NEIGHBORING A CIVIL WAR
TURKEY'S BORDER SECURITY WITH SYRIA

MURAT YEŞİLTAŞ

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Dr. 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 the thesis titled "Positioning Turkey: Geopolitical Mentality and the Army in Turkey". Yeşiltaş was a visiting researcher at the Department of European Studies and International Politics of Lanchester University between 2008 and 2009. He was a visiting professor at Virginia Tech's Institute of Government and International Relations in 2010-2011. Currently, Dr. Yeşiltaş is an Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations at Sakarya University. He teaches undergraduate and graduate level courses, such as Turkey's Middle East Policy, Critical Geopolitics, Political Geography, and Comparative Foreign Policy Analysis

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the issue of how Turkey's border security policy has been shaped since 2013, the year in which Syrian crisis began to deepen and ramify. This analysis draws on interviews with government officials as well as non-governmental organization representatives. So, these parts are included in various sections of the text as much as possible.

In the analysis, changes in Turkey's border security policy in recent years were investigated just after the global and regional divergences in this policy had been addressed. Within the context of the Syrian crisis, the parameters of Turkey's respective policy, struggle against Foreign Fighters (FF) and the military measures taken were also covered.

This paper analyses the issue of how Turkey's border security policy has been shaped since 2013.

and even assuring logistic and direct assistance to ISIS.[2]

In Turkey, as well, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu have been heavily criticized for this particular issue. Turkey's adoption of a flexible border security policy towards Syria following the Arab Spring in particular remained at the core of all criticisms. It was claimed that Ankara supported ISIS as part of a strategic move to prevent the formation of a Kurdish geopolitical corridor in the north of Syria.[3] With the launch of a military campaign by Turkey against ISIS and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on July 24, 2015, and Turkey's new security measures concerning the Syrian border which were announced directly afterwards, Ankara's border security policy has once again been brought into question.

Ankara, however, declared ISIS a terror organization on October 13, 2013[4]; joined the "comprehensive counter-terrorism" action plan by the international community against the Foreign Fighters[5]; and has supported all

INTRODUCTION

The subject of Turkey's border security has been one of the priority issues on both national and international agendas lately. Ankara remained reluctant to become a part of a U.S.-led military strategy adopted by the international coalition[1] to initially degrade the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and then ultimately destroy it completely. Since September 2014, however, Ankara has been criticized particularly for its alleged support for ISIS and for implementing a flexible security regime on the Syrian border. In addition, several international media outlets held Turkey responsible for the failure of the U.S. and the coalition forces against ISIS, accusing the country for unwillingness to cooperate, for tolerating ISIS crossing its borders,

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1. The idea of forming a coalition force against ISIS was introduced by U.S. President Barack Obama and was announced by President Obama at a NATO summit held on September 5, 2004. The core countries of the coalition initially included the U.S., the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Turkey, Italy, Poland and Denmark. Currently, the coalition forces include over 60 member states. "US forms 'core coalition' to fight Isis militants in Iraq," *The Guardian*, September 5, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/05/us-core-coalition-fight-isis-militants-iraq-nato.

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2. For examples on this particular issue, see: "Turkey-Syria border has become gate into ISIS for foreign fighters" CBS News, September 26, 2014, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/turkey-syria-border-has-become-gate-into-isis-for-foreign-fighters/; "A Path to ISIS, Through a Porous Turkish Border", *New York Times*, March 9, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/10/world/europe/despite-crackdown-path-to-join-isis-often-winds-through-porous-turkish-border.html?_r=0; "An Unhelpful Ally", The Wall Street Journal, June 25, 2014, http://www.wsj.com/articles/how-turkey-is-exacerbating-the-mideast-crisis-1403722487; "US increasingly frustrated by Turkey's inaction against Islamic State", *The Guardian*, October 8, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/08/us-increasingly-frustrated-turkey-inaction-islamic-state; "Fight Against ISIS Militants Lags Because They're Nimble … and the U.S. Isn't", *Time*, June 8, 2015, http://time.com/3913433/barack-obama-isis-strategy-g7/; "This border post shows how Turkey's ISIS problem keeps getting worse", *Business Insider*, May 22, 2015, http://www.businessinsider.com/turkeys-isis-problem-keeps-getting-worse-2015-5#ixzz3fOLfidWS;

3. Can Acun, "Kuzey Suriye'de PYD Kuşağı", *SETA Perspektif*, Sayı 107, Haziran 2015, ss. 1-8

4. The Office of Public Diplomacy Communique on Foreign Fighters, April 22, 2015.

5. "Türkiye'nin Terörizmle Mücadele Alanındaki Uluslararası Çalışmalara Katkısı", *Turkish Foreign Ministry*, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye_nin-terorizmle-mucadele-alanindaki-uluslararasi-calismalara-katkisi_.tr.mfa.

resolutions and action plans of international organizations, especially the United Nations. Within the scope of the "open door policy"[6] Ankara has also welcomed Syrian refugees who suffered from ISIS attacks. Furthermore, Ankara has provided support, including arms support, to the Peshmerga who come from Iraqi Kurdistan to fight together with Syrian Kurds against ISIS, and has allowed the Peshmerga to pass thorough Turkish territory as well.[7] Above all these political action plans, Ankara has implemented the "zero tolerance policy" and adopted an array of measures to increase the security on the Syrian border. In the meantime, the civil war in Syria has gradually posed an internal security threat to Turkey and morphed into an instrument of geopolitical pressure. Thus, as a natural outcome of the circumstances created by the Syrian civil war, Turkey has put a critical and to some extent strict border policy into play. Such a change has taken place at a time of a critical transformation - both in concept and content – of Turkey's border security regime and of the understanding of border management which Turkey has adopted in the last decade.

Due to the new geopolitical situation as a result of the civil war in Syria, regional stability and Turkey's national security have become strongly interrelated. For the very same reason, border security mechanisms underwent a radical change in this period. In order to prevent illegal activities due to the Syrian civil war and terrorist groups from entering Turkey, a myriad new methods have been introduced. But more importantly, the new security mechanisms have indicated that physical border security mechanisms should be approached with a geo-cultural sensitivity and a consideration of Turkey's Kurdish issue in particular. Consequently, the Syrian crisis created an image that made it impossible to separate border security from social-political processes. In this sense, the Kurdish people living in the region have seriously reacted against Turkey's attempt to build a wall along the border to protect itself from the civil war and instability in Syria.[8] The transformation process that the Kurds in the region started to experience since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, and the new costs of such a transformation have significantly affected Turkey's border security politics. The country is already being pressured to change its border security mechanisms due to security-related instabilities. In the end, radical and rigid regional border security policies were crafted after the Arab Spring and, as a result, a new geo-political situation has ensued.[9]

This analysis examines how Turkey's policy of border security has been shaped since 2013, the year the Syrian crisis began to deepen and take new turns. During the preparation for this study, interviews were conducted with state officials and civilians in provinces and counties along the Turkish-Syrian border; in different sections of this document, excerpts from the interviews are used as much as possible. In this analysis, Turkey's policy of bor-

6. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu "*BM Güvenlik Konseyi'ni daha fazla geç kalmadan insani duruma çözüm bulacak güçlü bir karar almaya çağırıyorum*", *Turkish Foreign Ministry*, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-davutoglu-_bm-guvenlik-konseyi_ni-daha-fazla-gec-kalmadan-insani-duruma-cozum-bulacak-guclu-bir-karar-almaya-.tr.mfa (Accessed on July 9, 2015).

7. "Türkiye silah verdi, açıklamadık", *Al Jazeera Turk*, http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/turkiye-silah-verdi-aciklamadik; "Barzani: Türkiye'nin yardımı olmasaydı Kobani'nin geri alınması mümkün olmazdı", *Hürriyet*, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/28957496.asp.

8. "Nusaybin'de duvara karşı ölüm orucu", *BBC Türkçe*, November 1, 2013, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/11/131101_nusaybin_duvar.

9. Among the latest examples is the Tunisian government's announcement to build an anti-terror wall on the Tunisia-Libya border following the ISIS attacks in Tunisia in March and June of this year. "Tunisia to build 'anti-terror' wall on Libya border", *BBC*, 8 July 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33440212. In this regard, the Arab Spring has left borders facing urgent pressures for change while it has caused countries to seek ways to strengthen border security. The ramifications of the Arab Spring, in this sense, have been devastating for regional borders.

der security and recent changes are evaluated alongside the main parameters of Turkey's policy of border security with regards to the Syria crisis. The numbers in the tables and graphics are extracted from the Turkish General Staff's public statements on the incidents which occurred in the 2013- 2015 period and from field studies conducted in the same period.

TURKEY'S POLICY OF BORDER SECURITY

The threats posed to Turkey's border security have varied both in terms of content and dimensions throughout the history of the Republic of Turkey as the regimen of border security against threats has been subjected to critical transformations. It is also possible to say that the political understanding and mechanisms to provide border security have changed as well. In the early period of the Republic, security priorities defining the border security paradigm were basically shaped around the protection of the territorial integrity of the newly-established "country". The primary mission of all state officials was to "protect the borders".[10] In this regard, to have a "strong military" seemed a must for strong border security. Although the borders were fortified by means of bilateral or international agreements, Turkey struggled for a long time with border and sovereignty issues (particularly with Syria) regarding the southern Turkish province of Hatay.[11] The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) has always been the key actor in charge of protection of the borders. In the first half of the 1980s, the Kurdish issue topped the agenda and gradually became the country's number one security problem. The

terror of the outlawed the violent campaign of the outlawed PKK(Kurdistan Workers' Party) in connection with the Kurdish issue started to escalate and carried the border security issue into new territories where the prevention of "infiltration" of terrorists was deemed more important. Therefore, TSK has continued to be the leading actor in border protection and security.

Furthermore, as one of the main elements of the political economy of terrorism, smuggling - mostly from Iran, Iraq and Syria to Turkey - proves that border security is not only limited to terrorist attacks. Illicit trafficking of goods and substances, like smuggling beyond the state's control, has necessitated a more comprehensive discussion of border security and the formation of various official agents in charge of the latter.

In the post-Cold War period, the change in the global approach to border security affected Turkey as well. Security has been shaped not only around the prevention of terrorist attacks, or of the attacks from other countries, but also around global issues, such as mass migration and smuggling. In the 1990s, the main threats of the Cold War faded out and Turkey was expected to adopt flexible security policies accordingly. Contrary to the expectations, Turkey increased border security measures particularly after the intensification of the terror threat, the emergence of new international security issues, and the gradual participation of the PKK terror in the regional equation. In fact, the issue of border security between Turkey and its neighboring countries in the Middle East became part of anti-terror measures especially when neighboring countries, in particular, tried to use the PKK as political leverage against Turkey.

In those years, due to the emergence of the refugee crisis after the Gulf War in 1991 and the increased threat of being a transit route for "human trafficking", Turkey adopted new security

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10. Ferhat Tekin, "Sınırın Sosyolojisi: Ulus, Devlet ve Sınır İnsanları", Açılım Kitap, 2014, p. 134.

