

# The Turkish geopolitical role in the Syrian crisis: A study in political geography.

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**Abstract:** *The present study tackles the geopolitical characteristics of the state of Turkey. The ability of Turkey to benefit from the natural and human characteristics in favor of its strategy towards the countries of the region in order to have an effective role at all levels is a topic that is given a great deal of discussion in the present study. The Syrian crisis reveals many aspects of the Turkish strategy in the region.*

**Keywords.** *Politics, Crisis, Geopolitics, Strategy, Relationships.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION.

With the coming of the Justice and Development Party to power in Turkey in 2002 as the result of legislative elections held on November 11, 2002, the Turkish strategy has become concerned with the regional and global events and developments; global economic blocs or international trade. The attention of the Turkish decision-makers is drawn to the geopolitical characteristics that Turkey contains in terms of water, industrial and agricultural resources, and even human capacity. The population of Turkey has approached the size that qualifies it to have large human forces that can be invested in various sectors to give Turkey political weight at the regional and global levels. The attempt in the present study is to identify the natural and human resources of Turkey and the Turkish strategic role towards the Syrian crisis. The present study is also an attempt to tackle the way the Turkish government dealt with the Syrian refugees. For this purpose, the present study assumes that Turkey has an important geopolitical position through which it can deal with the countries of the region. Turkey deals with the Syrian crisis in two ways; the first way is indirect, and the second way is direct. Turkey welcomed the Syrian refugees during 2011 and provided them with the necessary support believing that the Assad regime collapses easily. But that regime could not be defeated after a 5 year war. Turkey turned towards establishing camps for the Syrian refugees first and to remove the danger of the domination of the Kurds on the borders. The analytical approach is one of the important research methods in political geography. Describing the phenomenon requires analyzing the content. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to track the Turkish strategy towards the Syrian crisis through the positions taken by Turkey towards this crisis by direct and indirect interventions.

## II. THE LIMITS.

The spatial limit; The nature of the geographical location of Turkey in the west of the Asian continent in the form of a rectangle between the two latitudes (36-42) north of the equator and between the two longitude (26 - 44) to the east gives Turkey a geopolitical importance, (Map 1).

The temporal limit; The academic year (2019).

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Map (1) The location of Turkey in the world.

Source: The researcher relying on Fadhil Abdulqadir Ahmed, the struggle of the two great powers in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, a PhD dissertation, Faculty of Arts, University of Baghdad, 1989, p. 16.

Section one.

### **Geopolitical characteristics of Turkey.**

The geopolitical characteristics are effective factors that give the state the dominance over the region. Countries having a valuable geographical and suitable location for industry and agriculture are able to achieve self-sufficiency, which gives them complete freedom in their policy that makes them not submit to the policy of neighboring countries that may depend on conducting exchanging trade. Large population size and ideal quality enable the state to invest these manpower to dominate all areas.

Turkey has many of these characteristics, including:

Natural properties.

#### **1. Geographical location.**

As for the astronomical location, Turkey is located between the latitude 36-42 north, and longitude 26-44 east, (Map (1)). This places Turkey in the northern temperate region in addition to other factors influencing the climate of this region <sup>i</sup>.

Turkey has three coasts extending from the Black Sea in the north, with a length of 1200 km, the Mediterranean from the south, with a length of (1150 km), the Sea of Marmara, and the Aegean Sea with a length of (1250 km)<sup>ii</sup>.

Turkey has control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits with a length of (9632 km) and a width of (3704 km) respectively. The Dardanelles Strait connects the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara has a length of (75932 km) and a width of (7408 km). Turkey has an important geographical location in which it has become a bridge linking the Asian continent with important navigational characteristics. Warm and open seas give Turkey importance in the field of international and regional maritime strategy making it a geopolitical sensitive region and strategically important in the global political perspective as it represents one of the vital regions of the world that enables it to have Influential policy in the global sphere at the regional and international levels<sup>iii</sup>.

The location of Turkey places it in direct contact in the south with Iraq and Syria with a 1208 km length of borders; 331 km with Iraq and 877 km with Syria respectively. 454 km is the length of its borders with Iran in the east and southeast. Armenia and Georgia surround Turkey from the northeast with a 610 km length of borders. From the west, Greece and Bulgaria have 212 km and 269 km length of borders with Turkey respectively. These countries are the immediate Turkish neighbors. There are other countries overlooking the Black Sea; Romania, Ukraine, and Russia. The sea is closed and has no access to global seas except by passing through the Turkish lands via Bosphorus and Dardanelles<sup>iv</sup>.

