International Journal of Political Science
ISSN: 2228-6217
Vol 13, No 4, Dec 2023, (pp. 95-112)

Evaluation of the Policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran from the Perspective of National Security towards Kurdish Groups (2009-2022)

Aram Marivani[1], Abdol Rahman Hassanifar[2*], Faramarz Mirzazadeh[3]

[1, 3]Department of Political Science, South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
[2*]Associate Professor of Political History, IHCS, Tehran, Iran

Received: 28 Oct 2023 ; Accepted: 18 Dec 2023

Abstract

Money is vital for all terrorist organizations. For some organizations, it is a tool to achieve their goals; for others, it is the objective itself. Terrorists participate in organized crime activities at various levels. Organized crime expert Tamara Makarenko describes the nexus between organized crime clique and terrorist clique. This study expanded her continuum into understanding the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its evolution through the organization's financial sources The Kurdish clique has caused ups and downs in Iran-Turkey relations. The strategy of America and Israel is to exploit ethnic and religious divisions to launch proxy wars in the Middle East and strengthen the permanent presence of their military and intelligence forces in the western borders of Iran. The policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran from the point of view of national security towards the Kurdish clique in the period 1388-1401 are largely influenced by regional and extra-regional variables in the field of strengthening Kurdish separatist clique with the aim of balancing forces and creating obstacles against regional influence. It has been Iran. It can be said that the policy of the Islamic Republic in the form of the governments established in 1388-1401 (especially 1392-1400) was based on the importance of involving ethnic minorities in political power and the foundations of political, economic and cultural development. and provided social.

Keywords: Kurdish Clique, Foreign Relations, Islamic Republic of Iran, National Security

[*]Corresponding Author's Email: hassanifar@ihcs.ac.ir

Introduction

The present study describes the geopolitical, political, historical and cultural relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the Kurdistan of Iraq today, how the relations between Iran and the climate of Iraqi Kurdistan create opportunities and challenges for c. A. Iran will set the stage. On the other hand, the process of seeking independence in this region through the threats of Kurdish separatist clique such as Komleh, Demrak, and Pejak and the threats of the presence of Israel and the United States in this region, how will the proximity of Kurdish separatist clique and Israeli and American agents to the western borders of Iran and to what extent this process will weaken the territorial integrity of the Kurdish areas of Iran. This thesis has also considered the importance of how the geopolitical, political, historical and cultural relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the Kurdistan of Iraq today can be effective in the direction of removing security threats and securing the interests of both sides. And the important issue of the independence of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, what effect will it have on the national cohesion of the Kurdish regions of Iran and the resolution of government inadequacies and the explanation and solution of strategic challenges.

Iran and Turkey have been involved in a new 'great game' in the Caucasus and Central Asia following the disintegration of the Soviet Union (See Koolaei, 2010). The issue of transfer of energy from the Caspian Sea has become one of the most visible areas of competition between the two states. For Ankara, putting down the Kurdish rebellion, as spearheaded by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), has been equally important in ensuring security in areas where gas and oil pipelines are laid. By and large, Turkey has managed to resolve the Kurdish clique by attracting international support, especially from the United States, for putting down the PKK-led insurgency (Koolaei, 2008: 47-70).

If Iran and Turkey wish to remain regional middle powers, their interests would dictate handling the Kurdish clique in such a way that it would not threaten their broader geopolitical, geostrategic, and economic interests (Gülden, 2012: 85-114). Given the complexities and the unfolding nature of regional dynamics, however, this has not always been easy. Both Iran and Turkey have sought to further their own, often competing and conflicting, interests in Iraqi Kurdistan, which in recent years has been able to assert increasingly greater levels of autonomy from the central government in Baghdad. ISIS attacks on and advances against Kurdish areas in Syria, especially the city of Kobani, have also emerged as a potential source of tension between Tehran and Ankara. Tehran sees the ISIS as a mortal enemy, whereas for Ankara hastening the demise of Bashar Assad's regime— not defeating ISIS—is the top priority .

Despite its significance, the impact of the Kurdish clique on Iranian-Turkish relations has not been extensively studied before. Much of the existing literature related to the topic has instead focused on the Kurdish communities in Turkey, and some on Iraqi Kurds, and how the central governments in Ankara and Baghdad have dealt with the national and political aspirations of their Kurdish populations. A number of works have examined the overall regional challenges and opportunities inherent in Iranian-Turkish relations, among which the

Kurdish clique has been analyzed as only one factor. Much of this literature has only scantly dealt with the impact of the Kurdish clique on Iranian-Turkish relations independently. In this respect, our work fills an important gap in the available scholarship .

Significance of Kurdish Areas in the Middle East

The desire for independence of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the influence of external factors on Iran's ethnic issues due to the proximity and ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic ties of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with the Kurdish regions of Iran in intensifying the ethnic demands and turning the region's independence into the focus and axis of regional convergence The Kurds of Iran have played an essential role with the Kurds of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and have caused an ethnic crisis and weakened the national unity of the Kurdish regions of Iran. The active presence of Kurdish parties and clique opposed to the Islamic Republic of Iran in this region all show that the Kurdistan Region It can be a suitable alternative to other countries in the region and even the central government of Iraq for regional and extra-regional countries, because the continued presence of the United States in the areas under the control of the central government of Iraq due to the influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the political structure of this country, especially in the political parties The Popular Mobilization Forces is considered a big obstacle for this continued presence, and the US and its European partners can easily control the Strategic area of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which can be a place to control and monitor the movements and activities of the countries of Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. will not ignore The Iraqi Kurdistan region is unique for Israel in terms of security due to its border with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in terms of security, what effect can it have on Iran's nuclear and missile activities in the form of covert commercial companies? At the beginning of the victory of the revolution, Komle, together with other Kurdish separatist clique, wanted the autonomy of the Kurdish regions of Iran and tried to bring these regions under their control through military operations and clashes with the Revolutionary Guards. In an "eight-point program, they demanded the approval of the autonomy of Kurdistan in the constitution of the Islamic Republic and emphasized that other Kurdish regions (West Azerbaijan, Kermanshah and Ilam provinces) should join the territory of the autonomous government" (Zaki). and et al., 2019: 51). Komleh believed that the Kurdish areas of Iran should be far from the control of the Islamic Republic and under the leadership of the communists. "The main goal of Komle was separatism and the separation of these regions from Iran and the establishment of a socialist government" (Ghaed Rahmati and Faal, 2018: 329). With its violent actions in the Kurdish regions of Iran, this group shows the weakness of the central government and its offensive power among the Kurds of these regions and "returns to its bases in the Kurdistan region of Iraq after attacking the designated targets". Hawramy, 2020: 1). Pejak "not only does not face any problem in supplying weapons through smuggling and financial aid from neighboring governments, but since the enmity of this group with the Islamic Republic is in line with the interests of Israel and the United States, it has caused the weapons to be You have gone to receive from them" (Moradian, 2019: 55). Pejak's trained forces "with

