

# FOREIGN MINISTER AHMET DAVUTOGLU'S VISIT TO KIRKUK

DIŞİŞLERİ BAKANI AHMET DAVUTOĞLU'NUN  
KERKÜK ZİYARETİ

زيارة وزير الخارجية احمد داود اوغلو لمدينة كركوك

ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES  
مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية



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## CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

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### **History**

*In Turkey, the shortage of research on the Middle East grew more conspicuous than ever during the early 90's. Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) was established in January 1, 2009 in order to provide relevant information to the general public and to the foreign policy community. The institute underwent an intensive structuring process, beginning to concentrate exclusively on Middle affairs.*

### **Outlook on the Middle Eastern World**

*It is certain that the Middle East harbors a variety of interconnected problems. However, neither the Middle East nor its people ought to be stigmatized by images with negative connotations. Given the strength of their populations, Middle Eastern states possess the potential to activate their inner dynamics in order to begin peaceful mobilizations for development. Respect for people's willingness to live together, respect for the sovereign right of states and respect for basic human rights and individual freedoms are the prerequisites for assuring peace and tranquility, both domestically and internationally. In this context, Turkey must continue to make constructive contributions to the establishment of regional stability and prosperity in its vicinity.*

### **ORSAM's Think-Tank Research**

*ORSAM, provides the general public and decision-making organizations with enlightening information about international politics in order to promote a healthier understanding of international policy issues and to help them to adopt appropriate positions. In order to present effective solutions, ORSAM supports high quality research by intellectuals and researchers that are competent in a variety of disciplines. ORSAM's strong publishing capacity transmits meticulous analyses of regional developments and trends to the interested parties. With its web site, its books, reports, and periodicals, ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM facilitates the sharing of knowledge and ideas with the Turkish and international communities by inviting statesmen, bureaucrats, academics, strategists, businessmen, journalists, and NGO representatives to Turkey.*

**Bilgay DUMAN**

He was born in 1983 in Ankara. He has been carrying on his doctoral study at Abant Iz-zet Baysal University, Department of International Relations Ph. D Program since 2011. He wrote his postgraduate thesis on “The Turkmen and Kirkuk in post-Saddam Period”. His articles and interviews have been published in various media agencies and organizations, on national and international press. In addition to a great number of conferences he attended, he has frequently carried out field studies in the Middle East, and also he took part in international watchdog teams and served as UN electoral watchdog during the elections in Iraq and Afghanistan. He continues to serve as a Middle East Specialist in ORSAM.

## PRESENTATION

As ORSAM, we strive to handle the subjects, which are quite important both due to its being in the area of interest of Turkey in terms of its foreign policy, due to its capacity of affecting the region and also due to the internal political structure of the Middle East, in all seriousness through all studies we carry out on Middle East. We believe that the studies we carry out through the information we obtain on site and at first hand will help better understanding Iraq.

Our report entitled, “Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s Visit To Kirkuk” aims at putting forward all details related to Ahmet Davutoğlu’s visit, as he has been the first Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey to visit Kirkuk after 36 years. This report, which is related to the Kirkuk visit of Foreign Minister Prof. Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, was also enriched by visual materials in order to commit the visit considered as a milestone to memories.

In addition to this, due to the importance of Kirkuk in Turkish foreign policy, the visits paid by Turkey to Kirkuk are presented also with the documents. Thus, it is thought that this report will help better understand the importance of Ahmet Davutoğlu’s visit to Kirkuk. On the other hand, a collective knowledge on Turkey’s interest in Kirkuk was also formed. We hope that this report will be a useful source for those who are interested in the subject.

*Hasan KANBOLAT*  
*ORSAM Director*

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# **FOREIGN MINISTER AHMET DAVUTOĞLU'S VISIT TO KIRKUK**



Prepared by: Bilgay Duman  
ORSAM Middle East Specialist

# FOREIGN MINISTER AHMET DAVUTOĞLU'S VISIT TO KIRKUK

## Abstract

- It is known that urbanization of Kirkuk was completed during the Assyrian period.
- Turkish dominance prevailed in Mosul-Kirkuk region, which was included in the territories of Ottoman Empire by Yavuz Sultan Selim in 1517, until the Ankara Agreement signed in 1926.
- After Mosul, an Ottoman province, entered into the Iraqi domination, Kirkuk became an administrative unit at provincial status. Different policies implemented on Kirkuk province by all the administrations in Iraq changed the structure of Kirkuk.
- After the Ba'ath Party, which appeared with the discourse of "socialist Arab nationalism" in 1968, became dominant power in Iraq; assimilation policies were launched towards the non-Arab components in the country. This situation directly affected Kirkuk.
- The Iraqi invasion of the U.S. brought up Kirkuk to the agenda again. Today, considering the issues discussed within the political process in Iraq, it is seen that the crucial point is Kirkuk which has rich oil field.
- Kirkuk has a potential which could affect not only the developments in Iraq, but also the regional and even international politics.
- Turkey shows great sensitivity towards Kirkuk. One of Turkey's sensitivities towards Kirkuk is due to the presence of Turkmen population in Kirkuk.
- Playing an active role in status problem of Kirkuk especially after 2003, Turkey clearly expresses its view on pursuing the balance in Kirkuk at every platform.
- However, Turkey's interest in Kirkuk is not only limited with its current policies. Turkish officials have strived to show their interest in Kirkuk and the local community as much as possible within the bounds of its policy and diplomacy. Even though it is not clearly known in the public opinion, many Turkish statesmen have paid visits to Kirkuk from past to present.
- Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's Kirkuk visit on 2 August 2012 is the first visit made by Turkish officials since the then-Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çaglayangil's visit in 1976. In addition, the fact that Davutoğlu paid this visit in a very critical period increases its importance.



## Introduction

The Iraqi invasion of the U.S. in 2003 and violence almost became the symbol of this country. Following the war that took place in Iraq, the damage caused by the U.S. and Iraqi government under the name of “terror operations”, sectarian violence, power struggle and people’s fight to survive still carry on. Through the interventions in Iraq, the genes of the country were manipulated and its nature was destroyed. In this environment, the people lost the sense of confidence. This situation has affected every field in Iraq. Considering especially what has been taking place in political platform, the aforesaid situation is understood more clearly. The separation in Iraq comes into being in Kirkuk in its clearest form. Even though a road map for Kirkuk was suggested in the constitution adopted in Iraq in 2005, the lack of political consensus culture in Kirkuk drags both the social base and the general policy of Iraq into a deadlock. Today, considering the issues discussed within the political process in Iraq, it is seen that the crucial point is Kirkuk which has rich oil fields. Almost all political issues ranging from the sharing of oil incomes in power struggle between the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and the central government, to federalism in the status of peshmerga forces and to elections are all locked on Kirkuk. From this point of view, Kirkuk’s being described as a “miniature of Iraq” in a classical saying makes sense. On the other hand, Kirkuk has a potential which could affect not only the developments in Iraq, but also the regional and even international politics. One of the countries to be affected most by this capacity is Turkey. As a matter of fact, Turkey has a great sensitivity towards Kirkuk. One of Turkey’s sensitivities towards Kirkuk is due to the presence of Turkmen population in Kirkuk. Therefore, even during the periods when Turkey could not develop an effective policy for its close neighbors, Turkey’s interest in Kirkuk and the Turkmen population in the area remained at high level, and Turk-

mens and Kirkuk has never been forgotten. At this point, it would be good to shed light on the history of Kirkuk and Turkish officials’ historical visits to Kirkuk.