11. Yücel Güçlü, *The Question Of The Sanjak Of Alexandretta: A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations*, Turkish Historical Society Publications, 2001; Michael B. Bishku, "Turkish-Syrian Relations: A Checkered History", *Middle East Policy*, 19/3, 2012,p. 43.

TABLE 1

CURRENT SYSTEM OF BORDER SECURITY IN TURKEY

LAND BORDER

Land Forces Command

1. Guarding the border and providing the security in its area of responsibility.*

2. Preventing criminal acts in first degree military forbidden zone established along land borders as well as smuggling in the line of duty, picking up, chasing and capturing the wrongdoer even in second degree military forbidden zone, commencing mandatory legal proceedings about perpetrators, handing over the people that are apprehended and criminal evidence to local security forces..*

3. Implementing the provisions of the Law on the Combatant Foreign Army Members Who Take Refuge in Turkey with the Number 4104 and dated 11.8.1941, depurating other refugees from their weapons, ammunitions and other war equipments, handing over these refugees and the materials with them to the interested authorities.*

Gendarmerie General Command

1. Civil Tasks; "crime preventive" activities for security and public order, protection and lookout in general.**

2. Judiciary Tasks; includes the revelation of the crime and criminal in the process of prevention of crime, the activities of capture and handing over to judicial authorities with evidence.**

3. Military Tasks; tasks assigned due to judicial laws and orders and the ones assigned by Presidency of General Staff.**

AIRSPACE BOUNDARY

Under the authority and responsibility of Ministry of Interior, through local authorities, police, gendarmerie, private security organisation personnel and other public and private organisation personnel carry out supervision in airports..***

It is coordinated by Security General Directorate, DHMİ Office of General Director, Customshouse Directorate and Gendarmerie Company Command in trust of Airport Security Program Local Authority.***

SEA BORDER

Coast Guard Command

1. Providing the security in coasts and territorial waters.****

2. Preventing any smuggling act carried out by sea.****

3. Depuration of refugees, who enter our territorial waters, from their weapons and ammunitions and taking necessary precautions.****

4. If required contributing to the national defense under the authority of Turkish Naval Forces.****

BORDER CROSSINGS

PASSENGER ENTRANCE-EXIT PROCEDURES

Control and supervision authority of passenger entrance and exit in border crossings is granted to Security General Directorate in compliance with Passport Law with Number 5682.***

Early detection of forged documents, VIP guard, passport procedures and the execution of transactions related to foreigners are sustained via these organisations.**

GOODS ENTRANCE-EXIT PROCEDURES

The authority and responsibility of Ministry of Customs and Trade, which is responsible of procedures of entrance and exit of goods in border crossings, are designated with Delegated Legislation with Number 640.***

The elements that pose threats to the security of the country, to the public security and public health, to the environment and consumers, risking the financial interests of the country, preventing the proper implementation of the precautions taken at institutional and international levels related to the entrance, exit, transit, transport and end-use and goods that are not released for free circulation that are transported between Customs Territory of Turkey and other countries are defined as risks and the task of management of these risks is pertained to Ministry of Customs and Trade.**

* Law on Guard and Security of Land Borders
** Risk Analysis in Border Management
*** National Action Plan for the Implementation of Turkey's Integrated Border Management Strategy
**** Tasks of Coast Guard Command within the Scope of the Law 2692

mechanisms and border security policies.[12] All in all, unconventional security threats such as terrorism, human trafficking and smuggling in the post-Cold War had already changed the state's understanding of border security.[13] The border security problem relapsed in connection with the security approach implied by the new threat perception. New implementations and methods of border management were introduced in response.

The outbreak of the Arab Spring in Tunisia in 2010 deeply affected an array of countries and introduced many different and new challenges to Turkey's border security as the civil war in Syria deepened after 2011.

As part of the European Union (EU) integration process, Turkey made new security arrangements so as to comply with EU policies. Concordantly, new security risks forced Turkey to develop an "integrated border management" model in border security. The model was intended for coordination and cooperation with the EU as part of the accession process. The new integrated border management model and the new border understanding of the AK Party (Justice and Development Party) governments introduced a significant change in Turkey's traditional border pol-

itics, and boosted cross-border interaction with Middle Eastern countries in particular. However, none of these new political processes seemed sufficient to eliminate border security threats such as terrorism, trafficking of illicit goods or smuggling, and illegal transit of refugees.

With the Arab Spring and the civil war in Syria, Turkey's border management based on the traditional discourse of a nation-state left its place to a more flexible border perception as soon as the AK Party came to power in 2002.[14] During the AK Party period, in particular, "border" has simply become a token of state sovereignty as a ramification of the "zero problems with neighbors" understanding, which is one of the principles of Turkish foreign policy, and of visa liberations with neighboring countries. Conditions progressed further after a relative regional stability was reached, and the AK Party government changed the border approach based on threats and the sense of protection that had dominated traditional Turkish security discourse and foreign policy practices in the past. In fact, the regional stability and the new consideration of foreign policy and security increased political, social and economic dynamism between Turkey and its neighbors especially in the Middle East. Therefore, "border" was no longer seen as an obstruction limiting sociopolitical and economic relations between Turkey and neighboring countries. It was redefined by being incorporated into the discourse of "Partners of a Common History" in order to clear the way for social dynamism.[15]

Within the framework of this new understanding, as the emphasis on nation-state is pre-

12. William Hale, *Türk Dış Politikası 1774-2000*, Trans. Petek Demir, Arkeoloji and Sanat Publications, İstanbul, 2003, p. 235-236.

13. Alice Hills, "Border Control Services and Security Sector Reform", Philipp Fluri ve Miroslav Hadzic (ed.), *Sourcebook on Security Sector Reform (Collection of Papers)*, Centre for Civil-Military Relations, Belgrad, 2004, p. 319-344; Andy Oppenheimer, *Border Protection: Countering Terror Movements, Military Technology*, September 2014, p. 54-60; Noel Parker, Nick Vaughan Williams, "Critical Border Studies: Broadening and Deepening the 'Lines in the Sand' Agenda", *Geopolitics*, 17/4, 2012, p. 727-733; Christian Leuprecht, Todd Hataley and Kim Richard Nossal, *Evolving Transnational Threats and Border Security: A New Research Agenda*, Center for International Defence Policy, Kingston, Canada, 2012; Edward Alden, "Immigration and Border Control", *Cato Journal*, 32/1, 2012, p. 107-124.

14. For the concepts of borders in foreign policy in the AK Party period, see: Murat Yeşiltaş and Ali Balcı, *A Dictionary of Turkish Foreign Policy: A Conceptual Map*, SAM Papers, May 2013.

15. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech at the symposium entitled "Towards the Great Turkey" organized as part of the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Hearths, *Turkish Foreign Ministry*, March 26, 2011, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-turk-ocaklari_nin-kurulusunun-100_-yilini-kutlama-etkinlikleri-kapsaminda-duzenlenen.tr.mfa.

served, though ambiguously, the concept of border has been translated, through a new definition of "regionalism", into a part of policy which is flexible in physical and narrative terms. Consequently, during the AK Party rule, a new policy of border security was enabled based on a liberal border concept particularly on the Syrian border.

The new "region" discourse influencing the AK Party goverments' political jargon and the general atmosphere of the period also converted the traditional border notion from a static state into a stepping stone for regional integration and created a new politics of neighborhood. Therefore, Turkey's borders, particularly in the Middle East, were dissociated from security concerns, and a new period of sociopolitical and economic interaction unraveled. More concretely, the AK Party government in the frame of a liberal border concept gradually started visa liberalizations with neighboring countries and substantially increased trade by signing "High Level Strategic Cooperation Agreements" with the same states.[16] In fact, a series of Cabinet meetings for a "Integrated Border Management" were held with neighboring countries (as is the case with Syria) and Turkey set maximum border interaction as a priority.[17]

However, the outbreak of the Arab Spring in Tunisia in 2010 deeply affected an array of countries and introduced many different and new challenges to Turkey's border security as the civil war in Syria deepened after 2011. The instability in Syria and Iraq gradually turned into an uncontrollable and unmanageable regional crisis. This triggered new dynamics and caused serious security problems and, therefore, had a critical impact on Turkey's border security paradigm and mechanisms. As a matter of fact, a rapid transformation from a border security paradigm to a border security regi-

men took place. There were attempts to demilitarize the border security paradigm before the Arab Spring, and the border security regimen had to be secured again. As a consequence, efforts to set up an a Border Security Unit which is under the authority of the Ministry of Interior, in the middle-term and to bring civilian personnel rather than military into the task force failed.[18] Therefore, Turkey had to increase military presence along its southeastern border.[19] In addition to this military presence, Turkey took strict border security measures by applying a series of new security technologies, and changed its attitude from a liberal border approach to the zero tolerance policy which was implemented for military security purposes.[20]

The civil war in Syria and the ongoing clashes in Iraq have increased the risks to Turkey's border security; traditional threats against its border security have been replaced by new unconventional threats. Concordantly, border security turned out to be an urgent issue as the ISIS terror organization engaged in conflicts, one way or another, in regions adjacent to Turkey, and the country became one of the target countries on the "transition route" for Foreign Fighters (FF).[21]

In the face of all these developments, Turkey put new security measures into effect to ensure border security. In addition, Turkey began to use more technology-intensive tools because of the geographical nature and the length of its border which make it difficult to control. In short, due

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16. "Hedefimiz bütün dünyayla vizeleri kaldırmak", https://www. akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/hedefimiz-butun-dunyayla-vizeleri-kaldirmak/41275#1.

17. "Türkiye - Suriye YDSİK 1. Toplantısı Ortak Bildirisi, 22-23 Aralık, Şam", http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye---suriye-ydsik-1_-toplantisi-ortak-bildirisi_-22-23-aralik_-sam.tr.mfa.

18. Arif Köktaş, "Sınır Güvenlik Birimi' Kurma Çalışmaları", SDE Analysis, The Institute of Strategic Thinking, July 2011, http://www.sde.org.tr/userfiles/file/Sinir%20Birlikleri%20Analiz.pdf.

19. "Suriye ile ilgili tehdit algımız değişti" BBC Türkçe, June 26, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2012/06/120626_erdogan_syria.shtml.

20. "Angajman kuralları değişti askeri hareketlilik arttı", Haberturk, June 28, 2012 http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/754647-angajman-kurallari-degisti-askeri-hareketlilik-artti.

21. Tuncay Kardaş and Ömer Behram Özdemir, "Avrupalı Yabancı Savaşçılar: Kimlik, Sosyal Medya ve Radikalleşme", SETA Analysis, February 2015, Issue 115, p.17 http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20150203185528_avrupali-yabanci-savascilar-pdf.pdf

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to the new dynamics created by ISIS, Turkey instituted a priority border security regime which has a "zero tolerance policy" as its cornerstone.

