

Turkish Contradictory Foreign Policy towards Iraq in 2005-2015

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Abstract

One of most sensitive relationships in the Middle East is that between Turkey and Iraq. Crucial in Turkey's relationship with Iraq is its view of Iraqi Kurdistan. This article studies the development of the Turkish foreign policy towards Iraqi Central and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 2005-2015. The article analyzes several dimensions of Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraqi Central Government and KRG. Many observers have stressed on contradictory nature of Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraq in post-2003 era. So the main question of this article is why there has not been a coherent approach in Turkish foreign policy towards central government of Baghdad and regional government of Erbil in 2005-2015? The answer of the article as its hypothesis is failing nature of Iraq central government and the vast oil resources in Kurdistan region have encouraged a pragmatic and ups and down relations between Ankara, Baghdad and Erbil in 2005-2015 which could be characterized by deep contradictories in economic and security goals. The article shows that Ankara increasing relations with KRG is a reflection of Turkish limits of influence in Iraq and in the region as a whole.

Keywords: Turkey; Foreign Policy; Iraq; Kurdistan Regional Government; Change.

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Accepted on 15 May 2017

1. Introduction

Turkey experimented remarkable changes in the last decade. In 2002, the government of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power. Turkey, under AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as Prime Minister, gradually started to change its role in foreign policy regarding its neighboring region. Turkey's project of pro-active and widely engaged foreign policy began to rise after 2002 and consolidation of the AKP's power in the second term after 2007 strengthened this new approach in Turkish foreign policy (see Robins, 2013).

The so-called New Turkish Foreign Policy (NFP) was at first highlighted as a remarkable success and ambitious project. Later on, it was criticized for its setbacks and contradictory nature especially according to Syria crisis and Iraq and many observers considered Turkish foreign policy as unsustainable (See Cockburn, 2015; Cook, 2015; Bahrami, 2012). This article, of course focuses on Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq and tries to examine the causes of ups and down and contradictory nature of the Turkish relations with Baghdad and Erbil.

The so-called New Turkish Foreign Policy (NFP) shows both potential and limits of Turkish regional power. In 2003–2007, Ankara maintained realist security approach for Baghdad, seeing Iraqi unity as a counter-power to Kurdish nationalism. But after 2007, Turkey pursued closer ties with Baghdad by for example expanding economic and political relations. At the same time, Ankara sought to get closer with Kurdish Regional Government in Erbil. By 2009, such balancing proved to be unsustainable. Baghdad viewed closer Ankara relations with Erbil as an unwanted support for KRG's independence. At the same Turkey found it increasingly difficult to manage its relations with Iraq central government while Baghdad was failing central control over its territory. Ankara also at this time considered Iraqi Kurdistan a more valuable partner regarding to Northern Iraqi hydrocarbon riches. Ankara, in this way, shaped a contradictory and ups and down relations with central and regional government of the neighboring country Iraq.

As we can see, there is no any comprehensive approach in Turkish foreign policy toward Iraq in 2005-2015. So the main question of this article is why there is no coherent approach in Turkish foreign policy toward central government of Baghdad and regional government of Erbil in 2005-2015? The answer of the article as its hypothesis is failing nature of Iraq central government and the vast oil resources in Kurdistan region have encouraged a pragmatic and ups and down relations between Ankara, Baghdad and Erbil in 2005-2015 which could be characterized by deep contradictories in economic and security goals. According to this hypothesis, we can consider Turkish foreign policy as dependent variable and failing nature of Iraq central government and vast oil resources in Kurdistan region as independent variables of the article. The relation between these variables is analyzed through analytical-descriptive method.

This article will first discuss the issue of change and continuity in foreign policy with neoclassical realism approach and uses this analytical framework

for understanding Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East and especially Iraq. Then it will focus on analyzing Turkish foreign policy under the AKP governments towards Iraq according to variables mentioned in hypothesis.

