

KURDISH ISSUE AND TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH IRAQ AND SYRIA:
1991-2016

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the impact of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on Turkey’s relations with Iraq and Syria in the years between 1991 and 2016. Gulf War in 1991, Iraq War in 2003 and Arab Uprisings were taken as regional dynamics to present cooperation and conflict terms in Turkey’s relations with Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, the impact of Kurdish Regional Government and some significant Kurdish entities in Iraq and Syria were analyzed in terms of Turkey’s security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK. In this context, this thesis argues that regional dynamics, ongoing security threats and Turkey’s security understanding have continued determinant role of Kurdish issue and PKK in Turkey’s relations with Iraq and Syria in spite of cooperation and rapprochement periods between Turkey and these two states.

Keywords: Turkey, Iraq, Syria, KRG, Kurdish issue

ÖZ

KÜRT SORUNU VE TÜRKİYE’NİN IRAK VE SURİYE İLE İLİŞKİLERİ: 1991-2016

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Bu tez, Kürt meselesinin ve PKK terörizminin 1991 – 2016 yılları arasında Türkiye’nin Irak ve Suriye ile olan ilişkileri üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Türkiye’nin Irak ve Suriye ile olan ilişkilerinde işbirliği ve çatışma dönemlerini ortaya koymak için 1991’deki Körfez Savaşı, 2003’deki Irak Savaşı ve Arap Ayaklanmaları bölgesel dinamikler olarak ele alınmıştır. Ayrıca, Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi’nin ve Irak ve Suriye’deki bazı önemli Kürt yapılarının etkisi Türkiye’nin Kürt meselesi ve PKK ile ilgili güvenlik endişeleri açısından analiz edilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu tez, Türkiye ile bu iki devlet arasındaki işbirliği ve yakınlaşma dönemlerine rağmen, bölgesel dinamiklerin, devam eden güvenlik tehditlerinin ve Türkiye’nin güvenlik anlayışının, Türkiye’nin Irak ve Suriye ile ilişkilerinde Kürt meselesinin ve PKK’nın belirleyici rolünü devam ettirdiğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Irak, Suriye, KBY, Kürt sorunu

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	Assyrian Democratic Movement
GAP	South Eastern Anatolia Project
GNAT	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party
IKF	Iraqi Kurdistan Front
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JDP	Justice and Development Party
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KNA	Kurdish National Assembly
KNC	Kurdish National Council
KPDP	Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KSP	Kurdistan Socialist Party
KTP	Kurdistan Toilers' Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
PASOK	Kurdistan Socialist Party
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD	Democratic Union Party
SNC	Syrian National Council
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YPG	People's Protection Unit

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis questions the role of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria. It argues that security concerns of Turkey determine these relationships despite certain periods of cooperation between the states due to changing regional dynamics and Turkey's changing security understanding, ongoing threat perception from PKK terrorism continued to dominate the relations. The centre of this analysis will be the effect of regional dynamics; therefore, three regional turning points will be used in order to make a comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, Gulf War in 1991, Iraq War in 2003 and Arab Uprisings will be taken as regional dynamics to analyse the impact of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria. In this context, this thesis will try to analyse the effect of aforementioned regional dynamics on Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue with regard to Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria. Therefore, as the focal point, the effect of regional dynamics on change and continuity patterns of Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue will be examined on basis of Turkey's relations Iraq and Syria between the years of 1991-2016.

Historically, Kurdish issue is one of the significant determinants of Turkish foreign policy at both domestic and regional level. At domestic level, as a result of establishment of Republic of Turkey as a secular and nation-state, Kurdish issue emerged as an identity problem. In early years of the Republic, Kurdish rebellions caused a serious security threat for national integrity of Turkey. Considering the strong sensitivity of national integrity that has its roots back in the foundation of the Republic, it is not surprising that these rebellions and the fear of division led to attachment of high priority at the national level. On the other hand, at the regional level, Turkey considered Kurdish issue within the perspective of its relations with neighbours in Middle East. Saadabad Pact, signed by Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan in 1937, could be seen as an important example of security concerns of

Turkey, Iran and Iraq due to their Kurdish population (Oran, 2001, p.28). However, until 1980s, Kurdish issue remained as a domestic identity issue and it did not constitute a significant place in Turkish foreign policy.

Primarily, as a NATO member, Turkey's security concerns were shaped in accordance with the structure of bipolar international system during the Cold War period. However, end of the Cold War did not terminate Turkey's security concerns completely because Kurdish issue has emerged as a new security threat for Turkey's national interests at both domestic and regional levels. Thus, it could be argued that in spite of the historical aspect of Kurdish issue, Turkish foreign policy makers did not take Kurdish issue into account during the Cold War because of its specific security perception. On the other hand, Kurdish issue has become a more prominent subject in Turkish foreign policy making because of the increasing impact of regional dynamics on Turkey's foreign relations. Furthermore, the Gulf War in 1991 has deeply affected regional and international dynamics of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, so in the following period, they became a remarkable part of Turkish foreign policy-making. In this context, as neighbours which have a Kurdish population living within their national borders, Turkey-Iraq and Turkey-Syria relations were affected by Kurdish issue as a common determinant in different ways.

In the context of Kurdish issue, relations between Turkey and Iraq had been shaped by Turkey's security concerns because of Kurdish influence in the northern Iraq. Accordingly, it could be argued that Kurdish issue was the main determinant of the relations between two states which indicates regional and international aspects of the Kurdish issue for Turkish foreign policy-making. On the other hand, historical and contemporary problems of Turkey-Syria relations in 1990s were not evaluated in this context. Especially, exploitation of Kurdish issue by Syria presented that Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism are Achilles' heel for Turkish foreign policy-makers.

In literature, many academic works examined Turkey-Iraq or Turkey-Syria relations in the context of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. Kirişçi and Winrow (1997) emphasized both domestic and foreign policy aspects of Turkey's Kurdish issue. They revealed the relation between Turkey's ethnic identity problem and its northern Iraq policy. Robins (2003) claimed that Turkey's northern Iraq policy in

1990s had serious contradictions in itself because of domestic and international aspects of the issue. Fuller and Barkey (1998) examined the effect of Kurdish issue on Turkey's foreign policy by focusing on different regions and foreign policy issues. Karakoç (2010) presented the impact of the Kurdish identity on Turkish foreign policy between 1980 and 2000 by applying constructivist approach. Lundgren (2007) explained Turkey's approach towards northern Iraq after the Gulf War by focusing on Kurdish political groups in Iraq. Sayarı (1997) analysed Turkey's Middle East policy in 1990s in the context of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism by focusing on Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria. Oktav (2003) brought out that Kurdish separatism was used by Syria against Turkey because of water sharing problem between the two countries. At the same way, Daoudy (2013) examined that the water issue between Turkey and Syria was securitized as the result of historical conflicts and security concerns of Turkey due to Kurdish issue. Martin (2000) presented Turkey's foreign relations in Middle East in regard to its national security. He claimed that the ethnic separatism problem of Turkey and the PKK terrorism were used by its neighbours to take leverage against Turkey. Finally, Olson (1997 and 2001) examined that the relations between Turkey and Syria since the Gulf War to 2001 by focusing on water sharing problem and Kurdish issue. He analysed the regional reflections of water issue for Turkey and exploitation of Kurdish issue by Syria.

In the light of this academic survey, it could be precisely argued that Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism affected Turkey's foreign policy formation towards Iraq and Syria in different ways. At the beginning, after the Gulf War, Turkey's Iraq policy had focused on only the northern Iraq since political developments and security concerns of Turkey due to increasing activities of PKK in northern Iraq. Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism became the most important determinants of Turkey's Iraq policy, so Turkey actually did not have an Iraq policy but it has a northern Iraq policy. On the other hand, the effect of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on the relations between Turkey and Syria in 1990s was a significant example of that a domestic problem of a state could be transformed into a foreign policy weakness by other states. During the 1990s, the controversial topics between Turkey and Syria were not discussed in their own context since the exploitation of Kurdish issue by

Syria and its close relations with PKK became significant part of the relations between them. Syria's historical resentment because of Hatay's participation to Turkey and water issue were main problematic areas between two states, however; Kurdish issue and PKK were developed into primary issue by Syria. Thus, as a result of this situation, it came to light that Kurdish issue was one of the most disturbing and prolonging foreign policy weaknesses of Turkey, so its foreign policy towards Iraq and Syria was based on its security concerns and threat perceptions.

In 2000s, significant domestic and international developments have caused structural alterations in the formation of Turkish foreign policy. At international and regional levels, after 9/11 attacks perpetrated by Al Qaeda, the US started to apply its "war on terror" concept actively. It could be stated that 9/11 became a cornerstone for international system since Afghanistan War in 2001 and then Iraq War in 2003 that altered the main dynamics of international and regional politics. Especially, Iraq War in 2003 has changed political, economic and social construction of Iraq which formed a new reality in Middle East, so Turkish foreign policy-makers had to face with this new situation in the region respectively. Furthermore, there was one more dimension that complicated the picture further. The accession negotiations for EU membership of Turkey were launched on 3 October 2005 that has affected Turkey in many aspects including the foreign policy formation. Furthermore, at domestic level, two significant developments have influenced the formation of Turkey's foreign policy deeply, especially its Middle East policy. One of them was the capture of PKK leader Öcalan which was crucial regarding Turkey's security concerns due to PKK terrorism. The other one is Justice and Development Party (JDP)'s formation and sustainment of single party government since 2002 as JDP has achieved to construct its Middle East policy by emphasizing party's philosophical and historical background.

Therefore, in the light of these breakthrough developments, Turkey's foreign policy, particularly its Middle East policy had experienced a dramatic change. JDP government has reshaped the main pillars of Turkish foreign policy in the above-mentioned context. As a result of this change, Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraq and Syria has been altered deeply in 2000s in line with the alteration of the effect of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on Turkish foreign policy formation. Therefore,

many academic works endeavoured to understand this breakthrough change in the formation of Turkish foreign policy with respect to Kurdish issue and PKK in theoretical perspective.

Three main theoretical explanations to understand the transformation of Turkish foreign policy in regard to Kurdish issue were discussed intensively in the academic literature. Primarily, thoughts and works of Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Chief Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister from 2002 to 2009 and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2009 to 2014 are seen as main determinants of foreign policy formation of JDP. Therefore, Davutoğlu's famous book "Strategic Depth" (2001) is seen as main guide of JDP's foreign policy making and new Turkish foreign policy by many authors. Furthermore, Davutoğlu (2008), Kalın (2008) and Aras (2009) presented the transformation of Turkish foreign policy by focusing on foreign policy understanding of Davutoğlu and JDP. Basically, this foreign policy understanding is based on Turkey's geopolitical location with a historical and cultural background. They underline the link between regional peace and domestic peace, so Kurdish issue was evaluated as a negative impact for Turkey's foreign policy goals in the Middle East by them. Furthermore, they emphasize the active regional leadership of Turkey by using historical and cultural ties with neighbours for the chronic problems of Turkey in Middle East. On the other hand, Altunışık (2009) stated that JDP's foreign policy is based on conservative constructivism regarding its over-emphasis on history, culture and geography. Moreover, Altunışık and Martin (2011) examined JDP's foreign policy in Middle East compressively by focusing on the impact of regional developments and economic ties of JDP with Anatolian bourgeoisie. On the other hand, Murinson (2006) preferred a critical stance against Davutoğlu's thoughts to explain the change in Turkey's foreign policy. He basically stated that his critical approach to the traditional foreign policy and his thoughts are based on the legacy of Ottoman Empire solely and geopolitical depth of Turkey as a result of this legacy.

Secondly, Europeanization and Desecuritization debates provide a significant contribution to literature to understand the transformation of Turkish foreign policy in general and the effect of Kurdish issue on it. For example, Aydın and Açıkmеше (2007), Oğuzlu (2008), Tank (2005), Öniş (2003) and Açıkmеше (2013) stated that the accession process of Turkey to be a member of EU paved the way for closer

relations with EU and political and economic reform process, so these developments altered the main dynamics of Turkish foreign policy and the role of the Kurdish issue in the formation of it. On the other hand, Aras and Karakaya Polat (2008) presented the link between Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy and the desecuritization of Kurdish issue in foreign policy-making of Turkey.

Finally, the relation between economic considerations and foreign policy decisions of Turkey were discussed as an explanation of transformation of Turkish foreign policy. Especially, Kirişçi (2009) analysed JDP's foreign policy understanding by using theoretical frameworks of Rosecrance's trading state and Putnam's two-level games. He presented the link between JDP's economic consideration in southern part of Turkey and the change in Turkey's northern Iraq policy. At the same way, Gümüştü and Sert (2009) claim JDP has been the party of the rising devout bourgeoisie which was located in the centre of economic liberalism, democratic policies and social conservatism, so JDP's foreign policy preferences towards Middle East were shaped in this context. Furthermore, Tocci and Walker (2012) said that one of the features of JDP's Middle East policy is based on practical national interest such as preserving new investments and searching markets for Turkey's bourgeoning bourgeoisie. Moreover, Altunışık and Martin (2011) mentioned that the export-oriented strategy of Turkey has influenced its foreign policy goals since the spread of Anatolian bourgeoisie's influence in the new markets became one of the crucial concerns of foreign policy-makers.

These theoretical debates served as useful tools to understand the roots of the transformation of Turkish foreign policy, particularly its Middle East policy. However, these explanations could be seen not adequate separately to explain the change in Turkish foreign policy and the transformation of the Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in formation of foreign policy. Especially, Turkey's Iraq and Syria policies have experienced different change process in terms of Kurdish issue. On the other hand, all these valuable debates should not be ignored but they should be evaluated as a part of a comprehensive analysis by considering Turkey's national interest.