the cooperation of the intelligence and military forces of Israel and the United States are continuously moving to these areas through their bases in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with the aim of terrorizing and bombing the sensitive and vital centers of the Kurdish regions of Iran. The purpose of this group of ethnic demands is to seek independence and establish autonomy from the central government, incite the people of Kurdish regions, ethnic and religious conflicts, make the Kurdish regions of Iran insecure and put pressure on Iran on behalf of regional and extra-regional powers. (Nadimi, 2017: 4). One of the security threats of Pejak in these areas is the political activities of this group, which follows the strategy of aggression to stabilize this group in the domestic and international arenas. In line with its political actions, this group seeks intellectual superiority in the Kurdish regions of Iran.

The activities of the opposition clique have always been used by the interested governments to compete or confront their regional rivals and enemies. The main reason for the opposition clique ' tendency towards third powers should be considered the root of the small power of these cliques compared to the power of the governments. In fact, none of the opposition clique in the region have been able to manage a regular and official war against the governments alone. Pejak, like its predecessors, is no exception to this rule. The main international relations of this terrorist group are limited to relations with the enemies of the Islamic Republic. In the meantime, the Zionist regime and the United States of America in the first place and the European Union in the second place are the official and unofficial allies of this terrorist organization. Iran and the strategic goals of these governments are different and variable (Dimore, 2006:3). The desire for independence of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq through cultural threats, political threats (ethnic and separatist demands, ethnicity and identity, ethnic nationalism, Iraqi federalism) and economic threats has weakened the national unity of the inhabited regions of Iran.

Approximately thirty million Kurds are scattered in West Asian countries, mostly in Turkey (Gabbay, 2014: 15). Regional and international actors have often used Kurdish national aspirations to further their own political and diplomatic purposes. None of the states with sizeable Kurdish populations—Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria— have acquiesced to Kurdish demands for a national homeland. Up until relatively recently, in fact, the Turkish state often referred to its Kurdish population as 'mountain Turks'. The Kurdish population in Turkey is the largest in the region, both numerically and in terms of the percentage of the overall population (Yildiz, 2005: 6). This has forced many of Turkey's Kurds to immigrate to Istanbul, thus turning it into the largest Kurdish-inhabited city in Turkey .

Poverty, unemployment, and deprivation in Turkey's eastern and southeastern areas, especially in the 1970s, provided a fertile breeding ground for the formation of the PKK. The Kurds also rebelled against Turkish rule earlier, during the waning years of the Ottoman Empire. The 1920 Treaty of Serves stipulated not only the disbanding of the Ottoman Empire but also the establishment of a State of Kurdistan. But the Treaty of Lausanne, signed in 1923, precluded the establishment of Kurdistan within the former Ottoman Empire territory. In fact, from 1924 to 1939 Kemal Ataturk's Turkish Republic imposed bans on most symbols of Kurdish identity such as

language and clothing. The series of revolts that took place among Kurds against the central government were all brutally suppressed. Today, the European Union, encouraged by the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, is pressing the Ankara government to recognize Kurdish political and cultural rights .

For their part, Iranian Kurds live in Iran's four northwestern and western provinces as well as in the country's larger cities such as Tehran and Mashad. Immediately following the advent of the 1978-79 revolution, at a time when the central government in Tehran was weak and wracked by turmoil and instability, Iranian Kurds rose up in rebellion to further their independence. But their efforts ultimately bore little success and their independence campaign was put down by the post-revolutionary authorities. A remnant of that campaign still lingers on today in the form of a guerrilla organization called the PEJAK, which still on occasion engages in cat-and-mouse attacks on government targets .

Iraq's Kurdish population numbers approximately six million and lives mostly in the country's mountainous area in the north. Following the ejection of the Iraqi army from Kuwait and the U.S. imposition of a no-fly-zone in the northern and southern parts of the country, the Kurds gained considerable autonomy from Baghdad. This autonomy was further enhanced following the 2003 U.S. invasion .

The Kurdish areas in Syria include the north and northeastern region. Constituting some 18 percent of the Syrian population, Syrian Kurds also live-in large cities such as Aleppo and Damascus. As in the case of Turkey and Iraq, Kurds comprise the largest ethnic minority in Syria. After the outbreak of Syrian civil war in 2003, Kurds erected local governments in three separate regions run by the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union, which is an offshoot of the PKK. The ISIS attack on Kobani in June 2015 attracted the attention of world public opinion and brought mass media coverage to Syrian Kurds .

