Northwest Syria", reliefweb, February 27, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/two-weeks-after-earthquakes-urgent-needs-and-prolonged-vulnerability-northwest-syria-february-2023>

⁷⁴ "Syria's Assad thanks 'Arab brothers' as quakes stir aid diplomacy" Al Jazeera, February 17, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/17/assad-syria-disaster-aid>

⁷⁵ "Aid needs are immense as Turkey-Syria death toll crosses 29,000" Al Jazeera, February 12, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/12/turkey-syria-quake-deaths-pass-28000-un-expects-toll-to-double>

⁷⁶ "Northwest Syria: Aid Delays Deadly for Quake Survivors" Human Rights Watch, February 15, 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/15/northwest-syria-aid-delays-deadly-quake-survivors>

the Syrian government to maintain the Cilvegözü border gate operational for six months while concurrently extending the authorization for the use of Bab al-Salam and Al-Ra'ee for an extra three months⁷⁷. With a demand pressed by the UN Security Council, this agreement was predominantly motivated by the pressing necessity for humanitarian support rather than any diplomatic reconciliation. While re-establishing a new border crossing represented a noteworthy accomplishment in humanitarian accessibility, it failed to foster a more extensive diplomatic dialogue between Ankara and Damascus.

Although the disaster in the form of 'earthquake diplomacy' can create opportunities for cooperation that lead to a temporary easing of tensions, the geopolitical landscape between Türkiye and Syria remained largely unchanged. The underlying tensions, rooted in Türkiye's support for opposition forces in the Syrian civil war, military presence, and Syria's alignment with regional actors opposed to Turkish interests, continue to overshadow any potential diplomatic gains from the disaster.

In contrast, the Türkiye-Greece rapprochement in 1999 led to notable improvements in bilateral relations, supported by mutual aid and public diplomacy efforts. However, it is important to note that the rapprochement between Türkiye and Greece in 1999, while fostering temporary co-operative efforts, did not yield long-term, tangible changes in their diplomatic relations. This underscores that disaster diplomacy, even when initially successful, often struggles to address deeper structural and geopolitical tensions that persist beyond the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The 2023 earthquake, while creating opportunities for Türkiye's rapprochement with Greece and Armenia and Syria's engagement with Arab countries, did not result in comparable developments between Türkiye and Syria due to the complex geopolitical dynamics.⁷⁸ Likewise, the

⁷⁷ "Syria-Türkiye: UN completes 200th cross-border aid mission since February quakes" UN News, August 29, 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/08/1140192>

⁷⁸ See D. Bechev, "Facing tragedy, Turkey mends ties with Greece and Armenia", Al Jazeera, February 27, 2023. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/2/27/turkey-earthquake-diplomacy>; J. Kucera, 'Armenia-Turkey border opens for earthquake aid

earthquake brought chance for Syria to come close with other Arab countries⁷⁹. Thus, the intricate network of regional coalitions, internal political factors, and the ongoing turmoil in Syria have collectively played a significant role in diminishing the efficacy of disaster diplomacy in promoting the improved relations between the two nations.

In conclusion, while the 2023 earthquakes created a temporary opening for collaboration between Türkiye and Syria, entrenched political and geopolitical dynamics constrained the disaster's potential to catalyze long-term reconciliation. The diplomatic efforts that emerged were largely confined to humanitarian initiatives, reflecting the limitations of disaster diplomacy in overcoming deep-seated mistrust and conflict. This differs from the post-1999 Türkiye-Greece earthquake diplomacy, where pre-existing diplomatic frameworks and public sentiment temporarily facilitated cooperative efforts following the disaster. Consequently, the Türkiye-Syria case underscores the challenges disaster diplomacy faces in deeply divided geopolitical contexts, emphasizing the need for robust pre-existing frameworks and trust-building measures.

§ 4.3 The Case of Water as a Balancing Conflict and Cooperation Between Türkiye and Syria

Water conflicts between Türkiye and Syria possess a longstanding historical context influenced by geopolitical dynamics and the critical significance of water resources within the region. The Euphrates and Tigris rivers have been pivotal to these conflicts, acting as essential water sources for agriculture, industrial activities, and domestic consumption in both nations. The Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), which has

delivery'. Eurasianet, February 13, 2023. Available at: <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-turkey-border-opens-for-earthquake-aid-delivery> ; A. Grigoryan, 'Diplomatic thaw between Turkey and Armenia?'. Friedrich Naumann Foundation, February 21, 2023. Available at: <https://www.freiheit.org/diplomatic-thaw-between-turkey-and-armenia>

⁷⁹ N. Ebrahim, "Syria's Assad hopes quake can help free him from global isolation" CNN, February 15, 2023. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/15/middleeast/assad-pariah-status-earthquake-mime-intl/index.html>

aimed to utilize these rivers for developmental purposes in southeastern Türkiye, has emerged as a significant source of dispute. Syria has consistently charged Türkiye with reducing the flow of the Euphrates, thereby jeopardizing Syria's water security. This ongoing tension has endured for several decades and has been intricately linked to broader geopolitical and security concerns.⁸⁰

The Syrian Civil War has exacerbated the competition for water resources, thereby introducing an additional layer of intricacy to the disputes between the two nations. The control of water has emerged as a strategic asset within the conflict, with Türkiye's upstream position on the Euphrates River being particularly controversial. Various Syrian factions, including governmental authorities and multiple opposition factions, have accused Türkiye time-to-time for allegedly weaponizing water by intentionally limiting its flow to regions governed by Kurdish forces and opposing groups⁸¹. These allegations heightened tensions, with water emerging as an instrument within the broader context of the conflict⁸².

The legal context surrounding water governance is critical for understanding the dynamics of conflict and cooperation between Türkiye and Syria. Transboundary water governance refers to managing water bodies that cross political boundaries, requiring formal agreements between riparian states⁸³. For instance, the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, which originate in Türkiye and flow into Syria and Iraq, exemplify transboundary resources requiring bilateral or multilateral agreements.

⁸⁰ Ö.Z. Oktav, "Transition from enmity to 'common fate' rhetoric: water issue in Turkish-Iraqi-Syrian relations." *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 40 (2009): 71-90.

⁸¹ "Turkey/Syria: Weaponizing Water in Global Pandemic?", Human Rights Watch, March 31, 2020. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/31/turkey/syria-weaponizing-water-global-pandemic>

⁸² N. Zawahri, "Adapting to Climate Change in Conflict-Affected Syria" in Marwa, et al. "Troubled Waters in Conflict and a Changing Climate: Transboundary Basins Across the Middle East and North Africa" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2024): 33-35.

⁸³ See A. Kibaroglu,, & Scheumann, W. (2013) ; M. Daoudy, (2009).

In contrast, transnational water governance addresses broader regional impacts of water issues, such as climate-induced scarcity or ecological degradation, transcending specific political boundaries⁸⁴. Both concepts play a central role in shaping the policies and strategies of Türkiye and Syria. Hence, it is important to outline the key legal principles and their relevance to the Euphrates-Tigris Basin dispute, highlighting the fundamental divergence in the legal and political approaches adopted by the two nations.

The disagreement between Türkiye and Syria over the Euphrates and Tigris rivers illustrates a stark divergence in their legal and political framing of water-sharing disputes. While Syria seeks to frame the matter as an international issue governed by principles of international law, Türkiye views it as a sovereign matter requiring bilateral negotiation. This fundamental discord complicates efforts toward a sustainable resolution and highlights the broader challenges of transboundary water governance in politically sensitive regions. For instance, Türkiye has resisted the internationalization of water-sharing issues, refusing to ratify the UN Watercourses Convention of 1997. This decision reflects Türkiye's perspective that international legal principles like "equitable and reasonable utilization" often prioritize the rights of downstream states like Syria and Iraq, potentially limiting upstream nations' ability to develop their resources⁸⁵. In response, Syria has sought international arbitration to counterbalance Türkiye's upstream dominance, framing its grievances as violations of customary international law⁸⁶.

Despite its position as an upstream state in the Euphrates-Tigris Basin, Türkiye is classified as a water-stressed country due to its limited renewable water resources. With an average annual water availability of approximately 1,500 cubic meters per capita, Türkiye falls below the widely accepted sufficiency threshold of 1,700 cubic meters per capita, making efficient water management a critical priority (Kibaroglu, 2022).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ A. Kibaroglu, "Türkiye's Water Security Policy." *Insight Turkey* 24.2 (2022): 69-88.

⁸⁶ See Daoudy, 'Asymmetric power'; 'Water weaponization in the Syrian conflict: strategies of domination and cooperation'.

Climate change has further exacerbated Türkiye's water challenges, with rising temperatures and declining precipitation in regions like Central Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia. For example, during the drought of 2020–2022, agricultural production in Konya Province, a major agricultural hub, declined sharply due to reduced water availability for irrigation. Similarly, Lake Tuz, one of Türkiye's largest salt lakes, dried up almost entirely in 2021, highlighting the severe impacts of water scarcity on ecosystems and livelihoods⁸⁷. These challenges are compounded by rapid population growth, urbanization, and industrialization, which have increased demand for water resources.

From the perspective of Türkiye, managing water resources through the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) is considered pivotal for national development, enhancing both agricultural efficiency and energy production. Türkiye posits that its utilization of transboundary water resources complies with international legal frameworks, underscoring that water constitutes a sovereign asset that each riparian nation can exploit within its jurisdiction. Moreover, Türkiye asserts that its governance of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers aims to maximize water utilization for the benefit of all riparian nations, subject to the limitations imposed by natural hydrological conditions⁸⁸. In addition, Türkiye's water security strategy underscores the strategic significance of water resources in safeguarding energy security and enhancing agricultural output, which are perceived as vital elements of the nation's broader security framework⁸⁹. For instance, the Atatürk Dam, one of GAP's flagship projects, generates hydroelectric power and provides irrigation water for over 1.7 million hectares of arable land. While GAP is often

⁸⁷ "Turkey steps up efforts to combat climate change", TRT World, 27.10.2024. <https://www.trtworld.com/turkiye/turkey-steps-up-efforts-to-combat-climate-change-12774887>

⁸⁸ A. Kibaroglu, and V. Sümer. "Turkey's foreign policy orientation in the water context and the Orontes Basin." *Science Diplomacy and Transboundary Water Management The Orontes River Case* (2015): 60-62; A. Kibaroglu, *Turkey's Water Diplomacy: Analysis of Its Foundations, Challenges and Prospects*. Anthem Press, (2021): 35-38.

⁸⁹ A. Kibaroglu, "Türkiye's Water Security Policy." *Insight Turkey* 24.2 (2022): 70-74.

criticized by downstream neighbors for its impact on water flows, from Türkiye's perspective, it represents a vital strategy for addressing its own water scarcity challenges⁹⁰.

The historical evolution of the Euphrates-Tigris dispute underscores these asymmetrical power dynamics between Türkiye and Syria, rooted in geography and historical precedence. Türkiye, as the upstream state, enjoys a natural advantage in controlling the flow of these rivers, which it has leveraged to prioritize its national development objectives. This asymmetry became particularly evident during the 1970s and 1980s, when Türkiye's construction of large-scale dams, including the Keban and Atatürk dams, significantly reduced water flow to Syria and Iraq. These actions were viewed by downstream states as unilateral assertions of control, leading to heightened tensions. Syria responded by intensifying its calls for international arbitration and aligning with Iraq to strengthen its position. Despite these efforts, bilateral agreements like the 1987 protocol have been criticized for lacking enforcement mechanisms and failing to address the root causes of the dispute⁹¹.

