

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the author provides the background information related with the topic of Turkey's military occupation towards Northern Syria. Moreover, this chapter contains theoretical framework, research question, hypothesis, research methods, scope of research and also outline of the thesis.

A. BACKGROUND

Turkey is a constitutional republic country located in two continents, Asia and Europe. Turkey has a population of 82 million people in 2018. Up to 70 % of the country's citizens identify as Turkish, while Kurds are the largest minority at the number of 20 % of the population. With an area covers of 814,578 km², most of its territory includes in the West Asia region with an area of 790,200 km² or 97%. While only 24,378 km² or 3% of its territory include in Europe region. This country is bordered by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran in the east, Georgia in the northeast, Bulgaria and Greece in the northwest, also by Iraq, and Syria in the southeast (Jatmika, Hubungan Internasional Kawasan Timur Tengah, 2016). Blessed with the strategic geographical position, since the ancient times Turkey played a significant role as a bridge between the East or Asians and the West or Europeans. Since 2018, the Prime Minister of Turkey has been abolished by a constitutional referendum that has been held in 2017. Since then, the head of state and head of government was handed by the president of Turkey. Recep Tayyip Erdogan became a president and led the country since he won the presidential election in 2014 and was re-elected in the 2018. Erdogan was supported by the Justice and Development party (AKP). Meanwhile, Syrian Arab Republic or Syria is a unitary republic country located in Western Asia region. Syria has a population of 18 million people in 2019. This country is home to a variety of religious groups and ethnic, including Kurds that consist of 9% from total population,

Armenians, Assyrians also Christians. Syria is a country in which Muslim population become a majority, 12% of Syrians are Shia, 74% of them are Arab Sunni and the rest or are Christians also Druzism (World Population Review, 2020). With a territory cover of 185,180 km², this country divided into 14 governorates or provinces. In the past, Syria has a long history with a rich of cultural heritage. Also, this region was a part of Ottoman empire and French colonialism. Since the year of 2000, Bashar al-Assad has been a president of Syria. Following his father step, Hafez al-Assad who was ruled the country from 1971 to 2000. (Mortimer, 2002)

Turkey and Syria are two countries that are geographically close. Thus, these two countries relate in economic, political and cultural terms that have been formed since ancient times. Besides, Syria was also ever a State of the former Ottoman empire which for centuries became the ruler in the Middle East region. In the 1900s, Turkey and Syria had poor relations with the problems like; water dispute, Hatay Province dispute and Syrian support for the PKK (Partia Karkeren Kurdistan or Kurdistan Workers Party) that viewed as a rebellion terrorist group by Turkey. These problems made the relationship heat up and almost on the verge of war situation. But it could subside with both countries has signed Adana agreement. It became a turning point in their relations. Furthermore, In the 2000s era, these two countries were continually building good relations. The comprehensive evidence is when Syrian president Bashar Al Assad visited Ankara in January 2004. This visit was very historical because for the first time the Syrian president officially visited Turkey and it clear sent a message of new brotherhood between two countries (Hinnebusch, 2013). Moreover, President Bashar Al Assad and Recep Tayyip Erdogan who were prime minister at that time acted as important actors behind the Turkey-Syria new partnership. At the meeting, two countries began to build a good relationship such as; expansion of economic relations through free trade, cooperation in the field of security and conflict management in the Middle East. The 2004 meeting between Turkey and Syria

had a good impact on building good relations in the following years, so that the two countries tended to apply and build a more positive pattern of relations when compared to the previous era in the 1900s. Between the year of 2004 until 2010, Syria became the first country in which Turkey was developing high-level cooperation as a result of its foreign policy doctrine of "zero problem" and "maximum cooperation with neighbours" (Ataman, 2018). But in 2011, it all changed when Syria was hammered by domestic crisis that eventually sparking Syrian civil war. This crisis began with a mass demonstration in March 2011 when the people of Syria demanded to end Bashar Al Assad's regime which had been in power for 5 decades. The people of Syria were disappointed with the lack of freedoms and economic woes drove resentment to the Syrian government. Moreover, the Arab Spring movement or a series of anti-government protests across middle-east countries fever Syrian pro-democracy activists. They were inspired by the movement of mass that succeed toppled Tunisia's and Egypt's presidents (Zisser, 2017).

