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**SİYASET BİLİMİ VE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI**



**AN APPROACH TO USING HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY TO  
MAINTAIN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN THE CONFLICT  
OF SYRIA**

**Zıyad DEDE**

**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

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## LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ KABUL VE ONAY FORMU

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**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

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**ÖZET**

Bu araştırma, savaş bölgelerinde insani diplomasi, sürdürülebilir tarım ve politika arasındaki ilişkiye odaklandı. Finansmanı daha sürdürülebilir tarım projelerine yönlendirmek ve böylece siyasi istikrarı sağlamak amacıyla karar vericiler üzerinde savunuculuk ve etki yoluyla sürdürülebilir tarımı teşvik etmek için insan diplomasisine güvenilebilir. Tarım, Suriye'deki çatışma aktörleri arasında ortak bir çıkar ve ortak zemindir. Devam eden çatışma, tarım sektörünün gerilemesine neden olsa da hâlâ ekonominin omurgasını ve Suriye toplumunun gelir kaynağını oluşturuyor. Bu sektöre verilen destek, insanların yaşamlarının iyileştirilmesine ve devam eden çatışmaların hafifletilmesine katkıda bulunmaktadır ve çatışma sonrası ekonomik ve sosyal kalkınmada çok önemli bir role sahip olacaktır. Dolayısıyla insani diplomasi yoluyla tarım sektöründe sürdürülebilirliğin teşvik edilmesi bir yaklaşım olarak çatışmaların azaltılmasına, göçün azaltılmasına, sürdürülebilir kalkınmaya, iklim değişikliğine direnmeye ve gıda güvenliğine katkıda bulunacaktır. Araştırma, Suriye'nin tarım sektöründe yer alan yerel ve uluslararası insani kuruluşlar, yetkililer, Politikacılar ve yerel konseylerle yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla toplanan ilk-elden-bilgilere dayanıyordu. Ayrıca araştırmacının kişisel deneyimleri ve akademik geçmişinin yanı sıra saha ziyaretleri; gözlemlerinin yanında saha raporları, kitaplar ve akademik dergi makaleleri gibi ikincil veri analizleri de dikkate alınır. Araştırmadan, siyaset ve tarımın karşılıklı bağımlılığının ile birlikte çatışma bölgelerinde insani diplomasi ve siyasetin karşılıklı bağımlılığı da dahil olmak üzere birçok sonuç çıkarıldı. Sürdürülebilir tarım yoluyla çatışma bölgelerinde barış ve istikrarın desteklenmesinde insani diplomasinin rolünün yanı sıra, insani yardım çalışanlarının çatışma bölgelerinde karşılaştığı zorlukların olduğu kadar siyasetin insani yardım üzerindeki etkisi de var. Suriye çatışmasında tarım siyasi bir arabulucu görevi görüyor ve insani diplomasi yumuşak güç olarak kullanılıyor. Ayrıca, siyasi ve insani diplomasi örtüşebilir ve birlikte kullanılabilir, ancak bunların odak noktaları ve hedefleri farklıdır. Çalışmada şu önerilerde bulunuluyor: Sürdürülebilir uygulamaları destekleyen tarım politikalarına ve yatırımlara ağırlık verilmesi ve Suriye'deki diğer çatışma aktörleri arasında tarımın sürdürülebilirliği konusunda farkındalık yaratılması. Çatışmalardan etkilenen bir çevre, hem kısa vadeli gereksinimleri hem de uzun vadeli kalkınmayı dikkate alan sürdürülebilir bir tarım yaklaşımını gerektirir. Kalkınma aktörleri, yerel yönetim yetkilileri ve insani yardım kuruluşları arasındaki işbirliği ve koordinasyon kritik öneme sahiptir. İnsani diplomasi ve kapasite geliştirme, çatışma bölgelerinde çalışan insani yardım kuruluşları için temel becerilerdir. Sürdürülebilir tarım, siyasi diyalog, çatışma çözümü, yönetim reformları, adalet ve uzlaşma prosedürlerini içeren daha kapsamlı bir barış inşası stratejisine dahil edilmelidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İnsani Diplomasi, Sürdürülebilir Tarım, Politika.

**HASAN KALYONCU UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE EDUCATION INSTITUTE  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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**Ziyad DEDE**

**MASTER THESIS**

**Advisor**

**Dr. Yaman KEPENÇ**

**ABSTRACT**

This research focused on the relationship among humanitarian diplomacy, sustainable agriculture, and politics in conflict areas. Human diplomacy can be relied upon to promote sustainable agriculture through advocacy and influence over decision-makers in order to direct funding to more sustainable agricultural projects and thus achieve political stability. Agriculture is a mutual interest and common ground among the conflict actors in Syria. The ongoing conflict has caused a decline in the agricultural sector, but it still constitutes the backbone of the economy and a source of income for Syrian society. Support for this sector contributes to improving people's lives and mitigating ongoing conflict, and it will have a crucial role in post-conflict economic and social development. So, promoting sustainability in the agricultural sector through humanitarian diplomacy as an approach will contribute to conflict mitigation, migration mitigation, sustainable development, resisting climate change, and food security. The research was based on first-hand information gathered through interviews with Humanitarian local and international organizations, authorities, Politicians, and local councils involved in Syria's agricultural sector. Furthermore, the researcher's personal experiences and academic background are considered, as are field visits and observations, as well as secondary data analysis such as field reports, books, and academic journal articles. Many conclusions were drawn from the research, including the interdependence of politics and agriculture, as well as the interdependence of humanitarian diplomacy and politics in conflict zones. Aside from the role of humanitarian diplomacy in promoting peace and stability in conflict zones through sustainable agriculture, there are also challenges that humanitarian workers face in conflict zones, as well as the impact of politics on humanitarian aid. In the Syrian conflict, agriculture acts as a political mediator and humanitarian diplomacy is employed as soft power. Additionally, while political and humanitarian diplomacy can overlap and be used in conjunction, their respective focuses and goals are different. The study makes the following recommendations: emphasize agricultural policies and investments that support sustainable practices and raise awareness of the sustainability of agriculture among other conflict actors in Syria. A conflict-affected environment requires a sustainable approach to agriculture that takes into account both short-term requirements and long-term development. Collaboration and coordination among development actors, local government officials, and humanitarian organizations are critical. Humanitarian diplomacy and capacity building are essential skills for humanitarian organizations working in conflict zones. Sustainable agriculture should be included in a more comprehensive peacebuilding strategy that includes political dialogue, conflict resolution, governance reforms, and justice and reconciliation procedures.

**Keywords:** Humanitarian Diplomacy, Sustainable Agriculture, Politics

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## ABBREVIATIONS & FIGURES

### Abbreviations

<b>afad</b>	Disaster and emergency management presidency
<b>afns</b>	Aid fund for northern Syria
<b>cfsam</b>	Crop and food supply assessment mission
<b>covid -19</b>	Coronavirus disease.
<b>euaa</b>	Neither the european union agency for asylum
<b>fao</b>	Food and agriculture organization of the united nations
<b>fcdo</b>	Foreign, commonwealth & development office
<b>fsl</b>	Food security livelihood clusters
<b>giz</b>	Deutsche gesellschaft für international zusammenarbeit GmbH
<b>hd</b>	Humanitarian diplomacy
<b>hpg</b>	Humanitarian policy group
<b>icrc</b>	International committee of the red cross
<b>ihr</b>	International humanitarian relief
<b>ingo</b>	International non-governmental organization
<b>ngo</b>	Local non-governmental organization
<b>pyd</b>	Democratic union party
<b>rata</b>	Ras al-ain and tell abiad
<b>sdf</b>	Syrian democratic forces
<b>snc</b>	Syrian national coalition
<b>soc</b>	Syrian opposition coalition
<b>srtf</b>	Syria recovery trust fund
<b>tmo</b>	Soil crops office
<b>unocha</b>	United nations office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs
<b>unrwa</b>	United nations relief and works agency
<b>ypg</b>	People's protection units

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I/NGOs, farmer, Local authorities interviews



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity has increased recently due to a number of factors, such as economic hardship, natural disasters, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as the world's population has continued to increase. Jobs have been lost, income has dropped, and food supply chains have been disrupted as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, the price increase of food, fuel, and fertilizer is contributing to the war in Ukraine, which is escalating the food insecurity crisis. Combining these factors has made food insecurity more severe. Programs that provide food assistance, like food baskets and meal delivery services, as well as changes to the policy that will increase access to wholesome food and support for small farmers, are among the measures taken to address the problem. The cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders, including governments, humanitarian organizations, and the private sector, is essential for achieving sustainable agriculture. Each sector has unique resources and expertise that can be leveraged to address food insecurity and promote sustainable agriculture practices. For example, governments can provide funding and policy support for sustainable agriculture programs and infrastructure development. Humanitarian organizations provide emergency food aid and support for small-scale farmers. The private sector invests in sustainable agriculture practices and invests in technologies that support sustainable agriculture. Through collaborating and coordinating their efforts can develop and implement comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of food insecurity and promote sustainable agriculture practices. This approach helps to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable communities are met and that sustainable agriculture practices are adopted at a scale. Syria's food security situation has suffered significantly as a result of the ongoing conflict since 2011. Large numbers of people have been displaced as a result of the conflict, which has also caused infrastructure to be destroyed and agricultural production and food supply chains to be disrupted. As a result, many Syrians have limited access to sufficient and nutritious food and face high levels of food insecurity.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted food supply chains and led to additional economic hardship, has made the situation worse. Additionally, the sanctions put in place against Syria have been a major contributor to the nation's food insecurity. Providing humanitarian aid and support for small-scale farmers is an important step in addressing the critical food insecurity situation in Syria. This includes providing

assistance with seed and fertilizer, as well as technical support for sustainable agriculture practices. Additionally, providing support for infrastructure development, such as irrigation systems and storage facilities, can help to improve the resilience of agricultural systems and ensure that food can be grown and distributed even in the face of ongoing conflict and other challenges. It's also important to consider the need for long-term support and livelihoods programs. This includes providing education and training opportunities, as well as access to markets and financial services, to help farmers and communities rebuild their livelihoods and become more self-sufficient. It's worth noting that due to the ongoing conflict, access to certain parts of Syria is limited, and the delivery of aid is a challenging task. Coordination with the authorities and security forces on the ground is crucial to ensure that aid reaches those in need. Since humanitarian diplomacy, agriculture, and politics are closely interrelated, while Humanitarian diplomacy refers to the use of diplomatic tools and channels to prevent, mitigate, and resolve humanitarian crises.

The agricultural sector is often at the center of humanitarian crises, as food insecurity and displacement can be caused by or exacerbate conflicts over resources. In the Syrian conflict, humanitarian diplomacy is used to negotiate safe access for aid workers and to protect civilians and their livelihoods. This includes advocating for the protection of agricultural land and infrastructure, as well as the rights of farmers and other food producers. Politically, the agricultural sector plays a key role in stabilizing and rebuilding societies affected by conflict, so supporting sustainable agricultural practices and investing in rural development help to create jobs and income opportunities and promote social and economic stability. This is crucial to reducing the risk of future conflicts over resources and helping to create a more secure and stable environment for all. Thus, Humanitarian Diplomacy, agriculture, and politics are closely interrelated, and addressing the needs of the agricultural sector is an important part of resolving humanitarian crises and promoting long-term stability and peace.

## **1.1. Research Problem**

Humanitarian organizations have been working diligently to address food security issues in Syria amid the ongoing conflict. However, the challenges posed by the conflict's complex and dynamic nature often limit the scope of these efforts to short-term, emergency interventions. This is due to a range of factors, including security concerns, logistical difficulties, and the immediate needs of affected populations. Humanitarian diplomacy has primarily centered around negotiating access to affected communities and ensuring the safety of aid workers. This focus on access is crucial for delivering immediate assistance, such as food, water, and medical supplies, to vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas. However, the broader challenge lies in promoting longer-term resilience and sustainable solutions for food security. Fluid and complex political dynamics in conflict zones can make it challenging to garner support for longer-term initiatives that require cooperation from various stakeholders and Different actors involved in the conflict may have varying interests, making it difficult to achieve consensus on priorities like sustainable agriculture. Convincing decision-makers, both within the affected country and in the international community, to prioritize and invest in sustainable agriculture programs is indeed a complex task.

The Political instability and conflict in Syria have had a devastating impact on the agriculture sector and the efforts of humanitarian operations in the country. Due to the ongoing conflict, agricultural infrastructure and production have been destroyed, leading to a shortage of food and high prices. Due to the restricted access to markets and farmland caused by fighting, it has also become more challenging for farmers to sell their crops. Humanitarian operations have also been hindered by the ongoing violence, with aid workers facing significant challenges in reaching those in need and implementing long-term and more sustainable approaches.

## **1.2. Research Significance**

The significance of the research lies in its explanation of the relationships between Political stability, Sustainable agriculture, and Humanitarian diplomacy in the Syrian conflict, highlighting the significance of the development and sustainability of agriculture in the Syrian conflict as a shared interest among conflict actors and other stakeholders, which is reflected in the peacebuilding efforts in conflict zones and political stability. The strength of the study is that it concentrates on one of the key economic sectors in Syria and highlights the problems that this sector is currently facing

and has been facing for some time. By addressing various economic, social, and environmental factors, sustainable agriculture can indeed play a significant role in reducing migration. It can also provide sound recommendations that help to achieve the sustainability of the agricultural sector and thereby contribute to economic and social development. Agriculture, development, and sustainability may play a crucial role in mitigating the conflict. It could be the starting point for reconciliation and negotiation among the conflict actors and enhance the peacebuilding process in Syria. Shedding light on the importance of the development and sustainability of agriculture in the Syrian conflict as a mutual interest among conflict actors and other stakeholders, this development and sustainability may play a crucial role in mitigating the conflict. Sustainable Agriculture can indeed play a significant role in mitigating migration by addressing various economic, social, and environmental factors. In addition, promoting sustainable agriculture plays a crucial role in promoting climate change mitigation and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

At a time when food insecurity is a major problem and there is an urgent need to rationalize the use of agricultural and natural resources, especially in conflict zones where the emphasis is on increasing agricultural production to secure daily and urgent food while ignoring the long-term effects of agricultural activities, the world is experiencing a food crisis. Humanitarian organizations have a crucial role to play in promoting sustainable agriculture through the practice of humanitarian diplomacy, especially in conflict-affected areas where agriculture can serve as a mutual political and economic interest among conflicting actors.

The specific objectives of the research are:

- 1- The purpose of the study is to determine how politics, agriculture, and humanitarian diplomacy interact in conflict zones.
- 2- The study seeks to clarify the function of humanitarian diplomacy in preserving sustainable agriculture in conflict areas.
- 3- Maintaining sustainable agriculture in conflict zones helps us better understand how humanitarian diplomacy contributes to peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

This research sets out to answer the following research question:

How can Humanitarian Diplomacy be used to maintain agricultural sustainability in the Syrian conflict?

The five sub-questions addressing different aspects of the research question will be addressed step-by-step throughout the dissertation in order to answer the research question and maintain the research's focus:

- 1- How did the conflict impact Syria's agricultural sector?
- 2- What is the relationship between politics and agriculture in Syria?
- 3- What is the relationship between politics and humanitarian diplomacy?
- 4- How does humanitarian diplomacy affect agricultural sustainability in conflict zones?
- 5- What role does humanitarian diplomacy play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding by promoting agricultural development and improvement?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Humanitarian Diplomacy definition is a relatively new concept in both humanitarian studies and International Relations, scholars have focused on humanitarian diplomacy functions from the point of providing better humanitarian access to the most affected communities or as soft power in international relations. The term "Humanitarian Diplomacy" is a relatively new idea. Many different organisations define humanitarian diplomacy in very similar ways. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) defined Humanitarian diplomacy as “persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles.” (IFRC 2011). Humanitarian Diplomacy refers to the use of diplomatic tools and techniques to promote and protect humanitarian principles and the rights of individuals affected by humanitarian crises. This includes using diplomatic pressure to secure access to people in need, negotiating safe access for humanitarian aid convoys, and working with other countries and organizations to coordinate a response to a crisis. The goal of humanitarian diplomacy is to alleviate suffering and save lives in humanitarian emergencies while also working to prevent and resolve the underlying conflicts that lead to such crises (Simard 2013a). Humanitarian diplomacy influences day-to-day humanitarian operations and ensures that the most vulnerable individuals affected by crises such as armed conflicts or natural disasters receive immediate humanitarian assistance such as medicine, food aid, or drinking water. It also affects strategic decision-making at the regional and UN levels in terms of intervention modality and the transition from relief to development. (Bowden and Hough 2020a).

The term "Humanitarian Diplomacy" is defined differently from traditional diplomacy, which plays a role in international relations to find solutions through dialogues and negotiations. Rather, humanitarian diplomacy aims to strengthen humanitarian operations and programs through advocacy and the creation of crucial partnerships to achieve humanitarian goals. This is done during disasters and conflicts to ensure that affected people have access to humanitarian aid. Humanitarian diplomacy is not limited to humanitarian organizations alone but includes states and national organizations working in the humanitarian aid sector. The term is also used by national cooperation organizations and ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Defense, Development, and Civil Protection, which include humanitarian aid departments, to

respond to local or global emergencies. According to Alameldeen, he discussed humanitarian diplomacy mainly in terms of access and the challenges through case studies from different countries such as Colombia, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Syria on the importance of negotiation and human diplomacy at various levels. researcher has discussed the success of the humanitarian diplomacy and negotiations that took place among UNRWA and ICRC with the conflict actors to access life-saving humanitarian supplies to Madaya and the Yarmouk camp (Alameldeen 2019a).

The researcher focused on accessing emergency humanitarian aid without talking about how to find a road map that can guarantee to minimize people's need for aid by negotiating with the conflicting parties, which means building resilience and sustainability in parallel with emergency aid. Some researchers have studied humanitarian diplomacy as a “Soft Power” in international relations, Kandemir argued the most essential component of humanitarian diplomacy in Türkiye is the diplomacy between states and humanitarian organisations, and Türkiye uses humanitarian diplomacy as soft power in foreign affairs policy, to establish good relations with neighboring countries (Kandemir 2021). This thesis argument agrees with Kandemir on the part of implementing humanitarian diplomacy at all local and international levels, and the challenges among Türkiye and humanitarian organizations in responding to northwestern Syria, and even the refugees in Türkiye . However, his search did not elaborate on the idea of sustainability and the preservation of natural and agricultural resources in the conflict in Syria through humanitarian operations or how to develop joint action plans among the Turkish government, organizations, donors, and local authorities to sit together at the same table to develop more sustainable and strategic plans in humanitarian response in the interest of the most vulnerable people. Instead, the researcher focused on legal rules, regulations, and administrations in humanitarian cross-border operations.

The authors Roeder and Simard have Discussed in their book the role of humanitarian organizations, the funding mechanism, and relations with stakeholders. In addition to the skills and experiences that humanitarian organizations should be equipped with to be able to achieve the goals of humanitarian diplomacy, this argument can be used as a guide in strengthening the role of humanitarian diplomacy in the field of achieving sustainable development goals, especially in the field of food security (Roeder and Simard, 2013b). Zevenhuizen's research has explored the effect of pre-conflict Baath party's agriculture policies contributed to the outbreak of conflict;

however, during the conflict for more than ten years, there have been many changes at all local and international levels, and different actors have held control in different locations. The intervention of humanitarian organizations has also changed many agricultural practices (Zevenhuizen, 2016). However, this thesis argument about using Humanitarian diplomacy as a key factor to achieve the sustainable goals- zero hunger by promoting sustainable agriculture in conflict zoon areas through coordination, advocacy, partnership, and cooperation among all stakeholders at different local and international levels and influence the decision-makers. For example, Humanitarian diplomatic efforts in the Syria conflict focus on the Security Council Renewal of Cross-Border aid operations into Northwest Syria (Bowden and Hough, 2020a). Rather than advocating for the development and sustainability of the agricultural sector and the development of a unified strategic plan among the stakeholders, agriculture is considered the main source of food security and livelihood in northwest Syria, considering the presence of a large number of displaced people, thus achieving food security through resilience and a more sustainable response in conflicted areas and reducing dependence on humanitarian aid. Research and studies have ignored the role of agricultural improvement and development impacts on the balance of political power and the dependence on it by governments and armed groups to strengthen power in the field and gain the loyalty of the rural community. The researchers instead concentrated on the significance of agriculture as a factor causing armed conflict in some nations due to certain agricultural policies, or the conflict among the actors over agricultural resources such as water and soil in other countries, such dispossession of assets as land or water or other threats to food security which can fuel conflict.

