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# Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan (1991-2014) from Clientelism to Interdependence: Evolution of Fluctuating Relations in Light of Identity, Security, Economy and External Interventions

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations

School of Government and International Affairs

University of Durham

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## ABSTRACT

In the year 1991, under the air protection of the American-led coalition a *de facto* Kurdish entity emerged in Iraqi Kurdistan. Since then Iraqi Kurds have administered and represented their region and have entered into relations with their neighbours and the world. This research explores the dynamics of the emergent relations between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1991-2014 period with the aim of understanding the forces that have shaped the relations in the form of identity, security, economy and external interventions. During this period Iraqi Kurdistan has proved to be an emergent actor, evolving from a *de facto* region ruled by warring parties into a constitutionally recognised *de jure* region represented by Kurdistan Regional Government.

This research claims that identity, security, economy and external interventions have persistently influenced the relations. However, the extent of the influence of each factor has varied throughout the period with obvious impacts on the relations. In the 1991-2008 period Kemalism, an identity that regards Kurdish nationalism as an existential security threat, dominated Turkish state. Hence, in this period Turkey avoided recognising Iraqi Kurdistan and therefore the informal relations were defined in relation with PKK's security threat and hence security factor dominated the nature of the relations. However, unlike the 1991-1998 period that Turkey had a free hand in conducting military raids into Northern Iraq, in the 1998-2008 era following the American brokered 1998 Washington Agreement, external interventions in the form of American presence and supremacy eclipsed the relations, ended the Turkish free hand in conducting cross border operations and defined the permissible courses of actions to be taken both by Turkey and Iraqi Kurds in the relations. Identity shift in Ankara and ascendance of Neo-Ottomanism paved the way for emergence of formal political and economic relations between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan in 2008-2014 period that was dominated by the economy factor, as bilateral trade, energy links and investment reached their peak and facilitated improvements in political relations.

In terms of locating this research within international relations theories, this research claims a single theory cannot analyse the relations effectively and hence applies the analytic eclecticism approach to explain the complexities and anomalies in the relations theoretically. Hence, a mixture of constructivism and patron-clientelism, constructivism and realism, and constructivism and interdependence are selected to explain the three eras, namely 1991-1998, 1998-2008, and 2008-2014 in the relations respectively.

## **DECLARATION**

The author confirms that this thesis presented for examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (International Relations) at the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University (2011-2019), has not been submitted for any other degree at another university. The author also affirms that this thesis is entirely his work and that the published and the unpublished work of others utilized in the thesis are credited to their authors.

## **STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT**

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author

## **DEDICATION**

To my parents

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

It was impossible for me to finish this research without the continuous support and encouragement I received from family and friends. First I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Asutay and my family who never lost hope in me and were always present to support me during the lowest days of my life, when I had lost all my self-confidence and motivation for finishing my research.

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## List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party, or <i>Adalet Ve Kalkinma Partisi</i>
ANAP	Motherland Party, or <i>Anavatan Partisi</i>
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party or <i>Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi</i>
BOTAS	Turkish Pipeline Corporation
CHP	Republican People's Party, or <i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>
DDKD	Revolutionary Democratic Culture Associations
DDKO	Revolutionary Eastern Culture Clubs
DEP	Democracy Party, or <i>Demokrasi Partisi</i>
DP	Democratic Party, or <i>Demokrat Parti</i>
DSP	Democratic Left Party or <i>Demokratik Sol Parti</i>
DTP	Democrat Turkey Party or <i>Demokrat Turkiye Partisi</i>
DTP	Democratic Society Party or <i>Demokratik Toplum Partisi</i>
DYP	True Path Party or <i>Dogru Yol Partisi</i>
FP	Virtue Party or <i>Fazilet Partisi</i>
HADEP	People's Democracy Party or <i>Halkin Demokrasi Partisi</i>
HDP	People's Democratic Party, or <i>Halkların Demokratik Partisi</i>
HEP	People's Labor Party or <i>Halkin Emek Partisi</i>
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IK	Iraqi Kurdistan
IKF	Iraqi Kurdistan Front
IMK	Islamic Movement of Kurdistan
IR	International Relations
IS	Islamic State
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and Levant
ITF	Iraqi Turkmen Front
KADEK	Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress
KCK	Kurdistan Communities Union or <i>Koma Civaken Kurdistan</i>
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KDPI	Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran
KIG	Kurdistan Islamic Group
KIU	Kurdistan Islamic Union
KPDP	Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRM	Kurdistan Referendum Movement
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party or <i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i>
MIT	Turkish Intelligence Agency
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party, or <i>Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan</i>

PMF	Peace Monitoring Force
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD	Democratic Union Party or <i>Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat</i>
RP	Welfare Party or <i>Refah Partisi</i>
SHP	Social Democrat Populist Party or <i>Sosyal Demokrat Halkci Partis</i>
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOMO	Federal Iraqi Oil Marketing Organization
SP	Felicity Party or <i>Saadet Partisi</i>
T-IK	Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan
TAL	Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period
TEC	Turkish Energy Corporation
TPAO	Turkish Petroleum Corporation
YBS	Sinjar Resistance Forces
YDG	Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement
YPG	People's Protection Units or <i>Yekîneyên Parastina Gel</i>

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# Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

Iraqi Kurdistan (IK) is a part of a largely mountainous area referred to as Kurdistan currently divided among five states. This area, continuously inhabited since 10,000 BC (Izady, 1992: 23), has been the scene of remarkable historical developments and has been ruled by different mainly non-Kurdish empires, dynasties and states. Prior to the Arab conquest of the Middle East in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries which brought Kurdistan under the rule of Umayyad and Abbasids dynasties, Kurdistan had witnessed the reign of a number of empires including: Guti, Elam, Kassite, Lullubi, Median, Achaemenid, and Sassanids (Sadiq, 2002: 14-20). Among these empires, only Medians are considered to be Kurdish (Sadiq, 2002: 23). However, during the rule of Islamic dynasties especially from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century a number of powerful Kurdish dynasties emerged that ruled vast parts of Kurdistan. Among these are Buwayhids (932-1062), Mamlanids (920-1071), Hasanwayhids (950-1015), Shaddadis (951-1088), Marwanids (990-1069) and Ayyubids (1169-1250). The Mongol occupations of the region in the 13<sup>th</sup> century brought the end to those dynasties and ended the Kurdish political power. Thus, Turkic, Mongolian Seljuk, Khwarazmshahid, Ilkhanid, Timurid, Aq Qoyunlu and Qara Qoyunlu dynasties ruled Kurdistan till it finally became a war zone between Ottoman and Safavid empires in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Izady, 1992: 41-46; Tahiri, 2004: 30).

The first lasting division of Kurdistan region occurred following the Chaldiran battle (1514) between Ottoman and Safavid Empires<sup>1</sup>. Due to Ottomans winning the war, most parts of Kurdistan, including south Kurdistan or IK, were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. Under the Ottoman administrative system, these Kurdish areas were divided into three *Vilayets* or provinces of Diyarbakir, Raqqa and Mosul (approximately IK). Depending on their geopolitical importance and power status of the Empire, Kurdish provinces were handled or administered in different ways. The most inaccessible areas located in the borders of Ottoman Empire were left fully autonomous, while the degree of autonomy was decreasing in territories closer to the centre. This administrative system paved the way for the establishment of a number of Kurdish emirates namely, Bitlis, Ardelan, Botan, Badinan, Mukri, Bane, Baban and Soran. Most parts of Mosul province (IK) being in Ottoman-Safavid

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<sup>1</sup> All the historical events and details presented from now on in this section are discussed and referenced in the coming chapters of the thesis.

mountainous border enjoyed autonomy and in fact Baban, Soran, Ardalan and Badinan emirates were ruling parts of this province. However, the centralization policy of Ottoman Empire starting from the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought an end to the rule of these Kurdish emirates.

In 1918, as British troops occupied the territories that now constitute Iraq, Mosul Province was cut from Ottoman Empire and finally incorporated to the newly established state of Iraq in 1921. This arrangement fell short of Kurdish aspirations of having an independent country and resulted in a number of Kurdish revolts. Relations between the central government in Baghdad and Iraqi Kurds have continued to be uneasy since then and even regime change from monarchy to republic in 1958 was of no avail. During this continuous struggle Kurds gradually got organized into political parties to fight for their rights. Following nine years of fighting Iraqi troops, finally for the first time in modern history, Iraqi government was forced to sign an agreement with Iraqi Kurds in March 1970, which granted Kurds autonomy and self-rule in Kurdish areas of Iraq. The autonomous administration last for almost five years till Kurdish revolution collapsed in 1975 due to Algiers Agreement signed between Iraq and Iran. Nevertheless, Iraqi Kurds continued with their struggle and finally the new changes in the region offered them a new opportunity sixteen years later as Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, which resulted into First Gulf War and curtailed Saddam's power.

The aftermath of the war for Kurds was declaration of a no fly zone by the USA, the UK and France in 1992 for sheltering the Kurds against Saddam's army, as Kurds led another uprising against Iraqi regime after Saddam was pushed out of Kuwait. This provided *de facto* independence for Kurds living in the northern provinces of Erbil, Suleimaniya and Duhok. Politically, in the newly emerged Kurdish-ruled entity, a democratic Parliament was elected in 1992 followed by the establishment of a Kurdish government aiming to function as a *de facto* nation state. The established government, however, did not survive long due to internal conflict between the major Kurdish parties, and as the result a period of dual administration followed.

This initial experience has been rather important for the Kurds in terms of establishing themselves within functioning modern state institutions. This paved the way for overcoming the differences and resulted in merging the administrations again and establishing a unified Kurdish government following the Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. Though Kurds lost some limited privileges after the establishment of a new Iraqi government in Baghdad, their

region is now recognized in Iraqi constitution as a federal region, and Kurdish institutions are all recognized by the law. Importantly, Iraqi Constitution also recognizes the separate entity of Kurdistan under ‘federalism rule’.

As the recent history demonstrates, in the economic sphere as well as the political one, Kurds have experienced different phases. They have survived the double embargo period – international embargo imposed on Iraqi regime and also Iraqi regime’s additional embargo on Kurdistan with devastating consequences on Kurdistan. The hardship relatively eased due to the UN Resolution 986 (oil for food program), issued in April 1995 by UNSC.

It should be noted that the on-going war in Iraq in the 1990s had devastating consequences for the economy and economic institutions in the region. However, after the Second Gulf War in 2003, the ‘regime change’ in Iraq paved the way for economic progress in Kurdistan. The privileges of security and stability made Kurdistan a target for foreign companies, mainly neighbouring Turkish companies, and launched a construction boom in the region with the revenues generated partly through the oil fields within the new administration of Kurdistan. It can, therefore, be argued that Iraqi Kurds have been practically in charge of their political and economic relations with their neighbours and outside world since 1991. However, the nature of these relations has witnessed dramatic fluctuations over the years, which makes this research feasible but also fascinating.

As regards to Turkey, on the other hand, as a modern state, it was established in 1923 by General Mustafa Kemal, later known as Ataturk, who enjoyed Kurdish support during the liberation campaign of the mainland that is called Turkey today. However, after victory, Ataturk and his colleagues initiated a westernisation policy resulted in deposing the Caliphate system, which was source of political legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire and adapted an ideology currently known as Kemalism that stressed modernising the society through secularism and Turkish nationalism which as an identity defines the feature of Turkey as a nation state. This imposed and mutually exclusive identify resulted in ignorance of Kurdish identity’s existence and Kurdish demands by the new regime. Hence, from the very establishment of Turkey up to now, Kurdish nationalism and Islam have been the gravest security threats for Turkey from Kemalism perspective. This has resulted in an active Turkish domestic and foreign policy in response to Kurdish issue both inside and outside its borders. Consequently, discussing Kurdish history in modern times in any part of the larger Kurdish territories, it is inevitable that Turkey comes into picture in one way or another, as the great

majority of Kurds live in Turkey without their cultural and ethnic identity being recognized despite some minor recognitions in the recent years. In particular with the newly emerging *de facto* Kurdish state, the Turkish interest in the region has increased but also changed. One reason behind this change is the recent transformations in Turkish politics due to ascendance of the religiously-oriented Justice and Development Party, or *Adalet Ve Kalkinma Partisi* (AKP) with nationalism mix, which has been in power since 2002 and has assumed a dynamic identity through the process of consolidating its power. The party under the leadership of Erdogan has proved to be very pragmatist, and this pragmatism has enabled Turkey to be more flexible in foreign policy, while adhering to Kemalist aspirations, especially in relations with Kurds.

As Turkey's history has demonstrated, Kurdish issue holds a significant position in Turkey's foreign as well as domestic policy calculations, which explains as to why Turkey is sensitive to the developments in IK and explains the importance the relations with Iraqi Kurds have for Turkey. The importance attached to the relations is not unilateral and maintaining good relations with Turkey tops the foreign policy agenda of Iraqi Kurds. Viewed from the Kurdish perspective, in addition to historical factor, geographical factor is involved as well, which has a great part in turning Turkey into both an important asset and threat. IK is a landlocked area with no access to sea and Turkey is regarded as its gateway to Europe. Meanwhile, the largest Kurdish population lives in the Turkish part of Kurdistan, which implies that logically Turkey is inevitably involved in any substantial solution for Kurdish issue whether inside or outside her borders. Finally, the increasing economic and energy ties due to presence of abundant oil and natural gas resources in IK is another reason why Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan (T-IK) relations are viewed with utmost importance by both sides.

These relations in this last period that started in 1991 following the establishment of the Kurdish entity in IK, in spite of their immense bilateral importance, have witnessed dramatic fluctuations. There are occasions in which Turkey was not ready to recognize the Kurdish entity and Turkish officials were accusing IK of harbouring terrorists. In contrast to the former stance, Turkey later opened her consulate in Erbil (the capital of IK) and issues visa for Iraqi Kurds. Moreover, a large number of Turkish companies have rushed into the region and Turkish products have been occupying a large segment of Kurdistan's market.

In an attempt to explore and examine the evolving nature of the relationship between Turkey and the IK, this study covers the 1991-2014 period, which as an era witnessed dramatic



changes and developments. Investigating, thus, the nature and substance of these fluctuating relations between IK and Turkey is very important both academically but also in terms of policy dimensions, as the future of these relations has a tremendous impact for Iraqi Kurds' future as well as Turkey and for the future of the Kurdish population in Turkey.

## **1.2. AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research, hence, aims to explore the developments and dynamics of change in politico-economic relations between Turkey and IK during the period of 1991-2014. In doing so, this research aims to examine identity, security, economy and external interventions as the four pillars around which the relationship has been constructed and developed. It also aims to explore the identified relationship within the international relations (IR) theories to render a theoretical understanding.

In responding to the aims, the following objectives are developed:

- (i) to identify the nature and the developments in the relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey;
- (ii) to critically examine the evolving nature of the relationship around identity, security, economy and external interventions;
- (iii) to examine the evolving relations in three distinct periods between 1991 and 2014;
- (iv) to locate the nature of the relationship within a theoretical framework by defining the period and the relevant theoretical explanation.

In line with the aims and the objectives, this research investigates three main questions:

- (i) What is the nature of the relationship between IK and Turkey?
- (ii) What are the main determinants of the relations between Turkey and IK?
- (iii) Considering the determinants of the relations between Turkey and IK, how this relation can be theorised within international relations?

### **1.3. RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

In Kurdish public psyche, Turkey is usually depicted as the historical nemesis. However, positive developments were underway in Iraqi Kurd's relations with Turkey in post-2008 years that seemed to contradict this judgment. These developments raised the researcher's curiosity, wondering what could be the possible explanation for the observed changes. In search of answers, the available academic works written on the subject were studied with no avail, as they were mainly superficial pieces lacking rigorous, in-depth analysis. Lack of literature coupled with the grave significance of relations with Turkey for Iraqi Kurds motivated the researcher to explore this issue in his PhD research.

Thus, the significance of this study mainly lies in its role of filling the observed gap in the literature in the field of T-IK relations. In addition to demonstrating the historical roots and evolution of the relations, this research tracks and explains the political evolution of both Turkish state and Iraqi Kurds in a chronological manner while simultaneously highlighting and analysing the impacts of these on-going evolutions on the relations between both entities as well as within components of both entities. As the existing body of knowledge demonstrates, this is an endeavour not undertaken in any previous work. Moreover, this research has benefitted from primary material meticulously collected in fieldwork, which bestows it originality, depth, and novelty regarding data and analysis. In addition to other contributions and distinctness of the work mentioned at the end of this section, the researcher's background and language knowledge have further enriched the analytic prowess of the work as explained in the methodology section.

Meanwhile, IK's growing role in the Iraqi and Middle Eastern politics, which is due to its vast oil and gas reserves and its function as the beating heart of Kurdish nationalism, is another reason behind the significance of this study. Furthermore, the substantial volume of trade and security and political cooperation between Turkey and IK needs an in-depth analysis both for understanding the working trends and future possibilities, which this research undertakes.

Until recent years, exploring the relations between Turkey and IK was hardly making a fascinating research topic. Historical or practical as well as theoretical factors, had their parts in dissuading researchers from studying this subject. However, recent developments in T-IK relations as well as in the theoretical realm have made this subject an appealing, as well as an

important topic for academic research and some scholars, have started to shed light on some of the aspects of these relations.

Historically, although relations have existed between Turkey and IK since 1991, these relations have never been on a large scale and utterly significant level until recent years. In fact, prior to 2008, the relations were mainly revolved around the security theme and were not of a very formal nature. Nevertheless, official and sizeable bilateral politico-economic relations have commenced in the post-2008 era, turning these relations worthy for academic investigation.

Theoretically, IK as a political entity is not a sovereign state. Hence, studying the relations between a sovereign state as Turkey and a non-state political entity like IK proves to be challenging. This, as a theoretical obstacle, has dissuaded the researchers, especially in light of the scale of bilateral relations prior to 2008. However, the longevity of the IK's political entity and increase in academic literature developed around such entities and growth in bilateral T-IK political and economic relations removed the barriers and raised the scholarly interest in the subject.

Having stated that scholarly interest in the subject and its actual importance is growing in recent years does not mean that the subject is well explored, and sufficient academic works are available on the subject. In reality, researches precisely debating on the subject are quite rare and suffer from many shortcomings. For example, there is no comprehensive work covering all the period under study, and the literature available mainly gives a chronological narrative of events in a specific period. Furthermore, the works engaging in the theoretical analysis of the relations do not exceed the number of a hand's fingers and their analysis merely covers a specific period of the relations. More importantly, the available literature has made no significant attempt at studying IK's internal dynamics affecting the relations, as they have a Turkish-centred analytical perspective. This research has attempted to address all these issues with the objective of helping academics and politicians in getting a better insight into the relations.

#### **1.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Being a discursive study, inductive qualitative method is utilized in conducting this research. In order to locate the required data for developing the historical narrative, presenting its analysis and testing its hypothesis, three main resources are utilized. The methods for acquiring the data and the way the resources are utilized in describing and analysing the relations are detailed below.

### **Secondary Resources**

As part of the critical literature review, books and articles written in academic journals on different aspects of this issue are studied and benefitted in presenting the historical evolution of the relations and analysis of the determining factors steering the relations. However, due to the absence of academic resources covering the whole period and important events, this research has used newspaper articles, news videos and internet news websites to cover the events and developments for presenting a comprehensive understanding of the extent and development of the relations. Thus, the secondary resources available in English, Kurdish, and Persian languages are used in the research process that provides useful insight for analysis of the events. In addition to using the data and insight acquired from the secondary resources in the historical chapters, they are utilized in tandem with the primary sources and data in the empirical chapters. This has been accomplished through following the inductive coding method for the secondary data to facilitate the understanding and analysis process. The way this coded data is utilized with the primary data obtained in the fieldwork is explained in the next section.

### **Primary Resources**

In addition to the secondary sources, in an attempt to develop primary material, the researcher conducted 32 face-to-face interviews with politicians, government officials, intellectuals, experts, and academics involved in the T-IK relations in a way or another both in Turkey and IK. Meanwhile, the researcher succeeded in obtaining valuable data related to the economic relations that have significantly enhanced the originality and informed analysis of the research. However, getting access to interviewees and such data was in no way an easy endeavour. It was an odyssey with lots of obstacles and unforeseen events to be tackled during the fieldwork. The researcher's Kurdish identity and personal experience, sensitivity of the topic, difficulty in getting access to interviewees and required data, gaining the

confidence and trust of the interviewees, and political turmoil at the time of conducting interviews were significant issues to be dealt with while conducting the fieldwork.

Being a Kurd from IK conducting a PhD research on T-IK relations had both pros and cons for the research. Most of the academic works on the issue were penned by non-Kurdish, mainly Western, writers who could not speak the language and were not aware of the debates and political discourse underway in the Kurdish circles, platforms and social media on a daily basis. Speaking the Kurdish language, witnessing the developments first-hand from Erbil city, capital of the Kurdish region, and actively following the events and debates in the Kurdish mass and social media provided the research with exceptional inside information and knowledge from the Kurdish side that was not available for foreign researchers. Moreover, the Kurdish origin of the researcher has bestowed the research with an ethnographic approach as the researcher's background means that he is immersed in the Kurdish experience and has a good insight into the internal dynamics of the Kurdish society and politics. Meanwhile, being fluent in English, and Persian languages and having a good knowledge of Arabic language and the researcher's work experiences as a consultant working with coalition troops, journalist, translator and assistant lecturer of politics were valuable assets that eased the hurdles and helped enrich the research.

On the other hand, being a Kurdish researcher working on T-IK relations can raise concerns on the neutrality of the research, as life experience can have intentional or unintentional impacts on the outcomes of qualitative researches in social sciences. To counter such concerns and to avoid subjectivity, as can be seen with the interviewees list in the Appendix, this research presents the discourse of all the involved parties in the relations and applies rigorous qualitative methods to analyse their impact on the relations. Hence, the views, concerns and analysis of the major actors both from the Kurdish and Turkish camps were acquired and neutrally presented and objectively assessed in the research to arrive at unbiased conclusions.

Another problem related to the researcher's identity was how a Kurdish researcher could successfully conduct research in Turkey on T-IK relations, a country that used to deny the existence of Kurds and put them in jail for speaking their mother tongue. Although positive developments had in some respects improved the government stance vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue, nevertheless it was still a very sensitive unresolved issue, and many inside Turkish government and public were still unwilling to change their perspective and conduct towards

the Kurdish issue. This was due to decades of the government campaign to securitize the Kurdish issue and even depict it as the issue of terror through linking it to the PKK. Hence it was a tremendous undertaking to conduct research on the Kurdish issue in Turkey, find interviewees willing to discuss it, gain their trust and get their honest view and insights. This problem was further exacerbated as the researcher's knowledge of Turkish language was quite fair, and with no experience of living or researching in the country, there were no friends or family members to rely on for accessing the interviewees. Later it is discussed how these challenges were addressed during the fieldwork.

Meanwhile, it is worth mentioning that an unfortunate bias exists in the region in the form of favouring white Western researchers over local ones when it comes to granting interview opportunities. It is much more difficult for a Kurdish researcher to get access to interviewees, in particular busy senior officials.

These were significant issues to deal with at the outset of my work. Especially unfamiliarity with the Turkish language and having no links in Turkey were of great concern. To deal with this issue with my supervisor's approval, it was decided to take a Turkish language course in Ankara before starting my fieldwork. Being supervised by a Kurdish professor from Turkey was a privilege for the researcher, as he put me in touch with a friend working in a leading think tank in Ankara to assist me with the course registration and settling in Ankara. I was lucky enough to share a flat with a bright British-educated Kurd from Turkey who was working in the same think tank, and this became an excellent opportunity to get a good network of friends through him and get an efficient insight on what is going on in the country, in particular with regards to the Kurdish issue. Even though Kurds (of Turkey) were more eager to converse and become friends, the network of my friends included an equal number of Turks as well. Meanwhile, the Turkish language course attended in the summer of 2012 enabled the researcher to communicate with people for daily needs and exchange simple sentences related to life and even politics. Later, the language skills acquired during the course proved vital in arranging the interviews and communication with receptionists and security staff in the offices and buildings that interviews were conducted.

Indeed, the benefits of spending time in Turkey before starting the fieldwork surpassed the researcher's expectations. Through e-mail communication and friend networks, I could establish contacts with people working in three think tanks with different political orientations, participated in several events and seminars and even presented a seminar on

Iraqi Kurds political struggle at an event organized by one of these think tanks. Meanwhile, at least three or four times a week I was socializing with the new friends and their colleagues and friends who were all educated knowledgeable folks usually working in think tanks, academia or media. Such friendly gatherings were ample opportunities for exchanging views on various political, cultural, economic, religious and other topics with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and political affiliations. Interestingly, they were as eager to hear my views, as I was to listen to theirs, as many of them had never had the chance to speak with a Kurdish researcher from Iraq. In some of these gatherings, everyone was communicating in English; however, when everyone could not speak English, I was assisted by friends who were translating my words into Turkish. As the researcher is familiar with different dialects of the Kurdish language, communicating with Turkey's Kurds was relatively easy and on many occasions, my new Kurdish friends were translating my conversations with their Turkish colleagues. Thus, by the time the Turkish course ended, in addition to the language skills, I had gained a good insight into the dominant political perspectives in Turkey and established a network of friends that could put me in touch with potential interviewees. Moreover, the extent of the Kurdish issue's sensitivity in Turkey was observed first-hand, and the researcher spotted concerns, fears, grievances, and hopes of divergent sections of Turkish society.

### **Selecting Interviewees and Interview Questions**

Inclusiveness was a major criterion for choosing the interviewees. In order to present an unbiased analysis, it was decided to include the voices of all major political parties, senior bureaucrats in charge of practically conducting the relations, as well as academics and experts who were knowledgeable in the field and could present distinct views and analysis on the topic. Including the voice of major political parties demanded interviewing representatives from the Justice and Development Party, or *Adalet Ve Kalkinma Partisi* (AKP), Republican People's Party, or *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP), Nationalist Movement Party or *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (MHP), People's Democratic Party, or *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (HDP), Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Change Movement, Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) and Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) parties whose words reflect their party's views on the relations. The criteria for choosing these representatives were holding senior positions in the party, having good knowledge on or involvement in the relations, and being involved in the decision-making

process of their political parties in a way or another so that their views were accepted and translated as their relevant party's view on the relations at the time of interview. Thus, a list of potential interviewees from political parties was prepared to be approached for interviews. In addition to party officials, a list of senior bureaucrats was drafted. The aim was to get updated information on how the relations are administered and developed from people who were in charge of conducting the daily business between both entities. The third category of interviewees included scholars, think-tank staff and experts who were chosen in a way that include individuals with diverse views and analysis for the relations.

It should be noted that interviews were semi-structured, in a way that a number of questions were specified as an interview guide (see Appendix for the interview guide) to be addressed during the interviews; however, the interviews were flexible and were not following a strict manner of asking the questions from the list one after the other. Different questions were directed to different interviewees based on their affiliation and expertise and the interviews usually progressed smoothly through following the arguments and raising questions or points that could further elaborate the interviewee's viewpoint or were conducive to new insights and information.

### **Getting Appointments and Conducting Interviews**

The interviews were conducted between April and June 2013 in Erbil and Suleimaniya cities in IK and Ankara and Diyarbakir cities in Turkey. However, as already stated, getting interview appointments and gaining interviewees' trust to express their honest views on the sensitive issues explored in the research was not an easy task. As the researcher is from IK, it was decided to start conducting the interviews from Erbil city, where the researcher has a good network of friends and colleagues. In order to get access to the high-ranking bureaucrats and party officials, the researcher's personal links were utilized in the form of getting assistance from friends, colleagues, and family members. Meanwhile, at the end of each interview, the researcher asked the interviewees to recommend potential interviewees who could help enrich the research's scope and analysis, which helped me get in touch with knowledgeable individuals who were interviewed later. Despite all the help I received from my personal links, appointments from a number of high-ranking officials were not granted or were cancelled or postponed due to their busy schedules, and the researcher was obliged to approach equally eligible alternative individuals who met the criteria considered for selecting the interviewees.



The researcher made great efforts to approach the interviewees through their friends or individuals in their close circle to increase the chances of getting the interview opportunities and at the same time to facilitate the trust-building process. The same approach was followed for getting interview appointments in Turkey. The friendships and contacts made during my previous visit to Turkey paved the way for getting access to interviewees from different parties and with different ideologies and worldviews who were otherwise unapproachable for the researcher. Indeed, having contact with people from different political backgrounds made it possible for the researcher to interview individuals from ultranationalist Turkish parties with hostile views towards the Kurdish issue. Unfortunately, Gezi Park protests spread through Turkey while I was conducting my fieldwork in Turkey. This created further problems, as the whole country and especially the party officials and bureaucrats were pre-occupied with the protests and unrest in the streets and some appointments were rescheduled or cancelled.

Meanwhile, the researcher had to take extra precautions to make sure interview venue is safe, its route is not blocked by protesters and leave early to arrive on time due to unwanted delays caused by the protests and government security measures. Some of the interviews were conducted in the Parliament compound in Ankara, a few hundred meters away from Kizlay Street's protests. This was challenging and worrisome as regardless of all the precautions, during protests unexpected developments can change the nature and route of protests, and I could have been accidentally caught in the chaos while commuting from my accommodation to the Parliament. Despite the negative impacts on my fieldwork, the protests provided an exceptional opportunity to observe the frustrations, hopes, and perspectives of different segments of Turkish society and get a better understanding of the country's politics.

After all the efforts put into granting interview opportunities, the researcher succeeded in getting appointments with 32 high-profile well-informed individuals from both countries. This included leaders of political parties, senior influential party officials, well-known parliamentarians, consul generals and senior officials in the consulates, head of KRG's foreign relations office (otherwise KRG's acting foreign minister), advisers of Turkey and Kurdistan prime ministers, advisers working in parliament, intellectuals, scholars and experts in the field. Most were directly or indirectly engaged with the relations. Due to significance of trade and energy relations, in addition to top Turkish diplomat in Erbil and KRG's leading foreign relations diplomat the researcher conducted interviews with the Turkish trade attaché

to Erbil, Director of Turkey-KRG relations in KRG's Department of Foreign Affairs, economic advisor of KRG's Trade Ministry, and experts in energy field. These interviews provided valuable data and explanation that were later used in the empirical chapters. Moreover, to gain first-hand information on Iranian view and engagement, an interview was conducted with the country's consul in Erbil due to the country's immense role and influence in the region.

The list of the participants and their affiliation along with the dates and places of the interviews are presented in Table 1 in the Appendix section. As evidenced by the list of the interviewees, this research benefited from key political players and policy makers from all the sides involved. This has enhanced the argument developed in this research as well as its analysis, which also distinguishes this research from the others. Therefore, huge efforts in reaching out such high-profile individuals should be appreciated, which resulted in a highly informed piece.

In order to create a conducive interview environment leading to fruitful interviews, a routine procedure was followed throughout the interviews. The first issue was arranging the time and place to both suit the interviewees' schedule and comfort and be appropriate for conducting the interview with none or minimum disturbances. Thus, most interviews were conducted in the interviewees' work offices at the pre-arranged time, as due to their busy schedules, it was the best option. However, two interviews were carried out in nice quiet cafes in Ankara, Turkey, as holding the interviews in those locations better accommodated their schedules.

The first step in all interviews was introducing the researcher and the research project, getting the interviewees' consent, and asking permission for recording the interview. As stated above, due to sensitivity of the research topic it was very important to assure the interviewees about the purpose of the interview, nature of the research and the fact that the information acquired would be exclusively used for PhD research. The fact that interviews were granted through friends and close contacts of the interviewees who had already briefed them about the researcher and the project was a positive step in the trust-building process. Nevertheless, at the outset of interviews in addition to briefing the interviewees on the research project and its aims, a one-page long respondent brief with Durham University logo on it was handed to them, and they were informed about the way the interview material is used in the research. Meanwhile, it was attempted to create a friendly environment, make the conversation flow smoothly and avoid creating sensitivities that may affect the interview quality. Hence, while

interviewing the MHP parliamentarian, to avoid tension or angering the interviewee the researcher used the term 'Northern Iraq' in reference to IK, as the word 'Kurdistan' is treated as a taboo by MHP ultranationalist. Such measures were quite helpful in encouraging the interviewees to trust the researcher and engage in informative conversations and even enthusiastically suggest potential interviewees who could help the research. Both at the beginning and end of each interview, the researcher expressed his appreciation and thanked the participants for the interview opportunity.

Except for one interview, all the other interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The interviews conducted in Kurdish and the one interview conducted in Persian were all translated by the researcher (who is a Kurd and has professional work experience as a translator and has lived and finished his high school in Iran and is fluent in Persian), and for three interviews conducted in the Turkish language, the researcher employed qualified interpreters to translate the interviews. The interview that was not recorded was due to the interviewee's request, as the interviewee was more comfortable with the researcher taking notes rather than recording his voice.

### **Data for Economic Relations**

Trade and energy links impact on the bilateral relations has noticeably increased in the post-2003 years. However, reliable data on this topic is scarce. In particular, energy related data (such as details of T-IK energy deals) is often classified and not available for the researchers. Indeed, several attempts to access such data produced no results. Hence, for energy data, this research relies on the secondary literature and the official data released by government institutions in Turkey or IK. Meanwhile, the researcher attempted to get the data on other aspects of economic relations. Government institutions in Turkey had no separate data for economic relations with IK. The available data was related to the total volume of trade with Iraq, which was utilized in the research through benefitting from statements released on Kurdistan's share in this trade in the literature and statements on this issue by related officials interviewed by the researcher.

In search of further data, the researcher succeeded in getting valuable information on economic relations from officials interviewed. Meanwhile, it was noticed that KRG has invaluable detailed data on foreign investment, projects and companies registered in the region, but accessing them was very difficult. The researcher requested access to the data by

using Durham University's support letter but was rejected and informed that the data could be accessed only through the KRG institutions. As the researcher was a staff member of Salahaddin University in Erbil, upon my request, a support letter was issued endorsing the researcher and requesting the cooperation of KRG institutions. This letter was later successfully used for obtaining the data, which is utilized in the analysis of T-IK economic relations in Chapter 7 of this study.

It should be noted that in addition to the sources as mentioned above, personal observations of the writer in IK and Turkey are employed in evaluations and assessments.

### **Data Codification and Analysis**

After completing the fieldwork, all the interviews were transcribed and reviewed twice by the researcher with the aim of finding patterns or repeated ideas. In order to organize the data and prepare it for qualitative analysis, at the next step, the interview material was annotated through using codes. The first factor considered in codifying the data was to develop the codes in response to the research questions initially set by the study. Consequently, inductive coding method was applied for organizing the data. After the first round of coding, all the codes were written in a separate document and were reviewed to find common themes, patterns and issues. Later, based on recurring common themes, codes were linked together under overarching themes. As the final step of the inductive codification process, all the codes were organized under a number of cohesive categories in a way that no code was left out. Hence, after applying thematic content and discourse analysis, the primary data is analysed through interpretivism, and it is observed that the relations are governed by four major overarching analytical categories, namely security, identity, economy and external interventions.

Accordingly, the interview data is extensively utilized in the empirical chapters of the study that correspond to the analytical categories and in addition to providing first-hand knowledge and insight, it substantiates or rejects the arguments proposed in the literature. Therefore, this study benefits from interpretivism as part of social constructivism, as the related data through interviews as a product of participants' social constructivism were subjected to further social constructivism through interpretivism by the researcher. This helps to develop a systematic process in meaning making out of the raw interview data.

It should be noted that while codifying the data, important sections were highlighted for

direct quotation due to their significance. In several such direct quotations, for the sake of preserving the connotative meaning or emotional significance attached to the words, the exact English words spoken by the interviewees are quoted that include colloquial words or expressions. The same style is used when quoting from interviews conducted in languages other than English to convey the connotative meaning.

## **1.5. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This research is organised in the following manner:

*Chapter 1: Introduction:* This chapter introduces the general background, research questions, aims and objectives, methodology, and organization of the study.

*Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework:* This chapter explores the theoretical confusion surrounding the political entity called IK, assesses the rigour of theories suggested in the literature for analysing the T-IK relations, explains how this study has inductively chosen the four analytical pillars for exploring the evolution of the relations and how in contrast to the suggested theories analytic eclecticism as an approach can accommodate the role played by these four factors in directing the relations without leaving out any of the factors' role.

*Chapter 3: Historical Roots of Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations: From Ottoman Legacy to 1991:* In this chapter, due to significance of historical factors in shaping current relations, shared historical heritage of Iraqi Kurds and Turkey during the Ottoman Empire's reign and the political arrangement between Kurds and Ottoman Empire are discussed. Later, developments of Kurdish issue in Turkey and Iraq and Turkey's stance towards this issue, especially in relation to Iraqi Kurds, is presented in separate sections.

*Chapter 4: Political Developments of Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan and Their Relations (1991-2014):* This chapter presents the political evolution of Turkey and IK in different sections. Later, the major events and developments in T-IK relations in the 1991-2014 period are discussed. Meanwhile, post-2014 developments are presented briefly.

*Chapter 5: The Role of Identity in Determining the Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations:* This chapter explores the role identity has played in shaping the T-IK relations, through

investigating the identity of the incumbent parties both in Turkey and IK in the 1991-2014 period

*Chapter 6: Exploring the Role of Security in Determining the Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations:* This chapters explores the role security factor has played in the relations in the 1991-2014 period, through examining the impacts of Kurdish issue in Turkey and Turkmen-Kirkuk issue on the relations.

*Chapter 7: Exploring the Impact of Economic Factors on Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations:* This chapter discusses how economic factors such as trade, investment, and other economic relations have impacted the relations in the 1991-2014 period.

*Chapter 8: Exploring the Impact of External Interventions in Determining Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations:* This chapter discusses how regional and external interventions have influenced the bilateral T-IK relations in the 1991-2014 period.

*Chapter 9: Conclusion and Discussions:* This chapter finalizes the arguments and findings of the research through presenting a critical reflection in light of identity, security, economy and external interventions through stages, followed by a section examining the T-IK relations in the context of IR theories. However, an important part of the interpretative discussion in this chapter is to bring together the theoretical paradigms specific to each period and give meaning to the findings.

## **Chapter Two: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

As stated in the previous chapter, this research explores the relations between Turkey and IK. While Turkey is recognized as a state, IK is not. Hence, the first section of this chapter attempts to define the status of IK within IR and political theory frames as an entity that exists and is the subject of this study. The second section assesses the IR theories suggested in the literature for explaining the complexities of T-IK relations, followed by explaining the inductive method applied for selecting the four analytical factors, *i.e.* identity, security, economy and external interventions, that steer the relations and finally presenting the analytic eclecticism approach as an option that can incorporate the role played by all the analytical categories in theoretical analysis of T-IK relations. Thus, this chapter sets the basis for the final analysis of the relations in the context of IR theories in the final chapter.

### **2.2. IRAQI KURDISTAN: TERMINOLOGICAL CONFUSION**

This research explores the relations between two entities, namely Turkey and IK. Terminologically Turkey is referred to as a state in IR; however, a terminological confusion surrounds the political entity called IK. As it can easily be noticed, this results in an ‘asymmetry’ in particular an institutional one, in the relations, which is explored by this study.

Having terminological confusion over the nature of its political entity is not unique to IK and is shared by a number of similar entities all over the world that do not meet all the requisite criteria to get nominated as state. Since IK is one of the two pillars of this research, clarifying its status and designating the proper terminology for referring to it is a problem that needs to be tackled at the outset of this research. In particular, in light of the fact that the already existing confusion is further complicated as the status of IK has endured some changes during the period under study in this research, namely 1991-2014. Hence, in an attempt to explore the status of IK in IR, the following discussion presents a historical introduction to emergence of entities like IK; explains why their status is short of statehood according to statehood criteria; introduces different terms utilized in reference to these entities and finally discusses the designation of the appropriate term for addressing the status of IK in this study with its political rationalization.

Sovereign state has traditionally been the main focus of IR as a discipline. No doubt endurance and success of state-centric views testify that state still preserves its salience in the discipline. Nevertheless, as Pegg (1998: 230-1) rightly asserts, state has never been the sole actor in international arena and it has always coexisted with some other units. Supranational bodies, international organizations, global solidarity groups, multinational corporations and polities like IK, that have some common characteristics with states but fall short of statehood, are among such units. Hence, IK and polities in the same category can be considered as anomalies in the state system. Such polities mainly emerged after two waves of new state formation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: after the process of decolonization and after the collapse of communism and disintegration of former Yugoslavia (Bartmann, 2005: 12-3). They can be found both in states organized under ‘state principle’, in which all habitants of the state territory are considered as citizens regardless of their ethnic, religious, linguistic or racial background, or ‘national principle’, where communities are divided along linguistic, racial, religious or ethnic background (Pegg, 1998: 43).

Defining the state, criteria for statehood and evolution of these criteria clarifies why polities like IK are kept outside the club of sovereign states. When it comes to the main traits of statehood, *Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States* (signed in 1933) in terms of international law and Weber’s definition of state in terms of philosophical nature have proved to be two popular and helpful theoretical tools. Montevideo Convention (1933) identifies population, territory, government and capacity to enter relations with other states as the four qualifications required for statehood. Weber (1946: 78) defines the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” and it reiterates the aforementioned criteria with emphasize on the efficient and practical (as opposed to nominal) control on the territory.

As it is evident these criteria emphasize on competence and viability while a number of current states (especially failed, weak and small states) fail to meet these minimal conditions. However, changes in the international system since 1945, as new micro-states emerged following post-war decolonization, shifted the emphasis from competence to inclusiveness (Bartmann, 2005: 17) and surfaced new criteria that guarantee the survival of these new states. Spears (2004: 17) refers to this shift in terms of empirical approach towards the definition of state as opposed to legal, or juridical approach. These new criteria are listed by Geldenhuys (2009: 14-20) as ‘sovereignty’ and ‘recognition’. He further explains the criteria



via referring to internal and external sovereignty and independent state's possession of the second (while some states may lack the first) and the debate between declaratory theory that claims an entity that exhibits the Montevideo Convention requirements is a state in its own right regardless of external recognition and constitutive theory which articulates that an entity possessing the mentioned basic requirements is not a state until it is constituted as such through international recognition. Nevertheless, it could be argued that recognition criterion could be accommodated under sovereignty, seeing that the notion of sovereignty as defined by Jackson (1999: 10-12) implies international recognition as well. Jackson (1999: 10) defines sovereignty as a legal institution endowing its owner the right of being the principal authority of its territory internally and internationally in a world of coexisting sovereign equals in which political independence of sovereign units is mutually recognized. It is worth mentioning that post-positivist readings of the sovereignty concept problematize the existence of absolute or fixed sovereignty. Denoting this fact, Caspersen's (2012) book on unrecognized states refers to examples of sovereign states ceding degrees of their sovereignty to other states or supranational organizations such as the European Union.

As already mentioned, there are some anomalies to the state system where one or more requisite criteria for statehood might be missing in the case of certain entities such as IK. No agreement exists over naming these anomalies and as a result authors utilize various terms. The terms commonly used are 'contested state' (Geldenhuis, 2009), '*de facto* state' (Pegg 1998; Bahcheli *et al.*, 2005), 'states-within-states' (Kingston and Spears, 2004), 'unrecognized state' (Caspersen and Stansfield, 2011) and in some cases 'statelike entity', 'quasi-state', 'nominal state', 'proto- and semi-state' (Geldenhuis 2009: 26-7).

Ironically, in some instances contradictory meanings are associated with the same term by different authors. This point is demonstrated in Geldenhuis' (2009: 26-27) reference to Jackson's use of the term 'quasi-state' for states with deficiency in empirical statehood in contrast to Kolsto's (2006: 749-750) use of the same term for entities that have physical control over all or most of the territory they claim, have unsuccessfully attempted to gain international recognition as an independent state, and have existed as a non-recognised entity for at least two years. Similarly, each writer has devised his or her criteria for inclusion or exclusion of an entity in the group. For instance, Pegg (1998: 32) calls an entity '*de facto*' if it remains *de facto* independent for minimum one year; Caspersen and Stansfield (2011: 3) call it 'unrecognized state' in case of minimum two years purported independence, and

Geldenhuis (2009: 4) calls it a ‘contested state’ if the entity persists its supposed independence for minimum three years. As can be seen, the absence of a common criterion is so awkward that even co-authors of a book written on unrecognized states have opposing views on inclusion or exclusion of some entities in their study (Caspersen and Stansfield, 2011: 5).

In an attempt to find a common ground among definitions and choosing the proper terminology for IK, definitions devised for four of the most commonly used terms in the literature are presented here. To start with, the definition of states-within-states by Spears (2004: 16) is an example of a broad definition with no robust restricting criterion. He defines states-within-states as entities that may have developed a range of impressive institutions efficiently controlling a territory within a state. Spears’ (2004: 17) sole criterion for describing the states-within-states is their lack of international recognition in spite of possessing key elements of Weber’s criteria for statehood. Similarly, Geldenhuis (2009: 8-23) attempts to illustrate that contested states own the empirical requirements of statehood, though contested, yet lack the juridical requirement; however, he adds a better criterion. In other words, his definitional feature for such states is their lack of ‘*de jure*’ recognition (Geldenhuis, 2009: 7).

The criterion devised by Geldenhuis (2009: 4) for being nominated as ‘contested state’ is a minimum three years existence as a *de facto* independent state and the desire to be treated as a peer by recognized states of the world. As for *de facto* state, McGarry (2004: x) provides a broad definition similar to Spears’ definition of states-within-states, while Pegg (1998) attempts to be as precise as possible both with his definition and his inclusion criterion. McGarry (2004) describes the *de facto* states as outcomes of secessionist bids functioning as states, while enjoying the majority support of population living in their territory yet failing to secure international recognition.

On the other hand, Pegg’s (1998: 4) detailed definition portrays the *de facto* states in a Weberian manner as “entities which feature long-term, effective and popularly supported organized political leaderships that provide governmental services to a given population in a defined territorial area” and seek but fail to get international recognition. Furthermore, Pegg (1998: 39) adds the criteria of existing as a *de facto* state at least for one year and aiming at secession as prerequisites for being considered a *de facto* state.

Finally, in a criteria-based definition, Caspersen and Stansfield (2011: 3-4) define the unrecognized states based on three criteria: Firstly, gained and preserved *de facto* independence and territorial control for minimum two years; secondly, lacking full international recognition; and thirdly exhibiting an aspiration for full juridical independence through formal declaration of independence, referendum or any other means revealing overt desire for secession.

As it is evident, all the definitions stress on presence of some or all empirical requirements of statehood named in Montevideo Convention and Weber's definition and existence of *de facto* independence as opposed to lack of external sovereignty or international recognition as the main traits of these entities. On the other hand, these definitions mainly differ in their criteria of inclusion and the terms chosen for calling these entities. However, what remains is the arbitrary usage of these definitions and most of the time according to a particular purpose.

### **2.3. FUTURE, AIMS AND INTERACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

It could be argued that there are minor differences in definitions presented above and choice of a term or inclusion criteria are mainly a matter of convenience not an iron-rule. Nonetheless, linguistic nuances and empirical differences can be noticed which will prove helpful for choosing the proper terminology. As mentioned, these differences are not so significant in most cases, hence, with the aim of presenting a robust argument in favour of one of the above terms, a brief survey of future scenarios for these political entities, how international community deals with them and a short historical overview of IK's institutional development are presented below which are immensely important in supporting our argument.

Discussing the fate of these non-recognized political entities has resulted in developing a major literature being conducted on these entities. Generally three scenarios are suggested as the possible destinations for these entities which include: (i) succeeding in declaring independence and gaining international recognition; (ii) military defeat and reincorporation into mother state by brute force; (iii) arriving at a peace settlement and devising a type of power-sharing formula like autonomy, federalism, or similar arrangements with the mother

state (Anderson, 2011: 187). Pegg (1998: 209-11) adds the option of preserving the status quo or survival as a *de facto* state to the mentioned scenarios. Interestingly, Caspersen (2012) explains that since ruling elites in some unrecognized entities are eager to preserve the prerogatives the status quo is offering them, they have no real intention to seek independence. Despite this, Caspersen (2012) details the repercussions lack of sovereignty and recognition could have on the future of unrecognized entities in terms of forceful annihilation as they are not protected by the non-intervention norm, in an effort to demonstrate the significance of international recognition for the survival of unrecognized states.

On the other hand, whilst these entities exist as a reality of the international system, their existence has not been a solitary and isolated one and they have been dealt with by international community in different ways and have developed their own foreign policy objectives respectively. In this regard, Pegg (1998: 173-180) refers to the importance of *de facto* states, especially in terms of their impact in economic and conflict resolution areas, on international politics and classifies the reactions of the international community to the *de facto* states in three broad categories of ignoring their existence, actively opposing and sanctioning them or their limited acceptance by international community. Nevertheless, a better account of international response to these entities is offered by Geldenhuys (2009: 46-8), as he classifies the international response into five categories: (i) supporting military action against the entity; (ii) international isolation of the entity in political, economic, diplomatic and socio-cultural forms; (iii) indifference or benign neglect of the entity or in other words neither neglecting nor engaging with it; (iv) engagement in terms of limited acceptance and establishing relations broadly in the forms mentioned in the isolation category; and finally, (v) *de jure* external recognition and full engagement with the entity as a sovereign state. As it is obvious, the unrecognized entities under study favour the two last options and the foreign policies they devise aim at gaining recognition and legitimacy. On the other hand, engagement with these entities incurs both risks and interests upon the states and other international actors dealing with them.

In an effort, to list the foreign policy aims of unrecognized states, Owtram (2011: 136) mentions four aims: (i) seeking recognition for the sake of granting survival in all the three forms of economic, military and political survival; (ii) attempting to gain material resources via getting foreign aid or investment; (iii) establishing foreign relations with other states and international actors; and (iv) finally trying to increase the level of their recognition, either *de*

*facto* or *de jure* by other states. It's noteworthy that foreign policy of these unrecognized entities is not merely derived by external motives, as domestic factors and satisfaction of internal demands and aspirations plays a significant role in this regard (Owtram, 2011: 134).

Having discussed the aims, international response, foreign policy and future of these entities it is now easier to investigate how the case of IK is fitting into this framework. Emergence of IK as a political entity is rather ironical in terms of being in odds with the unrecognized and non-juridical basis of the entities under study. In fact, IK's status was bestowed upon it by the international community in the form of a UNSCR; hence giving it a form of juridical or formal recognition. This happened when in 1991, following the uprising of Iraqi Kurds and cruel repression of the uprising by Iraqi regime a mass exodus of about two million Kurds resulted in a refugee crisis for Turkey and Iran (Natali, 2005: 64). The international response came in the form of UNSCR 688 in April 5, 1991 that created a no-fly-zone providing a safe haven for Iraqi Kurds. In presence of this international protection, Kurds elected their first Parliament in May 19, 1992, and established the KRG. The elected Kurdish Parliament voted for federalism as the mechanism for organizing Kurdish relations with Baghdad (Gunter, 2006: 235). However, the federal solution endorsed by Kurdish Parliament remained in the theoretical realm, as in practice Iraqi Kurds were in full charge of their own affairs till the Operation Iraqi Freedom toppled Saddam's Regime in 2003 and started a new era for Iraqi Kurds-Baghdad relations. Thus, the new Iraqi constitution, which was ratified in 2005, declares in its first article that Iraq is a federal state (2005: 5) and formally recognizes the KRG and its institutions -as a federal region- in article 117 (2005: 71).

In spite of the fact that federalism is the system enshrined in the Iraqi constitution, fierce debates have been going on between the Iraqi government and KRG on the nature of this federalism, control of disputed territories and their bountiful oil reserves and clear-cut demarcation of power realm and authorities of KRG and Baghdad. The ramification of this struggle is evident in Iraqi Parliament's failure in passing oil and gas law despite having three draft laws (Brusk, 2012).

On the other hand, due to the juridical legitimacy of IK's institutions granted by UNSCR 688 (and consequent elections held in 1992) and later by Iraqi constitution, neighbouring states as well as international community have opted for engagement, albeit initially very limited, rather than isolating IK.

## 2.4. IRAQI KURDISTAN AS AN UNRECOGNIZED STATE

As mentioned earlier, the terms discussed in this section are quite similar and this makes the task of finding an appropriate term further complicated. However, as justified below, among the four discussed terms this study selects ‘unrecognized state’ for the Kurdish political entity in northern Iraq, which is rationalized as follows:

As noted, ‘States-within-states’ with its broad definition presented by Spears (2004: 16) is a wide concept capable of encompassing various entities that their existence and aims are quite different from entities like IK. Meanwhile, the complicated case of IK cannot be explained just in terms of developing some institutions controlling a territory within a state. Aspects such as population, juridical legitimacy, future aims and engagement with other states and entities witnessed in the case of IK cannot be accommodated in this concept.

While Geldenhuys’ (2009: 4) contested state includes some of IK’s traits, the criterion devised by him overtly excludes IK. In spite of the fact that Iraqi Kurds have enjoyed *de facto* independence even for more than three years (1991-2003), they never declared independence or demanded to be treated as an independent state by other state in the 1991-2014 period which is investigated in this study (The Kurdistan Independence Referendum was held in 2017). In fact, the public desire for independence and Kurdish leadership’s rhetoric that independence is a natural right of Kurds remained just an aspiration or hope, as this demand was not formally employed as the official policy of IK’s authority until 2017 and Kurds have kept committed to federalism principles. Even the referendum held in September 2017 was just to know the public view, not to declare independence upon release of the results. Hence, Geldenhuys (2009) is right in excluding Kurdistan from the list of contested states based on this criterion.

In contrast to the previous terms, *de facto* state as defined by Pegg (1998) contains most of the characteristic elements of the IK. However, while IK’s inclusion or exclusion in Pegg’s criterion can be argued, this study rejects to apply this term mainly on linguistic basis. The term ‘*de facto*’ implies the absence of any *de jure* or formal recognition. In the case of IK, as referred to earlier, there is a kind of *de jure* recognition based on international and Iraqi legal documents recognition of IK as a political entity. Therefore, this research argues that the

reality of IK cannot be reconciled with the negative connotations present in the term *de facto* state.

Finally, although the application of the term unrecognized state to IK's status is debated; this research argues that it is the best term for describing the IK's political entity. While, some contenders in the edited volume by Caspersen and Stansfield (2011) who refer to unrecognized states do not regard IK as an unrecognized state on the basis of lacking desire for secession, others consider it as such, albeit till 2003. As Anderson (2011: 188) states, IK voluntarily integrated into federal Iraq in 2003 and terminated its existence as an unrecognized entity.

No doubt, IK meets the first requirement of Caspersen and Stansfield's (2011) definition of unrecognized state, *i.e. de facto* independence and territorial control for minimum two years. Although in a similar vein with the concept of '*de facto* state' the term 'unrecognized' involves negative connotations, it is the second criterion of unrecognized state's definition that defines and limit the negative scope of this aspect. Hence, 'unrecognized' in this case refers to lack of 'full' *de jure* international recognition, as a state and does not deny partial or limited formal or juridical recognition of the entity, which is present in the case of IK.

As mentioned above, some contenders exclude IK arguing that it has not exhibited an aspiration for full juridical recognition, opting for federalism instead. This research argues that such a desire has been publicly expressed both by Iraqi Kurdish public and their leaders even before the 25 September 2017 referendum, and choosing federalism is merely a pragmatic initiative on behalf of Kurdish politicians to cope with the geopolitical reality of their situation. A clear public demand for independence is exhibited in an unofficial referendum held by Kurdistan Referendum Movement (2005) alongside Iraqi Parliamentary elections in January 2005 in which 98% of voters living in IK voted for independence. Moreover, in different occasions Kurdish political leaders, especially Masoud Barzani (former President of Kurdistan Region) have expressed their desire for having an independent Kurdish state, acknowledging that it is the natural right of Kurds, which has been denied due to current geopolitical realities on the ground. This stance is most evident in Jalal Talabani's, late Kurdish President of Iraq, interview with the Kurdish website *Hawlati* in which he declares his support for the Kurdish right of self-determination, but at the same time acknowledges the practical difficulties ahead of declaring an independent Kurdish state (Hawlati, 2012). However, the clearest message of Kurdish demand for secession came in

April 2012, as in an interview with Associated Press in a clear warning to Baghdad, President Masoud Barzani hinted at the possibility of holding a referendum in September 2012 for deciding on whether to stay as a part of Iraq or not, if the problems between Kurds and Iraqi government remain unsolved (Jakes: 2012)

As explained above, it is clear that IK logically certifies to be called ‘unrecognized state’ until 2003. Taken at face value, it appears that following its voluntary integration into Iraqi state in 2003, IK is no more illegible to be called so. However, this research argues that while institutionally or in appearance IK has lost its pre-2003 independence via integration into federal Iraq, functionally it has retained most of its pre-2003 prerogatives and the ruling system in Iraq is not simply a federal one. Late President Talabani endorsed this fact, when he referred to the state of affairs and Iraqi Kurds relation with Baghdad as ‘confederalism’ (Hawlati, 2012). Meanwhile, in an interview with a Kurdish Satellite Channel, Nuri Maliki, former Iraqi Prime Minister, in reference to the extent of authority enjoyed by the KRG, claimed that Iraq is a part of Kurdistan Region not vice versa (NRT Satellite Channel, 2012). A further evidence of this fact (as explained in later chapters) is witnessed in Turkey’s denial to recognize the KRG and involve it in negotiations on the PKK issue in pre-2008 and her final acknowledgment and direct involvement with the KRG in the later period that proved Iraqi government has no actual power over the territories administered by the KRG. Hence, it is clear that functionally IK still deserves to be nominated as an ‘unrecognized state’, and in absence of a better term, this research applies this term to refer to IK as defined as ‘a political entity possessing administrative institutions in charge of controlling a defined territory and population which may or may not enjoy a degree of formal recognition; nevertheless lacking full *de jure* international recognition and a seat in the United Nations’.

Following the nomination of IK as an unrecognized state, clarifying a point is essential for understanding the reason why this research is dealing with the relations between IK and Turkey or otherwise an unrecognized state and a recognized sovereign state. The fact is, in spite of being an exception to the norm and an anomaly in the international system, the *de jure* unrecognized entities mentioned in this section are coexisting and interacting with recognized states and other actors present in the international system. As stated earlier, due to the real existence of these entities and the impact they have inserted on the course of events in their respective regions, states have dealt with them in various ways, which have influenced these entities and their fate in return. In short, unrecognized states establish actual



relations whether official or unofficial with states as well as regional and international actors present in the global politics, and as long as these relations and interactions exist, exploring them in the form of an academic research turns into a fascinating study and an academic necessity.

Meanwhile, IK as an unrecognized state has followed suit and since its emergence in 1991 has established relations with sovereign states both in the region and beyond. Even an evolutionary pattern can be noticed in the case of IK, as it attempts to assume the role of a sovereign state in its relations with other states and even with the central government in Baghdad (evident in various negotiations between the two polities, especially during Prime Minister Maliki's second term in office). As Charountaki (2011: 249) notes, IK as a non-state entity has entered relations with state entities and is pursuing its own foreign policy. The relations with Turkey have been among the most significant and enduring ones that have experienced tremendous changes from one period to another. Nevertheless, these relations, while existent and growing fast have not been academically scrutinized and explicated properly. Hence, this research explores the relations as an attempt to fill the academic gap in this field and provide scholarly guide on hitherto unexplored realm of theorizing the T-IK relations in the framework of IR theories applied in explaining the state-state relations.

## **2.5. EMERGENT ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES**

As discussed earlier, the theme of T-IK relations is a relatively new research area that has not come under proper academic scrutiny. This is especially the case when it comes to theorising the relations through the lenses of the IR theories. In order to address this academic gap, the previous section dealt with the political nature of IK as an entity and concluded that it is an unrecognized state that despite its unrecognized status has entered into relations with sovereign states and is pursuing a foreign policy agenda of its own (Charountaki, 2011: 249). Having settled with the fact that IK as an entity has assumed the role played by sovereign states and is practically engaged in relations with its neighbouring states and beyond, the following section assesses the theories proposed in the literature for analysing T-IK relations. Later, it discusses how four analytical categories have emerged inductively by using the fieldwork data and the material from the literature along with the implications they have on the theoretical analysis of this study.

### **2.5.1. Theoretical References in the Literature**

The scarcely available literature and interview material gathered through fieldwork have attempted to use variants of realism, liberalism, constructivism, and dependency theories and the patron-client approach to provide theoretical analysis for specific periods of the T-IK relations. Details of these works are presented in chapters seven, eight and nine of this research. This section attempts to provide a brief assessment of these theories followed by a reference to para-diplomacy and foreign policy analysis approaches that are used and suggested for analysis of non-state actors' foreign policy and complicated status of regional relations in the Middle East respectively.

IR scholars have extensively used realism for explaining the behaviour of states in the international arena. Realism is a state-centric approach that advocates the importance of power and security in international relations. In this theory, states are regarded as unitary actors struggling for power and survival in the self-help system of international anarchy. According to realism, in response to the systemic pressures states as rational actors, regardless of their internal composition or regime type are forced to balance their power against their rivals to guarantee their interests and survival (*see*: Kaarbo and Ray, 2011: 4-5; Baylis *et al.*, 2008: 100-3; Waltz, 1979: 126-7). This rhetoric's explanatory power is quite evident in its description of the Cold War's systemic roots, which indicates realism's success in explaining the balancing behaviour of states in situations that security has primacy over other concerns.

In spite of the rigour of its simple, general rhetoric, realism has its own shortcomings as well. To start with, due to its focus on the state as the main actor in IR, realism has little or no contribution in explaining the significant role played by non-state actors in the globalised world, and their formal, or informal asymmetric relations vis-à-vis states. Meanwhile, with its inherent pessimism and belief in recurrence and confrontation, realism has faced serious problems in predicting change (such as predicting the end of Cold War, or predicting the course of action taken by governments) or explaining the cooperation conducted among states under the condition of anarchy (*see*: Steans *et al.*, 2010: 71-3; Donnelly, 2009: 54-6; Jackson and Sorensen, 2010: 90-3; Kaarbo and Ray, 2011: 7).

Realism's focus on the systemic factors and ignorance of unit-level or individual factors has played a major role in its failure in this respect. To tackle this issue, realists have come up with a number of solutions that incorporate motives and unit-level factors into the realist analysis. Defensive and offensive realism, the balance of threat theory, neoclassical realism and omnibalancing are among these efforts (Donnelly, 2009: 43-5; David, 1991: 238-241). While defensive, offensive, and balance of threat approaches only deal with the motives of the states for balancing, in terms of being satisfied status-quo, or expansionist or deploying the balancing strategy only against threats, neoclassical realism and omnibalancing engage with the unit-level factors and this fact distances them from tenets of simplicity, generality and purity present in realism's systemic analysis. Neoclassical realism advocates that domestic factors, such as identity or regime type, act as intervening variables framing

the state's response to systemic incentives (Rose, 1998), which turns it into a theory of foreign policy rather than IR and makes it resemble a blend of realism and constructivism. Omnibalancing, on the other hand, claims that Third World, or developing states due to their peculiarities, such as their artificiality, heterogeneity, lack of domestic legitimacy and authoritarianism prioritize balancing against internal threats over the external ones (David 1991: 235-241). Scholars have used this theory for explaining the behaviour of various states (*see*: Olson, 2007: 188-90; Nonneman, 2005: 1-45; Bobik, 2012; Fravel, 2008; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 1997) usually adding their touch and folding it according to their case studies (Strakes, 2011: 96). This raises the concern over amassing a wide array of states with different internal structures and claiming that the theory indifferently applies to them all. Meanwhile, as Elik (2008: 39) clarifies, omnibalancing cannot account for continuity or change in bilateral relations of specific states through a period of time. As noticed, despite modifications, realism still struggles to explain cooperation, change, and asymmetric relations involving non-state actors, which are prevalent phenomena in international relations.

In terms of asymmetric relations between unequal entities patron-client approach presents a distinct perspective on certain aspects of the relations between states and non-state actors. This approach has been widely used both at domestic and international level for explaining the relations between two actors of unequal power, social or financial status that have voluntarily entered into asymmetric relations via exchanging asymmetric services (*see*: Pelras, 2000: 394-5; Hunt, 2002: 4-21; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984: 43-7; Kaufman, 1974: 285; Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002: 3-4; Chandavarka, 1993: 28; Valenca, 1999; Pelras, 2002; Kudat, 1970; McKoy and Miller, 2012; Khan 2005; Carney, 1989; Soherwordi, 2011). In IR, patron-client relations emerge when there is an apparent asymmetry in the military power of the entities involved, the client is involved in the patronal competition, and other parties view the relationship as such (Carney, 1989:46). In spite of its resemblance with dependency relations, three main dissimilarities are perceptible. First, in the patron-client model, unlike pure dependency, actors enter into the relations voluntarily and the exit door is open to them. Secondly, unlike dependency, which covers merely socio-economic factors, patron-client relations involve ideological, military, cultural and strategic factors. Finally, there is an element of affinity in patron-client relations that makes it different from dependency (Carney, 1989: 43). Evidently, this approach is only applicable to the analysis of voluntary asymmetric *quid pro quo* relations and cannot explain the complicated involuntary relations of the globalization era.

Liberalism, which is also utilised in the literature for analysing T-IK relations, presents a counterargument to realism's pessimistic perspective that acknowledges the role of non-state actors and rationalizes the presence of international cooperation under anarchy. Unlike realists, liberals believe that regime type has an impact on foreign policy, as democracies are less likely to engage in war and advocate that increased social and economic contact, international norms and organizations,

and free-market economy facilitate cooperation under anarchy. Hence, contrary to realism, liberalism is more successful in explaining the logic behind cooperation and progress under anarchy, for instance in the case of European Union (*see*: Richardson, 2008: 43-4; Mingst, 2008: 63; Knusten, 1997: 211-14; Steans *et al.*, 2010: 26-28; Wilson, 1918; Brown and Ainley, 2005: 21-2). The concept of interdependence advocated by liberals further explains the incentives urging the actors to move away from power politics towards cooperation and integration.

Interdependence liberalism could be described as re-emergence of the liberal idea that free trade can create cooperation and peace mixed with the globalization advocacy that technological progress has turned the world into a small village. According to this brand of liberalism, the interdependence of states and people have increased due to technological revolution and high levels of transnational relations in particular in trade, but including many other fields such as security, investment and social matters, which has resulted in conflict and military confrontation losing their appeal, as these relations have created mutual dependence and common interests (Shoenbaum, 2006: 56-8). International actors, such as international trade organizations or regional unions, can play a significant role in enhancing the feasibility of cooperation and broadening the interest scope of states (Burchill, 2009: 66).

Global developments at times have increased the liberal optimism and hope, as evident from Fukuyama's (1989, 1992) 'The End of History' hypothesis formulated in the years following the end of Cold War, or Doyle's (1983a, 1983b) democratic peace theory, nevertheless, events such as Brexit, the rise of far-right groups, war on terror and on-going conflicts and rivalries in the Middle East, South China Sea, Ukraine and other regions are indicative of limits of the liberal rhetoric. Furthermore, as explained below, Marxist theorists direct their own criticism towards liberalism's ideal of free trade and a free-market economy, accusing it of favouring the developed economies.

Marx and Engels (1848) critic of capitalism that was based on the idea of class struggle between the proletariat and bourgeois classes became the inspiration for writers who criticized the inequalities present in the global economy that holds back the progress of poor, developing countries (*see*: Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Goldstein, 2005: 476-7; Mingst, 2008: 71). Such ideas organized under dependency theory and world-system theory divided the world into core and periphery, and in the case of the world-system, semi-periphery states and claimed that global economy works in a way that developed economies of the core exploit the periphery and prevent their industrialization and development, and this unequal distribution of wealth eventually turns the periphery states dependent on the core (Wallerstein, 1974; Wallerstein, 1976; Chirot and Hall, 1982: 81-2; Goldstein, 2005: 476-7). Dependency theory sheds light on unequal relations and can help analyse the imbalanced economic relations between two entities that favour only one of them at the expense of the other, ultimately ending in one-sided dependence.

However, dependency and world-system theories have their own shortcomings and are criticised for several reasons. The main one is their economic reductionism, which ignores the other realities and factors including cultural, social and political ones (*see*: Chirot and Hall, 1982: 97-102; Kaufman, Chernotsky and Gellersource, 1975: 329-330). In addition to reductionism, these theories are criticized for a number of other serious defects. For instance, Velasco (2002: 44-45) demonstrates how dependency theory, its assumptions and its policy recommendations are proved to be inaccurate. In some other works, dependency and world system theory's premises as well as their policy recommendations are put to the test and severely criticized or rejected based on empirical data (*see*: Kaufman, Chernotsky and Gellersource, 1975; Ahiakpor, 2009; Pieterse: 1988; Petras, 1981; Hollist, 1981).

In contrast to the above-mentioned theories, constructivism provides a different model for analysing international relations. Whereas realism, liberalism and Marxism employ positivist methodology and base their argument and explanations on the material structures, constructivism deploys post-positivism methodology and emphasizes the importance of normative structures for understanding the international relations. Even though different views and classifications exist in the constructivist camp (*see*: Zehfuss, 2004: 6-7; Wendt, 1992; Wendt, 1999; Weber, 2009: 81; Phillips, 2007: 60; Adler, 2010: 99), it could be argued that in essence constructivism believes in the social construction of reality in IR and interrelation of material and ideational structures in a way that normative or identity-based interpretation of the material structures defines the interest and course of actions to be taken by states and the actions taken in turn affects the structures in an on-going dynamic process (*see*: Jackson *et al.*, 2004: 338-9; Jackson and Sorensen, 2010: 209-10; Reus-Smit, 2009: 220-22; Mansbach and Rafeferty, 2008:34-5). This approach is remarkably helpful in explaining what is considered irrational action in international relations, as constructivism includes the ideational factor that can clarify such acts' intent.

Despite its explanatory power, for instance, in analysing the end of Cold War, constructivism has its own shortcomings. Rationalist approaches claim that most of the issues addressed by constructivists can be explained by interest and material factors and utilizing norms and identity for explaining IR is problematic as these factors are not observable. On the other hand, critical theorists accuse the constructivists of not paying adequate attention to language and taking terms such as state as non-problematic in line with the rationalist tradition (Steans *et al.*, 2010:201-2).

In addition to mainstream IR theories, the concept of paradiplomacy is also used in reference to IK's foreign policy (Abbas Zadeh and Kirmanj, 2017). This term that first appeared in the 1980s (Aguirre, 1999: 185) explores the role of sub-state units in international affairs. In other words, it studies the parallel role of the constituent political units of sovereign states in foreign affairs (Dhawan, 2019: 372). Even though T-IK relations constitute a significant part of IK's paradiplomacy, this concept is

not used for theoretical analysis of T-IK relations due to several reasons. The first reason is the absence of a general theoretical framework in the paradiplomacy literature, which is essential for theoretical analysis of the study. Lecours (2002, 92) openly refers to this fact, as he states:

However, this literature suffers from two major weaknesses: the first, and most important, is the absence of a general theoretical perspective that can explain how regional governments have acquired international agency, and what shapes their foreign policy, international relations, and negotiating behaviour; the second is a lack of focus on constructing general analytical frameworks that can guide the study of paradiplomacy.

Lack of such a framework is rooted in the fact that sub-state units include a list of diverse entities worldwide with strikingly different levels of prerogatives and power and diverse types of foreign engagement (Chatterji and Saha, 2017, 391). Indeed, Kuznetsov (2015: 50) lists eleven scholarly dimensions applied for understanding the external activities of the sub-state units in the literature on paradiplomacy.

The second reason deals with the unique nature of IK's case and the aim of this research. As discussed in the first section, IK as the product of unprecedented developments in the region is a distinct evolving entity that has experienced different levels of legality, recognition, authority and institutionalization through time. Due to this fact, IK's post-1991 history demonstrates that different actors and different foreign policy agendas have been pursued at different stages of IK's evolution. This issue problematizes the analysis of IK's foreign policy in terms of paradiplomatic relations in two major ways. First, IK's foreign policy in many occasions deviates from paradiplomacy and is closer to protodiplomacy, which is defined as "efforts to promote claims of political independence or autonomy by a people or political subunit" (McHugh, 2015: 244). In protodiplomacy, for advancing their legitimacy subunits emulate diplomatic behaviour and attempt to publicize their identity and interests and gain international support through the process (McHugh, 2015: 244).

Meanwhile, prior to constitutional recognition of the KRG, IK's diplomatic endeavours were not endorsed by the Iraqi state and were mainly informal and this deviates from the legally endorsed foreign activities of sub-state units examined in paradiplomacy research. This additionally makes it difficult to find proper entities for conducting comparative research. It should be noted that the aim of this research is an exclusive focus on T-IK relations rather than a comprehensive analysis of IK's diplomacy in general. It is worth mentioning that lack of theoretical framework in paradiplomacy literature, absence of academic work formulating IK's foreign policy and scarcity of research on IK's paradiplomacy create serious practical hurdles for a paradiplomacy-centred analysis of T-IK relations.

Another approach for the study of IR in the Middle East advocated by Darwich and Kaarbo (2020) suggests the use of foreign policy analysis ideas instead of eclectic methods for understanding the complexities of the region's relations. They offer four avenues of research to incorporate the domestic factor in the analysis of the region's relations, which are, "an understanding of public opinion's influence based on the distribution of information, the decision unit framework, leadership style and role theory" (Darwich and Kaarbo, 2020: 233). However, as this research focuses only on T-IK relations rather than the foreign policies of these two entities, this method's general application would not serve the purpose and aims of the research adequately. Meanwhile, this research has extensively explored the role of domestic factors in T-IK's relations, as demonstrated in the empirical chapters. Furthermore, the approach advocated by Darwich and Kaarbo (2020) is, in essence, eclectic as well, as it blends the foreign policy analysis and IR theories for the study of IR in the Middle East.

### **2.5.2. Emergent Analytical Categories and Analytic Eclecticism**

As discussed earlier, this research has employed the inductive method for analysing the data and material collected in the fieldwork and available in the literature. Through the process, the collected material was codified in an attempt to find proper answers and explanations for the research questions set by the study. The main aim was to find the main factors influencing and steering the bilateral relations. Numerous factors were mentioned in this regard both in the literature and in the fieldwork material. These included the role of nationalism, culture, geography, individuals (certain political leaders), different identities, the PKK, Kirkuk issue, Turkmen, certain countries, security concerns, energy, trade, investment, and religion. After a lengthy process of codification and thematic and content analysis, these factors were appropriately coded and classified into different groups based on their connection. As the outcome of this inductive process, four categories emerged, accommodating all the factors influencing the relations, namely 'identity', 'security', 'economy', and 'external interventions'.

The emergence of these analytical categories as the result of inductive research made it clear that T-IK relations are ruled by these four factors and ignoring any of them will provide a distorted image and analysis of the relations. Hence, it was concluded that a proper theoretical framework for the analysis of the relations must incorporate the role played by all the mentioned factor, without ignoring or leaving out the contribution made by each throughout the period under study. In search of proper IR theories, it was realised that despite their analytical power, no theory adequately incorporates the role of the four analytical categories mentioned above. Moreover, it was recognised that this problem is not limited to this research, as many complicated issues exist in global politics that require an eclectic approach for effective analysis that can capture reality potentially in its fullness. Issues such as European Union's foreign policy, South China Sea dispute, Iran's nuclear program, and Asia-Pacific security are examples of complicated topics that have been investigated through analytic

eclectic method for an effective comprehensive theoretical analysis (*see*: Regilme, 2018; Cornut, 2015, Phol and Willigen, 2015; Katzenstein and Okawara, 2001/2). In order to incorporate the role played by the analytical categories that inductively emerged, the applicability of the analytical eclectic approach, as explained below, is examined in this research.

### **2.5.3. Analytic eclecticism**

Each of the theoretical paradigms covered so far has its own narrow scope and focuses on a specific aspect of an IR issue or problem. For instance, ‘realism’ focuses on security, ‘liberalism’ on norms in international society, and ‘constructivism’ on identity for explaining the complexities of IR. Each theory has its own logic and analyses the world according to its framework of explanation leading to partial reality only through such a perspective. These logics operate well in explaining aspects of some problems or questions in the IR. However, there are some complex problems that one theory cannot explain alone. Each theory clarifies an aspect, namely partial reality, but not all aspects of such complex problems. For instance, while exploring Great Britain’s approach to Germany’s unification, Hayes and James (2014: 401) observed that while realism, neoliberalism and constructivism each explains an aspect of the British policy, none could explain it in its fullness. Through using the three theories simultaneously and interactively, Hayes and James (2014: 426-7) recognized that they could better explain the British stance. There are similar problems in IR that one theory alone cannot explain.

Insistence on using one paradigm or superiority of a paradigm leaves the empirical anomalies of world politics unexplained. Katzenstein and Okawara (2001/2: 154) argue against “privileging of parsimony that has become the hallmark of paradigmatic debates”, and instead advocate for “drawing selectively on different paradigms - that is by analytic eclecticism”. What Katzenstein and Okawara (2001/2: 183) advocate for is problem-driven research. Hence, the priority is explaining the complexity of a process occurring at a specific time, place and context, rather than attempting to explain everything through the narrow scope of one approach unsuccessfully.

Analytic eclecticism is not a research tradition in itself. As Friedrichs (2009: 646) explains, the idea is to combine existing theories in a pragmatic way to explain more complex problems in a novel way so that the reality can be captured as much as possible. In Friedrichs’ (2009: 646-647) words, in the process “the constituent elements of different research traditions are translated into mutually compatible vocabularies and then recombined in novel ways” so that interacting theories can reach an efficient explanatory power of the social reality.

Sil and Katzenstein (2010: 412) present an effective definition of analytic eclecticism, declaring that it is not an alternative model of research, but rather “an intellectual stance a researcher can adopt when



pursuing research that engages, but does not fit neatly within, established research traditions in a given discipline or field”. Meanwhile, three characteristics are identified for distinguishing analytic eclecticism. “First, it proceeds at least implicitly on the basis of a pragmatist ethos ... second, it addresses problems of wide scope ... third ... analytic eclecticism generates complex causal stories that forgo parsimony” (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 412). Certainly, choosing certain theories in the problem-driven analyses requires adequate justification. Hence, it should be stated why specific theories are selected and used in the analytic eclecticism, and the contribution of each theory in the combination must be elucidated (Cornut, 2015: 53-54).

Similar to other approaches and methods, analytic eclecticism has both pros and cons. As a method, it may be too malleable to be a research program in itself (Katzenstein and Okawara, 2001/2: 184-185). Meanwhile, as analytic eclecticism draws from different theories with competing analysis traditions, the problem of theoretical incoherence concerning incommensurability across traditions may become an issue (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 414-415). However, due to two reasons, it could be argued incommensurability is not a problem in this case. First, if incommensurability across traditions was true, we could not translate from a different language, or even understand the past stages of our language. Second, theories ultimately rely on empirical referents to operationalize diverse concepts, apparatuses and variables. This provides the opportunity to put elements of one causal story within a research tradition beside specific elements of another causal story from another tradition and combine, contrast or reconceptualise them (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 414-415).

In comparison, positive aspects of analytic eclecticism outweigh its shortcomings. Firstly, all theories have both good explanations and flaws. Since no single theory is flawless, there is no reason preventing eclecticism from utilising the positive aspects of different theories (Sil and Katzenstein, 2011: 10-11). Secondly, paradigms narrow down and ignore some factors, while analytic eclecticism does not ignore such facts and gives a better explanation (Sil and Katzenstein, 2011: 11). Thirdly, instead of overreliance on one paradigm and ignoring some facts, eclecticism finds the links “and interactions among a wide range of causal forces normally analysed in isolation from one another” (Sil and Katzenstein, 2011: 12).

## **2.6. CONCLUSION**

As discussed, various terms are adopted in reference to entities like IK that lack the full conditions required for statehood. This research argues that ‘unrecognised state’ is the term that best matches IK’s status, as it has emerged and institutionalised based on legal documents, but lacks de jure international recognition as a state. In the second section of this chapter, the IR theories that have been suggested by other contenders and the analytical

eclecticism approach, which is considered to be appropriate for including the role played by the four analytical categories of the research, are presented and explained. These theories are later reconsidered, and their applicability to the relations is examined in the conclusion chapter after conducting the analysis. Thus, after this theoretical introduction, the following chapters provide empirical analysis based on the inductively emerged analytic categories, which are brought together under analytical eclecticism approach in the conclusion chapter.

# **Chapter Three: HISTORICAL ROOTS OF TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS: FROM OTTOMAN LEGACY TO 1991**

## **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

As stated earlier, this study focuses on post 1991 relations between Turkey and IK. This is mainly due to the fact that since the establishment of modern states of Turkey and Iraq up to 1991, Kurds living in IK have never been capable of establishing and preserving an autonomous political entity comparable to their current one and consequently no formal relations between an Iraqi Kurdish entity and Turkey as stated had existed prior to this date to be explored by researchers. It is inevitable to assume that good portion of issues topping the agenda of current relations between Turkey and IK have their roots in this era of absent relations and even date far back to the shared Ottoman Empire history of Kurds and Turkey, events happening during the redrawing of borders following the WWI which finally incorporated the Mosul *Vilayet* (current IK) to the newly established state of Iraq, and ensuing Turkish-Iraqi relations. Without proper knowledge of this historical background, some policy conducts or political goals and expectations of Turkey and IK, and presence or absence of mutual trust in certain circumstances will be quite difficult to understand. In fact, instances of reference to the social links and the shared heritage signify the important role this factor is currently playing in fostering the ties between both sides.

This chapter, hence, presents a brief introduction to the historical environment preceding the creation of an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq (in 1991) in three sections to explore the historical evolution of the relations: section one discusses the different methods and policies Ottoman Empire utilized in dealing with Kurds and the Kurdish response (with an emphasis on IK area) and events preceding and following the WWI resulting in redrawing of borders and division of Kurdistan, while the following section sheds light on the organizational and historical evolution of Kurdish issue in Iraq. The last section explores the development of Kurdish issue in modern Turkey up to 1991 and establishment of the Kurdish administered region in Iraq.

### 3.2. OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND KURDS

It is a striking fact that certain dynamics shaping the Kurdish-Ottoman Empire's relations centuries ago still retain their power in forming T-IK relations nowadays. Factors such as identity, interference of external powers and regional politics, which shaped the Ottoman-Kurdish relations, are still dominant determinants in constructing the contemporary relations. In the same manner, internal factors influencing the foreign policy decisions and domestic weak points of both parties have proved to be longstanding dynamics preserving their reign on the region's politics over centuries.

While it could be noticed that historically Kurdish-Turkish relations are traced back to 11<sup>th</sup> century, the establishment of relations between Ottomans and Kurds dates back to 16<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to Ottoman and Safavid empires' take over of Kurdistan, the land had witnessed centuries of war and invasion resulting in downfall of Kurdish dynasties of Hasanwahys, Marwanids and Ayyubid. Kurdish Emirates were unable to survive and Kurdish land was mainly under the rule of Kurdish tribal chiefs who were frequently killed and replaced due to raids by new dynasties ruling the area or as the result of cunning policies they devised to control the Kurdish tribes (McDowall, 2005: 46-7). In that era, changing fortunes of ruling dynasties in the area meant frequent changes in the map of Kurdish areas ruled by different dynasties. However, this instability almost ended as Ottoman-Safavid rule over the region resulted in a longstanding division of Kurdistan between these rival empires.

Safavid raids into Kurdish lands and Ottoman Empire territories started in 1505, just three years after the establishment of Safavid Empire by Shah Ismail. The founder of Safavid Empire adopted the Shiite version of Islam as opposed to Sunni version adopted by Ottomans and his army was mainly composed of *qizilbash* troops. The sizable population of *qizilbash* living in Anatolia and their aptness to be influenced by the charisma of Shah Ismail (as evident in *qizilbash* rebellion in Anatolia in 1511) proved a great threat to Ottoman rule and ideology (McDowall, 2005: 25-6). Ottomans were swift in countering this threat as Sultan Selim I (the Grim) assisted by Kurds started a massive military campaign against Safavids culminated in Chaldiran war (1514) and resulted in Safavid defeat (Ozoglu, 2004: 47). As discussed below, Chaldiran is a turning point in Kurdish history, as it initiated the mechanism for Kurdish-Ottoman relations and consolidated the borderline between the two Empires, which is sustained until today. However, this resulted in the historic division of Kurdistan into

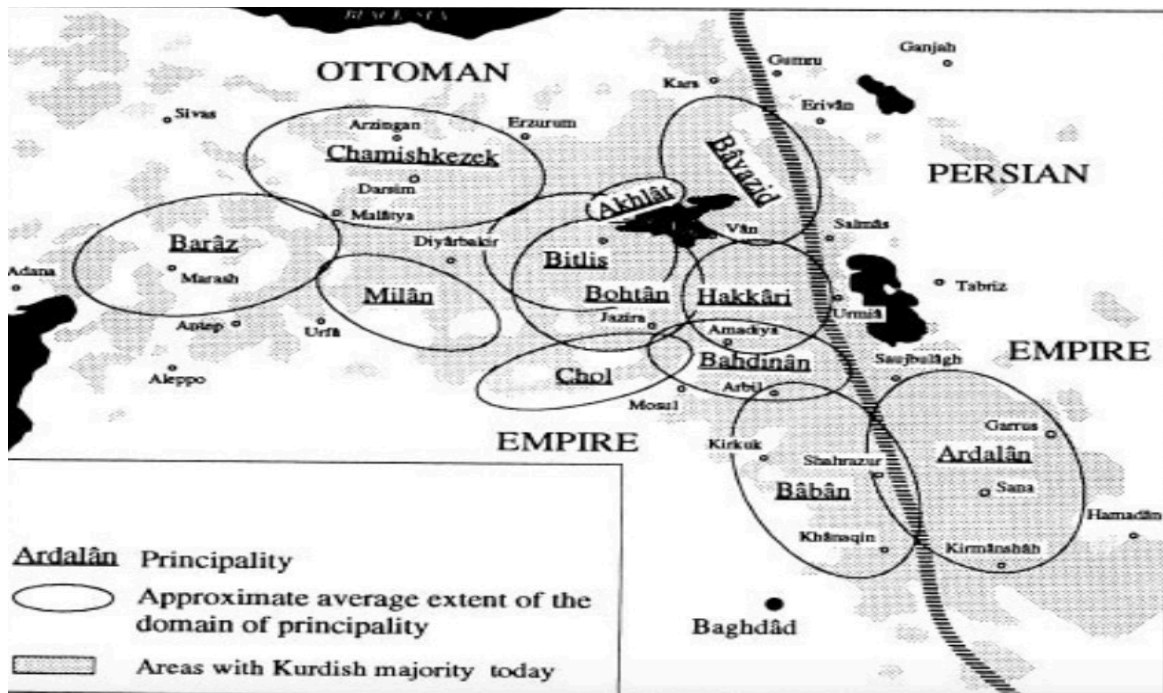
two parts: one under the Ottoman rule and the other under the Safavid rule. In addition to Chaldiran, some other wars occurred between Ottomans and Safavids, in which Kurdish forces played significant roles. These wars resulted in Amasia Treaty (1555) and Zohab Treaty (1639) that further consolidated the Ottoman-Safavid borders (Alyawayi, 2004: 18).

As stated, Kurds played a major role in Ottoman victory in Chaldiran and later protecting the Ottoman territories from Safavid expansionism. The credit for Kurdish support and allegiance to Ottomans mainly goes to a Kurdish notable working for the Ottoman court named Mevlana Idris Bitlisi. Given a free hand by the Sultan, he devised an administrative mechanism for granting the Kurdish-Ottoman cooperation, winning the support of Kurdish chieftains and consequently incorporating the Kurdish lands into the Ottoman imperial system.

According to Bitlisi's plan, Kurdish areas incorporated into the Empire were divided into three *eyalets* (provinces) of Diyarbakir (comprising most parts of Turkey's Kurdistan), Raqqa (comprising of parts of Syrian and remaining parts of Kurdistan in Turkey) and Mosul (approximately comprising of IK). The districts located in strategic or least accessible areas of these *eyalets* were left fully autonomous and had no tax obligations. These were called *Kurd hukumeti* (Kurdish government). Other areas were organized into some twenty *sanjaqs* (fiefdoms) with different degrees of freedom: centrally appointed rulers ruled some and others were ruled by Kurdish chiefs with no Ottoman interference in hereditary succession of these *sanjaqs* (Bruinessen, 1992: 157-162). Thus, Ottoman-Kurdish agreement resulted in the creation of 16 independent Kurdish emirates (or principalities), 50 Kurdish *sanjaqs* and a number of Kurdish *sanjaqs* ruled by Ottoman officials (Kendal, 1993: 14). As for the fate of the IK in this arrangement, it is noteworthy that some of the strongest emirates (such as Baban, Badinan, and Soran) were located in the present-day IK (*see*: Maps No 1 and 2) and enjoyed a high level of autonomy and at times *de facto* independence.