The harsh treatment on protesters inflamed public anger. Led by President Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian government responded to the peaceful demonstrations by killing hundreds of protesters and jailing many more. Thus, with the cruel treatment from the Syrian government, the demonstrators began to change their approach from demonstrating peacefully to armed violence and at this time there was a major change in the dynamics of the Syrian revolution from demonstrations to civil war. At the beginning, the civil war in Syria began on a small scale where the battlefield was part of the cities in Syria and carried out by the Syrian community itself. Then, it developed into a larger scale as the duration of the conflict went on and the growing influence of the rebels who were able to control important cities and facilities in Syria. In the year of 2014, the rise of ISIS power that originally come from Iraq finally found its way to infiltrate to several Syria region and took power there has made Syria civil war even worse (Manfreda, 2017). As times went by, Syria civil war eventually became a proxy war.

The presence of big player countries and direct involvement played a significant role in Syrian civil war. In one side, Russia joined the war in 2015 and has been the principal ally of the government of Syria or Assad's regime along with Iran and Hezbollah. In the other side, USA joined the war in 2014 and has been the ally for anti-government rebels that wanted to topple down Assad's regime and had a vision to establish democratic government along with Turkey and Gulf States. But, these two factions had a common enemy to fight with in Syria civil war, it was ISIS or Daesh (Al Jazeera, 2018). As for Turkey specifically, it has participated diplomatically and militarily in the Syrian civil war since it starts in 2011. Initially support Syrian government, several months later Turkey made a U-turn to condemning Syria after several advise from Erdogan was rejected by Bashar al Assad, and the relations between Turkey and Syria turns badly. The Turkish government's involvement gradually evolved into military assistance to the Free Syrian Army in July 2011 as a revenge of Syria assistance towards Kurds separatism near in the border, and direct military operation such as; Operation Euphrates Shield in 2016, Operation Olive Branch in 2018 and Operation Peace Spring in 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Turkey, 2020). The emergence of the Syrian domestic crisis directly affected the stability of countries surrounds, especially Turkey. The two biggest impacts for Turkey were; the stability of border security and a huge number of refugees.

The crisis in Syria affected Turkey's stability of border security because the northern region of Syria directly bordered to south eastern Turkey, which is occupied by most of Turkish Kurds. This region becomes the basis of the Turkish rebel group movement, which is PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan). Also, a hot spot because it is close with Syrian Kurds autonomy region that ruled by PYD (Partiya Yekitiya Democratic) and YPG (Yekineyen Parastina Gel). If we look at back in history, Kurds people are ethnic groups in which the majority live in northern Syria, southern Turkey, parts of Iran and Iraq since ancient times. In the beginning of the 20th Century, many Kurds

began to consider creating their own homeland or generally referred to as Kurdistan country. After World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the Western allies once made the decision to establish a Kurdistan state for the Kurds people in the 1920 Sevres Agreement. But unfortunately, the promise was cancelled three years later, when the Lausanne Agreement finally established the boundaries of modern Turkey and there was no plan to establish a Kurdistan state (BBC, 2019). Therefore, until now Kurds have become a large ethnic group without a homeland. Moreover, with the label of minority status in the countries of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran eventually made Kurds being uncomfortable. It forced Kurds to attempt establishing their own sovereign country in the last three decades ago by conducting various efforts to suppress the legal government in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey (Gunter, 2014).

Kurds in Iraq have fought their independence and forced a series of conflicts with different political regimes that eventually led to the establishment of the autonomy region of the Kurdistan Regional Government or KRG in 1992. Then, Kurds in Syria has their own organization which is PYD (Partiya Yekitiya Democratic) or the Democratic Union Party founded in 2003 by Syrian Kurds and former PKK members to channel Kurds political interests (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012). Furthermore, PYD has a right-wing movement called YPG (Yekineyen Parastina Gel) or People's Protection Units which are more focused on military activities especially in Syria civil war. In other hand, Kurds in Turkey has a Kurds militant organization and political organization called the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan) or the Kurdistan Workers Party which has been the driving force of the separatism movement since 1984. The PKK has been categorized as a terrorist organization by the governments of Turkey, USA, Australia, Japan and European Union because it has involved in several military actions such as; terrorism, separatism also rebellion with the Turkish government. Thus, The Turkish government has also repeatedly accused the PKK organization of being affiliated with PYD and YPG from Syria (Canpolat, 2018). As Syrian

civil war continued, in 2012 the government of Syria gave Syrian Kurds a political and military autonomy in its northern territories by withdrawing Syrian government forces in that area. This decision was welcomed happily by Syrian Kurds, especially PYD and YPG. But not for Turkey, this is a serious threat to the security of their borders. The rise of Kurds in Iraq who eventually gain its autonomy region as well as Kurds in Syria has empowered Kurds in Turkey increasingly to get the same autonomy right. PKK is more motivated than ever to follow the footsteps of PYD and KRG (Dal, 2017).