## Brief History of Kirkuk

Mosul-Kirkuk region is known as the area where Assyrian State and the State of Babel, which are the two most important civilizations of the ancient times, were established. It is known that the urbanization of Kirkuk was completed during the Assyrian period. The Mosul-Kirkuk region, which has been an important center since the ancient times, appeared as major cities of the Umayyads and Abbasids by maintaining its importance during the period of Muslim Empires.<sup>1</sup> Kirkuk, which was known as a small settlement and a city that hadn’t gained importance yet during the Umayyads and Abbasids, became an important center of defense in terms of resisting against the threats to come from the east after the Ottoman Empire took the control of the region in 16<sup>th</sup> century. Turkish dominance prevailed in Mosul-Kirkuk region, which was included in the territories of Ottoman Empire by Yavuz Sultan Selim in 1517, until the Ankara Agreement signed in 1926. Mosul-Kirkuk region suddenly became the center of attention for the European states after the discovery of oil resources in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and in early 1900s Britain and Germany made attempts to establish their dominance in the region. While Germany maintained its influence in the administration of the Ottoman Empire, Britain encouraged the leaders of tribes in the region to revolt and strived to decrease the authority of the Ottoman Empire on the people.<sup>2</sup>

The Ottoman Empire, which fought in many fronts in World War I, went to war against Britain in Iraq. Although British forces were defeated, they could easily advanced against the Ottoman Army which remained weak due to the fact that the forces in Iraq were sent to other fronts with more violent fights. Kirkuk

came under the British domination on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918. Following the World War I, the start of Turkish War of Independence and the Armistice of Mondros weakened the the Ottoman forces in Kirkuk and Mosul. After the great victories gained in Anatolian territories, negotiations were launched in order to sign the peace treaty in 1922. However, as a result of disagreement between Turkish representatives and Britain, the arguments on the Iraqi border (Mosul-Kirkuk issue) were suspended and excluded from the Treaty of Lausanne signed on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1923 and the issue started to be discussed in the League of Nations. Striving to solve the domestic problems and defend the borders, the Republic of Turkey remained ineffective in discussions made on Mosul-Kirkuk issue within the League of Nations in 1924 and 1925. Due to the efficiency of Britain in the League of Nations, the decision issued was to Turkey's disadvantage. In accordance with decisions of the League of Nations, Turkey had to seek a settlement with Britain. As a result of the "Treaty of Friendship and Good Neighborly Relations between Iraq and Turkey" which is known as the Ankara Agreement and which was signed between Turkey, Britain and Iraq on 5 June 1926; Turkey accepted to leave the province of Mosul to Iraq. The Article 14 of 18-Article agreement envisaged that 10 percent of the oil revenues from the region were to be granted to Turkey, which renounced all its rights related to Mosul and Kirkuk, only for 25 years.<sup>3</sup>

The existence of oil in Iraq was found out after New Zealander Mining Engineer William Knox, who worked for Britain, discovered the Baba Gurgur oil field in the neighborhood of Kirkuk in 1902. However, the first oil production in Iraq was launched with the first oil well drilled in Baba Gurgur in 1927. Because the oil pipelines to carry the oil produced from the neighborhood of Kirkuk and Mosul to the oil terminals in Port of Tripoli in Lebanon and the Haifa Port in Israel could be completed in 1927.<sup>4</sup> The oil revenue of 10 per cent, which started to be received in 1931,

continued to be received until 1951. After another payment in 1954, it was cut. However, there are different views on this situation. The general view suggests that all credits of Turkey was written off with a total payment of 500 thousand sterling Turkey received. On the other hand, the oil revenue to be received from Iraq was recorded in budget items until 1987.<sup>5</sup>

After Mosul, an Ottoman province, entered into the Iraqi domination, Kirkuk became an administrative unit at provincial status. Different policies implemented on Kirkuk province by all the administrations in Iraq changed the administrative, social and demographic structure of Kirkuk. The population of Kirkuk increased 5 times due to the immigration between the years 1919 and 1968. It is known that some 39 thousand Kurdish immigrants settled in Kirkuk between 1947 and 1957.<sup>6</sup>

After the Ba'ath Party, which appeared with the discourse of "socialist Arab nationalism" in 1968, became dominant power in Iraq; assimilation policies were launched towards the non-Arab components in the country. Accordingly the Ba'ath regime, which particularly targeted the northern Iraq, limited the size of territories that Turkmens can own with 300 decares through the Agrarian Reform Law enacted in 1970.<sup>7</sup> Although various cultural rights were granted to Turkmens, some Turkmen villages and towns were destroyed and some of their names were changed. Turkmens were forced to migrate. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs were settled in Turkmen areas. Besides, it was forbidden for the Turkmen to speak Turkish in public places, and even those who spoke in Turkish were punished.

Within the scope of "Arabization" policy of the Ba'ath Party, it was decided to nationalize and disappropriate the lands and properties in Kirkuk between 1975 and 2001. The personal lands in Kirkuk were disappropriated and na-

tionalized in accordance with the decisions and numbered 336, 369, 398; decision dated 1976 and numbered 53; decision dated 1977 and numbered 222; decision dated 1978 and numbered 974; decision dated 1980 and numbered 1554; decisions dated 1981 and numbered 12, 126, 181, 1391 and 183; decisions numbered 730 and 1081; decision dated 2000 and numbered 117; and the decision dated 2001 and numbered 137. Within the framework of the aforesaid decisions, Turkmen and Kurdish settlers were evacuated from certain regions and they were forced to migrate to southern cities of Iraq. On the other hand, the Arab population was settled in the areas that were nationalized, and dwellings were built with the promotion of government, and the agricultural lands that were subdivided again were shared out amongst the Arab population settled in Kirkuk. Some lands and properties, on the other hand, were disappropriated on the ground that they would be used for the public weal. Besides, between 1975 and 1988 the villages where Turkmens were densely populated such as Beshir, Yaychi, Turkalan, Bulova, Kumbetler, Leylan, Yahyava were either completely evacuated or most of the agricultural lands were nationalized.<sup>8</sup> During the Saddam Hussein period, it was forbidden for Turkmens and Kurds to purchase real estate.

On the other hand, in accordance with the resolution of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council, dated 29 January 1976; the area of Kirkuk province was reduced, and the administration of Tuz Khormato was annexed to Seladdin Province, Altunkopru sub-district was annexed to Erbil, Chemchemical District was annexed to Sulaimaniyah and Kifri was annexed to Diyala provinces.

During the Ba'ath regime and Saddam Hussein period, there were even massacres in Kirkuk. In 1970, lots of Turkmens were put in prison, exiled and executed with no reason. One of the worst examples are those which took place in 1980. On 16 January 1980, the

prominent Turkmen figures were arrested, put in prison and executed. The Altunkopru Massacre which took place in 1991 is another heartbreaking example of dictator practices of the Saddam period.

Despite all that happened, the people in the area could preserve their identities. Especially Turkmens' love and commitment to Turkey continued at same level. In fact, as perceived by the Ba'ath regime and among Turkmens, being Turkic was equated with the commitment to Turkey. Therefore, Turkey has always been a dream "homeland" for Turkmens. On the other hand, Turkish foreign policy took shape both with the ideological polarizations of the Cold War order and also with the necessities of regional conjuncture. Therefore, Turkey could not pay enough attention to the components with the same origin in neighboring countries. However, thanks to those who migrated to Turkey for economic, social and political reasons in order to protect themselves from the practices of the Ba'ath regime, Turkey's relations with the region have never been ended.

After the Gulf War in 1991, a rapid increase is observed in Turkey's Iraq policy with the no-fly zone in northern Iraq. The presence of Turkey in northern Iraq as a peace-maker force brought along Turkey's influence in this area and thus Turkey could shape the politics in northern Iraq. This region provided a living space for the opponents of Saddam Hussein and a large number of political parties and non-governmental organizations started to become active in the region.