With Iraq and Syria embroiled in civil wars and having large swaths of their Kurdish territories hived either off or constantly threatened by ISIS, and both having become battlegrounds for regional and extra-regional actors, the potential for collision between Iran and Turkey has become proportionately greater. Both Iran and Turkey are aspiring middle powers and try to balance the regional impact of great powers. Each has a different motive for aspiring to become a middle power. For Iran, the primary motive appears to be leadership of the Muslim World (Cetinsaya 2003: 162). Turkey's chief motivations seem to revolve around enhanced influence, soft and hard power projection, and economic development. Whatever their motivations, in places like Syria and Iraq, where the influence of great powers has become disproportionately large since 2003, Iran and Turkey try to become more active in order to balance the influence of great powers. The Kurds, in the meanwhile, are caught in-between .

Turkish-Iranian Relations

After the collapse of the monarchical regime in Iran, Turkey had two major concerns toward the Islamic Republic. First, Ankara feared that a similar, religiously-inspired revolution may also break out in Turkey. Second, given the chaos that initially followed the revolution in Iran, Turkey feared that the weakness of the central government in Tehran

might result in a successful secession of Iranian Kurdistan and the creation of a Kurdish state, thus prompting Turkey's Kurds toward the same objective. Not surprisingly, Ankara adopted a cautionary policy toward Iran (Özcan, and Özgür Özdamar, 2010: 101-105). The policy had three main pillars: coexistence and good-neighborly relations with Iran; neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war; and exploiting the opportunity created by the Iran-Iraq war to increase economic ties and trade with Iran. At the same time, Turkey's military government (1980-1983) stepped up its campaign against both the country's own Islamist movements and the PKK. Ankara's virulent secularism notwithstanding, Turkish-Iranian relations continued to expand throughout the 1980s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 a new dimension—namely competition in the South Caucasus and Central Asia—was added to the relations between the two countries. But their relations continued to expand nonetheless .

Throughout this period, Ankara was busily putting down a Kurdish rebellion in the southeastern parts of the country. On occasion, the Turkish campaign spilled over into northern Iraq, the Iranian reaction to which was silence. There was a common understanding between the two states that they had to prevent the flight of Kurdish populations into their respective borders. Neither of them wanted Iraqi Kurds to become so weak that Saddam Hussein would be able to effectively suppress them. But Ankara also wanted to make certain that the predicament of Iraqi Kurds would not spur Turkish Kurds into action. For this reason, Turkish President Turgut Ozal was the first leader to propose the creation of a Kurdish safe haven in north Iraq. The Iranians, however, were not optimistic about the safe zone and opposed the use of military force and the launching by the U.S. of Operation Provide Comfort. Iran was concerned that the no-fly zone would turn into a safe zone for various opposition clique operating out of northern Iraq, especially Iran's Kurdistan Democratic Party. Between 1993 and 1995 Ankara was ready to provide support to Iran's Kurdistan Democratic Party as leverage to Iran's generally positive policy toward the PKK. For the next several years, both states saw it as beneficial to handle the trans-border Kurdish clique s in northern Iraq in ways that would insulate their own Kurdish populations. Establishing regional government in northern Iraq highlighted the possibility of the rise of an independent state. So, Iran and Turkey were forced to work with each other on this issue .

One of the reasons why Turkey dealt with its own Kurdish clique and avoided involvement in Iran's Kurds and Azeris was the growth of Islamist movement in the country. In 1991, Turkish armed forces were concerned about the collaboration between Islamists and the PKK, leading to a relatively tense period of relations between the two countries. In April 1991, a safe zone was created in northern Iraq for the Kurds by the U.S.-led forces, providing the ground for the activities of Turkey's Kurds in the region. In 1995, the Turkish army launched a massive campaign in northern Iraq in order to pursue and suppress PKK guerrillas, deploying some 35,000 troops. In 1996 and 1997, Turkish security forces inflicted similarly heavy losses on the PKK, especially in northern Iraq .

Throughout this period, Turkey was not seriously concerned about the breakup of Iraq and the potential for a Kurdish succession that would lead to collaboration between Turkish

International Journal of Political Science, Vol 13, No 4, Dec 2023

and Iraqi Kurds. However, Kurdish activities after the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003, following the fall of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq and the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government, were of serious concerns for the Turkish leaders. Israel's activities in northern Iraq and its support for Kurdish independence also exacerbated Turkey's concerns about the Kurdish clique, especially given Turkey's weariness about foreign support for Kurds (Hersch, 2004, in: Freedman, 2009 .)

With Prime Minister Erbakan and his Rafah Party coming to office in 1996, Turkish-Iranian bilateral relations improved. Erbakan visited Iran and signed the agreement on export of Iranian gas to Turkey, which represented a significant milestone in the two countries' relations (Oktav, 2003: 105). After the Turkish military forced Erbakan to step down because of his Islamist tendencies, bilateral relations did not worsen, but neither did they improve. During the rising tensions between Turkey and Syria over the extradition to Turkey of the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, Iran successfully diffused tensions between the two countries through mediation (Olson, 2000: 5-9 .)

Iranian-Turkish relations deteriorated in 1997 when Turkey's Defense Minister and Chief of Staff visited Israel to discuss military refurbishment projects and possible joint military maneuvers (Calabrese, 1998). The Israel-Turkey alliance since 1996 led to speculations and suspicions in the Middle East about this new pivot of power. Ankara wanted to gain the American Jewish community's support for removing the Kurdish separatists, to end criticisms of Armenian genocide, to increase pressures on Syria, and to emphasize Turkey's importance for the West after the fall of the Soviet Union. Turkey's closeness to Israel appeared to balance the Iran-Syria alliance and their implicit support for the PKK .

Iran-Turkey Cooperation on Prevention of a Kurdish State

Domestic dynamics have influenced Turkish foreign policy toward Iran and Syria in the past, as policymakers have successfully externalized the sources of Turkish political Islam and Kurdish separatism (Aras and Polat, 2008: 496). While both Ankara and Tehran have agreed on the creation of an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, both states have also agreement that it would not serve their interests if an independent Kurdish state were to emerge from this entity (Lenore and Kerriids, 2004: 84-91). In spite of all significant disagreements between Ankara and Damascus on various Kurdish issues and division of the Euphrates water, before 2011 the two states worked together to preclude the emergence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which, all the three states believed, was an objective pursued by the United States and Europe .