THE SYRIAN CRISIS AND TURKEY'S BORDER SECURITY POLICY

Turkey had to undergo a radical change in its border security policy as the Syrian crisis turned into a military conflict first and then into a civil war. After August 2011, Ankara's political stance towards the Bashar al Assad regime in Syria significantly changed when the regime pressured the Syrian opposition by applying military measures. The transformation from the Syrian regime's gradually increasing military threats to a security vacuum led Turkey to adopt a new engagement policy as part of its military strategy. In this regard, Ankara, as a NATO member, requested from its allies the deployment of anti missile defence systems against possible Syrian military airstrikes.[22]

On the other hand, the "open door policy" has led to a "mass human mobility" along the Syrian border and has turned into an acute border security issue. In different phases of the conflict, Turkey has had difficulty managing the issue due to the sudden rise in number of refugees (Tables 2, 3) and the lack of international support, although Turkey has tried to resolve the issue via an integrated institutional strategy. To cope with the issue, Turkey's calls for the formation of a "security zone" and a "no-fly zone" have fallen on deaf ears in the international community. Turkey, therefore, attempted to deal with the situation on its own. Down the line, this has turned into a problem of border security, and the country's control of its national borders has become difficult.

After the Syrian civil war spread in the region and attracted various armed groups into Syria in 2014, non-state armed actors began to pose a threat to Turkey's border security. Especially after ISIS concentrated power in Raqqa and took over Mosul in Iraq, and transformed into a geo-political actor in the region, Ankara joined the political struggle envisioned by the anti-ISIS coalition, but refused to participate in a military intervention for different reasons.[23] Later on, Turkey followed the "zero tolerance" policy in border security within the scope of the fight against ISIS and adopted a rigid attitude towards FF. In this regard, Turkey promptly took a series of military and political measures to provide border security so as to minimize the threat posed by ISIS. Lastly, Turkey has adopted more military precautions in border security (including physical measures) and has tried to form an integrated policy for safer borders.

Nonetheless, besides the ongoing civil war, both physical conditions on the Syrian border and the military clashes in the north of Syria have prevented Turkey from taking better security measures on the Syrian border. One of these conditions is, without doubt, Turkey's very long border (911 km) with Syria, and therefore, the impossibility of implementing a rigid security regime along its considerable lenght. On the other hand, possible security risks posed by the Syrian regime were not reckoned until 2011 and that has made it difficult to put fast, adequate and effective security measures into practice in the post-crisis period.

As the Syrian crisis has gained an ethno-sectarian dimension, the formation of different ethnic and military groups along the border has also affected Turkey's policy of border security. In the perspective of the entire Turkish-Syrian border, the Kurdish region, the Arab region and the ISIS region constantly change hands and that

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22. Türkiye'den resmi Patriot talebi, *Al Jazeera*, November 21, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/turkiyeden-resmi-patriot-talebi.

23. A 101-day hostage of the personnel of the Turkish Consulate in Mosul, Iraq, by ISIS affected Turkey's participation in the military support to the coalition forces.

TABLE 2

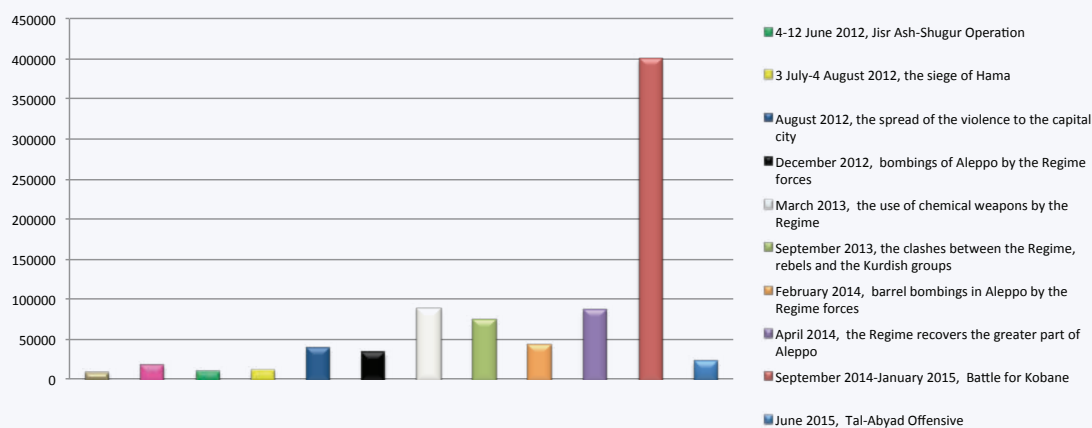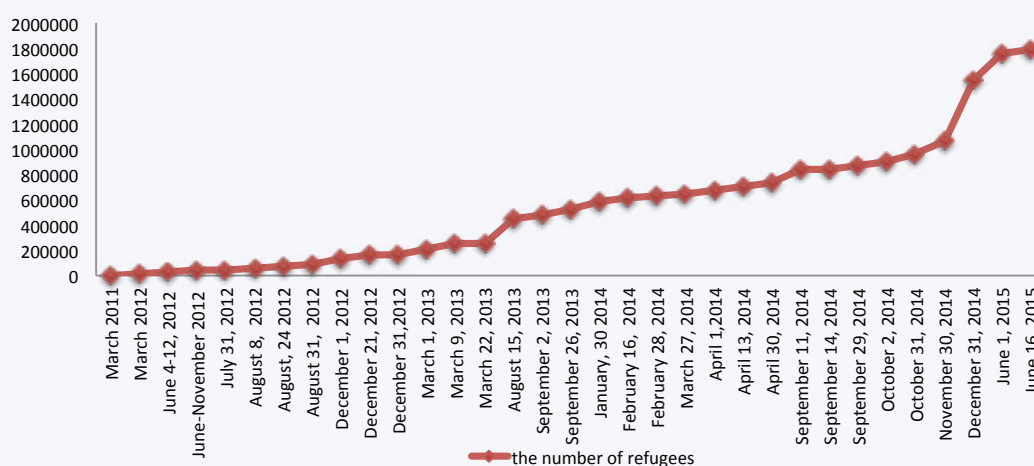**Refugee Influx to Turkey According to the Developments in Syria**

- March-December 2011, the beginning of the demonstrations in Syria
- march 2012, bombings of Homs by the Regime forces
- 4-12 June 2012, Jisr Ash-Shugur Operation
- 3 July-4 August 2012, the siege of Hama
- August 2012, the spread of the violence to the capital city
- December 2012, bombings of Aleppo by the Regime forces
- March 2013, the use of chemical weapons by the Regime
- September 2013, the clashes between the Regime, rebels and the Kurdish groups
- February 2014, barrel bombings in Aleppo by the Regime forces
- April 2014, the Regime recovers the greater part of Aleppo
- September 2014-January 2015, Battle for Kobane
- June 2015, Tal-Abyad Offensive

TABLE 3

the number of refugees

makes it impossible to anticipate threats from the other side of the border. There was only the State of Syria across the border before the civil war, but now it has been replaced by different non-state armed groups claiming sovereignty and having different ideologies, structures, and long-term strategies. The People's Defense Units or *Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* in Kurdish (YPG), ISIS and the Syrian opponents – although they have not adopted a state model – have started to see themselves as states; therefore, they create more security pressure on Turkey.[24]

Despite the aforementioned physical obstructions, border transits have not been able to be completely eradicated. Physical conditions vary along border regions. An authority we have interviewed says that security obstacles exist because of geographical conditions in certain areas.

> "For instance, overgrown greens and trees serve as a camouflage for terrorists and smugglers, and block the view for military troops. Again, terrorists and smugglers easily hide in the mountainous terrains while crossing the border. Besides, the Karasu River in the province of Hatay forms the border with Syria, but the river dries up in summer and allows border crossing. Measures are strict enough except during periodical and physical weaknesses.[25]

> "The situation on the western tip of the Turkish-Syrian border seems more critical. Along the Turkish-Syrian border, some parts of the Kurt Mountains, in the North-South direction, facing Turkey are in the

Syrian territory; this sets a physical obstacle which terrorists use to hide in. There are zigzags along the border as well; some small hills are located in the Turkish side and others in the Syrian side. Such geographical conditions make it difficult to determine the factors threatening border security."[26]

On the other hand, we should emphasize that the border between Turkey and Syria was quite busy, as well, before the civil war broke out in Syria. During the Cold War period, in the 1950s, border transits could not be prevented either for humans or for goods even in the presence of landmine fields. On both sides of the border, crossing is possible if smugglers are paid a small amount of money.[27] The Syrian civil war made an already very problematic border security situation even more complicated.

Another dynamic influencing Turkey's border security policies towards Syria is the revival of Kurdish nationalism in the region due to the Syrian civil war and the fight against ISIS. In other words, the continuing relationship with the Kurdish ethnicity on the other side of the border makes it difficult to take border security measures against the security risks mainly posed by the civil war. Geo-cultural dynamics set by the presence of this ethnical region which serves to consolidate Kurdish nationalism also create resistance against necessary border security measures. In fact, efforts to build a wall for security reasons along the border areas populated by Kurds (the Nusaybin border region especially) were protested by the mayor of Nusaybin who went on a hunger strike[28] although the government

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24. SETA interview, May 19, 2015. If we look at the groups that Turkey shares a common border with on the Syrian side, one notices that there are plenty of different groups on the coastal region. Ahrar al Sham, Ansar al Sham and small ethnic and local groups are located in the coastal region. Again, the Nusra Front is active in the same area. The PYD is located in Aleppo rurals and Afrin; the Islamic Front is in yet another part of the region and ISIS is in some other part. The Syrian regime and the PKK exist in the Qamishli region. Among all, Turkey shares the longest border with ISIS, and ISIS poses the biggest threat to Turkey's border security. The second most dangerous group is the PYD/PKK. The PKK controls the region enclosed by Afrin, Kilis and Reyhanli. Turkey and the PYD are neighbors in Kamishli and some other small regions.

25. SETA interview, May 18, 2015.

26. SETA interview with Hassa District Governor Mustafa Pala, Hassa (Hatay), May 18, 2015.

27. Osman Bahadır Dinçer et.al. "*Suriyeli Mülteciler Krizi ve Türkiye: Sonu Gelmeyen Misafirlik*", Brookings & USAK, November 2013, p. 11.

28. "Kurds protest against wall along Turkey's border with Syria", *Reuters*, November 7, 2013; http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/07/us-syria-crisis-turkey-kurds-idUSBRE9A610720131107.

