

The Implications of the Turkish Military Intervention in Northern Syria “Operation Olive Branch 2018” Role Theory “Case Study”

Zeyad Salem Sweilem Albdoul

Department of Political Science, Prince Hussein College of International Studies, The University of Jordan
Corresponding Author E - mail: zezoalfaqeer95[at]gmail.com

Abstract: *The objectives of the study of the Turkish military intervention in Syria is embedded in expressing the impatience of Turkish policy towards the strategy of the United States of America, which led to Turkey becoming in a real dilemma and political problems. As for the problem of the study, it is represented in Turkey's dilemma regarding the expansion of Russia and Iran, the two largest supporters of the Assad regime, in addition to the vacuum created by the United States of America and the Obama administration, and the negative repercussions on the economy. The worst is what happened to Turkey from failed coup attempts and attempts to destabilize Turkey's sovereignty, and what happened due to the migration of millions of Syrian refugees to Turkey. Turkey, all of these factors had the greatest impact on pressure and causing problems. As for the importance of the study (the study showed the dangers that faced the Turkish state due to the intervention in Syria and the conflicts that took place with the Kurdistan Workers Party, which demands an expanded rule. The Middle East, especially Syria, and at the same time the United States supports Turkey's opponents, namely the Kurds, and places restrictions in the buffer zone, which led to the Turkish military action in the Syrian region. As for the data sources for the study, the lion's share was from (the Arab Center for Research and Political Studies) to obtain a lot of information and references. Finally, the study's recommendations focus on the fact that Turkey relied on direct military force to achieve its strategic goals of encircling the activity of the Kurdish People's Protection Units, which it sees as the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Turkey launched three military operations between 2016 and 2019 in the countryside of Aleppo, Afrin, Raqqa countryside and western Al - Hasakah.*

Keywords: Syria, protests, military operations, Turkish intervention, Russian intervention, Afrin, olive branch

1. Introduction

Turkey began its military operation on Afrin on January 20, 2018, despite the complexities and consequences that it bears despite of the strong relationship between the Kurdish militias and the United States of America as well as the possibility of the development of the operation and the outbreak of an international conflict.

The Turkish Army's Chief of Staff announced that the military operation in the Syrian region of Afrin began under the name “Olive Branch. This military operation started after creating the appropriate conditions, completing the necessary planning for the operation and carrying out an accurate and complex calculation of the consequences of the operation on the method of a four - way analysis balancing between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat (Hinnebusch, 2015) .

In this research paper, we reveal the geostrategic importance of the Afrin region, the dimensions of the “Olive Branch” operation and the Turkish arrangements for it, the position of the most prominent regional and international players on the Syrian arena, and the expected scenarios for this operation days after its launch.

2. Research Problem

It is possible to determine the problem of the study in the research case by studying the theory of the role in international relations and the interpretation of the concept of international intervention, especially in the Syrian - Turkish case, so that the nature of the crisis in Syria and

Turkish - Syrian relations will be discussed, as well as a study of the so - called Operation Olive Branch, which is included within the Turkish military intervention in Syria in the Afrin region

3. Research Importance

The importance of the study is embedded in knowing the extent of the impact of the Turkish military intervention in Syria, standing in front of the Kurdish project, knowing the goal of Olive Branch Operation, and whether the purpose of this operation has been achieved, and reviewing international positions and the future of the operation .

4. Research Questions

What is the position of the Turkish state on the Syrian crisis and the issue of the Kurds before the olive branch?

- What is The nature and purpose of the olive branch operation?
- What is the International positions on the process?
- What is the future of the process?

5. Methodology

The historical method was used to study the historical evidence between the Kurds and the Turkish state. The analytical method was also used to analyze the Turkish position towards the Syrian crisis and the Olive Branch operation.

Volume 11 Issue 8, August 2022

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

6. Literature review and background

6.1 The protests in Syria and the Turkish position

The Syrian Civil War: The Syrian Civil War started in the city of Daraa, where the security arrested fifteen children after they wrote slogans calling for freedom and demanding the fall of the regime on the wall of their school on February 26, 2011.

In the midst of that, there was a call to demonstrate, called by a page On Facebook. it was not known who was behind it. A group of activists responded to it on Tuesday, March 15, 2011. These protests were against tyranny, oppression, corruption and spreading chaos in Syria in the interest of Israel in the first place (known as the Arab Spring), which erupted in the Arab world in late 2010 and the beginning of 2011, especially the Tunisian revolution and the Egyptian revolution of January 25 (Guha - Sapir et al., 2018) . However, the Syrian security and intelligence forces and militias loyal to the regime (known as the Shabiha) confronted them with live bullets, and the slogan changed to "The people want the fall of the regime." While the Syrian government announced that these incidents were carried out by militants and terrorists who would destabilize national security, demonstrations took place in the cities of Daraa, Damascus, Homs and Baniyas (Karakus & Svensson, 2020).