2. Analytical Framework: Change and Continuity in Foreign Policy in a Neoclassical Realism Approach

This article uses ‘neoclassical realism’ as its main analytical framework. The term ‘neoclassical realism’, was coined by Gideon Rose in 1998, which argued that neoclassical realism incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. It argues that the scope and ambition of a country’s foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. Its adherents also argue that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level (See Rose, 1998).

“Studying the effect of relative power on foreign policy is the core subject of neoclassical realism. The principal factor of foreign policy analysis for neoclassical realism is decision-maker’ understanding from systemic pressures that make them to decide. The second intervening variable in neoclassical realism is the capability or relative power of states in relation with other states. In other words, though neoclassical realists are seeking for systemic analysis, they do it through analyzing relative power of each state and attitudes of decision-makers towards the situation (Dehghani Firoozabadi and Zare Ashkezari, 2016: 96).

According to this analytical framework we can study Turkish foreign policy in mentioned period with focus on Ankara goals and capabilities in Middle East region as a regional power. We also must consider coming to power of the AKP as a deep change in domestic affairs of Turkey which encouraged some transformations in Turkish foreign policy. There seems to be a general consensus among scholars that the AKP government in Turkey heralded a deep change in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East. In fact, the AKP government criticized Turkish earlier policies towards region many times. Here we can ask how much really is new in Turkish foreign policy towards Middle East. And how can we explain changes in AKP foreign policy towards Iraq in a neoclassical realism vision?

“The literature on foreign policy change defines change in different ways. Charles Hermann in this issue distinguishes between four categories of foreign policy change in terms of outcomes as below: (1) “adjustment change,” referring to a change in the level of effort, (2) “program change,” pointing to changes in methods or means although the basic purposes remain unchanged, (3) “problem/goal change,” where the purposes themselves change and (4) “international orientation change,” represents the redirection of foreign policy

orientation, that means a basic shift in roles and activities” (Alunis and Martin, 2011: 571).

Analyzing Turkey’s foreign policy towards Iraq and region as a whole in 2005-2015, we can argue that there have been some signs of program change and problem/goal change. As I explain later, we can divide Turkey’s foreign policy towards Iraq into two periods: 2003–2009 and 2009–2015. In first period, “Turkey mainly pursued its goals through diplomatic negotiation rather than military force, focused on its soft power assets, emphasized engagement and economic interdependence, and promoted mediation roles. Thus, clearly Turkey began to use different means in achieving its foreign policy objectives in the region. This represented an important contrast with Turkish foreign policy in the region for most of the 1990s which was highly securitized and used mostly military means (balancing alliances, military relations, military threats and interventions)”(Altunis and Martin, 2011 : 571).

In second period, we can see some important signs of goal/problem change in Turkish foreign policy. In 2009–2015 period Turkey clearly aimed for regional leadership and popular uprising in Arab countries which started in 2010, strengthened this strategy. In this period Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq experienced a profound change as Ankara inclined to Kurdistan Regional Government and shaped strong economic and military relations with Erbil. As a result, Ankara-Bagdad relations deteriorated as central government in Iraq percept Turkey actions as against its sovereignty and territorial integrity. But it seems these changes in AKP foreign policy towards Iraq have not been tuned in a logical manner .As I show later, there were contradictories between economic and security goals in AKP foreign policy towards Iraq and the means that were used for pursuing these goals have not been chosen in a rational calculation.

3. Turkey-Iraq Relations in Historical Perspective

After a relatively stabilized era of 1960 to 1990, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 profoundly changed Turkey-Iraq relations. After UN SC Resolution 665, Turkey allowed United Nations forces to fly missions from its air bases. The allied coalition achieved its objective and had neither a mandate nor much desire to press on into Iraq itself. After the cease fire agreement on 28 February 1991, both Shiites in the south and Kurds in the north of Iraq had risen in revolt. Following that incident, UN SC Resolution 688 was passed, which called on Iraq to end its repression of its own population and paved the way for the creation by the coalition powers of a safe haven north of the 36th parallel in Iraq (just south of Arbil)(Tripp,2007: 15).