Different reasons have been mentioned for Kurdish cooperation and alliance with the Ottomans. However, Kurdish aspirations for independence or autonomy and identity in its religious form appear to be significant determinants that played a great role. As Mardukh (2011: 220) states, historically Kurds were identifying themselves with Persians on the basis of common race (or ancestral affinity), religion and history. However, adopting the Shiite Islam by the founder of Safavid Empire created a rift between Sunni Kurds and Shiite Persians and resulted in Kurdish support of Sunni Ottomans. No doubt, Bitlisi himself and his

**Map No 1 : Map of Historic Kurdistan**



Source: Izady (1992: 53)

**Map No 2: Historic Map of Kurdistan**



Source: Bruinessen (1992: 158)

arrangement that granted the Kurdish leaders *de facto* independence and recognition (Abdulwahid, 2011: 125) as well as Ottoman military might and organization also played their part in winning the support of Kurdish leaders (McDowall, 2005: 27). In fact, as the historical account of events discussed in this chapter reveals, Kurds have highly valued this *de facto* independence and fought for preserving it time and time again, which indicates the longevity and significance of this factor.

As McDowall (2005: 30) states, although Bitlisi's plan lasted well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was a pragmatic, rather than a perfect, one. Kurdish chiefs were trying to get greater independence (and if possible full independence as a state), while Ottomans were pushing for further control whenever possible and implementable. Thus, there are numerous occasions of Kurdish chiefs shifting sides between Ottomans and Safavids or fighting for achievements or independence and on the other hand Ottomans infringing on the granted rights and prerogatives of Kurdish rulers (Ozoglu, 2004: 49-51). As a matter of fact, absence of unity among Kurdish emirates and tribal chiefs was one of the main reasons behind the failure of Kurds in establishing a Kurdish empire in this sensitive era of Kurdish history (Mardukh, 2011: 222).

Although Bitlisi's plan organized the Kurdish-Ottoman relations for a good part of Ottoman era, it did not survive the reign of Ottomans. In the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ottomans opted for direct rule or centralization and initiated a new reform package called *Tanzimat* with the objective of reforming the Empire for re-emergence. One reason for this policy shift was Ottoman defeats in its European territories, which created a dire need for new soldiers to be recruited in Ottoman troops and Kurdistan was regarded as an unexhausted source of troops. Another reason was the prevention of foreign interference in Ottoman affairs, especially Russian and Persian attempts to use the Kurdish card against Ottomans (Alyawayi, 2004: 24-5). The evident outcome of centralization was revolts by Kurdish emirates whose rights and prerogatives enshrined by Bitlisi plan were violated. The major revolts occurred in present-day IK territories during this period are presented in brief in the following sections, due to their historical importance and relevance to IK.

### ***Baban Emirate Revolt***

The reign of Babans, over a territory that covered most parts of IK, dates back to early 16<sup>th</sup> century. As Bruinessen (1992: 171) states, from 1550-1850, territories under the rule of

Baban Emirate were merely nominally belonged to the Ottoman Empire. In addition, Ottomans never enjoyed full sovereignty over these territories, as Babans switched sides several times during this period. This was mainly a pragmatic response on part of Babans stirred by imperial rivalry of Ottomans and Safavids and later Ottomans and Qajars (McDowall, 2007: 34-5). In addition to their fame for switching sides, Babans are also known for their construction and infrastructure projects. The most important one is the city of Suleimaniya that was founded by Ibrahim Pasha (or Braim Pasha) of Baban in 1784 (Alyawayi, 2004: 37).

In 1788, Prince Abdulrahman Pasha who had the aspiration of establishing a Kurdish state became the ruler of Baban Emirate (Mella, 2005: 73). Though initially he made some progress, his attempts finally failed as his 1806 revolt was defeated by Ottoman troops in 1808 and he took refuge in Iran (Kendal, 1993: 18). Following this defeat, Baban Emirate lost its influence and significance mainly due to internal rivalries among the ruling family members and frequent Ottoman-Persian interference in the internal affairs of the emirate (Bruinessen, 1992: 173). Hence, finally in 1851 Abdullah Pasha, the last ruler of Baban, was ousted and replaced by a Turkish ruler named Ismail Pasha, which ended the Baban Emirate rule over Kurdistan (Alyawayi, 2004: 39-40).

### ***Soran Emirate Revolt***

Soran Emirate was among the emirates that existed at the time of Ottoman conquest of Kurdistan (Alyawayi, 2004: 25). This emirate obtained grandiose and significance in Kurdish history as Mir Mohammed of Rawanduz who displaced his father in 1814 took over its leadership and right away started an elimination campaign against his opponents and rivals in the ruling family (McDowall, 2007: 42). His aim was Kurdish independence and for achieving this aim he raised a strong army and established an armaments factory in his capital Rawanduz (Kendal, 1993: 16). Having defeated the internal rivals, Mir Mohammed started conquering the Kurdish territories in his neighbourhood one after the other. By 1825, he had defeated the Bahdinan Emirate's ruler and succeeded in controlling almost all the areas currently known as IK (Jwaideh, 2006: 56-59). Mir Mohammed's expeditions were not limited to IK. He attacked the Kurdish territories located in Persia as well forcing the Iranian leaders to ask for Russian help (Kendal, 1993: 19). Furthermore, he attacked the territories under the rule of Botan Emirate, located in present-day Turkey, and succeeded in capturing some of its cities (McDowall, 2007: 34).



Constant expansion of the Soran Emirate and growing influence and power of Mir Mohammed finally rang the alarm bells in Istanbul and resulted in an extensive Ottoman military campaign against the Mir. The initial Ottoman campaign, which lasted throughout the summer of 1834, proved unsuccessful and ended in Ottoman withdrawal. Nevertheless, Ottoman forces finally succeeded in convincing the Mir to surrender himself in 1836. He was sent to Istanbul and after spending some time in exile there, on his way back to Kurdistan he was assassinated and with his assassination the era of great Kurdish emirates came to an end in Iraqi Kurdistan (Kendal, 1993: 19-20).

The factors forcing the Mir to surrender and resulting in the fall of Soran Emirate are still debated. Alyawayi (2004: 27-29) refers to the following factors as the main reasons behind the fall of Soran Emirate:

- (i) Commander of Mir's army betrayed him and did not fight;
- (ii) Mir Mohammed was under siege as Ottomans attacked his capital from three sides and Iranian forces were also ready to attack in the other side of the border;
- (iii) Britain was supporting the Ottomans;
- (iv) There was no cooperation among Kurdish Emirates to defend each other in such a situation;
- (v) A *fatwa* (religious decree) was issued by an influential Kurdish cleric named Malay Khati declaring those fighting the Caliph's (Ottoman) army as infidel and as the result Mir's army deserted him and did not fight.

McDowall (2005: 44), however, mentions great power rivalry as another factor leading to the failure of Mir Mohammed. In his account, a British agent named Wood, wary of Russian support for Iranian troops and certain of Ottoman defeat in case of fighting with the Mir Mohammed army and eventually Mir Mohammed's inability to stand an Iranian invasion supported by Russians immediately after fighting Ottomans, convinces Ali Ridha Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, to negotiate with Mir Mohammed and persuade him to surrender. Ali Ridha Pasha succeeded in convincing the Mir and thus Soran Emirate fell to the Ottoman army.

Similar revolts occurred in other Kurdish emirates located in northern parts of Kurdistan, namely the Kurdistan in modern day Turkey territories. The most important ones were by Mir Bedir Khan of Botan starting in 1824 and ending in 1847 by the betrayal of Yezdan Sher, his nephew and army commander. Yezdan Sher himself initiated another revolt in 1853, which lasted until 1855, as he was arrested and imprisoned by an Ottoman plot in Istanbul (Bulloch and Morris, 1993: 80-82).

Downfall of Kurdish emirates did not mean the termination of indirect rule and autonomy in the Kurdish areas of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, due to Ottoman Empire's failure in filling the gap created by the overthrow of Kurdish Emirates, indirect rule continued to be practiced on a smaller scale through tribal chiefs and a group of religious leaders called '*Shaikh*' mainly from *Qadiri* and *Naqshabandi* Sufi orders. *Shaikhs* were respected by Kurds as religious leaders and instructors. However, it was their role as neutral arbiters in tribal feuds that bestowed them political leverage and turned them into political leaders in the Kurdish society (Bruinessen, 1992: 210). Therefore, the famous Kurdish revolts, which occurred following the annihilation of Kurdish emirates in mid-19th century, were in most cases led by the *Shaikhs* and their descendants.

Against this historical background it is not surprising that the first significant revolt following the downfall of the Kurdish emirates was organized and led by a *Shaikh* named *Ubaidullah* in 1880. Although Shaikh Ubaidullah's revolt mainly targeted the Persian Empire's territory and his motives and aims for revolution are still debated (Pelletiere, 1984: 50); nevertheless, he succeeded in summoning and commanding a big army capable of attacking and capturing Persian Empire territories and creating problems for the Ottoman Empire as well.

In line with Ottoman centralization policy aiming at controlling the Kurds and winning their allegiance was the establishment of an irregular Kurdish force called Hamidiya Cavalry in 1891 by Sultan Abdulhamid II. As Alyawayi (2004: 137) states, having a loyal Kurdish force under the direct rule of the Sultan was the main aim of this initiative. Recruits were from Eastern Anatolia and tribal chiefs were the commander of their tribesmen which were organized in Hamidiya regiments. Although Ottomans succeeded in utilizing this Kurdish force for their ends in several cases, as McDowall's quote of the British military consul at that time reveals, Hamidiya forces had been "under no control whatever, beyond that of their own native Chief" (McDowall, 2007: 60).

The situation in IK in the last decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century and prior to the WWI was not much different from other parts of the Kurdish areas in the Ottoman territory. *Shaikhs* and tribal leaders were in continuous flux with Ottomans, as Kurds were asking for further rights and Ottomans were attempting at tightening their control in the region. These tensions in some cases resulted in armed confrontations and instability. For instance, in the period 1908-1914 Shaikh Abd al-Salam of Barzan confronted the suppression attempts by the Ottoman governors of Mosul and Baghdad militarily and even in one case defeated the Ottoman troops. However, he was finally waylaid, captured and later executed by the Ottoman governor of Mosul in 1914 (Jwaideh, 2006: 110-113). Shaikh Said Barzinji backed by Hamawand tribe in Suleimaniya city and its surrounding areas instigated another revolt. Although Shaikh Said Barzinji was murdered in Mosul in 1909, the revolt continued under the leadership of his son, Shaikh Mahmood Barzinji, even up to the outbreak of the WWI (McDowall, 2005: 97).

### **3.3. WORLD WAR I AND EMERGENCE OF NEW STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

The final decades of the Ottoman rule witnessed great social, political and ideological upheavals in the empire. Christians that were enjoying special privileges, as other non-Muslim minorities of the empire, including exemption from military service, turned wealthier as the result of their trade links with Europeans. Indeed, the wealth gap between Muslim and Christian subjects of the empire became so visible in 1860s that resulted in a Muslim backlash manifest in the ‘Young Ottomans’ movement demanding reforms in accordance with a modern understanding of Islam (Zurcher, 2010: 68). Young Ottomans ideology gradually lost its salience as the result of Ottoman defeats in wars with Russia, rise of nationalism and growth of liberal ideas. For the sake of confronting the growing pressure of these novel ideas as well as external threats, Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) adopted a pan-Islamic policy (Zurcher, 2010: 68-69). However, Abdulhamid’s pan-Islamism could not resist the challenges raised by the impact of the Western type schools, military-schools as well as the Western political thought. Finally, in 1908 and under the pressure of military forces supporting the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) or the Young Turks, Abdulhamid agreed to restore the 1876 constitution, hold parliamentary elections and lift the

censorship (Kansu, 1997). This event is known as the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. It ended censorship and a year later (in 1909) deposed Abdulhamid for his support of a coup, which targeted the Parliament (Davison, 1998: 120-126).

At the outset, CUP included supporters of diverse ideologies as wide as pan-Ottoman, pan-Islamic, pan-Turkish or pan-Turanists, seculars, and a number of other views (Kansu, 1997). However, it was gradually dominated by advocates of pan-Turanism (demanding the unity of all Turkic-speaking people) who consequently limited the post-1908 liberties and dragged the Ottoman Empire to a fatal war in 1914 by siding with Germans in the WWI. The Ottoman defeat in the war also marked the end of pan-Turanists whose grip on power cost a sizable part of Ottoman land and great loss of lives (Davison, 1998: 126-136).

During this period of immense change, which witnessed the emergence of nationalist and secessionist movements among the various nations of the empire, Kurds were not passive spectators. In fact, despite its Turkish nationalistic orientation, CUP included a number of Kurds who believed in the constitutional reform and supported the 1908 revolution. Moreover, a number of Kurdish associations, clubs, schools and papers surfaced following the revolution that set the foundation of Kurdish nationalism (Kendal, 1993: 26-33). These new Kurdish organizations were mainly founded by Kurdish intellectuals especially sons and descendants of Kurdish notables holding posts in the Ottoman bureaucracy.

Among these was, *Kurt Terraki ve Teavun Cemiyeti* (Kurdish Society for Progress and Mutual Aid), headed by notables such as Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Nehri, son of Sheikh Ubeydullah, and Emin Ali Bedir Khan. This society established a cultural branch called the Society for Propagation of Kurdish Education that reinstated the publication of a magazine called *Kurdistan* (Olson 1991: 15) initially published in the form of newspaper in 1898 as the first published Kurdish paper (Izady, 1992: 59). Another Kurdish organization emerged in 1912, three years after the 1909 closure of the Kurdish Society for Progress and Mutual Aid by the Young Turks, named *Hevi-ya Kurd Jamiyati* (Kurdish Hope Society) founded mainly by sons of Kurdish notables in Istanbul (McDowall, 2005, 94). This society started publishing a bilingual Kurdish-Turkish magazine called *Roji Kurd* (Kurdish Day) later renamed *Hetawi Kurd* (Kurdish Sun) from June 1913 and the society itself was active until the outburst of the Great War in 1914 (Alyawayi, 2004: 171-172).

During the chaotic years of the First World War majority of Kurds, as Muslims responding to the Ottoman Caliph's call, participated in the war and fought for the Ottoman army (Kendal, 1993:199). However, the burden of providing troops for the army was not the only suffering that war brought upon Kurds. In addition to the casualties in the front, CUP army evicted up to 700,000 Kurdish civilians from their villages to deny the enemy shelter and food, while many other Kurdish civilians fled their areas to avoid the atrocities of the enemy armies (McDowall, 2005: 103-4).

As armistice was signed between defeated Ottoman Empire and allies in October 1918 at the end of the war, Kurds restarted their nationalist activities and Kurdish societies surfaced again. *Kurdistan Taali Cemiyeti* (Society for the Rise of Kurdistan) replaced the Kurdish Society for Progress and Mutual Aid and the revived Kurdish Hope Society later merged with a fraction of young, radical members of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Olson, 1991: 21-2). In spite of presence of such organizations, Kurdish nationalism at this era was not as strong as the nationalistic feelings and organization of other Ottoman nations and Kurdish notables had different views and plans for the future of the Kurdish nation. Kurds were still more at ease to identify themselves as Muslim Ottomans living in a Muslim community ruled by Caliph and Kurdish leaders were more in favour of granting Kurdish autonomy rather than independence. These tensions are evident in Kendal's account of internal debates of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan. As Kendal puts it, while young radical members of the society were fervently backing the idea of independence, notables headed by Sheikh Abdul Qadyr were advocating the autonomy and cooperation with Turks, believing that it is not appropriate for Kurds to abandon their Muslim Turkish brothers and arguing that if Turks decide to deprive Kurds from their right to autonomy, Kurds will take this right by force (Kendal, 1993: 32). In fact, CUP leaders (and later Mustafa Kemal) were clever enough to benefit from Islamic sentiments of Kurds and pretended that they support the local governance or control of Kurdish areas by Kurds (McDowall, 2005: 124-5).

An important development with longstanding impact on the future events following the war was a treaty signed between Ottomans and victorious powers in August 1920 called Treaty of Sevres deciding on the fate of Ottoman territories thereafter. Articles 62-64 of section III in this treaty dealt with Kurdistan, containing a scheme for independence of a segment of Kurdish lands (*see: Map No3*) (Jawideh, 2006: 131-2). This treaty was signed at a time when Turks (assisted by Kurds) under the leadership of General Mustafa Kemal (later Ataturk) had

already started fighting for liberation of Ottoman territories under occupation (known as the War of Independence) and finally succeeded in forcing their demands in a new treaty named Lausanne three years later. Besides the appeal of Islamic solidarity utilized by the government established in Ankara by Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues (Bruinessen, 1992: 272-3), two other factors encouraged Kurds in taking part in the War of Independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, the successful completion of which dashed the Kurdish aspirations for autonomy and independence. These factors were fear from incorporation of Kurdish lands into the Armenian state devised in Sevres treaty (see: Map No 3) and landing of Greek troops at Smyrna (Izmir) and subsequent events which led emphasising on Islamic identity and cracking down on expressions of Kurdish identity (McDowall, 2005: 126).

### Map No 3: Kurdistan in Sevres Treaty



Source: Izady (1992: 58)

The treaty signed in Lausanne on 24 July 1923, which contained no reference to Kurds and their rights except for a hint at cultural rights of people speaking in languages other than Turkish in its Article 39, dashed all Kurdish hope for independence and autonomy (Mango, 2010: 172-4). In spite of the Turks' success in controlling most parts of the Kurdish territory, control of Mosul *Vilayet* (present day IK) remained debated between the newly established state of Turkey and Britain for years. Finally, in 1925 the League of Nations awarded the

Mosul *Vilayet* to Iraq under British mandate (Abdullah, 2003: 133). Rivalry on the *Vilayet* was centred on discovery of oil and its importance for British (Abdullah, 2003: 132) as well as Turkish side and Turkey's fear from establishment of an independent Kurdish state in this area by British forces and spill over of nationalistic feelings and demands to Kurdish territories under Turkey's rule (Mango, 2010: 174).

### **3.4. A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF KURDS IN IRAQ FROM 1918 TO 1991**

The political evolution of Kurds in IK prior to 1991 can be broadly classified into two periods: the era of tribally organized nationalism (up to 1946) and the era of party-organized nationalism (post 1946). The first era includes the Kurdish struggle epitomized in Sheikh Mahmood's revolts in Suleimaniya and Sheikh Ahmed and Mulla Mustafa Barzani's revolts in the Barzan area. The second era starts with establishment of Kurdistan Democratic Party in 1946 and encompasses the Kurdish revolts organized by Kurdish political parties following this date. These are discussed in the following sections.

#### **3.4.1. Tribally Organized Nationalism (1918-1946)**

As already stated, during the Ottoman reign the geographic area constituting the modern-day Iraqi state was divided into three *Vilayets* (provinces) of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul inhabited by majority Sunni Arabs, Shiite Arabs and Kurds, respectively. British forces started attacking these provinces in 1914 and succeeded in occupying them by the end of 1918 (Tripp, 2008: 31-2). However, ruling these territories and their ethnic, religious and culturally different inhabitants under the umbrella of a new state was not an easy task for Britain and the British appointed royal family that ruled Iraq till their bloody downfall following 1958 revolution.

At the early years of the occupation due to a number of practical as well as political reasons Britain considered a special treatment of Mosul Province, which led to devising the indirect rule policy for administration of the area through employing the local tribal leaders (Eskandar, 2000: 140-1). Nevertheless, international and regional changes coupled with substitution of British officials in charge of administering the region and Kurdish activities and revolts finally stirred the British policymakers to bring the province under the direct rule

of Baghdad and deprive it of its autonomy prerogatives (Eskandar, 2000:151-3). Hence, the British project of direct rule and later state-building countered numerous Kurdish revolts which set the foundation of Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish political development in Iraq.

As Britain was establishing its control over the Kurdish tribes in Mosul *Vilayet*, a number of skirmishes happened with tribal forces in northern parts of the province. These clashes happened in Zakho, Amadiya, Zibar-Barzan regions, Aqra and parts of Erbil, and as described in detail by Jwaideh (2006:147-159), they were not due to nationalistic feelings or demands. In contrast, Kurdish revolts with apparent nationalist flavour first broke out in the southern part of the province and in the city of Suleimaniya, where, in line with indirect rule policy, Britain had appointed Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji, an influential religious leader, as the governor to control the area. However, his Kurdish administration did not last long after his appointment in October 1918, as he was toppled in May the following year for revolting in search of extending the boundaries of his administration and his prerogatives. Sheikh Mahmud was arrested and sent to exile, just to be brought back in autumn 1922 as the area was in a chaotic state due to the threats of Turkish incursion (Sluglett, 2007:77-80). However, upon his reinstallation in Suleimaniya, Sheikh revolted again in November 1922 and declared himself the king of independent Kurdistan with Suleimaniya as its capital (Pelletiere, 1984: 64). Sheikh's second administration did not survive the raids of British and Iraqi troops and was finally collapsed in July 1924. As Iraq joined the League of Nations in 1930 and signed an Anglo-Iraqi treaty ignorant of Kurdish rights, Sheikh Mahmud instigated another revolt, which lasted for eight months (Sadiq, 2002: 83-6).

The revolts of Sheikh Mahmud were soon followed by other tribally organized rebellions further north in Barzan region. These were led by another charismatic religious leader named Sheikh Ahmed Barzani and in later stages by his brother Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Barzani tribesmen under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmed fought a number of wars against Iraqi army backed by British RAF as well as some neighbouring tribes from 1928 to 1933 until they finally were defeated and Sheikh and a number of his family members were exiled from Barzan first to Nasiriya and then Suleimaniya to remain under house surveillance (O'Ballance, 1973:24-5). In 1943, Mulla Mustafa escaped his house arrest and staged another revolt in Barzan area asking for implementation of some national demands. In spite of initial military victories in a number of clashes with Iraqi forces, finally in 1945 Barzani was forced



to retreat to Iran where he joined the short-lived Kurdish Republic in Mahabad (Bois, 1966: 152).

In addition to the revolts led by Kurdish religious-tribal leaders, Kurdish intelligentsia in urban centres of IK were actively engaged in political activity and established a number of Kurdish associations and political parties. In absence of Kurdish organizations, Kurds first favoured the Iraqi Communist Party (founded in 1934); nevertheless, as anti-Kurdish feelings rose among Arabs following Bakir Sidqi's coup in Baghdad in 1936, the Kurds started forming their own parties and societies as a nationalist reaction (Mella, 2005:129-30). Thus, *Komalay Brayati* (Brotherhood Society), a group with pro-leftist and nationalist ideologies led by Sheikh Mahmud's son, Sheikh Latif, was formed which was mainly restricted to urban notables and religious dignitaries. Meanwhile, younger and more radical nationalists in Suleimaniya formed another group named *Darkar* (Woodcutters), and later a party named *Hiwa* (Hope) which both included educated urban folk while lacking peasants and tribesmen in their ranks (McDowall, 2005:287-90). *Hiwa* disintegrated by mid-1944 and two new short-lived parties with similar support bases namely *Shurish* (Revolution) and *Rizgari Kurd* (Kurdish Liberation) emerged to fill the vacuum (McDowall, 2005: 294).

No doubt, Sheikh Mahmud and later Barzani revolts in spite of being led by religious-tribal leaders stood for national demands and aspirations. Nevertheless, these revolts lacked political organization and urban-tribal cooperation. In fact, Kurdish tribesmen were following their leaders due to their religious or leadership charisma not due to a well-organized nationalist ideology. On the other hand, Kurdish organizations mentioned earlier failed in bridging the gap between themselves and Kurdish peasants and tribesmen and advancing the Kurdish nationalism to an organized mass movement including Kurds rank and file. Hence, Kurdish political evolution in 1918-1946 period could at best be labelled as the era of tribally organized nationalism.

### **3.4.2. Party-Organized Nationalism (Post 1946)**

Kurdish political evolution proceeded to a new phase as Kurdish Democratic Party; later renamed Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was founded. This party was established in 1946 following Mullah Mustafa Barzani's proposal, while he was in exile in Iran and subsequently he was chosen as its leader in exile (Ghareeb, 1981: 35). Unlike the former parties, KDP under the leadership of Barzani as its charismatic tribal leader and with educated urban

intellectuals like Ibrahim Ahmed and Jalal Talabani in its politburo succeeded in organizing and uniting Kurdish peasants and educated urban dwellers in the struggle for Kurdish rights (O'Leary and Salih, 2005: 21). Meanwhile, finally Barzani's exile ended as Abd al-Karim Qasim toppled the monarchy in Baghdad replacing it with a republican system in 1958 and issued amnesty for Barzani enabling him to return in the October of the same year (Rubin, 2007: 360).

In spite of good relations at the outset, Kurdish demands for autonomy and further rights were rejected by Qasim (Pelletiere, 1984:124), and as a result, tensions were escalated and finally in September 11, 1961 the Kurdish revolt (known as *Eylul* or September Revolution) broke out which lasted intermittently for 14 years (Bulloch and Morris, 1993:123). The most significant events during this period of alternating negotiations, confrontations and ceasefires were internal rivalries and clashes between Barzani and some members of his politburo headed by Ahmed and Talabani, 1970 autonomy agreement with Baghdad and finally the collapse of the revolution. Indeed, Barzani forces clashed with the Ahmed-Talabani fraction in 1964, forcing them out of the Kurdish region. Later, this fraction took arms against Barzani in 1966 in cooperation with Iraqi forces (Sluglett, 1989: 194-5). However, due to failure in subduing the Kurdish revolt led by Barzani, Iraqi government finally signed an accord with him in 11 March 1970 to be implemented in four years. This accord granted Kurds the autonomy, constitutional recognition, and representation in Iraqi government with positions as high as vice-presidency, recognition of Kurdish language as official language as well as education in Kurdish language, and a number of other rights (McDowall, 2005:327-28). This was a milestone achievement in the history of Kurdish struggle, which granted a good number of Kurdish demands. However, this agreement had a short longevity and lasted just four years.

War between Kurdish forces and Iraqi troops broke out again in 1974 as Iraqi government cunningly avoided implementing the accord and brought forward a new deal unfavourable to Kurdish demands. Finally, in a regional plot victimizing the Kurds, Iraq and Iran signed the Algeria Agreement in 1975, according to which Iraq made territorial concessions in return for termination of Iranian support for Kurds. The immediate result was the eventual collapse of the Kurdish revolt, which was deprived of all regional and international support (Slugett and Slugett, 1990: 168-170).

After the disappearance of Mulla Mustafa Barzani from the political scene, IK witnessed the emergence of new political parties. A new party named Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) was established under the leadership of Jalal Talabani as the party leader in 1975 as a left-wing group called *Komala* (brotherhood) led by Nawshirwan Mustafa Amin joined forces with a social democrat group named *Bezutnamwa* (Movement) headed by Ali Askari. Meanwhile, Mulla Mustafa's son, Masoud and Idris, dominated the KDP, while a group headed by Sami Abdul Rahman split from it in late 1970s and established a party called Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party (KPDP). Furthermore, the first Kurdish Islamic party named Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK) was established in 1979 by Sheikh Othman Abdul Aziz (Anderson and Stansfield, 2004: 168-9). As future developments studied later in the research reveals, increase in the number of political parties with different ideologies and agendas casts a lasting impact on the future of political and national struggle in the Kurdish region.

It should be noted that the Algeria Agreement left Kurds helpless and isolated, while the regime change in Iran and subsequently Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) provided unanticipated help and support for Kurdish parties in their struggle with the Baath Regime in Baghdad. In fact, the success of Kurdish forces known as *Peshmerga* (those who face death) in capturing Kurdish territories in the final years of the war forced Baghdad to use unconventional weapons and punitive measures against *Peshmerga* and Kurdish civilians alike. Hence, in an infamous campaign known as *Anfal* (the spoils of war), as stated by Leezenberg (2013: 395), depending on different estimates 50,000 to 200,000 Kurds were killed and many more were displaced. An instance of this brutal massacre was chemical attack on the Kurdish town of *Halabja* in 16 March 1988, resulting in the tragic death of 5,000 Kurdish men, women and children (Leezenberg, 2013: 399). The campaign did not merely target the human lives, as 90 percent of Kurdish villages were destroyed and their inhabitants were killed or displaced (Johns, 1988). An outstanding impact of the atrocities committed during *Anfal* campaign was unification of Kurdish parties with different ideologies in a front established in May 1988 named Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) consisting of KDP, PUK, KPDP, Kurdistan Socialist Party, and Kurdish Social Party and later joined by Iraqi Communist Party, Kurdistan Toilers' Party and the Assyrian Democratic Party (Rabil, 2003). Therefore, a war-torn hopeless nation and a helpless IKF witnessing the end of Iraq-Iran conflict was the dominant picture of IK's political scene in the final years of the 1980s prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

### 3.5. KURDISH ISSUE AND ITS IMPACT ON IRAQ-TURKEY RELATIONS

#### 1920s-1990

Kurdish issue has played a significant role in the relations between Turkey and Iraq since their emergence as sovereign states in the early decades of twentieth century. Whereas before the resolution of Mosul province's fate, the relations were tense; nevertheless, after the solution of this case and throughout the 1926-1990 era, relations remained amicable. Mango (1968: 230) explains this strange friendship in terms of the fear from Kurdish threat. As he states, both countries lack ethnic homogeneity and fear disintegration due to Kurdish nationalistic demands. In line with this argument, pacts signed between these countries have a direct relation with Kurdish issue.

In fact, it could be argued that Kurdish issue was a major reason behind the Turkish failure in keeping Mosul as a part of its territory. As the result of secular and nationalist policies utilized by Ataturk's government and cruel suppression of Kurdish revolts, Turkey alienated its Kurdish population, who found itself outside the new identity devised for the country, and, therefore, the new regime lost the trust and support of Kurds living in Mosul province, hence providing justification for the League of Nations commission to award the province to Iraq (Izady, 1992: 64).

Indeed, Kurdish revolts in Turkey and Iraq reminded both states of their vulnerability and stirred them towards cooperation. That's the reason King Faisal, the British appointed King of Iraq, received Ataturk's hospitality in June 1926, as he visited Turkey and friendly relations continued with the establishment of legations in Baghdad and Ankara in 1928, while both countries promised avoiding the support of Kurdish movements on the other state's soil (Hso, 2008: 28). In line with this policy, and for the sake of getting Iran's cooperation in its fight against Kurdish nationalists, Turkey signed a treaty with Iran in 23 January 1932 and in March signed another treaty with Britain and Iraq (Olson, 1991: 140).

In addition to treaties and mutual promises directly related to Kurdish issue, Turkey and Iraq became signatories to regional pacts initiated by and aimed at countering the communist threat; nevertheless, related to the Kurdish issue, even though not directly stated in the pacts. The first pact of this type was *Saadatabad* Pact signed in 8 July 1937 by Iraq, Turkey and

Iran in a palace with the same name in Tehran (Gunter, 1997: 90). This pact was followed by a similar one called Baghdad Pact. In fact, Iraq worried of Soviet threat and demanding Turkish cooperation on Kurdish issue signed this pact with Turkey in 24 February 1955 and later Britain, Pakistan and Iran joined the pact (Uzer and Uzer, 2005: 113).

It's worth mentioning that the Turkish fear from spillover of Kurdish nationalism from Iraq was so grave that Turkey stepped in to prevent Iraqi government from signing a deal with Talabani's PUK. In this incident, Turkish foreign minister flew to Baghdad in October 1984, warning Iraqi officials of closure of Iraq's sole oil export outlet from the north through Turkey (McDowall, 2005: 350-1). In addition to such interferences in internal politics of Iraq, Turkey signed a security protocol directly linked to the Kurdish issue in both countries the same year. According to this protocol, both countries acquired the right of hot pursuit of Kurdish rebels up to 5 kilometres on the soil of the other country without any need for prior consent (Keskin, 2008: 64). After chemical attack on *Halabja* in 1988 Turkey denied extending the agreement and two years later Turkey's demand for extension was turned down by the Iraqi side (Keskin, 2008: 63).

### **3.6. POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC AND KURDISH ISSUE**

As mentioned earlier, under the leadership of General Mustafa Kemal, who was later awarded the title 'Ataturk' or 'father of Turk', a new state emerged from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire that was named Turkey. Whilst those fighting for saving the empire had different plans and visions for the future, at last it was Ataturk's vision that dominated and later decided on the route to be taken by the new state. In essence, he shook the foundations of the Ottoman political, cultural and social life as he embarked on a process of constructing a new identity shaped by modernization, secularization and Turkish nationalism resulting in a number of Kurdish revolts in Turkey as a response.

Historically, the transition from empire to modern state started as early as 1923 in which due to efforts by Ataturk and his colleagues on 13 October 1923, Ankara replaced Istanbul as the capital of Turkey. Meanwhile, on October 29 Turkish Republic was declared by the Grand National Assembly and Ataturk was later elected as the first president and Ismet Inonu as the

first prime minister of the Republic (Davison, 1998: 146). In line with the secularization policies of the new republican state, the assembly abolished the caliphate on 3 March 1924 and the last Ottoman caliph and his family were sent into exile. Moreover, the state attempted to exercise control over religious affairs in order to prevent its opponents from utilizing religion for influencing public policy. Corresponding to this policy, a number of measures were taken which included banning the religious schools (*madrasah*), discouraging and removing the religious education, abolishing the office of Sheikh-al-Islam and putting a governmental department in charge of religious affairs and employing mosques personnel (Mango, 2009: 186-7).

Religion was not the sole target of the republican regime's hostility and its early reforms. As part of the state's strategy to engineer an imaginary state based on Turkishness with unilingualism, Turkish became the official language of the country and all residents of the state, as well as the past people of Anatolia, were termed as Turkish people. Under this new identity construction project, soon Kurdish identity, language and even acknowledging the fact that Kurds and Kurdistan exist became taboos. Consequently, in newly established modern Turkey, Kurdish language, political parties and even cultural activities were banned (Natali, 2005: 81-3).

Implementation of such large-scale and Jacobean reforms was not an easy task and as the result opposition materialized in two ways. Non-violent opposition was led by a group of Ataturk's companions who formed an opposition party named Progressive Republican Party to enrol the support of those dissatisfied with the speedy pace of reforms implemented by Ataturk's Republican People Party (CHP). However, their party was soon banned, and single party rule remained the norm for several years up to 1946 (Mango, 2009:187). Nevertheless, fierce reaction surfaced in the form of revolts against the state in the Kurdish areas. Abolition of caliphate had severed the bond connecting the Kurds and Turks as Muslim brothers living in an Islamic community and the new reforms had terminated the Kurdish autonomy and shattered the nationalistic aspirations of the Kurds as well as affecting their everyday life in the process of Turkification. Meanwhile, Kurds and their identity were kept outside the new identity definition devised for the nation by Ataturk and his colleagues.

Hence, the first revolt was led by Sheikh Said, a popular religious leader, in connection with a Kurdish society named *Azadi* (Freedom), which was founded in 1923 (Olson, 1991:41). The revolt was planned for some time in March or May 1925; nevertheless, it broke out early due

to unaccounted for events on 8 February without adequate preparation (Ozsoy, 2010:137-8). Consequently, in spite of initial victories, the revolt was brutally suppressed by April and Sheikh Said and forty-six of his followers were arrested and sentenced to death, which was carried out in June 1925 (Leary, 2008: 7). The crime attributed to them was presented in different ways to domestic consumption as well as external world; for the former it was the Kurdish separatism and for the latter the religiosity of the uprising in the sense of restoring the caliphate. In following this, views differ on the nature of Sheikh Said's rebellion as some describe it as religious and others name it nationalistic (Aydin, 2005: 27-8). However, it is obvious that both stances could be justified due to the circumstances in which the revolt occurred and the nature of the leadership directing it.

Suppression of Sheikh Said's revolt and the subsequent punitive measures taken by government did not dissuade Kurds from revolting again. Consequently, a Kurdish nationalist organization named *Khoybun* (Independence) founded in October 1927 staged a new revolt known as the *Agri Dag*h or the Mount *Ararat* Revolt. This revolt was led by General Ihsan Nuri Pasha whose troops had seized control of areas in Mount Ararat by 1928 and established a small Kurdish entity. Even though the revolt spread to some other Kurdish areas, it was finally crushed in 1930 via Iranian cooperation. Once again, severe punitive measures, including mass arrests and deportations, summary executions, and destruction of villages followed the suppression of the revolt (Jwaideh, 2006: 211-14).

The last longstanding Kurdish unrest in the early decades of the Republic led to the emergence of other revolts including the Dersim (Tunceli) Revolt in an area populated by Zaza Kurds, where Kurds resisted the assimilation and centralization policies of the state and therefore they were ruthlessly eliminated by the government troops and their popular resistance, which started in 1936 and was confronted in 1937 was finally crushed in 1938 with utmost atrocity (Kendal, 1993: 58).

It is worth noting that the above mentioned revolts only covered a portion of Kurdish territories and none managed to spread through the whole Kurdish areas inside Turkey's borders (*see*: Map No 4); and therefore, remained localized uprisings, which can be explained by the lack of nationalistic awareness among the Kurds.

**Map 4: Kurdish Uprising and Nationalist Movements 1880-1939**



Source: Izady (1992:63)

Beyond the long-lasting impact of the initial reforms on the Kurds, during the lifetime of Atatürk, many other secular and nationalist reforms were implemented which even entered the sphere of family life. In addition to abolition of caliphate and banning religious schools, religious courts were closed down and substituted by civil courts, alphabet switched to Latin, European calendar adopted and even *fez* (an Ottoman headgear) was banned and replaced by hat. Any opposition to such reforms was confronted with capture and even execution (Zurcher, 2004: 172-3). Meanwhile, single party rule under Atatürk's leadership remained intact, except for a short interval in 1930, when based on his initiative Fethi Okyar established a short-lived Free Republican Party to survive only for few months (Aksin, 2007: 209-10).

### 3.6.1. Political Developments in Turkey from Inonu to Ozal

Even though Atatürk himself died in 1938, his legacy lingered on as his ideas were fervently adhered to by his followers and were later denominated as Kemalist ideology or Kemalism, which is enshrined in the Turkish constitution. Thus, Ismet Inonu who replaced Atatürk as the second president of the republic carried on the reform policies with a greater zeal to indicate his adherence to Atatürk principles and ideas. In his era, repression and assimilation of Kurds continued and Kurds who had witnessed the cruel suppression of the revolts and tragic



atrocities occurred afterwards were in a weak position incapable of staging armed uprisings for decades to come. Hence, this period can be considered as ‘silence period’ in the modern Kurdish history.

In that era of Turkish history, government crackdown and negligence of Kurdish areas even resulted in decrease in Kurdish population (Izady, 1992: 62-3). The observations of a Turkish journalist who visited the Dersim area in 1948 indicates that there were no traces of civilization in the area due to absence of any governmental projects (even in health and education) and destruction resulted by the fighting. He claims that gendarmeries and tax collectors were the government’s sole embodiment in the region (Kendal, 1993: 63). Thus, Inonu’s years in office proved to be harsh time, not only for Kurds, but also for other minorities who suffered tax bias, such as the 1946 ‘wealth tax’ imposed on minorities (Stone, 2010: 159) as well as individuals and groups dissatisfied with the regime and with no outlet to express their resentment.

Inonu and his party could not maintain the single party rule as the changes in the international arena demanded changes in Turkey’s domestic politics as well. Therefore, due to prevalence of capitalist democracy following the WWII and for enlisting American aid and protection for countering the threats posed by the Soviet Union on Turkey’s territories, Inonu terminated the single party rule and gave way to democracy through initiating the multi-party system (Zurcher, 2004: 208-9). As the result of this policy shift, new political parties emerged, the most influential one being Democratic Party (DP) that was established on 7 January 1946 by former members of the Republican People’s Party. It even succeeded in winning 40 seats in the first ever multi-party based election held in July 1946 a few months after its establishment; an election which was accused of widespread fraud (Mango, 2004: 42-3).

Few years later and in 1950 elections, the DP that had provided a channel for liberal, conservative, Kurdish, Islamic and other non-represented voices of Turkish society to express their concerns won a sweeping majority with 408 seats against 69 seats of Inonu’s CHP and ended the long monopolistic reign of the CHP over Turkey (Jung and Piccoli, 2001: 86-7), as it promised to bring back the ‘rule of law’ and ‘power of the people’.

On the whole, the early years of the Democrat’s rule provided a breathing space, although restricted, for long subjugated people of Turkey. In addition to developments in the economic sector and in particular modernization of agriculture (Dodd, 2012: 55), the DP

headed by Adnan Menderes as its Prime Minister allowed the return of Islam to the public domain (Karakas, 2007: 13) and to a good extent eased the pressure exerted on the Kurdish population. In effect, the new election system and the DP's need for winning votes was one of the main reasons behind this policy shift. As the outcome, Kurdish areas witnessed certain level of relaxation in assimilation and repression policies exercised by the former administrations, while some of the Kurdish notables from Sheikh and tribal chiefs' families were allowed to return and act as clients guaranteeing votes for their DP patron and on the other hand distributing the incentives provided by the state among their supporters (Bruinessen, 1984: 8). In this process, some members of the leading Kurdish families had become Member of Parliament, including the grandson of Sheikh Said. This initially provided hope for the normalization of the Kurdish issue.

Another important development in this era was the appearance of Kurdish publications. McDowall (2005: 405) refers to this development as "the first Kurdish self-expression" since Dersim revolt. These publications, as well as Kurdish deputies in the Parliament who were campaigning for development projects in the neglected Kurdish areas in Turkey were nominated as 'Eastist', since the ban on the words Kurdish and Kurdistan had urged them to use 'East' in reference to the Kurdish areas.

While the early years of the DP's rule was coupled with economic progress and democratic reforms, the last years of the decade long reign of this party witnessed the return to authoritarian practices and deterioration of the country's economy. Freedom of press was curbed, some publications were closed down and opposition leaders were under pressure (*see*: Aksin, 2007: 261-64). Similarly, the situation did not go on well for Kurds as their publications were closed down and 48 leading Kurdish intellectuals were arrested and put to trial (McDowall, 2005: 405)

Finally, on 27 May 1960, the authoritarianism of the DP's final years and its weak economic performance provided sufficient excuse for the army to stage the first military *coup d'état* in the Turkish Republic's history (Aksin, 2007: 264). Whilst the official reason stated by the coup leaders was ending the crisis created by the DP, there was a far more significant reason for the army's involvement in politics. As detailed by Jung and Piccoli (2001:86-9) compared to the CHP's era the military had lost its say and influence throughout the DP's reign and was looking for an opportunity to regain its lost status. For instance, just one of the six defence ministers serving in Menderes's cabinet had military background. Also, there was a sharp

decline in the military's representation rate in the parliament. This coup, in addition to toppling the Menderes administration set precedence for further *coups* and bestowed a new role upon the military as the guardian of the Republic and its values, or in Jung and Piccoli's (2001: 96) words, as new Janissaries loyal to "Ataturk and the Kemalist Republic" guarding the Turkish state.

The main event following the coup was ratification of a new constitution put to referendum on 9 July 1961, which was more liberal than the previous one and provided more opportunities for political activity due to Turkey's engagement with western institutions. In addition to the new constitution, a number of new parties were founded which took part in the October 1961 elections. Justice Party, as the continuation of the DP, winning 34.7 percent of the votes and the New Turkey Party with 13.9 percent of the votes were among these parties (Zurcher, 2004: 246). Another party established in this period and important due to its ideological difference with the Kemalist establishment was the Worker's Party of Turkey (Zurcher, 2004: 246-7).

The years following the coup were not as bright as promised in the junta's goal of ending the crisis. Weak coalition governments, chaos and violence in the streets and universities and two more military coups were events dominating the following two decades. Cemal Gursel, the leader of the junta, became the president in 1963, while Inonu became the premier of a shaky coalition government composed of CHP and Justice Party. In 1965, Justice Party with its new leader Suleyman Demirel won the majority and formed the new government. He was capable of improving the economic performance of the country and scored victory for his party in 1969 for the second time (Mango, 2004: 57-66). However, chaos followed by escalation of violence between leftists and other groups especially in universities, and a military ultimatum on 12 March 1971 resulted in Demirel's resignation. Following this coup, a number of interim administrations were formed, and later elections held in 1973 resulted in establishment of a new coalition government headed by Ecevit, the new leader of the CHP. This coalition government was followed by a new one headed by Demirel. Nevertheless, these coalition governments proved to be incapable of solving the economic and security crisis in the country, as radical left and right groups were indulged in violent acts and economy was getting worse (Zurcher, 2004: 258-263). Once again, the military took the lead and staged another coup in 1980 to end the crisis.

The new coup soon drafted a new constitution which was ratified in a referendum hold on 23 October 1982 and elected General Evren, the leader of the junta, as Turkey's president for a seven years term (Dodd, 2012: 58). Meanwhile, all the political parties were banned, and their leaders were imprisoned or put under enforced residence. Only three new parties, *i.e.* Nationalist Democracy Party, Populist Party and Motherland Party were allowed to take part in 1983 elections in which Ozal's Motherland party won the majority. Ozal carried on the economic policies he had started under the auspices of generals in 1981 and in addition to improving the country's economy (Harris, 1985: 65-8) succeeded in winning the next elections for his Motherland Party and was elected as Turkey's president in 1989 (Dodd, 2012: 58).

The successive coups, coalition governments and economic planning did not improve the situation of the Kurds and their region. Indeed, accusing the Kurds of separatism and suppressing them was among the first things *coup* leaders were implementing following their coups. Nevertheless, during the turbulent times of 1960-1990, periods of easing the pressure on Kurds occurred as well that permitted the advancement of the Kurdish cause to new levels in Turkey mainly due to certain degree of change in the political culture initiated through Turkey's engagement with the West.

An immediate consequence of the 1960 coup for Kurds was the arrest and torture of 485 Kurds and continuation of assimilation policies (Aydin, 2005: 38). Generally, as evident from General Gursel's, coup leader, statement threatening the Kurds or in his vocabulary "mountain Turks" that their villages will be bombarded and destroyed ruthlessly in case of rebellion it is clear that the governmental stance on the Kurdish issue was still harsh (Ozcan, 2006: 75). However, the new constitution provided some opportunities for Kurds as well. A number of bilingual publications surfaced; nonetheless, existing for short periods of time, as they were frequently banned by the state. Meanwhile, in the absence of legal Kurdish political parties, some Kurds joined the leftist groupings and eventually affected the discourse of these parties in support of the Kurdish or otherwise termed 'Eastern' question. Their influence could be clearly seen through Workers Party's open acknowledgement of ethnic problem in Turkey in 1970 resulting in the party's closure by the court in 1971 (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 15).

Disappointed with the leftists' performance on Kurdish issue and their engagement in violence, Kurds gradually set up their own leftist and nationalist parties. Democratic Party of

Turkish Kurdistan established in 1965 and surviving through 1978 could be considered as a nationalist party modelled on the KDP in Iraq (Kendal, 1993: 81). As for the Kurdish left, the following groups and parties appeared in 1960's and 1970's; nevertheless, their internal competition and problems halted their success and growth: Revolutionary Eastern Culture Clubs (DDKO) in 1969, Revolutionary Democratic Culture Associations (DDKD) in 1975, Kurdistan Socialist Party in 1975, KAWA in 1976, *Rizgari* (Liberation) in 1977, and Kurdistan National Liberationists in 1978 (Gunter, 1997: 24).

In spite of their failure in rallying mass Kurdish support, these groups worked as a prelude to the establishment of the major Kurdish party in Turkey's modern history that reintroduced armed resurrection against the government in the country's Kurdish areas. Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) known as *Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* in Kurdish was established on 28 November 1978 by Abdullah Ocalan, an ordinary left-oriented Kurd with higher education degree from Ankara and with no link to notable religious or secular Kurdish families (Marcus, 2007: 46). Establishing an independent Marxist-Leninist Kurdistan through fighting the feudal and colonial forces was the initial stated goal of the PKK (Heper, 2007: 157). Although since its establishment the PKK was involved in limited acts of violence, in August 1984 with attacks on military installations it officially started its war against the government (Kirisci and Winrow, 2003: 126), which has been continuing since then and claims lives of Kurdish as well as Turkish military personnel and civilians.

It is worth noting that restriction of political rights and political parties followed by the 1980 coup and its 1982 constitution played a great role in militarizing the Kurdish struggle and later in further suppression of the Kurdish areas. Basically, the new constitution of 1983 reversed the liberal path taken in the 1961 constitution and limited the liberties hitherto permitted in the law. It prohibited the use of Kurdish language and altered the village names from Kurdish to Turkish (Yildiz, 2005: 16). Thus, the violent fighting between the PKK guerrillas and government forces and emergency situation in the southeast was the prevalent scene in Turkey up to 1991, the start date of the era under study in this research.

### **3.7. SUMMARY**

As presented above, the history of Kurdish relations with Ottoman Empire and later with Iraqi and Turkish states is a turbulent one. Throughout this history Ottomans and their successors applied different methods to win the Kurdish cooperation or to contain and suppress the Kurdish aspirations for self-rule and statehood. Apparently, in the modern era the central authority's attempts for establishing firm control over the Kurdish territories had been countered by Kurdish revolts that at first were organized and led by tribal chiefs and religious leaders and later by Kurdish political parties. The denial, massacre and assimilation attempts in Turkey and Iraq, and Ankara-Baghdad cooperation in countering the Kurdish threat all failed in putting an end to Kurdish national demands and struggle. This trend continues after 1991 and most factors that played role in Turkish-Kurdish relations continue to affect the relations. The next chapter benefits from the historic data presented in this chapter and continues with the post-1991 political evolution in IK and Turkey and presents the developments in 1991-2014 T-IK relations.

## **Chapter Four: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF TURKEY AND IRAQI KURDISTAN AND THEIR RELATIONS (1991- 2014)**

### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

As stated in the previous chapter, any progress or achievement by Iraqi Kurds has always been perceived as threat by Turkey and as the result Turkish government was in close cooperation with the Iraqi state for curbing any threat emanating from the spillover of the Kurdish nationalism from Iraq to the Kurdish areas in Turkey. Against this historical background, Turkish government was in no ways eager to get involved in fostering the Kurdish position in Iraq or enter into direct contact and relations with the Kurdish political entities from IK. However, ironically, the milestone changes following Saddam's defeat and withdrawal from Kuwait forced the Turkish government to get involved in the protection of Iraqi Kurds and establish relations with them.

This chapter, hence, explores as to how the relations between the IK and Turkey started and developed in three main sections. The first section provides a brief historical survey of the political developments in IK, while the second section does the same for Turkey. The third section provides a chronological account of the T-IK relations in this era. Meanwhile, a brief survey of post-2014 developments is presented at the end of the chapter.

### **4.2. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN, 1991-1998**

In the historical overview of IK presented in the previous chapter, it is discussed that at the final years of the Iraq-Iran war, Kurds were experiencing the worst atrocities committed towards them in the modern history. As stated, the immeasurable cruelty used against Kurds by the Saddam regime in Baghdad, especially the use of chemical weapons against civilians and Kurdish fighters alike, stirred the Kurdish parties to get united under the banner of IKF *en mess* in 1988 just two years ahead of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Occupation of Kuwait by Iraq and later Iraqi defeat on the hand of coalition troops unfolded events that opened new

horizons for the Kurds of Iraq. This section presents the political transformation of the Iraqi Kurds from 1991-1998 in a chronological manner, which aims to critically shed light on the historical factors and motives involved in the relations between Turkey and specific Kurdish parties, or at times all Iraqi Kurdish parties during the period.

#### **4.2.1. Kurdish Uprising and Territorialisation of the Kurdish Nationalism in Iraq**

The gloomy status of Iraqi Kurds at the final years of the 1980s was soon replaced by a situation even optimistic Kurds could hardly imagine. In a miscalculated move, Iraqi army had attacked and occupied her southern neighbour, namely Kuwait in 1990 just to face a harsh international response in the form of a crushing defeat at the hand of the coalition troops led by the USA. Iraqi Kurds misled by the statements from Washington, especially the speech by President Bush the senior encouraging the Iraqi people “to take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside,” (The New York Times, 1991) staged an uprising forcing the Iraqi army out of the Kurdish cities including Kirkuk in a fortnight.

The uprising started on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1991, and by 19<sup>th</sup> March 1991 virtually all the Kurdish areas of IK were controlled by the Kurdish forces fighting the Iraqi army (McDowall, 1992: 117). However, absence of any post-war plans for removal of Saddam Hussein from power had tragic implications for the Kurds, who were happy and hopeful following their swift victories. Iraqi army was allowed to strike back after crushing the Shiite uprising in the south of the country and Kurds with the fresh memories of Halabja and *Anfal* atrocities fled for their lives *en masse* to Iranian and Turkish borders. The scale of the mass exodus of Kurds was so enormous that Turgut Ozal, Turkey’s president at the time called it “the greatest mass migration of modern times” (Bulloch and Morris, 1993: 27).

The misery of the Kurds televised through international press and the burden of this unpredicted human influx on the neighbouring countries ultimately forced the international community to take action. Initially, in response to the mounting international pressure and letters from Turkish, Iranian and French representatives in the UN addressed to the Presidency of the Security Council and Secretary-General, the UN resolution of UNSCR 688 was issued on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1991 which condemned the repression of Iraqi civilians, in particular in the Kurdish region, and demanded the respect of the human rights and immediate end to the repression (UNSCR 688, 1991). Further to the Security Council’s resolution and UN’s



decision for building a safe haven for Kurds, on 10 April 1991, the USA, Britain and France forced a no-fly zone north of 36 latitude on Iraq, prohibiting the Iraqi air force from using this air space (BBC, 2001).

Leadership of the IKF who were wary of the safety of the Kurdish civilians could not easily trust the security guarantee provided by the West, due to the experience of being left to the mercy of Saddam's army after the uprising, started negotiations with Baghdad. However, negotiations failed and clashes broke out between Iraqi forces and Kurdish *Peshmerga* once again. The result was withdrawal of Iraqi forces and administration from the governorates of Erbil, Suleimaniya and Dohuk in October 1991 and a subsequent economic embargo on the Kurdish-controlled areas by Baghdad (Yildiz, 2004: 40).

Withdrawal of the Iraqi regime from Kurdish areas and the international recognition and protection of the Kurdish safe haven had two significant implications for the Kurds. First, it turned Kurds, and more specifically IKF leadership into practical rulers of the Kurdish region. Second, it resulted in what Olson (2005: 233) calls "territorialisation of Kurdish nationalism". It is worth noting that as explained in the definition of 'state' in Chapter 2, a defined territory is an essential segment in state building process, an option previously unavailable for Iraqi Kurds. These two factors heralded a new era in the Kurdish political transformation; an era in which Iraqi Kurds as the ruler of their territory entered into relations with their neighbours and the world.

In spite of the utter significance of the aforementioned achievements for the Kurdish political evolution, in practice everything was not so smooth and prosperous. Years of war and destruction had left Kurdish villages and economy in ruin and economic embargo forced on Iraq by the UN and Iraqi embargo forced on Kurdish territory by Saddam Regime had created a catastrophic living condition for the Kurds. These problems were further exacerbated by the inexperience of Kurdish leadership fresh from guerrilla warfare into civil administration. Indeed, due to the lack of efficient communication devices, internal groupings coupled with absence of central leadership and disproportionate veto right for all the parties, IKF was incapable of sound administration and proved inefficient (McDowall, 2007: 379-80).

In order to escape the administrative incompetence stalemate, IKF leadership decided to hold the first democratic elections in the Kurdish region in 1992. The voters were casting ballots for a 105 seats parliament as well as a national liberation movement leader in a proportional

representation election system. The parliamentary election had a 7% threshold and five of the seats were allocated to the Assyrian Christian minority by quota, while the leadership post required a simple 50%+1 majority. The elections were held in May 19, 1992 and as the result indicated only the KDP with 45.05% and the PUK-KTP coalition with 43.61% could pass the 7% threshold and none of the four leadership candidates could win the majority vote (*see*: McDowall, 2007: 379-81; Koohi-Kamali, 2003: 216-17; Logan, 2009: 166-67).

The outcome of the elections for Kurdistan was the establishment of the KRG based on a 50-50 power-sharing system in which administrative power was distributed between the KDP and the PUK. Meanwhile, Kurdistan Parliament defined the framework of future relations with Baghdad as a 'federal union' with a multi-party, democratic Iraq that respects human rights (Kakai, 1994: 123-132).

In spite of KRG's success in maintaining the administrative structure, civil servants network and police force, there were serious flaws in the power sharing system, which finally doomed the experience. The KDP and the PUK leaders did not accept any administrative position and their military forces were loyal to the respective party rather than the government. As Gunter (1999: 75) states, Barzani and Talabani's absence from the government "denied the government valuable credibility and left it in the hands of mere lieutenants". The scale of party interference in the administration was so high that forced the first KRG Prime Minister to resign in March 1993, claiming, "every decision now needs a party decision" (McDowall, 2007: 385).

The events took a catastrophic turn, as in 1994 the KDP and the PUK started a bloody civil war. The historical enmity and rivalry between the parties, interferences by the neighbouring states, debates over custom revenue control and distribution and inefficiency of the 50-50 power sharing system all played their roles in the outbreak of the KDP-PUK war for controlling the Kurdish administered region (Bengio, 2005: 179).

The internal Kurdish fighting continued and picked in 1996, as the KDP which was losing ground to the Iranian backed PUK asked for Iraqi government's help and succeeded in capturing almost all the Kurdish administered territory. However, the victory did not last long, as the PUK with the help of Iran launched a counter offensive and recaptured most of its lost territory. The new borders emerged, which left the PUK in charge of Suleimaniya governorate and parts of Erbil and Kirkuk governorates, while the KDP was in control of

Duhok governorate and parts of Erbil governorate, including Erbil city, the capital of the Kurdish administered region (Gunter, 1999: 85-90). As the result of war, Kurdish administration and Kurdistan parliament both were split into the KDP administration and parliament in Erbil and the PUK ones in Suleimaniya, each claiming to be the legitimate representative of the Iraqi Kurds. Moreover, the region witnessed high tension and failed peace attempts between the parties till finally Americans stepped in to end the confrontation. Finally, in September 1998 Barzani and Talabani declared the American brokered peace deal in Washington, which condemned the internal fighting and seeking help from external forces, and contained provisions for revenue distribution, election organization, and status of the key cities among other things (Yildiz, 2004: 49-50).

#### **4.2.2. Iraqi Kurds in Pursuit of Institutionalisation, 1998-2008**

Declaration of the 1998 Washington agreement, which established truce between the KDP and the PUK, started a new era of Kurdish political evolution in IK. In spite of the fact that KDP and PUK's separate administrations and parliaments were not united, noticeable changes were occurring in the Kurdish political culture as well as Kurdish administrative structure. Years of internal fighting and bloodshed had taught Kurds that fighting is not the best way to settle their dispute and this realization has so far played a significant role in the political process in IK. Meanwhile, both administrations started to demonstrate better performance in terms of efficiency and providing services as tough party control over them was gradually decreasing.

Regardless of the milestone 1998 progress, in practice the normalization of the relations and unification of KRGs was not an easy task. The first concrete step in this regard materialized on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2002 as the Kurdistan Parliament reunited in presence of Barzani, Talabani and a number of dignitaries invited from Western and neighbouring states (Ahmad, 2002). This was a timely step, as it took place just few months before the March 2003 Operation Iraqi Freedom which toppled Saddam's regime and started a new phase in Iraq's history.

The changes brought about by the 2003 war on Iraq altered the situation for Iraqi Kurds as well. Kurds became the ally of coalition troops in their fight against Saddam's regime and later actively engaged in the post-Saddam Iraq's political process. During this process, Kurds became influential players in Baghdad; however, IK lost the *de facto* independence it was

enjoying since 1991 uprising. On the other hand, there was a positive side to the developing narrative and it was the official recognition of the Kurdish institutions in the new legal documents of the Iraqi state.

The first step in transferring power from coalition authority to Iraqis took place on 13 July 2003, as the Coalition Provisional Authority appointed an Iraqi Governing Council consisting of 25 members, five of whom were Kurdish (International Crisis Group, 2003: 17). On 8<sup>th</sup> March 2004, the appointed council signed the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period (TAL) to work as the country's provisional constitution (Al-Istrabadi, 2005-6:27). Due to the Kurdish persistence, TAL granted a good number of Kurdish demands, including federalism (article 4), recognition of Kurdish as official language (article 9), recognition of KRG as the official government of territories under its control (article 53), enabling Kurdistan Parliament of amending the federal laws in Kurdistan (article 54), and normalization of Kurdish areas outside KRG jurisdiction where Arabisation campaigns were carried out during Saddam's era, including Kirkuk (article 58) (Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period, 2004).

The governing council was replaced by an interim Iraqi government in June 2004 that was in charge of ruling the country until a transitional government was elected. During such developments, Kurds enjoyed a good representation in this government too, as 8 members of the 33-member interim government were Kurdish (Park, 2004: 18).

As noticed, great and unanticipated changes had dominated the political landscape of Iraq during the period, which necessitated further cooperation among the Kurdish factions in IK so that they can keep up with the changes, preserve their prerogatives and guarantee their rights in the new Iraq. Indeed, developments in Iraq's political arena speeded up the unification process in Kurdistan as well, since Kurds decided to hold new parliamentary elections for the Kurdistan Parliament on 30 January 2005, which was the same day, specified for election of Iraqi Parliament members and local governorate elections.

In the Iraqi Parliamentary election, all the major Kurdish parties except the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) united in an alliance named Kurdistan Alliance List. As for Kurdistan Parliament elections that was electing 111 members this time, KDP, PUK and some minor parties were running in a unified list. Meanwhile, while KDP and PUK were running separately in Kurdistan region governorate council elections, they were united in the Kirkuk

governorate council election to avoid the fragmentation of Kurdish vote which could turn down the Kurdish stand from majority to minority in the oil-rich disputed city. In the Iraqi Parliament, Kurdistan Alliance List scored well and came second after winning 75 seats of the 275 seats Iraqi Parliament. Meanwhile, the other Kurdish list, the KIG list, won 2 seats. At the same time, KDP-PUK list succeeded in winning 26 out of 41 seats in Kirkuk council elections (Katzman, 2006: 2-6).

As the result of Kurdish insistence and their performance in the elections, Jalal Talabani, head of the PUK, who was nominated by Kurds, became the first Kurdish president of Iraq in the modern history of Iraq in 2005 (Associated Press, 2005). Meanwhile, in Kurdistan Parliament elections, KDP, PUK and their allies, including Turkmen and Christians won 89.5% of the votes (Peyamner, 2005). On 12 June 2005, this newly elected Parliament voted Masoud Barzani as the president of Kurdistan Region (Katzman, 2010: 3). This was due to an agreement between the KDP and PUK and was in return for KDP's consent over Talabani's nomination for presidency over Iraq.

Another interesting event that occurred in the Kurdish populated areas, including Kirkuk on 30 January 2005 was an informal referendum organized and held outside the exit door of polling stations by the Kurdistan Referendum Movement (KRM). The referendum had two simple options, voting for the independence of Kurdistan or accepting the *status quo* and voting for Kurdistan to stay as a part of Iraq. The result was 98.8% in favour of Kurdistan's independence in contrast to 1.2% voting against it (KRM-International Committee, 2005). This informal referendum was a clear indication that Kurdish public sincerely desires independence and it is the harsh circumstances and unfriendly neighbourhood that block the materialization of this dream for Kurds.

In spite of election of a new Kurdish parliament and agreement over Talabani's presidency over Iraq and Barzani's presidency over Kurdistan, the KDP and the PUK failed in uniting the Kurdish administration in 2005 as they failed to agree on the details of the process. That is while the interim parliament and government in Baghdad oversaw the processes of drafting a permanent constitution for Iraq and putting it into referendum and holding a new round of parliamentary elections to select parliamentarians who would serve a four years mandate. Hence, Iraq's permanent constitution, which included the rights guaranteed by Kurds in the TAL, and involved an article (article 140) on the future of the disputed areas including Kirkuk, was ratified in a national referendum held on 15 October 2005 (Morrow, 2005: 2-3).

Endorsement of federalism, and recognition of *Peshmerga* and KRG institutions by the constitution boosted the status of Iraqi Kurds, as Iraq was now formally a federal state and Kurdistan Region was a constitutionally recognized federal region within this state. Two months later, on 15 December 2005 parliament election was held throughout the country for the second time in a year. Iraqi Kurds won the second place again and Talabani was re-elected as Iraq's President on 22 April 2006 (*see*: Katzman, 2006: 3-6; CNN Library, 2014).

After settling down with Iraqi parliament elections, Kurds enhanced their attempts for the unification of KRG administrations that were functioning as two separate states since their split in 1994 due to the KDP-PUK war. The efforts finally bear fruit on 21 January 2006, as KDP and PUK signed the Kurdistan Regional Government Unification Agreement. The agreement fundamentally outlined how to distribute the top administrative posts between the KDP and the PUK and how to manage the unification of the ministries, especially the sensitive ones, as well as Kurdistan Region's police and military forces (*see*: Hadji, 2009: 519; Krg.org, 2006a). Hence, as the signed agreement paved the way for reunification of the administrations, on 7 May 2006, the united KRG led by Nechirvan Barzani from the KDP as the Prime Minister and Omer Fatah from the PUK as deputy prime minister received the approval vote from Kurdistan Parliament (krg.org, 2006b).

Though the newly established united administration was a great leap forward, the most sensitive ministries, namely, *Peshmerga*, Finance and Economics, Interior and Justice were not unified initially. Among these, Justice Ministry was the first to be unified in February 6, 2007, less than a year of the unified government's inauguration (krg.org, 2007). Meanwhile, in spite of the initial agreement over transfer of KRG's premiership from the KDP candidate to a PUK one after two years, President Talabani as PUK's secretary general surprisingly extended the KDP candidate's tenure and let Mr Nechirvan Barzani to stay in office (Amedi, 2009). Hence KRG continued the unification process under Nechirvan Barzani's premiership and succeeded in unifying the sensitive Ministries of *Peshmerga* and Interior in April 2009 (Krg.org, 2009a), while Finance Ministry remained non-unified for three more years until it finally was unified in May 2012 in the following KRG cabinet (Kurdsat.tv, 2012).

Materializing the unification process and establishment of a unified KRG in 2006 was a historic moment in IK's political progression towards further institutionalization, and advancement of its administrative capability building. Nevertheless, another historic change occurred the same year that opened new horizons in IK's politics and shifted the longstanding

bipolarity dominant in the Kurdish political landscape. In December 2006, Nawshirwan Mustafa, a cofounder of the PUK and the second top man in the party, and a number of senior PUK officials' whose constant requests for substantial reform were turned down and were unhappy with the nature of the PUK-KDP relations finally broke away with the PUK (Ali, 2013). Shortly afterwards, Nawshirwan Mustafa established a media corporation called *Wusha* in 2007, which included a newspaper, radio channel and website (The Majala, 2010). Mustafa's enterprise finally took the form of an official political party named *Gorran* (meaning Change) in February 2009 and took part in July 2009 Kurdistan Parliament election running the Change List (Romano, 2010).

Introduction of a vibrant opposition to IK's political scene is the main contribution of *Gorran*, as Kurdistan's political system had been long dominated by the KDP-PUK's power-sharing methods operating in absence of a strong opposition monitoring their performance. Widespread demonstrations in Suleimaniya province, which started from 17 February 2011, is a clear example of *Gorran*'s influence on Kurdish politics. The demonstrations started at the pick of Arab Spring revolts and were dubbed 'Kurdish Spring' respectively. Change Movement did not succeed in materializing its demand for resignation of the cabinet, as finally military force ended the demonstrations after three months. Nevertheless, KDP-PUK leadership were forced to accept their shortcomings in administration and vow for fighting corruption (Ali, 2013).

#### **4.2.3. Frequent Elections in Kurdistan and Iraq and their Political Ramifications**

As discussed earlier, integration of Kurdistan Region to federal Iraq had the negative impact of losing sovereign prerogatives enjoyed by the Kurds prior to Saddam's downfall in 2003. However, it has paved the way for positive impact of urging the Kurds to hold regular elections, a prerequisite of democracy frequently overlooked by the Kurds in the previous decade. These regular elections have bestowed Kurds' political leverage as kingmakers in Baghdad and introduced new actors and reforms to the Kurdish domestic politics.

The parliamentary elections, thus, have been consistently held in Kurdistan Region since 2005 both for Kurdistan and Iraqi Parliaments. It is worth mentioning that there have been some exceptions to the regular elections in the region, which includes the cancellation of governorate and local council elections in 2010 and the postponement of the Kurdistan

Presidency election scheduled for 2013, which was deferred by the Kurdistan Parliament for two years (Ahmed, 2013).

The first elections following 2005 were held in July 2009 through which 111 candidates were elected for Kurdistan Parliament and for the first time a president was elected for Kurdistan Region through direct ballot. In the Parliamentary elections, the KDP-PUK's unified 'Kurdistan List' came first winning 59 seats, Change Movement's 'Change List' came second winning 25 seats, a union of Islamist and leftist parties named 'Reform and Services List' came third winning 13 seats and other seats were won by other minor parties and the 11 seats minority quota. As for the Presidential election, Masoud Barzani with 69.6% of the votes came first among five candidates and Kamal Mirawdly with 25.3% came second (Krg.org, 2009a).

In accordance with KDP-PUK political deal, the new KRG cabinet as well as Kurdistan Parliament were headed by candidates from PUK and KDP for two years rotational terms. In line with this agreement the PUK candidate Barham Salih headed the KRG cabinet from 28 October 2009- 4 April 2012, while a KDP candidate was the speaker of Parliament and a new cabinet headed by the KDP candidate Nechirvan Barzani took office on 5 April 2012 as PUK received the Parliament Speaker post (Krg.org, 2009b). Change Movement and Islamic parties of the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) and the KIG that were part of the 'Reform and Services List' did not participate in the government and formed a strong opposition, which, as already mentioned, seriously challenged the unrivalled rule of the KDP and the PUK over the political and economic life of Kurdistan region.

On 21 September 2013, a new round of Kurdistan parliamentary elections were held, which heralded the end of unified KDP-PUK election list era. Indeed, 2013 parliamentary elections stood out differently from the previous ones as there was no united list and all the parties were racing for votes individually. Election results were a blow for PUK and shifted the balance of power in Kurdish politics for the first time since the establishment of the first KRG. The results indicated that the KDP had won the first place with 38 seats, however, instead of the PUK, it was the Change Movement that came second with 24 seats. The PUK won just 18 seats, which landed it in the third place, and Islamic parties of the KIU and the KIG with 10 and 6 seats respectively came fourth and fifth (Musing on Iraq, 2013).



Domestic politics and competing in internal elections of Kurdistan region has not been the only worry of Kurdish political parties, as Kurdistan region has been actively involved in Iraqi politics and relations with Baghdad have not always been easy. Through participation in elections and making coalitions with other Iraqi parties for forming the Iraqi government Kurds have tried to preserve their status and prerogatives in the country. Nonetheless, as explained below, this has not been an easy task for Kurds and many problems have surfaced during the process.

Unlike 2005 elections on 7 March 2010 Iraqi Parliament elections all Kurdish parties were not running in a single list. KDP and PUK had a joint list named “Kurdistani Alliance” which came fourth and won 43 seats, and Change Movement, KIU and KIG which were running separate lists won 8, 4 and 2 seats respectively (Smith, 2010: 8). This time Kurdish role was quite substantial in the post-election period, as Kurds succeeded in bringing all the Iraqi groups together in Erbil and ended the 9 months deadlock of government formation in Iraq. The Kurdish brokered deal known as ‘Erbil Agreement’ signed in November 2010 gave Maliki a new term in office as Iraq’s Prime Minister (Mardini, 2012). Meanwhile, Kurds guaranteed the Presidency and foreign ministry posts for the Kurdish candidates Talabani and Zebari respectively and received some other cabinet posts.

In spite of Kurdish role in Maliki’s ascendance to premiership and their participation in the coalition government, the relations between Baghdad and Erbil was far from being good, as both sides came to the brinks of war for a number of times. Reasons for the fluctuating relations have been diverse, but predominantly the disputes between Baghdad and Erbil have stemmed from one of the following issues: territorial debate between KRG and Baghdad, management of natural resources and budget, and finally the case of *Peshmerga* and Iraqi army. In general, the dispute has been over the extent of regional and central governments’ authorities in all the cases mentioned.

#### **4.2.4. Territorial Disputes Between Baghdad and Erbil**

The case of territorial disputes between Kurds and Baghdad is deep-rooted in Kurdish historical memory, as fighting started between Kurds and Baghdad just four years after signing of the 1970 Agreement mainly due to territorial disputes between Kurds and Iraqi government. The status of the oil rich city of Kirkuk was at the heart of the dispute and after

four decades this dispute is still playing a huge role in governing the relations between Kurds and the central government in Baghdad.

As stated in the previous sections, in 1991 Kurds gained control over major parts of what they claim to be historically and geographically Kurdistan in Iraq; nonetheless, they failed to gain control over Kirkuk and some other Kurdish territories that have economic significance due to their abundant hydrocarbon resources. After the fall of Saddam's regime, Kurdish forces as allies of the USA attempted to gain control over these territories. Eventually, their military presence and weakness of Iraqi government and its army bestowed Kurds *de facto* control over parts of these territories (*see*: Map No 4). Interestingly, it was the American-led coalition that granted this *de facto* control to the Kurds at the peak of insurgency in Iraq as due to Iraqi army's inefficiency and weakness there was a dire need for manpower to counter the insurgency (International Crisis Group, 2009: 11). However, *de facto* control over a fragment of the Kurdish areas outside KRG administration is neither appeasing the Kurds nor gives them legal control over the territories they regard rightfully theirs. Hence, early on (following 2003) Kurds have earnestly engaged in a constitutional struggle for winning back these territories from a central government that has no intention to surrender in this case.

The first reflection of Kurdish constitutional attempts for reincorporation of these 'disputed territories' was article 58 of TAL (Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period, 2004). This article set guidelines for Iraq's transitional government to remedy the injustices inflicted on the disputed territories through the chauvinistic policies of the previous regime. These included resettling the non-locals brought to these areas and reintroducing the original residents, settling the land and property disputes and allocating fair compensations in accordance with Iraqi property law, providing job opportunities, providing the opportunity for residents to alter the fake nationality and identity affiliations registered in their identity documents, and recommendations for taking measures to correct the administrative boundaries altered by the former regime due to political motivations. In spite of outlining the measures for normalizing the demographic status of the disputed territories, TAL left the permanent solution of the issue to the time, when all the "measures are completed, a fair and transparent census has been conducted and the permanent constitution has been ratified" (Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period, 2004).

### Map No 5: Iraqi Disputed Territories

Iraq Disputed Internal Boundaries



SOURCE: Unclassified map provided by U.S. Forces-Iraq.  
RAND OP339-T.7

Source: (Hanauer *et al*, 2011: 4)

The constitutional struggle continued as Iraqis drafted the country's permanent constitution and once again Kurdish insistence turned fruitful. Article 140 of the Permanent Iraqi Constitution demands the executive authority to take action and implement the requirements of article 58 of the TAL. In addition, it set 31 December 2007 as the deadline for all the three processes of normalization, census and referendum for Kirkuk and other disputed territories (Iraqi Constitution, 2005).

In spite of existence of a clearly stated constitutional timeline, none of the three stages specified in the Article 140 were implemented by the termination of the deadline. Even an effort by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq aiming to facilitate the implementation of article 140 in six months failed. Similarly, attempts to solve the issue

through Iraqi Supreme Court have produced no result yet (Bolden and Fussnecker, 2009: 1566-1567). While various reasons could be mentioned for the misfortune of Article 140, the major one is the fact that among the Iraqi sides involved, the Kurds are the only group that want the article to be implemented (Natali, 2010: 108-9).

Up to this point the constitutional struggle continues as Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and other sides involved each have their interpretations for the constitution and the fate of the Article 140. Now, as the deadline is past, some Iraqi politicians consider the Article 140 dead and invalid, while Kurds consider it valid and remind that their voluntary union with Iraq is related to adherence to the constitution (and in particular the Article 140) as stated in the preamble of the constitution (Bolden and Fussnecker, 2009: 1567). Indeed, when Kurds got the upper hand in Kirkuk, they declared the Article 140 is implemented by *de facto*, but after they lost Kirkuk talks about article 140 started again.

The constitutional struggle, however, has not been the only way of struggling over the disputed territories. A military rivalry has always coincided with the constitutional one and at times this rivalry has ended up in confrontations that brought Kurds and Baghdad to the brinks of war. These confrontations are usually initiated by Baghdad, especially at times that insurgency and terrorist attacks are decreased or under control and the central government feels powerful enough to push for further control and say over the Kurdish territories.

The first instance of such confrontations occurred in 2008 in a Kurdish city located in the Kurdish controlled section of the disputed territories. In this specific case, Iraqi army first pushed out *Peshmerga* forces from the mixed population sub-districts of Jalawla, Saadiya and Qere Tepa followed by an attempt to do the same in Khanaqin. Meanwhile, Baghdad started to deploy the army's 12<sup>th</sup> division in Kirkuk governorate in such a scale that 9,500 Iraqi troops were stationed in this governorate in 2009 (International Crisis Group, 2009: 12). The case of Khanaqin was solved following Erbil-Baghdad negotiations as well as due to massive civil demonstrations in the city, which deterred Baghdad from fulfilling its aim (Voller, 2012: 198-9).

Although Baghdad temporarily diverted its attention from Khanaqin, the confrontations did not stop. Instead, new and fiercer hostilities emerged few years later, which made Iraqi, and Kurdish troops line up against each other ready to fight protecting their borders. The crisis started in September 2012 as Iraqi Prime Minister, Maliki, announced the establishment of

‘Tigris Operation Command’ in Kirkuk Province and few months later ‘al-Jazeera and Badiya Force’ in Sinjar city located in Ninevah Province (*see*: Ahmad, 2012; Zebari, 2013a). While the declared reason behind establishment of such commands was security, as Hanish (2013: 6) states, the real reason was political, and Maliki wanted to establish control over the area and undermine the Kurdish security force. Although the tension level declined later due to increased terrorist activities in the Sunni dominated areas, the danger of future confrontations and clashes is still in the air as long as the issue of disputed territories is not solved.

#### **4.2.5. Management of Natural Resources and Budget**

The question of managing the hydrocarbon resources is a thorny debatable issue, which has produced controversy between Baghdad and Erbil from the early days of post-Saddam Iraq. There are constitutional articles, which provide general guideline for this issue; however, due to Baghdad-Erbil disagreement there is no ratified hydrocarbon law.

Iraqi constitution article 111 clearly states that oil and gas belong to all Iraqi people and the Article 112 devises the management plan of hydrocarbon resources as follows (Iraqi Constitution, 2005):

Article	112:
First: The federal government, with the producing governorates and regional governments, shall undertake the management of oil and gas extracted from present fields, provided that it distributes its revenues in a fair manner in proportion to the population distribution in all parts of the country, specifying an allotment for a specified period for the damaged regions which were unjustly deprived of them by the former regime, and the regions that were damaged afterwards in a way that ensures balanced development in different areas of the country, and this shall be regulated by a law.	
Second: The federal government, with the producing regional and governorate governments, shall together formulate the necessary strategic policies to develop the oil and gas wealth in a way that achieves the highest benefit to the Iraqi people using the most advanced techniques of the market principles and encouraging investment.	

Finally, article 115 states that other than the exclusive authorities of the central government, other powers belong to the regions and in addition, regional laws will have priority over the federal ones in the case of shared powers.

These constitutional articles are interpreted in different ways by KRG and Baghdad and lack of agreement has destined failure in endorsement of any hydrocarbon law in Iraqi Parliament.

In the absence of an Iraqi Law, Kurdistan Parliament first passed a petroleum law draft in 2007, and later turned it into the hydrocarbon law in 2009 and has signed many Production Sharing Agreements with oil companies for exploration and excavation of oil and gas. Undoubtedly the defiant act of KRG has not passed unnoticed in Baghdad and in return, Baghdad has continuously threatened KRG with financial punishment, declared the contracts illegal and blacklisted the companies cooperating with KRG (see: Natali, 2010: 109-110; Voller, 2012: 224-225; Katzman, 2010: 11).

Financial or budgetary dispute is another issue, which is closely related to oil and Erbil-Baghdad relations. Iraq's economy as a whole is oil-dependent and KRG's economy in turn is dependent on the budget provided from Baghdad, and consequently on oil. Indeed, it is estimated that the budget coming from Baghdad constitute 95% of Kurdistan's budget, which is a clear indicator of the extent of KRG's economic dependence on Baghdad (International Crisis Group, 2012a: 7). Hence, Baghdad-Erbil disputes over oil have always been reflected in dispatching of budget from central government's coffers to Erbil.

According to initial post-2003 agreements and in the absence of a national population census KRG's share was estimated 17% of Iraq's budget. Nevertheless, both Kurds and central government have always criticized this arbitrary distribution. Kurds claim in reality what they receive is less than 14% percent, while central government questions the fairness of this distribution and even attempted to legally decrease KRG's share to 13% through Iraqi Parliament. Failure in holding a national population census in 2010 has exacerbated the problem as neither side's claims could be legitimately confirmed (Alsumaria.tv, 2013; International Crisis Group, 2012a: 1; Katzman, 2010: 5).

The developments took place in early 2014, as KRG-Baghdad dispute over oil was enmeshed with the budget issue. In this case, Baghdad started to use the budget card to pressure Erbil for making concessions, in particular in oil issue. The economic siege caused deferral of salary payments in Kurdistan region and an atmosphere of economic insecurity, especially for government employees (Rudaw, 2014a).

#### **4.2.6. *Peshmerga* and Iraqi Army**

*Peshmerga*, a Kurdish term that literally means 'one who faces death', has been used as a title referring to the Kurdish military force fighting for the Kurdish cause. Since Iraq emerged from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire as a new state, *Peshmerga* forces organized under the

command of Kurdish parties have fought the successive Iraqi regimes as freedom fighters. Meanwhile, as discussed earlier, *Peshmerga* forces have been involved in the internal fighting of Kurdish parties as well. Former Iraqi regime considered *Peshmerga* as a militia force fighting the state. However, regime change in Iraq after 2003 has altered the situation and changed the status of *Peshmerga* from a militia force fighting the Iraqi regime to a constitutional force in charge of preserving security. Moreover, unification of the PUK and KDP *Peshmerga* ministries in 2009 was another milestone in *Peshmerga's* evolution from party militia towards a regular national force.

Consequently, 2003 witnessed the beginning of the transformation of *Peshmerga* from militia to legal force. The shift commenced as *Peshmerga* forces fought alongside the coalition troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom and later helped them in stabilizing the country and providing security. Kurdistan region was the safest place in the country and Kurdish forces were assisting the Iraqi army and coalition troops in their fight against insurgents and terrorists both in disputed territories and Baghdad (Hanauer *et al.*, 2011: 3; Atlantic Council, 2009: 1).

Alliance with coalition and fighting for stability of Iraq was a great boost for *Peshmerga* status, but was no guarantee for the survival of the forces. Kurds who had experienced the bitter days of Saddam's dictatorship did not want to disband their military force which they regarded as the protector of their rights and survival in future Iraq. Hence, they persisted to legitimize the Kurdish military forces and succeeded to do so both in the TAL and in the 2005 Iraqi constitution.

Kurdish victory in this respect is embodied in article 54 A of TAL that grants KRG's right to retain its command over its security and police force (Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period: 2004), and later in the fifth section of article 121 of the permanent Iraqi constitution (2005) which reads:

The regional government shall be responsible for all the administrative requirements of the region, particularly the establishment and organization of the internal security forces for the region such as police, security forces, and guards of the region.

Legalizing the *Peshmerga* was a great victory for the Kurds; however, problems have risen between KRG and Baghdad over equipping, funding and leadership of the force. Kurds demand the Iraqi government to take the responsibility of equipping and funding the *Peshmerga* force from the federal budget, but due to lack of agreement on who has the

authority over the force Baghdad rejects to pay the bill. The draft constitution of Kurdistan Region gives the authority to the President of the Kurdistan, while Baghdad claims that according to the constitution Iraqi Prime Minister should have this right (Devigne, 2011: 58-9). In fact, Baghdad has never hidden its intention to bring *Peshmerga* under its control through using the funding card. For instance, in an interview with Al Sumaria TV Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Maliki overtly declared his willingness to fund *Peshmerga* if the force turns under the jurisdiction of Baghdad (Francis and Altamimi, 2012). This is a demand Kurds have refused and the problem still persists between both sides.

#### **4.3. POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IN TURKEY, 1990-2014**

Significant domestic, regional and international events since 1990 have tremendously impacted the Turkish political landscape. Gulf wars, war with the PKK, war on terrorism, death of President Ozal, economic crises, ascendance of Islamic-oriented parties to power, side-lining of generals by civilians and relations with the EU are merely a few examples of such influential events. Due to these events, Turkish politics has witnessed shifts in both domestic and international spheres. This section attempts at providing a historical survey of the political development in Turkey during the 1990-2014 period, which, as a period, is the subject matter of this research.

Turkey's political developments since 1990 can be broadly divided into two eras. The era of weak coalitions, which covers early 1990s up to 2002, and the era of AKP rule which covers the post-2002 period. The first era is identified with absence of a strong party winning the electoral majority needed for establishing the government, shaky coalition governments, frequent snap elections triggered by failure of the coalitions and socio-economic insecurity resulted from political instability. This trend ended with the emergence of a new era in Turkish politics with AKP as a moderate-Islamic party winning the majority in 2002 elections and forming the government. Ascendance of AKP has since then changed the political equation in Turkey and has immensely influenced both domestic and foreign politics of Turkey.



#### 4.3.1. Era of Weak Coalitions, 1990-2002

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Motherland Party (ANAP) was the major victor of the 1980s elections, and in 1989 Turgut Ozal as the party leader eventually became Turkey's eighth president. A major factor leading to ANAP's success in 1980s was the ban on the leaders of the old guard and their political parties following the 1980 military *coup d'état*. This factor coupled with Ozal's charisma and favourable election laws guaranteed ANAP's domination in Turkey's Parliament. However, the situation was quite different in early 1990s that eventually led to a different outcome in 1991 parliamentary elections. A referendum was held on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1987 that resulted in repealing the bans on political activities of the former party leaders, in spite of Ozal's campaign against the removal of these bans (Evin, 2005: 31). Presence of formidable experienced rivals and absence of Ozal as the charismatic party leader, due to his presidency, had changed the fortunes of ANAP for 1991 elections.

Parliamentary elections were held on 20 October 1991, which eventually ended ANAP's grip on power. In that election, True Path Party or *Dogru Yol Partisi* (DYP) a centre-right party led by Suleyman Demirel came first winning 27% of the votes. ANAP led by Mesut Yilmaz won 24% and came second. Other parties directly entering the parliament were Social Democrat Populist Party or *Sosyal Demokrat Halkci Partisi* (SHP) led by Erdal Inonu winning 20.8%, Welfare Party or *Refah Partisi* (RP) alliance led by Necmettin Erbakan with 16.9% and Democratic Left Party or *Demokratik Sol Parti* (DSP) led by Bulent Ecevit with 10.8% of the votes (Hic, 2008: 154). The outcome of elections was a new coalition government consisted of DYP and SHP with Demirel as Prime Minister. Although ANAP and DYP were ideologically close, an alliance of centre right forces was not formed and ANAP opted to act as the opposition (Ahmad, 2003: 158).

A noteworthy fact about 1991 elections is the entrance of Kurdish representatives to the parliament through SHP ticket. The SHP-Kurdish coalition pushed away some of the nationalist Turks from voting for SHP, while brought in more votes for the party in the Kurdish areas. The Kurdish party in coalition with SHP was People's Labor Party or *Halkin Emek Partisi* (HEP), whose members took their oath in Kurdish and soon split from SHP and represented HEP. As HEP was closed down by the constitutional court in 1993, the Kurdish members founded a new party named Democracy Party or *Demokrasi Partisi* (DEP) which followed the same fate of HEP and was declared illegal and was also closed (Altunisik and Tur, 2005: 51-54). An important milestone from this experience was the impeachment of

three Kurdish MPs of their parliamentary impunity and their arrest at the gates of the Turkish parliament, which left an important adverse mark on Turkish democracy and resulted in worsening trust between the Kurds and Turkish system.

Election was not the only event of early 90s with significant impact on Turkey. Occupation of Kuwait by Iraq had ignited the flames of another war in the region, one that brought forward new challenges to Turkey. Ozal had his personal views on how Turkey should deal with the war and acted independently in this case. He sided Turkey with the American-led coalition in the war against Iraq and cut Iraq's oil export through Turkey. Ozal's imposition of his individual will on foreign policy was not costless as Turkey's foreign minister and chief of staff at the time resigned and Turkey lost the economic revenue accrued from Iraq's oil pipeline crossing through Turkey (Laciner, 2009: 197-199). Meanwhile, events unfolded after the war, including the refugee influx at Turkey's borders, establishment of no-fly zone and a Kurdish entity in northern Iraq protected by an international force and the PKK's active presence in this newly established Kurdish enclave presented new challenges to Turkey (Uslu, 2000: 202-204).

The Gulf War and its consequences were soon followed by the unexpected death of Turgut Ozal on 17 April 1993 from heart failure, which is considered to be the official reason for his death. However, there was suspicion over the real reason behind his death and the issue has not been settled with certainty. Even after forensic tests conducted on his exhumed remains in 2012, still there is suspicion that poisoning was the real reason behind his death. This suspicion is rooted in the belief that discontent raised among opponents due to Ozal's personal conduct of Turkish politics and his attempts at solving the Kurdish issue may have urged them to poison him (Today's Zaman: 2012; Hurriyet Daily News: 2012; Seibert: 2012).

