

# TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS BETWEEN COOPERATION AND COMPETITION: THE KURDISH CASE IN IRAQ FROM THE YEAR 2014 TO 2019

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on 'Turkish-Iranian relations between cooperation and competition: a case study the Kurdish question in Iraq 2014-2019. The problem of the study is on which is suffering from a state of instability in the countries where the Kurds live. There is an urgent need for separation from the central state in Iraq, which is a case of insomnia for Turkey, Iran and the Iraqi central government. The separation will provoke a reaction among the Kurds of Turkey and the Kurds of Iran. The study aims to reach understanding the nature of Turkish-Iranian competition in Iraq, and to identify the nature of the Kurdish question in Iraq and its role in influencing the relationship between the two countries

**KEYWORD:** Turkey, Iran, Kurdistan, International Relations.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Iraq and the Kurdish question have been among the most significant and critical areas for Turkey. They are also among the most competitive areas between Turkey and Iran since of Iraq and the Kurdish Question are areas of competition between Iran and Turkey and also areas of interests at the economic, security, political, military and historical level.

Iraq has been and continues to be an area of conflict between the Ottoman and the Safavid and this conflict has expanded to competition due to Iraq's convenient geographical location, vital importance, natural resources and diverse demography composed of Arabs, Turkmen, Kurds, Zaidis and others.

The Kurdish question is one of the most critical challenges for both Turkey and Iran, particularly the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Kurdish expansion beyond the areas of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk to include the areas of Mosul and Kirkuk which are considered by both Turkey and Iraq to be a matter of national security.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTION

The intention of Kurds living in Iraq to separate from the central state of Iraq results in a state of instability in the countries where other Kurds live. This intention worries Turkey, Iran and the central Iraqi government since in case the separation was fulfilled, this would encourage the Kurds living in Turkey and Iran to ask for the same thing.

## III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the nature of the Turkish-Iranian competition in Iraq?
- What is the importance of the Kurdish question for both countries after the American withdrawal from Iraq?
- What is the level of coordination and cooperation between Turkey and Iran regarding the Kurdish question?

#### IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

- Understand the nature of the Turkish-Iranian competition in Iraq
- Learn about the Kurdish question in both Turkey and Iran after the American withdrawal.
- Explore the level of coordination and cooperation between Turkey and Iran regarding the Kurdish question

**First:** The American invasion of Iraq and the history of Turkish-Iranian competition

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 posed the first regional challenge for Turkey since the Justice and development party took office in 2002. Prior to this invasion, the new Turkish leadership decided to formulate new policy based on resolving issues with the neighboring countries. Later, The American invasion challenged this policy and its position on the foreign intervention in the region. However, Turkey managed to handle this issue in a pragmatic and responsible way thus balancing between sustaining a good relationship with NATO, of which Turkey is the second largest army after the United States of America, and continuing to follow its policies to take interest in Iraq which is considered by Turkey to be one of its the most vital and historical resources given that Iraq has always had geopolitical, national security and demographic ties represented by the Turkmen living in Iraq and the great geographical areas in the most strategic regions between the Iraq and Turkey.

Prior to the international application of economic sanctions on Iraq, Iraq and Turkey had excellent trade relationships but these relationships deteriorated due to the sanctions. The border trade between Turkey and Iraq at the southeastern border of Turkey was the economic lifeblood of the poor Anatolian regions, but the interruption of business resulted in a wave of unemployment and economic stagnation in the region after it started to show development and prosperity. This deterioration of the economic situation and the strikes that followed the war on Iraq that exhausted the Turkish economy increased Turkish concern about such crises that may occur to one of its neighboring countries, especially if the matter is related to another trading partner of Turkey. (Yunus Al-Taweel.

