REPORT

OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD

IMPLEMENTATION AND LESSONS LEARNED

MURAT YEŞİLTAŞ, MERVE SEREN, NECDET ÖZÇELİK

SETA

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Abbreviations

ACV	Armored Combat Vehicle
AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency
BTF	Battalion Task Force
COMINT	Combat Intelligence
DAESH	*Al-Dawlah al-Islāmīyah fī al-'Irāq wa-al-Shām*
ELINT	Electronic Intelligence
FETO/FETÖ	Fetullah Gülen Terror Organization
FISINT	Foreign Instrumentation Signals Intelligence
FSA	Free Syrian Army
FST	Fire Support Team
GEOINT	Geospatial Intelligence
HDP	People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*)
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IHH	Humanitarian Relief Foundation (*İnsani Yardım Vakfı*)
IMINT	Image Intelligence
MEB	Ministry of National Education (*Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı*)
MİT	National Intelligence Organization (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*)
MRL	Multiple Rocket Launcher
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NMRT	National Medical Rescue Teams
NSC	National Security Council
OES	Operation Euphrates Shield
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
RAF	Religious Affairs Foundation of Turkey, or *DİYANET* Foundation
SF	Special Forces
SFC	Special Forces Command
SIGINT	Signal Intelligence
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
U.S.	The United States
UAV (aka drone)	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
YPG/PKK	People's Protection Units/ Kurdistan Workers' Party

ABSTRACT

The report presents a one-year assessment of the Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) launched on August 24, 2016 and concluded on March 31, 2017 and examines Turkey's future road map against the backdrop of the developments in Syria.

In the first section, the report analyzes the security environment that paved the way for OES. In the second section, it scrutinizes the military and tactical dimensions and the course of the operation, while in the third section, it concentrates on Turkey's efforts to establish stability in the territories cleansed of DAESH during and after OES. In the fourth section, the report investigates military and political lessons that can be learned from OES, while in the fifth section, it draws attention to challenges to Turkey's strategic preferences and alternatives - particularly in the north of Syria - by concentrating on the course of events after OES.

INTRODUCTION

In conformity with Article 51 of the United Nations (UN) Charter, Turkey exercised its "right of self-defense" and declared to the international community the launch of Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) on August 24, 2016.[1]

Article 51 of the UN Charter stipulates that if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, the member state may exercise the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense until the Security Council takes measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Therefore, based on Article 51 of the UN Charter, Ankara took action to eliminate the threats posed against it by terrorist organizations present in Syria, particularly DAESH, and to exercise its right of self-defense – even aggressively on the soil of another country, if necessary – as provisioned by international law.

However, the military, political and strategic reasons Turkey has put forward with respect to OES are more important than the legal reasons. Following an overall analysis of the period that paved the way for the operation in view of the security environment and tactical-operative methods used by adverse parties, the following actions stand out among Ankara's primary objectives: to establish border security; to push DAESH away from the border line (and, therefore, to disrupt the

1. Turkey remarked that Operation Euphrates Shield was conducted in the scope of the UNSC resolutions for the fight against DAESH as stated in Article 51 of the UN Charter. See "*Başbakanlık Koordinasyon Merkezinden 'Fırat Kalkanı Operasyonu' Hakkında Yapılan Basın Acıklaması*", The Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, https://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/_Article/pg_Article.aspx?Id=2a0e4e31-1a6d-4d65-9074-cc8b7097d0f6, (Access Date: August 11, 2017); For Article 51 of the UN Charter, see "*Birleşmiş Milletler Antlaşması ve Uluslararası Adalet Divanı Statusu*", Ombudsman, https://www.ombudsman.gov.tr/contents/files/6535501-Birlesmis-Milletler-Antlasmasi.pdf, (Access Date: August 11, 2017).

organization's center of gravity and prevent DAESH attacks particularly against border provinces); and to block the YPG/PKK, a PKK offspring in Syria, from carving out a corridor by taking control of the east-west line in the north of Syria.

At this point, it should be noted that the aforementioned objectives were explicitly verbalized in a press release following a National Security Council (NSC) meeting held three months after the start of OES.[2] Additionally, one should not forget that Ankara's decision to launch a direct military operation at the end of the sixth year of the Syrian crisis set a breaking-point in Turkish foreign policy in Syria and that the operation had a crucial impact as it was one of the most comprehensive cross-border operations by the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) in the history of the Republic. From this aspect, the nature, characteristics, scope and timing of the OES are extremely significant since they changed the security environment in Syria.

On the eve of the operation, the prevailing opinion was that the scope, the duration and the phases of the operation would develop depending on the rapidly changing political and military situations. As a matter of fact, the course of the operation changed as expected during the process. Operation Euphrates Shield was not only a military offensive against two separate terror organizations but also a political operation against non-state actors who complicate and confuse the nature of "being opponents and allies." The OES was not simply a military offensive with national and international dimensions - its mission also included a humanitarian aid perspective, the coordination of international and local alliances, and the elements of a stability operation.

With the participation and coordination of many state and public institutions and non-governmental organizations, Turkey has initiated a process of multidimensional "construction" in the DAESH-cleansed territories. In this sense, the process and management of building stability have been shaped, in different ways, by the idiosyncrasies of the region and the strategic priorities of other actors. After all, Turkey's efforts to establish stability in the post-operation period consist of collective activities for stability. These activities are basically in the areas of security, humanitarian relief support, economic stability, infrastructure and suprastructure services, building the judicial state and justice, food supply, sheltering services, medical assistance, and educational services. All these auspices and assistance indicate that Turkey has become adept at providing humanitarian aid. In this regard, OES may be considered to have set a precedent and become a critical turning point for Turkey.

2. For the minutes of the NSC meeting dated November 2016, see "*30 Kasım 2016 Tarihli Toplantı*", Republic of Turkey National Security Council General Secretariat, https://www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/30-kasim-2016-tarihli-toplanti, (Access Date: August 11, 2017).

Reconstruction and renovation of territories cleansed of DAESH after the military operations play a key role in the future of local people and in Turkey's strategy for fighting terrorist organizations.

With OES, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) tested its capacity for combat readiness, while with the lessons learned from the course and outcomes of the operation, it realized the need for developing its mobility at tactical, operative and strategic levels. First and foremost, OES has proven the capability of the Turkish military to perform a joint offensive operation. In the course of the operation, the TAF also tested its capacity to execute an operation with irregular local partners and following the operation, observed some drawbacks. The Turkish military identified discrepancies between the implementations of target acquisition and fire support, and improved the related capabilities. Evidently, however, the need for close air support for irregular and suddenly emerging targets has surfaced as a stark reality. On the other hand, the TAF also acknowledged the need for the improvement of cooperation between armored vehicles and light infantry and commando units. The development of new tactics in order to eliminate vulnerability during the phase of disposition on target should be evaluated as an important military operational need.

Close-range irregular terrorist targets should be defined as a separate topic of marksmanship outside the marksmanship of conventional tank artillery and armored combat vehicles (ACV) and treated as a separate topic of shooting drills. The TAF also recognized the need for the active use of an adequate number of equipped anti-tank units in urban warfare. Along with air defense and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) platforms, anti-tank weapons should also be improved by using national resources. With these guiding principles, Turkey, in general, and the TAF, in particular, should build capacity in the following areas:

- Threat assessment specific to terrorist organizations
- Public diplomacy
- Adaptation of the security sector to new threats
- Strategic flexibility in diplomacy
- Timing in military operations
- Counterterrorism in local population areas
- Tactical use and modernization of armored units
- UAV areas of use and operability
- Local armed actors
- Effective transportation of humanitarian relief
- Active cooperation and coordination of intelligence agencies

Turkey ended the operation in seven months after accomplishing its preset goals. However, it cannot be said that the tests that Turkey has been facing ever since are over. Although Turkey removed the DAESH threat from its border, which was the reason for the operation in the first place, and prevented the PKK from forming a corridor that stretches over the west of the Euphrates River to the town of Afrin, there are many factors that will shape Ankara's future road map considering the length of the line in the north of Syria.

At this stage, the military aspect of Turkish foreign policy in Syria and the strategic calculations of Ankara are being tested by multi-dimensional strategic countermoves. Despite the existence of alternatives against the PKK in the north of Syria, the question of "How can Turkey overcome the difficulties triggered by this terrorist organization in the near future?" remains one of the most important issues in the upcoming period. After this stage, among Turkey's main goals in the post-OES period is the prevention of a *fait accompli* in the north of Syria following the removal of DAESH by targeting the PKK with direct or indirect interventions.

The report presents a one-year assessment of the Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) launched on August 24, 2016 and concluded on March 31, 2017 and examines Turkey's future road map against the backdrop of the developments in Syria. In the first section, the report analyzes the security environment that paved the way for OES and in the second, it scrutinizes the military and tactical dimensions and the course of the operation. In the third section, the report concentrates on Turkey's efforts to establish stability in the territories cleansed of DAESH during and after OES. In the fourth section, the report investigates military and political lessons that can be learned from OES, and in the fifth section, it draws attention to Turkey's strategic tryouts and alternatives - particularly in the north of Syria - by concentrating on the course of events after OES.

ENVIRONMENT OF IN/SECURITY AS GROUND FOR THE OPERATION

A range of security risks that developed in the period before Operation Euphrates Shield revealed the necessity for Turkey to intervene militarily in Syria. First, DAESH committed suicide attacks targeting Turkey and, in particular, large cities. Second, DAESH's control of about a 100-kilometer border line in the Azaz-Jarablus region, north of Syria, and its command over the border line could have easily led to the targeting of other border provinces and military points in Turkey, and, in particular, the town of Kilis. For this reason, Turkey, for a long time, tried to secure its southern border by eliminating DAESH components along the 100-kilometer-long border between Azaz and Jarablus, and to ensure the security of the line between Azaz and Çobanbey (Rai) by eliminating DAESH elements.

While for Turkey OES represented phases that aimed to secure the national border line, DAESH's suicide attacks were based on a two-step strategy.[3] The first step was to declare the PKK as the enemy and to set it as a target. Considering the DAESH attacks in the southeastern Turkish town of Suruç, the capital Ankara, and the southeastern city of Gaziantep, this strategy manifested as an attempt to punish the PKK in Turkish territory.

One of the prime reasons of implementing this strategy was that DAESH intended to exacerbate the ethnic conflict in Turkey and used terror attacks as an opportunity to have the upper hand against the PKK. DAESH's second strategy was based on balancing out the military pressure resulting from Turkey's anti-

3. Murat Yeşiltaş, Ömer Behram Özdemir, Rıfat Öncel, Sibel Düz ve Bilgehan Öztürk, *Sınırdaki Düşman: Türkiye'nin DAİŞ'le Mücadelesi*, (SETA Report, İstanbul: 2016); Murat Yeşiltaş, Rıfat Öncel ve Bilgehan Öztürk, "Turkey's Fight Against DAESH", *SETA Policy Analysis*, Issue: 23, (November 2016).

DAESH policy, e.g. backing up the international coalition, and deterring Ankara's tough stance against the organization. To this end, DAESH diversified its targets by committing suicide attacks in Turkey as for instance, the attacks in Sultanahmet and Taksim Squares, and at the Atatürk International Airport in Istanbul.

All in all, DAESH's main goal was to drag Turkey and the PKK into a gradually deepening and transforming /fight, and, therefore, to consolidate its operational center of gravity in Syria and protect it from outside attacks.

Prior to Operation Euphrates Shield, the DAESH territory along the Turkish border included districts, notably Dabiq, in which the group vivaciously implemented its messianic and caliphal policy, and other strategically important sites which enabled maneuverability and protection for DAESH forces. This, at the same time, allowed the organization to control a vast geographical area. Hence, DAESH aimed to open a front in Turkey in which conflict would become uncontrollable, then to localize its presence in Turkey by recruiting new militants, and remove the military pressure on the organization.

Intensified DAESH attacks targeting Kilis since the early months of 2016 were concrete evidence of the dramatic change in the group's strategy towards Turkey. An analysis of earlier DAESH attacks reveals that the group concentrated on specific targets in Turkey as seen, for instance, in the Diyarbakır attack on June 5, 2015; the Suruç attack on July 20, 2015; and the Ulus attack on October 10, 2015. In these attacks, DAESH's main goal was to bring its fight with the YPG/PKK in Syria and Iraq into Turkey by targeting PKK- or HDP-linked individuals in bomb attacks. DAESH also adopted this approach as a key factor of its recruitment strategy in Turkey.