One of the most notable instances of utilizing water as an instrument of diplomacy can be observed in the governance of the Euphrates River. Much critique has been directed towards Türkiye's policies, particularly about the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP). Authorities from Syria, alongside international observers, have alleged that Türkiye has intensified the humanitarian crisis in Syria by diminishing water flow. Türkiye disproves this claim since the discourse surrounding water scarcity has been strategically employed by the YPG/PKK in their propaganda efforts, alleging that Türkiye is intentionally worsening the water crisis in northern Syria to put pressure on regions under their jurisdiction⁹². In response, Türkiye has refuted these allegations, contending that they are politically driven and fail to account for the

⁹⁰ See Maden, 2023; Daoudy, 2020.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² "YPG/PKK makes propaganda over water shortage in N Syria" Anadolu Agency, March 28, 2020. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/ypg-pkk-makes-propaganda-over-water-shortage-in-n-syria/1783255>

complexities involved in the management of transboundary water resources amidst conflict and environmental challenges. Accordingly, the staff at the Allouk water station in northeastern Syria tasked with resolving operational challenges, assert that the difficulties encountered do not stem from Türkiye. Rather, they contend that the Assad regime neglects to supply the essential electricity required for the pumps to operate at optimal efficiency⁹³. According to the Turkish officers in the region, the Syrian regime, in collaboration with the PKK/YPG terrorist organization, routinely block the energy provision to the Peace Spring region. Due to the deliberate inaction regarding the restoration of previously damaged power infrastructure, residents are unable to derive adequate benefit even on occasions when electricity is accessible⁹⁴.

The Syrian Civil War has further exacerbated the fragmentation of authority over water resources within the Syrian territory, with various factions, including the regime based in Damascus, exercising control over distinct segments of the Euphrates River. This fragmentation has escalated tensions between Türkiye and Syria, particularly concerning critical infrastructure such as the Alouk Water Station. The station, which is essential for providing water to nearly half a million individuals, has emerged as a contentious point of conflict between forces supported by Turkey and the YPG/PKK. The control of the station has undergone numerous transitions, resulting in recurrent interruptions in water supply and allegations suggesting that Türkiye is weaponizing water in its broader confrontation with the YPG/PKK terrorists in Northern Syria⁹⁵. International actors have occasionally intervened in these water-related disputes, with mixed results. In 2021, Russia brokered a temporary agreement to resume the water supply from the Alouk Water

⁹³ "Syrian regime's claim of cutting water supply not true" Anadolu Agency, December 20, 2020. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syrian-regime-s-claim-of-cutting-water-supply-not-true/2082754>

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "Turkey/Syria: Weaponizing Water in Global Pandemic?", Human Rights Watch, March 31, 2020. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/31/turkey/syria-weaponizing-water-global-pandemic>

Station, highlighting both the potential and limitations of international mediation in such disputes⁹⁶. However, while these interventions may temporarily normalize tensions, they have not led to long-term solutions or improvements in bilateral relations. This instance illustrates how the governance of water infrastructure can be strategically exploited, thereby complicating the diplomatic dynamics between Türkiye and Syria.

Despite the existence of conflicts, there has been collaboration fostered by water resource management. As discussed in Chapter 3, before the start of the Syrian Civil War, Türkiye and Syria engaged in diplomatic initiatives to govern their shared water resources. The 1987 protocol, in which Türkiye pledged to ensure a minimum water flow into Syria, stands as a notable illustration of how water can function as a platform for cooperation, even in the context of broader political discord⁹⁷. Furthermore, in 2009, both nations formalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that sought to bolster collaboration in water management, encompassing the exchange of hydrological data and the synchronization of water utilization during periods of drought⁹⁸. Although the civil conflict impeded these initiatives, the MoU exemplifies the potential of water to act as a cornerstone for diplomatic interaction again in the future. The 2007-2008 drought offers another illustration of collaborative engagement, wherein Türkiye temporarily increased the water flow to Syria to mitigate the drought's impact on Syrian agriculture⁹⁹. Although this cooperation was limited and short-term, it underscored Türkiye's readiness to participate in cooperative water

⁹⁶ "Türkiye, Russia conduct joint work for water in Syria" Hürriyet Daily News, August 9, 2021. Available at: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Türkiye-russia-conduct-joint-work-for-water-in-syria-166941>

⁹⁷ A. Kibaroglu, and V. Sümer, 2015: 60-63.

⁹⁸ A. Kibaroglu, and W. Scheumann. "Evolution of transboundary politics in the Euphrates-Tigris river system: new perspectives and political challenges." *Global Governance* 19 (2013): 290-92; Ö.Z. Oktav, 2017: 246.

⁹⁹ A. Kibaroglu, and W. Scheumann. "Euphrates-Tigris rivers system: Political rapprochement and transboundary water cooperation." *Turkey's Water Policy: National Frameworks And International Cooperation*. Berlin, Heidelberg, (2011): 277-299.

governance when deemed essential, emphasizing the prospective function of water as a diplomatic bridge.

The failure to establish a consistent and reliable framework for water cooperation reflects the broader deterioration of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Syria during the civil war. During the drought spanning from 2020 to 2022, Türkiye addressed its irrigation requirements in the southeastern Anatolia region by reducing the water discharged downstream, which exacerbated crop failures in Syria¹⁰⁰. Nevertheless, the potential for water-related disaster diplomacy remains significant. Water management emerges as a critical humanitarian issue and a potential avenue for disaster diplomacy in the context of the protracted Syrian Civil War. Türkiye's announcement of the preparation of a new water management law in 2021 can be seen as an example. Highlighting the imperative for Türkiye to modernize its agricultural irrigation infrastructure, president Erdoğan stated that, as a nation experiencing water scarcity, Türkiye is compelled to optimize the utilization of its current water resources through the promotion of conservation practices, particularly in light of the necessity to allocate its scarce water supplies with neighboring Iraq and Syria¹⁰¹. In his speech, he added ““We have always shown the necessary sensitivity to meeting the water needs of our neighbours. We have never turned the water issue into a threat or a bargaining tool in our bilateral ties. We will maintain this same fair attitude going forward”¹⁰². The management of shared water resources, particularly the Euphrates River, presents an opportunity for Türkiye and Syria to engage in dialogue, even amidst ongoing conflict. While disaster diplomacy traditionally involves leveraging humanitarian crises to foster diplomatic relations, the role of

¹⁰⁰ N. Zawahri, 2024: 34.

¹⁰¹ “Turkey preparing new water management law: President” Anadolu Agency, March 30, 2021. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/energy-diplomacy/turkey-preparing-new-water-management-law-president/32292>

¹⁰² “Erdogan: Turkey preparing new law for better water management” TRT World, July 5, 2021. Available at: <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/erdogan-turkey-preparing-new-law-for-better-water-management-45429>

water in this context is particularly significant due to its direct impact on both human security and regional stability.

One of the most critical challenges confronting the region is the effect of climate change, which has exacerbated water scarcity and heightened the occurrence of extreme weather events. These changes disproportionately affect downstream states like Syria, which rely heavily on the consistent flow of water for agriculture and domestic use. For instance, the prolonged droughts of 2007–2008 and 2020–2022 severely impacted Syria’s agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity and economic distress. Türkiye, meanwhile, has intensified its focus on water conservation and infrastructure modernization through initiatives like the proposed 2021 Water Management Law. This law emphasizes water conservation practices and modern irrigation methods to address Türkiye’s own water scarcity issues while ensuring sustainable allocation to downstream nations¹⁰³. Despite these efforts, the lack of coordinated regional action to address climate-induced water stress continues to deepen the discord between the two nations. Nevertheless, these mutual challenges concurrently offer ways to foster broader diplomatic engagement between Türkiye and Syria. Recognizing climate change as a shared, non-political challenge could provide opportunities for renewed dialogue and cooperation, particularly in the realms of disaster risk reduction and sustainable water management. Collaborative initiatives to manage water resources could establish a foundation for localized cooperation during harsh droughts or water shortages. Despite their limited scope, such interactions could facilitate the emergence of more enduring dialogue on other contentious matters.

As climate change intensifies heat waves and water scarcity within the region, the urgent need to manage water resources will inevitably increase. This scenario provides a unique opportunity for Türkiye and Syria to initiate a dialogue, potentially culminating in more extensive diplomatic engagements in the future. By concentrating on mutual vulnerabilities, such as the repercussions of climate change on water

¹⁰³ See Kibaroglu, 2022

availability, both nations may uncover shared interests, thereby facilitating new pathways for peacebuilding initiatives within the region.

As the dispute surrounding water resources continues, these conflicts exemplify the dual nature of water as both a point of conflict and a potential tool for diplomacy between Türkiye and Syria. Understanding how water management influences diplomatic relations, particularly in the post-2011 context, is essential for exploring opportunities for both conflict and cooperation in the region. This investigation holds significant importance as we assess the role of water as a diplomatic instrument in the context of Turkish-Syrian relations.

§ 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the complex dynamics of disaster diplomacy between Türkiye and Syria, emphasizing pivotal events and their extensive implications for bilateral relations (See Table 3). The period of informal engagement (2021-2024) established a preliminary framework for collaboration, particularly in disaster management. Nevertheless, the 2023 Earthquake exposed the complexities of disaster diplomacy, as prevailing mistrust hindered practical cooperation despite the shared humanitarian crisis. A comparative analysis of Türkiye's earthquake diplomacy with Greece in 1999 and its approach to Syria in 2023 highlights how differing historical, geopolitical, and domestic contexts shape the outcomes of such diplomacy. The 2023 Earthquake on relations represented a missed opportunity for rapprochement, as geopolitical anxieties and historical grievances dominated potential goodwill. Furthermore, the Case of Water illustrated the dual nature of shared resources in intensifying tensions and providing avenues for cooperation contingent upon diplomatic endeavours.

Table 3.1: Evaluating the Role of Disaster Diplomacy in Türkiye-Syria Relations

Period/Event	Description	Significance
The Period of Informal Engagement (2021-2024)	After years of strained relations, efforts were made to rebuild diplomatic ties between Türkiye and Syria.	Created a foundation for cooperation, especially in areas requiring joint efforts like disaster management.
2023 Twin Earthquakes	Devastating earthquakes impacted both nations, bringing attention to the need for cross-border humanitarian assistance.	Highlighted the potential for disaster diplomacy; however, existing mistrust limited collaborative efforts.
Comparative Analysis: Türkiye-Greece (1999) vs. Türkiye-Syria (2023)	Analyzes Türkiye's earthquake diplomacy with Greece in 1999 and Syria in 2023.	Demonstrates that while natural disasters can open diplomatic channels, underlying political and historical factors can hinder similar outcomes.
Impact of 2023 Earthquake Disaster on Relations	Post-earthquake relations between Türkiye and Syria showed limited improvement, with opportunities for closer ties largely unrealized.	Reflects the complexities of disaster diplomacy; geopolitical concerns and historical grievances overshadowed potential goodwill gestures.
Case of Water as Balancing Conflict and Cooperation	The management of shared water resources, particularly the Euphrates River, continues to be a source of tension, yet also offers a potential area for cooperation.	Emphasizes the dual role of water as both a conflict driver and a possible avenue for building trust, depending on diplomatic approaches.