UN SC Resolution 688 weakened Iraq central authority especially in the north of the country. In this era of the lack of authority in Iraq, Turkey's relation with Iraq was in a unique situation. The central government in Baghdad had no power in Northern Iraq but Turkey's core issue about Iraq was in Northern Iraq - Iraqi Kurdistan. So, the Turkish government created political relations with Iraqi Kurds (See Hale, 2000).In this way, Turkey found a pragmatic solution for

its security problem in this unique situation but this situation was only a short term period and it changed after the Second Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq.

“Prior to the implementation of sanctions, Turkey was one of Iraq’s major trading partners, with total trade between the two countries valued at about \$3 billion per year. There was also a brisk transit business, from which Turkey received approximately \$1 billion per year by trucking goods to Iraq from Turkish ports. Estimates of Turkey’s cumulative losses from the economic sanctions range from \$20 to \$60 billion. However, sanctions have not been a total loss for Turkey, as Turkish firms reportedly won export contracts under the OFFP valued at \$340 million in 2002, making Turkey Iraq’s seventh-largest supplier under the U.N. program” (Economist Intelligence Unit May 1, 2002).

Beside these formal economic relations there was an illicit trade in diesel fuel that flourished along the Turkish border with Iraq during the implementation of sanctions, involving as many as 500 trucks per day at its peak. The smuggling was done using specially modified trucks that would carry food from Turkey into Iraq, and would pick up deeply discounted fuel products for the return trip. On that time, mainly because the oil sales were provided revenue to Turkey’s impoverished southeastern region (Economist Intelligence Unit, February 16, 2000).

Turkey’s relationship with the Kurds of Iraq has historically been affected by the anxiety created by its own Kurdish minority in southeastern Turkey. Ankara always fears that a strong, self-governing Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq could further incite the nationalist aspirations of its own Kurdish population. Turkey is also concerned by the presence of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels within KRG-controlled territory. PKK rebels have used northern Iraq as a safe haven to launch cross-border attacks against Turkey many times. Ankara in response to this threat has had engaged in limited military action targeting the rebels in northern Iraq sometimes. Turkey has also initiated a high level of security and intelligence cooperation with the KRG in order to deter PKK rebel's attacks.

4. Two Periods of Changes in Turkish Foreign Policy towards Iraq

4-1. Program Change

The premise guiding Turkey’s stance towards Baghdad and Erbil in the first period was continuing predominance of “realist-exclusionist approach” (Oguzlu, 2008). In this period, Turkey went through a “default support for Baghdad” along with “an inherent suspicion towards Erbil”. Ankara considered that supporting the KRG will eventually lead to emergence of an independent Kurdish state which would probably emerge as threat to Turkey. At the same time, the key premise was to keep Iraq united and strong as a buffer against sectarian tendencies especially from Kurds.

In this period, every potentially positive step towards the KRG was perceived as a major threat (Oguzlu, 2008). However, as AKP was gaining more confident position, it gradually initiated careful contact with KRG

(Cagaptay and Evans, 2012). But when PKK renewed its insurgency in 2004, Ankara repeatedly criticized Erbil for not taking up sufficient precautions to prevent PKK from operating within its territory.” Finally, in March 2007, after unofficial pre-negotiations, Turkish National Security Council gave go-ahead to high-meetings with KRG officials and the first high-level visit of Davutoğlu to Erbil took place in October 2008” (Larrabee and Tol, 2011).

So we can see here some signs of program change in Ankara dealing with Iraq. Turkey in this period continued its view about respecting Iraq territorial integrity and sovereignty, although Iraq central authority was failing and sectarian tensions were excreting through all country. But some changes occurred in the means and methods for example turkey encouraged expanding economic ties with Baghdad and Erbil as a rather new era in two countries relations.

During this period, Turkey relied mostly on Baghdad and its Prime Minister al-Maliki for several reasons. “Turkey believed in feasibility of al-Maliki’s goal to maintain strong united Iraq that would overcome sectarian resentments. Therefore, it seemed rational to bet on Baghdad led by al-Maliki, believing it would grow strong and eventually provide help while dealing with PKK. Several visits and phone calls were made between Ankara and Baghdad, who was assuring its support in fighting against PKK through 2006 and later on” (Cagaptay and Evans, 2012).