Some of the agreements signed by Turkey and Iran to remove the possibility of the creation of a Kurdish state took shape in 1995 during meetings between President Demirel and President Rafsanjani. These agreements are important for several reasons: they indicated the threat of Kurdish nationalism for both, particularly the PKK's for Turkey. Turkey and Iran were ready to cooperate on the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis in the Azerbaijan Republic and the rising influence of Russia in northern Iraq. The agreements meant that Iran and Turkey were ready to coordinate their Kurdish policies in northern Iraq, which both regarded as threats to their national interests. Such

coordination, while significant, did not completely alleviate mistrust between the two neighboring states .

Iranian Kurds, meanwhile, experienced a period of relative progress and prosperity in the late 1980s and the 1990s as Iran underwent reconstruction from the war with Iraq. Ethnic tensions continued nonetheless. With the election of reformist president Khatami in 1997, a number of political and civil institutions took shape for the expression of ethnic symbols and identity, and more attention was paid to political, economic, and social issues. General improvement of conditions in Kurdish areas was a priority for the government. In the sixth Parliament (2000-2004), in fact, representatives from Kurdish regions formed a faction to devise and pursue their ethnic demands, an endeavor which was followed in the next parliaments (Maghsoudi and Darbandi, 2010: 155-177).

Kurdish Autonomy before the Fall of Saddam

Before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, Turkey and Iraq cooperated in efforts to keep their Kurdish populations in check (Hale, 2007: 32-34). Turkish cooperation with the coalition forces in attacking Iraq and kicking Saddam out of Kuwait, however, worsened their bilateral relations. In the 1990s, Turkish relations with the Iraqi Kurds were based largely on the internal disputes between the Iraqi Kurdish parties, particularly the two major parties, the Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union. In the 1990s, PKK's activities influenced Turkish relations with the Iraqi Kurds (Lundgren, 2007: 85-86). PKK's use of Iraqi Kurdistan's territory to conduct military operations on Turkish soil raised Turkish protest, and on certain occasions was answered with aerial attacks. One of the reasons why Turkey became closer to the Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1990s was cooperation between PKK and the Patriotic Union against Turkey (Lundgren, 2007: 86). In return, Iran established closer ties with the Patriotic Union. In some ways, this represented an Iranian-Turkish proxy war in northern Iraq in the mid-1990s (Oktav, 2003: 108). Nonetheless, Iran and Turkey cooperated on the prevention of the rise of an independent Kurdish state .

In late 1990s, as tensions between the two countries over the PKK receded, for a time it appeared that Iraqi Kurdistan might emerge as a new area of friction between them. The implementation of the "Oil for Food" program in Iraq brought about significant benefits for Turkey and the Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan. In exchange for Turkey's support, the Party frequently entered military clashes with the PKK (Stein and Bleek, 2012: 143-150 .)

Iran and Syria were suspicious of Turkey's objectives and policies in the Kurdistan region, worried that Turkey may make the Iraqi Kurdistan its own protectorate. Both states opposed Turkey's call for a change in international boundaries. In trilateral meetings among Iran, Turkey and Syria, priority was given to the protection of Iraqi territorial integrity (Girisci and Winrow, 1997: 167). But in 1999 Iranian-Turkish relations deteriorated, when Turkey engaged in two military operations with the aim of suppressing PKK forces along the Iranian borders. Nevertheless, the two countries never put aside their economic cooperation even during periods of tension. The coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, the deepening

of the Iraqi crisis, and the fear of the partition of Iraq with a Kurdish state in the north brought Turkey closer to Syria and Iran, countries that also have significant Kurdish populations (Aras and Polat, 2008: 496). In 2005, Prime Minister Erdogan was the first Turkish leader to acknowledge that "the state made mistakes about the Kurdish issue" (Aljazeera, 2011). Admitting mistakes is one thing; rectifying them is quite another. More than a decade later, the prime minister's party, the AKP, has yet to devise a clear strategy toward the Kurds (Dokmejian, 2012).

Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to a convergence of Iranian, Turkish and Syrian interests in their resisting Kurdish demands for autonomy. Apart from other territorial disputes between Syria and Turkey, the PKK has often used Syrian territory as a base for its attacks on Turkish targets, thus heightening tensions in Turkish-Syrian relations. The U.S. occupation of Iraq resulted in closer cooperation between Iran and Turkey out of concern for their own territorial integrity and in the hope of countering a further expansion of American and even Israeli influence in northern Iraq. Iran and Turkey declared solidarity in fighting terrorism, and, during Erdogan's visit to Tehran in 2004, Iran recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization (Bas, 2013: 118). This improved Iran's image in Turkey and served as a springboard for enhanced bilateral ties .

It was around this same time in 2004 that the Iranian offshoot of PKK, known as the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK), was created. Soon thereafter Iran and Turkey convened a joint meeting to discuss border security issues and coordinate their efforts against Kurdish rebels. As a result of a signed memorandum, the two states agreed to share intelligence on Kurdish activities and to coordinate military operations against the PKK and PEJAK (Bas, 2013: 118). Beginning in 2007 the two countries conducted joint military operations inside Iraqi territory, leading up to major attacks on the Qandil region in 2009. Another factor in Tehran-Ankara convergence was a change in Turkish outlook on Syria whose bilateral relations had improved since 2004 when President Assad visited Turkey for the first time. The two countries even conducted joint military exercises .

There are conflicting viewpoints among the Turkish political parties and elites concerning the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Turkey's Kemalists, including the military, secular parties and extremist nationalists see the existence of an autonomous Kurdish political entity as a security threat. The country's Islamists and Kurdish political elites, however, hold the belief that the KRG has no other option but to rely on Turkey due to its geopolitical constraints. Thus, not only can it serve as a good market for Turkish products, but it also has the potential of turning into a reliable regional partner. As the Syrian crisis deepened, the positions of each of the Turkish camps hardened .