SOURCE Authors Own Compilation

The examination of disaster diplomacy between Türkiye and Syria in the aftermath of the 2023 earthquake underscores the complexities and constraints associated with employing natural catastrophes to foster diplomatic reconciliation. Although the earthquake appeared to create a potential avenue for cooperative efforts, especially in the humanitarian sense, the prevailing geopolitical context and the deeply entrenched

hostilities between Türkiye and Syria significantly curtailed the effectiveness of these diplomatic initiatives.

The 2023 earthquake initially appeared to provide a fleeting opportunity for Türkiye and Syria to engage in constructive dialogue, akin to the rapprochement witnessed between Türkiye and Greece after the 1999 earthquake. Türkiye's quick response to this disaster, which included facilitating humanitarian assistance to Syria, suggested a readiness to rise above political divisions in the face of a humanitarian crisis. However, the profound geopolitical tensions between the two countries, particularly Türkiye's support for opposition groups within the Syrian civil conflict and Syria's alignment with factions opposed to Turkish interests, overshadowed any possible diplomatic progress.

The ongoing military and political tensions further the challenges of normalizing relations between Türkiye and Syria. Diplomatic engagements involving the defence ministers and intelligence heads of Iran, Russia, Syria, and Türkiye highlighted the inherent difficulties reconciling conflicting interests. Syria's stipulation for withdrawing Turkish military forces as a condition for reconciliation has obstructed significant diplomatic advancement despite the constructive nature of these discussions. Recent diplomatic initiatives, including the interactions among the defence ministers and intelligence chiefs, have illuminated the persistent challenges to normalizing relations. Although the constructive nature of these dialogues is evident, Syria's insistence on withdrawing Turkish military presence as a prerequisite for reconciliation has impeded any substantial diplomatic progress¹⁰⁴. While these meetings may suggest a potential thaw in relations, they remain constrained by Türkiye's military presence in northern Syria.

The persistent stalemate between Türkiye and Syria slowed diplomatic relations between the neighboring states' reconciliation. President Bashar al-Assad has categorically articulated that any prospective dialogue with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is predicated

¹⁰⁴ "Turkey, Russia, Iran, Syria hold 'constructive talks'" Reuters, April 25, 2023. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/turkey-russia-iran-syria-hold-constructive-talks-ankara-says-2023-04-25/>

upon the unconditional withdrawal of Turkish military forces from Syrian soil, in addition to the formulation of a definitive framework for such negotiations. Assad's stance emphasizes his aim of terminating what he characterizes as Türkiye's "illegal occupation" of Syria, which reflects ongoing grievances regarding Türkiye's military interventions and its backing of opposition factions seeking to overthrow him¹⁰⁵. In contrast, President Erdogan has conveyed a readiness to pursue meetings with Assad; however, he firmly dismisses the prerequisite of withdrawing Turkish troops, labelling it as "unacceptable"¹⁰⁶. This core divergence—where Assad's Syria insisted on the complete withdrawal of Turkish forces while Türkiye maintaining its strategic foothold—hindered any substantial progress in diplomatic relations, thereby obstructing efforts to rebuild formal relations between the two nations.

The comparison between the 2023 earthquake involving Türkiye and Syria and the 1999 Türkiye-Greece earthquake demonstrates the importance of contextual variables in shaping the outcomes of disaster diplomacy. In the case of Türkiye-Greece, mutual aid and public diplomacy played pivotal roles in fostering a long-term transformation in bilateral relations. In contrast, the 2023 earthquake did not produce a similar outcome between Türkiye and Syria, primarily due to the intricate web of regional alliances, domestic political dynamics, and the ongoing conflict within Syria. The reopening of the border crossings, while a significant humanitarian achievement, did not result in broader diplomatic engagement between Ankara and Damascus.

Water as a shared resource occupies a critical role in the diplomatic relationship between Türkiye and Syria, acting both as a source of conflict and as a potential mechanism for fostering cooperation. While water governance has the potential to serve as a mechanism for extensive diplomatic engagement, the ongoing disputes surrounding the management of water resources, notably the Euphrates River. Syria's

¹⁰⁵ "Erdogan open to meeting al-Assad but not to withdrawal from Syria" Al Jazeera, July 17, 2024. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/17/erdogan-open-to-meeting-al-assad-but-not-to-withdrawal-from-syria>

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

framing of the water dispute as an international issue reflects its vulnerability as a downstream state. It frequently cites international legal principles like "no significant harm" to argue that Türkiye's dam-building projects under GAP have jeopardized its water security. In contrast, Türkiye's insistence on bilateralism underscores its desire to control upstream water management without external constraints. Additionally, Türkiye has expressed concerns that internationalizing the issue could embolden downstream states to demand disproportionate water shares, further complicating negotiations¹⁰⁷. These divergent legal perspectives create a persistent diplomatic deadlock, making cooperative water governance increasingly difficult in the absence of mutual trust.

The broader implications of the dispute extend beyond legal frameworks. While Türkiye's approach emphasizes sovereignty and development, it risks exacerbating regional tensions and alienating downstream neighbors. Similarly, Syria's strategy of internationalization, while legitimate in principle, often delays negotiations by creating political friction. Moreover, external factors, such as climate change and prolonged droughts, have intensified the need for cooperation. For instance, the Euphrates-Tigris dispute underscores the importance of balancing national interests with shared responsibilities in addressing transboundary water challenges (Zawahri, 2024). Without trust-building measures and a shared legal framework, the potential for sustainable resolution remains limited. Historical accords and examples of cooperative efforts highlight the potential for water-related disaster diplomacy. However, this opportunity remains isolated mainly due to political and military rivalries.

¹⁰⁷ Maden, 2023; Daoudy, 2020.

Conclusion

This chapter presents a conclusive analysis of the influence of disaster diplomacy on Türkiye's foreign policy towards Syria. It is divided into three principal sections: an overview of the research and its findings, an examination of the study's limitations and avenues for future research, and an exploration of the prospective trajectory of Türkiye's foreign policy regarding Syria. This discussion emphasizes the nuanced interplay between acute disasters like earthquakes and ongoing issues like water management, highlighting their respective roles in shaping bilateral relations.

§ 5.1 Overview of the Study and Implications

The thesis started with an introductory chapter aimed at outlining the research question, objectives, methodological approach, and the core thesis argument. Chapter 1 focused on the ways disasters, such as earthquakes, influence Türkiye's foreign policy towards Syria, while also examining the role of water as a dualistic factor of conflict and cooperation. The chapter initially established a conceptual framework pertaining to Turkish foreign policy regarding Syria, emphasizing Türkiye's agency in both regional and global political arenas, the principal actors that shape its foreign policy, and the recent international developments that have impacted the country's contemporary foreign policy stance. Additionally, it engaged in a discourse on Türkiye's historical, political, economic, and security ties to Syria, providing a brief historical framework from the late Ottoman era to modern times, while directing the dialogue towards the implications of the disasters experienced by both nations and their consequent effects on Türkiye's bilateral relations with Syria.

The second chapter, titled Research Design and Theoretical Overview, combines the research design with a theoretical framework. It details the methodology, case selection, and the core concept of disaster diplomacy. This chapter explains how disasters, such as earthquakes, can create temporary opportunities for diplomatic engagement. Additionally, it examines transboundary water disputes as a persistent geopolitical issue, emphasizing their role in balancing conflict and cooperation between Türkiye and Syria. The chapter engaged with contemporary academic discussions pertaining to disasters and their consequential effects on the resolution of extant conflicts and inter-state relations. Simultaneously, it provided a framework concerning the implications of such literature that explains the role of disasters in offering unique opportunities for nations to engage in collaborative initiatives that may not have otherwise emerged, capitalizing on the mutual necessity for assistance and solidarity during crises to foster enduring diplomatic ties. It scrutinized this

argument for its relevance to the investigation of the foreign relations of Türkiye with Syria.

Drawing upon various empirical case studies related to disaster diplomacy, Chapter 2 explained an array of conceptual frameworks and dimensions associated with disasters, encompassing earthquakes, droughts, tsunamis, and hurricanes, while asserting that water diplomacy constitutes a crucial element within the sphere of international relations, particularly in contexts, where water resources traverse national boundaries. This dual analysis highlights the interplay between acute crises and long-standing geopolitical challenges in shaping interstate interactions. It concluded that enduring historical and political hostilities between states may obstruct effective collaboration both during and after disasters. Consequently, the chapter argued disaster diplomacy embodies a complex and politically nuanced subject, influenced by numerous variables that affect the decisions made by nations impacted by disasters.

In this context, the thesis enriches this body of literature by agreeing on the transient nature of disaster diplomacy processes while simultaneously opening avenues for scholarly discourse concerning the case of Türkiye-Syria relations. It proposed that the objective is to engage in debate regarding the extent to which disasters may generate temporary opportunities for cooperation and dialogue, and to what degree they possess a significant capacity to yield enduring resolutions to conflicts between Türkiye and Syria.

While the thesis primarily focused on the recent interplay between Türkiye and Syria regarding water-related issues and the impact of the twin earthquakes experienced by both nations, it provided a concise overview of the political historical background of the bilateral relations in Chapter 3 to explain the contemporary dynamics of foreign relations. Chapter 3 examined the historical framework that informs the diplomatic exchanges between Türkiye and Syria across two distinct temporal epochs: pre-2000s and post-2000s, with particular emphasis on the limited diplomatic interactions that characterized the period before the year 2000. Prior to the 2000s, the bilateral relationship predominantly revolved around contentious matters such as the Hatay region, water

disputes, and Syria's support for terrorist activities. The watershed moment in their diplomatic relations was marked by the onset of the Syrian civil war in the 2000s.

This chapter clarified that until the 2000s, when relations began to show signs of improvement, Türkiye's engagement with Syria was predominantly shaped by pivotal issues including the Hatay dispute, concerns surrounding water management, and the threat of terrorism. Following the Adana Agreement of 20 October 1998, the two nations initiated a process of normalization. Concurrently, the dynamics between the two countries began to evolve positively as shifts in governmental leadership coincided. This development enabled the resolution of prolonged conflicts through high-level engagements and deliberations. Both nations undertook initiatives of goodwill, engaged in multilateral cooperation, and developed economic relations. However, this situation abruptly ended in 2011 with the dissemination of the Arab Spring in Syria.

In 2021, Turkish foreign policy experienced significant transformations as initiatives were undertaken to restore relations with regional countries. Consequently, dialogues that started at the intelligence level with the Assad regime in 2020 have progressively transitioned to higher levels, particularly in the aftermath of the twin earthquakes that impacted both nations. The dual earthquakes not only engendered a collective sense of vulnerability but also underscored the significance of collaboration in confronting shared challenges, thereby facilitating a transformation in the dynamics of Türkiye-Syria relations.