(The future of Turkish-Iranian relations 1932-2007) Center for Regional Studies, University of Iraq)

The Turkish-Iraqi relationships remained stagnant until the justice and development party took office in 2003. Turkey eagerly tried to prevent the war on Iraq by organizing a series of forums that included regional powers seven weeks prior to the invasion. These regional powers were Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria

Turkey believes that the political solution in Iraq is the establishment of a central government in Baghdad that controls all Iraqi lands and is shared by all spectrums of the people. The objective of this government is to reduce Iranian influence and to limit its control over the government. Turkey seeks to include Turkmen in this government as well as taking advantage of its strong relationships with Kurdistan Region to influence the decisions taken by the central government.

On the other hand, Iran believes that Iraq should have a weak central government isolated from Arab and Western influences and dominated by the political parties that are close to it. Iran was also able to dominate some of the parties, even those that differ ideologically with it, and this is what can be observed with the Islamic Party (one of the most prominent parties representing the Sunni community). Likewise, Iran was able to dominate the Turkmen demographic component, especially after the terrorist attacks of ISIS on them in 2014. Iran has developed relations with the ISIS that led to underestimate the Turkish project and prevented Turkey from compromising Iranian interests in areas under the control of Turkey's allies (Arab Forum for Analyzing Iranian Policies – Website .2018)

## 1. Political competition "Spheres of Influence"

In 2008/2009, the United States forced Iraq to sign a security agreement with the United States of America stipulating that the two countries will restore the relationship between each other while Iran rejected this agreement. (Amina, 2015: 85)

Turkey and Iran supported political parties and forces during the parliamentary elections at the end of 2012. Turkey supported the secular Iraqi national coalition, while Iran supported the Shi'ite parties. Turkey avoided supporting any sectarian party due to the sensitivity that would result and would anger a large the Iraqi Elite who view Iranian position as a sectarian position.

Turkish government officials have privately expressed concern about the expansion of Iranian influence in Iraq. Turkey would also like to see Iraq come back to become a parallel force to confront Iran. Iran has successfully, and possibly better than any other country neighboring Iraq, managed to persuade many Iraqi ethnic and sectarian groups. This advantage was because many Iraqi opposition politicians took refuge in Tehran throughout the reign of former President Saddam Hussein. Even in Kurdistan Region, the Iranians, unlike the Turks, were very adept at supporting all Kurdish parties.

## 2. Mosul and Kirkuk in Turkey's strategic approach on Iran

The research will examine these two provinces and the extent of their overlap in the file of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The research will also examine how Turkey regards these provinces on the demographic, geographic and economic basis, and how Iran is developing its expansion strategy there. Mosul and Kirkuk are of vital and strategic importance for Turkey, given their close geographical locations and their vital resources, the most important of which is oil. They have also been of a geopolitical field for Turkey

### 1- Al-Mosul

The Iraqi city of Mosul represents the geopolitical balance that Turkey seeks to have with some regional countries. The geographical location of Mosul shows the extent of its importance, not only in terms of its total physical space but also in terms of its geopolitical location and resources.

The province of Mosul borders Turkey. Turkey has permanent consulate in the province. Mosul is the second largest city in Iraq. Turkey believes that it lost Mosul during the First World War. In this regard, Turkey allocates a balance to Mosul in its annual budget to emphasize the importance of the province of Mosul for Turkey. Mosul has population of one million people, the majority of them are Sunni and some Christian, Yazidi and Turkmen minorities

Many historical books have mentioned that the province of Mosul belongs to Turkey as evidenced by the fact that Turkey has joined a treaty to recognize Mosul as part of its territory on the basis that the majority of its population during the era of the British mandate on Iraq. In 1926, an agreement was signed stating Mosul as an Iraqi territory

This historical interaction is noticeably linked to the importance of this provenience, and the role of the colonial powers in deliberately dividing the area based on historical claims thus creating a sense of permanent instability. The Turkish interest in Mosul serves as an indication of the nature of Turkish interest in this region demonstrated by the fact that Turkey has allocated a balance to Mosul in its annual budget. Here we can understand the philosophy of colonialism in dividing the region a hundred years ago and the role that the colonial powers had in rising geopolitical problems between the borders of countries following the concept of divide and rule, which would help deepening the conflict between the powers