In the meantime, in Iraq a coalition was forged between the Shia and the Kurds through Iran's mediation, paving the way for the emergence of a federal system. The Kurdish-Shia collaboration has managed to maintain political balance in Iraq. In response to Tehran's support for Baghdad, Ankara supported the Erbil government. The KRG wanted Baghdad to remain weak in order to capitalize on its increasing

autonomy. It pursued separate policies in its actions in disputed areas, conducting foreign relations, and concluding agreements with foreign oil companies (Weitz, 2014) .

Changes in the Iraqi body politic after the U.S. invasion have made Iranian and Turkish leaders highly sensitive to the political and security repercussions of such an upheaval (Lerner, 2010). The Turkish parliament rejected cooperation between the country's armed forces and the United States in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq and overthrow of Saddam's regime in March 2003 (Yeşiltaş, 2009: 34). Turkey insisted on political settlement of Saddam's fate and saw military action in Iraq as a threat to its national security (Yeşiltaş, 2009: 34). The Turkish and Iranian governments were both concerned that political instability in Iraq and the country's possible breakup would lead to Kurdish separatism in their own countries. They considered Kurdish separatism a serious threat to their security (Derakhsheh and Divsalar, 2011: 111-112). Thus the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the rise of AK Party in Turkey laid the groundwork for increasing expansion of bilateral relations (Ayman, 2012: 11 .(

The political ascent of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led to significant changes in Turkey's domestic sphere as well as its regional and global roles. The AKP's vision of Turkish foreign policy, as developed by former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, initially put great emphasis on improving relations with all of Turkey's neighbors, particularly in the Middle East (Habibi, 2012: 7). Turkey gained enormous economic growth in this period and the AKP leaders integrated the country into the world economy, speeding up economic reforms in their efforts to join the European Union. Reducing the role of the military in the government was also on top of the AKP leaders' agenda. Davutoglu called Turkey the bridge linking the Muslim countries and the advanced Christian nations, a role arising from Turkey's geopolitical necessities. He pursued the policy of ending problems with Turkey's neighboring countries. In 2005, Prime Minister Erdoğan publicly acknowledged while in Diyarbakir, the largest city in the Kurdish region, that Turkey has a Kurdish clique. The AKP government also introduced an unprecedented reconciliation campaign in 2009, which involved a program to better integrate PKK militants into the society (Bilgin, 2012: 67)

In this period, Turkey recognized Iraqi Kurdistan and opened up its consulate in Erbil. From late 2008 onward, relations between Ankara and Erbil expanded, culminating in Davutoglu's visit to Kurdistan region in 2009 and Masoud Barzani's visit to Turkey in 2012. This fundamental change in Ankara-Erbil ties was affected by the AKP's new policy toward Turkey's Kurds. This also led to better economic relations, particularly in the field of energy, resulting in the Regional Government exporting up to three million barrels of oil to Turkey's Ceyhan port daily (Dov and Salih, 2014). Ankara pursued these energy interests in Iraqi Kurdistan while continuing to favor a more powerful central government in Baghdad (İseri and Dilek, 2013: 26). Ankara, moreover, was concerned about Iran's increasing influence in Iraq. Iran, in turn, decided to continue with its balance-of-power approach and to support the status quo, therefore supporting Iraqi Kurdistan, especially in the city of Sulaymaniyah. Despite its energy imports, Turkey adopted a less friendly and at times even

aggressive posture toward the increasingly autonomous Kurdish region to its south .

The Iraqi market is vital to Turkey's economy. In 2011, the volume of transactions of Turkish companies with the region reached $12 billion, half of which were conducted with the Kurdistan Government (Jozel, 2014: 3-10). Turkey hoped that the improvement in its relations with Iraqi Kurdistan would help improve its relations with the PKK, which had sabotaged the oil and gas terminals in Kurdish areas several times. This would also enhance the prosperity of less developed areas in Turkey's southeast region (Jozel, 2014: 76)

Arab Spring and Change in Turkey's Relations with Iran and Syria

Although Turkey and Iran were cooperating in their security and economic policies, their different foreign policy approaches reappeared with the Arab Spring (Bas, 2013: 120). Turkey's long border with Syria has made the country's leaders very sensitive to developments in its neighbor to the south. The likelihood of the breakup and collapse of Syrian political system and the wave of refugees would have extensive implications for Turkey. The revival of the clique of Hatay province and disputes over water may exacerbate these concerns (Oktav, 2003: 91-117). For Iran, the Assad regime is of strategic significance because it provides a bridge to Lebanon's Hezbollah movement. The Arab Spring "securitized" Turkey's relations with Iran and Syria, whereas Turkey's pursuance of the policy of accession to the European Union influenced the Desecuritization process in Turkey's domestic politics and foreign policy (Aras and Polat, 2008: 496)

Prior to the uprisings, Turkey's soft power had seen a precipitous rise across the Arab world. But the outbreak of the Arab Spring and especially the Syrian civil war confronted Turkey with serious strategic challenges (Philips, 2013: 2-10). AKP leaders' tacit and implicit support for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) seriously affected the process of their expanding presence. With the Arab World developments, Iranian-Turkish relations also entered a new phase of competition (Bas, 2013: 120). While Turkey attempted to present itself as a role model for the establishment of Islamic political systems, Iran described the 2011 developments in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya as Islamic Awakening and viewed Syrian unrest as a result of Western intervention (Bas, 2013: 120) .