Following the establishment of the historical context in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 delves into the dynamics of disaster diplomacy between Türkiye and Syria, focusing on two critical aspects: the 2023 earthquake and the issue of shared water resources. The analysis begins with the phase of informal engagement between these two states, explicitly covering 2021 to 2024. In discussing the 2023 Earthquake as a significant case of disaster diplomacy, Chapter 5 initiates a comparative analysis that contrasts the earthquake diplomacy between Türkiye and Greece in 1999 with that of Türkiye and Syria in 2023, acknowledging that the concept of earthquake diplomacy emerged prominently in academic literature

following the İzmit earthquake in Türkiye in 1999, which signified the initiation of Türkiye's involvement in disaster diplomacy. Lastly, the chapter engages with the issue of water as a dualistic factor of conflict and cooperation between Türkiye and Syria. It posits that the disputes over water resources between these nations are deeply rooted in historical contexts, shaped by geopolitical tensions and the critical importance of water resources in the region. Over time, the Syrian Civil War has intensified the competition for water resources. A salient example of water serving as a diplomatic tool is the governance of the Euphrates River. However, the Syrian Civil War has further fragmented the control over water resources within Syria, with various factions, including the Damascus regime, holding authority over different segments of the Euphrates. The failure to establish a consistent and reliable framework for water cooperation highlights the broader deterioration of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Syria amid the civil conflict. Nonetheless, the potential for water-related disaster diplomacy remains significant. While disaster diplomacy conventionally involves the utilization of humanitarian crises to foster diplomatic relations, the importance of water within this context is particularly pronounced due to its direct implications for human security and regional stability. By evaluating interactions catalyzed by disaster, the chapter aims to ascertain how disaster diplomacy has influenced the evolving dynamics between Türkiye and Syria.

The principal assertion advanced in this chapter is that the effects of the disaster on the reconciliation of bilateral relations between the two states remain uncertain. Concurrently, existing scholarly literature reveals a scarcity of investigation into this case relative to the extensive analyses produced by non-governmental organizations and the prevalent opinion pieces within the discourse. Consequently, the Chapter aimed to enrich this corpus of literature by introducing a unique case study. It presented a conceptual framework concerning the implications of the 2023 earthquake on the prospective rapprochement of Türkiye-Syria relations.

In conclusion, Chapter 5 endeavors to synthesize the thesis, address its limitations, outline potential pathways for future research, and investigate the prospective trajectories of Türkiye-Syria relations within the

framework of disasters and diplomacy. Consequently, the thesis contributes to the existing body of literature by offering a comprehensive, contemporary, empirically grounded, and theoretically informed account of the role of disaster diplomacy in shaping bilateral relations. Therefore, it aspires to establish a foundation for future research initiatives and provide experts, policymakers, and scholars with a profound analysis of the bilateral relations between the examined nations.

§ 5.2 Limitations of the Study and the Future Research Areas

Through the employment of qualitative case studies alongside the process-tracing methodology, this research has enlarged the existing body of literature by delivering an empirical analysis of the rapprochement between Türkiye and Syria, as well as explaining the conditions under which such diplomatic efforts may culminate in substantial transformations within the realm of international relations. The bilateral relationship between Türkiye and Syria served as a pivotal case study for disaster diplomacy, owing to the distinctive opportunities that disasters present in nurturing international collaboration among states with historically fraught relations, thus offering insights into how mutual humanitarian crises can act as a catalyst for dialogue and cooperation, albeit constrained by overarching geopolitical considerations and the intrinsic complexities of international relations.

While the dominant perspective within the disaster diplomacy literature posits that disaster events invariably lead to lasting diplomatic improvements, this thesis has made a significant contribution to the discourse by investigating whether the repercussions of such diplomatic initiatives are short-lived and frequently fail to engender lasting changes in interstate relations. This contribution is crucial for understanding the factors that influence the efficacy of disaster diplomacy within international affairs, thereby providing essential insights for policymakers and scholars who are engaged in the intersection of natural disasters and diplomatic relations.

However, the conclusions derived from the thesis are constrained by certain limitations. Four principal concerns may be regarded as potential limitations of the thesis. Firstly, the contemporary political landscape addressed in the thesis posed the challenge of the author maintaining a critical distance from the events and dynamics that he personally observed in Türkiye. Nonetheless, the adoption of a rigorous scientific methodology facilitated the mitigation of this particular limitation. Secondly, the rapidly evolving political dynamics in the bilateral relations between the two nations necessitate ongoing analysis and monitoring of the daily developments in future investigations within this domain. Consequently, the arguments posited in the thesis must be assessed and empirically substantiated in light of the shifting outcomes of the bilateral relations between Türkiye and Syria. Thirdly, these arguments should be generalized to other cases in order to yield new insights, given that the Türkiye-Syria relationship constitutes a relatively limited sample for generalization. Future scholars may wish to incorporate a broader sample that could enhance this area of inquiry. From a comparative standpoint, Türkiye's disaster diplomacy with other nations could be examined, such as the instance of Greece, Armenia and Türkiye's disaster diplomacy. Fourthly, the thesis emphasizes the limitations of disaster diplomacy in contexts characterized by ongoing conflict and entrenched political divisions, suggesting that while disasters may facilitate diplomatic engagement, such opportunities are heavily contingent upon the prevailing political environment. The case of Türkiye and Syria consequently illustrates the limitations of disaster diplomacy in environments marked by intense conflict and political enmity.

Despite these limitations, the thesis aimed to enrich the existing body of literature by investigating disaster diplomacy through a dual framework that incorporates both acute disasters, such as the 2023 earthquakes, and ongoing challenges like water management. The findings of the thesis revealed a robust correlation within this dual disaster framework to elucidate the potential reconciliation process of Türkiye-Syria relations. The study aimed to discern the common patterns inherent in this

process and to analyze the nature of such a process from a historical vantage point.

In the current literature, disaster diplomacy is inadequately analyzed within the particular context of Türkiye and Syria. Although catastrophic occurrences such as the 2023 earthquake event have emphasized the potential for collaborative initiatives, the resultant diplomatic repercussions remain ambiguous. The earthquake exacerbated pre-existing tensions and showed the complex socio-political landscape, especially concerning the Syrian refugee population residing in Türkiye. Despite the potential for cooperation arising from disaster situations, the immediate repercussions manifested in limited international aid directed towards Syria, in stark contrast to the substantial assistance provided to Türkiye, thereby revealing a discrepancy in equitable disaster response and its diplomatic implications. Secondly, the historical framework of Türkiye-Syria relations further complicates the viability of disaster diplomacy.

Additionally, the influence of international actors on Türkiye-Syria relations has become even more pronounced in the wake of the Assad regime's collapse. The involvement of regional and global powers, such as the United States, Russia, and Iran, as well as Türkiye's evolving partnerships with opposition forces and neighboring countries, underscores the complex interplay of geopolitical interests shaping these relations. The fall of Assad has reconfigured regional alliances, with Türkiye emerging as a pivotal player in Syria's future. However, the extent to which these shifting dynamics intersect with disaster diplomacy initiatives remains underexplored. The fragile post-conflict environment offers both risks and opportunities for leveraging disaster-induced diplomatic efforts to foster collaboration and stability.

§ 5.3 Concluding Remarks: Future Trajectory of Türkiye's Foreign Policy in Syria

While the principal argument posits that disasters inherently consolidate states and communities in their endeavors to mitigate catastrophic consequences, the academic discourse surrounding the concept of disaster

diplomacy predominantly revolves around four pivotal inquiries. The initial inquiry concerns the degree to which disasters impact diplomatic relations. The subsequent inquiry investigates whether disasters engender a novel framework of diplomacy. The third inquiry seeks to determine whether disasters foster an atmosphere conducive to authentic diplomacy, wherein the engaged parties prioritize reconciliation rather than exploiting the events for public relations gain. Finally, the fourth inquiry scrutinizes the temporal aspect of diplomacy, assessing whether it manifests as a transient or enduring phenomenon, contingent upon the willingness of the involved parties and other factors extraneous to the disaster itself.

Despite the historical tensions and the ongoing absence of formal diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Syria, there had been multiple occasions wherein these nations united in response to various calamities. Two notable examples are the 2023 twin earthquakes and transboundary water management along the Euphrates River. The "disaster diplomacy" was initiated in reaction to the earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in 2023. In addition to these recent exemplars of disaster diplomacy, one can also underscore the instance of a shared but scarce water resource that demarcates the border between the two nations. It appears that both parties' collaborative oversight of the basin is imperative for effectively managing these risks in the future.

Historically, the Republic of Türkiye has maintained a complex and contentious relationship with the Syrian Arab Republic, particularly following the onset of the Syrian uprising in 2011, which triggered significant political, economic, and military turmoil. Nonetheless, recent developments indicated a potential shift in relations, as Türkiye sought to tackle internal challenges related to Syrian refugee demographics and Kurdish political ambitions. The 2023 Earthquake impacting Türkiye and northern Syria has exacerbated the pre-existing difficulties encountered by Syrian refugees living in Türkiye, thereby underscoring the imperative for enhanced humanitarian interventions and integration strategies. The ramifications of the disaster on vulnerable populations, including Syrian refugees, underscore the potential for disaster diplomacy to transform

Türkiye's diplomatic interactions with Syria. The enduring humanitarian crisis might have necessitated Türkiye to adopt a more cooperative stance, prioritizing shared humanitarian goals over political discrepancies. However, considerable barriers remained. The post-disaster context has intensified uncertainties for Syrian migrants within Türkiye, encompassing issues about legal status, housing accessibility, and availability of essential services. These challenges may obstruct leveraging disaster diplomacy to cultivate improved bilateral relations. Moreover, Türkiye's foreign policy orientation has increasingly been characterized by a trend toward securitization and nationalism, which could limit the avenues for diplomatic engagement with Syria. Despite these obstacles, the twin earthquakes presented a critical opportunity for Türkiye to reevaluate its strategic approach towards Syria. By prioritizing humanitarian cooperation and addressing the pressing needs of Syrian refugees, Türkiye could facilitate the establishment of a more stable and constructive bilateral relationship with Syria. This approach aligns with disaster diplomacy's broader objectives, which emphasize natural disasters' ability to transcend political conflicts and foster international collaboration

Nevertheless, it is imperative to recognize that the disaster diplomacy observed in these scenarios would not inherently resolve all the foundational tensions between these nations. While these diplomatic maneuvers were promising, it was vital to maintain this momentum and persist in endeavors toward reconciliation.

As I was in the final stages of revising this thesis following its successful defense, a historic shift occurred in Syria. On November 27, 2024, armed opposition forces led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) launched a sudden and unexpected offensive in the western countryside of Aleppo province. Initially met with skepticism regarding their likelihood of success, the rapid advances made by HTS and allied groups in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Daraa culminated in the capture of Damascus on December 8, 2024. This decisive 13-day operation led to the dramatic fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, with Assad seeking refuge in Russia and the Syrian army disbanding in disarray.

This monumental development fundamentally alters the dynamics analyzed in this thesis, as reconciliation efforts with the Assad regime are no longer applicable. Türkiye now faces a radically changed political landscape, requiring a reassessment of its foreign policy priorities. The implications of this shift for Türkiye's approach to normalization, counterterrorism, and regional stability are profound¹⁰⁸.

Türkiye's response to these evolving dynamics reflects its strategic vision for Syria's post-Assad future. The collapse of the Assad regime marks a pivotal moment in Türkiye-Syria relations, with implications for refugee dynamics, border security, and regional influence. Hosting over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, Türkiye views Assad's departure as an opportunity to facilitate repatriation and reduce domestic tensions¹⁰⁹. As highlighted by Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Türkiye had long advocated for a peaceful resolution to the Syrian conflict. Through the Astana process, Türkiye sought to suspend hostilities and provide the Assad regime with an opportunity to reconcile with its people. However, as Fidan noted, "The Syrian regime failed to seize this chance, despite the foresight of President Erdoğan, who had initiated proactive measures anticipating this trajectory in Syria"¹¹⁰. The Assad regime's rejection of Türkiye's normalization initiatives underscores the complexities of the region's geopolitics and validates Türkiye's current approach of

¹⁰⁸ "Türkiye Acting Carefully to Ensure Daesh/ISIS, PKK Terrorists Do Not Exploit Post-Regime Syria," Anadolu Agency, 08.12.2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-acting-carefully-to-ensure-daesh-isis-pkk-terrorists-do-not-exploit-post-regime-syria-foreign-minister/3418087>

¹⁰⁹ S. Cook, "After Fall of Assad Dynasty, Syria's Risky New Moment," CFR, 08.12.2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/after-fall-assad-dynasty-syrias-risky-new-moment>

¹¹⁰ Hakan Fidan, "Astana süreciyle Suriye'de devam eden çatışmalara ara verilmesini ve rejime halkıyla barışması için zaman sağlamıştık ama bunu değerlendirmedik..." X (formerly Twitter). Retrieved from <https://x.com/HakanFidan/status/1865738975685615819>.

prioritizing inclusive governance and the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity¹¹¹.