The strategic central location of Turkey dominates the transit areas and the battlefields of influence for the land and maritime forces between the East-West and North-South lines. In Turkey, there are the points that connect the central Eurasian land masses with the warm seas and Africa on the North-South line through two important land crossing points; the Balkans and the Caucasus in addition to the sea crossing points; straits. The regions linking Eurasia with the Middle East and Caspian regions are the center of geo-economic resources. In the east-west direction, the Anatolia Peninsula is considered the most important link in the strategic peninsula chain that encircles the Eurasian continent. The importance of Turkey's strategic location is that it constitutes a land bridge between Asia, Europe, and Africa. The Bosphorus Strait and the Dardanelles are the key to the Black sea and the only outlet. What increases the importance of Turkey's strategic location is its adjacency to the Mediterranean Sea from the south. It is the first transportation bridge for the West. This location makes Turkey as a link between the three richest regions in the world; the Caucasus region, the Russian oil fields, and the Middle East<sup>v</sup>.

It also overlooks the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Aegean Sea, in addition to its control over the Marmara Sea, the Bosphorus Straits, and the Dardanelles. Controlling the seas means controlling the land bases whose strategic locations affecting Maritime transportation and the protected bases by coastal forms from the depth of its terrestrial background<sup>vi</sup>.

Hence, Turkey has an important geographical location and is a fulcrum in the region. It is the passage for international trade between Asia and Europe. Its location qualifies it to seize and invest the natural resources that it possesses in the best way. Turkey has the most important water resource in the region. It makes use of this resource to impose its dominance.

## **2. The area.**

The area of the state and its size are among the criteria of strength. This is an important factor determining the political and economic standing of the state. The different political units in the area increase the importance of studying this factor and the extent of its internal and external impacts. Vast areas can include greater amounts of resources and absorb a greater number of the population<sup>vii</sup>. Turkey has an area of 780580 square kilometers; 3%; 23.885 square kilometers of Turkey's area is in the continent of Europe. The European part of Turkey is called the Thrace. Whereas, the largest part of Turkey is known as Anatolia. It is in the continent of Asia. Its area is 755,567 Square km<sup>viii</sup>. This area gives Turkey the freedom in the distribution of the population and facilities, especially military ones. It also gives preference to exploit the largest number of soil, minerals, and natural plants.

## **3. Climate.**

Climate is one of the most important factors affecting the state's strength and its political conditions because it affects the human effort and thus what it attains to its progress and sophistication. Climate leads to a strong correlation between parts of the state and its cohesion. But, in the case of climate diversity, it leads to diversity in agricultural production. The study area is between the two latitudes (36-42 °) to the north. It is in the warm temperate region except its northern part overlooking the Black Sea which is within the transitional zone between the temperate and warm region and the cold temperate zone. Thus, there is diversity in climatic regions leading to a spatial variation in the rain, which has positive effects on agricultural diversity. This enables the region to achieve a policy of self-sufficiency and then to form a support for the economic situation. Climate has positive effects on the activity of the population and their cultural development and the progress of the

state<sup>ix</sup>. Climate provides Turkey with the perfect atmosphere and conditions for growing many crops of strategic and economic importance. Many countries in the region depend on such products, especially since Turkey is a market for most of the Middle East countries.

#### 4. Water resources.

Water is one of the sources of threat to the regional system due to competition and conflict over water resources. It can turn into a tool for internal rivalries even between countries in the region, especially those suffering from internal tensions or civil wars<sup>x</sup>. Turkey is the only country that combines military power and water abundance resulting in complete domination over the water of the Tigris and Euphrates. Turkey constructed dams and established projects damaging the interests of Syria and Iraq sharing the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Turkey used water to control and pressure its neighbors. This strategy is similar to what the United States did when it took advantage of funding establishing the high dam on the Nile to put pressure on Egypt by funding several projects in Ethiopia<sup>xi</sup>. The amount of water resources in Turkey is about 518 km<sup>3</sup> annually. Surface water is about 185 km<sup>3</sup> annually and groundwater constitutes 253 km<sup>3</sup> annually. 80 km<sup>3</sup> annually is lost in evaporation. Thus, The amount of available water is estimated at 438 km<sup>3</sup> annually, which exceeds its annual need estimated at 95 billion m<sup>3</sup><sup>xii</sup>. Turkey aspires to exchange this water for Arab oil. The Turks attempt to turn Turkey into a water state as opposed to the term of an oil state. The former Turkish President Süleyman Demirel declared it as he possesses Arabs oil and produce it as a national wealth of their own. Turkey considers the water of the Tigris and Euphrates a wealth for sale to those who pay<sup>xiii</sup>.