4-2. Problem/Goal Change

AKP started to pursue a new approach towards Iraq in 2008. It seems that turkey had lost its confidence to Iraqi central government for maintain order and especially control PKK activities in border area. Turkey on February 21, 2008 sent its troops into northern Iraq to target the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).The ground offensive was preceded by Turkish Air Force aerial bombardments against PKK camps in northern Iraq, which began on December 16, 2007. (Reuters February 25, 2008) This constituted the "first confirmed ground incursion" of Iraq since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. Ankara also reinforced its security ties with KRG. Thus, “since 2008 and on we a see major policy shift regarding stance towards the KRG. Turkey started to diversify its relations and the event marks a turning to a balanced strategy between favoring Baghdad and Erbil. Several high level visits occurred subsequently, for example in October 2008 Ahmet Davutoğlu met Kurdish leader Barzani in Iraq, which was the first high level visit after four years” (Larrabee and Tol, 2011).

Turkey security ties with Erbil grew later and in 2010, during the historical visit in Turkey, Barzani pledged to pursue “all efforts” to stop the PKK. But this goal change in Turkish foreign policy was not welcomed by Baghdad. Iraq Prime minister Al-Maliki, gradually started to see this change in Turkish foreign policy as an unacceptable incursion into internal affairs (Cagaptay and Evans, 2012). However, the main reason for worsening relations and mutually negative rhetoric between Ankara and Baghdad was the fact that this shift in

security goal were followed by economic and political ones (further discussed below), which in Baghdad's eyes went against central government interest and weakened its leverage against the KRG.

Kurd-on-Kurd fighting (remembering bloody civil war in 1994–1997 between Barzani and Talabani clans) is not popular and would decrease Barzani's popular support at home. However, Barzani has been happily using Turkey's invitation to bolster his position among both Turkish and Syrian Kurds on the expense of PKK. For example in November 2013, Barzani for the first time visited Diyarbakır and met with Erdoğan (Candar, 2013).

But security cooperation between Ankara and Erbil against PKK was futile. Shaky ceasefire between the PKK, and the Turkish government collapsed in July 2015 and attacks on Turkish security forces which operated in northern Iraq was soared. And Turkish ground and air forces engaged in carrying out operations against the PKK positions in the country's troubled southeastern border region as well as northern Iraq and Syria later on. PKK in retaliation "bombed oil pipeline on Turkish soil in July, carrying Barzani's oil to Turkey and further to international markets. It was strongly condemned by KRG since such attacks led to loss of millions of dollars on revenues for Barzani (Johnson, 2015).

5. Hypothesis Analysis

5-1. Iraq Failing State Capacity and Turkish Foreign Policy Change: Assessing Change in Security Goals

Iraq has viewed as a failing or failed state in recent years because it lost many characteristics of a functioning government especially after US invention in 2003. A functioning government should have a 'monopoly of violence' in its territory; basically it is the only police force within its borders and its army protects it from any threats outside the border. But the Iraqi Police have not succeed in maintaining domestic security against sectarian revolts and terrorist attacks. Iraq army broke ranks and fled when ISIS captured Mosul on June 2014. According to Zartman, state failure goes beyond revolt, coup, or protest. It refers to a situation in which a state's structure, authority, law, and political order have collapsed and need to be reconstituted in some way (Zartman, 1995). Therefore, "failure at the state level occurs if various structures, authority, power, laws, and the political order collapse. The political vacuum that occurs after state failure encourages non-state actors to take charge of the different roles of the state, leaving behind the actors that are unable to rebound or fill the vacuum" (Lyons and Samatar, 1995: 12).

The initial causes of the security crisis after in Iraq after US invention were twofold, the lack of troops the invading forces brought with them, followed by the disbanding of the Iraqi army. Faced with the widespread lawlessness that is common after violent regime change, the United States lacked the troop numbers to control the situation (Dobbins et al, 2003:197). James Dobbins, in a

study on state building published in the run-up to the invasion, compared U.S. interventions in other states since the World War II . Dobbins concluded that occupying forces would need 20 security personnel, police, and troops per thousand people. Translated into American personnel, U .S. forces should have had between 400,000 and 500,000 soldiers to impose order on Iraq (Dobbins et al, 2003: 197).