As Iran moved to strengthen its support for the Bashar Assad government, Turkey sponsored Assad's opposition clique, including those with ties to the al-Qaeda and al-Nusra clique. Syria is currently entangled in a protracted crisis, a civil war that is fueled by intensive rivalry among the regional and trans-regional powers (Philips, 2013: 210). The Turkish government's primary objective has been the overthrow of Bashar Assad. Indeed, Erdogan has pursued a policy some have called 'neo-Ottoman', although its success so far has been elusive (Nasser, 2013). Syria is also of paramount strategic importance for Iran. Some analysts think that the "Syrian case has almost become a Turkey Iran proxy war" (Bas, 2013: 121)

Not surprisingly, a confluence of interests has taken place involving Iran, the Lebanese Hezbollah, the PKK, and the Syrian regime. One of the consequences of this has been the intensification of differences between Iran and

Turkey over the clique of Iraqi Kurdistan (Noi, 2012: 26). By some estimates, Syrian Kurds compose 20 percent of PKK fighters (Dokmejian, 2012). Barzani's Democratic Party leaned toward Turkey and Saudi Arabia from the onset of the Syrian crisis, calling for the overthrow of Assad's government. In response, Jalal Talabani called on the Kurds to work with the Assad government. Turkish officials had repeatedly talked about the possibility of attacking the PKK inside Syrian territory .

The course of the Syrian civil war has also affected the Kurds' relations with the Assad government. Military retreats by the Syrian regime forces prompted the Democratic Union Party of Syria (PYD), which is very close to the PKK (Middle East Briefing, 2015), to declare autonomy. Since November 2013, in fact, the PYD has consolidated its local self-rule based on the PKK model (Orhan, 2015: 3). Confronting the Iranian policy of strengthening the Assad regime, Turkey has made efforts at taking advantage of Kurdistan Regional Government's influence on Syrian Kurds. Turkish leaders see the influence wielded by Masoud Barzani on Syrian Kurds as essential in the peace process with the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan .

Iran has also attempted to expand its relations with the PYD, affecting Turkey's policy toward the Kurdistan region for its own benefit. The Syrian Kurds are influential in the political balance in the country, acting as forces loyal to Assad. Syria's ethnic heterogeneity is one of the reasons that the country's 2011 uprising has had a different outcome than those in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt (Bilgin, 2012: 67). Nonetheless, Kurdish autonomy in Syria is not consistent with either Iranian or Turkish strategic objectives. For Turkey, the fate of Syrian Kurds is even more consequential for the aspirations of its own Kurdish populations, and therefore more closely linked with its policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan. In the event of a confrontation between Erbil and Baghdad, it is very unlikely that Turkey will lend its military support to Kurdistan .

Before the Syrian uprising erupted, Davutoglu had met with the Syrian authorities more than sixty times (Mohammed, 2011: 69). For the AKP, good-neighborly relations were a strategic priority, having prior to 2011 resulted in the expansion of Turkey's relations with both Iran and Syria (Ahmadi and Ghorbani, 2014: 67). But once the uprising broke out, Turkey threw its support entirely with the Syrian opposition, hoping in the process to counter Iran's rising influence in Iraq. United by their concerns over developments involving the Kurds and their drive for autonomy, Iran and Turkey nevertheless stood against each other in supporting and mobilizing forces loyal and opposed to Assad (Mohammed, 2011: 71-72). Turkey, in fact, has at time gone so far as to view the rise of ISIS as a useful counterstrategy in checking the influence and powers of the Kurds in both Syria and Iraq (Maleki, 2015) .

Iran and the Kurdistan Regional Government

Beginning in the second half of the 1990s, as the central government in Baghdad experienced more pressures from the United States, developments in Iraqi Kurdistan became increasingly more important in Iranian-Kurdish relations (Zulal, 2012: 141). The Kurdistan Regional Government prioritized its economic ties with Turkey because, under the pressure

of international sanctions, Iran lacked the necessary potential to meet KRG's needs. Since Turkey purchased gas from Iran at world market prices (Kinnanderm, 2010: 10-11), Turkey's agreement with KRG would give Ankara a free hand in bargaining with Iran .

Beginning in 2003, when the U.S. invaded Iraq, until 2011, when the Arab uprisings broke out, Iranian-Turkish relations expanded significantly. Increasing international pressures on Iran and Ahmadinejad's aggressive foreign policy ensured the continuation of such ties. Davutoglu's Eurasianist foreign policy also facilitated the expansion of Turkish relations with Iran (Grigoriadis, 2010). Iran saw in Turkey a useful strategic and economic partner that could facilitate ties with the European Union and to also alleviate some of the pressures arising from West-imposed sanctions (Habibi, 2012, 5-7). In 2009, the leaders of the two countries announced that they planned to increase the volume of bilateral trade from $10 billion to $30 billion per year. This was followed by the signing of a new security memorandum that stipulated fighting the PKK (Zulal, 2012: 169-174). Turkey's military attack on PKK militants in 2011 was accompanied with Iran's support, marking a fundamental change in their reciprocal relations (Arsu, 2011). The Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu stressed their countries' determination to fight both PKK and PEJAK guerrillas (BBC, 2011). In the meanwhile, for their part the Kurds saw the dawn of the Arab Spring as an opportunity to expand their autonomy and influence (Noi, 2013: 23). But the Turkish-Iranian security cooperation did not last long. The Turkish government had little liking for Iran's Iraqi ally, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. When the Syrian civil war broke out, Turkey began courting the KRG in an effort to forge an anti-Assad bloc. Turkey even extended its support to Salafi clique inside Syria, enabling passage for some from Iraqi Kurdistan .

United States and the KRG

U.S. policy toward the KRG has been contradictory. The United States has, on the one hand, backed autonomy for the KRG while, on the other, it has emphasized Iraqi territorial integrity. Although in the 1970s the U.S. pointedly withheld support for Kurdish expressions of autonomy, by the early 2000s many high-ranking American officials had endorsed the creation of a sovereign Kurdish state (Zulal, 2012: 169-174 and Migdal Ovitz, 2002: 5). The post-Saddam Iraqi government established close ties with Iran, and the KRG also tried to design its relations with Iran in such a way so as not to provoke the U.S. Sharing a border with Iran and Iran's role in meeting the KRG's needs have been important factors in shaping KRG-Iran relations. With Iran's growing influence in the Iraqi government, the U.S. paid more attention to its Kurdish allies. The conclusion of Exxon-Mobil agreement with KRG as backed by the U.S. government sent a clear message to Baghdad and Tehran. A visit to Washington by the KRG President Masoud Barzani further solidified U.S.-KRG ties (Zulal, 2012: 156) .