Meanwhile, another threat towards Turkey's stability of border security which evolved increasingly due to the chaos in Syria was the extremist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In cause of the increasing civil unrest in Syria due to the authoritarian approach of the Syrian government, ISIS managed to enlarge its capacity. In consequence, ISIS saw an opportunity to gain power in several parts of the region, as the Syrian regime was in a state of disruption and getting weaker (Oztig, 2019). The threat of ISIS towards the Turkish government arose when several members of the organization carried out attacks within Turkish territory. Several terror attacks were conducted in the name of organization in various places such as the Turkish town Nigde, in the spring of 2014. Then, later in 2015, Turkish town Suruc became a place of a bomb attack conducted by ISIS and responsible for killing several young people (Oztig, 2019). The other impact from Syrian civil war for Turkey is a refugee problem. Since the beginning of Syrian civil war in 2011, initially Turkey adopted open door policy for Syrian refugee. But as a front guard before entering Europe as a favourite destination of refugees, the number of refugees that came to Turkey increased day by day as the situation in Syria became worse. From 170.912 refugees that moved to Turkey in the end 2012, it developed sharply until hit the number of 3.614.508 refugees in June 2019 (UNHCR, 2020). To bear the burden of refugees for 8 consecutive years, of course this huge number of refugees affecting economic, social, political and security aspects towards Turkey. Moreover,

in the end of 2019, Erdogan put his hands up with the refugee problems and said that turkey could no longer accommodate new refugees from Syria (CNN Indonesia, 2019). As the accumulation of threat to the stability of border security and a huge number of refugees, Turkey launched several military operations such as Operation Euphrates Shield in 2016, Operation Olive Branch in 2018, and Operation Peace Spring in 2019. In the recent military operation, Turkey held talks with the United States between February and September 2019 on the creation of a safe zone in neighbouring Turkish border Syrian territories. Furthermore, Erdogan delivered a speech at the UN general assembly in September 2019 to propose a “safe zone”, A corridor with an initial depth of 30 km and a length of 480 km in northeast Syria that directly bordering Turkey in the south. He said in the UN: “If this safe zone can be declared, we can resettle confidently somewhere between 1 to 2 million refugees” (The Guardian, 2019). The purpose of “safe zone” establishment initially was to relocate the refugees back to Syria.

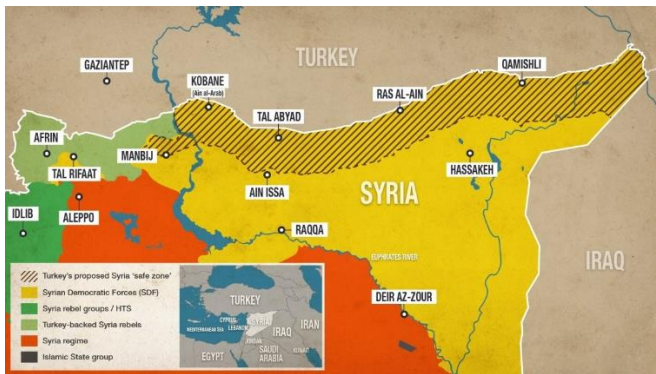


Figure 1 Turkey's proposed northern Syria 'safe zone' map

Source: www.alaraby.co.uk

On 6 October 2019, the Trump administration suddenly ordered American troops that stationed in north Syria to withdraw. 3 days later, advantaging the absence of foreign

power in north Syria, Turkey launched a military operation in northeast Syria territories with the code of Operation Peace Spring started 9 October until 17 October 2019. After gaining an international attention because many civilians became victims, the operation ended on 17 October 2019 when U.S and Turkey agreed on a deal in which Turkey agreed to stop the intervention in Syria in return for a complete withdrawal by the SDF (Syria Democratic Forces mainly contain the army from YPG) from a safe zone south of the Syria-Turkey border. 3 days later, on 22 October 2019, Russia and Turkey also reached a deal to end the Turkey's military operation and it obligated for SDF to move 30 kilometres away from the border area (Solace Global, 2019).