A month after Ozal's death, on 13 May 1993 Demirel was elected as Turkey's 9<sup>th</sup> President. In July the same year Tansu Ciller from Demirel's DYP became the first female Prime Minister in Turkey's history and her reshuffled cabinet won Turkish Parliament's approval vote. However, her mismanagement of the country's economy resulted in a crisis with detrimental impacts on Turkey, which included inflation rate over 100% and huge decrease in Turkey's currency value (Hic, 2008: 155-160).

While coalition government was struggling with the crisis and was losing members in the parliament, new developments were occurring in the political arena. RP led by Erbakan was

gaining more popularity and was improving its performance. An early indication of this fact was RP's success in winning mayor's office in twenty-eight Turkish cities including Istanbul and Ankara in 1994 municipal elections (Kamrava, 1998: 276). Meanwhile, as banned parties were allowed to organize and enter politics, CHP returned to Turkish politics in 1992 with Deniz Baykal as Party's chair. Few years later and in February 1995 SHP merged into CHP and in the first congress of the party Baykal was once more elected as the party leader (Tosun, 2010: 33). The incumbent coalition faced further problems as CHP's leader and Ciller could not agree over the coalition's continuation and Ciller's resignation led to early elections in December 24, 1995 (Aksin, 2007: 300).

It is worth mentioning that the short-lived DYP-CHP era witnessed a milestone in Turkey-EU economic relations. Europe decided to accept Turkey's entrance to its Customs Union and the decision was enacted in January 1996. This event was interpreted by some as a step closer to EU membership, while others considered it as a false decision that gives Europeans the economic privileges of Turkey's membership without practically accepting the country as a member; hence taking away Turkey's chance of membership (Mango, 2004: 95).

Similar to 1991 elections, no political party won the majority in 1995 elections. As stated by Ozbudun (2000: 76), party system turned further fragmented in the country. In this elections RP succeeded in preserving its ascending trend and came first with 21.4% of the vote. Other parties that succeeded crossing the 10% threshold were ANAP with 19.7%, DYP with 19.2%, DSP with 14.6% and CHP with 10.7% of the votes. Turkish ultra nationalists of Nationalist Action Party or *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (MHP) with 8.2% of the votes failed to secure any seats in the Parliament (Ozbudun, 2000: 76). Similar to MHP, Kurds failed to cross the 10% threshold. People's Democracy Party or *Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* (HADEP), which was established in May 1994 as the new Kurdish party in a joint ballot with two small parties could gain just 4.17% of the vote, mainly from the south-eastern provinces and failed to gain any seats in the Parliament (Barkey, 2017: 130-3).

As none of the parties in the parliament had enough seats to form the government on its own, a long process of negotiation started that took over two months. Finally, on 12 March 1996 centre-right parties ANAP and DYP formed a shaky coalition (*Anayol*) led by Mesut Yilmaz of ANAP. This coalition soon collapsed as the government resigned in 5<sup>th</sup> of June, mainly due to RP's threat of setting up enquiry commission against Ciller's corruption and internal problems in the centre-right camp (Hale, 1999: 31).

Interestingly, in less than a month the same party that was pressing for corruption investigations against Ciller formed a coalition government with her party. As the result of this deal, DYP and RP formed a coalition government in June 1996, which is known as *Refahyol* government. Erbakan was appointed as Prime Minister to be replaced by Ciller after two years and RP stopped pursuing Ciller's corruption investigation in the Parliament (Findley, 2010: 357).

The coalition that brought an Islamic party to power for the first time in Turkish Republic did not last long and collapsed even before Erbakan finished his two years term. As Yilmaz (2012: 374-5) explains, two types of developments resulted in RP's failure in staying in power and its eventual downfall. The first was army, secular politicians and public and non-Islamic media's distrust of an Islamic Party in power. It was extremely difficult for them to digest RP's reign in the secular Turkey established by Ataturk. The second development was RP or radical Islamists' anti-secular activities, such as RP members speeches discrediting Kemalism, attempting to lift the ban on wearing headscarf in public buildings, changing working hours in Ramadan (Muslim fasting month), and inviting the Sufi religious leaders to break their fasting in the Prime Minister's house. RP's activities were not limited to the domestic sphere. Erbakan attempted Islamic-oriented foreign policies which generally ended in failure. This included the establishment of an Islamic alternative to G7 called D-8 (Developing 8) consisted of Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nigeria as well as travelling to Muslim countries in Asia and Africa, while unsuccessfully trying to distance Turkey from Israel and West (Bilgin, 2008: 410-411).

Such bold and anti-secular activities by RP and its members in both domestic and foreign spheres had alerted the secular establishment of Turkey, resulting into banning RP from politics through the coalition of secular and military establishment by sacrificing democracy. The event that played an important role in this process was Jerusalem Day rally in Sincan city. In this rally, which was organized by RP's mayor in Sincan in early February, the mayor and Iranian ambassador to Turkey made speeches purportedly asking for implementation of Islamic law and establishment of Islamic State in Turkey. Turkish military responded swiftly as the next day a column of tanks marched through the city and later Sincan mayor was arrested and the Iranian ambassador was expelled from the country (Lombardi, 1997: 214; George, 1997: 55). Generals did not stop there and on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1997 meeting of the National Security Council the incumbent government was asked to take a number of

measures against rising Islamic sentiments and feelings in politics and was threatened by sanctions if it fails to take such action. State institutions, civil society and media were mobilized as well, and finally Erbakan decided to resign on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1997 amid mounting pressure (Caglar, 2012: 28-31). In contrast to the former *coup d'état*'s by the military, on 28 February 1997 process, also known by other terms as 'postmodern coup' and 'soft coup', Turkish military did not use hard power, did not cease the power and was capable of mobilizing the support of civil society, media and other government institutions (Burak, 2011: 156-7) through undemocratic means.

Erbakan's resignation brought forward the need for a new coalition government. A joint DYP-RP plan to form a new government headed by Ciller failed as President Demirel rejected to nominate Ciller and nominated Mesut Yilmaz from ANAP instead. Yilmaz succeeded in forming a coalition consisted of ANAP, DSP and Democrat Turkey Party or *Demokrat Turkiye Partisi* (DTP), a party consisted of broke away members of DYP led by Husamettin Cindoruk. On 12 July 1997, the new ANAP-DSP-DTP or Anasol-D coalition that was supported by CHP from outside received the Parliament's yes vote and Yilmaz became the country's Prime Minister (Hic, 2008: 177).

Meanwhile, the events did not end there for RP and its leader, as the party was taken to court in May 1997 faced with many accusations, including 24 charges that RP had connections with militant Islamic groups. The Constitutional Court made its decision in January 1998 and banned RP on the grounds of violating secularism and political party law. Soon after declaring RP illegal, in June 1998 the court banned Erbakan from political activity for five years. However, it seems RP had anticipated the court decree, as a number of RP members established a new party called Virtue Party or *Fazilet Partisi* (FP) on 17 December 1997 to replace the banned RP even before the court decision was out. FP had the same fate of RP and was closed down by the court on 22 June 2001 due to similar accusations. Followers of FP were divided on two camps as the party was banned. The radicals established a new party called Felicity Party or *Saadet Partisi* (SP), while moderates established their own party called AKP and ran on different ballots for 2002 elections (Narli, 1999: 43; Yilmaz, 2012: 376).

Poor economic performance, corruption, and inter and intra-party rivalries inherent in Turkey's 90s coalition governments made Anasol-D government another short-lived coalition. As CHP ceased its support for the coalition, early elections were scheduled for

April 1999 and DSP's leader Ecevit became the Prime Minister of the caretaker government. However, a significant event occurred prior to the elections that played an important role in the elections results. Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK's leader, was arrested in February 1999 few months after leaving Syria. In fact, due to threat of Turkey's military intervention, Syria stopped supporting the PKK and expelled Ocalan. He failed getting asylum in Russia, Italy or any European country and ended up in Kenya, where he was captured and transferred to Turkey (Kirisici, 2004: 278-9).

Ocalan's arrest proved fruitful for Ecevit (Prime Minister at the time) as well as Turkish ultra-nationalists of MHP, as they performed well in the April 1999 election. DSP with 22.19% came first, while MHP with 17.98% secured the second place. The Islamist FP with 15.41%, ANAP with 13.22%, and DYP with 12.01% were the other parties capable of crossing the 10% threshold and entering the Parliament. CHP with 8.71%, and HADEP with 4.75% failed to do so and stayed out of the Parliament (Carkoglu and Hinich, 2006: 372-3; Carkoglu, 2003: 132).

The government formed after the elections was a new coalition composed of DSP, MHP and ANAP and headed by Ecevit as the prime minister. In spite of initial reforms and achievements, in particular getting the EU candidacy status in December 1999, the coalition failed to finish its term in power. Government inefficiency in providing adequate help for 1999 earthquake, leading to and failing to tackle the economic crisis, disagreements among coalition partners, dispute between Ecevit and Ahmet Necdet Sezer who was elected as Turkey's president in 2000, and finally 2001 economic crisis and Ecevit's sickness were among the reasons resulting in termination of DSP-MHP-ANAP rule and early elections in 2002 (Mango, 2005: 24-5; Dismorr, 2008: 47; Karahan, 2013: 130).

As 2002 election results revealed, the decision for holding early elections at a time that country's economy was devastated by the internally triggered 2001 crisis and the political atmosphere was in no way favourable for the incumbent coalition was a fatal mistake for the coalition parties. However, this decision heralded a new era for Turkish politics, the era of the AKP rule which emerged in 2001 from the files and ranks of RP as a conservative party with roots in Erbakan's Islamism. Turkish public fatigued by coalition governments and their legacy of corruption, frequent economic crisis and political instability opted for a change and bet their lot on the newly established AKP for politico-economic stability.

#### **4.3.2. The Era of AKP, 2002-2014**

The result of the early elections in 2002 presented AKP and its charismatic leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan as the new choice of Turkish public and their hope for a positive transformation. Indeed, ascendance of AKP to power started a new era in both domestic and foreign politics of Turkey. This era continues to this date due to AKP's success in keeping its grip on power. However, the situation and the power of the main actors in Turkish politics have changed significantly during the years of AKP rule due to the external factors and internal dynamics.

The AKP's reign started at a time that army had the dominating role in Turkish politics and the judiciary was under the control of Kemalist seculars who were quite sensitive to an Islamic-oriented domestic or foreign agenda. These factors and the memory of what had happened to the RP through the post-modern coup made the AKP start as a cautious moderate party. However, rounds of success in consecutive local and national elections and constitutional reforms to satisfy the EU criteria, among other domestic and regional developments gradually paved the way for the AKP to reduce the powers of military and judiciary in an attempt to dominate them. The major historic events leading to such a development are briefly presented in this section.

The general elections held on 3 November 2002 were the starting point in the AKP's marathon of dominating Turkey's power centres. In these elections, AKP with 34.28% of the votes and 363 seats and CHP with 19.40 and 178 seats were the only two parties that could pass the 10% threshold and enter the parliament. The 9 seats left were gained by the independents that had obtained 0.99% of the votes. On the other hand, the failure of members of the former coalition government was quite devastating. Similarly, Kurds and pro-Erbakan Islamists failed to cross the threshold. The votes gain for these parties was as follows: DSP 1.22%, MHP 8.34%, ANAP 5.13%, DYP 9.55%, FP 2.48% and HADEP 6.23% (Carkoglu, 2002: 32).

The stunning victory of AKP enabled the party to form a single-party government and bring to an end the era of shaky coalitions. However, AKP's leader, Erdogan, was banned from holding public office and could not get the premiership post due to earlier imprisonment for reciting a poem which disturbed the military and secular establishment. This post was temporarily filled by Abdullah Gul for three months as a caretaker Prime Minister, till the ban

was lifted and Erdogan could get elected to the Parliament by winning 90% of the votes in the small town of Siirt and then replaced Gul as Turkey's new prime minister and the chairman of the AKP (Dismorr, 2008: 82-8).

In the first year of AKP rule, the region was witnessing a historic event. September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks carried out against targets inside the USA had resulted in American-led war on terror and Saddam's regime was the target of this war in 2003. In return for American use of Turkish soil for opening a northern front in the war against Iraq, Turkey was offered a lucrative deal that comprised both political and economic incentives, including USD 15 billion in grants and loan. However, in 1 March 2003 the bill was voted against in the Turkish Parliament. This decision was a blow to Turkish-American relations and negatively impacted the bilateral relations for many years (Taspinar, 2008: 18-19).

Although this parliamentary decision was not in favour of the AKP, there were other rulings that were benefitting the party. A reform package was passed on 31 July 2003 that decreased the role of the military in the National Security Council and bestowed the civilian administration the power to scrutinize the military's budget. Meanwhile, on 26 September 2003 Turkish Parliament amended about 350 articles of the penal code to bring them in line with the EU laws. As the result of such steps, the EU accepted Turkey's application for conditional membership on 17 December 2003 and October 2005 was set as the date for commencement of accession talks (Ahmad, 2014: 184-187). These reforms were tilting the power balance in favour of the AKP and were taking away the generals' free hand in Turkish politics. Meanwhile, local elections of March 2004 further boosted the AKP position, as the party gained 41.67% of the votes and won 12 out of 16 metropolitan municipalities (Bozlagan, 2013: 4).

AKP's success in its initial years in power had the impact of turning the party more self-confident and encouraged it to get the presidency seat as well. Hence, as Sezer's term ended in 2007, AKP nominated Abdullah Gul for the post. Gul, who had an Islamic background and his wife was wearing headscarf was regarded as a threat to secularism both by the opposition and the military. Hence, his nomination started a raw between the AKP on one hand and military and opposition parties on the other. Army's response was publishing an e-memorandum on 27 April 2007 threatening to act if needed for protecting secularism in the country. Meanwhile, the opposition succeeded in annulling Gul's success in the first round of presidential elections in the parliament through winning the court decree that stated the legal



quorum was not achieved. AKP decided on holding early elections to avoid the stalemate and go ahead with its candidate. The elections were held on 22 July 2007 and in August 28 while CHP boycotted the session, MHP attended to end the deadlock and Gul was elected as Turkey's president by the new parliament (Migdalovitz, 2007: 3-12; Burak, 2011: 162-3).

Results of the 2007 elections were another indication of AKP's triumph over its rivals in winning the support of Turkish public. The party's vote rose from 34.28% in 2002 to 46.6% in 2007, but in spite of the vote increase, as more parties crossed the 10% threshold AKP gained just 341 seats. CHP with 20.8% and MHP with 14.3% were the other parties crossing the threshold. Meanwhile, 20 Kurds who were members of Democratic Society Party or *Demokratik Toplum Partisi* (DTP), the new Kurdish party that had replaced HADEP after the former was banned by court in 2003, entered the parliament as independents (Eligur, 2007: 2). AKP's attempts for consolidating its power, hence, increased following its third victory in the elections. Limiting the powers of military, judiciary and media was a major step in this process. Such aims were pursued both through constitutional reforms and campaigns targeting these institutions.

Arrest waves aiming at military staff, journalists, lawyers, academics and prosecutors accused of being involved in *Ergenekon* and Sledgehammer plots against the government with the objective of toppling the AKP government were at the centre of AKP's campaign targeting the military institution. *Ergenekon* case started in March 2007 as the weekly political magazine *Nokta* published the diaries of a retired navy commander revealing a coup plot against the AKP in 2004 (Aydinli, 2011: 231). Illegal weaponry stocks found in Istanbul by police and arrest of army staff related to the case commenced the arrest waves of *Ergenekon* affair. Those arrested were accused of membership in an illegal terrorist organization called '*Ergenekon*' plotting to create disturbance and topple the AKP government through coup (Unver, 2009: 2-4). *Ergenekon* arrests were soon followed by new arrest waves of high-profile officers among others in what is named the 'Sledgehammer' case. In January 2010, an anonymous informant sent CDs, voice recordings and loads of documents to the Turkish daily *Taraf*. Three CDs with details of an operation called Sledgehammer aiming at destabilizing and toppling the AKP were among the documents. Even though the authenticity of the documents is still under question, new waves of arrests followed the revelation of the documents (Rodrik, 2011: 101-3). In the course of the arrest waves and in Jung's (2011: 2) terms in an attempt to "provoke a political earthquake" on 29 July 2011 the main leadership

of the Turkish armed forces, except for the chief of staff, resigned just a week before the *Yuksek Askeri Sura* or Higher Military Council's annual meeting on approving the promotions and determining the retirements in the files and ranks of military cadres. However, no harm came to AKP government due to such a provocative and politically oriented positioning. On the contrary, the government benefitted as Prime Minister Erdogan appointed a new leadership and filled the vacancies in less than a week.

*Ergenekon* and Sledgehammer accompanied by new legislations and reforms eventually gave the upper hand to the AKP administration. For instance, in June 2009, Turkish Parliament enabled the civilian courts to try the military staff in the peacetime while deprived the military courts of the right to try the civilians at such times (Commission of the European Communities, 2009: 10), which was considered as a right step in the EU-siation process. AKP even succeeded in amending the article 35 of the Turkish armed forces' internal service law that was bestowing Turkish army the right to interfere for stopping the internal threats, which by definition provided the necessary legal rationale and pretext for military *coup d'états*. The amended law removes the threat of military coups, as it does not include the domestic threats, and focuses on the external threats on the Turkey's land instead (Aknur, 2013: 143). It is important to mention that Gulen Movement, a socio-religious movement headed by Fethullah Gulen, the self-exiled Turkish Islamic religious leader, assisted the AKP in its confrontation with the military (Rodrik, 2011: 108), as Gulen Movement for many years infiltrated the every aspect of bureaucracy including police and intelligence as well as judiciary, and therefore their experience and soft power was useful to facilitate the AKP policies.

Judiciary, which was known to act as an ardent protector of Kemalism is also hit by the AKP initiated reforms. In particular, after 2010 constitutional reforms some argue that the judiciary has lost its independence and has become subservient to the executive branch in the process (Asik, 2012: 146-7). Even media has not been safe from the AKP's power solidification schisms. Restrictions on specific websites and social media, and pressures exerted on journalists and media groups are among limitations posed on the media sector by the AKP. In the case of confronting the government or criticizing it, even economic measures were taken against the daring media. A clear example of this case is the billions of tax fine imposed on Dogan Media Group in 2008 and 2013 that even forced the group to sell some of its newspapers (Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012: 310-312; Corke *et al*, 2014: 4-8).

Constant struggle with the Kemalist, secularist opposition once dominant in the major institutions of the state has not been the sole challenge for AKP on its path to control Turkey's power centres. Other groups and issues have turned AKP's power solidification road into a bumpy one. Gezi Park protests and Gulen Movement erupted in 2013 and the ongoing Kurdish issue and regional developments have at points created crises for the ruling AKP party. However, the party has succeeded to preserve its supremacy in the polls and its dominance over the Turkish state institutions. This fact has given the party an enhanced sense of security and consequently AKP's leaders have turned more confident and vociferous both in their propaganda and policies.

In contrast to its early years in power when AKP was portraying itself as a conservative democrat (Akdogan, 2003) party that respects secularism and is eager to press ahead with democratic and economic reforms to join the EU, in later years as a result of consolidating its power, the party progressed in its ideological position by showing more signs of conservatism, Ottomanism and Islamism. In practice, the EU membership bid has not progressed well, as factors including Turkey's problem with Cyprus, growing negative perspective towards the EU among Turks, and the EU's fear from enlargement and its religious-cultural differences with Turkey have resulted in setbacks in the process (Goksel, 2012: 1-3). Nevertheless, there are debates over reasons behind the initial enthusiasm of AKP for implementation of the EU membership reforms. Alessanderi (2010: 25) relates this enthusiasm to AKP's aim of creating a novel political atmosphere in which the party could foster its cultural and politico-economic plans. As the party succeeded in achieving this goal and consolidated its power through 2007 election victory, the EU membership zeal died down.

The more recent developments in Turkish politics have enhanced suspicions over the real motive of the AKP's policies. Ahn (2014: 55-64) in 'Curbing Civil Liberties' titled essay refers in details to a number of AKP policies and deeds that are interpreted as authoritarian or Islamic by critics. These include the October 2013, 45% increase in alcohol tax in 2010 and limitations on its sale time and place in 2013, statements in 2008 and 2012 encouraging women to have more than two children and referring to abortion as murder among similar statements related to child-birth, passing the school bill in March 2012 that allows students to attend religious secondary schools before finishing high school and introducing optional religious modules to the curriculum, criticising shared university accommodations and

encouraging separate male and female dorms, and increased ban on social media and internet content starting with March 2007 YouTube ban. Interestingly, the party continued this path in the later years too, as in a speech in late November 2014, based and interpreted on Islamic rhetoric President Erdogan stated that women and men are not equal and referred to motherhood as the praised role Islam assigns to women (The Guardian, 2014a). Such statements and the authoritarianism AKP is much accused of recently have not passed unnoticed by those segments of the Turkish society who feel their freedom and future prospects are threatened in the process. Gezi Park incident is an instance that the voice of opposition to the AKP authoritarianism is heard in the streets of the major cities all over Turkey.

Gezi Park incident in Taksim, Istanbul started with a peaceful environmental protest on 28 May 2013 in which a small group of demonstrators protested against government plans to destroy the park, which is located in Taksim Square of Istanbul and build a shopping mall instead. Gezi protestors erected tents and stayed in the square to show their resolve in stopping the government plan. However, their peaceful protest and environmental message was confronted by excessive use of force by police and the news of heavy-handed police response stirred solidarity demonstrations in the major cities all over the country. The demands of the protestors were not just environmental, while AKP government and its leader became the target of demonstrators' criticism and politics dominated the rallies. By mid-June 2013, police succeeded in clearing the Taksim Square; however, random protests continued to occur for the following months. Casualties of Gezi protests included 8 dead and 8,163 injured, which created a real challenge for the AKP government (Yaman, 2014: 2-3; Taptuk, 2013: 43).

The researcher was carrying out fieldwork in Ankara as the Gezi protests engulfed Turkey. Through observing the events unfolding first-hand, it was clear that most of the demonstrators were young people politically affiliated with the opposition parties and educated youth with liberal ideals who were both angry with what they conceived as authoritarianism of the AKP and heavy-handedness of police in confronting the demonstrators. They were complaining that AKP government is curbing freedoms and slogans asking for government resignation were frequently heard in the rallies. On the other hand, as the researcher noticed, AKP supporters were claiming that the protests are a plot aiming at toppling a democratically elected successful government. In their analysis, both

domestic and external actors were involved in this sinister anti-AKP conspiracy. However, the clearly noticeable fact was fragmentation of Turkish society into camps highly suspicious of each other and wary about their future. On the one hand, a leading AKP wary of conspiracies and plots aiming at toppling it from power, and on the other hand a camp composed of parties and groups afraid of their future in a Turkey dominated by Islamist AKP which tries to monopolize and direct all aspects of the Turkish politics and life.

For the sake of remaining in power, AKP has even turned against its once significant ally, Gulen Movement, as the later started revealing corruption cases involving senior AKP officials and criticized the party's policy. Gulen Movement, also known as *Hizmet* (Service) Movement, is organized and led by Fethulleh Gulen, a Muslim cleric living in self-imposed exile in the USA since 1999. The movement's religious orientation is influenced by the religious tradition and teachings of Said-i Nursi, a well-known Kurdish Islamic scholar from Turkey. Meanwhile, a trend of Turkish nationalism is mixed with the movement's Islamic teachings that at times even the secular Kemalist military institution of Turkey has tolerated and cooperated with the group due to their self-propagation of Turkish nationalist ideology (Seufert, 2014: 8-15). Through working in the education and business fields, propaganda for their nationalistic-religious views as well as socio-political activities Gulen Movement has gained a vast network both inside and outside the country.

Until December 2013, Gulen was considered as a close ally of the AKP and an important factor in the AKP's success in struggle against its rivals. As Balci (2014: 1-2) rightly points out, since 2002 Gulen has "unconditionally" supported the AKP in its domestic reform policies and containment of the military power and has been of great assistance for implementation of the AKP's cultural and politico-economic policies in Central-Asia and South Caucasus regions. It should be mentioned that unlike Balci's position, the relationship was not as such 'unconditional', as the benefits of the cooperation were mutual as AKP facilitated the infiltration of Gulen supporters to police and judiciary institutions (Jenkins, 2014 April 9). However, cracks in relations surfaced as early as 2010 when Gulen blamed Prime Minister Erdogan following Israel's attack on a Turkish ship carrying aid to Gaza. Further deteriorations occurred due to Gulen's dissatisfaction regarding the AKP's Kurdish policy and later measures taken towards prep schools by AKP. Finally, the differences picked as on 17 December 2013 pro-Gulen Deputy General prosecutor accused senior AKP officials of being involved in corruption cases and 66 people were arrested (Al Jazeera Centre for

Studies, 2014: 3-5). This incident changed the mutual cooperation to open confrontation and tilted the former allies against each other. In response, AKP started a campaign against Gulen, accusing it of working as ‘a state within state’ or ‘parallel state’ and many Gulen sympathizers were removed from their posts in the judiciary and police institutions. However, as the results of 30 March 2014 elections illustrated, Gulen’s challenge could not impact the AKP’s success and the party preserved its supremacy in the polls (Jenkins, 2014). In spite of victory in the elections, AKP has not stopped its campaign against Gulen Movement. In late April 2014, AKP opened a financial front with Gulen, as it targeted Bank Asia, a member of TUSKON, the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey with close links to Gulen Movement (for details *see*: Gursel, 2014; Tremblay, 2014). On the other hand, on 14 December 2014, AKP carried out a campaign against the critics of its government in Gulen media outlets. In this operation, Turkish police arrested 23 people from cities all over Turkey. Most of those detained were journalists; however, there was a police chief among those arrested as well (see: BBC News, 2014; Al-Jazeera English, 2014).

The EU voiced its concerns and strongly criticized the raids; nevertheless, Erdogan remained defiant and defended the arrests as legal. He even went as far as publicly declaring that “EU can not teach Turkey democracy” and Turkish people “don’t care whether the EU allows [us into the EU]” (Today’s Zaman, 2014a). Such bold statements are clear indication of the AKP’s self-confidence and sense of security as well as its transformation from a weak, insecure party advocating Pro-Europeanization reforms to a dominating party flexing its muscles both domestically and internationally. Interestingly, AKP did not stop at this point as an Istanbul court issued an arrest warrant for Fethullah Gulen, accusing him of “leading a criminal organization” (Letsch, 2014). This shows AKP’s determination in eliminating all obstacles on its path of power maximization.

#### **4.3.3. AKP and the Kurdish issue**

Kurdish question has remained the thorny issue haunting the governments in Ankara since the establishment of modern-day Turkey in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. AKP has been challenged on this front as well, and the party has come out with its own special way of engaging with

the issue. It aims to get maximum gain for the party through utilizing this issue, while it wants to give away the least.

It should be noted that AKP's engagement with the Kurdish issue has not been a smooth, continuous, well-planned and well-executed one. On the contrary, it has been a fluctuating shaky engagement through which AKP has taken steps forwards and backward repeatedly, due to domestic, regional and international elements involved. Throughout this process AKP has attempted to demonstrate the government's earnestness in solving the Kurdish issue through giving hope and promises, while doing little and sluggish practical work on the ground. This has kept the Kurdish side that expects significant and quick practical moves by the government, quite frustrated. Events and analysis presented below explain the above claims.

As stated earlier, in its initial years in power AKP was enthusiastically supporting the prerequisite reforms for joining the EU, an important part of which relates to Kurdish issues within the larger human rights and freedoms. AKP's aim was decreasing the powers of the Kemalist institutions and increasing its own grip on power; nevertheless, the reforms were benefitting the Kurdish cause simultaneously. In fact, the predicament of Kurds in Turkey was a main obstacle ahead of Turkey's EU membership. One privilege of such reforms was limited broadcasts in minority languages, including Kurdish. The process started as early as 2004 and in January 2009 Erdogan inaugurated the launch of state-run Kurdish channel named TRT 6, which broadcasts programs in Kurdish all day long (Sumer, 2009: 110).

Meanwhile, AKP showed intentions to deal with the Kurdish issue differently and indicated its resolve to tackle the issue in a democratic way. However, the shaky status of the AKP in its first term in power had made the party hesitant and uncertain in its resolve to deal with the issue in an unwavering manner. In addition, the party was much concerned with its popularity and vote ratio in the elections. These factors encouraged the party leaders to take pragmatist and opportunistic policies to keep their supporters on board, while trying to appease the Kurdish population and avoid the wrath of the ultranationalist Turks. Erdogan's 2005 statements on the Kurdish issue through which he accepted state has committed mistakes towards Kurds are an example of such a policy. Talking to a Kurdish audience in Diyarbakir in 2005, Erdogan declared that Kurdish issue could be solved through democracy rather than force. That is while his tone was different when he was talking to a Turkish audience where

his rhetoric resembled the security-oriented logic of the former administrations (Mitchell, 2012: 122; Polat, 2008: 1).

The goodwill shown by the AKP coupled with the limited EU accession reforms were positively interpreted by the hopeful Kurdish population of the country who were anticipating further reforms and a decisive solution to their problem. In response to the AKP initiative PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire in 2006 and Kurdish support for AKP increased in the Kurdish areas as evident in 2007 election results. Nevertheless, AKP misread the situation and the Kurdish support, and consequently resumed curbing the civil rights and once again opted for the conventional security-centred management of the Kurdish issue through use of force. The outcome was noticeable decrease in Kurdish support for the AKP in 2009 local elections and significant improvement in the Kurdish DTP performance through winning 99 local councils (Uzun, 2014: 24-26; Larrabee, 2013: 135).

The unpleasant election outcome encouraged the AKP to re-evaluate its Kurdish policy. Consequently, it announced an initiative referred to as ‘the national unity project’, ‘Kurdish Opening’ and ‘Democratic Opening’. As Candar (2009: 14-15) states, the opening policy was urged by both domestic and regional incentives and its primary aim was terminating the insurgency. However, the initiative was doomed from the very beginning as it lacked a clear vision or a well-developed plan. As detailed below, the controversial return of the PKK members from IK, leaking of the PKK and Turkish Intelligence meetings held in Oslo in 2011, banning of DTP and continued clashes between the army and PKK are clear examples of the superficiality and elusiveness of the opening initiative.

As a step forward in the opening process, government admitted the return of 36 PKK fighters and supporters from IK to Turkey. This was a positive step that many anticipated results in further progress. However, its disorganized implementation in October 2009 backfired as the group was received by Kurds as victorious heroes, a move that angered many in Ankara, especially in the Turkish nationalist circles (Turan, 2013: 3; Candar, 2009: 19). Another blow to the opening came from the leaking of Turkish Intelligence Agency (MIT) meetings with PKK representatives in Oslo. Such meetings had started far earlier and peaked in 2011 in what is known as Oslo peace process through which MIT and PKK representatives met in Oslo. The meetings stopped in June 2011 as 14 Turkish soldiers were killed in fights between the PKK and the army. However, the news of the meetings was leaked to press in September and created further trouble for the AKP (Democratic Progress Institute, 2013: 25-29).



Interestingly, at the background of the Kurdish opening, the court banned the DTP. The party, which was not ready to publicly denounce the PKK as a terrorist organization was accused of undermining the country's unity and cooperation with the PKK. Peace and Democracy Party or *Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi* (BDP) soon replaced DTP and represented the Kurds in 2011 elections (Mitchell, 2012: 123). Meanwhile, unsuccessful unilateral ceasefires declared by PKK and continued intermittent army-PKK clashes were signalling the failure of the opening.

Disappointed by the state of affairs and realizing that PKK insurgency cannot be stopped by military might alone AKP decided to inject new hope to the opening and take a milder stance towards the Kurdish issue. Larrabee (2013: 136) mentions four reasons for this policy shift. These include enhanced PKK activism in 2010-2012 period and inability to solve the issue by force, mounting domestic pressure for resolving the Kurdish issue, AKP's electoral considerations, and finally the realization of the role Ocalan could play in the process. The last came as 600 Kurdish political prisoners ended their strike after Ocalan asked them to do so, showing the influence Ocalan still maintains among the Kurds in Turkey.

As the result, Ocalan gained a pivotal role in the talks with government over the peace process and Kurdish delegates were allowed to visit him in the prison. The outcome of such visits was Ocalan's message read on 21 March 2013 Kurdish New Year or *Newruz* celebrations. The message asks for a new era in Turkey, where dialogue replaces war. It also demanded the withdrawal of PKK forces from Turkey. His message was positively greeted by the PKK, and consequently a new unilateral ceasefire was declared by the organization few days after the message (Ensaroglu, 2013: 14-15).

Meanwhile, PKK started the first phase of withdrawal on 8 May 2013 as a part of a three-stage peace process. The stages are gradual withdrawal, democratization and constitutional reforms and finally release of Ocalan and PKK's entrance to politics after laying down its arms. However, the peace process has failed to pass into its second stage and withdrawal was halted in early September 2013, as neither the government nor the Kurds could implement the required steps for proceeding to the final stage. Government appointed a 'Wise Persons' commission in April 2013 to advocate, consult and get views of various stakeholders on the process from all over the country and report to the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, it announced a reform package at the end of September 2013; nevertheless, the package was far below the Kurds' expectations and the report did not materialize any tangible outcomes on the ground (Democratic Progress Institute, 2013: 32-38; Ozbudun: 2013).

In comparison to former administrations, it could be noticed that Kurdish issue has witnessed milestone improvements, especially with regard to cultural rights, in the AKP era. However, so far the government has failed to make a conclusive resolution for the problem and the ‘democratic opening’ remains unsteady and insecure. The widespread October 2014 Kurdish protests and unrest all over Turkey in condemnation of Turkey’s stance towards the fate of Kurdish town of Kobani in Syria is a clear indication of the fragility of the peace process (Today’s Zaman: 2014b). Logical explanation for this could lie in the long history of hostility and mistrust between the Kurds and governments in Ankara, absence of a clear road map for peace, indecisiveness of the AKP, lack of institutional construct as well as domestic and regional dynamics involved in the process. However, it seems that AKP has ontological constraints in effectively bringing the Kurdish issue to a resolve, as its ideology is very much embedded in tacit Turkish nationalism legitimised by Islamic/religious outlook.

#### **4.3.4. AKP’s Foreign Policy**

The significance of the AKP era does not lie in domestic politics alone. AKP has tried its fortune in engineering a new foreign policy for Turkey aiming at enhancing its role in the region as well as on the global arena. The outcome has been more engagement with the neighbouring and Muslim countries, regional politics, and appearance of terms such as ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ and ‘Zero Problem with Neighbours’.

Ahmet Davutoglu who became Turkey’s Foreign Minister in May 2009 played a great role in Turkey’s return to its historical roots and the regional politics. Davutoglu’s aim was utilizing the Ottoman heritage to turn Turkey into a regional-global power and his method was implementing the ‘zero problems with neighbours’ policy to improve Turkey’s relations with the neighbouring and Muslim countries (Abramowitz and Barkey, 2009: 123). However, the policy did not work well for Davutoglu and Turkey, as the country’s involvement with Arab Spring and war in Syria deteriorated its relations with Syria, Iran and Egypt (AlJazeera Centre for Studies, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, a major reason behind the AKP’s self-confidence was landslide victories in elections. The party has managed to win all the elections since coming to power in 2002. However, its vote rate has not always been ascending. In 2009 local elections, AKP’s votes were 3% less compared to 2004 local elections and 8% less compared to the party’s votes in 2007 general elections. The distribution of vote in the 2009 local government

elections was as follows: AKP came first with 38.8%, and CHP with 23.1%, MHP with 16.1% and the Kurdish DTP with 5.65% followed. The major reasons behind AKP's vote drop were dissatisfaction of Kurdish voters (as discussed above), especially in the South East Turkey (Carkoglu, 2009: 2-5) and economic problems which had resulted in 15% unemployment and more than 14% GDP decline (Abramowitz and Barkey, 2009: 119-120).

In spite of the vote loss in 2009, AKP managed to garner an astounding percentage of votes in the 2011 general elections. The party won 49.9% of the vote and came first for the third consecutive national election since its ascendance to power in 2002. The opposition parties proved to be incapable of presenting a robust, convincing program to the electorate and were defeated once again by the incumbent AKP. Thus, CHP gained 26% of the votes, followed by MHP with 13%, which was around 3% less from the previous elections. Meanwhile, Kurds from BDP running as independents to bypass the 10% threshold succeeded in gaining 36 seats in the parliament. It is worth mentioning that in 2007 elections only 21 independent candidates entered the parliament and the remarkable increase in the number to 36 was an achievement for the Kurds (Thorp, 2011: 2-3; Robbins, 2011).

AKP's success in 2011 was followed by two more victories for the party in 2014 local and presidential elections. On 30 March 2014 local elections were held at a time that Gezi Park protests and AKP-Gulen raw had turned the elections into a challenging trial for the parties involved. Once again, AKP illustrated its crisis management capability and came first with 44% of the votes, followed by CHP with 25% and MHP with 18% of the votes. Meanwhile, the Kurdish coalition consisted of BDP and People's Democratic Party, or *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (HDP) raised their vote share to 6.2% (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014: 18-19).

Local elections were soon followed by the first popular presidential election in Turkey held on 10 August 2014. In this election three candidates were competing for the country's presidency post. AKP's candidate was Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was Turkey's Prime Minister and AKP's leader at the time. CHP and MHP were both represented by Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and the Kurdish candidate Selahattin Demirtas was representing the HDP. Winning 51.79% of the votes, Erdogan succeeded to become the first publicly elected President in the history of the Turkish republic. CHP-MHP joint candidate gained 38.44%, while Demirtas as the first Kurd running for the President post in Turkey won 9.78% of the votes (Ozbudun, 2014: 2). Meanwhile, on 27 August 2014, just a day before Erdogan swear in as Turkey's

President Ahmet Davutoglu was nominated as AKP's leader and replaced Erdogan as Turkey's Prime Minister (AlJazeera Centre for Studies, 2014: 1).

#### **4. 4. TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS, 1991-2014**

This section briefly presents the major events that occurred between the 1991-2014 timescale in T-IK relations to portray the overall picture of the milestone developments in the relations. Hence, it provides the background picture needed for proper analysis of the relations in the coming chapters. Events are not analysed or presented in minute detail in this section, as specific events relevant to different aspects of the study are utilised in the coming chapters to assess the significance and evolution of the major factors in shaping the bilateral relations. However, the grand picture provided here helps to locate the context and effects of the specific events in the overall build-up of the relations and helps in underpinning or disproving the analysis presented hereafter.

The events are presented in three distinct sections. This categorization is due to the changes that occur in the nature of T-IK relations in the discussed periods. It does not, however, mean that each period is completely distinct from the others and the division is based on abrupt and unexpected changes in all aspects of the relations. On the contrary, the changes occurred gradually and the dates selected for the classification here solely indicate the start date of emergence of a new trend with new characteristic features in T-IK relations.

The first section covers the period between the start of the relations in 1991 and signing of the 1998 Washington Agreement between the KDP and PUK. In this period Turkey enjoys the western support, conducts unhindered incursions into IK and is in need of Kurdish assistance for countering the PKK insurgency. The second section covers the period following 1998, which sees the decrease in the PKK strength and consequently declining in the Iraqi Kurds' importance for Turkey, enhanced direct western involvement in IK, and worsening of Turkish-American relations that decreased Turkey's influence and role in IK. This period ends in 2008, as Turkey and the USA relations improved and Turkey started to recognise the legitimacy of the IK's institutions. Hence, the third section focuses on the developments from 2008-2014 that sees improved relations between both sides in a new political and economic environment that has no resemblance to the previous eras. Since this

study focuses on the relationship between IK and Turkey until 2014, the analysis stops at this point.

#### **4.4.1. Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan, 1991-1998: Era of Informal Relations**

As stated in the previous chapters, early 1990s brought about tremendous change to the Middle Eastern politics and created a novel political environment for the Iraqi Kurds who were at the heart of the events. Iraq's decision to occupy Kuwait and the ensuing events following the defeat of Iraqi troops created turmoil throughout the country. Iraq lost its control over most parts of the Kurdish areas and as the result Kurds became the direct neighbour of Turkey. Meanwhile, PKK fighters who had infiltrated into the Kurdish region were using the region as a haven for their activities and operations. It was such a situation that necessitated contact and communication between the new neighbours. Highlights of the historical evolution of this involuntary relation are presented below.

At its outset, T-IK relations were almost singlehandedly directed by Turgut Ozal, who was Turkey's President between 1989-1993. He aligned Turkey with the international coalition formed to force Saddam out of Kuwait with the aim of reclaiming the fading strategic importance of Turkey for the West (following the end of Cold War) and to make Turkey have its say in the post-war situation in Iraq (Lindenstrauss and Aksoy, 2012: 15; Atlantic Council, 2009: 9-10). In particular, Turkey was concerned with the threats of PKK and Kurdish nationalism emanating from IK and was hoping to counter the potential post-war dangers. Ozal was even thinking of controlling the historical Mosul *Vilayet* in northern Iraq through military means and asked the army to have a ready plan for such a scenario. However, Ozal's plan was not well-received by the army that was considering it unrealistic and adventurous, to the extent that even Turkish Chief of Staff resigned in protest (Jenkins, 2008: 13).

Despite Ozal's optimism, the post-war situation was in no way in Turkey's favour. In spite of losing the precious economic gains from trade with Iraq, Turkey was facing a refugee crisis at its doorstep. Meanwhile, subsequent opportunities surfaced for Kurdish nationalism in IK and internationalisation of the Kurdish question through global mass media had further complicated the situation for the Turkey's policymakers. In order to cope with the new developments, Ankara was forced to act promptly and the result was myriad of tactics to achieve the goals of containing the internal and external threats emanating from Kurdish

nationalism and avoiding further humanitarian catastrophes with economic consequences on Turkey's borders.

As already stated, the refugee crisis was one of the immediate results of the war. This humanitarian crisis was demanding an urgent response. However, security and economic concerns had rendered Turkey incapable of opening her borders to the helpless Kurdish refugees gathered in the border area. Turkey was afraid that in case of admitting the refugees PKK fighters disguise themselves as refugee and infiltrate into Turkey (Jenkins, 2008: 13). Meanwhile, putting aside the economic burden of nearly a million refugees, presence of such a big number of Kurds in Turkey would have increased the Kurdish population there and could have strengthened the Kurdish national feelings among the Kurds in Turkey, too.

Finally, Turkey succeeded to avoid such unfavourable outcomes as a safe haven was created for the Kurds inside Iraqi territory. This came after Resolution 688 was passed in a UN Security Council meeting on 5 April 1991 and a no-fly zone prohibiting the Iraqi planes flying north of the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel was established as a part of Operation Provide Comfort, which was launched on 5 April 1991. Turkey played an influential role both in initiation and maintenance of the haven. Indeed, Turkey instigated the Resolution 688 in cooperation with France and Iran. Meanwhile, President Ozal's idea of creation of a safe zone in the border areas played a significant role in the birth and evolution of the safe haven project. Besides, the military force protecting the safe haven and their fighter jets were stationed on Turkish territory, at the Incirlik Air Base in Adana Province and their mandate was regularly renewed by Turkish Parliament (Gunter, 1997a: 98; Kirisci and Winrow, 2003:159-160; Yildiz, 2004: 37-41). Interestingly, the way Turkish government dealt with the crisis played a historic role in the fate of Kurds in Iraq and their relations with Turkey. In other words, Turkey's fear from recurrence of a similar refugee influx in future was an important factor in the country's decision to tolerate the existence of a Kurdish autonomous region on its border. This policy bestowed the Iraqi Kurds the chance to establish a political entity under the umbrella of Western protection and ironically Turkey, the very country that was denying the existence of Kurds, turned into the economic lifeline, the corridor of international aid and security guarantor of this entity.

Under such conditions, which were far beyond Turkey's control, Ankara decided to commence friendly relations with the Kurdish leadership in Iraq. In spite of references to cultural and social affinity between Turks and Iraqi Kurds, the real aim behind this policy

was exerting Turkey's influence on the Kurdish leadership to prevent the establishment of a Kurdish state and simultaneously benefitting from Iraqi Kurds' assistance in solving the Kurdish problem and eradicating the PKK insurgency in Turkey (Lindenstrauss and Aksoy, 2012: 49-50; Gunter, 1997a: 10). Clandestine contacts between Turkey and IKF, which started in January 1991, led to inviting the Kurdish leaders for talks in Ankara (Karadaghi, 1993: 229). The first meeting occurred on 8 March 1991 as the PUK's leader Jalal Talabani accompanied by the KDP's envoy Mohsin Dizai met Tugay Ozceri, Turkey's Foreign Ministry undersecretary, in Ankara. Talabani, who was delighted with the new developments, likened the shift in Turkey's policy towards the Iraqi Kurds to turning of a new page and stated that the most significant outcome has been Turkey's decision to stop objecting the establishment of direct relations between the Iraqi Kurds and Americans (Gunter, 1991: 39). Talabani's statement illustrates the extent of Turkey's leverage when it comes to the relations between Iraqi Kurds and the West. This was due to the cold war alliance with the West and the great role Turkey had played in the Gulf War and afterward. Hence, Turkey's concerns were well received in the American administration at the time. This factor had great ramifications for the relations, as it was losing this privilege *vis-à-vis* Kurds in 1998 that changed the dynamics of the relations.

Iraqi Kurdish leaders were invited to Ankara in several other occasions and were even received by the Turkey's President and Prime Minister in a number of the visits. For instance, Masoud Barzani, KDP's leader, had six official visits to Turkey between 1992 and 2001. Meanwhile, both Barzani and Talabani were issued with Turkish diplomatic passports (Lundgren, 2007: 86; Jenkins, 2008: 13). Another development was the establishment of the KDP and PUK representations in Ankara in late 1991, which are both still operative (Gunter, 1997b: 11). It is worth noting that in spite of the aforementioned developments, Turkey's officials were still regarding the situation in Northern Iraq as temporary and were considering the Kurdish controlled areas as an inseparable part of the Iraqi territory. Turkey was still considering the Baghdad government as the legitimate representative of all Iraqi territory and was not recognising the publicly elected Kurdish administration (Lundgren, 2007: 75-6). Hence, conducting relations with the Kurds was a pragmatic policy to manage the uncontrollable situation until the Iraqi government succeeds in reclaiming its sovereignty over the lost Kurdish territory.

Embracing the Kurdish leadership, however, was not the only aspect of the relations. In parallel with the diplomatic contacts, Turkish army was bombarding the PKK bases and border villages leaving civilian casualties. On 1 March 1992, Turkey's fighter jets carried out the first trans-border operation without being granted the right of hot pursuit by Iraqi government. Turkey was referring to her right of self-defence to fence off Iraqi government's protest over breach of its sovereignty (Keskin, 2008: 62). However, PKK bases were not the mere targets of such attacks. Iraqi Kurdish villages were sometimes targeted as well resulting in civilian casualties. An early instance of this case was bombing of five Kurdish villages on 11 October 1991 resulting in three deaths and 11 injuries among civilians (Karadaghi, 1993: 236). Moreover, in some cases the air raids were expression of Turkey's frustration with the developments in IK and were carrying clear political messages. For instance, few days before May 1992 elections Turkish fighter jets bombed a KDP's election campaign office demonstrating Turkey's discontent towards the process (Marcus, 1993: 243-4). Iraqi Kurds were quite unhappy with such bombardments, which were resulting in destruction of Kurdish villages and death of Kurdish civilians. As a sign of displeasure, in October 1991 Barzani even closed the KDP's office in Ankara for a short time (Gunter, 1997b: 12). These bombardments were forming the other pillar of Turkey's policy aiming at dissuading the Kurds from establishment of a Kurdish state through show of force.

In parallel to the air raids, 1990s witnessed several incursions of Turkish troops into the IK's territory, some of which were assisted by the Iraqi Kurdish parties. A part of Turkish army's 1991 strategy in fighting the PKK was setting up a five-kilometre wide security zone patrolled jointly by Iraqi Kurdish forces (Keskin, 2008: 61). PKK was alarmed by such cooperation between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds and was concerned about the future of its presence in the autonomous Kurdish region and its plans to extend the party's influence there. Its activities against Turkey were jeopardising IK's status *vis-à-vis* Turkey, its major economic and security lifeline. As a reaction, in February 1992 IKF warned the PKK that if it does not stop its activities against Turkey it would be eradicated from the region. PKK ignored the warning and relations turned worse to the extent that in July PKK placed an embargo on T-IK trade and had forcefully controlled a number of IK's border villages (Gunter, 1996: 54-55). In response to PKK's hostilities, on 4 October 1992 the same day that Kurdistan Parliament declared federalism, Iraqi Kurds launched an offensive on the PKK. Meanwhile, Iraqi Kurds assisted the Turkish troops that entered into the Kurdish territories twelve days later. The war resulted in the PKK's surrender to the PUK on October 28 and



ended the PKK-imposed trade embargo (Gunter, 1997a: 120). Although Iraqi Kurdish cooperation with Turkish army partly aimed at getting the latter's support for their declared federalism schism; nonetheless, PKK's conduct and policies were also playing a substantial role in pushing them down this road.

Military cooperation was in no way successful in gaining Turkey's trust over Kurdish intentions behind the declaration of federalism. A tripartite meeting consisted of Turkish, Iranian, and Syrian foreign ministers was held in Ankara in November 1992 to discuss the developments in IK. Their aim was to counter the threat of Kurdish nationalism and prevent the establishment of a Kurdish state (Bengio, 2012: 206). Such tripartite meetings were held periodically and combined with the military incursions worked as a solid warning signal to the Iraqi Kurds that establishment of a Kurdish state would not be tolerated and has no chance of success. Even the clarification letter Iraqi Kurds sent to the Parliaments of these three countries explaining the reasons behind declaring federalism and assuring them that Iraqi Kurds have no secessionist intentions and would not interfere in the internal affairs of their neighbours did not result in any positive changes in the interest of Kurds (Gunter, 1997b: 12-13).

Following the military cooperation with Turkey, Iraqi Kurds, and in particular Jalal Talabani tried to broker a peace deal between the PKK and Turkey. The plan partially succeeded, as PKK came on board and decided to declare ceasefire in March 1993. However, the sudden death of President Ozal, who had a favourable view towards peaceful solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, ended the prospects of success for the initiative (Bruinessen, 2000: 13).

After Ozal's death, Turkey's policy towards Iraq started to change in ways that Turkish politicians were more in favour of normalising the relations with Baghdad. As Olson (1995: 13-14) states, the relations started to improve since 1993 as diplomatic, military and economic delegations were frequently moving between both capitals, and even on 11 December 1993 assassination of Caglar Yucel, the administrative attaché of the Turkish embassy, in Baghdad could not derail the improvements in the relations. By early 1994, Turkey was pressing for reopening of the pipelines and removal of the UN sanctions on Iraq. Moreover, as a goodwill gesture, foreigners crossing into IK from Turkey were demanded to have a valid Iraqi visa (Olson, 1995: 15). Up to the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003, Turkey continued improving and enhancing relations with Baghdad and was working for lifting the sanctions hoping that with the end of sanctions Baghdad can reclaim its sovereignty over the

country and reinstate its economic relations with Turkey. As discussed in coming chapters, this policy had great ramifications for Turkish relations with IK.

Another important event that occurred in 1990s and had tremendous impact on T-IK relations was the internal war between the KDP and PUK forces, which started in 1994 and lasted for four years, which created another dilemma for Turkey. On the one hand, it was good that Kurdish forces were focusing their efforts on fighting each other rather than establishing a Kurdish state; on the other hand, the war meant more instability in IK and more chances for the PKK to thrive and launch attacks on Turkey from a safe haven in Kurdistan. Meanwhile the war brought about new alliances due to geographic realities of the region. Areas under the KDP's control were mainly bordering Turkey while areas under the PUK's control were bordering Iran. This necessitated closer cooperation between Turkey and the KDP on one hand, and Iran and the PUK on the other for safeguarding their interests and countering the security threats. As demonstrated below, at times this meant military cooperation and direct involvement of the neighbouring countries in the Kurdish civil war.

The regional response to the Kurdish civil war was remarkable. In order to make sure their influence and interests in Kurdistan region are preserved and their concerns are taken into consideration, Turkey, Iran, and even Baghdad attempted to broker peace deals between the warring Kurdish parties. They were not alone in this regard, as France and the USA also made attempts at bringing an end to the KDP-PUK conflict. However, it was the concerns and military interference of the regional actors, which was responsible for the failure of most of these peace-making efforts. The extent of the regional intervention finally required the American direct mediatory action in 1998, which eventually brought an end to the Kurdish civil war.

At the outset of the hostilities Turkey tried to bring the warring parties together on its land. However, the meeting between representatives of the KDP and PUK in the Turkish border town of Silopi on 30 May 1994 resulted in no peace deal (Gunter, 1996: 233). Another round of peace negotiations occurred in July 1994 in Paris that resulted in a peace deal scheduled to be signed by Barzani and Talabani in presence of the French President. Although Turkish observers were present in the meetings and Turkey's concerns were reflected in the deal, fears that such a deal can lead to establishment of a Kurdish state urged Turkey to decline granting visas to the Kurdish leaders and stopped them from going to Paris for signing the deal. A year later in August, an American initiated attempt brought the warring parties

together in Dublin-Ireland. Similar to the Paris meetings, an agreement was made which was cognisant of Turkey's security concerns and was due to be signed by Barzani and Talabani in Washington at the end of September. Nevertheless, this did not materialize as the PKK that was unhappy with the KDP policing of the borders and cooperation with Turkey started a new war front against the KDP. The PKK was encouraged to do so by Iran and Syria that were not happy with an American-brokered peace deal, and the PUK that wanted to scatter the KDP forces on two fronts. Meanwhile, Talabani referred to the position of the Turkish delegation that was imposing on what he considered the external issue of the PKK as the reason behind the failure of the talks (Gunter, 1997b: 15; Hso, 2008: 100-102).

Ankara Peace Process in late October 1996 was another peace-making attempt that was initiated by the USA, Britain and Turkey. This time a Peace Monitoring Force (PMF) composed of Turkmen and Assyrians was created to monitor the cease-fire line (Gunter, 1999: 87). However, this initiative followed the path of Paris and Dublin Agreements and reached a deadlock by the summer of 1997. Iran's concerns over the USA's intentions and PKK's concerns over Turkey's intentions behind arming and training the PMF which involved around 1,000 local Turkmen were main reasons behind the failure of this process (Gunter, 1999: 121-122).

As mentioned earlier, initiating peace deals was not the sole method neighbouring states and Baghdad government were utilising to safeguard their interests in the Kurdish region. Military force was used, and alliances were formed at a number of times to achieve what could not be gained through diplomatic means. In this regard, in response to increased PKK activities and mindful of the chaotic situation resulted from the KDP-PUK conflict, a massive Turkish military incursion occurred in March 1995 which included 35,000 soldiers marching through 240 kilometres wide border area into the 40 kilometres depth of the Kurdish territory. The operation resulted in death of 20 civilians and destruction of 71 villages in border areas (Hamakarim, 2008: 122-3). Meanwhile, unlike the 1992 operation, in 1995 Turkey conducted the operation without consulting or informing the KDP and PUK leadership (Kirisici and Winrow, 2003: 164).

Similar to Turkey, Iran used military force against dissident Iranian Kurds stationed in IK. In July 1996, a mechanized Iranian force estimated between 2,000 and 3,000 and assisted by the PUK entered deep into the Kurdish Region under PUK control and bombarded the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (KDPI) camp near the town of Koy Sanjiq, 80 kilometres south-east of

Erbil city (Hurriyet Daily News: 1996; Foundation for Democracy in Iran: 1996). PUK cooperation with Iran was rewarded by Iranian military assistance that tilted the power balance in the PUK's favour. As mentioned in the previous chapter, KDP asked for Iraqi government's help to survive the Iranian-backed PUK assault in 1996 which resulted on 31 August 1996 deployment of Iraqi army in Erbil and PUK's flight from the city. Another round of military interventions occurred in 1997 as the PUK and the PKK in a tacit alliance with Iran were fighting the KDP, which was backed by Turkey. In May 1997, a massive 50,000 strong Turkish force crossed the border to fight the PKK. Unlike previous incursions, Turkish troops did not retreat completely as some troops were stationed in the three permanent bases established in Dohuk province. The peak of Turkish support for the KDP in the fight against the PUK was in October the same year as Turkey bombarded both PUK and PKK positions (Gunter, 1998: 33-40; Rogg and Rimscha, 2007: 839).

#### **4.4.2. Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan, 1998-2008: Era of Confrontation and Denial**

Starting from 1998, relations between Turkey and IK entered a new phase due to milestone developments on the ground that changed the dynamics at work framing the relations. The 1991-1998 era was dominated by good USA-Turkish relations, instability, civil war and absence of a unified constitutionally recognized Kurdish entity, heavy direct involvement of regional powers in IK, and strong presence of PKK and ensuing importance of Iraqi Kurds for Turkey's security. However, all these changed after 1998, albeit not absolutely and in an abrupt manner, yet enough to make a gradual shift in the relations.

The shift started with the Washington Agreement that heralded an era of direct American involvement with Kurds, which later evolved into close cooperation and alliance after 2003, while American-Turkish relations was gradually taking back steps in particular after the unfavourable treatment Americans received from Turkey's Parliament at the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The increased American involvement resulted in decreasing influence of regional actors and near absence of Baghdad after 2003. Meanwhile, the PKK leader's capture in 1999 resulted in near absence of PKK till 2004 and subsequently loss of Iraqi Kurds strategic importance for Turkey. This coincided with increased support of Ankara and hope in Iraqi Turkmens. The shift resulted in losing the support of Iraqi Kurds in fighting against the PKK, as the organization resumed attacks on Turkey. Meanwhile, the internal situation of IK started to stabilise and Kurds succeeded in gaining constitutional recognition

and a sizeable presence and leverage in Baghdad while forming a united Kurdish government in Erbil. The milestone developments in this era are briefly presented below.

As stated above, signing of the Washington Agreement is selected as the starting point for a shift in T-IK relations. This is due to the fact that for the first time in the history of Kurdish-American relations American administration directly engaged with the Kurdish issue and (although in broad terms) publicly declared support for the Iraqi Kurds. At the ceremony organised to publicize the agreement, Madeline Albright, American Secretary of State at the time, stated that the Barzani-Talabani reconciliation “will make it easier for the United States and others to help their people” and “With unity, there is every reason for the Iraqi Kurds to look forward with hope” (USIS Washington File, 1998). Even such general comments about American support for Kurds were immediately noticed and picked both by analysts and neighbouring states. An article entitled ‘Kurdish Agreement Signals New U.S. Commitment’ which was written just 12 days after declaration of the accord clearly illustrates this point. In this article, Makovsky (1998) an analyst for The Washington Institute for Near East Policy remarks that while the agreement increases the Kurdish unity and reduces Iraqi and regional interventions, nevertheless “the increased level of U.S. commitment is surprising, and possibly ill-advised”. Meanwhile he referred to Turkey’s decision to boost diplomatic ties with Iraq to ambassadorial level as a sign that “highlights widespread regional opposition”.

In fact, the agreement was mindful of Turkey’s concerns through stressing on Iraq’s territorial integrity and unity and clearly stated “both Parties are committed to preventing violations of the borders by terrorists or others” (Gunter, 1999: 102). However, the expressed hope of both parties for reform in Iraq on a “federative basis” was a source of concern for Turkey (Gunter, 1999: 102).

Meanwhile, as discussed in chapter 3, PKK leader was captured in February 1999 in Kenya; an event that dealt a shattering blow to the organization and crippled it for almost half a decade. In fact, the operations conducted by the Turkish army and the KDP had already decreased the PKK power and manoeuvrability in launching offensives on the Turkish soil from IK territory. The last attack of this kind in 1990s was launched on 29 December 1998 and was countered by a brigade-size Turkish troops incursion into IK (Keskin, 2008: 61). Moreover, PKK lost the support of PUK due to two main reasons. The first one was the dominating and expansionist intentions and activities of the PKK in border areas located in the PUK territory, in particular establishment of a local administration near the Raniya-

Rawanduz region that angered and alerted the PUK. The second reason was PUK's attempt to regain favour in Ankara. In particular Barham Salih, then the newly appointed prime minister of the PUK administration, was very keen on this matter (Olson, 2002: 113). Finally, in October 2000 tensions escalated into war, which continued into 2001 and rendered hundreds of casualties on both sides. As Rubin (2001) states, in this war PKK was used as a pawn by Iran to split the PUK forces that were simultaneously fighting against fundamentalist Islamists with the aim of extending political Islam's sphere of influence in IK.

Decreasing security threat emanating from the PKK eventually decreased Turkey's sense of dependence on Iraqi Kurdish support and assistance in countering the PKK. Under such circumstances Turkey started to invest more on its ethnic kin Iraqi Turkmen as a more reliable alternative to Kurds. The origin of Turkmen (also spelled as Turkmen and Torkomans) in Iraq is debated, as some Turkmen sources trace their presence back to waves of migration dating back to Amawids, Abbasids and Seljuki dynasties, while there are other accounts tracing their presence in Iraq to 1638 Ottoman conquest of the country. Meanwhile, in absence of reliable population census, estimates over Turkmen population range from 2% to 16% of Iraq's population depending on different sources. This population is scattered in cities ranging from the Syrian border in north to Iranian border in the central Iraq with a sizable population in the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. In addition to their disjointed geographical distribution, Turkmen population is also divided between Sunni and Shiite versions of Islam (Oguzlu, 2001: 7-13; Kayili, 2005: 4-7).

Turkey started to invest on this group in early 1990s, and by 1995 Turkish security succeeded in gathering a number of Turkmen parties and organizations under an umbrella called Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) and funded it through the Turkish government (International Crisis Group, 2005: 10). Meanwhile, as already stated, through Ankara Peace Process, Turkey trained and organized the Turkmen in the PMF, which was established to patrol the border between the KDP and PUK forces. Although majority of Turkmen population were living in areas outside Kurdish administration prior to 2003; nevertheless, the Turkish policy of support and manipulation of Turkmen card against Kurdish ambitions at times was creating friction between Kurdish parties and the ITF. Examples of such incidents occurred in late 1990s and early 2000 in Erbil city (Human Rights Watch, 1999). However, Turkey's insistence on protecting Turkmen and Turkmen rights increased immensely prior to 2003 occupation of Iraq. As the researcher observed at the time, Turkish government and in

particular Turkish media were picturing Turkmen as victimized people vulnerable to ethnic cleansing by Kurds and in need of urgent protection. In this process Turkmen political weight and population was usually exaggerated, in particular with regards to their standing in Kirkuk. Hence, Turkey was constantly using the Turkmen card as a reason for possible Turkish military incursion into northern Iraq and Kirkuk with the aim to warn Kurds against any ambitious plan for annexation of Kirkuk into the Kurdish region.

However, Turkey's policy of support for the ITF and ignorance of Iraqi Kurds started to shift due to eye-opening developments after 2005 elections. Through the process, Turkey found that Turkmen population in Iraq is overly exaggerated as ITF gained just 1.1% of the national vote and won only 18.4% of the votes in Kirkuk, the city Turkey was claiming to be a Turkmen city (Jenkins, 2008: 17). Meanwhile, Turkey recognized that 50% or more of Turkmen population are Shiite and are more affiliated with Shiite Arab parties and have no desire for cooperation with or reliance on Turkey (Barkey, 2010: 6). As discussed below, re-emergence of the PKK threat and the clout Kurds gained in Iraq following the collapse of Saddam regime played their part in reformulating the Turkey's policy towards Turkmen.

As mentioned earlier, after declared American support for Kurds in 1998 and decreasing PKK threat, in addition to increased support and reliance on Turkmen, Turkey was adopting the policy of strengthening the relations with Baghdad with the aim of reintroducing Iraq into the international community. Ankara was consistently urging Baghdad to cooperate with the UN and weapons inspection teams and stick to other peaceful measures to avoid being attacked. Ankara's fear was from possible post-war scenarios of Kurdish control over oil fields in Kirkuk and Mosul and eventual independence or another refugee influx and humanitarian crisis on its border (Gorener, 2008: 2; Lundgren, 2007: 98). In line with this policy, Turkey was denying Kurds any official status and was considering them as actors filling the void, to be dispersed as Iraq restores its territory. Lundgren's (2007: 88) quotation from a Turkish official strongly reaffirms this point. As the anonymous official stated, Turkey neither recognizes the Iraqi Kurdish leaders as political partners, nor attributes any official status to them. The unnamed official continued "...they are elements at the moment filling the power vacuum and with whom we have to cooperate in the fight against PKK" (Lundgren, 2007: 88). At best, Turkey was granting the status of 'an Iraqi party leader' to Barzani and Talabani.

In spite of Turkey's attempts for peaceful settlement of Iraq's problems with the West, by mid 2002, it became apparent that war is inevitable and Saddam's regime would be toppled soon. By summer 2002 Turkish General Staff was already determined to join the American-led operation; however, unlike the Americans Turkey was more concerned with the post-war situation. The main aim was to prevent Kurdish independence through stationing Turkish troops in Northern Iraq and preventing the Kurdish forces from controlling Kirkuk and Mosul. Turkey was also counting on Turkmen support and was planning for establishment of a Turkmen militia to counter the Kurdish *Peshmerga* forces (Jenkins, 2008: 15-16). However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Turkish parliament's 1 March 2003 decision that denied Americans opening a northern front in the war against Saddam's regime dashed all the hopes and plans made by the Turkish army. Apparently, Iraqi Kurds were in no ways sympathetic towards Turkish military involvement and the Turkish parliament decision which resulted in cooling of the US-Turkish relations was the unforeseen blessing that signified the Kurdish presence and role both as base provider and war ally for the Americans.

The new reality on the ground rendered huge impact on Turkey's power *vis-à-vis* Iraqi Kurds. The researcher, as an undergraduate university student in Erbil at the time could see the frustration of Erbil citizens and all Kurds in general towards the possibility of Turkish military involvement, in particular as Turkey had amassed a massive military force in the border area. Huge demonstrations throughout Kurdish cities and especially in Erbil were held at the time that protested against any possible incursion. As witnessed by the researcher, demonstrators that were angry at Turkey's threats of intervention were carrying placards reading 'No for Turkish military incursion' and even some angry protestor burned the Turkish flag. Kurdish leadership was also worried about the outcome of any incursion on Kurdish autonomy and survival of the KRG. The public rallies and Kurdish official stance which was referring to any Turkish involvement as invasion and occupation, coupled with American fears from regional repercussions of such a scenario eventually resulted in dismissal of Turkish military involvement in the Operation Iraqi Freedom. Hence, even after entrance of Kurdish *Peshmerga* to Kirkuk and Mosul and extensive coverage and magnification of this event by Turkish media no Turkish intervention occurred. Nevertheless,



it should be mentioned that American decision to demand the withdrawal of Kurdish forces from those cities played a significant role in allaying Turkey's concerns and pressure<sup>2</sup>.

As the time passed, the extent of chilliness in Turkish-American relations became more evident. On 4 July 2003, the U.S. forces arrested 11 Turkish commandos in the Kurdish city of Suleymania. They were handcuffed, hooded and detained for sixty hours. The captured Turkish commandos were accused of conspiring to assassinate the Kurdish governor of Kirkuk. It is worth noting that earlier in April a group of Turkish soldiers in civilian dress who were escorting weapons hidden in an aid convoy heading to Kirkuk were also arrested by American soldiers (Peuch, 2003). Although both sides hushed the April event, the Suleymania incident was publicized and created public fury in Turkey and embarrassment for Turkish officials. Handcuffing and hooding of the Turkish special forces was considered humiliating and outrageous by the Turkish public and newspaper headlines referring to American troops, as 'Rambos' or 'Ugly Americans' were clear reflections of this frustration (Howard and Goldenberg, 2003). General Hilmi Ozkok, Turkish army's chief of staff at that time, stated that there is a "crisis of confidence" between Turkey and the U.S.A. (Howard and Goldenberg, 2003). Meanwhile, many in Turkey regarded the incident as the signal that Washington favours Iraqi Kurds over Turkey (Cagaptay, 2004: 46).

Developments on the ground in late 2003 further reinforced such beliefs as Turkey's bid to join the coalition through deploying troops in Iraq was turned down once again by Americans. Turkish Parliament approved troop deployment in October 2003 and Americans were in favour of more ally boots on the ground helping the stabilization of Iraq; nevertheless, vociferous opposition from Iraq, especially from Iraqi Kurds and public protests convinced Washington that any Turkish military involvement could be counterproductive and create more chaos (Somer, 2005: 114-115).

In addition to losing grounds to Kurds in Washington, Turkey was irritated with the increasing influence of Kurds in Kirkuk. Kurdish leaders and in particular Masoud Barzani were publicly declaring Kirkuk as an Iraqi city with Kurdish identity which needs to be incorporated into the Kurdish administered areas. In an interview in 2004, Masoud Barzani referred to the city as 'the heart of Kurdistan' and expressed Kurds' readiness to sacrifice

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the researcher working as interpreter with foreign journalists covering the war events at the time visited the Kirkuk city three days after its liberation in 2003 and witnessed the gradual withdrawal of the displeased Kurdish *Peshmerga* from the city.

their lives for preserving the Kurdish identity of the city (Turkish Daily News, 2004a). Such remarks were infuriating the Turkish officials who were fundamentally against Kirkuk's incorporation into Kurdistan region, as the oil wealth of the city could provide enough resources for Kurdish economic independence and eventually their political independence. Hence, Kurdish officials were frequently warned that Turkey would not allow them to implement this plan, even if it means through exerting military power (Turkish Daily News, 2004a).

In addition to concerns over the possible Kurdish aspirations and planning for independence in IK, in 2004 Turkey was forced to deal with more immediate and concrete threat of PKK's military resurgence. Although since the PKK's unilateral declaration of ceasefire in February 2000, PKK was never completely inactive and instances of sporadic incidents like ambushes and PKK planted landmines were reported; nevertheless, on 1 June 2004 the organization rescinded its unilateral ceasefire with subsequent escalation of violence in the Kurdish dominated south-east of Turkey (Cagaptay and Koknar, 2004).

The new round of PKK violence occurred at a time that Turkey was no longer enjoying the free hand they used to have in the Kurdish region in the previous decade and Iraqi Kurds under American protection could find no reason to fight the PKK on Turkey's behalf as they did previously. Unlike the previous occasions in which PKK was running an offensive policy towards Iraqi Kurds, this time PKK was not challenging the authority of the KDP or PUK and was not attempting to occupy territories under their administration. Meanwhile, Americans were immensely occupied with counter insurgency and state building processes in Iraq and did not want to divert their troops from the Iraqi cities into the inaccessible mountainous terrain to open a new front and fight the PKK. Moreover, the U.S. did not want to anger the Iraqi Kurdish ally and destabilize the Kurdish administered territory, which was the only stable and prosperous region in Iraq. As the result of this stance, Turkey was accusing Washington of having double standards in fighting terrorism and even many Turks believed that Americans were harbouring the PKK (Eligur, 2006a).

Interestingly, Turkish concerns over the developments in Iraq brought Ankara closer to Iran and Syria. Concerns over disintegration of Iraq and spill over of Kurdish nationalism were the main reason behind this trilateral amity. In this regard Iranian officials were reinforcing Turkey's fears over American intentions in Iraq. For instance, Firouz Dowlatabadi, Iranian ambassador in Ankara at the time, was quoted, "What is certain is that Israel and the United

States are seeking to establish a Kurdish state” (Turkish Daily News, 2004b). Another event that played its role in bringing Turkey, Syria and Iran closer was PKK campaigns in August 2005 in Iran and Syria, which turned PKK into a common threat. Moreover, in addition to proclaiming the PKK as a terrorist organization, both countries promised to take required measures against the PKK fighters (Eligur, 2006b: 1-2). Ultimately, the continuous visits by Iranian officials to Turkey and vice versa resulted in enhanced bilateral cooperation and picked in signing a Memorandum of Understanding in February 2006. According to this agreement Iran fights the PKK and Turkey fights the Iranian outlawed group People’s Mujahideen (Eligur, 2006b: 3).

In spite of increased cooperation with Iran and Syria, Turkey was facing more challenges from Northern Iraq. As Iraqi permanent constitution was ratified in 2005, Iraq was declared as a federal state by the constitution, thereby Kurdish administration and *Peshmerga* forces gained constitutional recognition. Furthermore as mentioned in Chapter 3, Jalal Talabani was elected as the first Kurdish President of Iraq, while Masoud Barzani was elected as Kurdistan Region’s President. Whereas Turkey was taking comfort in the idea that IK’s situation is temporal, and Iraq would eventually regain its control over the Kurdish areas, these developments guaranteed and legitimized the continuation of the Kurdish federalism in Iraq and at the same time increased Kurdish influence in Baghdad. This was the source of great frustration for Turkey, which was not ready to grant Iraqi Kurds any form of recognition, while legally bound to deal with a new federal Iraq with Kurdish representation at presidential level.

Under such circumstances PKK was increasing its activities at such a rate that fifteen Turkish soldiers lost their lives between 12 and 19 July 2006 alone (Shiffrinson, 2006: 5-6). Turkish patience was running thin and Turkish officials were talking about possible unilateral incursions into IK. In parallel with threats of unilateral operations and concerned over possible rupture with the USA in case of implementing this plan, Turkey was persistently demanding proper action from American and Iraqi government to stop the PKK infiltration into Turkey from Iraqi territory. Washington was apprehensive of Turkish concerns and wary of possible consequences of any Turkish unilateral incursion. Hence, in order to dissuade Turkey from taking such a path President Bush assured Prime Minister Erdogan that American administration is cognizant of seriousness and urgency of the situation and works with Turkey in fighting terrorism (Shiffrinson, 2006: 5-6).

Establishment of a trilateral commission consisting of American, Turkish, and Iraqi representatives to coordinate joint anti-PKK action was the outcome of Turkish insistence and American assurances. The commission was formed in August 2006 and Turkey was hoping to achieve three aims through this mechanism, namely: Washington put pressure on KRG to fight PKK, Iraqi government proclaim PKK a terrorist organization, and Iraqi government take measures to close down Makhmur Refugee Camp -a camp in Makhmur town housing Kurdish refugees from Turkey- (International Crisis Group, 2008: 6-8). As General Baser, Turkish envoy in the commission, noted early on, the commission was a failure, as Iraq was too weak to take action and Washington was reluctant to put pressure on KRG to take action. General Baser was dismissed from the commission due to his public criticisms of commission's utility and the new Turkish envoy never met his American counterpart. Indeed, the American counterpart resigned in October 29, 2007 and his resignation signalled the commission's termination, while Turkey had achieved none of her goals (International Crisis Group, 2008: 6-8). Failure of this attempt made it clear for Turkey that without involvement and support of Iraqi Kurds, it is not easy to succeed in gaining palpable Iraqi government or American cooperation in fighting the PKK, especially as the areas where PKK fighters were located is under Kurdish administration's dominion.

Continued PKK violence, failure of the trilateral commission, unresponsiveness of Americans and uncooperativeness of Iraqi Kurds created the nightmarish situation that had displeased the Turkish administration in 2007. This situation had heightened tensions between Turkey and KRG to unprecedented heights. Iraqi Kurdish leaders and in particular KRG president Masoud Barzani were the direct target of insults and threats by Turkish officials. That is while Turkey was denying dealing with Iraqi Kurds or recognizing the Kurdish administration in any conceivable way. In a TV interview in June 2007 Prime Minister Erdogan stated his counterpart was the central Iraqi government and not Iraqi Kurdish leaders and added, "I met with the Iraqi President and Prime Minister. I won't meet with any tribe leader... I won't meet with Barzani or someone else". Meanwhile, Erdogan accused Iraqi Kurds of supporting the PKK whether overtly or covertly (Turkish Daily News, 2007). In addition to continuous use of offensive terms such as 'tribal leader' and accusation of supporting PKK, Turkey was airing threats that Iraqi Kurdish leaders could be equally targeted in case of possible military incursions into Northern Iraq. For instance, while Turkish troops were amassed in IK's border, General Yasar Buyukanit asserted, "We can't

know whether we will go there and fight only the PKK or deal with [Iraqi Kurdish President Masoud] Barzani as well” (Tisdal, 2007).

Consequently, Iraqi Kurdish leadership was placed under immense pressure by Turkish threats. Although Barzani and Talabani were mostly taking defensive positions, at times due to urgency of the situation they were posing as actors owning offensive capability in case Turkey implements her threat of invading the Kurdish region and interfering in Kirkuk. In an interview with Al-Arabia News Channel on 6 April 2007<sup>3</sup>, and in response to Turkey’s objection over Kirkuk’s incorporation into KRG and possibility of Turkish military intervention, Masoud Barzani said:

... We will not let the Turks to interfere in the issue of Kirkuk... Kirkuk is an Iraqi city with Kurdish identity... Kirkuk is part of Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraqi Kurdistan is a part of Iraq... Turkey has no right to interfere in the issue of Kirkuk. If Turkey allows herself to interfere in the Kirkuk issue, we will do the same with regards to Diyarbakir and other cities in Turkey... What right does Turkey has to interfere in the Kirkuk issue? ... If Turkey allows herself to interfere in the issue of Kirkuk because of a few thousands of Turkmen, then we will intervene for the sake of 30 million Kurds in Turkey... If we are destined to live without stability and freedom, by Allah, we will not let the others to live in stability and freedom.

This statement was a clear sign of Kurdish resentment and the strongest tone used by an Iraqi Kurdish leader towards Turkey. Soon it resonated a strong response from the Turkish side. Prime Minister Erdogan warned the Iraqi Kurdish leadership that “they could pay dearly” (Candar, 2007) and added “They should be very careful in their use of words ... otherwise they will be crushed by those words ... Barzani has again exceeded the limits” (Jones, 2007).

In spite of offensive and at times insulting stance of Turkey, instances of Kurdish strong reaction were quite rare and Kurdish officials were presenting justifications to avoid deteriorating the already tense relations. For instance, just few days after Barzani’s interview, his aid and head of presidential office told Reuters that Barzani was just insisting on the non-intervention principle and was not threatening Turkey (Jones, 2007). In some other cases Kurdish leadership was referring to the impracticality of Turkey’s demands and was offering Turkey to seek non-military options for solving the PKK problem. For instance, in a joint press conference hosting Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani in October 2007 and in response to Turkish demands for handover of the PKK leaders to Turkey, Talabani stated, “The idea of PKK leaders being turned over to Turkey is a dream which will never come true. We will turn over not a single Kurd to Turkey, in fact, not even a Kurdish cat” (National Review

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<sup>3</sup> The interview is available at the following link as a video; the quotation from Barzani is taken from the subtitle in the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urt6S2uR7i0>

Editors, 2007). Later he explained how it is impractical to demand Iraqi Kurds to do so, while even Turkey with its advanced military power cannot accomplish this mission in the rugged mountains used by PKK. Meanwhile, with regard to Turkey's demand for naming the PKK a terrorist organization, Barzani stated, "if Turkey were to present the PKK with a plan for peace, and if the PKK were to reject it, then we would count the PKK as a terror organization, but at this point, this is just not the situation" (Hurriyet Daily News, 2007).

A major reason behind Iraqi Kurds' confidence and their defiance in the face of Turkish pressure was presence of coalition troops in Iraq and American concern over IK's stability. PKK was also benefitting from the situation as Turkey's inability to launch incursion into Iraq had bolstered the organization's freedom of movement and activity in its mountainous border bases. Under such circumstances, PKK decided to change its fighting tactics and use larger units in its operations. Such large-scale attacks with the aim of inflicting high casualties commenced in September 2007, and by mid-October had resulted in the death of nearly 40 Turkish soldiers (Jenkins, 2008: 20). In a single attack of this type carried out on 21 October, PKK fighters killed 12, wounded 16 and captured 8 Turkish soldiers (Olson, 2008: 38). Although PKK's change of tactic succeeded in raising the casualty numbers, nevertheless, it soon backfired and resulted in resumption of Turkey's cross-border operations nearly after a decade of the last Turkish operation in Iraqi territory.

These attacks raised Turkish public anger to a level that it was quite difficult for any administration to contain it without perceptible action to reassure the public that government is tackling the issue properly. Turkey's parliament acted swiftly, as in October 2007 it granted permission to army's cross-border operation into northern Iraq, while there were reports of 100,000 Turkish troops stationed in the border area (Katzman, 2009: 32). Meanwhile, the PKK attacks coupled with Turkey's active diplomacy gained American and European support for Turkish rhetoric of military self-defence against the PKK. However, they were encouraging Turkey to give priority to dialogue and in case of military action make its operation limited in nature and only target the PKK fighters (Kirisci, 2007: 34).

A major diplomatic breakthrough for Turkey was on 5 November 2007 with Bush-Erdogan meeting in the White House focusing on the PKK and terror issues. American administration was aware of the situation's urgency and the public pressure on Turkish administration to take action. Meanwhile, for the sake of signifying this issue and showing Turkey's impatience for action, in the press conference after the meeting Prime Minister Erdogan

referred to the October 17<sup>th</sup> Parliament mandate for cross-border operation. However, to grant American support he emphasized, “this is a mandate for a cross-border operation that solely aims the PKK. It cannot and it does not cover civilians” (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2007). American response was promise for cooperation and intelligence sharing, as a strategy to get Turkey’s support for American policies in Iraq and dissuade unilateral Turkish interventions into the country. Thus, President Bush referred to the PKK as “a terrorist organization” and an enemy of Turkey, Iraq and the United States, and emphasized that the American “good, sound intelligence delivered on a real-time basis, using modern technology” can help in the fight against the PKK (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2007).

In spite of the fact that neither Bush nor Erdogan referred to any agreement for a cross border raid or military strike against the PKK, as Idiz (2007) rightly predicted a few days after the meeting, Erdogan’s contentment with the meeting was indicative that he had received the American green light for a limited operation targeting the PKK without harming Iraqi Kurds or confrontation with their forces.

Having received the American green light, Turkish fighter jets carried out their first cross-border raid in early December 2007 (Jenkins, 2008: 20). The aerial attacks continued till February without any significant ground attack. Iraqi Kurds were not happy with these raids and this was reflected in Masoud Barzani’s decision to cancel his scheduled December meeting with Condoleezza Rice, American Secretary of State at the time, in Baghdad (Butcher, 2007). On 22 February 2008, Turkey launched a ground attack involving 10,000 troops that lasted for 8 days. Iraqi Kurdish forces and American troops had already left the operation area and no confrontation occurred between Iraqi Kurds and Turkey during the incursion (Keskin, 2008: 71). This operation proved to be helpful for Turkish and American administrations and Iraqi Kurds as well. It gave Turkish administration the proof it needed to present the Turkish public to assure them of the government’s seriousness in fighting the PKK even if it involves cross-border operations. Simultaneously, through granting Turkey the right to implement this limited operation, the USA succeeded in convincing Turks to avoid conducting unilateral operations that could result in confrontation between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds. Meanwhile, Iraqi Kurds who were saved from such a confrontation faced the prospect of better relations with Turkey, as after the operation Turkish administration that

was under less pressure from the public gained the opportunity to decrease its hostility towards KRG.

#### **4.4.3. Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan 2008-2014: Era of Rapprochement and Cooperation**

The situation once again changed for Iraqi Kurds and Turkey as dynamics framing the relations gradually shifted after 2008. After winning consecutive elections and restricting the army's power through Ergenekon trials, the AKP became capable of advancing its agenda in domestic and foreign policy of the country. In 2007 military intervened through issuing a letter on their website with the objective of containing the AKP's expansion. Having a landslide victory in 2007 elections after the e-coup attempt provided the AKP the mandate it needed to restructure the military and political relations. Domestically, this development resulted in the initiation of peace process in Turkey with the aim of settling the Kurdish issue inside the country. In the foreign domain, this was translated into implementation of a new foreign policy agenda based on the ideal principle of zero problems with neighbours as initiated by the new foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu. He took over the ministerial position after the cabinet re-shuffle following the 2009 local election, however, Davutoglu was influential in making Turkish foreign policy since the formation of AKP governments in 2002.

It should be noted that both trends required turning over a new page in Turkey's relations with Iraqi Kurds, which was realized through recognition of the KRG and starting cooperative relations with it. This cooperation was further facilitated with the increasing trade and business ties between both sides, in particular in the energy sector. In addition to the changes stemmed from shifts in Turkey's domestic and foreign policies, some other factors encouraged the T-IK rapprochement. Improvement of Turkey-USA relations following late 2007 cooperation between both countries was one of these factors. Another important factor was Arab Spring and its repercussions on the regional balance of power and Turkey's relations with her neighbours and the world. Arab Spring altered the regional dynamics in a way that Turkey's relations with Baghdad, Iran and Syria deteriorated, while her politico-economic relations with the KRG were thriving. These issues are further discussed below.

As discussed above, Iraqi Kurds were aware of Turkey's strategic importance for Kurdistan region and were eager to have good neighbourly relations based on mutual respect. Turkey's hostile stance was the main obstacle ahead of any positive progress, as Turkish officials even



avoided using the word 'Kurdistan' or recognise the KRG. However, significant developments before and in 2008 paved the way for the commencement of formal meetings between Turkish and KRG officials which later led to recognition of KRG by Turkey and establishment of cooperative relations. The developments included American role in bringing both sides together, changes in Turkey's strategy towards new Iraq and Kurdish issue in Turkey and Iraqi Kurds' pragmatism in responding to Turkey's policies.

American involvement eased the observed tensions and facilitated T-IK rapprochement in three main ways. Firstly, American administration was encouraging both sides to seek cooperation instead of confrontation and was even pressuring the Kurdish leadership to issue anti-PKK declarations (Bacik and Coksun, 2013: 159). Secondly, as mentioned earlier American green light for Turkish air raids and February ground incursion into Iraqi territory played an important role in easing the public and military's pressure on Turkish administration and opened up the possibility of turning to non-military and non-confrontational alternatives for Turkish politicians. Finally, as Olson (2011: 87) states, as U.S. and Iraq signed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) resulting in official handover of sovereignty to Iraq, Turkey started to view KRG as the legal entity in charge of preserving the security and stability of T-IK borders. Hence, according to this deal, U.S. was no more the ultimate authority in charge, and Turkey realised that in the future it needs to deal with KRG for fighting the PKK, while KRG recognised that Americans will eventually withdraw from Iraq and they will be left alone to deal with Turkey. This was an encouragement for cooperation for both sides.

In addition to the positive role played by the U.S., the internal dynamics of Turkey were also tending to be supportive of pro-rapprochement policies. After decades of war and failure of the military option in uprooting the PKK, even Turkish military was now receptive to initiation of dialogue and turning to the political options in dealing with the Kurdish issue (Zaman, 2010). Undoubtedly, *Ergenekon* trials and purging the army of hardliners played a critical role in bringing about such a positive shift in the Turkish military command. Meanwhile, five years of experience in dealing with post-Saddam Iraq had made Turkish officials realise the fact that Iraqi government has no real control over Turkey-Iraq border or the mountainous areas PKK bases were located in, as it was KRG that had the power to cooperate with Turkey in any future conflict with the PKK. Meanwhile, in April 2008 Turkish National Security Council's decision for starting talks with all Iraqi political

elements which was in line with Turkey's 'zero problem with neighbours' foreign policy was quite helpful in providing the needed justification for initiating dialogue with Iraqi Kurds as an Iraqi political element (Szymanski, 2009).

In response to these developments, Iraqi Kurdish leadership's pragmatism and sincere desire for developing peaceful relations with Turkey was further encouraging the establishment of progressive bilateral relations. Kurdish leadership's promptness in condemning the PKK violence and its insistence on peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey (as stated previously) was indicative of this fact. For instance, on 4 October 2008 in a phone call to Abdullah Gul, Turkey's president at the time, Jalal Talabani, the Kurdish president of Iraq, condemned the attack PKK had carried out against Turkey's security forces and pledged Iraqi government would do its best to prevent PKK infiltrations into Turkey's soil through Iraq (Ahmed, 2012: 161). Such condemnations by Iraqi Kurdish leadership in KRG have occurred in several other cases (instances of formal condemnations of PKK violence could be found in the KRG's official website from 2008 onwards). In addition, the Kurdish leadership was openly asking for direct talks, as Nechirvan Barzani, KRG prime minister of the time, talking to reporters demanded Turkey to have direct talks with KRG if it wanted KRG's assistance in fighting the PKK and added that the PKK is the source of problem both for Erbil and Baghdad (Ahmed, 2012: 162). Meanwhile, it should be noted that increasing economic and trade ties with Turkey's exports amounting to \$5 billions in 2007 (Fuller, 2008: 103) was playing a major role in persuading both sides to engage in direct talks.

In light of the above background knowledge, the first official meetings between Iraqi Kurdish leadership and Turkish officials started in early 2008 and in later years gained momentum. It is worth noting that secret meetings held between Emre Taner, head of the MIT from 2005 to 2010, and Iraqi Kurds was also crucial in bringing about this shift in Turkish policy, which paved the way for inauguration of official talks between both sides (Ertem, 2011: 62; Barkey, 2010: 5). Consequently, official meetings started with Jalal Talabani's 7-8 March 2008 visit to Ankara. Talabani was Iraq's president, but he was a Kurd as well, and it was this fact that Taspinar (2008: 20) refers to as the main reason behind Ankara's rejection to receive or have dialogue with him in 2007, as the former president, Ahmet Necdet Sezer (president from 2000-2007) who was a 'staunch Kemalist' was in no way receptive of such an option. Although ascendance of the AKP candidate to presidency made Talabani's 2008 visit possible; nevertheless, as Ahmed (2012: 168) states, once again his Kurdish origin resulted in

poor reception in the airport by low-ranking officials. In spite of all the shortcomings, this visit was an icebreaker and removed the barricades ahead of official meetings between Turkey's government and Iraqi Kurdish leaders.