This resource enables Turkey to be a political pressure card to impose its policy on both Iraq and Syria by controlling the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, especially as it has worked on the establishment of several control and storage projects that would increase the process of controlling the resources of the rivers.

#### Human characteristics.

The population structure is one of the human characteristics affecting the internal and external strength and behavior of the state because most of the political and economic problems faced by the countries of the world in present time are originally due to the role of human factors<sup>xiv</sup>. Population growth is defined as the change taking place in The number of the population increases or decreases as a result of the natural increase; the difference between births and deaths, or the abnormal increase caused by the migration factor<sup>xv</sup>. Turkey has the advantage of increasing the population size that reached in 2011 to 74,724,269 million people. In 2017, the number increased to reach 80,810,525 million people. This increase has given Turkey an advantage in terms of increasing the workforce in all economic activities as well as in the military field to achieve internal security and stability.

Table (2) The numerical growth of the Turkish population from (2000- 2017).

Years	Number of populations	Increase or decrease
2011	74,724,269	+1.36
2012	75,627,384	+1.21
2013	76,667,864	+1.38
2014	77,695,904	+1.34
2015	78,741,053	+1.35
2016	79,814,871	+1.36
2017	80,810,525	+1.25

Source; Turkish statistics institute, official statistics, population and statistical demography, the growth of population of Turkey from 2000- 2017, Anqara, 2017.

The distribution of the population according to age groups is considered one of the most important population data as it is related to economic activity, population movement, employment, strength or weakness of society, and the ability to provide a number of residents to perform social and military services<sup>xvi</sup>.

Table (3) shows the age groups of Turkish society. The group of young people (0-14 years) recorded the lowest rate during 1935 as it amounted to (6.6 million people). Whereas, in recent years, it recorded a higher rate of (18.9 million people). In 2016, this increase is due to an improvement in living conditions and the development of health care. The middle category (15-64 years) recorded its lowest rate during 1935 at a rate of (8,8 million people). This is due to the decline in health care and wars. The highest rate for this category is in 2016 at a rate of (54,2 million people). The elderly group (65 years and over) recorded its lowest rate during the year 1935 at a rate of (0.628 million people). The highest rate for this category is during 2016 at a rate of (6.7 million people). This increase during this year is due to an improvement Standard of living and health care for this group.

Table (3) Age structure and percentage of population groups in Turkey from 1935-2016.

Years	Number of population/ million	0-14 years/ million	Percentage	15- 64 years/ million	Percentage	65- over/ million	Percentage
1935	16.1	6.6	41.2	8.8	54.4	0.628	3.9
1960	27.7	11.4	41.2	15.3	55.1	1	3.5
1970	35.6	14.9	41.8	19.1	53.8	1.6	4.4
1980	44.7	17.5	39	25.1	55.9	2.1	4.7
1990	56.5	19.7	35	34.2	60.7	2.4	3.4
2000	67.8	20.1	29.8	43.7	64.5	4	5.7
2010	73.7	18.9	25.6	49.5	67.2	5.3	7.2
2011	74.7	18.9	25.3	50.3	67.4	5.5	7.3
2012	75.6	18.8	24.9	51.1	67.6	5.7	7.8
2013	76.7	18.8	24.6	51.9	67.7	5.9	7.7
2014	77.7	18.9	24.3	52.6	67.8	6.2	8.0
2015	78.7	18.9	24.0	53.5	67.8	6.5	8.2
2016	79.8	18.9	23.7	54.2	68	6.7	8.3

Source; Turkish statistics institute, official statistics, population and statistical demography, the growth of population of Turkey from 1935- 2016, Anqara, 2017.

Turkish society is a young society in which the numbers of the middle class are high. This group, which is the basis of state building, is responsible for the first and third categories. Accordingly, the building and strength of the state is based on the extent of the youth of its population and the extent of their ability to give in the economic labor force as well as in the military force.