At that point, it could be easily observed that Turkey's Iraq and Syria policies in the context of Kurdish issue and PKK were studied on an individual basis in

literature, so these works examine specific issues and periods of Turkish foreign policy in this context. On the other hand, this thesis aims to merge Turkey's Iraq and Syria policies with respect to the role of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on its formation. It is obvious that Turkish foreign policy and the effect of Kurdish issue on it could be analysed by focusing Turkey's relations with other Middle Eastern states or the US. Furthermore, as international actors, the US and Russia have become significant actors in the region, so the impact of their policies and activities in the region on Turkish foreign policy was taken into account in the context of Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria. In different time periods, increasing effect of the US and Russia in Iraq and Syria had affected Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, therefore the effect of the US and Russia in region were considered in the context of regional dynamics. Particularly, the exclusion of Turkish-Iranian relations in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in this thesis could be seen as a problematic element in order to make a comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, Iran is one of the major actors in the region and has a remarkable Kurdish population. However, Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism has not been main dynamics of Turkish-Iranian relations. Within this context, the ideological differences between them were the most prominent foreign policy problem in the relations for Ankara in 1990's. Moreover, significant changes in Middle East as the result of Iraq War in 2003 and Arab Uprisings have formed the distinctive features of Turkish-Iranian relations. Therefore, it could be said that regional rivalry between Turkey and Iran became main theme of their relations in spite of increasing economic ties among them. However, as above-mentioned, due to specific nature of the relations between these two states and Turkey, namely Turkey's Iraq and Turkey's Syria relations are chosen as the main theme of this thesis.

In the first chapter of this thesis, historical background will be presented to review the period between 1991 and 2007. This chapter will start with the Gulf War in 1991 and it will end with Iraq War in 2003 and developments as a result of the war to compose a broad analysis of Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraq and Syria in regard to Kurdish issue and PKK. In the first chapter, similar and different effects of Kurdish issue on Turkey's Iraq and Syria policies will be examined. In the second

chapter of the thesis, the period between 2007 and 2011 will be analysed as a transformation period of Turkish foreign policy by focusing on the rapprochement between Turkey and Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). This transformation will be analysed by referring above mentioned theoretical approaches in a holistic manner. This thesis advocates the mentioned transformation was realized as a result of pragmatic understanding of Turkish foreign policy-makers in context of national security and interest. In the last part of the thesis, the period between 2011 and 2016 will be examined by focusing on Syrian Civil War and Ankara-Erbil-Baghdad political triangle since their junction points will present significant clues in order to understand the role of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in making of Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, it is clear that the analysis of Turkish foreign policy in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK is challenging and complicated to be covered within the scope of a master thesis level. Nevertheless, I hope that this thesis will be a humble contribution for further works which aim to understand patterns of the mindset and *modus operandi* of Turkish foreign policy-makers.

CHAPTER 2

TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH IRAQ AND SYRIA IN 1991-2007

The first chapter of this thesis aims to evaluate outcomes of the end of the Cold War and Gulf War in 1991 by focusing on Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria regarding Kurdish issue. Thus, the first chapter has two main parts for the relations between Turkey and Iraq and the relations between Turkey and Syria. In the context of Turkey's relations with Iraq, the establishment of Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and Northern Iraq policy of Turkey until 2007 will be analysed to make a comprehensive analysis of the influence of all actors regarding the relations between Turkey and Iraq. At the same way, political and economic developments in Turkey – Syria relations will be explained by focusing on reasons of the tension between them and the impact of Kurdish issue on it. Especially, in this framework, in order to understand the general structure of relations between them, some significant political developments and turning points such as the water issue and 1998 Crisis will be examined. Finally, Iraq War in 2003 and its aftermath will be analysed in the context of this thesis by focusing on mainly Turkey's Iraq policy. This examination also will pave the way to understand the impact of PKK on Turkey's Iraq and Syria policies.

Within this framework, the influence of the Kurdish issue on the foreign policy of Turkey towards Iraq and Syria could be explained in a historical context as the Kurdish issue is not only an identity problem of each state concerning their internal political structures but this issue was also exploited by different regional and global actors. As a result, change and continuity patterns in foreign relations of Turkey with Iraq and Syria regarding the impact of Kurdish issue could be examined by revealing the links between Kurdish issue and formation of Turkish foreign policy.

In this perspective, the determination of the origin point in examination of the historical background of foreign relations of Turkey with Iraq and Syria with respect

to Kurdish issue could be problematic because of its interminable and complex nature. Thus, in this thesis, post – Cold War period and the Gulf War in 1991 are chosen as the starting point of the historical background because of some specific features of post – Cold War era and the influence of the Gulf War on regional and international politics. Primarily, in the Cold War, states usually had certain security perceptions and foreign policy goals as a result of the nature of Cold War, thus the scope of intra state relations of Turkey with Iraq and Syria was determined by this reality. Political developments in post – Cold War era and the new political, economic and security concerns of states related with them has increased the density of intra-state relations in Middle East and the influence of regional and international powers and non-state actors.

In this respect, Turkey's Middle East policy had been formed in the context of its security understanding and concerns in 1990s which means that the formation of Turkish foreign policy did not experienced a significant change at the mental level. Furthermore, Tür stated that the end of the Cold War did not result any tangible alteration in Turkish foreign policy since the securitization of it had continued throughout 1990's. A rising threat from Turkey's southern neighbours has taken the place of the threat from the USSR. Kurdish separatism was stated as the most significant threat against Turkey in the National Security Policy Document in 1992. This document also emphasised the support of Turkey's southern neighbours for PKK as the main source of threats against it (2012, p. 124). At that point, in order to understand Turkey's security oriented foreign policy understanding in terms of Kurdish issue, Turkey's security culture should be examined from a historical perspective. According to Altunışık, Turkey's security culture in its Middle East policy consists of four deep-rooted norms. These norms are the *realpolitik* understanding, pro-status quo stance, the traumatic experience of the late Ottoman period and reluctance to be part of regional affairs. First, Turkey has mostly preferred a pro-status quo stance in its foreign policy since the foundation of Republic of Turkey, seeking to protect the existing borders and balance of power. Second, the tradition of *realpolitik* has determined the security culture of Turkey, so the security oriented and state centric foreign policy understanding of Turkey is the result of Turkey's *realpolitik* approach. Third, the transition period from Ottoman Empire to

Republic of Turkey regarding Sevres Treaty has caused a traumatic experience for Turkish nation. Finally, the Turkish elites' attempts to construct a Western identity paved the way for the reluctance of foreign policy makers to get involve in Middle East politics (2007, pp. 69-71). Therefore, the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War presented significant challenges against main pillars of Turkey's security culture in terms of Kurdish issue. Turkey's Iraq and Syria policies in 1991-2007 had been formed by taking above mentioned security culture norms into consideration due to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

On the other hand, it should also be noted that the influence of the Kurdish issue on Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria could be observed during the Cold War, especially 1980s. For instance, Karakoç stated that the military coup on 12 September 1980 in Turkey became a starting point for relations between Syria and Kurds in Turkey since many Kurds took refuge in Syria after the establishment of the military regime (2010, p. 921). However, the aim of this thesis is to reveal change and continuity patterns in Turkish foreign policy making with their reasons by focusing on the impact of Kurdish issue on relations of Turkey with Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, in the post-Cold War period, as crucial regional dynamics, Gulf War and Iraq War caused serious consequences which determined the impact of Kurdish issue on Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria.

2.1. Iraq

In post – Cold War era, Turkey's Iraq policy was based on looking up to the UN resolutions and realization of the commitments arising from Turkey's general cohesion with the West in the foreign policy (Tocci and Walker, 2012, p.38) The influence of Kurdish issue on the relations between Turkey and Iraq has experienced a serious transformation as a result of the Gulf War. After the Gulf War, political and administrative structures of Iraq changed enormously, so non-state actors increased their ability to impact on Baghdad's internal and external relations. For instance, the establishment of KRG and the increasing influence of KDP and PUK in Iraqi political structure took place in accordance with this change, so Turkish foreign policy makers had to include all sides of this new period in their calculations. In this context, understanding of the Gulf War and its outcomes will provide a necessary

perspective to grasp the new paradigms of Turkey's relations with Iraq with regarding Kurdish issue.

2.1.1. Gulf War: Reasons and Results

On 2 August 1990, the Gulf War started with the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, led by Saddam Hussein. As a response to the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, the Operation Desert Shield and the Operation Desert Storm were launched by the UN coalition, led by the US forces. This development had paved the way for significant developments in the regional level of Turkish foreign policy making. One of them was that the reactions of ethnic and religious groups in Iraq towards Saddam Hussein's regime during the Gulf War. Uzgel stated that the US called Kurdish population in the Northern Iraq and Shiite population in the southern part of Iraq to rebel against Baghdad administration. The main aim of the US was to distract Saddam Hussein from the operation and to keep Iraqi army busy on two fronts with Kurds and Shiite population (2012, p. 259). Kirişçi and Winrow claim that Iraqi military gave its whole attention to quell the Kurdish uprisings in the north after it suppressed the Shiite rebellion successfully which swept any success chance of the Kurdish rebellion (1997, p. 157). Moreover, the US had a remarkable role in the Kurdish rebellion from its beginning to the end of it since the most important encouragement of Kurds was the success of the Coalition forces and the US with respect to the ultimate aim of independence. However, as Kirişçi and Winrow emphasized that a no-fly zone declaration, covering Iraqi helicopters, gunships and fixed-wing aircrafts, was expected by Kurds with the enforcement of the US (1997, p.157). On the other hand, in a short period, Baghdad administration quelled firstly Shiite rebellion and then Kurdish one harshly. According to Uzgel, the main reason behind the reluctance of the US for the declaration of non-fly zone in the northern Iraq was to preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq since Iran could have exploited the power vacuum in the region without the balance of Saddam administration (2012, p.260). Interestingly, in Iraqi War in 2003, Bush administration decided to topple down Saddam Hussein regarding this possibility and further developments in the following period revealed the accuracy of it.

Furthermore, Kurdish rebellion in the northern Iraq caused serious consequences for Turkey as approximately half a million Iraqi Kurds left their homes and ran away to Turkish border to take refuge as a result of the failure of Kurdish rebellion against Saddam regime. Kirişçi and Winrow stated that on 2 April 1991, the Turkish National Security Council (NSC) convened due to the emergency situation in Turkey-Iraq border. In the meeting, it was decided that the borders would not open unless the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution about the situation of the Kurdish refugees in the borders (1997, pp. 157-158). It was obvious that this decision of the Turkish NSC was related with the past experience of Turkey during the Kurdish refuge flow as a result of the conflict between Baghdad and Kurdish population in 1987. In 1987, in order to quell the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq, which was backed by Iran, Saddam Hussein regime used an excessive force against the Kurdish population in Iraq which led to an enormous refugee flows to Turkey. Approximately, between 40.000 and 50.000 Iraqi Kurds took refuge to Turkey and 35.000 Iraqi Kurds, as a permanent refugee continued to live in Turkish territory (Robins, 2003, p.269). Similarly, Turkey had to face with the burden of Kurdish refugees in many ways, so Turkey did not want to pay the total cost of this new Kurdish refugee flow. Moreover, Lundgren stated that “Ankara tried to protect what were perceived as national interest, while at the same time trying to cope with the unintended consequences of its realist, interest-protecting policy” (2007, p.73). These developments clearly indicated that the existence of Kurdish refugees on the territory of Turkey had internal and external dimensions for the national interests of Turkey, so the refugee crisis was internationalized by Turkish foreign policy makers to ease the pressure on Turkey to open its borders. Furthermore, Kirişçi and Winrow said that “many Turks were also concerned that the presence of Iraqi Kurdish refugees on Turkish soil would intensify feelings of nationalism and separatism among Kurds in Turkey” (1997, p.158).

In the light of these developments, in order to find a solution for the political and humanitarian crisis on Turkey-Iraq border, the United Nations Security Council passed the Resolution 688 on 5 April 1991. This resolution clearly stated that it was demanded from Iraq to cease this oppression on all Iraqi people to remove the threat towards international peace and security. In addition to that, in the resolution, it was

stated that the humanitarian efforts should be pursued for Iraqi civilian population, especially Kurdish population (UNSC, 1991). Before analysing the outcomes of this resolution, it should be noticed that many scholars emphasized the different points of the text of the resolution. For instance, Lundgren claims that the Kurdish population was emphasized particularly in the resolution (2007, p. 74). Furthermore, Kirişçi and Winrow claimed that definition of the refugee crisis as a threat to international peace and security was perceived as one of important sides of the resolution (1997, 158). In the light of these statements, it could be said that the Kurdish issue was transformed to an international problem as a result of the UNSC Resolution 688, so the Kurdish issue has increased its scope of influence in Turkish foreign policy making since any political and military act of Turkey to Kurdish population in Turkey or Iraq is evaluated within this newly formed perspective.

In the following process, on 10 April 1991, a no-fly zone was created the above the 36th parallel which forced Baghdad to withdraw its military forces from this part of Iraq. Furthermore, with the initiative of the US, the UK and France, the creation of a safe haven in Zakhu was started (Uzgel, 2012, p. 261). Operation Provide Comfort was started within the context of the establishment of safe havens. Kirişçi and Winrow stated that the necessary security and protection to ensure voluntary repatriation of the Kurdish refugees was provided thanks to Operation Provide Comfort (1997, p. 160). Moreover, in July, Operation Provide Comfort was finished since almost all of the Kurdish refugees returned Iraq, so Operation Poised Hammer was launched and the coalition forces withdrawn from Iraqi territory which was replaced a with small scale coalition force that was stationed in Silopi, Turkey (Hale, 1992, p.688). Therefore, many aspects of Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Poised Hammer were discussed and criticized widely in Turkey at that time however; in order to understand developments in northern Iraq and the establishment of Kurdish Regional Government regarding foreign policy concerns of Turkey, the related and limited parts of these discussions will be examined.