Just twenty days after Talabani's visit to Ankara, on March 28 the first meeting between a Turkish official and Iraqi Kurdish officials occurred in Duhok province. In this meeting, Murat Ozcelik, Turkey's Special Envoy to Iraq, on his way from Mosul to Turkey stopped in Duhok and met with Duhok governor in his office in presence of Safin Dizayee, a senior KDP official. In this meeting Kurdish officials assured Ozcelik that KRG would not allow the PKK to open offices in Kurdish cities or infiltrate into Kurdistan cities through the Kurdish region's airports (Today's Zaman, 2008). Few days later and on 2 May 2008 Ozcelik accompanied with Ahmet Davutoglu, Prime Minister Erdogan's chief foreign policy advisor at the time, travelled to Baghdad and met with Talabani and KRG's Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani. In the meeting with Barzani, both sides discussed the ways to tackle the PKK threat in the border area as well as the strategic relations between both sides (Ahmed, 2012: 171; International Crisis Group, 2008: 12).

These initial meetings cleared the path for more high-ranking visits and talks. Even continued PKK attacks did not stop such meetings, as on 14 October and just eleven days after a deadly PKK attack, Ozcelik met Masoud Barzani in Baghdad to discuss how to increase Turkey-KRG cooperation (International Crisis Group, 2008: 12). The situation improved further in 2009 and more meetings were held between senior Kurdish and Turkish officials. One of such meetings was held between Kurdish premier, Nechirvan Barzani and Turkish President Abdullah Gul in March 2009 in the latter's visit to Baghdad. The meeting focused on the trade relations and border security and comments uttered by both sides on the meeting were indicative of some positive developments in spite of continued challenges and differences. President Gul stated his country's willingness and readiness to work with the new Iraq (KRG Website, 2009a).

It should be noted that in spite of the fact that President Gul avoided referring to KRG, nevertheless, KRG was a reality on the ground and a constitutional part of the new Iraq his country was willing to work with. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Barzani stated that the meeting was positive, but at the same time acknowledged that all the problems cannot be solved in one meeting. However, he signified the progress occurred and showed KRG's eagerness in developing the relations by saying: "If we look back to one year ago, we see that the situation

has improved a lot, and I think this has been a very positive step. We are on the right path. The KRG will spare no effort in the development of this relationship” (KRG Website, 2009a).

As it could be noticed, due to tensions and obstacles complicating the bilateral relations, the initial meetings involving senior Turkish officials were held either in Ankara or Baghdad. However, the progress made since early 2008 opened new horizons for both sides and gradually prepared the ground for visits of Turkish high-ranking officials to Erbil. The first meeting of this type occurred on 30 October 2009 as Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu visited Erbil and met with KRG officials in the city. Ertem (2011: 61) calls this “a ground-breaking event” as for the first time Turkey accepted “an Iraqi Kurdish leader as an equal counterpart” in contrast to the former state rhetoric that was considering Kurdish officials as tribal leaders. After meeting with Davutoglu, Masoud Barzani referred to the meeting as a “historic step”, praised Erdogan’s ‘Kurdish Opening’ policy and expressed KRG’s support for the initiative. Meanwhile, Barzani revealed Turkey’s plan to open a consulate in Erbil, which was indicative of the incredible shift of Turkey’s policy towards IK. In addition to plans for developing political relations through opening the consulate, Turkey was also planning to enhance the economic relations as 80 representatives of Turkish businesses accompanied Davutoglu in the trip and met KRG officials and participated in an economic forum in Erbil city (KRG Website, 2009b).

The relations reached new heights as Masoud Barzani, Kurdistan Region’s President, was officially invited to visit Turkey. Barzani started his five days visit on 2 June 2010 and met Turkish President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Turkish business representatives. Barzani’s reception reveals how much Turkey’s policy towards IK had changed and Davutoglu’s comments after meeting with Barzani exposed Turkey’s new interests in the Kurdish region. Stating that Turkey wants greater economic integration with Kurdistan Region, Davutoglu said:

We are pleased with the improvement in our relations. We would like to develop strategic cooperation on energy and trade. Turkish Airlines is planning to start direct flights to Erbil as soon as possible. Turkish trade and agriculture Banks are considering opening their branches in the Kurdistan Region.

However, economy was not the only issue on the agenda, as security and political issues were also discussed in the meetings (KRG Website, 2010a; KRG Website, 2010b; KRG Website, 2010c).

As events unfolded, it became clear that Turkey is determined in developing its economic and political ties with the KRG. In line with this policy, Erdogan was the first Turkish Prime Minister in the Republic's history to visit Erbil on 30 March 2011 and open the city's new airport that was built by Turkish companies as well as the new building of the Turkey's Consulate in Erbil (KRG Website, 2011). In this visit and future visits of this kind both sides were usually stressing on continued cooperation, especially in the economic field, and the Kurdish side was always voicing its support for the peace talks and political solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

In addition to boosting the diplomatic relations, Barzani and Erdogan's visits played the role of normalising the future high-ranking visits. Barzani became a regular guest in Ankara and he was warmly received by the Turkish administration. In particular, two of his visits bear historic and symbolic significance. He was invited to attend the AKP's general congress in October 2012 and his presence in the congress had clear symbolic and political messages at a time that Turkish-Iraqi relations were experiencing some trouble reflected in Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki's refusal to attend the congress. As Aziz Barzani (2012), a Kurdish scholar, writing for *Today Zaman* states, in light of the developments in T-IK relations and the regional status and role of Barzani, the visit is not surprising and adds that in addition to showing the progress and improvement in Turkey-KRG relations, the visit also gets KDP, rather than PUK, closer to Turkey and AKP, as Masoud Barzani is also head of KDP and his accompanying delegation are mainly senior KDP officials.

Another Barzani visit with great symbolic implications was his visit to Diyarbakir in November 16, 2013 at a time that Gezi Park incident had damaged Erdogan's popularity and Democratic Union Party or *Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat* (PYD), a Syrian Kurdish party affiliated with the PKK, unilateral decision for forming autonomous administrations in Kurdish regions of Syria had irritated Barzani. Kurds consider Diyarbakir as the undeclared capital of Turkey's Kurdistan and presence of Turkey's Prime Minister and IK's president and their speeches delivered under Turkish and IK flags had many implications for Turkey, Kurds and the whole region. The symbolism of the event was so significant that Candar (2013a) refers to it as the "political marriage" of Turkish Prime Minister and Kurdistan Region's President, an alliance of Kurds and Turks (backed by Washington) against Tehran, Damascus, Baghdad and PKK and compares it with the historic alliance of Ottoman Sultans and Kurdish leaders against the Shiite Safavids (also *see*: Ozer, 2013). Another significant

symbolism of the event was Erdogan's utterance of the word 'Kurdistan'. It was the first time a Turkish premier publicly used the word 'Kurdistan' and as Candar (2013) states, Erdogan's use of the "word 'Kurdistan' will inevitably legitimize this concept and lead to major developments that are unpredictable today". It is noteworthy that Barzani's speech in Diyarbakir was full of support for peace and brotherhood between Turks and Kurds and praise for Erdogan's braveness in starting the peace process and acknowledging the Kurdish reality in the country (Kurdistan Region Presidency Website, 2013). Hence, Diyarbakir visit could be regarded as the symbolic peak of Turkish-Kurdish rapprochement in the Middle East which eventually broke the taboos of utterance of the word 'Kurdistan' by Turkish statesmen and official displaying of the Kurdistan Region's flag in the Turkey.

Ramifications of the continued meetings and the close ties between the KRG and Turkey were felt both in the political and economic arenas with impact not only on Turkish-Kurdish relations, but also on the regional politics and balance of power. In the economic field, trade volume dramatically raised between both sides, hundreds of Turkish companies and thousands of Turkish citizens started working in Kurdistan region including Turkish energy companies and a direct pipeline was built to carry Kurdish crude through Turkey to the Mediterranean ports (for details of these economic and energy relations see chapter 7). Meanwhile, in the diplomatic sphere, Turkey opened her consulate in Erbil on 11 March 2010 (KRG Department of Foreign Relations, 2015). Indeed, Turkish-Kurdish closeness and cooperation in politico-economic fields proceeded to such a level that some were even talking about possible integration of IK into Turkey<sup>4</sup> (Ertem, 2011: 62). The speedy pace of developments, in particular evolving energy ties that were disregardful of Baghdad's anxieties, even made Washington concerned over Iraq's integrity and sovereignty (Morelli and Pischedda, 2014: 107).

However, Americans were not the only group concerned with improved and progressive nature of the Turkey-KRG relations. The Shiite-dominated Baghdad government with its close links to Tehran was quite frustrated with increasing Turkish presence and influence in the country. Indeed, as Turkey-KRG relations were improving, Turkey-Baghdad and Baghdad-KRG relations were taking back steps. A brief overview of the turbulent Baghdad-

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<sup>4</sup> In summer 2012 the researcher attended a panel on T-IK relations held in SETA, a leading think tank in Ankara with close ties to AKP governments, in which the panellists were optimistically considering the integration of IK into a federalist Turkey as a possible scenario for the future of the relations.

Turkey relations is presented below, while details of the major dispute points between Baghdad and KRG are discussed in the previous chapter.

As the history of Turkey's relations with Iraq and Iraqi Kurds reveals, Turkey has favoured to deal with a relatively strong central government in Baghdad in control of all Iraq's territory. American occupation of Iraq and Saddam's downfall revived the hopes in Ankara that a sovereign Iraqi government would soon be established in Baghdad and Turkey would be saved from dealing with or recognising the Kurdish administration in northern Iraq. This was the reason that in a press release issued by Turkish foreign ministry prior to 2005 elections in Iraq, Turkey urged all Iraqis to take part in the elections and reiterated the country's support for the political process in Iraq based on the "principle of preservation of Iraq's national unity and territorial integrity". The press release even disclosed what Turkey hoped the elections achieve in Iraq, which was "to establish Iraq's national unity and territorial integrity on solid foundations" (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release, 2005). Based on this policy, Turkey was supportive of Kurdish participation in the elections and eventual reintegration into Iraq. Turkey's insistence on Iraq's integrity and unity was so strong that even after ratification of the permanent Iraqi constitution and eventually the federative system for Iraq, Turkey was advocating against 'ethnic federalism', in order to prevent the establishment of a unified federal Kurdish region incorporating Kirkuk, and instead was encouraging the establishment of administrative federal units (Gunter, 2007: 122; Lundgren, 2007: 111).

Although the election results and constitutional changes in Iraq were not satisfying Turkey's expectations for her preferred Iraq, Turkey continued with the policy of ignoring the KRG and treating Iraq as a unified state with a sovereign central government. This policy was well reflected in the aforementioned pre-2008 T-IK relations. Meanwhile, simultaneous with ignoring KRG, Turkey was working hard to foster relations with Iraq and have Baghdad in control of the Kurdish territory. In this regard, in addition to the establishment of anti-PKK tripartite Turkish-American-Iraqi commission, Turkey signed numerous agreements with Iraq. Initially, Turkey-Iraq cooperation was more feasible, since Shiite-led Baghdad was also in favour of Turkey's continued pressure on KRG, as limitation of KRG powers and sphere of influence especially in regard with Kirkuk was in Baghdad's new rulers' interest. However, failure of the tripartite and closeness of Baghdad to Iran gradually disillusioned Turkey. This is evident in inclusion of KRG in the anti-PKK tripartite (Charountaki, 2012:

193) and ministerial-level Turkey, U.S. and KRG meeting in Erbil on 21 December 2009 (Bacik and Coksun, 2013: 160). Later, Turkey-Iraq relations started to worsen due to increased sectarianism in Iraq and the region following the Arab Spring and Syria crisis, as well as increased Turkey-KRG energy cooperation. Interestingly, Turkey proved to be KRG's sole lifeline during the KRG-Baghdad budget row, as KRG oil continued to be exported through Turkish land and Turkey even accepted to lend money to KRG for management of its budget deficiency and paying the salaries of its employees (*see* Chapter 7).

#### **4.5. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN IK AND TURKEY FROM 2014-2017**

This section briefly presents the major political developments in both IK and Turkey in 2014-2018 time period. It is not attempted to analyse or explain these events, as this research's focus is on 1990-2014 years. Emergence of Islamic State in Iraq and Levant abbreviated as ISIL and ISIS and new developments in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and in the Middle East region in general have changed the regional status quo to a point that outcomes of the ongoing disputes and clashes are hard to predict. T-IK relations are also affected by the regional games and as long as these games are not relatively settled no accurate theoretical explanation can be developed easily.

As regards to the political developments in IK, following the budget cut from Baghdad, a new threat emerged from Sunni Arab territories of Iraq. In June 2014, ISIS started its offensive and captured territories in Anbar province (Sly, 2014). The ISIS onslaught continued and soon Mosul fell under their control. Kurds secured Kirkuk and most of the disputed territories for themselves, as Iraqi army was collapsed and no more present in these areas (Hawramy and Beaumont, 2014). After gaining these territories, Kurds started to advocate for independence referendum (The Guardian, 2014b). However, ISIS offensive on Kurdish territories that started in August 2014 and occupied many Kurdish towns and villages (Pollak, 2014) put a halt on Kurdish independence plan. Indeed, it was international help, including American and European air support, training, and weapons, and Iran and later Turkey's help that enabled the Kurdish *Peshmerga* forces to defeat the ISIS (Collard, 2014; Roberts and Ackerman, 2014).

As for establishment of new Kurdish cabinet, nine months after 2013 elections and after much debate finally a cabinet composed of all parties was formed (Rudaw, 2014b).



Nevertheless, this broad-based coalition did not last till the end of the cabinet's mandate. Change Movement that was not happy with the second extension of Masoud Barzani's presidency term in 2015, was accused of being behind the demonstrations that targeted the KDP offices in Suleimaniya area. Meanwhile, strikes were encouraged in Suleimaniya governorate as a reaction to KRG's austerity measures due to financial crisis (Seloom, 2008: 1). In spite of opposition, Barzani's term was extended for the second time in 2015 (DW, 2017), and Change Movement ministers were expelled from the cabinet and its parliamentarians including the speaker of the parliament were prevented from entering the Parliament (Ahmed, 2015).

While the above-mentioned problems were not solved yet, 25 September 2017 was specified as the date for Kurdistan independence referendum. Several reasons are mentioned for this, including Barzani's ambition to prolong his presidency, Kurdish plan to legitimize its hold on the disputed territories, and solving the unsolvable problems with Baghdad (Stansfield, 2017: 2-7). The referendum won around 93% of yes vote (McKernan, 2017), but soon IK became the target of sanctions by Baghdad, Turkey and Iran, including the ban on international flights (Seloom, 2018: 2) and Iraqi army captured Kirkuk and most of the other disputed territories in and after 16 October 2017 (Chmaytelli and Jalabi, 2017). Another important event after the referendum was Masoud Barzani's step down from power on 24 October 2017, while he rejected to accept extension to his mandate, similar to extensions of Parliament and cabinet's tenures (Rudaw, 2017).

As for the political developments in Turkey, on 7 June 2014, Turkey held another round of general elections. Election turnout was 83.92% and similar to previous elections AKP with 40.66% won 258 seats and came first. CHP with 25.13% and 132 seats, MHP with 16.45% and 80 seats and HDP with 12.96% and 80 seats came second, third and fourth (Hurriyet Daily News, 2015). In spite of winning the first slot, AKP was unable to secure the majority in the parliament. Soon after the election Erdogan started military operations against the PKK. Many analysts saw this move as "a calculated strategy for Mr. Erdogan's Islamist-rooted Justice and Development party to regain its parliamentary majority in new elections" (Arango and Yeginsu, 2015). Erdogan's main target was the HDP, the party that stripped the AKP of winning the majority in the Parliament. In his rallies Erdogan even suggested that a vote casted for HDP is a vote against Turkey (Coskun and Toksabay, 2015).

Erdogan's strategy paid off. PKK ended the unilateral ceasefire that its leader declared in

2013 and the fights resurfaced in the southeast (BBC, 2015a). Meanwhile, AKP succeeded in winning the majority in the November 2014 snap elections. The results of the elections were as follows: AKP 49.5%, 317 seats; CHP 25.3%, 134 seats; MHP 11.9%, 40 seats; and HDP 10.8% and 59 seats (YeniSafak, 2015). Such victories emboldened the ruling AKP to tighten its grip on power. Meanwhile, as Erdogan and Davutoglu's relations deteriorated, just 20 months after becoming Prime Minister Davutoglu resigned. His resignation raised concerns over increased authoritarianism in Turkey (Letsch, 2016).

Another important event that further tightened President Erdogan's grip on power was a failed coup on 15 July 2016 seemingly by the Gulen Movement's leader and his followers (Aljazeera, 2017). This coup gave Erdogan the opportunity to arrest his opponents. A year after the coup 50,000 people were jailed and 170,000 were investigated on the suspicion of being involved in the coup (Shaheen, 2017). Furthermore, in April 2017 a referendum was held in Turkey that extended president's powers, made his election public, and changed the Turkish system from parliamentary to presidential system. In the referendum for changing the constitution for presidential system, 51.41% voted in favour and 48.59% voted against the constitutional amendments (Daily Sabah, 2017). A year later and in snap elections in 2018, Erdogan succeeded to win 52.59% of the vote in a publicly held election carried out in June (Statista, 2018).

#### **4.6. CONCLUSION**

The chronological progression of Turkish and IK's political progress presented here clarifies that major changes have occurred in domestic politics of both entities with tremendous effect on their bilateral relations. IK as an emergent entity evolved from a *de facto* polity consumed in civil war into a unified entity endorsed by the Iraqi constitution that eventually affected the bilateral relations. Meanwhile, Kemalists lost their grip on power in Turkey, as the AKP assumed power and steered the country's politics with immense impact on relations with IK. The extent of the impact of such issues on the relations is clear in the way developments of the bilateral relations in the chapter are presented. Such factors have resulted in dividing the 1991-2014 era into three distinct periods in the relations, which indicates the dynamism of the fluctuating relations. The history and developments presented in this chapter provide the

background knowledge needed in the analysis presented in the coming chapters, which specifically target the impacts of identity, security, economy and external interventions on the relation. Hence building on the material presented in this chapter, the next chapter explores the impact of identity factor on the relations.

## **Chapter Five: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF IDENTITY IN DETERMINING TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION AND CAVEAT**

Identity has always been a contentious issue and political analysts as well as IR theorists have always debated its impact on domestic and international politics of states. In line with this, the impacts of identity on T-IK relations is also an important and interesting topic which needs thorough investigation for better understanding of the nature of T-IK relations in view of the strong ideational claims by the Turks and the Kurds. In examining the impact of identity on formulating the relationship between Turkey and IK, this chapter starts with an introduction that in addition to presenting the outline explains the researcher's take on identity and justifies why the end product of identity process and not the whole identity-formation process itself is discussed and investigated in this research. The second section outlines the historical evolution of contending identities in Turkey and IK and briefly presents their policy orientation and vision for the future of Turkish or IK's politics. The third section presents the arguments concerning the role of identity in the relations through extensive use of the interviews carried out during the fieldwork. It is noteworthy that the interviews focused mainly on the developments occurred in more recent years with occasional references to past eras, as the historical sections of the research in earlier parts can adequately help in assessing the role of identity in the relations during the previous eras. Finally, the impact of identity on the relations is assessed in the conclusion section, which evaluates the possibility of future changes in relations in the case of incumbent identity shift that has occurred in Turkey or IK.

Prior to investigating the role identity plays in the relations, it is crucial to clarify how 'identity' as a concept is treated, and which identities are considered in this research. As this study's focus is on the relations between Turkey and IK, it explores and examines identity from an ontological perspective and avoids engaging in epistemological questions over the identities active in Turkey and IK or dealing with the processes of identity formation. Engagement in such arguments will deviate the research from its aims, and results in unnecessary attachment to the realm of identity theorising, which is not the intention of this research. Therefore, the epistemology of identity formation is outside the focus of this study,

while this study concerns with identities that are perceived through ontological lenses which considers them as distinct outcomes of the identity-formation processes that have impact on the foreign policy making and strategic planning of the entities in question in this research. Thus, this research considers identity within the caveat of articulation and outcomes rather than the process of formation.

In spite of the researcher's aforementioned stance on identity, this research acknowledges the dynamism of identities and the fact that identities are constantly reformulating and reshaping themselves through processes of interaction with social and material forces at work. However, as the focus in this research is on 'relations' and not 'identity' *per se*, the research only focuses on the impact ascendance of a certain identity to power has had on the relations between Turkey and IK. Meanwhile, the relation between identity and structural and material factors categorized under the rubric of external factors in this research are discussed in the section that explores the interrelation of the four factors influencing the T-IK relations, as this section solely focuses on the identity as a factor impacting the relations.

Another issue that needs to be clarified at the outset is what are the researcher's criteria of inclusion or exclusion with regard to choosing which identities should be included or excluded in the study of the relations. As there are myriad of identities in Turkey and IK and it is both beyond the scope of this research to include all of them in the study and due to the fact that most of them have had no significant or even noteworthy influence on the course of events in T-IK relations, the research has only focused on the identities that have been in power or have played a significant and lasting role and influence in the direction of political life in Turkey and IK. This is due to the fact that foreign policy in both entities under study has been formulated by incumbent elites and it has been their identity that has mattered in deciding the courses of action to be taken in the relations. As a result, the research focuses primarily on Kemalist, Ottoman (and Neo-Ottoman), and Islamist identities in Turkey and different forms of Kurdish nationalism, in the form of tribal, party and institutional or Kurdistanism in IK. Brief references to some secondary identities are made at some points to further clarify the role identity can play in shaping the relations.

## **5.2. PREVAILING IDENTITIES AND THEIR VISIONS IN TURKEY AND IRAQI KURDISTAN**

The detail of milestone events discussed in the historical background chapters is of great use when it comes to discussing the issue of identity and its impact on the T-IK relations. This is mainly due to the fact that constant rivalry among existing identities has its roots in the Ottoman era and later the age of newly emerged post-Ottoman states in the region. Meanwhile, it is mostly these identities or an evolved form of them that are still lingering on and dominating the political life of the region. For instance, religious, national and Ottoman identities that were at work during the Ottoman Empire period are still at work both in Turkey and IK under new titles as Neo-Ottomanism, Islamist, Kemalist, and Kurdish nationalism. The major identities and their visions and concerns are briefly presented below, so that when they are mentioned in the coming sections their influence on the relations based on each identity specific worldview is easily discernable.

### **5.2.1. Dominant Identities in Turkey**

As mentioned above, current dominant identities in Turkey have their roots in the region's history, in particular the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. At this historical era, a number of competing identities were developed in an attempt to save the Empire from collapse and regain its glory; pan-Islamism, pan-Ottomanism, and pan-Turanism were the major ideologies advocated at the time for this purpose.

Pan-Islamists, especially after the Empire's losses in Europe that to a good extent homogenised the Empire through dramatic reduction of its non-Muslim population were in favour of utilising the Islamic identity as the Empire's unifying glue. This view regarded Islam as the driving force that can unify the Muslims in a holy war against the onslaughts of the non-Muslim European powers and prevent the further disintegration of the Empire. In contrast to pan-Islamists, pan-Ottomans regarded the Ottoman and pan-Turks/Turanists regarded the Turkish or Turanist identity as the unifying factor and driving force that could prevent the Empire's demise. Although these competing groups were trying to unite the Ottoman community through creating their ideal 'Ottoman nation', 'Muslim nation' or 'Turkish/Turanist nation'; nevertheless, it should be noted that in spite of their differences, the shared aim of all these groups was saving the Empire through whatever geographical

landscape was left after wars in each period (Yavuz, 2003: 37-58; Onar, 2009: 2-5; Grigoriadis, 2010: 4).

After the collapse of Ottoman Empire and establishment of modern-day Turkey under Mustafa Kemal's leadership, it was his vision labelled as Kemalism that prevailed and shaped the identity conception of the country. Kemalism was the product of an era that considered West and its civilisation as a source of inspiration and threat at the same time. It was an inspiration for what Turkey can achieve if the country succeeds to reach the progress level of the civilised West in contrast to the backwardness of the Ottoman past (Wigen, 2009: 4). Meanwhile, West was regarded as a threat on the territorial integrity of the country epitomised in Sevres Treaty syndrome, which has, largely, dominated and influenced the domestic and foreign policy of Turkey.

The Kemalist project aimed at the creation of a modern homogenous and secular Turkey as an imaginary project. In this regard, Islam and Kurdish nationalism, and even the existence of conscious Kurds, were regarded as the two major threats for the success of the project (Ozturk, 2009: 8). Islam was reminding the Republican elite of a failed Ottoman past and they believed that if this force is not subdued and controlled by the state it can lead to the failure of secularisation and modernisation projects and create a rival identity for the Republic's Turkish secular identity. Similarly, Kurdish nationalism was regarded as a threat to homogenising role of Turkish identity and the country's territorial integration (Martin, 2004: 159), as it run against the imagined Turkish identity. The domestic policies aiming at rooting the Islamic and Kurdish threats through utilising all state capabilities, including the military power, as detailed in chapters 3 and 4 are outcomes of this worldview. Similarly, the impact could be felt in the foreign policy domain as Turkey isolated itself from the Middle Eastern neighbours and followed an isolationist policy, except when Kurdish issue necessitated cooperation with the neighbours (for more details on Kemalism *see*: Taspinar, 2011: 3; Kaylan, 2005; Parla and Davison, 2004).

Although Kemalism's grip on power had side-lined the other ideologies for many decades, it failed to end their existence or influence on Turkish politics. As a result, since Erbakan's premiership in 1996, Islam and neo-Ottomanism have returned to the fore in Turkish politics and assumed a leading role in formulating the country's politics. Prior to discussing the dominance of Islam and neo-Ottomanism, it should be noted that Turkish politics at the RP and AKP eras are not unanimously nominated as Islamist and Neo-Ottoman and such terms

are very controversial in nature, as there are different conceptions of Islam or Ottomanism to start with. For instance, there are three images of Ottoman Empire: an advanced civilised Empire, an Islamist Empire or a multicultural one (Danforth, 2014), and consequently different positive and negative ways to view and interpret neo-Ottomanism, as evident from a Kemalist disdain and an Islamist's nostalgia for it. However, in absence of fixed terminologies with clear definitions this research uses them, as they are the most widely used terms that have found their way into the literature in reference to Turkish politics at RP and AKP periods.

As noted earlier, proponents of the Islamic solidarity at Ottoman era attempted to use Islam as a unifying identity to save the empire, when non-Muslim territories still existed. However, ascendance of pan-Turkish ideologies kept them out of power. Nevertheless, the degree of intolerance towards manifestations of Islam in domestic policy and life of the country has varied due to various internal and external factors. Through reviewing the historic data presented in Chapters 3 and 4 of this research, good examples of such changes are easily traceable. For instance, introduction of multi-party system and DP's victory, the policy of using Islamic ideology to counter communism and the political parties attempting to win the votes of pro-Islamic constituencies are among the incidents that eased the pressure on manifestations of Islam. On the other hand, banning pro-Islamic parties and arresting their leaders and activists, as well as tough reaction towards their demands which are referred to in the previous chapters are among examples of Kemalist regime's anti-Islamic policies.

As detailed earlier, Turkish Islamists have established a number of political parties since early 1970s. The most successful ones that succeeded in ascendance to power are RP and AKP. RP is often referred to as a party with an Islamic agenda, while AKP is more referred to as a party with neo-Ottoman agenda. As stated earlier, the soft coup against RP in 1997 as well as AKP's realisation of potential benefits of pursuing EU membership for the party had a great role in AKP's more pragmatic approach.

In contrast to Kemalism, neo-Ottomanism and Islamism do not hold a negative view towards the Ottoman past and the country's Islamic heritage. On the contrary, they consider it as a source of national pride as well as a potential source for extending the Turkish influence at both regional and global levels. It is worth mentioning that Islamism has a Turkish flavour in it, culminating into Turkish Islamism, as they want Turkey to be the leading and central player in the Islamic world (Yavuz, 2003: 235-236).



Although it is easy to state that the main difference of pan-Islamic and pan-Ottoman identities at the late decades of Ottoman era was difference in favouring Islam or Ottoman identities for unifying the peoples of the Ottoman Empire, it is quite difficult to set distinctive goals for each identity in modern Turkey. One reason for this ambiguity could be the fact that there is no single party purely representing Islamism or neo-Ottomanism and at the final assessment it is the researcher's view that classifies a certain group or party as Islamist or neo-Ottoman. Hence, while many researchers refer to AKP's policies as neo-Ottomanist, others choose other terms, such as Islamic (Cagaptay, 2009) or 'pan-Islamist' (Ozkan, 2014: 119) depending on the blurry borders with geographical implications they draw to differentiate them. However, this research attempts at setting the differences between the two ideologies through considering the RP as more representative of the Turkish Islamism and AKP as a better representative of neo-Ottomanism due to latter's ambition of regional power by realising the aspirations in the contemporary times.

As evident from RP's policy under Erbakan's leadership, an Islamic foreign policy is more inclined to improving Turkey's relations with the Muslim countries, rather than with the West. The party's anti-EU stances and Erbakan's attempts at boosting cooperation among Muslim countries through establishing a number of organisations are affirming this point (*see* Chapter 4). Meanwhile, on the domestic level, RP revealed an explicit support for the implementation of Islamic rules and instructions in the society. Furthermore, the solution for the Kurdish problem in the country was sought through Islamic solidarity (Ince, 2012: 171), just as pan-Islamists of Ottoman era were thinking that Islam could work as the glue bringing together Turks, Kurds and all other Muslim nationalities of the empire.

In contrast to the pro-Islamic foreign policy of the RP, AKP attempted to improve the country's relations with the West and the East at the same time. Ottoman past, economic incentives and Turkey's geostrategic significance were considered as assets for projecting the country's soft power and influence in the region and globally. Hence, AKP started a foreign policy endeavour based on the assumption that Turkey's strategic depth grounded in historical and geographic factors, as the country is located in crossroad of different civilisations, enables her to play a great regional and international role while enjoying zero problems with neighbours (Murinson, 2006). Meanwhile, internally the party tried to solve the Kurdish issue through giving Kurds more, nevertheless limited cultural and political rights. As illustrated in the former chapter, both internal and external policies of AKP have

faced serious challenges and endured tremendous change throughout the party's years in power since 2002 elections. The extent of such developments (as discussed earlier) has made the party and its neo-Ottoman identity undergo transformations that make it susceptible to accusations of totalitarianism or Islamism (Taspinar, 2011: 1-2; Danforth, 2008: 84-90).

### **5.2.2. Dominant Identities in Iraqi Kurdistan**

As evident from the historical background provided in the earlier chapters, Kurdish nationalism in its different forms has been the dominant ideology and identity in IK. In the case of IK, nationalism in its modern form is a latecomer that emerged at the last decades of the Ottoman rule. As the Kurdish-Ottoman history reveals, Kurds were enjoying a good level of autonomy under the rule of Kurdish emirates until they were replaced by the rule of influential Kurdish religious leaders or *Sheikhs*. Although some of the Kurdish Emirs ruling the emirates and some of the *Sheikhs* who led the Kurdish revolts are at times labelled as nationalist (Olson, 1991; see Chapters 3 and 4), nevertheless nationalism was not an evolved ideology or identity at their era. In fact, infancy of Kurdish nationalism was a major reason behind Kurdish failure in establishing a Kurdish nation-state at the end of the WWI when Arabs and Turks successfully launched their state-building projects.

Kurdish nationalism remained at a tribal level until the establishment of well-organized Kurdish nationalist parties in the later years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, until 1990s and territorialisation of the Kurdish nationalism, 'tribal' and 'party' nationalism were the dominant forms of the Kurdish nationalism. However, after twenty-five years of Kurdish rule in IK, a new form of Kurdish nationalism that Aziz (2011) calls 'Kurdistani' has emerged and simultaneously exists and competes with other forms of Kurdish nationalism.

As this research merely focuses on the identities in power, it is essential to clarify different terminologies used in relation to Kurdish nationalism. In principle, the ruling Kurdish parties in IK have derived their legitimacy from advocating themselves as legitimate representatives of Kurdish nationalism. In the process each political party as well as their supporters claim that they are genuinely working for the Kurdish national interests and in many cases have accused the other parties of betraying the Kurdish cause. As witnessed by the researcher, this trend which has its roots in the differences and rivalries that resulted in the creation of the PUK, has survived and continues to operate in the Kurdish political scene; however, currently the number of national parties has increased and each continues to justify its deeds through

nationalism while accusing the others of betraying the Kurdish cause via seeking party or family interests. In essence, each party has attempted to promote the party and its interests via depicting itself as the real defender and promoter of the Kurdish nationalism. However, in the process, party interests and survival of the party have frequently gained priority over the real national interests of IK. This is evident in the conduct of the KDP and the PUK throughout the civil war in 1990s and the early years of the new century and in non-nationalistic measures taken by Kurdish political parties in their internal rivalries since the formation of the Kurdish safe haven (details are provided in Chapters 3 and 4). Hence, when ‘party nationalism’ is used it refers to the situation in which Kurdish parties present themselves as the legitimate representative of the Kurdish nationalism and project the interests of IK in the light of their party interest rather than genuine IK interest. In contrast, the ‘Kurdistani’ identity that has emerged gives priority to the Kurdish national interests rather than party interests. It is very difficult to single out the percentage of adherents to each type of the identity, since as mentioned above, supporters of the Kurdish political parties in power all consider themselves as explicit supporters and defenders of the Kurdistani identity and see their parties as doing the same. However, presence of this form of ‘Kurdistani’ identity can be noticed through changes in the conduct of the Kurdish political parties (for instance the KDPs fervent advocacy of Kurdish independence peaked in 2017 independence referendum, and the fact that the parties in IK are less inclined to engage in Kurdish-Kurdish conflicts again) and the restrictions that the increased Kurdish national awareness has imposed on them (for instance with regard to the KDP and PUK’s direct military cooperation with Turkey against the PKK).

It is worth mentioning that in spite of the fact that establishment of a Kurdish state encompassing all parts of Kurdistan divided among Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria is a Kurdish nationalist dream; nevertheless, it is not in the agenda of the Kurdish political parties ruling the IK. Their stated goal based on the realities on the ground and balance of power in the region is the liberation of the Kurdistan located in Iraq (Mala Omer<sup>5</sup>). Hence, Kurdish nationalism in this research considers this factor and regards the aim of Kurdish nationalism in IK as guaranteeing the rights of Kurdish people in IK and ultimately establishment of a Kurdish state in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Meanwhile, Iraqi Kurdish nationalism regards the same right for Kurds living in the other parts of Kurdistan, but considers it as the struggle of the respective Kurdish part and decision to choose their fate and solve their issues with the

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<sup>5</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil

states they live in based on the particularities of their struggle and political conditions in that country. This stance is evident from the assurances Iraqi Kurdish leaders have given to Turkish and Iranian authorities that they do not interfere in their Kurdish issue and their repeated claims that the Kurdish issue in different parts of Kurdistan is resolvable if the Kurdish parties in those countries solve their problems through negotiation and peace talks with the states they live in (Necef, 2013; Rudaw, 2014c; Rudaw, 2015a).

Meanwhile, in spite of the fact that Islamic political parties are present in IK's political scene and have Parliament members and ministers in the Kurdish government, this research does not consider the Islamic identity as a dominant political identity in IK for two main reasons. First, these political parties do not possess such political and military influence to win the top positions in the government and steer the domestic and foreign policy of IK. Secondly, as the leaders of these political parties have revealed in their interviews with the researcher (Faraj<sup>6</sup>; Bapir<sup>7</sup>), Kurdish national goals are now at the top of their agenda as well, which implies that they should rather be considered as Kurdish Islamic nationalist parties. This shift is due to the fact that Kurdish Islamic parties have recognised the great role Kurdish nationalism has been playing in the IK society.

### **5.3. IDENTITY AND TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS: 1990-2014**

This section attempts to critically examine the impact of identity on the bilateral T-IK relations. In order to achieve this aim, first it examines the presence of any correlation between shifts in T-IK relations and shifts in identity of incumbent elites in both entities. Through the process, the study considers different perspectives on the elites' identity and connotations of such perspectives and assesses their accuracy against the existent evidence. In addition, in conducting the analysis, the research elaborates who were the agents of policy shifts, what were their aims and how their identity has impacted on their choices of policy and consequently the T-IK relations in certain periods of time. Finally, it concludes how identity factor, or a specific identity can affect and shape the relations.

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<sup>6</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>7</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil

### **5.3.1. Ozal's Neo-Ottoman Pragmatism and Military's Kemalism: Identity Shifts in Turkey in 1990-1998 and 1998-2008 Eras**

As the history of T-IK relations reveals, the relations started in the turbulent times of early 1990s with meetings between senior Turkish officials and Iraqi Kurdish leaders. Having considered the history of Turkey's conduct towards the Kurdish issue in Iraq, holding such meetings is considered an unorthodox policy. This section attempts to single out such policy shifts and investigates their links with the changing identity issue, both in Turkey and IK.

It is worth noting that this section utilises the historical details presented in the previous chapter that discuss the political evolution of IK and Turkey, and milestones of T-IK relations for the sake of substantiating the arguments and analysis of the identity issue, and simultaneously to avoid repetition and unnecessary presentation of historical data. Hence, historically it is clear that the relations emerged at the era of Turgut Ozal's presidency and at a time that Iraqi Kurds under the umbrella of the IKF were attempting to build their institutions. It was in the aftermath of Iraq's defeat in the war with coalition forces and eventual withdrawal of Iraqi army and bureaucracy from IK due to the international humanitarian and military intervention through legitimized Security Council resolutions.

Turgut Ozal, Turkey's president at the time, was a controversial politician who brought significant change to Turkey's domestic life and foreign policy. Prior to his ascendance to power, the country's politics was dominated by Kemalist ideology. However, his era terminated the dominance and continuity of Kemalist policies in a way that terms such as 'Ozalism' (Laciner: 2009), 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' (Yesilda, 1993), and 'Neo-Ottoman' (Yavuz, 1998) are used in reference to his identity and Turkish foreign policy in his era. Indeed, as detailed below Ozal broke with Kemalist traditional politics in numerous ways, which appropriately rationalises the use of such terms by the researchers and analysts. Ozal's reforms and policy shifts covered both internal and foreign domains and intriguingly the revolutionary changes initiated in both fronts played substantial role in bringing about Turkey's policy shift towards IK.

Domestically, in addition to introducing economic reforms, Ozal's way of dealing with Islam and Kurdish issue were clearly in contrast with the Kemalist harsh anti-Kurdish and anti-Islamic stances. As Cornell (2001: 63) states, Ozal was a devout Muslim regularly attending the Friday prayers. During his era normalisation of religion is observed in society, politics

and bureaucracy (Cornell, 2001: 63). Meanwhile, Ozal's economic reforms loosened the state's control over the economy and assisted the emergence and strengthening of a new group of entrepreneurs from Anatolian cities with strong belief in Islam and the Islamic culture. Meanwhile, the capital inflow from Gulf countries added to the economic power of the Islamic groups and brotherhoods, and religious-tolerant approach and reforms of Ozal further paved the way for their political organisation and access to media outlets (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008: 38-39).

Similarly, Ozal era opened new horizons for the evolution of Kurdish issue in Turkey. As revealed in the previous chapter, prior to Ozal's era Kurdish identity and existence was rigorously denied and Kurdish uprisings were severely crushed by the military force. Apparently, the dominant logic prior and even during Ozal's years in office was the absolute denial of Kurdish issue and referring to it only in the context of terror or terrorism problem. However, Ozal changed this trend, and as Ince (2012: 167) claims, Ozal's introduction of the Kurdish issue into the public life and offering political rather than military solution to the problem was one of the 'taboos' he broke in Turkish politics. From Ozal's standpoint everything even 'federalism' should be discussed in the context of Kurdish issue, while this was interpreted as concession to terrorism by most of his contemporary politicians (Ince, 2012: 168).

Indeed, Ozal's courage in discussing the Kurdish issue publicly to the extent of public acknowledgement of his Kurdish ancestry in 1990 had astonished many in Turkey (Somer, 2005a: 601). In addition to his boldness in discussing the Kurdish issue, and contesting the practicality and success of the army's focus on the military solution (Somer, 2005a: 613), Ozal's attempts also resulted in the abolishment of law 2932 that consequently made it legal to use the Kurdish language in daily conversations and music, but not in government offices, publication or education (Gunter, 1991: 35).

It is worth noting that such changes mainly occurred during Ozal's presidency in early 1990s and under the influence of developments in IK as well as Ozal's increasing charismatic leverage over Turkish politics and his ambitions for Turkey's EU endeavour. Kuniholm's (1991:44) argument that links Ozal's legalization of Kurdish language use to Turkey's November 1990 signing of Paris Charter, a document attaching great importance to minority rights, is an example at hand that indicates the relation between such reforms and the EU membership plan. Nevertheless, regardless of Ozal's aims, his performance and views on

resolving the Kurdish issue in early 1990s were in stark contrast with his predecessors, who ruled the country in previous decades and the impact on Turkey's political debate was clearly detectable. As Lundgren (2007: 49) points out, while in 1984 and 1985 Turkish mainstream daily papers only published 25 articles related to Kurds with only three using the word Kurd, in 1991 and 1992 the number rose dramatically to 685 articles, 304 of which used the word Kurd.

Turkey's foreign policy was similarly impacted by Ozal and he left lasting imprints in this domain too. Prior to Ozal, passivism and isolationism, especially in the regional politics was the norm in Turkey's foreign policy. In contrast, Ozal's years transformed the cautious Turkey into an active and at times adventurous multiregional player with significant presence in regions as diverse as Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia, Middle East, Black Sea region and even in relations with Greece (for details of such activism *see*: Laciner, 2009: 153-205; Sayari, 2000: 170; Alimukhamedov, 2014: 74-95).

Turkey's policy towards Middle East at Ozal time is a clear example at hand to illustrate the country's deviation from its Kemalist foreign policy. As discussed in the earlier chapters, historically, Turkey was only occasionally involved in the Middle East politics, such as the country's involvement in Baghdad Pact, and seeking the friendship of oil-rich Arab states in 1970s and there were specific reasons, such as countering communist and Kurdish threats and economic and strategic needs of the country for such occasions (Martin, 2004: 159-161). However, in 1990-1991 Gulf War under Ozal's leadership Turkey became an active member of the anti-Iraq coalition through permitting the coalition's use of a number of Turkey's military bases including Incirlik, the country's airspace, blockading the Iraqi oil pipeline, and deployment of Turkish troops to Iraq's border (Lesser, 2000: 185).

As Karaosmanoglu (2000: 210) indicates, this policy "deeply affected old patterns of behaviour by involving Ankara in an inter-Arab conflict. One guiding principle of Republican Turkey's policy towards the Middle East was to refrain from intervening or taking side in local conflicts". Liel (2001: 163) adds that in addition to violating the Kemalist norm of "neutrality in intra-Arab conflicts", Turkey's participation in Gulf War violated the principle of "good relations with Iraq" as well.

As noticed, Ozal era had witnessed dramatic shifts in both domestic and foreign life of Turkey, but the important point is how these developments were translated into Turkey's

relations with IK and brought change to the relations. As discussed in the earlier chapters, the Turkish officials always regarded advancements of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq as a significant threat. The country's regional pacts and her emphasis on the territorial integrity of Iraq were tools utilised to counter such a threat. In this regard, Turkey was avoiding establishing contact with Iraqi Kurds and at times took it to the extremes. In a press conference in Ankara in December 2015 while talking about the immeasurable difference of Turkey's treatment of Iraqi Kurds in the past compared to post-2008 years Masoud Barzani recalled an incident in 1960s. Accordingly, aiming at getting international and regional support, Mulla Mustafa Barzani sent a copy of the letter he had sent to the Secretary General of the UN concerning the atrocities committed towards Kurdish civilians and destruction of their villages in IK to the regional leaders, including Cevdet Sunay, Turkey's President from March 28, 1966-March 28, 1973. "Some leaders replied the letter and some did not, but the only leader who refused to receive the letter and returned it to the sent address unopened was Cevdet Sunay, Turkey's President at the time" Masoud Barzani told the reporters (Rebwar, 2015). At some points, Turkey was even interfering in Baghdad's treatment of Iraqi Kurds, as in October 1984 Turkey stepped in to stop Iraqi government from going ahead with signing a deal with the PUK (*see* Chapter 4).

Evidently, prior to Ozal, Iraqi Kurds were dealt with solely through the security-oriented perspective of Turkey's rulers who were either ardent Kemalists or adherents of Kemalist ideology. However, Ozal dealt with the Iraqi Kurds in a radically different method from his predecessors. He formally received their leadership in Ankara, supported the establishment of the no-fly-zone and advanced a different perspective towards Iraqi Kurds. His perspective was so different from the Kemalist predecessors and weak coalition government's succeeding him that he was even advocating plans that in principle were jeopardising Iraq's territorial integrity. Such plans were running in a complete opposite direction to Turkey's pro-status quo foreign policy emphasizing on the sanctity of the territorial integrity of Iraq (*see* Chapter 4)

One of such plans was Ozal's intention to dispatch Turkish troops to north Iraq in an attempt to occupy and if possible, annex the historical Mosul *Vilayet* to Turkey ideally through a federal system. Uzer (2011: 188) claims that based on information provided by Korkut Ozal, Turgut Ozal's brother, during the war (in 1990-1991) American President had given the green light to President Ozal allowing Turkey to "occupy and stay in the Kirkuk-Mosul area".



However, Ozal did not succeed in convincing the army to implement such a plan and his plan did not materialize.

Remarkably, this plan by Ozal still attracts criticism, especially from adherents of Kemalist ideology. As CHP diplomat and politician Osman Koruturk<sup>8</sup> stated, the idea of T-IK unification openly discussed by Ozal and some others “is not a good idea” as it changes “the established borders”. This sheds light on Kemalists’ consistent fear from domino effect of border shifts on the sanctity and integrity of Turkey’s borders, and simultaneously indicates the extent of defiance to Kemalism in Ozal’s advocacy.

Another instance of Ozal’s deviation from Kemalist foreign policy towards Iraq and Iraqi Kurds is evident in a speech he delivered in the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir. Talking to a Kurdish audience, Ozal emphasized on the brotherhood of people living in Southeast Turkey (Kurds) and Turks and stated that Turkey’s Kurds and Iraqi Kurds being brothers makes the Iraqi Kurds brothers with Turks as well (Laciner, 2003-2004: 169). Ozal later criticized the Turkish policy of neglecting the former atrocities committed against the Iraqi Kurds, such as chemical bombardment of Halabja with the pretext of irrelevance of crimes being committed outside Turkey’s borders to Turkey by stating that “This policy must be changed. Turkey’s new policy should be as: if Baghdad commits another barbarity there, it will find us opposing it” (Laciner, 2003-2004: 169). Evidently, here Ozal was talking about policy shift and threatens to interfere in the internal affairs of a neighbouring sovereign state. As the history of Turkey’s foreign policy prior to Ozal and conduct of coalition governments after him reveals, such an activism in foreign policy that advocates challenging the sovereignty of Baghdad is exclusive to Ozal, which was in contradiction to the Kemalist approach.

It should also be stated that Ozal was in favour of Saddam Hussein’s removal from power and establishment of a new ruling system in Iraq. As Abramowitz (2013: 40-42), American ambassador in Turkey at Ozal’s time, recalls, Ozal “was an early advocate of Saddam’s departure ... [and], was aghast that the US would leave Iraq with Saddam still in charge”. As it will be discussed later, this stand by Ozal is another indicative of his different approach towards Iraq and IK.

Events and policies mentioned above illustrate how Ozal was following a dramatically different policy line in dealing with IK. However, to apprehend the real scope of Ozal and his

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<sup>8</sup> CHP parliament member: 30 May 2013, Ankara

identity's influence on T-IK relations, it is essential to answer two questions. First, was Ozal single-handedly directing the relations, and second, what were his aims in the relations. Through answering these questions, it becomes easy to analyse the difference of Ozal's approach, and, hence his identity, with the Kemalist policy dominating regimes preceding and following him.

Undoubtedly Ozal played a great role in shaping Turkey's politics during and even after the decade of his rule. In particular, his role in Turkey's involvement in Gulf crisis and management of the Kurdish file demonstrate his prominent influence in Turkey's policy formulation. Indeed, it was Ozal's method of conducting politics and his role in running such files that encourages some writers to proclaim he was independently steering the country's foreign policy in early 1990s. Abramowitz (2013: 38) provides some examples of Ozal's bypassing the Parliament and Turkish bureaucracy for the sake of pragmatism during the Gulf war and at the time when Bulgarian Turks in big numbers took refuge in Turkey following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Similarly, Sayari (1992: 16) describes Ozal as far ahead of Turkey's political parties and public opinion in his foreign policy stances during the Gulf crisis and claims "Ozal almost single-handedly engineered Turkey's efforts to redefine a future role for itself in regional and global politics".

As history has revealed Ozal's foreign policy decisions, especially towards IK and Gulf crisis were made virtually independently of the identity, strategy and policies of the Kemalist state. Certainly, his own identity, charisma and the critical situation Turkey faced in early 1990s were influential in providing Ozal with this privilege. As Hale (2014: 17) explains, the traditional Turkish policy-making system based on agreement among president, cabinet, military commanders and foreign ministry was not capable of coping with the situation, in particular when disagreement was present among the above. Under such circumstances, Ozal as head of the state, and the most experienced politician who was in frequent contact with world leaders turned to become a powerful policy-maker and this placed him "in the driving seat".

However, Ozal did not have the absolute free hand, as opposition to his decisions brought him both limitations and negative repercussions. He faced resistance from military, foreign ministry and even his party. Foreign and defence ministers who were from his own party resigned in protest in October and November 1990 respectively. Turkey's chief of staff followed suit in December the same year (*see*: Liel, 2001: 161-2; Candar, 2004: 56). His bold

decisions even cost him dearly in terms of losing supporters and consequently his party losing in the 1991 elections as discussed in chapter 4. This fact resulted in further overt criticism of Ozal policies by prime minister and foreign ministry offices that were no longer under the control of ANAP, Ozal's own party (Ozcan, 2001: 14-15). It should be noticed that sometimes such opposition was limiting Ozal's manoeuvrability in foreign policy and at times were forcing him to retreat. For instance, due to army and foreign ministry opposition, Ozal could not go ahead with his plan of dispatching war ships and troops in the war against Iraq and a northern front was not opened against Iraq (*see*: Blank *et al.*, 2002: 39; Aykan, 1996: 344-345).

It should be noted that military and foreign ministry's resistance towards Ozal's plan was mainly based on their Kemalist-oriented threat perception and their aim was to avoid the outcomes of what they perceived as adventurous endeavours by Ozal. Hence, their aim was clearly in line with Kemalism and the Kemalist method of foreign policy execution. However, as stated, Ozal's method was different from Kemalists', but what he was hoping to achieve through his model? Answer to this question will clarify the real intentions of Ozalist identity and its impact on the relations between Turkey and IK.

The main aims Ozal pursued in initiating and continuing relations with IK can be summarized as follows: gain first-hand information from the Iraqi Kurdish leadership and put them under Turkish control or influence, dissuading and preventing Iraqi Kurds from moving towards autonomy or independence, isolating the PKK and preventing their alliance with Iraqi Kurds, utilising the influence of Iraqi Kurds for solving the Kurdish issue in Turkey, preventing the occurrence of new waves of refugees on Turkey's doorsteps and through finding a mechanism for solving the Kurdish question, facilitating the Turkey's acceptance and membership to the EU (*see*: Gunter, 1997: 10-12; Aykan 1996: 347; Bradshaw, 1991: 79). Through a closer look at Ozal's aims, it becomes clear that his goal was not much different from the Kemalists' aims in terms of policy outcomes despite being motivated by different ideational motivations. In other words, as Lundgren's (2007: 95) statement illustrates "even if Ozal's methods were unorthodox, the objectives were all traditional".

At the final assessment, it becomes clear that Ozal was a charismatic leader who gave Turkey a new style of leadership and changed the country's foreign policy behaviour pattern regionally and internationally. He had an immense impact on T-IK relations as evident from his role in arranging meetings with Iraqi Kurdish leadership and establishment of a safe

haven for Kurds in Iraq. Unlike Kemalist politicians who were always in favour of utilising ‘might’, Ozal was using both might and diplomacy and had a carrot and stick policy evident from his way of dealing with the Kurdish issue both domestically and with regard to Iraqi Kurds (Bruinessen, 2000: 9-10). It is beyond doubt that if Ozal was not leading Turkey at the time, the unconventional developments and progress in relations with IK were hardly imaginable. Constant opposition of military and foreign ministry and resignation of Turkey’s chief of staff are clear indications of the fact that if Ozal was not in charge of the Kurdish policy, Turkey was in no way ready for changing her traditional passivism in foreign policy and security oriented policy towards Kurds. The fact that after Ozal’s death Turkey’s policy shifted back to its Kemalist pattern once again is another evidence of the fact that without Ozal, T-IK relation would have taken a quite different path.

As discussed, Ozal, as a pragmatist was not a staunch follower of Kemalism and this gave him more manoeuvrability. His personality and success had made him more self-confident. It was this personality, influence, and charisma that had made it possible to witness such a drastic change in Turkey’s treatment of Kurds. However, as Cemaleddin Hashimi<sup>9</sup>, Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator, correctly asserts, Ozal’s policies were just “an individual attempt rather than coordinated projected systematic attempt ... [and] could not be translated to into state policies”. Due to the fact that Ozal failed to incorporate his ideational position, ideology and perspective into state policy, this research identifies his policies as ‘individual neo-Ottoman pragmatism’, as Ozal utilises the Ottoman style pragmatism in dealing with the Kurdish issue. This is evident from his aim of benefitting from the Kurdish factor for the Turkish state’s interests, through isolating the PKK, keeping Iraqi Kurds from fulfilling their ambitions especially independence, impressing the West and ultimately preserving Turkey’s territorial integrity. Therefore, it could be argued that Ozal’s identity did not bring any change to Turkey’s aims in dealing with IK; nevertheless, it changed Turkey’s method of treating it. In other words, the outlook remained the same, while utilisation of soft power was translated into a better manoeuvrability for Ozal’s Turkey. Hence, Ozal’s identity has impacted the relations only through defining a different framework of action in response to Kurds in contrast with the more restrictive framework of action permitted by Kemalism in this context. Thus, in reiterating, Ozal’s pragmatism in this sense is quite reminiscent of Ottoman Empire’s pragmatism in dealing with the Kurds and their emirates in an attempt to sustain the state in the long-term, as discussed in the historical chapters.

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<sup>9</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

### 5.3.2. Post-Ozal Years

Ozal era created a short gap in Kemalism's continuity; nevertheless, as stated above his outlook could not surpass or replace Kemalism in the state institutions. After Ozal's death and up to 2008, T-IK relations witnessed the resurgence of Kemalism and military's dominance. This period covers both the era of weak coalition governments and AKP's consolidating years, when foreign policy was still under the dominance of military. Even though throughout these years Kemalism was in charge; nevertheless, domestic and international events, in particular the extent of PKK's activism, occupation of Iraq in 2003, *de jure* recognition of IK's federalism in the Iraqi constitution in 2005, and fluctuating Turkey-US relations were playing great part in Turkey's choice of policy towards IK. Dynamics in Kemalist behavioural shifts and the impact of Kemalist ideology on changing the management of the relations are discussed for understanding the extent of change identity shift has brought into the relations.

Turkey's political scene after Ozal was frequented with weak coalition governments whose leaders were in no ways as influential and charismatic as him to keep the military at ebb and implement an independent or pragmatist foreign policy regardless of the bureaucracy and military's opposition. The new leadership was so apprehensive of military and Kemalism's supremacy that even after occasional calls for cultural rights or political solution of the Kurdish issue were quickly shifting rhetoric and showed support for the military's unyielding options (Lundgren, 2007: 49). Events following Ozal's death reveal how quickly Turkey diverted back to its traditional style of politics which provides another evidence as Ozal's policies remained as individual policies rather than creating structural break in the trajectory of Turkish foreign policy.

As a consequence of identity shift, Turkey returned to its heavy-handed treatment of the country's Kurds and terminated the hope for political solution of the Kurdish issue. Turkish army's control of the Kurdish policy in post-Ozal years is the embodiment of this identity shift. As Robins (2003: 329) states, to win the military's support and strengthen her power position, Ciller, the prime minister of Turkey in mid-1990s, surrendered the total management of the Kurdish issue to the military. Army's ascendance in the decision-making processes altered the delicate balance created by Ozal. Bruinessen (2013: 12-13) makes a comparison between Ozal and Ciller eras in terms of their treatment of Kurdish issue and concludes that while Ozal had a carrot and stick policy, Ciller's era was void of any carrots

for Kurds. Force evacuation and destruction of Kurdish villages, grave violations of human rights, extra-judicial arrests and executions, imprisonments of writers for exercising their freedom of expression, and lifting the immunity of Kurdish parliamentarians are some examples of Ciller era's harsh policies provided by Bruinessen (2013: 12-13). Hence, post Ozal era dashed all the hope for political solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey and all the PKK attempts for peace negotiations were turned down. Indeed, Ciller's reaction to such PKK attempts was a metaphorical response stating that PKK will ask for their (Turkish negotiators) arms if they accept to shake hands with the PKK (Bacik and Coskun, 2013: 150).

Ascendance of military and Kemalism had its impact on the Turkey's foreign policy as well, in particular towards Iraq and IK. As elaborated earlier, as a staunchly nationalist outlook, Kemalism views the Kurdish identity as a threat delegitimizing the constructed Turkish Kemalist identity and it takes a security outlook towards it that in turn views the whole Kurdish issue in Iraq and Turkey through the same security lens. As Nasuhi Gungor<sup>10</sup>, TRT Turk Canal Coordinator at the time of the interview, affirmed, in the Kemalist domination era, the Iraqi Kurds were directly linked to the PKK and "terror issue" inside Turkey and relations with Iraqi Kurds were acceptable as long as they could lead to tackling the PKK issue inside Turkey. Otherwise, relations were frowned upon as both issues were viewed through the same security lens. Repercussions of this perspective were soon perceived in post-Ozal era as Turkey started to conduct her relations with IK from the perspective of controlling and destroying the PKK and re-establishing Iraq's sovereignty over all Iraqi territory.

The details of Turkey's treatment towards IK are provided in the previous chapters, and therefore, this chapter will avoid repeating them. Below the major differences with Ozal and post-2008 era are singled out to clarify the role of identity in directing the relation.

Change in Turkey's vision towards Iraq is a clear indicative of conflicting Ozal and post-Ozal policies. Unlike Ozal, the new governments stopped pursuing the idea that 'Saddam should go'. The new ruling elite concluded that there is no threat on Saddam regime's survival and based on this assumption started to improve Ankara's relations with Baghdad. Turkey was even attempting to encourage the international community to end the sanctions on Iraq so that the normal economic activity between Turkey and Iraq could resume. Meanwhile, Turkey was assuming that Iraq's control over all its territory is just a matter of time and IK will be

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<sup>10</sup> TRT Turk Canal Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

soon reincorporated to Iraq. This belief lingered on even after 2003. Thus, in contrast to Ozal period, Turkey was encouraging the Iraqi Kurds to come to a settlement with Baghdad. In the meantime, in contrast to frequent official meetings between Iraqi Kurds and Turkish officials during Ozal time, in the Kemalist era Turkey was avoiding granting Kurds any recognition and meetings that occurred were only in relation with the PKK security threat.

Another difference between Ozal and Kemalists' treatment of IK was the way PKK and security issue were dealt with. Kemalists who were opposing the political solution of the Kurdish issue were merely focused on military operations and as a result, the number of trans-border operations increased significantly and in some cases (as in 1995) even without notifying the Iraqi Kurds. In addition, as Turkey knew, it can better deal with PKK security threat via cooperation and alliance with the KDP (Robins, 2003: 338) it did so and at times backed the KDP in the internal KDP-PUK war. Furthermore, in all KDP-PUK peace negotiations till 1998 Turkey was making sure that its demands are reflected in the agreement and this fact was the reason behind failure of some peace efforts.

The 1998 Washington Agreement and 1999 capture of Ocalan were two momentous events that signified another aspect of the Kemalists' security-oriented politics. As the PKK threat was almost diminished, Turkey started to ignore the Kurds and focus more on Baghdad and on the Turkmen minority living in IK. Establishment of the PMF, ITF and threats that Turkey would intervene to protect the Turkmen minority were manifestations of this policy.

As the situation changed in 2003 and Saddam's removal became a fact and Kurds became an influential actor in Iraq, due to Kemalists' view linking the Kurdish nationalism success in IK to the Kurdish issue in Turkey, the relations became quite tense. As a result, in both pre-and-post 2003's downfall of Saddam periods, Turkey was frequently issuing threats to launch military attacks on IK with the excuse of protecting Turkmen or preventing Kurdish incorporation of Kirkuk into the Kurdistan Region, but in many cases the aim was generally hampering the progress of Kurdish nationalism towards greater autonomy or independence in IK.

The resurgence of PKK attacks in 2004 and American indolence to act turned Turkey more upset and confrontational towards Iraqi Kurds. Throughout the period, up to AKP's power consolidation and consequent post-2008 change in T-IK relations, Kemalists refused to grant Iraqi Kurds any recognition to the extent that Turkish President Sezer avoided meeting Iraqi

President Talabani in 2007 on the basis of Talabani's Kurdish origin.

As evident from above examples of differing Kemalist and Ozalist policies and perspectives towards IK, it becomes clear that dominance of Kemalist identity made great change in the way Iraqi Kurds were treated by Turkey. The pragmatism and leniency of Ozal was completely absent in the Kemalist era and the only cooperation Kemalists had with Iraqi Kurds was in relation with their aim of destroying and uprooting the PKK. Indeed, it could be argued that during continued Kemalist era, nothing much happened beyond security concerns.

Nevertheless, in spite of differences in style, it seems that the aims of both Ozal and Kemalists are quite similar. Throughout the 1993-2008 Kemalist dominance era, the main aims were preventing Iraqi Kurds from gaining independence, more constitutional legitimacy or incorporation of Kirkuk to the Kurdish administered region, destroying the PKK, preventing crisis (refugee crisis) in Turkey's borders and restoring Iraqi control of the Kurdish administered territory, giving prominence to Turkmen, gaining more influence in Iraq, and solving the Kurdish issue through military force (Lindenstrauss, 2007: 94-95; *see* chapter 4). Both eras share the principal aims of uprooting the PKK threat, countering Kurdish ambitions in Iraq and preserving the territorial integrity of Turkey. However, while in Ozal era both soft and hard powers were utilised in Kemalist era, utilising the hard power remained the main strategy. Thus, the discussion in this section shows that how identity even in personal level, as in Ozal's case, can have impact on the treatment of Kurds both in Turkey and IK.

### **5.3.3. The Impact of Identity in Iraqi Kurdistan (1990- 1998 and 1998-2008)**

Whilst above discussion has focused on the role of identity from the Turkish side, this section attempts to explore the significance of the identity factor from the IK side in order to provide a holistic and balanced picture. However, unlike Turkey's case where a sovereign state was in place to conduct the relations, in 1990 IK was the scene of chaos and war and had no legally recognised political establishment representing the population. Nevertheless, a *de facto* Kurdish entity emerged to fill the political void and changed the political landscape. The identity of the actors in charge of administering this entity and the impact it had on the relations are discussed in this section.

The Kurdish entity evolved in 1990s was the embodiment and continuation of Kurdish



national struggle in IK. As discussed earlier, Kurdish national movement in IK has its roots in the Ottoman era. Revolting Kurdish Emirs, Kurdish notables of late Ottoman era and influential Kurdish *Sheikhs* at the time nurtured the seeds of Kurdish nationalism. In absence of well-organised popular political organisations, infantile Kurdish nationalism remained mainly tribal in early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Soon, the dominant tribal and religious leaders in cooperation with Kurdish intellectuals succeeded in forming Kurdish political parties and by mid 20<sup>th</sup> century party-organised nationalism dominated over the tribally-organised one, though traits of the earlier coexisted with the later. In this regard, Amarilyo (2014: 63-80) and Neuberger (2014: 15-35) in their works are quite insightful in indicating the links between Kurdish tribalism and nationalism and the formula of their coexistence. The KDP and the PUK, the prominent Kurdish nationalist parties of IK in 1990s were the products of this political evolution and had their legitimacy in revolting against Iraqi regimes for defending and promoting the Kurdish national cause. Meanwhile, further progress of Kurdish nationalism from party-organised nationalism towards institutional or Kurdistanism that is already discussed illustrates how different forms of nationalism continue to interact in the modern stage of Kurdish national evolution. This section, therefore, attempts to explore the significance of the identity factor in the relations, through examining the interplay of different forms of Kurdish nationalism in two different phases of 1990-1998 and 1998-2008.

Stansfield (2003: 61-176) provides a detailed account of how the KDP and the PUK were established and operate and how Iraqi Kurds started their institution building attempts and administered their region in the turbulent post-Gulf War - 2002 years. His account is an insightful view of how politics of IK was operating both at party and institutional levels. Initially, the region was jointly controlled and administered by the IKF parties. Soon elections were held, and a government was formed by victorious KDP and PUK on the infamous '50-50' system. However, as Stansfield (2003) argues, the established institutions remained just as facades, as the real power stayed with the political parties. Stansfield (2003: 146) quotes a PUK Politburo member, who claims that in the first and second KRG cabinets "there was an unwritten understanding between the political bureaus of the KDP and the PUK that all the decisions of the KRG must have [their] prior approval." As a result, the KRG was crippled by the KDP-PUK rivalry and eventually was divided into two administrations based in Suleimaniya and Erbil following the outbreak of the KDP-PUK armed conflict. Stansfield (2003) believes that the dual administration system operated more effectively, in spite of the

fact that they were still under party control. Hence, KRG remained divided and under party influence until its unification process in post-2003 period started.

As evident from the Stansfield's (2003) account and the milestone historical details presented in earlier chapters, the KDP and PUK and not the KRG or other national Kurdish institutions were the real actors administering the IK's political life and its relations with the external actors. The lasting dominance of party identity over a national one raises a number of questions related to the identity issue. This section attempts to further clarify the role of coexisting Kurdish identities on the relations through answering the following questions:

- (i) Why party-nationalism and not a national Kurdish identity gained supremacy and support?
- (ii) What was the identity promoted by the KDP and PUK?
- (iii) What was the aim of the Kurdish political parties and how it impacted the T-IK relations?
- (iv) How Kurdistani identity has coexisted and evolved with other forms of identity and what is its impact on the T-IK relations?
- (v) Why Kurdistani identity gained strength after 1998?

As discussed earlier, Kurdish national movement initially emerged in the Ottoman era; nevertheless, this, as a movement, failed to develop into modern nationalism to construct a strong unifying Kurdish identity by the time Kurds gained their autonomy in IK. Pluralism of the Kurdish nationalism and the historical rivalry and conflict present among the rival primordial, tribal and political forms of nationalism were the major impediments in this regard. Bruinessen's (2006: 21-48) work sheds light on linguistic, religious, cultural and political aspects of this pluralism and explains the role this factor and historic rivalries between the KDP and PUK have played in impairing the national identity formation. In addition to the internal factors, the military, cultural and economic measures devised by Iraqi, Turkish, Iranian and Syrian governments also played an important role in preventing the evolution of a Kurdish national identity.

Even after the establishment of the Kurdish autonomous region, these factors continued to impair the national identity formation. The negative performance of the Kurdish parties in

1990s and lack of a vibrant civil society further delayed the progress of a national identity. Vali (2006: 50-51) refers to the impact of such factors on the greater Kurdistan level (involving all Kurdish territories in the Middle East); nevertheless his argument is applicable to the IK case as well. He argues that the Kurdish nationalism's failure "to transcend the structural limits of this political and cultural fragmentation ... is rooted in the chronic weakness of civil society in Kurdistan". He further adds, "foreign patronage and internal clientelism ... are both opposed to Kurdish national identity". Hence, fragmented Kurdish identity failed to crystalize into a national and dominant Kurdistani identity in light of its inherent problems and hampering external involvements.

In light of the above discussion, it becomes evident that the Kurdish political parties have played their part in bringing failure to dominance of a unified Kurdistani identity in IK. The question remains, how Kurdish parties that were projecting themselves as nationalists have prevented the success and dominance of a unifying national identity and what the repercussion of their policy has been for the Kurdish autonomous region. The conduct of the political parties after 1990s is helpful in finding answers to such questions.

In early 1990s, both KDP and PUK owed their public support to their history of national struggle against oppressive Iraqi regimes. Similarly, their leaders were enjoying charismatic, traditional and revolutionary legitimacy among their followers. Unforeseen developments of early 1990s created historic challenges and opportunities for these parties who had no experience in urban administration of big cities like Erbil and Suleimaniya. Hence, as Hassan Mustafa<sup>11</sup>, Advisor of IK's Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, points out, at this stage the Kurdish political parties were aiming at managing and containing the crisis and surviving through the experience. In the process, they initially attempted to promote their party interests through cooperation under the umbrella of IKF and KRG without considerable success.

The first endeavour of the KDP and PUK was to gain supremacy through elections. As Voller (2012: 142) argues, in addition to the KDP-PUK's attempt to settle the power-sharing crisis, the 1992 elections also aimed at gaining international legitimacy and recognition for the Kurdish administration. All Kurdish parties were aware of limitations lack of international legitimacy had imposed on the Kurdish autonomous region and were hoping that democratic legitimacy bestowed on the elected Kurdish government through 1992 elections enhance their standing in the international level. The outcome of elections was not promising in either

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<sup>11</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil

front, as the elections did not satisfy the ambitions of any party and chaos and internal war dashed the hope of earning international recognition and respect.

It should be stated that IK's interest was in cooperation of all political parties and advancement of a unifying identity. Nevertheless, existence and dominance of party interests directed the Kurdish parties towards conflict as the ultimate device for guaranteeing their domination after failing to do so through the ballot box. As Gunter (1996: 240), Bengio (2005: 179) and Stansfield (2005: 199) state, in addition to historical enmity, economic rivalry and external intervention, presence of multiple identities and their multiple interests played a significant role in the outbreak of hostilities between the KDP and PUK in the 1994. In Stansfield's (2005: 199) view, the conflict reflected "the multiple fault lines which exists in Kurdish political identity, between rural and urban areas and between tribal association and social sentiment- all focused in the personalities leading the two dominant parties of the KDP and PUK. The divisions are overlapped and usually mixed".

Indeed, both KDP and PUK were to a good extent responsible for exacerbating such fragmentation and divisions. As Leezenberg (2006:165) states, both prior and after 1992 elections KDP and PUK were actively engaged in creating their extensive patronage networks at the expense of institutionalism and democracy. In this regard, in addition to utilising the economic means, both parties were projecting themselves as the true nationalists and protectors of Kurdistan and its interests. However, as Jenkins (2008: 21) asserts both KDP and PUK have been quite practical and have utilised the nationalist rhetoric "to mask tribalism and the personal ambition of their leaders, even at the cost of the lives of their fellow Kurds". It is remarkable that an NGO worker had raised a similar point talking to Gunter (1996: 240) at the chaotic time of Kurdish internal war, stating, "Barzani thinks he's the true leader of the Kurds. So does Talabani and they'll fight each other down to their last *Peshmerga* to prove themselves right".

Indeed, as the researcher recalls, at the time of hostilities the radio stations of both parties were engaged in harsh war of words against each other through utilising the party based nationalist rhetoric. In the process, each party was accusing the other of betraying the Kurdish cause, and the Kurdish pejorative word *jash*, which means 'donkey's foal' and is used in reference to traitors, was frequently used in reference to the other. The ideological battle was not only limited to the media and it was easily noticed among the members and supporters of both parties. Indeed, most party supporters genuinely believed in sincerity of their leaders and

were ardently advocating the nationalist rhetoric of their parties substantiated with their selected references to historical events that they were considering as proof of the rival party's betrayal of the Kurdish nation.

As the result of polarisation of Kurdish politics and society on party lines, relations of Iraqi Kurds with neighbouring states were framed by elites ruling the Kurdish political parties, especially the KDP and PUK leadership. These ruling elites were justifying their party and individual interests using nationalist rhetoric. As discussed earlier, although initially there was a kind of superficial cooperation among the IKF members and later KDP-PUK dominated KRG, but deep-rooted rivalries and party-based interests were always present and played more significant role in relations with Turkey and other neighbouring states. The 'party-oriented' versus 'national-oriented politics' of the KDP and PUK was evident in the way they were reacting towards the PKK issue and relations with Turkey. Party interests and fears for security were at times making the KDP to issue harsh statements against Turkish interventions, while the PUK was more eager to support tough action against the PKK (Olson, 1992: 20) and *vice versa* at other times (Kirisci, 1996: 34). Indeed, after 1994, the party-based stances towards Turkey became more evident, as KDP made alliance with Turkey in fight against the PUK and PKK in 1995 and 1997, and as PUK fought the PKK in 2001, since the PUK's interests demanded such an action at that time.

Therefore, the war, which broke out in 1994 between KDP and PUK, was a clear manifestation of supremacy of political parties and their model of nationalism over a national Kurdish identity. The outcome for relations was emergence of a kind of patron-client relations between IK's political parties and neighbouring states or Baghdad government. In this context, the aim of Kurdish political parties was defeating the rival parties at best and guaranteeing their own party's security and survival at worst. However, through the process, each party was accusing the others of betraying the nation and becoming the agent of the neighbouring states of Kurdistan.

As the researcher has noticed, even until now Kurdish political parties are accused of treason and harshly criticised for their clientelist relations with states that have been engaged in suppression of the Kurdish nation. Ali Bapir's<sup>12</sup>, whose party is also accused of such clientelist relations, comment on accusations of treason is evidence to dynamics of party-oriented politics of Kurdistan at the time and how party-interests were steering the IK's

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<sup>12</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil

relations with Turkey, Iran and Baghdad. Bapir stressed:

I do not like to call it becoming the agent of the foreign forces, because as the KDP relied on Turkey and brought Turkish fighter jets and later relied on Baghdad and brought Baghdad's tanks and PUK relied on Iran and brought Iranian missiles and weapons, the issue was not Turkey, Baghdad and Iran had an interest and the KDP and the PUK were materialising their interests. I believe, it was the specific party interests of the KDP and the PUK that was urging these parties to seek help from these countries. It was not becoming the agent, but it was relying on the foreigner against your own brothers ... Because even us [the KIM at that time] when we were oppressed and the PUK was staging war on us in 1994, we were forced, indeed Iran helped us, Iran was both helping us and the PUK. Hence it is not becoming the agent, it is stretching helping hand towards foreigners and bringing them into your country for your own party interests.

#### **5.3.4. Post-1998 Developments and Reinforcement of Kurdistan Identity**

As the sequence of events prior to 1998 reveal, party interests that were steering the relations with Turkey and other neighbouring states were in contrast with the national Kurdistan interests of IK. However, new developments in the region brought party and national interests much closer after the 1998 Washington Peace Agreement. In contrast to Ankara, Baghdad and Tehran, Washington as the broker of Kurdish peace deal and the new patron of Kurdish parties had no interest in Kurdish internal war. As evident from Washington Agreement and American pre and post-2003 war policies, Washington policy was enhancing cooperation between the KDP and PUK for decreasing regional intervention in Kurdistan region, mobilising and utilising the Kurdish military forces in the war against Saddam and later using them for building a stable and operational democratic Iraq. Meanwhile, KDP and PUK needed to appease their new patron and its demands and work for more gains in Baghdad. Furthermore, PKK demise after Ocalan's arrest and Turkey's turn towards Baghdad and neglecting Kurds and pre-and-post 2003, Turkish hostile stands towards IK reinforced the need for cooperation among Kurdish parties. Hence, in post 1998 years, due to the KDP and PUK's need for Kurdish public support in relations with Baghdad they started to foster the Kurdistan identity in favour of their party gains in Baghdad. In other words, party and Kurdistan identity ran parallel and this factor resulted in increasing significance of the Kurdistan identity in the conduct and foreign relations of the Kurdish political parties.

As indicated earlier, in spite of the fact that there is a pan-Kurdish sentiment that calls for a unified Kurdish national identity covering all parts of greater Kurdistan among majority of advocates of the Kurdistan identity; nevertheless, this research applies the Kurdistan identity only in the framework of IK and treats it as an identity that has IK's national interests at heart both in domestic and external politics rather than party or other factional and

individual interests. Probably Chorev's (2007: 9) statement that focuses on interest-oriented pragmatic politics of the Kurdish elite especially after 2003 explains these points and clarifies how Kurdistan identity in this context has become more pragmatist than ideal. In Chorev's (2007: 9) words:

The commitment to Kurdish nationalism that once defined political life in pre-2003 Iraqi Kurdistan has vanished. What has emerged instead is an undertaking to protect Kurdish interests at politically expedient moments, but no strategy to ensure the ideological and political engagement of the masses in the long term.

After this clarification, it is essential to denote that Kurdistan identity was not born in post-1998 era. It is rooted in the Kurdish national struggle and has been present throughout ups and downs of Kurdish revolutions since Ottoman Empire. Its evolution and impact on IK relations with Turkey from 1990s to 2008 are, however, presented below.

As Bruinessen (2006: 37) states, even the horrifying tragedies of Halabja and Anfal in 1988 and the opportunity provided by establishment of the safe haven failed in persuading the Iraqi Kurdish leadership to put party and individual interests aside and promote a unifying national identity. However, while Kurdish leaders failed to make a successful transition "from tribal warlordship to true statesmanship" (Gunter, 1996: 240), a good number of Kurdish people were moving beyond the tribal, religious and national affiliations. Romano (2006: 210) who visited Erbil in 1994 refers to worries of shopkeepers, labourers and traders in the city who were afraid that Kurdish internal war result in foreign intervention and were asking the Kurdish leadership to pay more attention to the Kurdish interests rather than party and individual ones. This is a clear indication of presence of Kurdistan identity among Kurds in 1990s that were wary of outcomes of the war for the Kurdistan region. On presence of such sentiments Aziz (2011: 5) even goes further and claims:

The political change that took place in Iraqi Kurdistan after 1991, the 19 May 1992 election and the existence of the de facto Kurdish state since 1992 coalesced to cause a sense of political and national cohesiveness among urban and literate Kurds in which a widely accepted identity as 'Kurdistanis' displaced the former self-designation of 'Iraqi Kurds; or 'Iraqis'. ... Tribal affiliations and religious loyalties no longer exercise a major influence in post-1990s Iraqi Kurdistan, especially among the younger educated generation.

If party organized nationalism of the KDP and PUK is also counted as being the same with the Kurdistan identity mentioned by Aziz, in that case Aziz's statement can be accepted as correct regarding the salience of Kurdistan identity after 1990s. However, as the turn of events revealed, factional party identities prevailed and derailed the institutionalisation attempt of the 1992 elections and led to the 1994 Kurdish fratricide. Nevertheless, the

Kurdistani identity was gradually gaining strength in coexistence with other forms of identity. In spite of the fact that tragedies like Halabja and *Anfal* Campaign could not unite all the Kurdish parties, they further awakened the sense of Kurdish national identity among the Iraqi Kurds to see and define themselves as Kurds and reject the idea of being controlled by Iraqi government (Romano, 2006: 215). This sense of belonging to Kurdistan and not Iraq was further reinforced through the administrative and education system introduced by the Kurdish government. For instance, Kirmanj (2014: 83-98) sheds light on introduction and advocating Kurdish nationalism rhetoric and myths in the curriculum to replace the material that was promoting the Iraqi and Arab nationalism. Hence, focus on Kurdish history and events with historical significance in the Kurdish modern history, such as Halabja and *Anfal* are among material introduced into the curriculum.

In spite of such developments, the Kurdistani identity was harshly subdued by the party nationalism during the years of violent Kurdish infighting. However, great external changes in 1998 were coupled with similar domestic developments, which led Kurdistani identity to gain a better position. The peace deal ended the war and with the end of conflict, the role of Kurdish warlords and tribal leaders tended to decrease over the politics (Leezenberg, 2006: 170-171). Meanwhile, the bitter experience of the Kurdish fratricide had made it clear for the Kurds that unity and cooperation can be more fruitful than war and this was supportive for strengthening of a Kurdistani identity. Probably KDP and PUK leaders had come to similar conclusion, especially in light of the new regional developments, American encouragement of Kurdish cooperation and fruits such cooperation could yield to Kurdish leadership in Baghdad.

Undoubtedly, the cooperation and unification process that started after the Washington Agreement and discussed in the former chapter further reinforced the feeling of unity and belonging to a Kurdistani identity among the Iraqi Kurds. Moreover, the cultural, economic and administrative policies of the Kurdish administrations throughout the post 1990 years had further paved the grounds for strengthening of a unifying Kurdish identity. Aziz (2011: 91) refers to the impact of the establishment of numerous schools, universities, publication houses, military and police colleges and free press, especially after 1998 had on evolution of the Kurdistani identity. Meanwhile, the new generation of Kurds born after 1990s were raised under Kurdish administration and Kurdish was the language of their everydayness including curriculum, social, cultural and political life.



Moreover, through reviewing the events occurred in post-2003 era, signs of further progress and strengthening of the Kurdistan identity could easily be discerned. Emergence of the referendum movement and the widespread support for Kurdish independence in their informal referendum held in 2005, outbreak of protests to the KDP and PUK corruption peaked in the establishment of the Change Movement, and Iraqi Kurds' discontent over Kurdish leadership's failure in reincorporating Kirkuk into Kurdistan region (Shiffrinson, 2006: 4) are clear examples of surge in Kurdistan identity.

As above discussion indicates, Kurdistan identity had gained strength and support and its impact was visible in internal and external politics of IK. Kurdish leadership was forced to be more assertive on Kurdish nationalist demands in Baghdad to satisfy the Kurdish public. Obviously, endorsement of federalism, and articles related to disputed territories and Kurdish *Peshmerga* forces in the permanent Iraqi constitution, and Kurdish resistance to concede Iraq's presidency post to a Sunni Arab are reflections of the impact Kurdistan identity had on Kurdish leadership's positioning in Baghdad.

Meanwhile, Kurdish leadership attempted to project themselves as national leaders and this factor coupled with pressure from the Kurdistan identity was restricting their freedom of action. The impact was quite evident in relations with Turkey. In contrast to the 1990-1998 period when the KDP and the PUK were assisting Turkey in her fight against the PKK, in 1998-2008 such collaborations would have been very costly for the image of the KDP and the PUK leaders. As International Crisis Group (2008: 4) report argues, it is not logical to expect Masoud Barzani who projects himself as a national leader to "act against the PKK, which emphasises Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalism and executes a military struggle against Turkey on those grounds".

Kurdistan identity, hence, had the impact of turning the KDP and the PUK leadership more cautious in their relations with Turkey and played its role in limiting their freedom in waging war against any other Kurdish groups to appease the Turkish government. Indeed, the already discussed tough reactions and harsh statements issued by Barzani and Talabani in response to Turkish demands for surrendering PKK members were in part aiming at the domestic audience to appease the national fever of the Kurdistan identity and guarantee the Kurdish support for the KDP and the PUK in the elections.

In spite of the fact that Kurdistan identity registered a significant presence in post 1988

years; party leadership was still giving priority to party interests rather than the national ones. In other words, while the Kurdistan identity was gaining more support among the public, Kurdish leadership remained more committed to their party interests. Consequently, party-organised nationalism of the Kurdish leadership remained in charge of ruling the Kurdish region and organising its relations with Turkey.

The sluggish nature of the KRG unification process discussed earlier in particular with regard to military and finance related spheres, and military, economic and administrative dominance of the KDP and the PUK on their geographic zones of influence are indicative of this fact. Prioritising party to national interests was especially evident in lengthy bargains over distribution of administrative posts between the major Kurdish parties. The researcher could observe how the Kurdish public was unhappy with the detrimental KDP-PUK rivalry over posts especially in Kirkuk city. Due to party rivalry in this city, KDP and PUK were running their own intelligence offices and both refused to accept the candidate of the other party for governor post resulting in settlement on Abdulrahman Mustafa, a non-partisan Kurd, for the post from 2003 to 2011, when he resigned mainly due to the KDP-PUK rivalry. Meanwhile, physical violence such as attacks on the KIU offices in Dohuk in 2005 (Wing, 2011) were further proof to resilience and supremacy of party interests over Kurdish politics

Stansfield (2006: 269) adequately points out this dichotomy of increasingly nationalist Kurdish society versus KDP and PUK politics. While referring to historical roots of Kurdish society's disillusionment with Baghdad and acknowledging that Kurdish people are not unified, he argues:

When analyzing 'the Kurds', it is necessary to make a distinction between the two major parties of the KDP and PUK, on the one hand, and Kurdish society on the other. The distinction is important, as it is apparent that there is an increasing disconnect between the two parties and the society at large ... Unwilling to be held within a state dominated by Arab nationalists, the Kurds have developed a strong Kurdish nationalist position, which has deep roots in Kurdish society.

After acknowledging the presence of coexisting Kurdish identities and their interests, it is remarkable to explore the aims of Iraqi Kurds in their relations with Turkey in the period. As the historical evidence suggests, until 2008 Turkey refused to recognise the KRG and was dealing solely with the Kurdish parties and individuals in these parties. Meanwhile, a unified and stable KRG was mostly absent in this period, due to the internal war and immaturity of the unification process. Hence, the aims of Iraqi Kurds in the process are manifested through the vehicle of Kurdish parties throughout most of the time.

As already stated, in early years of 1990s, Iraqi Kurds' aim in relations with Turkey was managing the crisis and gaining recognition. Initially, security of Kurdish people and stability of the Kurdistan region was the aim of the parties constituting the IKF. As Abdulsalam Rashid Ismael<sup>13</sup>, director of KRG-Turkey relations in the KRG's foreign relations office, stated, at the time Iraqi Kurds were attempting to gain Turkey's recognition through displaying Iraqi Kurds' usefulness in establishing stability and order in the region and proving that they are no threat to Turkey. Meanwhile, Iraqi Kurds' security in the safe haven was at the mercy of Turkey's approval for continuation of coalition troops operations 'poised hammer' and 'provide comfort I and II' (Olson, 1992: 19).

The situation changed soon; as civil war in Kurdistan and sudden death of President Ozal in April 1993 in Turkey changed the way Turkey was dealing with IK and altered the way the KDP and PUK were observing the security issue. As it could be easily discerned from the KDP and the PUK's clientelist relations with Turkey, the shift was in prioritising the party survival and security, rather than the security of the whole population living in IK. Therefore, instead of a unified Kurdish administration, the KDP and the PUK were trying to prove their usefulness for Turkey in order to guarantee their survival or dominance and benefit financially at the same time. As Hassan Mustafa<sup>14</sup> states, up to 2003 such party aims remained dominant in relations with Turkey. However, both Mustafa<sup>15</sup> and Ismael<sup>16</sup> confirm that Kurds gradually, and in particular after 2003 started to focus more on economic and energy sectors in relations with Turkey. Using the economic and energy factors by the Kurds aimed at winning the trust of Turkish state through creating shared interests and urging Turkey to cooperate with Iraqi Kurds rather than threatening them with military intervention. Kurdish parties have always been aware of Turkey's strategic importance as IK's gateway to Europe and the international market.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Kurds were particularly worried about losing their achievements in the Kurdish autonomous region in case of any Turkish intervention. Hence, it could be argued that security, survival, recognition and economic interest have been the main aims of the Kurdish leadership in relations with Turkey. The difference rests in the fact that prior to 1998, Kurdish parties mainly utilised the security card, or military cooperation with Turkey

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<sup>13</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG's Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>14</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>15</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>16</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG's Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil

to secure their survival and security, while in post 1998 years economic and energy cards started to gain supremacy. In addition, due to merging of party and Kurdistan interests, Kurdish leadership was more concerned with the recognition and survival of the Kurdish federal entity in IK.

Finally, it could be concluded that in spite of presence and evolution of other forms of nationalism, party organised nationalism of the KDP and PUK remained salient and in control throughout the 1990-2008 years. Although the Kurdistan identity displayed great progress after 1998, its salience was mainly related to the fact that interests of the party-organised nationalism and Kurdistan nationalism were in line rather than contradictory. Otherwise, the slow pace of unification process, especially in financial and military aspects, and perpetuating the existence of the KDP and the PUK dominated zones during the 1998-2008 era are proof of how Kurdish parties still gave priority to their party interests, regardless of the national Kurdistan interests. Nevertheless, utilisation of Kurdistan identity and sentiments by Kurdish leadership was not without impact on their choice of policy and behaviour. The substantial merger of Kurdistan and party interests in 1998-2008 years left its footprints on T-IK's relations evident from emboldened and more national stances of Kurdish leadership towards Turkish demands.