Conclusion

Based on the security dimensions stated in the theory of the Bozan regional security complex, the severe security threats of the Iraqi Kurdistan region's independence have affected various aspects of the security of Iran and other Kurdish-inhabited countries and made ethnicity a key problem for Iran and

Kurdish-inhabited countries. The Kurds have become an ethnic group. According to this theory, the two countries of Iran and Iraq are located in a regional security complex, and any change in one member (Iraqi Kurdistan region) affects another member (Kurdish regions of Iran). Therefore, the independence of this region has a potential role in weakening the integrity Arizi has Kurdish border regions of Iran. It seems that the geopolitical, political, historical and cultural situation of the Islamic Republic of Iran with today's Kurdistan of Iraq in terms of economic, political, cultural relations. It is intertwined in the bed of history; In such a way that the fusion between these fields can be observed in the new era. One of the areas that has a high influence and importance in the new Iraq, the western borders of the country are the belt of ethnicities that interact with similar ethnicities on the other side of the borders (the climate of Iraqi Kurdistan). In order to secure the borders in the field of ethnic issues, ethnic minorities should be involved in political power and provide platforms for political, economic, cultural and social development. The main cause of the protests and ethnic movements that occurred in the Kurdish areas of Iran at the beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution was dissatisfaction with the political system and the violation of the rights of the Kurds before the Islamic Revolution. Therefore, in order to reduce the security threats caused by the presence of Israel and America in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, attention should be paid to the role of ethnic clique in the administrative system, especially in political positions. A look that is based on trust and not mistrust. This province is one of the Kurdish regions, which is easily vulnerable to external threats in case of lack of internal cohesion, and the history of this province is a testimony to this claim. It is considered the autonomous region of Kurdistan, which in the light of geopolitical realities, examining the opportunities and the challenges facing the Islamic Republic of Iran have made it necessary. Identifying the government's inadequacies and explaining and solving the strategic challenges of the government during the years 1388-1401 regarding the Kurdish identity with the activity of terrorist clique such as Pejak and Komle can be useful to some extent in eliminating the all-round security threats of these cliques.

After decades of fighting and suffering, the Kurds in Iraq have achieved far-reaching self-rule. Looking at the history of conflicts and alliances between the Kurds and their counterparts inside Iraq and beyond its borders, the authors find that the region faces an uncertain future because major issues like the future status of Kirkuk remaining solved. A federal and democratic Iraq offers a rare opportunity for a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish clique in Iraq – and for national reconciliation. While certain clique and currents in Iraq and the wider Arab world have to overcome the notion that federalism equals partition, the Kurds can only dispel fears about their drive for independence if they fully reintegrate into Iraq and show greater commitment to democratic reforms in the Kurdistan Region.

The basic structure of the Kurdistan region of Iraq has four variables: the border that separates the regional security complex from its neighbors. The anarchic structure and the regional security complex formed by two or more autonomous units and the polarity expressing the structure and material distribution of power in the theory of the regional security complex of Kurdistan and the social structure

based on the patterns of friendship and enmity between separatist Kurdish clique and the system of the Islamic Republic. The regional security complex will be considered in this research because the independence of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has affected various aspects of the security of Iran and other Kurdish-inhabited countries, and the issue of ethnicity has become a key problem for Iran and ethnically-populated countries. Kurds have turned.

References :

Ahmadi, Hamid and Fahimeh Ghorbani, "The Impact of Syrian Crisis on Iranian-Turkish relations," Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs, no. 1 (2014)

Aras, Bulent and Rabia Karakaya Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran," Security Dialogue, Vol. 39, No. 5, (October 2008), pp. 495-515 .

Arsu, Sebnem, "Turkey Deploys Thousands in Pursuit of Kurdish Rebels," The New York Times, October 20, 2011)

Bas, Safak, "Pragmatism and Rivalry, the Nature of Turkey- Iran Relations," Turkish Policy Quarterly, no. 3 (Fall 2013)

"Between ISIL and the Kurds: Where Will Erdogan Go," Middle East Briefing, June 27, 2015, http://mebriefing.com/?p=1825

Bilgin, Fevzi, "Resolving Turkey's Kurdish Issue," The Rethink Institute, Washington DC, (May 22, 2012)

Calabrese, John, "Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship," British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, no. 1 (1998)

Cetinsaya, Gokhan, "Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historic Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations," Middle East Review of International Affairs, no. 3 (September 2003)

Dokmejian, Armenak "Turkey, Syria, and the Kurds," The Washington Review of Turkish & Eurasia Affairs (April 2012) , http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/turkey-syria-and-thekurds.html .

Dov, Friedman, and Cale Salih, "Kurds to the Rescue: How to Get the Kurdish Regional Government to Take on ISIS," Foreign Affairs, June 2014 ,17 http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141569/dov-friedman-and-cale-salih/kurds-to-the-rescue

Elik, Suleyman, Iranian-Turkish relations, 1979-2011: Conceptualizing the Dynamics of Politics, Religion and Security in Middle Power States (London: Routledge, 2013)

"Erdogan and Syria's Kurds: Who is the Cat and who is the Mouse?" Middle East Briefing, no. 84 (July 8, 2015) .

Gabbay, Shaul M. "State Borders vs. Cultural Historical and Religious Social Networks: The Case of Turkish Kurds', Kurds in Iraq – and Their Struggle for Self Determination," European Scientific Journal, no. 29 (October 2014) .

