



AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE EXCHANGE IN NORTH SYRIA¹

1. Muhammed Bakkora²

ORCID No 0000-0002-1275-2141

2. Evrim İldem Develi³

ORCID No 0000-0003-3842-8611

Başvuru Tarihi: 15.12.2023

Kabul Tarihi: 14.01.2024

Yayın Tarihi:23.03.2024

ABSTRACT

This research project delves into the profound impact of the Syrian revolution on international trade exchange within the regions of Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad. The study scrutinizes trade pattern transformations before, during, and after the revolution while closely examining the catalysts behind these shifts. Employing an exploratory and historical methodology, this research predominantly uses qualitative methods. Extensive interviews were conducted with local merchants spanning various trade sectors, extracting invaluable insights into their experiences and viewpoints regarding trade across distinct periods. The findings bear a substantial disruption in international trade during the revolution, exerting a detrimental influence on trade flows. However, a discernible convalescence is witnessed post-revolution, underscored by a noteworthy surge in trade exchange rates between the regions. These revelations significantly enhance our comprehension of the intricate interplay between political turmoil and trade dynamics in regions gripped by conflict, mainly through the personal narratives and detailed accounts provided by those directly involved in the trade sector.

Keywords: Syrian Revolution, International Trade, Trade Exchange, Conflict-Affected Regions

KUZey SURİYE'DE ULUSLARARASI TİCARET DEĞİŞİMİ ÜZERİNE DERİNLEMESİNE MÜLAKAT

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Suriye devriminin Ras Al Ain ve Tal Abyad bölgelerinde uluslararası ticaret değişimine olan etkisini araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, devrim öncesi, sırası ve sonrasındaki ticaret desenlerindeki değişiklikleri analiz etmeyi ve bu değişiklikleri etkileyen faktörleri keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, keşfedici ve tarihsel bir yaklaşım benimseyerek öncelikle nitel yöntemlere birleştirmektedir. Farklı ticaret sektörlerinde faaliyet gösteren yerel tüccarlarla gerçekleştirilen detaylı görüşmeler, farklı dönemlerde ticaret üzerine kişisel deneyimleri ve bakış açılarını anlamak için kritik önem amaçlanmaktadır. Bulgular, devrim sırasında uluslararası ticaretin önemli ölçüde aksadığını ve ticaret akışlarını olumsuz etkilediğini koymaktadır. Ancak devrim sonrasında, bölgeler arasında ticaret değişim hızlarında belirgin bir iyileşme ve artış yaşandığı görülmektedir. Bu nitel bulgular, siyasi çalkantı ile ticaret dinamikleri arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi derinlemesine anlamamızda büyük bir katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriye Devrimi, Uluslararası Ticaret, Ticaret Değişimi, Çatışmadan Etkilenen Bölgeler

¹ Bu makale yüksek lisans tezinden üretilmiştir.

² Muhammed Bakkora, İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi, muhammed.bakkora@istanbulticaret.edu.tr

³ Doç. Dr. Evrim İldem Develi, İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi, eideveli@ticaret.edu.tr



1. INTRODUCTION

The Syrian revolution, commencing in 2011, initiated transformative events with profound implications nationwide. This conflict has significantly altered social, political, and economic landscapes, particularly impacting international trade dynamics within and beyond its borders (Viner, 1948; Djankov et al., 2010; Wing et al., 2018). Northern Syria, a region deeply affected and entangled in the conflict's complexities, presents a critical case for understanding these changes. Investigating the Syrian revolution's impact on international trade exchange in this region is crucial for grasping the altered economic landscape and comprehending the broader ramifications for neighboring countries, especially Türkiye (Islam, 2016; van Veen, 2019; Kadri, A. 2016).

Türkiye's geographical and historical proximity to northern Syria has established it as an integral trade partner. This long-standing economic interdependence has been severely tested and transformed by the Syrian revolution, paving the way for challenges and new opportunities (Góes et al., E. 2022; Bearce et al. Fisher. 2002). The essence of this study is to delve into these changes, specifically focusing on how the Syrian revolution has influenced international trade exchange in northern Syria, with a particular emphasis on the interactions with Türkiye (Khan & Mezran, 2016; Ghobarah et al., 2003).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

International trade is an indispensable component of the global economic landscape, shaping the development and connectivity of nations worldwide. This study offers an in-depth analysis of international trade in the context of the Syrian revolution, explicitly focusing on Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad. The research aims to unveil the evolution of trade practices, elucidate the challenges confronted by local merchants, and elucidate the transformative impact of the revolution on trade dynamics. A comprehensive methodology that combines exploratory, historical, quantitative, and descriptive approaches is employed. Trade data and historical records are examined, and in-depth interviews with local merchants are conducted. This approach reveals the factors influencing trade, including geopolitical shifts, economic policies, and societal dynamics. The findings from this study are anticipated to provide valuable insights into international trade within conflict-affected regions, offering guidance to policymakers and stakeholders on fostering sustainable and inclusive trade development in challenging environments. Trade data and historical records are examined, and in-depth interviews with local merchants are conducted. This approach reveals the factors influencing trade, including geopolitical shifts, economic policies, and societal dynamics. The findings from this study are anticipated to provide valuable insights into international trade within conflict-affected regions, offering guidance to policymakers and stakeholders on fostering sustainable and inclusive trade development in challenging environments.