#### **5.4. TURKEY AND IRAQI KURDISTAN IN POST 2008 PERIOD**

As details discussed in the previous chapter indicate, Turkey's recognition of IK came in post-2008 era and all aspects of the relations peaked in the 2008-2014 period. Constitutional recognition of IK and the international engagement with this Kurdish entity had transformed the IK from a *de facto* region to a legally endorsed immediate neighbour of Turkey. Indeed, this era was the era of optimism and progress where the milestone developments in the relations occurred. The fact that relations started to enter the formal phase is in itself indicative of the importance of this period with regard to the previous eras. Hence, the interviews conducted mainly focused on this period of enhanced formal politico-economic relations and aim at portraying the way actors and analysts in the region were viewing the relations as they were being developed. Therefore, this section relies mainly on the interviews conducted by the researcher.

Meanwhile, unlike the previous sections where identity issue in Turkey and IK were discussed separately, in this section impact of identity factor is discussed jointly due to the

nature of the period. In pre-2008 years there were no formal extensive relations between Turkey and a legal Kurdish entity called KRG with legal legitimacy endorsed by the Iraqi constitution. Turkey was dealing with IK's political parties separately and had no intention to recognise or conduct any relations with the KRG as the official representative of the Iraqi Kurds. Meanwhile, the extent of the relations was not at the level of creating a strong correlation between both sides. However, emergence of new type of relations has generated new questions and enquiries. There is a debate over real actors in the relations in particular with regard to the role of KRG institutions, the dynamics of their interactions, their objectives and so on that necessitates investigating the impact of the identity issue from 2008 onward in a joint manner.

In exploring the impact of identity factor in this period, this section first explores who are the real agents leading the relations, and investigates what is their identity. Later it examines the agent's aim followed by the question whether the relations take a different direction or continue normally if an alternative agent with different identity comes to power either in Turkey or IK. Through discussing the answers to the above questions, the research sheds light on how identity factor has impacted the relations in the 2008-2014 period and singles out the similarities or differences with the previous era.

#### **5.4.1. Leading Actors in Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations, 2008-2014**

There is no agreement over who is in charge of running the T-IK relations, in particular from the IK side in the post-2008 period. The researcher has noticed that even people from all different walks of life have contradicting statements on the issue, usually based on their political orientation. This fact has been further reflected in opinion pieces written in Kurdish language in the Kurdish media as well as on social media forums. Meanwhile, in the conferences and workshops attended by the researcher it is observed that even academics who talk on Kurdish issue have differing views on this topic. Moreover, in the literature on the T-IK relations, writers either do not engage with this issue and gloss over the controversy through using IK or KRG as the representative of the Kurdish side or briefly and without proper justification select a political party or some individuals as the IK's representative in charge of the relations. Nevertheless, available literature falls short of presenting the counter arguments or properly explaining the logic behind their choice.

In order to understand the reason behind this disagreement and find out the rhetoric of the different camps, the interviewees of the research were questioned on the subject. They have three different views on the actors in charge of the relations that are outlined as follows: (i) Turkish state-KDP or state-party relations; (ii) Turkish state-KRG (read Kurdish state) or state-state relations; (iii) Turkish state-Kurdish individuals, or state-individual relations. As far as the Turkish side is concerned, the role of AKP is not ignored, but as reflected in the views of the interviewees discussed below, Turkey has established institutions and AKP is representative of state institutions. The views and their justifications are presented below.

#### **5.4.1.1. Turkish state - Kurdish party**

Among those interviewed, the supporters of the idea that relations are state-party relations are from leadership of IK's opposition parties in 2013. Meanwhile, Veysal Ayhan<sup>17</sup>, head of International Middle East Peace Research Centre (IMPR) in Ankara, who had a similar stance, justified his view based on the concerns IK's opposition parties had with regard to the relations.

The concern from the opposition parties is that unlike Turkey, IK still lacks the fully evolved national institutions. As Sardar Abdullah<sup>18</sup>, head of Change Movement's bloc in Iraqi Parliament at the time of interview, claimed, "Kurdistan still does not have national institutions. The institutions that exist are party institutions". Similarly, Ali Bapir<sup>19</sup>, leader of KIG, argued that in Turkey party, government and state are separate, "hence I cannot say on the Turkish part it is a party relation, but on our [IK] side I believe it is more having a party flavour, because we do not have the institutions". Even though both Bapir and Abdullah conceded that KDP has come to power through elections and it has played the main role in developing the relations with Turkey, but they still regarded the relations as state-party ones. Abdullah<sup>20</sup> justified his stance arguing that "AKP being in power in Turkey and KDP being in power in Kurdistan does not give them the power to talk on behalf of Turkey and Kurdistan Region. These are governments, and governments change. State strategies are not drawn on the basis of governments".

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<sup>17</sup> Head of International Middle East Peace Research Centre (IMPR): 13 June 2013, Ankara

<sup>18</sup> Head of Change Movement Bloc in Iraqi Parliament: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya

<sup>19</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>20</sup> Head of Change Movement Bloc in Iraqi Parliament: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya

Shwan Qlyasani<sup>21</sup>, senior officer of diplomatic relations of Change Movement, placed doubt on the intentions of those administering the relations with Turkey, as they do not discuss the relations openly inside the Kurdistan Parliament. He called the relation as Turkish state-KDP relations as they are not formulated through the parliament with Kurdish national interests in view and lack transparency. Referring to closeness of KDP with Turkey and PUK with Iran, he argued that relations have party interests in heart, rather than the national interest, security and prosperity of all Iraqi Kurds.

Concerns expressed by the political parties that think are excluded in the decision-making process makes it easily discernible that they feel there are serious ambiguities in the relations, especially in the economic field and KDP avoids sharing the details for the sake of preserving its own interests. As the researcher has concluded from his analysis, many supporters of these political parties and even some non-partisan Kurds share the same concerns and express such views in the social media. Meanwhile, as above argument indicates, the KRG institutions are regarded to be party-dominated, and, therefore, electoral legitimacy is not viewed as a satisfactory criterion for justifying the national-oriented nature of the relations.

The solution suggested for this problem from Change Movement and KIG was outlining a national strategy with presence of all political parties in the Kurdistan Region. As Qlyasani<sup>22</sup> stated, with “an independent Kurdistan strategy” Kurdish parties will not become the servants of foreign countries’ agendas as before. Meanwhile, Abdullah<sup>23</sup> asserted that in the meeting of Kurdistan political parties, Change Movement has formally asked for drawing of an “independent Kurdistan strategy” by all sides, to make sure all policies are in line with the national interests of the Kurdistan people and do not violate the redlines drawn by all sides. Hence, based on this standpoint party identity and interests are still dominant in IK and direct the relations with Turkey.

#### **5.4.1.2. Turkish state - Kurdish state**

In contrast to the views expressed by opposition parties, interviewees from the parties in power both in Turkey and IK and some intellectuals believe that the relations between the

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<sup>21</sup> Change Movement’s Senior Officer of Diplomatic Relations: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya

<sup>22</sup> Change Movement’s Senior Officer of Diplomatic Relations: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya

<sup>23</sup> Head of Change Movement Bloc in Iraqi Parliament: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya

two sides have been proper institutional relations that are serving the interests of both entities in Turkey and IK. Their justifications are mainly based on the electoral legitimacy of dominant parties, as well as historical, geographic and bureaucratic realities on the ground.

As acknowledged by most interviewees, from the IK's side, the KDP is the party accredited for improving and developing the relations. However, unlike the advocates of state-party relations, supporters of the idea that relations are institutionalised claim that in spite of KDP's grave role, now relations are evolved into Turkish state-KRG relations. As Jutyar Adil<sup>24</sup>, Head of Sarenj Research Centre in Erbil, stated "At one hand it is true [to call relations AKP-KDP relations], since the relations have developed at the era of AKP rule and KDP's dominance. On the other hand, it may not be true, as we can look at the relations and notice the role of KRG and see that the relations are now institutionalised especially in energy sector".

Meanwhile, the relations between parties from Kurdistan region with parties from other countries are not prohibited by law but as Sa'di Ahmed Pira<sup>25</sup>, the PUK political bureau member and former head of the PUK committee in Erbil, affirmed as long as these relations are in the Kurdistan region's interests. Indeed, IK's political parties acknowledge that they have relations with parties that have similar ideologies outside Kurdistan region, just as Pira<sup>26</sup> referred to the PUK's relations with social democrat parties and Mohammed Faraj<sup>27</sup>, head of the KIU at the time of the interview, referred to his party's good relations with the AKP and the role played by his party in convincing the AKP to shift Turkey's policy towards Kurds. Therefore, looking at the relations through this perspective, the KDP's relations with the AKP should be separated from the KRG-Turkey relations, as the KDP has the right to have good relations with any political party outside Kurdistan region as long as they serve the interests of Kurdistan.

Another factor which was highlighted to prove that relations are legal and institutional was the fact that both AKP and KDP are elected parties that have come to power through democratically held elections. In addition to politicians, this factor was emphasized by academics, like Anwar Anaid<sup>28</sup>, lecturer at Kurdistan University-Erbil, and Salah Mala

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<sup>24</sup> Head of *Sarenj* Centre and university lecturer: 24 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>25</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>26</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>27</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>28</sup> Kurdistan University Lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil



Omer<sup>29</sup>, lecturer at Salahaddin University-Erbil, who considered the relations as healthy state-to-state relations due to the democratic legitimacy of the AKP and KDP.

The electoral legitimacy and the privileges it bestows on the political party winning the majority was further elaborated by the KDP and the AKP senior cadres to reject the critics accusing the relations of being non-institutional. As Hemn Hawrami<sup>30</sup>, head of the KDP's foreign relations, stated, the KDP as the strongest party in IK holds both presidency and premiership offices and "of course the vision of the KDP for the foreign policy of Kurdistan region reflects in KRG's foreign policy vision". Similarly, Cemaleddin Hashimi<sup>31</sup>, Turkey's Prime Ministry public diplomacy coordinator during the interviews, stressed that AKP and KDP are the dominant parties in Turkey and IK and while without AKP in power in Turkey and Erdogan's leadership it would have not been possible to see the immense developments in the relations; nevertheless, the parties have been acting on behalf of the whole country, consulting with the state institutions and their decisions are, therefore, institutional and not party ones.

In addition to references to democratic majority, reference to institutional decisions and bureaucracy are also utilised to prove that relations are institutional and not party or individual based. In particular, in Turkey's case reference to National Security Council's 2008 decision to start dialogue with all Iraqi elements is frequently referred to. Referring to this event, Hashimi<sup>32</sup> stressed that: "Perhaps apart from the civil people in the National Security Council none of members of the security council was pro-AKP. That was a state policy and this policy has become a policy by the pressure put by Erdogan and Davutoglu. That is quite crucial. That is a state policy". Even Adil Zozani<sup>33</sup>, a BDP parliamentarian at the time of interview, referred to role played by the National Security Council to confirm the role of state and not AKP alone in the relations.

In absence of a similar National Security Council resolution on the Kurdish side, Falah Mustafa<sup>34</sup>, Head of KRG's foreign relations office otherwise IK's *de facto* Foreign Minister, referred to the bureaucratic aspects of institutional relations to prove the legal institutional

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<sup>29</sup> Salahaddin University Lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>30</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>31</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara

<sup>32</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara

<sup>33</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara

<sup>34</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013 in Erbil

nature of the relations. He first referred to the fact that KRG received international legitimacy after being legally recognised in Iraqi constitution and added:

KRG has become a *de jure* reality this time and international community has started to deal with it ... today we have 27 foreign representatives based in Kurdistan Region. They are dealing with Kurdistan Region officially and the Republic of Turkey is one of these governments that has a consulate general...so the relationship between KRG and Turkey is an official relationship within the framework of Turkish-Iraqi relationship. Turkish-KRG relationship is formal, is government to government.

He further referred to bilateral visits of senior officials of both sides and arrangement of such visits through official communication with the Turkish Consulate General in Erbil as further proof for official nature of the relations.

Meanwhile, geographic and social facts were referred to by Mala Omer<sup>35</sup> and Pira<sup>36</sup> to refute the accusations that KDP is pro-Turkish and PUK is pro-Iranian, as closeness in this case was interpreted as the natural result of geographic proximity of KDP dominated areas to Turkey and PUK dominated areas to Iran. Meanwhile, the geographic proximity was regarded as the dynamic factor behind social affinity and economic-oriented incentive urging both KDP and PUK to move further towards building better relations with their geographically imposed neighbours.

#### **5.4.1.3. Turkish state- individuals**

In addition to the above views, some have gone further and consider the relations between Turkish state and some individuals in IK as an important determining factor. Kamaran Mantek<sup>37</sup>, an outspoken critic of corruption and a lecturer at Salahaddin University, regards the relations to be imbalanced relations between the Turkish state and Barzani family. He referred to an occasion when Davutoglu, as Turkey's foreign minister, addressed the Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani as the head of a distinguished Erbil family and believes that the relations are imbalanced as KDP was relying on Turkey for survival. In his view relations should be institutional, but now "Turkey is dealing on the basis of parties, families and even individuals".

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<sup>35</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>36</sup> PUK politburo member: 16 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>37</sup> Salahaddin University Lecturer, 22 April 2013, Erbil

Rebin Rasul<sup>38</sup>, Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre at the time of interview, also stressed on the role played by individuals in the relations and referred to infancy of Kurdistan's national institutions. He stated that so far relations at Parliament and even government level are rather weak and remain mainly in the individual domain. "As we see the issue of oil pipeline has progressed more from the time Mr Nechirvan [Barzani] has become Prime Minister again and trade has improved." But he remained optimistic that time will solve the issue and relations grow more institutional as Kurdistan institutions turn mature over time.

#### **5.4.2. Dominant Actors and their Impact on Identity During 2008-2014 Period**

##### **5.4.2.1. Evolution of identity in Turkey**

As stated above, Turkish state, dominated by AKP since 2003 is regarded as the leading actor in T-IK relations, while KRG, as well as KDP and some influential individuals are nominated as the leading actors from the IK side. This section, therefore, investigates the identity of the dominant actors in power and attempts to shed light on the differences ascendance of these identities to power have made to Turkey and IK's politics. This helps the final analysis on the role of identity factor in the relations, after presenting the aims of the actors and exploring the possibility of changes in T-IK relations if actors advocating rival identities such as Kemalism were in charge or take office in the coming sections.

AKP, as discussed earlier is referred to as a party advocating and implementing neo-Ottoman politics. Neo-Ottomanism and its differences with Islamic and Kemalist ideologies are already examined. Meanwhile, AKP's evolution as a neo-Ottoman party under the influence of Davutoglu and AKP's activism in domestic and foreign policy are presented earlier. As Davutoglu was the architect of Turkey's foreign politics in the period 2008-2014, his views and scope of Turkish active foreign policy are further investigated below. Later it is attempted to single out Turkish political differences in this era with the previous ones to shed light on the impact of AKP's identity on Turkey.

Davutoğlu initially expressed his views on Turkey's identity, geography, history, and how the country should manage its domestic and international politics in his seminal work *Stratejik Derinlik* or *Strategic Depth* published in 2001. He continued to propagate his views through

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<sup>38</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil

articles, interviews and eventually implemented them while in charge of steering the country's foreign politics. In his view, the country's exceptional geography and Ottoman history have turned Turkey into a central power in several regions. In Davutoglu's (2008: 78) words, "Turkey holds an optimal place in the sense that it is both an Asian and European country and is also close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean". Meanwhile, since due to Ottoman roots, Turkey's influence spans over the "Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf, and Black Sea" regions, Davutoglu (2008: 79) states that Turkey should engage in an active foreign policy and "make its role of a peripheral country part of its past, and appropriate a new position: one of providing security and stability not only for itself, but also for its neighbouring regions".

Davutoglu (2008:79-83) mentions five principles for achieving the aims he envisioned for the country's politics both domestically and internationally. His first principle, "balance between security and democracy" targets domestic politics, especially the Kurdish problem and secular-Islamic debate, while the other four principles of "zero problem policy toward Turkey's neighbours", "develop[ing] relations with the neighbouring regions and beyond", "adherence to a multi-dimensional foreign policy", and "rhythmic diplomacy" aim at creating an environment of balanced, good and progressive foreign relations. According to these principles, instead of focusing on only one specific region, and with the aim of utilizing the country's geo-cultural privileges, Turkey should engage in all the regions and reap the fruits this multi-dimensional foreign policy bestows upon the country (Onar, 2009: 13-14; Kardas, 2006: 318-319; Aras, 2009).

Even though Davutoglu lost his hegemony over Turkish foreign politics after his resignation in 2016, nevertheless it was his vision that was promoted in the 2008-2014 era. Hence, as AKP started to implement politics in line with Davutoglu's neo-Ottoman vision, it resulted into visible shifts in Turkish politics. The impact on the domestic politics, especially in terms of reforms in military-civilian relations and the Kurdish peace process are already discussed in the earlier chapter.

In terms of foreign politics, Turkey engaged in increased politico-economic as well as cultural relations with numerous countries, especially with her immediate neighbourhood. In addition to improving relations with the Arab countries of the Middle East, especially with Syria, Turkey even engaged with Hamas, which has been ruling the Gaza section of Palestine. Meanwhile, Turkey was attempting at further improving its relations with Iran,

Iraq, Israel, and even countries like Armenia, Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria that have historical grievances towards Turkey (Aras, 2009: 10-11; Grigoriadis, 2010: 6-8; Linden and Irepoglu, 2013: 238-240). Furthermore, in addition to the country's strategic relations with the West, especially its EU project, Turkey was increasing its presence in Africa and Balkans.

In Africa, as Shinn (2015: 2-7) states, Turkey's embassies, high-level visits, trade, investment, aid and cultural engagements have increased significantly, not only in the North African countries, but also in the Sub-Saharan parts of the continent. Erdogan's 2011 visit during *eid ul adha* (Islamic religious festival of sacrifice) to Somalia is a clear example of Turkey's new involvement in the African continent. Turkey's political, economic, military and cultural exchange with Balkan countries rose dramatically as well. Mitrovic (2014: 54) claims that "Turkey's export to most of the Balkan countries grew couple of hundred percent". It is worth mentioning that Turkey's activism was not limited just to those regions, as Caucasus, Caspian (Ozturk, 2009: 25-29) and "wide arrays of places from Afghanistan to Burma and the Philippines" (Dalay and Friedman, 2013: 136) were among destinations visited by Turkish diplomatic and business missions.

Turkey's attempts at achieving her neo-Ottoman foreign policy goals faced a great challenge as demonstrations in 2011 led to the 'Arab Spring' that swiftly spread through the North Africa and the Middle East. This regional challenge forced Turkey to decide between keeping the good relations with the incumbent regimes or risk the 'zero problem' goal and side with the revolutionary forces. Turkey's decision to side with the Arab street ended the improved relations with Syria and Egypt and in addition to the economic losses turned Turkey into a regional rival of Assad's Syria and his allies. Sumer (2013: 20-23) explains that Turkey's decision was based on the assumption that a democratization process is underway in the region and by pausing the 'zero problem' policy for the transitional period of regime changes, Turkey can both spread her soft power and gain economic privileges with the emerged post Arab Spring democracies that look to Turkey as a model. In this vision, Turkey still keeps committed to Davutoglu's principles in foreign policy. However, as the turn of events indicate, Turkey has failed in achieving these goals in the region at large.

Evidently, Turkey in 2008-2014 took a different political turn compared to both Kemalist and Ozal eras. Ideological differences with Kemalism are already discussed (also see: Taspinar, 2008: 16) and AKP's political activism is in stark contrast with Kemalist's isolationist foreign policy. Meanwhile, in addition to the fact that Ozal's neo-Ottoman endeavour was

just an individual attempt compared to AKP's well-orchestrated state-level policy shift, there are other aspects that set apart Ozal and AKP's projects. Evidently, AKP's diversification in foreign relations was much broader than Ozal's era of activism to start with, as Davutoglu's doctrine and its associated roadmap aimed at turning Turkey into a central power rather than mere a bridge. Meanwhile, even though both Ozal and AKP worked on improving the relations with the Muslim World; as Danforth (2008: 90-91) states, while Ozal's activism was helpful in improving the relations with the West, AKP's increased relations with Turkey's neighbours "had to come at the expense of its ties with the U.S."

In the framework of Turkey's neo-Ottomanism and her enhanced activism, relations with IK underwent a drastic shift as well during this particular period. The impacts are evident from recognition of the KRG and consequent emergence of formal relations with IK and increased economic, cultural and diplomatic relations as discussed in the previous chapters. However, to assess the role of identity on this shift, aims of Turkey and possibilities of shift in case other agents were in power in Turkey should be examined.

In the final analysis, AKP's dominance as the main actor directing Turkey's politics via employing neo-Ottomanist policies in the '2008-2014' era is undeniable. Nevertheless, the party's identity or the extent Islamic, Ottoman, pragmatist, conservative or secular considerations rule the party's politics remain debated. Both in the literature and among the interviewees there are views that stress on different aspects of AKP's policies to prove their claim over the party's identity. For instance, AKP's identity is referred to as moderate or secular Islamic (Mala Omer<sup>39</sup>), Sunni Islam (Idiz, 2015), pragmatist rather than Islamist (Danforth, 2008: 85), neo-Ottoman pragmatist (Mantek<sup>40</sup>), and so on, based on the writer or interviewees' viewpoint. However, this research refers to AKP as a neo-Ottoman party, in which 'neo-Ottomanism' as a concept encompasses all the features of pragmatism including Islamism and Ottomanism, and through pragmatism it allows for moderation in religion as well as adapting to secularism.

#### **5.4.2.2. Identity in Iraqi Kurdistan**

The on-going rivalry among different forms of Kurdish nationalism and reasons behind the rise of Kurdistan identity's popularity prior to 2008 are discussed earlier. Meanwhile, it

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<sup>39</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>40</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil

became clear that unlike the former periods, when Turkey was conducting relations merely with Kurdish political parties and personalities, in the 2008-2014 period formal relations were established between Turkey and IK, and KRG dominated mainly by the KDP became the leading actor in these relations. The interaction and rivalry among different forms of Kurdish national identity in light of the above-mentioned developments is discussed below.

The formal recognition of the KRG and the role it assumed in the T-IK relations after 2008 encourages concluding the success of Kurdistan identity over other forms of the identity in this period. However, further investigation into the political reality of the Kurdistan region in this period reveals the peculiarities of IK's political system and the intricate developments in the rivalry of its different identities.

Undoubtedly, compared to the turbulent years of civil war and unification process, in 2008-2014 period IK's institutions and civil society were in much better positions and role of political parties were comparatively less detectable. Referring to increasing civil campaigns and enactment of new laws, such as end FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) campaign, referendum campaign, and press law, Voller (2014: 130-135) argues that the KRG is in the transition from a government dominated by warlords to a democratic one "willing to engage in a dialogue about its socio-political policies and amend at least some of its domestic policies".

The interviewees also verified the developments in human rights and freedoms and institutionalisation of the KRG organs. Indeed, the role pressure from public opinion had played in bringing about change in the KRG, the KDP, and the PUK conduct both domestically and in relations with neighbouring states was stressed by the interviewees. Referring to this fact, Ali Bapir<sup>41</sup> claimed:

Public opinion indeed has a great impact and now the PUK and the KDP are reviewing their policies in some issues. Previously they were arresting any bearded person ... now they cannot arrest people with baseless accusations anymore. In this regard ... public opinion is a good obstacle ahead of doing things against public interest.

Others reiterated the view that public opinion and opposition voices have assumed a significant position in the political calculations of Kurdistan's political elites as well. In particular Hassan Mustafa<sup>42</sup>, Ismael<sup>43</sup> and Sardar Abdullah<sup>44</sup> pointed out the role public

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<sup>41</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>42</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>43</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG's Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil

opinion has played in preventing conflict among Kurdish parties. Such statements indicate that Kurdistan identity's role represented by public opinion and KRG's national institutions rather than the KDP and the PUK organs have gained a better position compared to the previous eras of the KRG's absence and emerging opposition and civil society voices. Indeed, KRG's role in this period is quite visible and the strategic agreement between the KDP and the PUK and relative merger of Kurdistan identity and party interests makes it reasonable to think that the KRG and Kurdistan identity have been the real actors and identities in charge of the relations in this period.

Nevertheless, the realities in IK's politics reveal the fact that even during this period, in spite of KRG's significant role and the visible limitations Kurdistan identity imposed on politicians' freedom of action, political parties kept their dominance over the politics. This is mainly due to the unfinished institutionalisation process and the power party elites have in shaping the public opinion. As Kamaran Mantek<sup>45</sup> and Bapir<sup>46</sup> stated, Kurdistan still needs to be properly institutionalised with a truly democratic and transparent government so that public opinion and national interests are observed fairly. Meanwhile, attesting the role played by party politician, Jutyar Adil<sup>47</sup> believes mass media plays a big role in shaping the public opinion and IK's political elites are directing the Kurdish public opinion the way they desire through employing media as a medium. Similarly, Rebin Rasul<sup>48</sup> claims that even though public opinion plays a role, but the politicians are the ones who make the final decisions.

In addition to such comments by the interviewees, some events occurred at this period clearly indicating the failure of thorough unification of KRG institutions and the desire of Kurdistan's political parties to prioritise party interests over the national ones. Attacks on political parties' offices and TV and Radio stations and burning them in some cases, including attacks on KIU offices in Dohuk province (Natali, 2014a), attacks on KDP offices in Suleimaniya province (Ahmad, 2011) attacks on Change Movement offices in Erbil province (EKurd Daily, 2011) and burning NRT satellite Channel's office in Suleimaniya (Berwani, 2011) all occurred in 2011 are examples of how party interests were inciting conflicts in the Kurdistan region.

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<sup>44</sup> Head of Change Movement Bloc in Iraqi Parliament: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya

<sup>45</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>46</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>47</sup> Head of Sarenj Centre and university lecturer: 24 April 2013, Erbil

<sup>48</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil



Further to such instances, the fact that a number of strategic ministries and organs in the KRG have managed to keep the KDP-PUK division beneath the façade of unification demonstrates the survival and dominance of party interests. Gunter (2011:142) refers to the fact that in spite of the unification process, interior, finance, and *Peshmerga* ministries, intelligence agencies and most of the press are still divided into separate KDP and PUK branches. The fact that the KDP and the PUK have kept their *Peshmerga* forces under their control, rather than unifying them into a national force is further evidence of the fact that political parties still prefer guaranteeing their survival to the national goal of institutionalisation of the KRG. Assertions of a senior PUK official speaking on the condition of anonymity to Rudaw's Hevidar Ahmed (2014) at the time of political bargaining over KRG's cabinet posts in 2014 shows how far these parties are ready to go to safeguard their interests and survival. The senior PUK official states (Ahmed, 2014):

How Peshmerga Ministry will not be allocated to the PUK? Do you know that PUK has 120 tanks and chief of staff? Do you know that PUK has 2000 Peshmergas outside the Peshmerga Ministry and has canon and engineering units? There are officials inside the PUK that have two brigades.

He continues that if PUK demands are not considered, then no one can have control over the PUK forces.

The above examples and arguments indicate that in spite of great developments in Kurdish political evolution and identity in the discussed period and increased role of the KRG in the relations, KRG institutions have not yet fully institutionalised. The implication is that in case party and national interests diverge on vital issues with consequences capable of jeopardising the party's survival or status, there is a big possibility that political parties prioritise their interest over the national ones. However, as such vital divergences in party and national interests did not occur in this period, survival of party nationalism and its dominance over Kurdistan identity and KRG, especially in regard to relations with Turkey was not exhibited and remained concealed under the cover-up of a unified KRG.

It is worth mentioning that while both in the literature and among the interviewees there is no disagreement over the fact that Kurdish nationalism is the dominating ideational force in the IK; there are concerns over possible future rise in political Islam's fortune in the Kurdish region. Rasul<sup>49</sup> predicts a future conflict between the secular political parties and a

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<sup>49</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil

conservative Kurdish society that heads towards further Islamisation. Even Hawrami<sup>50</sup> acknowledges that due to radicalisation in the region, IK may “feel the heat” as well, but it is stated that extremism will not succeed in the Kurdistan region. The fact that even Kurdish Islamic parties use the nationalist discourse and at times tend to focus more on corruption and mismanagement of the national resources in their propaganda (Gunter, 2011: 52-53) indicates that as long as the threats on Kurdish national existence in IK have not vanished, political Islam does not have a big chance of dominating the Kurdish political landscape, as currently nationalism still manages to provide legitimacy by acting the most needed ‘liberation theory’.

#### **5.4.3. Aims Pursued by Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan, 2008-2014**

Listing the aims Turkey and IK hoped to achieve in their bilateral relations facilitates the understanding of their intentions. It also helps in exploring the changes in both entities’ aims in comparison to the previous eras and leads to better analysis of the role played by identities, especially the neo-Ottoman identity in the relations. For this sake, in all the interviews carried out during the fieldwork, through asking various questions the researcher attempted to find out the goals and expectations of both sides in the relations.

Turkey’s main aims in this period based on interviews and literature were: countering the PKK threat and building stability in the border areas; using KRG as mediator for the peace process negotiations and taking benefit from Iraqi Kurds’ influence on their brethren in Turkey, benefitting the economic boom in IK through export, construction and investment, benefitting Kurdistan’s hydrocarbon wealth through investment in its energy sector both to diversify Turkish energy resources and enhance Turkey’s energy security and become the export route for the Kurdish crude; building social and cultural links to spread Turkey’s soft power in the Kurdish region; facilitating the process of joining the EU and demonstrating Turkey’s ability to build good relations with Kurds; using Iraqi Kurds as an influence base for Turkey in Iraq and attempting to preserve Iraq’s integrity (Charountaki, 2014; Voller, 2014: 110; Kaya<sup>51</sup>; Gur<sup>52</sup>; Hashemi<sup>53</sup>; Selcen<sup>54</sup>; Ayhan<sup>55</sup>). Meanwhile, there are views that consider Turkey’s ultimate aim as controlling the IK, “if not physically, then practically

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<sup>50</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil

<sup>51</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>52</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>53</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>54</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>55</sup> Head of International Middle East Peace Research Centre (IMPR): 13 June 2013, Ankara.

under Turkish influence” (Forat<sup>56</sup>) or having imperial plans to control IK via utilising Islamic and neo-Ottoman identities and methods (Mantek<sup>57</sup>).

Evidently, in addition to preserving the fundamental former aims, new goals appear in Turkey’s foreign policy towards IK in 2008-2014 period. In addition to ambitious economic and social plans, Turkey even recruited IK’s help for solving the country’s Kurdish problem. In explaining Turkey’s agenda, Selcen<sup>58</sup>, Turkey’s former consul in Erbil, stated that Erdogan has “set the target for us as full social and economic integration” and referred to invisible social bonds with Iraqi Kurds that makes understanding and conducting business much easier in Erbil than in Baghdad. In reference to softened Turkish stance towards her former redlines, Selcen<sup>59</sup> reaffirmed “We are fully committed to the territorial integrity and national unity of Iraq”, and clarified his country’s increased engagement with Iraqi Kurds by stating that “but we also want to develop beyond the classic political frontiers”.

As for the goals of Iraqi Kurds, based on the interviews and literature, IK’s main aims in this period were as follows: providing security and stability for the Kurdish region, avoiding being the target in the Turkey-PKK conflict, bringing success to the peace process in Turkey, economic integration and energy export through Turkey, encouraging Turkish investment, being recognized and treated as equals with mutual respect by Turkey, using Turkish support for creating a power balance against Baghdad and even hopping for Turkish support for an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq (Charaountaki, 2014; Cagaptay, 2014; Hassan Mustafa<sup>60</sup>; Falah Mustafa<sup>61</sup>; Mala Omer<sup>62</sup>; Faraj<sup>63</sup>; Hemn Hawrami<sup>64</sup>; Abdusalam Rashid Ismael<sup>65</sup>; Kaya<sup>66</sup>; Anaïd<sup>67</sup>). It is worth mentioning that interviewees mainly from the opposition parties of the time were stressing that a major aim in the relations should be turning the relations into institutional government-to-government relations whereby serving

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<sup>56</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>57</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>58</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>59</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>60</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013 in Erbil

<sup>61</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>62</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>63</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>64</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>65</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG’s Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>66</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>67</sup> Kurdistan University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

the interests of all Kurdish public and not just few individuals or parties (Bapir<sup>68</sup>; Abdullah<sup>69</sup>; Qlyasani<sup>70</sup>).

Above aims reveal two facts about the nature of the relations. Firstly, it is observed that Kurdish ambitions have evolved, and national aims were more visible, and secondly it is evident that some, especially the opposition voices still considered the relations as not institutionalized and in the interest of all Kurdish people which indicates persistence of party interests' presence. Demands for recognition as equals, economic aims of turning Turkey into Kurdistan's gateway to Europe especially for energy export and enrolling Turkish support for internal power struggle of Iraq as opposed to just power struggles among the Kurdish parties are new aims compared to the previous eras.

In this period, Iraqi Kurds hoped the relations become strategic and mutually beneficial. As Falah Mustafa<sup>71</sup> claimed, "We want ... good neighbourly relations with Turkey ... mutually beneficial and long-term ... we do not want to have short-term relations, and we want it to be strategic and not tactical". Indeed, Kurdish emphasis on strategic relations and mutual respect was due to concerns about Turkey's aims, as some consider Turkey's goals in the relations as purely economic and tactical with imperial ambitions in mind (Mantek<sup>72</sup>; Rasul<sup>73</sup>; Hosseini<sup>74</sup>). Meanwhile, while some hoped that change in Turkey's aggressive attitude towards Kirkuk and Kurdish independence can be a sign of support that IK can invest on, others see it as tactical and pragmatist and not real policy shift. For instance, as Mala Omar<sup>75</sup> stated, the mere fact that as opposed to loud opposition of Iran and some Arabs, Turkey is not showing opposition to Kurdish independence makes Turkey and IK get closer. Adel<sup>76</sup> believes this silence was due to regional rivalry and Turkey's recognition of the fact that keeping Iraq united is very costly even for Americans and it is better for Turkey to be friend with Iraqi Kurds rather than enemy.

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<sup>68</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>69</sup> Head of Change Movement Bloc in Iraqi Parliament: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya.

<sup>70</sup> Change Movement's Senior Officer of Diplomatic Relations: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya.

<sup>71</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>72</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>73</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>74</sup> Iranian Consul in Erbil: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>75</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>76</sup> Head of Sarenj Centre and university lecturer: 24 April 2013, Erbil.

## **5.5. CHANGE OF DOMINATING ACTORS AND CHANGE IN TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

A significant question that can help our understanding of the extent identity influences the relations is what happens if one of the dominant actors in Turkey or IK loses power and gets replaced. Answering this question frames our perception with regards to the role identity plays in the relations compared to the role of other material factors involved in the process. For finding the answer to this question, the researcher asked the views of interviewees from different political parties to discover what happens if opposition parties replace the incumbent governing ones. Meanwhile, non-partisan interviewees were asked to express their views regarding this issue to enrich the debate and provide a better picture of dynamics in the relations. Especially since the interviews were conducted at a time when enormous developments in the economic and energy relations had cast their shadows on the other aspects, it was quite appealing to investigate the impact replacement of dominant identities can have on the relations.

After analysing the views expressed by the interviewees, it becomes clear that there is no agreement over the fate of relations in case of change in dominant actors. Meanwhile, it becomes clear that other than ultranationalist MHP no party is in essence against existence of extensive relations between Turkey and IK during the period in question. However, as views expressed by the interviewed politicians reveal, if change in dominant identities occur, change in the nature of the relations or the manner relations are conducted will be inevitable and certain things will undergo minor and, in some cases, dramatic changes. Indeed, the researcher has followed the reaction of opposition parties towards developments in T-IK relations throughout the years since 2003, and noticed that their persistent expression of concern and at times condemnation is further evidence of authenticity of views expressed by the interviewees. Different views and their justifications are presented below.

In the IK side, all parties were supportive of good relations with Turkey based on mutual understanding and respect. Senior members of Islamic parties, and Change Movement all agreed that good relations with Turkey was in IK's interest (Bapir<sup>77</sup>; Qlyasani<sup>78</sup>; Abdullah<sup>79</sup>;

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<sup>77</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>78</sup> Change Movement's Senior Officer of Diplomatic Relations: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya.

<sup>79</sup> Head of Change Movement Bloc in Iraqi Parliament: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya.

Faraj<sup>80</sup>). However, in spite of acknowledging that their parties will respect the relations with Turkey in case of ascendance to power, nevertheless as Bapir<sup>81</sup> explained, since relations have not evolved into proper state-to-state relations, if another party replaces the incumbent KDP government, the relations may eventually undergo change. The opposition party representatives interviewed claimed that they would further institutionalise the relations in the interest of Kurdish people.

As the researcher has noticed, at times of intensified KDP-PUK internal rivalries, some PUK supporters and media expressed concerns over KDP's monopolizing of the relations with Turkey. Nevertheless, as historical attempts of Jalal Talabani and other senior PUK leaders including Barham Salih indicate it is not PUK's strategy to work against relations with Turkey. PUK enjoys better relations with Iran, but the party believes that Kurdistan region needs to keep good relations with Turkey. For instance, referring to the geostrategic significance of Turkey as the bridge between the East and West, Pira<sup>82</sup> affirmed, "It is logical for us to have relations with Turkey and have agreements with them. Geography is not our choice. Improving the relations will be beneficial not only for IK, but also for the other parts of Kurdistan in Syria, Turkey and Iran".

Although IK's parties are all supportive of good relations with Turkey and their mere concern over the institutionalization of the relations does not jeopardize the continuity and progress of relations, the story is different in Turkey. Both Selcen<sup>83</sup> and Hashimi<sup>84</sup> from AKP claimed that Erdogan and AKP will stay in power for a long time and relations are strategic and continue as they get more institutionalized and gain more public support. However, none of them ruled out the possibility of change due to unforeseen circumstances in future bringing the opposition to power. As Selcen<sup>85</sup> claims, "everything is possible in politics". Meanwhile, as discussed in the next chapter, Kurdish parties in Turkey were also supportive of Turkey's good relations with the IK. However, MHP and CHP as nationalist Turkish parties and loyal adherents of Kemalism have continuously expressed their concerns over the relations.

Compared to the ultranationalist MHP, the major opposition party CHP has much softer

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<sup>80</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>81</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>82</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>83</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>84</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>85</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

stances towards the relations. The major points for CHP are integrity of Iraq and centrality of Baghdad in the relations. Referring to historical occasions of good relations between CHP and Iraqi Kurds even at troubled times, in the interview for this study, Koruturk<sup>86</sup> stated that in case of CHP's ascendance to power relations "of course will continue, but ... CHP will be more careful". Referring to CHP's initial opposition to federalism project in Iraq, Koruturk<sup>87</sup> explained that after constitutional ratification of federalism in Iraq, CHP as a democratic party respected the will of Iraqi people. Through such examples, Koruturk<sup>88</sup> was picturing CHP as a non-sectarian secular party that respects the sovereignty of other states and criticized the AKP's policy towards Iraq and Syria as sectarian and not in line with Turkish secular tradition in foreign policy. In particular, as expressed, CHP was not happy with the way AKP has ignored Baghdad in the energy relations with Iraqi Kurds. In articulating such a view, Koruturk<sup>89</sup> stated that:

We do not agree the government's petroleum exchange with Kurdistan without the consent of the central government. This is something, which had to do with the Iraqi constitution and Iraqi distribution of natural resources ... now, we understand that the AKP government bypassing of the central Iraqi government has a more sectarian reason than economic.

While CHP has supported the relations but has concerns over the way it has been conducted, MHP has viewed the relations through the security lens, which mainly focuses on the PKK and Iraqi Turkmen issues. Ozcan Yeniciri<sup>90</sup>, an MHP politician and academic who was a Member of Parliament at the time of interview, was quite critical of Erdogan and AKP's policy. In his view, AKP's policy was in line with Washington's new project for the Middle East aiming at dividing Iraq that could eventually lead to the division of Turkey. Giving evidence from occasions like Turkey giving shelter to Iraq's former Sunni President Tareq Hashemi, Davutoglu's visit to Kirkuk without prior arrangements with Baghdad, and Turkey's energy relations with Erbil, Yeniciri<sup>91</sup> justified his criticism of AKP for treating "Northern Iraq" as an independent state. He, therefore, argued that "Relations should be through Baghdad government and instead they [AKP politicians] are doing it through Erbil". As Yeniciri<sup>92</sup> explained, what makes MHP more upset is that they think AKP is ignoring the presence of PKK camps in northern Iraq and supports the USA and Barzani rather than

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<sup>86</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>87</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>88</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>89</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>90</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>91</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>92</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

supporting the Iraqi Turkmen who are Turks' brethren. In short, Yenici<sup>93</sup> and his party saw AKP's politics in line with Washington's Middle East project aiming at disintegrating Iraq and Syria and eventually disintegrating Turkey. In Yenici<sup>94</sup> words, "Dividing Iraq means dividing Turkey. Hence, Turkey should act in support of the status quo in Iraq not supporting Barzani to separate his region from the rest of country."

MHP's stance as expressed by Yenici<sup>95</sup> is expressive of how Turkey's ultranationalists still view the IK merely through the security lens and Kemalist ideology. It is worth noting that so far MHP supporters, including Yenici<sup>96</sup> are not prepared to spell out the word IK and prefer the term 'Northern Iraq'. However, in spite of the candid views expressed above by party representatives, there is counter argument presented, which claim that the relations are not just ruled by the identity of actors and stress that structural forces can push the relations in different directions at any time.

Generally, there are two arguments made in this regard. The first one claims that the relations have achieved a level that would not be jeopardized by mere change of incumbent parties and identities; and, the second claims that relations are susceptible to change even with the incumbent identities in power if the structural and material factors change. Supporters of the first view argue that even if a new identity or party comes to power due to numerous factors that are mentioned below, the relations either would not change or would undergo just very minor changes. The mentioned factors are (Falah Mustafa<sup>97</sup>; Anaïd<sup>98</sup>; Mala Omar<sup>99</sup>; Adel<sup>100</sup>; Pira<sup>101</sup>; Hawrami<sup>102</sup>; Gur<sup>103</sup>; Kaya<sup>104</sup>; Rasul<sup>105</sup>):

(i) high level of economic exchange and trade exists between both sides;

(ii) Turkey is IK's gateway to Europe and IK is Turkey's gateway to business in Iraq and the Gulf and both need each other especially in the energy field;

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<sup>93</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>94</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>95</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>96</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>97</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>98</sup> Kurdistan University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>99</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>100</sup> Head of Sarenj Centre and university lecturer: 24 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>101</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>102</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>103</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>104</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>105</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil.



- (iii) regional rivalry between Turkey and Iran prevents Turkish incumbents from leaving IK to fall into the rival's sphere;
- (iv) even nationalist and ultranationalist parties of CHP and MHP have their companies and investment in the IK;
- (v) social and geographic realities and public opinion are against negative change in the relations;
- (vi) even if hostile parties come to power, the already existing infrastructure and the reality on the ground, in particular IK's constitutional legitimacy and increasing irrelevance of Baghdad or a powerful central Iraqi government will prevent them from changing the status quo;
- (viii) relations have existed even in the worst times and will hardly go backward; and finally
- (ix) there is no sign that AKP would lose power and all the IK parties are favouring good relations with Turkey, hence there is little chance that the relations experience negative change in the near future.

In contrast to the above argument, the proponents of the second view claim that relations were not fully institutionalized and if structural changes occur, Turkey even with AKP in power will pay more attention to her interests than to relations with IK (Bapir<sup>106</sup>). Such views confirm that change in Turkey's stance towards IK may even incur harsh economic consequences on Turkey; nonetheless, Turkey will give priority to her strategic interests and not the economic ones (Mantek<sup>107</sup>). Even some consider the 2008-2014 developments through Turkish eye on economic interests and not due to strategic change in Turkey's policy towards IK (Forat<sup>108</sup>). Meanwhile, based on the assumption that the relations were not institutionalized, it is argued that with other parties coming to power in the IK or with new geographic realities emerging, such as opening of a border gate connecting the IK to the Mediterranean Sea through Syria the relations with Turkey will undergo change (Mantek<sup>109</sup>;

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<sup>106</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>107</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>108</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>109</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

Bapir<sup>110</sup>).

After considering both views and with hindsight knowledge due to Turkey's conduct after ISIS attacks on IK, it is evident that in the case Turkey feels that her strategic and economic interests can be better preserved and nourished by another actor capable of replacing the IK, such as central Iraqi government or a pro-Turkish Sunni entity, there will be no doubt regardless of the party in power, Turkey will change her relations with IK. As Forat<sup>111</sup> stated, "today even if CHP and MHP were in power we would have had the relations, because it is in the interests of Turkey, but if relations are not in the interests of Turkey, then any party in power will desert the Kurdistan region". Further indication of this fact can be found in Adham Barzani's, a senior KDP official, interview with Nuche Net (2014) in which he frankly voices his belief that countries with Kurdish problem in their land cannot be honest partners in relations with the IK and he continues to state that:

I have always stated my view: I have always been afraid of Turkey-KRG relations ... In this war [ISIS against Kurds] other states have taken stance, but Turkey is silent ... Kurdish issue is a secondary issue for Turkey, or probably they have gained some economic benefits from the Kurdish issue, hence they may try and gain those economic benefits from somewhere else.

Meanwhile, even though the IK parties were in favour of good relations with Turkey, if Turkey changes her stance towards the IK, Iraqi Kurds will turn to other alternatives such as allying themselves more with the West or Iran, or even get supportive of the PKK. Indeed, Masoud Barzani's visit of the PKK fighters in Makhmur frontline and praising their role in fighting ISIS at the outset of ISIS attacks on Erbil in 2014 (Xendan, 2014a) and his praise for Iranian support in a press conference with Iranian foreign minister through acknowledging that "we asked for weapons and Iran was the first country to provide us with weapons and ammunition" (Hashem, 2014) can be interpreted as a clear sign of Barzani and Iraqi Kurds discontent with Turkey's disheartening and cold conduct at the time and a message to Ankara that IK is not out of options. Hence, in case of dramatic change, as the history of Turkey's changing conduct with Iraqi Kurds and the history of Iraqi Kurdish parties switching alliances with Baghdad and neighbouring states proves, both sides will follow any policy that can guarantee the fulfilment of their goals.

However, if dramatic political, economic and security changes do not occur in Iraq or the region, with the current level of economic and socio-political relations, even if incumbents

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<sup>110</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>111</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

change in either side, the relations are not expected to face doomed deterioration or confrontation. Nevertheless, if Kemalist parties like MHP or CHP come to power in Turkey, relations will not be conducted the way AKP conducts them. The Kemalist parties will consider the strategic interests of Turkey and due to the realities on the ground, especially absence of strong centralized and non-sectarian governments in Baghdad and Damascus, they will be forced to continue with the relations. As Kaya<sup>112</sup> stated, in Turkey's Parliament even MHP and CHP supported the energy relations with IK or even CHP presented its project for solving the Kurdish issue in Turkey (Yanarocak, 2014: 153). However, the fact is that due to their inherent fear of Kurdish nationalism's spill over, CHP and MHP will favour stick to carrot in dealing with Kurdish issue and attempt to conduct the relations through Baghdad, rather than Erbil and build Baghdad's control over IK as far as possible. However, based on current realities, as mentioned earlier, structural and material forces will limit the Kemalists' power of manoeuvrability and force them to keep Turkey's relations with IK at a certain level to serve Turkey's interests.

With knowledge on dominant actors, their identity, their aims and possibility of change due to identity shift and with hindsight knowledge, the task of clarifying the identity's role in the 2008-2014 years turn easier. It becomes evident that AKP's neo-Ottomanism is a pragmatist identity that attempted to reap the fruits of economic and political opportunities available. This is evident from the party's commitment to Turkey's basic aims in dealing with IK, while employing a mixture of soft and hard powers for achieving these aims. AKP's frequent change in stance in dealing with Kurdish issue in Turkey evident from ups and downs in the peace process as well as the party's contradictory statements regarding Kurdistan's independence during the period in question or the party's way of reacting to ISIS attack on Erbil are all indicative of neo-Ottomanism's opportunist pragmatism. For instance, just in the case of Kurdish independence in Iraq, there were various statements by senior AKP officials: some quite supportive of the issue, such as Celik's comments for Financial Times viewing Kurds as "brethren" in case of inevitable division of Iraq (Moore, 2014) and Erdogan's statement that "Kurdish secession is an internal Iraqi affair and we do not stand against it. Kurds have the right to have their own state" (Xendan, 2015a). In contrast some other statements such as "Kurdish region's independence further destabilizes the region" by Gul (KNNC, 2014) and "A Kurdish independent state will endanger region and turn it into chaos" by Davutoglu (Rudaw, 2015b) were quite discouraging.

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<sup>112</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

Meanwhile, AKP's conduct towards PKK and peace process versus ISIS, evident from pragmatist changes in Erdogan's comments on Kurdish issue in Turkey ranging from denial to acknowledgement and launching the peace process and the way dealing with ISIS issue further elucidate AKP's pragmatist policy. As Ocalan told his lawyer, "I tell it openly, they negotiated with ISIS to free their diplomats in Mosul Consulate, but they do not approach us for negotiations" (Foad, 2014).

However, in spite of AKP's neo-Ottoman pragmatism, if other identities were in power in Turkey, the level of progress achieved in the relations would have been unconceivable. Evidently, Kemalist parties with their excessive focus on PKK and Turkmen issues, and their stress on conducting relations through Baghdad and avoiding the sectarian conflict in the region would have not been ready to go so far in the relations with Iraqi Kurds.

In the IK, although it appears that KRG and Kurdistan identity are dominant, in reality it is temporary overlapping of party and national interests that creates this perception. Otherwise, failure of proper institutionalization of KRG left party organized identity in control. In fact, party dominance became further tangible after 2014 evident from occasions of the KDP and PUK conduct after war with ISIS broke out. The rivalry between the KDP and PUK went as far as PUK claiming that weapons airlifted to Kobani were provided by the PUK and Kurdistan Presidency (namely KDP) issued a statement in response claiming they were provided by the KRG from both Erbil and Suleimaniya (Xendan, 2014b). Hindsight knowledge, based on political stalemate over the presidency and referendum issues further clarifies this fact. However, as interests of political parties was in unity, and neither identities were against good relations with Turkey, the major impact of the identity in this period was putting restrictions on Kurdish parties' pursuit of party interests regardless of Kurdish nationalism redlines. This was embodied in aspects of the relations such as efforts for peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey through mediation rather than through military assistance of Turkey as in 1990s.

## **5.6. CONCLUSION**

At the conclusion, it becomes clear that identity has played an essential role in the way T-IK relations have developed. In Turkey, Kemalist identity has been more focusing on security and inclined towards applying the stick rather than the carrot, while Ozal's and AKP's

versions of Ottomanism have been more inclined to utilize both carrot and stick and have been more pragmatist in the relations. That is while the goals of these identities in relations with IK are almost identical, aiming at preserving Turkey's unity and territorial integrity at minimum and indirect or even if possible direct control over the IK and silencing the Kurdish nationalism at maximum. Therefore, it can be concluded that the aim of identities in power in Turkey since 1990 has remained more or less the same and the significance of identities has been in specifying the possible frameworks of action for fulfilling the aims. In other words, shift in the identities in Turkey have not changed the major aims and therefore even AKP follows Kemalist ideals in its foreign policy, but have been able to change the methods applied for achieving these aims through widening or limiting the horizon of possible policy actions depending on the circumstances.

Similarly, in IK, identity has framed the horizon of possible policy options. However, the difference has rested in the fact that aims have varied from national to party ones, with the exception of 2008-2014 period, where it seems party and national interests are to a good extent overlapping. Hence, while the aim of Kurdistan identity has been survival and thriving of the Iraqi Kurds with the aim of independence at sight, party nationalism has mainly focused on survival and progress of the party. The result has been more restriction on Kurdish leadership with regard to Kurdish national redlines imposed by Kurdistan identity, compared to more relaxed policy options presented by party nationalism.

In conclusion, identity's role has been defining the possible courses of action in the relations through conditions imposed by the structural and material realities on the ground. Hence, while neo-Ottomanism makes it easy to utilize soft power, through socio-economic means and granting more civic and cultural rights to the Kurds for achieving Turkey's aims in the relations, Kemalism's scope in this respect is quite limited and inclines to use military rather than soft power to do so. Similarly, while party-organized nationalism in IK makes it easier to cooperate with Turkey in fighting the PKK and start Kurdish infighting for achieving party goals, the Kurdistan identity prohibits the Kurdish leaderships to do so in disregard of the Kurdish national interests.

The dynamic role performed by identity within each entity and the process through which it has defined the course of action taken by both entities in their relations is extensively discussed in this chapter. As explained in chapter 2, theoretically constructivism and neoclassical realism are theories that have engaged with the interaction of normative and

material factors in shaping the foreign policy of states or in analysis of IR. Undoubtedly, identity, as a normative factor, has constantly played a significant role in T-IK relations and the mentioned theories could be very helpful in rendering theoretical analysis for identity factor's influence on the relations. However, identity is not the only factor shaping the direction of the relations and there are other factors with significant impact that interact with identity in shaping the relations. The role of each of these factors is explored separately in the coming chapters, and the final chapter, after analysing the interaction of these factors (namely: identity, security, economy and external interventions) and assessment of proposed theories in the literature, attempts to apply an appropriate theoretical approach capable of accommodating the role played by all the factors as well as their interactions. Thus next chapters explore the roles played by security, economy and external interventions, followed by an analysis in the conclusion chapter that clarifies how identity, as a dynamic force, has been interacting with these factors and how all these factors could be brought together under the explanatory rigour of a theoretical framework.

## **Chapter Six: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SECURITY IN DETERMINING TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

Security is an important factor determining the nature of relationship between countries, which has also played an important role in determining T-IK relations. In a way, both entities are concerned that their integrity and survival could be at risk due to presence of actual or potential security threats. From this perspective, the main threat for Turkey has been the potential expansion of Kurdish nationalism and for Iraqi Kurds Turkish military attack and annihilation of all Kurdish achievements in Iraq. In particular, the emergent issues around the PKK and ‘Iraqi Turkmen-Kirkuk’ are the main manifestations of security issues impact on the relations within the period covered by this study until 2014.

The PKK issue was more dominant till 1998, but as Ocalan was arrested and the PKK weakened, Turkey tended to focus more on the Turkmen ethnic group initially in Erbil and after 2003 in Kirkuk. However, the PKK issue came to the fore once more as the party resumed attacks on Turkish forces in 2004, when Turks did not have the luxury of American support for cross-border incursions anymore and Iraqi Kurds were gaining further influence and constitutional legitimacy day after day. Although security concerns over PKK and Turkmen-Kirkuk issues continued to exist in the 2008-2014 period and beyond, nevertheless, the force of other factors involved in the T-IK relations pacified their impact.

In order to highlight the role security factor plays on the relations, this chapter attempts to investigate the following questions:

- (i) How PKK and Turkmen-Kirkuk have impacted the relations historically?
- (ii) Why PKK and Turkmen-Kirkuk issues cause problem?
- (iii) How PKK and Turkmen-Kirkuk issues are dealt with? and
- (iv) What would be the impacts of different scenarios for dealing with PKK and Turkmen-Kirkuk issues on T-IK relation?

## **6.2. THE IMPACT OF PKK ON TURKEY AND IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

### **6.2.1. How PKK Has Impacted Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations?**

It will be misleading to isolate the PKK from the history of Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. It is true that PKK started its armed activities in 1984; nevertheless, its struggle for Kurdish national rights is the extension and evolution of Kurdish national struggle dating back to Ottoman time. The history of this struggle has already been discussed in the earlier chapters and it is demonstrated how from the early days of Turkish Republic, the Kurds in Turkey staged revolts (like *Sheikh Said* and *Dersim*) and established various cultural and political organisations to achieve their national aspirations against the forced ‘imagined society’ of Turkishness leading to the denial of Kurdish cultural, civil and political rights. Hence, PKK has become the manifestation of on-going Kurdish struggle in Turkey in the modern age.

Evidently, as elaborated in the previous chapters, Turkey’s Kurdish problem has played a great role on both Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq and IK. PKK, being the extension of Kurdish struggle, has been at the centre of Turkey’s consideration in her policy formulation towards IK. In this regard, as Hassan Ahmed Mustafa <sup>113</sup>states, until 2008, relations between Turkey and IK were security relations whereby Kemalist Turkey attempted to curtail threats emanating from Kurdish nationalism and crush PKK through military might. Therefore, it will not be wrong to assume that shadow of PKK threat has continuously influenced the relations and steered it in certain security-oriented directions.

Indeed, impact of the PKK factor has been manifold on T-IK relations. Frequent Turkish military incursions into IK territory, human casualties, economic loss, hindrance of Kurdish aspirations in Iraq, and delaying of the prospects of non-security-centred T-IK relations are among the most obvious outcomes of PKK’s influence on the relations, especially since PKK has established its bases in the T-IK borderline. As a result, PKK factor has been mainly responsible for instability and regression rather than cooperation and progress in the relations.

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<sup>113</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil.



Military incursions and bombardment and shelling of border villages have been the prominent physically perceptible consequence of PKK's presence in the relations. Extensive incursions and bombings of IK territories in 1990s and the new ones in 2008-2014 years are discussed earlier, and such bombings still continue in spite of the highly evolved T-IK relations. Turkish military bases in IK are vivid reminiscent of Turkey's military presence and engagement in the Kurdish territory. As Mohammed Haji Osman, an Iraqi parliamentarian from the PUK bloc, revealed "In Kurdistan Region there are 13 Turkish military bases with 3,235 Turkish soldiers stationed in them and all these bases are in Duhok Province in Batufa, Kani Masi, Bamerni, Singi, Siri, Gali Zaxo, Sirti, Kubki, Kamri, Koxi Spi, Daray Dawatia and Sari Ziri (Xendan, 2015b). That is while Rudaw agency claims Turkey has only 3 bases in Duhok located in Kani Masi, Bamerni, and Beguva accommodating 2,000 soldiers, 20 tanks, 10 armoured vehicles, 10 long-range canons, and 8 helicopters and the Turkish base in *Bashiq* established in 4 December 2015 after ISIS attacks has 25 tanks, 30 armoured vehicles, 10 long-range canons, 600 soldiers and 144 officers in charge of training *Peshmerga* and Sunni fighters (Hares, 2016).

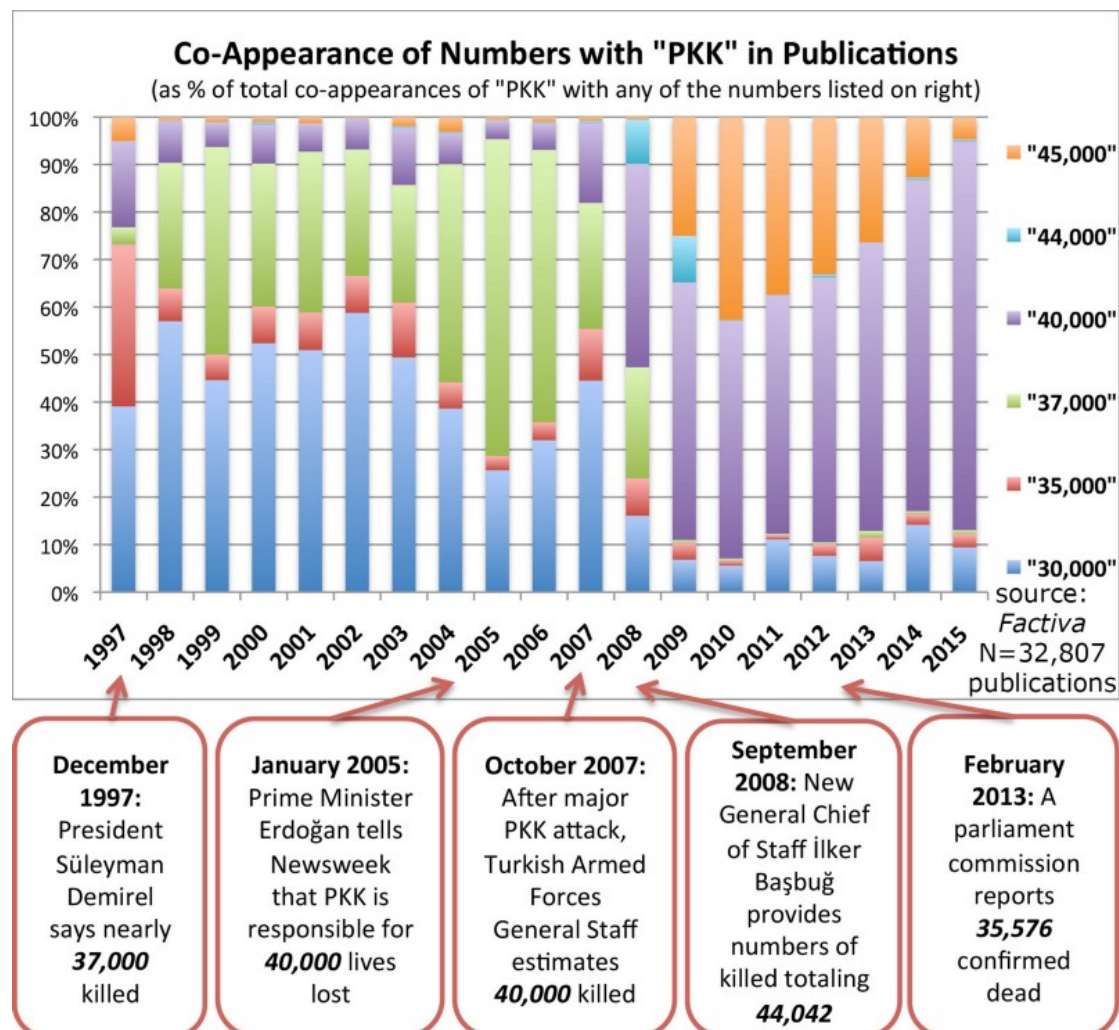
It should be noted that insecurity and instability has been the immediate impact of these incursions. Over 300 villages, some even 60 kilometres away from the border are deserted or half-populated and their buildings, agriculture and livestock are affected due to the attacks, whilst at times of peace some of these villages are controlled by the PKK rather than KRG (Saadullah, 2015; Szlanko, 2016).

Although there is no official data related to the economic costs of the PKK war on KRG, nevertheless, destruction of life in these villages and displacement of their inhabitants, unfriendly environment for investment and other costs related to dealing with PKK have certainly cost Kurdish economy dearly. The same goes to Turkish economy, as countering the PKK had cost an estimated 300 to 450 billion dollars up to 2014 (Werz and Hoffman, 2014: 10). In addition to the direct economic costs of war and destruction of Kurdish areas in Southeast Turkey and border areas of IK, as the history of the relations reveals, at times PKK issue has been the main obstacle ahead of developing fully fledged economic ties between Turkey and IK.

As for human casualties, there are no verifiable data detailing the number of military and civilian victims of the war between PKK and Turkey. Arjomand (2015) presents the most quoted estimates that could be viewed in the Figure1 and argues that it is not clear which

victims are counted in these estimates and if they include Iraqi Kurdish fighters and civilians perished due to the conflict. Although, verifiable data is not available on the number of Iraqi Kurdish victims of the conflict, based on the longevity of the conflict, and numerous incursions, bombardments and the wars between Iraqi Kurds and the PKK, casualties can reach to a few hundreds. For example, in a single attack of Turkish fighter jets on the Zargali village in August 2015, five villagers were killed (Otten, 2015).

**Figure No 1: Number of death casualties related to the PKK**



Source: Arjomand (2015)

### **6.2.2. Why Does the PKK Issue Cause Problem?**

As the discussion so far indicates, PKK has been the source of many problems in T-IK relations and has been the major reason for securitizing the relations. The question remains, why PKK issue has caused so many problems.

The root of the problem lies in Turkish state-building project. As discussed in chapter five, Turkish Republic is established on the Kemalist principles, which denies the Kurdish identity and considers it as a threat to state ideology and the territorial integrity of the country. Hence, historically Turkey has violently reacted to expressions of the Kurdish identity inside the country and even considered the developments of the Kurdish national movement in Iraq as an existential threat to Turkey's integrity due to fears of spillover of Kurdish nationalist sentiments to Turkey. As Lundgren (2007:40) argues, any expression of Kurdish identity is "a challenge to the very premises on which the Turkish nation-state has been built". In this light, it becomes clear why PKK is such a big problem for Turkey and why Turkish state has also historically viewed the Kurdish issue in other parts of Kurdistan as an extension of Turkey's internal Kurdish problem.

As the history of Turkish objections and interferences against the Kurdish aspirations in Iraq reveals, Turkey continues to view the national aspirations of Iraqi Kurds as a threat. That is what makes PKK an essential problem for Iraqi Kurds, whose dream for more rights, power and ultimately independence has been vigorously objected by the Turkish state. Ironically, Kurdish issue in Turkey currently represented by the PKK militarily has impaired both the success of Turkey and IK's state building projects and made them view each other as potential threats that can endanger the survival of the other. Meanwhile, PKK as a rival has attempted to represent itself as an alternative for IK's political parties, especially the KDP, resulting in violent clashes and harsh propaganda wars causing instability in the IK.

### **6.2.3. Different Treatments of PKK Issue and Repercussions on Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations**

In spite of changing fortune of governing parties in Turkey, Kurdish issue continues to be viewed as a threat. However, there have been two different approaches towards dealing with this problem. These could be termed as stick and carrot and stick approaches. For the most part of Turkish Republic's history, the stick approach has been prevalent. However, in the

last years of Ozal's presidency and in AKP's post-2008 rule until 2015 stick and carrot approach is utilised pragmatically to deal with the Kurdish issue and PKK.

The stick approach that is favoured by the Kemalists and ultranationalist Turks does not recognise the existence of Kurdish issue in the country and views it only as the issue of terror and suggest that after uprooting the terrorists, economic projects can address the problems of Turkey's southeast region. Violence, arrests of Kurdish parliamentarians and activists, closure of pro-Kurdish parties, assimilation attempts, declaring emergency rule and similar methods of using hard power are regular procedures utilised by the followers of this approach (Kirisci, 2007: 15-16; Atlantic Council, 2009: 6-7; Arin, 2015: 1). As the history of the relations reveals, in this approach, IK is viewed as the extension of Turkey's Southeast and relations are conducted through a security-focused perspective giving space only to military cooperation in fighting the PKK without bestowing any formal recognition to Iraqi Kurds and their political entity.

Regional developments, internal dynamics of Turkish politics and the evolution of the Kurdish question have made it difficult for Turkey to follow an uninterrupted stick policy. Thus, at times stick and carrot policy is used by Turkish politicians that gives Kurds alternates between some cultural and civil rights and retreating to violence and military devices as seen appropriate. Ozal's and the AKP's strategies and policies are clear embodiments of this approach. Realities of the post-Gulf War in 1990s urged Ozal to grant Kurds some rights, while the draconian anti-terror law, emergency rule and village guard system were also instituted during Ozal era (Romano, 2006: 55-6). Similarly, in the post-2003 years Turkey faced new realities as Washington was against Ankara's unilateral incursion into northern Iraq (Shiffrinson, 2006: 3), Iraqi government denied granting permission to cross-border operations (Keskin, 2008: 71), and Kurds gained constitutional legitimacy and influence in Baghdad and as a result the AKP favoured a more pragmatic approach that eventually culminated in application of the carrot and stick politics. Erdogan's statements in favour of the Kurdish question and initiation of peace process as opposed to his statements that deny the existence of Kurdish problem (Hurriyet Daily News, 2016) and his retrieve to violence are clear indications of AKP's stick and carrot policy. This approach has a better manoeuvrability room for relations with IK and provides the chance of building pragmatic relations based on mutual interests.

Evidently, persistence of Kurdish issue in Turkey translates into persistence of a major obstacle in front of progress in T-IK relations. A fundamental question is how long the Kurdish issue in Turkey continues to remain unresolved and haunts the relations with long-run implications on the bilateral relations. The peace process was underway at the time the researcher carried out his fieldwork in Turkey and IK, and therefore attempts were made to get the view of different parties involved in the process and assess the chances of failure and success of the process and the eventual impact of each scenario on the future of T-IK relations. The aim was to better understand and evaluate the scope of the PKK or Turkey's Kurdish problem's influence on the future of the relations. The interviews and interaction with people involved in the process made the researcher better understand the complexity of the issue and the dynamics at work. Hence, to answer the fundamental question stated above, the different views of parties involved, difficulties ahead of resolving the Kurdish issue in Turkey and impacts of the success or failure of the process on T-IK relations are presented below mainly relying on the fieldwork data, substantiated by the available literature on the issue.

#### **6.2.3.1. Kurds of Turkey and their view**

Researching on what Turkey's Kurds want to achieve or what is their view for solving the Kurdish problem can be treacherous. To start with, there are different views on who is the legitimate representative of the Kurdish cause in Turkey. Meanwhile, the Kurdish view has changed through time and the current Kurdish demands though appear to be easy to comprehend, have a wealth of connotations and details attached to them. The issue of representation is addressed in the section dealing with the difficulties ahead of resolving the Kurdish question in Turkey below, while the Kurdish demands and their complexities are presented here.

The best way to understand the Kurdish demands in Turkey is via comprehending the fact that Kurdish question "is the aspiration of the only stateless people of the Middle East for establishing their own nation-state" (Candar, 2013: 59). Kurds lost the chance of establishing the state the Severs Treaty of 1920 granted them and as Calisar (2013: 30-31) explains, therefore, they feel deceived due to the way Kemalist establishment treated them after they assisted Ataturk in the independence war. Hence, the ultimate goal of Kurds has been establishing a state of their own to the extent that even PKK's stated aim in 1980s was independence (Sarihan, 2013: 90). However, after decades of struggle, Kurds of Turkey have

recognised how improbable it is to achieve the independence goal easily. As Nazmi Gur<sup>114</sup>, BDP Parliamentarian at the time of the interview, acknowledged, changing the *status quo* is not easy, as “destroying one country may be easy, but creating a new one is not so easy”, referring to the failure of Iraqis to build their state again after the Gulf wars.

Due to realisation of this fact, even PKK changed its stance, as evident from Ocalan’s writing (Ocalan, 2009: 40-41) and his messages for peace and laying down arms (BBC Persian, 2015). The literature on PKK and Kurds’ demands in Turkey indicates that Kurds have reviewed their perspective and reduced their aspirations in a way that they can be accommodated under three major headings, namely, recognition of Kurdish identity, and granting Kurds their cultural rights, and political rights including the right of self-administration (Yegen, 2016: 15; International Crisis Group, 2012b; Democratic Progress Institute: 2013; Cagaptay, 2015: 6). Interviews conducted in Turkey and interaction with Kurds of Turkey made it clear for the researcher why Kurds are focusing on these rights and what it means for them.

### ***Recognition of the Kurdish identity***

Talking to Kurds in Turkey, it becomes evident that as individuals whose existence as Kurds had long been denied by a law in Turkey, constitutional recognition of the Kurdish identity is what they regard as their unquestionable right. As Adil Zozani<sup>115</sup>, BDP Parliamentarian at the time of interview, stated, “because denial of Kurds is in the law, so recognition of the Kurds should be in the law as well”. The constitutional definition that names all the Turkish citizens as Turks is considered unfair by Kurds. “If you write Turks, you have to write Kurds. If you do not want to write Kurds, then you do not need Turks to be written in the constitution,” Gur<sup>116</sup> claimed. The Kurdish middle ground is a neutral definition of citizenship encompassing all the citizens of Turkey without referring to any specific ethnic group (Gur<sup>117</sup>; Forat<sup>118</sup>; Zozani<sup>119</sup>).

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<sup>114</sup> BDP Parliament member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>115</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>116</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>117</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>118</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>119</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

### ***Cultural rights***

Similarly, Kurds want to be free in practising their cultural rights in Turkey. The right of using Kurdish language, which was prohibited by law for several decades, especially in education is at the heart of Kurdish cultural demands. While visiting the Kurdish newspapers and cultural centres in Diyarbakir, the researcher noticed how enthusiastically Kurdish writers and activists were trying to advance the Kurdish language and culture and what a great sacrifice was made to achieve the establishment of those centres and publishing in Kurdish freely. In one office room in Diyarbakir, the walls were covered with photos of Kurdish activists and writers who had lost their lives because of propagating Kurdish language and culture. As Gur<sup>120</sup> argued, “language is our identity” and the right of education in mother tongue should be granted by the constitution. Forat<sup>121</sup> added that Kurdish students should not be forced to sing the Turkish national anthem in school and should have the freedom of using their mother tongue in education.

### ***Political rights***

Political demands are the most contentious ones. To start with Kurds want to have the right of establishing political bodies, such as a political party with the name Kurdistan in its title as put forward by Forat<sup>122</sup> and Zozani<sup>123</sup>. Meanwhile, they consider the appointment of a centrally appointed governor, namely *Vali*, alongside elected mayors as a non-democratic mechanism (Forat<sup>124</sup>; Zozani<sup>125</sup>). As Forat<sup>126</sup> explained, while 95% of Amed (Kurdish name for Diyarbakir) is Kurdish and Kurdish mayors are elected and it seems Kurds are administering themselves, the governor appointed by Ankara administers them in reality identifying the two layers of administration in Turkish governance system; and the security apparatus can arrest anyone. Forat’s<sup>127</sup> conclusion was “so in reality we are not running and administering ourselves”.

As a result, what Kurds are demanding is what they call ‘democratic autonomy’; the demand for which is rooted in Ocalan’s evolving suggestions for solution of Kurdish problem in

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<sup>120</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>121</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>122</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>123</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>124</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>125</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>126</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>127</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

Turkey, starting from democratic Republic in late 1990s and developing to a form of confederal system termed democratic autonomy (Jongerden, 2016: 115-117; Cagaptay, 2015: 4; Yegen, 2016: 13-14). It is hard to provide an accurate definition for democratic autonomy; however, talking to Kurds in Turkey makes it easy to understand what they aim to achieve through democratic autonomy.

Zozani<sup>128</sup> calls a system in which Kurdistan, Kurdish identity, education and political organization rights are officially recognised, governors are not imposed from Ankara and Kurds are administering themselves as democratic autonomy and claims “for us it is not a big problem what this system is called”. Forat<sup>129</sup> defines democratic autonomy as follows: “When we say democratic autonomy, we mean everything should be administered by us, other than the army that is state army. Hence, Kurdish representatives should run municipality governor, security, administrations and others”.

Meanwhile, Gur<sup>130</sup> defines the democratic autonomy system as follows:

We propose [de]centralisation for the administrative system of Turkey. We officially propose to Turkish constitution committee that Turkey should divide into from 22-25 regions. So every region must have their own administration. Every region should have their own local government and local parliament and Ankara must share all their power with them. Not only Kurds, but all Turkey and Kurds must have democratic autonomy within this way.

Evidently, what Kurds care more about is the rights they assume they should get rather than the name of the system. For instance, the rights Kurds aspire to achieve through democratic autonomy could be achieved even if the name of the system was a very loose federal system or a type of confederalism. Thus, their expectations relate to the everyday practice of political culture, which they expect to be an articulation of Kurdish demands relating to everyday practice.

Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that amnesty for the guerrillas and the release of Ocalan and Kurdish political prisoners are among the expectations PKK has in the process of resolving the Kurdish question in Turkey (Faraj<sup>131</sup>). Moreover, removing or lowering the 10% election threshold is what many Kurds referred to as a needed reform in electoral law when the researcher was talking to Kurdish people in Turkey (also see: Calisar, 2013: 45).

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<sup>128</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>129</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>130</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>131</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil.



Furthermore, Kurds demand the abolishment of all laws adversely affecting the Kurds and the Kurdish region such as terror law, party law, election law, and village guard (Gur<sup>132</sup>).

### **6.3. AKP AND RESOLUTION OF THE KURDISH ISSUE**

AKP's way of dealing with the Kurdish issue, ups and downs of the Oslo process (2009-2011), the democratic opening, and the procedures implemented are already discussed. This background knowledge facilitates the understanding of the AKP's position and eliminates the need for repetition of that information and helps to focus only on how far AKP is ready to go and how much concession it is prepared to make for the Kurds.

An easy way to understand AKP's Kurdish politics is to simplify it as Erdogan's Kurdish policy. Erdogan's leadership charisma and his unquestionable control over AKP are beyond doubt (Akdogan, 2018). In addition to the AKP supporters, even the Kurdish people encountered during the fieldwork were frequently referring to Erdogan's role in directing the country's politics. Hence, statements like "our prime minster [Erdogan at the time of interviews] talks about ..." (Selcen<sup>133</sup>) were frequently heard in reference to the country's politics towards Kurds. Meanwhile, as the history of Erdogan's conduct towards Kurdish issue evidences through his controversial statements, he once acknowledges and once denies the Kurdish problem, which reveals that Erdogan and the AKP's vision has been a dynamic one based on pragmatism determined by mainly changing circumstances of domestic politics.

This dynamism is well observed whilst Kurdish issue is located within the big picture of Erdogan and AKP's political ambitions since the party's ascendance to power. In this framework, ups and downs of the Kurdish issue's fate could be analysed through AKP's evolution from an anti-establishment party seeking reforms to the establishment party attempting to rewrite the constitution to install a presidential system fitting the party's ambitions.

AKP started as an anti-establishment party in 2001 in favour of implementing the EU style reforms for power consolidation and pushing the military to the corner (Romano, 2006: 166-7). These reforms favoured AKP and Turkey's Kurds simultaneously. This fact coupled with AKP's anti-establishment rhetoric urged many Kurds, especially the conservative Muslim ones to vote for the AKP in the elections (Barkey, 2015: 4). This in turn urged the party to

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<sup>132</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>133</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

show its Kurdish voters that its approach towards Kurdish issue is different and there is a plan to solve the Kurdish problem (Werz and Hoffman, 2014: 12). The aim was to keep the voters satisfied and gain more votes in the process, but at the same time it became a reason for the start of Kurdish opening as well. Assistance of the Iraqi Kurds, and in particular the KDP was pragmatically employed to bring Turkey's Kurds on board and through trade relations with the IK improve the economic situation in the southeast Turkey, namely the Kurdish region (Al-Sharikh, 2011: 116) to guarantee further Kurdish support.

It should, however, be stated that AKP's way of viewing the Kurdish issue in Turkey is different from the way Kurds or other parties have viewed it. Indeed, it is as if the AKP has a project for all Turkey and Kurdish issue happens to fit into segments of this project, not an independent project at all. Therefore, it will not be wrong to assume that the AKP's aim is to achieve its grand aims, no matter if some segments fail to materialize or not.

This fact is evident in how Hashimi<sup>134</sup> explained the AKP's view towards the resolution of the Kurdish issue. In this view, the PKK and Kurdish political parties are not the sole representatives of the Kurds, and the peace process is not the one between Turks and Kurds, but "the peace process of all Turkey". That is while the AKP, until July 2015, identified that Kurdish issue is not just PKK issue and, it has, at the time, concluded that military means alone cannot solve the problem, as it is a political problem. Hence, PKK's disarmament becomes "part and parcel of the process", as disarmament removes all the military-related risks facing the process "and the rest is the matter of political discussion" (Hashimi<sup>135</sup>).

The question, however, remains as to what does AKP's 'peace process of all Turkey' prescribe for solving the Kurdish issue. To start with, AKP was projecting its Kurdish politics within the framework of AKP's justice oriented politics whereby the party attempts to bring justice to all including Kurds. In addition to Selcen<sup>136</sup> and Hashimi<sup>137</sup>, even Faraj<sup>138</sup>, whose party is closely linked to the AKP ideologically, was referring to Islamic principles urging the AKP to spread justice as a duty, especially with regard to Kurds. Hence, AKP was

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<sup>134</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>135</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>136</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>137</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>138</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

rationalising the developments related to Kurds not due to peace process, but due to the party's own vision and policy. Hashimi<sup>139</sup> argued:

These are two different processes. We have always been discussing since the beginning for a very very long time and plus with AKP to increase the power of local administrations, to reduce the centralisation to empower municipalities, specifically the big cities and Diyarbakir is one of them. To increase the autonomous power of the cities and regions. This is completely irrelevant to the PKK demands, completely irrelevant to the security issue ... Even the democratisation process is not a concession given to BDP, PKK or Kurdish people, it is part of normalisation of Turkey ... For example, TRT 6 is not broadcasting in Kurdish to appeal, to get to realise one of the demands of PKK. It is being done, because Turkey decides it is a demand by Kurdish people. But obviously, we know this kind of democratisation processes would have impact on the resolution of the Kurdish issue.

As it is clearly stated, AKP has its own grand plans for the normalisation of Turkey and if some coincide with PKK and its political wings' demands it does not mean AKP is trying to implement the PKK demands. However, the extent of AKP's plans with regard to Kurds has always remained in a shroud of ambiguity. Selcen's<sup>140</sup> statement below is a clear indication of how the entire AKP project was just words, and not a concrete plan of action.

Our prime minister talks about the presidential system, talks about state system that instead of existing 81 provinces, we are going to have 29 or so regions or state where for example now governors are assigned, appointed by the capital and mayors are elected by the people, we think of the uniting these two positions and having like Iraq or the united states an elected governor.

Obviously, AKP's plan for decentralisation has never been materialised and developments in the region including the Syrian crisis, and political developments inside Turkey that turned AKP into the establishment party or the party of the centre eventually widened the rift between AKP and the majority of Turkey's Kurds and placed them into two opposing camps. This is evident in HDP crossing the 10% election threshold in June 2015 elections and its vehement opposition to Erdogan's plans for a presidential system enshrined in a new constitution. The apparent outcome of this opposition was AKP's shift towards military solution of the Kurdish issue in an attempt to win over the support and votes of Turkish nationalists. The policy proved successful as the vote of Turkish nationalists enabled AKP to win the majority in November 2015 election. MHP's votes dropped from 16.3% in June 2015 to 11.9% in November 2015, while AKP increased its support by 8.5% compared to June 2015 elections (Kanat, 2015). Evidently, increase in Turkish nationalists' vote in AKP will have further implications for the future direction of AKP's policy towards Kurds in Turkey.

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<sup>139</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>140</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

Following the assessment of AKP's position and performance, it becomes clear that AKP has continued to deal with the Kurdish issue in the most pragmatist manner. Apparently, granting some cultural rights and if in AKP's interest plans for potential increase of local administrations' power and improving the economic status of the southeast is what AKP has regarded as the solution for the Kurdish issue in contrast to what Turkey's Kurds expect.

#### **6.4. REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (CHP) AND THE KURDISH ISSUE**

The stance of CHP towards Kurdish issue has endured dramatic change compared to its hard-line stance of denial and repression evident in the party's historical treatment of Turkey's Kurds, which can be explained through CHP being the founding party of the Kemalist Turkey. This changing trend is visible in 1990s, as Beriker-Atiyas (1997: 444) sums up the party's perspective in 1997 as follows:

As a party of the centre-left, it also differentiates between terrorism and the Kurdish problem. It claims that the principle of the unitary state and Turkish as the official language should be preserved. The CHP considers the problem as one of democratization. Freedom of expression, the establishment of Kurdish TV, and other cultural institutions are measures that should complement military measures.

Acceptance of the fact that Kurdish problem exists is an existential development in itself. However, nothing much has happened since this development in CHP's view towards the Kurdish demands. Indeed, in May 21, 2013 CHP released its position paper on the Kurdish issue in fourteen pages under the title, *Steps and Priorities for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Social Peace in Turkey*<sup>141</sup>. In this document, CHP emphasises that ending terrorism is party's top priority and points out the need for solving the Kurdish problem. It goes on criticising the AKP's way of dealing with the Kurdish issue on the basis that AKP was dealing with Ocalan, while it should have dealt with the BDP; there is no transparency in government's engagement with Ocalan as it is claimed that talks are conducted in secret, while public should know about the details and political parties should be involved; and parliament is excluded in the process while it should be included. Moreover, AKP is criticised for endangering Turkey's national and geographic integrity, violating the constitution due to the way the process was conducted and PKK fighters were leaving the country armed and keeping their Qandil bases intact; capitalising the peace process for its

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<sup>141</sup> This document was sent to the researcher via e-mail by Mr. Koruturk's secretary and could be viewed in the appendix.

political ambitions of winning votes in election and changing the constitution while the party does not believe in the process and has no roadmap for solving the issue; demonstrating a very weak performance in countering the PYD in Syria and ignoring the Baghdad while focusing on the ‘government in northern Iraq’.

The solution CHP proposes in the document is basically establishment of ‘National Reconciliation Commission’ in parliament and ‘Wise Men’s Taskforce’ outside parliament to work in co-ordination to administer the process with agendas quite different from the identical ones AKP established, removal of the 10% election threshold, guaranteeing and strengthening freedoms of expression, belief, organisation, demonstration and human rights, providing equal opportunities for all, making *Nevroz* a national holiday and dealing with past violations of human rights, while abolishing courts with special competence among other points related to improving human rights and freedoms.

Some aspects of CHP’s position are further clarified in the interview conducted with senior CHP politician, Koruturk<sup>142</sup>. He stated that CHP recognises the existence of Kurdish problem and claimed that the problem is solved when Turkey’s Kurds feel there is no problem, not when Erdogan says so. Meanwhile, he explained CHP’s position that talks should be conducted with BDP as counterpart based on the fact that BDP has electoral legitimacy and can consult any side or group during the process including the PKK and Ocalan, while PKK and its leaders “all claim to represent the Kurdish people, not through the vote, but through the force of arms.”

Koruturk<sup>143</sup> continued criticising AKP for having no clue in how to solve the Kurdish issue and not sharing anything with other parties and explained CHP’s insistence on solving the problem through parliament due to the need for national consensus that can be achieved through a parliamentary commission with members from all parties and a wise men’s commission with delegates from all parties as well. Moreover, absence of such broad-based commissions and lack of transparency were factors that Koruturk considered responsible for lack of national consensus leading to the phenomenon of more hope and support towards the process in Kurdish areas of East Turkey and resulting in concern and worries in the western provinces of the country.

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<sup>142</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>143</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

With regards to Kurdish demand for democratic autonomy, Koruturk<sup>144</sup> explained that Kurdish issue has been around for a long time and its resolution needs long time as well. He added that CHP has made several researches, conferences and symposiums on the Kurdish issue to discuss the Kurdish demands and solutions. He further explained that “This is open to discuss [ion] and we [*sic.*] then reach a consensus. There are some things that we might discuss and there are some things that we might have objection to. This is a serious business ... not easy to say in politics there is no problems”.

Assessing the CHP stance, it is viewed that the party is ready to give Kurds some cultural rights and improve the general human rights and freedoms in Turkey, but it still keeps a tough position towards other Kurdish demands, especially with regards to the PKK issue, democratic autonomy and constitutional recognition of Kurds. Meanwhile, the party seemed still to be favouring the policy of ignoring IK and conducting the relations through Baghdad and deals with any developments of Kurdish cause outside Turkey, such as the Syrian Kurds’ achievements as an existential threat.

## **6.5. NATIONALIST MOVEMENT PARTY’S (MHP) VIEW ON KURDISH ISSUE**

Being a Turkish ultranationalist party, MHP’s position towards Kurdish issue in Turkey has been the most unyielding one; as party ideology is based on the uncompromising Turkishness, which is based on the denial of any other ethnic communities in Turkey. The party denies recognising the Kurdish problem and sees it only as the problem of terror that has no political solution and should be only dealt with through brute force (Beriker-Atiyas, 1997: 443).

Without delving into the ideological positioning of MHP, during the field research for this study, instances, such as Devlet Bahçeli, MHP leader, criticising the Turkish government permitting the Kurdish *Peshmerga* to cross Turkish territory and fight against ISIS in Kobani for what he views as “building Kurdistan” (Chomani, 2014) or his rejection of “every coalition option after the June elections and offering nothing more than hawkishness against

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<sup>144</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

Kurdish nationalists” are clear indications that the party has no intention to change its position on the Kurdish issue (Aykol, 2015).

Ozcan Yeniceri<sup>145</sup>, a MHP politician, provided an insight into MHP’s rhetoric and outlook towards the issue during an interview with him. Yeniceri<sup>146</sup> justifies his party’s denial of Kurdish problem based on the following premises:

There should be three things in order to say there is Kurdish question. First if a person with Kurdish origin cannot freely move and live in any part of Turkey. Second, if a Kurdish citizen is not accepted to specific professions. Third, if a Kurdish citizen cannot study in the school or get accepted to an office, then we can say there is a Kurdish problem. Turkey does not have such problems. The issue that is called Kurdish question is in fact disintegration of Turkey and creation of a Kurdish state.

He added that his party denies dealing with problems in Turkey based on “ethnicity, sect, religion or region” and discredited criticism towards the article 66 of Turkish Constitution that calls all Turkey’s citizen Turk, based on the rhetoric that the article means everyone is equal in the country.

Yeniceri<sup>147</sup> further clarified that MHP considers the Kurdish demands for “release of Ocalan, democratic autonomy and recognition of Kurdish identity” as a means for disintegrating Turkey. Meanwhile, MHP criticised the AKP’s opening policy as unconstitutional, demands surrender of PKK fighters and putting them on trial, not disarming them. He also claimed that by making Ocalan a partner in negotiations AKP has equalled terrorists and Kurdish citizens and insulted the Kurds. In short, MHP views AKP’s opening as “a split-up policy, splitting the country ethnicity-by-ethnicity, faith-by-faith, region-by-region, vessel-by-vessel and leaf-by-leaf” Yeniceri<sup>148</sup>said.

