

Türkiye's Approach to Crisis Management: The Case of Syria

Türkiye'nin Kriz Yönetimine Yaklaşımı: Suriye Örneği

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin kriz yönetimi yaklaşımına ışık tutmayı ve Türkiye'nin Suriye sahasındaki sınır ötesi operasyonlarını kapsamlı bir şekilde analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, kriz yönetiminin pratik yönüne odaklanmakta ve Türkiye'nin kendisi için varoluşsal bir tehdit oluşturan Suriye İç Savaşı'nı yönetmedeki başarısını vurgulamaktadır. Türkiye, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi gibi önemli zorluklarla karşı karşıya kalmasına rağmen, terörle mücadele kapsamında Suriye sahasında art arda gerçekleştirdiği sınır ötesi operasyonlarla da krizleri etkili bir şekilde yönetmiştir. Örneklem olarak 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi sonrası Suriye'deki operasyonların seçilmesinin nedeni, her iki krizin arka arkaya yaşanmış olması ve Suriye İç Savaşı'nun Türkiye'nin 21. yüzyıldaki en önemli krizi olmasıdır. Arap Baharı sürecinin Türkiye'nin 911 km kara sınırına sahip güney komşusuna sıçraması sonucunda Suriye başarısız bir devlet haline gelmiş, devlet aygıtı giderek ortadan kalkmış ve kamusal yapısı yok olmuştur. Bu süreçte ülkede çeşitli terör örgütleri ve devlet dışı silahlı örgütler ortaya çıkmış, bu örgütler kendilerine geniş faaliyet alanları bulmuş, başlangıçtaki yerel etkilerini bölgesel etki düzeyine taşımış, siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal çevrelerdeki güçlerini önemli ölçüde tahkim etmişlerdir. DEAŞ ve YPG/PKK bu örgütlerin en önde gelenleridir. Ayrıca El-Kaide'den türeyen diğer örgütleri de unutmamak gerekir. Suriye'de 2011 sonrası yaşanan siyasi, askeri ve ekonomik çalkantılar, bölgede ortaya çıkan güç boşluğu ve bu boşluğu doldurmaya çalışan devletler, devlet dışı silahlı aktörler ve terör örgütleri Türkiye'nin güvenlik yaklaşımlarında ciddi kırılmalara neden olmuştur. Ayrıca terörizm ve göç kaynaklı krizlerle mücadelede önemli zorluklarla karşılaşmıştır. Sınırların ötesinde güvenliği sağlama ve terörü ülke topraklarında karşılama yaklaşımı, son beş yılda Türkiye'de terörden kaynaklanan güvenlik krizini derinleştirmiştir.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to shed light on Türkiye's crisis management approach and comprehensively analyze Türkiye's cross-border operations in the Syrian theater. It focuses on the practical side of crisis management and highlights Türkiye's success in managing the Syrian Civil War, which poses an existential threat to Türkiye. Despite facing significant challenges, such as the July 15 coup attempt, Türkiye has managed crises effectively, as evidenced by its successive cross-border operations in the Syrian theater as part of the fight against terrorism. The reason for choosing the operations in Syria after the July 15 coup attempt as the sample is that both crises occurred back-to-back, and the Syrian Civil War is Türkiye's most crucial crisis in the 21st century. As a result of the spread of the Arab Spring process to Türkiye's southern neighbor with a 911 km land border, Syria has become a failed state, its state apparatus has gradually disappeared, and its public structure has ceased to exist. During this process, various terrorist organizations and non-state armed groups emerged in the country. These organizations found extensive areas of operation, extended their initial local influence to a regional level, and significantly strengthened their influence in political, economic, and social circles. DAESH and YPG/PKK are among the most prominent of these organizations, not to mention various other groups linked to Al-Qaeda. The post-2011 political, military, and economic turmoil in Syria, the emerging power vacuum in the region, and the states, non-state armed actors, and terrorist organizations trying to fill this vacuum have caused severe ruptures in Türkiye's security approaches. However, it has faced significant challenges in tackling crises stemming from terrorism and migration. The approach of providing security behind the borders and meeting terrorism on the country's territory has deepened the security crisis stemming from terrorism in Türkiye in the five years.