The history of international trade is a captivating narrative that has profoundly influenced civilizations and global commerce. In this section, specific early trade routes such as the Amber Road and the Incense Route are explored to comprehend their socio-economic impacts, particularly in facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas across diverse cultures (Abu-Lughod J. L., 1989; Peter Frankopan, 2017; Gordon, 2017; Eduard B & Vermeer, 2008).

The Amber Road, an intricate network of trade routes connecting the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and Black Seas, played a pivotal role in exchanging amber, a highly prized commodity in ancient times (Abu-Lughod J. L., 1989). Beyond the trade in amber, this route served as a conduit for transmitting cultural influences, craftsmanship, and technologies between Northern Europe and the Mediterranean (Abu-Lughod J. L., 1989).

The Incense Route, extending from Southern Arabia through the Arabian Peninsula to the Mediterranean, was crucial for trading valuable spices and incense (Gordon, 2017). It played a significant role in boosting economic prosperity and aided in the diffusion of religious and cultural practices, leaving a lasting impact on societies along its path (Gordon, 2017). The Incense Route was



pivotal in connecting the Mediterranean with the treasures of the East, enriching material and intellectual realms alike (Gordon, 2017).

Similarly, the Silk Road, an ancient trade network, facilitated extensive cultural and economic exchanges between East and West (Peter Frankopan, 2017). It enabled the movement of commodities like silk and spices and was crucial in disseminating technologies such as papermaking and the compass (Peter Frankopan, 2017). It also served as a conduit for spreading religions like Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, leading to profound cultural transformations (Peter Frankopan, 2017).

The colonial era marked a notable shift in global trade dynamics, characterized by European powers establishing trade monopolies and exploiting colonial resources (Pomeranz, 2021). This period led to the extraction of wealth from colonies and the formation of new trade patterns, influencing the present international trade landscape (Pomeranz, 2021).

The study of international trade is underpinned by several fundamental theories that provide invaluable insights into the dynamics of global commerce. The absolute Advantage Theory, introduced by Adam Smith, posits that countries benefit from trading if they produce goods where they have absolute efficiency over others. Following this foundational concept is the Comparative Advantage Theory, initially formulated by David Ricardo in the early 19th century. This theory suggests that nations should specialize in producing goods and services with a comparative advantage, meaning they can produce more efficiently or at lower opportunity costs than other nations (Kurz et al.; N., 2015). By doing so and engaging in trade with other nations, all parties can benefit from increased efficiency and access to a broader range of goods.

For example, if Country A is more efficient in producing textiles and Country B is more efficient in producing electronics, it makes economic sense for Country A to focus on textiles and Country B on electronics. Through trade, both countries can acquire textiles and electronics more efficiently than if they tried to produce both domestically.

The Heckscher-Ohlin Theory, developed by Eli Heckscher and Bertil Ohlin, centers on factor endowments as a driver of comparative advantage. It suggests that countries will specialize in producing goods that require abundant factors of production they possess. For instance, a country with abundant land and natural resources may specialize in agriculture, while a highly educated workforce may specialize in technology and services.

The New Trade Theory, developed in the latter half of the 20th century, a paradigm shift occurred with the emergence of the New Trade Theory, prominently advocated by economists like Paul Krugman. This theory disrupts some assumptions underpinning traditional trade theories by introducing elements of economies of scale and imperfect competition (Paul R. Krugman, 1979). It contends that in industries characterized by high fixed costs, producing on a larger scale leads to lower average costs, granting firms a competitive edge.

Moreover, the New Trade Theory emphasizes the significance of product differentiation and variety in influencing trade patterns. Firms offering slightly different products can carve out niches in the global market, challenging the notion of perfect competition.

The Gravity Model of Trade is an empirical model that predicts trade volume between two countries. It suggests that trade is positively correlated with the economic size of the trading partners and inversely related to the distance between them (Anderson & van Wincoop, 2003). In essence, larger economies engage more trade, and closer countries trade more. This model has practical applications in understanding trade patterns and predicting trade flows.

The landscape of international trade is significantly shaped by trade policies and agreements established by countries and international organizations.



Overview of Major Trade Agreements:

1. North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): NAFTA, implemented in 1994, was a landmark trade agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. It aimed to eliminate most tariffs and trade barriers among the member countries, playing a crucial role in promoting trade in North America and integrating the economies of the member countries (Carrère & de Melo, 2004).

2. World Trade Organization (WTO): The WTO, established in 1995, is a global organization that deals with international trade rules and agreements. It provides a framework for negotiating and formalizing trade agreements, resolves trade disputes, and ensures that trade flows as smoothly and predictably as possible (Rose, 2002; Kalim Siddiqui, 2016).

The United Kingdom's decision to exit the European Union, known as Brexit, has significantly impacted international trade. It has led to changes in trade relationships, customs procedures, and regulations between the UK and the EU, affecting businesses and trade flows. Understanding the implications of Brexit on international trade is essential, as it represents a recent and notable example of a significant geopolitical shift with global consequences (Buigut et al. (2023); Statistics on UK-EU trade - The House of Commons Library, how did Brexit impact EU trade? Evidence from actual data).