DAESH aimed both to gain the sympathy of people in Turkey by playing into a staunch anti-PKK position and to destabilize the country by instigating ethnic and sectarian sensitivities. With the Sultanahmet attack on January 12, 2016, DAESH, for the first time, targeted foreigners on Turkish soil. Again, a blast on Istiklal Street on March 19, 2016 was a similar act of terror against foreigners in Turkey. By doing so, DAESH punished citizens of the coalition member states, taking revenge and injecting xenophobia into its recruitment strategy in Turkey.

DAESH threats targeting Turkey were not limited to acts of terrorism in the country. The attacks in Kilis on January 18, 2016 by choosing the terror strategy of launching rockets stood out as containing a number of "first-ever" attempts for DAESH: the first of these unprecedented moves was DAESH's random assault of civilians - in the past the organization had always chosen specific targets. The second novelty for DAESH was that for the first time it carried out rocket attacks on Turkish soil. Then again, a rocket attack by DAESH against TAF elements deployed in Bashika, Iraq, on December 16, 2015, stood as evidence that the group

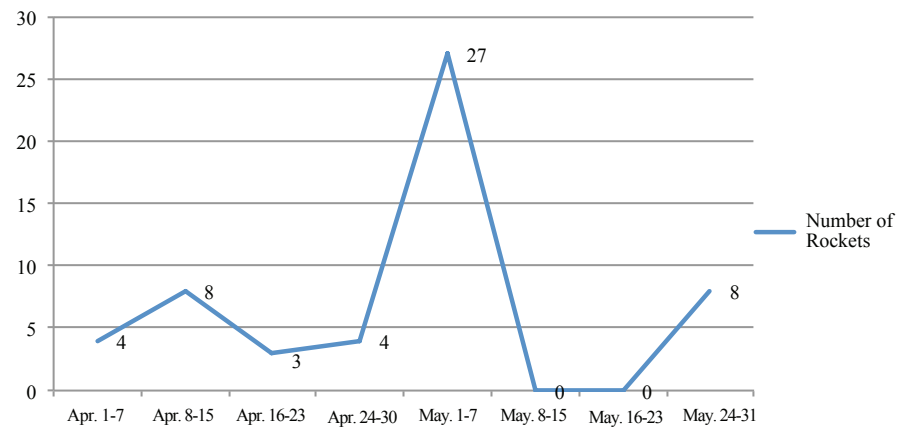
views Turkey as a genuine enemy.[4] The third novelty was that DAESH committed attacks from its territory in Syria onto Turkish soil. Previously, DAESH conducted attacks in Turkey, or guard posts on the border, by approaching with vehicles, but this time, it attacked using rockets launched from 10-15 kilometers inside the area under its control in northern Syria.

Meanwhile, a car bomb attack on Gaziantep Police Department on May 1, 2015 also confirmed a change in DAESH's strategy regarding Turkey. With the exception of earlier attacks from DAESH territory in Syria targeting guard posts on the border, with this attack for the first time, DAESH targeted Turkish security forces. Therefore, an assessment of the Kilis attacks together with the Gaziantep blast reveals that DAESH obviously shifted its "ambiguous" war against Turkey onto a solid platform.

Between April and May 2016, DAESH intensified rocket attacks (mostly Katyusha-type), almost daily, by targeting Kilis with 54 Katyusha rockets. As a consequence, 19 people died - 12 Turkish nationals and 7 Syrian nationals - and 67 were wounded. Although Katyushas have about a 20-kilometer target range, the group increased the range by modifying these rockets and, therefore, further increasing the threat against Turkey's southern border.

The manufacturing cost of Katyusha rockets is extremely low and their use is quite simple. They reach the target very quickly and have the capacity to hit large areas. Furthermore, Katyushas can have high maneuverability if mounted on different vehicles. For this reason, Katyusha rockets, in time, compelled Turkey to take measures in Syria and necessitated a military operation by Turkey in order to neutralize the rocket threats by DAESH. In the end, the high speed performance, the

GRAPH 1: NUMBER OF ROCKETS FIRED AT KİLİS (APRIL-MAY 2016)



4. "*Teror Orgutu DEAŞ, Musul'da Saldırdı, Turk Topcusu Karşılık Verdi*", *Milliyet*, December 16, 2015.

small size, the relatively close range between the launch point and the target, and the light weight of Katyushas made the protection against them difficult for Turkey.[5]

Aside from rocket threats, DAESH executed a suicide attack in Gaziantep just before OES, killing 54 civilians who had gathered for a wedding ceremony. Intensified rocket threats aiming civilian areas created new types of risks. Hence, it became imperative for Turkey to fight against DAESH on a military level and accelerate preparations for OES. Meanwhile, the crisis between Ankara and Moscow after Turkey shot down a Russian fighter jet on November 24, 2015 ended; hence, one of the important obstacles for OES was removed. Prior to OES, DAESH-linked terror elements and attacks, in general, demonstrated the fragility of the security environment both inside and outside Turkey.

Another issue that led to Operation Euphrates Shield was the intensification of PKK attacks and the attempts to establish an autonomous region through the YPG/PKK in the north of Syria following the group's change of strategy with the outbreak of the Syrian civil war.

The anti-DAESH international coalition backed the PKK's bid as the group activated a war of attrition inside Turkey. By doing so, the PKK tried to make Ankara focus on its internal issues. Therefore, the organization expanded the territory it controlled in the north of Syria and reinforced its military power.[6]

Two basic factors concerning the PKK's change of strategy need to be addressed at this point. The first is the PKK's efforts to create a security pressure on Turkey by taking its armed violence into cities. The main purpose of this strategy was to consume Turkey's energy internally and, therefore, reinforce the group's military and political power in Syria. By doing so, the PKK aimed to evolve into a functional and useful actor in regional politics. The second factor was the PKK's attempts to open a new front in the ongoing war in Turkey's neighborhood and to cause a shift in Turkey's political center of gravity, confining the country's security policies within its national borders. In this fashion, the PKK turned DAESH's existence into a strategic opportunity to consolidate its own power and become a legitimate actor, and, in this spirit, began to expand its territory with the aim of instigating the period of "war of attrition" against Turkey.

The PKK has interrelated its fight against DAESH and the civil war in Syria with incidents in Turkey, and its confrontation in Turkey with incidents in Syria and Iraq. The PKK used this strategy to turn the line stretching in the north of Syria and Iraq - an integral part of Turkey's border and regional security - into

5. Arda Mevlutoğlu, "*Katyuşa'lar, HIMAR'lar ve Ötesi*", Siyah Gri Beyaz, April 29, 2016, http://www.siyahgribeyaz.com/2016/04/katyusalar-himarslar-ve-otesi.html?spref=tw, (Access Date: August 10, 2017).

6. Murat Yeşiltaş and Necdet Özçelik, "*PKK Terörünün Yeni Dinamikleri: Radikalleşme ve Şehir Çatışması*", *SETA Analiz*, Issue: 157, (April 2016).

a springboard for its war against Turkey. Thus, the PKK's former move aimed at Turkey's national political stability, while the latter at Turkish foreign policy. Simply put, in addition to DAESH's terrorist attacks, another risk was created in Turkey's security environment that led to Operation Euphrates Shield.

With the intention of eliminating such security risks, Turkey took action to block the PKK from carving out a corridor in Syria by crossing to the west of the Euphrates River and reaching Afrin. The PKK's Syria branch, the YPG, captured Manbij from DAESH and crossed the Euphrates River towards the west, which meant more risks for Turkey. In consequence, Turkey further detailed the operation's goals and tactical approaches.

As one may recall, Turkey repulsed a coup attempt by FETO on July 15, 2016. Thus, in addition to DAESH and the PKK, FETO's failed attempt laid bare the fact that Turkey's national and international security architecture had become more fragile. Indeed, DAESH and PKK terrorism caused Turkey to consume its energy within the country as the DAESH-PKK encounter, which escalated during the Syrian civil war, increased risks and threats against Turkish national security to the highest possible level. Turkey managed to eliminate the accumulated risks born out of the aforementioned three vital security problems in two phases: (a) by purging FETO-linked elements and members who were part of FETO's strategic decision-making mechanism and who had infiltrated the security bureaucracy, and (b) by taking advantage of the opportunities in the international conjuncture provided by the anti-DAESH coalition, and consequently launching OES. In short, Turkey planned the following three-tier strategy in its simultaneous fight against its three leading security problems mentioned above:

i. To eliminate the PKK's armed forces inside the country by using military means and methods,
ii. To incapacitate DAESH threats against Turkey, and
iii. To reinstate the state's strategic flexibility by purging it of FETO components.

Turkey executed OES in a chaotic and intricate environment of (in)security, and targeted all actors and factors that at the time and in the days to come could cause various security weaknesses both inside and outside Turkey's borders.

THE MILITARY AND TACTICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE OPERATION

Operation Euphrates Shield was conducted with the participation of more than one component and actualized under the concept of a joint operation.

A joint operation enables an operation commander to take initiative, to impose the conditions of the operation on the counterforce and to create opportunities for eliminating the reaction capabilities of the counterforce. The TAF components that joined OES seized the opportunities afforded through adaptability by taking, maintaining and manipulating the initiative. In this regard, it would not be an exaggeration to say that, in general, OES was carried out based on operational and tactical initiatives. TAF components gained physical and psychological edge over DAESH and YPG/PKK elements through synchronous engagement, the execution of a deep operation, and the operation's sustainability.

Operation Euphrates Shield aimed at sustaining field control in order to capture a vast territory, keep the area under control and preclude terrorist organizations' hybrid elements from reusing the region.

On the other hand, in order to beat the counterforce, Operation Euphrates Shield had to materialize as a joint operation in order to control and protect the operation field itself, local residents, and resources in addition to mobility, fire power and survivability. Beyond the unity of ardor in these matters, OES also had to concentrate on public perception within the operation field, political opposition, and fight against crime.

THE REDUCTION OF THE IMPACT OF DAESH ATTACKS AND YPG/PKK STRIKES AFTER OES

Decision-makers in the Turkish military scrutinized the situation thoroughly before developing the operation process's duty description. As DAESH and the YPG/PKK shaped the operation field with their irregular actions, the military decision-makers viewed them as a direct threat and enunciated that the U.S. and Russia played a role to facilitate such threats posed against Turkish national security.

Thus, Turkey directly engaged with terrorist organizations through Operation Euphrates Shield and, at the same time, fulfilled its responsibility as part of the anti-DAESH military coalition; it planned and executed the operation under such circumstances that it had to adopt a political position against the U.S. and Russia. For this operation, Turkey analyzed the clashes between DAESH and the YPG/PKK and their military capabilities. DAESH seemed incapable of engaging in an effective and large-scale offensive when under attack by well-organized battalions and brigades. For its defense, DAESH adopted volatile tactics along its defense lines echeloned at different depths, taking advantage of rough terrains and local people. Hence, it was anticipated that DAESH, as it did in Ramadi in 2015, could form a rearward defense-in-depth by starting with villages relatively remote from large settlements such as Dabiq, Mare' and al-Bab. In tactical defense zones, DAESH was expected to use improvised explosives and anti-tank rockets, to commit vehicle bomb attacks, and organize tactical raids and drone attacks.[7] As DAESH defense lines approached strategic settlement areas, the group applied a number of defense tactics.

Accordingly, it was projected that within an area 2-3 kilometers outside its defense lines, groups of 30-50 DAESH militants - even as many as to form a company - might organize either raids or counteroffensives reinforced by multiple suicide attacks and supported with heavy weapons. The Turkish military also forecasted that DAESH could intensify improvised explosive attacks in support of tactical defense activities in avenues of approach and use snipers at choke points. The OES headquarters had already deduced that the YPG/PKK could not defend settlement areas without the strategic fire support provided by the U.S. CENTCOM.

When DAESH took the offensive in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) in October 2014, the YPG/PKK's presence had not been felt and DAESH had recently taken the town and nearby villages under its control.