Keywords:

Syria Crisis,
Middle East,
Crisis Management,
Cross-Border,
Turkish Foreign Policy,

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1. INTRODUCTION

Between 2011 and 2016 Various terrorist organizations, backed by the support of some foreign countries, have increased their actions and activities in these years and have become proxy elements of the countries they feed. In addition to the security crisis in the south, the July 15 coup attempt by the Gulenist Terrorist Organization (FETO) in 2016 necessitated a change in Türkiye's counterterrorism doctrine (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2016).

The deepening of the crisis and the change in doctrine to manage the deepening problem are similar. In the aftermath of the treacherous attempt, Türkiye has adopted the approach of eliminating terrorism at its source and confronting and eliminating it across borders. Türkiye's domestic and national technology move, the reduction and minimization of foreign dependency in the defense industry and military technology, and the investments in the defense industry such as UAVs and UCAVs, domestic and national tanks, infantry rifles, cruise missiles, the MİLGEM project, multi-barrel rocket launchers, attack-tactical reconnaissance helicopters demonstrate the development of its security policy and the policy it pursues in terms of crisis management (Savunma Sanayi Başkanlığı, 2019:34-35).

In addition to the various terrorist organizations that have emerged during the civil war in Syria since 2011, another critical issue that needs to be evaluated in the context of Türkiye's security policies and crisis management is the issue of migration from Syria. First of all, if we look at the data briefly, the number of Syrians displaced and internally displaced in the country following the Syrian War is known to be approximately 6.5 million (BM Mülteci Örgütü, 2018). In addition, the number of people have fled Syria as refugees is about 6.6 million (Anadolu Ajansı, 2022). The number of registered Syrians residing in urban areas in Türkiye is approximately 3.6 million (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2021). Approximately half of this population is under 18, and the youth population between the ages of 15-24 corresponds to about 764 thousand people. It is also known that the number of Syrian babies in Türkiye will be around 750 thousand in 2022.

In addition, if we look at the population in the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch regions that Türkiye has secured and controlled in Syria, the number of internally displaced persons who have sought refuge in these regions is approximately 2,3 million (See more Koparan and Özcan, 2020; See more Yukuş, 2021). Although the figure in northern Syria is not precise, the population living within Türkiye's borders and Syria within Türkiye's sphere of influence is around 6 million. In sum, the number of Syrians under Turkish control appears to be higher than those under regime control (www.takvim.com.tr, 2021; www.turkishaawsat.com, 2021). All these data and the issue of migration should be considered in two contexts;

1. The security vulnerability and the economic burden it will create for Türkiye in the short term.
2. The danger of demographic change in the long term.

When it comes to security vulnerability, the first thing that comes to mind is irregular migration movements and actions of undocumented migrants that may prejudice public security. However, another less obvious but critical vulnerability is the engineering of migration and its use as a coercive force. In other words, using migration as a weapon is an inevitable crisis to manage in the Syrian civil war context.

Russia's efforts to put pressure on Türkiye by triggering the fragile structure in Idlib and threatening to create a new wave of migration through the approximately 3,5 million Syrians residing in the region are among the examples that can be evaluated in this context. Likewise, terrorist attacks and infiltration attempts into the safe zones Türkiye has established in Syria aim to make the region insecure while forcing the Syrian population to migrate, mainly to Türkiye.

2. CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND TÜRKİYE

A crisis means a turning point for the better or worse, sudden developments in the direction of deterioration and dangerous situations (Canöz and Öndoğan, 2015:38). According to Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer, a crisis is a specific, impulsive, and non-routine event that threatens an organization's primary objectives and involves high uncertainty (Seeger vd., 1998:233; Gilbert, 2019:63). The sudden emergence of crises requires the parties to the trouble to make various decisions, develop strategies quickly, and direct the problem in a way that will create opportunities for themselves (Karabulut, 2012:116).