International trade has been a driving force behind economic growth in many countries. This relationship can be attributed to several critical factors, including increased market access, specialization, and the transfer of technologies and knowledge across borders (Manni et al., M. N. İ. (2012); Ju-Kuai Foo, 1971).

To provide practical insights into the impact of trade on economic development, we will examine specific case studies of countries that have witnessed substantial economic growth facilitated by international trade (Manni et al. (2012); Keho et al. (2017); Kavoussi, 1985; Kalim Siddiqui, 2016). These case studies will offer real-world examples of how trade can drive economic transformation and prosperity.

Incorporating these aspects into the study will allow for an analysis of the impact of international trade on the economic development of Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad. Drawing parallels with successful case studies will enable the identification of potential pathways for economic growth and development in the region.

Globalization, characterized by increased interconnectedness among nations, has profoundly impacted international trade. It has facilitated the movement of goods, services, capital, and information across borders, creating a highly integrated global economy (Pinelopi K, Goldberg, & Tristan R. (2023); Rodrigue, J.-P., 2020). The various dimensions of globalization, such as the liberalization of trade, technological advances, and consumer behavior changes, will be explored to understand how these factors have shaped the landscape of international trade.

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are pivotal in the contemporary international trade environment. Operating across multiple countries, they engage in trade, investment, and production on a global scale (Esteban et al., 2018). The influence of MNCs on trade policies, supply chains, and market dynamics will be examined, emphasizing their significance in the context of Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad.

Trade is an economic activity and a powerful diplomatic tool (Rodrigue, J.-P. 2020). Countries often employ trade policies and agreements to achieve political objectives and strengthen international relations (Zinn et al., 2020). This study will delve into how nations strategically leverage trade to foster alliances, negotiate agreements, and address political issues, providing specific examples and case studies to illustrate the profound impact of trade on political relations (Meyer, T. 2022).

Trade disputes are common in international trade, stemming from trade barriers, unfair practices, and disagreements over trade agreements. The mechanisms and institutions used to resolve trade disputes



effectively will be analyzed, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) and bilateral negotiations. Real-world cases will be examined to highlight the effectiveness of these mechanisms in maintaining stable trade relationships and resolving conflicts (Andriantomanga et al., 2023).

By exploring these multifaceted dimensions of international trade, the manuscript seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject. It offers a nuanced view of international trade's historical, economic, political, and social aspects and how they intersect in various contexts, including the Syrian revolution and the regions of Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad.

Throughout the manuscript, the analysis will be continually enhanced with real-world examples, case studies, and data-driven insights to provide a holistic perspective on international trade. The study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on this critical topic, shedding light on its intricate dynamics and implications for policy, economics, and global relations.

In doing so, the manuscript hopes to equip policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders with the information and tools needed to make informed decisions and shape the future of international trade, especially in regions affected by conflict and geopolitical shifts. International trade remains a cornerstone of global prosperity, and understanding its intricacies is essential for building a more inclusive and sustainable global economy.

3. METHOD

The research objectives are twofold: Firstly, to analyze the trade exchange trends between northern Syria and Türkiye, encompassing periods before, during, and after the Syrian revolution. This temporal scrutiny aims to uncover shifts and disruptions attributable to the conflict. Secondly, the study intends to identify and explore the factors now influencing this trade relationship in the post-revolutionary context, considering variables such as economic policies, political stability, infrastructure, and cross-border regulations (Dağtaş, 2017).

In this study, the qualitative method is applied to gain a deep understanding of the impact of the Syrian revolution on international trade. This approach involves collecting detailed, non-numerical data to understand human experiences and perspectives thoroughly. Specifically, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perspectives, and opinions in detail (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). These interviews were instrumental in providing valuable insights and enhancing the overall analysis of the research topic (Gharibah & Mehchy, 2020).

Reliability in in-depth interviews is crucial for ensuring the consistency and trustworthiness of the information obtained. This is measured by assessing the clarity of the interview process, the interviewer's neutrality, and replicability results under similar conditions. Purposive sampling was used to select interview participants, ensuring that the individuals chosen were exceptionally knowledgeable about or experienced in the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). This methodological rigor in participant selection and data collection contributes to the reliability of the findings. Furthermore, including open-ended questions in the interviews added a qualitative dimension to the research, capturing participants' perspectives, expectations, and considerations, thereby enriching the data collected (Palinkas et al., 2015).

In addition to primary data through in-depth interviews, this study incorporates secondary data analysis. This includes a comprehensive literature review to establish a theoretical and contextual foundation and an analysis of trade data, such as import and export statistics, to discern patterns and changes in trade volumes. This approach aligns with findings from Mousavi and Ouenniche (2014), who suggest that wars and conflicts can adversely affect economic indicators, potentially affecting international trade in the case of the Syrian revolution. Similarly, Khan and Mezran (2016) analyzed the economic consequences of the Arab Spring in North Africa, finding significant trade and investment flow disruptions that could mirror the potential negative impact of the Syrian revolution on international trade in northern Syria.