During the offensives against DAESH in the period of 2015-2106, the presence of the YPG/PKK was felt as an effective element of maneuverability - not as

7. For a detailed report on DAESH's strategy and tactics of using drones, see Serkan Balkan, DEAŞ'ın İHA Stratejisi: Yenilikçi Terörün Yükselişi, (SETA Rapor, İstanbul: 2017).

a good defense component. On the other hand, from late 2015 until the middle of 2016, the PKK's urban insurgency in the southeastern Turkish towns of Silvan, Sur, Nusaybin, Cizre, Şırnak and Yüksekova developed in the form of defense and ended with a grave defeat, proving the group's incapability for urban defense.[8] Still, the Turkish military assessed that the PKK, too, could apply defense patterns learned from DAESH, organize anti-tank rocket and vehicle bomb attacks, use dynamic defense tactics supported with improvised explosives, and dig out trenches and install barriers on avenues of approach. More importantly, the Turkish military anticipated that the YPG/PKK's defense strategy could be built based on embedded elements of the U.S. military's display of strength, the adoption of a hostile political stance by Washington towards Ankara, and the expectations through show of force by the U.S. Special Forces against OES elements.

Although it was known all along that the success of an operation against DAESH and the YPG/PKK by regular land forces would not be impacted negatively, it was anticipated that the threat of U.S. and Russian air forces and air defense systems could limit the operation's pace and its initiative. Thus, differences with the U.S. and Russia could have been reduced by politics rather than de facto military posturing, and Operation Euphrates Shield could be carried out with an appropriate operational force at a well-balanced pace by taking into account the threats from the U.S. and Russia.[9]

The most serious threats against a Turkish military operation to be conducted in Syria were uncertainty and the possibility of multiple ordeals rather than the operational and tactical capacities of DAESH and the YPG/PKK. Hence, in order to engage in both regular and irregular tactical and operational threats in a theater of operation expected to change apace, Operation Euphrates Shield forces10 would have to be shaped in accordance with the concept of a joint operation, pairing up different weapon systems and platforms. The scope of the operation's main combat zone was cast into uncertainty as a result of the multinational strategic ambiguity.

Terrain and weather conditions were the other two critical factors that affected the method of service and operation, besides the scopes, capacities and limitations of counterforces which defined the boundaries of threat risks.

The lightly rolling terrain of the operation field enabled an armored and mechanized offensive supported by airborne infantry and local forces. On the

8. For a frame analysis particularly on how the PKK's strategy changed after the Arab Spring, see Murat Yeşiltaş and Necdet Özcelik, "*PKK Terorunun Yeni Dinamikleri: Radikalleşme ve Şehir Catışması*", *SETA Analiz*, Issue: 157, (May 2016).

9. Interview with a top-ranking military officer, Ankara, August 19, 2017.

10. For the OES constituents that participated in the operation, see Can Acun, Bünyamin Keskin and Bilal Salaymeh, "*5 Soru: Fırat Kalkanı Harekatı*", SETA *5 Soru*, August 25, 2016, https://www.setav.org/5-soru-firat-kalkani-operasyonu, (Access Date: August 2017).

other hand, the Turkish military had also assessed that the land cover would not let the OES forces at tactical assembly bases have sufficient cover and camouflage against aerial surveillance and indirect fire. Then again, the most critical terrain features were determined to be settlement areas, such as villages and towns, for it was projected that settlement locales would provide operational advantage for those in control.

Small hills are designated terrain features as well; however, the Turkish military's assessment of the vulnerability of such areas stemmed from the clear view and lack of protection on hills and hilltops in the face of aerial surveillance and attacks, and the possibility of indirect overland fire. Two important natural obstacles in the operation field seemed to be the Euphrates and Sajur Rivers, while small stream beds did not present an obstacle as the Turkish military assessed that they would provide partial cover and hiding space during forward operations.[11]

Artificial obstacles were improvised explosives, land mines embedded in suitable terrain on the OES forces' avenue of approach, and ditches entrenched around settlement areas, water channels, and barricades. After close consideration, the Turkish military concluded that the terrain of the operation theater would have a negligible impact on the advance of OES components, but that it would provide an opportunity to use different avenues of approach in order to capture designated targets.

DESIGNATION AND PREPARATION OF THE OPERATION FORCE

The operation force was built on the need for an effective integration of local allies with military capabilities. Operation Euphrates Shield was executed by TAF and Free Syrian Army (FSA) components. The elements from the TAF consisted of conventional units of the Land Forces Command and battalions of the Special Forces Command (SFC). The FSA constituents were formed by Ahrar al-Sham, the Sultan Murad Division, Jays al-Tahrir, Al-Mutasim Brigade, the Nour al-Din al-Zinki Movement, the Salahaddin Brigade, and the Hamza Division. A total of about 4,000 TAF troops and 7,000 FSA soldiers directly participated in OES.

The Special Forces Commander assigned to the OES Command was in charge of the command, control and coordination of the operation. The OES headquarters integrated the units on duty into the operation field in Syria; set the target; planned and enabled fire support for the land and air forces; coordinated the operation and logistic activities together with other state institutions and local partners; and executed the operation at a desired pace. The authority of

11. Interview with a military officer, Ankara, August 18, 2017.

combat command was assigned to a SFC brigadier general; and the operation, in general, was carried out at the level of a Brigadier Combat Team.

Thus, the Turkish military seemed to designate a modular task force according to the needs of the offensive. Tactical, operational and strategic requirements necessitated maneuvering of the OES's organic units together with the support units in the Battalion Task Force (BTF). A BTF with high maneuverability capability, high fire power and adequate current force executed the initial phase of the liberation of Jarablus. More BTFs were needed as the operation was, later on, deepened towards the west and the south.

The BTF (mechanized and armored) in Operation Euphrates Shield consisted of three combat companies (two mechanized and one or two tank-mechanized companies), a reconnaissance team, a mortar team, a supply team, a maintenance team and a medical team. In addition, air defense, artillery, engineer and anti-tank teams were put under the BTF's command and fire support teams (FST) provided support to the BTF.

In order to perform the assault task, the BTFs in the operation were provided maneuvering capability, fire and combat support, and combat service support. Mechanized and armored BTFs often used armored mobile fire support in order to gain a psychological advantage in the operation field by supporting mobility and survival activities, and by causing fatalities. The BTFs, at the same time, organized maneuvers mostly to break through DAESH's tactical and protective defense positions. Once breakthrough maneuvers had succeeded, commando branches, Special Forces teams and FSA elements stepped in for close combat.

The FSA forces on subordinate and small tactical wheeled vehicles became one of the most effective actors in manipulating the tactical situation to pick up the pace of the offensive as they successfully fought against terrorists who remained in defense positions in the rear of the main line of defense and in the reserve.

EXECUTION OF THE OPERATION

The Jarablus - Sajur Phase (August 24-28, 2016)

As expected and planned, the initial phase of Operation Euphrates Shield in the town of Jarablus demonstrated that OES would be executed strictly in the scope of a joint operation.

The operation was launched under the fire support of medium-range artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS), proceeded with the engagements of special forces teams and their identification of targets to be struck by air elements, and ended with quick tactical gains of the armored and mechanized units.

The OES forces initiated the operation by intensified artillery fire opened on DAESH positions nearby Jarablus and the village of Keklice at 4:00 a.m. on August 24, 2016, and continued with air raids on strategic points with F-16 fighter jets with precision-guided munitions. At 10:30 a.m., two company teams launched the forward operation of the land force components at the start line and crossed the Turkish-Syrian border. In the initial phase of the operation, the OES constituents aimed to achieve tactical gains by taking advantage of the armored maneuvering capability of the two company teams which guarded each other with artillery and other overland fire support means. Company teams captured Jarablus and nearby villages on the first day of the operation with the maneuvers of M60 A3 tanks, ACV-15 and tactical wheeled vehicles in addition to *Fırtına* (Storm) T-155 artillery fire support.

DAESH merely resisted and retreated in the direction of al-Bab with 46 casualties on the first day of the operation. The OES forces targeting YPG/PKK positions in the region, subsequently advanced to the south and gained ground towards the tactically important village of Amerne without any significant resistance by the YPG/PKK.

In the village of Amerne, however, the YPG/PKK elements hit two M60 A3 tanks belonging to OES components by firing MILAN and 9M133 Kornet anti-tank rockets provided in advance by the U.S. Special Force teams. The OES elements extending the operation to the YPG/PKK positions in the same region, on the same day, killed 25 YPG/PKK terrorists in their positions and captured seven.[12]

The OES forces took over the villages of Ayn al-Bayda, Dabis, Balaban, Khirbat, Kirk Maghar, Balweran and Jubb al-Kusa from the YPG/PKK and advanced towards the northern banks of the Sajur River on August 28, 2016. This move secured the eastern border of the operation from the town of Karkamis in the north and down the Sajur River in the south, along the Euphrates River.

Since the U.S. guaranteed on August 28, 2016 that the YPG/PKK would withdraw to the east of the Euphrates River, OES stopped advancing to the south, the TAF and FSA components unified their gains in the operation field and designated Sajur River as the southern border line of the eastern sector of the operation.

Subsequently, Operation Euphrates Shield changed direction towards Çobanbey (Rai) and the forward operation continued to the west. Although the southern border line of OES approached Manbij (12 kilometers outside the residential area), which was one of the strategic targets of OES, the operation forces

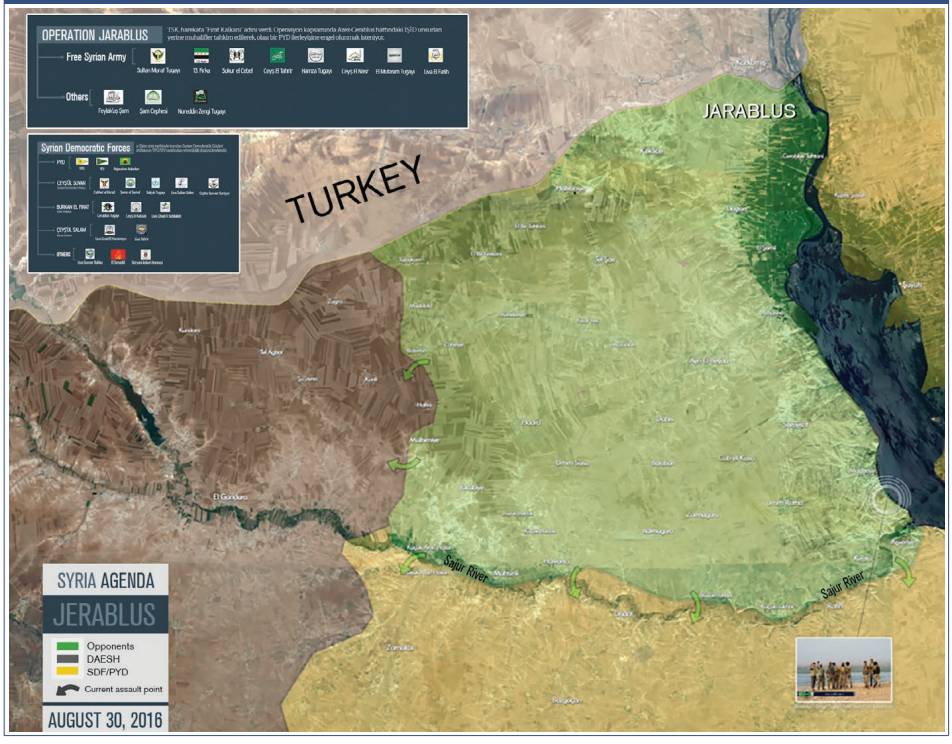
12. "Fırat Kalkanı Operasyonunda 25 YPG'li Öldürüldü", *Euronews*, August 28, 2016, http://tr.euronews.com/2016/08/28/firat-kalkani-operasyonu-nda-25-ypg-li-olduruldu, (Access Date: August 11, 2017).

cleaned a 400-square kilometer area from DAESH and the YPG/PKK in five days, pushed away DAESH components from the Turkish border and bulldozed the YPG/PKK terrorists.