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

According to the explanation previously on the background, the research question presented by the author is: **“Why Turkey military occupied Northern Syria region 2016-2019?”**

C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to answer the research question, this paper will be based on the concept of separatism, national interest and military occupation. The author picks these concepts because they are very suitable to explain the problems in this paper.

1. Concept of Separatism

Separatism is the desire by a group of people within a country to separate from the rest of the country and form their own government (Oxford, 2020). Moreover, Horowitz stated that groups or people who want to separate themselves to get an independence, because: (1) Feeling dissatisfied, feeling different and so on. These people are called separatists who seek to gain independence as their nation or a group. Usually people who commit separatists, they don't want to be said to be separatists and considered themselves more as self-determination (Horowitz, 1981). (2) Oppression of minorities. There is a caste, then the oppression of the strong against the weak. So that it makes the group uncomfortable in their

environment. Separatist movements against the will of the government almost certainly end in some form of armed conflict and violence, Horowitz argues, "disproportionately attracts people with an interest in aggression. The people willing to take up arms for secession are those who are willing to be brutal with their ethnic enemies and with their own rivals as well. As their advantage grows, new bouts of ethnic cleansing can be expected" (Horowitz, 1981). In Horowitz's opinion, those who appear to be struggling to support the separatist movement are more aggressive individuals in society. These people will commit crimes against their ethnic enemies, making recognition of secession rights the prelude to ethnic cleansing by extremist factions on both sides. Horowitz argues that a group has a general right to separate and if it has experienced certain injustices, that secession is the correct solution to the last option. The so-called right to secession stems from the principle of self-determination of the state (Horowitz, 1981). In this case, the Kurds in Turkey experienced deep oppression in so many fields. In terms of politics, several parties under the name of the Kurds were dissolved by the Turkish government, then the Kurds were not given their own autonomy rights.

In terms of culture, Kurds people feel disappointed because the name and Kurds traditional clothes are prohibited, the use of Kurds language is restricted. Even the existence of ethnic Kurds was denied, and they were called "Mountain Turks" (BBC News Indonesia, 2019). Also in historical factors, before World War 1, The Kurds are one of the indigenous peoples of the Mesopotamian plains and the highlands in what are now south-eastern Turkey, north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, north-western Iran and south-western Armenia. but Britain and France as the winners of World War 1 divided their colonies into Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. As a consequence, the Kurds, who were not given territory and independence, had to be separated by the country's borders. The unfairness of political, cultural and historical that Kurds got, especially Kurds in Turkey, increased separatist sentiment and desire for independence. The

author used this concept to explain the PKK in Turkey as a separatism group that want to gain independence from Turkey.

2. Concept of National Interest

National interest is used as a form of political behaviour in a realism view, to defend, oppose or propose political policies. National interest is the main basis of a country in determining foreign policy. As the main actor in decision making, the state is always required to make decisions in accordance with the interests of the country. Moreover, Donald E. Nuechterlein defines national interest as the needs and desires of a sovereign state to deal with other sovereign states based on external environmental considerations. This definition gives a picture of the difference between the external and internal environment of a country, the internal environment is interpreted as the public interest of a country's society while the external environment is the influence of the international system. Donald also revealed that the interests of a nation-state mean the interests of the whole of society and not just the interests of groups and political elites (Nuechterlein, 1974).

In addition, Morgenthau states that each country's national interest is the pursuit of power, that is, anything that can form and maintain a country's control over another country. This power or control relationship can be created through coercive techniques or cooperation (Masoed, 1994). Furthermore, Morgenthau classified national interest with two levels, vital or primary and secondary interest. The primary interest is the ability of a country to protect the physical, cultural, political and security identity of the country from interference or threats from outside (Bakry, 2017). Also, the primary interest concerns with the very life of the state, there is no compromise or hesitation. The point is, in this case a state must maintain territorial integrity or physical identity, sovereignty, economic-political regime with its various ideologies, and maintain the norms and cultural values contained in a nation-state (Masoed, 1994). Sovereignty here means that the right to have absolute and unlimited power, either legal or political, within the territory of

a state (Harrison, 2018). Meanwhile, the secondary national interest is a form of state interest that can be pursued or compromised with other countries through negotiation. In writing this thesis, the author chooses this concept because it is related to the problems that arise in the background when the growing internal and external threats from PKK, YPG, PYD and ISIS near the Turkey-Syria border ruin Turkey's security and sovereignty. According to this concept, Turkey must protect their sovereignty which is included within primary interest by any means from internal or external threats.