Grigoriadis, loannis N. "The Davutoğlu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy," Middle Eastern Studies Programme, Bilkent University (April 2010)

Gülden, Ayman, "Regional Aspirations and Limits of Power-Turkish Iranian Relations in the New Middle East," Hellenic Studies/Etudes Helleniques, Vol. 20 Issue 1, (Spring 2012), pp. 85-114 .

Habibi, Nader "Turkey and Iran: Growing Economic Relations Despite Western Sanctions," Middle East Brief 62, (May 2012) .

Hale, William, Turkey, the U.S. and Iraq (London: Saqi Books, 2007)

İseri, Emre, and Oğuz Dilek, The Nexus of Turkey's Energy and Foreign Policy with Iraqi Kurdish Oil: The Iranian Connection, Ortadugo Analiz, no. 50, (2013): 26 .

Jozel, Khusro, "Ankara-Erbil - Baghdad Axis: A Clique of Energy and Politics," Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (February 26, 2014): 3-10 .

Karacasulu, Nilufer and Irem Askar Karakir, "Iranian-Turkish relations in the 2000s: Pragmatic Rapprochement," Edge Review, Vol. 11, No. 1, (January 2011), pp. 111-119

Kinnanderm, Elin, "The Turkish-Iranian Gas Relationship: Politically Successful, Commercially Problematic," Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, UK (January 2010)

Koolaei, Elaheh "Geopolitics of Energy Transit through the Caucasus," Journal of Central Eurasia Studies, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Winter & Spring 2008): 47-70 .

Koolaei, Elaheh, New Great Game in Central Asia (Tehran: IPIS, 2010)

Lenore, Martin and Dimitris Kerriids, eds., The Future of Turkish Policy (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 84-91

Lerner, Barbara, "Losing Turkey to the Islamists," National Review, August 2, 2010 ,

http://www.nationalreview.com/article/243584/losing-turkey-islamistsbarbara-lerner

Lundgren, Åsa, The Unwelcome Neighbor: Turkey's Kurdish Policy (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007)

Maghsoudi, Mojtaba and Anoushe Darbandi, "Ethnic Policy of Islamic Republic of Iran about Kurds," Political Science Research Quarterly, no. 4 (Spring 2010): 155-177 .

Maleki, Sadeq, "Step by Step to Kurdish State," Iranian Diplomacy, July 4, 2015 ,

http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/newsletter/fa/page/1949514/%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%85+%D8%A8%D9%87+%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%85+%D8%A8%D9%87+%D8%B3%D9%88%DB%8C+%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%AA+%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF%DB%8C.html .

Migdalovitz, Carol, "Iraq: The Turkish Factor," CRS Report for Congress (October 31, 2002)

Mohammed, Idrees, "Turkey and Iran Rivalry on Syria," Alternatives, no. 2-3 (2011)

"NATO Calls Emergency Meeting after Turkey's Request," Aljazeera, July 28, 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/07/nato-emergencymeeting-turkey-pkk-kurdish-isil-150726182515557.html

Nasser, Nicola, "Syria, Egypt Reveal Erdogan's Hidden "Neo-Ottoman Agenda,"" Global Research, November 20, 2013, www. global research. ca/syria-egypt- reveal...hidden...ottoman.../5358781

Noi, Aylin Ünver, "The Arab Spring, Its Effects on the Kurds, and the Approaches of Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq on the Kurdish Issue," Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 16, No. 2 (June 2012), pp. 15-29

Özcan, Nahit Ali and Özgür Özdamar, "Uneasy Neighbors: Turkish Iranian Relations Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution," Middle East

Policy, Vol. 17, No. 3, (Fall 2010), pp. 101-117

Oktav, Özden Zeynep, "Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish Iranian Relations," Perceptions, (Summer 2014), pp. 103-117

Oktav, Özden Zeynep, "Water Dispute and Kurdish Separatism in Turkish-Syrian Relations," The Turkish Year Book, (2003)

Olson, Robert "Turkey-Iran Relations 1997 to 2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Clique s," Third World Quarterly, no, 5 (2000): 5-9 .

Olson, Robert, The Kurdish Clique and Turkish-Relation: From World War I to 1998, (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publisher, 1998) 39. Olson, Robert, Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000, (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2001)

Orhan, Oytun, "Is a Kurdish Belt Possible in Syria?" ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs, no. 28, (June 2015)

Philips, Christopher "Into the Quagmire: Turkey's Frustrated Syria Policy," Chatham house (April 15, 2013): 2-10, http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/188137 .

Romano, David and Mehmet Gurses, eds. Conflict, Democratization and the Kurds in the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Stein, Aaron, and Philip C. Bleek, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: From "Friends with Benefits" to "It's Complicated,"" Insight Turkey, no. 4 (2012): 143-150 .

"Turkey and Iran Collaborating against Kurdish Rebels," BBC News Europe, October 21, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe15407142 .

Waltz, Kenneth, N. "International Structure, National Force, and the Balance of World Power", Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 21, No :(1967) 2 , 231–215

Weitz, Richard, "Ankara Pursues Persian Partnership," The Turkey Analyst, no. 13 (July 9, 2014)

Yavuz, M. Hakan, and Nihat Ali Özcan, in "The Kurdish Clique and Turkey's Justice and Development Party," Middle East Policy, Vol. 13, No. 1, (Spring 2006), pp. 102-119

Yeşiltaş, Murat, "Soft Balancing in Turkish Foreign Policy: The Case of the 2003 "Iraq War,"" (2009): 34, http://sam.gov.tr/wpcontent/uploads/2012/02/MuratYesiltas.pdf .

Yildiz, Kerim, The Kurds in Turkey, EU Accession and Human Rights (London: Pluto Press, 2005)

Zulal, Shawal, "Survival Strategies and Diplomatic Tools: The Kurdistan Region's Foreign Policy Outlook," Insight Turkey, no. 3 (2012)