### **3. METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATION**

#### **3.1. Methodology**

The research methodology consists of data collection via interviews (in person and online) with key informant persons, with the following categories:

1. Farmers, livestock breeders and technicians.
2. Humanitarian organisations responses in the food security and livelihood sectors.
3. Governmental Bodies (Agriculture Directorates): the Syria Interim Government, the Turkish Government, and Local councils that are involved in the agriculture sector in Syria.

The researcher's academic background, Personal experiences and skills, observations, and field visits to Syria. The researcher is a Syrian agriculture engineer who graduated from Aleppo University in 2012 and has more than 10 years of experience in the field of agriculture. In addition, he has been a humanitarian aid worker since 2013 and has been working with many INGOs and NGOs in Turkey and Syria in the field of food security and livelihood. he is an active member in the field of agriculture through Attending high-level meetings, workshops, and conferences with donors, INGOs/NGOs, government institutions, and local authorities to coordinate humanitarian response in Northwest Syria. Moreover, being a humanitarian aid worker in Türkiye and Syria for many years allowed the researcher an observe and overview the situation through Frequent visits to Syria through the border crossings between Syria and Türkiye to different locations in Syria during different periods, and it was a great opportunity to observe the great changes in the agricultural sector in the field. For instance, I visited Tel Abiad city many times in 2013–2014, 2016–2019, and 2022 With the change of conflict actors, there were significant changes in the agricultural policy, such as changing the agricultural areas, the type of crops, the markets, the number of livestock, etc. "Tell Abiad is an area administratively affiliated with the Raqqa Governorate, located in northeastern Syria, and it has a border with Türkiye known as the Akcakale border. Tell Abiad is growing strategic crops in Syria such as wheat, barley, cotton, and sugar beet, and owns large numbers of livestock, especially sheep. What distinguishes Tell Abiad is the presence of different races, including Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, and Armenians, who have lived peacefully in this region for decades".

Secondary Data analysis, such as field reports, books, and academic journal articles. Focusing on pre-existing data collection and its subsequent reports.

Due to the conflict in Syria, the study was limited to the areas near the Turkish border in northwestern and northeastern Syria, which have access from Türkiye for humanitarian operations during the research period.

The study focuses on four governorates and covers the following geographical areas.

**Table 1** Research geographical areas in Syria

#	Country	Governorate	Districts
1	Syria	Idlib	1. Ariha 2. Harim
2	Syria	Aleppo	1. Afrin 2. Azaz 3. Jarabulus 4. Al Bab
3	Syria	Raqqa	1. Tell Abiad
4	Syria	Al-Hasakeh	1. Ras Al Ain



**Figure 1** Map of research areas in Syria

A structured interview for qualitative data has been conducted with the following key informant through personal interviews and WhatsApp call Interviews:

**Table 2** Interviewers categories

#	Interviewer category	Su- Category	Total Number of interviews
1	Farmers, Livestock Breeders and Technicians	Technicians#20 Farmers and Livestock Breeders# 50	70
2	NGOs/INGOs working in the field of food Security and Livelihoods	INGOs # 6 NGOs # 8	14
3	Governmental and Non-Governmental Entities, Local authorities	1. Turkish entities # 4 2. Local Councils # 7 3. Syrian Interim Government # 3 4. Syrian Selvation Government # 2	16

### 3.2. Challenges and Limitations

1. Geographical limitation: The research is geographically limited to Northern Syria, including Idlib (Ariha and Harim Districts), Aleppo (Afrin, Azaz Jarablus, and Al Bab Districts), Raqqa (Tell Abiad Districts), and Ras Al Ain districts.
2. The insecurity situation in northern Syria due to ongoing conflict.
3. Society's apprehension about taking part in interviews, particularly on political issues
4. Limited resources and research in the fields of humanitarian diplomacy, agriculture, and conflict politics in conflict zones
5. COVID-19, The coronavirus spread during the research period, as challenging the face-to-face interviews.

## **4. IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE AND SYRIA'S AGRICULTURE BACKGROUND**

### **4.1. Fertile Crescent - Mesopotamia**

Agriculture is regarded as a pivotal development in human history because it marked the transition from a nomadic to a settled way of life and provided a reliable source of food, resulting in the growth of cities and the development of civilizations. It also constituted a kind of great transformation in terms of human development in the city, which led to the construction of the village in the ancient world as a home and a first dwelling that needed continuity in life. So, agriculture appeared because of these human transformations as an urgent need for the continuation of life. Furthermore, agriculture was formed and grown in Mesopotamia Valley country after it became the cradle of human civilization in the ancient world, and it differed due to the different environment and place, and it is a region in the Middle East that was home to some of the earliest human civilizations. It was named after its fertile soil and is often referred to as the "Cradle of Civilization." On the map, the region appears in the shape of a crescent or a half-moon. The name Fertile comes from the fertile soil on the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

The Fertile Crescent is a historical region located in the Middle East, encompassing the modern-day countries of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and parts of southeastern Turkey and western Iran. It is widely regarded as one of the cradles of civilization, and its role in the development of agriculture, urbanization, and early human settlements is well known and it is historically associated with the emergence of early civilizations such as Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), as well as the Canaanite and Phoenician civilizations in the Levant (modern-day Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine). These civilizations advanced agricultural techniques, including irrigation systems, as well as writing, mathematics, law, and government (Tomass 2016). Mesopotamian civilizations, which were part of the Fertile Crescent, had the oldest human civilizations. It is an ancient historical region located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern-day Iraq and parts of Kuwait, Syria, Türkiye, and Iran. Scholars believe that this is where the agricultural revolution began (Issawi 1988). The name translates as "land between the rivers," referring to the Tigris and Euphrates. One of the world's first civilizations, Mesopotamia, emerged in the area around 4000 BCE and lasted until the 6th century

BCE. It was home to ancient empires such as the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, and Babylonians, who made significant contributions to human civilization, including the development of writing, urbanization, and the wheel.

The availability of this freshwater combined with the fertile soil in this region led to the growth of edible wild plants, and cereals, in particular, was the beginning of the knowledge of Human agriculture and, over the years, constituted the largest part of the human food resource since the early times. Despite the presence of many alternatives and competitors from other crops, these crops were able to maintain their position at the top of the pyramid of this system for thousands of years. Wheat, as it was known in the past, is the center of the grain basket circle in the world, as humans relied on it to establish their physical and living conditions. Wheat has been associated with humans since more than 10,000 years ago (Holt 1969).

The Assyrian Empire was a Mesopotamian empire that succeeded the earlier Middle Assyrian Empire and expanded its territory through a series of military campaigns led by its ambitious and often ruthless rulers. King Tiglath-Pileser III (Reigned 745-727 BCE) and his successors, including Sargon II (Reigned 722-705 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (Reigned 668-627 BCE), expanded the empire to its greatest extent and the Assyrian imperial relied on military conquest to expand the empire's area and was interested in agriculture to support the gains made by military force by improving and developing agriculture, particularly in the areas between the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and increasing the labor force in these areas through migration of the population from different regions of the empire to these areas to work in agriculture, a process known as agglomeration. With the expansion of the empire's population and geographical control, the demand for agriculture increased in order to ensure economic stability and increase food sources. The nature of the relationship between the inhabitants of the Fertile Crescent and the foreign powers that dominated them was not always the same. Some empires sought booty and tax revenue, but they frequently allowed conquered people to worship their own gods. Others, such as the Neo-Assyrian Empire, pursued policies of assimilation by adopting a unifying Aramaic language and a polytheistic religion, culture, and value system (Rosenzweig 2018). The empire's interest in agriculture was not only for economic growth, but also for political reasons, such as strengthening the empire in the countryside and gaining the trust and loyalty of the rural community in order to maintain control over areas far from the state's center.

#### **4.2. Syria's Modern History and Agriculture Background Syria**

In 1946, Syria gained complete independence from the French mandate. Following World War, I, the country faced political instability and military coups in the early years of its independence. This period of uncertainty and change in leadership significantly influenced the trajectory of modern Syrian history. and in 1958, Syria and Egypt formed the United Arab Republic (UAR) under the leadership of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The union was intended to foster greater Arab unity and nationalism in the face of regional challenges. The establishment of the United Arab Republic was seen as a symbol of pan-Arab aspirations, with the hope of creating a unified Arab state. The union's goal was to integrate both countries' economies, militaries, and political systems, with Nasser as president and Syrian leaders assuming prominent positions within the government. However, the union ran into problems and internal disagreements. Syrians, in particular, felt that their country's interests were not adequately represented, and there were tensions between Syrian and Egyptian political factions. In 1961, Syria declared its independence, effectively dissolving the United Arab Republic and ending the union. Despite its relatively short duration, the United Arab Republic had a significant impact on the history of the Arab world. It represented an early attempt at achieving Arab unity and nationalist aspirations, albeit with limited success. The union's demise emphasized the complexities and difficulties of establishing a cohesive pan-Arab state, and it influenced subsequent political movements and ideologies in the region.

The Ba'ath Party did indeed come to power in Syria in 1963 through a military coup, called the "Ba'ath Revolution." and it established a one-party dictatorship that suppressed political opposition and human rights. Syria faced economic difficulties, conflicts with Israel, and political repression during this time period (Van Dam 2011a). Syria was involved in several wars with Israel, including the Six-Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, which had a significant impact on Syria's territory and geopolitical dynamics. From 1970 to 2000, Syria was ruled by the Ba'ath Party, led by President Hafez al-Assad. Opposition to the regime was crushed, dissent was suppressed, and human rights violations occurred. The government's security apparatus, including the notorious intelligence agencies, exerted control over society, stifling political freedoms. Before the Syrian conflict, agriculture was a major sector of the Syrian economy, employing around 25% of the workforce and accounting for around 20% of the country's GDP (Owen and Pamuk 1999). The main crops grown in Syria

include wheat, barley, cotton, olives, and various fruits and vegetables. Animal husbandry, particularly the raising of sheep and goats, is an important aspect of Syrian agriculture in addition to crop cultivation. Irrigation has a long history in the country, dating back to ancient times, and the country now has a well-developed irrigation system that allows crop cultivation in areas with limited rainfall. Syria has a total land area of 18.5 million hectares, 6 million of which are arable and make up 32.8% of Syria's total land area. The agricultural sector drives the Syrian economy. It is critical for economic security by promoting growth, achieving self-sufficiency, and ensuring food security (Gobat and Kostial 2016).

Agriculture is one of the most vital sectors of the productive real economy and, along with industry, serves as the major engine for achieving economic and financial stability as well as sustainable development. Agriculture in Syria occupies a strategic position because it provides food for the people, spares the country from the political and economic pressures faced by countries that import foodstuffs, and provides great job opportunities for a wide sector of citizens. It secures raw materials of plant and animal origin for the manufacturing industries and provides foreign exchange by exporting surplus production. . According to the prevailing, topographical, and Climatic features there are five agricultural stability zones in Syria: First stability zone: Its area is 2.7 million hectares, and it constitutes 14.6% of the area of Syria. Its annual rainfall rate is more than 350 mm/year. Its main crops are grains, legumes, summer crops, vegetables, and fruit trees. Second stabilization zone: Its area is 2.5 million hectares, and it constitutes 13.3% of the area of Syria. Its average rainfall is 250-350 mm/year. Its main crops are grains, legumes, and fruit trees, the most important of which are vines, olives, and almonds. Third stabilization zone: Its area is 1.3 million hectares, and it constitutes 7.1% of the area of Syria. Its annual rainfall rate is more than 250 mm/year. Its most important agricultural crop is barley and legumes. Fourth stability zone: Its area is 1.8 million hectares, and it constitutes 9.9% of the area of Syria. Its annual rainfall rate is 200-250 mm/year, and its most important agricultural crop is barley. Fifth stabilization zone: Its area is 10.2 million hectares, and it constitutes 55.1% of the area of Syria. Its annual rainfall is unstable and ranges between 100-150 mm/year. It is used as pasture for sheep. The agricultural policies in Syria aim to achieve social welfare and self-sufficiency in strategic crops. Policymakers view these goals as political and non-negotiable obligations. Agrarian reform and the foreign political environment, especially the international alliances imposed by the Cold War, are among the most

important factors that shaped the strategy and agricultural policies in Syria from 1960 onwards, as are the insecurity imposed by developments in the Middle East and the uncertainties inherent in the international trade system (Andrew, R, J. 1980). Since 1970, the state-led import model has been adopted, and the role of the public sector has expanded while at the same time activating the private sector through productive investments.

The Economic development and self-reliance were the sources of national strength. Work began to shift from dependence on the agricultural economy to dependence on the industrial economy and make up for the lack of staff and technical capabilities through the implementation of ready-made imported projects and financing these projects through increasing oil exports, external borrowing, and Arab aid. (Hinnebusch et.al. 2011). Therefore, many factories belonging to the public sector for food and other agricultural manufacturing activities were established before the mid-eighties, when the Syrian economy was based on central planning. With the sixth five-year plan (1986–1990), the process of gradual transition towards indicative planning began through the process of decentralization. However, the government maintained its role in input distribution, while strengthening the role of the private sector in agricultural production and marketing.

#### **4.2.1. Syria during Hafez Al-Assad's reign**

Hafez Al-Assad, who served as the President of Syria from 1970 until his death in 2000, experienced a period of authoritarianism, political repression, and significant changes in domestic and foreign policy. He was a member of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and rose to power in a military coup in 1970, deposing his predecessor and taking control of the country. He worked to consolidate his power by centralizing authority within the ruling Ba'ath Party and the security apparatus, particularly the intelligence agencies. He effectively sidelined political rivals and suppressed opposition, establishing a one-party dictatorship. Under Assad's rule, political opponents, activists, and dissenters were subjected to arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances. Freedom of speech, press, and assembly were severely curtailed, with strict censorship and restrictions on independent media. Human rights groups have documented widespread violations, such as the suppression of political freedoms, restrictions on civil society, and prisoner mistreatment.

Hafez Al-Assad's legacy remains controversial, with some viewing him as a strong leader who brought stability to Syria, while others see him as a ruthless dictator who trampled on human rights and suppressed political dissent. When the Baath Party came to power in 1963, Hafez al-Assad's political career advanced, and he held various positions in the party, including serving as a member of the regional leadership three times. This helped lay the foundation for his eventual rise to the presidency in 1970. He was elected President of Syria in 1971 in a one-candidate election. He was the head of the Arab Socialist Baath Party at the time (Van Dam 2011b). Hafez Al-Assad became the first President of Syria from the Alawite sect, which is a minority in the country, making up around 10% of the population. The Alawite sect is considered part of the larger group of Islamic denominations known as Twelver Shi'a Islam (Malbousson 2007). He was known for strengthening the Syrian military with the support of the Soviet Union. Syria became a one-party state with a strong centralized government and a dominant security apparatus. Political freedoms were limited, and the president held absolute power.

The Syrian state was built on sectarian lines, with Sunnis dominating political institutions and Alawites controlling the military and intelligence services. This structure allowed the government to maintain a balance of power between different sects but also created tensions and mistrust between the various communities. The intelligence agencies mentioned, such as the Political Security Department and the Military Intelligence Division, played a key role in maintaining the government's grip on power and suppressing opposition, had significant influence over the population and there was limited political and partisan participation. The government also had extensive control over the social, economic, and political aspects of both rural and urban areas in Syria. The Syrian constitution of 1973 established the Ba'ath Party as the leading party in the country, with significant control over legislative, executive, and judicial powers. This led to a one-party system where the Ba'ath Party dominated the political landscape in Syria. The Syrian constitution included Article 8, which stated that the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party is the leading party in the society and the state and is responsible for leading a progressive national front aimed at unifying the efforts of the masses (Peaslee 1985). After the adoption of the Syrian constitution, the Ba'ath Party held a significant number of seats in the People's Assembly and took control of the Council of Ministers. Additionally, all official newspapers became affiliated with the Ba'ath Party, further solidifying its control over the country's political and media

landscape. The charter of the National Progressive Front, which was established in Syria in the 1970s, gave the Ba'ath Party exclusive control over organizing partisan or factional activity within the army and armed forces. This effectively made the Ba'ath Party the leading force in the military and further consolidated its dominant position in the country.

During Hafez Al-Assad's presidency, Syrian foreign policy was driven by a combination of pragmatism, regional power dynamics, and the pursuit of national interests, Assad sought to exploit regional contradictions and divisions to maintain internal security and enhance Syria's influence in the Middle East and Syria positioned itself as a key player in the Arab-Israeli conflict, supporting various Palestinian factions and engaging in military confrontations with Israel in addition, Assad capitalized on rivalries and conflicts within the Arab world to advance Syria's interests, often aligning with Arab nationalist and leftist movements (Lund, 2019). Syria cultivated alliances with regional powers and sought to balance its relationships to maximize its influence. Syria had a close relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, receiving military and economic support. This alliance served as a counterbalance to U.S. influence in the region (Othman 2017). and Syria maintained a strategic partnership with Iran, particularly after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, as both countries shared a common opposition to Israel and the United States.

#### **4.2.1.1. Agricultural sector under Hafez Al-Assad**

Hafez Al-Assad, during his presidency, implemented various agricultural policies with the aim of achieving food security, promoting rural development, and increasing agricultural production in Syria. One of the key agricultural policies implemented by Hafez al-Assad was the establishment of large-scale irrigation projects, which aimed to improve water management and expand the cultivation of crops, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions. The government invested in the construction of dams, canals, and irrigation networks to facilitate agricultural activities and increase water availability for farming. Furthermore, Hafez al-Assad implemented land reform measures in an effort to address issues of land ownership and inequality. The Syrian government redistributed land to small-scale farmers and encouraged cooperative farming models, aiming to increase productivity and support rural communities. also provided subsidies, credit facilities, and technical assistance to farmers to enhance agricultural practices, promote mechanization, and introduce modern farming

techniques. There were also efforts to promote agricultural research and development and improve the availability of inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and machinery. It's important to note that Hafez al-Assad's agricultural policies were implemented in the context of a centrally planned economy and a state-controlled agricultural sector. The government played a significant role in regulating and directing agricultural activities, including crop choices, pricing, and marketing (Springborg 1981). This was accomplished through a mechanism of production planning and direct control in which the government determined the cultivated areas, productivity levels, and prices at which strategic crops would be purchased from farmers. This level of control over agriculture was viewed as a way for the government to ensure self-sufficiency, promote exports, and maintain political control over the rural population. Some have criticized Syria's policy of direct control and intervention in the agricultural sector as violating basic economic laws and leading to farmer noncompliance. The heavy focus on monitoring and enforcement, rather than training and production promotion, has been seen as a major factor contributing to the ineffectiveness of the policy (Sarris and Corsi 2001). Critics argue that this approach failed to consider the realities of agricultural production and market conditions and, as a result, did not achieve its intended goals of promoting self-sufficiency and exports. The lack of compliance by farmers and non-implementation of plans have been seen as a direct result of this approach.