After the second day of the operation, it was seen that the forward operation would take place in the direction of Manbij and that from Turkey's perspective the YPG/PKK terrorists in Syria were of equal priority to those of DAESH. At this stage, however, OES was subject to limitations due to the friction on the part of the U.S.-Turkey alliance in Syria and, to this day, has not been able to reach its goal concerning Manbij. After making tactical gains, Turkey, as part of the stability operation, has brought social services to locals living in the field of operation and continued to reinforce the operation components with additional military units.

The initial phase of Operation Euphrates Shield was critical since it became a maneuvering test for Turkey to gauge the military capacities of DAESH and the YPG/PKK, and the reactions of the U.S. and other international actors. From the tactical perspective, OES indicated that the defense capacities of these terrorist groups basically relied on anti-tank rockets and dynamic small unit tactics.

MAP 1: OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD AS OF AUGUST 30, 2016[13]



13. http://www.suriyegundemi.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/cerablus5.png, (Access Date: August 11, 2017).

MAP 2: AREA CONTROLLED BY OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD AS OF SEPTEMBER 7, 2016[14]

The Çobanbey (Rai) and Dabiq Phase (September 3 – October 16, 2016)

Although the U.S. manipulation of the situation in the north of Manbij slowed down the pace of the operation, the Turkish military launched another offensive on the town of Çobanbey and nearby villages on September 3, 2016. As was the case in Jarablus, this operation also started with artillery fire against DAESH positions and air raids by a team of two armored companies. Subordinate FSA forces crossed the border to wipe out DAESH elements from the Çobanbey and Dabiq regions and to be prepared for the upcoming phases of the operation by meeting with the OES forces in the eastern sector of the operation.

The company teams, deployed in the vicinity of Çobanbey, accompanied by M60T Sabra tanks with 120-milimeter diameter cannons and reactive armor protection, moved forward to the DAESH positions in the area. With this move, the Turkish military apparently anticipated that the DAESH militants in the Çobanbey-Dabiq region had greater defense capability than the DAESH and the YPG/PKK militants in the Jarablus region. As expected, DAESH demonstrated its anti-tank armed defense capacity by striking two M60T tanks in the region of Vukuf village, south of Çobanbey.

However, DAESH failed to defend further its positions when faced with the OES forces' high fire power and maneuvering capability. In consequence, the Turkish military saved the village of Vukuf and nearby villages from DAESH. It was assessed that the DAESH defense was based on the formation of depth of defense among critical villages by deploying a team of 20-25 terrorists in each. DAESH also

14. "ÖSO 6 Köy Daha Aldı", *Aljazeera Türk*, September 7, 2016.

defended itself based on the tactic that terrorists in the rear did not reinforce the defense elements at the front, but guarded the latter's withdrawal as needed.

The OES forces employed containment tactics by approaching DAESH defense positions from different directions which resulted in the failure of DAESH components to create effective choke points in the OES forces' approach directions. Thus, in general, DAESH terrorists tried to defend themselves in daytime by stopping the advance of the OES forces through opening fire with anti-tank weapons. But this enabled the OES components to take advantage of tactical movement and assault at night.

However, DAESH militants realized that the OES forces that had made tactical moves or committed assaults in the night were most vulnerable during reformation at the target location in the early morning hours, after they had captured itat night. In fact, DAESH hit two OES tanks in the Vukuf region (as noted previously), and an M60T tank during the capture of the village of Tall al-Hava during such times.[15]

Although the Turkish military acknowledged, in advance of the operation, that DAESH's anti-tank assets would pose a threat, it could not be predicted, in general, that these weapons were highly integrated into tactical use. It was understood that tanks faced problems in tactical use against irregular terrorist groups when DAESH hit three reactive-armored tanks of the OES forces in two days. Apparently, armored vehicles needed more infantry troops ahead of them to shape the field of combat during the advances. Nonetheless, Euphrates Shield units remained vulnerable to anti-tank threats from DAESH to the same degree due to the standstills in deployment phases or the inactions at bases during forward operation phases.

One of the most important problems the OES forces faced in the operation field was to determine and destroy improvised explosives, and to open passages in areas that were thought to be planted with such explosives. In fact, two Turkish soldiers were martyred near the village of Akçakoyunlu while improvised explosives were being neutralized.[16]

The scale of DAESH's hybrid tactics have been clearly noted when considering the losses suffered by OES forces' personnel and equipment. On the other hand, it was envisaged that DAESH components, as they lost more territory, would defend their positions in smaller areas more effectively by using consolidated tactics in coordination. Therefore, in order to capture Dabiq, the Turkish military deployed more TAF and FSA units to the Çobanbey area in September 2016.

The village of Dabiq was strategically important for DAESH since foreign fighters had to cross Turkey to join the group. It was also tactically important for

15. Uğur Ergan, "Fırat Kalkanı Harekatında Acı Kayıplar", *Hürriyet*, September 10, 2016.

16. "*Fırat Kalkanı Operasyonu'nda 2 Şehit, 2 Asker Yaralı*", *Milliyet*, September 20, 2016.

the group because the location allowed DAESH to launch rockets into the southern Turkish town of Kilis. Thus, Dabiq was critical for OES forces as well, not only to intercept rocket attacks by DAESH on Kilis, but also to conjoin the Turkish military's territorial gains in Azaz, Mare' and Çobanbey, and connect Jarablus in the eastern sector of the operation with Azaz in the west through a 90-kilometer-long corridor, 15 kilometers inside the border.

After Dabiq was surrounded from the north, Operation Euphrates Shield advanced towards a line between the villages of Mare' and Akhtarin. On this axis, DAESH elements putting joint tactics into work, displayed solid defense capacity and fortification capabilities, and organized raids empowered with Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGMs) mortars, drones, vehicle bombs, and suicide attacks. Still, the OES components, having joint weapon platforms advantage, managed to defeat DAESH on this line, too.

Turkey sent Leopard A24 tanks and the T-122 *Sakarya* MLRS system to this sector. The high maneuvering capability of the former and the high firepower of the latter made substantial contributions to the success of the operation. However, the TAF components in this sector were negatively affected by the inadequacy of some FSA groups. At this stage, the Turkish commando units participated in Operation Euphrates Shield. After the capture of the Mare'-Akhtarin line, the OES forces captured Dabiq in ten minutes on October 16, 2016.[17] The village of Dabiq had been used in romanticized propaganda by DAESH in the recent past.

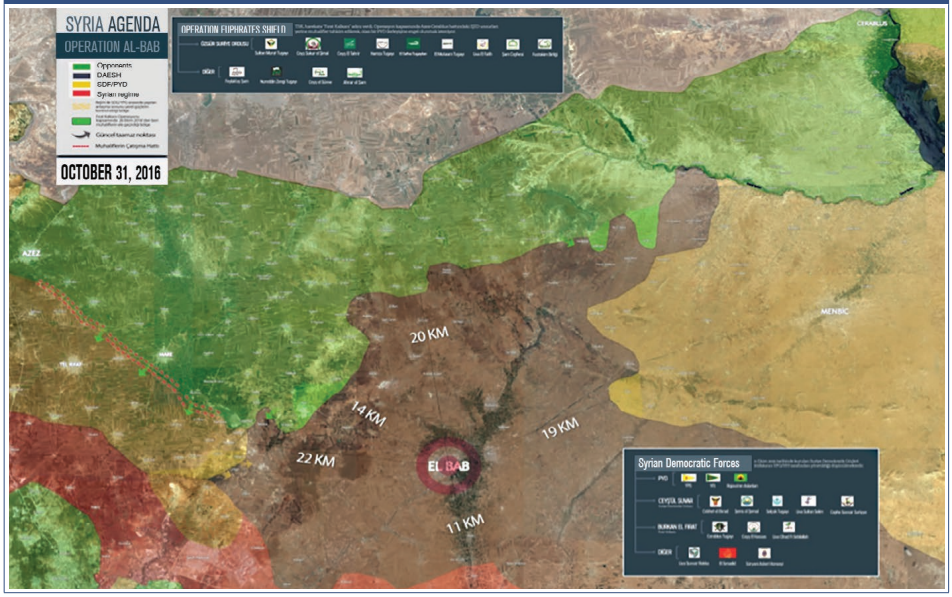
Contrary to the attitude of the anti-DAESH coalition air forces in the Jarablus sector during the initial phase of the operation, Turkey provided substantial air support to Operation Euphrates Shield components on the Mare'-Aktarin line of interception, 20 kilometers inside the border. After the capture of this line, the coalition's air support decreased and subsequently ended, causing speculations that the U.S. and Russia were trying to dictate to Turkey not to proceed any further beyond this line.

With the Dabiq takeover, the OES forces consolidated all their gains in Jarablus, Çobanbey and Mare', and began to control a 1,300-square kilometer area. In this phase between August 20 and October 16, 2016, Operation Euphrates Shield was targeted with more complicated and intensified terrorist tactics and the operation forces suffered scores of casualties.

DAESH tried not to give a great deal of importance to Dabiq after the OES forces captured the village on October 16, 2016. The group stressed that their enemies view this takeover as a psychological victory over DAESH, but that they make a mistake by thinking that DAESH cannot differentiate between this small war and Armageddon.

17. In the third issue of *Rumiyyah* magazine, dated November 2016, DAESH mentioned the loss of Dabiq.

MAP 3: AREA CONTROLLED BY OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD AS OF OCTOBER 31, 2016[18]



The Dabiq - Al-Bab Phase (October 17 - December 20, 2016)

The situation in the operation field became more complicated with the involvement of the Syrian Regime Forces and the start of YPG/PKK attacks in the Mare' region.

As a result, the OES components had to take measures on the ground against DAESH and the YPG/PKK elements, and in the air against the regime constituents.

After saving Dabiq - Mare'- Akhtarin from DAESH, the OES forces started to prepare for an advance towards al-Bab. To this end, the Turkish military staged an air strike against the YPG/PKK, killing some two hundred terrorists in the region of Maarat Umm Hawsh on October 20, 2016. With this assault, the Turkish military intended to stop the YPG/PKK's advance in the Mare' region and eliminate the threat posed by this terrorist organization. The air raid blocked the advance from the west of the YPG/PKK elements to al-Bab and prevented a possible connection of the Afrin-Manbij line via al-Bab. At this stage, the OES forces, consisting of a BTF, prepared and planned to approach al-Bab from the northwest direction via the villages of Hazwan and al-Dana. The OES components in the northern sector of the operation simultaneously began to advance towards the south from the direction of Kabasin to al-Bab, aiming to both eliminate small DAESH components and impede the advance of the YPG/PKK terrorists in Manbij to the west.

Before the Turkish BTF approached al-Bab from the northwest, it was reinforced by elite TAF elements on tactical wheeled armored *Kirpi* (Hedgehog) personnel carriers and tactical wheeled *Kobra* (Cobra) combat vehicles. The pace of

18. http://www.suriyegundemi.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/elbabson31ekim.jpg, (Access Date: August 11, 2017).

the operation was based on the maneuvering and fire power of Leopard 2A4 and M60T tanks, as M60 A3 tanks were also tasked in this phase.

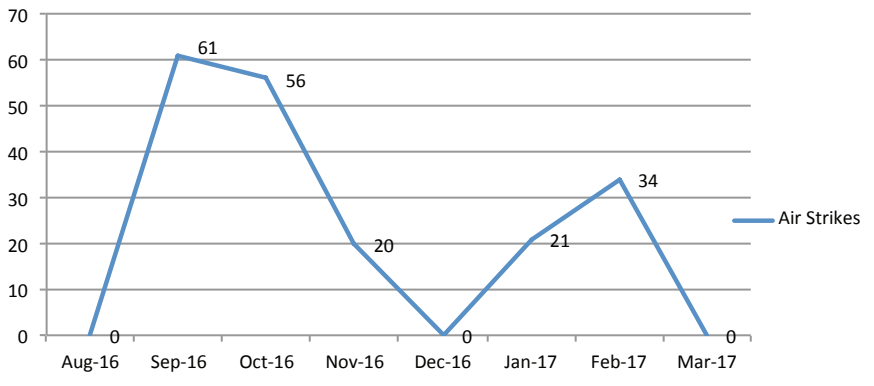
In the areas acquired during the phase of advance to al-Bab, the OES components built operation bases guarding one another. The bases were built on the principle of all-around security, but were exposed to various attacks by DAESH and Syrian regime elements. DAESH launched raids on these operation bases by using 120-milimeter mortars, anti-tank rockets, vehicle bombs and suicide bombers, backed by assault groups of 40-60 members. During the DAESH raids, the OES components experienced and tested the effectiveness of the 23-milimeter ZSU-23 weapon, which was also used by DAESH.