The crisis management process involves planning, preparation, response, and recovery. Each step can help governments and other organizations coordinate to manage crises effectively (Klopf, 2023:33). International

relations also constitute an essential dimension of crisis management (Diamond, 2019:276). Crisis management requires having flexible and creative thinking to overcome crises, making fast and accurate decisions, being objective and courageous, being ready for action at any time, and being prepared for all kinds of unexpected requests and conditions (Akdağ, 2005:3).

Support from other countries can increase resources and provide more expertise. In addition, cooperation with international organizations is a significant opportunity to share best practices in crisis management. There are several factors for successful crisis management. Planning, allocating the right resources (Coller, 2018:22), following a good communication strategy (Coman et al., 2021:8), and keeping the public informed are success factors that help governments respond effectively during a crisis (Horwitz, 2020:28). Examples of good practices in crisis management include Japan's 2011 earthquake, the September 11 attacks in the US, and Thailand's 2004 tsunami disaster.

In recent years, Türkiye has been closely following the crises in its region and trying to intervene effectively. One of these crises is the civil war in Syria. Türkiye pays special attention to this issue as it shares a border with Syria (Altuğ, 2020:52) and is exposed to the direct effects of the Syrian crisis. (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2022). Türkiye's approach to the Syrian crisis consists primarily of humanitarian efforts, border security measures, and diplomatic solutions (Wei, 2019:464).

Since the beginning of the war in Syria, Türkiye has taken in around 3.7 million Syrian refugees. In addition, the Turkish government has been carrying out various projects to provide refugees with basic needs such as shelter, education, and healthcare. Regarding border security, Türkiye is fighting against terrorist organizations in Syria. In particular, the presence of terrorist organizations such as PKK/PYD/YPG in Syria poses a severe threat to Türkiye (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2017).

For this reason, Türkiye conducts military operations to ensure security on its borders and takes a decisive stance against terrorist organizations. Regarding diplomatic solution proposals, Türkiye receives the international community's support for peacefully resolving the Syrian crisis. Türkiye is trying to fix the Syrian problem peacefully, especially by participating in initiatives such as the Astana Process and the Sochi Summit (Ayvaz, 2020:1-18). For crisis management, Türkiye intervenes in situations through the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) (AFAD Presidency, 2021).

3. SOME EXAMPLES OF TÜRKİYE'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT

One of the prominent examples of Turkey's recent crisis management is the "*July 15 Coup Attempt*". The July 15, 2016 coup attempt was one of Türkiye's most significant crises in recent years. However, the Turkish people took to the streets at the call of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and fought against the coup plotters. While the coup attempt was thwarted with the support of the people, Türkiye's security forces managed the crisis by responding appropriately (Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2016).

"*Syria Crisis*" can also be cited as an example of Turkey's recent crisis management. The civil war in Syria hurt Türkiye. Millions of Syrian refugees took refuge in Türkiye, which caused many problems in Türkiye's economic and social structure. However, while hosting refugees, Türkiye also took essential steps in humanitarian aid (Özcan, 2022).

"*Covid-19 Pandemic*" can also be cited as an example of Turkey's recent crisis management. The worldwide Covid-19 pandemic also affected Türkiye. However, Türkiye tried to prevent the spread of the Pandemic by taking measures quickly through the Ministry of Health and other relevant institutions. It also demonstrated its social state approach by helping those in need during the pandemic (T.C. Sağlık Bakanlığı, 2023).

3.1. July 15 Coup Attempt

The fight against FETÖ, which paralyzed Türkiye's civilian and military bureaucracy, coincided with the Syrian Civil War. FETÖ members who infiltrated Türkiye's civilian and military structures led to moves that made crisis management difficult and created security weaknesses. The FETÖ organization, which has paralyzed the military and severely hampered its operational capability, has dealt a significant blow to crisis management and the state's decision-making process based on the wisdom of the nation. The number of generals and admirals dropped from 326 to 196 in 2017. The purge of 130 generals and admirals demonstrates that this process is challenging. After the purges in the military command, the staff intelligence, chain of power, and administration

were damaged (Özer, 2017). In addition to the chain of command, approximately 8 thousand and 6 thousand non-commissioned officers were dismissed. As is well known, the number of officers in the Armed Forces decreased following the treacherous coup attempt in 2016. While there were 32,189 officers in July 2016, this number dropped to 24,705 after the coup. In addition, the number of non-commissioned officers decreased from 68,978 to 62,781 (Özer, 2017).