#### **4.2.2. Syria during Bashar Al-Assad 's reign**

After the death of his father, Hafez Al-Assad, on June 10, 2000, Bashar Al-Assad succeeded him as the President of Syria. Prior to his father's passing, Bashar Al-Assad was not actively involved in politics or holding any high-ranking government positions. However, following his father's death, the Syrian constitution was indeed amended to lower the age requirement for the presidency from 40 to 34, which allowed Bashar Al-Assad, who was 34 years old at the time, to assume the role of president. When Bashar Al-Assad initially came to power, there was indeed optimism and hope among some observers that his youth and background could lead to positive changes in Syria. There were expectations for political, societal, and economic reforms in the country. However, over time, these expectations were not fully realized, and the situation in Syria took a different trajectory. The human rights situation in Syria has been a significant concern, with various allegations of human rights abuses committed by the government under Bashar Al-Assad's leadership. These allegations include

arbitrary detentions, torture, extrajudicial killings, and the targeting of civilians (Hinnebusch and Zintl 2015a). Bashar al-Assad announced a policy of development and modernization during his swearing-in speech, which included plans for political, economic, and social reforms. However, the extent to which these reforms were implemented and their impact on the political structure and power dynamics in Syria has been a subject of debate and criticism. While some limited reforms were indeed introduced, such as changes to the economy and investment laws, the overall political system in Syria remained largely unchanged. The Ba'ath party, which has been in power since 1963, continues to dominate the political landscape, and the presidency holds significant authority and control. (Rais 2004).

In 2003, the People's Assembly elections were widely seen as an opportunity for Bashar Al-Assad to demonstrate his commitment to political reform and to move the country toward more democratic and transparent governance. However, these elections fell short of international standards for free and fair elections and were criticized for widespread irregularities and a lack of genuine opposition. The election results were seen by many as a continuation of the authoritarian rule and a failure to deliver on promises of political reform. This has contributed to the persistent concerns about the lack of political freedom and democracy in Syria. The 2003 People's Assembly elections did not bring about significant change to the political landscape in Syria, as the number of seats held by the ruling Ba'ath party and its allies remained largely unchanged. In the 2007 elections, the Ba'ath party consolidated its hold on power by increasing the number of seats allocated to the party at the expense of the National Front and independent candidates, further solidifying its dominant position in the country's political system. This has reinforced concerns about the lack of political competition and pluralism in Syria, as well as the authoritarian nature of the regime.

Indeed, Bashar al-Assad has relied heavily on a close-knit group of advisors and family members throughout his presidency. This inner circle, sometimes referred to as the "Republican Palace," includes individuals who are closely related to him through family ties. This concentration of power within a small group has raised concerns about nepotism and reinforced the perception of an authoritarian regime in Syria. Some key figures within this inner circle include his cousin Atef Najeeb, son-in-law Assef Shawkat, and advisors for security affairs Major Generals Ibrahim Hawija and Muhammad Nassif. Individuals like Advisor for military affairs General Ali Aslan and former Defense Minister General Ali Habib have also played significant roles within the

Assad regime. The influence of this close circle of advisors and family members has been seen in various aspects of governance, including the military and security apparatus. Critics argue that the concentration of power within this group has limited the scope for meaningful political reform and has hindered the development of a more inclusive and democratic political system in Syria (Bengio and Dor 1999). Bashar Al-Assad's reliance on his family and inner circle extends beyond just his immediate relatives and includes his brother Maher, who was given a key role in the military and promoted to the rank of brigadier general (Leverett 2005). Additionally, the family of his mother, Anisa Makhoul, has also played a significant role in the Syrian government and has seen its influence expand significantly. This includes members like Muhammad Makhoul, as well as Rami and Ihab Makhoul, who have become wealthy through their political connections and control several key economic sectors in the country, such as banking, trade, and telecommunications. These developments have fueled fears of corruption and cronyism within the Syrian government, as well as reinforced the perception that the regime is dominated by a small, powerful elite.

#### **4.2.2.1. Agricultural sector under Bashar Al-Assad**

While initially continuing the policies of direct control and intervention in the agricultural sector, the government has gradually introduced reforms aimed at promoting private-sector investment and encouraging the development of agribusiness. These reforms have included the passage of new legislation aimed at liberalizing the agricultural sector and attracting foreign investment. Efforts have been made to improve farmer infrastructure and services, such as credit, extension services, and marketing assistance. These initiatives seek to boost agricultural productivity and competitiveness. Moreover, Bashar al-Assad has expressed a vision for economic reform, including the establishment of a "Social Market Economy." This concept typically combines elements of free-market principles with social policies aimed at reducing income disparities and ensuring a degree of social welfare (Al Ashqar and Dayoub 2013). The 10th Five-Year Plan, covering the period from 2006 to 2010, indeed focused on economic reforms and attracting private and foreign investment in Syria.

The plan aimed to achieve high growth rates by promoting investment in sectors such as communications, banking, and foreign trade, which were deemed profitable and conducive to economic development. Part of the broader policy direction during this period was the liberalization of the economy and reducing the role of the state in certain

sectors. This involved reducing government expenditures, including subsidies and investment in the public sector. These policies were put in place to address economic imbalances and promote more sustainable growth. The plan aimed to improve the business environment by streamlining regulations, improving infrastructure, and providing incentives to both domestic and foreign investors. The aim was to attract capital and expertise to the country, foster job creation, and stimulate economic development. Indeed, there were divergent views on government support for the agricultural sector in Syria, particularly in terms of subsidies. Some proponents of a market-based approach argue that subsidies for the agricultural sector burden the state budget and have negative effects on the overall economy. They contend that market-based pricing, where supply and demand determine prices, would promote efficiency, reduce waste, and contribute to sustainable growth in the sector. Advocates of this view often highlight issues such as low growth rates, fluctuating production levels, and the high consumption of energy and water in the agricultural sector. They argue that reducing subsidies would encourage farmers to adopt more efficient practices, invest in technology, and respond to market signals, leading to increased productivity and competitiveness. However, critics of this approach raise concerns about the potential negative impact on small farmers and rural communities. They argue that reducing subsidies without adequate support mechanisms in place could lead to the marginalization and impoverishment of small-scale farmers who heavily rely on government assistance. These critics contend that government support is necessary to ensure the sustainability of rural livelihoods, maintain food security, and prevent social and economic disparities (Madi 2019). The advocates of a market-based approach found allies in a new class of urban businessmen, some of whom were related to the Assad family. This group, including figures like Rami Makhoul and Firas Talas, saw the market economy as an opportunity to expand their businesses through trade and services, and by acting as intermediaries between international companies and the Syrian government by attracting foreign investment, these businessmen aimed to increase their influence and wealth. This aligns with the broader trend of liberalizing the economy and reducing the role of the state, which was a key part of the 10th Five-Year Plan for the period from 2006 to 2010.

The urban businessmen saw more potential for profit in trade and services than in agricultural production, which requires a large capital investment and has a slow production cycle with uncertain profits. This group's focus on trade and services and

their growing influence in the decision-making centers in Damascus, as well as their connections with international markets, allowed them to increase their wealth and solidify their power. Meanwhile, the agricultural sector was left with less investment and attention, leading to a decline in its importance and competitiveness (AlHamsh 2011). The shift in focus away from agriculture and toward trade and services, combined with limited institutional reforms, resulted in a schism between leadership and rural communities, as well as a weakening of political representation of the agricultural population at decision-making levels. The failure to address issues of inefficiency, corruption, and fraud has also contributed to the growth of the informal sector and the widening of economic and social inequality. These factors combined to undermine the development of the agricultural sector and the well-being of rural communities. The period from 2000 to 2010 was characterized by limited changes in development policies that focused on economic liberalization but did not address the underlying issues affecting the agricultural sector and rural communities.

The plans aimed at reducing poverty in rural areas did not result in the expected outcomes and instead led to further marginalization of farmers and a decline in their role in decision-making levels. The plans did not address the root causes of poverty in rural areas and instead focused on expanding production without considering the needs of farmers and the rural communities they represented. This resulted in a widening gap between rural and urban areas and a decline in the importance of agriculture and the well-being of rural communities. The plans failed to effectively reduce poverty and improve the living standards of rural communities, particularly in Aleppo and Jazira countryside. “During the period 2000–2010, a decline in oil production contributed to the search for alternatives to compensate for the contribution of oil to production, exports, and public revenues, but the change in development policies was limited to economic liberalization measures without a radical change in institutions” (SCPR 2019). The Syrian government's response to the 2008-2009 drought was inadequate and further marginalized agriculture and farmers in Syria. The drought had a significant impact on eastern regions, particularly the governorates of Raqqa and Al-Hasakah, and affected rain-fed crops and sheep farming. The lack of government support during the drought contributed to a 32% decline in sheep farming between 2007 and 2010, further exacerbating the marginalization of agriculture and farmers in the region (Chapman 2014). This caused the migration of an estimated 1.5 million Syrians from the countryside to the cities as they lost their main livelihood source, thus leaving many

farms without cultivation, putting pressure on resources in urban areas, and increasing the poverty average. This rural-urban migration led to overcrowding in cities and put a strain on resources. It also contributed to the rise in poverty levels, as many of the migrants were unable to find work and support themselves in the city. The decline in agriculture also had a negative impact on the economy, as it was a key sector for food security and job creation. The government's response to the drought was seen as inadequate, further exacerbating the challenges facing the rural population and agriculture sector (Crop Monitor 2021). The government's priority is to secure food supplies for the Syrian people through a mix of self-sufficiency and importing food commodities while ensuring that the food supply is stable and affordable. One of the basic elements that contributed to Syria's possession of independence during the past decades is the food security provided by the agricultural sector. This shift in focus from self-sufficiency to food security reflects the realities of the Syrian economy and the challenges faced by the agricultural sector, including drought, limited resources, and declining productivity.

## 5. SYRIA UPRISING

The Syrian Uprising, also known as the Syrian Revolution, was a complex and prolonged conflict that began in March 2011 as part of the Arab Spring wave of protests and uprisings. The uprising initially started as a peaceful movement calling for political reforms, democracy, and an end to human rights abuses by the Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad. However, the government reacted to the protests with a harsh crackdown, employing military force against the demonstrators. This violent response further inflamed the situation, leading to the escalation of the conflict into a full-fledged war. Over the years, the conflict in Syria has become increasingly complex and multifaceted. Various factions and armed groups emerged, each with their own interests, including anti-government rebels, jihadist organizations such as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Kurdish forces, and international actors supporting various sides. The involvement of regional and global powers such as Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States exacerbated the conflict.

The war resulted in significant human suffering and a massive humanitarian crisis, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, and millions have been displaced both within Syria and as refugees in neighboring countries and beyond. The conflict has also caused extensive damage to infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and other vital services. Efforts to resolve the Syrian conflict have been ongoing, including diplomatic negotiations, ceasefire agreements, and peace talks. However, achieving a lasting and comprehensive solution has proven to be extremely challenging due to the complexity of the conflict and the divergent interests of the involved parties (Lister and Mccants 2014). Because the Syrian opposition was fragmented and lacked cohesive military and political leadership, the regime was able to gradually reclaim control of much of the country. The rise of extremist groups like ISIS, which took advantage of the chaos and instability to establish a self-proclaimed caliphate in parts of Syria and Iraq, exacerbated the situation.

In 2015, Russia had intervened on behalf of the Syrian government, providing air support and other military assistance, which helped the regime gain a significant advantage over the opposition. The conflict has since become a complex and multifaceted war, with multiple actors involved, including government forces, opposition groups, extremist organizations, and foreign powers. "Iran's support for the regime was especially important: it provided crucial financial resources, assistance in electronic

warfare, and support in the formation and training of pro-regime militias on the model of the revolutionary guard. At Iran's urging, Iraq provided Syria with cheap oil and declined to isolate Asad's regime. Likewise, by early 2013, Hezbollah stepped in, notably also with special forces in the strategically important town of al-Quseir, to help defend the route between regime-controlled coastal provinces and Damascus (Hinnebusch and Zintl 2015b). At the beginning of 2015, the Syrian armed opposition regained control, taking over the entire province of Idlib, moving closer to its main stronghold in Latakia, and also approaching the center of the capital, Damascus. However, the direct Russian military intervention at a sensitive moment changed the situation. The involvement of various regional and international actors such as Iran, Russia, the United States, and Türkiye further complicated the conflict, leading to a fragmented and divided opposition, and multiple frontlines, making it difficult to achieve a decisive outcome. Currently, the opposition forces are mainly in control in the northwest and northeast of Syria.

### **5.1 Turkish Military Operations in Northern Syria**

Türkiye has played a significant role in the Syrian conflict due to its proximity to Syria and its own national security concerns. Türkiye's policy in the Syrian conflict has evolved over time and has included various elements, such as supporting certain opposition groups, conducting military operations, and hosting a large number of Syrian refugees. In 2016, Türkiye launched a military operation called "Operation Euphrates Shield" in northern Syria. The goal of this operation was to combat the presence of ISIS and also to counter the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which Türkiye considers an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Türkiye sees the YPG as a threat to its national security due to its links with the PKK, which has been involved in a decades-long insurgency within Türkiye. Subsequently, Türkiye conducted additional military operations in Syria, including "Operation Olive Branch" in 2018 and "Operation Peace Spring" in 2019, both aimed at pushing back Kurdish forces and establishing a buffer zone along its border. In addition to its military involvement, Türkiye has also provided humanitarian aid and shelter to millions of Syrian refugees. Türkiye has taken in a large number of Syrian refugees since the start of the conflict, making it one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world. The influx of refugees has posed significant social, economic, and political challenges for Türkiye. It is important to note that Türkiye's policy in the Syrian conflict has been influenced by

various factors, including its national security concerns, the presence of Kurdish forces along its border, and the complex dynamics of the conflict. Türkiye 's approach has sometimes drawn criticism from other countries and has been the subject of ongoing debate and negotiation in regional and international forums.

### **5.1.1. Euphrates shield operation in 2016**

The Euphrates Shield Operation was a military operation in Syria carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces. It started on August 24, 2016, and ended in March 2017. The operation was aimed at clearing the border region between Türkiye and Syria of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) militants, as well as countering the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and preventing the establishment of a contiguous Kurdish-held territory along the border. Türkiye launched the operation in response to increasing security threats from ISIS and the YPG, which it considers an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a designated terrorist organization in Türkiye . The PKK has been involved in a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state. During the Euphrates Shield Operation, Turkish forces, supported by units from the Free Syrian Army (FSA), crossed the border into Syria and targeted ISIS strongholds, particularly in the region between the Euphrates River and the border towns of Jarablus and Al-Rai. The operation aimed to secure the border and prevent the flow of ISIS fighters, weapons, and supplies.

The Turkish military, along with the FSA, successfully cleared several towns and villages from ISIS control, including the city of Jarabulus, Azaz, and Al-Bab districts in northern Aleppo. The operation also aimed to establish a safe zone in northern Syria to house Syrian refugees and prevent further displacement. During the Euphrates Shield Operation in Syria, Turkey established many institutions to provide vital services and maintain stability in the areas under its control. These efforts were aimed at facilitating the return of displaced Syrians, establishing local governance, and providing basic services to the civilian population. Among the key institutions established are the following. Local Governance: Türkiye supported the establishment of local councils in the liberated areas, which were responsible for governing and providing basic services to the local population. These councils were often composed of members of Syrian civil society and aimed to ensure representation and local decision-making. Security: Türkiye played a significant role in establishing and training local security forces, such as the Free Syrian Police (FSP). The FSP was tasked with

maintaining law and order, preventing crime, and ensuring the safety of civilians. The FSP received training and support from Türkiye to enhance its capabilities and professionalism. Healthcare: Türkiye established field hospitals and healthcare centers in the operation areas to provide medical assistance and services to the local population. These facilities aimed to address the urgent healthcare needs of the population affected by the conflict. Education: Türkiye also focused on restoring and providing educational services in the liberated areas. Schools were reopened, and efforts were made to rehabilitate damaged educational infrastructure.

Türkiye provided resources and support to ensure access to education for children and youth. Humanitarian Aid: Türkiye coordinated the delivery of humanitarian aid to the affected population in the Euphrates Shield Operation areas. This included the provision of food, clean water, shelter, and other essential supplies to address the immediate needs of displaced Syrians and local residents. These efforts by Türkiye were part of its broader strategy to establish stability, provide essential services, and create conditions for the return and resettlement of Syrians in the areas under its control. The Turkish government, humanitarian organizations, and the Syrian interim government work together to provide services and support to host communities and IDPs in the Euphrates Shield areas. They prioritize the upkeep and restoration of public institutions, schools, and infrastructure, the construction of hospitals, the provision of basic necessities, and the support of the agricultural sector. The governor of Kilis oversees the region of Azaz, while the governor of Gaziantep oversees the regions of Jarabulus and Al Bab.

### **5.1.2. Operation olive branch in 2018**

After the withdrawal of the Syrian regime from Afrin, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military branch, the People's Protection Units (YPG), began to establish self-administration and constituted the ultimate authority in northeastern Syria and Afrin under the name of Rojava, which Türkiye considers a threat to its national security, as it considers the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from Türkiye 's point of view. Thus, these Kurdish forces, thus Türkiye conducted military operation Olive Branch in 2018. and the operation lasted about two months, with Turkish-backed forces capturing Afrin city in 2018 (Bayraktar 2019). Türkiye justified the operation as a necessary measure to protect its national security and prevent the establishment of a Kurdish-controlled territory along its border.

However, the operation received criticism from various parties, including Kurdish groups, who accused Türkiye of causing civilian casualties and displacing local populations. The Turkish state of Hatay has taken a direct role in supervising local councils in the region. While these councils are technically subject to the Syrian Interim Government, they receive executive orders directly from the Turkish government, giving Türkiye significant influence in the region. In parallel with the stability of the security situation in Afrin and the formation of the local administration in Afrin. (Al Hilu 2019). Türkiye and a few humanitarian organisations have provided basic services such as the rehabilitation of hospitals, schools, water networks, and bakeries, among others. As a result, many internally displaced people (IDPs) have settled in the Afrin region, having previously been displaced from regime-controlled areas such as Ghouta and Homs.

### **5.1.3. Operation peace spring in 2019**

Operation Peace Spring was a military operation launched by the Turkish military and Free Syrian Army in October 2019 against the YPG/PYD, Operation Peace Spring targeted areas primarily located in northeastern Syria, along the Turkish-Syrian border, including parts of the Raqqa and al-Hasakah governorates. Most of the population is Arab, with a large percentage of Kurds, Turkmen, and Armenians living together in this region for hundreds of years in peace and without any ethnic problems between these races (Balanche 2018). The specific areas targeted by the operation included the Tel Abiad and Ras al-Ain districts, as well as a 120-kilometer pocket along the Turkish-Syrian border, with the goal of clearing the area of Kurdish-led forces (YPG/PYD), which it considers a security threat, and creating a "safe zone" along the Turkish-Syrian border (Gurcan 2019). The Turkish offensive in Northern Syria was eventually halted following agreements reached with both the United States and Russia, which called for the withdrawal of Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) from the targeted areas along the Turkish-Syrian border. These agreements aimed to ease tensions and stabilize the situation in the region (Stanicek 2019). "Operation Peace Spring, which was launched in October 2019, has been in the making for more than four years. By mid-2015, the YPG-PYD's expanding occupation of the mostly Arab-majority Northern Syria, combined with their deliberate policy of forced displacement of its Arab and Turkmen, but also dissident Kurdish opponents led to a new wave of Syrian refugees entering Türkiye .

The PYD's occupation of Northern Syria was accompanied by the deadliest wave of terrorist attacks of the last two decades against Türkiye by the PKK." (Aktürk 2020). After the Turkish military operation and the subsequent takeover of the targeted areas by Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces, the security situation in the region improved and allowed for the return of Syrian refugees from Türkiye . However, the extent to which the situation has stabilized and the conditions for the refugees remain controversial and a matter of debate. The administration of the targeted areas in northeastern Syria was transferred to local councils, which were established and supervised by Turkish institutions based in the Sanliurfa Province of Türkiye . The local councils were responsible for managing the daily affairs of the area and ensuring stability and security in the region. There are two border crossings in Tel Abiad and Ras al-Ain between Türkiye and Syria that have been affected by the Turkish military operation in the region. Following the operation, many humanitarian organizations that received Western support were not allowed to operate in the areas of Ras al-Ayn and Tel Abiad, due to opposition from Western donors to the Turkish military presence in these areas. Instead, these organizations continued to operate in other regions, such as the Euphrates Shield area and Idlib.