### **Political Situation in Kirkuk from 2003 to 2012**

Before the U.S. entered in Iraq in 2003, an agreement was reached on Kirkuk as a result of the meetings held in Ankara, and it was decided not to let any armed force in Kirkuk other than the U.S. troops. However, right af-

ter the fall of Baghdad on 9 April 2003, peshmargas of KDP and PUK entered in Kirkuk along with the U.S. troops. The peshmarga forces which settled in Kirkuk set land and register offices on fire, seized the records, plundered the Kirkuk Museum and destroyed the Turkmen cemeteries.<sup>9</sup> Turkish authorities expressed their concern on the permanent stay of Kurds in Kirkuk. Then-Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül called the then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and demanded a guarantee on the removal of Kurdish groups from Kirkuk by reminding him of the promise that Turkey's interests would be preserved. On the other hand, it was announced that Turkey decided to send a military observer mission to Iraq for a site survey.<sup>10</sup>



**In 2003, Peshmarga forces seized the records of the land and register offices in Kirkuk.<sup>11</sup>**

The memorandum, which was signed under the name of "Redeployment of Peshmarga Forces" on 17 May 2003 between the U.S., KDP and PUK, and which enabled the peshmarga troops to exceed the line described as "Green Line" indicating the borders of KRG, ignited the wick of opposition. According to this memorandum, it was decided to settle 2545 PUK, 3445 KDP members in Mosul, Kirkuk, Seladdin and Diyala in order for peshmarga forces to "help the U.S. troops in fight against terrorists". The KDP and PUK forces, on the other hand, were deployed in the areas which are located out of the KRG borders and put forward by the Kurdish groups of

their own with the help of the U.S.<sup>12</sup> Kurds, who took the control of Kirkuk by using the efficiency of peshmargas through the help of the U.S., settled the Kurdish population from other regions and neighboring countries (especially from Syria, Iran and Turkey) in Kirkuk. However, before entering in Iraq on February 2003, the U.S. held a meeting with Iraqi, Kurdish and Turkmen leaders in Ankara through Zalmay Halilzad, ambassador at large of the U.S. President George W. Bush; and a memorandum of understanding was signed at the end of this meeting. Ali Tuygan, Undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also attended the meeting. At the end of the meeting, a 7-article agreement was signed. This agreement envisaged to let neither civilian nor military forces from either sides (Turkmens and Kurds) in Kirkuk, to allow only the intervention of the U.S. troops in the city, to prevent any civilian or military movement to Kirkuk by coalition forces, and to abide by the territorial integrity of Iraq. However, Kurdish groups did not adhere to the agreement and entered in Kirkuk right after the fall of Baghdad on 9 April 2003. The population of Kirkuk which was 830 thousand people in 2003 almost reached 1,5 million in 2012 with the immigrations in Kirkuk.

Increasing their influence in Kirkuk after 2003, Kurds took the control of 23 of 24 Directorates of Service under the administration of Kirkuk provincial council which had been under the control of Turkmens before, and only Kirkuk Provincial Directorate of Education was left to the Turkmen administration.

The Kirkuk Provincial Council was created through an organization by the U.S. in early 2003. Among the ethnic groups living in Kirkuk was envisaged a joint administration. This situation turned into the domination of Kurds in action. The elections were troublesome due to the biased attitudes of the U.S. For the elections, thirty nine-person list of candidates was prepared for each group



in which six people would be elected each from Turkmen, Arabs, Kurds and Assyrians who live in Kirkuk. Then, 24 members of the Kirkuk Provincial Council were elected from the 156-person list created. 12-member 'independent' list which was submitted to the approval of the U.S. administration in Iraq among the 144 candidates that the U.S. designated as an 'independent' delegate among the leaders of tribes and businessmen from Kirkuk. The then-U.S. Commander General Raymond Odierno in Iraq designated 6-person independent candidates in provincial council among the 12 independent members. However, Turkmen and Arabs objected to the fact that the majority of 144 delegates, elected in a way that the U.S. designated the independent delegates, and the 5 out of 6 independent representatives were composed of Kurds.<sup>13</sup> Despite the objections, Odierno approved the decision. The provincial council that was designated afterwards elected the governor, deputy governor, and the speaker. The 30-member provincial council elected Kurdish Abdurrahman Mustafa as governor.<sup>14</sup> Although Turkmen and Arabs were elected as deputy governors, both groups protested the biased attitude of the U.S. and did not accept this position.

As a result of the elections held on 15 December 2005, the Kurdish dominance in Kirkuk Provincial Council increased. The number of Kurdish members in 41-member provincial council, which has the power to take decision related to the internal control of the Kirkuk province, increased to 26. Turkmen won 9 seats, while Arabs won 6 seats.

In the Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution adopted with a controversial referendum carried out on 15 October 2005, a process was planned to find a solution to Kirkuk problem. After the necessary arrangements (normalization and census) were made, it was envisaged to make a referendum by 31 December 2007. It is thought that what is meant by the "normalization" here should be explained.

Normalization, which is the starting point of the process, aims at the return of those who were forced to migrate from Kirkuk during the Saddam Hussein period, and at compensating the injustices. During the period of Saddam Hussein, approximately 11.800 people migrated from Kirkuk. Arabs, who were brought especially from southern Iraq, were settled in the places of those who were forced to migrate. The normalization aims at returning the families who were forced to migrate and those who immigrated to Kirkuk back to their places, and compensation is paid with this goal. However, the disputes on properties in Kirkuk still continue. A law was enacted in 2004 to solve the property conflicts, and then this law was amended in 2006 and 2009. Approximately 46 thousand lawsuits were filed regarding the disputes on properties in Kirkuk between 2004 to 2012. Only the files presented in 2006 were examined until 2012. Therefore, it expected that the legal arrangements related to the disputes on properties in Kirkuk will take years. Besides, within the scope of the normalization, the Kurdish population settled in Kirkuk after 2003 should be removed from Kirkuk and the Kirkuk population should turn back to its natural order. However, the commission could not complete the mission required, and thus Kirkuk referendum could not be held. As any referendum had not been held in Kirkuk by 31 December 2007, the Article 140 lost its validity. So it was removed.

Within the process, Turkmen and Arab members in Kirkuk Provincial Council boycotted the Council on the ground that Kirkuk was "Kurdified" and that their rights were overridden. Besides, the U.S. which took the charge in the country after its invasion of Iraq in 2003, did not intervene in the problem in Kirkuk until 2008. However, the causes stated below led to the U.S. intervention in the Kirkuk problem:

- Increasing demands of Kurdish groups,
- The fact that Kirkuk problem is the origin of all conflicts in Kirkuk,

- The sensitivities of the countries in the region,
- The increase in the number of attacks carried out by the terrorist organization PKK against Turkey from the northern Iraq, and the operations carried out after the memorandum allowing the military intervention in northern Iraq issued by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey with Turkey's determination in getting rid of this threat,
- The fact that Iraqi government and almost all the political groups in Iraq see that Turkey is right about its concerns about Kirkuk,
- The increase of Iraqi government's and all Iraqi political groups' confidence in Turkey,
- The rise of Turkey's dominance in the Iraqi political process,
- The U.S.' strive to develop proactive policy by changing its policy in Iraq.

In addition, the Kirkuk issue reached an international dimension after the United Nations also intervened in the problem by making certain suggestions on Kirkuk.

While Kurds, claim that Kirkuk is their traditional capital, insist on including the province in their autonomous region; Arabs and Turkmen demand Kirkuk's being under the control of the central government. The fact that Kirkuk is an Iraqi province and the need for a joint administration in Iraq is accepted by almost all political groups in Iraq except for the Kurdish groups. The fact that especially Turkey and the countries in the region as well as the United Nations and the U.S. demand a consensus on solution offers related to Kirkuk launched a new process for Kirkuk. The United Nations offered a solution suggesting a shared governance among the groups living in Kirkuk (sharing the administration of Kirkuk among Turkmen, Arabs and Kurds at a rate of 32 per cent for each group, and 4 per cent for Christians). A similar decision was taken by the Iraqi Parliament. Also the Article 24 of the Provincial Council Election

Law, which was enacted on 22 July 2008 with the approval of 127 MPs among 140 MPs in the Iraqi Parliament, envisaged to share the administration in Kirkuk among three main groups and to give 32 per cent share for each group among these three main components (Arab-Kurd-Turkmen) and 4 per cent for Christians from the authority. What is meant by the authority was stated as the whole safety and civilian offices under a ministry or not, and it was also stated that this authority included three authorities (President of the Council -Governor- Deputy Governor), presidencies of the parliamentary commissions, and the public officials at each degree.