#### **Economic characteristics.**

The factors contributing to the progress and development of countries at the regional and international levels are that the population that engage in actual economic activity that would elevate it and place it at the forefront of productive and developed countries. The more people working in different economic sectors, the more the country has a correct economic structure. Table (4) shows the percentage of exports for the period (2000-2016) that has recorded a total of (1195.2). Whereas,

the highest percentage of exports is in 2015 at a rate of (143.8). The lowest percentage of exports is in 2000 at a rate of (27.7). Imports recorded a total of (1884.3). The highest rate of imports is in 2013 at a rate of (251.6). The lowest rate of imports is in 2000 at a rate of (54.5). This indicates the negative balance of trade in which imports outperformed exports. Despite this, Turkey has exports of great economic importance that make it an economic power affecting in the region as well as affecting the global economy.

Table (4) The percentages of the Turkish exports and imports from 2000- 2016.

Years	Exports	imports	Total	Trade scale	The percentage of exports to imports
2000	27,7	54,5	82,2	26,7	51,0
2004	63,2	97,5	160,7	34,3	64,8
2007	107,3	170	277,3	62,7	63,1
2010	113,9	185,5	299,4	71,6	61,4
2011	134,9	240,8	275,7	105,9	56
2012	152,5	236,5	289	84	64,5
2013	151,8	251,6	403,4	99,8	60,3
2014	157,6	242,1	399,7	84,5	65,1
2015	143,8	207,2	351	63,3	69,4
2016	142,5	198,6	341,1	56	71,8

Source; Turkish statistics institute, official statistics, population and statistical demography, indicators of the Turkish economy, Anqara, 2017.

Section two.

### **The Turkish role in the Syrian crisis.**

The Turkish strategy is basically concerned with the events and developments taking place in the world in terms of economic blocs with a clear weight in the overall context of international trade. Turkish decision makers are aware of Turkey's potential of water, agricultural and industrial resources, workforce, and employment opportunities. They also realize that the fields of employment of These capabilities are regional in nature rather than international, taking into account the religious, cultural and historical aspects. On this basis, Turkish foreign policy in the era of the Justice and Development Party is multidimensional<sup>xvii</sup>.

Once the Syrian crisis started in 2011, in which many armed factions announced their rejection of the Bashar Al-Assad regime, Turkey began waving the possibility of providing support and assistance to these factions, which were called the Free Syrian Army. Turkey announced the possibility of establishing refugee camps for Syria. Indeed, it has even refused aid from international humanitarian organizations, stipulating that these factions are able to end the Syrian regime and turn the page of Bashar Al-Assad in which Turkey, especially the Development and Justice Party led by Erdogan, sees an unwelcome person and hostile to the directions of Turkish politics.

In addition, after the coming of the Justice and Development Party to power in Turkey, it quickly set out in its priorities a method of zeroing problems, which is concerned with ending Turkey's problems with neighboring countries. The decision-

makers 'tried to reduce the rate of economic inflation, in which, this party has succeeded. With their success, they linked between Internal and external success because they see that there is some interaction between the internal and external environments as well as the transition from rigid politics and diplomatic latency to the permanent movement and communication with all important countries to Turkey.

First: Turkey's position in the Syrian crisis.

What happened in Syria since 3/15/2011; popular protests against Bashar al-Assad, and excessive violence by the Syrian regime towards the demonstrators put the Turkish policy in trouble; either sacrificing the ruling regime in Syria as it did in the Egyptian case when OrduGunn demanded that Mubarak step down and respond to the demands of people, the Libyan case, when OrduGan called for the necessity of stepping down Gaddafi immediately after committing crimes amounting to the genocide, or Turkey does not lose its political balance it gained through an effort it has made politically and diplomatically since the outbreak of the Arab revolutions, or the priority of Turkey's vital interests. By drawing a road map exiting the Syrian system from the crisis by responding to calls for political reform and openness to all sides in the political equation in Syria, whether Islamist opposition forces or political opposition symbols<sup>xviii</sup>.

Also, the Turkish position differed when protest broke out in the Syrian interior, as Ankara found itself obliged to determine its position in a clearer form and bears the consequences of any decision it takes towards Syria for several reasons. Perhaps, among the reasons are the many common files between the two sides; most notably the Kurdish issue and what repercussions the change in Syria can have on the Kurdish interior, as well as other internal reasons related to the goals of Turkish foreign policy and its desire to play an influential regional role towards the region's issues in general<sup>xix</sup>.