The Operation Peace Spring areas in northeastern Syria experienced significant economic disruption following the Turkish military operation in October 2019. The conflict led to widespread damage to infrastructure and displacement of local populations, causing a decrease in economic activity and hindering the delivery of basic goods and services. The instability and uncertainty also caused a decline in foreign investment and trade, further exacerbating the economic situation. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic added to the economic challenges, affecting the already weakened economies in the region. Prior to Operation Peace Spring, the northeast part of Syria was known for its agricultural production, particularly of wheat, barley, and cotton. The TMO Office in Sanliurfa played a key role in facilitating the trade of these crops between Syrian farmers and Turkish buyers. However, the conflict and instability in the region have likely disrupted this agricultural trade and negatively impacted the local economy.

#### **5.1.4. Operation spring shield in 2020**

The operation was launched in response to escalating tensions and attacks by Syrian government forces, primarily targeting Turkish observation posts in the Idlib province. The operation began on February 27, 2020, following an airstrike that killed 33 Turkish soldiers in Idlib. In response, Türkiye initiated a large-scale military offensive against Syrian government targets, including air defense systems, military bases, and command centers. The primary objectives of Operation Spring Shield were to push back Syrian government forces, establish a ceasefire, and create a Safe zone to protect Turkish observation posts and civilians in Idlib. Turkish forces, supported by artillery, airpower, and armed drones, targeted Syrian military positions and engaged in clashes with government forces. The operation resulted in significant territorial gains for Turkish-backed rebel groups and a temporary halt in the Syrian government's offensive.

A ceasefire agreement was eventually reached between Türkiye and Russia, which led to the establishment of a new demilitarized zone in Idlib. Politically, the operation represented a significant escalation in the conflict in Idlib, with implications for the broader Syrian conflict and regional actors, including Russia. (Telci et al. 2020). The operation was seen as a challenge to the Syrian government's control over the area and raised tensions between Türkiye and Syria, as well as Türkiye and Russia. The result of the operation was a temporary halt to the Syrian government's advances in Idlib and a change in the balance of power in the region. However, the conflict in Idlib continues with ongoing fighting and the displacement of civilians, and the humanitarian situation remains dire. The political situation in the region remains tense, with the potential for further escalation in the conflict.

#### **5.2 Türkiye's Spheres Of Influence In Northwest Syria**

Türkiye has established spheres of influence in northwest Syria, including Idlib, Afrin, Azaz, Jarabulus, AlBab, Tel Abiad, and Al Ras Alyin. These areas have been the focus of Turkish military operations and intervention in recent years. In these spheres of influence, Türkiye exerts significant political, military, and economic influence. It supports local governance structures, provides security, and helps administer services such as health, education, and infrastructure development.

### **5.2.1. Situation overview**

Türkiye has significant influence in northwestern Syria, particularly in the areas of Idlib and Aleppo. This influence is exerted through military presence, support for local armed groups, and the provision of humanitarian aid. Türkiye 's involvement in the Syrian conflict is driven by several factors, including the desire to contain the spread of Kurdish militancy, the provision of assistance to Syrian refugees, and the pursuit of its own geopolitical interests in the region. The security situation in northern Syria is complex and has been greatly impacted by the ongoing Syrian conflict (Yüksel 2019). The security situation in Türkiye 's spheres of influence in northwest Syria is complex and dynamic, characterized by ongoing military operations, sporadic fighting, displacement of civilians, and political instability. Türkiye has established several observation posts in the Idlib governorate, which has been declared a de-escalation zone under the Astana Agreement between Türkiye , Russia, and Iran. However, this agreement has been frequently violated, leading to increased violence and insecurity in the area. The presence of various armed groups, including the Syrian government, opposition forces, and extremist organizations, has added to the complexity of the situation and made it difficult to maintain stability and protect civilians. The humanitarian situation in Türkiye 's spheres of influence in northwest Syria is dire, with a large number of civilians affected by the conflict and in need of assistance. The ongoing violence and displacement have resulted in widespread food insecurity, limited access to basic services such as healthcare and education, and the loss of livelihoods. The situation is particularly dire for women and children, who are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Additionally, many internally displaced persons (IDPs) are living in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in camps and informal settlements, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

The international community has called for increased access and funding for aid organizations working in the region to address the urgent needs of affected populations.(UNOCHA 2023). The infrastructure in the region has been heavily damaged, leading to widespread disruptions in essential services such as electricity, water, and sanitation. Many healthcare facilities and schools have also been destroyed or are no longer operational, making it difficult for civilians to access basic services. Furthermore, the displacement of a large number of civilians has strained the region's already scarce resources, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Türkiye, local councils, and aid organizations are addressing these challenges and providing basic services to

affected populations, but the situation remains dire, and much more needs to be done. The administration situation is fragmented and characterized by a lack of effective governance and security, and various opposition groups and armed factions exercise varying degrees of authority. The absence of a functioning central government and the ongoing conflict has created a power vacuum in the region, making it difficult to provide basic services, protect civilians, and maintain stability. The international community has called for a political solution to the conflict in Syria, which is necessary to address the administration and security situation in the region and to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis.

### **5.2.2. Non-state governance structures in Syria**

In Due to the country's ongoing conflict and fragmentation, various non-state governance structures have emerged in various areas in Syria. These structures have taken on administrative, security, and service provision roles, filling the governance vacuum created by the breakdown of the central government's authority. These non-state governance structures frequently have limited resources and capacity, and their effectiveness and legitimacy vary according to local circumstances. They also face a number of challenges, including a lack of international funding, recognition, and support, which can limit their ability to provide effective governance and services to the population. Below are detailed analyses of each non-governmental organization to help understand how they contribute to the study's goals in different geographic contexts.

#### **5.2.2.1. Syrian national council (SNC)**

The Syrian National Council (SNC) was established in Istanbul in 2011 with the aim of unifying various opposition groups. However, the SNC faced internal divisions on issues such as foreign military intervention in Syria and political and military strategy, which weakened its effectiveness and hindered its ability to represent the opposition in a unified manner. The SNC had a significant Islamist component, including the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which was the largest and most cohesive faction within the council. This led to the Muslim Brotherhood having significant influence over policy and decision-making within the SNC (Kerr 2022). Relations between the Kurdish opposition, activists, and the Syrian National Council were strained from the start because the National Council resisted Kurdish demands for

federalism or political decentralization, which further weakened the Council's unity and ability to represent the opposition effectively.

#### **5.2.2.2. National coalition for Syrian revolutionary and opposition forces, known as Syrian opposition coalition (SOC)**

In order to increase international recognition and gain more domestic legitimacy, the Syrian opposition established the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in Doha in 2012, also known as the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC), which is a more diverse body that includes various opposition groups. The Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) was formed to be more diverse and inclusive than the Syrian National Council, and it includes a broader representation of minority groups and Syrian activists. The aim of this was to create a more representative body that could effectively represent the Syrian opposition on the international stage and gain wider recognition and legitimacy. The Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) first gained widespread support from local councils and the Syrian Free Army. At the international level, the Gulf Cooperation Council declared the SOC the legitimate representative of the Syrian people and withdrew its recognition of the government of Bashar al-Assad. Except for Algeria, Iraq, and Lebanon, the League of Arab States recognized the SOC as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Among those who backed the SOC were Turkey, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) opened representations in several countries, with the most prominent being in the United States, Germany, Qatar, and France. However, most of these representations were later closed due to a lack of financial support and conflicts among SOC members. The lack of funding and ongoing internal disputes within the SOC limited its effectiveness and ability to fulfill its role as a representative of the Syrian opposition. The SOC faced many challenges and made several mistakes, such as a lack of a clear vision for Syria after the fall of the Assad regime, internal conflicts, a lack of transparency and good governance, and the inability to manage military forces. These failures resulted in the SOC becoming a powerless political body with little to no real influence in Syrian politics. It lost the interest of its international and regional supporters, and its legitimacy and authority were severely diminished (Al Kilani 2017). In 2012, the National Coalition established a special unit for the coordination of humanitarian intervention. This unit is called the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU).

ACU has played an important role in the coordination of humanitarian assistance in Syria, providing support to communities affected by the conflict. However, it has faced challenges such as limited access to certain areas, the complex security situation on the ground, and difficulties in obtaining funding. After ACU got financial funding from international organizations and United Nations agencies for the humanitarian response, this has resulted in a lack of transparency, ineffective management of resources, and ultimately a reduction in the level of humanitarian assistance provided to the Syrian people, who are in dire need of help. Additionally, the infighting between the different components of the National Coalition over control of the Assistance Coordination Unit has weakened the overall effectiveness of the Syrian opposition and hindered their ability to effectively respond to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Despite these challenges, the ACU has continued to work to provide critical aid and services to those in need in Syria.

#### **5.2.2.3. Syrian interim government (SIG)**

The Syrian Interim Government (SIG) is a political organization established in 2013 and based in Istanbul, Turkey, by the Syrian opposition as an alternative to the government of President Bashar al-Assad. aims to provide a transitional government for Syria when the Assad government is removed from power. The SIG is led by an appointed Prime Minister, and it has a cabinet composed of various ministers responsible for various sectors such as health, education, and local administration. The SIG has limited authority in the areas of northwest Syria that are controlled by the opposition, and it relies on the support of the local councils and civil society organizations to provide services to the population. Despite its ambitions, the SIG has faced numerous challenges, including a lack of resources, international recognition and support, and opposition from some opposition groups and factions who reject its legitimacy and political vision for Syria's future.

SIG has been recognized by some countries, including the United States, as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people (Gani and Hinnebusch 2022). SIG HQ is based in Gaziantep, Türkiye , and mainly works in northern Syria, divided into three locations according to Turkish military operations in Syria. The first is Aleppo province's Operation Euphrates Shield areas, including Azaz, Al-Bab, and Jarablus districts; the second is Aleppo province's Operation Olive Branch areas, including Afrin district; and the third is Raqqa province, Tel Abiad district, Hasaka province, and Ras

al-Ain, known as Operation Peace Spring areas. However, it can be said that the activity of the interim government differs between these regions, as it has greater activity in the Jarabulus region than in the Afrin region. There were SIG offices in Idlib as well, but in 2017, they were forced to close after the formation of the Salvation Government in Idlib. The SIG was able to gain trust and cooperate with many international donors and organizations, such as GIZ, Chemonics, and SRTF, and implement humanitarian emergency relief and development projects SIG mainly succeeded in the health and education sectors in Syria through coordination with the Turkish Government and local councils. In some cases, the SIG competes with humanitarian organizations and local councils in implementing humanitarian projects and acts as a cooperating body that works jointly with local councils and organizations in other cases. The triple Memorandum of Understanding between the SIG Ministry of Health, local councils in Azaz and Jarabulus, and the International Humanitarian Relief Organization (IHR) in the medical waste management project through the establishment of medical waste management stations in al-Bab and Azaz, which was funded by the Trust Fund for the Reconstruction of Syria was one of the success stories for all actors in northern Syria for the benefit of Syrian society and to show the possibility of cooperation between these different parties.

Humanitarian organizations work directly with the local councils in the field, so that the local councils act independently of the SIG and its ministries in various sectors, each local council has also become independent in the administrative region to which it belongs, and there is practically no official link between the local councils in northern Syria. SIG no longer has any power tools or means of pressure that could make the local councils, or other official institutions, in the areas controlled by the national army, compelled to submit to it or recognize its authority. The main sources of funding for these regions are Revenues from commercial crossings (5% allocated to councils), Local fees and taxes imposed and collected by each council. External funding comes from Western organizations, countries, and the United Nations. Turkish side oversees all disbursements for the benefit of the local councils. The SIG's decisions and activities have received a lot of popular criticism due to the lack of transparency and disclosure in the government's work mechanism, as well as the absence of a specific mechanism to facilitate the flow of reliable information among government institutions to societal groups, through which these groups can know how the decisions they made were responded to and the level of implementation and application. Furthermore, despite

financial and political backing, the SIG is unable to function as an effective executive authority in northern Syria. This, combined with the fact that each administrative region of north Syria belongs to a different Turkish state than the others, has resulted in insecurity and complexity in the governance structure.

#### **5.2.2.4. Syrian salvation government (SSG)**

The Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) is a parallel government established by the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group in the Idlib Governorate of Syria. It was announced in 2017 and aims to govern areas under HTS control. The SSG has been designated as a terrorist group by the UN and international organizations and its actions have been widely criticized by the international community (Keser and Fakhoury 2022). Interior, Justice, Endowments, Education, Health, Local Administration and Services, Economy and Resources, Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Higher Education, and Agriculture are all part of the SSG. It is regarded as the political arm of HTS and administers the majority of Idlib province that is not under Syrian government control. The SSG took control of local councils in Idlib and western Aleppo, as well as the Bab al-Hawa border crossing with Turkey. A crossing administration was established to manage most crossings in northwestern Syria, and the Sham Bank was set up to manage finances. The Watad Petroleum Company was formed to import oil and gas from Türkiye , but later stopped operations. The SSG allowed other companies, such as Al-Arabiya Company, Al-Salam Company, and others, to supply fuel to the region. In response to international policies focused on supporting stability through recovery projects, the SSG increased its focus on stability and adapted to shifts in international policies towards Syria. The SSG has implemented infrastructure-supporting projects to achieve this (Jerome and Haenni 2021). The SSG launched several initiatives, including the Bab Al-Hawa Industrial City, which aimed to create job opportunities, attract investments, and reduce external dependence. Other initiatives included opening the Aleppo-Bab Al-Hawa highway and supporting sectors such as education and health. Due to a lack of economic resources and many local residents and displaced persons, the SSG worked with international and local humanitarian organizations to address needs in various sectors such as health, education, water, sanitation, and nutrition, which would help employ the population and revitalize the local market.

## **6. AGRICULTURE AS A POLITICAL MODERATOR IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT**

### **6.1. Impact Of Conflict On Agriculture Sector In Syria**

Prior to the 2011 crisis, agriculture was a significant contributor to Syria's economy. It contributed 18% of the country's GDP and employed 17% of the workforce, with 80% of those employed in agriculture living in rural areas and 46% of the total population. Livestock was a major contributor to agricultural output and exports, and small-scale farmers, landless farmers, and rural women favored raising cattle. Although crop cultivation was rainfed, over 1.5 million hectares were irrigated. (Tothova et al. 2019). The ongoing crisis in Syria has had a significant negative impact on the agricultural sector, which was already facing challenges due to climatic factors. 70 farmers and animal breeders reported the following impacts of the conflict on their agriculture: 40% said it had a "Very significant" impact, 42% said it had a "Significant" impact, and 17% said it had a "Medium" impact. The ongoing crisis had a major impact, mainly on the agricultural infrastructure in the country. Many agricultural facilities and infrastructure, such as irrigation channels, wells, silos, buildings for directorates of agriculture, irrigation stations, agricultural roads, and others, have been damaged or are still out of service due to bombing and conflict.

The shortage of electricity and fuel has also forced many farmers to abandon irrigation and switch to primarily rainfed crops like barley. This has resulted in a decline in the sector's overall productivity and efficiency. Specific examples of the impact on the agricultural infrastructure in Syria can be seen in the Tel Abiad area, where silos like the Suluk silos went out of service due to bombing during battles against ISIS by the international coalition. Additionally, damage to irrigation canals in areas such as Azaz and Afrin has also been observed. These examples highlight the devastating effects that the ongoing crisis has had on the country's agricultural sector and its infrastructure.

Agriculture Inputs (Seed, Fertilizer, etc.) The prices of agricultural inputs increased in general under the conditions of the conflict due to the impact of several factors, such as the depreciation of the Syrian pound and the rise in fuel and transportation prices, which led to the abandonment of large areas of land by farmers. Even the use of fertilizers has declined significantly since 2011 due to the low availability in the market and high prices. Thus, farmers used very low rates of

fertilizer, and most of them did not apply fertilizer at all. According to interviews, a significant majority of farmers and animal breeders (84.51%) confirmed the high costs of agricultural inputs. This can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the ongoing crisis, which has disrupted supply chains and created difficulties in obtaining necessary inputs. Additionally, inflation and the devaluation of the currency have also contributed to the rise in the cost of inputs, further challenging the agricultural sector in the country.

Shortage and increase in fuel prices due to the ongoing conflict have had a significant impact on the agricultural sector in Syria. The lack of electricity and the disruption of oil production in eastern regions, combined with road cuts among conflicting parties, have led to fuel being transported by smugglers or traders under unstable security conditions, driving up fuel prices. Additionally, the availability of high-quality fuel has become a problem, as people have started extracting diesel from crude fuel in small, manually operated stations that have a harmful impact on the environment and human health. The rise in fuel prices and shortage of fuel in the market has resulted in a decrease in the area and production of strategic irrigated crops like cotton and wheat and a shift towards more reliance on rain-fed agriculture. (FAO 2021). According to the interviews, 42.8% of those polled said the crops grown in their area changed during the war.

The ongoing conflict and its impacts on the agricultural sector, such as the shortage of fuel and rise in fuel prices, the decrease in the availability of inputs like seed and fertilizer, and damage to agricultural infrastructure, have likely contributed to this change in crop types. Farmers may have been forced to switch to more resilient crops that require fewer inputs, or they may have been forced to transition to more subsistence-style agriculture, growing crops primarily for their own consumption. The Mechanization, Syria's conflict has had a negative impact on the country's agricultural mechanization. The lack of agricultural machinery, combined with the depreciation of the Syrian pound, increase in fuel prices, and rise in spare parts costs, has made it difficult for farmers to maintain their machinery. This has led to a return to more primitive methods of agriculture and an increased reliance on manual labor, including child labor and women in agriculture. Additionally, many types of agricultural machinery have been destroyed during the conflict, further exacerbating the challenges faced by farmers in Syria. The Agriculture Labor Market: During the ongoing conflict in Syria, the agricultural sector has faced two major challenges in the labor market: a

decrease in the number of agricultural workers due to migration and displacement to safer areas and a decrease in quality due to the lack of technical expertise from engineers and agricultural technicians also caused by migration and displacement. This has resulted in a significant increase in reliance on women and child labor and the use of traditional, labor-intensive agricultural methods with low productivity. Livestock, the ongoing conflict in Syria has affected livestock breeders, causing many of them to evacuate due to shelling and clashes near their settlements (ACU 2017). This forced some breeders to travel long distances to find suitable areas for raising livestock, leading to a decrease in the number of livestock due to the unstable conditions they faced in recent years, such as securing fodder, fluctuating prices of vet medicines, and variations in prices.

Livestock breeders also faced challenges in their living conditions and thousands of livestock have died because of battles and bombing in different areas (FAO 2017). According to interviews with livestock breeders, 40% had decreased the number of livestock during the ongoing conflict and most breeders have sold a large portion of their flocks to feed the remaining animals, with the hope that conditions would improve, and early rains would provide natural pastures to avoid the loss of their sheep flocks. The pastoral areas have shrunk due to military battles that have taken place on large areas of land previously used as pastures for livestock. These areas have become battlegrounds, leading to the displacement of breeders to other locations. In total of 123 total fodder centers, 73 are out of service, leading to large numbers of livestock deaths either due to lack of feed or the spread of pandemic diseases such as foot and mouth disease and smallpox, due to a shortage of available vaccines or weak preventive immunizations against disease epidemics and difficulty in delivering them to affected areas. There are also difficulties in marketing, caused by the disruption of transportation routes and the high cost of transportation from production to consumption areas. The spread of the phenomenon of livestock smuggling to neighboring countries, especially to Lebanon through the Al-Qarah region located in the countryside of Damascus and to Türkiye and Kurdistan to take advantage of the high prices there compared to the local market (FAO 2017). In addition, the conflict has led to an increase in livestock smuggling to neighboring countries, particularly to Lebanon through the Al-Qarah region in the Damascus countryside, as well as to Türkiye and Kurdistan region in Iraq, due to the higher prices in these markets compared to the Syrian local market.