This plan which was suggested for Kirkuk could not be put into practice. Although local elections were held in Iraq on 31 January 2009, Kirkuk was excluded. Besides, it was planned to eliminate injustices by conducting a census in Kirkuk, to make voter lists according to the census, and to hold local elections in Kirkuk. Nevertheless, as the process envisaged in Kirkuk could not be put in practice, the local elections could not be held in Kirkuk and the administration carried on as it was. Turkmen and Arab members showed the unfair practices of Kurds in Kirkuk as the reason, protested the provincial council, and abdicated. Even though four separate commissions were formed until 2011 especially in order to solve the disputes on assets and to eliminate demographic injustices in Kirkuk, the problems in Kirkuk could not be solved. This situation increased the sensitivity in Kirkuk.

On the other hand, after the tension between the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) and Kurdish political parties that continued until some years ago, the relations Turkey developed with the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government, the moderation in the attitudes of Kurdish groups, the rise of Turkmen in political field paved the way for the improvement and moderation of relations between some Turkmen and Kurdish political parties. As a matter of fact, Turkmen Hasan Turan's taking over the

seat of Kurdish Rizgar Ali as the Chairman of Kirkuk Provincial Council on late May 2011 as a result of gradually developing relations broke the ice in relations. Afterwards, in addition to the decision taken by the ITF, KRG's enabling ITF to open an office in Erbil again carried the relations to a higher level. Following this period, the number of mutual visits between Turkmen and Kurdish political groups increased. However, the start of approach between Turkmen and Kurds led to problems between Turkmen and Arab members who acted in unison especially in Kirkuk Provincial Council in political terms as of 2003. Particularly the transformation in the administration of Kirkuk province brought along the reaction of Arabs. This situation caused to the prejudice regarding that there is an agreement on Kirkuk between Turkmen and Kurds. In fact, some political Arab circles put forward that Kurds and Turkmen reached an agreement on giving a bigger share to Turkmen in KRG in return for the annexation of Kirkuk to KRG with the support of Turkey. This situation drove a wedge between Turkmen and Arabs who adopted a joint policy in Kirkuk until 2011. Despite the statements of Turkmen officials regarding no agreement was signed with Kurds, Arabs reacted against Turkmen. Ethnic and religious groups in Kirkuk have been going through problems and even conflicts with each other. The problems related to estate and land conflicts in particular trigger the tension in Kirkuk. On the other hand, it was stated that the Commission on Article 140 was formed again upon the decision of the Iraqi Parliament as of September 2012. In fact, the Commission already started to carry out activities and the normalization policies gained momentum. Accordingly, some Arab families who settled in Kirkuk during the Saddam Hussein period received their compensations and started to return to where they came from.

On the other hand, the conflict on Kirkuk between KRG and the Iraqi central govern-

ment still continues within this framework. Through the meetings held in Erbil in 2012, Kurds who have been hosting the anti-Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki bloc also strive to maintain and reinforce the KRG government. As a matter of fact, the visits paid to Kirkuk in the second week of May 2012 indicated the struggle between the Iraqi central government and KRG.

Paying a surprise visit to Kirkuk on 8 May 2012, Nouri Al-Maliki also held the Council of Ministers meeting here. After the meeting, the Government Spokesman Ali Al-Dabbagh stated that some decisions were taken related to Kirkuk. Nouri Al-Maliki's paying a visit to a province of his country as an Iraqi Prime Minister is quite an ordinary situation. However, both due to the characteristics of the city he visited and also due to the timing, it is more than an ordinary visit.

Kirkuk constitutes a problem between the Iraqi central government and KRG as a result of Kurdish groups' efforts to take the control of the city since 2003. Kirkuk has become a point of contention also between Turkmen, Kurds and Arabs living here. The unjust practices and the disturbance of political and social balance of Kirkuk caused by the Kurdish policies on Kirkuk after 2003 turned Kirkuk into a deadlock. In each political process in Iraq, Kirkuk has become a bargain and the parties that want to gridlock these processes have brought forward Kirkuk. Thus, almost none of the legal and political solution offers put forward to designate the status of Kirkuk since 2003 could not be put into practice. This situation turned Kirkuk into a "powder barrel". As a matter of fact, especially in disputes and polarizations pursued over the prime ministry of Nouri Al-Maliki in Iraq in 2012, Kirkuk has become the new play field. During Nouri Al-Maliki's visit to Kirkuk, the fact that helicopter and heavy armament vehicles and troops were brought to the city to provide the security grabbed the attention. Considering the extraordinary situation in Kirkuk; while

this situation could have been regarded as an ordinary precaution for a prime minister, the fact that these troops continued to minds.

Even though Kirkuk is still a province under the administration of the central government, the presence of peshmarga and the security forces of KDP and PUK in Kirkuk have taken over the security control of the city. The majority of some 15 thousand-person Iraqi police force in Kirkuk is composed of Kurds. Therefore, the presence of Kurds in Kirkuk has been disturbing for other groups for a long time. The other groups have been demanding help from the Iraqi central government on this issue. Although the central government sent additional security forces to Kirkuk in the past few months, peshmergas did not let these forces enter in the city. Why the security forces coming along with Nouri Al-Maliki have not still left the city is criticized. This situation caused to a new military tension on Kirkuk.

While Kurdish Governor of Kirkuk Necmettin Karim, Arab Deputy Governor Rakan Sait and Turkmen Chairman of Provincial Council Hasan Turan took part in the welcoming ceremony of Maliki's visit to Kirkuk; the fact that only 16 ministers from the some 40-member cabinet participated in this ceremony grabbed the attention. While Kurdish ministers of the cabinet protested the aforesaid visit, it is known that some of the Sunni Arab ministers did not take part in the visit. Turhan Müftü, State Minister Responsible for Provinces and ITF member, participated in the visit and he was the only minister who sat at the same table with Maliki during the meeting Nouri Al-Maliki held in Kirkuk Provincial Council. In addition, the fact that one (Hasan Turan) of the other two people at the table other than Nouri Al-Maliki was also Turkmen is an emphasis on the Turkmen dominance in Kirkuk. The protest of Kurdish ministers to the aforesaid visit clearly showed the reaction of KDP in particular. The fact that Kirkuk Governor Necmettin Kerim, who is a PUK

member, went to welcome Nouri Al-Maliki grabbed the attention. It is known that PUK and KDP went through problems on Kirkuk, that PUK was not comfortable with the efficiency of KDP in Kirkuk, and that therefore PUK started to establish close relations with Maliki. The fact that Necmettin Kerim welcomed Nouri Maliki might be considered as an exception to general rules of protocol.

Right after Nouri Al-Maliki's visit, the ministers of KRG also paid a visit to Kirkuk on 9 May 2012. The same day, in a statement made by Mesrur Barzani, who is the Head of KRG Intelligence Agency (Parastin) and also the son of KRG Leader Massoud Barzani, said that Nouri Al-Maliki's entering in Kirkuk with heavy weapons would not split Kirkuk from "Kurdistan" and thus the showdown turned into a discourse.

As insistently highlighted by Turkmen officials, the lack of force to protect Turkmen in Kirkuk and the insufficiency of existing governmental forces lead Turkmen to be affected most by violence. Even if Turkmen may not be directly targeted, Turkmen that are the most defenseless among others in Kirkuk are the most affected ones. In addition to security forces of the Iraqi central government in Kirkuk, there are also peshmerga and security forces of the Kurdish parties. Those forces can easily protect Kurdish neighborhoods. It is known that Sunni Arab tribes also have armed forces of their own. Sunni Arabs constitute the majority of Sahwa forces, which are the local forces formed to fight against Al-Qaeda. It is known that there are approximately 7 thousand Sahwa members in Kirkuk. Turkmen do not have such a force. The rate of Turkmen within the security forces of the Iraqi government is less than other groups. Therefore, some problems are observed in protecting the Turkmen districts; and the areas where the acts of violence are observed most might be listed as the Turkmen districts such as; Tisin, Baghdad Road.