With the ZSU-23 weapon system, DAESH terrorists intended to facilitate the approach of assaulters involved in the incursion by pressuring foot soldiers in base regions to remain in position. Furthermore, DAESH used ZSU-23s as facilitating tactical weapons against tank positions. Hence, the group forced tanks to change their positions and, in the meantime, attempted to strike them with guided anti-tank rockets.

The Syrian regime displayed its capacity to threaten Operation Euphrates Shield on November 24, 2016. The regime forces using single engine L-39 aircrafts with the capability to fly and shoot at night hit three TAF armored vehicles (tactical wheeled armored *Kirpis* and *Kobras*) in the region of Wakah. According to the Turkish side, the regime forces attacked for two reasons: to escalate the tension between Turkey and Russia on the anniversary of Turkey's downing of the Russian war plane in November, 2015; and to push the OES forces behind the 20-kilometer depth line.

However, this did not deter the OES forces from charging forward towards al-Bab. During the forward operation, the OES forces received no air support

GRAPH 2: U.S. AIR SUPPORT (AUGUST '16 – MARCH '17)



Source: The U.S. Department of Defense

from the anti-DAESH coalition, but compensated for it by directing the Turkish Air Force to the DAESH targets in al-Bab, Suflaniyah, Bzaa, and Tadef. With limited air support and under multiple threats, the OES components managed to approach within 2-3 kilometers of al-Bab outskirts in the west, where DAESH was preparing for mobile defense tactics.

Although vanguard OES components had artillery, MLRS and mortar support, they did not have close air support to help them engage with instantaneous targets which popped up during forward operation.

The Al-Bab Phase (December 21, 2016 – March 30, 2017)

The OES forces' first attempt to capture al-Bab was on December 21, 2016 when a long and carefully crafted intruder mission targeting the hospital region on Akil Hill, west of al-Bab was carried out. A company consisting of about 150 Turkish troops, Leopard 2A4 tanks and ZMA-15s took over the hospital region under heavy DAESH fire at night. As experienced in the previous phases, the team, in a certain small area and at a moment of vulnerability, was exposed to heavy mortar, SZU-23 and anti-tank fires during deployment at the target.

With the intruder mission, the OES forces successfully warded off DAESH elements from the hill, but became a stationary target on the same hill. Low visibility range due to thick fog and DAESH's heavy suppressive fire did not allow the OES forces to adequately locate and destroy the group's assault elements. In addition to this, a bomb-laden armored BMP-1 vehicle attack by DAESH caused heavy casualties among the OES forces. In the first trial of capturing al-Bab, OES forces lost 15 armored vehicles and had to pull out under heavy DAESH fire. DAESH also suffered a high number of casualties in the same combat and transferred many terrorists, vehicles, weapons/arms, and munitions from the town of Raqqa in order to keep al-Bab under control. After about a month of recovery, reconstitution and preparation in the operation bases where they withdrew, OES forces made a new move from the north to capture the town of Suflaniyah; the effort failed but weakened DAESH's resistance.

After two weeks of hard effort and synchronized advances from the north, east and west, the OES forces took over al-Bab on February 26, 2017. The Turkish military officially completed Operation Euphrates Shield on March 30, 2017, by pushing DAESH components 40 kilometers southward and forming a buffer zone between the border of Turkey and the dreamed YPG/PKK corridor.

On account of Operation Euphrates Shield, Turkey reached its goal to create a safe zone (90 kilometers in length and 40 kilometers in depth) in the north of Syria. However, Turkey could not fully meet its objective to push YPG/PKK elements to the east of the Euphrates River due to the support offered by the United States to the YPG/PKK.

POST-OPERATION PERIOD: ESTABLISHING STABILITY

Stabilization may be defined as a process to manage and minimize key tension points which may result in the reappearance of violence and the debilitation of law and existing order.

The contribution to the formation phase of the requisite preconditions for a successful long-term development is also part of this process.[19] Stability operations encompass various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside a country in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.[20] Efforts to achieve stability are considered multidimensional. In terms of OES, such efforts were put into practice by the TAF which has launched a multidimensional building process working in coordination with both state and non-state actors.[21] Efforts to provide stability consist of joint stability functions which are basically functions for security, humanitarian assistance, and economic stability.[22]

19. "The UK Approach to Stabilization: Stabilization Unit Guidance Notes", UK Stabilization Unit, http://www.gsdrc.org/document-library/the-uk-approach-to-stabilisation-stabilisation-unit-guidance-notes, (Access Date: August 10, 2017).

20. USDOA, Field Manual 3-07, Glossary-9, (2008).

21. "Joint Chief of Staff, Joint Publication 3-07", Stability, August 3, 2016, p. 1, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_07.pdf, (Access Date: August 11, 2017).

22. "Joint Chief of Staff, Joint Publication 3-07", III-1.

SECURITY

Security activities, in general, seek to protect and control civil populations, territory, and national assets such as infrastructure or natural resources. The goal must be pragmatic; in other words, it cannot be a complete absence of violence but its reduction to tolerable levels that can be addressed by indigenous forces and allow normal patterns of life to resume. These efforts align with two broad priorities: securing host nation territory and providing civil security.[23] After the terrorist organizations were removed from Jarablus, 450 police officers, who were trained in Turkey, were deployed to the region.[24]

During the subsequent phases of the operation, FSA components were trained and joined the effort to clean mines and improvised explosives in the captured areas, while such efforts continue since the terrorist groups were removed.[25] With these trace-and-search activities, the OES forces also tried to eliminate internal dangers in the regions captured and help local forces act more professionally. For instance, after the completion of the initial phase of the operation on March 30, 2017, FSA members were trained in military camps in a region near the Turkish border.

On the other hand, the total population of Azaz has increased from 150,000 to over 300,000 including Syrians who were transferred from Syria's inner regions to the town after OES forces swept the terrorists out of Azaz. For the security of the region, a unit of 500 police officers were trained in Turkey and stationed in Azaz.[26] The tactical training of the police force in Azaz is critical for the TAF to achieve its goals and for the locals to determine their own future. Thus, after the operation terminated, TAF units have continued to provide assistance to local security forces in Azaz.[27]

When necessary, the TAF deployed additional reinforcement in some regions. These units provided support to local forces on the Azaz-Tel Rifat line as they contributed to Turkey's counterterrorism strategy against the YPG/PKK.[28] Turkey has continued to take measures against DAESH and the YPG/PKK. In order to establish security in the region of Mare' (neighboring the YPG/PKK areas) and consolidate civilian control of the town, the Turkish military implemented the Free Syrian Police model on June 4, 2017.[29]

23. "Joint Chief of Staff, Joint Publication 3-07", III -4.

24. Kerem Kocalar, "Cerablus Polislere Emanet", *Anadolu News Agency*, January 30, 2017.

25. Kemal Karagöz and Halit Süleyman, "Bab Mayınlardan Temizleniyor", *Anadolu News Agency*, February 24, 2017.

26. Rauf Maltaş, "Güven Ortamı Azez'de Nüfusu Artırdı", *Anadolu News Agency*, May 29, 2017.

27. Ali Özkök, Twitter, June 14, 2017, 2:40 p.m., https://twitter.com/A_Ozkok/status/874954633537609728, (Access Date: August 15, 2017).

28. "Türkiye Tel Rıfat'a Askeri Birlik Gönderdi", *Yeni Akit*, June 21, 2017.

29. WyvernReports, Twitter, June 4, 2017, 2:24 p.m., https://twitter.com/WyvernReports/status/87-1326667955990529, (Access Date: August 15, 2017).

The Free Syrian Police was trained in Turkey in order to achieve interior security in al-Bab where motorized police units consisting of 25 motorcycles have been formed to consolidate security in the town. Therefore, the effect of terrorism on al-Bab has gradually diminished following the town's liberation.[30] All these initiatives have not only eliminated a great deal of potential problems that could occur among locals, such as unrest, but are also expected to prevent illicit economic activities in the long run.[31]

JUDICIAL SITUATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF JUSTICE[32]

After the liberation of the region, the Stability Committee under the guidance of the Free Aleppo Governorate Council categorized the crimes committed in the vicinity as follows:

TABLE 1: TYPES AND NUMBER OF OFFENSES	
Crimes of Aggression, Attacks against Individuals	124
Serious Acquisitive Crimes	177
Moral Crimes	32
Various Crimes	85
Total	**418**

Serious acquisitive crimes take the lead - motorcycle and vehicle thefts, in particular, occur very often. Aggression towards individuals is ranked second, the most notable of which is physical assaults. On the other hand, other crimes are sub-categorized, such as fraud, forgery, and possession of narcotic drugs. Following the liberation of the region, moral crimes rate last in occurrence - kidnapping and harassment fall under this category. Information obtained from the Court of Jarablus and the Office of the Prosecutor reveals that the above data covers the time period from the liberation until July 2017.

Courts play an effective role in the establishment of justice. Relevant laws in the Syrian Constitution were enacted in 1949 and made harmonious with Islamic Law as well. Courts in the region have become more functional thanks to the initiatives of the Turkish Ministry of Justice since Operation Euphrates Shield.

The Islamic Law (Sharia) courts and military courts were abolished on March 5, 2017, and regular and penal courts were set up in their place. Thus, the first ever independent and regular court was established in the region.[33]

30. Halit Süleyman, "Bab'ın Güvenliği Motorize Ekiplere Emanet", *Anadolu News Agency*, August 4, 2017.

31. "Joint Chief of Staff, Joint Publication 3-07", p. 4.

32. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Jarablus Court Report*, p 1.

33. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Jarablus Court Report*, p. 2.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Sustainable economy is characterized by macroeconomic stability. Although security and governance reforms remain priorities, economic growth increases the likelihood and sustainability of the operation's success.[34] After Jarablus was cleansed of DAESH under Turkey's auspices, the utility services and basic needs of the local population have been addressed. A project to erect 150 lighting poles in five camps and paving sandstones in al-Iman Camp has been completed. A similar project continues at Ahl al-Sham Camp as well. In addition, the improved safety for pedestrians, and the safe entry and exit of staple foods have invigorated the region's trade.[35]

Furthermore, only police officers officiate in streets after local law enforcements were consolidated by Turkey. Therefore, illicit activities or groups have been averted.[36] In addition to the attempts for food production, agricultural activities have recommenced in fields after the clearing of land mines and explosives following DAESH's removal from the region. Farmers have sown wheat, barley, lentils and chickpeas.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

Infra- and suprastructure services for a sound sustainable economic and social life are one of the topics that Turkey treats with great sensitivity. In the post-operation period, works on improving the water supply network, asphalting the roads,[37] and street lighting have been accelerated.[38]

Although the population of Jarablus dropped to about 3,500 due to the atrocities by DAESH, it has increased to 50,000 with the latest returns after Turkey's Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality provided basic needs, utility and health services, while schools have recommenced educational activities.[39] In terms of environmental cleaning services, Turkey assisted the operation's stability phase by sending dump tractors to 13 divisions in Jarablus and waste collection trucks to eight divisions; placing 600 garbage dumpsters; providing heavy duty vehicles, such as Leopard and bulldozers; building 138 lavatories;

34. "Joint Chief of Staff, Joint Publication 3-07", III-30.

35. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Public Services Status*, p. 2.

36. "Cerablus Kötü Günleri Geride Bıraktı", YouTube, February 15, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf4KBAc4yTU&feature=youtu, (Access Date: August 15, 2017).

37. WyvernReports, Twitter, May 31, 2017, 5:44a.m., https://twitter.com/WyvernReports/status/869746257136422913, (Access Date: August 20, 2017).

38. WyvernReports, Twitter, June 1, 2017, 12:20a.m., https://twitter.com/WyvernReports/status/870027157371801600, (Access Date: August 20, 2017).