## **6.2. The Relationship Between Sustainable Agriculture And Politics In The Syria Conflict**

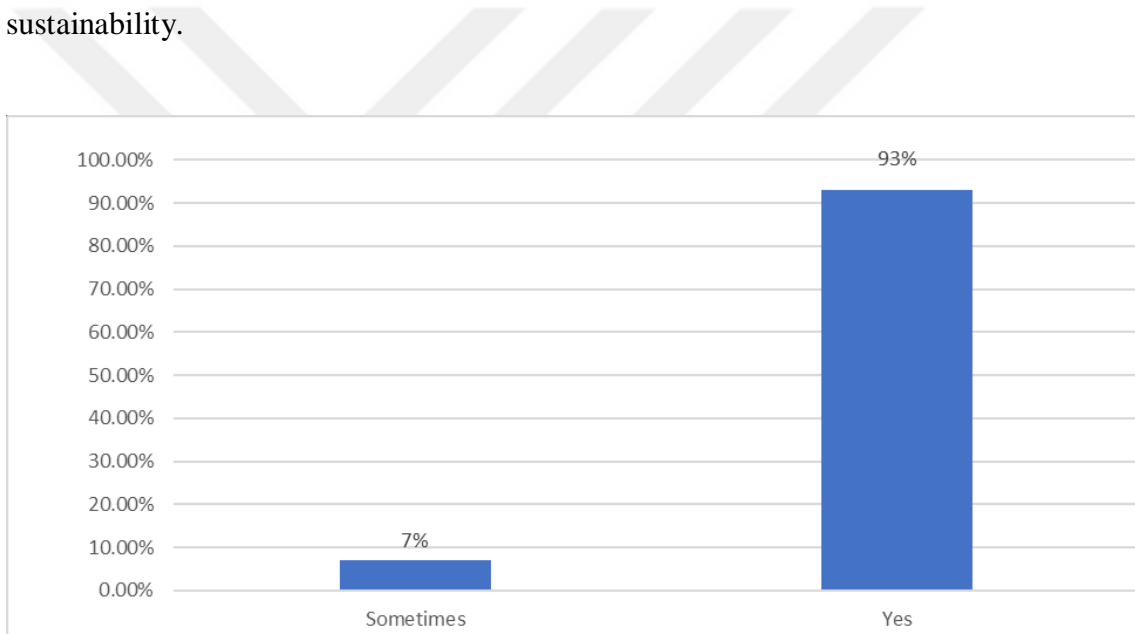
Food self-sufficiency is only one aspect of food security; it does not guarantee food access or distribution to all members of society. To ensure food security for all, a comprehensive approach that takes into account multiple factors such as food production, distribution, and access is required. A country's food security can be impacted by a range of internal and external factors. Climate change, for example, can disrupt agriculture production through weather changes and extreme weather events. Economic and political instability can impact the availability and affordability of food and, in turn, access to food. Thus, it's important to have a multi-faceted approach that considers not just food production but also access and distribution, along with addressing external factors that affect food security. Agriculture is the process of growing food and other crops, as well as raising livestock for food and other products. Food security refers to the ability of a society to provide enough food for all its members, considering not just the availability of food but also its accessibility and affordability.

The Government plays a crucial role in shaping agriculture and food security in a country, and government policies and investments in infrastructure, technology, and distribution systems can significantly impact agricultural production and food security. Moreover, the government's policies also address key challenges such as access to land, water, and other resources that are critical to agriculture. Additionally, government programs provide support to small-scale farmers, who are often the most vulnerable, to help them improve their production and access to markets. In this way, government policies and actions have a significant impact on agriculture and food security and contribute to long-term food security for all citizens. As a result, politics has a significant impact on the relationship between agriculture and food security. Governments must implement policies and strategies that promote sustainable agricultural practices, ensure universal access to food, and foster a stable environment for food production and distribution. (Habib et.al. 2014) .

Agriculture and political instability are linked because of competition for agricultural resources, particularly land, and water, where conflict can arise due to land tenure issues. Water access can also be a source of contention between countries or within a single country. Political instability plays a significant role in the unsustainable state of agriculture by impeding politicians' ability to create a successful vision for

preserving sustainable agriculture in accordance with international standards. The causes of this failure range from political unrest, civil wars, conflicts that undermine state institutions, and a lack of political vision to handle them. Political instability also led to a lack of land security and tenure, which discourages farmers from investing in long-term sustainable practices. This led to overuse of resources and degradation of the land, making it even more difficult to sustain agriculture in the future.

Interviews with 14 I/NGOs working in northern Syria's agriculture sector were conducted when asked the following questions: Does political instability have a significant impact on agricultural sustainability? The 93% of respondents indicated that this has a significant impact on agricultural sustainability and the rest of them 7% of respondents indicated that is sometimes political instability affects agricultural sustainability.



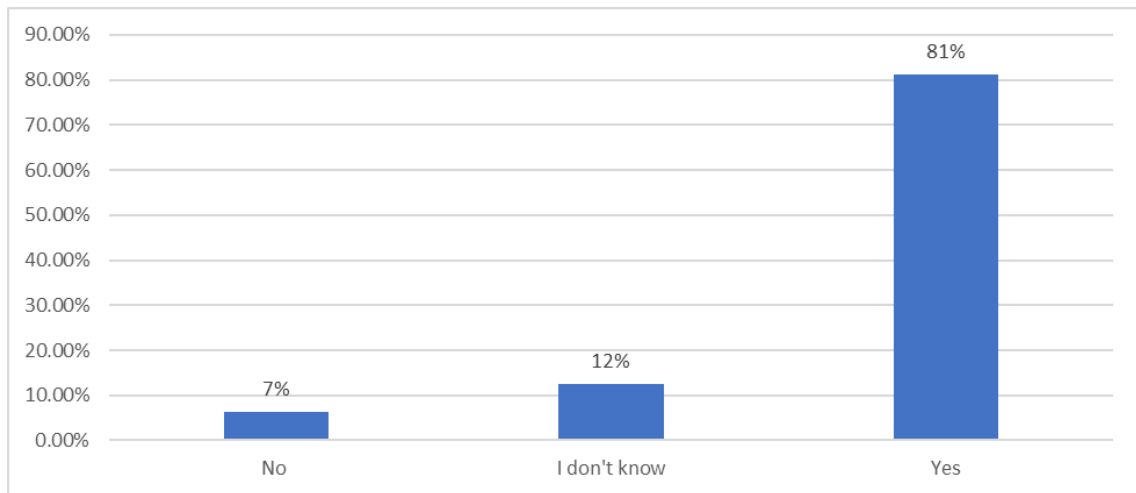
**Figure 2** I/NGOs interviews  
Question: Does political instability have a significant impact on agricultural sustainability?

Humanitarian organisations play a crucial role in promoting sustainable agriculture by implementing programs that address immediate food security needs while also considering the long-term well-being of communities. The policies of these organizations are indeed influenced by factors such as funding, project duration, and the type of intervention. Thus, the above chart shows how political instability impacts on sustainable agriculture programs funded by a humanitarian organisation. Syria's ongoing political instability causes fluctuations in funding for humanitarian programs. Donors are hesitant to commit long-term resources to projects in unstable environments, making it difficult for organizations to plan and sustain their agriculture programs.

Political instability has often led to restrictions on humanitarian access, making it difficult for organizations to reach vulnerable populations in Syria. This limits their ability to provide assistance and effectively implement agricultural programs. and the Syrian conflict has forced many humanitarian organizations to relocate or evacuate their staff for safety reasons. This disruption results in delays or interruptions in program implementation. Effective coordination among humanitarian organizations, government agencies, and other stakeholders is crucial for delivering aid and implementing agriculture programs. Political instability hinders coordination efforts, leading to duplication of efforts or gaps in assistance.

The political instability in Syria leads to economic instability and currency fluctuations, impacting beneficiaries' purchasing power. This, in turn, affects the effectiveness of cash-based assistance programs and the ability of farmers to access essential inputs. Changing regulations and shifting power dynamics in conflict zones create legal and administrative challenges for humanitarian organizations, affecting their ability to operate efficiently and comply with local laws. Thus, the political instability in Syria has posed significant challenges to humanitarian organizations working in the agriculture sector. These challenges include restricted access, security risks, staff displacement, infrastructure damage, funding fluctuations, coordination difficulties, economic instability, legal and regulatory hurdles, environmental damage, and changing needs. Despite these obstacles, humanitarian organizations continue to work diligently to support vulnerable communities and promote agricultural sustainability in the region.

Interviews with 16 government entities and local authorities working in northern Syria (Turkish agriculture directors, SIGs, and LCs) revealed that 81% of respondents believe there is a significant impact of political instability on agricultural sustainability. "I do not know," said 12%. and 7% said, "No." When asked, Does political instability have a significant impact on agricultural sustainability?. Syria's political unrest has significantly hampered local governments' ability to promote agricultural sustainability in their respective regions. These challenges include disrupted governance, inadequate resources, insecurity, inconsistent policies, restricted market access, food security concerns, displacement and land use changes, environmental degradation, dependence on aid, and civil servant safety.

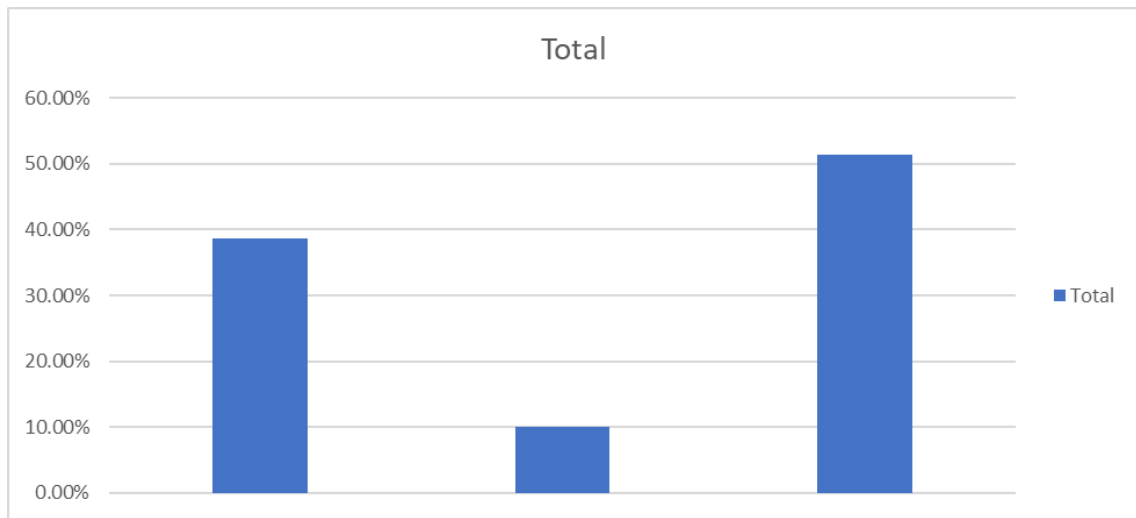


**Figure 3** Government entities and local authorities' interviews.  
 Question: Does political instability have a significant impact on agricultural sustainability?

I/NGOS, Governmental entities, and non-governmental actors had pointed to the influence of local and global politics on funding sources, project duration, and intervention modality as examples of how political instability can affect agricultural sustainability. This highlights the need to consider political and policy factors when working to promote agricultural sustainability in conflict-affected areas, as these factors can greatly impact the effectiveness and sustainability of agricultural efforts in these regions. Also, Agricultural development and sustainability have political implications, as it impacts the allegiance of farmers and rural communities. Improved agricultural production and food security result in increased economic stability and improved livelihoods, which in turn impact political support for a particular party or political entity. Thus, agriculture plays a key role as a political engine, shaping political alignments and outcomes. This highlights the interplay between agriculture and politics, and the need to consider both when working to promote sustainable agriculture and food security.

Interviews with 70 Farmers, livestock breeders, and technicians show that a significant percentage of the interviewees responded positively to the question about whether improvements in the agricultural sector and its sustainability could impact their political opinions about the relevant political actors. 51% of interviewees (farmers, livestock breeders, and technicians) responded to the question, "Can significant improvements in the agricultural sector and ensuring its sustainability by any actors change your political opinion about this political actor?" They responded "yes," indicating that they believe agricultural and sustainability improvements have the

potential to influence their political opinions about the actors responsible for these improvements.



**Figure 4** Farmers, livestock breeders, and technicians' interviews. Question: Can significant improvements in the agricultural sector and ensuring its sustainability by any actors change your political opinion of this political actor ?

This implies that there is a link between the success of agricultural sector actors and the political views of farmers and other agricultural workers. As a result, improving the agricultural sector and ensuring its sustainability usually necessitate a multifaceted approach involving a variety of actors, such as governments, non-governmental organizations, communities, and the private sector. These actors can collaborate to address challenges and opportunities in the agricultural sector while also promoting sustainable agriculture that promotes food security and economic stability. In this sense, the success or impact of any actor in improving the agricultural sector and ensuring its sustainability can change the perception or opinion of others towards that actor. However, this is a complex and dynamic process influenced by a number of factors, including the specific context as well as the political, economic, and social factors at work. This discovery suggests a strong relationship between agricultural well-being and political stability. The success of agricultural sector actors, including farmers, is intertwined with the political views and decisions that shape the broader political environment. Political factors can influence policies, resource access, market dynamics, government support, environmental regulations, and overall conditions for agricultural production.

### **6.3. Agriculture In Northern Syria Areas Influenced By The Turkish Government**

Türkiye has established a presence in several districts of northern Syria, including Azaz, Jarabulus, Al-Bab, Afrin, Tel Abiad, and Ras Al-Ain, all of which are overseen by various Turkish governorates, including Kilis, Gaziantep, Hatay, and Sanliurfa. Turkey has become more involved in the Syrian conflict in recent years, and it has taken steps to protect its security interests in the region. This has included military operations in northern Syria against Kurdish groups and ISIS. Türkiye has also contributed to efforts to promote stability and reconstruction in areas under its control, including through aid and support for local governance structures. However, these actions have been met with criticism from some quarters, and the situation in northern Syria remains complex and fluid. The presence of Turkish agriculture coordinators in each local council and the establishment of a representative office in each of the three zones of Turkish influence highlights the importance that Türkiye places on overseeing and coordinating the agricultural sector in northern Syria. This level of involvement suggests that Türkiye is committed to supporting the agricultural sector and promoting stability in the region. However, the effectiveness of these coordinators in improving and sustaining the agricultural sector will be determined by a variety of factors, including the level of support they receive from the local council, the Turkish government, and other actors, as well as the region's overall political and security situation.

The distribution of border crossing revenues to the local councils in the form of budgets plays a significant role in supporting the agricultural sector and ensuring its sustainability. By providing a steady source of funding for paying employees and restoring agricultural infrastructure and supplying inputs, these budgets help to create stability and promote economic development in the region. However, it's worth noting that relying on border crossing revenues alone may not be sufficient to ensure long-term agricultural sustainability, especially if the political and security situation in the region changes. A more comprehensive approach that addresses multiple factors, such as access to resources, technical expertise, and trade policies, may be necessary to achieve long-term food security and stability in the region (Khalaf 2015).

According to interviews with these Turkish agricultural coordinators in the states of Hatay, Kilis, Afrin, and Sanliurfa, they stated that focusing on sustainable solutions and developing existing institutions and infrastructure, we aim to address the urgent needs of communities and IDPs in the region, while preparing for a potential

handover to a Syrian governing body in the future. This approach demonstrates a commitment to the agricultural sector's long-term sustainability and the well-being of the communities it serves in northern Syria.

Cross-border agricultural support, Türkiye has provided humanitarian and developmental assistance to areas in northern Syria, particularly those under the control of Turkish-backed opposition groups. This assistance has included support for agricultural projects, such as providing seeds, equipment, and training to farmers. These initiatives aimed to improve agricultural productivity and enhance food security in the region.

The involvement of Türkiye in the Syrian conflict and its support for certain opposition groups have had implications for agricultural areas in Syria. Turkish military operations and control over specific regions have influenced agricultural practices and land use patterns in those areas, in addition with the gradual de-escalation of the conflict in some parts of Syria, discussions have emerged regarding the potential return of Syrian refugees from Türkiye . The return of refugees could have an impact on the agricultural sector in Syria, as they might bring back the knowledge and skills gained from their experiences in Türkiye 's agricultural sector.

Humanitarian organizations working on food security and agriculture in Northern Syria assess the needs of the region and formulate projects which are then submitted to donors for approval. They coordinate with the Turkish agriculture directorates by signing cooperation protocols and have a Memorandum of Understanding with local councils to implement agricultural and livestock projects. The aim of these projects is to improve food security and livelihoods in the area. According to interviews with the I/NGOs working in this area, they coordinate with Local councils (83%), the Turkish government (50%), and Turkish entities. This cooperation between I/NGOs and Turkish entities is frequently established to secure access for employees to project implementation areas in northern Syria and information sharing.

Humanitarian organizations working in Northern Syria in the food security and agriculture sectors, as well as other sectors, face a number of challenges, including different visions and strategies among the Donors, Turkish government entities, and local authorities all have different perspectives on project implementation in northern Syria's agricultural sector. Donors may prioritize funding for specific initiatives that align with their agendas, while the Turkish government and local authorities may have different priorities for the development of the agricultural sector.

Difficulty in coordinating and collaborating with INGOs, Turkish government agencies, and local authorities. Because there are no established mechanisms for collaboration, this presents a challenge for humanitarian organizations. This arises from differences in mandates, goals, and operating procedures, as well as from political, security, or other considerations. To be effective in providing assistance to affected populations, humanitarian organizations must be able to collaborate effectively with government agencies as well as other actors such as local authorities and other humanitarian organizations. This requires a strong understanding of the context and the needs of the affected populations, as well as the ability to negotiate and establish mutually beneficial partnerships. However, despite these difficulties, humanitarian organizations continue to work towards establishing effective and efficient mechanisms for coordinating and collaborating with government agencies, in order to ensure that their work is carried out in the most effective and impactful manner possible. Thus, INGOs operating in northern Syria must have strong humanitarian negotiation and diplomacy skills and knowledge. These organizations play a critical role in providing assistance and protection to affected populations, and they often operate in complex and challenging environments.

In order to effectively carry out their work, INGOs must be able to navigate conflicting interests and negotiate with a wide range of actors, including government officials, local authorities, and other humanitarian organizations. So effective humanitarian negotiation and diplomacy skills are critical in ensuring that INGOs can reach affected populations and provide the assistance they require, while also maintaining their independence and neutrality and adhering to humanitarian principles. Turkey is attempting to establish its influence and support communities and IDPs in Northern Syria. This approach has the potential to enhance agricultural conditions and ensure the sustainability of the sector, however, success will require collaboration with various factors such as NGOs, donors, SIGs, and the private sector. Nevertheless, political factors, including the influence of external actors plays a significant role in shaping the development and sustainability of the agricultural sector.

#### **6.4. Agriculture In Areas Influenced By The Syrian Interim Government**

The Syrian Interim Government (SIG) has established several institutions to support agricultural development, including the General Directorate of Agriculture and Livestock, the General Corporation for Seed Multiplication, and the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU). According to interviews with SIG representatives, The Syrian Interim Government (SIG) faces several challenges in developing agriculture in northern Syria, including the Lack of resources. SIG has limited resources and capacity, making it difficult for the government to support agricultural development, and it has little influence on the ground. The country's ongoing conflict has made it difficult for the SIG to exert influence over certain areas, limiting its ability to support agricultural development in these areas. The Damage to agricultural lands and infrastructure since the conflict has resulted in widespread displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and damage to agricultural lands, which has severely impacted the agricultural sector and the ability of farmers to produce crops and earn a livelihood.