The traitorous terrorist organization had captured the nerve endings of the armed forces and critical positions in the civil bureaucracy and politics. Despite this, the Turkish state mind emerged from this process, which was very difficult to make decisions and manage, by cleaning up the traitorous organization. Moreover, the crisis environment was so successfully controlled and managed that after about 40 days, the Republic of Türkiye launched its first cross-border operation since the Cyprus Peace Operation against Syria. This unstable state had become a hotbed of terrorism (Kara Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı, 2016). Türkiye not only cleansed the Gülenist Terrorist Organization (FETO) elements that had infiltrated its military and administration and prevented the treacherous coup attempt but also launched a comprehensive cross-border operation to the Azaz-Jarabulus line on the 40th day following the attempt. This operation, and the three primary operations that followed, were carried out in the aftermath of an uprising such as July 15, which aimed to dismantle the state mechanism. Conducting a cross-border military operation, especially after a significant change, purge, and reform process in the military, is the most unambiguous indication of the success of Türkiye and the Turkish Armed Forces' crisis management.

3.2. Syria Crisis: Existential Threat

The Middle East, including Syria, has historically been a region of significant importance where major imperialist powers have vied for power and control. Due to this historical background, the area has also meant prestige for many global powers. Middle East domination has been seen as the summit for every tremendous global power that can crown its victory by climbing to the top. In this sense, it is a fact that the region is strategically the most critical crossroads and, in many cases, the heartland of the road to consolidate world domination.

The Middle East, with its center of gravity in the northern regions of Anatolia, Syria, and Iraq, has been one of the most valuable areas - often the first - throughout history. All powers seeking global hegemony have also turned to the Middle East to maximize their strength and consolidate their dominance.

The civil war erupted in March 2011 when the Baathist regime led by Bashar al-Assad responded with heavy weapons against the Syrian people who took to the streets to make their demands heard, which has been going on for over a decade (Ismail, 2018:2; Muslu, 2018).

The Syrian crisis has become a situation that could trigger regional and global fault lines due to the risks it entails and the various actors involved (Lewis, 2023:122). The international crisis has not only had significant political and economic consequences in the regional dimension but has also become an area of competition where great powers test their capacities (Nas, 2019:47). Considering the current fragile structure, it still seems possible that at any moment, intentionally or unintentionally, the situation in Syria could get out of control on the ground or in the airspace and ignite a large-scale conflict. At this point, it is understood that every actor involved in the Syrian crisis is reviewing its policy and trying to consolidate its position through proxy elements or direct initiatives (Guidero and Hallward, 2019:102).

From Türkiye's perspective, it is seen that the Syrian issue, one of the most important agenda items of Turkish foreign policy, has a profound impact on foreign and domestic politics. Therefore, analyzing the course of the Syrian crisis from its inception to the present day from a multilateral and multidimensional perspective is an inevitable intellectual effort to ensure Türkiye's national interests and to develop proposals for the resolution of the crisis. The rapidly deepening war in Syria has changed its content over time, has deeply shaken regional geopolitical fault lines, and caused ruptures in Türkiye's security and defense policies.

Moreover, given the importance of this crisis in the context of the Grand Strategies of regional and global states participating in the war in Syria (Galeeva, 2022:98) and the position of the war in Syria in the foreign policy and security orientations of both central and regional powers (Bellamy, 2022:94), the conceptualizations of this crisis are somewhat incomplete. Empirical evidence suggests that the Syrian crisis is not just a simple civil war with regional consequences but a rare case of great power rivalry with systemic effects on international politics (Mumford, 2021:76).