TABLE 4

Border Incidents in Land Frontier of Turkey
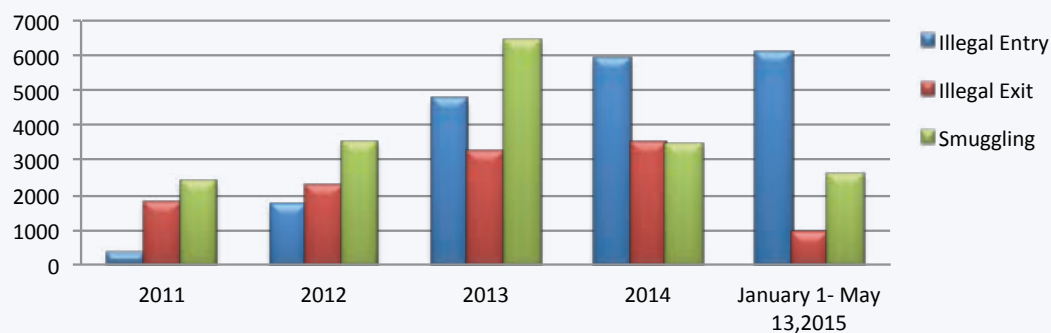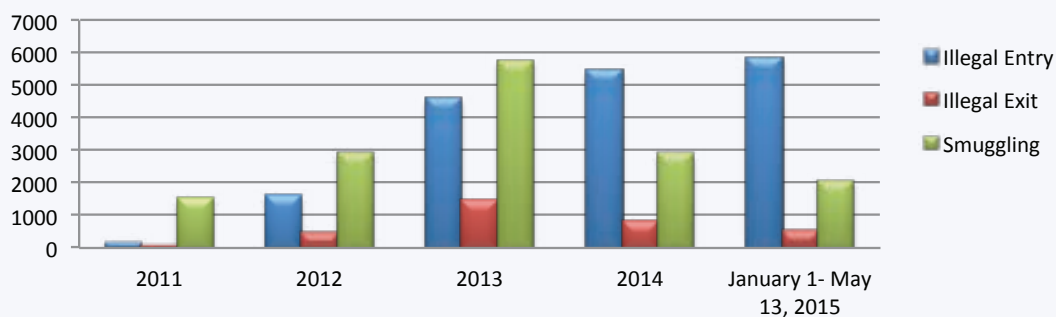## (2011 - May 13, 2015)

TABLE 5

Border Incidents in Syrian Border
(2011 - May 13, 2015)

authorities denied the construction[29]. Again, on October 20, 2013, about a thousand Kurds gathered in the Syrian town of Kamishli, right across the Turkish town of Nusaybin, and tried to walk across the border; the police dispersed the crowd by using water cannons.[30] The examples above indicate that the autonomy that the PYD has gained since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, with the contribution of the Kurdish nationalism in the region, poses a threat to Turkey's border security. Following the Arab Spring, in particular, the most frequently seen security risk on Turkey's territorial borders is illegal human transits. Apparently, illicit crossings have increased especially after 2013 (Table 4,5).

Another dynamic preventing Turkey from taking effective measures for its border security is the lack of administrative standards due to the multitude of cities located on the 911-km Syrian border. For instance, while strict measures are applied against smuggling and terror activites in a particular city, measures may vary in another. Thus, if smugglers or terrorists cannot pass the border in Hatay, they try other crossing points in other cities. During a field study, an official said, this is because of an interinstitutional integration problem.

> "There are individual and structural reasons behind such differences. Different provinces have different border issues. For instance, concerns of civil administrations in the provinces of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa are different from those of the civil administration in Hatay. Cross-border kinship relations in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa prevent taking measures as strict as those in Hatay.[31]That's why border security administrators face a dilemma: when administrators attempt to remove the border in order

to strengthen kinship relations between the two countries, border traffic increases and becomes vulnerable to exploitations. When the administrators try to take measures against possible exploitations, this is perceived as an attempt to permanently break kinship relations. If a border wall is built, controls at check-points could still be possible and border traffic could flow through border crossings. The construction of a wall is a measure planned for administratively uncontrollable areas along the border. Blocking kinship relations and people's rights is out of question. Therefore, it is assured that there is no reason for concern for the locals along the border."[32]

As a whole, although Turkey has increased security measures along the Syria border, diversity of threats and geographical conditions restrict effective measures. Accordingly, on the Turkish-Syrian border in particular, ISIS and FF top the list of threats.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Turkey has adopted serious measures to prevent the influx of foreign fighters (FF) to Syria via the southern borders of Turkey since the time that the Syrian civil war escalated into a military conflict. Ankara's active support of all the international community's decisions to prevent FF crossings from Turkey to Syria has been the most crucial of these measures. In this context, Turkey

- has contributed to the formation of a list to block potential FF from entry into Turkey, and actually succeeded in preventing their entry;
- has established Risk Analysis Centers in order to detect FF if they enter Turkey;
- has taken physical measures to increase border security;
- has seized the properties of individuals who are involved in terror activities; and

29. Arınç: 'Nusaybin'deki duvar değil tel örgü', *Radikal*, http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/arinc_nusaybindeki_duvar_degil_tel_orgu-1159009, November 4, 2013; *"Nusaybin'de duvara karşı ölüm orucu"*, *BBC Türkçe*, November 1, 2013, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/11/131101_nusaybin_duvar.

30. "Rising Costs of Turkey's Syrian Quagmire", p. 27

31. SETA interview, May 18, 2015.

32. SETA interview, May 18, 2015.

• has followed a strategy in accord with the international community's struggle against ISIS.

Categorically, Turkey is defined as one of the "target countries" for FF on their way to and from a conflict zone. Therefore, foreign fighters pose a serious threat to Turkey unlike any other country. In addition to this, an FF who decides to leave the conflict zone might prefer to reside in Turkey as a third country.[33] This picture directly presents a danger to Turkish national security as it makes the country's border security vulnerable. Moreover, it is estimated that the number of people joining FF from Turkey stands at over 1,000.

Sixty to seventy percent of the FF, who join the civil war in Syria, come from Middle Eastern countries and twenty to twenty-five percent from Western countries. The FF fighting with ISIS consist of either U.S. or EU citizens who are alienated, culturally excluded, second-generation immigrants from North Africa, North Caucasia and the Balkans.

As of September 2014 the number of foreign fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq to join the conflicts is approximately 2,000 or 3,000 - more than 100 of whom are American citizens. Fighters in these regions are mainly from France, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Germany.[34] According to U.S. officials, there are 12,000-15,000 FF in Syria and Iraq as of September 23, 2014.[35] Foreign fighters in Syria come from at least 80 different countries: probably 15-25 percent of FF are from Western Europe and North America, and the majority of the rest are Arabs and from Muslim countries in general.[36] As of September 2014, the EU counter-terrorism units have estimated that 930 French citizens travelled to Syria to join the conflict, 150 of whom returned to France long ago.[37] In the light of this information, it may be said that the U.S. and many European states have failed to prevent potential FF from leaving their countries. It is also quite difficult and less likely to follow and stop so many foreign fighters transiting from Turkey to Syria.

Turkey has verbalized the necessity of preventing foreign fighters before they leave their countries. To this end, Turkey has initially contributed to a no-entry list formed by international cooperation.

After the Cold War Era, Turkey's border security policy began to be shaped not only to prevent the attacks from terrorists or the other countries but also along with the global problems such as mass migration and smuggling.

When looking at the numbers shared with the public, one notes a remarkable increase in the no-entry list since 2014. Also, the expansion of information sharing in order to create this list has been extremely effective. Besides this, the Unit-

33. Haldun Yalçınkaya, "International Cooperation against Foreign Terrorist Fighters: The Experience of Turkey", *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs*, No 22, February 2015.

34. Dafna Rand and Anthony Vassalo, "Bringing the Fight Back Home: Western Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria", *Center for a New American Security*, August 2014, p. 1; Richard Barrett, "Foreign Fighters in Syria", T*he Soufan Group*, June 2014, p. 9.

35. Agence France-Presse, "Americans among 12,000 foreign fighters in Syria: US", Yahoo News, August 21, 2014, http://news.yahoo.com/americans-among-12-000-foreign-fighters-syria-us-225059981.html; Justin Sink, "WH: Radicalized Americans back in US", *The Hill*, September 22, 2014, http://thehill.com/policy/international/218494-white-house-radicalized-americans-back-in-us.

36. Bruce Riedel, "Syria's Terror Blowback Threatens Europe and the United States", *The Daily Beast*, May 5, 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/05/05/syria-s-terror-blowback-threatens-europe-and-the-united-states.html; Aaron Y. Zelin, "ICSR Insight: Up to 11,000 foreign fighters in Syria; steep rise among Western Europeans", *The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, December 17, 2013, http://icsr.info/2013/12/icsr-insight-11000-foreign-fighters-syria-steep-rise-among-western-europeans/; "Foreign Fighters in Syria", *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, p. 26; Zeke J. Miller, "Some Americans Fighting with Terror Groups Have Returned to the U.S., Obama Administration Says", *TIME*, September 22, 2014, http://time.com/3418455/isis-isil-barack-obama-us/.

37. "930 French residents have joined jihadi groups in Iraq and Syria, minister", *RFI*, September 14, 2014, http://www.english.rfi.fr/france/20140914-930-french-residents-have-joined-jihadi-groups-iraq-and-syria-minister.

ed Nations Security Council's Resolution 2178 (September 24, 2014) has contributed to the international awareness of foreign fighters, which has helped more names be included in the no-entry list.[38] Turkey does not act alone against FF and the effectiveness of Turkey's actions intensifies in accordance with the level of cooperation with the source countries of the aformentioned list. Thus, insufficiently cooperative source countries are responsible for potential weaknesses in the measures taken against foreign fighters. This is a criticism voiced frequently.[39] At this juncture, Turkey's criticism is that European countries, in particular, have not provided, or directly shared, sufficient information about foreign fighters who plan to join the conflict in Syria.

The information shared with the public also reveals that the number of FF on the no-entry list from 101 different countries reached 14,515[40]; the figure stood at 5,000 in the summer of 2014 and around 7,000 in the fall of 2014. The rapid increase in the number of listed foreign fighters is a result of cooperation, joint efforts and harmony among source countries against FF. In this regard, Turkey and the EU countries have shared more information after Turkey insisted on collaboration. Meanwhile, the latest figures announced by the Ministry of Internal Affairs Department of Migration show that the number of foreign fighters who were expelled by Turkey upon entry increased from 1,040 in late 2014 to a current 1,471. It is also noted by the Depart-

ment that foreign fighters come from 81 different countries.[41]

To join the conflict in Syria, foreign fighters from European countries in particular, select Turkey as their transit route. This is another reason that makes Turkey's role in this issue more sensitive.[42] In this sense, Turkey is preferred by European foreign fighters, and especially the Turkish-Syrian border. The data concerning border security measures reveal a higher number of border violations on the border with Syria between 2011 and 2015. Although it is not accurate to say that all were FF-related violations, it is a fact that the border violations have intensified on the Turkey-Syria border (Table 6).

Regional distributions based on the figures used in the no-entry list in the period of 2011-2015 are: North Africa 28 percent; EU 22 percent; the Gulf and Middle East 18 percent; Americas 1 percent; European countries other than the EU 4 percent; the CIS, Caucasus and Central Asia 21 percent; non-State 4 percent; and Asia-Pacific 2 percent.[43] The numbers reveal that the majority of fighters on the list are citizens of North Africa, the EU, the CIS, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Table 7).

To this end, one of the most critical elements in Turkey's struggle against FF is the deportation of potential foreign fighters who somehow enter the country. Such deportation cases are usually conducted by security forces, but the designated units of the Turkish Armed Forces are also in charge of deportations as part of routine measures on borders. In connection, the number of individuals deported by Turkey in the period of 2011-

38. "Measures against Foreign Fighters", Turkish Foreign Ministry Presentation,, ORSAM Workshop. (Yalçınkaya, p. 9)

39. "*Davutoğlu: Suriye sınırını kapatırız ama mülteciler ne olacak?*", *BBC Türkçe*, January 12, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/01/150112_davutoglu_suriye_sinir; "*AK Parti Genel Başkan Yardımcısı Nebati: AB yabancı savaşçılar konusunda kendi ayıbını örtmeye çalışıyor*", *AB Haber*, July 9, 2015, http://www.abhaber.com/ak-parti-genel-baskan-yardimcisi-nebati-ab-yabanci-savascilar-konusunda-kendi-ayibini-ortmeye-calisiyor/; "*Çavuşoğlu daha çok istihbarat paylaşımı istedi*", *Al Jazeera*, March 13, 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/cavusoglu-daha-cok-istihbarat-paylasimi-istedi.