SIG faces challenges in coordinating and collaborating with other actors, such as local authorities and humanitarian organizations, in order to support the development of the agriculture sector in northern Syria. Despite these challenges, the SIG is committed to assisting in the rehabilitation of agricultural lands and the restoration of agricultural production through initiatives such as providing farmers with inputs, and rehabilitating irrigation systems, and other agricultural infrastructure ( Hatahet 2021) . ACU, in particular, plays an important role in coordinating these efforts and ensuring that they are carried out effectively and efficiently. These efforts aim to assist farmers in recovering from the effects of the conflict and to support the long-term development of the agriculture sector in SIG-affected areas. “Prior to the conflict in Syria, there was a centralized and well-organized administrative structure in place for the agriculture sector, with specialized divisions that were responsible for various aspects of agriculture. These divisions worked together to support the growth and development of the sector, and they were provided with the necessary budget and personnel to carry out their duties. However, the conflict has had a significant impact on Syria's agriculture sector, resulting in a lack of decentralization, a shortage of technicians and employees, a decrease in funding, and a lack of enforcement of agricultural laws.

These factors have contributed to the agricultural sector's decline and have made recovery and growth more difficult. Lack of funding, for example, has limited the agricultural sector's ability to invest in new technologies and innovations that could

have improved productivity and competitiveness. “The decline in interest in agriculture has reduced the number of young people entering the sector, which could have long-term implications for the future of agriculture in Syria” Quotation from SIG interviews. In terms of the relationship and cooperation between the SIG, LCs, I/NGOs, and the Turkish government entities in the field of agriculture in northern Syria, these relationships are very complex and challenging. While there is a shared goal of supporting the development of the agriculture sector and improving the lives of the affected population, there are differences in mandates, goals, and operating procedures between the different actors, which makes coordination and collaboration difficult. Additionally, political and security considerations also impact the ability of these actors to work together effectively.

### **6.5. Agricultural Sector In Syrian Salvation Government Controlled Areas**

Agricultural sector plays a critical role in the economy of Idlib governorate, as it employs 20 to 30 percent of the labor force and is a significant source of income for the population. The export of agricultural products such as olive oil, dried figs, and medicinal and aromatic plants such as cumin also contributes to the region's foreign exchange reserves (iMMAP 2022). However, the ongoing conflict and its associated challenges, including damage to agricultural lands and infrastructure, displacement, and limited access to inputs and markets, have significantly impacted the agricultural sector in the region. This has had a direct impact on the ability of farmers to produce crops and earn a livelihood and has contributed to food insecurity and poverty in the area. According to interviews with representatives of the Harim and Ariha local councils, as well as the Salvation Government's Ministry of Agriculture and Development, the Salvation Government's Ministry of Agriculture has implemented a loan program known as "Qard al-Hasan" to assist farmers by providing them with seeds, fertilizer, and fuel. The military conflict and security instability in the Idlib region have had a significant impact on the agricultural sector, and the Salvation Government and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) play a critical role in addressing these challenges.

The ongoing conflict has caused the displacement of farmers, the destruction of crops and farm infrastructure, and the disruption of trade and market systems, all of which have affected the agricultural sector. The Salvation Government has been working to support farmers and promote agricultural production, but the region's

security situation has made effective agricultural policies and programs difficult to implement. In this context, the Salvation Government's efforts to promote a loan program for farmers and to support the cultivation of crops like soybeans, oil sunflowers, and yellow corn are important steps towards overcoming these challenges. On the other hand, the potential non-renewal of the UN cross-border resolution through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing with Türkiye and the legalization of its entry through crossings controlled by the Assad regime under Russian pressure have caused concern about the impact on their humanitarian needs. The situation has raised concerns about a potential reduction in food aid, which presents a challenge for SSG and INGOs in terms of supporting large-scale agricultural projects, particularly those related to wheat and barley, which are essential for sustaining the well-being of over 4 million people. Some donors, like GIZ, have restrictions on operating in areas under SSG control, which results in a decrease in funding and support for important initiatives in the area. This is because donors and supporters may fear that their resources will not reach the intended beneficiaries, but instead, be used to support the activities of the designated terrorist group. This can have serious consequences for the local population and the development of the local economy, especially in sectors such as agriculture (Bitar 2022). Despite these challenges, there are ongoing efforts to support the rehabilitation of agricultural lands and the restoration of agricultural production. These efforts include the provision of inputs, the rehabilitation of irrigation systems, and other agricultural infrastructure. In addition, humanitarian organizations and other actors are implementing programs to support farmers' livelihoods and improve food security in the area. The success of these efforts depends on a number of factors, including the ability of these actors to effectively coordinate and collaborate, as well as the security and political situation in the area.

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that the decline of agriculture in Syria has contributed to the escalation of the Syrian conflict. The relationship between agricultural improvement and political stability in Syria is mutual because improving the agricultural sector contributes to political stability because the conflict parties in Syria have a common interest. The relationship between agriculture and political stability in Syria is indeed complex and interconnected. While it's true that the decline of agriculture played a role in contributing to the escalation of the Syrian conflict, the causality is not straightforward, and multiple factors were at play, such as the drought

and agricultural decline. Prior to the conflict, Syria experienced a severe drought that lasted from 2006 to 2010.

Syrian government's mismanagement since the Syrian government's handling of the agricultural sector and the impact of the drought were criticized for exacerbating the situation. Allegations of corruption, misallocation of resources, and a lack of support for rural communities eroded trust in the government and its ability to address the needs of the population. This Syrian government's agriculture policy and drought led to a significant decline in agricultural productivity, rural unemployment, and the displacement of rural populations into urban areas. The decline in agriculture exacerbated existing economic and social vulnerabilities, contributing to grievances, unrest, and economic disparities. The agricultural decline widened the gap between the rural and urban populations in terms of economic opportunities and access to resources. The lack of economic prospects, especially in rural areas, has fueled dissatisfaction and led to social unrest. These economic disparities were among the underlying factors that contributed to political instability, in addition to resource scarcity as agriculture declined and water resources became scarce due to the drought, competition for these limited resources intensified. This competition contributes to conflicts over land, water, and other essential resources.

Local-level disputes can escalate into broader political conflicts, especially when governance structures are weak. The role of agriculture in conflict dynamics While improving the agricultural sector can contribute to political stability, it's important to note that the conflict parties in Syria have complex and divergent interests. Aside from agriculture, the conflict included political repression, sectarian tensions, external interventions, and regional power dynamics. thus, In the case of Syria, it is clear that, while improving agriculture could potentially contribute to stability by addressing economic disparities and resource competition, the conflict's escalation and resolution involved a wide range of factors other than agriculture.

## **7. HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY MAINTAIN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN SYRIA**

### **7.1. Humanitarian Diplomacy from A Political Science Perspective**

Humanitarian diplomacy refers to using diplomatic tools and strategies to address humanitarian crises and protect the rights and welfare of affected populations. Diplomatic efforts include securing access for aid workers and supplies, negotiating safe passage for refugees, and advocating for affected communities' rights with governments and other actors. It also entails collaborating with other government and non-governmental organizations to coordinate humanitarian response efforts and address the root causes of crises. In some ways, humanitarian diplomacy is like traditional diplomacy in that both involve negotiations and the gathering and analysis of data from different sources, and both call for a certain level of approval because they frequently include parties with opposing interests and operate in delicate political environments to achieve their goals through diplomatic communication. Humanitarian diplomacy and its mandates, on the other hand, are humanitarian actions regardless of government policies and their conflicts, and the goals of this diplomacy frequently conflict with the interests of the global community (Lauri 2018). To secure humanitarian interventions, humanitarian organisation frequently compromises or reach agreements with states or non-state actors. This is not the case with traditional diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy refers to the use of diplomatic means to advance a country's political, economic, and security interests, such as through negotiations, agreements, and alliances . Both types of diplomacy can overlap and be used in tandem, but they have different focuses and goals.

Humanitarianism and politics can intersect in various ways. For example, governments and political leaders can use their power to influence humanitarian responses to crises and conflicts, and humanitarian organisations may engage in political advocacy to secure resources and support for their work. However, the principles of humanitarianism may sometimes conflict with political considerations, such as when providing aid to an enemy during a time of war. Humanitarian organizations are expected to remain neutral and impartial in their actions, however, in practice, it's not easy to separate humanitarian work from politics. Political factors can impact aid workers' access and security, resource distribution, and civilian protection. Humanitarian workers do not participate in politics by participating in humanitarian

diplomacy. Humanitarians who serve as diplomats are therefore political negotiators rather than political advocates. “Humanitarian officials engage in diplomatic negotiations in the sense that they try to effect compromise with partners who have very different values and interests. In other words, they practice classic diplomacy because they engage in “a process in which divergent values are combined into an agreed decision. They engage in policy implementation, not policy making” (Minear and Hazel 2007). Humanitarian Diplomacy can be considered a form of "Soft power," which is the ability of a country or organization to influence the behavior of others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or force. By providing humanitarian aid and assistance to those in need, a country or organization can demonstrate its values and build goodwill with other nations and communities. This resulted in favorable perceptions of the country or organization, as well as increased influence in international affairs. Humanitarian diplomacy can also be used as a tool to advance a country or organisation’s broader political or strategic goal. For instance, providing humanitarian aid to a country in crisis can improve the country's stability, which in turn can help foster a more favorable environment for economic and political engagement. Additionally, providing aid to a country or region can also be a way to demonstrate solidarity, build regional partnerships, and strengthen regional stability.

Humanitarian diplomacy can be considered a form of soft power as it can be used to influence the behavior of others through attraction and persuasion by providing humanitarian aid, and it can also be used as a tool to advance a country's or organization's broader political or strategic goals. Political science scholars often view humanitarian diplomacy as a key component of conflict resolution and prevention. By engaging in diplomatic efforts to address humanitarian issues, states, and international organizations aim to reduce the likelihood of conflicts and promote stability. Humanitarian diplomacy is inextricably linked to international norms and legal frameworks. Political scientists investigate how states and non-state actors use diplomatic channels to advocate for international humanitarian law and human rights standards to be implemented. Political scientists study the decision-making processes that underpin interventions, as well as the role of diplomacy in obtaining consent or support from various stakeholders, including the UN Security Council. Political science perspectives often consider the tension between state interests and humanitarian principles in diplomatic efforts. States may engage in humanitarian diplomacy for strategic or political reasons, and scholars examine how this may impact the

effectiveness of humanitarian action. Political science research looks at the roles of international organizations, such as the United Nations and regional bodies, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in humanitarian diplomacy. Scholars analyze their strategies, effectiveness, and interactions in advocating for humanitarian causes. Political scientists investigate humanitarian diplomats' roles, training, and use of diplomatic techniques in negotiations. Examining the communication and negotiation skills required to advance humanitarian agendas is part of this. Scholars of political science frequently examine the relationship between humanitarian diplomacy and the dynamics of conflict and crisis. They examine how diplomatic efforts can mitigate conflict-related humanitarian crises and contribute to peacebuilding. The ethical dimensions of humanitarian diplomacy are a subject of study in political science. Scholars explore questions of moral responsibility, ethical dilemmas, and the moral standing of states and actors engaged in humanitarian efforts. Political science research also considers the role of public opinion and civil society in shaping humanitarian diplomacy. Non-state actors' public pressure and advocacy can have an impact on government policies and diplomatic actions. In summary, humanitarian diplomacy is a multifaceted field of political science that investigates the diplomatic strategies, political dynamics, ethical considerations, and international norms associated with humanitarian efforts. It is critical in shaping international responses to crises and conflicts, balancing state interests with the imperative of protecting vulnerable populations and upholding humanitarian principles.

## **7.2. Humanitarian Diplomacy And Sustainable Agriculture**

Humanitarian diplomacy and sustainable agriculture are inextricably linked in several ways. In the context of a humanitarian crisis caused by conflict or displacement, for example, sustainable agriculture contributes to food security and long-term recovery for affected populations. This may include promoting farming practices that are resilient to climate change and conserve natural resources, as well as supporting local markets and food systems. Additionally, sustainable agriculture can play a role in preventing conflicts by reducing competition for resources and promoting economic development. Humanitarian diplomacy can also aid in the promotion of sustainable agriculture by advocating for policies and investments that support sustainable farming practices, as well as addressing the root causes of food insecurity and agricultural vulnerability. Humanitarian diplomacy is critical in supporting sustainable agriculture and food

security for affected populations in Syria. The region's ongoing conflict has resulted in widespread displacement and infrastructure destruction, making it difficult for farmers to access land and resources and for markets to function properly.

### 7.2.1. Negotiating access to land and resources

Humanitarian diplomacy is used to negotiate access to land and resources for displaced communities and refugees, which is important for maintaining sustainable agriculture and food security (Alameldeen 2019b). UN aid is delivered to the Syrians either through “Cross-Border” delivery of humanitarian aid into Syria’s northwest from Türkiye, or through the "Cross lines" mechanism, which means that aid reaches those in need from one area of control to another between the Syrian opposition-controlled areas and the Syrian regime-controlled areas, and it is the mechanism by which the United Nations tried to deliver aid to the besieged areas. The areas controlled by the Syria government , failed every time because of the regime’s rejection and its obstacles and arguments. “Humanitarian access across Syria, including through cross-border and cross-line operations, must be expanded, and humanitarian activities must be broadened through investment in early recovery projects.

**Table 3** Difference between humanitarian access mechanisms

Cross-Border Aid Mechanism	Crossline Aid Delivery
<p>Humanitarian aid delivery through the Bab-al-Hawa border crossing in Hatay, Türkiye . Cross-border aid in Syria refers to the delivery of aid into Syria from neighboring countries or across international borders. This type of aid delivery is typically coordinated by international organizations such as the United Nations and is delivered through official border crossings or over land and air. The delivery of cross-border aid in Syria has been complicated by the ongoing conflict and the involvement of multiple actors, including the Syrian government, opposition groups, and international powers. Additionally, the Syrian government has often placed restrictions on the entry of aid, and some border crossings have been closed or are under the control of different armed groups. Despite these challenges, cross-border aid has been vital in providing assistance to those in need in Syria.</p>	<p>Crossline aid delivery refers to the delivery of aid across conflict lines or areas controlled by different parties in Syria. This type of aid delivery can be challenging due to security risks and the need to negotiate access with different groups. Organizations such as the United Nations and non-governmental organizations have been working to deliver aid across lines in Syria, but the ongoing conflict has made it difficult to reach all those in need.</p>

In accordance with Security Council Resolution 2165 of 2014 and subsequent extensions or amendments, it allows United Nations agencies and their partners to provide humanitarian aid across borders without the approval of the regime, allowing life-saving humanitarian aid to be delivered to northwest Syria from across the Turkish border. Russia did not stop objecting to the content of the mechanism, considering it a "breach of the Syrian state's sovereignty," as it put it. Moscow has escalated its pressure position according to the military changes it imposed on the geography and threatened or used the veto to obtain certain gains in exchange for not obstructing the mechanism before each voting session, which enabled it to reduce the number of border crossings used within the mechanism from four to be limited to only one, and then reduce the duration of Working with the mechanism from one year to six months.

As a Humanitarian diplomacy effort, the humanitarian multi-donor Pooled Fund was established in December 2022 to meet priority needs in the north of Syria with a primary focus on the northwest and to mitigate the negative impact of a non-renewal of UNSCR 2642. It enables a longer transition if the UN cross-border mandate is not renewed and will address gaps created by the short-term, six-month project window allowed by UN Security Council Resolution 2642 (UNSCR) by supporting longer-term programming. "In the event of a non-renewal in January 2023, the United Kingdom (UK) has led the creation of an alternative pool fund, the Interim North Syria Aid Fund (AFNS), to facilitate the flow of funds to international and Syrian NGOs. The Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom has already secured some donor commitments, though no formal announcement has been made. Donors should continue to support AFNS to ensure that funding to operational partners is not interrupted.

### **7.2.2. Successful humanitarian negotiations and diplomacy in northwest Syria**

The UN Security Council has passed several resolutions on the situation in Syria, including Resolution 2139, which calls for unhindered humanitarian access to all affected areas as well as civilian protection. (Pedersen 2021). The resolution also demands that all parties, including the Syrian government, allow INGOs to deliver aid to those in need and that the use of weapons in populated areas be prohibited. However, the resolution has not been fully implemented due to Humanitarian Diplomacy efforts in

northwest Syria have been focused on gaining access to and providing aid to those affected by Syria's ongoing conflict.

This has included negotiations with various armed groups, local councils, and Turkish authorities to secure safe access for aid convoys and to ensure that aid reaches those in need, in addition to ensuring the access of humanitarian organisations to farmers for daily technical consultations and distributions of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and seeds, as well as fodder, vaccines, and veterinary medicines to livestock breeders, and access to agricultural infrastructure for rehabilitation or new establishments such as silos, irrigation canals, and agricultural roads in northwestern Syria. “Humanitarian diplomacy is not only about gaining access to those affected by armed conflicts, but also about maintaining and assuring the effectiveness of this access” (Ragnier 2011). Also, humanitarian organisations have sought to build relationships with local communities to better understand their needs and to ensure that aid is delivered in a culturally appropriate and sustainable way. Successful humanitarian negotiations and diplomacy in northwest Syria have been instrumental in ensuring that aid reaches vulnerable populations in a timely and effective manner. These efforts are ongoing, as the conflict continues to evolve, and they serve as a critical lifeline for millions of people in need of assistance in the region.

### **7.2.3. Unsuccessful humanitarian negotiations and diplomacy in northeast Syria**

Unlike the regions of northwestern Syria, the UN cross-border resolution did not include the areas known as the Peace Spring operation area, which include Tel Abiad and Ras al-Ain in northeastern Syria, thus depriving people of humanitarian aid, knowing that this region does not have crossings only towards Türkiye, as it is confined between areas under the control of the Syrian government and on the other hand, by the Kurdish Democratic Forces. “Most Syrian organisations that receive Western support are not permitted to operate in Ras al-Ayn, Tel Abaid, or Afrin due to Western donors’ opposition to Turkish military operations in these areas. Such organisations typically continue to operate in the Euphrates Shield area and in Idlib”. This resulted in the absence of INGOs operating in this region; there are few NGOs funded by Qatari charities like Ataa Humanitarian Relief Association, or some Syrian NGOs (Syria Relief) funded by INGOs like World Vision USA, Med Global, IHR, USSOM, AFAD, and TRC. These organizations primarily work in the health, WASH, and education sectors; however, there are no I/NGOs working in agriculture, despite the fact that

agriculture is the primary source of livelihood and food security for the people in these areas. Unsuccessful humanitarian negotiations and diplomacy in Syria have been an unfortunate recurring challenge in a region marked by complex and dynamic conflict dynamics.

Syria has seen political fragmentation, with various armed groups controlling different areas, as one of the factors and issues that have contributed to such difficulties. Negotiating with multiple, frequently competing authorities can make humanitarian access and coordination more difficult. The region's strategic importance has drawn the interest of various regional and international actors, each with their political agendas. Geopolitical rivalries can hinder diplomatic efforts and complicate negotiations, and the ongoing conflict and insecurity pose significant risks to humanitarian workers and organizations. Insecure environments can hinder negotiations and disrupt aid delivery, making it difficult to reach those in need. Some parties to the conflict have imposed access restrictions on humanitarian organizations, making it challenging to reach vulnerable populations. These restrictions can include bureaucratic obstacles, checkpoints, and limitations on movement. The ethnic and political divisions in the region have further complicated negotiations. The presence of different ethnic and religious groups with varying political affiliations can create challenges in ensuring equitable aid distribution. The fluidity of alliances among armed groups in northeast Syria results in shifting power dynamics, which necessitate ongoing negotiations and adjustments in humanitarian access agreements. The bureaucratic hurdles, including lengthy approval processes and documentation requirements imposed by authorities, slow down aid delivery and create inefficiencies.