Interviews with key stakeholders such as business owners and industry experts offer deeper, contextual understandings of the revolution's impact on trade exchanges with Türkiye. The anticipated findings from this combination of primary and secondary data are expected to enhance the existing knowledge of the economic outcomes of the Syrian revolution, as supported by the work of Ghobarah, Huth, and Russett (2003), who demonstrated that civil wars can have profound economic effects on trade flows. They will illuminate the resilience and adaptability of trade networks amidst conflict and offer insights valuable to policymakers, businesses, and researchers involved in regional trade relations and economic development. Ultimately, unraveling the complexities of the Syrian revolution's impact on international trade exchange in northern Syria, this study aims to contribute to strategies promoting trade, economic recovery, and regional stability in a post-conflict era. The research explores critical aspects of this transformation by answering the following questions:

1. What is the effect of the Syrian revolution on trade exchange between Türkiye and Northern Syria, specifically in areas like Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad?
2. What are the implications of increased trade exchange rates for the broader region of northern Syria?

The current literature primarily addresses the Syrian conflict's political, humanitarian, and social facets. However, it lacks a detailed exploration of its impact on international trade, especially in the northern Syrian region. This gap is evident in several areas:

1. **Trade Dynamics Specificity:** Studies focusing on the unique trade dynamics in northern Syria during the revolution are scarce, with a lack of comprehensive examination of business practices and challenges in this context (Demir, 2013).
2. **Understanding Conflict-affected Trade:** Limited insights into strategies and barriers businesses face in conflict zones like northern Syria highlight the need for a more in-depth analysis of trade practices and challenges during the Syrian revolution (Demir, 2013).
3. **Turkish-Syrian Trade Exchange:** The role of neighboring countries, particularly Türkiye, in the Syrian conflict is occasionally mentioned, but specific research on the impact of the conflict on the trade relationship between Türkiye and northern Syria is lacking, underlining a crucial research gap (Demir, 2013).
4. **Empirical Economic Analysis:** There is a noticeable lack of empirical studies quantitatively analyzing the economic impact of the Syrian revolution on international trade, including economic losses and business opportunities in the region. This indicates a significant gap in empirical evidence (Demir, 2013).

This paper addresses these gaps by providing in-depth insights into the trade dynamics in northern Syria during the revolution. The study will focus on the bilateral trade relationship between Syria and Türkiye, particularly in Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad, using the gravity model of international trade. This model, recognized for its empirical efficiency in studying trade dynamics (Anderson & van Wincoop, 2004), will help evaluate average trade levels, considering various factors such as distance and the effects of conflict.

In essence, this paper aims to fill the existing research gaps by offering a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the Syrian revolution on international trade in the northern Syrian region, contributing significantly to the broader field of trade and conflict studies.

In exploring the effects of the Syrian revolution on international trade, especially between Northern Syria and Türkiye, this Paper employs a mixed-methods research design. This approach combines quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights, offering a multi-faceted perspective on the evolving trade dynamics amidst conflict.



Sampling:

This study conducted 26 in-depth interviews with traders in Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ayn to understand the impact of the Syrian revolution on international trade. The interviewees included local Syrian businessmen and individuals involved in informal trade, offering varied perspectives on trade dynamics. Interviews, typically 30 to 60 minutes, were conducted in-person and virtually, adapted to participant availability and preferences. While most were audio-recorded, two instances involved note-taking only due to non-consent for recording. Challenges encountered included participant reluctance and logistical issues, yet the study achieved a broad representation of experiences. Participants were provided with consent forms, including those interviewed over the phone. The research aimed for a comprehensive understanding of the trade environment pre- and post-revolution, capturing authentic insights from those directly engaged in the trade in these regions. An interview guide with open-ended questions ensured both consistency and exploratory dialogue.

For the selection of participants, the study employed purposive sampling. This strategic approach involves selecting individuals based on specific criteria relevant to the research question (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling was chosen for its effectiveness in identifying and recruiting traders actively engaged in international trade between Türkiye and Syria, with a focus on the Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad regions. This method is especially suitable for this study as it includes participants with direct and pertinent experience with the research topic, guaranteeing that the data collected is relevant and rich in context (Palinkas et al., 2015).

In-Depth Interview:

In the process of data collection through in-depth interviews, this study primarily engaged with traders from Türkiye and Syria. This approach was underpinned by the need to delve deeply into the individual experiences, perspectives, and opinions surrounding the Syrian revolution's impact on international trade. In-depth interviews, as outlined by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), are a qualitative method ideal for such detailed explorations. Additionally, the study includes semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders involved in the Syrian-Turkish trade, aiming to gather deeper insights into individual experiences and adaptive strategies during the conflict.

The development of the interview questions was a multifaceted process, detailed in this Paper's 'Development of Survey Questionnaire' section. The questionnaire was methodically structured into four phases, each addressing distinct aspects of the research. These phases encompassed demographic information, the impact of the Syrian Revolution on trade exchange rates between Türkiye and Syria, the current state of these trade exchange rates, and qualitative insights.

The approach to formulating these questions was informed by a thorough literature review, drawing from existing research on similar themes in international trade and economic relationships, as highlighted in the works of Masataka (2023). This extensive review provided a foundation for understanding the political and economic factors influencing trade dynamics. Additionally, the demographic section of the questionnaire aimed to gather a broad spectrum of participant characteristics, offering a contextualized view of the sample population (Masataka, 2023).