The rise of political tension and concerns about the security also lead to the rise of tension in Kirkuk. In this context, maybe the most moderate and rational statement came from Ershad Salihi, Head of ITF and Kirkuk MP. He stated that Kirkuk should not be the subject of political dispute between the Iraqi central government and KRG, and that there should be a political consensus envisaging equal access of all segments living in Kirkuk. It is believed that it is not possible to solve the Kirkuk problem through legal means anymore, and that an administrative solution equally shared among political parties representing the Kirkuk population could be useful. While it is obvious that the showdown in Kirkuk has given damage to each segment in society, it might be suggested that maybe Turkmens are the ones that will be affected most. The groups other than Turkmens have their own armed forces to protect themselves. In any conflict to take place in Kirkuk, Turkmens might be alone or divided between Arabs and Kurds. Therefore, the tension in Kirkuk will negatively affect Turkmens most.

From this point of view, the deadlock in Kirkuk should be eliminated as soon as possible. Kirkuk might reach the boiling point if the process in the province is not improved. In Kirkuk Property Claims Commission, only some 5 thousand of approximately 46 thousand cases could be solved. This Commission could only come up with solution for the cases filed in 2006. Commission still has 6-year case files ahead. Besides, the number of cases accumulates with each passing day. Therefore, the lack of a running mechanism is such as to worsen the problems. Holding the local elections in Kirkuk with former law and voter lists will mean the continuance of the current situation in Kirkuk and thus the tension will go on. These developments led to the increase of sensitivity related to Kirkuk. It was understood that a unilateral intervention in Kirkuk would not be a solution. This situation increased the efforts of reconciliation for Kirkuk. Considering the particular

situation of Kirkuk, it is necessary to establish the balance by enacting a particular law for this province. It is now obvious that the problem in Kirkuk could only be solved by a joint administration. It is also obvious that the aforesaid problem in Kirkuk cannot be solved through unilateral interventions. Both world public opinion and the Iraqi parties acknowledge that. It is believed that this fact should be taken into consideration and it should be acted accordingly. Solution to the problem in Kirkuk might play a major role in solving other deadlocks in Iraq.

### **Turkey's Interest in Kirkuk and Kirkuk Visits From Past to Present**

Although the fact that the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) vetoed the 1 March (2003) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which allowed the U.S. troops enter in Iraq through Turkish territories in 2003 decreased the efficiency of Turkey in Iraqi politics, the developments in Iraq and the regional political situation strengthened Turkey's hand in Iraq again. We see that Turkey started to be on the rise in the region and in Iraqi politics in the post-2007 process. The mutual visits between Turkey and Iraq have reached to the highest level in the last five years, and on 23-24 March 2009, President Abdullah Gül became the first Turkish President paying a visit to Iraq after 33 years.

Kirkuk is one of the major points related to Turkey's sensitivities towards Iraq. Playing an active role in the status problem related to Kirkuk in the post-2003, Turkey clearly expresses its view on pursuing the balance in Kirkuk at every platform. However, Turkey's interest in Kirkuk is not only limited with its current policies. Turkish officials have strived to show their interest in Kirkuk and the local community as much as possible within the bounds of its policy and diplomacy. Even though it is not clearly known in the public opinion, many Turkish statesmen have paid visits to Kirkuk from past to present. At this

point, Turkish officials' visits to Kirkuk are briefly mentioned in order to more clearly understand Turkey's interests in Kirkuk and the local community. The visits paid by Turkish officials to Kirkuk from the establishment of Iraq until 2011 might be outlined as follows:

- After Iraq was established, the first visit to Kirkuk was paid by the committee including the then-Minister of Economy Celal Bayar and the then-Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüşti Aras who visited Iran in 1937 to sign the Sa'dabad Pact and firstly visited Iraq before Teheran within the framework of the final preparations of the Pact. It was decided to go to Baghdad through Mosul and Kirkuk, and the committee headed out on 18 June 1937 to go to Iraq. On 21 June 1937, Aras and Bayar crossed the border and firstly visited Mosul, then Kirkuk, and passed from Kirkuk to Baghdad by a special train. After Aras and Bayar held talks following their arrival in Baghdad on 22 June 1937, they went to Teheran to sign the Sa'dabad Pact along with Naci Al-Asil, then-Foreign Minister of Iraq.<sup>15</sup>
- Visiting Iraq on 17-28 November 1954, the committee including Turkish academicians such as Prof. Dr. Ekrem Şerif Egeli, Prof. Dr. Tevfik Remzi Kazancıgöl, Prof. Dr. Behçet Sabit Erduran and Prof. Dr. Fahrettin Kerim Gökay paid a visit to Kirkuk on 23 November 1954 after their visit to Baghdad.



Milliyet Newspaper clipping on Turkish committee's visit to Kirkuk in 1954

- Between 6 and 12 November 1955, the committee including the then-Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, then-Foreign Minister Fuat Köprülü, then-Minister of Economy Nedim Paçacı and Minister of Public Works Kemal Zeytinoglu went to Kirkuk on 9 November 1955, examined oil facilities and got information.



Milliyet Newspaper clipping on Prime Minister Adnan Menderes' visit to Kirkuk in 1955

- On 20-24 October 1967, the then-Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel paid a visit to Kirkuk upon the invitation of Iraqi Prime Minister General Tahir Yahya. Making examinations in Kirkuk on 22 October 1967, Demirel talked to the 10-person Turkmen Fraternity Hearth in Baghdad during his visit to Iraq. Head of the Committee Retired Colonel Abdullah Abdurrahman and Dr. Necdet Koçak, Dr. Rıza Demirci and Adil Şerif were executed by Saddam on 16 January 1980.



Milliyet Newspaper clipping on Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel's visit to Kirkuk in 1967

- After Demirel, the 5<sup>th</sup> President of Republic of Turkey Cevdet Sunay who studied in Kirkuk Military High School in 1910 and then-Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil and a committee along with them paid a visit to Iraq between 27 April and 1 May 1968 upon the invitation of Iraqi President General Abdülselam Arif. In a joint declaration issued by Turkey and Iraq on 1 May 1968 following the aforesaid visit; it was stated that President Cevdet Sunay also visited Kufe, Karbala, Nejef, Kirkuk and Mosul.
- On 27 April 1976, President Fahri Korutürk also visited the Turkish Cultural Center in Kirkuk affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of Culture.



**Milliyet Newspaper clipping on President Cevdet Sunay's visit to Kirkuk in 1968**

- Between 4-8 February 1976, then-Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil visited Iraq. Çağlayangil paid a visit to Kirkuk within the scope of his Iraq visit.16



**Milliyet Newspaper clipping on President Fahri Korutürk's visit to Kirkuk in 1976**

- On 27 August 1973, Turkey and Iraq signed the agreement for Kirkuk-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline, and Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel came to Kirkuk for the opening ceremony on 3 January 1977. The aforesaid visit of Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel was the last visit paid by the Turkish officials until the collapse of the Saddam regime.



**Milliyet Newspaper clipping on Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel's visit to Kirkuk in 1977**



- During the three-day Iraq visit, paid by a committee of GNAT (Grand National Assembly of Turkey), including AK Party Balıkesir Deputy Turhan Çömez and CHP Tokat Deputy Orhan Ziya Diren, which

started on 25 September 2006; examinations were carried out in Erbil and Kirkuk. Within this scope, the committee went to Kirkuk on 26 September 2006, made examinations here, and talked to the officials.

### Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's Visit to Kirkuk



On 1 August 2012, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu firstly visited Erbil along with a committee to hold talks about the developments taking place in northern Syria, and held a long talk with KRG Leader Massoud Barzani. The same day he attended the Iftar meal, given by Sinan Çelebi, KRG Minister of Industry and Trade, in honor of Erbil Turks in Juhayna Hotel in Erbil. The following day, on 2 August 2012, along with the committee, he paid a surprise visit to Kirkuk.