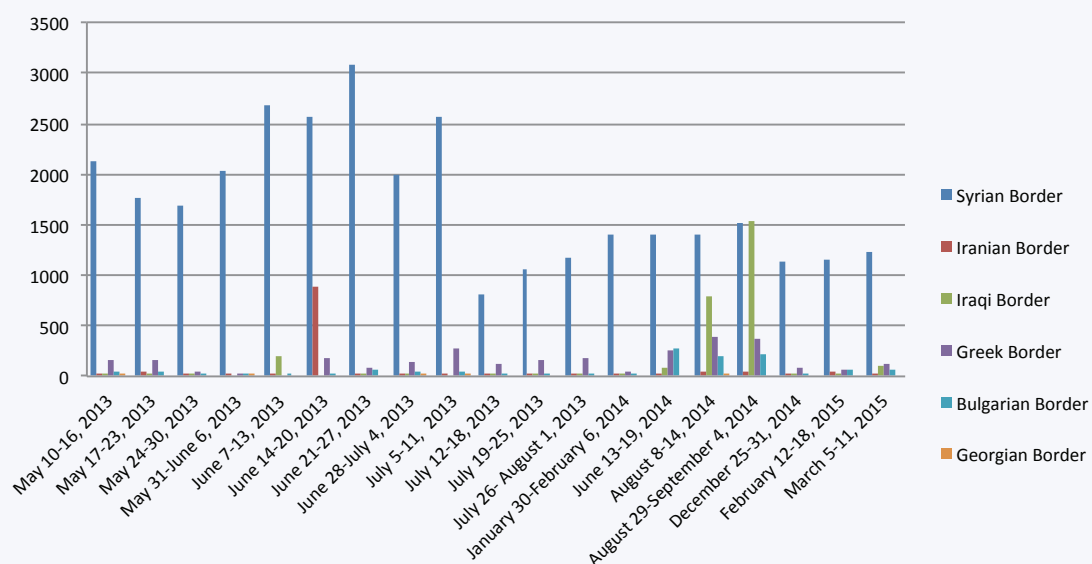40. "*Yabancı Savaşçılar*", http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/yabanci-savascilar_363_378_4742_icerik.

41. "*Yabancı Savaşçılar*", http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/yabanci-savascilar_363_378_4742_icerik.

42. Tuncay Kardaş and Ömer Behram Özdemir, "*Avrupalı Yabancı Savaşçılar: Kimlik, Sosyal Medya ve Radikalleşme*", *SETA Analysis*, February 2015, Issue 115, http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20150203185528_avrupali-yabanci-savascilar-pdf.pdf.

43. "Measures against Foreign Fighters", Turkish Foreign Ministry Presentation, ORSAM Workshop. (Yalçınkaya, p. 10)

TABLE 6

Illegal Border Crossings (May 10, 2013 - March 11, 2015)

Legend:
- Syrian Border
- Iranian Border
- Iraqi Border
- Greek Border
- Bulgarian Border
- Georgian Border

* The above data is from the official records on the website of the Turkish General Staff.

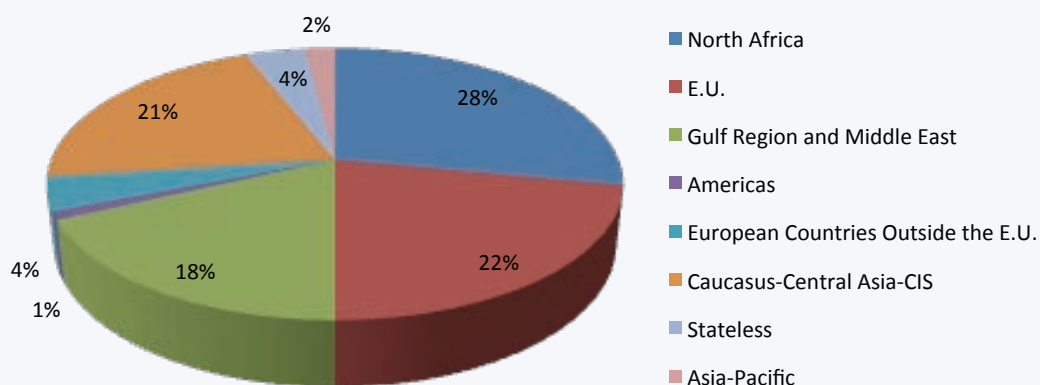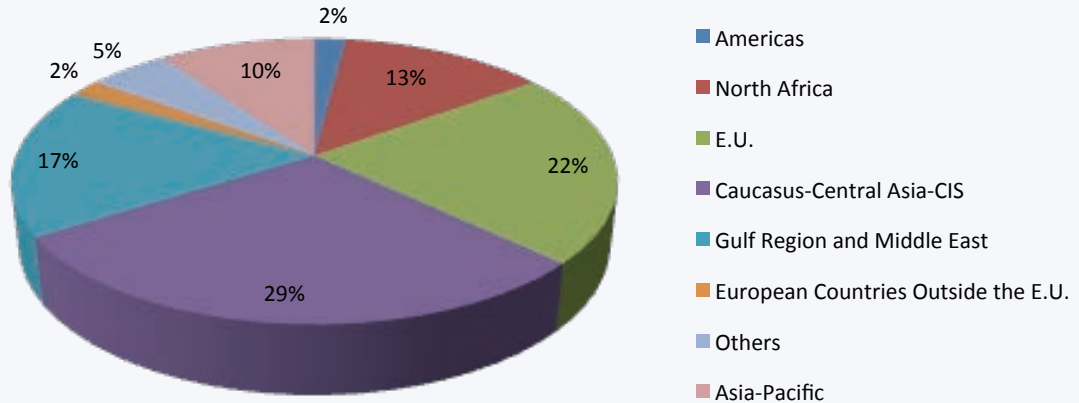| TABLE 7 |
|---|

2011 - 2015 No-Entry List (Distribution by Regions)

Legend:
- North Africa — 28%
- E.U. — 22%
- Gulf Region and Middle East — 18%
- Americas — 1%
- European Countries Outside the E.U. — 4%
- Caucasus-Central Asia-CIS — 21%
- Stateless — 4%
- Asia-Pacific — 2%

TABLE 8

2011-2015 Deportees (Distribution by Region)

- Americas
- North Africa
- E.U.
- Caucasus-Central Asia-CIS
- Gulf Region and Middle East
- European Countries Outside the E.U.
- Others
- Asia-Pacific

2015 sits at 1,471, and their distribution based on counties is: Americas 2 percent; North Africa 13 percent; EU 22 percent; CIS, Caucasus, and Central Asia 29 percent; the Gulf and Middle East 17 percent; European countries other than the EU 2 percent; Asia-Pacific 10 percent; and others 5 percent.[44] The percentages imply that foreign fighters, who are deported by Turkey, or potential FF are mostly from the CIS, the Caucasus, Central Asia and EU countries. Both data sets indicate that European countries should accept more responsibility as they send remarkable numbers of foreign fighters to conflict zones (Tables 8, 9).

The second dimension of Turkey's struggle against FF is the formation of Risk Analysis Groups in 2014.[45] The objective is to detect possible foreign fighters at airports, seaports and on borders by security forces (the Security Directorate, the National Intelligence, Counter-Terrorism and Smuggling Branch Directorates).

These centers employ personnel who are on duty around the clock in bus terminals and international airports. To this end, Risk Analysis Groups investigate suspects, check their posts on social media accounts and analyze to see whether the suspects have any links to terror organizations.[46] A total of 2,000 individuals have been investigated by Risk Analysis Groups so far and approximately half of them have been prevented from entry to Turkey and deported. In line with these measures, rent-a-car firms, in addition to airports and bus terminals are subjected to searches by Risk Analysis Groups. A team of officials is on duty to detect foreign suspects; particularly individuals who are underage, do not have hotel reservations and travel alone.[47] Similar searches offers a general assessment about regional distribution of deported foreign fighter suspects.

44. Yalçınkaya, p. 14.

45. The ORSAM Workshop entitled "The State of Affairs in Foreign Terrorist Fighters Research", January 23, 2015, Ankara. (Yalçınkaya, p. 8)

46. "*Türkiye IŞİD'e giden 1000 Avrupalıyı yakalayıp sınır dışı etti*", *HaberTürk*, October 15, 20104, http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/999892-turkiye-iside-giden-1000-avrupaliyi-yakalayip-sinir-disi-etti.

47. "UK arrests six people deported from Turkey on suspicion of joining ISIS", *Daily Sabah*, April 15, 2015, http://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2015/04/14/uk-arrests-six-people-deported-from-turkey-on-suspicion-of-joining-isis.

TABLE 9

2011 - 2015 The Ratio of No Entry and Deportation (Distribution by Region)
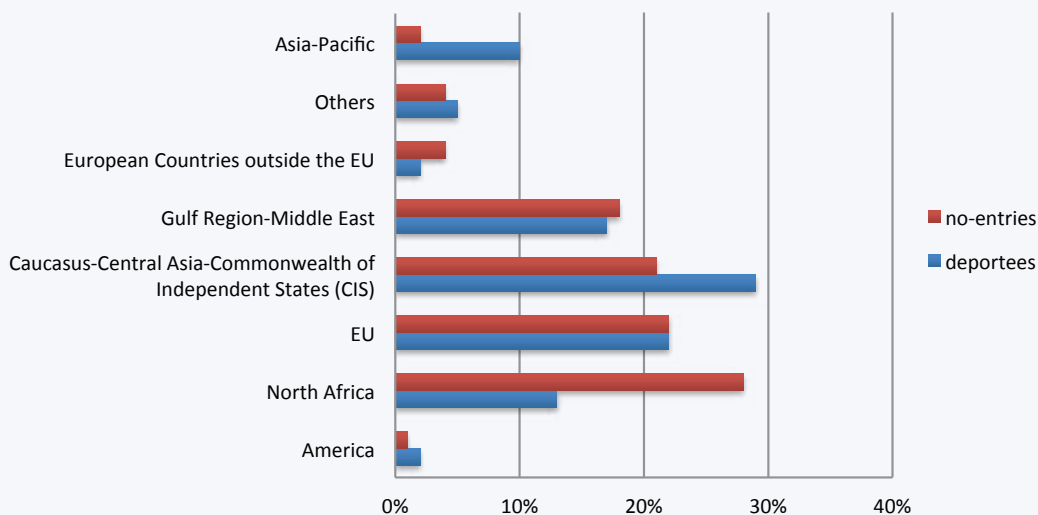
This is quite a delicate issue for Turkey because similar investigations or searches may threaten to compromise freedoms of travel and security. For this reason, it is very difficult to apply measures against foreign fighters effectively. The distribution of deported individuals indicates that their majority is from European countries.