The conflict of interests and the various political options of the global and regional parties towards the Syrian crisis and the political tragedy in Egypt have led Turkey to be tied to resolving the regional crisis by using peaceful mechanisms. The strategic competition and the contrast of intellectual premises between the global and regional parties have deepened the crisis due to the escalation of the extremist approach, especially in Syria, which led Western powers to support Syrian opposition groups. Turkey's proposals to resolve the crisis could not persuade the international community. Turkey advised its Western allies to intervene militarily in Syria to bring down Assad. Despite the great risk involved in its internal security, OrduGunn saw this as a necessary option to stop the bloody massacres committed by Assad's forces<sup>xx</sup>.

After launching a horrific massacre in the city of Houla by the Syrian regime, near the countryside of Homs, Turkey announced its decision to expel all Syrian diplomats from Ankara on May 31, 2011. Then, Turkey began to move at all regional and international levels to address the Syrian crisis. On the international level, Turkey worked with Western countries to form an international alliance outside the Security Council and demanded the establishment of a security buffer zone on its borders with Syria. Turkey hosted the Friends of Syria International Conference in Istanbul in April 2012. Turkey recognized the Syrian National Council as a legitimate representative of the Syrian people and set up camps for refugees and internally displaced people. Turkey also threatened to provide weapons to the Syrian opposition to protect themselves against the regime in order to prevent any interference from the West or their allies because Turkey understands the danger of this Western intervention. In November 2015, Turkish fighters shot down Russian fighters on the Syrian-Turkish border<sup>xxi</sup>.

The Turkish position in the Syrian crisis is not neutral. It is based on a new strategy away from the one they drew in cooperation with neighboring countries during the previous period. Diplomacy moves in several directions, including:

1. The Turkish leadership's instructions and almost daily statements, as if Ankara is a guardian of the Syrian regime.
2. The Turkish head of state considered that Syria and the situation there are Turkish affairs, which raised Damascus to consider it an interference in Syrian affairs.

3. Attitudes of the Turkish anti-Syrian media through a fabricated campaign and the presentation of ideas and opinions against the Syrian regime.

4. The initiative to embrace the Syrian opposition, support it logistically, and establish a leadership council for it.

Turkey's tendencies to exploit the new regional changes by threat and military intervention in Syria.

Through these trends, a new strategy leading to severing ties, shifting from effective strategic planning in cooperation, and transcending the problems of the past to yellowing the problems and then multiplying them through interference in the internal affairs of countries is built. This strategy is rejected by the Ankara government in its new strategy; the strategic depth strategy to zero problems in the Regional and International levels<sup>xxii</sup>.

After the failure of Turkish diplomacy to persuade Bashar Al-Assad's regime to introduce sufficient reforms to absorb the growing public anger for more than six months of shuttle diplomacy, Turkey receives the Syrian opposition forces and provides them with political, media, security, and military facilities. The Turkish position continues to evolve to the point of calling for Assad to step down. Added to this is the clash with the Iranian and Russian interests in support of the Assad regime, which prolong the Syrian conflict and lead to complexity. The results are as follows:

1. The tension in Turkish relations with the actors in the Syrian crisis, notably the regimes of Syria, Iran, and Russia.

2. The decline of the Turkish role and its impact on the crisis as a result of the tense relations of Turkey, which reached the point of boycotting, especially with the Syrian regime, and its retreat with both Iran and Russia, which negatively affected Turkey's role in the region and regional cooperation between its countries.

3. The complexity of solving the Syrian crisis, the intertwining of its files, and the escalation of the regional and international agendas in it.

4. The trade exchange between Turkey and Syria decreased. In 2012, it is only about 600 million dollars<sup>xxiii</sup>.

Through the Syrian crisis, accusations have been made against Turkey of influencing the ideological dimension in its foreign strategy, through military support that it provided, directly or indirectly, to the forces fighting in Syria in which Turkey supports such as the Islamic State (ISIS), al-Qaeda, the Nusra Front, and support for the Syrian opposition<sup>xxiv</sup>. Turkey has also adopted a dual approach in dealing with developments in the situation in Syria, which initially combines the protection and support of the friendly regime of Turkey, on the one hand, sympathy with the revolutionaries and the implicit support for them and their demands on the other, and stimulating the role of the Turkish community in hosting their activities on Turkish soil. But, it later evolved to demand that President Bashar Al-Assad step down from power<sup>xxv</sup>.