## **6.6. KURDS OF IRAQ AND THEIR VIEW**

Kurds of Iraq have had a troubled history with PKK and its presence in IK and each political party has its own views on the PKK, its political ideology and the way it engages with the Kurdish issue in Turkey. However, all Kurdish parties in IK unanimously support the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Statements made by Kurdish senior

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<sup>145</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>146</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>147</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>148</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

politicians that are previously discussed testify to this fact. Meanwhile, all the Kurdish interviewees interviewed in IK for this research argued that peace is the way forward and war will not produce any solution either for Kurds or for Turkish government.

Indeed, Kurds of Iraq continue to argue in support of the peace process regardless of the situation on the ground between Turkey and Kurds. Fervent statements of KRG President supporting the peace process in his trip to Diyarbakir (Necef, 2013), and KRG Prime Minister's statements in 2014 (Rudaw: 2014c) and 2015 (Rudaw, 2015a) are merely few examples of Iraqi Kurds' explicit support for peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. As Falah Mustafa<sup>149</sup> stated, KRG believes that the peace process "is the right thing to do" and it is this belief that makes them support the process.

In addition to supportive statements, Iraqi Kurds have been heavily involved in the Kurdish issue in Turkey; either through already discussed military cooperation or through facilitating and mediating the peace talks from Ozal to AKP's time. Turkish governments have been aware of this fact and utilised it at times Ankara has deemed appropriate. Due to this mediatory role, Erbil usually becomes the traffic where Turkey's Kurdish delegations stop on their way to Qandil and Ankara (Rudaw, 2015c). In the meantime, as Gur<sup>150</sup> stated, Turkey's Kurds expect the support of IK for the peace process and acknowledged that Iraqi Kurds have exhibited their support. It is worth mentioning that during the process Iraqi Kurds do not want to be regarded as interfering in Turkey's internal affairs and just aim for helping the resolution of the problem so as to establish good neighbourly relations with Turkey (Falah Musfata<sup>151</sup>).

Apparently, viewing the peace process as the right solution and Kurdish national sympathy are good incentives for Iraqi Kurds' support for the peaceful resolution of their brethren's struggle in Turkey. Nevertheless, Iraqi Kurds have further justification for supporting the peace process in Turkey, as they know that future security and stability of IK is at the mercy of peaceful resolution of the PKK and Kurdish problems in Turkey. Stressing on preservation of security and stability of IK, Faraj<sup>152</sup> added, "they [Turkey] should not bring tanks everyday

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<sup>149</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>150</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>151</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>152</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil.



saying that they are going to Qandil. We will never accept this”. It is easy to understand why Iraqi Kurds focus on security. Falah Mustafa<sup>153</sup>’s argument clarifies it all:

The important thing is to make sure that the progress we have achieved to be maintained, to be able to avoid our people any sufferings and miseries. Our objective is to develop our institutions develop our economy, develop the education system, the health system and encourage the private sector and improve the living condition of our people. This could not be achieved in disorder times; this can only be achieved when there is stability, peace and security. Therefore, our top priority is to keep Kurdistan Region safe and secure, to make it an environment that is conducive for business to be investment friendly and business friendly, to provide incentives for people to come and this is what serves the interests of Kurdistan.

Evidently Iraqi Kurds know that the security and future prosperity of their region is tied to the fate of Kurdish issue in Turkey and this is enough reason for their fervent support for the peace process. Meanwhile, they firmly believe that the solution only lies in peace and negotiations, and as Hassan Ahmed Mustafa<sup>154</sup> stated, “if Turkey is using the peace talks just as a tactic, the result will be return to war and continuation of the problem”.

## **6.7. WHY RESOLUTION OF THE KURDISH PROBLEM IS DIFFICULT**

As discussed above, all the parties involved in dealing with the Kurdish issue have their own views and projects for resolving it; nevertheless, it is almost a century since Turkey is established and so far, all the resolutions have ended in failure. In an attempt to examine the reasons behind this failure, this research has pointed out six major factors and explains their complexities below. These factors are: (i) conflicting expectations, (ii) mutual mistrust, (iii) problems posed by Turkish domestic politics, (iv) problems posed by internal dilemmas in the Kurdish camp, (v) role of the external factors and (vi) territorial nature of the problem, which are discussed as follows:

### **6.7.1. Conflicting Expectations**

Irreconcilable expectations are major hindrances for the resolution of the Kurdish question. They exist and arise both before initiation of any peace process and during the implementation phase of the process. The incompatible expectations before the process are related to the demands each party puts forward and the ones occurring during the process are related to presence of different views on how and at what pace the process should be implemented.

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<sup>153</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>154</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil.

The conflicting demands and views of the involved groups are already presented. It is easily observable that Kurdish demands need constitutional changes or amendments to permit the recognition of Kurdish identity and a model of self-administration that satisfies the Kurdish demands. Kurds consider what they have achieved so far as the result of their own struggle and consider the demands they ask for as basic and very simple. Zozani<sup>155</sup> referred to the fact that while Kurdish language had been forbidden in Turkey, it was the Kurdish struggle that made it possible for the researcher to conduct an interview with him in Kurdish language inside the Turkish Parliament. In this line of argument, Gur<sup>156</sup> claimed, “our demands are very simple and very limited. And of course they are basic”. Considering the fact that many Kurds consider independence as their natural right, it may be acceptable to view the Kurdish demands as ‘basic’. Furthermore, as Gur<sup>157</sup> argued, Turkish mentality has changed due to our struggle and need more change to accept the democratization of Turkey. He further explained that success of the peace process will make Turkey strong, but if the process fails, Kurds will not lose and can continue their struggle, but AKP and Turkish state will lose.

On the other hand, Turks are not ready to accept the Kurdish demands. As discussed above, AKP and CHP have until recently been ready to give Kurds some cultural and linguistic rights and are not ready to proceed with any form of political rights. Even there are reservations on giving Kurds cultural rights among members of these parties. As Kaya<sup>158</sup> said, “on language issue, when I discuss with the AKP deputies, seems they are positive, not all of them”. During the interviews and based on the researcher’s talks with the Turkish people, it was clear that they believe Kurds are demanding far too much. In Kaya<sup>159</sup>’s words, “There is no end to the demands of the Kurds”.

In case, AKP and CHP show some flexibility, MHP is not ready even to accept that Kurdish issue exists. Moreover, it is even claimed that Kurds already have all their rights, and have even more privileges compared to the Turks. As Yeniceri<sup>160</sup> claimed, “Ethnically Turk people have no privilege except their language is Turkish, which is the official language. Kurdish people have three times more capital in regard with their population and at the same time they are better represented in government.” Meanwhile, during field research in Turkey, the

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<sup>155</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>156</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>157</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>158</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>159</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>160</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

researcher frequently countered the argument that if peace process fails, Turkey will have no problem in continuing to use violence to tackle the PKK threat as it has done for decades. Writing in 2014, Park (2014: 52) referred to the fact that Turkey still has the power to “sustain a crackdown on the PKK inside its own borders and in northern Iraq”. This was a good incentive for Turkish government to avoid accepting the Kurdish demands knowing that it still has the military option available.

In addition to the already existing uncompromising gaps in demands and perspectives, even at the time of implementing the steps towards peace process conflicting expectations aroused. For instance, there were quite different expectations towards the PKK withdrawal process that was considered a prerequisite for the democratisation and other following steps in the peace process. As discussed earlier, AKP expected the PKK fighters to lay down their arms during the withdrawal process, while CHP and MHP had quite tougher stances and even expect the PKK fighters to surrender and stand trials in the court. On the contrary, the Kurdish side has different views on this issue. Kurds believe that withdrawal and not disarmament is the logical move for that stage of the peace process, which can later proceed to other steps, including disarmament. That is why even in 2015 Newroz message, Ocalan only asked for holding a congress to end the armed struggle and did not mention anything about disarmament (Stevenson: 2015). PKK’s view is further explained by Cemil Bayik, co-leader of Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK,) or *Koma Civaken Kurdistan*, who stated putting down arms is different from stopping the armed struggle and expressed PKK’s readiness for the later if Turkey takes serious steps. He further clarified, “at a time that war has broken out in the Middle East, asking Kurds to disarm means they want Kurds to walk to their death” (Chomani, 2015a).

As the result of these highly incompatible demands, a lengthy period of time and a well-formulated process are required for resolving the Kurdish issue. Interestingly, majority of the interviewees referred to the fact that it is wrong to expect the Kurdish question being solved in a short time, as establishing peace is a long process. However, peace process will not succeed if its details are not well articulated and a proper timetable is not set, even if the diverse demands and expectations get adjusted in an all-agreed-on format.

### 6.7.2. Mutual Mistrust

Mutual mistrust between Kurds and Turks has historical roots manifested in the history of the Kurdish struggle presented earlier in this research. The Turkish psyche wary of Turkey's disintegration and the Kurdish psyche that has experienced denial, assimilation and oppression under the Republic have intensified this mistrust. This historical suspicion has added up to both parties' enhanced mistrust during the implementation of peace process steps and absence of a neutral monitoring body has added up to the complications of solving the Kurdish case.

Talking to Kurds in Turkey, it was easy to feel their frustration and suspicion towards what they viewed as Kurds withdrawing and complying with the peace agreement, while Turkish government was doing nothing. Even Ismail Besikci<sup>161</sup>, the famous Turkish scholar, sociologist, philosopher, revolutionary, and writer, voiced his suspicion towards AKP's conduct in the peace process arguing:

PKK has withdrawn, but Turkey has done nothing. Turkey even has done nothing for the local autonomy. AKP has not talked about establishment of any Kurdish region as well. No legal action has been done concerning decentralisation. Even there is suspicion over the meetings between the government and Ocalan. Nothing is clear.

It should be noted that many Kurds suspect the motives of the Turkish government. Forat<sup>162</sup> claimed that Turkish government pursues two dreams, "First to become strong again in the world and in the Middle East and then subjugate Kurds once again ... Their second dream is to end the Kurds through assimilation."

Turkish side has its own suspicion as well. To start with, both CHP and MHP are very critical of the AKP's Kurdish policy and as apparent from the interviews, they consider AKP's plan as secretive and non-transparent (Yeniceri<sup>163</sup>; Koruturk<sup>164</sup>). Complaining about AKP's politics, a taxi driver in Ankara during the field research (2013) told the researcher, "there was no Kurdish problem in the country. It was Erdogan who created this problem" indicating that even Erdogan's limited understanding of Kurdish issue does not have its support among the larger public. Meanwhile, Turks are generally suspicious that Kurdish motive behind the peace process is establishing a Kurdish state and dividing Turkey, or as Cagaptay (2015: 4)

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<sup>161</sup> Turkish Sociologist, Revolutionary, Philosopher and Writer: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>162</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>163</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>164</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

quotes analysts, PKK utilising the peace process for building an “underground state” in Turkey’s southeast.

The already existing mistrust is further exacerbated when the involved parties demonstrate behaviour that is regarded by the other side as in contradiction to the expected behaviour during the peace process. For instance, arresting hundreds of Kurdish activists during the 2009 democratic opening and later (Pope, 2013: 124; Yildiz, 2012: 153), taking no counter step to PKK’s withdrawal, mixed messages by Erdogan about the peace process, Turkish performance during the Kobani crisis in 2015, keeping the 10% election threshold (Gunter, 2016; Barkey, 2015: 7) continuous construction of gendarmerie posts by Turkish government (Werz and Hoffman, 2014: 21) and assassination of three female Kurdish activists, one a PKK co-founder, in Paris in 2013 (Tekdemir, 2016) are among the events that even further substantiated Kurdish suspicion. On the other hand, kidnappings purported to be carried out by the PKK (Werz and Hoffman, 2014: 21), establishment of the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) by the PKK in March 2013 (Gunter, 2016) and their urban campaign of digging trenches and violence that was not stopped even after Ocalan’s mid-January 2015 message asking them to stop masked protests and digging trenches (Chomani, 2015b), and harsh stances of the HDP against Erdogan and AKP, that picked at the time of Kobani crisis to the extent that Demirtas called AKP “extension of ISIS” (Rudaw, 2016) and continued during the 2016 election campaigns and afterwards are among negative conducts of the Kurdish side that further stirred the Turkish side’s mistrust.

In the absence of a non-partisan committee monitoring the implementation of a peace process between the Turkish and Kurdish sides, it will be difficult to imagine that both sides overcome the mistrust dilemma, which is an essential element of conflict resolution. However, so far attempts for agreement on such a committee have failed (Gunter: 2016).

### **6.7.3. Turkish Domestic Politics and Kurdish Issue**

Internal dynamics of Turkish politics makes it difficult for the political parties to resolve the Kurdish issue without facing consequences. The problem is linked to the nature of Turkey’s political parties, the political calculations in Turkey’s national and local elections and the role of charismatic leaders in the process. These issues are further elaborated below.

Regarding the nature of political parties, as Forat<sup>165</sup> stated, for the success of peace process, Turkey needs a genuinely democratic and pro-European party in power that is eager to solve the Kurdish issue. Gur<sup>166</sup>, who was supportive of such a viewpoint, asserted that in Turkey only leftist groups are sympathetic towards the peace process and they have no power, while the main parties of AKP, CHP and MHP have no desire to solve the Kurdish issue.

CHP and MHP are nationalist parties that have their base among Turkish nationalists, and it is easy to understand why they are not sympathetic towards the Kurdish issue. That is while AKP has a broader base and has supporters both among Turks and Kurds. Kirisci's (2007:15) statement that AKP is the party that can address the Kurdish issue was based on this factor. However, any step taken by AKP towards the Kurdish issue is not free of political costs for the party. If AKP does not respond to the demands of the Kurds, it loses the support of its Kurdish voters. Seufert (2015: 4-5) refers to Erdogan's courting with Turkish ultra-nationalists during the period in question through his negative statements towards peace process and his stance towards Kurdish resistance against ISIS in Kobani as the main reasons behind AKP's diminishing votes among Kurds in June 2015 elections.

On the contrary, addressing the Kurdish demands turns the Islamist and nationalists inside the party (Barkey, 2015: 6) and the nationalist of MHP and CHP against AKP. In this process, CHP and MHP, incite the nationalists' feelings against AKP with serious political costs in the elections (Bacik and Coskun, 2013: 155). This fact facilitates the comprehension of AKP's pragmatism towards Kurdish issue. Indeed, the Kurdish side is aware of such political calculations as Cemil Bayik accused Erdogan of ending the peace process for election gains (Fishagi, 2015). Hence, as Koruturk<sup>167</sup> mentioned in the interview and as also stated by Yildiz (2012: 159), for a successful peace process all parties of Turkey should be involved and cooperate; otherwise, political costs will hamper the attempts for solving the Kurdish issue.

Identifying the Kurdish issue through specific individuals is another dilemma in Turkish domestic life that haunts the peace process. In this process, names like Ozal, Ocalan and Erdogan take precedence over the peace process and cast their shadows over any resolution. Evident emphasis on the role of Erdogan and Ocalan eventually turns the Kurdish issue into a

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<sup>165</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>166</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>167</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara

personal affair. As Barkey (2015: 6) argues, a major drawback of the process “is the degree to which its future has been tied to the political calculations of the two leaders: Erdogan and Ocalan”. In criticizing this factor, Besikci<sup>168</sup> stressed that Kurds should focus on getting their rights, rather than insisting on freedom of Ocalan.

#### **6.7.4: Internal Dilemmas in the Kurdish Camp**

Similar to the Turkish camp that is divided among different parties and ideologies, the Kurdish camp has been also suffering from its internal problems. These problems are manifested in PKK’s evolution and its involvement in violence, polarisation of representation among Turkey’s Kurds, and PKK’s rivalry with Iraqi Kurds and its repercussions for the peace process.

PKK has travelled a long bumpy road with change in aims, capture of leader and rifts inside its leadership members to reach its current status (for more details on PKK *see*: Marcus, 2007 and Ozcan, 2006). However, the biggest setback for the party is its terrorism label. In addition to Turkey, the USA and the EU consider PKK as a terrorist organisation (Keskin, 2008: 61). PKK has changed its name to Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) in 2002, *Kongra-Gel* or Kurdistan People’s Congress in 2003 and established *Komo Civaken Kurdistan* (KCK) or Kurdistan Communities Union in 2005 and utilised the name (Gunter, 2013: 76-77) but with no avail in getting rid of the terrorism label.

Due to this label, PKK cannot be a formal political party and partner to talks on the peace process with the Turkish government. In this political void, Kurds have established political parties such as BDP and HDP that are usually regarded as PKK’s political wing in the country, but formal expression of such a relation will criminalise and terminate these parties’ existence. Nevertheless, these parties are frequently pressured to condemn terrorism as a condition for being considered legal partners in peace talks and their members are arrested, harassed and accused of supporting PKK (International Crisis Group, 2012b: 21-22).

This situation has resulted in a representation dilemma in the Kurdish camp. Even AKP has claims on being the representative of Kurds. As Hashimi<sup>169</sup> argued, based on the high percentage of Kurdish vote for AKP, the party is the legal representative of Kurds. However,

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<sup>168</sup> Turkish Sociologist, Revolutionary, Philosopher and Writer: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>169</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

the Kurdish side refutes this argument. Gur<sup>170</sup> referred to Hashimi's argument as manipulative, since AKP is not a Kurdish party and does not represent the Kurdish cause, while BDP is holding the majority of the Kurdish votes and municipalities and is representative of the Kurdish cause.

The problem is further complicated in Kaya's<sup>171</sup> view, as there is no independent figurehead among Turkey's Kurds at the level of Ocalan and it will not be easy to convince Turks to accept the leader of a terrorist organisation as an official negotiation partner. Based on Gur's<sup>172</sup> claim, "the whole North Kurdistan<sup>173</sup> is considering Ocalan as their leader. Three and half million signatures submitted to this parliament mention that Ocalan is their leader". To solve this problem, Besikci<sup>174</sup> suggested that Ocalan should "remain as a spiritual leader" and like Koruturk<sup>175</sup>, he believed that talks should be conducted with the BDP as the legal representative of Kurds. Nonetheless, even in case of acceptance of pro-Kurdish legal parties as negotiation partners and reaching a deal, the problem continues, as PKK may deny accepting the deal and continue the armed struggle. Indeed, presence of extremists and moderates inside PKK itself (Mala Omer<sup>176</sup>) and its diverging interests with the Kurdish parties inside Turkey further complicates the problem. For instance, while HDP opted for criticizing Erdogan instead of making coalition with him, Murat Karayilan, leading member of KCK, praised HDP for crossing the 10% threshold in June 2015 elections but simultaneously criticized Demirtas's statement that HDP has no plan for making coalition with AKP. Karayilan referred to this statement as emotional and narrow-minded and asked HDP to act responsibly and keep all the options on the table (Chomani, 2015).

In addition to the problem of representation in Turkey, PKK has a problematic history with Iraqi Kurds. As discussed earlier, PKK is in competition with IK's parties over representation of the Kurdish cause and has engaged in fierce battles, especially with the KDP in this regard. The rivalry is both ideological and territorial. Being leftist, PKK's ideology is against KDP's conservatism and equally despised by the Islamist parties of IK. As Bapir<sup>177</sup> stated, PKK should review its leftist ideology, as it is not rooted in Kurdish mentality and way of thinking.

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<sup>170</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>171</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>172</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>173</sup> Kurdish nationalists refer to the Kurdish part in Turkey as North or Northern Kurdistan

<sup>174</sup> Turkish Sociologist, Revolutionary, Philosopher and Writer: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>175</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>176</sup> Salahaddin University Lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>177</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil.



This rivalry creates suspicion between the PKK and Iraqi Kurds and tarnishes the mediatory role Iraqi Kurds can play. For instance, after Barzani's 2013 visit to Diyarbakir that was viewed as Barzani's support for AKP, PKK and BDP both warned Barzani "not to get involved in Turkey's Kurdish problem on behalf of Ankara" (Park, 2014: 13-14). In this regard, PKK may consider improvements in T-IK relations as a threat, as evident from PKK's criticism of November 2013's oil and gas agreement between Turkey and IK. PKK based its criticism on accusing both sides of "pursuing narrow economic interests over the genuine needs of the Kurdish people" (Serdaroglu, 2014: 2). Meanwhile, Turkish parties can harness this rivalry to their advantage at the expense of peace process. As Haninke (2013) argues, bringing Barzani to "the heart of PKK territory in Diyarbakir" and ignoring PKK and BDP was an example of Erdogan exploiting this rivalry.

#### **6.7.5. External Factors**

Influence exerted by the external forces can have both positive and negative impacts on the peace process in Turkey. This section focuses on only the negative factors. Turkey's failures to join the EU and her suspicions towards the West and external support for the PKK, and developments after the Arab Spring in Syria are the main impediments to any peace process in Turkey.

Turkey has historically been suspicious towards the West due to the Sevres syndrome, which is further enhanced by the country's failure in joining the EU and American policy in the Middle East. Gunter (2011: 142) referred to the Turkish hope for joining the EU even after suspending Ocalan's execution and improving the minority rights as "pipe dream" and considers the failure of Turkey to join the EU as a considerable disadvantage to the success of peace process (Gunter, 2013: 61). Moreover, many are still very suspicious of American plans in the Middle East, to the extent that Yeniceri<sup>178</sup> was accusing the AKP of becoming an agent in implementing the American new Middle East project, which in his view involves the establishment of a Kurdish state.

In line with this historic suspicion Turkey suspects that many countries, both regional and beyond are supporting the PKK. Bacik and Coksun (2013: 157) elaborate the impact of this factor on the peace process as follows:

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<sup>178</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

A further reason for the failure of a political solution to emerge is that the PKK never felt obliged to seek a peaceful solution. Instead, thanks to supportive international conjuncture, the PKK enjoyed a large field of manoeuvre from Syria to Denmark.

Indeed, Turkey is right to some extent, as for instance, the Syrian support for the PKK in 1990s is not a secret. However, it seems sometimes Turkey goes too far in blaming everyone for supporting the PKK, and even portraying the problem as an external and not a domestic one. In this regard, Turkey has claimed that PKK is mainly composed of Kurds from other states, with a small minority of Turkey's Kurds, and the organisation's survival is due to illicit drug trade, money taken from Turkish citizens abroad, support from neighbouring countries and continuous active presence in the Western Europe (Lundgren, 2007: 70). However, through externalising the PKK problem and its roots outside Turkish borders, it will be difficult to expect a strong Turkish desire for resolving the problem.

It is worth mentioning that Kurds also have their suspicions towards the external powers. They have not forgotten that it was the role played by the colonial powers, especially in Iraq that prevented them from establishing their own state and divided Kurdistan mainly among four states. As Forat<sup>179</sup> stressed, the current political map of the Middle East is the outcome of external powers' intervention, and certainly they are still playing a major role in the region. However, it seems currently Kurds are more wary of the negative impact regional powers can have on the Kurdish issue, rather than the Western interference. Apparently, evident from Zozani's<sup>180</sup> happiness during the interview, in his view due to progress of the Kurdish cause, as he claimed, Obama saluted the peace process and Russia asked BDP to open an office in Moscow as it has done in Washington. Hence, some Kurds believe that external powers can no longer ignore them.

In addition to the role external powers can play in boosting the PKK's options *vis-à-vis* Turkey, Arab Spring created another base for the PKK and further obstacles for Turkey and the peace process. PKK has historically been active in the Kurdish parts of Syria and in October 2003 reincarnated its Syrian wing, PYD, headed by Salih Muslim. The party's military wing *Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* or People's Protection Units (YPG) has been actively engaged in controlling the Kurdish areas of Syria after Arab Spring reached the country in 2011 and regime forces withdrew from areas in the Kurdish region (Gunter, 2015: 76; Yegen, 2016: 1). Kurds refer to the Kurdish areas in Syria as *Rojava* meaning West as it is located in

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<sup>179</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

<sup>180</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

the Western part of the great Kurdistan. In 2013, PYD devised a political system composed of three non-contiguous autonomous cantons of *Efrin, Kobani and Cezire* (Sary, 2016: 6) to be replaced by autonomous federation declared in March 2016 by the PYD (Al-Jazeera Website, 2016a).

As the developments in recent years demonstrate, Turkey has not been happy with the developments in Syria and empowerment of PYD, that denies organic links with PKK, but is a constituent member of KCK with PKK (Gunter, 2015: 76). However, Turkey does not differentiate between the PKK and PYD and has taken a tough stance towards the party from the beginning. Turkey attempted to nullify PYD-PKK influence through its incorporation into the Free Syrian Army (military wing of the Syrian Opposition) without success (Erkus, 2014) and continued to put pressure on the party through proxies and siege, especially during the Kobani crisis. Turkish enmity towards the party reached a level in October 2016 that Turkish fighters bombed YPG bases in northern Syria resulting in high number of casualties (Al-Jazeera Website, 2016b).

Developments in *Rojava* impacted the peace process on two levels. Firstly, dominance of PKK's wing over Syria provided PKK with more muscle, territory and confidence. Hence, PKK was no more out of options and obliged to accept any peace deal. Secondly, Turkey's harsh treatment of PYD and its ambitions, especially during the Kobani siege was pressurizing the PKK to act offensively, while the peace process was still at its initial stages. Both these factors negatively impacted the peace process, as evident from Karayilan's anger over Turkey's treatment of Kurdish refugees from Syria and Kobani siege reflected in the statement that "Turkey's will is behind siege of Kobani by ISIS and Peace Process is over for us" (Osman, 2014).

#### **6.7.6. Territorial nature of the problem**

Elaborating on the Kurdish question, Ayhan<sup>181</sup>, one of the interviewees, asked, "Is it the problem of Kurdish rights or is it the problem of Kurdish territory or Kurdistan?" Referring to the fact that in IK, Kurdish rights are endorsed in the constitution, but the territorial disputes still exist. He explained that the Kurdish problem in Turkey is a territorial one, "but nobody wants to mention it is a problem with Kurdistan". In his view, even if the right of

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<sup>181</sup> Head of International Middle East Peace Research Centre (IMPR): 13 June 2013, Ankara.

political autonomy is granted to Kurds, the question of “where is Kurdistan?” stays and needs to be resolved through discussion.

The fact that all Turkey’s Kurds are not living in the country’s southeast further complicates the problem. As Rubin (2016: 53-4) clarifies, now Istanbul is the city with the most Kurdish population in all Turkey, while some major cities in Western Turkey such as Adana, Ankara and Izmir are home to sizable Kurdish population. Hence, in a situation that Istanbul city is home to more Kurds than Diyarbakir, it is not easy to answer the question posed by Ayhan that where is Kurdistan.

Indeed, the territorial problem of Kurdistan remains a main obstacle for any peace process, as Turkish history has proved how sensitive Turkish psyche is towards the sanctity of Turkey’s territory. One of the two premises Candar (2003: 60) underlines for ultimate resolution of Kurdish issue is “when Kurds will also have their independent nation-state”. However, even in the case of deciding to give Kurds their state, solving the question of where the boundaries of this nation-state are, proves a problematic task.

## **6.8. SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF PEACE PROCESS AND TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

Different aspects of the PKK issue are already discussed; however, the question remains, what will be the impact of success or failure of resolving the Kurdish issue in Turkey on the relations between Turkey and IK. Apparently, PKK issue has haunted the relations since their inception and continues to do so as long as the problem is not solved. The impacts of success in resolving the problem are presented below, followed by the outcomes of failure in achieving any resolution.

Successful resolution of Kurdish problem in Turkey benefits the relations on different levels. Firstly, Turkey will be free from a century-old problem that has cost the country dearly in terms of human lives, politically, and economically (Faraj<sup>182</sup>). Simultaneously, IK and its national aspiration cease to be regarded as a threat (Mala Omer<sup>183</sup>) and relations enter a new phase of development, where narrow security-oriented considerations are not overshadowing all other aspects and result in limiting the progress. Hence, relations are freed from security-

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<sup>182</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>183</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

imposed restrictions, the constant Turkish and PKK pressure on IK is eased (Adel<sup>184</sup>) and consequences of their military confrontations will not damage IK.

Secondly, Turkish accession to the EU will be easier after solving the Kurdish question and eventually turns IK into Europe's neighbour (Mantek<sup>185</sup>). Although Turkish accession to the EU has many other obstacles and the EU itself is struggling with many internal problems the latest one being the UK's decision to leave it (Brexit); nevertheless, resolving the Kurdish issue removes a major obstacle ahead of Turkey's accession and brings the project closer to reality. Eventually Turkey's accession will have significant impact both on human rights aspects and economy of both Turkey and IK despite the fact that both Turkey and the EU seems to have relinquished such dreams.

Thirdly, as argued by interviewees such as: Selcin<sup>186</sup>; Rasul<sup>187</sup>; Falah Mustafa<sup>188</sup>; Hassan Ahmed Mustafa<sup>189</sup>; and Mantek<sup>190</sup>, success will boost the already existing economic relations in several ways. It enhances the safety of energy routes, helps Turkey to get cheap energy from IK and become an energy hub, eases the social and economic progress and mingling through increasing the economic and trade level and number of border gates and travellers, helps the economy and tourism of Turkey's southeast, returns the IK territories currently under PKK control that could be benefitted for tourism as well as oil and mineral explorations, and further facilitates and guarantees IK's trade and interactions with the West through Turkey.

Finally, success of the process can have further political gains for Turkey, IK as well as the PKK. It can turn Turkey's Kurds and even PKK into influential political actors and result in establishment of a Kurdish region that can eventually become an influential source of support for Iraqi Kurds (Pira<sup>191</sup>). Meanwhile, it can result in Ocalan's release from the prison (Cagaptay, 2015: 3). Moreover, due to improved status of Kurds in Turkey and the PKK-Turkey reconciliation, Turkey's relation with Iraqi, Syrian and Iranian Kurds can improve tremendously. Hence, scenarios like confederation between IK and Turkey (Gungor<sup>192</sup>) or a

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<sup>184</sup> Head of Sarenj Centre and university lecturer: 24 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>185</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>186</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>187</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>188</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>189</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>190</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>191</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>192</sup> TRT Turk Canal Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

Turkish-Kurdish commonwealth (Cagaptay, 2015: 3) can turn into reality in case of break-up of Iraq and Syria in future. In other words, a Turkish-Kurdish alliance can emerge that boosts bilateral cooperation and increases both sides power in the region, especially Turkish power and influence in Iraq, Iran and Syria.

It should, however, be stated that some are still worried that even with success of peace process, due to PKK's rivalry with KDP, problems will arise between them for control and influence among Kurds (Barkey, 2015: 6-8). Such worries are based on historic and current rivalries between these two forces in the Kurdish region. Indeed, both KDP and PKK have manifested their discomfort and rivalry towards each other in different ways. In Syria, the rivalry is manifested in PKK's support for PYD, and KDP's support for "KDP affiliated groups, such as El-Party, Syrian Free Kurds Party, Kurdistan Unity Party, and Kurds Freedom Party; which are currently united under name of Kurdistan Democrat Party of Syria (KDP-S)" (Cifci, 2014). This rivalry is further reflected in PYD's monopolization of power and ignorance of pro-KDP forces, and KDP's attempt to pressure PKK and PYD through digging of a trench in the border with *Rojava* in April 2014 (Tastekin, 2014) and frequent impositions of blockades on Syrian Kurds through closing the border crossing (Flach, 2016). The tensions have heightened after PKK and PYD built their presence in Sinjar (Shengal in Kurdish), the main Yazidi settlement in Iraq, and organized the locals in Sinjar Resistance Forces (YBS) after 2014 ISIS offensives (Tastekin, 2015). PKK and PYD further frustrated the KDP with their suggestions of building a canton-style self-rule in Sinjar. Evidently, KDP slammed this proposal in a statement that criticized the PKK-PYD interference in Kurdistan region (Sahin, 2015a), and in an interview with Daily Sabah (Sahin, 2015b), Masrour Barzani, chancellor of Kurdistan Region's Security Council at the time, openly asked the PKK to leave Qandil and the PYD to leave Sinjar.

In addition, the KDP-PKK rivalry is manifested in statements criticizing the other and in their pro-AKP versus pro-Baghdad-Iran stances. For instance, Duran Kalkan, an Azeri leadership member of the KCK, in an interview with the party's TV in April 15, 2015 criticized the centralised administration of IK and in particular the KDP, stating that a centralised dictatorship could not rule in IK. In response, KDP politburo issued a statement next day that accused PKK of being the most centralised and totalitarian party and accused it of trying to further divide Kurdistan in the difficult time of fighting ISIS (Aziz, 2015a). This rivalry has even turned KDP more pro-AKP and PKK-PYD more pro-Baghdad-Iran in their political

conduct. Barkey (2015: 4-5) claims, the more KDP feels challenged by the PKK, the more it tries to encourage the Kurds in Turkey to vote for AKP. Similarly, PKK feels threatened by KDP, as the already mentioned PKK-HDP statement, asking Barzani not to intervene on Ankara's behalf demonstrates and in response attempts to check KDP's authority through other means. Cemil Bayik's defense of Iraq's territorial integrity in a statement claiming that "Iraq must remain a united country in order to defeat ISIS" (Hawramy, 2014), Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi's praise for PKK's role in saving the civilians (Xendan, 2014c) and claims that Iraqi government pays the salaries of the PKK-PYD organized fighters in Sinjar (Iraqi News Website, 2016) are all examples of PKK counteraction against KDP.

However, everyone does not agree with the view that the KDP-PKK rivalry will result in problems in case of the resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Kurdish politicians interviewed during the fieldwork, such as Pira<sup>193</sup>, Rasul<sup>194</sup>, and Gur<sup>195</sup>, were either rejecting the idea altogether or were suggesting that political rivalry through utilizing democratic means is acceptable if it does not lead to conflict and armed struggle. Thus, Kurdish national sentiment is a major reason behind Kurdish disdain towards internal Kurdish conflict. For this reason, Ayhan<sup>196</sup> referred to enhanced national awareness among Kurds as a major impediment for any future intra-Kurdish conflict and Zozani<sup>197</sup> stressed that if any party creates problem in future, it will be regarded as traitor to the Kurdish cause. Moreover, as Pira<sup>198</sup> stated, any peaceful resolution of Kurdish issue in Turkey involves PKK's disarmament that eventually permits political rather than armed resolution of PKK-KDP rivalry.

Furthermore, there are events that support the arguments advocating the possibility of future cooperation and not war between PKK and KDP. Cooperation of all Kurdish groups in the fight against ISIS in Kobani, Sinjar, and Kirkuk, and immediate end to PKK and KDP-I clash that occurred in May 24, 2015 in the border areas of IK with Iran (EKurd.net, 2015) was mainly due to widespread Kurdish public and political parties' discontent over it, are just two examples. Meanwhile, the fact that in spite of presence of both the KDP and the PKK-PYD forces in areas like Sinjar and their tense political rivalry so far, no military clashes have

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<sup>193</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>194</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>195</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>196</sup> Head of International Middle East Peace Research Centre (IMPR): 13 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>197</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>198</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil.

occurred is a positive sign for future. In an interview with Al-Monitor, a Peshmerga commander affirmed the visible presence of PKK in Sinjar and criticized its conduct, but affirmed, “Masoud Barzani told us not to fight with the PKK. We don’t want fratricide. Never. That is President Barzani’s red line” (Bozarslan, 2015).

Through more experience of mutual coexistence, as Bozarslan (2014: 12) asserts, PKK and KDP should finally formulate the way to respect each other’s autonomies and sensitivities. As Abdusalam Rashid Ismael<sup>199</sup>, an interviewee, claimed, the culture of tolerance and recognition is still at the process of developing, especially among Turkey’s Kurds and in future it will grow and will make cooperation easier. Hence, it could be argued that due to probable disarmament of PKK in case of success of peace process, and the economic rewards cooperation will bestow on both sides, as well as growing national awareness among Kurds it is more likely to witness cooperation rather than confrontation between the PKK and the KDP, though their rivalry for winning Kurds will continue ideologically and politically within democratic means.

Possible impacts of success of peace process on T-IK relations and the involved actors are already discussed. It is evident that impacts are mainly positive that further boost the relations. Failure of the peace process, on the other hand, is expected to keep the impact of the existent security-related negative factors on the relations: it will not end the relations. Since as Mantek<sup>200</sup> argued, the relations have existed at the difficult times of 1990s and much before the peace process start. Nevertheless, the failure perpetuates the Kurdish issue-related costs for both Turkey and IK, including all the ones discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In essence, the relations remain hostage to security considerations and, therefore, cannot fully be developed. To better understand the impacts, in the following it is attempted to shed light on the failure’s repercussions for bilateral trade, and Kurdish politics, and investigate the possibility of Turkey ending the relations with IK.

Unresolved Kurdish problem means continuous insecurity in the border areas and, as explained by Rasul<sup>201</sup>, this can considerably reduce the chances of increasing the border gates and trade level. Certainly, trade and economic relations continue but there will be negative consequences. The greatest impact will be on the energy trade. In July 29, 2015 the pipeline

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<sup>199</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG’s Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>200</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>201</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil.



carrying the IK crude oil through Turkey was blown up in Shernakh area by the PKK (Rudaw, 2015d). This incident alludes to what lies ahead when PKK decides to prevent the energy flow from IK to Turkey that would have detrimental economic consequences.

Nevertheless, continuous military presence of PKK, Turkish military attacks on Kurds in Turkey and border areas of IK and polarization of Kurdish camp are issues that will continue to have impact on the politics of IK and the Kurdish camp. Rasul<sup>202</sup> argues that although trade will continue, persistence of the conflict and victimization of Turkey's Kurds continues to have socio-psychological impacts on Iraqi Kurds, resulting in demonstrations and campaigns in support of their brethren in Turkey. In addition, it creates a dilemma for the KRG in its relations with Turkey, as the negative public opinion towards Turkey can restrict KRG's freedom of action in relation with Turkey. Indeed, the researcher has viewed significant increase in writings critical of Barzani and KDP's closeness to Turkey and AKP in Kurdish social media pages at times that anti-Kurdish statements and operations of Turkish state increase. While sometimes these anti-Barzani and KDP sentiments are politically incited by KDP' rival parties in IK, nevertheless, they are utilizing the Kurdish national sentiments for their success and these feelings can always be incited for pressuring the IK parties and institutions.

Moreover, security considerations can increase the divisions and rivalries among the Kurdish parties, and via taking into consideration the current closeness of PUK, PKK and Change Movement to Baghdad-Iran front, and KDP to Turkey front, bleak scenarios can be suggested by some analysts for future. The possibilities of PKK-KDP conflict are already discussed; however, as Forat<sup>203</sup> suggested, Kurdish infighting is against Kurdish national interests and its possibility is quite low, "but I am still afraid, because of the external intervention. Historically, the states around us have done this to us". Therefore, all issues considered no one could argue with certainty that there will be no possibility of Kurdish fratricide between any of IK parties and PKK or among IK parties in future. Indeed, sensitivity of Turkey to the unresolved Kurdish question and radical changes increasing the regional rivalry and Kurdish parties' dependence on their external allies for security are factors that enhance the possibility of future Kurdish fratricide.

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<sup>202</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>203</sup> Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK: 20 May 2013, Diyarbakir.

Finally, a question worthy to be considered is whether prioritization of security in the relations can lead to a situation similar to 1990s and earlier whereby Turkey totally or to a great extent ignores IK and attempts to conduct the relations through alternative actors, like Baghdad or Sunni Iraqis. Considering the regional developments and the increasing influence of Kurds, especially the Iraqi Kurds, it is quite unlikely that security factor leads to such a scenario. As Falah Mustafa<sup>204</sup> stated, the situation has changed and now Kurds are officially manning the borders and KRG cannot be ignored anymore. Moreover, Turkey knows well that it continues to need Iraqi Kurds as long as the Kurdish issue in Turkey is unresolved, Iraq is under Shiite influence and Turkish businesses need IK's market (Kaya<sup>205</sup>).

Furthermore, as Mala Omer<sup>206</sup> explained, Turkey knows well that KRG has prevented PKK from turning KR cities and towns into its bases, and also knows that economic relations are beneficial for Turkey as well. He further explained that even if Kurds in Iraq establish a state, they would not seek the incorporation of Turkey's Kurdistan into their state, just as Arab state of Kuwait does not want to be united in a country with Iraq. Hence, providing more reasons for Turkey to continue the relations with IK, regardless of Turkey's Kurdish problem. In addition, as Faraj<sup>207</sup> asserted during the interviews, in case Turkey decides to stop relations with Iraqi Kurds, "we will not be the main loser, but we may have less benefit". This is due to the fact that IK can find alternatives in Baghdad, Iran or even a future Kurdish region or state in Syria. Indeed, Barzani visiting the PKK-PYD guerrillas in Makhmur and praising their role in fighting ISIS alongside the Kurdish Peshmerga in August 2014 (Xendan, 2014a) at a time that Turkey did not act promptly in defence of Erbil city and KRG at the face of ISIS offensive, proves that even PKK and PYD can become alternatives in critical conditions, a message that may be well-received by Turks.

## **6.9. KIRKUK-TURKMEN ISSUE AND TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

Turkey's engagement with Iraqi Turkmen in the Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq prior to 2003 is already discussed. Meanwhile, Turkey's reasons behind bolstering the Turkmen

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<sup>204</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>205</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>206</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>207</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

community and using them against Iraqi Kurds, especially the KDP are elaborated accordingly. Turkey's focus shifted towards Kirkuk and the Turkmen population in the disputed territories as the Operation Iraqi Freedom started in 2003 without Turkish involvement. Since then, Turkmen and Kirkuk have become inseparable issues and are infused in such a way that could be examined at one frame. This section attempts to investigate their combined impact on T-IK relations as follows. First a brief history of Kirkuk city and its components is provided that sheds light on Kirkuk's significance, its diverse population make up, their claims over the city and their suggestions for its future status. Later, the research attempts to focus on the problems Kirkuk-Turkmen issue have created for T-IK relations. This covers both the problems related to the future of the city and its components and problems resulted from sensitivities of both Turkey and Iraqi Kurds towards Kirkuk-Turkmen issue that turns it into a security question for both sides. Then, this section assesses the possible future impacts of Kirkuk-Turkmen issue on the relations between Turkey and IK.

### **6.9.1. Kirkuk: History and Suggested Scenarios for Future**

Kirkuk is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious oil-rich city that plays a central role in many political calculations of statesmen in Iraq and beyond. As Hijran Kazanci<sup>208</sup>, ITF representative in Ankara at the time of interview, stated, Kirkuk problem involves the city's components, KRG, Baghdad, regional powers, and the international powers all at the same time. Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and Christians are all living in Kirkuk city and have their own narratives of the city's past and prescriptions for its future. The fact that Kirkuk contains 12% of Iraq's proven oil reserves (International Crisis Group, 2006: 2) and was the heart of the country's oil industry until Basra oil fields were exploited in 1950s (Knights and Ali, 2010: 1-2) has tremendously enhanced the sensitivity and conflict over the city and its resources.

Indeed, protecting the city's oil wealth was the major motive behind Iraqi governments' campaigns aiming at altering the city's demography in favour of the Arabs. These campaigns, known as 'Arabization' campaigns, are generally defined as forced displacement of hundreds

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<sup>208</sup> ITF Representative in Turkey: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

of thousands of Kurdish, Turkmen, and Assyrian Christians of the city and bringing in Arabs from other parts of Iraq to replace them (Human Rights Watch, 2004). However, Arabization was multi-dimensional and in addition to forced displacement, included change of Kirkuk's borders, destroying Kurdish neighbourhoods, providing monetary and land incentives to Arabs brought into Kirkuk and taking away the land of those forced to leave and making non-Arabs to register as Arabs (Anderson, 2009: 4-5).

Anderson and Stansfield (2009: 30-42) count five waves of Arabization that were conducted in the periods: 1925-1958, 1963-1968, 1968-1974, 1975-1987, and 1987-2003, which mainly targeted the Kurdish population of the city. While many Arab families were brought to the city through receiving financial incentives from the Iraqi government, there were some Arabs who migrated to the city for economic reasons. These economic migrants and Turkmens were employed in the city's oil industry, while the local Kurds were discriminated against and were not employed (Letayf, 2011: 67).

Meanwhile, Arabization included the manipulation of Kirkuk governorate's borders to the advantage of its Arab population. As a part of this process, in 1972 the Kurdish districts of Kalar, Kifri and Chamchamal were detached from Kirkuk, shrinking the governorate's size from 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> to 9,679 km<sup>2</sup>, while the governorate's name was changed to 'Ta'mim' (Moris *et al.*, 2015: 9). The statistics in table No 1 are clear indications of the drastic changes Arabization imposed on the city's population make up.

**Table No 1: Comparison of 1957, 1977, and 1997 Censuses (Anderson and Stansfield, 2009: 43)**

	<b>1957 Census</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>1977 Census</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>1997 Census</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Kurds	187,593	48	184,875	38	155,861	21
Arabs	109,620	28	218,755	45	544,596	72
Turkmens	83,371	21	80,347	17	50,099	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>388,829</b>		<b>483,977</b>		<b>752,745</b>	

After the fall of Saddam's regime, the situation changed and a good number of people who had been forced out of the city returned to Kirkuk. The research has already discussed the Kurdish constitutional attempts to incorporate Kirkuk into the KRG and tense relations and military standoffs between Erbil and Baghdad in this regard. As the 2007 constitutional

deadline for referendum in Kirkuk is already past, various solutions for the Kirkuk issue are suggested. Morris *et al.* (2015, 23) put forward six options as follows:

- (i) Kirkuk stays outside the KRG,
- (ii) Kirkuk becomes a federal region,
- (iii) Kirkuk incorporates in to KRG, but preserves special administrative status,
- (iv) Kirkuk remains outside KRG, but preserves special administrative status,
- (v) Kirkuk incorporates into KRG, and
- (vi) Kirkuk receives an interim special status.

In addition to such suggestions that deal with the overall fate of the governorate, Saeed (2015: 12) suggests ‘consociational democracy’ as the proper model for the internal administration of the governorate by its components. The views of Kirkuk’s main components on the past and future of their city are presented below, followed by the stance of Turkey to clarify how Kirkuk-Turkmen issue causes problem for the T-IK relations.

### **6.9.2. Kurds**

The fate of Kurds in Iraq and the fate of Kirkuk are in many ways intertwined. Turcan (2011: 88) argues that Kurdish-Baghdad disputes are centred on management of oil resources, type of the federalism, handling of armed forces, security and foreign affairs, and all these issues are directly related to Kirkuk. For Kurds Kirkuk has been and is a part of Kurdistan historically and geographically. The city has such a symbolic value for them that Mulla Mustafa Barzani called it “the heart of Kurdistan” and Jalal Talabani called it “the Jerusalem of Kurdistan” (Rafaat, 2008: 262). Kurds have been subject to cruel campaigns of *Anfal* and Arabization in the city and have struggled for controlling it throughout their modern history. As KDP’s Politburo message commemorating the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Kurdish Uprising states, in 1970’s Kurds sacrificed everything for Kirkuk (Xebat, 2014).

Kurds refer to historical data and maps as well as post-2003 election results to prove their point, to the extent that in a meeting of Iraq’s Governing Council Jalal Talabani put an Ottoman era map on the table demonstrating that Kirkuk was included in Kurdistan’s territory to prove this point (Raphaeli, 2015). Meanwhile, Kurds acknowledge the presence of other ethnic and religious groups in Kirkuk, but for them Kirkuk has a Kurdistan identity. As Masoud Barzani argued, “Kirkuk is a Kurdistan city, just like any other Kurdish city in the region” (EKurd Daily, 2009).

In order to fulfil their dream of incorporating Kirkuk into the Kurdish administered areas, Kurds emphasized the implementation of articles 58 of the TAL and 140 of the Iraqi constitution. However, various factors including the unwillingness of Baghdad and administrative-obstacles it created for implementation of the article 140, accounted and unaccounted difficulties in the process of implementing it, and local, regional and even international opposition have so far prevented Kurds from attaching Kirkuk to KRG through constitutional means (Moris *et al.*, 2015: 17-22). However, Kurds succeeded in controlling the Kirkuk city in 2014, as Iraqi army collapsed and deserted its bases in the face of ISIS offensives in Mosul and other Sunni Arab areas of Iraq. Baghdad's collapsed army was in no way capable of defending the city and as the result Iraq showed no opposition towards Kurdish control of the city (Werz and Hoffman, 2014: 29). It is worth noting that Kurdish forces did not control the whole Kirkuk province, as ISIS succeeded in capturing 45% of the governorate mainly in those Sunni Arab districts that were deserted by the Iraqi army (Moris *et al.*, 2015: 14). As already mentioned, Kurds lost Kirkuk and the disputed territories in 2017 and so far have been unable to send back the Kurdish *Peshmerga* or security forces to these areas for the sake of joint policing with Iraqi army and security forces.

In addition to its symbolic significance, Kurds are accused of having an eye on Kirkuk due to its oil resources. In response, Kurds emphasize on the symbolic importance of the city, the geopolitical reality that denies Kurds exporting the Kirkuk oil without Iraqi and regional cooperation, and the fact that Iraq's oil wealth, even those located in the Kurdistan Region belong to all Iraqis according to the constitution and the money will not go to the pockets of the Kurds alone (Anderson, 2009: 11). Nevertheless, Kurds are well aware of the significance of Kirkuk's oil, both economically and as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Baghdad (Oguz, 2016: 175). Indeed, after ISIS offensives Kurdish forces moved towards securing the oil industry and controlled the North Oil Company in Kirkuk, informing the employees that they are working under KRG and not Baghdad (Rudaw, 2014d). Probably controlling Kirkuk and its oil fields was a major incentive behind Barzani's calls for independence at the time, as Tanchum (2015) mentions, it was after controlling Kirkuk and its oil pipelines that Barzani declared "from now on, we will not hide that the goal of Kurdistan's independence".

However, ISIS turned the focus of its attacks on Kurdistan Region and as people fleeing the war zones in Sunni Arab areas took refuge in Kirkuk and KRG-controlled areas, the situation changed and Kurds faced new challenges in controlling the city. The first problem was

increasing number of Internally Displaced People (IDP) taking refuge in Kirkuk city. Numbering around half a million by January 2015, these mainly Arab IDPs were beyond what Kirkuk could normally cope with and city officials were frequently expressing their concerns on the issue (Rudaw, 2015e). Meanwhile, consequences of increase in the number of Arabs in the city and fears of ISIS sleeping cells among them aside, Kurds would have had a difficult time convincing them to return to their usually ruined villages and towns in the future. Moreover, Shiite militia of *Hashd al-Shabi* or Popular Mobilization Forces that is founded and sponsored by the Iraqi state and has many Shiite Turkmen members in Kirkuk province and towns who had challenged Kurdish control over the city. Indeed, in last months of 2015 and early months of 2016 several clashes occurred between the Kurdish forces and Shiite militia in the town of Tuz Khurmatu, 78 kilometres South of Kirkuk that resulted in dozens of casualties from both sides (Chulov, 2016; Reuters, 2016; Husameddin, 2016).

Moreover, Kurds are not unified in the city and party rivalries make it difficult for the Kurdish leaders to make any concessions in resolving the Kirkuk issue. As noticed by Romano (2006: 214), the rivalry was present in the background since Kurds dominated the city in 2003. Even the KDP and the PUK officials in Kirkuk who were interviewed by Rudaw (2013) admitted the presence of party rivalry as a major reason behind failure of the city's incorporation to the Kurdistan Region. Meanwhile, the rivalry makes the Kurdish parties cautious over their stances towards the city's future, as they try to avoid being criticised on nationalistic basis by the rival parties and let them champion the Kurdish cause. Change Movement's leader's criticism of both Barzani and Talabani in a speech he delivered in presence of his party supporters from Kirkuk and Diyala on 18 June 2013 is a clear example of how Kurdish parties try to capitalise the Kurdish national sentiments at the expense of other parties. Nawshirwan Mustafa linked the failure in regaining the disputed territories to the "personal and factional interests" (Zebari, 2013b) and stated that:

Barzani was afraid that the balance of power might turn against him with the return of these regions to Kurdistan and the participation of their representatives in the Kurdish parliament in a way that favours the PUK. This would not be in line with his interests and undermines his power. Meanwhile, Talabani wanted to please the Arabs, Turkmen and neighbouring countries like Iran and Turkey to support his candidacy for the Iraqi presidency.

Moreover, in addition to party rivalries, a new approach emerged in Kirkuk that was popular among some Kurdish residents of the city. Many Kirkuk residents felt they were ignored and victimised by both Baghdad and Erbil as their views were neglected and the salaries and petrodollar budget of the city were not paid properly. As Max (2015) states, "Kirkuk is owed

over \$1.37 billion for 2014 and 2015 regional development funds and ‘petrodollar’ royalties that the Iraqi federal government budgets for oil-producing provinces”. As Baghdad failed to deliver financially while tended to interfere in the city’s administration a proposal was promoted by the former Kurdish Governor of Kirkuk, Najmedin Karim, that demanded turning Kirkuk into an independent region (Kurdistani, 2016). Even though this view had some support inside the city, it was harshly criticised by some Kurdish intellectuals. They considered it as a threat to IK’s geographic integrity and believed it would be legally difficult and even impossible to incorporate an independent Kirkuk Region into the Kurdistan Region (Kurdistani, 2016).

Hence, it is evident that majority of the Iraqi Kurds still view Kirkuk as an inseparable part of Kurdistan and seek the resolution of the problem in incorporating the city into the KRG. Meanwhile, KRG acknowledges that other components have a historic presence in the city and attempts to convince them that they will be fairly treated if Kirkuk becomes a part of the KRG administered territory. As Masoud Barzani stated, Kurds will be generous in sharing the administrative posts of the city with Arabs and Turkmen if the city is attached to Kurdistan (EKurd Daily, 2009).

### **6.9.3. Turkmens**

Similar to Kurds, Turkmens have their own claims over the Kirkuk city. They claim that Mosul *vilayet* was a Turkmen rather than Kurdish or Arab *vilayet* and stress that Kurdish arrival to the urban areas including Kirkuk is quite recent (International Crisis Group, 2006: 4-5). Meanwhile, Kirkuk has a great symbolic value for Turkmen, since it “symbolizes the past glories of Ottoman rule” and Turkmen socio-political and economic dominance in the region and at the same time connects the “imagined community stretching from Sinjar in the west to Khanaqin in the east” (Anderson, 2009: 6-7).

In a similar reasoning with Kurds, Turkmen have been the victim of Iraqi governments’ Arabization campaigns, though to a lesser degree. However, Turkmens claim being victimized by Kurds as well. Indeed, a historic incidence is still casting its shadows on the Turkmen-Kurdish relations in Kirkuk and ignites Turkmen mistrust towards Kurds. Turkmen refer to this event as “massacre” (Turcan, 2011: 98). Nevertheless, as Anderson and Stansfield (2009: 33-34) explain, the event was related to Iraqi politics in post-1958 coup,



and after accidental collapse of a roof killing 20 Turkmen on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1959, three days of unrest and ethnic Kurdish-Turkmen clashes followed that included mortar attacks on Turkmen residential areas by Kurdish forces in the Iraqi army. It is claimed that 31 to 70 people died and 130 injured during the clash. Nonetheless, Turkmen were not the only victim of this incident as they claim, due to the fact that among the 28 people executed in relation to the incident, 24 were Kurdish and many Kurdish families, especially the notable ones fled the city to avoid being assassinated by the Turkmen secret organizations (Anderson and Stansfield, 2009: 34). Moreover, class discrimination is listed as a major reason behind the incident, due to the fact that Arabs and Turkmen were easily employed and were holding the administrative and economic power positions while Kurds were terribly discriminated against (Anderson and Stansfield, 2009: 70-71).

Turkmen discontent is not limited to this historic event. They have coined the term ‘Kurdify’ or ‘Kurdification’ that rhymes with ‘Arabization’ in reference to Kurdish attempts to tilt the Kirkuk population makeup in their favour and strengthen their position following post 2003 Kurdish dominance (International Crisis Group, 2006: 5; Anderson and Stansfield, 2009: 67). Oguz (2016: 168-9) claims that Turkmen have been the major victim of both Arabization and Kurdification campaigns and believes that ISIS’ offensive helped the Kurds to finalize their Kurdification process through controlling Kirkuk militarily (Oguz, 2016: 178). Furthermore, Kurdification is located within a three steps Kurdish plan, containing counterbalancing the Turkish influence in Kirkuk, Kurdification and finally seizure of Kirkuk and heading towards independence (Oguz, 2016: 182-3).

Turkmen victimization accounts are usually coupled with Turkmen statements that tend to exaggerate the Turkmen population and geographical presence in Iraq for justifying their claims of Kirkuk ownership as well as Turkmen claims that they are underrepresented in Kirkuk city’s administration and governmental organs. Anderson and Stansfield (2009: 56-62) refer to some of Turkmen claims towards their population, especially in Kirkuk. Based on such claims, Ahmed Muratli, head of ITF’s representation in Ankara in 2005, argued that even considering the most modest estimations, Turkmen constitute 6% of Iraqi population and as such deserve to have their own region or control one of Iraq’s governorates (Demirelli, 2005). However, ITF gained just 0.87% of the votes in Iraq’s 2005 elections (Atlantic Council, 2009: 18) and even if it is considered that the same number of voters did vote for other parties, the Turkmen population will not cross 2% of the country’s population.

Moreover, Anderson (2009: 13-17) refutes Turkmen claim of underrepresentation in Kirkuk, as he argues that even based on data presented by ITF itself, Turkmen are fairly represented compared to their population and if there is underrepresentation in the security bodies, it is due to Turkmen failure to fill their quota.

Similar to Kurds, Turkmen have their own dreams for the future of Kirkuk. In the immediate aftermath of the 2003 war, for countering the Kurdish constitutional demands for ethnic federalism, Turkmen were asking for geographic federalism and if Shiites and Kurds get their regions, a Turkmen region that covered an area of land much larger than the disputed territory between Baghdad and Erbil (Demirelli, 2005). However, after realizing their limits, their real population, and their relative power in the area, Turkmen have shown leniency towards alternative options. That is the reason, ITF's representative in Ankara, Kazanci<sup>209</sup>, stated that if Kirkuk is administered directly from Baghdad "many rights of Kirkuk will be impoverished", while granting Kirkuk "a special status" will be the best option that gives people time to decide on the future of their city. Indeed, many Turkmen are currently supportive of the idea of turning Kirkuk into an independent region. For instance, ITF and the Turkmenli Party expressed their support for the idea, while two other Turkmen parties turned it down (Sattar, 2016).

As evident from Turkmen's shifting preferences and differences over the future of Kirkuk, Turkmen camp has its own shortcomings as well. As Haydar Hadi<sup>210</sup>, a Turkmen journalist, explained, approximately 60% of Turkmen are Shiite and support Iraqi Shiite parties, while the rest who are Sunni mainly support the ITF. He added that further to religious and political disunity, Turkmen population is scattered geographically and as a result they cannot sever their relations with any other Iraqi components. Moreover, Turkmen reliance on Turkey or seeking the Turkish help can portray the whole Turkmen community as Turkish lackeys in Iraq and target of harsh criticism of other Iraqi components (Lundgren, 2007: 91-93).

#### **6.9.4. Arabs**

Evidently Arab dominance in Kirkuk was the direct result of the Arabization campaigns, as Arabs did not have a prominent presence in the city similar to Kurds and Turkmen.

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<sup>209</sup> ITF Representative in Turkey: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>210</sup> Turkmen Journalist: 25 May 2013, Ankara.

Meanwhile, as many Arabs were brought to the city or migrated there from the Shiite Arab populated areas in south and central Iraq, Arabs currently living in Kirkuk are not homogenous and unified (Letayf, 2011: 71). However, Arabs view the city as a mosaic that represents the country's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nature and should remain the same (International Crisis Group, 2006: 5-6). As newcomers into the city, Arabs have traditionally favoured the city to remain as a part of Iraq to secure their prerogatives and presence in the city (Anderson, 2009: 7). Consequently, Arabs were quite vociferous in opposing the city's incorporation into the Kurdistan Region or establishment of an independent Kirkuk region. However, internal politics of Iraq and disunity of Kirkuk's Arabs has resulted in changes in the Arab position as well.

Seemingly, while opposition to Kirkuk's incorporation into KR is still uninterrupted, Sunni Arab population of Kirkuk is not willing to be administered by the Shiite dominated Baghdad either. Alternatively, they prefer Kirkuk to be a region less influenced by either Baghdad or Erbil (Moris *et al.*, 2015: 25). That is while, as evident from Maliki's military adventures in Kirkuk and Khanaqin prior to ISIS takeover of Mosul, Iraqi government is still willing to keep Kirkuk as part of Iraq. Even some Arab academics still believe that Kirkuk case will be solved under a strong centralized system and fervently oppose the establishment of an independent Kirkuk region (Abbas and Jassam, 2016: 316-322).

#### **6.9.5. Turkey and Securitization of Kirkuk-Turkmen Issue**

As elaborated above, Kirkuk has a special place in Kurdish national struggle and Kurds have proved that they are ready to risk all their achievements for its sake. However, it is not only the Kurds who care that much about Kirkuk, as Turks are equally sensitive towards it and this fact automatically bestows Kirkuk-Turkmen issue strategic importance in T-IK relations. Almost a century has passed since Turkey lost the Mosul *Vilayet*; nevertheless, Turks still find it difficult to come to terms with the reality and keep referring to their historic entitlement to the lost Ottoman territory. A recent irredentist claim of this type was pronounced by Erdogan on 17 October 2016 as he emphasized on Mosul's importance for Turkey and in response to Iraqi politicians stated, "if the gentlemen desire so, let them read the *Misak-i Milli* (National Oath [Pact]) and understand what the place means to us" (Khalidi, 2016). The document Erdogan referred to includes the historic Mosul *Vilayet* that involves Kirkuk as well, inside the Turkish territory.

Apart from Turkish historic grievances towards Kirkuk, there are three other factors that place Kirkuk-Turkmen issue at the centre of Turkish foreign policy calculations. Firstly, Turkey is afraid that through controlling Kirkuk, Kurdish dream of independence in IK becomes economically viable. Consequently, Turkey's Kurds will be influenced, and Turkey's integrity comes under threat (Ferris and Stoltz, 2008: 1). Secondly, Turkish affinity with Iraqi Turkmen puts the Turkish government under public pressure at times their Iraqi kins face problems or ask for Turkey's support. In this case, Turkey may even interfere militarily if an ethnic war erupts in Kirkuk (Atlantic Council, 2009: 15-16). Thirdly, Turkey needs to keep her influence in Kirkuk, both to have a say in the future of Iraq and have her own supporters and base in the regional rivalries of the Middle East (Oguz, 2016: 183). In other words, Kirkuk-Turkmen issue is simultaneously linked with Turkey's relations with Iraqi Kurds, Iraqi Turkmen, Baghdad, and the regional and international powers involved in regional rivalry with Turkey.

Due to interaction of these factors, Turkey's stance towards Kirkuk-Turkmen issue has undergone fluctuations. Evidently, prior to 2003 and in particular from 2003 to 2005, Turkey was vehemently opposing the Kurdish aspirations in Kirkuk and was using the Turkmen card and threats of military intervention to stop Kurds pursuing their dream of incorporation of Kirkuk to the Kurdistan region. Turkey wanted Kirkuk under the control of Baghdad and was even opposing the Kurdish demands for federalism (Lundgren, 2007: 89-90). At this phase, Kirkuk was referred to as Turkey's redline and Turkish officials were issuing threats towards Iraqi Kurds with regards to Kirkuk-Turkmen issue. For instance, Erdogan was warning Kurds that their attempts for annexing Kirkuk is playing with fire and Turkey's deputy chief of staff was predicting a bloody future if ethnic-based federalism takes root in Iraq (Gunter, 2011: 16). In this period, the Turkish emphasis was all focused on the Turkmen population and attempts were underway to train and arm the Turkmen, a policy seriously opposed by the Americans (Lundgren, 2007: 91-93).

On the other hand, three factors softened the Turkish stance towards Kurdish aspirations in Kirkuk and decreased Turkish sensitivity on the Turkmen and defence of their claims. These factors are: post 2003 Iraqi elections that revealed the real Turkmen size and influence, improved relations with IK, and developments in Iraqi and regional politics that made Baghdad government closer to Tehran and in the opposite camp with Turkey. Election results, developments of T-IK relations and domination of Baghdad by pro-Iranian Shiites are

already discussed in this research; nevertheless, their combined impact on Kirkuk-Turkmen issue is not explained. Due to the mentioned developments, while in 2003 Turkey was threatening to interfere militarily in Kirkuk, in 2014 when Kurds controlled the city and Barzani openly asked for referendum on Kurdish independence, Ankara expressed no serious concern (Park, 2014: 11). On the contrary, there were statements from senior Turkish officials, such as Erdogan and Celik, that tacitly acknowledge the Kurdish right of independence in Iraq <sup>211</sup>(Xendan, 2015a; Moore, 2014). In this regard, Turkey went so far that in disputes with Baghdad over Turkey's presence in Mosul and its participation in the Mosul Operation, Turkish Premier, Binali Yildirim, referred to Masoud Barzani as "the real owner of the region" (Idiz, 2016).

Turkish government's shift in the way it deals with Kirkuk-Turkmen issue is easily observable, but is this shift a pragmatist policy or represents sincere change in Turkey's political calculations towards Kirkuk-Turkmen issue? Evidently, the preceding discussion on identity reveals the inherent pragmatism in AKP-dominated Turkish stances towards Kurdish issue both in Turkey and Iraq. Shifting stance in the Kirkuk-Turkmen case can be explained in the same framework, based on the changing conditions on the ground, as stated above. For instance, Idiz (2016) links Ankara's pragmatism in dealing with Kirkuk issue, in spite of the concerns voiced by Turkish nationalists, to the regional rivalry. Similarly, Kaya<sup>212</sup> acknowledged that Turkish stance was aggressive previously, but rejected the idea that Turkish stance is changed. In his view, if more substantial developments occur in the future, Turkish position can change, but so far "Turkish position is not changed".

It is worth mentioning that nationalists in Turkey are still unyielding in their position towards Kirkuk-Turkmen issue. For instance, Yeniceri<sup>213</sup> emphasized that Turkmen issue should constitute one of the pillars in Turkey's relations with IK and Koruturk<sup>214</sup>, in the interview, referred to the fact that Kirkuk is still a disputed territory and criticized AKP's politics towards the Kirkuk-Turkmen issue. Moreover, irredentist claims of even AKP officials with regards to Mosul *vilayet* also proves that AKP can change its stance as well and act similar to ultranationalists if the conditions on the ground change in favour of an anti-Kurdish stance in Kirkuk. It is worth mentioning that while Turkish nationalists claim that Turkish identity is

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<sup>211</sup> In spite of such statements, the real response of Turkey towards the Kurdish referendum for independence in 2017 was quite tough and hostile.

<sup>212</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>213</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>214</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

not ethnic, the Turkish support for the Turkmen minority in Kirkuk is ironically a clear discrepancy in Turkey's state ideology (Lundgren, 2007: 89-90)

As noticed, Kirkuk-Turkmen issue was a major source of problem for T-IK relations. In this process, Turkey started quite aggressively in opposing the Kurdish aspirations and supported the Turkmen claims over the Kirkuk's Turkmen identity. Turkey has repeatedly threatened Iraqi Kurds with military intervention over Kirkuk, to the extent that Barzani threatened to intervene in Diyarbakir if Turkey continues her interference in Kirkuk. However, based on pragmatism and especially after improvements in relations with IK in 2008, Turkey preferred to keep a closed eye on Kurdish adventures in Kirkuk. It seems Turkey is well aware of the complexities of the situation and how difficult it is to force a solution on Kirkuk issue, and consequently avoids pressing forward for implementation of a specific solution. Nevertheless, Turkey's concerns as expressed by nationalists are still intact in the background and dramatic shifts in the situation will eventually change Turkey's position accordingly.

#### **6.9.6. Future of Turkmen-Kirkuk Issue and Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations**

It is clear that Kirkuk issue is a complex one that includes various local, regional and international actors. As a result, none of the various suggestions proposed for solving the debate over the status of the city have so far succeeded in getting widespread support. As Anderson (2009: 33) states, settling the Kirkuk issue needs substantial compromise from all parties involved in the issue, not only Kurds or any other component. In absence of such an all-agreed-on compromised solution that leave all parties happy and prevent Turkey and other regional powers from future interferences, Kirkuk-Turkmen issue continue to cast its shadow on the T-IK relations.

Evidently, Kirkuk-Turkmen issue's resolution will remove a major obstacle ahead of fully-fledged T-IK relations. However, the problem remains and as Adel<sup>215</sup> argued, as long as the issue is not resolved, setbacks and problems in the relations are very possible. Evidently, Turkey's and Kurdish reactions to the issue in the future, depends on the already discussed local, Iraqi and international factors. In this context as evident from the developments in the relations, Kirkuk-Turkmen issue sheds more negative effects on the relations when T-IK relations are weak, while it plays a lesser role when relations are better developed.

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<sup>215</sup> Head of Sarenj Centre and university lecturer: 24 April 2013, Erbil.

Noticeably, Kirkuk-Turkmen impact on T-IK relations and the impact of the latter on the former are reciprocal. This is the reason Mala Omer<sup>216</sup> argued that as T-IK relations improve, Turkey could bring the Kurdish and Turkmen views closer in Kirkuk and even unify them. Meanwhile, Hassan Mustafa<sup>217</sup> claimed that Turkish sensitivity is decreased due to improved relations and predicted that even in case of Kirkuk's incorporation to the KRG, if Turkmen were treated well, Turkey would be satisfied. Aziz (2015b: 318) who argues in favour of Kirkuk's incorporation into the Kurdistan Region claims that it is a better option for Turkmen as well. Stating the Kurdish and Turkmen fates are interconnected in Iraq, Aziz mentions three reasons to justify his suggestion. Firstly, Turkmen will have a better power position and significance inside KRG in comparison to Baghdad; secondly, they will be closer to Turkey geographically and can develop their links with Ankara much easier, and finally Kurds and Turkmen have more affinity both in Kirkuk and other areas, compared to Turkmen-Arab affinity.

Interestingly, there is similar understanding among some Turkmen. Hadi<sup>218</sup> stated that Turkmen are very nationalist and "if Turkmen rights are clearly stated in the [future] constitution of Kurdistan, it can play a big part in Turkmen's decision". Meanwhile, referring to centuries of Kurdish-Turkmen coexistence in Kirkuk and Erbil, Kazanci<sup>219</sup> referred to his role in supporting the Turkish decision to open consulate in Erbil. As he explained, opening the consulate in addition to benefitting Turkey and IK, "also is guarantee for Turkmen rights in the region". He further added, "Improvements in T-IK relations is in the benefit of Turkmen". The facts that in 2003 a BBC reporter noticed that very few Turkmen in the Kurdistan Region are supportive of Turkish military intervention to protect them (Lundgren, 2007: 93) and even a Turkmen party named Turkmen National Association was established by KDP's support in 2002 and this party is pro-Turkmen-Kurdish cooperation (Anderson and Stansfield, 2009: 69) are further proof that if T-IK relations improve, many Turkmen and Kurds are supportive of the idea of further Kurdish-Turkmen cooperation in a way that benefits both sides.

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<sup>216</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>217</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>218</sup> Turkmen Journalist: 25 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>219</sup> Iraqi Turkmen Front Representative in Turkey: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

## 6.10. CONCLUSION

PKK and Kirkuk-Turkmen issues both create security concerns for Turkey and IK. Their presence and impact on the relations is easily discernable from the time T-IK relations started up to now. However, the severity of their impact has been quite different. In the 1990-1998, period PKK issue was the main security concern for Turkey and played a great role in directing the relations. However, Turkmen issue in the Kurdistan Region gained priority following the capture of Ocalan until 2003, when Kirkuk-Turkmen issue was infused. As PKK resumed its activities in 2004, PKK coexisted with Kirkuk-Turkmen issue and both continued to affect the relations. While Turkey started to ease its stance towards Kirkuk-Turkmen issue after 2005, PKK issue was still intensely affecting the relations. Due to improved relations after 2008, the impact of the security threat emanating from PKK and Kirkuk-Turkmen issues diminished, but as long as these issues remain unresolved, T-IK relations remain under their influence and cannot thrive properly.

Relations have a big chance of improvement and progress if the Kurdish issue in Turkey is solved and the lengthy war of the PKK and Turkish government terminated. In addition to establishing peace, resolution of the PKK issue can bring back economic boom to the border areas and turn the mountainous border area and villages into summer and winter resorts for tourists. Meanwhile, security loses its prevalence in political calculations of Turkey and Iraqi Kurds while formulating their mutual relations. Hence, both sides can focus more on economic, social and political relations. On the contrary, if the PKK issue is not solved peacefully, then security concerns continue to overshadow the T-IK relations and halt substantive progress in the relations.

Similarly, peaceful resolution of the Kirkuk-Turkmen issue can push away a big obstacle ahead of normalization of the T-IK relations. If a solution is reached through negotiation that satisfies all the Kirkuk components, then Turkey and IK can focus on developing bilateral relations. Otherwise, the Kirkuk-Turkmen issue can also prioritize the security concerns times and times again in the relations.

Evidently when Kemalists are in power in Turkey security takes the driving seat in the relations and the PKK and Kirkuk-Turkmens issues become the prime issues steering the Turkish politics towards IK. This decreases the possibility of creating advanced cooperative relations between Turkey and IK. Meanwhile, Kurdish nationalism and national aspirations in



IK, especially sympathy towards Kurdish aspirations in Turkey and the goal of incorporating Kirkuk into the Kurdistan Region, further raise the alarms in Ankara and negatively affect the relations as Turks consider such aspirations as a threat on Turkish integrity. However, when pragmatists rule Ankara and Erbil and there are good political and economic incentives for T-IK cooperation, the security factor takes the back seat and becomes less visible in directing the bilateral relations. Nevertheless, as long as the security concerns are not addressed peacefully through negotiation and agreement, T-IK relations cannot reach their climax and threats of confrontation and deteriorations are always in the air.

As discussed, security factor has constantly played its part in shaping the policy options of both entities at different levels. In this regard, different methods are applied by both entities for allaying their security concerns and guaranteeing their survival and interests. As detailed in the conclusion chapter, realism and patron-client approaches are suggested in the literature to account for the role of security factor and methods applied for achieving security-oriented goals in T-IK relations. However, as already illustrated, security factor has been interacting with other factors, as evident from the role economy, identity, and external interventions have played in alleviating or intensifying the security concerns, and this interaction is explored in the conclusion chapter with the aim of providing a comprehensive theoretical framework. The role played by economy, as another inductively emerged analytical category is explored in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Seven: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC FACTORS ON TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

### **7.1. INTRODUCTION**

Economy is one of the factors that gained significance in the later periods of T-IK relations. In order to assess the impact of economic factor on the relations, the researcher has attempted to collect the relevant trade, investment and energy data. However, due to the fact that IK is officially a federal region in Iraq, Turkey's trade with IK is not calculated separately and is included in the country's relations with Iraq. As the result, this research analyses the size and significance of trade relations with IK based on trade with Iraq and the estimates of IK's share provided in the literature and by the interviewees. Meanwhile, as some sensitive data regarding the details of energy deals and precise detail of amount and type of imported and exported goods could not be obtained by the researcher in spite of several attempts, the research relies solely on the available data obtained during the fieldwork and in the literature.

This chapter first presents the chronological development of the economic relations through providing data on trade, investment and energy relations, followed by analysis of their impact on the relations and implications for the future relations.

### **7.2. EVOLUTION OF ECONOMIC EXCHANGE AND TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

When T-IK relations are viewed from the economic perspective, it soon becomes evident that while for Iraqi Kurds economic links with Turkey have always played a vital role, for Turkey economic relations with IK gained significance roughly in the last decade of the relations. Explaining the growth of bilateral economic relations and the data provided below sheds light on the dynamics shaping the evolution of the economic relations.

Evidently, prior to establishment of the Kurdish entity in Iraq, Turkey's trade with Iraq was all conducted through Baghdad. Indeed, Iraq was Turkey's biggest economic partner before Saddam's occupation of Kuwait. The international sanctions imposed on Baghdad and regarded by Turkey, cost Ankara dearly, as Turkey lost the substantial trade, amounting to USD 4.5 billion U.S. annually (Atlantic Council, 2009: 13).

As discussed earlier, until Saddam Regime's fall in 2003 despite being *de facto* independent, the Kurdish controlled region was also affected by the international sanctions, as it was officially a part of Iraq. It was simultaneously suffering from the sanctions and hostile economic measures imposed by Baghdad. Turkey was assisting Baghdad at times, through putting restrictions on flow of goods and people to and from IK and via attempting to find alternative corridors for its economic exchanges with Baghdad in order to circumvent the Kurdish region (Chorev, 2007: 4-5).

Throughout these years, as the result of sanctions Turkey-Iraq trade became quite insignificant. As the data in Figure No 6 reveals, in 1996, the trade was close to USD 220 million, which is quite insignificant compared to the USD 4.5 billion pre-1990s trade volume. This later rose to around USD940 million prior to Saddam's overthrow in 2003 (Fidan, 2016: 122), but it was in no ways matching the potential and expectations of both sides.

In the meantime, Turkey's economic policy towards IK in those years was influenced by Ankara's faith in Baghdad regaining its control over the North, namely the IK, the need for preserving Iraq's integrity, and utilising the economic card to win the support of the Kurdish parties in the fight against the PKK (Olson, 1995: 14-15; Aykan, 1996: 358). At this stage, IK had no substantial economic appeal for Turkey, as it was an unstable war-torn region with no developed infrastructure and economic resources and had no certain political future. On the contrary, the limited trade conducted through Turkey was working as the lifeline for IK and played a significant role both in political and economic life of the region.

During the period, IK's main revenue source was Habur (also called Ibrahim Khalil) border crossing with Turkey. Trucks entered from Turkey with food, pharmaceutical and other goods and each returned with 2 to 2.5 tons of petroleum and were taxed on both ways by the KDP that was in control of the border area and the crossing from Turkey (Kirisci, 1996: 28-29). Implementation of the oil for food programme further boosted this trade and was simultaneously beneficial for the economy of Turkey's southeast (Jenkins, 2008: 18-19). It is estimated that KDP was gaining USD750 million annually from border trade with Turkey (Chorev, 2007: 4), though in absence of official data this number cannot be verified. In comparison, PUK was gaining much less from border trade with Iran, and the ensuing economic imbalance was a major source of contention between the KDP and the PUK. As a result, sharing the custom revenues was always part and parcel of peace deals and agreements between the KDP and the PUK. For instance, in 1995 PUK linked the withdrawal of its forces

from Erbil to getting a fair share from the USD150,000 daily revenue of Habur (Gunter, 1996: 237). During the Kurdish civil war, Jalal Talabani, the leader of PUK, even called for the closure of Habur gate by Turkey, claiming that KDP is using the revenue accrued for purchasing the weapons that were being used in the civil war against the PUK (Olson, 1995: 19).

As it is evident, in the absence of national institutions capable of proper management of IK's resources, economy was more a source of contention and conflict for partisan gains rather than being a source of peace and prosperity for Iraqi Kurds. Meanwhile, Turkey's policy that was focused on security concerns over the PKK and attempting to bringing back Baghdad's control over the borders was further exacerbating the Kurdish internal rift through implementing patron-client politics in relations with Iraqi Kurds. Even the aids provided by Turkey to IK, such as USD13.5 million in 1993 (Chorev, 2007: 4-5) and USD12.5 million in 1995 (Kirisci, 1996: 30-32) were rewards for cooperation in fighting the PKK, rather than help for building IK's infrastructure or developing its economy.

The situation, however, had changed in 2003 as downfall of Saddam ended IK's control over its economy and resources. Prior to 2003 IK's economy was quite small and insignificant, nevertheless, Kurds were independently in charge of administering their tiny economy despite frequent meddling from Baghdad and neighbouring capitals. As Baghdad once again became the source of IK's budget after 2003, the situation changed, and IK's economic independence changed to economic dependence on Baghdad.

As discussed earlier, in the post-2003 new Iraq up to the budget raw in 2014, almost 95% of IK's budget was provided from the treasury of Baghdad. This was based on the agreement that 17% of Iraq's budget should be allocated to IK, while Kurds claim they always received less than 14% of the budget in reality. Even though initially due to the 2003 war, pre-war sanctions and the post-war insurgency Iraq's oil production level was not producing much revenue; nevertheless, production elevation and oil price raise from 2009 to mid 2014 were translated into substantial revenues for Iraq and consequently IK. In this period, budget rose in such a brisk manner that it almost doubled in the 2009-2013 period. It went from 70.2 trillion Iraqi dinars (USD60 billion) in 2009 to USD71.28 billions in 2010, USD82.65 in 2011, USD100.09 billion in 2012, and 138.4 trillion Iraqi Dinars or USD118.3 billions in 2013 (United Nation's Joint Analysis Policy Unit, 2013).

Kurdistan's share of this budget was such a substantial amount that made Habur's revenue in comparison irrelevant and insignificant. In 2010, KRG received 11.4 trillion Iraqi dinars or USD 9.2 billion, which had risen to 18.4 trillion Iraqi dinars or USD15 billion in 2013 (Mills, 2016: 27). According to Mills (2016: 27), 36.6% of the budget in 2013 was allocated to wages and salaries. Meanwhile, Kalkan (2011: 3) states that roughly 70% of the KRG budget is allocated to the 'current expenditure' and 30% to investment. Injection of such huge quantities of cash into the economy either as salary or as investment boosted the economic relations with Turkey in four major ways:

- (i) increasing the income and purchasing power of Kurdish families and turning IK into a good market for Turkish goods;
- (ii) turning IK into a favourite destination for Turkish companies, especially the construction firms that won lucrative tenders;
- (iii) making IK an employment centre for considerable number of skilled and non-skilled Turkish workers; and
- (iv) making IK the transit route for Turkish trade with the rest of Iraq and even Gulf countries.

Figure No 2 presents the data on Turkey's exports to Iraq, which clearly illustrates the role increased budget has played in boosting the volume of Turkish exports to Iraq. However, as Sayer Erbil<sup>220</sup>, Turkish trade attaché to Erbil at the time of interview, explained, there is no accurate official data on Turkey's exports to IK or imports from IK, either in Turkey or IK, and the numbers presented in the literature are just estimates made by experts. These estimates are quite diverse, and some even consider the changing annual trade levels in determining the IK's share of trade with Turkey. There are some estimates for specific years, for instance in 2014 and in a press conference in Erbil, Davutoglu claimed USD 8 billion out of USD 12 billion (or 66.5%) of Turkish trade with Iraq is with IK (Salih, 2014), Morlli and Pischedda (2014: 110) claimed 70% of 2011's trade was with IK, and Fidan (2016: 123) stated that IK trade share in 2007, 2011 and 2013 had been 50%, 61% and 67% respectively. Meanwhile, there are general estimates, claiming that 80% (Abdusalam Rashid Ismael<sup>221</sup>),

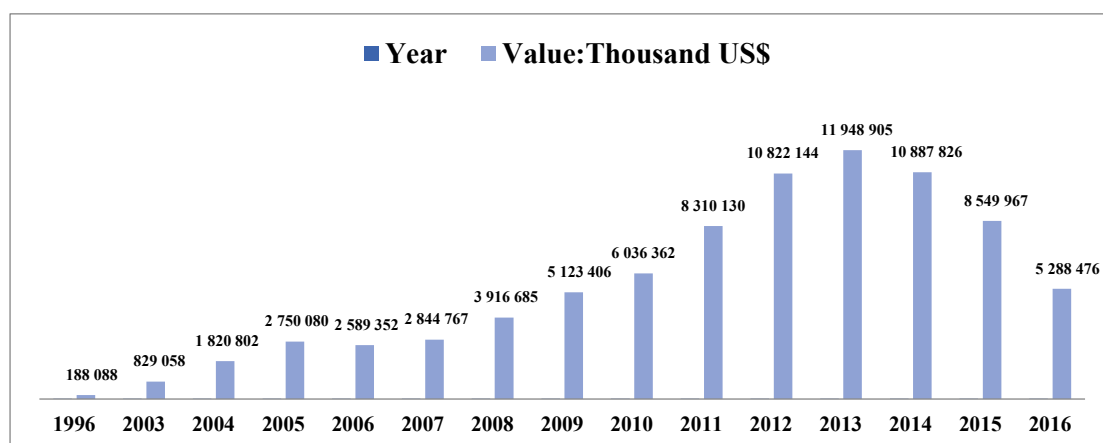
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<sup>220</sup> Turkish Trade Attaché in Erbil: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>221</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG's Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

70% (Jozel, 2014: 2), over 50% (Park, 2014: 12), or 50% (Barkey, 2010: 12) of the Turkish trade with Iraq is with the IK.

**Figure 2: Turkey's Export to Iraq (1996, 2003-2016 September)**



*Data Source:* Turkish Statistical Institute (2016)

As it is evident, estimates cover the 50 to 80 percent range and there is no way to verify their accuracy without hesitation. It gets more difficult, as in addition to being the gate to Iraqi market, IK works as a practical transit route for Turkish goods to the Arab countries of the Gulf, especially due to the limitations international sanctions have imposed on trade through Iran (Hasan Ahmed Mustafa<sup>222</sup>; Sayer Erbil<sup>223</sup>). Hence, due to practical reasons, probably until IK's formal independence no authentic formal data on the trade relations of Turkey and IK could be found and all the available data remain estimates. Therefore, this research has concluded through critical reflections to assess the trade relations based on the Turkey-Iraq trade data, as choosing any volume between 50% and 80% for T-IK trade is an unsystematic guesswork. Even choosing different percentages will not change the trend and just changes the number, as fluctuations and directions of charts will remain relatively intact.

As evident in Figure No 2 after remaining in around USD 2.5 billion for three years, Turkish exports to Iraq started to rise notably in 2008, with the rise of oil prices. Exports reached its peak in 2013 at almost USD12 billion. In IK, the impact of increased Turkish export, especially after 2008 was easily noticeable, as Turkish products constituted almost 80% of the goods in the IK market (Al-Sharikh, 2011: 121) and could be found everywhere in IK;

<sup>222</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>223</sup> Turkish Trade Attaché in Erbil: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

bazaars, supermarket shelves, shopping malls, and even the small grocery shops in the neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, while in the 1990s, Turkish exports were mainly food and pharmaceutical products; in this period, the list evolved and included diverse products, such as construction material, food and vegetables, furniture, clothing, dairy products, textile, meat, petroleum products, paper, electric appliances and many other food, cosmetic, industrial, and construction items (Kalkan, 2011: 3).

The outstanding success of the Turkish products is due to a number of factors. The main reason is good quality of Turkish products compared to many other products available in the market and geographic proximity of Turkey to the IK. As Fathi Modares<sup>224</sup>, KRG Trade Minister's economic relations advisor at the time of interview, explained, "Turkish products have the EC [European Community] standard" and can reach IK market fast. Furthermore, Turkish high-quality products have been exported everywhere, including the Western countries and Turkish products come with good maintenance and service as explained by Sayer Erbil<sup>225</sup>. Hence, the neighbouring countries cannot compete with Turkey in the free market of IK. Indeed, rentier Iraq is in no way capable of competing with Turkey (Barkey, 2010: 12), and Iran has its own limits in this commercial race. International sanctions and cumbersome bureaucracy in the borders made Iranian products and business with Iran less attractive for the IK. Arguing that in free market better quality and more attractive trade attract businessmen, Pira<sup>226</sup>, in the interview for this research, explained that Kurdish businessmen complain from the following bureaucratic problems in Iran that dissuade them from doing business with Iran which renders Turkey the upper hand in trade:

[Kurdish businessmen say that] in the Iranian border gates there is not a good mechanism in place to carry out their bureaucratic border crossing paperwork fast, and at the same time they were complaining that in the Iranian border there are a number of governments, the internal institutions of Iran, Islamic Republic's Revolutionary Guard, Iranian Army, and Police. Each of them is a government in itself and there is no specific institution for carrying out the work. Ok, there are some examples that products that are expiring fast are stopped for two days in the border. Then those products will expire. ... Secondly, there have been cases of problems occurring between two traders, an Iranian and a Kurdish one. The Kurdish traders have lost a lot as the Iranian partner has not paid the money and Iranian officials say that the trader has fled away and is not in Iran anymore, and there is no banking system or guarantee.

Having the upper hand in trade with Iraq and IK has big ramifications for Turkish economy. Exploring the growth rate of Turkish exports to Iraq and counting its share in total Turkish exports, further clarifies the significance of this trade for Turkey in economic terms. Figure

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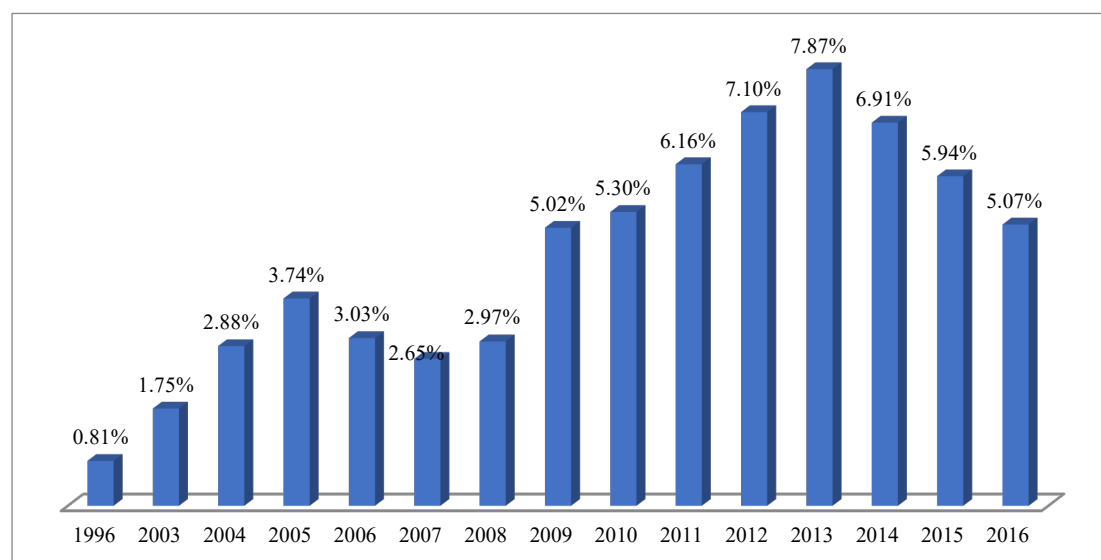
<sup>224</sup> KRG's Trade Minister Economic Relations Advisor: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>225</sup> Turkish Trade Attaché in Erbil: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>226</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil.