The security met the protesters brutally, especially in Daraa. As a result, four people were killed by Syrian security in that city, and the demonstrations for the rest of the week turned into bloody events in the vicinity of the Omari Mosque and other areas of the city which led to the killing of 100 protesters by the end of the week (Dogonay & Demiraslan, 2016).

On Sunday, July 31 (the first night of Ramadan), the Syrian army launched operations in several cities across Syria, most notably Hama, Deir ez - Zor, Al - Bukamal and Al - Harak. That day is considered the bloodiest day of protests so far. On August 18, an unprecedented escalation occurred in the positions of Western countries regarding. After five months of only condemning the repression and calling for reforms, some countries (France, Britain, Germany, the European Union, Canada and the United States) simultaneously announced that Syrian President Bashar al - Assad should resign immediately after he "totally lost his legitimacy" (Karakus & Svensson, 2020) . In early June, after the exacerbation of defections in the Syrian army for three months, he announced the formation of the first military organization to unite these soldiers, which is the "Free Officers Brigade" under the command of Hussein Harmoush, and two months later, the formation of the Free Syrian Army led by Riad Al - Asaad was announce (Guha - Sapir et al., 2018) .

On May 9, the Syrian army had entered a new phase, represented by the siege and invasion of Homs, the third Syrian city, which had witnessed demonstrations estimated at hundreds of thousands, at the same time that areas in the Homs countryside were subjected to military operations, and Tal Kalakh was surrounded, then Rastan and Talbiseh were besieged (Rodriguez - Llanes et al., 2018) .The demonstrations did not stop with the start of military action.

On June 3, Al - Assi Square witnessed a huge sit - in, as well as Maarat Al - Numan. The security forces responded with fire in what was known as the Hama massacre (Karakus & Svensson, 2020) .

On October 4, the UN Security Council moved, when Britain, France, Germany and Portugal presented a draft resolution condemning the Syrian regime and demanding it respect human rights and initiate political reforms. However, Russia and China's use of their veto power aborted the project (Leenders & Mansour, 2018) .On October 16, the Arab foreign ministers held an emergency meeting in Cairo, after which they reached a 15 - day deadline for the Syrian regime to start a dialogue with the opposition to solve the worsening crisis in the country. They also formed a ministerial committee aimed at communicating with the regime to stop the violence in Syria (Hinnebusch, 2015) .

6.2 The Turkish position on the protests in Syria

In fact, the only constant in the Turkish position on the Syrian revolution/crisis was the permanent change over the past six years, based on the interaction of three factors: the Syrian field reality, the internal Turkish scene, and the international position on the revolution/crisis.

As a result of the interaction of these three factors, the Turkish position has evolved from urging Bashar al - Assad to carry out radical and real reforms with the beginning of the protest movement in March 2011, to supporting the opposition and demanding the overthrow of the regime starting in 2012 (Hinnebusch, 2015) .

On the sidelines of the military operations, the Turkish official discourse avoided directing any blame to Russia by holding the regime fully responsible for what is happening in Aleppo, even though the aerial bombardment of the city was mostly Russian, and left its previous and repeated calls for the necessity of neutralizing the "moderate" opposition. Rather, Ankara worked to withdraw and attract some of the fighting factions in Aleppo to participate in the Euphrates Shield, according to some reports (Dalay, 2017) .

6.3 Turkey is begging Russia

In fact, the Russian intervention in Syria, at the request of the regime and under an agreement that allows the Russian Federation enormous influence in Syria, changed the course of the Syrian crisis as a whole, and not the Turkish position alone, by strengthening the regime's control over large areas that it had lost and defeating the largest body of the armed opposition in Aleppo and other regions, and created a balancing factor by confronting the Syrian groups funded by Turkey, the Gulf and the West on the ground. Turkey understood that arguing with the Russian policy in Syria means more loss for Turkey and will restrict it more and more in Syria (Noi, 2012) .