39. Kerem Kocalar, "Cerablus Hayatlarına 'Kalkan Oldu'", *Anadolu News Agency*, July 6, 2017.

supplying sanitary packages;[40] and various vehicles for possible disasters. Turkey also has sent fire trucks, bulldozers and dump trucks to Çobanbey and Jarablus.[41] Turkey also supplied generators for 25 water pumping centers in Azaz, Jarablus, al-Bab, and Çobanbey.[42]

Turkey has not only attempted to bring physical order to the region but has also repaired a vast number of mosques to recover social texture and establish spiritual order. According to the Religious Affairs Foundation (*Diyanet)* of Turkey Director General Mustafa Tutkun, Turkey has undertaken the maintenance and repair works of about 110 mosques in Syria, most of which are already completed and open to worship.[43] Again, the Islamic tradition of *muqabala* – reading/listening/reciting the Quran to one another during Ramadan– was performed in Azaz after the OES forces removed the terrorists.[44] In this regard, the normalization of locales cleansed of terrorist groups has brought back social order.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Meeting the needs for water, food, shelter, and health are among the leading elements of humanitarian assistance. In this context, non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups should determine priorities in the area and find solutions immediately. Subsequently, the improvement of institutions and the locals' living conditions are also important. The security of civilians depends on meeting basic necessities.

Food, personal security, and health are basic human needs.[45] In this regard, the elimination of food shortage, shelter, health and education services remain the priorities in humanitarian assistance. Moreover, NGOs in the region have also created employment. A total of 1,144 people work for civil society projects and a monthly subsidy of 175 U.S. Dollars per family is paid by such organizations.[46] According to President of Turkish Red Crescent Kerem Kınık in early May, 2017, 6.5 million people were displaced, and Turkey has provided humanitarian assistance to 4.5 million of those who have been affected by domestic migration (including people who migrated to the OES region).[47]

40. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, Public Services Status, p. 2.

41. Wyvern Reports, Twitter, July 19, 2017, 4:00 p.m., https://twitter.com/WyvernReports/status/887658426163179520, (Access Date: August 20, 2017).

42. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Public Services Status*, p. 1.

43. "TDV Suriye'deki Camileri Onarıyor", *Anadolu News Agency*, May 26, 2017.

44. Rauf Maltaş, "Türkiye'nin Azez'de Onardığı Camide Mukabele Geleneği", *Anadolu News Agency*, May 30, 2017.

45. "Joint Chief of Staff, Joint Publication 3-07", III-22.

46. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Public Services Status*, p. 5-6.

47. Bayram Altuğ, ""Türkiye Sığınmacılar Konusunda İnsancıl Bir Duruş Gösterdi"", *Anadolu News Agency*, May 6, 2017.

FOOD SUPPLY

Deprivation of food directly affects people's health and the levels of wellness in a region. Turkey has transferred a large number of food supplies to the region since the early days of the operation, while towards its end, various NGOs have begun to open bakeries in Jarablus.[48]

TABLE 2: FOOD ASSISTANCE ACCORDING TO THE STABILITY ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE

Flour	Bread	Meals	Food Packages
134 Tons	4,450 Packages per day	4,500 Servings per day	100 Families/1,200 per year

SHELTERING SERVICES

Many people either have lost or been forced out of their houses as a result of the devastation caused by skirmishes. Some of the aggrieved have moved to safe zones inside Syria, while others had to migrate to Turkey. In this context, Turkey has increased assistance, particularly since March 30, 2017, in order to bring the settlement areas into order, rebuild the future of the region's people and strengthen social ties.

TABLE 3: SHELTERING ASSISTANCE ACCORDING TO THE STABILITY ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE

	Houses	Shelters	Tents
Construction			50
Repair	125 (Azaz)	3 (Azaz)	

The final expansion was realized on June 12, 2017 at Zoğara (Zoghara) Camp in the west of Jarablus. The camp was built in two months to host thousands of displaced individuals from Al-Waer.[49] On the same day, Turkey and Qatar built a container city for refugees in the south of Bab Laymoon, across from Elbeyli, Kilis.[50]

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

Since the early phases of the operation, health services have been provided to the majority of the population in Jarablus.[51] Moreover, a hospital to care for approximately 50,000 people has been built with operation rooms, medical teams, and equipment.[52]

48. "Turkiye'den Cerablus'a Ekmek Fırını", *Anadolu News Agency*, December 25, 2016.

49. Qalaat al Mudiq, Twitter, June 12, 2017, 3:22 p.m., https://twitter.com/QalaatAlMudiq/status/874240474952990720, (Access Date: August 20, 2017).

50. Cemal, Twitter, June 12, 2017, 2:53 p.m., https://twitter.com/Acemal71/status/874233088691367936, (Access Date: August 20, 2017).

51. Kerem Kocalar, "Cerablus'ta Nüfusun Yarısı Kadar Poliklinik Hizmeti Verildi", *Anadolu News Agency*, November 16, 2016.

52. Kerem Kocalar, "Cerablus'taki Hastanede Ameliyatlar da Yapılabilecek", *Anadolu News Agency*, November 17, 2016.

Some of the district hospitals have technical equipment and tomography machines.[53] It should be noted that Jarablus is a central point to which people living in PYD-controlled Manbij come to seek protection from the bad weather conditions in winter.[54] Pregnant women in Jarablus prefer hospitals built by the Turkish Ministry of Health.[55] The UMKE provided medical assistance at Jarablus hospitals for a while.[56] In addition, the AFAD remains active in the region. In this scope, three doctors with different specializations have been requested by the AFAD to work at Mavi Ay (Blue Moon) Hospital in Syria.[57] [59]

TABLE 4: MEDICAL ASSISTANCE ACCORDING TO DATA BY THE STABILITY COMMITTEE[58]

	Al-Bab	Jarablus	Bezaa	Azaz	Zoghara	General Works
Ambulance		1				
Medical Material						1 Container
Community Health Center Rehabilitation			1	s		
Hospital Restoration	1	1				
Mobile Clinic					1	
Dialysis Center Restoration				1	1	

FIGURE 1: MOBILE HEALTH TRUCKS SENT TO AL-BAB[59]

53. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Public Services Status*, p. 5.

54. Kerem Kocalar, "Çocuklarına Şifayı Cerablus'taki Hastanede Buldu", *Anadolu News Agency*, December 29, 2016.

55. . Kerem Kocalar, "Gözlerini 'Güvenli Liman' Cerablus'ta Dünyaya Açtılar", *Anadolu News Agency*, January 6, 2017.

56. Hatice Şenses Kurukız, "Fırat Kalkanı Harekatına Katılan UMKE Ekibi Yurda Döndü", *Anadolu News Agency*, January 19, 2017.

57. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Public Services Status*, p. 5.

58. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Public Services Status*.

59. Erdal Turkoğlu, "Türkiye'den Bab'a Sağlık Hizmeti", *Anadolu News Agency*, May 11, 2017.

In the regions cleansed of DAESH by the OES forces, the Turkish Red Crescent continues to provide a variety of educational and health services along with food and aid in kind. The Turkish Red Crescent General Director Mehmet Güllüoğlu has indicated that in addition to such services, hospitals in Syria should also be supported, and due to the ongoing crisis, people cannot receive the health services they need, thereby characterizing the types of future/prospective assistance.[60] Medical assistance in the region is also provided by Turkey in the form of mobile health trucks operated by ANDA *Kardeşe Vefa* Association in the al-Bab region.[61]

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Mechanisms to find solutions to old problems should be developed by institutions in order to integrate societal structures. In order to consolidate social peace and ties in the region, Turkey devotes a great deal of importance to educational services.

One of the most beautiful examples of this is the transformation of prisons and torture chambers in Jarablus into schools so as the youth, who have long been deprived of education, are once again offered educational services.[62] After the liberation of Jarablus, another contribution of the operation to people in the region has been the reopening of schools previously closed by DAESH.

FIGURE 2: MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

60. İzzet Mazı, "Suriye'deki Hastanelere Destek Çağrısı", *Anadolu News Agency*, May 5, 2017.

61. "Türkiye'den Bab'a Sağlık Hizmeti".

62. Mehmet Akif Parlak, "Cerablus'un En Büyük Okulu Tekrar Eğitime Başladı", *Anadolu News Agency*, November 20, 2016.

Schools damaged by DAESH have been restored and prepared for service with Turkey's support. Al-Bab Local Council Member for Education Ahmed Kırız has stated that Turkey has undertaken the restoration of nine schools.[63] Hence, teachers in Jarablus continue to offer educational services.[64]

To this end, the teachers in 25 schools in Sawran and 52 schools in Akhtarin and in its vicinity have been paid their salaries by Turkey .[65] After the restoration of damaged school buildings in Jarablus and the nearby settlement areas by Turkey, children have returned to schools.[66]

To prevent any setback in religious education services, *Diyanet* and AFAD have signed a joint protocol.[67] As life gradually returns to normal in Jarablus, children have begun to receive education in schools opened by Turkey Maarif (Education) Foundation. In Maarif schools, education is in Arabic, but education in Turkish and English as a second language is also offered.[68] In each region purged of terrorism, MEB continues to support the improvement of schools.[69]

In terms of emergency aid and medical education, doctors coming from Hama and Idlib to Gaziantep, Turkey, on July 20, 2017 participated in the World

FIGURE 3: ASSISTANCE SERVICES

63. Halit Süleyman and Selen Temizer, "Bab'da Eğitim Seferberliği", *Anadolu News Agency*, May 22, 2017.
64. Mehmet Akif Parlak, "Cerabluslu Öğretmenler Artık Mutlu", *Anadolu News Agency*, December 8, 2017.
65. The Free Syrian Governorate Council Stability Committee, *Public Services Status*, p. 2.
66. Sinan Uslu, "Cerablus'ta Hayat Normale Dönüyor", *Anadolu News Agency*, February 23, 2017.
67. Aynur Ekiz, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı ile AFAD İşbirliğine Gitti", *Anadolu News Agency*, December 23, 2016.
68. Abdullah Doğan, "Cerabluslu Çocuklar Türkçe de Öğrenecek", *Anadolu News Agency*, January 4, 2017.
69. Özkan Beyer, "Türkiye Suriye'nin Geleceğine de Destek Veriyor", *Anadolu News Agency*, April 10, 2017.

Health Organization (WHO) training course entitled "How to Deal with Chemical Weapon Attacks."[70]

The number of Syrian refugees who have returned from Turkey to the region that was liberated by OES has reached 46,750 as of July 26, 2017.[71] The stability model applied in the same area is expected to help more Syrian refugees return home from Turkey. The political and legal infrastructures in the region have not yet been fully established.

Turkey, as a whole, offers assistance to courthouses, prisons, police stations and checkpoints. The transfer of local forces to other conflict areas and the deficiencies in social and political infrastructures in the regions that have been cleansed of terrorist organizations create difficulties in establishing judicial order.[72] Turkey should continue to contribute to the area of political governance in order to achieve complete stability in the future.

70. Henry Leconte, Twitter, July 20, 2017,1:04 p.m., https://twitter.com/henrylec1/status/887976536585912320, (Access Date: August 20, 2017).

71. "Suriye'ye Dönüşler Sürüyor", *Anadolu News Agency*, July 26, 2017.

72. "Cerablus'ta Yeni Dönem Başlıyor", *Vatan*, January 21, 2017.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE OPERATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

The TAF stands to greatly benefit from the lessons learned from the phases and consequences of OES, and must spend a great deal of efforts to improve its operational capabilities. Above all, Operation Euphrates Shield has proven that the TAF can perform a joint offensive operation with the FSA.

Turkey tested its capacity to perform the operation together with irregular local partners and discovered certain inadequacies. Discrepancies between the implementations of determining the target and fire support were noted and capabilities at this point were improved. Obviously, close air support was necessary in the face of irregular and suddenly appearing targets. Also, better cooperation between armored vehicles and light infantry and commando units was certainly needed.