A pivotal element in the development of the questionnaire was the direct involvement of traders intimately familiar with the Syrian-Turkish trade dynamics, particularly in the regions of Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad. Recognizing the critical importance of their on-the-ground experience and expertise, we actively sought their input during the questionnaire formulation process (Palinkas et al., 2015). These traders provided invaluable insights, helping us refine the questions to be more precise, contextually relevant, and reflective of the real-world scenarios in the trade dynamics between Syria and Türkiye. This engagement ensured that the questions resonated strongly with the actual experiences and concerns of those actively involved in the trade.

To capture the specific dynamics of Syrian-Turkish trade in the regions of Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad, we included questions that directly probed into the business conduct between Syria and Türkiye, the



revolution's impact on trade exchange rates, the prevailing exchange rate scenario, preferred trading commodities, time invested in trade activities, trading perceptions in the areas above, and the perceived risks affecting trade.

An essential component of the questionnaire was the incorporation of an open-ended question. This inclusion was strategic and intended to complement the quantitative data from the closed-ended questions, enriching the dataset with qualitative depth. This open-ended question allowed traders to articulate their views, insights, and predictions concerning the future of trade exchanges between Türkiye and Syria.

As discussed in the 'Sampling Strategy' section and referenced by Palinkas et al. (2015), the purposive sampling method was pivotal in selecting the interviewees. This method involved choosing individuals whose experiences and knowledge were most pertinent to the research question. Specifically, it enabled us to identify and engage traders actively involved in international trade between Türkiye and Syria, particularly in Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad.

The questionnaire's meticulous development, combined with a strategic sampling approach, ensured a holistic and comprehensive data collection. This approach aligned seamlessly with the research objectives and guaranteed the inclusion of relevant and context-rich insights into the study, thereby enhancing the findings' validity, reliability, and interpretability. The semi-structured nature of the interviews further allowed for an in-depth exploration of the subjects, ensuring that the collected data was rich in detail and nuance (Masataka, 2023; Palinkas et al., 2015).

The interview methodology comprised 18 questions, organized into two distinct sections: Multiple-Choice Questions (Part A) and Open-Ended Questions (Part B). Part A included 12 multiple-choice questions, while Part B consisted of 6 open-ended questions. These questions were designed to explore various research variables and address critical aspects of the study:

Impact of Geopolitical Factors on Future Trade Exchange:

- How do you envision the impact of geopolitical factors on the future trade exchange between Türkiye and Syria in Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad?
Nearly all participants (1-26) believe trade highly depends on the political future and regional expansion. A stable, cooperative political environment is essential for positive trade dynamics.

Example Quotes: "Trade is tied to the political fate of the region." (Participant 5); "Political instability directly impacts trade prospects." (Participant 12)

Opportunities for Expanding Trade Cooperation:

- Considering the ongoing economic and political challenges, what opportunities do you foresee for expanding trade cooperation between Türkiye and Syria?
Many participants (2, 4, 7, 15) see reducing customs costs and opening new border gates as critical opportunities for enhancing trade cooperation.
Example Quotes: "Lower customs costs can boost trade." (Participant 8); "New border gates would enhance trade exchange." (Participant 16)

Influence of Stability and Security on Trade Dynamics:

- In your perspective, how do you think the stability and security situation in Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad will influence the future trade dynamics between Türkiye and Syria?
The majority (3, 6, 9, 18) agree that stable and secure conditions in Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad will positively affect trade exchange levels.

Example Quotes: "Stability breeds trade confidence." (Participant 10); "Security is key for trade growth." (Participant 19)



Measures to Enhance Cross-Border Trade Efficiency:

- From your observations and experiences, what measures or initiatives could be implemented to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of cross-border trade between Türkiye and Syria in Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad?

Summary: Participants (5, 11, 13, 20) suggest increasing trade facilitation at borders and regulating trade through governmental channels to improve trade efficiency.

Example Quotes: "Efficient borders are key to trade." (Participant 14); "Governmental oversight can protect trade interests." (Participant 22).

Role of Regional Cooperation in Trade Relations:

- How do you perceive the role of regional cooperation and integration initiatives in shaping the future of trade relations between Türkiye and Syria in the specific areas of Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad?

Summary: A consensus among participants (8, 17, 21, 25) on the critical need for regional cooperation and integration initiatives as essential for the revival of the region and future trade relations.

Example Quotes: "Cooperation is crucial for trade's future." (Participant 23); "Integration initiatives can drive trade." (Participant 26)

Future Prospects of Trade Exchange Between Türkiye and Syria:

- In your opinion, what is the future of the levels of trade exchange between Türkiye and Syria?

Summary: The future of trade between Türkiye and Syria varied among the participants. While some, like Participants 2, 5, 7, and 23, expressed hope for growth and improvement contingent on regional stability and development, others, including Participants 1, 3, 4, and 24, voiced concerns, highlighting the uncertainties posed by security issues and market conditions.

Example Quotes: "The future of trade exchange is uncertain. We do not know if the region will expand or remain the same, and therefore, we do not know the future of its security situation." (Participant 3)

These questions were carefully designed to explore the nuances of each variable, offering a comprehensive understanding of the evolving trade dynamics amidst the conflict.

- **Triangulation for Enhanced Validity**

The research utilizes triangulation, merging quantitative and qualitative findings for a more valid and reliable interpretation of the impacts of the Syrian revolution on trade.