6.4 International Positions

An extensive report at Al Jazeera Center for Studies dealt with international positions and possible scenarios regarding the "Olive Branch" operation launched by the Turkish armed

forces, in cooperation with the Free Syrian Army, against the militias of the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian arm of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) (PKK), in the Syrian region of Afrin, the report prepared by researcher Mahmoud Samir Rantisi, indicated the existence of important international positions, especially for international and regional forces that have presence and influence within the scene in Syria, namely: America, Russia and Iran in addition to the position of the Syrian regime (Oktav, 2015). The report reviewed the reactions of those forces on the Turkish operation in Afrin, as follows :

a) The American position

It is known that one of the main motives of the Turkish operation is the development of American dependence on the People's Protection Units and the increase in support for them despite the elimination of ISIS. Turkey has often wondered through its president what it means to describe the relationship between Ankara and Washington as an alliance in light of the American support for a party on Turkey's borders (Van der Vyver, 2015). Therefore, what was in front of Washington, which is not present in Afrin, is to ease the Turkish tension to avoid further damage to the relationship with Turkey and not offer Moscow more opportunity to get benefit from this situation (Taheri, 2013).

b) Russian position

There was some lack of clarity regarding the Russian position prior to Turkey's advance to Afrin, where Lavrov denied the withdrawal of his country's forces from Afrin although the forces actually withdrew hours before the start of the operation, and although Russia expressed its concern, it announced that Washington was the one who pushed Ankara to this step and that Washington is pressuring Kurds and encourage them to separatist tendencies (Charap et al., 2019). The Turkish coordination with Russia also emerged directly through the Turkish Chief of Staff and Intelligence's visit to Moscow, where the Turkish Foreign Minister stated that his country is conducting consultations with Russia and Iran to enable them to use the Syrian airspace, and said: The visit of the Turkish Chief of Staff to Moscow comes within the framework of consultations with Russia and Iran, the main backers of Bashar al - Assad, to allow Turkish planes to participate in the Afrin campaign (Kainikara, 2018).

c) Iranian position

Although Turkey worked closely with Iran to successfully thwart the results of the referendum in northern Iraq, Iran, which maintains a presence in areas close to Afrin, called for an end to the military operation, arguing that this might lead to the strengthening of terrorist groups (Hetou, 2018). For his part, the Iranian Chief of Staff, in contact with his Turkish counterpart, called for Turkey to confirm respect for the territorial integrity of Syria and that it had no ambitions in Syria, which was clearly confirmed by Turkey that Iranian position was not opposed, but it was understanding position for the Turkish move (Al - Moussawi, 2017).

7. The Objectives of Operation Olive Branch

Turkish forces launched a military air and ground campaign called "Operation Afrin" targeting positions of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia in northern Syria.

The Turkish move came in response to Washington's announcement, which leads the international coalition against ISIS, that it is in the process of forming a military force of 30, 000, the majority of which are Kurdish fighters, to protect the areas of influence of the "Syrian Democratic Forces" in northeastern Syria (Kasapoğlu et al., 2018).

Despite the control of the Kurdish People's Protection Units over Qamishli, Hasaka and northern Raqqqa, all of which are adjacent to the Turkish borders, Afrin is of exceptional importance to Turkey, as it represents the core of the Kurdish federal project (Al - Moussawi, 2017). Turkey seeks from the "Afrin operation" to achieve several goals, which can be summarized in four main goals (Al - Moussawi, 2017; Oktav, 2015; Van der Vyver, 2015):

- Preventing the Kurds of Syria from controlling the border strip with Turkey or establishing an autonomous region there. In this context, Turkey realizes that the "Kurdish federation" project will not be complete without the annexation of the Afrin region, or at least in this case it will be possible to contain it through an economic siege, and then easily subjugated it politically.
- Opening the door for the Turkish forces to take control of the Manbij region and seize it from the Kurdish units, as the Afrin region is a focal point to link the areas cleared by the Euphrates Shield operation, which includes the "Azaz - al - Bab - Jarabulus" triangle, and linking it to the Idlib region.
- Turkey's quest to maximize its presence on the ground and change the equation of power, which perpetuates Turkish influence inside Syria, and makes it an essential party in the expected political settlement process.

8. International Positions on the "Olive Branch"

Official reactions from Western and Arab countries to Turkey's Operation Olive Branch in Afrin, Syria, and while some countries considered the Turkish operation a legitimate right for Turkey to defend its borders, others saw it as a violation of the sovereignty of Syrian territory (Gürcan, 2018). Turkey has "legitimate" security concerns in the region, and that America had prior knowledge of the military operation

8.1 Deteriorating situation

For his part, the French Foreign Minister expressed his concern about the "deteriorating situation" in Syria, and also called for a halt to the fighting in Afrin, and to allow humanitarian aid to reach everyone, and asked the Security Council to hold an emergency meeting, Monday, after the start of the Turkish operation (Yeşiltaş, 2018). The French Foreign Minister said, " Jean - Yves Le Drian, in a tweet on Twitter, said that the emergency meeting of the Security Council will focus on the conditions of Eastern Ghouta, Idlib and Afrin.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu considered that France or any other country's transfer of Operation Olive Branch to the United Nations is tantamount to "aligning with the terrorists".