Primarily, Kirişçi and Winrow stated that Operation Provide Comfort was evaluated by many in Turkey as the beginning point of the establishment of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq (1997, p. 161). At the same way, Uzgel briefly explains opposing views against it that Operation Provide Comfort caused a serious

power vacuum in northern Iraq, so that development paved the way for the establishment of the Kurdish state. PKK also found a suitable environment and increased its terrorist activities against Turkey (2012, p. 263). Therefore, it could be said that Turkey had to face with a serious dilemma as a result of the Kurdish refugee crisis and Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Poised Hammer since the power vacuum in northern Iraq could cause the establishment of a Kurdish state which was the most terrible nightmare of Turkish foreign policy makers. Moreover, the relation between Turkish foreign policy and its security concerns related with PKK and its own Kurdish population could be easily observed in the following period. In order to make a comprehensive analysis of that period, the accuracy of the security concerns of Turkey and the establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government should be examined in the same context regarding the relations between Turkey and significant Kurdish parties in Iraq such as KDP and PUK.

2.1.2. Foundation of Kurdish Regional Government

The security concerns of Turkey related with the outcomes of Operation Poised Hammer and political developments in the northern Iraq could be examined in two parts. First of all, as it was mentioned above, the correlation between the power vacuum in the northern Iraq and the activities of PKK was an important issue for the decision makers in Turkey. Robins stated that PKK found a very advantageous position to increase its capacity and ability to attack Turkey because it could exploit the political turmoil in the northern Iraq (2003, p. 323). Hale also made a similar statement that “during the spring and summer of 1991, the PKK inevitably exploited the collapse of Saddam’s power in northern Iraq, as well as the availability of arms from retreating Iraqi troops.” (1992, p. 689). Thus, it is obvious that the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from northern Iraq and the political turmoil in the region had caused serious security problems for Turkey, so Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) launched many military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. Nevertheless, Turkish foreign policy makers decided to develop a political dimension for Iraqi policy of Turkey by focusing only the security concerns of Turkey. Particularly, the relations between Turkey and Kurdish groups in Iraq, especially KDP and PUK, and Turkish foreign policy under Özal administration should be examined in order to understand

fully the basic goals and concerns of Iraq policy of Turkey in the context of Kurdish issue.

During his presidency, Özal actively involved in making of Turkish foreign policy regarding relations between Turkey and Kurdish groups in northern Iraq. Robins stated that Özal had two main motives for constructing his foreign policy. One of them was to find a solution for Turkey's Kurdish issue at home. Another motive was to augment Turkey's sphere of influence in a neighbouring territory (2003, p.321). Furthermore, Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu said that KDP and PUK realized that without Turkey's consent, a Kurdish state cannot be established in northern Iraq. On the other hand, Özal decided to develop relations with Barzani and Talabani to curb the power of PKK (2012, pp. 555-556). Thus, Özal administration aimed to increase Turkey's influence on Kurdish groups in the context of internal and external sides of Turkey's Kurdish issue regarding its security concerns. At the same way, Kurdish groups realized that cooperation with Turkey was a vital necessity for their political existence in northern Iraq. It was a bold and breakthrough move in terms of the traditional understanding of Turkish foreign policy which has strong roots that could be traced back to the foundation of the Republic of Turkey.

In the light of these developments, Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary election, held on 19 May 1992, was a significant turning point regarding the political developments in Iraq and its outcomes deeply affected Turkish foreign policy towards northern Iraq and Kurd groups in this region. As it was mentioned before, as a result of the OPC and the Poised Hammer, a power vacuum arised in northern Iraq as Iraqi military forces had to withdraw from that part of Iraq. That situation paved the way for augmentation of political organizational structure of Kurdish groups in northern Iraq, so in order to understand Turkey's approach northern Iraq, the political institutionalization process of Kurds in northern Iraq should be examined carefully.

Before the Gulf War, the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) was established as an umbrella organization, including KDP, PUK, KPDP, KSP, PASOK, ICP, KTP and the ADM, in order to coordinate opposition activities of those groups and to take advantage of possible instability in Iraq (Stansfield, 2003, p. 92). In spite of the failure of Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq after the Gulf War, the withdrawal of Iraqi military forces and the power vacuum in the region as a result of the OPC and

the Poised Hammer had caused a suitable environment for the Kurdish political groups in northern Iraq to establish their own administrative and political structure.

Under these circumstances, the IKF decided to form a freely elected Kurdish National Assembly (KNA) instead of Iraqi Legislative Assembly. The multi-party elections that were held on 19 May 1992, resulted in an almost draw between KDP and PUK. Therefore, the newly formed political and administrative structure was established in accordance to this equal power division between KDP and PUK (Stansfield, 2003, p.96). In the following process, the forming of the regional government and the approval of establishment of a federated state in northern Iraq were the most significant activities of the KNA. On the other hand, these developments were evaluated as immense threats for Turkey's external and internal security and serious challenges for the main pillars of foreign policy of Turkey by decision-makers. Robins stated that "Turkey refused to recognise the establishment of a Kurdish government in northern Iraq, which it dismissed as legally baseless and invalid" (2003, p.325). At the same way, Altunışık emphasized that above mentioned developments had caused a serious disturbance among Turkish political and military elite since potential developments could cause the end of territorial integrity of Iraq and the formation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq subsequently. Thus, the irredentist ideas and activities among Kurd population of Turkey could increase or the establishment of KRG could affect Turkey's own Kurd population as a result of spill over effect (2007, p.74). On the other hand, the OPC and the Operation Poised Hammer were seen as the main reasons behind these developments in northern Iraq however; Turkey continued to follow same line with the US in its Iraqi policy. For example, after the establishment of KRG, the Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel said that "I am totally against a Kurdish state that will be established in Iraq. The decision of the US Congress, related with the preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity, should be abided" (Aydın Tarihi, 1992). At the same time Ankara was aware of that the continuation of this policy would create a serious dilemma for the security understanding of Turkey. Furthermore, Altunışık briefly summarize the situation of Turkish foreign policy makers; "to make matters more complex, throughout the 1990s Turkey found itself in an awkward position of supporting the US's Iraq policy and yet deeply resenting it for its implications for Turkey" (2007, p.75). Under these

circumstances, Turkey chose to form the relation with IKF to affect the developments in northern Iraq and to use military means to cope with the terrorist activities of PKK by using assistance of IKF. In October 1992, Turkey had launched a military operation with the participation of IKF against PKK to curb its effect in northern Iraq. This military cooperation was useful and necessary for both sides. For instance, Kirişçi and Winrow stated that in northern Iraq, there was a dependency between Ankara and IKF for each other with regard to their security interest (1997, p. 163). For Turkish side, this military operation as a part of the above mentioned cooperation, Turkey had extended its sphere of influence in northern Iraq and on the Kurdish groups and forced PKK to withdraw from the region.

Regarding the regional dimension of the immense threat caused by PKK, Turkey also used diplomatic means to reinforce its military gains in northern Iraq. On 14 November 1992, the ministers of foreign affairs of Turkey, Iran and Syria met to discuss the developments in Iraq by focusing on Kurdish issue. Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu stated that it was declared that Turkey, Iran and Syria would not let the establishment of a Kurdish state in the region (2012, p. 557). Moreover, after the meeting, the joint declaration was read by Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hikmet Çetin who said that “we believe that Iraq’s political structure in the future based on democratic principles, respect to human rights and integrity can be and should be decided by if and only if consent and free choice of whole Iraqi people” (Ayn Tarihi, 1992). It can be said that Turkish side had continued to keep the same understanding since the formation of Sadabad Pact which was signed on 8 July 1937. Turkish foreign policy makers acknowledged that Kurdish issue and developments in northern Iraq could be used by regional and international powers or be a reason of a regional security crisis, so Turkey tried to compensate for lacking of healthy relations between Ankara and Baghdad and serious security threats due to the power vacuum in northern Iraq with a regional cooperation between Ankara, Tehran and Damascus.

In the short run, the primary aim of Turkish foreign policy makers regarding Turkey’s Iraq policy was to diminish the influence and activities of PKK and to sustain security in regional manner. Thus, Turkey recognized that IKF acknowledged that any Kurdish political formation in northern Iraq cannot be sustainable in spite of Turkey’s opposition, so both parts decided to cooperate against

PKK in northern Iraq. Robins stated that on December 1992, Turkey and the IKF signed an agreement which includes the withdrawal of Turkish forces from Iraq and responsibility of Iraqi Kurds for security (2003, p. 328). After the Gulf War, Ankara had to face with a double-edged problem concerning its Iraqi policy since Ankara's two main goals were actually contradicted each other. On the one hand, Ankara had to prevent PKK to exploit the power vacuum in northern Iraq; on the other hand, any political formation of Kurdish groups should be prevented to protect the integrity of Iraq. Therefore, as a result of this contradiction, Turkey chose a hollow hearted cooperation with IKF to meet its security necessities in northern Iraq.

2.1.3. Northern Iraq Policy of Turkey until 2003

In the previous part, the Gulf War and its outcomes were discussed by focusing on foreign policy choices of Ankara by taking into account the influence of Kurdish issue on it. In this part, Turkey's Iraq policy, particularly northern Iraq policy will be examined until 2003 Iraqi War. The main principles and pillars of Turkey's northern Iraq policy and the influence of Kurdish issue on it will be evaluated in a broader historical perspective to form a comprehensive foreign policy analysis. To achieve this tough task, a threefold analysis of Turkey's foreign policy toward northern Iraq will be used; primarily Turkey's relations with KDP and PUK, secondly Turkey's attempt to strengthen the relations between Ankara and Baghdad and finally increasing importance of Turkmens in Turkish foreign policy. In these three parts, foreign policy goals of Turkey will be discussed.

Oran stated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared three goals regarding Turkey's northern Iraq policy. These goals were preservation of territorial integrity of Iraq, taking care of Turkey's legitimate security concerns due to the PKK and protection of Turkmens in northern Iraq (2012, p. 268). It could be easily observed that all of these goals were built on the security perception of Turkish foreign policy makers. In other words, Turkish foreign policy was designed on the security understanding of Ankara, so in order to understand northern Iraq policy of Ankara, the location of this issue in the cognitive map of the foreign policy makers should be evaluated. In this context, Çandar stated that northern Iraq and south eastern Turkey

are not seen separable from each other with respect to geographic and ethno-cultural terms regarding security understanding of Ankara (2004, p.53).

Particularly, Kurdish issue was the main motive in the background of security understanding of Ankara regarding its Iraq and especially northern Iraq policy. For example, Altunışık claimed that “Turkey assessed what has been happening in Iraq through the lens of the Kurdish issue and security perspective dominated the policy as the issues were defined as existential” (2007, p.76). Furthermore, Mesut Özcan said that in Turkey, domestic and foreign policy were primarily determined in the context of the Kurdish question in 1990s. Thus, Kurdish issue was taken into account as a dominant factor by Turkish foreign policy makers to evaluate policy options which led to security based foreign policy choices with international and regional actors (2011, p. 72). In the light of these considerations, it can be pointed that the historical and cognitive map of Ankara has taken security as the primary objective of its northern Iraq policy due to terrorist activities of PKK in the region.

Primarily, the conflict between KDP and PUK became the main theme in Turkey’s approach towards KDP and PUK in the following process since this conflict could be a leverage or a new threat for Turkey’s security interests. In early 1994, the tension between two Kurdish parties had escalated in northern Iraq. According to Kirişçi and Winrow, the ideological differences were the root of the conflict between them because of more conservative and tribal based ideological structure of KDP and more secular and leftist ideological background of PUK (1997, p. 164). Furthermore, Robins claimed that in September 1994, the Habur border gate was reopened with the decision of Ankara to especially to pave the way for the border trade which had become a serious factor in escalation of the conflict between KDP and PUK. Since the Habur border gate was controlled by KDP that rejected to share the trade revenue, consequently the conflict had intensified seriously (2003, p.333).

Basically, KDP and PUK were actually rivalry powers since both of them wanted to be the dominant power in northern Iraq, so with the effects of ideological differences and other problems, the conflict between them was inevitable. However, in the short run, it became obvious that this situation was a double-edged sword for Ankara’s northern Iraq policy. On the one hand, KRG had been weakened in political

and administrative spheres as a result of the conflict, so it was significant in terms of the integrity of Iraq. On the other hand, a possible power vacuum could be filled by PKK; thereby Turkey could face with new security threats in northern Iraq. At that point, it should be reminded that Ankara had different relations with each of these two Kurdish factions. In the following process, the nature of these different relations was a significant issue to understand Turkey's northern Iraq policy in 1990s. For instance, Kirişçi and Winrow claimed that Turkey's relations with the KDP had been tended to be positive because of Barzani's significant readiness to cooperate with Ankara and his pragmatic approach in the matter of Kurdish aspirations in the region. On the other hand, Ankara had serious doubts about Talabani's commitment to observe territorial integrity of Iraq and keep the PKK out of northern Iraq (1997, p165). Therefore, this understanding of Ankara directly reflects itself on the northern Iraq policy of Turkey; however, Turkey supported the efforts to settle the dispute between KDP and PUK because of its security interest in the region. For example, above mentioned approach of Turkey could be seen in the negotiations, held in Dublin, to settle the dispute between two Kurdish factions. Robins (2003, p.336) and Uzgel (2012, p.264) said that the main motive of Turkish foreign policy makers was to recognize and to add of legitimate security concerns of Turkey into the final resolution of the negotiations. Also, both of them emphasized that as a result of the failure of the negotiations, Iran had increased its effect in the region by strengthening its ties with Talabani's faction. Through this political cooperation preference of the both sides, PUK gained leverage against KDP's potential influence in Iraq, whereas Iran had the opportunity to exploit the power vacuum in the region.