No 3 reveals how Iraq's share of Turkey's exports grew from less than 2% in 2003 to almost 8% in 2013, placing Iraq and IK at the top spots of Turkey's export destinations. However, as the trend in the figure 3 reveals, after 2013 Turkey's export to Iraq and Iraq's share in Turkey's total exports dropped. Similarly, trade level decrease is visible in 2013-2015 period and onward.

**Figure No 3: Export to Iraq's Percentage in Turkey's Total Export (1996, 2003-2016 September)**



Data Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (2016)

The mentioned 2% decline was resulted from a number of factors. These included, Erbil's tense relations with Baghdad peaked at Baghdad cutting KRG's share of Iraqi budget and economic confrontation of Iraqi government and the KRG from 2013 onward, deteriorating relations between Ankara and Baghdad due to heightened regional rivalry following the Arab Spring and Ankara's anti-Maliki stances with negative impacts on the trade relations, significant drop in oil price, ISIS' capture of Iraqi and Kurdish territory, plight of nearly two million internally displaced Iraqis and refugees from Syria taking shelter in IK, and incapability of the KRG to pay the civil servants' salaries, and the wages due to be paid to the oil companies working in the region (Fidan, 2016: 125; Mills, 2016: 27; Kamisher, 2016: 10-11).

The raw between Erbil and Baghdad on the one hand, and Ankara and Baghdad on the other hand, under the complications of ISIS terrorism even affected the bureaucratic procedures of trade and transport between Iraq and Turkey. Although Turkey had eased Iraqi citizens'



entrance to Turkey through issuing 30 days visa at the port of entrance or issuing electronic visas, in the early 2016, Turkey stepped back and imposed new restrictions on Iraqi citizens' entrance to Turkey through tightening the visa rules (AFP, 2016). Meanwhile, the disagreements between Baghdad and Erbil had resulted in double taxing Turkish products entering Baghdad-administered territories, as the products are once taxed by the KRG and once by the Iraqi government. This has resulted in a 30% decrease in trade crossing from the Habur border gate (Musa, 2017).

It is worth mentioning that IK's trade with Turkey is mainly imports from Turkey. Even the whole Iraqi exports to Turkey look quite insignificant compared to imports from Turkey. This fact is quite noticeable in figures No 4, 5, and 6 that present the data on Iraq's exports to Turkey and compare it with imports from Turkey and the total bilateral trade. Indeed, other than energy, Iraq and IK do not have much to export to Turkey. Hence, as evident in figure No 7 even in the best case, imports from Iraq does not constitute even half a percent of Turkish total imports.

As acknowledged by a number of interviewees, IK is a region in the process of building infrastructure and planning for production and industrialization in the future and as such is a consuming rather than producing region (Hawrami<sup>227</sup>; Pira<sup>228</sup>; Modares<sup>229</sup>; Mantek<sup>230</sup>). As a result, very small quantities of livestock wool and leather, oil products such as phosphate, some chemicals produced in refineries and used for industrial purposes, honey and some agricultural products are the main items other than oil that IK exports to Turkey (Modares<sup>231</sup>; Sayer Erbil<sup>232</sup>).

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<sup>227</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>228</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil.

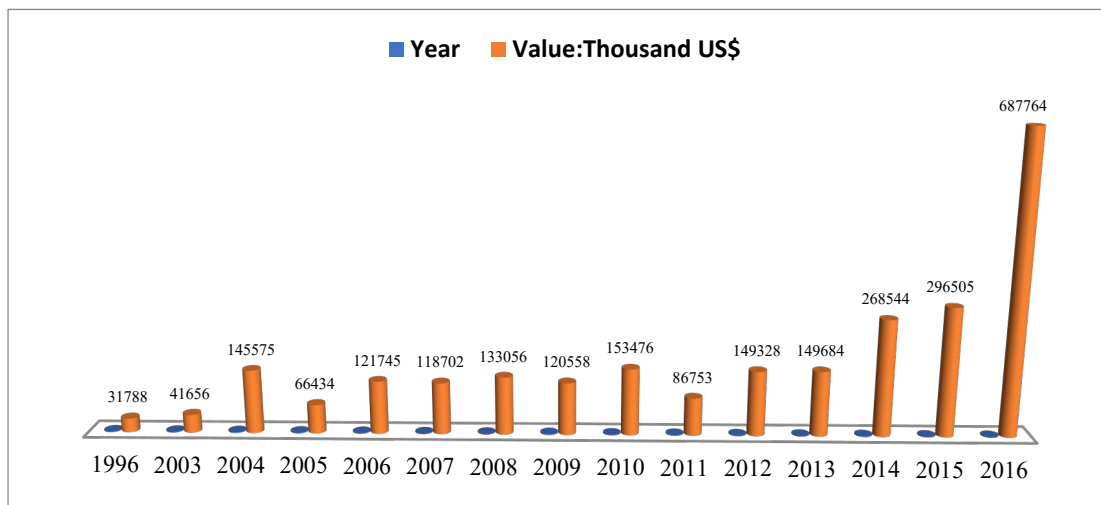
<sup>229</sup> KRG's Trade Minister Economic Relations Advisor: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>230</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>231</sup> KRG's Trade Minister Economic Relations Advisor: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

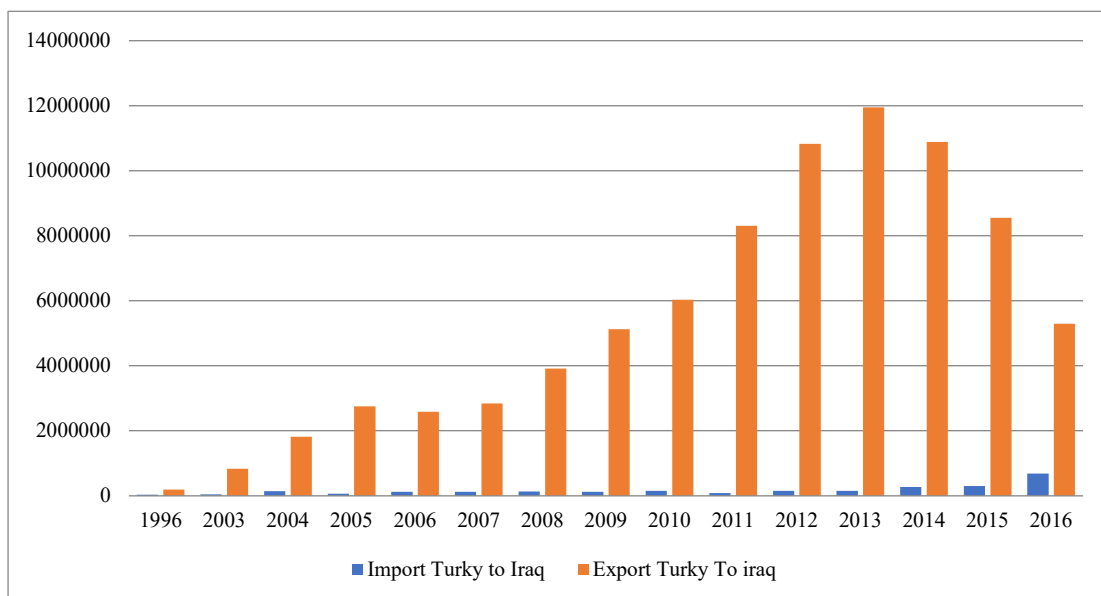
<sup>232</sup> Turkish Trade Attaché in Erbil: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

**Figure No 4: Turkey's Import from Iraq (1996, 2003-2016 September)**



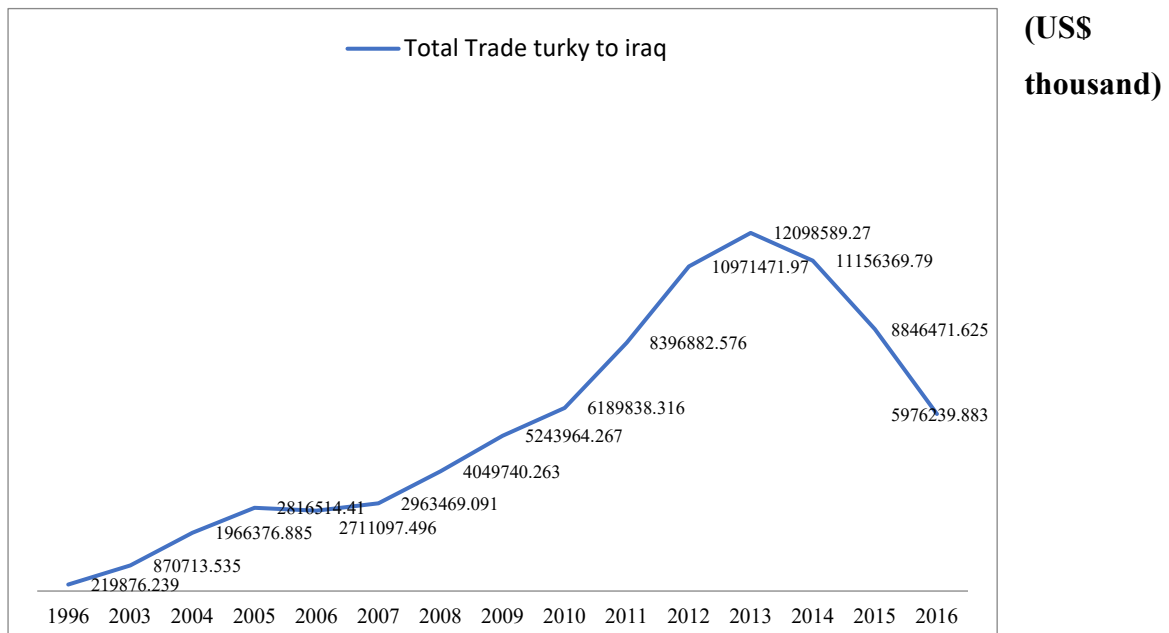
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (2016)

**Figure No 5: Turkey's Export to Iraq Compared to Imports from Iraq (1996, 2003-2016 September)**



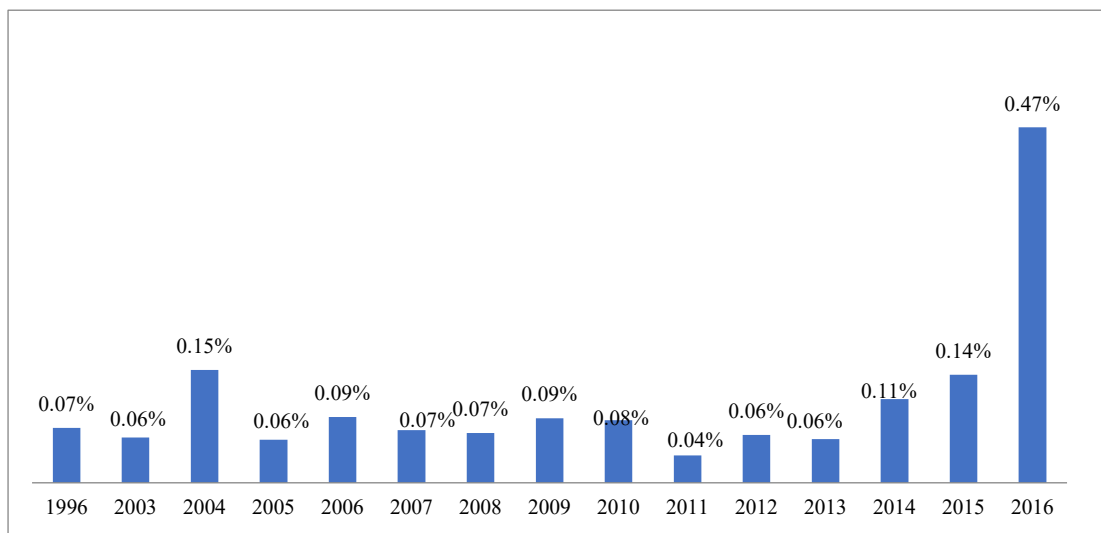
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (2016)

**Figure No 6: Turkey-Iraq Trade (1996, 2003-2016 September)**



Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (2016)

**Figure No7: Iraq's Import Percentage in Turkey's Total Import (1996, 2003-2016 September)**

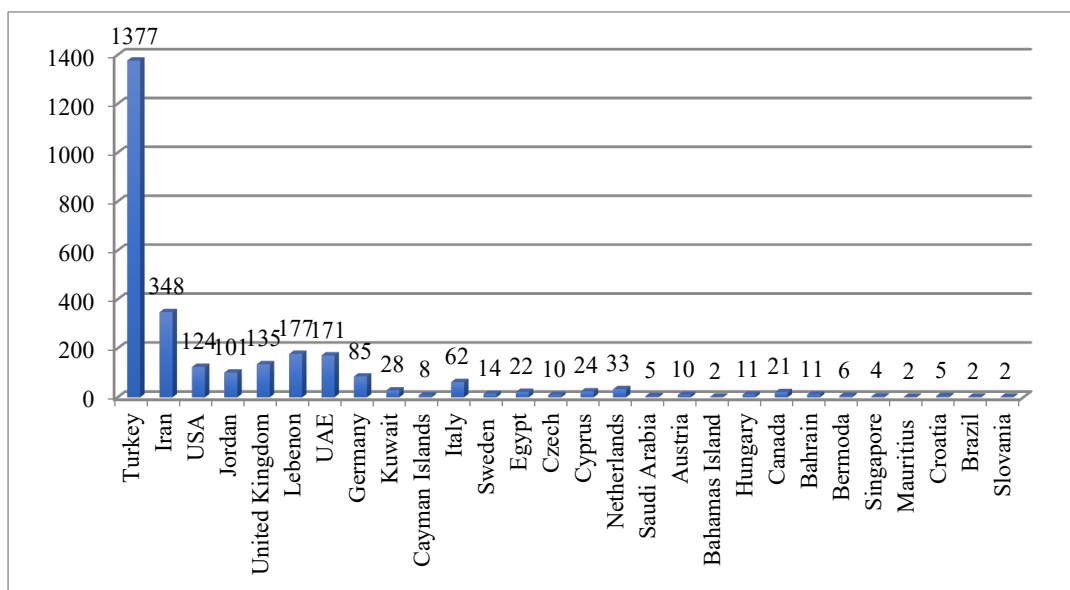


Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (2016)

### 7. 3. TURKISH COMPANIES AND WORK FORCE IN THE IRAQI KURDISTAN

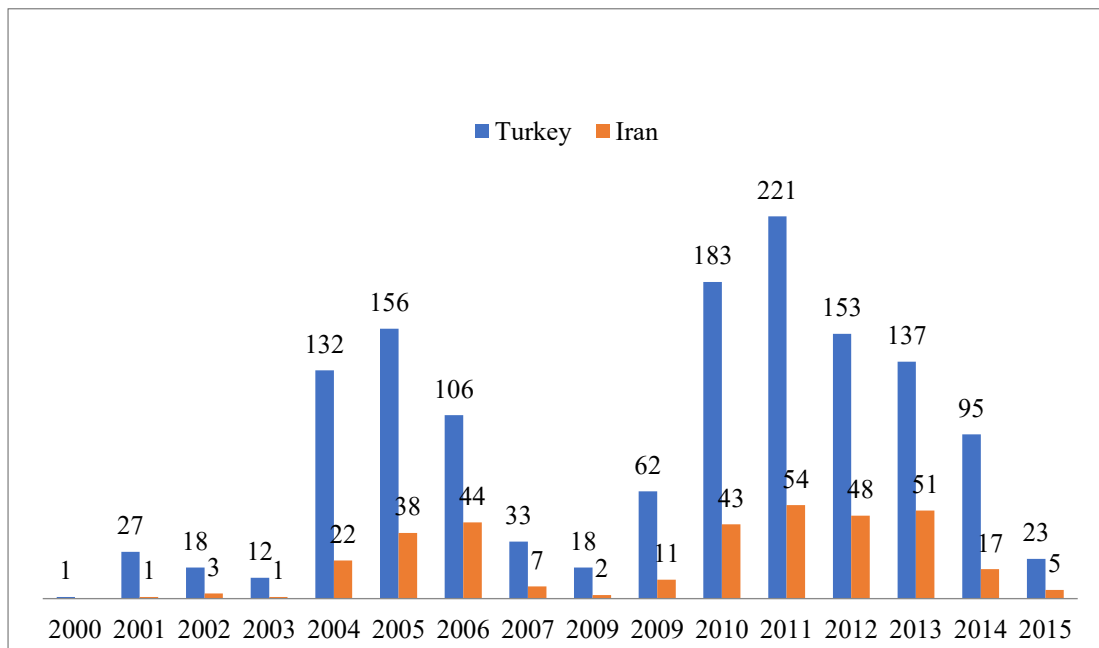
Trade is not the only area that gained significance in T-IK relations and played its role in fostering the bilateral economic links. After 2003, many Turkish companies poured into the Kurdistan region and actively engaged in the process of building the region's infrastructure and changed its social life. The data presented in Figure No 8 shows the number of foreign companies registered in IK from 2000 to July 2015, and as evident Turkish companies have occupied the first place. Actually, with 1,377 registered companies, 49.2% of foreign companies registered in IK are Turkish and Iran with its 348 companies comprising 12.4% of the registered foreign companies is far behind in the second place. Figure No 9 lays out the linear progress of Turkish and Iranian companies' registration throughout the 2000- 2015 July period.

**Figure No 8: Foreign Companies Registered in Iraqi Kurdistan (2000-2015 July)**



Source: Fieldwork (KRG's General Directorate of Companies Registration-Foreign Companies Branch)

**Figure No 9: Turkish & Iranian Companies registered in Iraqi Kurdistan (2001-July 2015)**



*Source:* Fieldwork (KRG's General Directorate of Companies Registration-Foreign Companies Branch)

The fluctuations observed in the figures are due to both political and economic factors. Obviously, prior to Saddam's downfall, due to lack of political and economic attractions very few Turkish companies were registered. The number started to rise immediately after 2003 as new economic incentives emerged. Regardless of the lack of Turkish formal recognition and political engagement with IK, Turkish companies started to register and work in the region. The trend changed soon as the impact of cold and confrontational relations of Turkey and IK in 2007-8 was enough reason to dissuade many Turkish companies from risking the adventure of working in a place that could become the target of offensives conducted by their own country's armed forces at any moment.

As political confrontation shifted towards cooperation after 2008, number of Turkish companies registering in the IK started to rise again. However, the rise was not just due to political reasons at this stage. Increased KRG budget, increased oil prices coupled with discovery of sizeable oil reserves produced high hopes for energy riches of the Kurdish region and entrance of giant oil firms, especially Exxon Mobil's 2011 entrance into IK, as discussed in the energy section below, played significant roles in increasing the number of Turkish companies entering the Kurdistan region. Nevertheless, as noticed, the dramatic rise peaked in 2011 gradually decreased afterwards and started sharp decline in 2014 and the following years, due to the same reasons that decreased the trade level as well as

discouraging news from Kurdish oil industry as discussed in the energy sector. Meanwhile, as employees in the KRG's General Directorate of Companies Registration-Foreign Companies Branch<sup>233</sup> informed the researcher, some companies stopped their operations in IK after 2014, but no data could be obtained as companies do not inform the authorities when they do not operate or stop working.

Turkish companies working in IK can be seen in various fields. That is while at first mainly construction companies entered the Kurdish region and in fact still comprise nearly 25% of the Turkish companies in IK (Al-Sharikh, 2011: 118-119). However, Turkish companies are now engaged in fields as diverse as, banking, service sector, internal design, transporting, engineering, retail, as well as construction and energy (Ismael<sup>234</sup>; Park, 2014: 12-13). Meanwhile, they have proved successful in winning tenders, especially large-scale construction projects such as construction of airports, roads and universities (Can, 2007).

A number of factors played an important role in making Turkish companies more successful. The major factors are: geographical proximity, the skill of utilizing the social, religious, cultural, and linguistic bonds, regional industrial superiority, mediating role played by Kurds from Turkey in winning the tenders, as well as experience Turkish construction companies gained during the 1970s oil boom in the Gulf as well as their experience in other countries, including Russia (Selcen *et al.*, 2016: 121-122). Meanwhile, KRG's aim of winning Turkey's recognition and support through economic incentives, especially in pre-2008 period, as well as Turkey sending ultranationalist or army-linked firms and later AKP-linked for political purposes both played positive role in the success of Turkish companies (Hassan Ahmed Mustafa<sup>235</sup>; Jenkins, 2008: 18-19; Can, 2007). It should be noted that at times Turkish companies face limits and problems in IK as well, due to corruption issue in the KRG, emergence of political problems with Turkey (Jenkins, 2008: 19) or due to the discussed KRG failure in paying companies' wages in recent years.

Further to success in winning tenders, Turkish companies have successfully created jobs for many Turkish citizens in IK. Jenkins (2008: 18-19) states in 2007, 14,000 Turkish citizens were working in IK, and the number increased to 25,000 in 2010 and 30,000 in 2012 based on Fidan's (2016: 121) estimates. A good number of them are skilled workers and

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<sup>233</sup> Information obtained in a visit to the directorate in 2016

<sup>234</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG's Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>235</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil.

professionals, as Hawrami<sup>236</sup> stated that 4,000 Turkish engineers were working in Kurdistan during the time of the interview. Nonetheless, due to relaxed laws of KRG, including the visa-free entrance of Turks, Turkish companies have employed few locals and preferred to bring laborers from Turkey that at times as noticed by the researchers upsets the Kurds.

#### **7.4. TURKISH INVESTMENT IN IRAQI KURDISTAN**

As noted earlier, trade relations and entrance of Turkish companies predates the emergence of good political relations between Turkey and IK. In comparison, Turkish investment is a latecomer that entered the scene in 2009 after improvements in political relations. Detailed data on Turkish capital investment in all sectors except energy sector are available in this research. However, details of Turkish investment in the energy sector could not be attained, as such data could not be obtained either from Turkish or Kurdish side. Nevertheless, based on extensive energy relations and presence of Turkish energy companies in IK, it is evident that Turkey is one of the top investors in IK's energy sector.

The need for attracting investment, especially foreign investment has long been felt by Kurdish officials. This was the main motive behind issuance of an investment friendly law in 2006. In addition to treating the foreign investors as national ones (article 3), this law facilitates acquiring land plots for projects, bestows ownership rights (article 4), gives 10 years tax exemptions for non-custom taxes and custom tax exemptions for import of project's needed equipment and material, as well as five years tax exemptions for import of the raw material (article 5) among other facilitations observed for the investors in this law (Law of Investment in Kurdistan Region Iraq, 2006). Appeal of the investment law coupled with the relative safety of the Kurdish region (Pira<sup>237</sup>; Falah Mustafa<sup>238</sup>) and the abundance of its energy resources and easy visa procedures were major motives behind arrival of foreign capital in the region. Improved and progressive political relations of Turkey and KRG were certainly further incentive for Turkish investors to bring their capital to IK and invest.

Success of the investment law in bringing in foreign investment is evident in table No 2. Foreign investors have invested over USD 5.5 billions that comprises around 13% of the

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<sup>236</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>237</sup> PUK Politburo Member: 16 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>238</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

capital invested in the region. Turkey is responsible for big share of this investment. Table No 3 lists the countries that have invested in IK along with the amount of their investment. As can be seen, with over a billion USD Turkish investment accounts for one fifth of the total foreign investment in the Kurdish region.

**Table No 2: Foreign, National and Joint Venture Investment in Iraqi Kurdistan by August 2015 (USD)**

Investment Source	Capital in USD	Percentage
<b>National</b>	33,043,315,906	77.83%
<b>Foreign</b>	5,561,127,414	13.10%
<b>Joint Venture</b>	3,850,461,534	9.07%
<b>Total</b>	42,454,904,854	100%

*Source:* Fieldwork: (KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department- Directorate of Information)

**Table No 3: Foreign Investment in Iraqi Kurdistan by Country (1.8.2006 - 9.9.2015)**

Country	Capital by USD	Percentage
<b>United Arab Emirates</b>	2,527,216,000	45.44%
<b>Turkey</b>	1,129,857,640	20.32%
<b>Lebanon</b>	995,136,871	17.89%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	214,403,975	3.86%
<b>United States</b>	115,822,925	2.08%
<b>Switzerland</b>	158,665,762	2.85%
<b>Egypt</b>	150,000,000	2.70%
<b>New Zealand</b>	139,389,850	2.51%
<b>Germany</b>	81,205,712	1.46%
<b>Iran</b>	25,440,802	0.46%
<b>Sweden</b>	13,500,000	0.24%
<b>Lebanon-France</b>	7,082,207	0.13%
<b>Russia</b>	2,805,670	0.05%
<b>Georgia</b>	600,000	0.01%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,561,127,414</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* Fieldwork: (KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department- Directorate of Information)

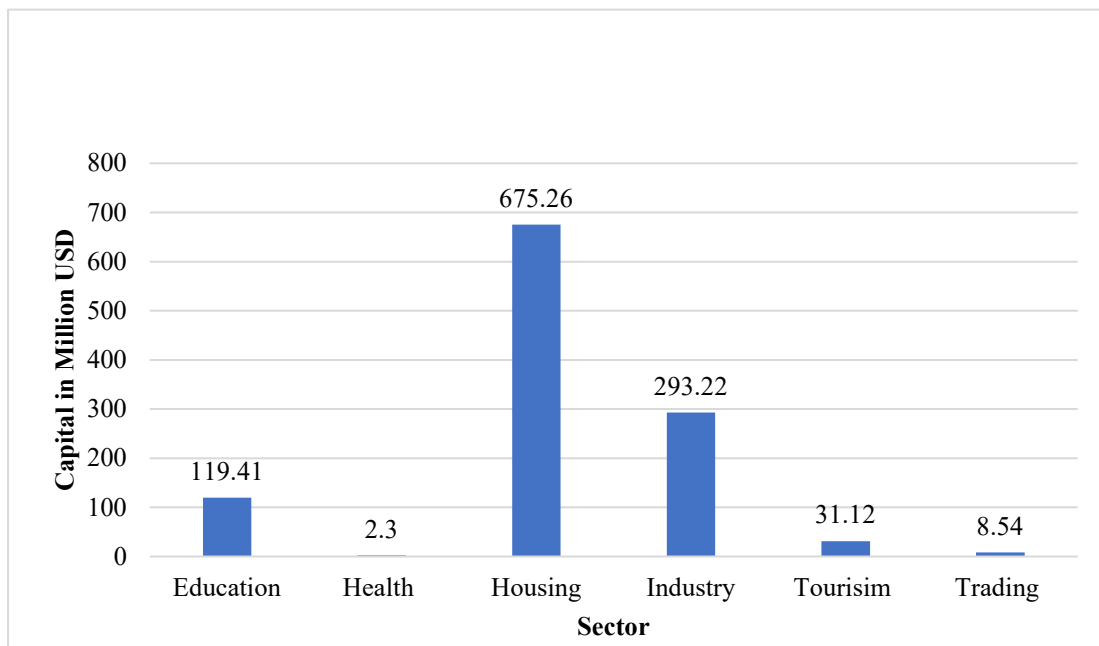
It should also be stated that the available datasets show that Turkish investors up to August 2015 have carried out 16 projects in IK, 10 of which were carried out in Erbil, 5 in Duhok and 1 in Suleimaniya. Details of these projects are presented in figures No 10, 11 and 12 and table No 4.

As part of the Turkish portfolio, Turkish investors have been involved in three joint venture projects, namely: Erdemli Factory with USD 1,750,000 capital in Erbil, Emran Factory for



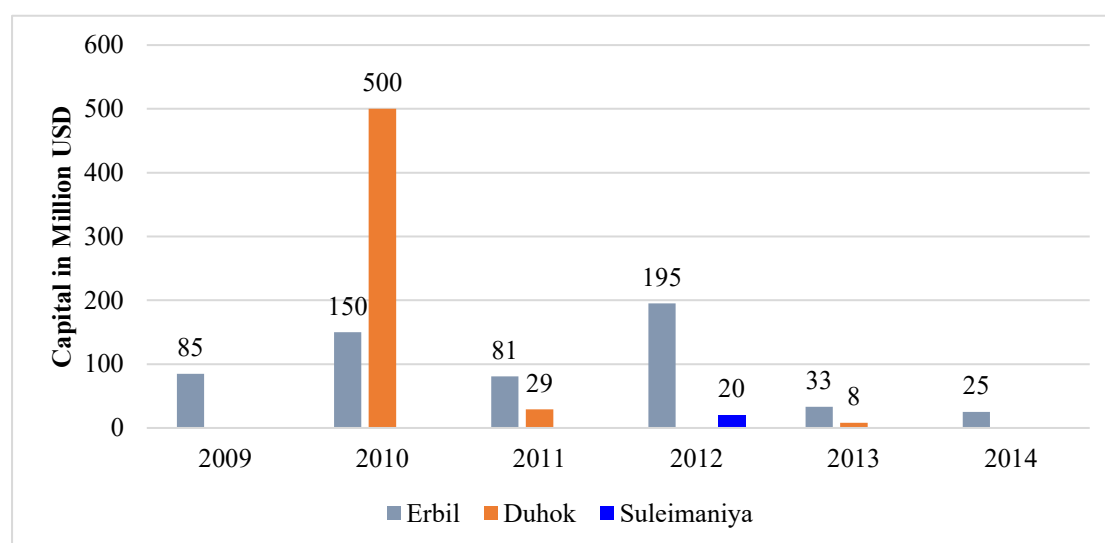
producing sandwich panel in Duhok with USD 4,960,000 capital and Hawler Cement Plant in Erbil with USD 274,896,000 capital (KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department, Directorate of Information, 2016). It is worth mentioning that national capital involves both Kurdish and Iraqi capital, as they are not separated.

**Figure No 10: Turkish Investment In Iraqi Kurdistan by Sector and Capital (1/08/2006 to 09/09/2015)**



*Source:* Fieldwork: (KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department- Directorate of Information)

**Figure No 11: Turkish Investment in Iraqi Kurdistan by Year and Governorate (01/08/2006 to 09/09/2015)**



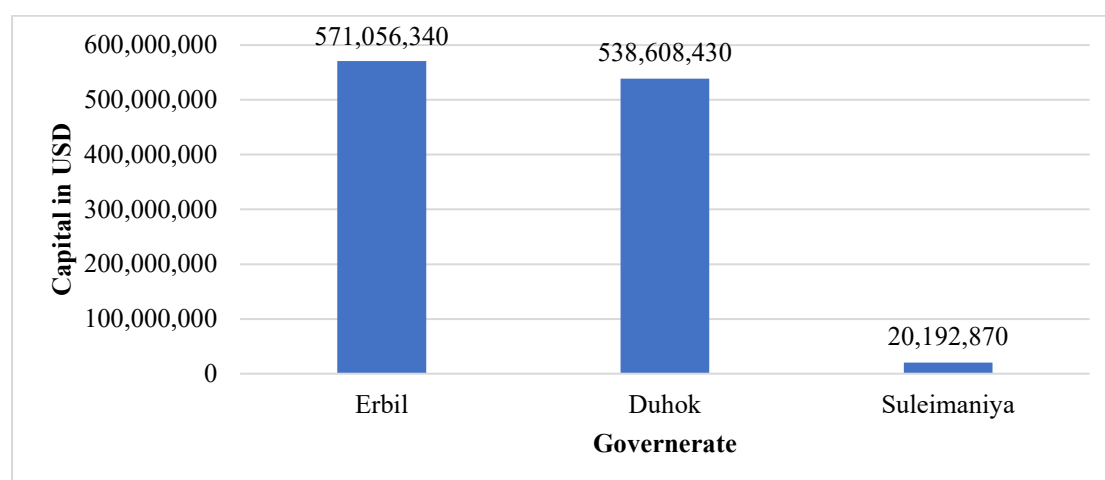
Source: KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department- Directorate of Information

**Table No 4: Turkish Investment Projects in Iraqi Kurdistan Governorates by Sector and Capital (01/08/2006 – 09/9/2015)**

Sector	Governorate	Project	Capital by US \$
Education	Erbil	Bilkent School	40,000,000
Housing	Erbil	Ozal Village	45,000,000
Housing	Duhok	Avro City	500,000,000
Industry	Erbil	Polteks Factory for Production of Iron	150,000,000
Health	Erbil	Assembler (Anatolia) Specialist	2,300,000
Education	Erbil	Ishek University	79,411,530
Housing	Duhok	Dubra City	7,465,260
Housing	Duhok	Stera Zevi City	10,000,000
Housing	Duhok	Rona City	12,600,000
Housing	Suleimaniya	Shaheen City	20,192,870
Housing	Erbil	Canadian Village	80,000,000
Industry	Erbil	Karma Aerated Auto Calved Concrete, Isiklar Paper Sack Plant, Karma Pet Performed Plant, Karma Pet Recycling Plant	115,346,610
Trading	Duhok	Baha for Parking	8,543,170
Tourism	Erbil	Dedaman 5 Star Hotel	31,122,200
Industry	Erbil	Amar Plant for Umbrellas and Tents Production	2,876,000
Industry	Erbil	Aves Factory for Producing Sunflower Oil	25,000,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,129,857,640</b>

Source: Fieldwork (KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department- Directorate of Information)

**Figure No12: Turkish Investment in Iraqi Kurdistan by Governorate (1-08-2006 to 09-09-2015)**



*Source:* KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department- Directorate of Information

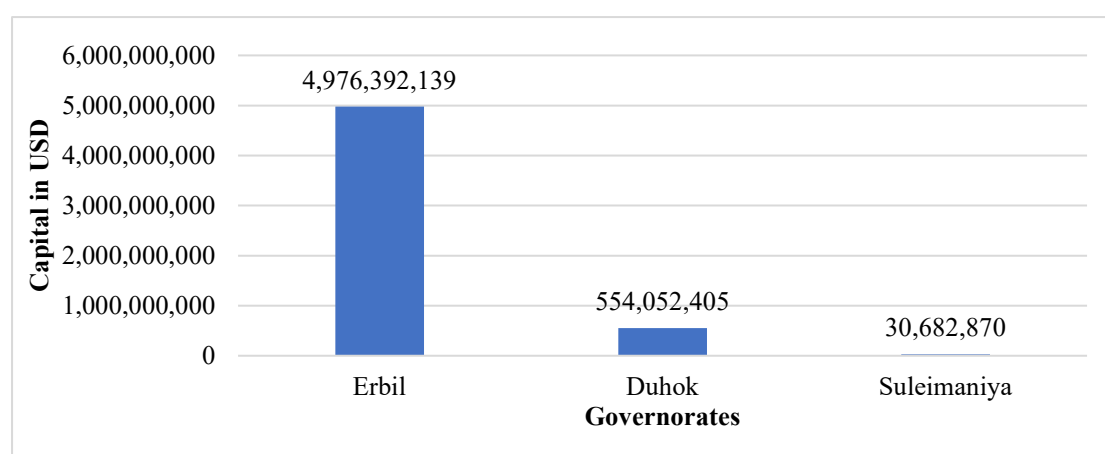
As the presented data reveals, Turkish investment peaked in 2010 and started to decline afterwards. However, the noticed decline can be examined in two phases: The first one that starts immediately after 2010 is related to the nature of projects carried out in 2010 and not losing appeal of IK for Turkish investment. It is indeed due to the fact that the Avro City project carried out in 2010 with half a billion USD capital was a big housing project and the projects carried out before and after it were not comparable in capital. However, the second decline that started at the end of 2013 and continued in 2014 is due to the problems already mentioned in relation with KRG's budget and ISIS attacks in the region that decreased IK's appeal for foreign investors.

Two more facts become immediately evident through observing the data. Firstly, major part of the capital from Turkey is allocated to housing sector, and secondly, it seems Turkish investors have ignored Suleimaniya governorate. The first point can be explained in terms of the construction boom in the Kurdish region after the fall of Saddam regime and dire need for new houses and apartments in the expanding cities of Kurdistan. Such projects, as observed by the researcher, had high profitability and quick profit return and Turkey's competence in construction section was a further positive factor for the Turkish investors.

While it is tempting to conclude, Turkish investors have avoided investment in Suleimaniya, observing the data presented in the Figures No 13 and 14 sheds doubt on such conclusions. As it is easily noticed, foreign investors have focussed their investments on Erbil that has

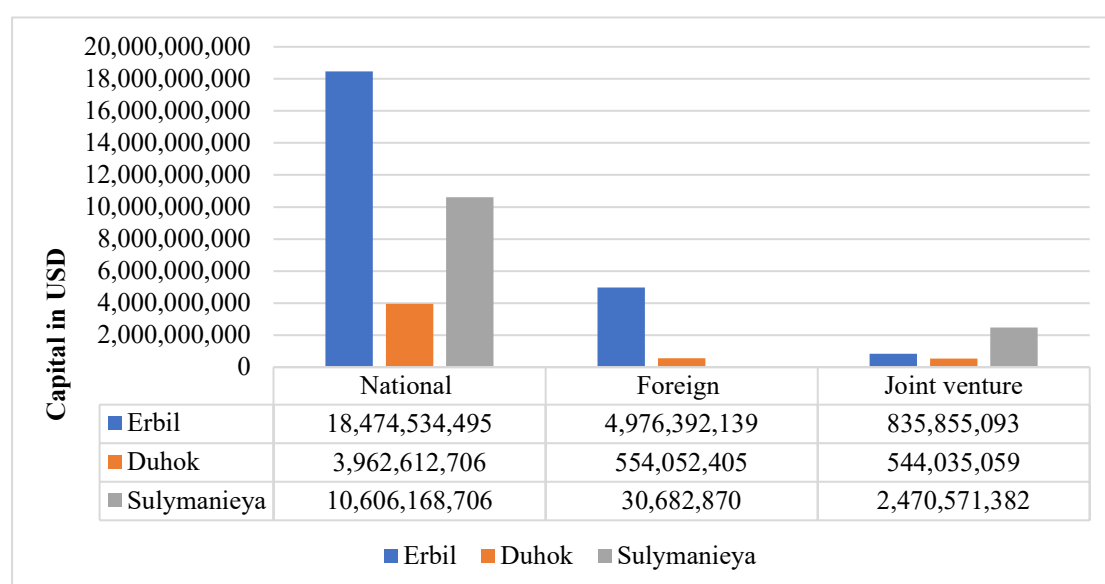
attracted 89% of the foreign investment, while Suleimaniya and Duhok relied mainly on national and joint-venture investment. Moreover, while other countries had an insignificant presence in Duhok and Suleimaniya, 97% of Duhok's foreign investment and around two-third of Suleimaniya's foreign investment is from Turkey. This could hint at Turkish readiness to invest in all Kurdish governorates if proper investment opportunities are provided.

**Figure No 13: Total Foreign Investment in Iraqi Kurdistan by Governorate (01/08/2006 to 09/09/2015)**



Source: KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department- Directorate of Information

**Figure No 14: Foreign, National and Joint Venture Investment in Iraqi Kurdistan by Governorates (1-08-2006 to 27-08-2015)**



Source: Fieldwork: (KRG Board of Investment-Studies and Information Department- Directorate of Information)

In addition to investing in IK, Turkey has provided KRG with cash after IK later was hit by severe budget shortage due to the ISIS attacks. According to Rudaw website (2017), Turkey has lent KRG half a billion USD interest free loan and USD 650 million with 5% to 6% interest.

## **7.5. ENERGY SECTOR RELATED RELATIONS**

In the last decade of T-IK relations, energy has been such a significant factor that it will not be misleading to nominate the T-IK relations in this epoch, ‘energy relations’. Considering the geopolitical realities, outstanding progress in the bilateral energy links is not abnormal. Turkey is an energy hungry country, which can provide easy access to sea, while IK is an energy rich landlocked neighbour that needs access to open seas and a market for its energy. However, the development of relations is not following the simple logic presented above. The history of IK’s energy sector evolution and Turkish engagement and ambitions in the sector are discussed in the following sections with the objective of exploring the extent of energy factor’s influence in the bilateral relations.

### **7.5.1. Emergence and Evolution of Kurdish Energy Sector**

Compared to the Middle Eastern giants of the energy market, IK is an infant that is still at the initial stages of securing a place for itself in the turbulent global energy market. Thanks to abundance of oil and gas in the region, the Kurdish government has been successful in gaining the confidence of numerous energy companies and has successfully built an energy sector from scratch that is currently capable of exporting the Kurdish crude oil in significant quantities. The exact magnitude of the energy reserves lying beneath the Kurdish soil is not clear yet; nevertheless, a number of estimates exist.

The estimates of KRG’s Ministry of Natural Resources as stated on the ministry’s website (2014) claim that the region has 45 billion barrels of oil reserves, which in case of independence makes the IK as the 10<sup>th</sup> oil rich country in the world, and holds “as much as 200 trillion cubic feet (5.67 trillion cubic metres) of natural gas reserves, around 3% of the world’s total reserves” (KRG’s Ministry of Natural Resource’s Website, 2017). However, some claim that these estimates are optimistic and untrue (Rubin, 2016: 68-9) due to obvious politico-economic reasons. Estimates by other sources claim Kurdish oil reserves to be 17.7

to 18 billion barrels and 1.2 trillion cubic meters of gas (Ozdemir and Raszewski, 2016: 129; Ozdemir, 2014: 4). Mills (2016: 17-18) also refers to KRG's claim of having 75 billion barrels of oil reserves explaining that this number includes the Kirkuk reserves and clarifies that proven oil reserves are nearly 11 billion barrels, while Kurdish region has nearly 50 billion barrels if unrecoverable reserves are added as well.

Regardless of the large differences between the presented data by each, even the stringiest estimates still point to presence of economically viable amounts of energy waiting for exploitation in the Kurdish region. Abundance of the energy resources alone has not been enough for development and progress of IK's energy sector. Exploring the developments in Kurdish energy sector signifies the role played by an influential mix of geopolitical and economic factors enmeshed with security concerns in ups and downs of Kurdish energy sector evolution.

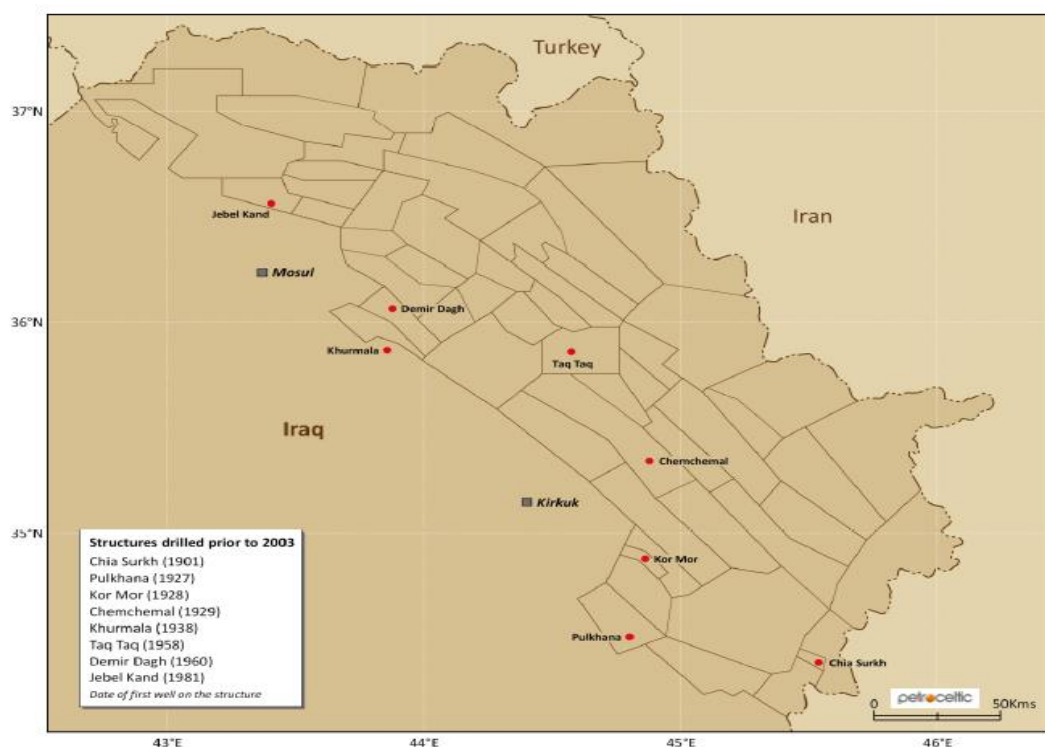
### **7.5.2. Kurdish Energy Sector in a Chronological Perspective**

As the above introduction reveals, Iraqi Kurds are quite new in the energy game. While Iraq's wealth is historically built on energy riches of the Kirkuk city, as discussed earlier, Kurds insist on its Kurdistan identity. Due to this wealth, Iraqi regimes made sure Kirkuk stays out of the Kurdish reach. Baghdad's aim was to prevent Kurds from gaining the economic foundation needed for their independence and due to this reason even avoided conducting major oil exploration and drilling projects in the Kurdish region. Consequently, when Kurds failed to control Kirkuk and its energy wealth after Saddam's withdrawal from Kuwait, in essence they were left with no working infrastructure in the energy field and no substantial source of revenue. Meanwhile, international sanctions, uncertain political future, instability and economic status of IK prior to 2003 were efficiently discouraging investment in the region's energy sector. Map No 6 illustrates the pre-2003 status of IK's energy sector after decades of Baghdad's ignorance and a decade of Kurdish rule. Evidently, only eight structures were drilled prior to 2003 and they were mostly located in areas with close proximity to borderland between Kurdish dominated and Arab dominated Iraq rather than in the Kurdish heartland.

Regardless of the poor status of their energy sector, Kurds were aware of the politico-economic significance of developing an independent energy sector. Hence, their attempts to utilise the existing energy resources predated the 2003 regime change in Baghdad.

Interestingly, Turkish presence is remarkably tangible even in the early steps of IK's march towards building an independent energy sector. This is evident in Genel Energy and Pet Oil's presence in Taq Taq oil field in 2002 after signing a deal with the PUK and production of around 3,000 bpd even before the 2003 war started (Mills, 2016: 8; Olson, 2006: 22). This deal was one of the initial steps Kurds took, as many problems still existed even after the 2003 regime change in Baghdad. These problems, which could be classified under legal, logistic, corruption, security and unexpected developments categories are explained below. Meanwhile, KRG's policies to counter these problems are explored.

**Map No 6: Structures Drilled Prior to 2003 in Iraqi Kurdistan**



Source: Mills (2016: 7)

### 7.5.3. Energy Sector Impediments and KRG's Response

Kurdish energy sector has been embroiled with legal disputes from the outset. As it is already discussed in Chapter 4 Erbil and Baghdad have presented different interpretations for constitutional articles 111, 112 and 115 related to management of oil and gas resources and monopolised authorities of central and regional governments (for a detailed discussion *see*: Wahab, 2014: 9-11; Strouse, 2010: 16). Meanwhile, absence of hydrocarbon law and continued disagreement between Erbil and Baghdad over their rights and duties in the energy sector has practically crippled all the efforts for ratification of any energy law in the Iraqi parliament and legal settlement of the disputes.

This legal impasse had the immediate impact of discouraging foreign investment in the Kurdish energy sector. Indeed, risks involved for companies investing in the Kurdish energy sector were reinforced by the punitive measures of Baghdad that aimed at discouraging energy firms from entering the Kurdish region. These measures included blacklisting the companies from working in the Iraqi energy sector outside KRG jurisdiction as well as suing the firms doing business with KRG (Wahab, 2014: 14). In addition to the hostile stance of Baghdad and the legal standoff, Iraqi Kurds were suffering from absence of any established administrative body such as a ministry or directorate specified to the management of the energy field and lack of infrastructure for exporting the Kurdish crude.

Despite all the odds, Kurdish energy sector emerged and grew thanks to the policies implemented by the KRG to counter the impediments. In response to the legal impasse in Baghdad, KRG came up with the plan of drafting and ratifying a Kurdish energy law. The bill, entitled ‘Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region-Iraq’ was passed in Kurdistan Parliament in 2007 and it renders the upper hand in management of energy sector to the KRG rather than Baghdad. This fact is evident in the law’s article 2, Section b. that reads “... no federal legislation, and no agreement, contract, memorandum of understanding or other federal instrument that relates to Petroleum Operations shall have application except with the express agreement of the relevant authority of the Region” (Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region-Iraq, 2007).

In response to absence of administrative units in charge of the energy issue, KRG established the Ministry of Natural Resources in 2006 and appointed Dr. Ashti Hawrami as its first minister (KRG Ministry of Natural Resources Website, 2017). Meanwhile, in accordance with article 4 of the Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region-Iraq (2007), a regional council consisted of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the ministers of natural resources, finance and planning is in charge of formulating the general principles of petroleum policy, approving the contracts and limiting production if necessary.

These legislative and administrative measures enabled the KRG to develop the bureaucratic means to deal with the issues related to the energy sector in the region. However, KRG’s success in encouraging international firms to come and invest in IK’s energy sector lies in another policy. It was the KRG’s production sharing agreements that attracted the foreign investors to the region. As Park (2014: 23) explains, the production sharing contracts offered the companies the opportunity of retaining around 20% of the profit, which was quite



lucrative compared to the 1% or 2% service fee the Iraqi government was offering. Indeed, KRG's deals were severely criticised by Baghdad and were accused of having no legality. In addition, they were considered to be "too generous" and so favourable that makes them to be dreamt of by companies all over the world (Neuhof, 2012).

However, as Hakan Demir <sup>239</sup>, Chief of Petrol Trade of TPIC (Turkish Petroleum International Co. Ltd), explained the apparent difference between the deals proposed by Baghdad and KRG lies in the fact that oil wells under Baghdad control had already passed through the exploration and drilling phases and were currently producing wells, while KRG's wells were mostly in the exploration stage and needed considerable amounts of investment. Hence as the risks and the sums to be invested were higher, production-sharing contracts were quite logical and acceptable as they were in accord with the world standards. In other words, in such contracts companies are investing on suspected oil fields and in case their exploration bears fruit and good quantities of oil and gas is discovered and drilled, the company rips a good share of the profit; otherwise, if oil and gas is not discovered, the company should deal with the losses (Paasche and Mansurbeg, 2014: 11).

Due to these tempting contracts foreign firms started to sign agreements with the KRG and started exploration and drilling operations in the region. The first deal was signed in 2004 with DNO, a Norwegian Oil Company (Strouse, 2010: 3-4). As KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources was established, IK was divided into geographical exploration blocs presented for contracts. Soon many small and medium sized firms were lured into making contracts in such a way that by August 2007 contracts were signed with 27 energy firms from 15 countries (Atlantic Council, 2009: 14-15). Nevertheless, discovery of sizable energy fields in the region and KRG's investment friendly deals and environment ultimately succeeded in bringing in the giants of energy field starting with Exxon Mobil in November 2011 and Chevron in July 2012, both American companies, followed by French Total and Russian Gasprom (Park, 2014: 25).

It was due to the investment and presence of these foreign firms that KRG developed its energy sector and became an energy producer. Table No 5 illustrates this fact, as KRG's oil production increased from an average of 1084 bpd in 2003 to 214,968 bpd in 2013. As the Ministry of Natural Resources Reports in 2014 (4), and 2015-16 (2016: 31) elaborate, KRG continues to produce and export substantial amounts of oil. On average, KRG has produced

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<sup>239</sup> Chief of Petrol Trade of TPIC (Turkish Petroleum International Co. Ltd): 12 June 2013, Ankara.

312,576 bpd in 2014, 576,615 bpd in 2015 and 527,660 bpd in 2016. The figures presented by the Ministry also include oil produced in the Avana, Bai Hasasn and Khurmala fields in Kirkuk province that came under KRG's control after 2014's ISIS offensives in Northern Iraq. This explains the huge increase in production especially in 2015, as 49.25% of the year's produced oil was from the mentioned fields in the Kirkuk area (KRG Ministry of Natural Resources Report, 2016: 12-15).

**Table No 5: Gross KRG Oil Production 2003-2013 (BOE)**

2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	Year
78,463,518	76,706,152	68,231,486	27,483,775	15,689,046	3,117,172	1,524,211	506,269	367,738	160,599	395,945	Production

*Source:* KRG Ministry of Natural Resources (2013)

In spite of the Kurdish success in encouraging foreign investment and sizable production, there were other problems that restricted the export of Kurdish crude. These included lack of export infrastructure and routes and unexpected developments causing harm. Kurds needed an export gate as well as export infrastructure such as working pipelines, as Kurdish crude oil must have been exported to produce revenue.

The only existing pipeline built in the North of Iraq for exporting oil before Kurdish dominance was Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline. It is consisted of two parallel pipelines, the first one built in 1976 and the second one in 1987, with the total capacity of 1.4 mb/d pumping oil from Kirkuk fields to the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan South of Turkey (International Energy Agency, 2013: 8). Initially KRG was cooperating with Baghdad in oil export and the small quantities produced were exported through the pipeline and trucks. This short-lived period of cooperation started from June 2009 and SOMO (the Federal Iraqi oil marketing organization) was in charge of the process of exporting and marketing the Kurdish crude oil (Strouse, 2010: 8-9). However, debates over the legality of KRG's deals with the energy companies and who should pay these companies remittances halted the cooperation several times and left the KRG with the option of independent oil sale. This option seemed more logical for Kurds in light of the fact that Baghdad stopped sending the Kurdistan's share of

the budget in February 2014 due to its disagreement with Erbil in the energy issue (International Monetary Fund Report, 2015: 9).

The problem was not just politico-legal, as there were other factors involved in exporting oil through the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline. Poor maintenance of the pipeline and frequent sabotage acts by terrorists had practically paralyzed the pipeline. For instance, in 2013 the pipeline's section inside Iraq's territory was the target of 10 terrorist activities and in the same period technical problems and leaks halted the production and export three times (Paasche and Mansurbeg, 2014: 8). The immediate alternative for the problematic pipeline route, especially in light of the budget row between Baghdad and Erbil that was frequently taking out the option of oil export through Baghdad's infrastructure, was export through trucks. Such export reportedly started in late 2012 as KRG was independently exporting small quantities of oil in discounted price through Turkey (International Monetary Fund Report, 2015: 8). However, this method had its own shortfalls as well. As Demir<sup>240</sup> explained, in truck export method transportation cost is around USD100 per ton that is translated into around USD 12 per barrel. That is while export through pipeline costs USD 1 to 2 per barrel.

These impediments made KRG think of more pragmatic alternatives for oil export. Hence, KRG with the help of Turkey started building its own pipeline to export oil through pipeline independent of Baghdad. The news of an agreement to build two pipelines for exporting oil and gas came after Nechirvan Barzani's visit to Ankara in May 2012 and in June 2013 KRG's Natural Resources Minister announced that the oil pipeline would be completed by September (Park, 2014: 27-28). The Kurdish oil pipeline is consisted of a number of sections that are explained below, but the maximum capacity of the KRG pipeline stands at 700,000 bpd (Genel Energy Website, 2016):

The first, from the Taq Taq field to the Khurmala Dome, has capacity of 150,000 bopd. The second section, from Khurmala to the KRI border, has capacity of 700,000 bopd. At the border, both the KRI pipeline and the dedicated export pipelines from the Tawke field, which have capacity in excess of 250,000 bopd, are tied into the 40-inch section of the Iraq-Turkey pipeline. The 40-inch section currently has 700,000 bopd of capacity.

As the pipeline became ready for export, KRG started pumping oil through it independent of Baghdad and on 23 May 2014 officially announced the commencement of KRG's independent oil sale through the pipeline. KRG's official statement (KRG Website, 2014) indicated that the process would continue as it read "A tanker loaded with over one million

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<sup>240</sup> Chief of Petrol Trade of TPIC (Turkish Petroleum International Co. Ltd): 12 June 2013, Ankara.

barrels of crude oil departed last night from Ceyhan towards Europe. This is the first of many such sales of oil exported through the newly constructed pipeline in the Kurdistan Region”.

The Kurdish stance angered Baghdad and raised concern in Washington, while Ankara remained supportive of Erbil and continued cooperation with the KRG and its independent oil export project. Baghdad’s stance issued by SOMO was condemning the oil sale without Baghdad’s approval and was indicative of Baghdad’s right to sue the companies and entities involved in what it considered as illegitimate sale of Iraq’s national wealth (Hacaoglu and Meric, 2014). Meanwhile, Washington was critical of direct Erbil-Ankara cooperation as it was concerned about the repercussions of the independent oil sale on Iraq’s stability and territorial integrity (Jones, 2014). Hence, American stance was encouraging cooperation between Erbil and Baghdad and stressing on the need for Baghdad’s blessing in the issue of oil export (Rudaw Website, 2014a).

In spite of American and Iraqi objections, Erbil and Ankara were determined to go ahead with the independent oil sales and continued cooperation. In response to the American stand, Falah Mustafa (Rudaw Website, 2014b) questioned Washington’s neutrality, as after six months it made no objections to Baghdad’s act of cutting KRG’s budget, while it issued statements in favour of Baghdad on the oil sales issue. He explained that the USA “makes decisions based on her interests and wants stability in the region. But we do not want the region’s stability to be on our account anymore” (Falah Mustafa<sup>241</sup>; Rudaw Website, 2014b). Turkey was also viewing the issue through the lens of her economic interests (Bryza, 2012: 57) and continued facilitating Kurdistan’s independent oil sale. This was evident in Taner Yildiz’s, Turkey’s Energy and Natural Resources Minister at the time, statement in a press conference in June 2014 expressing Turkish readiness to sell Kirkuk’s oil if KRG export it through Turkey (KNN, 2014).

In June 2014, a few months after Kurdish independent oil sale, the issue was pushed to the side-lines by ISIS’s sudden attack on northern Iraq and capture of Mosul city (Chulov, 2014). Maliki’s government in Baghdad was ill prepared for this plight and faced with large-scale desertion of army staff and consequently lost its upper hand *vis-à-vis* the KRG, especially in the disputed territories, such as Kirkuk. The attack impacted Iraq’s oil production as well and with Iraqi army barracks void of soldiers in the north, Baghdad asked the Kurdish forces to help secure the oil infrastructure and facilities there (Ozdemir and Raszewski, 2016: 129).

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<sup>241</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

Hence, Kurdish forces swiftly moved in and filled the security gap emerged due to sudden withdrawal of Iraqi army and in the process took control over the oil fields located in the disputed territories. KRG also connected Avana and Bai Hassan fields in Kirkuk to Khurmala and connected them to the KRG pipeline, which enabled KRG to directly export their oil through the KRG pipeline (Ozdemir, 2014: 8; Mills, 2016: 13).

However, ISIS offensive was not all blessing for Iraqi Kurds. Soon after controlling Mosul, ISIS changed the direction of its attacks to the Kurdish territories and captured the Kurdish city of Sinjar in August 2014 and even proceeded to the gates of Erbil city (Morris, 2014). As the result of ISIS advances, oil companies started withdrawing their non-essential staff, such as those working in the exploration field and oil service companies started reducing their staff that negatively impacted IK's oil production growth ambitions (The Economist Intelligence Unit Website, 2014).

ISIS attack on IK was one of the unexpected developments that hindered the growth of KRG's energy sector due to the security threat it posed. In addition to ISIS there were other such developments that adversely affected the oil sector. Drop in oil prices was a substantial one that inflicted a surprise blow to the Kurdish booming oil sector. Oil prices were once close to USD 150 in July 2008 and after a sudden drop the same year gradually started to rise. The rising pattern continued in a manner that from October 2009 until October 2014 with few exceptions, the price remained roughly between USD 80 and USD 100 per barrel with the average price being over USD 100 from 2011 to 2013. However, from late 2014, the price started to drop to the extent that average price from 2015 to 2017 was under USD 50, which at times, such as in February 2016, was as low as under 30 dollars per barrel (Statista, 2017; Macrotrends, 2017). The disastrous impact of oil price drop is better understood when it is viewed in light of budget cut from Baghdad in 2014 and sudden flow of refugees and internally displaced people to the region due to ISIS attacks.

Matters were further complicated for the KRG due to news of some reserve downgrades, withdrawals of some firms and legal disputes in court due to KRG's failure in paying the energy firms dues in the region. Hitting more water than expected after drilling and other geological problems resulted in decrease in oil production and revisions of estimates for KRG's oil wealth. Afren Plc, Oryx Petroleum, and Genel were among the companies that declared reserve downgrades in the fields they were working on (Bousso, 2016). Due to the mix of reserve downgrades, and the factors mentioned above, a number of companies

withdrew from the region. Consequently, Chevron gave up Rofi area in Duhok in 2015, Exxon withdrew from three of its six excavated areas in 2016, and in total 19 concession areas have been abandoned by oil firms since 2014 (Walter, 2016; Abdullah, 2017).

KRG's inability to pay the energy firms' fees at times meant attending the court and getting involved in legal disputes. In October 2013 Dana Gas, Crescent Petroleum and Pearl Petroleum petitioned at the London Court of International Arbitration to settle their contractual disputes with the KRG, and the latter was ordered by court to pay substantial amounts to the firms in sessions held in 2015 and 2016 (Reuters Staff, 2017). However, KRG enhanced its attempts to save its energy sector and ultimately in 2017 succeeded in encouraging new investments as well as settlement of the legal cases, which is a positive sign for the future of the region's energy sector. A landmark success for the KRG in this regard was signing a deal with Rosneft, a Russian state controlled oil company, in June 2017 that includes production sharing agreements for five blocs as well as purchasing the Kurdish oil and transporting the crude oil through the KRG pipeline to the company's refineries in Germany with plans to enhance the pipeline's capacity from 700,000 to 1,000,000 barrels per day (Goran, 2017; Sheppard and Foy, 2017). It is expected that this deal would adversely affect Turkish free hand at imposing her conditions on the KRG in energy matters, as Ankara will not be able to deal with Rosneft the way it can deal with the KRG (Bozarslan, 2017). On the other hand, KRG succeeded in making new arrangements for payment of debts to the major oil producers of the region and in August 2017 settled the legal dispute with Dana Gas consortium in a London court (Zhdannikov, 2017).

In addition to the mentioned obstacles that have hindered Kurdish energy sector, corruption and some potential security threats that at times have turned into actual threats have been discouraging forces that continue to muddy the progress of the Kurdish energy sector. As Wahab (2014: 20-21) states, weak governance, mismanagement, bribery and a number of other corrupt practices have harmed both Iraq and KRG's oil sector. Indeed, in the KRG, there is a public outcry over lack of transparency in region's energy sector management, which is echoed in the opposition's critic of the government's performance. Among others, Abdullah<sup>242</sup> frankly voiced his concern over lack of transparency in Kurdistan's oil sector and asserted that Kurdistan's entrance into the oil politics has its own threats and only in the

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<sup>242</sup> Head of Change Movement Bloc in Iraqi Parliament: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya.

case of transparency ‘Change’ or *Goran* Movement and others can support the energy policy, as they can evaluate the possible threats or opportunities and decide based on clear views.

Moreover, in addition to ISIS’s aggression that destabilized the region and compelled the evacuation of staff and withdrawal of some companies, threats imposed by ongoing Turkey-PKK conflict, Shiite militias and Iraqi government and Iran’s conflict with her own Kurds that have recently become active in the border areas with Iran have posed security concerns to the Kurdish oil sector (Roberts, 2016: 5). PKK attack on the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline in 2015 is an example of how Turkey’s Kurdish conflict can have adverse impacts on the KRG’s oil pipeline security. Meanwhile, PKK’s negative view on Turkey-KRG energy deals and pipeline projects that views the trade to benefit AKP, the Turkish incumbent government, rather than Kurds can herald future problems for the Kurdish pipelines if Kurdish issue in Turkey remains unresolved (Roberts, 2016: 11).

#### **7.5.4. Turkish Thirst for Energy and Turkey- Iraqi Kurdistan Energy Relations**

Turkey is an import-dependent energy market that imports oil and gas for meeting the energy needs of the country’s growing economy. Indeed, growth of population and economy has made Turkey only second to China in terms of gas and electricity demand growth (Karagol, 2016). The growth is in such a rate that in the 10 years period of 2004-2014, Turkish electricity demand almost doubled, while gas demand grew even faster from 22 billion cubic meters (bcm) to 49 bcm (International Energy Agency, 2016: 9). For the sake of satisfying her energy needs, Turkey mainly relies on oil and gas imports. For instance, in 2014, the sources of Turkish energy supply were 24.7% petroleum, 33.4% natural gas, 32.1% coal and 9.8% renewables and hydro (World Energy Council, 2016: 14). As the country has limited reserve of fossil fuels, oil and gas imports institute the chief mode of dealing with the energy demand in such a way that in 2012, Turkey imported 93% of its oil and 99% of the gas supply (Karagol, 2016).

Russia and Iran are the two major gas exporters to Turkey. For instance, major sources of Turkey’s gas import in 2011 was 58% from Russia, 19% from Iran, 9.5% from Algeria and 8.7% from Azerbaijan (International Energy Agency, 2013: 14-15). Similarly, in 2015, gas imports were 55.3% from Russia, followed by 16.2% from Iran, 12.7% from Azerbaijan, 8.1% from Algeria and 2.6% from Nijeria (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website, 2015). Evidently, Iraq is absent in the list of gas exporters to Turkey, but it assumed a leading

role in the list of oil exporters. For instance, in 2012 Iraq with 19% was second to Iran with 39% followed by Saudi Arabia with 15% and Russia 11% in the list of major oil exporters to Turkey (International Energy Agency, 2013: 6), while in 2015 Iraq came first in the list with 45.6% followed by Iran 22.4%, Russia 12.4%, and Saudi Arabia 9.6% (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website, 2015).

The above data demonstrates the extent of Turkish dependence on energy imports and points at the strategic significance energy riches of Iraq in general and IK in particular hold for Turkey. As already discussed, traditionally Ankara has favoured conducting the energy relations through Baghdad. Nonetheless, the 2002 deal between Genel and the PUK for production of 3,000 barrels of oil per day indicates Turkish pragmatist readiness for reaping benefit from IK's energy sector in the side-line as well. Certainly, it should be noted that Turkish presence at such a scale could not be interpreted as serious involvement of Turkey in the Kurdish region's energy sector, as the production level was quite low and there was no institutional or legal foundations in the KRG officially in charge of the energy sector. Hence, such a deal could be classified as an unofficial interest-driven contract between a Turkish company and PUK, rather than an official deal between Turkey and KRG.

In this era, Turkey was determined in keeping Baghdad in charge and as Balci (2014: 14-15) explains, in the 2006-2010 period Turkey was attempting to encourage Erbil-Baghdad cooperation in the energy issue with the central role given to Baghdad. Through signing two agreements with Baghdad, one in July 2008 for enhancing the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline capacity and transporting Iraqi gas to the international market and the other one in September 2010 for renewing the pipeline agreement for 15 years, Turkey was demonstrating its conventional Baghdad-centred energy policy (Balci, 2014:14-15). However, a number of factors changed Turkish orientation in the energy issue in Erbil's favour. These included the discovery of huge oil reserves in the Kurdish region and entrance of major oil companies such as Exxon Mobil, emergence of political problems with Baghdad, absence of an Iraqi hydrocarbon law, and attraction of lucrative contracts presented by the KRG.

Definitely Turkish initial involvement in KRG's oil sector was in no ways meant to draw KRG away from Baghdad or bestow KRG an outlet for independent oil exports. Faced with the realities of high oil prices, lucrative deals proposed by KRG and Iraqi hydrocarbon law stalemate, Ankara decided to get involved in the Kurdish energy sector with the hope that an Iraqi hydrocarbon law would eventually be passed that bind Erbil and Baghdad and prevent



Kurds from heading towards energy independence (Demir<sup>243</sup>; Selcen<sup>244</sup>). As a result of this policy, Turkish presence in IK's energy sector boosted in such a manner that in 2010 four Turkish companies were involved in 14 out of 40 oil production licenses issued by the KRG (Kalkan, 2011: 2).

Ankara was further pushed towards Erbil due to discussed failure of Iraqi Parliament to agree on a hydrocarbon law and Ankara's political problems with, then, the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Maliki. The political row that started with Turkey's support for Maliki's opponents in Iraq's 2010 elections (Balci, 2014: 15) was escalated to exchanging insults between Turkish and Iraqi premiers who were accusing each other of sectarianism, especially after Ankara sheltered Iraq's Sunni vice President who was accused of terror crimes by Maliki's government (Idiz, 2013). Ankara-Baghdad political confrontations were influential in convincing the Sunni elites in Ankara to make a U-turn from Shiite-dominated Baghdad to Erbil and support Kurdish independent oil sales. It was this shift in Turkish politics that enabled the Kurdish energy sector to survive and thrive and become the main source of KRG's revenue as Baghdad cut the KRG's budget.

In addition to the discussed involvement in building the oil pipeline, Turkey's engagement involved signing a number of strategic contracts with KRG that furthered the ties between the Kurdish energy sector and Turkey. First, as Turkey wanted to keep the state-owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) safe from Baghdad's blacklisting, it created a new corporation named Turkish Energy Corporation (TEC) as a subsidiary of Turkish Pipeline Corporation (BOTAS) to exclusively deal with IK's energy sector (Ozdemir and Raszewski, 2016: 131). Creation of TEC paved the way for signing deals between Turkey and KRG. A framework agreement known as '50-years deal' was signed in March 2013 and disclosed by Prime Minister Barzani in June 2014 that covers the issue of energy export through Turkey (Jones, 2014). Later the same year and after long negotiations in November 2013, a number of agreements were signed in relation to management of export pipelines, sale of oil and gas, acquisition of fields by TEC, revenue sharing mechanisms and other technical issues. The signed agreements made TEC an upstream player as major stakeholder in 7 blocs of oil fields, 2 of which are located in the disputed territories, and buying minor stakes in Exxon Mobil blocs. Meanwhile, Turkey imports discounted oil and gas from IK, BOTAS receives 1% for all oil transmitted through Turkey as transit fee, and revenues from IK's energy exports get

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<sup>243</sup> Chief of Petrol Trade of TPIC (Turkish Petroleum International Co. Ltd): 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>244</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

deposited in Turkish state owned Halk Bank (Mills, 2016: 35; Ozdemir, 2014: 6-7; Ozdemir and Raszewski, 2016: 132).

Direct oil exports and pipeline constructions discussed earlier are clear indication of the deals' impact on evolution of IK's oil industry. Nevertheless, the deals signed for production and export of gas and building gas pipeline did not bear fruit as expected. According to the agreement, it was expected that KRG start exporting gas to Turkey with 4 bcm in 2017, 10 bcm in 2020 and increasing the volume to 20 bcm in 2025 (Ozdemir, 2014: 10). Genel Energy as operator of Miran and Bina Bawi gas fields with 11.4 trillion cubic feet (tcf) or 320 bcm of gas in place 8.4 tcf or 240 bcm of which would be available for sale, was expected to play the major part in implementing this plan (Roberts, 2016: 21). According to the arrangements, Genel is responsible for development of upstream facilities and sells the produced gas to the KRG priced \$1.20 per thousand cubic feet. A midstream company aims to take over from there and transfer fee and the price KRG sells the gas required by Turkey are already covered in the November 2013 general sales agreement (Roberts, 2016: 21). However, plans for gas export did not get materialized as planned, due to the financial crisis and in particular KRG's inability to pay oil company's dividends, including the Genel Energy's, on time. Nevertheless, Genel Energy and KRG are still decisively pursuing their aspirations, as in February 2017 Genel announced that it has "finalized amended and restated production sharing contracts and gas lifting agreements for the Miran and Bina Bawi fields" (Genel Energy Website, 2017). The company also mentioned that BOTAS has started the tendering process for construction of the gas pipeline section in Turkey (Genel Energy Website, 2017).

## **7.6. EVALUATING TURKISH AND KURDISH GOALS IN ECONOMIC SPHERE: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS**

Evidently, economic links between Turkey and IK have evolved extensively in the last decade. The drive for more economic gains can be regarded as a major goal for the developments; nevertheless, both Turkey and Kurds have myriad of other goals to achieve through enhancing their economic and energy links. In most cases, these goals are in some way or another related to politics. The major aims of both sides are briefly discussed below.

### **7.6.1. Turkey's Goals and Economic Relations**

Economic relations between Turkey and IK evolved mainly in the last decade, and, as already discussed, Turkish aim in the pre-2003 period and even few years later was mainly related to gaining the support of Kurdish parties in the fight against PKK through patronage and economic aid. However, evolving economic relations and Turkish heavy involvement in the Kurdish region created new incentives and goals for Turkey. These aims could be summarized as making IK an export destination and market for Turkish companies, diversifying Turkey's energy sources, becoming an energy hub and actor, and using economic relations for certain political ends.

According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website, 2016) export-led growth has been the government's policy since 1980 and implementation of this policy in relations with IK is clearly visible. Exploring the data presented in the research reveals how Turkey successfully turned the Kurdish region into an export destination for Turkish goods and products and an arena for the diverse activities of the Turkish companies.

In addition to trade, Turkey has invested heavily in the Kurdish energy sector with two major goals at mind: diversifying the country's energy resources through getting cheap Kurdish energy and becoming an energy hub connecting the oil rich Middle East with the European energy market. Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (2017) clearly states that "diversification of routes and sources for imported oil and natural gas" is a major goal in the country's energy policy. The diversification policy aims at achieving energy security for Turkey and decrease the country's dependence on Russia and Iran, especially for gas imports. As Morlli and Pischedda (2014: 111) explain, Iran's gas supply is unreliable as Iran cuts the supply in winter due to rise in domestic consumption. Meanwhile, international sanctions imposed on Iran make it difficult for Ankara to pay for the purchased gas. Morlli and Pischedda (2014:111) add that Turkey has also expressed her desire to reduce dependence on Russia and as IK's only energy outlet Turkey can get gas at discounted prices and even bargain with other suppliers to get energy at cheaper prices

Kurdish energy in addition to facilitating the Turkish diversification policy gives Turkey "decision-making powers and ownership rights over the produced crude" (Ghandi and Cynthia Lin, 2014: 5) and helps the country's plan of becoming an active hub transferring

energy to Europe. Due to the nature of KRG's energy contracts Turkish companies are also involved in policy formulation of their energy blocs. Meanwhile, as Shaffer (2006: 102) advocates, the main advantage of becoming an energy hub is political. Demir<sup>245</sup> explained, having energy security and becoming energy hub enhances Turkey's international influence and bargaining power, especially with industrial states. Such views are also reflected by Bryza (2012: 57) who claims that "Ankara aims to elevate Turkey's geopolitical importance by attracting natural gas from the KRI into the Southern Corridor, and elevate Turkey's strategic significance as an energy transit hub for Europe, the Caspian, and the Middle East."

In addition to the above-mentioned goals, it is claimed that Turkey pursues a number of political goals through conducting economic relations with IK. These include through making Turkey the sole energy outlet for Kurds, Turkey uses economic pressure to discourage Kurds from moving towards independence. In addition, Turkey uses KRG as counterweight of Iranian influence in Baghdad and use KRG to pressure Baghdad. In the same manner, Turkey uses KRG against PKK and its offshoots in Syria and guarantees the security of pipelines crossing the Kurdish populated areas (Jozel, 2014: 6; Mills, 2013: 60; Wahab, 2014: 33-34; Morlli and Pischedda, 2014: 111). Among others, Zozani<sup>246</sup>, argued that the ultimate aim of Turkey is political integration and economy is a mere device for achieving this goal.

Considering the political goals Turkey seeks through economic relations, one could argue that Turkey's economic policy in relations with IK is the country's utilization of soft power to achieve those political objectives that are not easily achievable through hard power. Indeed, Strouse (2010: 20-21) refers to Turkish economic policy *vis-à-vis* KRG as "golden handcuffs" that creates "coercive dependence".

### **7.6.2. Iraqi Kurdistan's Goals and Economic Relations**

Similar to Turkey, IK has its own goals in economic relations with Turkey. However, it seems that Kurds are mainly interested in utilizing economic relations as a tool for establishing strategic relations with Ankara and gaining support for their political goals. Apparently, prior to 2003, Kurds were more party oriented and were more focused on party interests in their economic relations with Turkey. However, as Kurds united within KRG, economy was more utilized for economic and national ends rather than party interests (Hasan

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<sup>245</sup> Chief of Petrol Trade of TPIC (Turkish Petroleum International Co. Ltd): 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>246</sup> BDP Parliament Member: 28 May 2013, Ankara.

Ahmed Mustafa<sup>247</sup>), while some still rightly claim that party interests still play role in the relations as well (Bapir<sup>248</sup>; Qlyasani<sup>249</sup>).

The interviewees and literature on the economic relations suggest the following political and economic goals as the major aims of the KRG (Mills, 2013: 51; Wahab, 2014: 30; Jozel, 2014: 3; Morlli and Pischedda, 2014: 114; Mills, 2016: 40; Falah Mustafa<sup>250</sup>; Mala Omer<sup>251</sup>; Modares<sup>252</sup>; Rasul<sup>253</sup>):

- (i) gaining an outlet to Europe and Western world through Turkey;
- (ii) using economics to gain American support through Turkey;
- (iii) facilitating the resolution of Kirkuk issue as well as Kurdish issue in Turkey through economic cooperation with Turkey;
- (iv) using Turkish expertise to build IK's infrastructure;
- (v) attracting Turkish companies and investment as a means to demonstrate and guarantee the region's stability for foreign companies and encourage their investment;
- (vi) ensuring the region's security through bestowing lucrative economic enticements to Turkey and giant foreign corporations;
- (vii) cementing the region's control over the oilfields in the disputed territories, and,
- (viii) gaining economic and political independence from Baghdad via encouraging Turkey to protect her economic interests in the region.

Indeed, Kurds want to build strategic relations with Turkey based on economic cooperation, and, hope to achieve economic and political independence from Baghdad through these relations. As Hawrami<sup>254</sup> stated, "we want to control the source of revenues for our people. We do not want anyone to have the valve of our economic resources. We want our people to have the valve".

### **7.6.3. Economy's Impact on Politics, Balance of Interests and Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations**

The history and developments in T-IK economic relations are already discussed. However, three major queries should be dealt with in understanding the impact of economy on the

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<sup>247</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>248</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>249</sup> Change Movement's Senior Officer of Diplomatic Relations: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya.

<sup>250</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>251</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>252</sup> KRG's Trade Minister Economic Relations Advisor: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>253</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>254</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

bilateral relations. The first one deals with the extent of economy's impact on the relations, while the second one explores which side is benefitting more from the relations. Finally, the nature of the economic relations, in terms of dependence, interdependence or clientelism is explored.

Considering the enormous political changes in the region, it is not an easy task to measure the extent of economy's impact on politics. Generally, there are three different views on the topic. The first one considers economy as the main drive for positive change in T-IK relations. The second one gives priority to political and security issues and believes economy is the tool Turkey uses for projection of its power. The third view believes that economy and politics are interrelated, and their interaction is the main drive behind shifts in the bilateral relations. However, before starting to discuss these views, it is necessary to emphasize once again on the chronological evolution of economy as a deciding factor in the relations.

Evidently, those emphasizing on the leading role of economy in the relations refer to the post-2008 period. However, economic factor was present in the picture and was playing its role prior to this date as well. In the pre-1998 period, it was present as a Turkish card used to secure the cooperation of the Iraqi Kurdish parties in the fight against PKK. Turkey was the patron and based on the situation one or more of the IK's parties were among the clients. Meanwhile, economy was a source of contention among the Iraqi Kurdish parties and the civil war represented the materialization of the economic disputes. As mentioned, Talabani once even asked for the closure of the border with Turkey, because he believed that KDP benefits more from the relations and uses the money to buy weapons used in the internal fight. End of the KDP-PUK fight and arrest of Ocalan changed the equation, as due to PKK's ceasefire, Turkey was not in need of utilizing the economic card in the fight against PKK anymore. Hence, in the 1998-2008 period economic relations were growing gradually, regardless of cold political relations between IK and Turkey. The views expressed in the interviews and the literature, usually ignore the pre-2008 period, or else consider it as a build-up phase for the post-2008 period and the prelude to improvements in the T-IK political relations.

Advocates of the first view claim that economy gradually eased the way for political rapprochement and changed the relations from enmity to amity. As Hasan Ahmed Mustafa<sup>255</sup> explained, economic ties forced Turkey to deal with tenders and contracts with formal KRG

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<sup>255</sup> Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey: 27 April 2013, Erbil.

logos on them and gradually economy eased the way for formal recognition of the KRG. The focus of this group is usually on energy links. Park (2014: 30) refers to energy as the transformative factor that distances Ankara from Baghdad and brings it closer to Erbil. Proponents of this view claim that from 2008 onward economy at times surpassed the security factor (Balci, 2014: 8), or even became the major factor in the relations (Anaid<sup>256</sup>). Indeed, Anaid<sup>257</sup> believed that structural pressure of economy reinforces the economic cooperation and sectarian conflict in the region underpins the economic ties

Unlike proponents of economic priority, some argue that political calculations were the dominant force in the relations even in post 2008 period or believe that priority must be given to the security factor. They consider the developments in economic relations as a Turkish plot for advancing the country's interests. According to this perspective, politics is Turkish priority and through evolved economic relations Turkey turns IK into a sphere of influence or a vassal state (Al-Sharikh, 2011: 115-117). In supporting such views, Ayhan<sup>258</sup> mentioned that if Turkey's aim was to develop economic relations, Ankara should invest extensively in the Kurdish areas of Turkey, that have a great potential to be a production and export hub for the whole Middle East.

The alternative way that stresses the influence of non-economic factors in developing the economic relations belongs to AKP supporters who stress the role change in perception or identity among Turkey's top elites played in furthering the economic relations. As Hashemi<sup>259</sup> claimed, unlike the Turkish nationalists that deny the Kurdish issue, AKP addressed this issue and wanted to create peace during the period, and economy is used to gain the public support for this project.

It is worth mentioning that many in Turkey frowned upon developing direct economic relations with IK. Indeed, in 2008 and as Turkey was developing the economic relations with IK, many among Turkey's nationalist circles were against such developments (International Crisis Group, 2008: 13). Turkish nationalist traditionally give priority to the security issue. Koruturk<sup>260</sup> was critical of oil deals with KRG and believed they should be signed with Iraqi

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<sup>256</sup> Kurdistan University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>257</sup> Kurdistan University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>258</sup> Head of International Middle East Peace Research Centre (IMPR): 13 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>259</sup> Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>260</sup> CHP Parliament Member: 30 May 2013, Ankara.

government. Meanwhile, in Yeniceri's<sup>261</sup> view, political issues and precisely the issues of PKK and Kirkuk must be solved first, and then economy will follow. As Yeniceri<sup>262</sup> stated "We do not want Turkey to have good economic relations with Northern Iraq on the table and fight with Kurds under the table".

The third perspective believes that politics and economy are interlinked and the relations have developed through their interaction. In substantiating this argument, Falah Mustafa<sup>263</sup> argued, "sometimes the political relations pave the way for economic relations, other times economic relations pave the way". This view believes that interaction of political and economic factors, such as IK's mediation role in the peace process or Turkey's political recognition of the KRG and evolved economic relations worked hand in hand to develop the relations in post-2008 era.

Considering the rigorous opposition of Turkish nationalists towards developing direct economic ties with the KRG, it is difficult to claim that economy is the main cause behind improved relations in the post-2008 years. Economy certainly played a significant role, but the AKP's perception in dealing with the Kurdish issue was a decisive factor that paved the way for evolution of the economic ties. Hence, one can claim that identity shift paved the way and opened the gate for evolution of economic relations, and the later worked as a glue reinforcing the political cooperation and advanced the relations.

The next issues to be dealt with are which side is benefitting more from the economic relations, and what is the nature of the economic ties. Before discussing these issues, it must be clarified that substantial and direct economic links between Turkey and KRG started in the post-2008 era and in particular in the field of energy. As already discussed, the pre-1998 period is the period Turkey was using economy as a card to get clients among the Kurdish parties for the fight against the PKK. Meanwhile, the 1998-2008 era, as there was no recognition of the Kurdish entity and no serious political engagement, the private sector gradually built the economic links, and there was no official economic engagement between Turkey and IK. Hence, this section focuses on the nature of the post 2008 relations. However, as in February 2014, Iraq stopped sending the KRG budget, and the economic equation

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<sup>261</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>262</sup> MHP Parliament Member: 4 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>263</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.



changed, as explained later, this research believes post February 2014 relations differ with the previous era.

The issue of which side is the winner in the relations could be answered in three ways. Either Turkey or IK could be considered as the winner or alternatively it could be regarded as a win-win game. According to the first view, based on the data provided, Turkey has turned Kurdistan into a market for its products, and many Turkish companies and citizens are working in the Kurdish region. Meanwhile, Turkey is getting cheap energy, transit fee, and uses Iraqi Kurds as a pressure card both in Baghdad and in relations with the PKK and PYD. Hence, this evidences that Turkey has benefitted more in the relations. However, some in Turkey believe the opposite. As Ozdemir (2014: 6) explains, KRG had no infrastructure and outlet and without Turkey's cooperation Kurdish energy sector would have failed. Ozdemir (2014: 10-11) adds that the expenses of developing the IK's gas sector are so high that even in the long run it will not be so profitable for Turkey. Ozdemir (2014-11) also states that Turkish economic engagement has helped the Kurds to build an independent economy and head towards independence. Such concerns are worrisome for many among the Turkish nationalists and ultranationalists and make them think that IK is the winner in the economic game.

The third way to look at the relations is to see it as a win-win game. As Modares<sup>264</sup> explained, Turkey gets cheap energy, a market for its goods and Turkish companies benefit, and in return KRG gets an outlet for selling energy and importing the region's needs, and with the help of Turkish companies builds its infrastructure. Although, it is true that both sides benefit from the relations, but as it is explained later, due to imbalances in the equation, it seems that Turkey, as the dominant side, gains and benefits more.

It is already explained that the economic relations prior to 2008 were mainly ruled by either patron-client relationship (up to 1998) or were developed by the private sector (1998-2008) in absence of formal bilateral relations. However, there are different views on the nature of the relations in the post-2008 period. Dependency, interdependence, clientelism, and oligarchic capitalism are the paradigms used to explain the nature of T-IK economic relations.

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<sup>264</sup>KRG's Trade Minister Economic Relations Advisor: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

The advocates of dependency perspective believe that economic relations result in IK's dependence on Turkey. Aziz (2015b: 42-3) believes it is dependency, because Turkey conducts the relations in such a manner to achieve three goals:

- (a) turning IK so dependent on Turkey that the later could halt its development at any desired time;
- (b) attempting to create a political system in IK that could be easily manipulated by Turkey to prevent it from heading towards independence or helping the PKK;
- (c) linking IK's economic development to Turkey in a way that raw material is taken from IK and consumer goods are exported to IK without letting IK acquire the knowhow or use local labour.

Others refer to the imbalanced nature of the relations as the main reason for designating the term dependency for the relations. For instance, Rasul<sup>265</sup> claimed that bilateral trade is not balanced, because IK imports everything from Turkey and just exports one item in return and this will not create balance. He added that Turkey has many cards to use against IK, such as forcing her terms on IK for energy price, delivering the oil money to Baghdad rather than Erbil, and blocking the energy export. Similarly, Mantek<sup>266</sup> referred to the imbalance in trade claiming that the lorries enter IK loaded and return empty.

In furthering the debate, Mala Omer<sup>267</sup> explained the dependency through referring to Baghdad's zero-sum game with IK. He explained that due to Baghdad's policy, IK has no other option and can just think of Turkey as the only outlet and economic lifeline. Nevertheless, he called the relations as one of interdependence as Turkey needs energy and IK sells it. Hawrami<sup>268</sup> and Kaya<sup>269</sup> also believed that currently the relations are imbalanced, but they stated that if in the future Turkey import substantial amount of her energy needs from IK, then the relations could turn into interdependence.

In contrast to those who believe IK is dependent on Turkey, many use the term interdependence to explain the relations. Anaïd<sup>270</sup> and Rashid Ismael<sup>271</sup> referred to the

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<sup>265</sup> Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>266</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>267</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>268</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>269</sup> Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of Information Technology: 12 June 2013, Ankara.

