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# Euphrates Shield Operation an extra impetus for Turkish policy options



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**E**uphrates shield has begun on August 24/2016 by a Turkish military operation with coordination of international alliance forces to support a group of FSA to get rid of controlling ISIS in north of Syria and to prevent Kurdish forces which follow the democratic union party (PYD) which Turkey considers it as the Syrian branch for Kurdistan workers' party, from linking the Kurdish cantons between Afrin and Kobani and from making progress specifically in the west of Euphrates area that the operation takes its name from.

Forces of democratic Syria (which PYD forms its main root) has seized Manbij after battles against members of ISIS and these forces do not get out the city after liberating it, despite American pledges, and this led to motivate Turkey to begin the operation, in addition to some international circumstances which preparing for such this moving, the most important is naturalizing Russian-Turkish relations and skipping the crisis between them after dropping the Russian aircraft on November 24 2016.

[See Map 1 in the appendix](#)

## Operation stages

The operation succeeded in its first test to expulse ISIS from Jarablos and its countryside in record time, and also from the areas between Jarablos and Izaz.

This rapid progress in Jarablos has been attributed to the organization's Neglecting for this city in addition to the far distance between the city and its points of power especially because of tribal nature of the city which did not engaged in works with the organization as what has happened in other cities.

And that the organization probably did not want to repeat its experience in losing boarder cities such as Ain Al-Arab (Kobani) which it defended by it for a period and then lost it, as well as the decline in capabilities of the organization over time.

On the other hand, in spite of the threat of Kurdish militias to ISIS, but ISIS was confident that Turkey will not allow Kurdish militias progress to the east of Euphrates and this led to a lack of focus on military preparation in the region.

In the second stage of operation, Turkey was able to end ISIS presence from its southern boarders with Syria completely and liberated a large number of boarder villages and towns between Jarablos and Izaz (the same area which Turkey called for creating safe zone or no fly zone on it) by participating, involving its forces directly, and supporting FSA Forces.

By ending the first and second stages, Turkey has been able to provide safe zones for a large number of Syrian refugees, and a lot of Jarablos's inhabitants start returning to their homes, also the safe zone helped in reducing the numbers of Syrian refugees to Turkey significantly.

[See Map 2 in the appendix](#)

The third stage, which is currently going slower, is trying to control Al-Bab city after the expulsion of ISIS from the remaining area between Turkman and Mare'e, which Dabiq is located in it and has a symbolic status for Turks because it was liberated by Sultan Selim I, and also has an interest of ISIS because it related to future issues such as the great battle and Signs of the crack of doom.

Until October 17, 2016 the Turkish artillery provided the ability for FSA forces to liberate Akhtren, Ghaytoun and Al-Masoudyah and reach by liberating them to outskirts of Al-Bab which is the most important strongholds of ISIS in the eastern countryside of Aleppo.

It is worth mentioning that the lands area which liberated by Euphrates shield forces from ISIS until the end of Monday 17 October 2016 are 1300 square kilometer along the border.

[See Map 3 in the appendix](#)

## Indicators of the operation

The most important thing to notice is Euphrates shield operation has begun after nearly a month after the failed attempt of coup in Turkey July 15 2016, which may indicate the possibility that dislodge of some officers who had an association with Gulen has helped to overcome the obstacles of Turkish army move, and also the consensual situation between the political parties after the coup attempt may have a place within the internal factors affecting Euphrates shield operation.

Regarding the external factors, the operation came after a series of improving relations with some countries, especially Russia where it clearly seems that Russia had given the green light to Turkey's implementation of northern Syria operations to prevent establishment of Kurdish entity, which appeared in the absence of Russian targeting for Turkish forces, with near absence of Russian political and diplomatic attitudes towards the operation.

The Turkish government seems to be pledged for Russians to respect the unity of Syrian lands, which present in the Turkish discourse nowadays more than Assad departure.

Although the Syrian issue is still divisive between the two countries, but Russia needs to strengthen its relations with Turkey, particularly with regard to energy issues and the transfer of Russian gas to Europe via Turkey which was confirmed by Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Istanbul on October 10 2016.

Regarding to Turkish- American relations, and despite of the tension after the coup attempt and the Turkish conviction that America has a role in this attempt.

However, it not accurate that Euphrates shield operation was conducted without coordination with Washington but it is clear that the operation has done without full satisfactions of Washington or attempting to appease its ally, Turkey.

Brett Macgork, the special envoy of us president Barack Obama has said that the international alliance led by the united states against ISIS will provide full support for the group of opposition supported by turkey to take this town (Dabeq) which has a strategic importance.