To eliminate the weakness in deployment at the target, new tactics were needed. Marksmanship for irregular terrorist targets in close proximity should be doctrinized separately from that of conventional tank artillery and ZMA, and turned into an independent subject of shooting drills. Furthermore, a sufficient number of anti-tank units should be equipped and tasked effectively in urban warfare. National resources should be used for the development of air defense and UAV platforms along with anti-tank weapons. Operation Euphrates Shield was not only a military operation conducted against two separate terrorist organizations, but was also a political operation against state-level actors who complicated the very nature of being allies and/or opponents. In addition to the above, further lessons that should be learned, as a whole, from Operation Euphrates Shield are as follows:

- *Threat Assessment Depending on (Terrorist) Organization.* In order to develop methods to fight against similar asymmetric threats in the future, an in-depth analysis of the methodological approach and behavioral patterns of terrorist organizations seems imperative for achieving security and stability in the post-operation period. The train-and-equip policy of the U.S. towards the YPG/PKK, in particular, causes a substantial transformation in the dynamics of terrorist organizations in Turkey's nearby territories. In this regard, Turkey, not only on a tactical level but also on a strategic level, should scrutinize the details of combat practices of non-state armed groups eager to permanently stay in the region, and study what, where and how enemies might act in a possible fight against them.
- *Public Diplomacy.* It appears that to fight against DAESH's information operations is vitally important. Obviously, methods of public diplomacy should be applied against the group for its continued anti-Turkey propaganda. Thus, the authorized institutions of the Republic of Turkey must build the capacity to dominate and maintain a reliable information base about developments in the theater of war. With this, Turkey will have an opportunity to offer reliable information to the public and international community against the propagandas of terrorist organizations.
- *Security Sector's Adaptation to New Threats*. It is seen, once again, that the TAF should be subject to reforms considering the gradually increasing hybrid threats in the region. The restructuring of task forces and a structural change in the military's mindset are imperative at this point. It may be assessed that in Operation Euphrates Shield soldiers - tank crews in particular - were trained against conventional enemies rather than asymmetric or hybrid threats. This could be one of the important reasons behind the loss of armored vehicles during the operation. However, other vital institutions of the security sector should also be subject to reform.
- *Strategic Flexibility in Diplomacy*. Diplomatic conciliation, or agreements, is clearly essential in the execution or conduct of serious military operations, such as OES. The effectiveness of consensus, reached with the countries that become protectors of the host country where operations are carried out, was validated during Operation Euphrates Shield. Accordingly, Turkey needs to have the capability and flexibility to work simultaneously with different actors, whose interests are in conflict, in regards to blocking the formation of a terrorist corridor by the YPG/PKK. Pragmatic behavior seems necessary for strategic flexibility in diplomacy.
- *Timing in Military Operation*. A military operation should be carried out at the most suitable time and under the most favorable conditions to eliminate

threats. Inappropriate timing, or delay, of military operations means higher cost and delays in removing threats. In this context, OES may be evaluated as a delayed operation.

- *Counterterrorism Based on Local Population*. The importance of developing a reaction strategy by locals against a revolt has been realized. Concordantly, the approval/acknowledgement of an actor, who will execute the operation in a target area, by local kinsmen is extremely important. Thus, it was seen that Turkey experienced difficulty in receiving required intelligence and logistic support from locals. Having connections and creating networks among local people enables activities of reconnaissance, surveillance and intelligence during a war, and makes substantial contributions to capacity building after a war.
- *Tactical Use and Modernization of Armored Units*. The tanks deployed in the initial phase of the operation were old. Their armors were deficient and they did not have reactive armors which reduce the possible risks posed by Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM), Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) and Improvised Explosives (IE). However, using modern equipment is not a prerequisite for reaching strategic goals; existing insufficiencies, however, are believed to have caused the loss of armored vehicles. During OES, disadvantages derived from the failure of tanks' tactical deployment in the battle field rather than by structural technological problems. Nonetheless, the modernization of the army is indispensable in the face of possible asymmetric threats in the future. The development of simulation systems realistically reflecting the pace of an operation, the interception distance and the types of threat will be useful for setting the standards of realistic reaction in the theater of combat.
- *Operational Area of UAVs and Their Functionality.* Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), as part of the TAF's inventory of indigenous and national weapons, offered the most critical support during Operation Euphrates Shield. By evaluating their performance in Turkey's counterterrorism efforts, UAVs have been integrated into the system as part of the TAF's strategy to "search-find-destroy," while they also function to avert attempts of infiltration along the border and help collect video/image intelligence. Considering that UAV systems are abundantly used in the Syrian air space, indigenous UAVs are thought to contribute to advancing the capabilities of the TAF components in terms of reconnaissance, surveillance and operation flexibility. In this context, indigenous and national technology during warfare is evaluated to be of strategic importance.
- *Local Armed Actors* Owing to OES, Turkey created an alternative integrated model for joint operation planning by forming an alliance with local opposition groups in Syria. The goal of the model was to reinforce gains by back-

ing the efforts of more than one collaborator. Therefore, the role of military support was highlighted even in non-military activities. However, the lack of reliable local reconnaissance elements and coordination in the operations performed with the FSA forces reveal a lot about the weaknesses of this model. To begin with, considering the components of the FSA forces, it should be underlined that their traditional culture of war is different from that of the TAF. The core of the operation being performed on a terrain different from that of Turkey, linguistic differences between Turkish and the predominant regional language, as well as diverse regional cultural dynamics increased the dependency of the TAF on the FSA forces. In this respect, necessary steps should be taken to improve motivation and performance of proxy forces employed in the fight against hybrid threats.

- *Effective Delivery of Humanitarian Aid.* A tight control mechanism is required for effective delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. It has been assessed that certain individuals or groups retain the aid, do not offer it to the public and even sell it for profit. Therefore, control processes should be devised to prevent the exploitation of humanitarian aid by such authorities in the chaos of war. In addition, in the delivery of humanitarian aid, Turkish officials in charge should eliminate middlemen and have more direct contact with the local people.
- *Conformity among Intelligence Institutions and Effectiveness of Intelligence.* Although an in-depth analysis is not a realistic approach as we do not have access to current intelligence, certain deductions, can be drawn; the first should be related to MİT and the Turkish General Staff. The reason is, contrary to the assumption or the claim, as far as its area of duty is concerned, MİT was not obliged to plan and execute the operation, but to collect intelligence, generate analyses and distribute them to the relevant places. Therefore, away from MİT's authority over external operations, each and every single phase of Operation Euphrates Shield was conducted under the command and control mechanism of the General Staff. The key point here is not institutions stepping into each other's areas of jurisdiction, but, on the contrary, the need for their strong cooperation and harmonious coordination. Throughout OES, real-time and actionable intelligence sharing and cooperation were witnessed among institutions.
- By definition, intelligence contains many different subdisciplines from Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) and Combat Intelligence (COMINT) to Electronic Intelligence (ELINT), Foreign Instrumental Signal Intelligence (FISINT), Image Intelligence (IMINT), Measurement and Signature Intelligence (MASINT), Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)

and Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT). The measurement of success in counterterrorism requires a discussion in each and every one of these disciplines. From this perspective, Turkey's intelligence activities in Syria are successful in some areas, while success in others is limited. For instance, success has been made in HUMINT owing to people's support and in SIGINT and IMINT owing to technical infrastructure. In this sense, military intelligence executed in the care of the TAF seems quite successful.

- Although the TAF was alleged to have shown signs of substantial intelligence weakness concerning the failed coup attempt by the Fetullah Gülen Terror Organization (FETO) on July 15, 2016, there was, in reality, little infiltration by FETO members in the combat operations segments as the FETO infiltration seems mostly to have been condensed in recruitment and counterintelligence activities. From this aspect, it was witnessed that FETO tried to actualize plans and projects via staff officers (2% of the officers were FETO members) rather than via intelligence personnel. Considering the accumulated experience and expertise of the security forces, the technological infrastructure of intelligence still needs to be improved. In the medium term, the scope of technical intelligence activities should be greatly expanded. In this sense, Turkey needs a technology-based doctrine to push intelligence techniques to the fore and the capabilities to put them into effect.

TURKEY'S FUTURE ROAD MAP

Many different dynamics pertain to the capabilities regarding perception of threat, security environment and the strategic road map of Turkey in the post-OES period. At this point, Turkey's military alternatives and strategic forecasts regarding its policy in Syria are being tested by multi-dimensional counter-strategic moves. Although Turkey has various military alternatives against the PKK in the north of Syria, the methods that Turkey can apply in the near future to overcome the difficulties that are triggered by this terrorist organization will be of critical importance in the upcoming period. Turkey has accomplished its priority goals in the scope of OES: it removed the DAESH threat from its borders and hampered the PKK's westward territorial expansion and attempts to position terrorist elements in the area stretching from Kobani to Afrin.

Hereupon, Turkey's main goal should be to target the PKK by either direct or indirect interventions and not allow a *fait accompli* in the north of Syria after the removal of DAESH. However, the military and political engagements that Ankara will embark upon, for this purpose, are in the teeth of certain restrictions.

At this point, Turkey's strategy in the short-run is to push the YPG forces from Manbij to the east of the Euphrates River, to concentrate on securing its gains and, later on, to establish a structure of governance in these areas under the FSA's political and military ruling. Also, Afrin and Tel Rifat in the west of the Euphrates River are among the targets. If the PKK insists on materializing its geopolitical project of building a so-called "PKK belt" in the north of Syria, the Turkish military could directly target the PKK-controlled regions. Although this is possible considering the military and political gains of Turkey from OES, An-

kara could switch to a new strategy to cope with certain difficulties if the ongoing disaccord between Turkey and the U.S. remains in place. More importantly, such a move is likely to cause a serious fight between Turkey and the PKK, and may result in new frictions between Ankara, Washington, and Moscow.

Furthermore, Turkey can face pressure with the justification that its unilateral military intervention may harm the counter-DAESH operation to root the terrorist organization out of Syria. At this stage, Turkey will not go for a direct military intervention if the PKK withdraws and leaves Manbij to Turkey-backed FSA components. The likelihood of this scenario depends on the nature of the future relations between the Washington administration and the PKK in Syria after DAESH.

If the rift regarding the PKK persists between Ankara and Washington, Turkey may adopt different strategies to deter the PKK threat in the region. This could manifest into an indirect intervention by Turkey that would move anti-PKK alternative forces into the areas under its control. The first option here is to mobilize anti-PKK opponent Kurdish forces. Considering that the PKK is trying to take control of land in the north of Iraq, the group together with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) is likely to maintain a joint agenda concerning the PKK. Turkey's second option for an indirect military intervention is the military and political organization of anti-PKK Arab forces in the PKK-controlled territories. According to the reports released by international human rights institutions, the PYD/PKK-run administration pressures Syrian non-Kurds and opponent Kurds to leave their houses and, in this manner, consolidates its hegemony in the region.[73] Such developments may cause the U.S. to revise its relation with the PYD/PKK.

The confidence crisis and strategic divergence between Turkey and the U.S take the lead among factors that shape how Turkey will read threats in its future road map. Although it is debatable whether or not it was planned as part of OES, one of Turkey's goals in the short, medium and long run was to perform a joint Raqqa operation with the U.S. However, no agreement between the two administrations on the subject has been reached, an indication that Turkey has not yet managed to fully push the PKK to the sidelines.[74] Keeping in mind that U.S. policies on the PKK do not form on the basis of a temporary partnership, it would not be wrong to say that Turkey's military engagement alternatives in the region depend on its accord with the United States.

Yet another factor concerning the difficulties in the post-OES period is inter-alliance relations on the ground. The PKK is positioned in the west and the east, and the Syrian regime is in the south of the region controlled by Turkey-backed

73. . "Under Kurdish Rule: Abuses in PYD-run Enclaves of Syria", *Human Rights Watch*, (2014), https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/syria0614_kurds_ForUpload.pdf, (Access Date: August 11, 2017).

74. "Beyaz Saray'da Tarihi Trump-Erdoğan Görüşmesi Gerçekleşti", *Sabah*, May 16, 2017.

FSA. The PKK is protected by Russia in the west and by the U.S. in the east to a degree that the situation will determine Turkey's priorities in Syria from this time onwards. Turkey should agree with at least one, either Russia or the U.S., in order to launch a new campaign beyond the regions saved by OES.