8.2 Unpredictable risks

On Sunday, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel warned of "unforeseen dangers due to Turkey's military confrontation against the Kurdish People's Protection Units" and said, "This operation is worrisome, adding that after the Kurdish forces succeeded in fighting the "Islamic State" organization Syria needs steps to achieve stability and peace, stressing that "new military confrontations are the last thing Syria needs," adding that the Syrians have suffered enough, and he said, "Everyone's efforts should aim at achieving progress at the political level (Kasapoğlu et al., 2018) . " F .

For his part, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed, Monday, that Russian officials are in contact with the Turkish leadership regarding the military operation carried out by Ankara. She still believes in the importance of Syria's territorial integrity (Oktav, 2015) . Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch jointly with militants from the Free Syrian Army against the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on Saturday.

France called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the Turkish military operation in Afrin and other developments in Syria, while Cairo condemned the Turkish intervention, as well as Iran called for it to be stopped. French Foreign Minister Jean - Yves Le Drian said in a tweet published today, Sunday, that his country calls for an urgent meeting of the Security Council to address the situation in Eastern Ghouta, Idlib and Afrin (Yeşiltaş, 2018) . He added that he spoke this morning by phone with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu, calling on Ankara to stop its attack on the Afrin region, which is controlled by the Kurdish People's Protection Units. In several regions of Syria, Washington, which militarily supports the Kurdish units, had called on Turkey not to attack the Kurds in Afrin, and demanded it focus instead on fighting the Islamic State (Yeşiltaş, 2018) .

8.3 Process and expected scenarios

In the face of these contradictory positions, careful Turkish planning and lingering preparations, and Kurdish disappointment with the Russian - American inaction, the military scene in Afrin remains in front of several scenarios governed by the stability or change of the players' position, the geography of the region, and the extent of the Kurdish militias' ability to wage a war of attrition against the Turks and the Syrian army forces. Al - Hur allied with it, and these possibilities can be probed according to the following :

a) Scenario One: Achieving the full objectives of the operation with the required speed :

Achieving all the objectives of the operation can be done by controlling the entirety of Afrin, according to the Turkish plan and the expected time of the battle, without the emergence of any obstacles in the face of the operation, whether at the international level, the Kurdish response or the Turkish domestic issue. the Kurdish militias were shocked by American and Russian positions (Gunter, 2014) . Additionally, the diversity of the axes of action and the lack

of depth strategic strategy for the Kurds in Afrin or supply lines thwarted the Kurdish military.

b) Scenario Two: Partial success in controlling northern Afrin :

The conduct of the military operation may encounter some obstacles that delay the progress of the Turkish forces. This delay is attributed to the nature of the mountainous region and the possibility of fortification in it, the military doctrine enjoyed by the Kurdish element, and what constitutes the factor of the relative siege as a motive for steadfastness among the fighters of the Kurdish Protection Units (Gunes & Lowe, 2015) .

c) Scenario Three: The process fails to achieve its goals and the process gets out of control :

Turkey, regardless of the size of the Kurdish force or the Turkish losses or the length of its duration, will not allow the battle to stop, because of the consequences and repercussions. However, there is a possibility that may lead to the failure of the operation, which is the departure of the battle from tactical control, and curbing it internationally by a movement of NATO or the Security Council Or the United States alone, especially if we remember what France did in raising the issue for discussion in the Security Council and raising human rights files and Berlin's demand for NATO to discuss the "Olive Branch" battle (Resch, 2017) . This might bring back memories of the events of the second Gulf War and lure the Iraqi regime before launching the Battle of Desert Storm Likewise, Turkey, with its current strength and political sophistication, may have far exceeded what happened with the Iraqi or Serbian regime, in addition to the ability of the Americans to abandon the region in exchange for avoiding a direct clash at high costs (Hammy, 2018)