In the light of these developments, the escalation of military conflict between KDP and PUK became inevitable since the above mentioned reasons were not settled in spite of the diplomatic efforts. Also, the involvement of regional powers was another factor that excited the conflict. Therefore, on August 1996, the capture of Erbil by PUK was a turning point in the northern Iraq policy of Turkey since PUK was in cooperation with Iran and PKK. Thus, strengthening Iranian influence with the offensive of PUK could damage the territorial integrity of Iraq and PKK could increase its sphere of influence as a result of a possible power vacuum in the northern Iraq. More interestingly, KDP demanded the assistance of Baghdad administration

against the PUK to retake the control of Erbil. As a result of the joint military operation of Iraqi forces and KDP, Erbil was seized and PUK was defeated.

Uzgel stated that the outcomes of this event were very important in many aspects for Ankara. Primarily, the possibility of union of Kurdish factions in northern Iraq had disappeared. Secondly, an alliance between Turkey, Iraq and KDP emerged against the alliance between Iran, PKK and PUK. Finally, the contradictive military coordination centre of Operation Poised Hammer was moved from Zakho, Iraq to Silopi, Turkey (2012, p. 265). Basically, all of these outcomes served the security interests of Turkey as the conflict between KDP and PUK had risen as a serious obstacle in front of the establishment of a Kurdish political formation in northern Iraq. Also, KDP's rapprochement with Baghdad administration against the PUK had increased influence of Saddam rule on the developments in northern Iraq which was a valuable asset for Turkey to preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq.

In the following period, Turkey has started new foreign policy tools and has developed its gains in diplomatic area regarding its northern Iraq policy. Primarily, Operation Poised Hammer was turned into Operation Northern Watch which means that Turkey increased its authority on this new mechanism, so internal and security concerns of Turkey were satisfied. Moreover, during the negotiation between KDP and PUK, Turkey strengthened its position and increased its ability to preserve its security interest in northern Iraq. At the same time, Turkey decided to add a new face to its northern Iraq policy. Uzgel stated that Turkmens was added to political process in Iraq for the first time (2012, p. 265). Therefore, analysing of the increasing importance of Turkmens in Turkey's northern Iraq policy was a necessary step to form a comprehensive analysis.

The reason of the increasing importance of Turkmens in Iraq for Turkish foreign policy makers was based on the security understanding of Ankara regarding its northern Iraq policy. Oğuzlu claimed that if preservation of territorial integrity of Iraq and prevention of any formed Kurdish state structure in northern Iraq are the goals of Turkey, a desire for capable rule in Baghdad cannot be enough. Thus, Turkey should conduct a policy that aims to provide international endorsement for Turkmen population in assessments of northern Iraq's future (2002, p. 139). Moreover, the influence of Kurdish population in northern Iraq was a serious

consideration for Turkey since there was not any power which was able to challenge the power of them. At that point, Altunışık claimed that in order to balance the Kurdish influence, Ankara preferred to improve the relations with Turkmen (2006, p. 184). At the same way, Lundgren said that “the Turkmen are put forward by Ankara as a counter weight to Kurdish hegemony” (2007, p. 90). It could be easily said that in spite of the conflict between KDP and PUK, Ankara had serious concerns about the possibility of a Kurdish statehood in northern Iraq. Thus, Turkey began to emphasize rights of Turkmen population in northern Iraq, so Turkmen population could be a significant factor in the future of the region.

According to Oğuzlu, there were three main logical reasons of Ankara’s approach to Turkmen regarding its northern Iraq policy. The fact that existence of Turkmen population as the third largest ethnic community in the region, historical place of Turkmen in Iraq state structure and naturally sharing same national identity constituted above mentioned logical reasons (2002, pp. 139-140). In the light of these logical reasons, in order to preserve its national interest and to curb the effect of political hegemony of Kurdish factions, Ankara drove forward its ties with Turkmen community in northern Iraq. Therefore, ambiguity in the northern Iraq and security concerns of Turkey due to increasing effectiveness of Kurdish factions had formed a new challenge for Turkey. Besides military operations and temporary cooperation with Kurdish groups, Turkey included its relations with Turkmen in northern Iraq into its foreign policy formation regarding its northern Iraq policy.

Finally, restoring the relations with Baghdad was the third part of Turkey’s northern Iraq policy because of before mentioned foreign policy goals and security concerns of Turkey. It could be said that after the Gulf War, political developments in northern Iraq including existence of PKK and increasing autonomy of Kurdish factions became main theme of Turkey’s Iraq policy. In other words, during the 90s, Turkey basically did not have an Iraq policy in real terms, so Ankara’s approach to Iraq was limited with its security concerns and Kurdish issue. On this occasion, Turkey’s relations with the US and the sanctions, based on UN Security Council resolutions on Iraq were serious obstacles for Turkey to establish ties with Baghdad. On the other hand, Ankara recognized that strengthening relations with Baghdad was a significant necessity to form a thorough foreign policy on the solution in northern

Iraq. For instance, Robins stated that the idea that Turkey should be more active to restore the relations with Iraq, was widely accepted by Ankara (2003, p. 331). Similarly, Kirişçi and Winrow indicated that Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Turkey Mehmet Gölhan said that if state control could be restored in northern Iraq by Saddam administration, Turkey's security concerns could be solved, after a military intervention in northern Iraq by TAF in March 1995 (1997, p.67). Therefore, Ankara was aware of that in spite of its diplomatic and military attempts, the power vacuum in northern Iraq would continue to provide a suitable environment for terrorist activities of PKK, so Turkey's Kurdish issue and its Kurdish population were prone to be affected by the developments in northern Iraq in the eyes of Ankara. Furthermore, Saddam administration were still capable to keep the power in despite of multi faced crises in Iraq. Sayarı stated that Turkey had desired to return its relations with Baghdad to normal regarding Saddam's position in Iraq and had attempted to lift sanctions on it by using diplomatic means (1997, p. 47). In the light of this understanding, it should be noted that Turkey preferred to make its Iraq policy different from the US's one in spite of close cooperation between Turkey and the US on Iraq policy by focusing on its own Kurdish issue and security priorities.

2.2. Syria

In the post-Cold War era, historical and contemporary issues in the relations between Turkey and Syria had merged immensely. Therefore, distinct from Ankara's Iraqi policy, the effect of Kurdish issue on Turkey's Syria policy had many dimensions which were affected each other directly. Until the beginning of 2000s, the conflicts on Hatay province of Turkey, water issue and Kurdish issue were the main reasons behind the dispute between them. In this context, it must be noted that Kurdish issue and the activities of PKK could not be evaluated in a narrow frame. On the contrary, in 1990s, Syrian policy of Turkey was formed with the effect of Kurdish issue and the position of PKK in Syria. Thus, during the 1990s, Turkey had formed a foreign policy towards Syria which was based on its security perception and concerns. In order to understand the effect of Kurdish issue and PKK on Turkey's Syria policy, reasons and results of above mentioned main conflicts between Turkey and Syria will be analysed as a whole since this work claims that

Turkey's relations with Syria in 1990s regarding Kurdish issue and PKK cannot be evaluated in its own context.

2.2.1. Hatay and Water Issue in the Shadow of Kurdish Issue

At the beginning, it should be said that in the post-Cold War era, Syria preferred to use the PKK as a foreign policy instrument against Turkey. According to Robert Olson, the water question, grudge over Hatay province of Turkey and military and intelligence cooperation between Turkey and Israel were the reasons behind decision of Damascus to give shelter and support to the PKK (1997, p.170). At the same way, Muslih stated that Syria provided shelter to PKK, the ASALA and the Turkish radical left to form a balancing act against Turkey since Syria perceived Turkey's water policy as a serious threat for its vital interests (1996, p. 122). Furthermore, Martin said that "until October 1998, Syria was able to play a PKK card by harbouring its leader" (2000, p. 88). Thus, in 1990s, the relations between Turkey and Syria were framed by security concerns of Turkey. In this context, Kurdish issue and especially the activities of PKK had become a general theme of the relations between two parts. For instances, Tocci and Walker claimed that "Kurdish problems" was perceived as a generally internal issue by Turkey, on the other hand; Turkey had to deal with countries like Syria in a conflict position because of regional connections of the PKK (2012, p. 40). Furthermore, the PKK was not the only actor concerning the worsened relations of Turkey and Syria; however, in this period, disputes on Hatay province of Turkey and water issue were covered with Kurdish issue by Syria to distract energy and focus of Turkish foreign policy makers.

Firstly, the continuation of grievance of Syria over Hatay issue could be significant example of effect of historical disputes on contemporary foreign policy matters. Therefore, a short historical context should be useful for the further foreign policy analysis in this thesis. Discussions on the independence of Syria from French mandate were the starting point of Hatay issue for Turkish side. Armaoğlu stated that İskenderun Sancağı (Hatay's former name) which was part of French mandate of Syria, had gained an autonomous status with the decision of the League of Nations (1983, p. 349). In the following period, after the elections in Hatay, with the decision of members of parliament, Hatay Republic was established on 2 September 1938.

Moreover, on 7 July 1939, Hatay Republic became a part of Republic of Turkey with the approval of Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Issue of Hatay had come to fore front in the relations of Turkey and Syria many times especially after the independence of Syria from French mandate; however due the scope of this thesis, in the light of this brief historical background, issue of Hatay in 1990s will be evaluated regarding the effect of Kurdish issue.

In 1990s, Issue of Hatay had preserved its importance as a national issue for Syrian side, so Syria continued to claim Hatay as a part of its territory. As mentioned above, to take revenge of issue of Hatay, Syria used PKK as a policy instrument by sponsoring terrorist activities of PKK towards Turkey. In this context, it could be said that Kurdish issue and the PKK could be used by regional actors which indicated a serious security challenge for Turkey. For example, Utku Acun, the governor of Hatay, said that “the attacks on the Turkmens and the purchasing of land by the Arabs were evidence of Syria’s attempts to implement a long range strategic plan in the province”. In the following period, the decision of the NSC to augment the security and intelligence precautions in Hatay took place in the press (Olson, 2001, p. 109). The statement of Acun emphasized that the attacks against Turkmens in Hatay were executed by the PKK with the support of Damascus. Therefore, issue of Hatay could be seen as less important than the water issue between Turkey and Syria; however, the shadow of Kurdish issue on the issue of Hatay could be examined easily. The grudge of Syria over Hatay towards Turkey transformed into the cooperation of Damascus and PKK against Turkey.

The tension in relations between Turkey and Syria had increased as a result of the water issue after the case of Hatay. Daoudy said that the water dispute caused a more serious conflict in the relations which was damaged formerly by the historical territory dispute over the province of Hatay (2013, p. 137). Water issue between Turkey and Syria was shaped by not only these two countries but also non-state actors and regional actors. To make a comprehensive analysis of water issue regarding the activities of PKK in Syria, the essence of water issue between two parts should be briefly discussed. In this context, the South Eastern Anatolia Project (GAP) was a significant turning point regarding the water issue between two states. Basically, the goals of GAP were to construct necessary infrastructure for water

resources (particularly Euphrates and Tigris Rivers) and develop all socio-economic infrastructure parts in a holistic approach.

Especially after the construction of dams on Euphrates, legal status of rivers was discussed by Syria and Iraq. According to Damascus and Baghdad, Euphrates and Tigris are international rivers. On the other hand, these two rivers were evaluated as transboundary rivers by Turkey (Oktav, 2003, p. 97). Therefore, according to international law, Turkey has no any obligation to share water of Euphrates and Tigris. In this context, water issue was perceived as a security matter by Syria. On the other hand, for Ankara, GAP could be useful to decrease its security concerns due to Kurdish issue. Oktav stated that Ankara believed that socio-economic roots of Kurdish issue was directly related with worse economic condition in the south eastern part of Turkey. As a development project, GAP could provide a better life for this region where mainly Kurdish population lives (2003, p. 102). However, in the light of these, Syria was aware that Kurdish issue was Achilles' heel of Turkish foreign policy, so PKK could be used as a foreign policy instrument to solve the water issue by getting the best result for itself. For instance, when the flow of water decreased due to the construction of the Atatürk Dam, the participation of the President of Syria, Hafez Assad, to a ceremony of PKK, held on Bekaa Valley, was a direct message from Damascus to Ankara to remind that Syria was holding a serious security card against Turkey (2003, p. 102). Therefore, Ankara was aware that water issue with Damascus was not a technical problem between two states. The water issue with the effect of Kurdish issue turned into a national security problem for Turkey which had become the basic understanding of the relations of Turkey with Syria.

In 1987, Prime Minister Turgut Özal paid a visit to Damascus. The visit was shaped by the security concerns of both sides. Ankara expressed that Syria should cut its relations with the PKK and Damascus demanded an agreement that would pave the way for the "sharing" of the waters of Euphrates (Altunışık and Tür, 2006, p.232). As a result of the visit, two cooperation protocols which related with security and economic issues were signed. In the security protocol, the cooperation between both sides against the terrorist activities was stated. On the other hand, Turkey promised to release at least 500 cubic meters of water per second to Syria in the

scope of the Economic Cooperation Protocol of 1987 (Aykan, 1999, p.175). The main theme of the relations between Ankara and Damascus in 1990s was formed with the effect of this visit. Altunışık and Tür said that “with the 1987 Protocol, water and security issues were linked together in relations between the two countries (2006, p. 233). It could be said that PKK and Kurdish issue were serious weakness for Turkish foreign policy makers since this weakness could be easily exploited by regional and international actors to gain leverage against Turkey. Syria recklessly used a terrorist organization to get an advantage position in water issue. At this point, Protocol of 1987 could be evaluated as an achievement by Damascus.