The third dimension of struggling against FF as part of border security in Turkey is the operations conducted by security forces on the Syrian border. Strict measures taken on the border by relevant security units of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) top the list of measures Turkey has adopted to block the flow of foreign fighters to Syria. After the application of a string of security precautions, a remarkable number of foreign fighters have been caught by security forces. This occurred before the ISIS threat came into existence in 2014. For instance, Turkish authorities caught Mohammed Mahmoud (Abu Osama al-Ghraib), a citizen of Austria, while trying to infiltrate into Syria via the Turkish province of

Hatay.[48] What is interesting here is that although al-Ghraib has a police record and is a leader of a radical movement in his country, he was not prevented from leaving the country by Austrian authorities. Turkey does not have such information about any individual from any European country. Therefore, there seems nothing wrong in this individual entering Turkey legally just like any other tourist. Considering that Turkey receives millions of tourists each year, it is technically impossible to check every single person who enters Turkey from abroad. To detect a person who transits from Turkey to Syria requires a sophisticated monitoring system. In fact, John R. Allen, the coordinator of the anti-ISIS coalition, stated that the prevention of FF flow into Syria cannot be only on Turkey's shoulders.[49]

48. David Rising, "Turkey arrests extremist wanted by Germany", *Breitbart*, March 22, 2013, http://www.breitbart.com/news/da567m382/.

49. "Allen: Yabancı savaşçı akışını durdurma görevi sadece Türkiye'ye bırakılamaz", *AlJazeera Turk*, June 3, 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/allen-yabanci-savasci-akisini-durdurma-gorevi-sadece-turkiyeye-birakilamaz.

TABLE 10

**The Number of People Captured at Turkey's Land Borders
(2011 - May 13, 2015)**
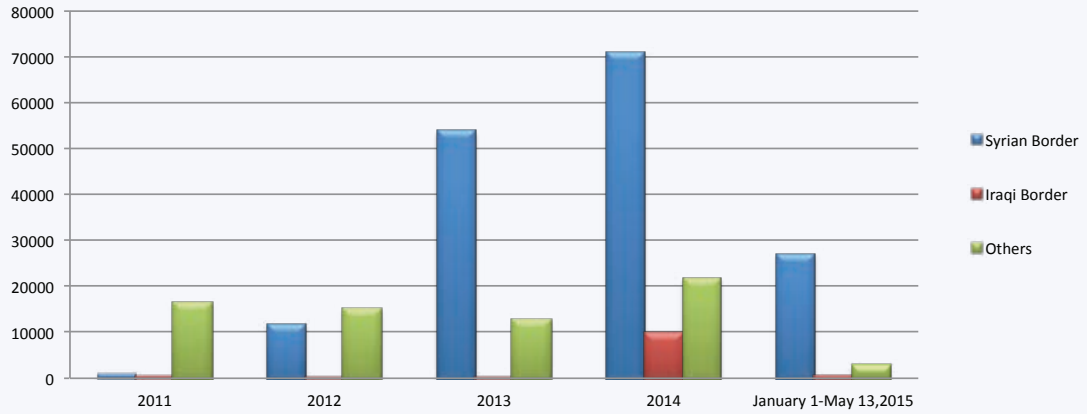
Still, Turkey's action plan against ISIS and the intensification of border security measures since September 2014, in particular, have slowed down FF traffic remarkably. For instance, Turkish authorities arrested 92 Syrians who attempted illegal entry into Turkey from Syria on March 28, 2015, and five Dutch citizens for an illegal transit from Turkey to Syria.[50] On April 1, 2015, nine British citizens, including two women and four children, were also deported by the Hatay Security Department for an illicit entry attempt to Syria near the Oğulpınar Border Post.[51] Again, 20 people were detained on April 4, 2015 in the village of Aşağıbeylerbeyi in Elbeyli County, Kilis, for allegedly trying to cross illegally into Syria to join ISIS. The suspects were travelling in a van toward the Syrian border when they were stopped during a police patrol.[52] A Dutch woman sought by Interpol was detained on April 6, 2015 in a Çolaklı Hotel by Manavgat District Gendermarie Command; she was allegedly about to join ISIS.[53] A statement issued by Kilis Gendermarie Command on April 7, 2015 stated that the squads of Öncü Infantry Border Post Command detained 16 people while they were trying to illegally cross from Turkey into Syria. The 5th Armored Brigade Units were dispatched to catch a Syrian in the act of entering Syria illegally at the Akıncı Village border point.[54]

Another statement issued by the office of the Gaziantep Governor on April 7, 2015 revealed the detention of 10 people from Switzerland, Kosova, Tajikistan, Syria and Russia while trying to illegally cross into Syria. A TSK announcement on April 5, 2015 stated that 15 Chinese

50. "5 Hollandalı, Suriye'ye geçmeye çalışırken yakalandı", NTV, March 29, 2015, http://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/5-hollandali-suriyeye-gecmeye-calisirken-yakalandi,pMoO04JgOkGh3NlrYt4jmQ.

51. Salim Taş, "Sınırda yakalanan 9 İngiliz ülkelerine gönderildi", Anadolu News Agency, April 14, 2015, http://www.aa.com.tr/tr/haberler/493200--sinirda-yakalanan-9-ingiliz-vatandasi-ulkelerine-gonderildi.

52. "Suriye sınırında, IŞİD'e katılmaya giden 20 kişi yakalandı", NTV, April 5, 2015, http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/suriye-sinirinda-iside-katilmaya-giden-20-kisiyakalandi%2cEcOR-EtmvEyRBnvXLwWI9Q

53. "İnterpol'ün aradığı kadın Antalya'da yakalandı", NTV, April 6, 2015, http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/interpolun-aradigi-kadin-antalyada-yakalandi,zUbpiC-ZRkuGBb0-0e5seQ.

54. "Suriye sınırından 17 kişi yakalandı", NTV, April 7, 2015, http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/suriye-sinirinda-17-kisi-yakalandi,m2cfs5_8wk-Snw-4yfp2Jw.

TABLE 11

**The Ratio of People Captured at Turkey's Land Borders
(Distribution by Borders), 2011 - May 13, 2015**

- Syrian Border
- Others
- Iraqi Border
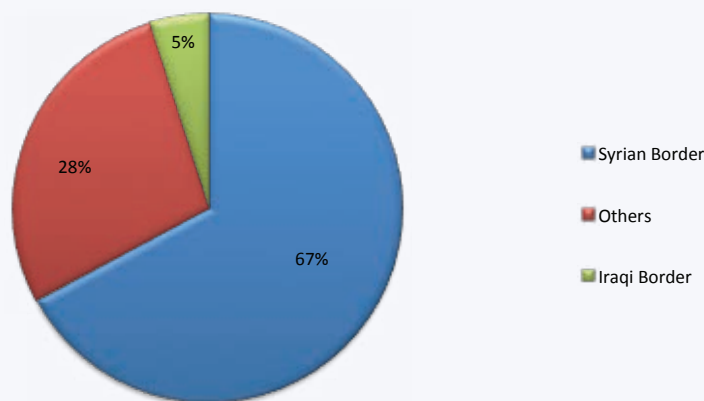
citizens along with 15 Syrians were detained for an illegal entry attempt into Syria.[55] On April 9, 2015, an ISIS member of Chinese origin and his two children were caught by the patrolling units of the Dağ Border Post on their way from Syria to Turkey in the vicinity of Çankallı Village, Kilis.[56] On April 10, 2015, 86 Syrians and six Chinese citizens were detained for an illegal entry into Turkey, according to a TSK communique. In addition, two Turkish citizens were arrested for illegally crossing the border into Syria.[57] On April 18, 2015, a Spanish couple who were on their way to join ISIS in Syria were caught in Istanbul and deported.[58] On April 21, 2015, a British

couple with their four children came to Turkey to enter Syria and join ISIS. The family, however, was detained in a hotel in Ankara Ostim and was deported by Turkish authorities.[59] On May 24, 2015, a French citizen arriving in Turkey on a plane from Milan to Istanbul confessed during his interrogation that he had plans to join the terrorist organization in Syria, so he was deported.[60] On June 15, 2015, five ISIS members were caught while trying to illicitly enter Turkey from Akçakale and their weapons were confiscated by Turkish officials.[61] As seen in the following table, in 2014 over 70,000 people were detained for illegal entry attempts to and from Syria.

Since then, military measures and the package of physical obstructions that Turkey has actualized on the Syrian border have caused a

55. "Turkey arrests dozens trying to cross its 'international' border with Syria, join ISIS", Daily Sabah, April 7, 2015, http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/04/07/turkey-arrests-dozens-trying-to-cross-its-international-border-with-syria-join-isis.

56. "Türkiye'ye girmeye çalışan Çinli IŞİD üyeleri yakalandı", NTV, April 9, 2015, http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/turkiyeye-girmeye-calisan-cinli-isid-uyeleri-yakalandi,EPmSuQGQP02nJvnYlyMKhw.

57. "Turkish security forces detain 134 people for illegal entry", Daily Sabah, April 11, 2015, http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/04/11/turkish-security-forces-detain-134-people-for-illegal-entry.

58. "Turkey detains Spanish couple suspected of joining ISIS in Syria", April 18, 2015, http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/04/18/turkey-detains-spanish-couple-suspected-of-joining-isis-in-syria.

59. "Turkey arrests Syria-bound British family", The Daily Star, May 21, 2015, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/World/2015/Apr-21/295191-turkey-arrests-syria-bound-british-family.ashx#.VTYQ7zdghsg.twitter.

60. "Türkiye Fransız vatandaşını sınır dışı etti", NTV, May 24, 2015, http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/turkiye-fransiz-vatandasini-sinirdisi-etti,4UGpNfrizUe33fswuwHZqw.