### 2- Kirkuk

Kirkuk is one of the oldest oil-rich Iraqi provinces and. It has a mixture of population of Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, and other nationalities, and it has been a constant source of tension between the central Iraqi government in Baghdad and the Kurdish central government in Erbil. Kirkuk stretches over an area of ten

thousand square kilometers and is about 250 km away from Baghdad. Its population is estimated at about a million and a half, including Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and other nationalities. This province is characterized by its huge oil reserves. An estimate indicates that it produces 40% of the total Iraqi oil, and 70% of the natural gas that Iraq produces in general. Because of its geographical location and economic richness, this province has remained a region of conflict and tension between the central Iraqi government and the Kurdish central government since an early period in the modern history of Iraq. These conflicts and tensions have continued during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the American military withdrawal from Iraq.

The problems of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region constraint the rapid growth of the Iraqi oil and gas sector since those borders are in the disputed areas. This problem leads to an Iranian and Turkish role at times, and to American mediation intervention. The root of the problem the central Iraqi government and the Kurdish central government dates to 2005, when the constitution granted the Kurdistan Government a major role in exploration and development of new oil fields in areas under its Jurisdiction. The problem remains to be unsolved till this day.

Kirkuk and Mosul play a great role in enabling Turkey to achieve its plans and interests in Iraq. The Turkish plans in Iraq intersect with the Iranian plans and positions in Iraq. As we already mentioned, the Iranian position in Iraq differs from the Turkish position. The Turkish position aims to build a coherent and a stable Iraq, so that Turkey would maintain economic cooperation with it. The Turkish position towards Mosul and Kirkuk as be a natural extension in the framework of Turkish interaction with the two provinces of Iraqi Kurdistan. The research has previously examined the historical importance of Mosul and Kirkuk and the nature of their historical, geographical, and economic ties.

#### **Second:** The Kurdish question in Iraq and the Turkish-Iranian competition and cooperation

Throughout history, the Kurds have undoubtedly achieved a remarkable development. The Kurds began as scattered groups without the intention to form a strong central state like the central Iraqi government that developed in the Great Plains of the Tigris and Euphrates or in the Nile Valley. In the last hundred years, The Kurds were divided between the Ottoman and Persian empires due to the shifting of policies. As for the past seventy years, they were divided among the four countries we mentioned earlier. Perhaps these divisions clarify the intention of the colonial powers to underestimate the Kurdish question in the countries where the Kurds live in as a part of their colonial plans

Underestimating the Kurdish question was the position that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk adopted. He considered this agreement of division as an execution for Turkey since this it internationalized that Kurdish question and imposed it on Turkey by force. The agreement of division was never implemented as a result of the Turkish refusal to it. The Turkish decision makers still continue to refuse recognize this agreement

The Kurdish question is a problem for Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria where the Kurds live. The Kurdish struggle began in 1970. The Kurds believed that the Kurdish issue was a just cause and that it needed a solution. They sought to establish a home for them and to obtain the right to self-governance. This struggle has gone through a series of revolutions for independence throughout the history of the Kurdish national movement in all places where Kurds live

Ahmed Wissal comments: " there is no crisis involving the Kurds and Turkey. However, the crisis is with terrorist militias that operate in more than one place, as well as the rise of Kurdish nationalism. Moreover, The Kurdish geographical expansion in the neighboring countries worries the Turkish government. Therefore, Turkey contained the crisis on its soil thus forcing these militias to move into the geographical neighborhood in Iraq and Syria, which poses a national threat to Turkey. As for Iran and the Turkish-Iranian cooperation on this crisis, there is no strong or significant cooperation at this stage. For instance, Iran's sympathizers in Sulaimaniyah allow the Labor Party to expand its territories there