Increasing assaults of the PKK in the beginning of 1990 revitalized the security concerns of Turkey regarding its Syria policy. Especially, Syria’s support and protection to the PKK and its leader Öcalan had been the one of the security issues of Turkey. Within this framework, Ankara preferred to use diplomatic ways to solve this dispute, so a security protocol was signed by Ankara and Damascus in 1992. Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu stated that protocol included the cooperation against terrorism, prevention of terrorist activities, smuggling and armed actions in border zone and extradition of apprehended persons (2012, p.556). Basically, the signing of the protocol was realized as a result of the pressure of Ankara to Damascus; however, Ankara was aware that water issue was an important element in the relations with Syria. Therefore, during his visit, Minister of Foreign Affairs Çetin said that “if Syria abides by the protocol, Turkey will do its part about water issue” (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu, 2012, p. 556). It revealed that Turkey continued to apply a water policy towards in the frame of security. Furthermore, Olson stated that the direct link between the Kurdish question and the water issue was seen in the meeting, organized in the level of foreign ministers, in 1994. Ankara clearly said that there would not be any negotiation on the water issue until the end of Syria’s support to terrorist activities of the PKK (1997, p.172).

The approach of Turkey towards these issues was problematic since securitization of water issue due to Kurdish issue which indicated that the perception of Turkish foreign policy makers was narrow. They had not enough ability to isolate Kurdish issue as a foreign policy matter. On the contrary, like the water issue with Syria, Kurdish issue had turned into an internationalized matter that could be

exploited by any power in Turkish foreign policy. For instance, Prime Minister Çiller declared that if Syria would renounce its support to the PKK, Turkish side was ready to accept a water protocol with Syria (Olson, 1997, p.173). At that point, the insistence of Ankara to solve water issue with Syria in the diplomatic ways could be discussed. Unlike the northern Iraq example, Turkey did not prefer any significant military campaign in Syria territory in spite of dominating security oriented approach of foreign policy makers. According to Olson, preserve the relations with Arab states and the probability of unsuccessful outcome of any military campaign were considered as two main risks by Ankara, so in spite of explicit support of Syria to the PKK, Turkey was refrained from any military action (1997, p. 170). Therefore, in the following period, it was seen that regional powers included the dispute between Turkey and Syria, so Turkey had to apply attentive foreign policy for water issue and its security matters. Moreover, regional reflections of the relations could be easily observed in affairs of these two states with third parties.

Syria's support to the PKK as a foreign policy tool to balance Turkey was mentioned before. Furthermore, for Ankara, Damascus's regional policies were formed regarding the dispute with Turkey. For instance, Altunışık and Tür stated that Syria's increasing ties with Greece, Armenia and Iran was evaluated as an unfriendly act by Turkey (2006, p.235). On the other hand, Turkey's relations with other countries in the Middle East were also affected in the same context. Moreover, close relations between Turkey and Israel was the most important example of this. Terrorism, supported by Damascus government, was a common threat for both Turkey and Israel, so Turkey signed a military agreement with Israel in April 1996 (Altunışık and Tür, 2006, p. 235). Regarding Arab-Israeli conflict, this agreement could be a serious obstacle in Turk-Arab relations for Ankara however; Kurdish issue and security concerns of Turkey were prevailed as main foreign policy determiners. In the same way, Olson stated that disputes between Ankara and Damascus on water of Euphrates and Syria's relations with PKK directly affected Turkey's relations with Arab states and Iran (1997, p.189). On the other hand, this policy decision indicated Turkey would not settle with diplomatic attempts to solve its security problem, so a more coercive stance of Turkey in foreign policy would be apparent. In the same way, some scholars said that in 1990s, especially with the

effect of new international system after the Cold War and rapprochement with Israel, Turkey decided a tougher foreign policy towards Syria as result of deteriorating relations due to the its support to the PKK (Phillips, 2012, p.3), (Tocci and Walker, 2012, p.40).

Furthermore, the vicious circle in Turkey's Syria policy with regard to Kurdish issue and the water without noticing internal political changes in Ankara. For instance, Minister of Foreign Affairs Baykal stated that any expectation of Syrian side for increasing water of the Euphrates would not realize until Syria give up its support to the PKK (Olson, 1997, p.176). Thus, Turkey's decision to link Kurdish issue and water continued, Turkey chose a diplomatic way to find a solution because of regional and international balance of power.

At that point, above mentioned harder stance of Turkey was a necessity to break the equilibrium in the relations which could be explained on the context of increasing effect of TAF on the internal politics. Furthermore, Olson clearly explained the nature of this equilibrium; Turkey and Syria thought that if they concede from their goals without an obligatory deal to preserve their national interests, this situation would be a serious setback for them (1997, p.178). Moreover, Turkey had to face with a serious terrorism problem due to the PKK and had to deal with regional challenges such as instability in the northern Iraq. At that point, Turkish foreign policy makers made a policy change to break the equilibrium and take more advantageous position regarding the developments in the region. On this context, "Turkey decided to de-link the issue of water and security and began to adopt a tougher stance against Syria on the PKK question" (Altunışık and Tür, 2006, p.236). This was a logical decision for Turkey since the fighting against terrorism should be evaluated on its own context. Otherwise, as it was seen many times before that Turkey's Kurdish issue has been used a foreign policy tool by third parties to get leverage against Turkey.

The mentioned change could be easily observed in the statements of Turkish authorities. For instance, President Demirel said that Syria was giving support to terrorism and any deal based on "more water for no terrorism" was not acceptable in any case (Olson, 1997, p.183). Furthermore, in 1996, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a memorandum to Syria. Turkey demanded that Syria should halt its

support to the PKK. Otherwise, Turkey would execute its right to respond with any measure (Altunışık and Tür, 2006, p.236). These statements clearly indicated that Turkey decided to extinguish the dark shadow of its Kurdish issue over its foreign policy decisions. Otherwise, Kurdish issue could have been a part of any negotiation or bargaining with Syria or any state. This understanding of Turkish officials could be easily observed in their statements. For instance, a senior official for the National Security Council said frankly “if we solve the water problem with Syria today, tomorrow they will bring up the subject of Hatay” (Olson, 1997, p.188). Thus, Turkey’s approach on fighting against the PKK was formed on its own context since PKK could be used by any state for any issue to gain leverage against Turkey.

Finally, this brief history of relations between Turkey and Syria regarding the above mentioned issues revealed that Turkey had to solve the Gordian’s knot. As Alexander the Great did, Turkey preferred to use its sword to cut the knot. To grasp the ultimate foreign policy decision of Turkey, statements of Turkish officials and regional developments should be evaluated in a comprehensive framework. Briefly, the tension in relations between Turkey and Syria had increased because Syria did not make enough effort to improve relations. This situation was mentioned bluntly by high ranked state officials. For example, Atilla Ateş, the commander of Turkish land forces, stated that “Turkey made enough endeavour for good relations with Syria but Turkey’s patience is about to running out. Syria is the source of all kind of disorder. “Turkey has enough power to respond unfriendly acts of Syria” (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu, 2012, p.565). Furthermore, in 1 October, in his speech in GNAT, President Demirel said that “I declare once more to the world that we have the right to retaliate against Syria” (Olson, 2001, p.111). At the same day, Kıvrıkoğlu, the commander of TAF, gave a name to relations between Turkey and Syria; “there is an ‘undeclared war’ between us and Syria”.

On the other hand, the effect of regional developments should be taken into account to understand the impact of Kurdish issue on Turkish foreign policy. Thus, Turkey had to consider all variables and developments in the region since policies and acts of international and regional actors could affect Kurdish issue in many dimensions. At that point, Washington Agreement, signed on 17 September 1998, should be assessed to apprehend the reasons behind “undeclared war” of Turkey

against Syria. Furthermore, Bülent Ecevit, Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, affirmed the link between mentioned agreement and the breaking out of undeclared war. Ecevit pointed out that the signature of Washington Agreement was evaluated as an initial stage for the establishment of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Thus, Turkey's security would be under a serious threat because of increasing presence of the PKK (Aykan, 1999, p.180).

In the following period, Turkey increased its military presence in area which is close to Syria border. Statements of state officials and increasing military presence of Turkey indicated decisive stance of Ankara to cut the knot. On the other hand, Syria had to retreat from its hard-nosed position due to Turkey's determined policy. Furthermore, Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK, was deported by Syrian government. In spite of the existence of internal reasons behind Syria's retreat, the change in Turkey's policy was the main reason of that. After the expulsion of Öcalan from Syria 17 October, on 20 October 1998, Adana Agreement was signed between Turkey and Syria. Briefly, the agreement aimed to form cooperation between two parts against the PKK. On the context of the agreement, Syria terminated all kinds of links between itself and the PKK. Taking the PKK out of the political relations between Ankara and Damascus paved the way for further cooperation and establishment of strengthening political and economic relations between them.

The relations between Turkey and Syria under the shadow of the Kurdish issue clearly revealed that the fighting against PKK was not an internal matter for Turkey. On the other hand, as Aykan said that after the Gulf War, the PKK question turned into an international problem mostly and "undeclared war" was the climax of this reality (1999, p. 185). In above mentioned period, Turkey recognized that existence of the PKK could be used by any regional or international power to get leverage for any subject. Thus, Turkey's foreign policy choices were limited by its internal issues, so common theme of its foreign policy towards Syria was determined by Kurdish issue.

2.3. Iraq War in 2003 and Turkey's Relations with Iraq and Syria

Briefly, after the 9/11 attacks conducted by al-Qaeda, the US administration decided to apply "war on terror" concept. In the following process, Afghanistan War

was launched to topple down Taliban government and to destroy al-Qaeda in October 2001 by Bush administration. In the context of war on terror, Washington claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and links with some terrorist groups, so Iraq was evaluated as a threat against international peace and security. In the light of these, Iraq War was launched by the coalition forces led by the US on 20 March 2003. Therefore, changing regional dynamics as a result of Iraq War presented new security challenges for Turkey, so Iraq War will be examined as a junction point in Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraq and Syria in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. Overthrown of Saddam's administration and existence on the de facto US rule in the region, the military presence of the US in Iraq altered the forthcoming policies of neighbouring states, such as Turkey and Syria. The territorial integrity of Iraq and the potential establishment of an independent Kurdish state were main concerns of these states after ending of Saddam's rule (Sarı Ertem, 2011, p. 62). In this part, Iraq War's some significant sections related with Turkey's foreign policy in the context of the thesis will be discussed.

2.3.1. Turkey's Iraq Policy From 2003 to 2007 in the Context of Kurdish Issue

Since the very beginning, territorial integrity of Iraq is one of the main security concerns of Turkey, so Turkey supported diplomatic attempts to resolve the dispute between the US and Iraq. In this frame, Turkey attempted to bring together states in the region besides diplomatic efforts were initiated by Turkey to assure Baghdad to back down (Altunışık, 2007, p. 76). Furthermore, as the most significant diplomatic attempt of Ankara to resolve the dispute, the first meeting of Iraq's Neighbouring Countries Initiative was organized on 23 January 2003 with the participation of Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt and Jordan (Aym Tarihi, 2003). Therefore, Ankara was aware that potential strengthening of Kurdish nationalism or renascent PKK terrorism were the possible outcomes of Iraq War, so at the same time, Turkey started to negotiate with the US for its role in a possible war in Iraq territory (Altunışık, 2007, p.76). During negotiations, Turkey's main concerns were the territorial integrity of Iraq and the future of northern Iraq, so Turkey aimed to

¹ See more information about Iraq War in 2003; Hinnebusch, R. (2007). The American Invasion of Iraq: Causes and Consequences. *Perception*, 12(1), 9-27.

increase its military capacity in the region to prevent any threat for its security. Ultimately, three Memorandums of Understanding related with political, economic and military issues were signed (Altunışık, 2006, p. 189).