9. Conclusion

Turkey wants to prove its weighty role in the region, which cannot be bypassed or canceled by political machinations, economic sanctions or alliances in which conflicting interests are shaking their foundations. this was evident in the deal that seemed more daring with the Syrian file, militarily and politically through the military operation that it led in Jarablus "Operation Euphrates Shield" and providing support to the "Free Syrian Army" factions and fighting terrorism to replay the ball again according to what is available to them in the "Olive Branch" operation, to show this process the rise of the Turkish graph, and to raise the status of the Free Syrian Army institution as an alternative force to the regime's army. This was reflected in the statements of all Turkish officials in their statements about the operation in which the Turkish army participates alongside the Free Army, after which Turkey may continue to rise further in the international system, thus proving its ability to bypass the American pole, even within a tactical framework, escaping from many The restrictions it faces in protecting its national security and building its regional project, which it sees in Syria after the fall of Assad has its strategic depth in it, with the difficulties it may face in its upcoming confrontations east of the Euphrates .

References

- [1] Al - Moussawi, A. H. (2017). Iran and the Syrian crisis. *Journal of US - China Public Administration*, 14 (3), 136–144.
- [2] Charap, S., Treyger, E., & Geist, E. (2019). *Understanding Russia's Intervention in Syria*. Rand.
- [3] Dalay, G. (2017). What next for Turkey in Syria? *Aljazeera Centre for Studies*, 27.
- [4] Doganay, M., & Demiraslan, H. (2016). Refugees of the Syrian civil war: impact on reemerging infections, health services, and biosecurity in Turkey. *Health Security*, 14 (4), 220–225.
- [5] Guha - Sapir, D., Schlüter, B., Rodriguez - Llanes, J. M., Lillywhite, L., & Hicks, M. H. - R. (2018). Patterns of civilian and child deaths due to war - related violence in Syria: a comparative analysis from the Violation Documentation Center dataset, 2011–16. *The Lancet Global Health*, 6 (1), e103–e110.
- [6] Gunes, C., & Lowe, R. (2015). *The impact of the Syrian war on Kurdish politics across the Middle East*. Chatham House London.
- [7] Gunter, M. M. (2014). *Out of nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in peace and war*. Oxford University Press.
- [8] Gürçan, M. (2018). Assessing the post - July 15 Turkish military: A comparative analysis of the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations. *New World Architecture of Economy and Security*, 371–396.
- [9] Hammy, C. (2018). Syria: Behind the great powers' games in Afrin. *Green Left Weekly*, 1168, 14.
- [10] Hetou, G. (2018). *The Syrian conflict: The role of Russia, Iran and the US in a global crisis*. Routledge India.
- [11] Hinnebusch, R. (2015). Back to enmity: Turkey - Syria relations since the Syrian Uprising. *Orient, Journal of German Orient Institute*.
- [12] Kainikara, S. (2018). *In the bear's shadow: Russian intervention in Syria*.
- [13] Karakus, D. C., & Svensson, I. (2020). Between the bombs: Exploring partial ceasefires in the Syrian civil war, 2011–2017. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32 (4), 681–700.
- [14] Kasapoğlu, C., Ülgen, S., & Chairman, E. (2018). *Operation Olive Branch: A political - military assessment*. Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies.
- [15] Leenders, R., & Mansour, K. (2018). Humanitarianism, state sovereignty, and authoritarian regime maintenance in the Syrian war. *Political Science Quarterly*, 133 (2), 225–257.
- [16] Noi, A. Ü. (2012). THE ARAB SPRING, ITS EFFECTS ON THE KURDS, AND THE APPROACHES OF TURKEY, IRAN, SYRIA, AND IRAQ ON THE KURDISH ISSUE. *MERIA Journal*, 16 (2).
- [17] Oktav, Ö. Z. (2015). The Syrian Civil War and Turkey - Syria - Iran Relations. *Syria Studies*.
- [18] Resch, E. M. (2017). *Syria's Impact on the Kurdish Peace Process in Turkey*.
- [19] Rodriguez - Llanes, J. M., Guha - Sapir, D., Schlüter, B. - S., & Hicks, M. H. - R. (2018). Epidemiological findings of major chemical attacks in the Syrian war are consistent with civilian targeting: a short report. *Conflict and Health*, 12 (1), 1–6.
- [20] Taheri, A. (2013). Has the Time Come for Military Intervention in Syria? *American Foreign Policy Interests*, 35 (4), 217–220.
- [21] Van der Vyver, J. D. (2015). Military intervention in Syria: The American, British and French alternatives and the Russian option. *De Jure Law Journal*, 48 (1), 36–54.
- [22] Yeşiltaş, M. (2018). Turkey's strategic reasoning behind Operation Olive Branch. *SETA Perspective*, 30.