61. "Sınırı aşan IŞİD militanları yakalandı", NTV, June 15, 2015, http://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/turkiye/siniri-asan-isid-militanlari-yakalandi,iMS_eSHDnECvTk0mcGbz9Q/vM34e9yXIkS3a_A3oSM0zg.
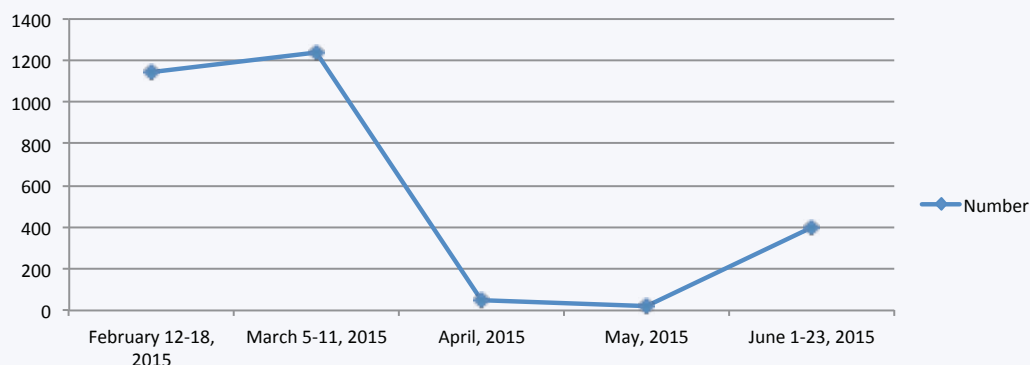
TABLE 12

The Number of People Captured at Syrian Border
(2011 - May 13, 2015)
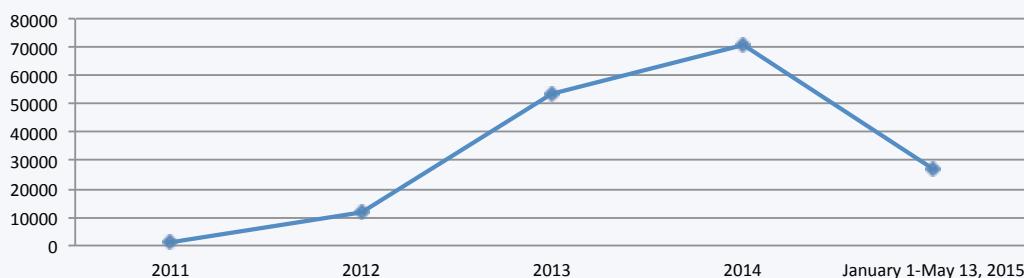
The data in the graph does not include the figures for asylum seekers

TABLE 13

Illegal Border Crossings in Syrian Border
(February 12 - June 23, 2015)

decrease in attempted FF transits. Although it is impossible to treat all of these cases in the category of terrorism, the high numbers are an indication of Turkey's "zero tolerance" policy in border security measures. According to a military officer, the number of people detained on the border has dramatically increased from 50 in every 1,000 before the ISIS threat to 950 in every 1,000 crossings with the presence of ISIS after 2014.[62] The figures do not include the

flow of Syrian refugees that occurred after severe clashes near the border. It is seen that the number of people detained near the border reached 70,000 before 2014 according to the information released by Turkish General Staff. The figure rapidly dropped as a result of border security measures taken after 2014 (Tables 12, 13).

Lastly, Turkey tries to block economic and financial support to ISIS, as part of counter-terrorism efforts, by freezing assets of individuals in Turkey. To this end, Turkey froze assests of citi-

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62. SETA Interview, May 20, 2015.

TABLE 14

National Identity of Al Qaeda Linked Legal Persons, Corporations and Institutions Whose Assets Have Been Frozen (June 16, 2015)
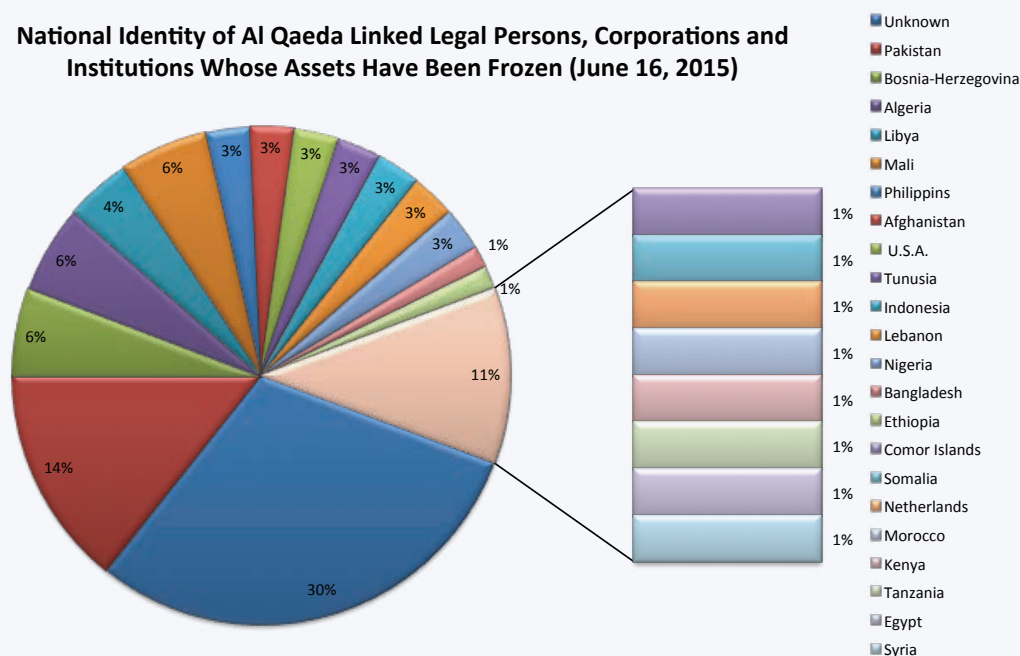
zens from different countries in order to prevent their economic support of terrorism (Table 14).

MILITARY AND PHYSICAL SECURITY MEASURES

Another leg of Turkey's policy of border security is the physical measures that have been taken on the Syrian border since 2014. Accordingly, it has been stated that a total of 317 border posts will be gathered under a central command, and a third "Border Special Forces Commando Brigade" will be formed.[63] Bringing border posts under the same roof is of importance the coordination of border security; the Special Forces Commando Brigade is extremely critical for a more effective fight.

Turkey has also adopted a string of measures against smuggling for its possible ISIS connections. Turkish authorities tightened up measures

in September 2014 so as to prevent oil smuggling and trade. In this sense, security forces have been intensified along border regions to allow strict control and inspection mechanisms. Turkey has increased controls on the Syrian border in October 2014, detained dozens of smugglers and ramped-up searches by highway patrols. Police in Hatay say they have arrested 38 people involved in smuggling since early 2014, and levied over $5.7 million in fines in the period of June-October 2014. According to Hatay Lt. Governor Orhan Mardinli, officials added 783 personnel to work in 56 locations around the province, around the clock.[64]

Furthermore, Turkish Land Forces, Security, Gendermarie and other military institutions have introduced additional measures, in coordination, to tighthen border security and fight against smuggling along the Turkey-Syria border. In response to the ISIS advance along the border, Turkish au-

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63. "Orgeneral Necdet Özel: İyimser öngörüde bulunmak güç", NTV, March 25, 2015.

64. "Turkey Cracks Down on Oil Smuggling Linked to IS", *The Seattle Times*, October 6, 2014, http://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/turkey-cracks-down-on-oil-smuggling-linked-to-is/.

TABLE 15

Captured Goods at Syrian Border
(2011 - May 13, 2015)

Legend: Fuel Oil (lt), Cigarette (Packages), Cannabis (gr), Drug (Number)
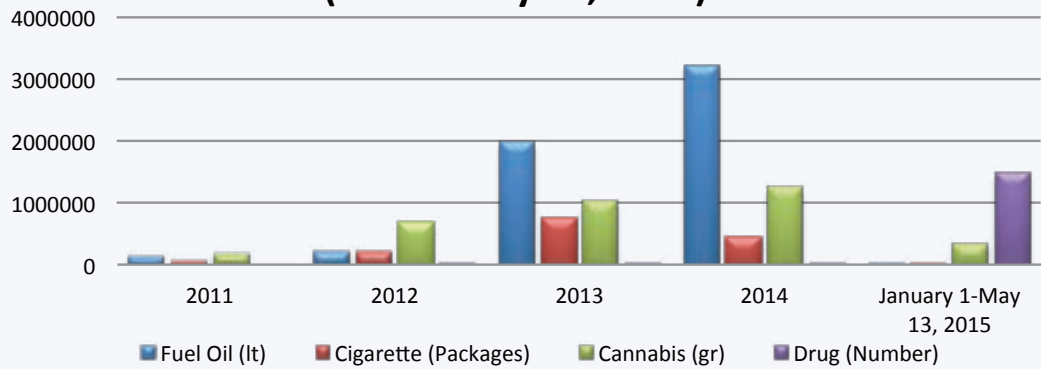
thorities dug 333-kilometer trenches; installed 60 kilometers of earth berms and 160 kilometers of razor wire barriers; built 13-kilometer walls; and illuminated 267 kilometers of border line. Turkey has, so far, built two dwarf walls at the weakest points along the 911-kilometer border with Syria.[65] Besides this, the border is also equipped with night vision systems and thermal cameras.

The number of people who were captured while trying to cross the border illegally has increased from 54,000 in 2013 to 71,000 in 2014 owing to the above measures. Again, the amount of smuggled oil has increased from 78 million liters in 2013 to 79 million liters in 2014. The total amount of smuggled oil that has been confiscated in border provinces has quadrupled and reached 20 million liters in 2014. Plus, a total of 350 kilometers of illegal pipeline was destroyed in the last two years (Table 15).[66]

In addition to the aforementioned measures which have been in effect for some time, the Cabinet decided for additional physical precautions on July 22, 2015. Accordingly, a 140-km

long additional trench and more barbed wires will be added in the region of Southestern Gaziantep city, old wires will be fixed and repaired; and walls will be built near problematic areas of the border. A 3-km fixed wall in Gaziantep and a 3-km movable wall will be installed in Hatay. An additional 118-km new illumination system will be added to the previous 270-km illumination system. The 1,280 km patrolling path will be rehabilitated and expanded with an additional 277-km new patrolling path. A 150-km modular wall will be built, and fortified wedge wire will be installed and a 15-km concrete-based fence wire will be mounted in designated areas. Other than Drones patrolling the border to monitor illegal transits, Zeplins used by the U.S. on the Mexican border will also be used.[67]

Another leg of the planned physical measures in order to strengthen security on the Syrian border is the completion of personnel deployment to the border has been in effect since April 2011, the time of the people's uprising in Syria. To this end, units on the border have been provided with logistic reinforcement. Similarly, necessary logis-
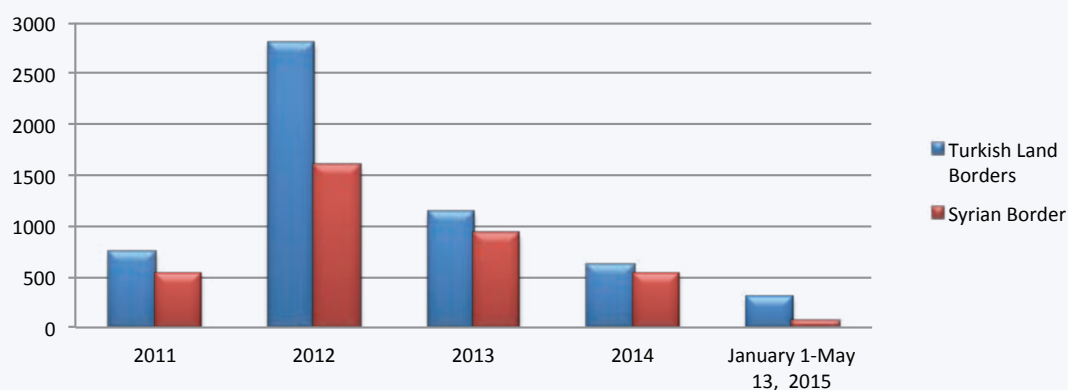
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65. "Karkamış gümrük kapısına duvar örüldü", Hürriyet, January 1, 2014.

66. Fact Sheet about Foreign Fighters (FF) by the Office of Public Diplomacy,, April 22, 2015.

67. "Bülent Arınç'tan önemli açıklamalar", *NTV*, July 23, 2015, http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/bulent-arinctan-onemli-aciklamalar ,RQgKaKZXfU2PEEoD2HB3oA.