In spite of hard negotiations with the US, GNAT rejected the motion that authorizes the government to send Turkish troops and to allow foreign military troops in Turkish territory, introduced by JDP government, on 1 March 2003. In a retrospective perception, decision of the Parliament on 1 March 2003 was a turning point for Turkey's foreign policy since in the following process, Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism became the focal point of Turkey's Iraq policy. On the other hand, another motion which was enacted by GNAT on 19 March 2003 to allow the government to send troops to northern Iraq and to open Turkish air space for military purpose of the US (Bölükbaşı, 2008, p. 102). However, it could be said that the second motion was ineffective attempt for Turkish side since the deployment of Turkish troops in the northern Iraq was rejected by the US as a result of the close cooperation between the US and Kurdish groups in Iraq. In the last instance, rejection of the motion by GNAT and the relative stability in the northern Iraq became the reasons behind increasing cooperation of the US and Kurds and decreasing the effect of Turkey on the northern Iraq, so Turkey had to face with serious problems in terms of its political and security concerns. Therefore, the Suleimaniah incident which was the arrest of Turkish Special Forces in northern Iraq by the US forces on 4 July 2003 was a significant indicator for the future of Turkey's northern Iraq policy. Basically, Turkey would have serious limitations to affect the developments in northern Iraq and to use military means to fight against the PKK. At the same time, Özcan claim that "Suleimaniah incident was a clear sign that the US favoured the Iraqi Kurds over its NATO ally" (2011, p. 75). On the other hand, reducing influence of Turkey to the developments in northern Iraq and limiting military ability of TAF were seen an opportunity by PKK, so, on 1 June 2004, PKK brought the ceasefire that announced on 1 September 1999 by PKK unilaterally (Ayın Tarihi, 2004). Hereby, the rejection of 1 March motion by GNAT had caused a political crisis between Turkey and the US since increasing cost and duration of the war was linked with the rejection of 1 March motion by Bush administration. Therefore, the deteriorating relations between Turkey and the US seriously affected

Turkey's Iraq policy in the following period. Particularly, Suleimaninah incident was a significant example in order to understand the impact of Turkey's relations with the US on its Iraq policy. Suleimaniah incident could be examined as both a retaliation for the motion by the US and as an indicator of new security challenges for Turkey in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

Concerning political life in Iraq, Kurds obtained significant positions which gave them opportunity to affect Iraq's policies. For instance, Talabani was elected as the president of Iraq and Barzani was named as the president of KRG in 2005 (Uzgel, 2013, p. 283). Furthermore, Sarı Ertem said that "in January 2005 elections in Iraq, the Sunni Arabs won only 6 per cent of the parliament seats while the Kurds won 27 per cent. With this result, Ankara specifically understood that the Kurds would have a strong say in the new Iraq" (2011, p. 62). In the same year, the constitution of Iraq was approved which legalised the power of regional governments. It could be stated that while Kurds acquired new gains to strengthen their position in domestic and regional level, Turkey's political and military capacity was limited as a result of rejection of 1 March Motion.

In the following period, as a result of increasing PKK attacks from northern Iraq against Turkey, a cross border military operation of TAF towards PKK came up; however, Turkey did not make a military operation against PKK in northern Iraq due to the opposition of the US. Tür and Han stated that in spite of Turkey's security concerns, the US kept away from any step against the PKK in the northern Iraq since the US gave importance to the stability of the region as part of its Iraq strategy. In this context, Turkey's Iraq policy was shaped under the influence of security-oriented approach (2011, p. 17). Furthermore, Sarı Ertem stated that Turkey could not get any concrete support from the US for its fight against terrorism up until 2006 by emphasizing the US concerns about possible Turkish military intervention in northern Iraq (2011, p. 59). Eventually, as a result of Turkey's persistent position for a military operation, a triple mechanism for fighting against PKK was established with participation of Turkey, the US and Iraq. This is quite unsuccessful and ineffective mechanism to fulfil Turkey's security concerns since it could not present any military and political solution for the existence of PKK in northern Iraq. On the other hand, the US presented establishment of official ties between Ankara and Erbil

as a solution for fighting against PKK (Uzgel, 2013, p. 286). At that point, it should be remembered that on 20 October 2005, Emre Taner, head of National Intelligence Organization, met with Barzani in Iraq. In the meeting, Turkey demanded the KRG would take action against PKK in cooperation with Turkey and this cooperation between Turkey and KRG would continue until the dissolve of PKK (Tahincioğlu, 2009). Therefore, it could be easily argued that the outcome of this meeting in 2005 was not fruitful since in the following process, as mentioned above, PKK attacks from northern Iraq against Turkey increased, so Turkey strengthened its traditional security-oriented position towards KRG and PKK in its Iraq policy. Therefore, in the period between 2003 and 2007, it was clear that Turkey had to take into account the changes as the result of Iraq War. The frame of Turkey's Iraq policy remained same in regard to Kurdish issue; however, increasing power of Kurd groups and escalation of PKK attacks from northern Iraq emerged as the challenges for Turkish foreign policy-makers. In this context, the consolidation of KRG's autonomous structure or the possibility of transformation of KRG into an independent state and PKK's safe haven in northern Iraq were immense threats for Turkey's national security and interest, so Turkey's Iraq policy was formed mostly by focusing on developments in northern Iraq in that period.

2.3.2. Turkey's Syria Policy From 2003 to 2007 in the Context of Kurdish Issue

After Adana Agreement on 28 October 1998 and the capture of PKK leader Öcalan, the normalization process of relations between Turkey and Syria had started with respect to Kurdish issue. At the same time, strengthening economic and political bond between Ankara and Damascus paved the way for the rapprochement of two states. On the other hand, Iraq War changed the approach of Syria towards Kurdish issue since overthrown of Saddam and augmenting Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq terminated the possibility of exploitation of Kurdish issue by Syria. On the contrary, the dissolve of territorial integrity of Iraq and the possibility of establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the region could be an immense threat for Syrian national interest due to its Kurdish population.

At that point, Qamishli uprising on 12 March 2004 was began at a football match between fans of Kurdish team and Sunni team which lead to further uprisings

throughout Kurdish areas of Syria (Gunter, 2014, p. 93). It could be said that Qamishli uprising happened as a result of growing influence of Kurds groups in northern Iraq, so Syria had to cooperate with Turkey in terms of Kurdish issue for its own sake. In this period, PKK was not a political instrument but a national threat for Syria, so with the effect of warming relations between Turkey and Syria, Damascus contribute to Turkey's fighting against terrorism.

In the period between 2003 and 2007, 73 PKK terrorist was extradited by Syria to Turkey. Furthermore, an attack, committed by PKK in Bingöl in July 2005 was condemned by Damascus which was the first official condemn of Syrian government. Moreover, in April 2007, Turkey and Syria made a joint military operation against PKK in Syrian territory. In the same year, Assad expressed that Syria would give support to Turkey for its cross-border military operations in northern Iraq (Yeşilyurt, 2013, p.414). In the light of these developments, while Turkey maintained its security-oriented approach in its relations with Syria in terms of Kurdish issue, Syria had to appropriate more cooperative approach towards Turkey because of its security concerns. Therefore, after Iraqi War, increasing PKK activities in the region and taking better position of Kurdish groups in northern Iraq became a factor that contributed the rapprochement between Turkey and Syria.

In conclusion, a specific issue becomes an "international security issue" when policy makers designate it as more important than other issues and it should take absolute priority (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, 24). In Turkish case, policy makers considered Kurdish issue as an international security issue and Turkish foreign policy regarding Iraq shaped around this perspective. The core of the security alert came from the immediate threat of PKK. As it is argued by Altunışık and Tür, PKK posed a significant challenge to the territorial integrity of Turkey, and therefore Ankara increasingly viewed its foreign relations through the lens of that issue, including those with Syria (2006, p. 233). The crucial point is that although certain responses to security threats may not always put forward disadvantageous position for a state, the Kurdish issue turned into a clear example of it in terms of Turkish case. At that point, the deteriorating relations with Syria upon Hatay and water disputes gained a new dimension and complexity when Syrian side realized that this is the Achilles' heel of Turkey. In this sense, since it is used by leverage against

Turkey, it became almost impossible to consider Kurdish issue within the narrow framework of Turkish internal politics and this challenge tighten the noose for Turkey to solve it on its own measures. Therefore, the Kurdish issue had to stay within the intersection of Turkish foreign policy with respect to Iraq and Syria at the same time.

CHAPTER 3

TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH IRAQ AND KRG IN 2007-2011

As explained in the first chapter, Turkish foreign policy makers applied security-oriented realist approach in its relations with Iraq and Syria due to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism since 1991. Especially, Turkey's approach to political developments in northern Iraq and the establishment of the KRG were significant examples of the security-oriented understanding of Turkey because of its security concerns. On the other hand, the period between 2007 and 2011 could be seen as the transformation term of the effect of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq and particularly KRG.

In accordance with the first chapter, the second chapter will be based on Turkey's relations with KRG by focusing on changing security perception of Ankara. Furthermore, the impact of Turkey's concerns on economy and energy will be discussed in order to make a comprehensive analysis of new foreign policy perception of Turkey towards KRG in regard to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. Moreover, in this chapter, Turkey's relations with Syria will not be examined in the scope of the thesis since Kurdish issue became a security threat for Damascus after the Iraq War in 2003 and PKK could not be used as a political card by Syria against Turkey. On the contrary, as mentioned above, the cooperation between Turkey and Syria against PKK which began after Adana Agreement in 1998 and the capture of Öcalan had consolidated in post-Iraq War period. In this context, after the overthrow of Saddam administration, increasing influence of Kurds in Iraq's political life and strengthening position of PKK in the northern Iraq has been included to the reasons behind the rapprochement between Turkey and Syria.

The perception analysis requires a multilevel way of considering in order to comprehend the whole picture to a certain extent. Consequently, in the first part of this chapter, domestic and regional developments will be analysed in order to understand the change of security understanding considering the formation of

Turkish foreign policy in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. In the second part of the chapter, the economic and energy concerns of Turkey will be analysed as a part of the changing relations between Turkey and KRG. These material concerns of Turkey played a significant role in the alteration of Turkey's security-oriented approach to KRG in spite of continuing security concerns of Turkey.

3.1. Changing Security Understanding of Turkey

In the period between 2007 and 2011, Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism had continued to be major security concerns of Turkey; however, approach and methods of Turkish foreign policy makers had changed to deal with these security concerns. Although changing is a process that should not be considered over clear-cut events in total, there was one specific event that created some significant remarks. In this sense, the Dağlıca Raid should be evaluated as a turning point in order to understand the process of the changing security understanding of Ankara. On 21 October 2007, PKK conducted an assault to the Dağlıca military post. PKK that infiltrated Turkish territory from northern Iraq killed 12 Turkish soldiers. In the following period, a serious indignation happened in Turkish society and the JDP government had to face with severe criticisms and pressure for a cross border military operation against the PKK existence in northern Iraq. Furthermore, a new bill that allows the government to send Turkish troops to make cross border operation in northern Iraq was approved by the GNAT to fight against terrorism and to allay the pressure on the government (Sarı Ertem, 2011, p. 59). On the other hand, it should be noted that Turkey chose more comprehensive understanding in terms of counter terrorism, so military operation was not seen as the sole option. Özcan stated that the approach of Turkey after the assaults of PKK on the Dağlıca military post in 2007 and on the Aktütün military post in 2008 revealed a new understanding of Turkey since it could be argued that diplomatic means were used effectively along with military means (2011, p. 76). This perception required diplomatic moves to a certain extent. In this context, Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to the US should be seen as an important attempt to fight against the PKK in northern Iraq as the US had refused any Turkish military operation in northern Iraq to preserve the stability of the country since 2003. Changing conjuncture required different reactions and tools to cope with the

situation. Therefore, Turkey needed to get the US cooperation by using diplomatic ways to deal with its security concerns. Hale expressed that during the meeting of Prime Minister Erdoğan with President Bush on 5 November 2007, PKK was defined as the common enemy of the US, Turkey and Iraq by President Bush. That was a dramatic change in the US policy. Furthermore, the US decided to supply real time intelligence to the TAF and to establish a tripartite coordination mechanism to counter PKK terrorism (2009, p. 147). Therefore, Turkey completed the diplomatic preparation of a military operation into northern Iraq by getting consent of the US. In diplomatic framework, Turkey started to present its aim and intention clearly before the Dağlica Raid and afterwards. Efeğil stated that in order to take a load off the other actors' mind, Ankara declared its aims clearly: to finish PKK terrorism and to destroy all infrastructure of PKK in northern Iraq accordingly. Ankara also expressed that it would not become a threat for the territorial integrity of Iraq or it did not mean invasion of northern Iraq (2008, p. 57). Thus, in the light of these, Turkey presented its concerns and aims apparently to all related actors, thus diplomatic attempts were used to prepare a ground for the development of the new security approach of Turkey towards Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in its northern Iraq policy.

At that point, the decisions of National Security Council that were taken on 21 February 2008 should be examined to understand the changing approach of Turkey towards KRG and Kurdish issue. NSC emphasized the importance of territorial and political integrity of Iraq and stated that the cooperation between Turkey and Iraq on political, economic, commercial, cultural and military fields and energy sector should be developed (MGK, 2008). It could be argued that Turkey preserved its security concerns related with Iraq and KRG in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, on the other hand, developing different aspects of the relations could give the way for new opportunities to deal with its vital problems. This was a bidirectional move that was unusual and flexible in terms of "traditional" perception of Kurdish issue policy of Turkey.

As mentioned before, diplomatic means were used as the complimentary of the military means by Turkey after Dağlica Raid. Therefore, on 21 February 2008, the Operation Sun was launched by TAF into northern Iraq which was the first cross border operation in Iraq after Iraq War in 2003. Approximately 10000 Turkish troops

joined the cross border operations and advanced 10 km from the border into northern Iraq. Furthermore, Prime Minister Erdoğan expressed that “the Operation Sun launched a new level in the attempts to isolate PKK. PKK is the only objective of the operation. Iraqi people are not our targets”. At the same line, President Gül expressed that “the Operation Sun is not against Iraqi people but PKK. Turkey gives importance to territorial integrity of Iraq” (hurriyet.com.tr, 2008). At that point high level narratives were used to clarify Turkish stand point. Thus, these statements emphasized that the operation was not launched against the KRG and other Kurdish groups in northern Iraq but solely PKK. In military aspect, the organizational infrastructure of PKK in northern Iraq was destroyed as a result of the operation and it was ended on 29 February 2008 (Efeğil, 2008, p. 60). During the operation, the US provided technical assistance and intelligence to TAF and military units of KRG retreated from the operation field, so diplomatic initiatives of Turkey and well-defined goals of the operation gave the way for a suitable environment for the cross-border operation. This was a clear example of the policy combination of complementary understanding of militaristic and diplomatic tools.