From the Turkish perspective, both leadership discourses and security and foreign policy approaches suggest that the Syrian War poses an existential threat to Türkiye. There are two main reasons for this: 1- Various terrorist organizations that have found large areas for themselves and increased their influence; 2- Migration mobility (Gökalp, 2017:221) and the political and economic consequences of the burden it will create for Türkiye. The Syrian refugee issue in Türkiye is, first and foremost, a threat and problem for Türkiye as a social cohesion issue (Karataş, 2015:118). It is observed that people from Syria have migrated to different parts of the world. The civil war in 2011 Syria caused Syrian citizens to migrate to Türkiye. When the statistical data of the General Directorate of Migration Management as of 2021 are analyzed, it is determined that "*the total number of Syrian asylum seekers under 'Temporary Protection' in Türkiye is 3,670,341*" (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2021).

In this context, the Syrian civil war and its consequences are a severe crisis management test for Türkiye. Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, Türkiye, the country with the longest border with Syria, has assumed an active and constructive role in the Geneva and Syrian Constitutional Committee work and the Astana and Sochi processes (www.hurriyet.com.tr, 2021). As the country that has taken the most responsibility for preventing the humanitarian crisis in Syria (Çavuşoğlu, 2016:17-24), Türkiye's Syria policy is based on Türkiye's sovereign rights. The basic principle is the security of the Turkish nation, the territorial integrity of Syria, the peace, welfare, and security of Syrian citizens, and legal legitimacy (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2022).

For over a decade, the crisis and conflict in Syria have threatened Syria's territorial integrity and security and threatened Türkiye's national security (Phillips, 2021:298). DAESH Moreover, PKK/YPG have threatened Türkiye's border security with their aggressive behavior in Syria. In this process, Türkiye participated in the International Coalition Against DAESH and acted with international actors. Still, on the other hand, the PKK/YPG terrorist organization received the support of various international actors, especially the United States (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2017).

As is known, international law does not protect terrorism and does not legitimize initiatives that support and patronize terrorism. The US's inconsistency in the fight against terrorism is one of the main factors of instability in Syria (Abhyankar, 2020:79). At this point, Türkiye carried out Operations Euphrates Shield, Olive Branch, and Peace Spring against the insincere policies of international actors (Matar and Kadri, 2019:19) and dealt a significant blow to DAESH, PKK/YPG, and created safe zones in the operation zones for its national security and the welfare and security of Syrians. Following the operations, 466 thousand of Syrians returned to the safe zones dignified and securely. In addition, water, electricity, and sewerage infrastructures were renewed, highways were repaired, and hospitals, health centers, and schools were opened to service by meeting their needs (Aslan, 2019:66).

Operation Spring Shield, carried out after the Assad regime attacked the Turkish Armed Forces, prevented the humanitarian crisis and the danger of irregular migration originating from Idlib. At the same time, the operations contained the terror corridor that runs from northern Iraq to northern Syria and aims to reach the Mediterranean Sea. The move towards national military technology, the reduction of foreign dependency, self-sufficiency, and maximum gains with minimum casualties are among the foundations of the Turkish defense idea. The current global and regional conjuncture suggests that Türkiye should look at the events in Syria from two perspectives. The first is the short-term security risks that the crisis in Syria poses/will pose for Türkiye, while the second is establishing an order that will not threaten Türkiye from Syria in the long term.

4. TURKISH MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SYRIA

The mass popular movements that spread to Syria after the Arab Spring gradually turned into a civil war with the influence of external forces. Thousands of Syrians were killed and wounded, and approximately 13 million Syrians were forced to leave their country and migrate (Baczko vd., 2018:72). To combat the crises caused by the Syrian Civil War in terms of terrorism and migration and to leave these crises with minimal damage (Donelli, 2018:2), Türkiye has carried out four successful operations against terrorist organizations in Northern Syria in a row.