<sup>270</sup> Kurdistan University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

integrated world economy and utilized the analogy “the world needs us and we need the world” to justify this position. Selcen<sup>272</sup> and Mohammed Faraj<sup>273</sup> also claimed that both sides benefit from the relations and depend on each other and this makes it interdependence. Gungor<sup>274</sup> explained the interdependence stating that IK has energy and Turkey has a good energy management network. In addition, Falah Mustafa<sup>275</sup> claimed that since IK has relations with others and has not put all the eggs in Turkey’s basket, and therefore, he claims that the relations are win-win for both Turkey and IK. In further explaining the situation, Paasche and Mansurbeg (2014:10) argue that Turkey-KRG relationship is at a level that it is “less of a Kurdish dependency, but instead is one of an equal partnership”. Each of these contenders justify their position through referring to the political, economic and geostrategic benefits Turkey gets from the economic ties with the KRG.

Disagreeing with the proponents of interdependence, Natali (2014:10) argues that in spite of the fact that the relations were presupposed to be mutual interdependence they have resulted in IK’s dependence on Turkey or have turned Turkey into IK’s patron. She justifies her position through claiming that due to the legal disputes over KRG’s independent oil sale, decreasing capability of IK to influence the Kurdish issue in Turkey and Syria, budget cut and IK’s budget crisis the economic relations have increased Ankara’s pressure cards and have decreased Erbil’s autonomy.

In a rather recent analysis, Mustafa and Aziz (2017: 137) have used the concept “oligarchic capitalism” in reference to the relations. According to their view, the nature of the relations is asymmetrical, but the similarity between the current political system in Turkey and IK has made the cooperation possible. This similarity is merger of politics and economy in both systems under the dominance of AKP oligarchs in Turkey and KDP oligarchs in IK.

After considering all the perspectives, this research argues that in spite of acknowledging that most of the trade is consisted of imports from Turkey, and Turkey is the only gateway for Kurdish energy, economic relations in the 2008-February 2014 period could not be named dependency, clientelism or oligarchy capitalism. This is due to the fact that during this period, KRG’s major source of revenue was Baghdad. Hence, neither KDP, nor PUK were in

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<sup>271</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG’s Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>272</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>273</sup> KIU leader: 8 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>274</sup> TRT Turk Canal Coordinator: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>275</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

need of getting an economic patron. Instead, economy was used by the KRG to improve the political relations between Turkey and KRG, and at the same time for encouraging the peaceful settlement of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Meanwhile, in this period, Turkey was in need of IK's support in Baghdad, Syria and with the PKK and PYD issues. Hence, with revenues from Baghdad, Turkey had no economic card to use against Kurds and the data of Turkish companies and Turkish investment in the region clarifies how eager Turkey was to seize the economic opportunities offered in the region.

This research, therefore, concludes that after considering the above factors, one may not be able to argue that IK was dependent on Turkey or was Ankara's client, as Turkey also needed both IK's political support and economic opportunities. As the dependence is mutual, despite the asymmetry in economic and political realities, it is concluded that interdependence better describes the nature of economic relations in this period

However, as Baghdad cut the budget and ISIS attacked the Kurdish region from 2015 onwards, the dynamics of the relations changed. Turkey became the only lifeline of IK and the aforementioned balance was lost. IK lost much of its attraction, and Turkey's response to ISIS attack on Erbil made many re-consider their views towards Turkey-KRG relations. For instance, Adham Barzani, a senior KDP official, criticized Turkish stance towards ISIS and expressed his distrust towards sincerity of neighbouring states with Kurdish population, and argued that Turkey's priority in the relations is economic interests not settlement of the Kurdish issue, and if Turkey could get these economic interests by other means, it would have rather done that (Nuche Net, 2014). Meanwhile, the internal political problems polarized the Kurdish region, which made it difficult to call the relations after February 2014 interdependence anymore, as IK is the side more dependent on Turkey, especially for oil export and budget.

## **7.7. CONCLUSION**

After discussing the chronological progress and the role economics has played in the bilateral relations through presenting the data and analysis, the research has arrived at the following conclusions:

First, Turkey is the major economic partner of the KRG and the economic relations developed mainly after 2008, as Turkey gradually entered into official relations with the KRG. Hence, initially, the change of perception among the Turkish ruling elite played a big part in the developments of formal economic relations.

Secondly, the aims Turkey and IK want to achieve through economic relations include both political and economic goals. Turkey's major goals are to make IK a good market for its products and companies, gain cheap energy and energy security, become a hub, utilize IK's weight both in Baghdad and in resolving the Turkey-PKK issues, and ultimately make IK a dependent region. The major goals of IK, on the other hand, are to have Turkey as a bridge and export outlet, get Ankara's help in building the IK's infrastructure, gain Turkish support or protection against IK's (or in case of clientelism the KDP's) rivals inside Iraq and ultimately support IK's independence.

Third, as long as Kurdish issue is not resolved in Turkey, economic cooperation cannot reach its maximum capacity, due to mutual mistrust, and since security of trade and energy pipelines cannot be guaranteed.

Fourth, as long as Turkey is the only outlet for IK, the relations will not be balanced and Erbil will be at the mercy of Ankara. The best scenario for Erbil and Ankara is the presence of good relations between Erbil and Baghdad and simultaneously Erbil and Ankara. As, IK economy succeeds only if there is a balanced relation between IK and all the neighbours; otherwise Erbil remains the vulnerable partner in the relations.

Fifth, the economic relations could be best explained by dividing them into four periods as follows:

- (i) pre-1998 period, or the era of patron-client relations;
- (ii) 1998-2008 the era of absent formal economic links and increasing private sector enterprises;
- (iii) 2008-2014 February, or the era of interdependence, and
- (iv) post 2014 or the new era of Kurdish dependence on Turkey.

Apparently, at times that IK is politically polarized the chances of relations stepping back to patron-client relations gets higher, while when the Kurdish government gets unified the probability of clientelism decreases.

Finally, as long as Kurdish issue is not resolved, Turkey will be eager to deal with a unified Iraq rather than KRG if possible; otherwise, based on the size of the Turkish interests in risk, Ankara would make pragmatist decisions. In this, however, the Turkish national interest and the nature of antagonism will play a determining role.

Discussing economy factor's role in T-IK relations it becomes evident that economy is both influencing and being influenced by other factors in directing the relations. As already debated in this chapter and as detailed in the conclusion chapter, interdependence, patron-client and dependency approaches are the major theoretical perspectives proposed in the literature that are engaged with explaining the nature of economic relations. The final chapter assesses the explanatory power of these theories vis-à-vis the on-going interplay of the economic factors with the other factors under study in this research. As the role of identity, security and economic factors are already discussed; the next chapter focuses on the role of external interventions on the relations, as the fourth inductively emerged analytical category governing the T-IK relations.

## **Chapter Eight: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS IN DETERMINING TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

### **8.1. INTRODUCTION**

The modern history of the Middle East is enmeshed with frequent episodes of foreign intervention influencing the already complicated politics of the region. Both Iraqi Kurds and Turkey have been greatly affected by regional politico-economic changes and foreign interferences. Arab spring and the events that followed it are the most recent examples of how local, regional and international politics interact and influence each other in the region.

As it is evident in the preceding chapters, both Turkey and IK's politics were and still are influenced by the regional and international politics. Turkey's fear from Western plots to disintegrate the country rooted in the Sevres Treaty, the country's attempts to join the EU, its membership in NATO, and its reactions towards post-Arab Spring developments are just few cases of the influence external factors insert on Turkish politics. In the case of IK, regional and Western interventions have frequently led to both negative and positive destiny shifts. For instance, in 1975 all Kurdish gains were lost due to withdrawal of the Western and Iranian support, while in post 1990 years it was the Western protection that led to establishment of the Kurdish administration in northern Iraq.

This section points at the main episodes of external intervention, whether regional or international, that influenced T-IK relations in a way or another. The fact that most of these events are already referred to in the previous chapters makes the task much easier. Hence, the focus in this chapter is on analysing how external forces through their physical or virtual presence have impacted the relations as opposed to exploring the relations of T-IK with these regional or international actors. Therefore, chronological interaction of the external forces and the post-1990 T-IK relations are discussed in three different periods based on the dominance, inferiority or balance in the extent of regional versus western presence and impact. Furthermore, post-2014 developments are briefly discussed. It is worth mentioning that Baghdad is also regarded as an external actor in this context, as the Kurdish entity has not been under Baghdad's sway and enjoyed an independent or semi-independent existence separate from Baghdad in the entire period under study.

## **8.2. WESTERN PROTECTION *VIS-À-VIS* REGIONAL DESTABILISATION: THE ERA OF TURKS (1991-1998)**

This period witnessed the frequent involvement of regional and international powers in Iraq's political life to the extent of curtailing Iraq's sovereignty. As detailed in the previous chapters, an international coalition forced Iraqi troops out of Kuwait and Iraq's defeat gave Kurds the opportunity to liberate their region in a popular uprising. These events opened the gate for regional and western interferences in both Iraq and IK in such a manner that the direction of events was decided by the interaction of Western, regional and local entities. In order to understand the role of external forces in moulding the T-IK relations in this period, a special attention must be paid to the following issues and their impacts on the relations:

- (i) Turkey's active participation in the Gulf War under Ozal's leadership and the country's goal of joining the EU;
- (ii) Establishment of the No-Fly-Zone and emergence of a western protected safe haven for Iraqi Kurds;
- (iii) Iran's military incursions and divide and rule politics coupled with the regional anti-Kurdish schemes by Baghdad, Syria and Turkey; and
- (iv) The Western and regional mediation attempts to end the Kurdish civil war.

The American-led coalition's operation that forced Saddam's defeated army out of Kuwait was a milestone in the region's history that opened the gate for active American presence in the region. As already discussed, Turkey under Ozal's leadership was an active partner of the USA in the war and simultaneously was an ardent pursuer of the EU membership. Since Washington was in need of Turkish cooperation, Ankara was regarded as a valued NATO ally and its concerns and preservations were respected by the U.S. administration. In contrast to Turkey's strategic importance for the USA, Iraqi Kurds had no recognised institutions or entity and were in a very hopeless situation. This was especially evident in the Kurdish mass exodus as Saddam's troops marched towards Kurdistan to crush the Kurdish uprising. Indeed, while Americans needed the Turkish cooperation, Kurds were even dependent on the Western protection for their survival in the face of Saddam's brutality.

Whereas western presence bestowed Kurds protection and allowed them to establish their institutions, it gave the upper hand in the T-IK relations to Turkey. Kurdish attempts for gaining recognition were declined by the Western powers and protection was all Kurds could get throughout this period (Bengio, 2012: 224-225). This was due to the fact that Washington had no project for the future of



Kurds as long as there was no decision on the fate of Saddam's regime (Bengio, 2012: 246-7). In the meantime, as discussed in earlier chapters, Turkey was given free hand in conducting military incursions into IK at will, and her concerns were highly regarded and endorsed in the mediation attempts. Indeed, the USA and the EU were supportive of Kurds as long as their actions were not in conflict with the policies of their NATO ally Turkey (Olson, 1994: 45)

On the other hand, Turkey's desire to join the EU was encouraging Ankara to carry out reforms on the Kurdish issue in Turkey and establish relations with Kurds outside Turkey (Kirisci, 1996: 27). This would have the impact of justifying the Turkish claim that Ankara is against the terrorists, not against the Kurdish nation. Hence, the aspiration to join the EU was a positive factor in favour of better treatment of Kurds both inside Turkey and in the IK region.

In addition to the Western presence, regional forces, especially Iran, Baghdad and Syria were exerting their pressure to advance their goals in the Kurdish region that had repercussions for the T-IK relations. The shared goal of preventing Kurdish nationalism to achieve significant gains in Iraq, even through using force was bringing all these forces together. Nevertheless, they had their own separate goals and rivalries that enabled the Kurdish parties to manoeuvre and survive in the hostile neighbourhood. This was usually done through forming and switching alliances with regional and even Western forces that in turn underpinned the formation of patron-client relations with Turkey.

Iran's policy towards IK is an excellent example of both using force and patronage to implement the divide and rule policy for achieving its goals. Similar to Turkey, Iran was bombarding the border areas and villages to intimidate the Iraqi Kurds and force them to hand over the Iranian Kurdish fighters active in the border area, or to remove them from the border (Gunter, 1997: 16; Bengio, 2012: 220). In addition, Iran was helping the Kurdish warring parties to enhance their conflict level and through divide and rule and mediation attempts achieve the goal of halting the progress of the Kurdish aspirations in IK. For instance, in early 1990s, Iran was supporting the IMK and the KDP against the PUK (Bengio, 2012: 220), and as Bapir<sup>276</sup> affirmed, at times Iran was simultaneously helping the KIM and the PUK, while they were at war with each other. As discussed earlier, Iran later became the PUK's patron and this forced the KDP to become Baghdad's client to push the Iran-backed PUK troops out of Erbil. Hence, willingness of Tehran and Baghdad to play the patron role *vis-à-vis* the warring Kurdish parties was essential in completing or counterbalancing the interchangeable web of patron-client relations with western and Turkish presence.

In addition to the patronage attempts, regional powers and the West were also attempting to achieve their goals through mediation among the warring parties in the Kurdish internal war. Details of such mediation attempts are already discussed in chapter four. Interestingly, while in absence of any plans

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<sup>276</sup> KIG leader: 15 May 2013, Erbil.

for the future of Iraq, the USA wanted the region to remain peaceful and did not want to be dragged into new conflicts (Bengio, 2012: 24-25), the regional powers favoured a degree of instability rather than chaos to halt the progress of Kurdish national aspirations (Kirisci, 1996: 37). No doubt, the priority given to Turkish concerns in the Western initiated mediations was the prevalent trend until 1998 and gave the Turks upper hand in relations with IK.

In brief, throughout this period both regional and international actors played their role in development of events in the region through various means, such as military operations to protect the Kurds (Operations provide comfort and poised hammer by the coalition), military raids to chase the Kurdish fighters and shelling the border villages (Turkey and Iran military interventions), and patronage of warring parties (Ankara, Baghdad, and Tehran's patronage of warring parties). Generally, in this period, external forces tilted the relations in favour of Turkey and left the Kurds in a miserable situation. Regional powers' hostility towards Kurdish demands and aspirations, their readiness to nourish the seeds of conflict among Kurdish parties and their military aids to the warring parties adequately kept the Kurdish dreams at bay. Meanwhile, the Western stance of giving priority to Turkey and having no plan for the Kurds' future privileged Ankara and gave Turkey the upper hand in the relations, to the extent of carrying out military operations in the region at wish. This era ended in 1998, as the Americans brokered Washington Agreement was signed between the KDP and PUK.

### **8.3. WESTERN DOMINANCE VERSUS REGIONAL WITHDRAWAL: THE ERA OF KURDS (1998-2008)**

Relative peace and stability prevailed in the Kurdish area and Kurds started their efforts to reunify the divided KRG, as the USA assumed the leading role and limited the regional powers' presence and influence in the Kurdish region. The timing of the Washington Agreement was very close to the time of Ocalan's capture, an event that temporarily eliminated Turkey's need for cross-border raids and simultaneously lessened the military importance of the KDP and PUK for Ankara. Meanwhile, the American presence in the region gradually increased as Washington decided to topple Saddam's regime in Baghdad. Five factors turned the American presence in Kurdish interest and affected the T-IK relations in favour of IK. These factors were:

- (i) Turkish Parliament's 2003 decision to reject American use of Turkish land for launching attacks on Iraq;
- (ii) Divergence of American and Turkish interests in Iraq and occurrence of Suleimaniya incident;

- (iii) The positive impact of Turkey's bid for joining the EU on the T-IK relations;
- (iv) The emergence of a weak Baghdad highly influenced by the Kurds who were enjoying constitutional legitimacy in new Iraq; and
- (v) Iran's anti-American position in Iraq and curtailment of Turkish and Iranian freedom of action in IK by the USA.

American plan to overthrow Saddam rang the alarm bells in Ankara, as Turkey was worried about Kurdish statehood or federalism in the post-Saddam Iraq. However, unlike early 1990s, when Ozal was an active ally of the USA, in 2003 Turkey disappointed the Washington as Turkish Parliament refused to let American troops open a northern front through Turkish territory. In response, Turkish concerns were not respected as before by the USA and Washington warned Ankara not to conduct any military action in Northern Iraq (Park, 2004: 22-23). This time, Kurds replaced Turkey and assumed the position of American ally, which made the Kurdish position *vis-à-vis* Turkey much better, especially as Washington and Ankara's interests in Iraq were diverging.

The divergence of interests was evident at the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Turkey was following the policy of favouring the Turkmen and wanted to intervene militarily in northern Iraq, because consolidation of Kurdish authority was regarded as an existential threat (Gorener, 2008: 3-4). On the other hand, Washington was using the Kurdish forces for creating stability in Northern Iraq and was considering the Turkish attempts as destabilising (Bryza, 2012: 54). Stability through limiting Kurdish aspiration and preventing foreign intervention (Shifrinson, 2006 December: 5) was what Americans aimed to achieve and Suleimaniya incident in which Turkish special forces were arrested by the Americans proved that Turkey no more was free to act at wish in Northern Iraq (Gunter, 2011: 11). Hence American stance in this period boosted the Kurdish position in the relations with Turkey and Kurds who were enjoying the American protection and patronage did not worry about Turkish threats or intimidating troop build-up in the border with Kurdistan region. Indeed, American stance played a big role in making Turkey to understand that conducting military interventions without American and Iraqi permission would be very costly for Ankara, and hence a shift of focus from utilising military means to developing economic ties had taken place in Ankara's stance towards IK.

During the period, AKP's passionate attempts for Turkey's EU membership were another positive factor for Iraqi Kurds. Kurdish issue was one of the thorny issues preventing Turkish membership in the EU (Olson, 2008: 24), and addressing this problem meant better treatment of Kurds inside Turkey and establishing liberal relations with Kurds of Iraq. The fact that Baghdad was very weak at the time and Kurds had a strong presence there also boosted the Kurdish position. For instance, the USA told Turkey that for any intervention Turkey needs Iraq's permission (Keskin, 2008: 70), and with Kurdish dominance in Bagdad such permission was very difficult to be granted. Meanwhile, Kurds legitimised

their institutions through constitution and Turkey started to come to terms with the fact that for influence in Baghdad, Ankara needs Kurdish and Sunni support.

At the regional level, Iran and Syria were concerned about developments in Iraq and held tripartite meetings. Similar to Turkey, Iran attempts to preserve Iraq's integrity; however, Iran also considers the USA as the cause of problems in the region (Seyed Azim Hosseini<sup>277</sup>). Nevertheless, anti-American rhetoric of Iran and her policies in Iraq and military build-up in the border areas threatening intervention to counter Iranian militant opposition forces (Shiffrinson, 2006 December: 5) did not scare the Kurds who were counting on American protection and were asking for peaceful resolution of Turkish and Iranian Kurdish issues.

Briefly, while in the former period the situation was in favour of Turkey, the 1998-2008 period could be nominated the Kurdish era. In this period Kurds assumed the role of the USA ally and as the result gained American protection and were able to win constitutional legitimacy and become an influential actor in Baghdad. Meanwhile, American heavy presence ended the free regional manoeuvres in the Kurdish region and made it difficult for Turkey and Iran to conduct military interventions. Under such circumstances and as Turkey in early years of AKP rule was ardently seeking to join the EU, Ankara decided to employ the economic means for promoting her interests in the Kurdish region and Iraq. Hence, throughout these years, American presence dominated the regional presence in the Kurdish region and American support gave the Kurds upper hand in the relations, but the situation started to change as the USA felt it needs the Turkish help for countering insurgency and rebuilding Iraq and allowed Ankara to resume cross-border raids in 2008 and following years.

#### **8.4. A BALANCED WESTERN, REGIONAL EQUILIBRIUM: THE ERA OF CO-OPERATION (2008-2014)**

As noticed, prior to 1998 the external interventions were in Turkey's and from 1998 to 2008 in IK's interest. However, from 2008 to 2014 as Turkey and IK were cooperating and working together, and due to new developments in the region, external intervention was not just in one side's interest. On the contrary, external intervention was mainly pushing Turkey and IK towards more cooperation and closeness. In this era, special attention must be paid to the American role in encouraging T-IK cooperation, Arab spring and its impacts, and Iran's stance towards T-IK relations to better understand the situation.

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<sup>277</sup>Iranian Consul in Erbil: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

In late 2007 American-Turkish rapprochement started as Washington signed a joint intelligence agreement with Ankara and included the PKK in its terrorist organisation list. Since Turkey was allowed to conduct cross-border operations and was not worried about Iraq's integrity, with American encouragement Ankara and Erbil started to get close and establish formal relationship (Iseri and Dilek, 2013: 29; Balci, 2014: 16). In addition to initial American encouragement, later and through 2011 withdrawal of its troops from Iraq, Washington unintentionally further pushed Turkey and IK towards each other. Kurds who were once enjoying the American physical support, with pull out of American troops felt the need for support from Turkey to balance against Baghdad (Gorener, 2008: 8). No more American troops were present to warn Maliki, Iraq's prime minister at the time, that he would be physically blocked if attack the Kurdish region (Filkins, 2014). Meanwhile, with the USA troops out of Iraq, Turkey felt the need for Kurdish support to balance against Iran's influence in Baghdad. Hence, Washington both voluntarily and involuntarily eased the tensions between Turkey and IK and encouraged their cooperation. Indeed, the cooperation grew to an extent that the USA became worried about the impacts of the growing ties on Iraq's integrity. Such concerns were raised when Turkey and IK decided to build a direct oil pipeline for selling KRG's energy independently and energy relations developed between both sides (Park, 2014: 1-6).

It is worth noting that Washington's policy constantly favoured establishing order and stability in the region and discouraged policies that imperil Iraq's integrity and stability. Therefore, as stated by Qlyasani<sup>278</sup>, American stance was favouring energy deals to be conducted through Baghdad rather than Erbil. Nevertheless, T-IK relations at this time were developed to the point that they were more concerned about their own interests rather than the American concerns. For instance, while Hemn Hawrami<sup>279</sup> acknowledged the great role played by the USA, he stated that "we seek, we pursue our interest in the region ... for the stability, for the economic development and for the job opportunities and for providing energy sources for our people". Similarly, Selcen<sup>280</sup> referred to the role of the USA as a superpower but added that maybe American bureaucrats want to play a mediation role, but Turkey and IK "are so close now that there is no room between the two parties for another one to meddle in".

In addition to the role played by the USA, Arab Spring and its outcomes also brought Turkey and IK closer. The Arab Spring outcomes improved the T-IK relations in three ways. Firstly, Arab Spring increased the sectarian tensions in the region and pushed Turkey towards assuming Sunni Islam identity (Idiz, 2015). This put Iran, Baghdad, and Syria in Turkey's rival camp and made Turkey closer to the KRG. Secondly, problems rose between Baghdad and Ankara that made it impossible for the emergence of Ankara-Baghdad agreements on the Erbil's account (Park, 2014: 33). On the

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<sup>278</sup> Change Movement's Senior Officer of Diplomatic Relations: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya.

<sup>279</sup> Head of the KDP Foreign Relations: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>280</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

contrary, Ankara was closer to Erbil and was using Erbil as a counterbalance against the rival camp in Baghdad (Barkey, 2010: 1). Thirdly, the Arab Spring provided the opportunity of self-rule for the Syrian Kurds, most of whom were affiliated with pro-PKK Kurdish parties. Both Ankara and Erbil preferred the Kurdish parties closer to Barzani to be in charge and this brought Ankara and Erbil closer (Park, 2014: 39-40). However, Barzani was supportive of federalism in Syria, which was frowned upon by Turkey (Park, 2014: 42).

Another factor that assisted the Ankara-Erbil rapprochement and cooperation was Iran's policy in the region that put Turkey and the KRG in the same camp. As stated by Kazanci<sup>281</sup>, through its support for Hizbullah and Syrian regime, Iran played a significant role in advancing sectarianism in the region. Meanwhile Iran had a considerable leverage in Baghdad and was considering the direct pipeline plan as a Western plot to create problems in the region (Hosseini<sup>282</sup>) due to their concerns over Iraq's integrity. Meanwhile, as uttered by Hosseini<sup>283</sup>, Iran was not favouring the peace process in Turkey and viewed the Turkish policies towards KRG as tactical with short-term outcomes.

In brief, in the period in question in this section, external intervention was a positive force that pushed Turkey and IK towards cooperation and increased trade and energy relations. Although the USA had a sizable presence in the region until 2011, troop withdrawal decreased Washington's weight and influence in Baghdad. Since then, Iran has gradually increased its influence in Baghdad. Nevertheless, the impact of external forces did not tilt the relations in favour of Turkey or IK in this period. Emergence of ISIS and re-emergence of American and Western presence in the region, after 2014, brought about new challenges and situations that disrupted the cooperation and honeymoon period enjoyed by Turkey and IK.

## 8.5. POST-2014 DEVELOPMENTS

ISIS onslaught on Iraq and later Kurdistan Region changed the *status quo* in the region. ISIS started its attacks on Kurdistan soon after Barzani called for holding a referendum on Kurdistan's independence in 2014 (Tanchum, 2015). The countries that quickly acted for saving Erbil were the USA and Iran. Obama ordered air protection for Erbil and referred to religious tolerance in the Kurdish region as one of the reasons he issued the Erbil protection order (Friedman, 2014). Meanwhile, as Barzani affirmed, on the night of ISIS attack on Erbil, Iran sent two planes full of weapons, but Turkey sent help much later (Hurriyet Daily News, 2014). Meanwhile, after KRG's independence referendum, Baghdad emerged as a strong actor again and KRG lost its control over the disputed territories.

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<sup>281</sup> ITF Representative in Turkey: 29 May 2013, Ankara.

<sup>282</sup> Iranian Consul in Erbil: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>283</sup> Iranian Consul in Erbil: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

While external intervention once, during ISIS attack was positive for Kurdistan, it became negative in the post-referendum days. Therefore, until the developments are settled, and a new status quo emerges it is difficult to evaluate the overall impact of the foreign intervention on the relations. Thus, as Mantek<sup>284</sup> stated, future of the relations depends on the regional changes and developments.

## 8.6. CONCLUSION

Analysing the role regional and global powers through their interferences have played in shaping the T-IK relations, it becomes evident that external intervention as a phenomenon has played a crucial role in framing the relations. Three distinct trends are distinguishable in this regard. The first trend is when the West is behind Turkey, cares about Turkish demands and bestows Turkey *carte blanche* to do cross border raids, and simultaneously there is a regional front (Iran, Syria and Baghdad) hostile to Kurdish aspirations. In such a situation, as in 1990-1998 years, Turkey assumes the upper hand position in the relations and deals with Iraqi Kurds the way it desires. Meanwhile, Kurds, whose demands are not heeded by the West and regional powers, are left with no option other than taking Turkish threats and demands seriously.

The second trend is when the West is behind the Kurds and protects the IK against Turkish and other regional threats (Iran, Syria and Baghdad). In such a case, as in 1998-2008 years, Kurds get the upper hand in the relations as *via* American physical support and protection they are capable of ignoring the Turkish (or even Baghdad and Iran's) threats and demands without suffering unwanted consequences. In such cases, Turkey needs to seek other options, such as utilising soft power to advance her plans in the relations.

The third trend is when the West cares about both Turkish and Kurdish demands and there is a regional camping that has Iran, Syria and Baghdad in one camp and Turkey in another. In such a situation, there is bigger chance of cooperation between Turkey and IK and the relations are balanced. Hence, it becomes clear that T-IK relations are easily influenced and shaped by interaction of local, regional and international powers, as illustrated above.

Evidently, external interventions in conjunction with the already discussed factors have played a significant part in T-IK relations. External interventions have determined the feasibility of different forms of alliances and patronage systems in the context of T-IK relations. Nevertheless, salience and success of this factor in shaping the relations and in establishment of different forms of balancing acts is tamed by the factors discussed in the previous chapters. In the next chapter, the complicated interplay of the identity, security,

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<sup>284</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013, Erbil.

economy and external interventions factors as the main determinants guiding the direction of T-IK relations is discussed, and after evaluating the analytical power of the theories proposed in the literature in encompassing the roles played by these factors, the theoretical position of the research is presented, that is the outcome of an inductive research process.



## **Chapter Nine: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **9.1. SUMMARY**

This research has critically explored the evolution of the political systems of both Turkey and IK with the objective of locating the impact of such evolution on their bilateral relations. In doing so, identity, security, economy and external interventions have been considered as important factors in developing the relations, which are examined profoundly. In addition, the nature of IK's political entity is scrutinised further and a survey of IR theories related to this study is presented. This chapter attempts to explore the significance of the four factors, namely identity, security, economy and external interventions in three distinct stages of T-IK relations through critical reflections. This is followed by examining the IR theories proposed for explaining the relations in the literature and the analytic eclectic approach proposed by this research for accommodating the role of the determining factors that have inductively emerged. Finally, the general remarks and recommendations are presented at the end along with a postscript to reflect on the post-2014 developments on the relations.

### **9.2. CRITICAL REFLECTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF IDENTITY, SECURITY, ECONOMY, AND EXTERNAL INTERVENTION THROUGH STAGES**

Based on the analyses presented in the preceding chapters, this section aims to render a critical reflection by focusing on each period through which the analyses were presented.

Considering the role played by the four factors, namely identity, security, economy and external interventions, T-IK relations in 1991-2014 period can be divided into three distinct periods. This does not mean that each era is constantly dominated by the signified factor and other factors have not played any role in that certain era. On the other hand, it does not indicate that the end of each era deprives the dominant factor of that era of any role in the relations. On the contrary, this division intends to demonstrate as to how a certain factor has tended to play a more significant role by significantly affecting the nature and developments of the relations. It is however obvious that identity is considered as a constant factor present in all the eras.

As discussed, identity as a factor both guides the relations through specifying the threats and interests of Turkey and Iraqi Kurds while simultaneously is affected by the developments resulted from interaction of these players. Hence, the threats and opportunities are defined and redefined through the process due to the dynamism of the identity factor. The three eras as identified are 'Security Dominance and Informal Relations', 'External Powers' Dominance and Absent Relations' and

‘Economic Cooperation Dominance and Formal Relations’. These are critically reflected upon as follows:

***Era of security dominance and informal relations, 1991-1998***

This era extends over the period of 1991-1998, during which Turkey was dominated by the Kemalist ideology, except for a short interval of Ozal’s rule. As identified, Kemalist ideology considers the integrity of the Turkish state as redline and regards Kurdish nationalism as the biggest threat on the state’s survival. Therefore, Turkish state was treating the gains and developments in IK as a grave threat. In this era, Turkey received assistance both from regional and international actors in achieving the goal of free military interventions in IK against the PKK threat and Kurds of Iraq were not considered as legal representatives of the Kurdish territory, but as a *de facto* reality temporarily forced on Turkey, till Iraqi regime restores control over the area.

It should be noted that the economic relations and the revenue generated from economic relations with Turkey in this era were quite vital for the survival of Iraqi Kurds, while it was quite insignificant for Turkey and played no strategic importance in Turkey’s calculations for dealing with the Iraqi Kurds. Economic card was mainly used for encouraging the cooperation of IK’s political parties in the fight against the PKK.

As Turkey was not ready to bestow any legality to the Kurdish leaders during this period, the relations remained informal and did not cross the patron-client line whereby Turkey was providing material and military incentives to enlist Kurdish cooperation in her military interventions. In this regard, Turkey’s attitude of not considering Iraqi Kurds as an entity eligible for bilateral relations has been the dominant factor. Hence, in this era, in absence of any viable regional or international support for the Kurdish cause in IK, Turkey had the free hand to deal with the Iraqi Kurds from the security lens and conduct all the relations from Turkey’s security perspective as defined by the Kemalist identity. Thus, in absence of significant economic transactions and in the presence of an external interference favourable to Turkey, threats were defined in terms of Kemalist identity and consequently, security became the dominant force in this era. In other words, economy and external intervention were employed to serve the Turkish security defined by Kemalism identity.

Hence, as observed above it could be concluded that when Kemalism is the ruling identity in Turkey, economic relations are insignificant, and regional and international involvement is in Turkey’s favour, the relations would be dominated by Turkish security concerns over the Kurdish issue. In such a condition Turkey has no incentives to engage with IK and prospects for establishment of good relations are close to zero, as Kemalist Turkey avoids elevating the IK’s status by bestowing it recognition through direct engagement and is ready to engage with the Kurds only informally for

satisfying her objectives, especially to use them in the fight against the PKK. Prospects for Turkish success in such an endeavour are much higher if party nationalism dominates IK's political scene and Kurds do not have established constitutionally recognised national institutions. This is due to the fact that advanced national institutions and dominance of a national Kurdistan identity would not permit the Kurdish parties to engage in patron-client relations with Turkey, while in their absence Kurdish parties do not feel obliged to respect the national redlines.

### ***Era of external powers' dominance and absent relations***

This era starts with the further involvement of the USA both in IK and the region. The increased American involvement in 1998 was soon followed by the decrease of the PKK threat due to its leader's arrest in 1999 and the repercussion this had on Iraqi Kurds' importance for Turkey in security front. In other words, absence of the PKK threat decreased the value and need for Iraqi Kurds' cooperation in fighting the PKK.

Two new developments, however, made Turkey feel its security is endangered once more, but contrary to 1991-1998 period in 1998-2008 period due to American resistance it did not have the free hand to deal with the threat as it wished. In this era, the external factor, or more precisely, the American direct involvement and its favourable treatment of Iraqi Kurds who acted as an American ally in 2003, as opposed to unfavourable treatment of Turkey that had rejected American use of Turkish land for the 2003 war, had changed the rules of the game. Meanwhile, after 2003 the PKK threat emerged strongly once again. In addition, Iraqi Kurds gained legal recognition in Iraqi constitution and Turkey was no more capable of ignoring this development and treating Kurdish leaders as usurpers of a position rightfully belonged to a sovereign Iraqi state. Kurds were, now, legal partners in Baghdad and legal representatives of their region even in the eyes of the Baghdad government.

In this era, hence, even though security was still a dominant factor and guideline for both Kurds and Turkey, there was an external, powerful actor involved in the relations that was deciding on what the possible and permissible scenarios for action were both for Turkey and Iraqi Kurds. Turkey was not free to intervene in IK at will and Iraqi Kurds were not free to create disturbance in the region, as peace and stability all over Iraq was the main priority of the USA. In such a situation a game of balancing was played both by Kurds and Turks through which Kurds did bandwagoning through jumping on American wagon and received immunity from Turkish threat.

Furthermore, Kemalist identity was still in charge in Turkey and Kurds were viewed through the security lens. However, as mentioned earlier, American presence had eclipsed the impact of all other factors and Washington was the actor that decided to prevent Turkey from conducting cross-border

operations and gave the Kurds freedom of action and protection. Therefore, this period witnessed the salience of the external intervention on the relations. It is worth mentioning that during this period, economic relations were growing, but these relations were not formal and were mainly conducted by the private sector.

It could, therefore, be argued that if Americans actively protect the IK while Washington's relations with Ankara are on bitter terms, even with Kemalism in power in Turkey, Ankara would not be able to materialise its military threats against the Iraqi Kurds, especially when Kurdish institutions are legally recognised within Iraq. Based on the data presented in the empirical chapters, with Kemalism in power in Ankara prospects for establishment of direct cooperative relations between Turkey and IK were very weak, as Kemalists preferred conducting the relations through Baghdad and were unwilling to deal with IK as a legal entity since achievements of Kurdish nationalism are regarded as a fundamental threat to Turkey's territorial integrity. It could be argued that Kemalists opt for engaging with IK only as the last resort when there is no other option left, and it would be just as a tactical move to be reversed as soon as Turkish interests could be satisfied through other means.

#### ***Era of economic cooperation dominance and formal relations 2008-2014***

The realization of the fact that cooperation in 2008-2014 period is the inevitable solution came due to change in American stance towards Turkey and American intention to bring Turkey and Kurdish allies together for the better management of the challenges Washington was facing in Iraq in particular and the Middle East in general. This was coupled with domestic developments in Turkey aiming at a non-security oriented engagement with Kurdish issue in the country as well as the increasing economic relations between the Iraqi Kurds and Turkey. This was the beginning of an era that Turkey started to recognise Kurds as official representatives of the region.

In this era, changing regional and international environment were in the interest of Iraqi Kurds, as Turkey was further alienated in a region dominated by Iranian-backed proxies and regimes, hostile secular regimes replacing the revolutionary installed Islamists, and later Sunni extremism surge in the region. Kurds turned into an ally and economic relations were of the most significant importance.

In this era, Turkey, hence, needed Kurdish cooperation both in economic and political spheres. Especially Kurdish weight in Baghdad was important for Turkey, as Ankara did not want its Iranian rival control the whole Iraq. In this period, in the neo-Ottoman identity of the AKP elites, Kurds were still considered as a threat if they were not acting within the framework deemed acceptable by them, but the role of economy and need for cooperation was so high that dominated the threat-perception of the AKP elites. Meanwhile, external intervention both in the form of American encouragement for

Turkey-KRG cooperation, the motivation to join the EU through performing reforms, and sectarian tensions in the region following the Arab Spring were urging Ankara to further cooperate with the Kurds.

Hence it could be argued that if a pragmatist ideology dominates in Ankara, Turkey will have a more flexible approach in foreign policy towards IK. However, it does not mean that Turkey forgets its security concerns and necessarily establishes cooperative relations with Erbil. However, a pragmatist identity in Ankara gives Turkey more policy options to choose from for the sake of achieving objectives that Kemalism only pursues through hard power. Meanwhile, a pragmatist identity opts for establishing formal cooperative relations with IK only in the case that there are significant economic and political incentives, and regional and international environment is encouraging cooperation. For instance, if the AKP had the option of conducting the relations through Baghdad, the relations with Erbil would not have developed the way they did (as the AKP chose Erbil after being disappointed from achieving its aims through Baghdad). Moreover, whenever Turkey is domestically engaged in peaceful settlement of her Kurdish problem and feels less threatened by the Kurdish nationalism prospects for cooperation between Turkey and IK increase and such relations can be further strengthened due to increased mutual economic dependence.

#### *Concluding Remarks*

In concluding, it could be argued that the dominant identity in Turkey defines the Turkish policy options towards IK. Accordingly, Kemalism prefers utilising hard power and avoiding direct, formal relations, while pragmatism in its different forms (Ozal's or the AKP's pragmatism) is more flexible and combines both hard and soft powers (smart power). Despite the general ideological positioning and the importance of identity as a determinant on the side of Turkey, identity factor is tamed by four factors, namely external interventions, security factor (in terms of the status of Kurdish issue in Turkey) economic factor, and dominant identity in IK. If the external interventions are in Turkey's favour, then Ankara has the upper hand and imposes her will on the relations, whether through direct military interventions or through exerting pressure on the Iraqi Kurdish parties. If the external interventions are balanced or in favour of IK, then Turkey faces limitations in implementing her security-oriented policies. Meanwhile, Turkish thirst for taking aggressive stances against IK (especially launching military incursions and bombardment of IK's border villages) increases if Ankara and Turkey's Kurds are on bitter terms or Turkey is at war with the PKK, while possibilities of confrontation decreases with improvement in Ankara-Turkey's Kurds relations.

Turkish stances are further tamed by the impact of the economic factor. When the volume of economic relations are insignificant for Turkey, or if Ankara can establish direct trade contact with Baghdad (opening a border gate not controlled by IK and not passing through Kurdish controlled

areas) and materialise its economic and energy objectives through Baghdad, then economy will not have any impact on Turkey's policy towards IK. On the contrary, if the volume of economic and energy relations are significant and Turkey has no other options to establish trade and energy links directly with Baghdad other than through IK, then economic factor influences Turkey's stance towards IK and pushes Ankara to head in the direction of establishing cooperative formal relations.

Finally, the dominant identities in IK play their role in contracting or expanding Turkey's options. If party nationalism is dominant in IK, Turkey can easily engage in patron-client informal relations with the Kurdish parties for achieving its security-oriented objectives, while if Kurdistan identity becomes dominant in IK, Turkey will face difficulty convincing the Iraqi Kurds to act as her clients in the war against the PKK, as such cooperation with Turkey brings about political costs for the Kurdish parties.

### **9.3. THEORETICAL IMPLICATION OF TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONS**

For locating the T-IK relations in the IR theories context, the research has attempted to utilize the literature available on the issue, the ideas expressed in the interviews carried out during the fieldwork, and analysis of the events and developments in the relations. Through utilizing these resources, the research attempts to avoid forcing a theoretical framework or testing the applicability of a certain theory on the relations. Instead, the research critically investigates the applicability of the theoretical frameworks suggested in the other studies, their applicability to the relations, and providing a justified explanation on the substance, namely the relations through theoretical conceptions.

Studying the literature and developments in the relations between Turkey and IK as has been presented so far, reveals four significant facts, which are critically important in finalizing the research's stand on the theoretical framework of the study.

The first and the most important conclusion can be drawn from the analysis is that the relations between Turkey and IK are 'multi-faceted emergent relations' between an established entity (Turkey) and an emerging entity (IK). In contrast to established relations between established entities (for example between the USA and the UK) enjoying an established pattern, T-IK relations have no established pattern and suffer from dramatic shifts that change the whole direction of the relations from one period to another as identified in this study so far. Consequently, the multi-faceted nature of the relations implies that the relations are determined by the interplay of a number of issues or factors (namely security, economy, external intervention and identity) and focusing on only one factor or issue will provide a distorted and imperfect picture and explanation of the relations. This is also true for a single theoretical framework to be able to explain such a complicated and emergent relationship.

The second conclusion is that through studying the available literature it becomes evident that very few works (which are discussed below) have theorised the relations and most are not comprehensive. Following the above point, the third conclusion is that the works available are mainly event analysis pieces, which at most present some policy recommendations, and not robust theoretical explanation. Except Sonmez and Kurban's (2017) work, others only cover a limited period of time or a certain era and their theory selection can in no way explain the turbulent nature of the T-IK relations from 1991 to 2014.

Finally, the historical evolution of the relations reveals that dramatic change has been a frequent occurrence in the relations and this factor is crucially important in explaining the problems present in studying the T-IK relations. The turbulent relations of T-IK since 1991 has witnessed dramatic changes in agents, issues and events or structures involved in directing the relations and such changes at certain periods have consequently resulted in paradigm shifts in the relations. This fact has encouraged many researchers studying the relations to focus only on a certain period in the relations and thus avoid the problem of explaining the change and the processes and dynamics at work that bring about such dramatic changes in the relations overtime or use more than one theory to account for the change. This is the main reason that the theoretical explanations provided by the first group of contenders cannot explain the evolution of the relations. However, this study attempts to overcome this problem through understanding and explaining how and why dramatic change has occurred, and whether the relations can be explained through the lenses of a certain IR theory or not as discussed below:

### **9.3.1. Historical Evolution and Theoretical Explanation**

As mentioned earlier, a limited number of works have delved into exploring the theoretical explanation of the relations. In addition, some of the academics and politicians interviewed during the fieldwork for this study stated their stand on the theoretical analysis of the relations. For example, Olson (2006: 14-16) explains Turkey's relations with her neighbouring countries according to omnibalancing theory. Accordingly, Turkey's trade relations with IK and its participation in the process of rebuilding Iraq is described as a part of Turkey's omnibalancing act. Olson (2006) does not explain further and makes no attempt to clarify the details of how this theory is applicable to the T-IK case. It should be noted that he is certainly right to assume that Turkey pays a great attention to the internal threat in the form of Kurdish threat epitomised by the PKK and performs balancing acts to counter this threat. However, it is quite hard to explain the Turkish behaviour, especially after 2008 with this theory. The obvious reason is, in this period, Turkey was paying much more attention to economy and expanding economic relations with the KRG and simultaneously was searching for a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue inside Turkey, which implied that security was not at the top of the agenda. Meanwhile, the extent of identity's impact is not clear in such a theoretical explanation,

while identity seems to have played a major role. Moreover, while it is tempting to apply the omnibalancing theory for pre-2008 period, there are aspects of the relation that this theory cannot appropriately address. For instance, while it explains the priority of security in pre-2008 periods, it cannot address the asymmetry, and informality of the relations in the pre-1998 relations or the significant role external intervention played in the 1998-2008 period. This research does not attempt to discredit the explanatory power of omnibalancing or any other theory, but rather attempts at presenting the theory(ies) that explains the relations in an effective manner.

Oguzlu (2008: 10-20), on the other hand, considers two major prevailing views in Turkey, one 'liberal', asking for increased engagement and relations with the KRG, and the other one 'realist' dealing with the IK through security lens. In his view, realists were dominating the Turkish politics until 2008 and liberal integrationists were replacing them in that year. Indeed, as the focus is on security, for the 1991-1998 period and for the external intervention in 1998-2008 period, realism can provide an efficient explanation. However, realism also fails to explain the importance of identity for the relations, as it is due to the identity issue that Turkey regards IK as a threat and *vice versa*. Meanwhile, while realism explains the relations between states as such, in the 1991-1998 era, the relations were quite asymmetric and informal, as there was no unified Kurdish government and no official relations between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds. However, realism cannot explain why before Ozal's death Iraqi Kurdish leaders were received formally in Ankara, while after his death relations became informal and revolved only around the security issue. Hence, realism may not be the most efficient theoretical frame at explaining the asymmetry and informality of the relations.

Although Oguzlu (2008: 10-20) is quite right about the ascendance of liberalism in 2008, liberalism alone cannot explain the relations. As discussed in Chapter 5, if the ruling elites were the traditional Kemalists, improvements in the relations and ascendance of liberalism was impossible. Hence, if identity is ignored, liberalism alone cannot explain the dynamics at work that brought about change in the relations between Turkey and IK. Indeed, if the AKP as a party was not dominating the foreign policy, it was impossible to see the dramatic shift in the relations towards liberal integration.

Al-Sharikh (2011: 117), on the other hand, claims that Turkey wants to turn the IK into a "vassal state" and views the relations according to the logics of dependence. Mantek<sup>285</sup> and Qlyasani<sup>286</sup> also believe that IK is dependent on Turkey due to the nature of the economic relations. However, as revealed in Chapter 7, the main source (over 90%) of the IK budget in 2008-2014 period was from Baghdad and at the same time Turkey was in need of IK's political support in Baghdad. Therefore, it is not reasonable to consider IK being dependent on Turkey, because even if Turkey had stopped all trade relations with the IK, Kurds had enough monetary power to import their necessities from

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<sup>285</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 22 April 2013 in Erbil

<sup>286</sup> Change Movement's Senior Officer of Diplomatic Relations: 14 May 2013, Suleimaniya.



elsewhere. Furthermore, in the pre-2008 period, the economic relations were not so significant to create dependence, especially since oil for food programme was in place.

Writing in 2017, Sonmez and Kurban (2017: 13-15) divide the relations into two periods, namely 1992-2008 and 2008-2015. They claim that the first period is dominated by security and therefore can be explained by 'realism', and the second period is dominated by economy and therefore can be explained by 'mutual dependency'. They indirectly refer to the role of identity as well, as they mention that in Turkey decision-making on foreign policy in 2008 is transferred from military to the foreign ministry. Indeed, Falah Mustafa<sup>287</sup>, Mala Omer<sup>288</sup>, Selcen<sup>289</sup>, Sayer Erbil<sup>290</sup> and Ismael<sup>291</sup> also iterated that the relations could be explained through liberalism's mutual dependency in the post 2008 period. However, as explained above, realism and mutual dependency alone cannot explain everything, as without considering the role identity shift in Turkey had on the relations one cannot explain why initially Turkey was avoiding recognizing the KRG and why in 2008 decided to shift its policy and opt for recognition of the KRG and cooperation with it. Indeed, realism and mutual dependency explain certain aspects of the relations, but ignore the role of identity, external intervention and asymmetries in the relations. Hence using these theories make it hard to explain for instance why while Kurdish threat was still regarded as a grave one by Ankara in 2008, nonetheless the relations became formal and improved, or how informal patron-client relations through which Turkey was using the Kurdish parties for its own ends and Kurdish parties were doing the same could be explained by balancing of power of the realism.

This short survey of studies reveals that in attempting to utilise a single theory, while some of these theories can explain some aspects of the relations at a certain period of time; nevertheless, none of them can properly explain the relations throughout the period under study. Hence, analysing the T-IK relations according to a single theory will provide a flawed picture incapable of explaining the complexity of the relations and ignorant of certain influential dynamics at work.

The failure of a single theory is due to changes in agents steering the relations, issues playing the main role and the structure or events occurring throughout the period (*see* Table No 6 below). The shifts are so dramatic that just few years after calling Kurdistan Region's president a 'tribal chieftain' and accusing him of 'harbouring terrorists', President Barzani received red-carpet reception in Ankara and was meeting Turkish President and Prime Minister. Therefore, changes in agents, structure and issues require a conceptual framework that explains the development of the relations in relation to such changes as identified in this study by periods through using 'analytic eclecticism approach'. In other

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<sup>287</sup> Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>288</sup> Salahaddin University lecturer: 25 April 2013, Erbil.

<sup>289</sup> Turkish Consul in Erbil: 5 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>290</sup> Turkish Trade Attaché in Erbil: 13 May 2013, Erbil.

<sup>291</sup> Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG's Foreign Relations Office: 9 May 2013, Erbil.

words, since each period is dominated by specific agents, issues and events which demarcates it from the others, each era can better be explained by a mixture of theories including constructivism and realism, liberalism or patron-client theory, which is attempted in the following sections.

### ***Non-Recognition Period of 1991-1998***

As discussed in detail, this period starts with establishment of a no-fly zone in northern Iraq, which provided a safe haven needed for the establishment of an unrecognized Kurdish entity in this region. In spite of initial engagement, Kemalist Turkey refused to recognize the Kurdish entity established in 1991 and dealt with the Iraqi Kurds through the lens of Turkey's security. Due to Kurdish internal fighting, Kurdish parties were at the mercy of help and assistance of regional powers for their survival. Hence, regional powers, especially Turkey and Iran and at times Saddam's government in Baghdad were playing the role of patron for a particular Kurdish political party they favoured at the time. Therefore, the relations between Turkey and IK was quite asymmetrical at this period, as one side was a recognized state with a sizeable hard power on the ground and was not ready to formally recognize any Kurdish political entity, and, on the other side, weak unrecognized warring Kurdish political parties with a *de facto* status in no way comparable to Turkey.

Observing the empirical facts, it becomes evident that due to asymmetry in status, lack of sizable economic relations and the nature of cooperation or conflict, none of the theories mentioned in the literature can single-handedly explain the dynamics of this period appropriately.

The best way to frame Turkey's military and financial assistance for a certain Iraqi Kurdish political party at a certain time for getting that political party's help in Turkey's fight against PKK is through patron-client relations. This best explains the voluntary *quid pro quo* informal relations with the Kurdish political party better suiting Turkey's demand, and on the Kurdish part, with the regional power better satisfying the Kurdish political party's aspirations. Meanwhile, the role of identity must not be forgotten. It is the Republican Kemalist identity that prevents Turkey from recognising Iraqi Kurds and establishing formal relations with them – an identity which is shared by all from various political spectrum. Furthermore, it is the party nationalism rather than Kurdistani nationalism as an overwhelming identity on the Kurdish side that allows for voluntary patron-client relations between Kurdish parties and Turkish government for gaining party interests.

This pattern in relations, however, ceased to be vigorously applicable, as regional intervention in IK turned critical and forced the American administration to take action and bring an end to the state of affairs. American involvement forced the warring Kurdish parties to sign the Washington Agreement in 1998 and end the years of internal fighting. American direct involvement and the end of the Kurdish infightings coupled with evolution of Kurdish identity and status (through emergence of a

unified KRG and affluence of Kurdistan identity) ceased the patron-client relations with Turkey and hence this approach's mixture with constructivism could no more explain the post-1998 relations properly.

### ***Transitional period: 1998-2008***

Washington Agreement signed in 1998 between the KDP and the PUK heralded the era of strong American presence in IK and its domestic and external politics. This presence gained further strength in 2003 as American troops toppled Saddam's regime in Baghdad. The immediate outcome of American presence was weakening of the regional dominance in IK, in particular Turkey's presence and influence. Consequently, Turkey lost its free hand in IK, while Iraqi Kurds started to gain a better position and status *vis-à-vis* regional powers. Two factors that played crucial role in this regard were Turkish Parliament's rejection of allowing the American administration to use Turkish bases and land in 2003 war against Iraq, and downfall of Saddam's regime that bestowed Kurds and their Regional Government a legal constitutional status.

In addition to the external western intervention, domestic changes were occurring both in Turkey and IK that justify the denomination of this period as transitional. The emergence of AKP into power in 2002 started changing both domestic and international politics of Turkey.

Domestically, the AKP started its efforts to transfer the power from military to the civilian administration and internationally it took an economic-oriented foreign policy, while it was trying to apply the zero-problem policy with neighbours and accelerate Turkey's acceptance to the EU. On the other hand, in IK, Kurdish political parties started the process of forming a unified Kurdish government, which finally succeeded, and KRG emerged as the official representative of Kurds in Iraq.

At this stage, in spite of the transitions occurring in both entities, and in spite of increasing economic ties between Turkey and IK, Turkish foreign policy was still dominated by the military and IK was in no way recognized by them. For Turkey, IK was a threat and Iraqi Kurdish entity was portrayed as an enemy due to the Kemalist identity. Meanwhile, due to American presence and support, Turkey had lost her free hand and her patron position in IK and could not even carry out cross-border operations, especially after 2003. Indeed, the USA was now playing the role of IK's patron and this fact coupled with IK's new constitutional status had bolstered IK's position and had turned the Kurds more confident in their relations with Turkey.

Exploring the empirical evidence and change in actors and forces involved indicates that after 1998 Turkey was no more the patron it used to be prior to this date. Meanwhile, economic ties, in spite of rising in volume were not yet playing a crucial role. In this period, external, or American intervention changed the equation completely. Therefore, patron-client, liberalist and dependency-oriented theories cannot explain the new situation in a logical manner.

However, realism with the help of constructivism seems capable of adequately filling this conceptual gap, as the identity element of constructivism explains why Kemalist Turkey was hostile towards IK and why IK parties were no more eager to be Turkey's client, and realism based on realities of global distribution of power and IK's alliance with the USA that cut Turkey's free hand in IK explains why despite Turkish hostility no military incursions into IK occurred and Ankara lost all its influence over IK. Hence, Turkey was engaged in a balancing act against IK under American patronage through threats of using force. On the other hand, Kurds had utilized the bandwagoning strategy to benefit from the American support to counter the Turkish military threats. Hence, Turkey and IK that based on identity factor were regarding each other as existential threats were engaged in balance of power act; one through amassing troops in the border area and threatening to use force in absence of American support and the other through shielding itself under the protective umbrella of the American ally. Without identity factor's explanatory power, the hostility between Turkey and IK (due to inherent hostility between Kemalism and Kurdish nationalism) and IK's disdain for cooperating with Turkey (due to change in IK's identity from *de facto* to *de jure* and affluence of Kurdistani identity) could not be explained merely by realism and later the balancing acts cannot be justified easily.

The situation started to change in 2008 as increasing economic relations between Turkey and IK, emerging regional sectarian rivalry and Baghdad's falling into the Iranian camp, advent of peace process with Turkey's Kurd in Turkey, American encouragement of T-IK cooperation and dominance of civilians in Turkey's foreign policy finally led to Turkey's formal recognition of KRG and direct formal Turkey-KRG meetings in 2008.

**Table No 6: Changing Pattern of Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan Relations**

Periods	Actors and their Agents				Dominant & sub determinants	Structure/ Events	Theory
	Turkey	Iraqi Kurdistan (IK)	Regional Actors	Western Actors			
<b>1991-1998- Era of Security Dominance</b> <b>Non-Recognition Period</b> Kemalist Turkey led by military		Divided political parties engaged in internal war (dominant party loyalty)	Iran, Syria, Iraq (Strong presence, esp. Iran and Iraq)	USA and Coalition forces  Presence in the interest of Turkey	Security+ Articulation of Identity	IK not recognized by Turkey, Turkey using hard-power, strong regional camp against IK aspirations, weak western presence  Analytic Eclecticism	Patron-client relations+ constructivism
<b>1998-2008- Era of External Intervention dominance</b> <b>Transitional Period</b> Kemalist Turkey transforming at the hand of moderate Islamists (military-civilian competition)		Emerging unified KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government), transforming loyalty from party to nation	Iran, Syria, weak Iraq (Iraq disappears for most of the period)	USA, EU  Strong USA presence in IK interest	External intervention, security, rising economic exchange, articulation of identity	USA presence sidelining Turkish and regional role, absence of Iraq, identity transformation, emergence of IK as a constitutional, influential player in Iraq  Analytic Eclecticism	realism+ constructivism
<b>2008-2014- Era of Economy Dominance</b> <b>Recognition Period</b> Moderate Islamist Turkey ruled by civilians  Institutionalizing KRG Increasing role of Kurdish nationalism  Iran, disappearing Syria, emerging Iraq  USA, EU Decreasing USA and EU presence  Economy, security, external intervention, articulation of identity  Trade-oriented relations, regional sectarian rivalry, hostility between Turkey and Iraq, Turkish peace process and civilian dominance in the state						Analytic Eclecticism  Neoliberalism (Interdependence)+constructivism	

### ***Recognition Period: 2008-2014***

As mentioned above, the dominant issues, agents and events influencing the relations were altered in 2008 and this fact has resulted in a new dramatic shift in T-IK relations. IK was no more regarded as an enemy; rather, it became a friend, a dominant economic partner and Turkey's gateway to the Arab Middle East. Trade and energy ties amounting to over 10 billions annually, and identity shift in Turkey which made Turkey view KRG as a friend not foe in the context of regional politics and Turkey's internal peace process once again makes it impossible to give a sound theoretical explanation of the developments using realism, patron-clientelism or dependency-oriented theories.

Instead, interdependence mixed with constructivism seems the best theoretical lens to explain the relations in this period. This is due to dominance of economics, mutual dependence of both sides on each other and secondary role given to security in the relations. Turkey needed IK economically both as a market and a gateway and politically as a counterweight to Iran in Baghdad and with an economic-oriented AKP in power, IK was viewed more as an opportunity rather than threat. Similarly, IK needed Turkey economically as a gate to the world and for creating a viable independent economy and politically as a counterbalance to Baghdad's pressures. Without considering the role of shifted identity in Turkey and Erbil after 2008, it is hard to explain the emergence of mutual dependency between both sides.

In conclusion, through exploring the current approaches in studying the relations, it becomes evident that they are flawed and fail in presenting a plausible theoretical understanding of the relations. This is due to the emergent nature of the relations, emergent nature of IK's entity and dramatic shifts resulted from frequent changes in agents, issues and structure (events) steering the relations. For the sake of tackling this failure, based on empirical evidence, this research provides a conceptual framework that considers the dynamics and processes involved and explains their role in the shifts occurred in the relations. Hence, the empirical facts suggest a conceptual framework that divides the relations into three distinct periods, each with its own specific agents, issues and events and explained through analytic eclecticism approach (*see* Table No 6). This theoretical method renders a more plausible approach and a better understanding both empirically and conceptually.

In doing so, analytic eclecticism allows the use of identity factor as employed in constructivism beside patron-clientelism in 1991-1998 period, with realism in 1998-2008 period and with interdependence in 2008-2014 period to yield a better explanation of the complexities in the relations. Any of the above theories alone cannot properly explain these complexities even in one period. Through mixing elements from constructivism and patron-clientelism, analytic eclecticism clarifies

how due to Kemalist and Kurdish identities' historic hostility, Turkey and IK do not engage in cooperative relations based on mutual respect in the first period. Meanwhile, as constructivism alone fails to explain the informal cooperation and relations occurred between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurdish parties during this period, elements of clientelism are utilised to account for the informality and asymmetry of the relations.

In the second period, constructivism continues to clarify the reason behind the hostile stance between the two actors. Nevertheless, it cannot explain the limits of Turkey's options towards IK and the intricate balancing acts between the two through involving the USA. Here, analytic eclecticism allows the introduction of realism elements to explain the balancing and help understand the Turkish use of force in the borders and the Kurdish use of American patronage to counter the threats.

In the third period, once more constructivism clarifies that due to identity shifts in Turkey and IK cooperation has become possible, but it cannot explain why the relations grew so fast and foes turned into friends while the security threat is still in the background. Here analytic eclecticism through introducing elements of interdependence explains how mutual politico-economic dependencies steered the relations towards further cooperation.

Dynamism and complexity of the T-IK relations, hence, is resisting to be explained just by a single theory. Analytic eclecticism provides the theoretical approach that accounts for dynamism and changes in the relations and allows better understanding and explanation of the relations.

#### **9.4. POSTSCRIPT: REFLECTIONS ON THE RECENT EVENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE TURKEY-IRAQI KURDISTAN RELATIONSHIP**

T-IK relations in the post-2014 period have proved to be dynamic and still remain under the influence of the identity, security, economy and external interventions factors. As discussed earlier, following the budget cut from Baghdad in February 2014, Erbil's dependence on Ankara increased, as Turkey was the only export gate for IK's oil. Meanwhile, Ankara provided Erbil with loans at the time IK was short of cash to pay the salaries of its civil servants. However, a number of developments in recent years have negatively affected the T-IK relations. Failure of the peace process in Turkey, IK's independence referendum in 2017, AKP's alliance with the ultra nationalist Turkish party of MHP and developments in Northern Syria culminated in Turkey's incursions into Kurdish areas in Syria are some of the events that have generated repercussions on the T-IK relations.

As the peace process in Turkey failed in 2015 and trench wars occurred in the Kurdish Southeast, Kurdish issue has once again become securitised in the country. As a result, Turkey resumed and enhanced its attacks on the PKK positions inside IK's territory that has inevitably resulted in civilian

casualties and destruction of Kurdish property and village life. Meanwhile, alliance with MHP has influenced AKP's politics and has turned it more inclined towards applying stick policy and utilising hard power in relations with Kurds. However, it was Kurdistan's independence referendum in 2017 that left the most negative influence on the T-IK relations. Ankara became very critical of the referendum few weeks before it was held and following the referendum Turkey coordinated with Tehran and Baghdad in imposing punitive measures on Erbil, including closing Turkey's airspace on flights originating from IK and stopping flights to and from Erbil and Suleimaniya airports. In spite of the antagonism resulted from the referendum, economic relations continued and Turkey did not stop the export of IK's oil or close its border to trade with IK.

Although the official relations continue in spite of the post-referendum coldness, Turkey's military incursion into Kurdish areas in Syria in 2018 and 2019 through targeting Kurdish interests and developments had the impact of raising anti-Turkish sentiments among Iraqi Kurds to the extent of holding demonstrations in condemnation of the Turkish operation and campaigning to boycott Turkish products, including Turkish TV dramas.

Undoubtedly developments in the region, especially in Syria, and Erbil-Baghdad relations, which are both unsettled so far play their role in the relations. Together with the Western and regional interventions these factors can change the direction of the T-IK relations. However, as far as the longstanding uncertainties continue to be unresolved in the region, it could not be concluded with certainty as to what their impacts on the relations would be. AKP's turn to ultra-Turkish nationalism and defining its interest at the expense of the Kurds does not leave much help for the structural improvements in the relationship.

## **9.5. LIMITATIONS**

Both theoretical and empirical limitations have been encountered in the process of conducting this research. Theoretically the research struggled with finding a theory to explain the complexities and uniqueness observed in the relations. However, soon it was apprehended that insistence on using one paradigm or advocating the superiority of just one theory leaves the empirical anomalies of the relations unexplained. Finally, analytical eclecticism was selected as an appropriate approach to account for this problem and clarify the complexities and irregularities of the study. As explained in Chapter 2, analytic eclecticism is criticised for its flexibility and because of the problem of theoretical incoherence in relation to incommensurability across traditions (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 414-415). However, as explained in Chapter 2, first, if incommensurability across traditions was true, we could not translate from a different language, or even understand the past stages of our language. Second, theories ultimately rely on empirical referents to operationalize diverse concepts, apparatuses and variables. This provides the opportunity to put elements of one causal story within a research tradition



beside specific elements of another causal story from another tradition and combine, contrast or reconceptualise them (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 414-415). Meanwhile, the benefits of applying this approach outweighs its shortcomings, as parsimony observed in IR theories ignores some aspects and facts of the phenomenon, and each theory has its own flaws, but analytic eclecticism avoids parsimony and combines the explanatory power of the theories to link the interactions among different causal factors (Sil and Katzenstein, 2011: 11).

In addition to the theoretical issue, this research encountered problem in accessing sensitive data on the real extent of Turkish companies' involvement in IK's energy sector and the content of T-IK energy agreements. Access to such data could help better analyse the nature of the energy relations and end or confirm the suspicion prevalent in opposition's view (*see* Chapter 7) on T-IK energy links. Unfortunately such data is not public, and the research has only relied on the public data and the data gained during the fieldwork and interviews in the final analysis of energy relations.

## **9.6. EPILOGUE**

In conclusion, it could be argued that this research has fulfilled its aims and objectives through critically presenting a chronological evolution of T-IK relations in 1991-2014 period, followed by a critical evaluation of the four determining factors of the relations (namely identity, security, economy and international relations) in separate chapters, and ended with a conclusion that assesses the combined effect of the four determining factors and investigated the applicability of the proposed theories of international relations on the relations.

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## **Appendices**

## APPENDIX 1: List and Detail of Interviewees

No	Full Name	Affiliation at time of interview	Place of Interview	Time of Interview
1	Abdusalam Rashid Ismael	Director of KRG-Turkey Relations in KRG's Foreign Relations Office	Erbil-Iraq	9 May 2013
2	Adil Zozani	BDP Parliament Member	Ankara-Turkey	28 May 2013
3	Ahmet Aydin	EPDK (Turkey's Energy Market Regulatory Authority) President's Advisor	Ankara- Turkey	31 May 2013
4	Ali Bapir	KIG Leader	Erbil-Iraq	15 May 2013
5	Anwar Anaïd	Kurdistan University Lecturer	Erbil-Iraq	22 April 2013
6	Aydin Selcen	Turkish Consul in Erbil	Erbil-Iraq	5 May 2013
7	Camaleddin Hashemi	Turkish Prime Ministry Public Diplomacy Coordinator	Ankara-Turkey	29 May 2013
8	Falah Mustafa	Head of KRG Foreign Relations Office	Erbil-Iraq	9 May 2013
9	Fathi Modares	KRG's Trade Minister Economic Relations Advisor	Erbil-Iraq	9 May 2013
10	Hakan Demir	Chief of Petrol Trade of TPIC (Turkish Petroleum International Co. Ltd)	Ankara-Turkey	12 June 2013
11	Hassan Ahmed Mustafa	Adviser of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Turkey	Erbil-Iraq	27 April 2013
12	Haydar Hadi	Turkmen Journalist	Ankara-Turkey	25 May 2013
13	Hemn Hawrami	Head of the KDP Foreign Relations	Erbil-Iraq	13 May 2013
14	Hijran Kazanci	Iraqi Turkmen Front Representative in Turkey	Ankara-Turkey	29 May 2013
15	Ismail Besekci	Turkish Sociologist, Revolutionary, Philosopher and Writer	Ankara-Turkey	30 May 2013
16	Jutyar Adel	Head of Sarenj Centre and university lecturer	Erbil-Iraq	24 April 2013
17	Kamal Kaya	Chairman of Turkish National Assembly Department of	Ankara-Turkey	12 June 2013

		Information Technology		
18	Kamaran Mantek	Salahaddin University Lecturer	Erbil-Iraq	22 April 2013
19	Muhammad Faraj	KIU Leader	Erbil-Iraq	8 May 2013
20	Nasuhi Gungor	TRT Turk Canal Coordinator	Ankara-Turkey	29 May 2013
21	Nazmi Gur	BDP Parliament Member	Ankara-Turkey	30 May 2013
22	Osman Koruturk	CHP Parliament Member	Ankara-Turkey	30 May 2013
23	Ozcan Yeniceri	MHP Parliament Member	Ankara-Turkey	4 June 2013
24	Rebin Rasul	Head of Kurdistan Parliament Research Centre	Erbil-Iraq	8 May 2013
25	Saadi Pira	PUK Politburo Member	Erbil-Iraq	16 May 2013
26	Salah Mala Omer	Salahaddin University Lecturer	Erbil-Iraq	25 April 2013
27	Sardar Abdullah	Head of Change Movement Bloc in Iraqi Parliament	Suleimaniya-Iraq	14 May 2013
28	Saydi Forat	Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Member and Former PKK	Diyarbakir-Turkey	20 May 2013
29	Sayer Erbil	Turkish Trade Attaché in Erbil	Erbil-Iraq	13 May 2013
30	Seyed Azim Hosseini	Iranian Consul in Erbil	Erbil-Iraq	25 April 2013
31	Shwan Qlyasani	Change Movement's Senior Officer of Diplomatic Relations	Suleimaniya-Iraq	14 May 2013
32	Veysal Ayhan	Head of International Middle East Peace Research Centre (IMPR)	Ankara-Turkey	13 June 2013



## **APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. In your opinion, what is the main determinant(s) in Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan?
2. Do you think replacement of Turkey's incumbent political party (or Iraqi Kurdistan's incumbent coalition) can affect the relations?
3. In your view, in light of the recent developments is Turkey fostering the disintegration of Iraq or preserving the Iraq's integrity is still at the top of Turkey's regional agenda?
4. In your opinion which factor (identity, security, economy, or foreign intervention are more influential in forming the relations? Has there been any change in the priority of these factors in different eras?
5. Do you view the relations between Turkey as a unitary actor with KRG or as a relation between the ruling AKP from Turkey and KDP in Iraqi Kurdistan?
6. How do you define the Turkish identity, and national interest in the light of Turkey-IK relations?
7. How do you define the Kurdish identity and national interest in the light of Turkey-IK relations?
8. How do you see the prospect of the relations?
9. What role the USA and Europe have played and are playing in the relations?
10. What is the role of regional players, especially Iran and Israel on the developments in Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan relations?
11. Do you think increasing trade volume and further democratization in Turkey (& Iraqi Kurdistan) can result in lasting peace between both sides?

12. Please comment on the statement that trade and business relationship between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan has been the main motivation for the easing of the tension on both sides?
13. Do you think the main aim of the Turkish business in Iraqi Kurdistan is just business or do they have other important political agenda?
14. Do you think the trade and energy relations are mutually beneficial or create dependency for respective countries?
15. Would you please comment on the dominant agent in the developing business between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurdistan: AKP's own agenda (not necessarily Turkish state), Gulen Movement, Turkish business institutions etc.?
16. Do you think with the current status of Kurds and Kurdish issue in Turkey a sustainable relation can be developed?
17. What will be the impact of the success or failure of the peace process in Turkey on the Turkey-KRG relations (and inter-Kurdish relations as well)?
18. What is the main objective/aim of Turkey and on the other case Iraqi Kurdistan in their relations with Turkey?
19. What is the main factor behind changes in the relations? Is it economy, identity, security or foreign intervention?
20. What will happen to the relations in the case of change in the economic relations or regime change in any of the nations respectively?
21. Is Turkey a reliable ally for Iraqi Kurdistan?? Having viewed the Turkey's changing stance towards the Kurds in the historical perspective and 1975 experience with alliance with Iran-USA, is it wise to get too close to Turkey and get distanced from Iraq?
22. If Turkey turns towards Iraqi government and bypass the Kurds, what will happen if Kurds prove pragmatic, make concession to Iraqi government and side with Iran and create problems for Turkey through utilizing the Kurdish card?

23. Post 1991 economy prevented the institutionalism and creation of a unified Kurdish nation and state. What about now (in the light of Turkey-KRG relations) ?

24. What is your comment on the statement that Kurdistan Region could become a part of a federal Turkey in future or will be better off via joining Turkey?

## **APPENDIX 3: CHP POSITION PAPER**



# **Steps and Priorities for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Social Peace in Turkey**

**- 21 May 2013 -**

## **Introduction**

Turkey today is focused on ways to end terrorism and to resolve the long-standing Kurdish issue. At center stage is the bargaining process between Prime Minister Erdoğan and Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the terrorist organization PPK currently serving a life-term in prison. With the support of the media, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) accuses the main opposition the Republican People's Party (CHP) of impeding and/or withholding support from the settlement process; and of refusing to put forward solutions of its own. Through unfounded allegations, AKP is trying to discredit CHP in the eyes of the Turkish public and international public opinion. This account is intended to refute AKP's misrepresentations and clearly state the position of the Republican People's Party (CHP) regarding the Kurdish issue and the on-going settlement process.

## **1. CHP's view on the need for a solution to the Kurdish and terrorism issues**

Ending terrorism is Turkey's number one priority and CHP fully shares the public's yearning for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. CHP wishes

our people to live together in harmony, with justice for all... We are dedicated to build a lasting peace based on civil liberties; a democratic and sustainable solution which will uphold the geographic and national integrity of our Republic.

Allegations to the effect that CHP is opposed to the settlement process; that we refuse to participate in the settlement process; or that we are trying to impede the settlement process are, simply put, untrue and untenable. They are a standard AKP partisan ploy to diminish CHP's standing in the eyes of the public.

We do however have serious misgivings regarding the settlement process which AKP is leading in partnership with Öcalan. It is not transparent and we believe it is wrong to exclude Parliament from the process. It is important to note that the Turkish people share our reservations.

AKP has embarked upon a misguided quest, making commitments that put at risk the security, national unity and geographic integrity of our country. AKP is manipulating the sensibilities of the Kurdish population for its own political gain.

Whereas CHP believes that the issue is best addressed within the Turkish Parliament, AKP believes the solution lies in bargains with Öcalan. CHP believes in negotiating with legal parties. AKP's motto, on the other hand, is to force its own solution on the nation with its "Do it my way" approach.

AKP habitually singles out CHP as the scapegoat when things go wrong. CHP will continue to monitor the bargaining settlement process between Erdoğan and Öcalan to make sure that it proceeds in a healthy manner.

## **2. CHP should participate in the settlement process and cooperate with AKP. So why isn't CHP doing this?**

How is CHP to support a settlement process about which it knows little beyond its name? AKP has undertaken this initiative under a cloak of secrecy, proceeding in a covert manner and hiding the content and scope of its initiatives from the public.

Becoming party to an undefined exploit is contrary to CHP's sense of duty and responsibility to the Turkish people. Statements from Erdoğan and AKP spokespersons all claim that "(T)he settlement process is moving forward and that no bargain has been struck with Öcalan; that no concessions are being made to PKK; and that the public is very pleased with the settlement process." If this were true, why would AKP be so insistent on sharing its presumed glory with CHP? What does AKP hope to gain by including CHP in a settlement process that is already proceeding so successfully?

There are basically two reasons behind AKP's attempt to bring CHP into the settlement process: to give credibility and legitimacy to a settlement process that lacks legitimacy and transparency; and to create a scapegoat in the event of failure.

CHP is prepared to support all sincere initiatives leading to a permanent and peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. But CHP will not support initiatives that do not meet the expectations of the public or agree with the people's sense of justice.

## **3. What are CHP's misgivings regarding the settlement process?**

3.1 AKP's past performance on the Kurdish issue is littered with missteps and failures. Its record is flawed.

3.2 AKP manipulated the Kurdish issue to its advantage prior to the 2011 elections. In an attempt to create an artificial semblance of peace in order to win over Kurdish votes, AKP conducted covert negotiations with the PKK as a result of which terrorist attacks were temporarily suspended. Following the elections and an about face on the part of Erdoğan, which included his statement “Öcalan would have been hanged had I been in power in 1999,” PKK resumed its attacks. Today with two elections in the next 15 months, and the new constitution at stake, there is no reason to believe the current AKP initiative is any different. AKP has refused to provide insight into its solution strategy or plans. And no information has been shared with Parliament. This behavior makes us suspect that AKP is going to let down the public once again, first and foremost the Kurds.

3.3 Instead of partnering with the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the party supported by the Kurds in Parliament, AKP has chosen Öcalan as its partner in the search for a settlement. This has solidified his status as the leader of the Kurdish political movement and as peacemaker in command of the settlement process. And it has legitimized the PKK, which has now acquired status as an “activist” organization. As a result, Turkey can no longer credibly maintain its position that the PKK as a terrorist organization. CHP believes this is a serious mistake by AKP.

3.4 A covert bargaining process that results in armed members of the PKK leaving the country untouched could likely result in violations of the principles of a state of law. Results that are based on violations of law cannot be lasting and there is always the risk that they will backfire. Sitting down at the table with an armed group that refuses to give up its arms is not befitting a constitutional state.

3.5 Needless to say, the cessation of fighting is a good and necessary development. But the current solution (having PKK leave the country) always leaves open the possibility that the PKK can return and restart its reign of terror. And this has occurred in the past.

3.6 PKK has not unequivocally renounced violence nor has it agreed to disarm. Öcalan and PKK's base in Kandil (Iraq) have purposefully stayed away from such a commitment. In other words PKK is keeping open the option to return to violence. This creates the impression of PKK dictating conditions and forcing concessions in the shadow of the threat of violence; the image of a government negotiating with a gun held to its head.

3.7 Perhaps the greatest concern is that the writing of the new constitution has been linked to the settlement process. The public is concerned that AKP, in an attempt to satisfy Erdoğan's presidential aspirations, is willing to make concessions to Öcalan in return for his support of the presidential system. Leaked documents verified that support for the presidential system is in fact under discussion with Öcalan.

3.8 As AKP maintains its silence on the process, PKK and Öcalan are taking control of the process and shaping the discourse through their traffic of letters and public statements. In CHP's view, it is wrong for AKP to leave the public realm to Öcalan. There are two reasons why AKP is refusing to take ownership publicly of the process: 1) AKP itself does not believe in the process, 2) AKP has made promises to Öcalan that if declared, the people would not accept. AKP sees the Kurdish issue not as a matter of terror nor of social significance to the population as a whole, but rather an issue of political calculations of importance to AKP and Erdoğan's political career. They are approaching the issue not as a concern for society as a whole, but rather a matter of political gain for AKP and Erdoğan personally. CHP will continue to expose Erdoğan's self-centered game plan at the expense of the good of the nation.



3.9 As AKP prepares its strategy for the upcoming local, presidential and Parliamentary elections, in an effort to ensure their personal political fortunes, they are putting at risk Turkey's future and deliberately undermining 90 years of democratic and social development of our people.

3.10 At a time when the crisis in Syria is deepening and the Kurds in northern Syria are becoming more powerful, the timing of AKP's negotiations with PKK raises suspicions that regional calculations are also at play.

3.11 AKP has reduced the scope of the settlement process to PKK's withdrawal from Turkey. However, democracy and human rights, which are at the heart of the problem, are being overlooked. The values and standards of the EU and the Council of Europe, which could contribute greatly to a root cause solution to the settlement process are not being debated at all.

#### **4. How should the settlement process proceed?**

4.1 Terrorism and the Kurdish issue are topics which transcend the government. They are of concern to all and are best solved with the participation of all walks of society.

- a) The settlement process needs to be conducted in accordance with the rule of law, the laws of the land.
- b) It needs to be conducted not according to the dictates of the PKK, but within the context of a broad and inclusive social consensus.
- c) Öcalan/Kandil should not be allowed to lead/usurp the process.

4.2 AKP must adhere to the principles of democracy during the settlement process. We need an honest, sincere and transparent process with no hidden agendas. The public must be informed of the developments. And AKP must not make any commitments which the people will not accept. Unfortunately AKP failed to abide by any of the criteria just defined.

## **5. What are the priorities and what is important in this process?**

5.1 The key to achieving an inclusive, permanent and sustainable solution is to define the problem correctly and develop the appropriate procedure/process for addressing the problem. The procedure will identify the domain where it will be dealt with and who the negotiating partners will be; ensure that the solution is consistent with the principles of a constitutional state; and define the context and road map for implementing the solution. Transparency, keeping the public informed to the extent required, getting inputs from public and private entities and civil society are all elements to be defined by the procedure.

5.2 CHP officially presented its two prong procedure to Prime Minister Erdoğan in person and in writing in June 2012. The first prong is the establishment of a “National Reconciliation Commission” within Parliament. The second prong is the creation of a “Wise Men’s Taskforce,” working in tandem with the Commission, and which would be responsible for the work outside the Parliament.

5.3 CHP developed this proposal because no government on its own has been able to solve this issue. Therefore, the place to solve this issue which involves and affects all of society is the Parliament, home of the national will. Only a solution developed in Parliament will be inclusive, healthy, permanent and sustainable. Unfortunately AKP rejected our proposal, refusing to take ownership of it.

5.4 The AKP government sees itself as the sole owner of the settlement process and is bargaining with Öcalan in a limited scope and under a cloak of secrecy, leaving Parliament out of the process. They have also plagiarized CHP's concept and convened a Wise Men Taskforce. However, contrary to CHP's concept of using the taskforce to engage the public directly in the process, AKP is using the Wise Men to market the vague notion of a peace process. The chances of coming to a sustainable, permanent and just solution using this approach are slim at best.

## **6. Why is CHP not supporting the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission that AKP has set up?**

6.1 According to Article 98 of the Constitution and Parliament's internal bylaws, a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission is established to investigate past events. CHP's recommendation to create a Parliamentary Commission for the purpose of investigating the Kurdish issue in its entirety is designed accordingly.

6.2 AKP's Inquiry Committee proposal is merely a tactic to legitimize the bargaining process with Öcalan. A close reading of AKP's justification for creating the commission, "Turkish Grand National Assembly will be linked to the process," exposes the real motive why AKP is trying to involve the Parliament. AKP, especially on the matter of PKK leaving Turkey with its arms, wants to bring Parliament into the process as an actor, to link it directly with the settlement process. However Parliament is a legislative body, not an executive one and therefore, this is not a legitimate role for it.

6.3 CHP believes in the principle of the supremacy of the law and, Turkey being a constitutional state, we reject the proposal to associate Parliament with the one-sided and flawed initiatives of the executive branch. For these reasons CHP has decided not to be

a party to AKP machinations to engage the parliament in allowing criminal terrorists to walk out of Turkey with impunity.

## **7. The difference between the Wise Men Taskforce initiatives of CHP and AKP.**

7.1 Beyond the name, the two initiatives are completely different.

7.2 The CHP initiative calls for the creation of a taskforce that reports to the Parliament. The taskforce is to consist of an equal number of members selected by each party, and that number is to be agreed upon by all parties. The taskforce is to meet with the public, NGOs, public and private organizations and institutions and collect their expectations, ideas and recommendations regarding the settlement process; and present these to the Parliament. In other words, the role of the taskforce is to expand the settlement process into an inclusive process designed to facilitate a genuine reconciliation that can only be achieved with the participation of society as a whole.

7.3 The premise of the AKP Wise Men Taskforce is completely different. The members of the group were selected by the Prime Minister himself and they report to the government, not the Parliament. Unlike CHP's taskforce, whose mission is to listen, the mission of the AKP taskforce is to "sell" the on-going process to the public using a travelling salesman approach that is big on clichés such as "End terror now!" "No more Mothers' tears" "Peace Now" and cheap heroics. It is also a counterproductive process that is in fact dividing the nation, instead of helping to promote reconciliation. Rather than listening to and acknowledging the concerns of the public, people with objections or concerns are being pepper sprayed. The work of this taskforce reflects the AKP mindset that is focused on keeping Parliament out of the

settlement process; and buying time for the government in its bargains with Öcalan.

7.4 AKP has a history of taking CHP ideas such as the Parliamentary Commission and Wise Men Taskforce, reshaping them for its own purposes and then launching them. The questions to ask here are why AKP didn't accept CHP's proposals in the first place; and why they refuse to bring the issue to Parliament, and preferring to deal with Öcalan, instead?

## **8. CHP's initiatives to-date**

There are two basic differences between AKP and CHP's approach to ending terror and addressing the Kurdish issue.

8.1 Firstly, AKP hasn't developed a single initiative, plan or report that it has shared with the public over the last ten years. This is the starkest indicator that AKP is using the issue for its own political gain, its own political agenda. For AKP, these issues are merely a means to winning Kurdish votes. If in fact AKP does have a roadmap, why aren't they sharing it with the public? Without a plan of its own, AKP is leading a process the roadmap and timing of which are being defined by Öcalan. The main driver behind this initiative is ensuring the future of Erdoğan and AKP. To have Turkey's most important issue being dealt with in such a partisan manner is an affront to the public and the national will.

8.2 AKP's previous settlement initiatives have ended in failure, resulting in an increase in terrorist violence and mistrust among the public. The spectacle of the mobile court at Habur damaged the principles of equality and justice; and increased the polarization among the public. Despite these previous failures that the Prime Minister still expects the public to "trust" him, to trust that the settlement process is "going well" is an insult to the

national will. Just as it did in 2011, AKP is trying to market a relative and temporary sense of peace as Turkey prepares for the upcoming election cycle.

8.3 The other difference between AKP and CHP is that among all political institutions, CHP has conducted the most research on the Kurdish issue and ending terrorism in Turkey. Since the party's inception to the present day, CHP has conducted extensive research and analyses and documented the results in reports on eastern and southeastern Anatolia. The recommendations and strategies developed as a result of this research have been included in the Party Platform.

8.4 The 1998 Democracy and Human Rights Report; the "Key Issues and Solutions" report presented to the 30th General Council Meeting in 2003; the 2011 "Democracy Report;" and the "Freedom and Democracy Report" report presented to the 34th General Council Meeting in 2012 are all examples of the work that CHP has done to address the Kurdish issue. In addition to these reports and analyses, CHP keeps working to develop new ideas. CHP has presented Parliament bills focused on the penal code, the "Fight against Terrorism," "Human Rights," and the Right to Meet, Demonstrate and Protest. Unfortunately these have all been rejected by AKP's parliamentary caucus.

8.5 It is CHP's position that peace and equality can only be achieved when they are based on a foundation of democracy, a constitutional state, human rights and freedoms. Our position is that individual rights need to be secured and protected. Individual rights and freedoms are the bricks and mortar of a democratic and unitary state based on equality. These principles are enshrined in our Party platform.

## **9. “The settlement process will strengthen Turkey’s future. It will reinforce its position as a regional leader.” CHP’s thoughts on this?**

9.1 The process is moving forward in accordance with Öcalan’s roadmap. And there are signs pointing to the PKK, with its arms, being conscripted into the battle in Syria.

9.2 AKP has been building its relations with the regional government in Northern Iraq, moving towards unification while at the same time distancing itself from the Bagdad government.

9.3 AKP has also remained silent in the face of PYD’s (PKK’s extension in Syria) efforts to gain control over northern Syria. The control of northern Syria in continuation of the control of Iraq by the same forces and the resulting access to the Mediterranean are likely to change regional dynamics. AKP supports this trend economically, commercially and in other ways.

9.4 These developments may be the warning signs of the redrawing of the borders in the region in the aftermath of new wars and conflicts. The role given to Turkey in this context is to play the part of the “surrogate mother”. AKP, playing such a role, is for the sake of short term gains putting at risk the future of our country and the region.

## **10. What is CHP doing now and what is its goal?**

10.1 CHP’s priority is a settlement process based on a legal and legitimate foundation, resulting in a permanent solution that simultaneously meets the expectations of the Kurdish population and is acceptable to the public at large.

10.2 AKP has repeatedly deceived the Kurdish population. CHP's goal is to make sure that this doesn't happen again by pursuing a transparent, legitimate settlement process.

10.3 CHP will do its best to expose the bargaining between AKP and PKK, to ensure that the promises do not violate the principles of a constitutional state; and that no promises are made that the public can't accept.

10.4 CHP will closely follow the regional and international ramifications of the settlement process. And we will warn the public and AKP of any developments which could constitute a threat to Turkey's unity, solidarity and security.

10.5 CHP will carry out its work on peace and security; and on Turkey maintaining its geographic integrity and unity under the mandate the electorate has given it as the main opposition party.

10.6 In March CHP announced its 17 point plan for democracy. We are determined to work towards the adoption of this packet: to ensure that the justice system dispenses justice; that Parliament carries out its main functions, including passing legislation to ensure basic rights and freedoms. CHP's "Freedom and Democracy" Report is a call to work together for a free and democratic Turkey.

## **11. What is CHP's Proposal?**

1. Abolish the electoral 10% minimum threshold.
2. Members of parliament should be elected by the people, not by party leaders.
3. Freedom of expression and of belief should be guaranteed.
4. Freedom of assembly, demonstration and organization is a basic right; it should be strengthened.



5. Freedom of religion and conscience are sacrosanct; no discrimination can be made among different beliefs.
6. All obstacles to democracy and human rights should be removed.
7. Press is free and cannot be censored: freedom of communication is essential.
8. The shame of detained politicians, scholars, journalists and students should be ended.
9. Courts with special competence should be abolished.
10. Decisions in court cases beginning 1 June, 2005 taken by these “special courts” should be thrown out and the cases should be retried.
11. The will of the nation cannot be imprisoned. Members of Parliament still in custody should be released.
12. Cases unresolved and executions without trial should not go unpunished. Cases must not be shelved due to passage of time.
13. Practices such as secret witnesses and illegal wiretapping should be ended immediately. Turkey must be freed of these wrongs.
14. Events leading up to and resulting in the Uludere Massacre need to be enlightened.
15. Build a museum in Diyarbakir, not a prison.
16. Lands should be cleared of mines and given to peasants.
17. Nevruz should become an official holiday.
18. Productivity and creativity should be supported with a democratic and egalitarian outlook.
19. Equal opportunity should be provided to all citizens in all walks of life.

***CHP is calling out to all to work together towards a democratic Turkey with freedom, justice, equality and religious freedom for all, in an environment of respect for the dignity of the individual. CHP and Turkey are ready for it.***