“In May 2003, the total strength of coalition forces numbered 173,000. This figured dropped to as low as 139,000 in 2004, and only significantly increased after President George W. Bush announced the “surge” at the start of 2007” (O’Hanlon and Livingston, 2010). Also Paul Bremer’s decision to disband the Iraqi army in May 2003, forced 400,000 armed, trained, and alienated ex-soldiers out onto the streets, facing unemployment. Thus, we can say the violence that shook Iraq after 2003 was a direct result of the security vacuum created by wrong security decision of US army.

Also the civilian institutional capacity of the Iraq state in 2003 was in a similarly perilous condition. “Iraq had staggered through two wars from 1980 to 1990 and was then subjected to the harshest and longest-running international sanctions ever imposed. The sanctions regime was specifically designed to break the government’s ability to deliver services and, with the notable exception of the rationing system, it was effective” (Dodge, 2010: 89).

After US invention, the civilian capacity of the state was dismantled by the looting that spread across Baghdad after the fall of the Baathist regime. This initial three weeks of violence and theft severely damaged the state’s administrative capacity. According to reports, 17 of Baghdad’s 23 ministry buildings were completely gutted (Phillips, 2005:135).

Overall, the looting is estimated to have cost as much as \$12 billion, equal to a third of Iraq’s annual GDP (Dobbins et al., 2009:111). “Following the destruction of government infrastructure across the country, the de-Beatification pursued by the U .S. occupation purged the civil service of its top layer of management, making between 20,000 and 120,000 people unemployed and removing what was left of the state and its institutional memory” (McConnell, 2006:40).The large variation in estimates indicates the paucity of reliable intelligence on the ramifications of such an important policy decision .

In the aftermath of state failure, authoritative institutions, both societal and governmental, quickly lose their capacity and legitimacy. In this way, due to lost of administrative and coercive capacity, the Iraq’s borders became increasingly meaningless. “In the aftermath of state failure, individuals struggle to find public goods, services, and economic subsistence and physically survive any way they can, usually through ad hoc and informal channels. When state authority crumbles, individuals not only lose the protection normally supplied by public offices, but are also freed from institutional restraints. In response, they often seek safety, profit or both. “Their motives become more complex than when they could depend on the state.” (Kasfir, 2004:55).

This is exactly the situation that the Iraqi population found themselves in from 2003 onward. The state suddenly ceased functioning, leaving a security and institutional vacuum across Iraq.

There is no doubt that security vacuum in Iraq after US interventions in 2003, help PKK to reinforce its position in the northern Iraq because as mentioned above Iraq security apparatus was dismantled and a security vacuum emerged that helped PKK. But as I show above, the security goal change (which named goal/problem change) in Turkish foreign policy to deter this threat was futile because Turkish security problems with PKK continued and deteriorated after shaky ceasefire between the PKK, and the Turkish government collapsed in July 2015.

Since the second half of the year of 2010, Turkey gradually counted more on the KRG and its influence over PKK. Since 2008, we can see the signs of changing policy regarding the issue of PKK from favoring Baghdad as a viable help to relying on Erbil. This policy trend can be further observed after 2010 Iraqi elections and along with other policy changes favoring Erbil over Baghdad in the security dimension. But this favoring Erbil in security ties has had much cost for Turkey and the gains seems minor and highly contested for these reasons:

1-The diplomatic relations between Baghdad and Ankara deteriorated specially after 2012 when Turkey gave refuge to Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hasimi, who was accused of supporting terrorism and sentenced to the death penalty. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Kirkuk - without informing the central government in Baghdad - created another crisis. Finally, the Iraqi government's refusal to give permission for Energy Minister Taner Yıldız's plane to land in Arbil indicated another one. Yıldız was in his way to Arbil to participate in an energy conference, but his plane had to go back and land in Kayseri. Despite his own moderate reaction, the conflict between the Turkish and Iraqi governments has often turned into political polemics (hurriyetdailynews, February 5, 2017). These are some signs of deterioration of the two countries relations that logically could be presumed as a setback in "zero problem with neighbors" that coined by AKP.