Türkiye organized Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) to take control of the Al-Bab region in northern Syria. Operation Euphrates Shield was conducted as part of Türkiye's fight against the presence of terrorist organizations such as the PKK/PYD/YPG in Syria. Operation Olive Branch (OOB) is a Turkish operation against terrorist organizations in the Afrin region. OOS was conducted as part of Türkiye's fight against terrorist organizations such as PKK/PYD/YPG in Afrin, threatening Türkiye's border security. Operation Peace Spring (OPS) is a Turkish operation against terrorist organizations such as the PKK/PYD/YPG in the Tel Abyad and

Ras al-Ayn regions of northeastern Syria. The process was part of Türkiye's fight against terrorist organizations threatening its border security. Operation Spring Shield (OSS) is the latest in Türkiye's operations against terrorist organizations in northern Syria. OPP was organized as an operation against the presence of terrorist organizations such as PKK/PYD/YPG in areas close to the Turkish border (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2022). These operations were carried out to protect Türkiye's national security and ensure border security (Işıksal, 2018). Due to terrorist organizations in Syria and their threats against Türkiye, Türkiye has organized these operations and made efforts to ensure regional stability (Zahra, 2017:29).

4.1. Operation Euphrates Shield

Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) was launched on August 24, 2016, along the Jarabulus, al-Bab, and Aleppo lines. Türkiye successfully operated jointly with its ground, air, and joint forces and elements of the then FSA, now the Syrian National Army (SNA). Within the scope of the operation, 2.647 DAESH members were neutralized, and an area of 2.015 km² was cleared of terrorist organizations with the support of the FSA (Kara Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı, 2016). As a result of this operation, 243 residential areas and 2.015 km² were taken under control. For the peaceful environment provided after the process to be permanent, Türkiye has ensured the provision of health services in 5 hospitals in the region within the scope of the activities carried out in coordination with public institutions and organizations for the normalization of life and 540 schools have started to provide education to nearly 200.000 students.

4.2. Operation Olive Branch

Operation Olive Branch (OOB) is a highly strategic operation. Considering the position of the terrorist organization PKK/PYD in northern Syria at the time of the process, the nature of the process becomes more apparent. With this operation by the armed forces and the FSA, Türkiye neutralized the terrorist organization in Afrin, which was dreaming of reaching the warm seas to the south. The operation, which started on January 20, 2018, lasted for 57 days, and the process was quickly concluded with Türkiye's effective use of tactical drones. The armed forces and the FSA neutralized 6.370 terrorists during the process. The fact that Operation Olive Branch and Operation Euphrates Shield started with the attack of 72 fighter jets in memory of the 72 heroic armed forces personnel who were martyred in Operation Olive Branch and Operation Euphrates Shield sent a vital message symbolically and operationally. At a time when it was rumored in some circles that the air force did not have enough combat pilots after the coup, carrying out an operation with 72 fighter jets at the same time is a capability that very few air forces in the world have (Kara vd., 2018). The OES was launched on January 20, 2018, on the Afrin, Aleppo, Syria, and Türkiye-Syria border. The OES is a continuation of the OES and was completed on March 24, 2018, by securing the SDF, PYD, and YPG control area.

4.3. Operation Peace Spring

Operation Peace Spring was conducted between October 9, 2019, and October 18, 2019, to ensure Türkiye's border security and neutralize terrorist organizations threatening its national security, particularly DAESH and PKK/YPG elements. The operation aims to prevent the terror corridor and ensure the return of Syrians forced to migrate to their homes. An area of 4.219 km² and 605 residential areas under the control of the terrorist organization were cleared of terrorism and taken under control. After the operation, Türkiye continued to provide public services, especially health and education, for the region's people within the crisis management scope (Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, 2019).

4.4. Operation Spring Shield

Operation Spring Shield is a large-scale operation in northern Syria. Launched on 27 February 2022 with the Armed Forces and the SMO, the operation ended successfully on 5 March 2022. Within the scope of the process, 3,473 regime elements, 93 tanks, 36 armored vehicles, eight helicopters, three aircraft, and ten air defense systems were neutralized. Thanks to the process, the security of Turkish soldiers in the region was reinforced, a severe message was sent to the regime, and the safety of the area's people was ensured (Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, 2020). Due to the scope and scale of this operation, TAF elements successfully carried out the process with the motto 'effective, deterrent, and respected! Due to its location east of the Euphrates, the BPH

is vital to prevent the regime's expansion and ensure TAF troops' security. Another importance of the process for Türkiye is to prevent migration to the Turkish border due to the regime forces' attacks and to ensure the safe and voluntary return of the region's people to their areas.