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is the center of Kurdish autonomous state and it is the only region that gained independence after many years of the Kurdish struggle. The Kurdistan Region is formed in what is known as the Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Dahuk. These three regions represent the lifeline of the region. In addition, they are rich in oil and minerals, and therefore they are areas that are vital to Iraq and its geographical surroundings for the resources that these regions possess. Likewise, the two Kurdish parties that represent the center of administration of these provinces thought that these provinces were not enough and managed to expand beyond their territories. The Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Masoud Barzani controls the areas around Erbil, while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by the late Jalal Talabani controls Sulaimaniyah and its

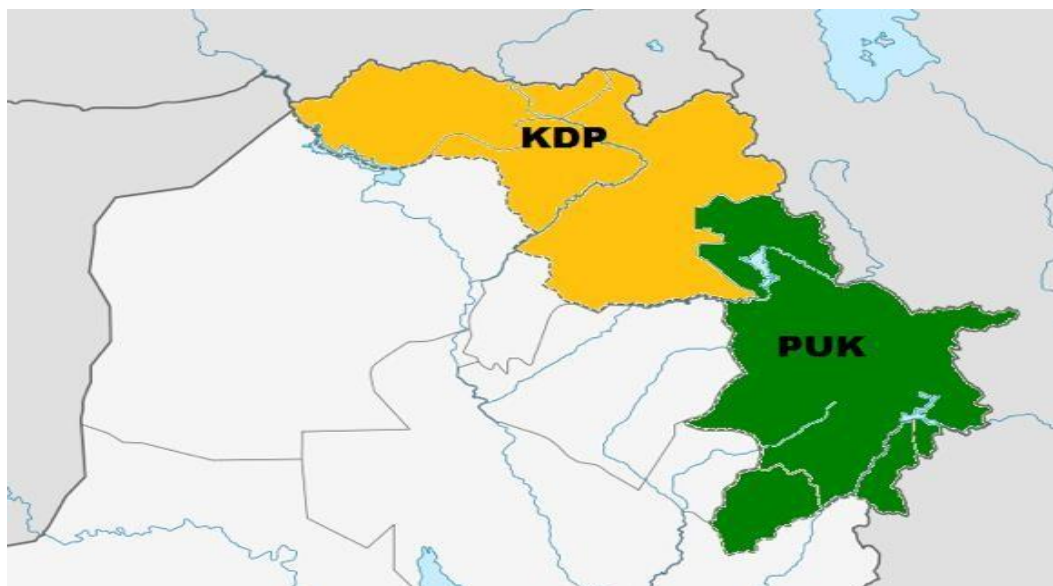
environs. The Kurdish ambition did not suffice to this extent of expansion and control, but rather extended to the governorate of Kirkuk, which is now the center of a conflict between the Iraqi central government and the Kurds. This is what we will mention later in terms of the importance of that governorate in terms of the nature of its crucial resources

The two countries adopted a similar position towards Kurdish nationalist and separatist movements in the region for almost half a century , but despite the fact that Iran fought Kurdish separatist movements in the past decades, it did not hesitate to use this card against its neighbors, especially in the times when it felt strong, as was evident when The Shah supported Kurdish groups opposed to the Baghdad government in the 1970s. After the revolution, Iran also resumed supporting the Kurdish movements in northern Iraq, as was the case in the era of the Shah. At the same time, Iran was monitoring the transformation of the Kurds in Turkey into military operations. After the Iran-Iraq war, Iran tried to show that the Kurdish question was the problem of others and that it didn't not suffer from it, so it strengthened its relationship with Kurdish groups outside Iran, believing that it solved the Kurdish dilemma inside the country. It sought to strengthen its relationship with the Kurdistan Work Party in Turkey through the Syrian regime.