Despite of the meanings and interpretations in this phrase, and despite the public disagreement about Washington's relation with the Kurdish forces , but this operation was not heading to Manbej where the Kurdish forces are controlling ,and they seem that it is heading to Al-Bab where ISIS is controlling.

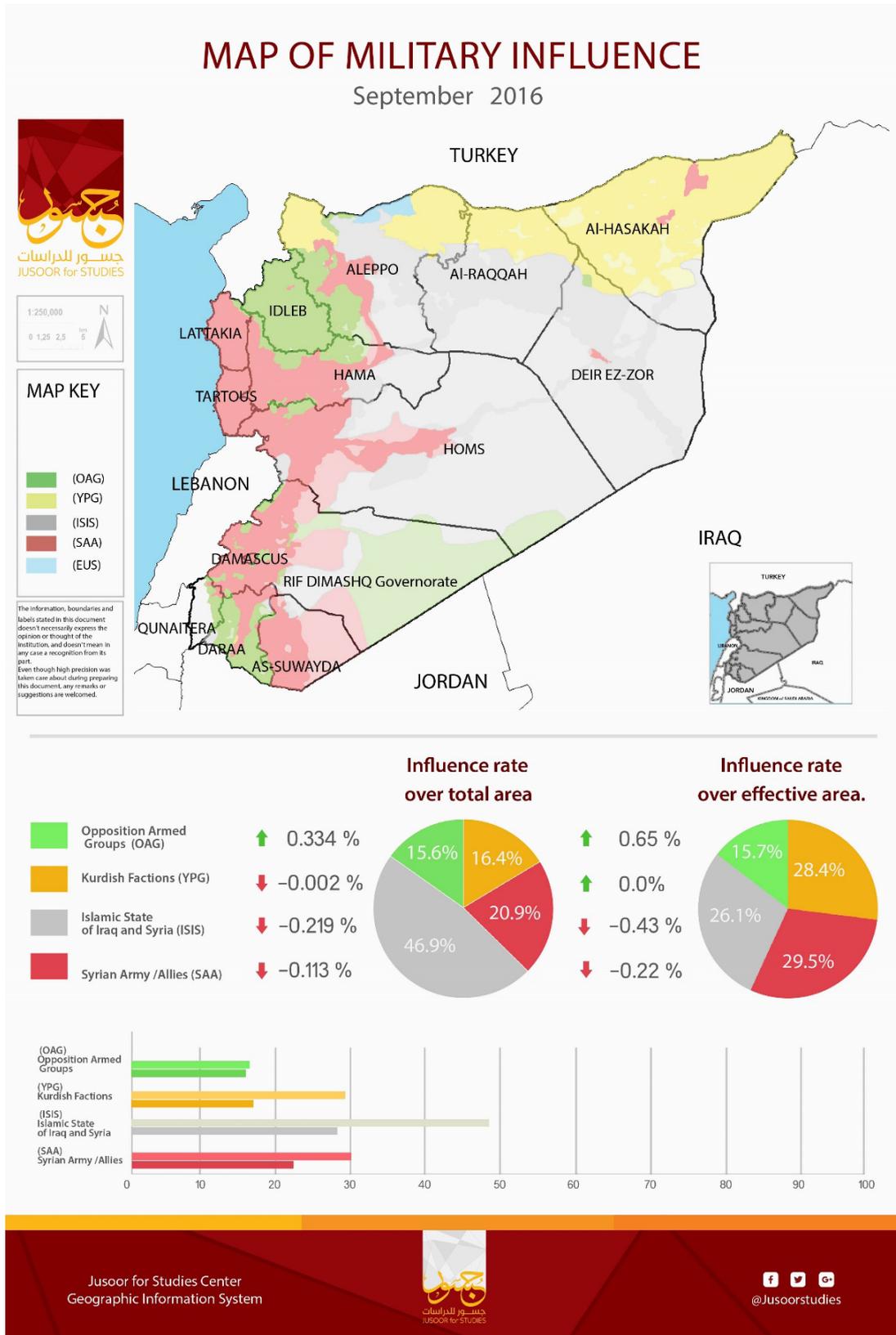
this is a Turkish attempt to achieve Turkish goals and to wait the American promises but with new influence on the ground according to a new international hard balance between Russia and America, and this lead us to realize that turkey did not rely on America totally and will show clearly the durability of Turkish-American relations if Euphrates shield operation attack Manbej which is unlikely now.

Turkey today looks much closer to achieve what it called for ,for a long time which is a safe zone in northern of Syria with about 100 km length and 50 km depth ,but turkey must be ready to required role and price to get concrete results and this is the challenge facing it especially with its current demands to participate in liberating Raqqa in Syria and Al-Mosel in Iraq which may create new dimensions in turkey's regional relations that seem to be heading for better with Riyadh and for worse with Iran.