The committee, in which Ahmet Davutoğlu took part, included;

- Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Feridun Sinirlioğlu,
- Turkish Ambassador in Baghdad Yunus Demirer,
- Turkey's former ambassador to Damascus Ömer Önhon,
- Advisor to the Foreign Minister Ali Sarıkaya,
- Special Advisor to Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Gürcan Balık, Chief of the Cabinet of the Foreign Minister Ahmet Tuta,
- Deputy Director General of Relations with Iraq Hakan Tekin,

- Turkey's Counsel General in Erbil Aydın Selcen,
- Press Counsellor of Foreign Ministry Osman Sert,
- Vice Chairman of AK Party in Charge of Foreign affairs, MP Ömer Çelik,
- Director-General of SETA Taha Özhan

The aforesaid visit of Ahmet Davutoğlu has been the first visit made by Turkish officials since the then-Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil's visit to Kirkuk in 1976, and also the fact that Davutoğlu paid this visit in a very critical period increases its importance.



**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu was warmly welcomed by Turkmen in Kirkuk.**



Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu firstly visited Kirkuk Governor's Office within the scope of his Kirkuk visit. Kirkuk Governor Necmettin Kerim, Chairman of Kirkuk Provincial Council Hasan Turan and Kirkuk Deputy Governor of Kirkuk Rakan Sait and

the members of Kirkuk Provincial Council were also present during Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Kirkuk Governor's Office. In his visit to Kirkuk Governor's Office, Davutoğlu held a joint press conference with Necmettin Kerim and Hasan Turan.



**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (in the middle), Hasan Turan (on the left) and Necmettin Kerim (on the right)**



**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (on the right) and Hasan Turan (on the left)**

**The Joint Press Conference held by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (in the middle), Kirkuk Governor Necmettin Kerim (on the left) and Chairman of Kirkuk Provincial Council Hasan Turan (on the right)**



Besides, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu also talked to the members of Kirkuk Provincial Council during his visit to Kirkuk Gov-

ernor's Office. He got information about the problems in Kirkuk, as well as the problems of the people in Kirkuk.



**Ahmet Davutoğlu and Female Members of the Kirkuk Provincial Council**





**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Members of Kirkuk Provincial Council**

Following his visit to Kirkuk Governor's Office and Provincial Council, Foreign Minister

Ahmet Davutoğlu performed midday prayer in Kirkuk Mosque.



**Ahmet Davutoğlu, Hasan Turan and the crowd in Kirkuk Mosque**





**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in Kirkuk Mosque**

Following his visit to Kirkuk Mosque, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Kirkuk Castle which is one of the most important symbols of Kirkuk. Besides being an important symbol of the city, Kirkuk Castle is also an important historical place for Turkmens. Turkmens lived in Kirkuk Castle. However, the settlements in Kirkuk Castle were destroyed. The Ottoman Officer Cemetery which is located next to the Tomb of Daniel within the Kirkuk Castle is also quite important both for Turkey and Turkmens. During his Kirkuk visit, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited both the Castle and the Ottoman Officer Cemetery. He was informed about the Kirkuk Castle by the Director of Kirkuk Historical Artifacts Eyad Tarık.



**Ahmet Davutoğlu (on the left), Hasan Turan (in the middle) and Director of Kirkuk Historical Artifacts Eyad Tarık (on the right)**



**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's Visit To Kirkuk Castle and Ottoman Officer Cemetery within the Castle**

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who also visited Turkmen Martyrs' Cemetery after his visit to Ottoman Officer Cemetery, was informed by ITF Leader and Kirkuk deputy Ershad Salihi, former Leader of ITF Sadet-

tin Ergeç and Leader of Turkmen Justice Party Enver Bayraktar. Davutoğlu stood by the grave of Turkmen leader Necdet Koçak who was executed on 16 January 1980 by the Ba'ath regime for a long time.



**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu Standing by the Grave of Turkmen Leader Necdet Koçak (On the picture from left to right Ershat Salihi, Ahmet Davutoğlu and Sadettin Ergeç)**





**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu Standing by the Grave of Turkmen Leader Necdet Koçak (On the picture from left to right Ahmet Davutoğlu, Enver Bayraktar and Sadettin Ergeç)**

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu lastly visited ITF Headquarter which is the most effective political organization with capacity for representation of Iraqi Turkmen. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was welcomed by a great crowd here, held a press conference with the

Leader of ITF and Kirkuk Deputy Ershad Salihi, ITF Kirkuk MP Jale Neftçi, ITF Diyala MP Hasan Özmen, ITF Mosul MP Müdrike Ahmet and ITF Vice-Chairman Ali Hashim Muhtaroglu.



**Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu held a press conference with the ITF Officials under the picture of Turkmen Leader Necdet Koçak in the headquarter of ITF. (On the picture from left to right: Ali Hashim Muhtaroglu, Ershat Salihi and Ahmet Davutoğlu)**

The speech of the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in the aforesaid press conference is stated as follows: <sup>17</sup>

*“Mr. President, distinguished Turkmen brothers in Kirkuk; above all, May God bless you, Ramadan kareem.*

*Today is one of the happiest days of my life. Because I finally came to beautiful Kirkuk in*

*our hearts, minds we always dreamt of. It is the first time a Foreign Minister of Republic of Turkey has visited Kirkuk in 75 years, thus it is a historical day. It is also the first time a Turkish statesman, a representative of Turkey pays a visit to Kirkuk after 36 years. But you will not wait this long again. I promise you this. We will see each other, and be together more frequently.*



**ITF Leader Ershad Salihi and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in Joint Press Conference**

*We have just listened to a Kirkuk Hoyrat. I am glad to be here. Thank you for your hospitality. We have just listened to a hoyrat of grand master Abdülvahit Küzecioğlu. Now I would like to say it with a little difference: “Dağlar dağladı beni, gören ağladı beni. Demir zincir kar etmez, Kerkük’üm bağladı beni.”*

*Kirkuk is as close and important for us as the importance of the lovelock a lover feels towards his love. May our friendship, fraternity and peace be eternal. For Turkey, Iraq is not a country that is out of minds. For Turkey, Iraq is the closest friend and neighboring country. We have fraternity with all groups in Iraq. For us, entire Iraq is a beloved and friendly coun-*

*try with its Turkmen, Arab, Kurd, Sunni, Shia, Christian components. When something happens in Iraq, and when we hear anything bad happened in the country, we feel so sad. But especially when we hear bad news from Kirkuk, when a terrorist attack takes place and our brothers in Kirkuk suffer, be sure that ember falls on our hearts and it never fades. If you live in peace here, in Turkey we are in peace as well. As our friend here said, if you are hurt even a little, 75 million Turkish population feel the pain in Anatolia. Everyone can be sure of that. Therefore, just like in the song, “bir gece ansızın gelebilirim” (“I might visit unexpectedly),” I said. I planned to visit for a number of times, but somethings came up at the*

*last minute and I couldn't come. Yesterday, we consulted with Prime Minister Erdoğan, made a snap decision, immediately let our friends know of the decision, and we came a night and a day. We arrived in Kirkuk on a beautiful autumn day. Hopefully, we are going to come here for several times...*

*Our President, Prime Minister, all members of our government, and entire Turkey sent their kindest regards. Kirkuk will always have a special and privileged place in our heart. I have just talked to our friend Hasan Turan, Dr. Necmettin Kerim, Deputy Governor Mr. Rakan and to all members of the Council in the Provincial Council. As I told them as well; Kirkuk is actually a model city of our entire region and our ancient culture. It is a city where Turkmen, Arab, Kurdish and Assyrian components have lived in peace for centuries. There might be those who want to create trouble here, and to break this fraternity. We will act in unison with this sense of fraternity against them, and we will preserve the peace in Kirkuk together. The primary component of this peaceful city is the Turkmen component that will never disappear. I greet them with respect and love.*

*Kirkuk exists with all these components. None of them can be excluded. Turkmen culture, that beautiful refined Turkmen culture made great contributions not only to Kirkuk and Iraq, but also to Turkey. We all know Kirkuk hoyrats. I grew up with those. We all grew up by listening to those hoyrats. We always wanted to come to Kirkuk.*