Türkiye remains committed to maintaining Syria's sovereignty and countering terrorism. President Erdoğan has emphasized that Türkiye will not allow any actor, including extremist groups such as the PKK/YPG, to exploit the transitional period in Syria. Erdoğan has also underscored the importance of supporting Syria's new administration in embracing all societal sectors, thereby fostering unified and stable governance¹¹². This vision is critical for achieving long-term stability and addressing the humanitarian and security challenges that have plagued the region¹¹³.

Additionally, Türkiye's normalization efforts extend beyond diplomacy to practical actions aimed at securing Syria's stability. Foreign Minister Fidan's diplomatic engagements with regional and global counterparts have laid the groundwork for international cooperation to address the immediate threats and challenges arising from the power vacuum left by Assad's regime¹¹⁴. These efforts underscore Türkiye's role as a stabilizing force, advocating for international support in Syria's reconstruction and governance.

The prolonged conflict in Syria has caused severe socio-economic degradation. Access to electricity, clean water, and food security remains a significant challenge, directly threatening the sustainability and productivity of human capital. The drastic decline in per capita daily income underscores the dire economic conditions faced by the population. Additionally, public services such as healthcare, education, and social welfare systems have been devastated, further undermining

¹¹¹ "Türkiye's Foreign Minister Discusses Situation in Syria With His Global Counterparts," Anadolu Agency, 08.12.2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/turkiyes-foreign-minister-discusses-situation-in-syria-with-his-global-counterparts/3418266>

¹¹² "Türkiye Hopes New Syrian Administration Embraces All Sectors of Society," Anadolu Agency, 10.12.2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-hopes-new-syrian-administration-embraces-all-sectors-of-society-president-erdogan/3420652>

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ "Türkiye Pledges Support for Syria's New Era, Calls for Focus on Way Forward," Anadolu Agency, 10.12.2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-pledges-support-for-syrias-new-era-calls-for-focus-on-way-forward/3418843>

the development and preservation of human capital. These challenges are exacerbated by the destruction of essential infrastructure, including electricity grids, water supply systems, and transportation networks, which restrict access to basic resources and services necessary for rebuilding livelihoods.

The post-conflict environment in Syria underscores the critical need for effective and inclusive governance to facilitate reconstruction. The weakening of central authority and fragmentation of local administrations have impeded the implementation of coordinated and sustainable policies. Transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance will be pivotal in guiding Syria's recovery. Furthermore, the degradation of public institutions during the conflict has significantly hampered economic and social recovery. Rebuilding these institutions and aligning them with international standards is essential for fostering stability and long-term growth.

These findings highlight the interconnected challenges of restoring human capital and rebuilding institutional capacity in Syria. A coordinated approach addressing both dimensions will be vital for achieving sustainable reconstruction and development. Türkiye's proactive normalization efforts, coupled with its emphasis on fostering international collaboration, position it as a key actor in addressing these challenges and shaping Syria's recovery trajectory.

However, Türkiye's position is not without risks. The rise of HTS complicates the new objectives of Türkiye due to the potential for continued instability and the group's controversial ideological stance¹¹⁵. While HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani has attempted to project a moderate image, skepticism about HTS's commitment to inclusivity and governance reforms persists¹¹⁶. The association of Türkiye with HTS and past

¹¹⁵ H. Baravi, & Said, S., "A Victory or the Beginning of a New Nightmare?" IPS-Journal, 10.12.2024. <https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/democracy-and-society/a-victory-or-the-beginning-of-a-new-nightmare-7978>

¹¹⁶ B. Hoffman, "Syria After Assad: What to Know About HTS, Hezbollah, and Iran," CFR, 09.12.2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/syria-after-assad-what-know-about-hts-hezbollah-and-iran>

allegations of links to extremist groups remain significant concerns. Professor Özden Zeynep Oktav identifies two critical challenges: sustaining coordination among opposition groups while preventing the radicalization of HTS, and addressing the potential stigmatization of Türkiye due to its historical interactions in the region¹¹⁷. Additionally, the fragmented opposition landscape, characterized by competition between HTS, the Syrian National Army (SNA), and PYD/YPG, complicates Türkiye's efforts to stabilize its southern border. This echoes concerns about post-conflict fragmentation observed in other regional contexts, such as Iraq¹¹⁸. These dynamics highlight the critical need for Türkiye to foster a cohesive opposition coalition while preventing HTS's radicalization—a challenge identified as pivotal to Türkiye's credibility and effectiveness in Syria¹¹⁹. These challenges necessitate a delicate balancing act to maintain credibility and foster trust among international stakeholders.

Looking forward, Türkiye's foreign policy trajectory in Syria reflects a dual commitment to addressing immediate security concerns while laying the foundation for long-term regional stability. President Erdoğan's remarks further underline Türkiye's commitment to fostering stability, with calls for international cooperation to address Syria's reconstruction and governance challenges¹²⁰. By emphasizing dialogue, inclusivity, and sovereignty, Türkiye seeks to position itself as a constructive leader in shaping Syria's future. Türkiye's established trade networks and geographic advantage position it as a key player in Syria's economic recovery, creating mutual benefits that align with Türkiye's

¹¹⁷ Özden Zeynep Oktav, "Şam Düştü, Şimdi Ne Olacak?" Aslında, 09.12.2024. <https://www.aslinda.com/sam-dustu-simdi-ne-olacak>

¹¹⁸ S. Cook, "After Fall of Assad Dynasty, Syria's Risky New Moment," CFR, 08.12.2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/after-fall-assad-dynasty-syrias-risky-new-moment>

¹¹⁹ Özden Zeynep Oktav, "Şam Düştü, Şimdi Ne Olacak?" Aslında, 09.12.2024. <https://www.aslinda.com/sam-dustu-simdi-ne-olacak>

¹²⁰ "Syria's Territorial Integrity Must Absolutely Be Protected," Anadolu Agency, 09.12.2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/syria-s-territorial-integrity-must-absolutely-be-protected-turkish-president-erdogan/3419494>

long-term strategic interests¹²¹. The reconstruction of Syria and the pursuit of sustainable, cooperative solutions to longstanding water disputes will play a pivotal role in shaping the future trajectory of relations between the two countries. As articulated by Fidan, Türkiye's normalization efforts are not simply about reopening embassies but about fostering a comprehensive roadmap for stability, cooperation, and shared prosperity¹²². This approach underscores Türkiye's strategic vision and its commitment to ensuring a peaceful and unified Syria.



¹²¹ "Türkiye Pledges Support for Syria's New Era, Calls for Focus on Way Forward," Anadolu Agency, 09.12.2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-pledges-support-for-syrias-new-era-calls-for-focus-on-way-forward/3418843>

¹²² H. Fidan, X (formerly Twitter), 2024.



Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

Al Jazeera, "Aid Needs Are Immense as Turkey-Syria Death Toll Crosses 29,000." *Al Jazeera*, February 12, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/12/turkey-syria-quake-deaths-pass-28000-un-expects-toll-to-double>.

Al Jazeera, "First UN Convoy Since Quake Enters Northwest Syria from Turkey." *Al Jazeera*, February 9, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/9/un-aid-convoy-syria-turkey-earthquake>.

Al Jazeera, "Russia: No Deal on De-escalation Zones in Syria Talks." *Al Jazeera*, July 6, 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/7/6/russia-no-deal-on-de-escalation-zones-in-syria-talks>.

Al Jazeera, "Erdogan Open to Meeting Al-Assad but Not to Withdrawal from Syria." *Al Jazeera*, July 17, 2024. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/17/erdogan-open-to-meeting-al-assad-but-not-to-withdrawal-from-syria>.

Al Jazeera, "Syria's Assad Thanks 'Arab Brothers' as Quakes Stir Aid Diplomacy." *Al Jazeera*, February 17, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/17/assad-syria-disaster-aid>.

Al Monitor, "Erdogan Says Meeting with Syria's Assad Is 'Possible'." *Al Monitor*, November 24, 2022. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/11/erdogan-says-meeting-syrias-assad-possible>.

Anadolu Agency, "Ankara Summit to Add Dimensions to Astana Process." *Anadolu Agency*, September 16, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/Türkiye/ankara-summit-to-add-dimensions-to-astana-process/1585527>.

Anadolu Agency, "Astana Meeting on Syria Stresses Importance of Türkiye-Syria Normalization." *Anadolu Agency*, June 21, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/astana-meeting-on-syria-stresses-importance-of-turkiye-syria-normalization/2927879>.

Anadolu Agency, "Erdoğan urges distance from all terror groups in Syria." *Anadolu Agency*, April 4, 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/erdogan-urges-distance-from-all-terror-groups-in-syria/1108448>.

Anadolu Agency, "Erdogan urges global community to avert Idlib assault." *Anadolu Agency*, September 11, 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/erdogan-urges-global-community-to-avert-idlib-assault/1251667>.

Anadolu Agency, "Dışişleri Bakanı Çavuşoğlu: Gelen Yardımların Suriye'ye de Ulaşması Konusunda Gerekli Desteği Veriyoruz." *Anadolu Agency*, February 8, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu-gelen-yardimlarin-suriyeye-de-ulasmasi-konusunda-gerekli-destegi-veriyoruz/2812215>.

Anadolu Agency, "Meeting on Syria in Astana Process Held in Kazakhstan's Nur Sultan." *Anadolu Agency*, June 16, 2022. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/meeting-on-syria-in-astana-process-held-in-kazakhstans-nur-sultan/2615478>.

Anadolu Agency, "First day of 9th round of Astana talks completed." *Anadolu Agency*, May 14, 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/first-day-of-9th-round-of-astana-talks-completed/1145413>.

Anadolu Agency, "Rescue Teams from Europe Help in Relief Efforts in Quake-Hit Southern Türkiye." *Anadolu Agency*, February 8, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/rescue-teams-from-europe-help-in-relief-efforts-in-quake-hit-southern-turkiye/2811563>.

Anadolu Agency, "Russia Urges Disarmament in Syria upon Erdoğan's Call." *Anadolu Agency*, September 7, 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/russia-urges-disarmament-in-syria-upon-erdogans-call/1249398>.

Anadolu Agency, "Summit in Tehran calls for political solution in Syria." *Anadolu Agency*, September 7, 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/summit-in-tehran-calls-for-political-solution-in-syria/1249211>.

Anadolu Agency, "Şah Fırat Operasyonu ile Türkiye'deler." April 21, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/sah-firat-operasyonu-ile-turkiyedeler/72924>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye Acting Carefully to Ensure Daesh/ISIS, PKK Terrorists Do Not Exploit Post-Regime Syria." *Anadolu Agency*, December 8, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-acting-carefully-to-ensure-daesh-isis-pkk-terrorists-do-not-exploit-post-regime-syria-foreign-minister/3418087>.