Finally , the most important indication that can be fix in this context and from the continuous Euphrates shield operation ,is the Turkish external policy that has begun to give greater impetus to realistic polices based on hard power against soft policy that was adopted earlier or just focus on certain dimensions of conflict such as humanitarian and maybe we will find turkey with greater intervention in the regional issues in the near future.

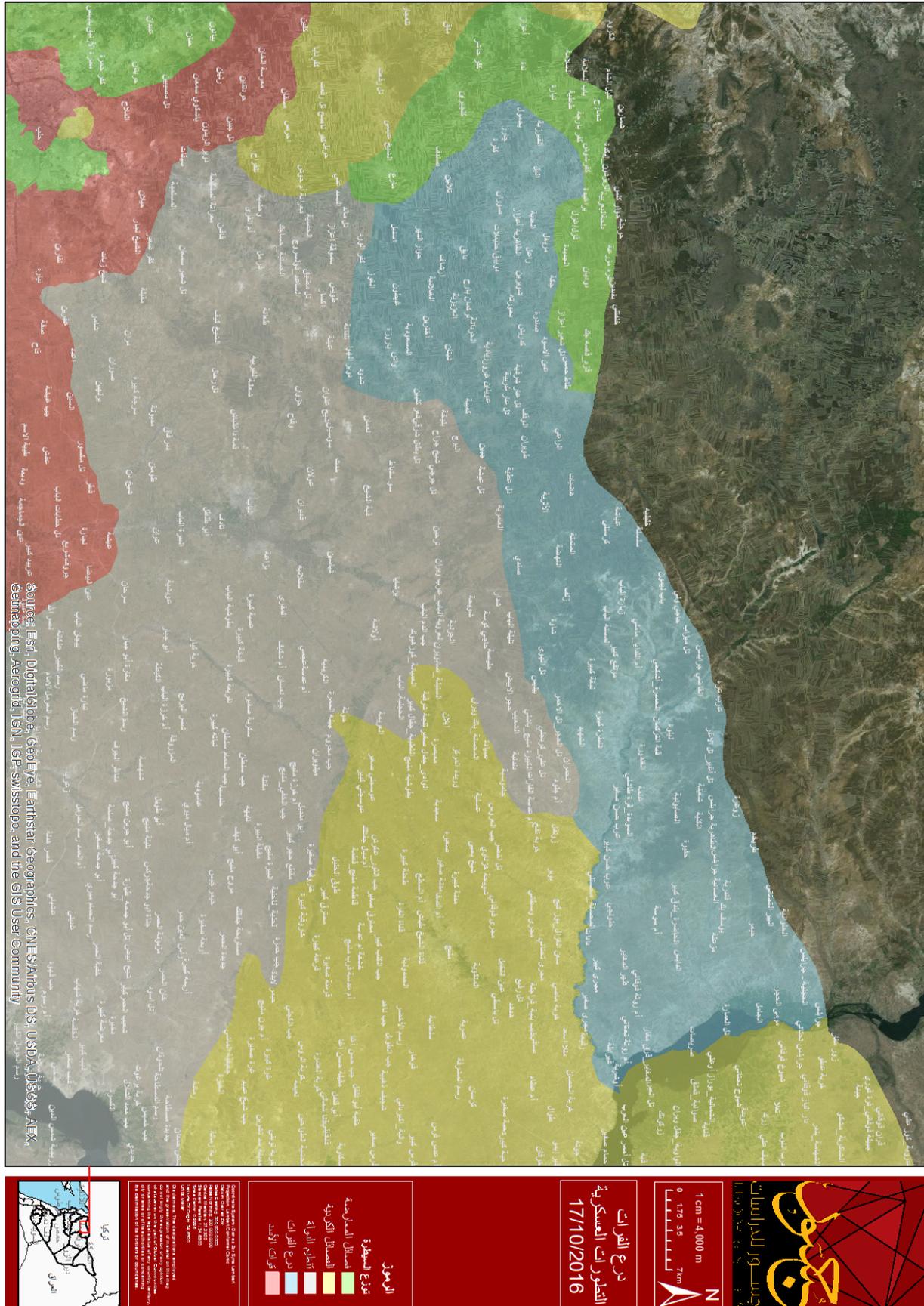
# Appendix

Map 1. showing zones of influence in the beginning of operations in Jarablos and its countryside.





Map 3. showing the progress of Euphrates shield operation until Monday ,October 17 ,2016.





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