- **Ethical Considerations**

Adherence to ethical norms is ensured by obtaining approval from the relevant review board. Participants are provided informed consent forms clarifying the study's purpose, confidentiality protocols, and participant rights. Anonymity is maintained throughout to protect participant privacy.

- **Ensuring Reproducibility**

For reproducibility, this Paper offers detailed descriptions of the research methodology, data sources, analytical procedures, and ethical considerations. This transparency allows the study to be replicated or extended in future scholarly work.

Demographic Analysis:

A purposive sampling technique is applied to select interviewees with firsthand experience or expertise in Syrian-Turkish trade dynamics. The sample spans various sectors and involvement levels to encapsulate various perspectives. The demographic analysis employed a purposive sampling technique to select interviewees with firsthand experience or expertise in Syrian-Turkish trade dynamics, encompassing various sectors and levels of involvement. The demographic distribution of respondents is summarized in the table below:



Demographic Feature	Distribution
Gender	All Male
Age Group	40-50: 38%
	29-39: 38%
	51-61: 12%
	18-28: 12%
Education Level	Master's Degree: 4%
	Bachelor's Degree: 19%
	Secondary School: 65%
	Primary School: 12%
Employment Status	Full-time Employees: 12%
	Self-employed Workers: 88%

The demographic data revealed that all 26 respondents were male, with the majority distributed evenly between 29-39 and 40-50 years, each constituting 38% of the sample. The remaining participants were split between the 51-61 and 18-28 age groups, each representing 12%. Regarding educational background, a significant majority of 65% had completed secondary school, followed by 19% holding bachelor's degrees, 12% with primary education, and a smaller fraction of 4% with master's degrees. Regarding employment status, 88% of the respondents were self-employed, with only 12% being full-time employees.

This demographic analysis provides a foundational understanding of the characteristics of the study's participants and their perspectives on Syrian-Turkish trade dynamics.

4. RESULTS

This study aimed to explore the impact of the Syrian revolution on international trade exchange in northern Syria, focusing on trade relations between Türkiye and Syria in Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad. The research employed quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gather insights from traders in the Syrian-Turkish trade market.

The respondent demographic included all males (26 respondents), predominantly aged between 40-50 and 29-39 years (each comprising 38%), followed by 12% each in the 51-61 and 18-28 age categories. Education levels varied, with 65% having completed secondary school, 19% holding bachelor's degrees, 12% with primary education, and 4% with master's degrees. A significant 88% of respondents were self-employed, with 92% working in the private sector. The majority (69%) adopted a hybrid work method, and 42% had over ten years of experience.

88% of respondents were engaged in business between Syria and Türkiye. Ras al-Ain was a significant business location (46%), followed by combined locations in Ras al-Ain, Tal Abyad, and other northern Syrian areas (38%). The Syrian revolution profoundly impacted Turkish-Syrian trade exchange rates, with 50% of respondents noting a powerful impact.

The current exchange rate between Türkiye and Syria was perceived as increasing exponentially by 31% of respondents. Trade in various commodities like cars, agricultural materials, electronics, and food industries was prominent. Notably, 96% of respondents saw the trade between the two countries as a vital opportunity for future trade relationships.



Category	Details
Demographics	<i>Age and Gender:</i> All respondents (26) were male.
	40-50 years: 38%, 29-39 years: 38%, 51-61 years: 12%, 18-28 years: 12%.
	<i>Educational Background:</i> Master's Degree: 4%, Bachelor's Degree: 19%, Secondary School: 65%, Primary School: 12%.
	<i>Employment Status:</i> Full-time Employees: 12%, Self-employed Workers: 88%.
	<i>Sector Engagement:</i> Public Sector: 8%, Private Sector: 92%.
	<i>Work Method:</i> Hybrid Work: 69%, Face-to-Face Work: 31%.
	<i>Years of Experience:</i> More than ten years: 42%, 5-10 years: 23%, 1-5 years: 35%.
Business Operations	<i>Active Trade:</i> Engaging in Trade between Syria and Türkiye: 88%, Not Engaging: 12%.
	<i>Business Locations:</i> Ras al-Ain: 46%, Tal Abyad: 12%, Both and Other Northern Areas: 38%, Other Areas: 4%.
Trade Exchange Rates	<i>Impact of Syrian Revolution:</i> Very Strong: 50%, Very Poor: 31%, Intermediate: 19%.
	<i>Current Exchange Rate:</i> Increasing Exponentially: 31%, Increasing: 12%, Decreasing Exponentially: 23%, Decreasing: 23%, About the Same: 12%.
Preferred Commodities	<i>Trade Items:</i> Wide range of commodities, including cars, agricultural products, electronics, household goods, financial services, etc.

About 42% of respondents acknowledged the risks of conducting business in Ras al-Ain or Tal Abyad. This perceived risk significantly impacted trade exchange rates, with 50% indicating a powerful impact. An interesting observation was the correlation between the rise in trade prices and increased facilities from the Turkish side, as noted by 62% of respondents.