The Turkish position and its relationship with Syria can be divided into four stages:

1. Pressure for political reforms in Syria.

It is a position that stems from several considerations, the most important of which are:

A. Turkey's previous support for popular movements in several countries ahead of Syria.

B. The Turkish support for the change process in the Arab world, and the good relations it has with Syria and the Bashar Al-Assad regime before 2011 including dozens of economic agreements and the establishment of a council for strategic cooperation.

C. Agreeing to establish a free trade area that brings together Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

D. Ankara fears that the events will slide and roll them into chaos that harms Syria and Turkey and its integrated communication project with the Arab world, as well as good personal and even family relations with Assad.

2. Supporting the opposition to topple Assad.

Ankara became fully convinced that Assad is not serious or unable to bring about real reforms. It affected the entire diplomatic piece between them after withdrawing the ambassadors and progressing The factions of the opposition in the field



against the regime. Ankara provided support to the Syrian opposition on several levels, political and Relief, logistical, and even the military, though it is not publicly recognized. Turkey has hosted most of the Syrian opposition political leaders and recognized them internationally<sup>xxvi</sup>.

### 3. Accepting a political solution.

Abandoning the slogan of toppling the Assad regime and accepting the transitional period plan and its timetable according to the US-Russian agreement in Vienna means implicit approval for Assad to remain in power until the elections to be held at the end despite many statements that he refused to remain in power. Among the factors that contributed to Turkey moves to this box are:

A. The state of stagnation between the regime and its allies on the one hand and the opposition factions on the other.

B. The capabilities of the Turkish role have declined significantly in Syria after the direct Russian military intervention.

C. The US-Russian agreement on the ceiling of a road map for a solution and its timetable<sup>xxvii</sup>.

### 4. Moving from the initiative to defense.

It is the last stage. It can be dated to the incident of Ankara bringing down the Russian fighter during which Turkey lost many positions and events in the Syrian issue with regard to overthrowing the regime and tipping the opposition. Its main concern has been to protect its borders and national security from the development of the Syrian crisis on two levels:

The general context regarding Russian punitive measures against Ankara, at all economic, commercial, political, and military levels, foremost of which is the fact that Moscow imposed an effective flight ban over Syria that has prevented Turkish aircraft so far from flying over Syria and sometimes from approaching the border and cutting support for opposition factions.

The specific context related to the progress of the Kurdish People's Protection Forces, which are military pretexts for the Democratic Union Party, which Ankara considers the Syrian extension of the PKK in northern Syria and the presence of political support from Russia militarily and the United States politically to establish a Kurdish strip along the Turkish-Syrian border (35 km). But, it retreated Turkish influence at this stage and its reliance on trying to defend its interests<sup>xxviii</sup>.

In light of what has been mentioned, it is possible to specify the causes of these positions with a set of factors that encourage Turkish intervention in Syria:

A. The Syrian crisis is directly related to its national security.

B. The steady progress of the Kurdish political project on its southern borders.

C. The Syrian scene overlapped with the internal Turkish situation after the Ankara bombing.

D The complexities of the Syrian field situation, which implies a possible defeat or a significant retreat for the opposition, and the repercussions of that on Turkey, which could prompt it to intervene in order to try to adjust the balance of the scene.

E. Turkey expects large future waves of asylum towards its borders in the event that the Aleppo front is wide open, which Ankara considers a weapon that Russia and the regime intend to use in confronting it.

H- The Turkish Parliament's mandate to the government and the army continues to apply to military operations outside its borders.

G. Provides internal support for a supposed government intervention in Syria and confronting Kurdish armed factions and protecting Turkmen, represented by the opposition National Movement Party.

H. Turkey's military superiority over both the system, the state organizations and the YPG, especially if its choice is limited intervention on the borders that could neutralize the Russian factor.

I. Some regional-international factors that may support Turkey's decision, for example its possession of the European Union pressure paper represented by Syrian refugees and the internal system of NATO, which requires member states to support any member state subject to attack<sup>xxix</sup>.

There are many obstacles preventing Turkey from taking a decision to interfere in the Syrian issue:

- A. Russia is militarily superior to it, which leads Ankara to avoid that.
- B. America's position and the red lines on Ankara's support for the Syrian opposition.
- C. The Syrian opposition factions are fragmented, which makes it difficult for Turkey to support the local ally.
- G. NATO's betrayal of Turkey and its statements from its leadership warns against attacking Russia in Syria by depriving it of victory.