After the Operation Sun, the meeting of NSC was held on 24 April 2008 which was significant to understand the changing understanding of Turkish foreign policy-makers towards KRG in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. According to NSC decisions, the contact and advisement with all groups and formation in Iraq was examined as beneficial (MGK, 2008). This decision indicated an apparent change in the mind of Turkish policymakers since KRG and Kurdish groups were evaluated as a part of security concerns of Turkey in the context of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. On the other hand, the decision of NSC revealed that Turkey accepted KRG and Kurdish groups in Iraq as part of Iraq’s political life which was a significant change regarding traditional Turkish foreign policy understanding. As a continuation of this decision, the Chief Advisor to Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and the Special Representative to Iraq Murat Özçelik paid a visit to Baghdad on 1 May 2008. Within the context to this visit, Turkish delegation met with Iraq President Talabani and KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani (Ergan and Ekşi, 2008). It was a breakthrough development for the relations between Turkey and KRG since it was the first official meeting with KRG. It could

be stated that Turkish foreign policymakers decided to examine the relations with KRG by using different means, however; it does not mean that security concerns of Turkey was solved. Furthermore, on 3 October 2008, PKK conducted an assault against the Aktütün military post and 15 Turkish soldiers were killed in this terror attack. However, Turkey did not change its new security understanding in its relations with KRG even though this assault was realized by PKK elements in northern Iraq. Moreover, Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu expressed that a new vision was formed after the Dağlıca Raid and a new political understanding was launched to break the vicious circle in October 2009 (Özcan, 2011, p.77). Therefore, the JDP government continued to stand behind the newly formed security understanding of Turkey in spite of ongoing PKK attacks and harsh criticisms from the opposition.

At that point, significant domestic developments accompanied the change of security understanding of foreign policymakers. In 2009, National Unity and Brotherhood Project, which was publicly known as “the opening process”, was launched to solve domestic aspect of Kurdish issue. This political initiative could be seen as a historical decision regarding the traditional approach towards Kurdish issue of Turkish policymakers. Due to the scope of this thesis, the opening process will not be examined. However, it should be noted that altering perceptions and methods towards domestic aspect of Kurdish issue was realized in the same line with the changing foreign policy perception of Turkey towards KRG in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK. On the other hand, while the opening process was interrupted because of some domestic developments in this period, the transformation of foreign policy making towards Kurdish issue had continued to be based on before mentioned new understanding. Furthermore, the establishment of the Turkish Consulate General in Erbil on 11 March 2010 was a clear evidence of the determination of Turkish foreign policy makers since this was a huge step regarding the developing relations between Turkey and KRG. It also could be interpreted that recognition of KRG by Turkey as a political entity in Iraq was reflected by the opening of the consulate general.

In the light of these, the historical breakthrough in the relations between Turkey and KRG realized on 3-4 June 2010 with the visit of Masoud Barzani to

Ankara which paved the way for deepening of the relations (Erkmen, 2015, p. 178). Since Iraqi War in 2003, this was the first visit of Barzani to Ankara that was realized as result of the invitation of Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly fighting against PKK terrorism, all necessary steps that will pave the way for further development of Turkey's relations with Iraq and KRG will be taken in the scope of the visit of Barzani and some KRG officials (mfa.gov.tr, 2010). These statements indicated the basic structure of the period between 2007 and 2011 regarding the new security understanding of Turkey. On the one hand, the importance of the fighting against the PKK terrorism was emphasized in the process of the development of bilateral relations, so the effect of Kurdish issue and PKK on Turkey's relations with Iraq and KRG had continued. However, the establishment of the official ties between Turkey and KRG was a clear example of Turkish foreign policymakers' changing of perception and method in the formation of Turkish foreign policy.

3.1.1. Reasons of New Security Understanding of Turkey

A brief history of the period between 2007 and 2011 was examined in order to understand the transformation of Turkey's relations with KRG regarding the effect of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on the formation of Turkish foreign policy. Moreover, the mind set of foreign policy makers should be examined to form a comprehensive analysis of the foreign policy understanding between 2007 and 2011. Therefore, in this part of the second chapter, the impact of security concerns in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism will be discussed by focusing on the perception of foreign policy makers and new foreign policy goals of Turkey.

First of all, the role of KRG in the fighting against the PKK terrorism was re-evaluated by Turkish foreign policy makers and it should be seen as a starting point of the new security understanding of Turkey. Sarı Ertem said that Turkish foreign policy makers became aware of the fact that without the support of KRG, an effective fighting against the PKK terrorism was not possible (2011, p. 60). At the same way, Özcan expressed that the new approach of Turkey of the rapprochement with KRG means that Turkey noticed that without the contribution of the KRG, forming an ultimate solution for PKK terrorism would be highly tough for Turkey

(2010, p. 121). Thus, these statements clearly presented that the security concerns of Turkey with respect to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism was still the main determinant of its foreign policy towards KRG. For instance, Erkmen claimed that in the transformation period in 2007, the security aspect of Turkey's relation with Iraqi Kurds were as important as previous periods (2015, pp. 173-174). Therefore, Ankara decided to make cooperation with KRG to find solution for its security concerns instead of the extensive military campaigns. However, not surprisingly, there were also the ones who expressed the traditional repercussions of the former understanding of Turkish foreign policy makers. At that point, some scholars discussed the impact of military solutions to find an ultimate solution to end PKK terrorism. For example, Gözkaman (2012, p. 166) and Oktav (2010, p. 58) argued that the efficiency of military solutions such as cross border operations or air strikes were not seen enough by Ankara, so the importance of the cooperation with KRG was accepted by Ankara for the solution of PKK terrorism. Ankara needed new solutions for old problems without destroying the main pillars of its foreign policy within the scope of the political conjuncture. Therefore, the approach of Turkey towards KRG was still based on a security-oriented understanding; however, Turkish foreign policy makers perceived the rapprochement with KRG as a part of the solution for Turkey's security concerns. For example, Erkmen claimed that the designation of the change in Turkey's policy towards KRG was approved by the decisions of NSC which reveals the new approach of Turkey was based on security (2015, p. 180). At that point, it should be noted that the new security understanding could not be examined by focusing merely the effect of PKK terrorism, so foreign policy understanding of Turkey and JDP between 2007 and 2011 should be analysed with respect to Kurdish issue.

In the period between 2007 and 2011, the new security understanding of Turkey in terms of the relations with KRG was formed within the context of foreign policy understanding of JDP and Davutoğlu. In this sense, JDP redefined Turkey's security concerns and threat perception related with Kurdish issue and PKK. Davutoğlu claimed that Turkey cannot preserve its security and stability without existence of security and stability in the region, so Turkey should prefer more active and assertive foreign policy as a constructive actor in the region (p. 79, 2008).

Furthermore, Aras expressed that changing territorial understanding of Turkey influenced Turkey's relations with its neighbours, in such a manner that close ties with neighbouring states reduced the effect of threat perception of Turkey in the formation of its Middle East policy (p. 129, 2009). In the light of these, "zero problem policy" of JDP was developed to find solution for old problems and to prevent the possibility of new problems with neighbours. Therefore, regarding Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria in 1990, JDP had to redefine the meaning of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in its foreign policy. For instance, Kalın evaluated Kurdish issue as an obstacle in domestic and regional politics for Turkey to develop a more liberal foreign policy in the Middle East (p. 32, 2008). Davutoğlu saw PKK as a factor that limited Turkey's opportunities to spread its sphere of influence in Middle East as well (p. 81, 2008). Thus, these statements revealed clearly that JDP tried to change the impact of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on the foreign relations of Turkey since this impact was perceived as an obstacle for the foreign policy goals of Turkey. In this perspective, JDP tried to apply a foreign policy that gives importance the cooperation with all actors in Middle East. The rapprochement between Turkey and KRG realized within this understanding in spite of continuing existence of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. In addition, Oğuzlu said that the approach of Turkey towards Kurdish groups in northern Iraq transformed from realist exclusionary perception into liberal integrationist perception (2012, p. 35). In order to get the cooperation of KRG in the fighting against PKK terrorism, this new perception toward KRG was applied since according to Oğuzlu, Turkey had to prevent the negative impact of the existence of PKK in northern Iraq on its relations with Kurds in northern Iraq to establish healthy relations with them (2012, p. 35).

At that point, the general framework of Turkey's Middle East policy that was designed by JDP and Davutoğlu could be a useful tool to understand the theoretical reasons of its new security understanding. In this sense, Davutoğlu's foreign policy strategy towards Middle East is based on four main pillars; namely security for everyone, dialogue as a means of solving crises, economic interdependence and cultural coexistence and plurality (2008, pp. 84-85). As a matter of fact that discussing Kurdish issue referring these principles is a real rupture for foreign policy-makers. Nevertheless, these four pillars have direct relation with the security

concerns of Turkey due to the instability in Middle East, so JDP did not redefine old problem but constructed new operative foreign policy tools. At that point, Kalın's statement was a significant example; he argued that "Ankara has no choice but to follow an effective regional policy to contain the Kurdish issue before it becomes an issue of 'Kurdistan' for Turkey" (2008, p. 33). Furthermore, Aras claimed that Davutoğlu's foreign policy perception targets to involve all regional actors to construct a broad coalition for solution of problems (pp. 134-135). Thus, it could be easily seen that Turkey's security concerns due to PKK terrorism preserved its place in the mind of Turkish foreign policy makers in spite of the changing contours of Turkish foreign policy, so the relations with actors in the region were reformed by regarding this reality.

Secondly, in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, a significant example of the interaction between domestic policy and foreign policy could be examined in the period between 2007 and 2011. As it was mentioned before, the opening process was launched to solve the Kurdish issue in domestic politics in 2009. On the other hand, the sphere of influence of the opening process was not limited with the domestic politics of Turkey. The formation of the new security understanding of Turkey towards KRG was also affected by the domestic developments related with the opening process. In this respect, Erkmen said that in the initial period of the opening process, if a marked improvement in fighting against the PKK could be achieved, KRG would be part of the process (2015, p. 180). In the same way, Efeğil claimed that Turkish policy makers were aware of that without support of KRG, forming an ultimate solution to the domestic aspect of Kurdish issue would not be possible since Turkey needs to establish close ties with the KRG to affect the development in the region (2008, p. 63). The reason of these statements is that Masoud Barzani and Barzan tribe have a considerable influence on many Kurds who are living in southeast part of Turkey. Particularly, for conservative Kurds in Turkey, Barzani is a significant political and religious figure, so Turkish policy makers perceived the strengthening ties with KRG as a crucial contribution for the solution of domestic Kurdish issue of Turkey.

In the light of these, there was a mutual interaction between the opening process and the developing relations between Turkey and KRG. On the one hand,

developments in a domestic political issue produced an effect on a foreign policy issue as Özcan expressed that even though the opening process was an issue of discussion in the scope of domestic politics, it affected Turkey's relations with Iraq, particularly with Iraqi Kurds positively (2010, pp. 116-117). On the other hand, the close ties between Ankara and Erbil paved the way for a significant contribution of KRG for the solution of domestic Kurdish issue of Turkey. At that point, Oğuzlu claimed that with beginning of the rapprochement between Turkey and Kurdish groups in northern Iraq, the messages of the Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq towards Kurdish political movement in Turkey started to change and it was a remarkable development. In these messages, it was expressed that the Kurdish issue should be solved within the framework of territorial integrity of Turkey and democratization process and it was advised that terror activities should be avoided (2012, p. 36). Therefore, domestic political concerns of JDP had a significant role on the formation of Turkey's foreign policy toward KRG, so Turkey's threat perception and security understanding related with the KRG had changed in the period between 2007 and 2011. As a result of this, KRG was seen as a part of the opening process by Turkish policy makers. In the same line, Ankara decided to develop its foreign relations with Erbil to influence its Kurdish population for the success of the process.

Consequently, in terms of fighting against the PKK terrorism, Turkish policy makers decided to change the security understanding of Turkey towards KRG. In former period, KRG and Kurdish groups in northern Iraq were seen within the context of a security oriented understanding, so KRG was perceived as a threat for the national integrity of Turkey. However, in the period between 2007 and 2011, Turkish policy makers started to appraise the relations with KRG as a useful leverage in the fighting against PKK terrorism in northern Iraq. It could be easily stated that the foreign policy understanding and goals of JDP had a significant role in the formation of this new understanding. The cooperation with all actors in the region was accepted as a crucial necessity to vanquish security concerns of Turkey. On the other hand, the opening process was started to find an ultimate solution for the domestic Kurdish issue of Turkey. In this respect, JDP aims to use the developing ties with Erbil to get the support of its Kurdish population. Thus, in the light of these,

the rapprochement between Ankara and Erbil could be possible in spite of the continuing effects of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

3.1.2. The Impact of Regional Developments on Turkish Foreign Policy

After the ousting of Saddam, Iraq has experienced a political transition process which made regional and international actors more influential on Iraq, so regional developments related with the future of Iraq gained importance for Turkish foreign policy makers. In this context, Turkey had to face with new foreign policy and security challenges, so a new paradigm in the formation of foreign policy towards all actors was an inevitable necessity for foreign policy makers. At that point, the effect of the regional developments on Turkey's Iraq policy was one of the reasons of the rapprochement between Ankara and Erbil and the changing security understanding of Turkey despite the fact that Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism was effective as the major security concerns of Turkey.

At the beginning, the US – Iraq Status of Forces Agreement which means that the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraqi territory until 2011 was approved by Iraqi parliament in 2008 (BBC, 2008). It could be said that after redeployment of the US troops, the internal and external dynamics would cause serious developments for the future of Iraq and the states in the region. Particularly, in the period after 2011, Iraq could be a more important area as a result of regional power rivalry. At that point, it should be also remembered that Iran has a serious influence on Iraqi politics because majority of Iraqi people are Shiite, so Iran has different means to important political figures in Iraq. Furthermore, political parties dominated by Shi'a identity were highly powerful in Iraqi political structure. Therefore, Turkish foreign policy makers thought that after the withdrawal of the US troops, Turkey would need to make cooperation with Kurdish groups in northern Iraq to preserve its influence on Iraqi politics. Thus, the withdrawal of the US troops and the increasing Iranian influence on Iraq were related regional developments for Turkish foreign policy makers.