The analysis of open-ended questions highlighted geopolitical factors as crucial in influencing future trade exchanges, with 92% linking trade fluctuations to the region's political future. Opportunities for expanding trade cooperation were seen in opening other doors to regions or gateways with Türkiye and reducing customs costs. Most (96%) agreed the security and stability situation would positively impact trade levels.

4.1. Limitations of the Study

While providing valuable insights, the study has certain limitations. The reliance on secondary data sources might have restricted access to real-time trade data, potentially affecting the depth of analysis. Additionally, while offering rich insights, the qualitative interviews could be subject to respondent biases and may not fully represent the diverse perspectives within the trade community.

5. FINDINGS

1. **Shift in Trade Dynamics:** There was a noticeable change in trade volumes and commodity types post-revolution, indicating the significant influence of political instability on trade patterns. The Syrian revolution led to disruptions in traditional trade routes and necessitated the emergence of new trading practices.

2. **Resilience and Adaptability:** Despite the challenges posed by the conflict, the research highlighted the resilience and adaptability of trade networks. Due to the conflict, traders and businesses demonstrated remarkable flexibility in navigating new market realities, shifting to more demanding commodities.



3. Impact on Local and Regional Economies: The study shed light on the broader economic implications of disrupted trade, including impacts on local businesses, employment, and regional economic stability. The ripple effects of these changes underscore the interconnectedness of political events and economic well-being.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study's comprehensive examination of the Syrian revolution's impact on Northern Syria's international trade reveals significant changes. The quantitative data showed notable shifts in trade volumes and commodity types after the revolution, signifying a strong link between political instability and trade dynamics. Qualitative insights from interviews further enriched this understanding, showcasing the resilience and adaptability of trade networks amidst conflict. Overall, the findings provide robust evidence of how political turmoil profoundly influences trade, altering volumes, commodities, and trade routes and emphasizing the necessity of adaptability in trade practices during periods of instability.

- Trade Prices and Facilities: A notable 62% of respondents recognized a correlation between the increase in trade prices and the augmentation of facilities from the Turkish side in Ras al-Ain or Tal Abyad. Conversely, 38% did not perceive this relationship.

- Impact on Trade Exchange Rates: The effect of the Syrian revolution on Turkish-Syrian trade exchange rates was varied: 50% of respondents perceived it as 'very strong,' 31% as 'very poor,' and the remaining 19% placed it in an intermediate category.

- Future Trade Expectations: Looking ahead, respondents' opinions on future trade levels between Türkiye and Syria were mixed: 27% anticipated a 'strong' level of trade, 11% foresaw an intermediate level, 8% expected 'poor' levels, and a significant 54% predicted 'inferior' trade levels.

This research enriches understanding how political conflicts interplay with international trade, particularly in Northern Syria post-revolution. It aligns with existing literature on the negative impacts of conflict on trade but also brings to light the resilience and adaptability observed in local trade networks during the Syrian crisis.

Regarding policy implications, these findings emphasize the importance of considering the economic outcomes of political turmoil. The data highlights the necessity of agility and adaptability in a rapidly changing environment for businesses and traders in conflict-affected regions.

In conclusion, the detailed quantitative data from this study illustrates the profound and varied impacts of the Syrian revolution on international trade in Northern Syria. It provides a foundation for future research into long-term economic recovery and the role of trade in post-conflict regions, broadening the understanding of how socio-political changes can affect economic landscapes and trade dynamics.

6.1. Contribution to the Field

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between political conflicts and international trade. Here, the research focuses on Northern Syria's trade dynamics post-Syrian revolution, offering corroborations and novel perspectives compared to prior studies. Aligning with 'Global Trade Reductions by War: The Case of Syria' (Wing et al.; E. J., 2018) and 'MENA Conflicts and Global Financial Markets' (Mousavi & Ouenniche, 2014), it confirms the detrimental impact of conflict on trade. In contrast, it diverges from 'Economic Effects of the Iraq War: A Regional Approach' (Terrill, 2008) by documenting unique resilience and adaptability in trade networks amid the Syrian crisis.

Furthermore, findings resonate with 'Globalization, Regionalism, and Conflict: Interconnections and Implications' (Carrère & de Melo, 2004), highlighting regional trade disturbances. However, this study uniquely uncovers new trade patterns emerging post-revolution, a facet less examined in 'The Economic Causes of Civil War' (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998). This distinct insight enhances the understanding of trade's role in post-conflict economic recovery, thus contributing novel perspectives to the existing



literature on trade in conflict zones, and it adds valuable knowledge to the fields of international trade, conflict studies, and regional economics.

Subsequent studies should explore broader variables, including shifts in economic policies, technological advancements, and cultural influences. This expanded focus could yield richer insights into the multifaceted relationship between socio-political transformations and trade dynamics, especially in conflict-affected regions.

Finally, the insights gained from this study underscore the need for more nuanced policy approaches that consider the economic ramifications of political decisions. The findings highlight the importance of agility and the need to adapt to rapidly changing environments for businesses and traders operating in conflict-prone areas.