While Turkey considers Erbil as one of the important areas, and has a close relationship with the self-governing authority in Erbil, Iran has a close relationship with the administration of governing authority in Sulaimaniyah

Those two provinces are of great importance because they have important resources for the two countries, so we find that Turkey seeks with all its capabilities to benefit from its relations, as well as maintaining positive intervention based on development and instead of conflict and disagreement. Turkey preferred to some extent to maintain this position until the independence Referendum stage. The independence Referendum marked an important stage in cooperation between Turkey, Iran and the central government of Iraq. The three countries agreed to reject the independence Referendum

Saif Al-Din Abdel-Fattah comments on the existing regional projects: " they can achieve a Middle Eastern force against foreign interference. His opinion is based on the shared position that the three countries agreed upon and that was to reject the independence Referendum throughout some measures that they managed to achieve, and which will be mentioned later



The yellow color on this this map shows the areas of control of the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Masoud Barzani, and green color shows the areas of control of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by the late Jalal Talabani

Here, the research will examine these two governorates, their importance, the nature of governance in them, the nature of the Turkish and Iranian position towards each of them, the areas of cooperation between the

two countries in regard to the Kurdish question, and the criteria by which each country will measure its interests with its partner in the region.

### 1.Erbil

Erbil is located in the north of the Iraqi Republic, about 360 km from the capital, Baghdad, about 89 km from the city of Mosul, and about 112 km from the city of Sulaymaniyah. The governorate of Erbil is bordered to the north by the Turkish state, and boarded to the north-east by Iran. Most of the population of Erbil is of Kurdish origin, with some minorities, such as Turkmen, Arabs, and Assyrians

The Iraqi president worked to strengthen the relationship with Iran after the American withdrawal from Iraq, and at the same time he worked to control the political institutions of the state, in particular the security services, and he also sought to limit the influence of Sunnis and Kurds

Turkey worked to achieve a state of coordination and cooperation with Iraq in order to achieve a state of stability in Iraq by balancing between activating the relationship with the central government and developing its approaches to interact with the region. With the expansion of the Kurds' vision in activating new positive positions with Turkey, Turkey has believed that it has to develop its relationships with Erbil since Erbil is geographically close to Turkey

### 2.Sulaymaniyah

The city of Sulaymaniyah was founded in 1784 AD by Ibrahim Pasha who was a Kurdish prince. Since then, Sulaymaniyah has become the cultural capital of Iraqi Kurdistan and home to philosophers, poets and writers. The Sulaymaniyah region was known as Zamoia before the establishment of the modern city in 1784, and it was the capital of the Kurdish Emirate of Baban in 1850. There were great conflicts between the Safavid Empire and the Ottoman Empire since the city had of great strategic location. Nowadays, the residents Sulaimaniyah are more open and tolerant than the other residents of Kurdistan Region. For instance, Women of Sulaimaniyah have gained independence and peace. However, Women of Sulaimaniyah do not accept to talk to a stranger at all. The city is often described as a "global jewel" and "a place to discover", and the city has so many important places and ancient monuments

**Third:** The level of political and security cooperation between Turkey and Iran regarding the Kurdish question

The two countries adopted a similar position towards Kurdish nationalist and separatist movements in the region for almost half a century , but despite the fact that Iran fought Kurdish separatist movements in the past decades, it did not hesitate to use this card against its neighbors, especially in the times when it felt strong, as was evident when The Shah supported Kurdish groups opposed to the Baghdad government in the 1970s. After the revolution, Iran also resumed supporting Kurdish movements in northern Iraq, as was the case in the era of the Shah. At the same time, Iran was monitoring the transformation of the Kurds in Turkey into military operations. After the Iran-Iraq war, Iran tried to show that the Kurdish question was the problem of others and that it didn't not suffer from it, so it strengthened its relationship with Kurdish groups outside Iran, believing that it solved the Kurdish dilemma inside the country.

Worrying about its interests and strategic influences in the region, the Iranian rejection of any American projects in the region prevents any developments that would take place in Iraq. Iran has been applying this strategy since 2003 until the present time.