It is worth to note that in the mid-2000s, Turkish foreign policy was one of the most praised in the world. Under the newly-elected Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkish diplomacy launched a torrent of new initiatives. Ankara repaired its relations with Iraq and Syria, which had become marred as a result of the Kurdish question. But changes in Turkish security goals towards these two neighboring countries deteriorated Ankara relations with these two Turkish neighbors.

2-Turkey lost its good will in public opinion of Iraq. Incursion of Turkish troops in Iraq and reports about Turkey covert relations with ISIS made resentment against Turkey is even growing on the street. Iraqi people rallied several times to condemn in the presence of Turkish troops in Iraq, calling Ankara's move "a violation of Iraq's sovereignty." Demonstrators repeated calls

for the immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops from the Iraq (Al-Monitor, Oct 19, 2016). This could be called as another sign of setback in Turkish foreign policy change towards Iraq.

3-Turkey policies in reinforcing ties with Iraqi Kurds while bypassing Baghdad beside its policies against Syria government, lead to ISIS growing power in Syria and Iraq and eventually deteriorated security situations in Turkish border area and even in its domestic security situation.

Expanding ISIS control over Iraqi territories will acts as a multiplier to spillovers from the Syrian civil war that Turkey has suffered. These include terror attacks, clashes along border crossings, attacks on Turkish territory, citizens and military personnel, and more than a million refugees – which may stay in Turkey indefinitely in the absence of a stable homeland.

5-2. Kurdish Oil and Turkish Foreign Policy Change: Assessing Change in Economic Goals

Energy sector is an area where we can observe extensive dynamics of relations between Turkey, the Iraqi central government and the KRG. Turkey vastly invested into renovation of oil fields and explorations in southern Iraq during first period of 2003–2009 (Cagaptay and Evans 2012). Other large contracts and licenses for Turkish firms were granted with promises of further investments as well. However, failing central control of Iraqi government, struck this mutually beneficial relation. The KRG is during the second period 2009–2015 in a serious dispute about sharing oil export revenues with Baghdad.

The tensions between Baghdad and the Kurds over oil emerged at the beginning of the reconstruction process after the overthrow of Saddam regime. The first battleground between Baghdad and the Kurdish leadership was the constitution. Under Kurdish pressure, it included Article 112, which stated that "the federal government, with the producing governorates and regional governments, shall undertake the management of oil and gas extracted from *present* fields, provided that it distributes its revenues in a fair manner in proportion to the population distribution in all parts of the country..."(Constitution of Iraq) "The term *present* remained intentionally nebulous, serving the KRG's future claims to oil reserves in its region. Hence, the Kurds were successful in "creating a constitutional framework for Iraq where the main question was not what control regions should have over oil, but rather what role was left for the national government." (Kane, 2010: 6).

Another stage of contestation over oil was in the Kurdistan Region itself, in the form of the KRG's unilateral regional hydrocarbon legislation. The Kurdish representatives in Baghdad did initially participate in the Maliki government's efforts to formulate a federal hydrocarbon law. But this cooperation encountered constant disagreements. One was over the KRG's support of the use of Production Sharing Agreements (PSA). Most other members of the coalition objected to this, viewing such agreements as a form of neocolonialism.

Another issue revolved around the right to extract oil in the disputed territories in Kirkuk (Voller, 2007).