H. Assumed leaks about the Turkish military establishment's reservation to any direct interference in Syria; only the protection of borders and the failure of the Kurdish project.

I. The official Arab position rejecting any supposed interference by Turkey in Syria, especially its position regarding the Iraqi Bashiqa camp<sup>xxx</sup>.

#### **The nature of the Turkish dealing with Syrian refugees.**

The first batch of Syrian refugees arrived at the borders of Turkey on April 29, 2011. The government of Ordu Gan announced the policy of an open door for Syrians with the promise of providing them with assistance in terms of shelter and services in the well-built camps near the border and rejected offers of assistance from international agencies. In October 2011, the government extended (temporary protection) to Syrian refugees and described them in an official capacity, in contrast to the term (inmates) used in most other countries in the region<sup>xxxi</sup>.

The Syrian-Turkish relations formed a basic part in the policy of Ihsanoglu who established the partnership for the establishment of a regional system in the Middle East. This partnership included Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq by setting up high councils for relations with these countries, canceling entry visas between them, establishing regions for free trade, and planning to build a network of roads, oil, and gas supply lines, and electric power. But, the overall behavior of Urdoghan's government towards the Syrian crisis, its involvement in supporting the Syrian political and military phenomenon, permanent threatening to establish a buffer security zone inside the Syrian territories, the threat of military action against the Syrian regime to get rid of it failed this agreement<sup>xxxii</sup>.

In addition, the government of OrduGan opened the borders and established camps for Syrian refugees fleeing from Syrian territory. The Turkish government at the time spent more than 150 million dollars in aid to refugees and to build nine camps<sup>xxxiii</sup>.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS.**

1. Turkey is internationally and regionally important from the maritime strategy perspective as it has long coastlines overseeing three waterways. This makes it a geopolitical sensitive region and strategically important in the global political perspective as it represents one of the vital regions of the world that enables it to exert an influential policy in the global field at the regional and the international levels.

2. The location of Turkey on important marine corridors gives it control over the strategic land bases affecting maritime transportation.

3. The 779,452 km<sup>2</sup> of area of Turkey gives it the freedom to distribute population and facilities, especially military ones. It also gives it the ability to exploit the largest number of natural resources; soil, minerals, natural plants, and many others.

4. Turkey has relied on the water resource as a political pressure through which it imposes its policy on Iraq and Syria. Turkey has full control over the Tigris and the Euphrates. It established many control and storage projects which increase the process of controlling water resources.

5. The Turkish foreign policy in the era of the Justice and Development Party is multidimensional.

6. When the Syrian crisis broke out in 2011, Turkey supported and aided the main refugee camps and refused the assistance of the humanitarian agencies.

7. The Turkish position changed and differed as protest approached the Syrian interior field. Ankara found itself obliged to determine its position in a clearer manner and bears the consequences of any decision it takes towards Syria.

8. The strategic rivalry and contrasting intellectual premises between the global and regional parties deepened the Syrian crisis due to the escalation of the extremist approach, which led to the concern of the Western powers to support the Syrian opposition groups.

9. Turkey worked with Western countries to form an international coalition outside the Security Council and demanded the establishment of a buffer security zone on its borders with Syria. Turkey hosted the Friends of Syria International Conference in Istanbul in April 2012. Turkey recognized the opposition Syrian National Council as a legitimate representative of the Syrian people and set up refugee camps And the displaced Syrians. Turkey threatened to provide weapons to the Syrian opposition to protect themselves against the regime. Turkey resorted to that in order to prevent any interference from the West or their allies because Turkey realizes the danger of this Western intervention.

10. The Turkish diplomacy failed to persuade Bashar Al-Assad's regime to introduce sufficient reforms to absorb the growing public anger for more than six months. Its failure prompted Turkey to receive the Syrian opposition forces and provide them with political, media, security, and military facilities. This position collided with Iranian and Russian interests in support of the Assad regime, which prolonged the tide of the Syrian conflict and complicated it.

11. Accusations have been made against Turkey of influencing the ideological dimension in its foreign policy, through military support that it provided, directly or indirectly, to the forces fighting in Syria in which Turkey supports such as the Islamic State (ISIS), Al Qaeda, and the Nusra Front, supporting the Syrian opposition, and securing safe passages for crossing into Syria through the Turkish border and training camps.

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