Iran fears a strong Sunni Kurdistan close to Israel more than it fears any other regional power because the formation of the Kurdish state means that Israel and Iran will be geographically close to each other which would result in a change in the rules of engagement, and a real threat to the Iranian military doctrine, because then Iran will be forced to include the "Kurdistan state" within the threats of Iranian national security leading to possible implications on its military efforts in terms of deployment and employment of military capabilities.

Therefore, Iran seeks to preserve a weak, unified Iraq that would not threaten its interests. It also seeks to preserve a country that is compatible with its regional policies and strategies, and not to allow any geopolitical changes that would negatively affect its interests. During the 2008 and 2009, there were numerous contacts between Turkish envoys and the President of the Kurdistan Region, Masoud Barzani. In November of 2008, a Turkish-Iraqi-American committee was formed to limit the activities of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)

#### 1. The Independence Referendum in the Kurdistan region and the Turkish-Iranian reaction

The independence Referendum that Masoud Barzani launched in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq marked an important turning point in the Turkish-Iranian position. The independence Referendum signified an important element of rapprochement between the two countries, given that the Kurdish issue represents a security and geopolitical threat for both countries. The two countries would not allow the Kurds to establish an independent state in the countries where they live. Not allowing the Kurds to establish their state is one of the important constants in the vision of the two countries despite the different interest tactics that the countries are working on regarding this issue according to the different levels of interests. The Turkish and Iranian parties, and many parties, especially the central government the Iraq, agree to reject the secession of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and any other projects leading to their separation in any of the countries where they live

In one of his meetings with the government, The Turkish President has stated that all options are under consideration, and that he hopes that the independence Referendum will be canceled since it will lead to catastrophic results for northern Iraq and the entire region. The Turkish armed forces have carried out maneuvers on the Iraqi border aiming to show leverage and to prevent the holding of the independence Referendum

The chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces visited Turkey in the context of rejecting the independence Referendum. The Turkish president Erdogan has stated that this visit aims to agree to an operation against the Kurdistan Region if the independence Referendum is announced. The two countries agree that if the Kurds residing in Iraqi Kurdistan succeed in seceding from Iraq, this will provoke the Kurds in both countries to ask for secession following the steps of the Kurds of Iraq and This is something that both countries reject and agree upon

Iran fears the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan due to its fear that this region will turn into an area of influence for its strongest enemies which would cause a direct threat to its national security. Iran also fears the American projects aiming to divide the region into rival states.

In this context, the two countries have declared that the independence Referendum is illegal and that they will not accept its results. They have also declared a package of political and economic punishments against the government of the Kurdistan Region. The Turkish-Iranian cooperation efforts in conjunction with the central Iraqi government in Bagdad have succeeded in the cancelation of the results of the independence Referendum and Barzani's stepping down from the government. As a result, the Kurdistan government was forced to retreat to improve its relationship with these countries.

Based on their awareness of its threat to their national security, The Iranian and Turkish elite see that the success of coordination between Turkey and Iran in eliminating this project heralds the possibility of fruitful cooperation to solve other outstanding issues in the region. Recently, there has been in a talk about a joint military operation between the two countries against the PKK. However, it can be assumed that Iran will not go to war in partnership with Turkey unless its national security is under direct threat. This could be resulted if the PKK explicitly joined the alliance of UAE, Saudi Arabia and Israel although there are no indications of that at the present time.

Hakki Yegor comments:" the high-level of coordination between the two countries during the independence Referendum on the secession of the Kurdistan region of Iraq has illustrated the Turkish-Iranian cooperation and their shared fear of the Kurdish separation. Both of countries considered the independence Referendum on the secession of the Kurdistan region as a threat to their national security and they did not hesitate to confront the government of Kurdistan region. The two countries declared that the the independence Referendum was illegal and that they were not willing to accept its results. They issued package of political and economic sanctions against the government of Kurdistan. Their efforts, in coordination with the central Iraqi government in Bagdad, resulted in the cancellation of the the independence Referendum results, Barzani

withdrew from power, and the retreat of provincial government given that the local, international and regional developments would increase the pressure on Kirkuk.