Anadolu Agency, "Talks Continue on Syrian Constitutional Committee." *Anadolu Agency*, August 3, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/talks-continue-on-syrian-constitutional-committee-/1547857>.

Anadolu Agency, "Turkey Preparing New Water Management Law: President." *Anadolu Agency*, March 30, 2021. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/energy-diplomacy/turkey-preparing-new-water-management-law-president/32292>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye Remembers Feb. 6 Earthquake Victims." *Anadolu Agency*, February 6, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkiye-remembers-feb-6-earthquake-victims/3128724>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye, Russia, Iran agree to ensure Syria cease-fire." *Anadolu Agency*, January 24, 2017. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/Türkiye-russia-iran-agree-to-ensure-syria-cease-fire/733940>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye, Russia, Iran Agree on Syrian Dialogue Summit." *Anadolu Agency*, November 23, 2017. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/türkiye-russia-iran-agree-on-syrian-dialogue-summit/974517>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye's Foreign Minister Discusses Situation in Syria With His Global Counterparts." *Anadolu Agency*, December 8, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/turkiyes-foreign-minister-discusses-situation-in-syria-with-his-global-counterparts/3418266>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye Hopes New Syrian Administration Embraces All Sectors of Society." *Anadolu Agency*, December 10, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-hopes-new-syrian-administration-embraces-all-sectors-of-society-president-erdogan/3420652>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye Pledges Support for Syria's New Era, Calls for Focus on Way Forward." *Anadolu Agency*, December 10, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkiye-pledges-support-for-syrias-new-era-calls-for-focus-on-way-forward/3418843>.

Anadolu Agency, "Terörist başının Kenya'da paketlenip Türkiye'ye getirilmesinin üzerinden 21 yıl geçti." *Anadolu Agency*, February 14, 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/terorist-basinin-kenyada-paketlenip-turkiyeye-getirilmesinin-uzerinden-21-yil-gecti/1733834>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye, Russia, Iran agree to ensure Syria cease-fire." January 24, 2017. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/Türkiye-russia-iran-agree-to-ensure-syria-cease-fire/733940>.

Anadolu Agency, "Türkiye Rejects Statement by Assad Regime Targeting Its Territorial Integrity." *Anadolu Agency*. December 2, 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/Türkiye/Türkiye-rejects-statement-by-assad-regime-targeting-its-territorial-integrity/2437175>.

Anadolu Agency, "Syria's Territorial Integrity Must Absolutely Be Protected." *Anadolu Agency*, December 9, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/syria-s-territorial-integrity-must-absolutely-be-protected-turkish-president-erdogan/3419494>.

Anadolu Agency, "Syrian Regime's Claim of Cutting Water Supply Not True." *Anadolu Agency*, December 20, 2020. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syrian-regime-s-claim-of-cutting-water-supply-not-true/2082754>.

Anadolu Agency, "YPG/PKK Makes Propaganda over Water Shortage in N Syria." *Anadolu Agency*, March 28, 2020. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/ypg-pkk-makes-propaganda-over-water-shortage-in-n-syria/1783255>.

Anadolu Agency, "Quadripartite Foreign Ministerial Meeting on Syria Held in Moscow." *Anadolu Agency*, May 10, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/quadripartite-foreign-ministerial-meeting-on-syria-held-in-moscow/2893563>.

Anadolu Agency, "11th Round of Syria Peace Talks Starts in Astana." *Anadolu Agency*, November 28, 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/11th-round-of-syria-peace-talks-starts-in-astana/1323856>.

Anadolu Agency, "14th round of Syria talks discusses latest developments." *Anadolu Agency*, December 11, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/14th-round-of-syria-talks-discusses-latest-developments/1670867>.

Anadolu Agency, "20 Years On After Marmara Earthquake Razes NW Turkey." *Anadolu Agency*, August 17, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/20-years-on-after-marmara-earthquake-razes-nw-turkey/1558325>.

Astana Times, "Latest Syrian Peace Talks in Astana Focus on Humanitarian Issues." *The Astana Times*, November 2, 2017. <https://astanatimes.com/2017/11/latest-syrian-peace-talks-in-astana-focus-on-humanitarian-issues/>.

Astana Times, "Second round of Syrian talks in Astana adopt mechanism to monitor ceasefire." *The Astana Times*, February 17, 2017. <https://astanatimes.com/2017/02/second-round-of-syrian-talks-in-astana-adopt-mechanism-to-monitor-ceasefire/>.

Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri. ATAM Publications, Ankara, 2006.

Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri. Vol. 28. Kaynak Publications, İstanbul, 2015.

CNN Türk, "Başbakanlık açıkladı, işte Zeytin Dalı Harekatı'nın 12 nedeni." *CNN Türk*, December 11, 2018. <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/basbakanlik-acikladi-iste-zeytin-dali-harekatinin-12-nedeni?page=1>.

CNN Türk, "Savaş uçağını Suriye düşürmüş." *CNN Türk*, June 23, 2012. <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/savas-ucagini-suriye-dusurmus>.

Cumhuriyet, "Esad'dan Türkiye'ye Normalleşme Çağrısı: Sözler Değil, Pratik Adımlar Bekliyoruz." *Cumhuriyet*, November 26, 2022. <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/dunya/esaddan-turkiyeye-normallesme-cagrisi-sozler-degil-pratik-adimlar-bekliyoruz-2006370>.

Fidan, Hakan. "Astana süreciyle Suriye'de devam eden çatışmalara ara verilmesini ve rejime halkıyla barışması için zaman sağlamıştık ama bunu değerlendirmedim..." X (formerly Twitter). Retrieved from <https://x.com/HakanFidan/status/1865738975685615819>, 2024.

Handbook On Water Allocation in A Transboundary Context. Geneva: United Nations Publications, 2021. <https://www.routledge.com/Disaster-Diplomacy-How-Disasters-Affect-Peace-and-Conflict/Kelman/p/book/9780367669645>.

Human Rights Watch, "Turkey/Syria: Weaponizing Water in Global Pandemic?" *Human Rights Watch*, March 31, 2020. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/31/turkey/syria-weaponizing-water-global-pandemic>.

- Human Rights Watch, "Northwest Syria: Aid Delays Deadly for Quake Survivors." *Human Rights Watch*, February 15, 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/15/northwest-syria-aid-delays-deadly-quake-survivors>.
- Hürriyet, "Rusya Dışışleri Bakanı Lavrov: Türkiye ve Suriye'ye Adana Mutabakatı'na Dönmelerini Önerdik." *Hürriyet*, October 22, 2024. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/rusya-disisleri-bakani-lavrov-turkiye-ve-suriyeye-adana-mutabakatina-donmelerini-onerdik-42324041>.
- İnan, Afet. *Atatürk'ten Mektuplar*. TTK Publications, Ankara, 1989.
- İnan, Afet. *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ve Türk Devrimi*. TTK Publications, Ankara, 1998.
- İnönü, İsmet. *Günlükler*. Yapı Kredi Publications, İstanbul, 2017.
- Middle East Monitor, "Putin, Erdoğan, and Rouhani Meet in Sochi." *Middle East Monitor*, November 24, 2017. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171124-putin-erdogan-and-rouhani-meet-in-sochi/>.
- ReliefWeb, "Athens: One Year On, Earthquake Effects Linger – Greece." *ReliefWeb*, August 18, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/athens-one-year-earthquake-effects-linger>.
- ReliefWeb, "Devastating Earthquakes in Southern Türkiye and Northern Syria, Situation Report." *ReliefWeb*, April 6, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/devastating-earthquakes-southern-turkiye-and-northern-syria-april-6th-2023-situation-report-20-entr>.
- ReliefWeb, "Earthquake: Türkiye and North-West Syria Flash Update No. 1." *ReliefWeb*, February 6, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/earthquake-turkiye-and-north-west-syria-flash-update-no-1-6-february-2023>.
- ReliefWeb, "North-West Syria: Situation Report (19 February 2023)." *ReliefWeb*, February 19, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/north-west-syria-situation-report-19-february-2023-enar>.

ReliefWeb, "Two Weeks After the Earthquakes: Urgent Needs and Prolonged Vulnerability - Northwest Syria." *ReliefWeb*, February 27, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/two-weeks-after-earthquakes-urgent-needs-and-prolonged-vulnerability-northwest-syria-february-2023>.

NTV, "Türkiye ve Suriye artık vize sormayacak." *NTV News*, September 16, 2009. <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/turkiye-ve-suriye-artik-vize-sormayacak,-UzbXQwtCk-Oezl115y5MQ>.

Reuters, "Frustration at UN Ahead of Likely Row with Russia on Syria Aid." *Reuters*, February 10, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/frustration-un-ahead-likely-row-with-russia-syria-aid-2023-02-10/>.

Reuters, "Russia, Türkiye, Iran Agree on Syria De-escalation Zones." *Reuters*, September 15, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN1BQ1DD>.

Reuters, "Syria Resisting Russia's Efforts to Broker Türkiye Summit, Sources Say." *Reuters*, December 2, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/syria-resisting-russias-efforts-broker-turkiye-summit-sources-say-2022-12-02>.

Reuters, "Turkey, Russia, Iran, Syria Hold 'Constructive Talks'." *Reuters*, April 25, 2023. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/turkey-russia-iran-syria-hold-constructive-talks-ankara-says-2023-04-25/>.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Final Statement of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue." January 30, 2018. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/final-statement-of-the-congress-of-the-syrian-national-dialogue_en.en.mfa.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Press Release Regarding the High Level Meeting Held on 30-31 July 2018 in Sochi in the Astana Format." July 31, 2018. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-205_-30-31-temmuz-2018-tarihlerinde-socide-astana-formatinda-duzenlenen-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Press Release Regarding the High-Level Meeting on Syria Held in Nur-Sultan on 21-22 December 2021." December 22, 2021. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-430_-21-22-aralik-2021-tarihlerinde-nur-sultan-da-yapilan-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Press Release Regarding the High Level Meeting on Syria Held in Astana on 22-23 November 2022." November 23, 2022. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-353_-22-23-kasim-2022-tarihlerinde-astana-da-duzenlenen-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press Release Regarding the High-Level Meeting on Syria Held in Astana on 20-21 June 2023." June 21, 2023. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-152_-20-21-haziran-2023-tarihlerinde-astana-da-duzenlenen-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa#:~:text=The%20twentieth%20High%2DLevel%20Meetin g,Deputy%20Minister%20of%20Foreign%20Affairs.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Joint Statement by the Presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Türkiye, 4 April 2018, Ankara." April 4, 2018. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/iran-islam-cumhuriyeti_-rusya-feder-asyonu-ve-turkiye-cumhuriyeti-devlet-baskanlari_nin-ortak-aciklamasi_en.en.mfa.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Statement by Representatives of Iran, Russia and Türkiye on Outcomes of the 21st International Meeting on Syria in the Astana Format, Astana, 24-25 January 2024." January 25, 2024. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/iran--rusya-ve-turkiye-temsilcileri-tarafindan-yapilan-astana-formatindaki-suriye-konulu-21-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-ya-iliskin-ortak-bildiri.en.mfa>.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Press Release Regarding the High Level Meeting on Syria Held in Nur-Sultan on 25-26 April 2019." April 26, 2019. Accessed April 21, 2024. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_114_-nur-sultan-da-yapilan-suriye-konulu-yuksek-duzeyli-toplanti-hk.en.mfa

Republic of Türkiye. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi* (1990 - 2020).