The priorities of various stakeholders in the region may not always align with humanitarian objectives. This complicates negotiations, as different parties may have differing goals and agendas. The humanitarian operations in Syria involve cross-border activities, which require complex negotiations and agreements with Turkey. To address these challenges and achieve successful humanitarian negotiations and diplomacy in Syria, sustained efforts, ongoing dialogue, and diplomatic strategies that account for the multifaceted nature of the conflict and the diverse array of actors involved are required. It also necessitates a commitment to humanitarian principles, including impartiality, neutrality, and the prioritization of human well-being amid the complexities of the situation.

#### **7.2.4. Humanitarian diplomacy advocating for sustainable farming practices**

Humanitarian Diplomats can advocate for sustainable farming practices, such as agroforestry and conservation agriculture, which help to conserve natural resources, reduce the risk of soil erosion, and improve crop yields. As a means of addressing food security and livelihood concerns in the country, INGOs engage in advocacy for sustainable agriculture through the UNOCHA FSL Cluster. Given the ongoing conflict in Syria, the FSL Cluster's primary focus will almost certainly be on providing humanitarian aid to those affected by the crisis. However, the UNOCHA FSL Cluster in Türkiye also has an important role to play in supporting sustainable agriculture in the country as part of a broader effort to rebuild and recover from the crisis. This includes providing technical assistance and resources to farmers and farming organizations to help them adopt sustainable farming practices, as well as working with non-governmental bodies (LCs, SIG, SSG), Turkish entities such as agriculture directors, AFAD, and another private sector to create policies and programs that support sustainable agriculture. Efforts to raise awareness of the challenges encountered in humanitarian crises and of the appropriate responses must be addressed to both states and the different civil society actors. In an actual crisis, advocacy must take the place of awareness-raising in order to exert the greatest possible pressure on civil and military authorities, allowing victims' needs to be met and their suffering to be alleviated. Humanitarian diplomacy advocating for sustainable farming practices in Syria is not only a response to immediate food security needs but also a step toward building resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.

By promoting sustainable agriculture, diplomats can contribute to the well-being of Syrian communities and the protection of the environment in a conflict-affected context. In some cases, the conduct of hostilities has a direct impact on food availability and access. For example, fighting may damage or destroy basic infrastructure (such as wells, irrigation systems, and dams), as well as destroy food and crops and kill livestock. The risk and severity of food insecurity may also increase in the event of a blockade, or if warring parties deliberately delay or prevent humanitarian access. Humanitarian actors play a helpful, though important, role in preventing and responding to food insecurity when parties to the conflict are not in a position to do so. However, the primary responsibility to ensure that the basic needs of civilians can be met rests with the parties to the conflict including, but not limited to, facilitating rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access.

International humanitarian law has a major role to play in preventing food security from being threatened in armed conflict. Full respect for the rules of international humanitarian law from the outset of the conflict can help prevent the situation from deteriorating into an acute food crisis. Respect for these rules depends on the preparations, behavior, and decisions of the parties to the conflict with regard to the conduct of hostilities. Stakeholders with influence over conflict parties have a role to play in ensuring international humanitarian law is followed and in reducing the numerous other pressures that armed conflict places on food security. For example, sanctions and restrictive measures imposed by states must always allow for humanitarian exemptions, such as the entry of food and agricultural items required for civilian survival. If this is not done, humanitarian workers may face complex legal and logistical challenges in providing appropriate assistance to those in need.

#### **7.2.5. Humanitarian diplomacy promot local markets and food systems**

Humanitarian Diplomacy is used to support promoting local markets in northwest Syria by facilitating collaboration and partnership among stakeholders' sectors and addressing the needs of affected communities. This includes encouraging local economic development by bringing together local businesses and entrepreneurs with I/NGOs and donors to promote economic development and create jobs opportunities in the region, Humanitarian diplomacy has a major role in strengthening local markets in NWS through Advocacy and negotiation with donors, I/NGOs, and local councils to develop programs modalities that support the local market in northwestern Syria, Such as value chain projects for wheat, barley and olives. as well as cash for work projects in agricultural projects and the rehabilitation of local markets. which Supports local trade since Injections of cash or the use of commodity vouchers with local traders benefit the recovery of trade and the local economy-based support for livelihood rehabilitation can potentially also provide a link between relief and longer-term economic recovery and may offer the opportunity for beneficiaries to increase income and create savings.

Humanitarian diplomacy is used to establish trade agreements and partnerships between local markets and international partners, which help increase access to markets and resources. And Humanitarian diplomacy used to bring together local farmers, LCs, I/NGOs, non-government agencies to develop sustainable agricultural practices and improve food security in the NWS. Supporting local farmers is an important aspect of

humanitarian diplomacy,(Loconto, Poisot, and Santacoloma 2016) as it helps to improve food security and promote sustainable development in affected host communities and IDPs in NWS. This is done through initiatives such as providing training and resources to local farmers, supporting local markets and supply chains, and promoting policies that protect the rights of small-scale farmers.

Supporting local farmers also help to preserve traditional agricultural practices and cultural heritage, in addition, Humanitarian diplomacy work to bring together I/NGOs, LCs, SIG, SSG, Turkish governments entities, and local communities to address the needs of those affected by the crisis and ensure that they have access to basic services such as food, water, and healthcare. which help to promote sustainable agriculture by providing a market for locally grown produce and supporting small-scale farmers in Syria. Humanitarian diplomacy promoting local markets and food systems is a strategic approach to humanitarian and development efforts that focuses on strengthening local food production, distribution, and consumption. This strategy seeks to improve food security, promote economic recovery, and foster resilience in communities affected by crises such as conflicts, natural disasters, and pandemics.in addtion humanitarian diplomacy involves engaging with local governments, authorities, and communities to understand their specific needs, priorities, and capacities regarding food systems and the local perspectives are crucial in designing effective interventions.

The diplomatic efforts facilitates improved market access for small-scale farmers and producers. This includes advocating for better transportation infrastructure, market information systems, and reduced trade barriers. and promoting the development of agricultural value chains can enhance the competitiveness of local products. Humanitarian diplomacy fosters partnerships between farmers, processors, and retailers to create more efficient and profitable supply chains. The diplomatic efforts can encourage investment in agribusiness and agro-processing enterprises, which can create jobs and add value to locally produced food. This means that humanitarian diplomacy promoting local markets and food systems is a comprehensive approach that recognizes the value of locally sourced food in addressing food security issues. Diplomats can contribute to sustainable development, economic recovery, and the well-being of communities affected by crises by advocating for policies, capacity-building, and partnerships that strengthen local food systems.

### **7.2.6. Humanitarian diplomacy enhances building resilience to climate change**

Humanitarian Diplomacy played a crucial role in building Syrian farmer resilience to climate change in northwest Syria by addressing the immediate and long-term needs of affected host communities and IDP's. This is done through Supporting training and capacity building of farmers to develop new skills, such as using weather forecasting and early warning systems, that help them to better prepare for and respond to climate-related disasters (Parkinson et al. 2018). And promoting sustainable agricultural practices such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and water management which help farmers to adapt to changing climate conditions. Moreover, building community resilience by supporting the development of Community-based organizations and networks that can help farmers to share resources, knowledge, and expertise in order to build resilience to climate change.

Providing adaptive resources and technologies including providing Syrian farmers and livestock breeders with drought resistant seeds, Modern irrigation systems, and other resources that help them adapt to changing weather patterns, also, develop and apply agriculture policies which support farmers Syrian farmers and livestock breeders such as crop insurance, subsidies, and tax breaks that help farmers recover from climate-related disasters. (Humphries 2018). Thus, humanitarian diplomacy plays an important role in building farmer resilience to climate change by addressing the immediate and long-term needs of affected communities, and by promoting sustainable and adaptive practices.

Humanitarian diplomacy plays a crucial role in building resilience to climate change in Syria, a country facing both the impacts of a protracted conflict and the challenges posed by a changing climate. Humanitarian diplomacy can advocate for the integration of climate adaptation measures into ongoing humanitarian response efforts. This includes addressing climate-related risks in emergency relief and recovery programs. So building resilience to climate change in Syria through humanitarian diplomacy is a multifaceted effort that requires a long-term commitment, coordination, and collaboration across sectors and stakeholders. Diplomats can contribute to more sustainable and resilient communities in the face of complex challenges by addressing climate vulnerabilities alongside humanitarian needs.

### **7.2.7. Humanitarian diplomacy addresses the underlying causes of food insecurity**

Humanitarian diplomacy is used to address the underlying causes of food insecurity in the conflict in Syria such as poverty, lack of access to resources, political instability, and insecurity, which are critical to maintaining sustainable agriculture and food security in the long term. However, it's important to note that the ongoing conflict and insecurity in Syria limited the ability of humanitarian actors to implement sustainable agriculture and food security programs. Furthermore, the ongoing economic sanctions and restrictions on aid delivery to the region make it difficult to provide the necessary support for sustainable agriculture. Overall, humanitarian diplomacy can be an effective approach to promote sustainable agriculture by addressing the immediate humanitarian needs and long-term development goals humanitarian diplomacy plays a critical role in addressing the root causes of food insecurity in Syria by advocating for access, peace, protection, and policies that support food production and distribution. It involves diplomatic engagement with multiple stakeholders and a comprehensive approach to tackling the complex challenges underlying food insecurity in conflict-affected regions. Diplomatic efforts aid in the resolution of disputes over natural resources like land and water, which cause conflict and food insecurity. It is critical to advocate for adequate humanitarian funding to support food assistance programs and address underlying food security issues, and diplomats work with host governments and international organizations to ensure that food security is integrated into national and regional policies and strategies.

In contexts where access within a country is limited, diplomats advocate for cross-border aid deliveries to reach vulnerable populations, and diplomacy promotes education and awareness campaigns on issues related to food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture practices. Diplomatic efforts are being directed toward conflict resolution and peacebuilding in order to address the underlying causes of conflict-related food insecurity. Negotiations for ceasefires and peace treaties contribute to the creation of a favorable environment for food production and access.

### **7.3. Relations Between Politics, Humanitarian Diplomacy And The Agriculture Sector In Northwest Syria**

The ongoing conflict in Syria has been fueled by political disagreements and power struggles among various actors. There has been a wide range of political disagreements among actors in Syria, both domestic and international, since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011. Domestically There are a variety of domestic political disagreements among actors in Syria, but the most significant one is between the government of President Bashar al-Assad, which is primarily made up of members of the Alawite sect, and various opposition groups, which represent a diverse range of ideologies and sects. Other points of contention include those between Kurdish groups and the government, as well as among opposition groups themselves. Syria's ongoing conflict has created a complex and fluid situation, with alliances and adversaries shifting over time. (European Asylum Support Office, 2019). Those actors are the government of Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and People's Protection Units (YPG), Anti-government armed groups in the Idlib area like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Other Islamist anti-government armed groups like Hurras Al-Din, the Syrian National Army (the former National Liberation Front), Feilqa al-Sham, Ahrar al-Sham, Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zinki, and Jaish al-Ahrar. and the Islamic State (ISIS). Anti-government armed groups in other areas outside the control of the Syrian government, such as the Syrian National Army in northern Aleppo governorate and Turkish-backed armed groups, controlled an area between the cities of Afrin, Azaz, Al-Bab, and Jarablus.

Internationally, there are also significant disagreements among actors. The United States and some European countries have supported the opposition groups and called for Assad to step down, while Russia and Iran have supported the government and opposed regime change. Türkiye has had a complex and evolving role in the ongoing Syrian conflict. Initially, Türkiye supported the opposition groups fighting to overthrow the government of President Bashar al-Assad. However, as the conflict has dragged on and the situation on the ground has changed, Türkiye 's priorities and policies have shifted. In recent years, Türkiye 's main focus has been on countering the Kurdish groups in Syria, which Türkiye views as a threat to its national security. Türkiye has carried out multiple military operations against Kurdish groups and ISIS in Syria, including Operation Euphrates Shield in 2016, Operation Olive Branch in 2018, and the Peace Spring Operation in 2019. Furthermore, Turkey has been dealing with an

influx of Syrian refugees, which has resulted in the creation of the world's largest refugee population hosted by Turkey. Türkiye has taken steps to manage the refugee crisis, such as building refugee camps and providing aid, but the crisis has strained the country's resources and caused friction with other countries in the region. Additionally, there are also disagreements over how to handle the situation in Syria among the UN Security Council members, with Russia and China vetoing various resolutions on Syria. The international community has been divided over the best way to handle these groups, with some countries advocating for military intervention and others calling for a political solution. In this context and with political disagreements among the actors' humanitarian aid is being used as a political tool by different actors in the conflict. This includes using aid to gain leverage or influence over certain groups, denying aid to certain groups as a form of punishment or coercion, or using aid as a means of propaganda. An example of the politicization of aid in northwest Syria is how the Syrian government and its allies have used aid as a weapon of war. The government has been accused of using aid as a way to punish and control areas under opposition control, by denying aid to these areas or using aid as a tool of propaganda to portray itself as the only source of assistance. Another example is how international aid organizations and donors have been accused of using aid to gain influence over specific groups or advance their own political agendas. This includes giving more aid to certain groups based on political considerations or using aid as a way to gain access to certain areas or populations.

Many European countries have expressed strong opposition to Turkey's military operation in northeastern Syria, dubbed the "Peace Spring," which began in October 2019. Türkiye launched the operation with the stated goal of establishing a "Safe Zone" along the Turkish-Syrian border. As a result, many European donors have chosen not to provide humanitarian assistance in the areas affected by the operation, citing concerns about the safety and security of aid workers and the potential for aid to be used for military purposes. Most Syrian organisations that receive Western support are not permitted to operate in Ras al-Ayn, Tel Abiad, or Afrin due to Western donors' opposition to Turkish military operations in these areas. Such organizations are typically still active in the Euphrates Shield and Idlib. Furthermore, non-state actors in the region contribute to the politicization of aid by imposing their own agenda on aid distribution or coercing or extorting aid organizations and workers.

Politicization of humanitarian aid in northwest Syria has hindered the ability of aid organizations to provide assistance to those in need and has put the lives of aid workers at risk. It's important for the aid organizations to maintain their impartiality, independence, and neutrality to provide the necessary aid to the affected population. These political disagreements and politicization of humanitarian aid in the northwest have played a significant role in Syria's ongoing conflict, thwarting efforts to bring about a resolution to the crisis, which has had a direct impact on the agricultural sector and food security for affected populations. The political instability in the country has made it difficult to implement sustainable agriculture and food security programs and has also limited the ability of humanitarian actors to access the affected population in northern Syria. Basically, Humanitarian diplomacy in northwest Syria has been an effort to secure humanitarian access to the affected populations. This has included negotiations with various parties to the conflict to ensure safe passage for humanitarian convoys and allow for the delivery of aid.

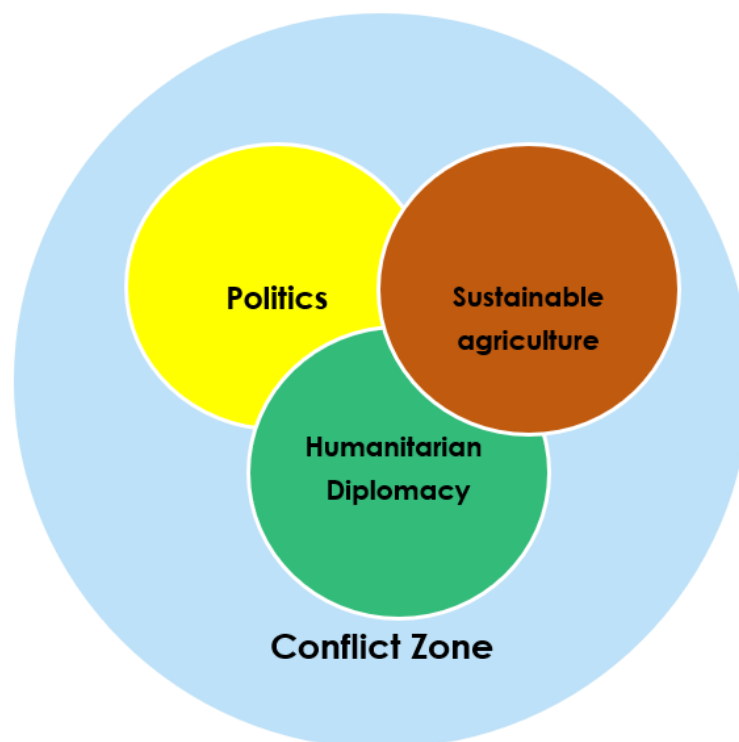
Another important aspect has been the efforts to negotiate ceasefires and de-escalation agreements to provide temporary respite for the affected populations and allow for the delivery of aid. This has been accomplished through a variety of initiatives, including the Astana process and the UN-led political process. Furthermore, Humanitarian diplomacy has included advocacy efforts on behalf of affected populations, urging the protection of civilians and the observance of international humanitarian law. This has been accomplished through the United Nations and other international organizations issuing statements and resolutions, as well as diplomatic efforts by individual countries. Despite these efforts, humanitarian access to many areas of northwest Syria remains restricted due to ongoing fighting, bureaucratic obstacles, and insecurity. The relations between politics, humanitarian diplomacy, and the agriculture sector in northwest Syria are highly interconnected and deeply influenced by the ongoing conflict in the region.

Northwest Syria has been a hotspot of conflict and political division. Multiple armed groups and actors control various areas, complicating humanitarian diplomacy efforts and the impact on agriculture. Politics is crucial in determining humanitarian access to northwest Syria. Humanitarian diplomacy involves negotiations with various parties to the conflict, including the Syrian government, opposition groups, and external actors, to secure access to aid organizations and support for agricultural projects. The conflict has had a devastating impact on the agriculture sector in northwest Syria.

Agricultural infrastructure, including farms, irrigation systems, and storage facilities, has been damaged or destroyed. The land has been abandoned due to insecurity, leading to reduced food production. The politics directly affect food security in the region. Humanitarian diplomacy aims to negotiate access to vulnerable populations, including farmers, to provide food assistance, seeds, and tools to help revive agricultural activities. and humanitarian diplomacy plays a role in ensuring the delivery of food aid and the functioning of local markets.

Diplomatic negotiations leads to the opening of border crossings and the establishment of safe humanitarian corridors for aid delivery and trade. and diplomatic efforts in northwest Syria promote sustainable agriculture practices and resilience-building initiatives. This includes advocating for the use of drought-resistant crop varieties, soil conservation techniques, and water management projects.

Agriculture is influenced by politics and the establishment of local governance structures. Coordination with local authorities is frequently required to effectively implement agricultural projects. Cross-border aid delivery politics are critical Humanitarian diplomacy include discussions with conflict parties bout allowing aid into northwest Syria.



**Figure 5** Relation between politics, sustainable agriculture and humanitarian diplomacy.

The relation among these three elements is highly interconnected and mutually dependent. The political instability and lack of security in Syria has made it difficult to implement sustainable agriculture and food security programs, while the destruction of the agricultural sector and food insecurity have been a direct consequence of the ongoing conflict.