On one side, this pressure was evident by the Turkish and the Iranian opposition of the independence Referendum in the Kurdistan Region. On another side, Barzani's rejection of the proposals for the independence Referendum made by the United States, Britain and the United Nations and his continuation to hold the independence Referendum on time will put him and his region under great international pressure

Moreover, the Iraqi parliament and the Iraqi Federal Court issued a decision not to accept the independence Referendum or even recognize it. Within this context, the Deputy Chairman of the Popular Mobilization Authority, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis visited Kirkuk on September 18. He visited the headquarters of the Turkmen Mobilization Brigade. During the visit, Al-Muhandis affirmed the support of the Turkmen in the city. On the same date, Turkey carried out military maneuvers near the Khabour crossing on the Turkish-Iraqi border and bombed the PKK positions in northern Iraq.

Ali Bakir comments:" there is an element of rapprochement between the two countries in Kurdistan Region regarding the security file , as Turkey aims at the unity of the surrounding country and fears that the Kurds might get their own self-independence in the countries where they live, unlike the Iranians, who have the belief that since they have a presence in the region , they can control all the resources. The separation of the Kurdistan region occurred against the will of Turkey. The Turks have accepted this reality and tried to take advantage of being the Kurdistan's only passage to the world and the poor relationships that Kurds have had with Iran. Oil is an important resource in the region so Turkey has tried to create a positive relationships with Kurdistan Region especially the city of Erbil, to the extent that it refused the continued problems that the Kurds have had with the Iraqi central government and the that it had refused the continued cooperation issues with the Kurdistan Region. They opened a special account for the sale of oil, so that the region would be compatible with the central government, and both had good trade relations specifically during President Maliki's era

In the context of agreeing to prevent the establishment of a Kurdish entity, Turkey and Iran exchanged intelligence information between each other regarding the PKK, and sometimes they coordinated efforts to combat attacks carried by the PKK and the Kurdistan Free Life Party. In the summer of 2010, Turkey and Iran intensified their cooperation to protect their borders, and increased coordination between the activities of their intelligence bodies directed against the PKK. However, as a result of the increasing tensions over Syria, intelligence cooperation between the two countries has declined significantly since the end of 2011.

The decline of the intelligence cooperation between the two countries hindered Turkish attacks against the PKK. On example was when The PKK attacked in Shamdunli district in Hakkari province in 2012 and resulted in killing 20 Turkish soldiers. Turkish experts believe that perpetrators had to transport heavy weapons to the city and deploy large logistical equipment to the region. They also believe that this operation of this magnitude would not have been carried out without the knowledge of Iran

The PKK's choice of the Qandil Mountains as its headquarters opened the door for Iran to strengthen relations with the PKK. The Turkish media had previously referred to the treatment of PKK members in Iran and about the visit of leaders of the party to Tehran and their meeting with Iranian officials

## 2.The implications of an independent Kurdistan on the Turkish-Iranian national security

The implications of the independent Kurdistan are based on the fact that the United States plans to establish this state within the current geographical region. This plan is currently in progress to reach several desired objectives which obviously became apparent after the Arab Spring revolutions and their regression. Some officials claim that the desired Kurdish state will be based on a geographical space deducted from the four countries where the Kurds reside live

This deducted geographical space is called the Kurdish Crescent or the Nationalist Ambition of the Kurds. This region extends from Abu Shahr in Iran and Khoo Abu Musa in the south of Ahvaz, and two Indians near the Strait of Bab al-Salam or Hormuz, passing through in the north of Lazakia and the Iskenderun brigade and reaching to the Iraqi lands in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Mosul and Kirkuk



Turkey has taken many measures to prevent the establishment of an independent Kurdistan, including the deployment of The Turkish military in the Iraqi base of Bou Ishika in the north of Mosul since 2014. Through this deployment, Turkey aims to win the battle of Mosul in order to prevent any geographical communication between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Kurds in Syria which would result in the establishment of the state of Deir Ez-Zor

The United States has ten bases in northeastern Syria and Syria in general aimed at having a leverage in the region and supporting the Kurds and their project there , so the United States of America is trying to achieve what the Allies could not achieve after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in establishing a homeland for the Kurds as a result of the factors we mentioned earlier.