*Today, we took many decisions in Provincial Council. Turkey will pull out all the stops for the development of Kirkuk and to bring prosperity and peace in Kirkuk. Kirkuk is also the symbol of unity and solidarity of Iraq. When peace prevails in Kirkuk, it means Iraq is also in peace; and when there is peace in Iraq, there is peace in the Middle East. Therefore, Kirkuk is blessed by God, the richest natural sources were given to Kirkuk. With all these natural*

*sources, Kirkuk will get rid of this current situation that requires development as soon as possible, and will become one of the richest and most prosperous countries of not only the region but also the world; Kirkuk has all the potential to become so. And Turkey will always be at the service of Kirkuk, and the people in Kirkuk; be sure of that.*

*Turkmen will always exist, and Turkmens will always live in Kirkuk, they will never disappear. Kirkuk without Turkmen is unimaginable; believe it. We will pull out all the stops to make this contribution. Turkey will spare no effort in economic, cultural terms for the development of this region. Today, I told Mr. Hasan Turan, Mr. Kerim and Mr. Rakan that; we give you a plain paper. Turkey is ready to do whatever you write on it as long as Kirkuk is in peace.*

*Today, we took another decision that made me so happy. We said Konya and Kirkuk become sister cities. I am a Turkmen from Konya, from Taurus Turkmens. Therefore, I am one of those who would understand Kirkuk best and who would feel this fraternity best. We always protected and will protect our Turkmen brothers wherever we see them. At the same time, State of the Republic of Turkey also watches over the whole humanity today. Wherever a person is in pain or the people suffer, we stand by them. I greet all my Turkmen friends here once again, celebrate their Ramadan Bairam. Hopefully, we will be together in peace for years to come.*

*Before I end my speech due to our limited time, I would like to conclude my remarks with a Kirkuk hoyrat: "Kalasız, Kerkük olmaz kalasız, o adı men koydum gittim, siz sağlıklı kalasız."*

*Take care of yourself, may God watch over you.*

*As I mentioned before, we will come back by making preparations. Look after Kirkuk, and I hope we all live in peace. May God watch over you."*



Following his visit to ITE, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu left Kirkuk the same day on 2 August 2012, and he left for Erbil to go back to Turkey.

### **The Repercussions of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's Kirkuk Visit on Domestic and Foreign Politics of Iraq**

Considering the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Kirkuk in terms of Turkey-Iraq relations, it is seen that the aforesaid visit increased the tension in relations between Turkey and Iraqi central government. On 17 December 2011, an arrest warrant was issued for Iraqi Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi for committing a terror crime. Tariq Al-Hashimi who stayed in KRG for a while after the warrant was issued, then came to Turkey on 9 April 2012. Following the appeal of Iraq to INTERPOL, a "red notice" was issued for Tariq Al-Hashimi on 7 May 2012. Despite this, Turkey stated not to extradite Tariq Al-Hashimi to Iraq, and on 30 July 2012, Tariq Al-Hashimi was granted permission to reside in Turkey. This situation further increased the tension in relations between the Iraqi government and Turkey. In the written statement made by the Iraqi Prime Ministry on 20 April 2012, Turkey was claimed to have intervened in the internal affairs of Iraq and it was stated that Turkey started to become a hostile country.<sup>18</sup> In the statement made by the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan the same day on 20 April 2012, he criticized Nouri Al-Maliki and stated that what happens in Iraq is not a good sign.<sup>19</sup> The fact that Turkey supported the opposition in Syria and opposed to the Assad regime following the events in Syria, once more triggered the tension between Turkey and Iraq. The Iraqi government explicitly stated they have been supporting the Assad regime since March 2011 when the events broke out in Syria.<sup>20</sup> The fact that some private companies in Turkey signed oil agreements with KRG led to the reaction of the Iraqi central government. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Kirkuk was

almost the last straw in relations between Turkey and Iraq. The following day of Ahmet Davutoğlu's Kirkuk visit, on 3 August 2012, the Iraqi government sent a diplomatic note to Turkey, and stated they the relations with Turkey would be revised. Considering in diplomatic terms, Turkey pursued its moderate policy despite the fact that Iraq adopted a strong attitude against Turkey. It was stated that the revenue to be obtained as a result of the oil agreement with KRG would be given to the Iraqi central government, and the respect to the sovereignty of Iraq was highlighted.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Turkey adopted an attitude such as to show that they act in accordance with its Iraqi policy towards the Iraqi government which adopted an undiplomatic attitude with their remarks "going way over the line" like; "We have the right to arrest Ahmet Davutoğlu"<sup>22</sup> after Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Kirkuk. It was emphasized that they went to Iraq through a visa taken by the Iraqi Embassy to Turkey and that Kirkuk is regarded as an Iraqi city just like Erbil. Nevertheless, the fact that the aforesaid visit to Kirkuk was made through the initiative of KRG, that logistic support and security was provided by the units affiliated to KRG caused to the reaction of the Iraqi central government. It was a quite proper visit, and also in terms of the way the aforesaid visit was made, it led Turkey to be perceived as having taken sides in the rivalry between KRG and Iraqi central government.

Considering Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's Kirkuk visit in terms of the Iraqi domestic politics, it was a visit that could affect the balances in Iraq. In addition to the ethnic and sectarian tension, the visit to Kirkuk where the administrative struggle between KRG and Iraqi central government takes place at high levels sparked the debates in Kirkuk again. The problems between KRG and Iraqi central government started to shape the domestic politics of Iraq. Reactions of the Iraqi central government to the oil agree-

ments signed by KRG, KRG Leader Massoud Barzani's efforts to overthrow Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, the problem regarding the control and management of Iraqi borders, "military tension" which takes place in disputed territories started to be observed also in Kirkuk.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, who convened the Council of Minister in Kirkuk on 8 May 2012, made an appearance and stated that Kirkuk is an Iraqi city. He drew an analogy like "little Iran" and suggested that the problems in Kirkuk could not be solved by force. The army forces composed of approximately a thousand people, which entered in Kirkuk along with armored and heavy-armed vehicles to protect Nouri Al-Maliki, stayed there. Then a committee from KRG paid a visit to Kirkuk, and they held talks and made statements highlighting the determination of Kurds on Kirkuk.<sup>23</sup>

This situation disturbed both political and security balances in Kirkuk, and the acts of violence in Kirkuk started to rise again. Turkmen, who are affected most by the events in Kirkuk, made attempts to settle the tension. Particularly ITF and Turkmen politicians appealed to higher authorities like the presidency, and demanded for an intervention to decrease the tension in Kirkuk.

The tension in Kirkuk is not only a political tension. Other factors of tension might be listed as follows: disputes on properties, lands in Kirkuk, problem of sharing oil revenues, energy investments. The statements of Muqtada Al-Sadr have been the clearest indicator of this. Muqtada Al-Sadr pointed out the talk held with KRG Prime Minister Nachirvan Barzani, and created a new agenda by stating that Kurds do not have any demands regarding Kirkuk's annexation to KRG, that they only asked for the oil revenues of Kirkuk. Going a step further, Sadr reiterated his approach on Kirkuk adopted since 2003 by stating that; "Despite my respect to

my brothers in Kurdistan, I say that Kirkuk is an Iraqi city and it will always be a city of Iraq. Like any other Iraqi city; Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Sunnis and Shias will live together."<sup>24</sup> Considering these statements in the light of the recent developments in the Iraqi politics, fractures might appear in Maliki opposition, just like in the Kurdish List and Iraqiya List, due to the Kirkuk approach of Muqtada Al-Sadr who is in anti-Maliki group.

It seems probable that the Iraqiya List will go through a similar situation. Sunni groups from Kirkuk within the Iraqiya List have recently adopted an attitude in favor of Nouri Al-Maliki. Sunni Arab groups in Kirkuk declared they gave a conditional support to Nouri Al-Maliki not to annex Kirkuk to KRG. The attitude of Nouri Al-Maliki on Kirkuk is the indicator to this. Nouri Al-Maliki substituted the Shiite Commander of the 12<sup>th</sup> Division of the Iraqi Army in Kirkuk with a Sunni Commander in order to support Sunni Arabs in Kirkuk. This situation is such as to weaken the Iraqiya List.