Sevük, İsmail Habib. *Atatürk'le Beraber*. İşbank Cultural Publications, İstanbul, 2017.

Sökmen, Tayfur. *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*. TTK Publications, Ankara, 1992.

Soyak, Hasan Rıza. *Atatürk'ten Hatıralar*. Yapı Kredi Publications, İstanbul, 2016.

Soysal, İsmail. *Hatay Sorunu ve Türk-Fransız Siyasal İlişkileri (1936-1939)*. TTK Publications, 1985.

TRT Haber, "Şam Büyükelçiliği Kapatıldı." *TRT Haber*, March 26, 2012. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/sam-buyukelciligi-kapatildi-34092.html>.

TRY World, "Erdogan: Turkey Preparing New Law for Better Water Management." *TRT World*, July 5, 2021. Available at: <https://www.trt-world.com/turkey/erdogan-turkey-preparing-new-law-for-better-water-management-45429>.

TRT World, "Türkiye's operation in Afrin: Five things you need to know." *TRT World*, January 21, 2018. <https://www.trtworld.com/Türkiye/Türkiye-s-operation-in-afrin-five-things-you-need-to-know-14469>.

TRT World, "Turkey Steps Up Efforts to Combat Climate Change." *TRT World*, October 27, 2024. <https://www.trtworld.com/turkiye/turkey-steps-up-efforts-to-combat-climate-change-12774887>.

TRT World, "Operation Peace Spring in a nutshell." *TRT World*, 2019.
<https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/operation-peace-spring-in-a-nutshell-30779>.

United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 2170 (2014)." August 15, 2014.
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/777420?ln=en>.

UN News, "Syria-Türkiye: UN Completes 200th Cross-Border Aid Mission Since February Quakes." *UN News*, August 29, 2023.
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/08/1140192>.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abhyankar, R. M. *Syria: Tragedy of a Pivotal State*. Gateway East, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Abney, F. Glenn, and Larry B. Hill. "Natural disasters as a political variable." *American Political Science Review* 60 (1966): 974-81

Ada, S. *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu (1918-1939)*, İstanbul: Bilgi University Publishing, 2005.

Adar, Sinem. "Understanding Türkiye's Increasingly Militaristic Foreign Policy." In *MENA Politics Newsletter*, Volume 3, Issue 1, Spring 2020.

Ahmed, Ahmed Babakr, and Hogr Ibrahim Hakeem. "National Influences in Turkish Foreign Policy: (The Fountain of Peace Operation as a Sample)." *QALAAI ZANIST JOURNAL* 6, no. 2 (2021): 1-39.
<https://doi.org/10.25212/lfu.qzj.6.2.01>.

Akcinaroglu, S, J.M DiCicco, and E Radziszewski. "Avalanches and Olive Branches: A Multimethod Analysis of Disasters and Peacemaking in Interstate Rivalries" 64, no. 2 (April 9, 2011): 260-75.

Akcinaroglu, S., & Radziszewski, E. Expectations, Rivalries, and Civil War Duration. *International Interactions*, (2005): 349-374.

- Aksu, F. *Türk Dış Politikasında Zorlayıcı Diplomasi*. İstanbul: Bağlam Publishing, 2008.
- Albayrak, M. Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu Politikaları (1920-1960). *Fırat Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 3(2), (2005): 1-63.
- Altunışık, M. B. "Worldviews and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East". *New Perspectives on Turkey*, (2009): 171-194.
- Altunışık, M. B. *The Inflexibility of Turkey's Policy in Syria*. 2016. Retrieved from *iemed.org*: <https://www.iemed.org/publication/the-inflexibility-of-turkeys-policy-in-syria/>
- Andrabi, T. and Das, J. 'In Aid We Trust: Hearts and Minds and The Pakistan Earthquake Of 2005'. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*. 99, 3 (2017): 371-386.
- Ataman, Muhittin, and Çağatay Özdemir. "Türkiye's Syria Policy: Constant Objectives Shifting Priorities". *Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi* 5, no. 2 (December 2018): 13-36. <https://doi.org/10.26513/tocd.466046>.
- Avcıoğlu, Doğan. *Türkiye'nin Düzeni (Dün-Bugün-Yarın)*. Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1968.
- Baravi, H., and S. Said. "A Victory or the Beginning of a New Nightmare?" *IPS-Journal*, December 10, 2024. <https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/democracy-and-society/a-victory-or-the-beginning-of-a-new-nightmare-7978>.
- Bechev, D. "Facing Tragedy, Turkey Mends Ties with Greece and Armenia." *Al Jazeera*, February 27, 2023. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/2/27/turkey-earthquake-diplomacy>.
- Bezci, Egemen. "Turkish Diplomatic Security: Lessons Not Learned" In *Diplomatic Security* edited by Eugenio Cusumano and Christopher Kinsey, Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503608986-010>

- Bhavnani, Rakhi. "Natural disaster conflicts." Unpublished manuscript, Harvard University, 2006.
- Box, George, Gwilym Jenkins, and Gregory Reinsel. *Time Series Analysis: Forecasting And Control*. San Francisco: Holden Day, 1976.
- Carter, David B. & Goemans, H. E. "The Making of the Territorial Order: New Borders and the Emergence of Interstate Conflict." *International Organization* 65.2 (2011): 275- 309.
- Cizre, Ümit (ed.). *Secular and Islamic Politics in Türkiye: The Making of the Justice and Development Party*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Çakır, A. A., & Akdağ, Gül Arıkan. "An empirical analysis of the change in Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government." *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 18, Issue 2 (2017).
- Çetin, Hikmet. "Türkiye'nin Dış Politika Öncelikleri." *Yeni Türkiye, Türk Dış Politikası Özel Sayısı*, no. 3 (1995).
- Comfort, L.K. 'Disaster: agent of diplomacy or change in international affairs?'. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. 14(1) (2000): 277-294.
- Comfort, Louise K. "Disaster: agent of diplomacy or change in international affairs?." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 14.1 (2000): 277-294
- Cook, S. "After Fall of Assad Dynasty, Syria's Risky New Moment." *CFR*, December 8, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/after-fall-assad-dynasty-syrias-risky-new-moment>.
- Cuhadar, E., Kaarbo, J., Kesgin, B. and Ozkececi-Taner, B. "Turkish Leaders and Their Foreign Policy Decision-making Style: A Comparative and Multi-method Perspective." *Turkish Studies*, Vol.22, Issue 1 (2021).
- Daoudy, M. "Asymmetric Power: Negotiating Water in the Euphrates and Tigris." *International Negotiation* 14, no. 2 (2009): 374.

- Daoudy, Marwa. "Back to Conflict? The Securitization of Water in Syrian-Turkish Relations" In *Türkiye-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity* (R. Hinnebusch, Ed.) (1st ed.). Routledge, 2013.
- Daoudy, Marwa, et al. *Troubled Waters in Conflict and a Changing Climate: Transboundary Basins Across the Middle East and North Africa*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2024.
- Daoudy, Marwa. "Syria and Turkey in water diplomacy (1962–2003)." *Water in the Middle East and in North Africa: Resources, protection and management*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2004. 319-332.
- Daoudy, Marwa. "Water weaponization in the Syrian conflict: strategies of domination and cooperation." *International Affairs* 96.5 (2020): 1347-1366.
- Demirel, Süleyman. "21. Yüzyılın Eşiğinde Türk Dış Politikası." *Yeni Türkiye, Türk Dış Politikası Özel Sayısı*, no. 3 (1995).
- Destradi, Sandra. "Regional Powers and Their Strategies: Empire, Hegemony, and Leadership." *Review of International Studies*, no. 36 (2010).
- Duran, Burhanettin. "Soçi Mutabakatı Sonrası Ne Beklemeli?" *SETA*, 2019.
- Ebrahim, N. "Syria's Assad Hopes Quake Can Help Free Him from Global Isolation." *CNN*, February 15, 2023. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/15/middleeast/assad-pariah-status-earth-quake-mime-intl/index.html>.
- Economides, S. 'The Europeanisation of Greek Foreign Policy'. *West European Politics*. 28(2). (2005): 471-491.
- Enia, J. 'Peace in its Wake? The 2004 Tsunami and Internal Conflict in Indonesia and Sri Lanka'. *Journal of Public and International Affairs*. 19. (2008): 7-27.

- Erdem, Engin I. "European Integration and Democratic Consolidation: Spain, Poland, and Türkiye in Comparative Perspective." *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (2011): 24.
- Evin, Ahmet O. "Changing Greek perspectives on Türkiye: An assessment of the post-earthquake rapprochement." *Turkish Studies* 5 (2004):4-20
- Ganapati, N.E., I. Kelman and T. Koukis. 'Analysing Greek-Turkish disaster-related cooperation: A disaster diplomacy perspective'. *Cooperation and Conflict*. 45(2). (2010): 162-185.
- Glantz, M.H. 'Climate-related disaster diplomacy: a US–Cuban case study'. *Cambridge Review International Affairs*. XIV(1). (2000): 233–253.
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005.
- Gerger, Haluk. *Türk Dış Politikasının Ekonomi Politikası: "Soğuk Savaş"tan "Yeni Dünya Düzeni"ne*. İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2012.
- Girgin, Kemal. *Ruslarla Kavgadan-Derin Ortaklığa (Son Yüz Senemiz: 1914-2014)*. İstanbul: İlgı Kültür Sanat, 2014.
- Grigoryan, A. "Diplomatic Thaw Between Turkey and Armenia?" *Friedrich Naumann Foundation*, February 21, 2023. Available at: <https://www.freiheit.org/diplomatic-thaw-between-turkey-and-armenia>.
- Güner, Serdar. "The Turkish-Syrian War of Attrition: The Water Dispute." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 20, no. 1 (1997): 107.
- Haas, Peter M., Robert Owen Keohane, and Marc A. Levy, eds. *Institutions for the Earth: Sources of Effective International Environmental Protection*. Mit Press, 1993.
- Hale, William. *The Political and Economic Development of Modern Türkiye*. Oxon: Routledge, 2014.
- Hale, William. *Turkish Foreign Policy Since 1774*. London: Routledge, 2013.

- Haugom, Lars. "Turkish foreign policy under Erdogan: A change in international orientation?" *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 38, Issue 3 (2019).
- Henry, Clement, and Ji-Hyang Jang. *The Arab spring: Will it lead to democratic transitions?*. Springer, 2013.
- Holloway, A. 'Drought emergency, yes ...drought disaster, no: Southern Africa 1991-93'. *Cambridge Review International Affairs*. 14(1). (2000): 254-276.
- Hoffman, B. "Syria After Assad: What to Know About HTS, Hezbollah, and Iran." *CFR*, December 9, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/syria-after-assad-what-know-about-hts-hezbollah-and-iran>.
- Hyndman, J. *Dual Disasters: Humanitarian Aid After the 2004 Tsunami*. Sterling, Virginia, USA: Kumarian Press, 2011.
- İnaç, H., & Hadji, A. (2022). Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East During the Rule of the Justice and Development Party: Interaction of Interests and Future Challenges. *Uluslararası Yönetim Akademisi Dergisi*, 5(2), 307-319.
- Ireni-Saban, L. 'Diplomacy in Times of Disaster: Management through Reputational Capital'. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*. 20(3) (2019): 99-114.
- Jervis, Robert. "Hypotheses on Misperception." *World Politics* 20, no.3 (1968): 454-479.
- Kahler, Miles. "Rising Powers and Global Governance: Negotiating Change in a Resilient Status Quo." *International Affairs*, Vol. 89, no. 3 (May 2013).
- Karşıyaka B.A., Karşıyaka S. "Recalibrating Turkish Foreign Policy After the Arab Uprisings: From Pro-activism to Uncertainty by Easing Off Ideational and Liberal Goals." In *Contemporary Türkiye at a Glance II*, edited by M. Ersoy and E. Özyürek. Springer, 2017.