“These disagreements eventually led the KRG to withdraw from negotiations with Baghdad. In June 2007, the Kurdistan Parliament passed a regional Petroleum Law, (Petroleum Law of the Kurdistan Region, June 29, 2007) ratified as a Hydrocarbon Law in May 2009, essentially declaring that the KRG would now contract independently with international oil companies through PSAs. Shortly after signing the draft legislation, the KRG declared it was capable of exporting crude oil in commercial quantities. The next step was to sign PSAs with several international companies. Here it should be noted that the KRG had already signed such contracts prior to the negotiations with Baghdad. Nevertheless, the post-2003 government in Baghdad consented to this agreement retrospectively. In contrast, the contracts that followed were signed against Baghdad's will. Nevertheless, most of the corporations that entered PSAs with the KRG were small or middle-sized, as most major oil companies feared alienating Baghdad, regardless of the stagnation in the political process” (Kelly, 2010: 748-749).

In this period, the KRG initially expressed its commitment to sharing its oil income with Baghdad. But then, Masud Barzani, the president of the region, threatened that the KRG would keep for itself revenues from the extracted oil because "they [Baghdad] often use it [oil revenue] against us [the Kurds]." (Reuters, November 10, 2009).

This threat has not been fully implemented, but it indicates the KRG's perception of its rights over oil extracted from the region. In October 2011, the KRG signed a PSA contract with ExxonMobil. This contract was even more controversial than previous ones, as two of the six blocks given to Exxon were actually located in a disputed part of the Kirkuk governorate. (ICG, April, 2012: 2). It seems Turkey's rising interest in energy sector within Iraqi Kurdistan has been viewed as a safety for Erbil against further pressure from Baghdad.

As the dispute between Erbil and Baghdad over independent Kurdish oil exports went on, Turkish companies (as well as international ones) invested into Iraqi Kurdish oil fields. It is estimated that besides 4 billion barrels of oil, Erbil possesses 45 billion of unproven reserves, as well as up to 35–35 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves (Paasche and Mansurberg, 2014). In 2013, Turkish companies eventually build a brand new Kurdish pipeline that would bypass existing federal Kirkuk-Yumurталik pipeline to Turkey. Previously, Kurds were sending usually around 100.000 b/d through Kirkuk-Yumurталik pipeline since late 2009 (Kardas, 2009). Additionally, Erbil was also officially selling oil to Turkey via trucks next to traditionally blooming smuggling – in 2013, reportedly some 20.000 b/d (Pamuk ,2013).

A new “independent” Kurdish pipeline started to operate in the beginning of 2014, currently sending around 400.000 b/d of Kurdish oil to Turkey (U. S. International Energy Administration, 2015). The latest attempt to reach a deal between Baghdad and Erbil occurred in December 2014. Parties firstly agreed

that Kurds would hand over 550.000 barrels of oil to Iraqi state oil company each day. In exchange, they would receive 17 % from national budget (Salih, 2015a). The deal, however, was only partially upheld by both sides while KRG does not sell enough oil through Iraqi state company and Baghdad does not fulfill its budgetary commitments either (Salih, 2015b).

It seems that changes in economic goals in Turkish foreign policy have had more gains and it is true. The Kurdish region is among the top ten trading partners of Turkey and Turkey is Kurdistan's largest trading partner. Several hundred Turkish companies operate in Kurdistan, accounting for more than half of the foreign companies registered in the KRG (The Washington Post, 8 April 2010). But there are some reasons that encourage us to evaluate these gains as shaky and short term in nature as i stated below:

1-Major part of Iraq oil reserves has located in south and Iraqi Kurdistan oil reserves constitutes a minor part of oil country wealth. "Iraq has five super giant fields (defined as holding more than 5 billion barrels of oil reserves) in the south that account for about 60% of the country's total proved oil reserves. An estimated 17% of oil reserves are in northern Iraq, near Kirkuk, Mosul, and Khanaqin. Control over rights to reserves is a source of controversy between the ethnic Kurds and other groups in the area. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimated that the Iraqi Kurdistan Region contained 4 billion barrels of proved reserves.⁷ KRG's estimate is much higher because it includes unproved resources. The KRG estimates that it holds 45 billion barrels, although this number has not been independently verified and likely includes at least some resources in disputed areas—especially Kirkuk."(US Energy Information Administration Report about Iraq, April 28, 2016).