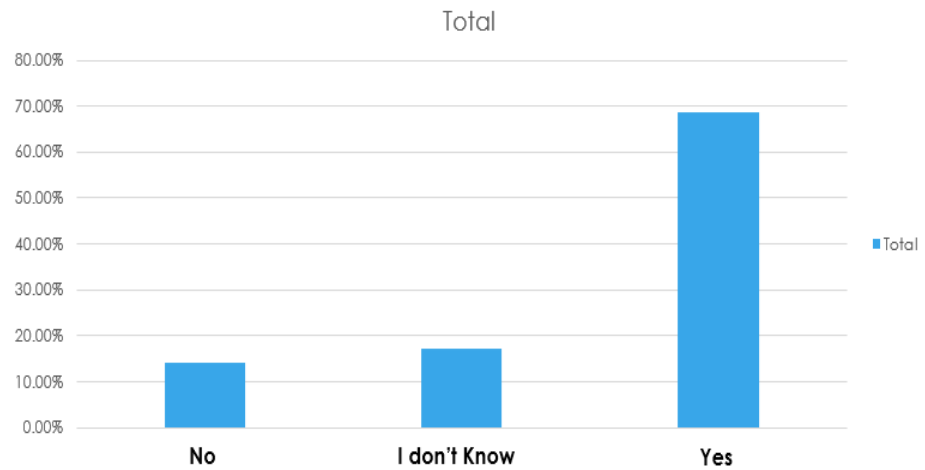
Humanitarian diplomacy plays a critical role in addressing these issues, but it's limited by the political situation and lack of security. The political instability and lack of security in Syria have created an environment where implementing sustainable agriculture and food security programs becomes extremely challenging. Insecure conditions make it difficult for farmers to tend to their fields, access markets, and engage in regular agricultural activities. This leads to reduced agricultural production and limited access to food for the population. and the destruction of the agricultural sector and food insecurity; the ongoing conflict in Syria has resulted in the destruction of critical infrastructure, including agricultural facilities and farmland. This destruction, coupled with the displacement of people and disruption of supply chains, has led to widespread food insecurity.

Destruction of the agricultural sector directly contributes to the inability to provide sufficient food for the population, exacerbating the overall crisis. Humanitarian diplomacy involves efforts to address humanitarian issues, such as providing aid and assistance to those affected by conflict and crisis. It can play a crucial role in alleviating the suffering caused by food insecurity and other humanitarian challenges in Syria. The current political situation and security concerns, however, limit the effectiveness of humanitarian diplomacy. Diplomatic efforts to deliver aid and coordinate relief efforts can be hampered by conflict and the unwillingness of conflicting parties to cooperate. Thus, the interplay between political instability, lack of security, sustainable agriculture, food security, conflict, and humanitarian diplomacy in Syria highlights a complex web of challenges.

#### **7.4. Humanitarian Diplomacy Enhance Political Stability And The Peacebuilding Process Through Sustainable Agriculture In Northwest Syria**

Humanitarian diplomacy is used in Syria to negotiate access for aid organizations, advocate for civilian protection, and work toward a political solution to the conflict that would improve the overall humanitarian situation. Humanitarian diplomacy contributes to peacebuilding through agriculture by addressing the needs of conflict-affected communities, particularly those related to food security. This is done by addressing the needs of the agricultural communities, and humanitarian diplomacy can reduce the tension between the conflicting parties and help build trust and cooperation. However, the situation in northwest Syria is complex and multifaceted, and humanitarian diplomacy's ability to improve peacebuilding will be determined by a number of factors. As a result, this study focuses solely on the humanitarian diplomacy effort in peacebuilding through the maintenance of sustainable agriculture in opposition-controlled areas of northern Syria.

In the context of Northwest Syria. Humanitarian diplomacy was used to negotiate access for aid organizations, advocate for the protection of civilians, and work towards a political solution to the conflict that would improve the overall humanitarian situation. Sustainable agriculture and peacebuilding are closely related, as sustainable agriculture practices can contribute to creating more stable and resilient communities, which in turn can help prevent and mitigate conflicts. (Ungar 2021). The following interview question was asked to I/NGOs, farmers, local authorities, and governmental entities working in northern Syria's agriculture sector: Do you believe that sustainability in the agricultural sector contributes to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Syria? 70% of respondents believe that achieving sustainable agriculture will aid in the development of peace, 17% are unsure, and 13% are opposed.



**Figure 6** I/NGOs, Farmer, Local authorities interviews

Answer to question: Do you believe that sustainability in the agricultural sector contributes to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Syria?

Humanitarian diplomacy is used in Northwest Syria to negotiate access for aid organizations, advocate for civilian protection, and work toward a political solution to the conflict that would improve the overall humanitarian situation. Sustainable agriculture and peacebuilding are inextricably linked because sustainable agriculture practices can help to create more stable and resilient communities, which can aid in conflict prevention and resolution. Improving the agricultural sector helps to create job opportunities for young people, reducing the number of combatants and those joining the fighting fronts. The Sustainable agriculture practices help to improve food security in Northwest Syria by increasing crop yields and reducing the dependence on food imports, which disrupted by conflict.

There is a strong link between food security, agriculture, and conflict in northwest Syria. The ongoing conflict in the country has disrupted agricultural production and distribution, leading to food shortages and high food prices. This has had a particularly severe impact on vulnerable populations, such as internally displaced persons and those living in NWS. In addition, the destruction of infrastructure and displacement of farmers has further exacerbated the food insecurity situation. Furthermore, the conflict has also led to the loss of fertile land and destruction of agricultural equipment, which will have long-term consequences for food production in the region. Sustaining peace encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict, including by addressing root causes and moving towards recovery, reconstruction, and development. Opportunities therefore

exist for interventions in support of food security, nutrition, and agricultural livelihoods to contribute to conflict prevention and sustaining peace, in order to address not only the symptoms but also the root causes of conflict.

Sustainable agriculture provides livelihoods for host communities and IDP's affected by conflict in NWS and helps to build local economies. It helps to rebuild the economy, create jobs, and provide a source of food for the affected population. This helps to improve overall resilience and reduce the likelihood of future conflicts. This reduces poverty and creates opportunities for economic growth, which can help to prevent or resolve conflicts. and also, help to protect the environment, which in turn help to reduce the risk of conflicts arising over scarce resources such as water or land (JSTOR 2023). Sustain food production and improve the livelihoods of farmers. These practices include crop rotation, cover cropping, reducing pesticide and fertilizer use, and promoting biodiversity. Additionally, sustainable agriculture also includes methods such as agroforestry, conservation tillage, and integrated pest management. (Parr et al 2020). Overall, sustainable agriculture aims to create a balance between food production and environmental conservation.

Sustainable agriculture promotes Community-based approaches that bring together different groups and create opportunities for cooperation and dialogue. This helps to build trust and understanding between different groups and reduce the risk of conflicts. “We must use all of the tools at our disposal, including dialogue, mediation and other forms of preventive diplomacy, to help prevent natural resources from fueling and financing armed conflict as well as destabilizing the fragile foundations of peace.” Sustainable agriculture promotes community-based approaches by involving local farmers and communities in the planning and implementation of agricultural projects. This helps to ensure that the needs and priorities of the community are considered and that the project is sustainable in the long-term. Community-based approaches also promote collective ownership and management of resources, which help to reduce conflicts over resources and promote cooperation among community members. Additionally, sustainable agriculture also be used as a tool to promote social cohesion, gender equality, and empower marginalized groups.

Sustainable agricultural practices, such as crop rotation, conservation tillage, and integrated pest management, help to increase crop yields and reduce the need for chemicals and other inputs. This led to more sustainable and resilient farming systems, which in turn help to reduce food insecurity and improve livelihoods for Syrian farmers

and their communities so, this reduces humanitarian needs, which help to reduce the pressure on aid organizations and governments to provide assistance, which reduce the risk of conflicts arising over aid distribution. “FAO assists people to strengthen their livelihoods to withstand crises, which reduces humanitarian needs and costs by a significant margin”. It's important to note that peacebuilding is a complex and multifaceted process that requires the participation of many different actors, including local communities, government, international organizations, and civil society. Sustainable agriculture alone can't bring peace, but it can play a significant role in preventing conflicts and creating a more stable environment for peacebuilding.



## **8. AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN SYRIA POST-CONFLICT**

### **8.1. Bashar Al-Assad's International Relations Normalization**

Following more than a decade of political and economic isolation, the Syrian government appears to be on the verge of regional reintegration, including membership in the Arab League. The steps of Arab normalization with the Syrian regime are advancing in conjunction with the restoration of bridges of communication with the regional countries in the region, which are steps prior to the pretext of a shift in relations for humanitarian reasons after the series of disasters caused by the devastating earthquakes that began on February 6, 2023, in Syria and Türkiye. Recently, there have been vigorous Arab movements to gradually normalize relations with the Assad regime, secure its engagement with the international community, and bring it back to the “Arab embrace”, whether through reopening embassies, visits by presidents and officials to Damascus, or building various economic agreements and understandings.

The UAE, the Sultanate of Oman, Algeria, and Jordan were the most prominent countries that sought to enhance the Assad regime in the Arab world, for various motives and reasons. It is within its quest to play a prominent regional role at the political level and its economic motive related to reconstruction in Syria. The UAE has led normalization efforts with the regime since its inception, as it was the first country to open its embassy in Damascus in 2018. It then raised the level of the relationship to include direct contact between the regime's leaders, Bashar al-Assad and Mohammed bin Zaid, and the exchange of visits between the ministries of foreign affairs and economy in 2021. Before Bashar al-Assad visited the UAE, the first Arab country to visit since 2011, in March 2022. Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zaid made his third visit to Damascus, during which he met Bashar Al-Assad. Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi's visit to Damascus was the first by a high-ranking Jordanian official since Syria's civil war began. Algeria also did not sever its diplomatic relations with the Assad regime, which has close political, economic, and military relations with Russia, to restore order to the Arab League at the Arab summit that was held in the Algerian capital in November 2022.

Tunisian President Kais Said increased diplomatic representation to the regime. As for Egypt, the recent Egyptian diplomatic movement comes in the context of keeping pace with the diplomatic movement of the normalizing Arab countries. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry visited Damascus, the first visit by a senior

Egyptian official since the Syrian crisis in 2011. A day earlier, a delegation of Arab parliamentarians led by the Speaker of the Council visited Egyptian Representative Counselor Hanafi al-Jabali in Damascus and met al-Assad and other Syrian officials. In a new sign of the thawing of relations between Cairo and Damascus, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry received Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Al-Miqdad in Cairo, in the first such visit in more than ten years, where the two sides discussed "bilateral relations and a number of joint regional and international files.

The Saudi government is taking shape, with a clear Saudi desire to reactivate the Arab role in Syria, including dialogue with the regime, as expressed in its Ministry of Foreign Affairs vision of the futility of isolating the regime, and the beginning of another approach to address the issue of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries and their suffering. civilians" in light of the political stalemate, and the Kingdom sending humanitarian aid to areas controlled by the opposition and the regime, within the framework of disaster-earthquake diplomacy, not to mention the security and intelligence meetings before the earthquake between Saudi Arabia and the regime. Turkey's desire to reconsider its relationship with the Syrian regime was clear, as evidenced by a meeting in Moscow in December 2022 of Turkey's, Russia's, and the regime's defense ministers and intelligence chiefs.

In the presence of Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Burak Akjibar, Syrian regime Deputy Foreign Minister Ayman Sousan, Russian Special Envoy to the Middle East Mikhail Bogdanov, and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Asghar Hajji, a quartet meeting was held in Moscow. The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement after the meeting that Ankara and the Syrian regime agreed to continue the talks, as they discussed during the meeting political relations as well as security issues and preparations for the meeting at the level of foreign ministers that is expected to be held afterward. Therefore, and taking into account the large gap between the two sides, Türkiye and the regime, the possibility of the path of normalization between Türkiye and the regime achieving tangible progress in the foreseeable future remains low, given the Turkish internal preoccupation with the earthquake disaster and the upcoming elections. (Al Sharq Strategic Research 2023). However, this does not change the reality of its presence as an electoral card or the importance of normalization in Turkish foreign policy in the medium term due to security considerations, internal political considerations related to the refugee issue, or the view of most political parties to normalize relations with the regime as a contributing factor to the refugees return.

## **8.2. Sustainable Agriculture in Syria Post-Conflict**

Indeed, achieving political and security stability post-conflict in Syria would be a critical factor in promoting economic growth and development, as the agricultural sector, in particular, has enormous potential to contribute to Syria's economic development by providing jobs and livelihoods, particularly in rural areas. By revitalizing the agricultural sector, lowering unemployment rates, and improving Syrians' livelihoods, more job opportunities can be created. Syria has a long agricultural history and fertile lands, so food security and self-sufficiency are critical.

Prioritizing the agricultural sector can enhance food security by increasing domestic production and reducing reliance on imports. This, in turn, can stabilize food prices and ensure a steady supply of essential commodities. In addition, Syria has traditionally been a major exporter of agricultural products such as wheat, cotton, olives, and fruits. Reviving the agricultural sector would allow Syria to tap into international markets once again, generating foreign exchange earnings and stimulating economic growth. Moreover, Value chain development A vibrant agricultural sector can lead to the development of value chains, including processing, packaging, and distribution networks. This allows agribusinesses, agro-industries, and related sectors to thrive, promoting economic diversification and increased productivity. Restoring regional food security not only means that millions of displaced Syrians will have enhanced and stable access to food but also improves the living conditions of a large number of farming and refugee-hosting communities in neighboring countries. Syria occupies a unique position as a trade corridor in the Middle East; it thus provides Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Jordan, all of which have been hit hard by the Syrian war, with access to regional agricultural markets. In fact, Syria plays an even larger role in global agricultural trade, linking supply routes to Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Russia, and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Food exports are crucial for the revival of Syria's agribusiness sector, which is the country's second-largest employer after the government sector. Syria exported food and agricultural products worth approximately \$3 billion prior to the war. Agriculture still provides no less than 26 percent of the Syrian gross domestic product and constitutes a social safety net for about 6.7 million Syrians. In light of the increased focus on reconstruction, investment in agriculture could offset up to \$16 billion in damage inflicted on the sector during the war. As a result, it is critical to recognize that long-term political stability and peacebuilding in Syria will necessitate multifaceted

efforts involving not only the agricultural sector but also other critical sectors of the economy. Sustainable agriculture can play a significant role in the political, economic, and social life of post-conflict Syria through economic Recovery and Growth since agriculture can provide jobs for a substantial portion of the Syrian population, including returning refugees and internally displaced persons. This can help to reduce unemployment and the strain on social services, and successful agricultural activities can generate income for farmers, contributing to poverty reduction and economic stability. Furthermore, Syria may be able to export agricultural products to neighboring countries and international markets, earning foreign currency and boosting economic growth.

The revitalized agricultural sector can enhance domestic food production, reducing the country's reliance on food imports and improving food security for the population. Access to nutritious and diverse food sources through agriculture can address malnutrition and improve public health. Investment in rural areas, including roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, can improve the quality of life for rural communities and foster social cohesion. Strong agricultural communities can be more resilient to shocks and disasters, both natural and man-made. Sustainable agriculture practices can contribute to environmental conservation by promoting soil health, water conservation, and biodiversity preservation. Agriculture frequently employs land and water resource management. Sound governance and conflict-sensitive resource management can help prevent conflicts over these resources. Empowering local governments and communities to make agricultural decisions can improve their ability to manage resources and resolve conflicts peacefully. Agriculture can be a critical component of humanitarian efforts, providing food aid and livelihood support to vulnerable populations.

Realizing these benefits, however, necessitates careful planning, investment, and coordination among various stakeholders, including the government, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities. It is essential to address land tenure issues, increase access to resources, and provide farmers with the necessary training and resources to adopt sustainable practices. Furthermore, ensuring that agriculture contributes to equitable development and inclusive growth is critical for post-conflict Syria's political, economic, and social stability.

## 9. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9.1. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the agricultural sector has indeed historically played a crucial role in the economic development and political stability of many countries, including Syria. Agriculture is frequently a significant source of employment, income generation, and food security for the population. When the agricultural sector thrives, it contributes to economic growth, poverty reduction, and social stability. In the case of Syria, agriculture has been a vital sector for several decades, employing a significant portion of the population and contributing to the country's GDP. Agriculture contributed significantly to Syria's economy prior to the ongoing conflict, with major crops such as wheat, barley, cotton, and fruits.

- The ongoing conflict has harmed the agricultural sector, which remains the backbone of the economy and a source of income for Syrians. Support for this sector improves people's lives and helps to mitigate ongoing conflict, and it will play an important role in post-conflict economic and social development.
- Promoting agricultural sustainability through humanitarian diplomacy will help mitigate conflict, migration, sustainable development, climate change resistance, and food security.
- Humanitarian diplomacy is a type of "Soft power," which is a country or organization's ability to influence the behavior of others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or force.
- Political diplomacy and humanitarian diplomacy can overlap and be used in tandem, but their focuses and goals are different. Humanitarian principles may sometimes clash with political considerations, such as when providing aid to an enemy during a war. Humanitarian organizations are expected to act neutrally and impartially; however, in practice, it is difficult to separate humanitarian work from politics.
- Humanitarian diplomacy promotes sustainable agriculture by advocating for policies and investments that support sustainable farming practices and addressing the root causes of food insecurity and agricultural vulnerability.
- In Syria, the mutual relationship between politics, humanitarian diplomacy, and agriculture is complex and intertwined and are mutually dependent. The political instability and lack of security in Syria have made it difficult to implement

sustainable agriculture and food security programs. Humanitarian diplomacy promotes sustainable agriculture by advocating for policies and investments that encourage sustainable farming practices, as well as addressing the root causes of food insecurity and agricultural vulnerability.

- Humanitarian Diplomacy is not limited to humanitarian organizations alone but includes states and national organizations working in the humanitarian aid sector. National cooperation organizations and ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Defense, Development, and Civil Protection include humanitarian aid departments to respond to local or global emergencies.
- Humanitarian diplomacy can be considered a form of soft power which is the ability of a country or organization to influence the behavior of others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or force. By providing humanitarian aid and assistance to those in need, a country or organization can demonstrate its values and build goodwill with other nations and communities. This resulted in favorable perceptions of the country or organisation, as well as increased influence in international affairs. Humanitarian diplomacy can also be used as a tool to advance a country or organisation's broader political or strategic goal.

## **9.2. Recommendation**

Sustainable agriculture practices do, in fact, play an important role in increasing agricultural yields, improving food security, and promoting long-term agricultural resilience. Raising awareness of sustainability among Syria's various conflict actors is thus a critical step. Humanitarian organizations, policymakers, donors, local governments, the Syrian government, non-state actors such as SIG and SSG, and farmers must all understand the benefits of sustainable agricultural practices and how they can help with post-conflict reconstruction and development. The local and international policy-makers play a key role in supporting sustainable agricultural development. They need to prioritize agricultural policies and investments that promote sustainable practices, such as water conservation, soil management, and agroecology. By providing incentives and creating an enabling environment, policy-makers can encourage farmers to adopt sustainable techniques and technologies. INGOs/NGOs have an important role to play in promoting sustainable agriculture. This organization can provide training, knowledge exchange, and technical assistance to farmers, helping

them adopt sustainable practices and improve their productivity. Strengthening these organizations and fostering collaboration among them can enhance their capacity to support sustainable agriculture initiatives.

During the ongoing conflict, a delicate balance must be struck between providing immediate humanitarian assistance and promoting long-term sustainability in the agricultural sector. While it is critical to address the affected population's immediate needs, it is also critical to avoid creating dependency and undermining farmers' long-term resilience. In a conflict situation, a sustainable agricultural approach takes into account both immediate needs and long-term development. Instead of solely relying on pure humanitarian assistance that provides short-term relief, efforts should be made to build on the existing capacities and resilience of farmers. Collaboration and coordination among humanitarian organizations, local governments, and development actors are critical. They can ensure a more comprehensive and integrated approach that addresses both immediate needs and long-term sustainability by working together. This includes aligning efforts, sharing expertise, and leveraging resources to support sustainable agriculture initiatives. Farmers can play a significant role in rebuilding their communities and revitalizing the agriculture sector if they are actively involved in decision-making processes and provided with the necessary support and resources. While the overall system may have been disrupted or changed as a result of conflict, farmers' resilience, knowledge, and experience provide a solid foundation for rebuilding and improving the agriculture sector. By recognizing and leveraging these assets, aid and development efforts can be designed to be more effective, sustainable, and tailored to the specific needs of the farming community.

Furthermore, it is recommended that additional research be conducted on the impact of a specific strategic agricultural crop such as wheat in politics and international relations during local and international conflicts, such as the Ukrainian grain export agreement, and on the impact of the Ukrainian grain export agreement's termination on global food prices.

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