In this process, the situation of Turkmen gains importance. While some of Turkmen take part in ITF and in Iraqiya List, some of the Turkmen political movements act in unison with Nouri Al-Maliki. Some Turkmen political movements in Kirkuk formed a new groups under the name of "Turkmen Coalition". Islamic Union for Iraqi Turkmen Union and Turkmen Fidelity Movement within this group includes political groups close to Shias. Here, the attitude of the people gains importance. In the recent period, it is suggested that Kirkuk Turkmen support Nouri Al-Maliki on the grounds that "he opposes to the Kurdish policies in Kirkuk". At this point, it is believed that the approach of Turkmen political movement in Kirkuk will be effective both in solving the problems in Kirkuk and also in overcoming the crisis points in Iraqi politics. Nevertheless, it is thought that it would be in vain to try to find a solution in Kirkuk without solving the problems such as; land

and property problems in Kirkuk, instability in security forces of in Kirkuk, the presence of Kurdish forces, oil revenues of Kirkuk, the local elections which were not held in 2009 and are supposed to be held in Kirkuk. At this point, it could be suggested that the most ideal solution is possible through an equally-shared administration in Kirkuk.

On 7 August 2012, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu welcomed a senior committee from ITF in Ankara, and hosted a dinner. The aforesaid committee included; ITF Leader and Kirkuk MP Ershad Salihi, Chairman of Kirkuk Provincial Council Hasan Turan, ITF Deputy-Chairman Ali Hashim Muhtaroglu, ITF Official Speaker Ali Mahdi, ITF Diyala MP Hasan Özmen and ITF Turkey Representative Hicran Kazancı. These mutual visits bring the Turkmen strategies into the forefront before long. The fact that Ahmet Davutoğlu only visited ITF as a political party during his visit to Kirkuk might be considered as a message given both to other ethnic and religious groups and also to Turkmens. More clearly, the aforesaid visit might be considered as a message to other ethnic and religious groups that Turkmens are privileged for Turkey. Even though Ahmet Davutoğlu is criticized by certain Turkmens, the fact that he did not visit other Turkmen parties except for ITF shows Turkey's support for ITF.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's Kirkuk visit also revealed the political structure especially in Kirkuk, as well as the balances in Iraq. Although Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Kirkuk was warmly welcomed by Turkmens and Kurds, it was criticized through a notice issued by an Arab Political Group composed of Sunni Arabs in Kirkuk. The Arab Political Group, in which especially Arabs from Havice take part, has established closer relations with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki in the recent period. After Nouri Al-Maliki strongly criticized the aforesaid visit, the Arab Political Group issued a notice from the same point of view. This situation is interpreted as a polarization in Kirkuk. In Kirkuk, Arabs have been accusing Turkmens for allying with

Kurds against themselves almost for a year. Especially after Hasan Turan was elected as the Chairman of Kirkuk Provincial Council on March 2011, Arabs boycotted the Kirkuk Provincial Council and they started to take a stand against Turkmens. In the post-2003 period, Turkmens and Arabs adopted a joint attitude against the pressure applied by Kurdish groups against Kirkuk. Turkmens and Arabs boycotted Kirkuk provincial administration for a long time. For the last couple of years, both the relations Turkey has developed with Kurdish groups, and the change in Kurdish groups' approach, and also some of Turkmens' striving to produce a pragmatic policy brought along an approach between Turkmens and Kurds. ITF was invited to the meeting KDP held on 11 December 2010. On October 2011, ITF Erbil Provincial Council was reopened.

### **In Lieu of Conclusion: Turkmen Strategies**

The arguments regarding what kind of strategy Turkmens could pursue in Iraq, where local elections are expected to be held in 2013 and general elections are expected to be held in 2014, started to slowly come to light. Especially Shia Turkmen Parties such as the Fidelity Movement and Islamic Union for Iraqi Turkmens joint their forces and formed a coalition to make preparations for elections. However, there is an ambiguity about the general Turkmen strategy. It would be good to prepare strategies for each election as the structures and systems of local and general elections in Iraq are different from each other. Therefore, the primary objective here is to prepare a pragmatic and rational policy and to preserve the interest of Turkmens at maximum level. Even though Turkmens followed different electoral strategies in previous elections, it is possible to suggest that the main axis is the opposition to Kurdish political parties. The important factor here is considered as preparing proper policy strategies in line with the conjuncture and the periodical change on the objective. Following the 2010 elections, the politics in Iraq started to become normalized. Ethnic/religious politics



could be overcome to some extent. Especially the agreement between the Nujeyfi group and Kurds, who were on the verge of conflict at a time in Mosul is one of the best examples to this situation.

It is thought that the aforesaid policy should also be applied for Turkmen. "There are no permanent friends or enemies in politics" expression which became a classical discourse for the political science, started to go for Iraq. Therefore, it is quite important to produce a policy without making concessions in terms of values and priorities in order to maximize the gains. For instance, the normalization in the relations between Turkmen and Kurds in Kirkuk grabs the attention. Whether this normalization will be taken a step further or not might designate the future of Turkmen in Kirkuk. First of all, designating what Turkmen want to for Kirkuk is important in terms of the strategies to be implemented. The alliances to be formed by preserving red lines such as; not annexing Kirkuk to any region, Turkmen's having an equal share in the provincial administration, returning the Turkmen assets and lands seized from them back to Turkmen, would maximize the interests of Turkmen. It would be useful for Turkmen to assess the alliance which will preserve the interests of Turkmen at maximum level. Developing policy by remaining within the stereotypes of historical traumas would not do any good for Turkmen anymore. If the interests of Turkmen are protected at highest level, an alliance with Kurdish political parties might be considered. There might be groups that will introduce the negotiation of Turkmen with Kurdish groups as a "betrayal to the Turkmen nation". The goal is to maximize the "interests of Turkmen nation to the highest level". If allying with Kurdish groups be in favor of Turkmen, for instance, they could form an alliance with Kurdish groups in local elections to be held in Kirkuk. Even if they do it unjustly by force in this disturbed balance, the dominance of Kurdish population in Kirkuk is obvious. The alliance to be formed between Kurdish political parties and Turkmen without making any concession in

terms of basic national values and sensitivities might be advantageous for Turkmen in potential local elections to be carried out in Kirkuk. Another option is that what Turkmen will gain from the alliance to be formed with Arabs should be reckoned well. Arabs have no dominance in Kirkuk provincial administration (including the provincial directorates of service). Therefore, there might be a bargain on the Turkmen lands that Arabs own. Turkmen might act more strategically and act in unison with Kurdish and Arab groups, if not all of them, by making a joint list. Thus, while Arabs and Kurds are weakened, Turkmen might take advantage of that. Because even though it is a slight possibility, it is known that there are problems especially among the Kurdish parties in the political rivalry in Iraq. In the conflict between KRG and Iraqi central government, it is said that Kurdish political parties which do not want KDP Leader Massoud Barzani to become any stronger have been acting in unison with Nouri Al-Maliki. Accordingly, it might be suggested that Turkmen might turn it into an advantage. For instance, Turkmen's taking advantage of the instability and vacuum in the Iraqi politics under the leadership of ITF and the gains of the situation for Turkmen are quite important.

In conclusion, it is believed that Turkmen aim at maintaining and protecting the Turkmen national interests at maximum level. What matters is the election of the group, depending on which they cooperate with. It is necessary to state that a unilateral confrontation would not do any good for Turkmen. On the other hand, looking behind the historical problems and act accordingly, as with Kurds would do any good for Turkmen either. What is meant here is not Turkmen's forgetting or ignoring their past or national history. Nations do stand thanks to their history and national remainders, and they struggle to preserve them forever. With this in mind, it is believed that in order to preserve national identity forever, rational and pragmatic strategies, as well as avoiding emotional politics could bring success to Turkmen.

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