- Kelkitli, Fatma Aslı. "A Neo-Classical Realist Account of Türkiye's Foreign Policy Behavior: The Comparison of Bülent Ecevit's 1978-1979 and 1999-2002 Governments". *Alternatif Politika* 15, no. 2 (2023): 315-43. <https://doi.org/10.53376/ap.2023.12>.
- Kelman, Ilan. "Acting on Disaster Diplomacy." *Journal of International Affairs* 59, no. 2 (2006): 215-240.
- Kelman, Ilan. "Hurricane Katrina Disaster Diplomacy." *Disasters* 31, no. 3 (2007): 288-309.
- Kelman, Ilan. "Burma and China Disaster Diplomacy." *Disaster and Social Crisis Research Network Electronic Newsletter* 34 (2008).
- Kelman, Ilan. "Catastrophe and Conflict: Disaster Diplomacy and Its Foreign Policy Implications." *Disaster and Diplomacy Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1-76.
- Kelman, I. *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Kelman, Ilan, and Thea Koukis. "Introduction." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 14, no. 1 (2000): 214.
- Keridis, Dimitris. "Earthquakes, Diplomacy, and New Thinking in Foreign Policy." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2006): 207-14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45289344>.
- Ker-Lindsay, J.. "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: The Impact of 'Disaster Diplomacy'?" 14, no. 1 (April 10, 2000): 215-32.
- Ker-Lindsay, J.. *Crisis and Conciliation: A Year of Rapprochement Between Greece and Türkiye*. London: IB Tauris, 2007.
- Keskin, Barış. "Türkiye's Erdoğan: leadership style and foreign policy audiences." *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 21, Issue 1 (2020).
- Keyman, F., & Gumuscu, S.. *Democracy, Identity and Foreign Policy in Türkiye: Hegemony Through Transformation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

- Kibaroglu, Ayşegül. 'An analysis of Türkiye's water diplomacy and its evolving position vis-à-vis international water law'. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*. 35(1) (2014): 4-29.
- Kibaroglu, Aysegul, and Waltina Scheumann. "Euphrates-Tigris rivers system: Political rapprochement and transboundary water cooperation." *Turkey's water policy: National frameworks and international cooperation*. Berlin, Heidelberg, 2011. 277-299.
- Kibaroglu, Aysegul, and Waltina Scheumann. "Evolution of transboundary politics in the Euphrates-Tigris river system: new perspectives and political challenges." *Global Governance* 19 (2013): 279.
- Kibaroglu, A. The Evolution of Water Diplomacy Frameworks: The Euphrates-Tigris Basin as a Case Study. In: Szálkai, K., Szalai, M. (eds) *Theorizing Transboundary Waters in International Relations*. Springer Water. Springer, Cham., 2023.
- Kibaroglu, Aysegul, and Sümer V. "Turkey's foreign policy orientation in the water context and the Orontes Basin." *Science diplomacy and transboundary water management The Orontes River case* (2015).
- Kibaroglu, Ayşegül. *Turkey's Water Diplomacy: Analysis of Its Foundations, Challenges and Prospects*. Anthem Press, 2021.
- Kibaroglu, Ayşegül. "Türkiye's Water Security Policy." *Insight Turkey* 24.2 (2022): 69-88.
- Klitzsch, Nikolas. "Disaster Politics or Disaster of Politics? Post-Tsunami Conflict Transformation in Sri Lanka and Aceh, Indonesia." *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 4 (2014): 554-573.
- Konyndyk, Jeremy, and Jesse Marks. "Foreign Affairs: How Assad Weaponized a Disaster." *Refugees International*, March 21, 2023. <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/foreign-affairs-how-assad-weaponized-a-disaster/>.

- Koukis, Thea, Ilan Kelman, and N.E. Ganapati. "Greece-Türkiye Disaster Diplomacy from Disaster Risk Reduction." *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 17 (2016): 24-32.
- Koukoudakis, G. 'The Foreign Policy of Greece as a Member of a Security Community'. *2nd LSE PhD Symposium on Modern Greece: Current Social Science Research on Greece*, 10 June, Hellenic Observatory, European Institute, LSE, London, UK, 2005.
- Kreutz, J. 'From tremors to talks: do natural disasters produce ripe moments for resolving separatist conflicts?'. *International Interactions*. 38(4). 2012: 482-502.
- Kucera, J. "Armenia-Turkey Border Opens for Earthquake Aid Delivery." *Eurasianet*, February 13, 2023. Available at: <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-turkey-border-opens-for-earthquake-aid-delivery>.
- Kut, Şule. "1990'larda Türk Dış Politikasının Anahtarları." In *Günümüzde Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası*, edited by Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirişçi. İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002.
- Kutlay, Mustafa, and Ziya Öniş. "Turkish foreign policy in a post-western order: strategic autonomy or new forms of dependence?." *International Affairs* 97.4 (2021): 1085-1104.
- Lake, David A. "Regional Hierarchy: Authority and Local International Order." *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009): 35-58.
- Lee, B.K., S.M. Mitchell, C.J. Schmidt and Y. Yang (2022) 'Disasters and the dynamics of interstate rivalry'. *Journal of Peace Research*. 59(1). pp. 12-27.
- Lesch, David, and Mark L. Haas. *The Arab spring: The hope and reality of the uprisings*. Westview Press, 2016.
- Lindell, M. K. "Disaster Studies." *Current Sociology* 61, nos. 5-6 (2013): 797-825.

- Loizides, Neophytos, "Elite Framing and Conflict Transformation in Türkiye." *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 62, Issue 2 (2009).
- Martirosyan, Vahram. "The Earthquake in the Soviet Media" (in Armenian). *Media.am*, December 3, 2012. Available at: <https://media.am/hy/critique/2012/12/03/2731/> (accessed April 10, 2020).
- Mavrogenis, Stelios, and Ilan Kelman. "Perceptions of Greece–Türkiye Disaster Diplomacy: Europeanization and the Underdog Culture." *Balkanistica* 26 (2013): 73–104.
- McGibbon, R. 'Transforming Separatist Conflict'. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. 7(2) (2006):121-130.
- Mercer, Jonathan. "Emotional Beliefs." *International Organization* 64, no.1 (2010): 1-31.
- Müftüler Baç, Meltem. "Türkiye's Grand Strategy in the Context of Global and Regional Challenges" In *Perceptions*, Volume-XXV, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter 2020).
- Natil, Ibrahim. "Türkiye's Foreign Policy Challenges in the Syrian Crisis." *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 27 (2016): 75-84. <https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.2016.0008>.
- Nel, Philip. "Redistribution and Recognition: What Emerging Regional Powers Want?" *Review of International Studies*, no. 36 (2010).
- Nel, P. and Righarts, M. (2008). 'Natural disasters and the risk of violent civil conflict'. *International Studies Quarterly*. 52(1). pp.159–185.
- Nelson, T. 'When disaster strikes: on the relationship between natural disaster and interstate conflict'. *Global Change Peace Security*. 22(2) (2010): 155–174.
- Norrlöf, Carla. "Is COVID-19 the end of US hegemony? Public bads, leadership failures and monetary hegemony." *International Affairs* vol. 96,5 (2020): 1281-1303.

- Oktav, Özden Zeynep. "Türkiye's Water Policy in the Euphrates-Tigris Basin". In: Behnassi, M., McGlade, K. (eds) *Environmental Change and Human Security in Africa and the Middle East*. Springer, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45648-5_13
- Oktav, Özden Zeynep. "Transition from enmity to 'common fate' rhetoric: water issue in Turkish-Iraqi-Syrian relations." *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 40 (2009): 71-90.
- Oktay, Özden Zeynep. "Water dispute and Kurdish separatism in Turkish-Syrian relations." *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 34 (2003): 91-117.
- Oktav, Özden Zeynep. "Şam Düştü, Şimdi Ne Olacak?" *Aslında*, December 9, 2024. <https://www.aslinda.com/sam-dustu-simdi-ne-olacak>.
- Olson, R.S. 'Toward a politics of disaster: losses, values, agendas, and blame'. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies & Disasters*, 18(2). (2000): 265-287.
- Oran, Baskın (ed.). *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*. İletişim Yayınları, 2006.
- Öktem, K., Kadioğlu, A., & Karlı, M. (ed.). *Another empire? A decade of Türkiye's foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party*, Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2012.
- Öniş, Z. & Keyman F. *Turkish Politics in a Changing World: Global Dynamics and Domestic Transformations*. Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2010.
- Özcan, Mesut. "An Overview of Türkiye's Policy in the Balkans and the Middle East in the 1990s." *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, no. 8 (2003).
- Özçelik, N., C. Acun, and M. Seren. "Terörle Mücadelede Yeni Safha: Zeytin Dalı Harekâtı." *SETA*, 2018.

- Payaslı, V. *Sancak'tan Vilayet'e Hatay (1921-1960)*. Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2017.
- Pehlivanlı, Hamit. *Türk Dış Politikasında Hatay (1918-1939)*. Ankara: ASAM, 2002.
- Pelling, M. and Dill, K. 'Disaster politics: tipping points for change in the adaptation of sociopolitical regimes'. *Progress in Human Geography*. 34(1). (2010): 21-37.
- Robins, Philip. *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003.
- Sander, Oral. "Yeni Bir Bölgesel Güç Olarak Türkiye'nin Dış Politika Hedefleri." In *Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, edited by Faruk Sönmezoglu. İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 1998.
- Scanlon, J. 'Dealing with the Tsunami Dead: Unprecedented International Co-operation'. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*. 21(2) (2006): 57-61.
- Sevin, E. and Jayasinghe, N. 'Disaster 'Public' Diplomacy: Understanding the role of disasters in international relations through the case of Turco-Greek Relations'. *International Journal of Business Perspectives & Social Sciences Information*. 4 (2018): 27-57.
- Tahincioğlu, G. "Kenya'dan İmralı'ya 14 Yılın Öyküsü." *Milliyet Gazetesi*, February 15, 2013. Accessed May 12, 2024. <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/kenya-dan-imrali-ya-14-yilin-oykusu-1669010>.
- Yalcinkaya, Alaaddin. "From Disaster Solidarity to Interest Solidarity: Turkish-Greek Relations After The Marmara And Athens Earthquakes Within The Concept Of Game Theory." *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies* (2003):149-202.
- Yin, R. K. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018.

Yinanç, Barçın. “Deprem Diplomasisi Türkiye’de Yabancı Düşmanlığını Geriletir mi?”, daktilo 1984, February 18, 2023. <https://daktilo1984.com/yazilar/deprem-diplomasisi-turkiyede-yabanci-dusmanligini-geriletir-mi/>

Zawahri, N. *Environmental Cooperation in the Tigris and Euphrates River Basin*. 2024: 34.