If one of these two important actors retires from backing the PKK, or protects it less in certain areas, Turkey, then, might be able to establish an environment to launch a new military operation against this terrorist organization.[75] This, however, is directly related to how and to what extent Turkey's position will be shaped in the general course of the Syrian civil war. Such a priority might even require a redefinition of the holistic picture of its Syrian policy. Ankara may seek a radical change in its Syrian policy if other regional actors against Bashar al-Assad withdraw their support from the Syrian opposition and if Turkey sees the protection of Syria's territorial integrity under threat.

In particular, after OES, if Turkey successfully follows the diplomatic ground that was laid with the Astana process for cease-fire in Syria and the declaration of de-escalation zones,[76] it may work more and closely with Russia and Iran for its goal to protect Syrian territorial integrity.

At this stage, Turkey's military presence in the OES region will continue in the short and the medium run. In this respect, the most effective and preferable policy for Turkey is to transform this experience into a point of attraction by creating a government model and social order that sets a precedent in the land rescued by OES.

By doing so, Turkey will increase its reliability in possible prospective military operations and gradually weaken the areas in which the PKK conducts propaganda and tries to gain legitimacy.

If Operation Euphrates Shield has reached its natural borders today, this is the result of the current status of the battle field. That is to say, it may not be permanent. Taking into account the course of the Syrian civil war, territory control seems to be shifting among the actors in combat. Thus, Turkey will not pull out just because the operation has ended. Moreover, Turkey will continue using any possible means to pressure the PKK in the region. Particularly in light of the assessment that the control of a vast area of land, despite appearing as an advantage, has turned into a weakness, Turkey is most likely to develop various punitive strategies against the PKK.

The course of Turkey's relations with Russia and especially with Iran in Syria has - and expectedly so - a great impact on the country's efforts to fight against

75. "Erdoğan'dan Suriye Mesajı: Hançeri Genişleteceğiz", *İnternethaber*, August 5, 2017, http://www.internethaber.com/erdogandan-suriye-mesaji-hanceri-genisletecegiz-1798236h.htm, (Access Date: August 11, 2017).

76. "Astana Süreci Zarar Gçrmemeli", *Milliyet*, April 9, 2017.

terrorism in the regions of Tel Afar, Sinjar and Mosul in Iraq. To set up a whole defense line against terrorist threats on its south, Turkey should read the Syrian and Iraqi policies as a whole, inasmuch as the actors fighting in these two countries, i.e. Syria and Iraq, are either the same or look very alike. The area that Turkey controls owing to OES will pose a threat to the Syrian regime in the long run – regardless of the identity of the regime's leader. The OES region has the potential to become a stepping stone for Turkey's strategic engagements even in regional-scale and other political options in Syria.

UNCERTAINTIES AND NEW AREAS OF STRUGGLE IN THE POST-DAESH PERIOD IN SYRIA

One of the other main factors shaping Turkey's road map is the fact that the direction of the Syrian crisis is full of uncertainties in the post-DAESH period.

The probability of a deepening Syrian crisis after the Raqqa operation is based on three basic dynamics which are intertwined as they are shaped simultaneously by local, regional and global-scale competition.

The first of these dynamics is that Syria exhibits an exorbitantly Balkanized look and the conflict environment, in consequence, gives way to the emergence of many actors on different fronts. These actors compete with each other and experience local, regional and global interests of conflict. The number of state and non-state armed actors forms equations which are extremely difficult to manage with respect to interests of conflict, ideology and types of alliances among the actors. The OES region, controlled by Turkey after being cleansed of DAESH, is a relatively small area on the map of Syria; however, with its multi-dimensional military and strategic complications, it presents a striking example that shows the crystallized state of the abovementioned phenomenon.

Turkey has ensured its border security after removing DAESH and clearly announced that its goal is to prevent the connection of the PKK corridor stretching along the Turkish-Syrian border from the north-east tip of Syria to the west. There are numerous sides to the military, strategic and tactical confrontations that began as soon as Turkey made its announcement. A stark example of this is the fight that took place among the Assad regime, Russia, the Opposition, Turkey, the U.S. and the PKK, for the field control of Manbij, Tel Rifat and Afrin. Although Turkey and the U.S. apparently work together as NATO allies to solve the Syrian problem in general (on the issues such as the fight against DAESH, the train-equip program and the Syria talks), this example demonstrates how the Washington administration's persistent support of the PKK in the east of Syria tears apart the holistic picture of the Syrian crisis drawn by the two actors and pushes the two allies into opposite corners.

Geographical dividedness has caused an excessively fragmented map, one that is almost impossible to manage, charged with bringing stability to the country after DAESH. Considering the existing situation and the post-DAESH period, none of the actors will be willing to abandon the area under its control. With the assistance of the U.S., the PKK will try to secure its expansion on the east-west line and wish to attain a sociopolitical and economic depth via Raqqa.

In an attempt to create its own sphere of influence via the PKK, the U.S. is thought to want to form an area of influence in the east of the Euphrates River under its control at its own discretion. As a matter of fact, the head of the U.S. Special Forces Command Raymond Thomas overtly stated that he had instructed the YPG "to change its name" and the group renamed itself "Syrian Democratic Forces."[77] This indicates that Washington has not chosen only the PKK as a tactical partner in the fight against DAESH.

In the near future, it will be plausible to talk about various political and military positions against the PKK-U.S. venture to be adopted by many more actors including Turkey, anti-PKK Kurds, Arabs who hate the PKK, and the Assad regime. In such an equation, the ways in which the Washington administration may possibly cope with the issue of reining back Iran and the Iran-linked militia, one of its second priorities in Syria, should also be noted.

Perhaps the most sensitive part of this issue is the likelihood of gradual fragmentation of the Opposition-controlled area squeezed in the northwest of the country, which may subsequently and naturally lead to a more complicated state of affairs. The Opposition is already fragmented within, lacks a holistic strategy, while regional actors fail to come up with a joint strategy. Such problems transform the dividedness in question into a vital problem.

On the other hand, it should also be considered that Russia will be vigilant to remain effective on local, regional and global levels and protect, foremost, its own sphere and military presence in Syria. To that end, Russia will not give up on a region that it will constitute the center of gravity in Syria, and will back the Assad regime in order to protect that center of gravity. Reciprocally, the Assad regime will yield more area to the pro-regime militia, Iran in particular, in order to sustain this struggle.

It is also assessed that the situation, described above, would escalate the tension between Russia and the U.S. in Syria. Considering that the military effectiveness of the Assad regime is dismal without Russia and Iran, any initiative of the regime and Iran targeting the PKK, and therefore the U.S., may change the extent of the crisis between Moscow and Washington. Thus, it may be thought that in the post-DAESH period in particular, Syria will be divided into four segments,

77. "U.S. General Told Syria's YPG: 'You Have Got to Change Your Brand'", *Reuters*, July 22, 2017.

each of which will run a higher risk of conflict. In this respect, the driving forces in shaping Syria will be Turkey and the Opposition in the north; the Assad regime, Russia and Iran in the west; other opponents in the south; and the U.S. and the PKK in the north-east.

There is another equally important dynamic that will deepen the Syrian crisis in the post-DAESH period and has the potential to directly affect the three-dimensional conflict equation described above: the continuation of the stated geographical fragmentation in Syria involving many actors may lead to further breaking down of alliances among actors and make it impossible to piece Syria together again, thus resulting in a new and even worse cycle of conflict in the post-DAESH period.

The critical point here is that the four main influence and control areas may turn into a full-blown showdown stage pitting the actors against each other and among themselves at local, regional and global levels. If the Euphrates River is taken as a strategical line of cleavage in the Syrian crisis, on both banks of the river, the number of actors who are trying to survive by controlling certain geographical areas is considerably high.

In fact, further break ups among these actors regarding the future of the ideological and political order will determine the risk of conflict and the order of the post-DAESH period.

The third dynamic behind the probability of the deepening of the Syrian crisis in Raqqa after DAESH is the lack of a political plan for the future of the PKK region, starting with the areas cleansed of DAESH. It remains unclear who will govern Raqqa and how. A similar situation is also true for Syria as a whole. On the one hand, a consensus has been reached among Turkey, Russia and Iran for a cease-fire; on the other, the formation and sustainability of de-escalation zones remains in act and the conflict is likely to continue due to the fact that there are certain groups who control some of these areas.

In conclusion, these three factors cannot be determined solely by local dynamics in Syria, and they invite the probability of a systemic crisis and conflict reflecting both regional and international power struggles. In this case, it is more obvious than ever that Turkey should make its strategic calculations very carefully. If security crises cease to be conventional and become structural, then Turkey will have to try much harder in the near future. The deepening continuation of the Syrian crisis in the post-DAESH period may burden Turkey with additional costs.

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Associate Professor Murat Yeşiltaş completed his BA and MA at the Department of International Relations of Sakarya University, in 2003 and 2009 respectively. He earned his PhD at the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Marmara University in 2012 with a thesis titled *Locating Turkey: Geopolitical Mentality and the Army in Turkey*. Yeşiltaş was a visiting researcher at the Department of European Studies and International Politics of Lancaster University between 2008 and 2009. He was a visiting researcher at Virginia Tech's Institute of Government and International Relations in 2010-2011. Currently, Yeşiltaş is an associate professor in the Middle East Institute at Sakarya University. He also holds the position of director of security studies at SETA Foundation, Ankara, Turkey. Yesiltas's current research interests include international security, terrorism, military studies, ethnic and religious radicalization, non-state conflicts, and Kurdish affairs. At the moment, he is working on the following research projects: The Rise of Kurdish Geopolitical Space, Border Security in the Middle East, and The New Regional Security Project in the Middle East (NRSP). His recent books include *Türkiye Dünyanın Neresinde? Hayali Coğrafyalar, Çarpışan Anlatılar* (edit (Koç Ünivesitesi Yayınları, 2015) *Jeopolitik Zihniyet ve Türkiye'de Ordu* (Kadim, 2016), *Non-State Military Actors in the Middle East: Geopolitics,Strategy and Ideology* (edit) (Palgrave McMillan, 2017).

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Merve Seren had worked in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey as a parliamentary advisor between 2005 and 2015. She holds a BA in Political Science and Public Administration from Bilkent University and an MA in European Union from Başkent University; she held an Erasmus Scholarship at Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms Universität Bonn, Germany. She entered the doctoral program at the International Security and Terrorism Department of the Turkish Military Academy and continued her studies at the Turkish Police Academy as a PhD candidate, where she defended her doctoral dissertation on strategic intelligence and national security. Seren was accepted to the U.S. Legislative Fellow Program, which was co-sponsored by the Freedom House and National Democratic Institute, and funded by the U.S. Department of State. Seren was selected as a member of the Atlantic Council's Young Atlanticist NATO Working Group, and attended GLOBSEC Bratislava and NATO Young Atlanticist Summit held on the outskirts of the NATO Summit in Chicago in 2012. Additionally, Seren was chosen to attend the First Middle-East Generational Ambassadors Summit hosted by Richardson Center and co-sponsored by the Aspen Institute, and the Youth Ministerial Meeting, organized by the Atlantic Treaty Association in collaboration with the NATO Public Diplomacy Division in 2013. Furthermore, Seren was chosen to attend the Munich Young LeadersProgram in 2017, a joint initiative of the Körber Foundation and the Munich Security Conference. As of February 2015, Seren has been working as a researcher in the Security Studies Department of SETA Foundation. She is responsible for conducting research on issues related to security, defense and intelligence such as air and missile defense systems, UAV technology, cyber security, and military expenditure.

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REPORT

OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD: IMPLEMENTATION AND LESSONS LEARNED

MURAT YEŞİLTAŞ, MERVE SEREN, NECDET ÖZÇELİK

The report presents a one-year assessment of the Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) launched on August 24, 2016 and concluded on March 31, 2017 and examines Turkey's future road map against the backdrop of the developments in Syria.

In the first section, the report analyzes the security environment that paved the way for OES. In the second section, it scrutinizes the military and tactical dimensions and the course of the operation, while in the third section, it concentrates on Turkey's efforts to establish stability in the territories cleansed of DAESH during and after OES. In the fourth section, the report investigates military and political lessons that can be learned from OES, while in the fifth section, it draws attention to challenges to Turkey's strategic preferences and alternatives - particularly in the north of Syria - by concentrating on the course of events after OES.

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