3. Concept of Military Occupation

Military occupation is an effective provisional control by a ruling power over a territory, without a claim of formal sovereignty. Then, the territory is known as the occupied territory. Military occupation is different from annexation by its intended temporary nature and no claim for permanent sovereignty. While an occupant may set up a formal military government in the occupied territory to facilitate its administration, it is not a necessary precondition for occupation (Benvenisti, 2004). Moreover, Military occupation stated in Article 42 of the 1907 Hague Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land which affirms that "a territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army." (International Comitee of the Red Cross, 2019). This same explanation is used to determine the existence of a state of occupation under the Geneva Conventions. Then, to determine whether a territory is under the 'authority' of a hostile army, the notion of effective control used three cumulative elements:

1. Armed forces of a foreign state are physically present without the consent of the effective local government in place at the time of the invasion.
2. The local sovereign is unable to exercise his authority due to the presence of foreign forces.

3. The occupying forces impose their own authority over the territory (Roberts, 1985).

The law of occupation relates even when the occupation does not meet any armed resistance. This is expressly provided in common article two of Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field. Geneva Conventions of 1949 that stated “The Convention shall also apply to all cases of partial or total occupation of the territory of a High Contracting Party, even if the said occupation meets with no armed resistance.” (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2019). Rather than the existence of armed resistance, what matters is that the occupation is ‘hostile’. It means that there is an invasion or other presence of a foreign state’s armed forces to which the territorial state did not consent. The lack of armed resistance of the territorial state cannot be interpreted as consent to the foreign armed forces presence, nor can the fact that part of the local population welcomes the occupying forces. Thus, occupying forces do not need to be present everywhere at all times to maintain the state of occupation. What really matter is whether occupying forces can project their authority throughout the territory such as occupying forces may only be present in strategic positions. The author used this concept to explain Turkey’s military occupation in Syria since 2016.

D. HYPOTHESIS

Turkey military occupied Northern Syria region 2016-2019 in order to defend its sovereignty by:

(1) Eliminate the increasing threats from:

- Kurds separatist groups
- ISIS

(2) Establish a “safe zone” across Northern Syria region and relocate the refugees

E. METHODS OF RESEARCH

1. Tool of Analysis

Based on the object of analysis, the tool of analysis of this study uses realist approach with state level analysis perspective.

2. The Technique of Collecting Data

In the preparation of this thesis, the collecting data technique used by the author is the library research. With this technique, the author hopes to find data or facts that are relevant to the problem under the research. The library research that the author use comes from various kinds of literature related to research in the form of books, scientific journals, newspapers, media reports, government policies as well as articles that related to the object of research.

3. Method of Analysis

The method that used by the author to analyse this research is deductive which is a conclusion of from a general nature into more specific case with tool of descriptive and explanatory.

F. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

In this paper, the author limits the scope of research from 2016, precisely after Turkey initiated their first military occupation in Syria territories, until Turkey's third military occupation towards Northern Syria in 2019.

G. THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of this research are:

1. To examine the reasons Turkey military occupied Northern Syria region 2016-2019
2. To complete the final assignment of study in International Relations program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta
3. To enrich the study of International relations related to the concentration of Diplomacy

H. OUTLINE

This thesis consists of five chapters, and each chapter contains the following:

CHAPTER I is an introduction chapter, the author describes the background of the problem, the research question, the theoretical framework, the hypothesis, the methodology, the scope of research and finally the outline.

CHAPTER II Explains the dynamics of Turkey and Syria relations, the Syrian civil war, the actors of Syrian civil war and the involvement of international actors, also the beginning of Turkey's involvement.

CHAPTER III Contains the specific impact of Syrian civil war towards Turkey: ruin the stability of border security and mass migration of Syrian people moved to Turkey, also talk in deep about the Turkey's military operation such as Operation Euphrates Shield in 2016, Operation Olive Branch in 2018, and Operation Peace Spring in 2019.

CHAPTER IV Contains Turkey decision to military occupied Northern Syria region 2016-2019 in order to defence its sovereignty by: (1) Eliminate the increasing threats from: Kurds separatist groups and ISIS. (2) Establish a "safe zone" across north Syria region and relocate the refugees

CHAPTER V Contains the author's conclusions from the results of the discussion contained in chapter I until chapter IV