TABLE 16

The Number of Weapons Captured at Turkey's Land Borders (2011 - May 13, 2015)

tic reinforcement and mechanized infantry units have been supplied to the border regiment commands by their brigadier commands. Military units on the border were reinforced with Tactical Wheel Armored Vehicle (TWV); "Kirpi" (meaning hedgehog in English) Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP), [a Turkish-made MRAP]; and Riot Control Vehicle (or Intervention Vehicle to Social Incidents, TOMA in Turkish). In order to provide better border security, Turkey established a border batallion in the town of Akçakale in 2014. Border units, particularly those in Syria and Iraq, have been provided with personnel support. In addition to the above, a government bill to set up a Border Security Zone, for more task efficiency, is currently being developed. Works have been completed on about 20 base regions for the installation of a Modular Temporary Base Zone (MTBZ) and the spread of Mobile Reconnaissance System (MRS). In this regard, MTBZs have been installed in 10 base regions and a total of 18 base regions have been equipped with MRSs. Currently, 50 percent of 40,000 military personnel in border protection is on task along the Syrian border.

Works continue for the installation of MT-BZs in eight base regions, and MTBZs and MRSs in six base regions in the near future. Within the scope of agreements signed with the Turkish Prime Ministry Housing Development Administration (TOKI) is the future construction of 120 facilities in order to scale up security measures and accommodation conditions for border units. Fifty-six of the facilities have already been completed, constructions continue for 20 facilities, and the planning and tender phase is in progress for other 34 stations. To meet the need for Urgent Border Physical Security Systems and the fortification of the Existing Barrier System on the Syrian border, 3,360 meters of movable concrete wall, 86,722 meters of wedge wire and 49,141 meters of earth berms have been installed in addition to 711,515 meters of bulldozing in the period of 2013-2014.[68] Owing to these measures, arms smuggling has decreased on the Syrian border. The percentage of various weapons seized near the Turkey-Syria border is low compared to 2015 figures.

Among Turkey's priorities is the enhancement of border security directly linked with

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68. Interview with the former Joint Chief of Staff Gen. Necdet Özel in the *Defense and Aviation Journal*, March 25, 2015, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/28549591.asp.

smuggling and illegal immigration, in addition to the "Counter-Terrorism Operation"; the enhancement of the Border Physical Security Systems; and the regulation of technical capabilities and legal authority of border units. Considering current and future needs, works continue for the formation of a standard and integrated "Border Physical Security System" based on the current assessment of threat, technological capacity and sources in hand along the borders of Turkey for the purpose of minimizing border violations; providing better and more effective border security; and encouraging savings in units and personnel by benefiting from high technology mechanisms. The restructure of border units is planned in the short term in accordance with the civil administration partition and works are also in progress for the middle-term removal of responsibility of border security from combatant brigades and the gathering of border units under a single roof.[69]

> Turkey, on the one hand, implements the open door policy about refugees and follows the "zero tolerance" principle against border crossings of Foreign Fighters, on the other.

It seems, through our interviews in border provinces and towns, that security forces are highly mobilized. An authority we interviewed said,

"For instance, in the province of Hatay and the town of Hassa security forces are on alert as operations continue non-stop. Since last year, big operations have been made against oil smuggling. The villages on the borders which have income from smuggled oil sales were subjected to operations, illegally laid pipelines were de-

stroyed; as a result, oil smuggling has pretty much come to an end.[70]

"A remarkable increase in physical measures can be noticed immediately. For instance, there are a total of six border posts along the 23-kilometer Hassa (Hatay) border, each of which is considered to have three or four observation points; thus, there are about 20 watchtowers equipped with thermal cameras and weapons accordingly. This means about one watchtower for every kilometer of border line. The distance is reduced to 500 meters in the Mardin region. If high technology is utilized, this would be quite an ideal distance. Moreover, there is a "border security road" parallel to the border. This is a very well illuminated asphalt road. Owing to this, military dispatching becomes easier, faster and more comfortable. If smugglers and terrorists use this road, they will most definitely be detected and detained. This road also plays a deterring role.[71]"

One of the critical points that came to our attention during the interviews is that the zero tolerance policy has been in effect on the border lately. This is also the case in smuggling. An authority told us, "There are efforts to minimize smuggling as much as possible, and there is success due to the measures that have been taken so far. The regions where smugglers break down physical barriers are identified and fixed immediately. The number of watchtowers has increased as permitted by the number of troops."[72]

Strict controls at border crossings have already been in place compared to the early days of the Syrian revolution. Another official comments on how security measures are extremely effective,

"Turkey is a state capable of keeping its borders under control. At the beginning of the process, controls on the border were almost impossible due to the refugee influx from Syria. Thousands of people in those

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69. Interview with the former Joint Chief of Staff Gen. Necdet Özel in the *Defense and Aviation Journal*, March 25, 2015, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/28549591.asp.

70. SETA interview, May 18, 2015.

71. SETA interview, May 18, 2015.

72. SETA interview, May 18, 2015.

days rushed to the border because of bombings and somehow entered Turkey. Turkey admitted them and placed them in refugee camps. It is possible to say that Turkey is in a very good condition compared to the situation in the early days in terms of border security. 250,000 Syrian refugees are living in camps on the other side of the border and this is an indication that Turkey is capable of controlling its borders. There are 150-200 camps today on the Syrian side and if Turkey fails to control the border, 250,000 Syrians in these camps should be expected in Turkey. The situation will invite twice or three times more Syrians who will think that crossing the border is easy.[73]"

Trenches are the number one physical barriers built for border security in many provinces. To this end, trenches in Reyhanlı, Kilis, Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa are more frequent. Many authorities also agree that trenches are important and play a critical role in deterrence.

A wire fence double in width (2 meters in height), and a barbed wire fence with a second layer of razor wedge wire are used along the entire border with Syria. However, they can be climbed in the absence of "check and search" by a human. To put it differently, in the absence of monitoring by soldiers, these barriers can be overcome. A military officer with whom we talked, commented, "There are border posts and watchtowers along the border. They must be used actively; otherwise, no physical factor will pose an obstacle."[74]

Examples of the measures discussed above can be drawn from the myriads of recent military and physical obstacles set for border security. For instance, on the borderline between the town of Nusaybin and Qamishli in Syria, a kilometer long, 2-meter wide, 3-meter deep trench was dug towards Kızıltepe in February 2015.[75] On March

9, 2015, Turkey closed the Öncüpınar and Cilvegözü border crossings; commercial trucks and emergency medical vehicles were exempt. In addition, Turkish authorities tightened checks and controls. Police intensified patrolling along the border to prevent illegal entries. On March 12, 2015, a person who attempted to violate the border was shot by a Turkish soldier.[76] On March 16, 2015, the Turkish government announced that the scanning of digital photographs and fingerprints will be required on the Syrian border.[77] A 1,300-meter trench and surveillance cameras were installed at the crossing near the Öncüpınar border area on May 12, 2015. On the Kilis-Azez road, three additional check points were set up.[78] On June 22, 2015, a 300-meter long, 2-meter wide and 3-meter deep trench was dug in the area between Qamishli and Nusaybin.[79]

CONCLUSION

Security-related changes in the aftermath of the Arab Spring have caused modifications in Turkey's border security policies. This, without doubt, was not limited to Turkey, and invited challenges on a regional scale regarding border security. In this time period, Turkey after reviewing its border security politics at both political and military levels, materialized a series of military measures and attempted to establish a safer

73. SETA interview, May 18, 2015.

74. SETA interview, May 19, 2015.

75. "Türkiye sınıra hendek kazıyor", Rudaw, June 22, 2015, http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=138109.

76. Mohammed Al-Khateib, "No sign of Turkey-Syria border reopening", Al-Monitor, March 18, 2015, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/syria-turkey-close-border-bab-al-salam-security-measures.html?utm_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm_campaign=587a9a0e75-March_19_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28264b27a0-587a9a0e75-93114785#.

77. Ahmet Topal, "Turkey introduces fingerprint scanners, photos to boost security on Syrian border", Daily Sabah, March 16, 2015, http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/03/16/turkey-introduces-fingerprint-scanners-photos-to-boost-security-on-syrian-border.

78. "Free Syrian Army heightens security on Turkish-Syrian border", Daily Sabah, May 12, 2015, http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/05/12/free-syrian-army-heightens-security-on-turkishsyrian-border.

79. "Türkiye sınıra hendek kazıyor", Rudaw, 22 Haziran 2015, http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=138109.

border with Syria. Ankara made a radical change in its military engagement rules with Syria on a macro level and also minimized illegal transits of Foreign Fighters from Turkey to Syria by adopting a "zero tolerance" policy. The issue of foreign fighters posing risks for border security has been a source of criticism against the country. Although Turkey implemented the "open door policy" regarding Syrian refugees, it has applied tighter control mechanisms on its border. Turkey has minimized possible risks from the other side of the border by taking an array of physical measures along the border with Syria.

The current architecture of border security in Turkey has been shaped by the coordination of different institutions. However, the plethora of institutions in charge of border security and the branching out of security threats take the lead among the challenges in forming an "integrated border security politics". At present, border security and management has been provided by the Security General Directorate, the Ministry of Customs and Trade, the Land Forces Command, the Gendermarie General Command and the Coast Guard Command. Professional law enforcement forces under the Ministry of Interior had been considered as appropriate to administer the restructuring process launched in 2003 and the activities of a planned Border Security Unit. However, it is difficult to claim that full-fledged progress has been made in the restructuring process as discussed above even though the planned border security unit is included in the National Program and is deemed necessary as part of Tur-

key's European Union membership bid. Ongoing political instability in the Middle East, geopolitical chaos, a new form of terror (ISIS), and the lack of institutional and legal infrastructure which Turkey experiences in the border security issue may be listed as major problems in border security, along with the problem of sharing bureaucratic authority and responsibility, and the limited border controls due to climate and terrain conditions.

In case of a failure to obtain a border security institution in the short term, a meeting mechanism may be created to improve coordination. In addition, measures applied in different provinces should be reviewed for coherence. Different measures may be taken depending on the social, economic and geographical conditions of provinces. Furthermore, general precautions should be applied in a more standardized way and measures should not vary dramatically between provinces.[80]

As long as the civil war continues in Syria, border violations and smuggling will continue to threaten Turkey's border security. Therefore, a permanent solution to the Syrian civil war, which is the main source of security problems on the border, should be found. Although the measures taken for border security will help to minimize security risks in the near future, the strict physical measures will negatively affect Turkey's power to influence the region in terms of a new Syria and a new regional order.

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80. SETA interview, May 18, 2015.

This paper analyzes the issue of how Turkey's border security policy has been shaped since 2013, the year in which Syrian crisis began to deepen and ramify. This analysis draws on interviews with government officials as well as non-governmental organization representatives. So, these parts are included in various sections of the text as much as possible.

In the analysis, changes in Turkey's border security policy in recent years were investigated just after the global and regional divergences in this policy had been addressed. Within the context of the Syrian crisis, the parameters of Turkey's respective policy, struggle against Foreign Fighters (FF) and the military measures taken were also covered.

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