

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

An armed conflict broke between Turkey and the Kurdish armed forces in northern Syria following Turkey's two military operations—Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) and Operation Olive Branch (OOB)—in the effort to achieve its two goals in northern Syria, which are to confront PPK-affiliated Syrian Kurdish groups identified as terrorists by Turkey and conduct territorial expansion for refugee relocation. Between the years of 2016 to 2018, these military operations were conducted into different areas of northwestern Syria and were deemed successful as they all provided Turkey favourable outcomes connected to increase resources of Turkey.

OES and OOB were followed by another military operation in 2019 but directed towards a different area of northern Syria, which is the east of Euphrates River where the Kurdish armed forces occupy. While it is evident that OPS objectives were to acquire more favourable outcomes corresponding to Turkey's own goals in northern Syria, the successes of previous military operations have the possibility of influencing Turkey's decision to escalate its conflict with the Kurdish armed forces by conducting OPS.

This research examines the influence of the successes in OES and OOB as motivations for Turkey to escalate its armed conflict with the Kurdish armed forces by conducting OPS, with the theoretical framework provided by Forrest Morgan *et al.* in instrumental motivations in deliberate escalations and power asymmetry on

escalation dominance in irregular warfare as well as Otomar J. Bartos and Paul Wehr on escalations due to conflict feedbacks.

Turkey's goals in northern Syria addresses its security concern in Turkish soil and around its border as the Syrian War resulted in negative condition to occur in Turkey and around its border, such as the emerging power of the Kurdish armed forces—PYD/YPG and SDF—with affiliations to PKK as well as the large population of Syrian refugees that has created domestic instability. With these Turkey's goals in northern Syria aims to reduce these insecurities by conducting its two military operations between 2016 to 2018, providing Turkey the advantages to conduct another military operation, OPS, that escalated the armed conflict.

OES and OOB provided Turkey with several favourable outcomes through their successes, particularly in the increase of resources in land, authority, and support. Both operations gave the country authority over Jarabulus, Al-Rai, Al-Bab, and Afrin by reconstructing their institutions to ensure loyalty to Turkey and band against the Kurds. Gaining these territories also allow Turkey to conduct Syrian refugee relocations, which is also aimed in ensuring the loyalty of the locals and maintain a Kurdish-free area by changing the local demographics. With these successes, comes the rise of approval and support for Turkey, President Erdoğan, and his AKP in Turkish soil and among Syrian locals.

These influenced Turkey's decision to escalate by OPS as these successes boosted Turkey's confidence in its ability and capability to truly prevail in achieving its goals in northern Syria as a succession of successes indicate the likeliness of achieving another success as Turkey has the advantage in the armed conflict and could gain more by escalating. This is empowered by the evident power asymmetry

between Turkey and the Kurdish armed forces in various aspects, resulting Turkey to gain escalation dominance, which has proven to be advantageous in OPS that provided Turkey more favourable outcomes corresponding to its Syrian goals despite being blocked from continuing early on.

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