

Abstract

For many decades, the Kurdish question has been considered one of the domestic security problems in Turkey, which tries to erase the national identity of its Kurdish citizens to the point of preventing them from using their language and wearing their traditional clothes and eliminated the name of their nationality, calling them Mountain Turks. Turkey's Kurds reacted with militant acts against the government by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which became a complex problem for successive governments. Turkey's apprehension of Kurdish separatism has never stopped at the Turkish border, but crossed to other countries, first of which is Iraq whose Kurdish minority makes up 13% of the population. Since the 1960s Iraqi Kurds started a militant movement calling for autonomy. These demands were the focus of Turkey, which views any official autonomous Kurdish autonomy as a threat of aspiration for the Kurds of Turkey to replicate the same situation on the Turkish side of the border. Therefore, the Turkish position has always been to oppose recognizing and true autonomy for the Iraqi Kurds.

However, the changes in Turkey's position toward the Kurdish cause drew this author's attention, since the beginning of communication between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds during the days of Turkish President Turgut Özal, who was described as being friendly to the Kurds because his mother was a Kurd, although some scholars see his flexibility towards the Kurds as part of his vision for Turkey's future – the same is said about Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its vision that was presented by former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. Herein lies the importance of the monitoring of escalating rapprochement between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds following the rise of the AKP since its ascendance to power in 2002 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

This relation continued to develop after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, at the hands of the U.S., and especially in light of the increased 2003 tension in Turkish-Iraqi relations, and at the same time, the increased tension between the Iraqi Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), despite the latter's becoming officially an autonomous region with more measures of autonomy than any federal region in the world. During the past years, the economic factor in Turkish-KRG relations has become more obvious. In addition to the large trade exchange and the activity of hundreds of Turkish companies in the KRG region, and from there to the rest of Iraq, oil came to play an additional role in these relations when a pipeline was built from the KRG region to Turkey and oil export began without approval from the Iraqi government, causing more tension between the Iraqi government and the KRG, and with Turkey as well.

The relation between Turkey and the KRG peaked when KRG President Massoud Barzani began talking about independence and ending the past era, simultaneously with the entry of ISIS into Iraqi territories and their capture of Mosul and other cities. Meanwhile, Turkey made some hints that it does not oppose the independence of Iraqi Kurds, raising some questions about the reality of Turkey's positions toward KRG independence and whether it really welcomes it, and the shape of the relation after the U.S. move to rein in the calls for Kurdish independence and the temporarily improved Turkish relations with Baghdad after the ascendance of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to the top position in Iraqi Government, then the return of tension before the start of Mosul liberation campaign in 2016.

This thesis attempts to trace Turkish policies toward Iraqi Kurds and their constant pursuit of establishing their independent entity, as a natural right, since 1960 by a persistent struggle that began in the Kurdish situation passed through various stages from autonomy to the

current federal arrangement, which is accompanied by constant calls for independence despite the quasi-independent status they currently have.

Despite the historical Turkish sensitivity toward the Kurdish movement and its aspirations, which is expressed by disapproving any Kurdish entity in Iraq, out of fear that it may be infectious for the Turkish side of the border, we still witnessed development in Turkey's relations with the Iraqi Kurds and the formation of an autonomous region, following the 1991 since imposition of a no-fly zone in the Iraqi north, then forward after the formation of a controversial federal Kurdish entity in constant dispute with the Iraqi Federal Government, and finally to the hints of independence, and the appearance of some Turkish signals in support of this proposed independence. This poses an essential question: Is the disappearance of Turkish objections of Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) real? And did the Turkish position change after the developments on the ground in Syria, especially after the rapprochement between the Syrian Kurdish movement, that controlled some territories near the Turkish border, and the PKK, which resumed its fight against the Turkish military?

Using a historical qualitative analysis, this author divided his thesis into four chapters, each consists of two parts, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter addresses the Iraqi Kurdish question and examines its roots and development, with a historical glimpse on the origin of the Kurds and their place of existence according to the previous literature – the author finds this to be necessary. The first part addresses the rise of Kurdish movement in Iraq and the quest of Iraqi Kurds to establish their own entity, while the second part looks into the developments, by looking at two 1980s and 1970 of the Iraqi Kurdish movement in the -1980 main stages: The Law of Kurdish Autonomy and the Iraq-Iran War (1988).