5. POST-MILITARY OPERATIONS ACTIVITIES

In the aftermath of the military operations in Syria, Türkiye has attached great importance to humanitarian aid activities in the region. The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and the Turkish Red Crescent assisted civilians in need in areas liberated from the influence of terrorist organizations as part of cross-border operations. In this context, Türkiye is known to have provided humanitarian assistance to approximately 370.000 displaced people and met their needs in the aftermath of Operation Peace Spring in northern Syria. The Turkish Red Crescent provided basic needs such as tents, blankets, food, and cleaning supplies. Türkiye also extended a helping hand to the civilian population in the region in the aftermath of Operation Euphrates Shield, providing shelter, water, food, and medical supplies. These efforts have saved thousands of civilian lives. Türkiye has continued to provide humanitarian aid with a public service discipline in the context of crisis management to ensure that the people of the region stay away from the conflict environment for the establishment of lasting peace and the peace and welfare of the people of the area after the military operations carried out in the fight against terrorism and the national security of the country. The Turkish Red Crescent Society is the most appreciated organization for its humanitarian aid to the region after the Syrian civil war. It has been instrumental in participatory humanitarian aid by collecting donations through its official website. The organization has demonstrated its sensitivity towards Syria in Arabic and Turkish on its corporate website. While Türkiye's security institutions serve in the context of national security, the Red Crescent Society serves in its area of responsibility in Syria in crisis management (Türk Kızılayı, 2022).

By mid-2022, the Turkish Red Crescent had provided aid to more than 6.7 million needy people. The Turkish Red Crescent shared with the public the report on its aid activities in Syria between August 2, 2012, and March 31, 2022. According to the report, aid activities are being carried out in the Idlib region, Operation Euphrates Shield, Operation Olive Branch, and Operation Peace Spring. It is noted that 33,8 million liters of water and at least 143,5 million lavash bread were provided to those in need, 63.433 trucks of humanitarian aid materials were shipped to 14 border aid points in the said period, and these aids reached 6 million 726.760 people in need (Karacaoğlu vd., 2022). The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) also provides humanitarian services.

In Syria's crisis management context. AFAD has constructed 86,481 briquette houses to shelter those in need in Syria and announced its total briquette house target for 2022 as 100.000 (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2022). In addition, in 2018, Türkiye started the construction of 3 fully equipped hospitals in the areas cleared of terrorism in northern Syria. These hospitals are strategically essential to accelerate the return of Syrians from Türkiye to the Euphrates Shield Operation area and to provide health services to the Syrian people who will settle in the region. Bab and Cobanbey hospitals have 200 beds each, while Marea Hospital has 75 (Koparan, 2018).

6. CONCLUSION

In the long run, if not in the short term, Türkiye will be in a much better position than Syria, Russia, or Iran. The Assad regime is a minority ethnic and religious/sectarian dictatorship, Iran is a foreign Shiite occupier, and its support for Assad and Iran taints Russia. It has little to show for its air presence in Syria. Conversely, the US has entered into a legitimacy problem by acting with the Syrian branch of the terrorist organization PKK. Another advantage for Türkiye is that it is geographically more accessible for Türkiye to deploy troops to use force in Syria compared to Russia and Iran. When envisioning the crisis in Syria, it is essential to remember that what is happening in the region is linked to what is happening in Ukraine, the Balkans, and Europe. This is because everything is more intertwined now than ever before.

For instance, Putin's intervention in Syria was partly aimed at taking Ukraine out of the limelight and thus gaining leverage against the Europeans by diverting the flow of migrants from Syria to Türkiye and Europe. In the coming period, the ongoing struggle for regional dominance between the powers in Syria will determine the new post-imperial order (Phillips, 2020:84). The civil war in Syria is between states, but now sub-state structures are also actors in this struggle (Salamey, 2018:47) In the coming period, what will bring power or a bloc to the forefront in Syria will be restoring order rather than building democracy. Freedom for anyone is impossible without establishing a healthy demand (Delatolla, 2021:59).

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