This controversial topic needs to be examined based on a realistic approach in order to fully understand the nature of political transitions of the United States and its plan to achieve the Kurdish independent state. All the regional factors and transformations that the region is witnessing at this stage indicate fundamental geopolitical changes including the attempt to establish the Kurdish Crescent

The large and open battles between the PKK and Turkey are bloody and unending. They have put a remarkable and noticeable pressure on the Party as the state launched numerous operations to weaken the Party and its forces. The Party constitutes a set of factors necessary in understanding the nature of the challenges that lead the party and the tactical situation

Therefore, the geopolitical of the independent Kurdish state cannot be achieved for a set of factors, the most important of which are:

- The Kurdish state will surrounded by countries that have historically rejected this Kurdish expansion and will do in the future.
- The scarcity of natural resources despite the presence of oil in several of its territories.
- The export of these resources must pass through its geographical neighborhood, which controls all its commercial routes since these routes are located within their territories

These factors raise an important question. Why is it not possible to achieve an independent Kurdish state? The answer to the question is that not establishing a Kurdish state corresponds with the western visions that seek to divide the political forces in the region and to turn them into separated entities amid the national calls asking the unity of religion, identity, geography and the removal of the concept of borders that deepens the separation of the nation

#### **The findings of the research:**

- The Kurdish question is an essential element of rapprochement between the two countries. This rapprochement represents a form of security consensus
- The American invasion of Iraq was an opportunity for the Iranian Islamic revolution to extend its religious influence over Iraq
- Iraq is important for Turkey since the Kurds have expanded their influence to include new territories like Kirkuk and Mosul. This expansion of influence has worried Turkey of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state
- Turkish and Iranian interests in Iraq are divided into in two levels. The first level is the Kurdish question which representing an area of cooperation. The second level is the Iraqi question representing an area of competition. These different levels provide opportunities for both countries to exercise their cooperation and competition thus creating new political influences

The Turkish position on the Kurdish question 'Kurdistan Region' seems to have achieved economic cooperation and have prevented the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. As for Iran, Iraq represents an area of influence and domination, and that it must preserve achievements accomplished there

#### **CONCLUSION**

Turkey and Iran have huge interests regarding both Iraq and the Kurdish question. These interests can cause complicated levels of competition and cooperation as well as the case with the surrounding regional powers. The importance attached by the two countries to the Kurdistan Region, their fear of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state and the level of coordination between each other and with the Iraqi central government demonstrate this level of cooperation. The political influences that Iran has in Iraq and its strong ties with the Iraqi political parties have enabled it to play a great role in the country and at the same time significantly underestimating the Turkish role. However, it seems that Turkey has set its geopolitical plans in Iraq and limited its role in its spheres of influence where it will not allow the establishment of a Kurdish independent Kurdish state, but at the same time maintaining effective economic and political ties with the provinces of Mosul and Kirkuk since Iraq has always had a significant and direct impact on the nature of the relationship between Turkey and Iran through history, especially the Kurdish question, which formed a form of mutual cooperation regarding the security and military field. They have always rejected the idea of the establishment of an independent Kurdish. After the American invasion of Iraq, Iraq was scattered between regional powers, and Iran was one of the countries that was able to extend its influence over it. Although the Turkish position supports Iraq and its territorial unity, it has not yet achieved the desired goal of being the primary competitor to any other political power.

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