This means that Turkey high engagement in oil sector in Kurdistan Region can play as a buffer for expanding Turkish presence in major part of Iraq oil industry especially because of Baghdad repeated resentment about Ankara-Erbil oil ties. "While it is useful for the KRG to diversify its oil exports, because it is making them less dependent on Iraqi consumption, Turkey lost considerable contracts and position in the rest of the country (Cagaptay and Evans, 2012: 13).

Since summer of 2009, Baghdad has been arguing that Erbil cannot award contracts to oil companies without federal consent. It has further objected to independent exports, arguing oil riches of Iraq should be, according to the constitution, redistributed on the federal level from a joint pool. So Turkey help for KRG oil export could only reinforce Bagdad resentments about Ankara interferences in its domestic affairs.

2-In an unstable security situation like that we saw in Iraq any economic and trade opportunities could be unstable and short term as well. It seems that if Turkey seeks for long term economic presence in Iraq market, it must go through a more constructive role in the region and especially in Iraq. As Davutoglu, former foreign minister of Turkey has stated "Turkey's strategic interests lie in peace, stability, security, and prosperity in its neighborhood and beyond. Turkey is in a unique position in geopolitical terms, in the midst of

Afro–Eurasia. This vast geography neighbors crisis-prone regions such as the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. It also holds a great potential for development and prosperity, which has so far been held back due to security problems. Any crisis in these regions—be it economic or political—has direct ramifications for Turkey and the wider international community. Therefore, stability in these regions is in the best interests of Turkey” (AUC Cairo Review (Egypt), 12 March 2012).

3-Turkey cannot rely heavily on KRG willingness for controlling its oil wealth and cooperation with Ankara in oil sector. The war with ISIS after 2014, eased the pressures on the K.R.G.'s efforts to export its oil directly as it was in urgent need of cash to both finance a costly war against the jihadist organization and also provide for its population in addition to nearly two million Syrian refugees and internally displaced Iraqis who had relocated to Kurdistan (Osgood, et al, 4, 2016). But this situation could change. If Iraqi government could succeed in controlling security situation and especially defeat ISIS, which is now is more probable than before, it would exert more pressure on KRG about coordination with Baghdad in oil sector. This means that Turkey oil ties and benefits with KRG are highly shaky and may not be counted in a long term calculation.

6. Conclusion

Turkey’s foreign policy towards Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan experienced extensive changes in 2005–2015. The New Foreign Policy of Turkey included various dimensions ranging from security, political to economic. According to our analytical framework, the article showed that changing environment in neighboring countries and especially Iraq and Syria profound crises have had a main role in this issue. These crises, in fact, changed the attitudes and calculations of AKP elites about nature of threats and opportunities of Turkey in neighboring environment and encouraged them to respond with “program change” and “goal/problem change” in Turkish foreign policy. This article focused on Iraq situation, of course, and considered the role of some main factors in Iraq crises in 2005-2015 especially the failing nature of central government and the vast oil resources in Iraqi Kurdistan region. I argued that failing nature of Iraq central government(as a security issue)with economic opportunities of oil and trade relations with Kurdistan regional government appeared as conflicting issues that AKP “program change” and then “goal/problem change” constituted no coherent and long term strategy for managing them. Due to this not scrutinized “changes”, Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq appeared as contradictory and ups and down between different economic and security goals and means in 2005-2015.

It seems that AKP elites have not any long term vision about managing security threats in neighboring country borders despite much rhetoric about “zero problem with neighbors” slogan in foreign policy. When armed rebels rose up against Syria's Bashar al-Assad in 2011, Turkey joined them, expecting him to lose power within month's .Assad, in contrast, warned that the fires of

Syria's war would burn its neighbors. When Baghdad started to lose control of Sunni territories in 2013 (and finally lost it in summer of 2014 to ISIS), it was a further invitation for Turkey to enhance its relations with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and pursue its new security goals pragmatically. From one point of view, it can be interpreted as an attempt by AKP elites to have at least some "upper hand in Iraq and Syria" but this balancing strategy of being between Baghdad and Erbil failed. Turkey setbacks in Iraq and Syria viewed as turning this country from a zero problems policy (with neighbors) to zero neighbors.

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