In the second chapter, the author examines, in two parts, the Kurdish movement in Turkey and its impact on Turkish foreign policy. The first part looks into the rise and development of the Kurdish movement in Turkey, while the second part examines the impact of the Kurdish movement on Turkish foreign policy.

The third chapter studies the relation between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds and until the fall of the past regime. The first part looks into 1990 in the Turkish sensitivity toward a Kurdish entity, and the second part examines the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which led to the conditions that made .2003 Turkey accept a federalist system in Iraq in

The fourth chapter looks into the regional developments and the nature of Turkish policy toward the KRG, in two parts. The first part addresses Turkish interests which are caught between the acceptance of federalism and the apprehension from independence, while the second part looks at the future of Turkish-KRG relations.

The conclusion presents the characteristics of Turkish policy toward Iraqi KRG and the results reached by the research, which are:

Turkish apprehension of the Kurdish question has entered a new era, - following the ascendance of the AKP to power in Turkey, under the influence of Ahmet Davutoğlu's school of thought, which combines new Ottomanization and Islamist ideology, which was meant to produce a containment policy toward the Kurds in general and the Iraqi Kurdistan in particular. But this policy suffered a number of defeats after the Turkish brazen meddling in some regional countries in a quest to influence their internal affairs, including Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt. However, the developments in Syria were the most influential on Turkey, whose apprehension of the Kurds was rekindled by the rise of Syrian Kurds who enjoy close relations with the Turkish PKK that returned to militant

. Meanwhile, Turkish rejection of 2013 activism, which it abandoned in when ISIS 2014 Kurdish independence in Iraq after signaling approval in captured Mosul.

Turkish regard of Kurdistan as part of the Mosul Velayat, which was - 1991 annexed as part of Iraq by the British, against Turkish will, began in as the international war on Iraq was waged to expel its forces from Kuwait, and when everyone was talking about removing the Iraqi regime and the potential division of the country. Turkish fears of what was described as a possible security vacuum in northern Iraq that may be filled by Iran, as well as its potentially becoming a launching pad for Turkey's Kurdish opposition movement. Former Turkish President Turgut Özal tried to make Turkey part of the post-war negotiations and demanded a Turkish role in the decision making concerning the region. At the same time, Turkey began to signal its right to reclaim Mosul if Iraq is divided after the war. When the war ended without the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, Turkish eyes remained fixed on northern Iraq which turned into an autonomous protectorate supported by Turkey, which adopted a careful interventionist policy towards its internal affairs, for the purpose of preventing the territory from becoming a point of departure of PKK militant hostilities.

The apprehension from a Kurdish entity in Iraq, which was felt by the - began 2003 AKP government after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in after the introduction of economic interests as a factor in 2007 to fade in the bilateral relations, particularly when the KRG began to explore and produce oil and gas without coordination with the Iraqi Federal Government. And despite Turkey's attempts to reconcile its position with both Baghdad and Arbil, this balance was lost as tensions with the Iraqi government, which was led by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. Turkey began to enjoy the greatest influence in Arbil, not only economically, but politically and in matters of security. Turkish oil companies became

dominant in the KRG oil sector's production and marketing, while Turkish reconstruction companies virtually enjoyed a monopoly in the KRI.

Energy (oil and gas) is a constant concern for Turkey, because of its great - need for energy to develop the industrial sector, on which it depends for the %90improvement of the economy. And since Turkey imports more than of its energy needs, the KRG oil discoveries made it an important component of Turkish policy toward the Kurds, especially after the prolonged dispute between the KRG and the Iraqi government over the oil issue and the KRG authority on its territorial oil. As Turkey agreed directly with the KRG to build a pipeline for oil and gas, there has been little information on the exported quantities and prices, while Kurdish opposition is accusing the Arbil government, and KRG President Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), of having a secret oil agreement with Turkey.

Future Turkish policy rests on several elements and political variables in - the region, including the fate of the KRI. There are several scenarios: such as the case of regional, international, and Iraqi approval of Kurdish independence, in the currently held borders, or in case of its division into two regions, with Sulaymaniyah as the other capital, or maybe it will remain in Iraq and submit to the necessities of coordination and agreement with the federal government of Iraq and the position of U.S., under President Trump, toward the Turkish policy, in addition to the rise of Russia's role and policy in the region. There are also the internal conditions of Iraq and whether it will recover and regain its strength with the help of international support, or whether it is will continue to be left as a battleground for regional and international conflicts.