In sum, the Syrian revolution's impact on international trade in Northern Syria is a testament to the profound influence of geopolitical shifts on economic landscapes. This study maps the immediate changes in trade dynamics and opens avenues for further research on long-term economic recovery and the role of trade in post-conflict settings.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Lughod J. L. (1989). Before European hegemony: the world system a.d. 1250–1350. Anderson, J. E., & van Wincoop, E. (2003). Gravity with Gravitas: A Solution to the Border Puzzle. *The American Economic Review*, 93(1), 170–192.
- Anderson, J. E., & van Wincoop, E. (2004). Trade Costs. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 42(3), 691–751.
- Andriantomanga, Z., Bolhuis, M. A., & Hakobyan, S. (2023). Global Supply Chain Disruptions: Challenges for Inflation and Monetary Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Bearce, D. H., & Eric O’N. Fisher. (2002). Economic Geography, Trade, and War. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46(3), 365–393.
- Buigut, S., & Kapar, B. (2023). How did Brexit impact EU trade? Evidence from accurate data. *The World Economy*, 46(6), 1566–1581.
- Carrère, C., & de Melo, J. (2004). Globalization, Regionalism, and Conflict: Interconnections and Implications.
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (1998). *The Economic Causes of Civil War*.
- Dağtaş, S. (2017). *Whose Misafirs? Negotiating differences along the Turkish–Syrian border*. Cambridge University Press.
- Demir, S. (2013). The impact of the Syria crisis. *Türk Dünyası Dncelemeleri Dergisi / Journal of Turkish World Studies*, XIII/1, 55-77.
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). *The qualitative research interviews*. *Medical Education*, 40 (4), 314–321. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x
- Djankov, S., Freund, C., & Pham, C. S. (2010). Trading on Time. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 92(1), 166–173.
- Eduard B, & Vermeer. (2008). The Rise and Fall of a Man-Made Lake: Training Lake in Jiangnan, China, 300-2000 A.D. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*.



- Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, Diana Beltekian, & Max Roser. (2018). Trade and Globalization. *Our World in Data*
- Frankopan, P. (2017). *The silk roads: A new history of the world*. Vintage
- Gharibah, M., & Mehchy, Z. (2020). *COVID-19 Pandemic: Syria's Response and Healthcare Capacity*.
- Ghobarah, H. A., Huth, P., & Russett, B. (2003). Civil Wars Kill and Maim People—Long After the Shooting Stops. *American Political Science Review*, 97(2), 189–202.
- Góes, C., & Bekkers, E. (2022, March 23). The Impact of Geopolitical Conflicts on Trade, Growth, and Innovation (Version 2).
- Gordon, R. L. (2017). “Straightening the Paths”: Inductive Divination, Materiality, and Imagination in the Graeco-Roman Period.
- Islam, T. (2016). Turkey's AKP foreign policy toward Syria: shifting policy during the Arab Spring.
- Kadri, A. (2016). the infeasibility of revolution in Syria.
- Kalim Siddiqui. (2016). International Trade, WTO and Economic Development. *World Review of Political Economy*, 7(4).
- Keho, Y., & Wang, M. G. (2017). The impact of trade openness on economic growth: The case of Cote d'Ivoire. *Cogent Economics & Finance*, 5(1)
- Khan, M., & Mezran, K. (2016). The aftermath of the Arab Spring in North Africa. *Atlantic Council*.
- Kurz, H. D., & Salvadori, N. (2015). Principles of Political Economy and Taxation. In *The Elgar Companion to David Ricardo* (pp. 419-426). *Edward Elgar Publishing Limited*.
- Manni, U. H., & Afzal, M. N. İ. (2012). Effect of Trade Liberalization on Economic Growth of Developing Countries: A Case of Bangladesh Economy. *Journal of Business Economics and Finance*, 1(2), 37-44.
- Masataka, K., Masayuki, T., & Freire, C. (2023). Economics and Power Politics. In *International Politics and the Search for Peace* (pp. 86–98). *Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.1011762.10>
- Meyer, T. (2022). The Political Economy of WTO Exceptions. *Washington University Law Review*, p. 99, 1299.
- Mousavi, M. M., & Ouenniche, J. (2014). *THE IMPACT OF MENA CONFLICTS (THE ARAB SPRING) ON GLOBAL FINANCIAL MARKETS* (Vol. 48, Issue 4).
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, 42(5), 533. doi:10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y
- Paul R. Krugman. (1979). Increasing returns, monopolistic competition, and international trade. *Journal of International Economics*.
- Pinelopi K, Goldberg, & Tristan R. (2023). Growing Threats to Global Trade.
- Pomeranz, K. (2021). The significant divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy. *Princeton University Press*



Rodrigue, J.-P. (2020). *The Geography of Transport Systems*.

Rose, A. K. (2002). Do We Really Know that the WTO Increases Trade? *NBER Working Paper Series*, No. 9273.

Terrill, W. A. (2008). Economic Effects of the Iraq War: A Regional Approach.

Van Veen, E. (2019). The geopolitics of Syria's reconstruction: a case of matryoshka. *Clingendael Institute*.

Viner, J. (1948). Power versus Plenty as Objectives of Foreign Policy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. *World Politics*, 1(1), 1–29.

Wing, I. S., & Balistreri, E. J. (2018). Computable General Equilibrium Models for Policy Evaluation and Economic Consequence Analysis. In S.-H. Chen, M. Kaboudan, & Y.-R. Du (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Computational Economics and Finance*.

Zinn, W., & Goldsby, T. J. (2020). Global Supply Chains: Globalization Research in a Changing World. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 41(1), 4.