These regional developments had a significant impact on the Turkey's Iraq policy and approach toward regional actors. For instance, Özcan claimed that the influence of Turkey on Iraq has increased after the withdrawal decision of the US administration. Particularly, due to more effective role of Iran in the region after the

Iraq War in 2003, Turkey was seen as the sole power to balance the influence of Iran (2011, p. 89). Similarly, Duman expressed that the US supported Turkey to take active role to balance Iranian influence on Iraq which was one of the most important factors in the formation of Turkey's Iraq policy (2011, p. 24). In the light of these, it could be said that the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraqi territory and the increasing influence of Iran on Iraq were regional dimensions of the changing security understanding of Turkey toward KRG since Kurdish groups were only powerful actors who Turkey could make cooperation to balance the Iranian influence. For instance, Sari Ertem claimed that with regards to the regional power rivalry between Ankara and Tehran, the quick progress of Iran to enhance the relations with the KRG caused the change of Turkey's traditional prudent approach toward the northern Iraq (2011, p. 64). At the same way, Oğuzlu expressed that Turkey started to cooperate with Sunni and Kurds groups in Iraq much more to prevent the change of the balance of power in Iraqi politics on the behalf of Shi'a groups which was one of the reasons of the rapprochement between Ankara and Erbil (2012, pp. 35-36). Furthermore, the US supported the developing relations between Turkey and KRG by regarding the future of Iraq and the region. Park (2012, p. 102) and Oktav (2010, pp.61-62) expressed that the US has provided background support for Turkey's efforts to improve its relations with KRG as well as Iraq. According to the US officials, the developing relations of Turkey with Iraq and KRG could be useful for the regional stability and to curb the influence of Iran on Iraqi politics.

Consequently, in the post-Iraqi War period, it could be clearly argued that the impact of Iran on the Middle East and particularly Iraq was seriously consolidated. In addition to that, the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraqi territory completely could cause a possible deterioration of the stability of Iraq or a serious expansion of Iran's sphere of influence in Iraq. In the light of these, Turkish foreign policy makers have changed Turkey's approach toward KRG by focusing on its regional interest and security vision. As the result of that, in order to balance Iranian influence on Iraq and get impact on it, Turkey decided to develop the relations with KRG, so the approach of Ankara toward Erbil was determined by Turkey's regional interest and aims instead of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

3.2. Turkey's Economic Interests and Energy Policies and its Relations with KRG

Regarding the previous parts of this thesis, the security dimension of the Turkish foreign policy towards KRG was analysed. However, in order to complete the picture and have a comprehensive perspective, the economic factors and policies should be added to the security analysis as well. The forthcoming parts will be focused upon the economic interests of Turkey in the region and the focal point of the enquiry will be based on the energy policies.

3.2.1. Turkey's Economic Interests and its Foreign Policy Understanding

Although foreign policy may be considered as a subject apart from political and economic dynamics of the domestic politics at first glance, political and economic dynamics became the part of decision making process in the foreign policy. Foreign policy formation is a complex task that requires extensive consideration of all elements that are related to states as a whole. In this sense, economy, as a crucial integral part of the politics and policy formation, is not an exception. Furthermore, some scholars claimed that foreign policy cannot be analysed without taking into account especially economic dynamics. In this context, Hale argues that states as political entities will lose their influence on the economic links at the international fora, however; individual decisions of businessman and consumers will be main determiners of these economic links in the future. As international actors, sovereign states' monopoly on economic issues has vanished in the contemporary international system (2000, p. 28). In the same way, retired Turkish Ambassador İskit expressed that nowadays, foreign relations and economic relations could not be separated from each other as there is a mutual interaction between them. In every foreign policy decision, there is an element to protect economic interests as well as in every economic activity, there is a concern to support foreign policy or to be in harmony with it. Economic relations could be used as a pressure mechanism to affect the decisions of other states as well as it could be an influential positive tool for the solution of political problems (2001). Furthermore, Kirişçi stated that foreign policy turned into a domestic matter since employment and wealth production are crucial concerns in addition to democratization process and

identity issue in the formation of foreign policy (2009, p. 39). In this perspective, in order to form a comprehensive analysis of the rapprochement between Turkey and KRG, the effect of the economic interest and energy policies of Turkey should be examined by focusing on domestic and regional economic dynamics.

Primarily, Altunışık and Martin expressed that reformation or alteration of economic system also could be a reason of foreign policy change. The export-oriented economic strategy has influenced foreign policy goals of Turkey since the spread of Anatolian bourgeoisie's influence in the new markets became one of the crucial concerns of Turkish foreign policy-makers, thus new approaches and tools are used by JDP in Turkey's Middle East policy (2011, pp. 578-579). Therefore, in the period between 2007 and 2011, Turkish foreign policy makers diversified their foreign policy aims and interests in the relations with KRG. This understanding could not be achieved with evaluating KRG by regarding solely security perspective. For instance, Kirişçi expressed that the impact of various economic actors was among the reasons of serious difference between Operation Sun in February 2008 and the other military campaigns in the 1990s. Particularly, the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and different Turkish companies operating in KRG took significant role to affect Turkish government about the scope of the operation (2009, p. 47). This was an important claim since it means that in spite of existence of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, economic interest of Turkey in the northern Iraq has caused re-assessment of KRG in a broader perspective. Later on, Kirişçi claimed that during the Operation Sun in 2008, the concerns of TAF related with civilians and civilian infrastructure in the region and JDP's attempts to hold open trading routes to northern Iraq should be seen as a result of the impact of Turkey's economic considerations (2009, p. 48). Moreover, it could be seen that the impact of Turkey's economic interest and goals in northern Iraq was not limited in military operations. It was a part of the changing general framework of Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraq and especially KRG, so the impact and the magnitude of the commercial relations between Turkey and KRG should be understood. In this perspective, Özcan said "the stress on economic factors has contributed to a diversification of relations with Iraq and we have witnessed a transition from the security-dominated policy of 1990s to a policy dominated by economic considerations" (2011, p. 86). In existence

of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, Turkey's security concerns related with northern Iraq will continue however; it could be said that its economic interest has emerged as an important factor that diversify the relations between Ankara and Erbil.

The magnitude of the commercial relations between Turkey and KRG should be noted in order to understand the impact of these relations on Turkish foreign policy. A brief analysis of the trade relations of them will reveal the cause and effect relationship of increasing trade relations and the rapprochement between Turkey and KRG. At this juncture, Sarı Ertem expressed that thanks to the comparative stability in the region, the northern Iraq is a significant market for Turkish companies. In the second half of 2000s, the trade volume between Ankara and Erbil has come up to 5 billion US dollars which was two time more than the trade volume between Turkey and Greece (2011, p. 64). Along the same line, Erkmen said that as an example of heavy increase in the trade relations, while 800 trucks were passing from Habur border gate in October 2008, this number increased to 3000 in January 2009. It was seen that the efforts made in 2007 and 2008 to prepare the infrastructure of the economic relations started to produce result (2015, p. 177). Furthermore, Turkey's economic interests in northern Iraq were limited with solely trade relations. Approximately, 15.000 Turkish workers are working in northern Iraq and especially Erbil, and Turkish corporations compose of 60 percent of the foreign companies in the northern Iraq (Gunter, 2011, p. 105). Therefore, the political stability in northern Iraq and reconstruction of economic structure of KRG in post-War period made the northern Iraq a significant trade market and employment opportunity for Turkish worker, so Turkey's economic interest increased its influence on Turkish foreign policy toward KRG. This situation could be easily observed by focusing on economic aspect of bilateral relations between Ankara and Baghdad or Ankara and Erbil. For instance, Özcan expressed that the economic operations of Turkey in the northern Iraq has begun to influence its foreign policy towards this region. Prime Minister Erdoğan paid a visit to Iraq with the participation of 9 ministers and 48 memorandums of understanding was signed by Ankara and Iraq to increase cooperation of these two countries (2011, p. 84). In the same line, Gunter claimed that "on 29 March 2011, Erdoğan became the first Turkish Prime Minister to visit the KRG, where he energetically promoted increased business initiatives between the

two sides” (2011, p. 105). In the light of these, it could be argued that Ankara was aware of the importance of the economic relations with KRG because of the region’s political stability and economic potential. On the one hand, as Kirişçi argues, the economic considerations and commercial relations became one of the major determiners of Turkey’s foreign policy toward northern Iraq. In this perspective, Turkey acted as a trading state in its relations with KRG, so the diversification of the relations affected the traditional security approach of Turkey. Thus, the correlation between developing political relations and trade volume could be easily observed which presented the impact of economic considerations and interests of Turkey on its foreign policy toward KRG. On the other hand, it should be noted that increasing mutual economic relations of two actors may cause the interdependency between them. In this case, Turkey’s security concerns were related to KRG since Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism could transform as a result of the increasing economic interdependency of them. Turkish foreign policy makers were aware of that KRG would have to consider the security concerns of Turkey related to Kurdish issue or PKK activities in northern Iraq because of its economic ties with Turkey. In this perspective, Turkey could act as a trading state, however; Turkey defines the economic relations with KRG not only as a goal but also as a mean to transform its security understanding.

3.2.2. Turkey’s Energy Policies and its Foreign Policy Understanding

Many aspects of energy issue are problematic since the cost of the energy and the security of the energy flows are crucial concerns for states. Rather than the mere energy supplies, different types of resources are seen as significant political tools by the main supplier states. The hydrocarbon resources are clear example of these kinds of supplies and they were transformed into the political weapons by the hydrocarbon-rich states. Thus, the oil and natural gas areas, pipelines and transportation of these resources became a part of the economic and political concerns of states. This is also the case regarding the newly discovered hydrocarbon potential of the KRG and the energy necessity of growing Turkish economy are directly related with the change in Turkish foreign policy towards KRG accordingly. It is suggested that in order to understand the basic points of Turkey’s interests and aims related with the energy in

a more comprehensive manner, the relation between Turkey and its energy suppliers and newly emerged KRG hydrocarbon resource markets should be analysed. First of all, the energy consumption of Turkey has increased as result of its growing economy and increasing population, hence there occurred an increasing need from the side of Turkey for cheaper and continuous energy flow from international energy markets.

At that point, the exporting countries and trade volume between Turkey and them can be useful tools to understand the importance of new energy markets and geopolitical importance of energy regarding current political developments. Primarily, Russia and Iran are main natural gas supporters of Turkey; %58 of total imported natural gas was bought from Russia, and Turkey was the top fourth country among the ones who are importing natural gas from Russia. Concerning the amount of resources comes from Iran, the share of Iran was %19 of total imported natural gas of Turkey according to a report prepared by Republic of Turkey Energy Market Regulatory in 2011 (EPDK, 2012a, p.32). Although there were some alternatives such as Algeria and Nigeria because of the reasons related to the high costs of transportation from these countries, Russia and Iran are still main natural gas suppliers of Turkey. Furthermore, the crude oil is provided from different countries such as Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. As stated in another report issued by Energy Market Regulatory, in spite of increasing share of Iraq, the approximately %63 of total imported crude oil was bought from Russia and Iran during the period between 2009 and 2011 (EPDK, 2012b, p.20). In addition to these facts, Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that one of the energy strategies of Turkey is the prioritization of activities related with energy security regarding increasing energy demand and increasing import dependency. As a result of that strategy, one of goals of Turkey's energy policy is the diversification of country of origin and route of the imported hydrocarbon resources (mfa.gov.tr, 2018).

In the light of these, it could be said that continuation and diversification of the energy flow became a crucial part of security concerns of Turkey as the result of its increasing population and growing economy. Therefore, the hydrocarbon resource potential of KRG is evaluated as a new dimension of the bilateral relations by Turkish foreign policy makers. In this perspective, new dimensions of Turkish

foreign policy and security concerns as a result of its energy strategy provided a new viewpoint for foreign policy makers to develop the relations with KRG in spite of continuation of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. Consequently, İşeri and Dilek stated that Turkey cannot disregard hydrocarbon resources of KRG considering its energy dependency on Iranian and Russian hydrocarbon resources, economic sanctions applied against Iran that supplies approximately %40 of imported energy of Turkey in 2011 and the fact that the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline which is a joint project of Turkey and Azerbaijan will operate after 2017 (2013, p. 30). In that vein, Erkmen expressed that Turkey which has a growing economy cannot neglect the oil resources in northern Iraq to meet its increasing energy need and to be an energy bridge in the future. Therefore, the oil resources in northern Iraq has a significant place in the relations between Ankara and Erbil (2015, p. 174). Eventually, Turkey's energy strategy formed a new aspect of its foreign policy toward northern Iraq. Furthermore, it should be noted that this new aspect was formed with changing security understanding of Turkey in the same period. In the meeting of NSC was held on 21 February 2008 which was above mentioned, the improvement of bilateral relations with Iraq on energy sector as much as possible was stated (mgk.gov.tr, 2008). It means that Turkish foreign makers aimed to form a comprehensive understanding in its relations with Iraq while security concerns of Turkey, related with Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, preserved its importance in the mind set of them.

Additively, the energy aspect of the relations between Turkey and KRG should be examined by focusing on general framework of Turkey's regional policies in order to grasp different sides of the effect of Turkey's energy strategies on the relations. Ministry of Foreign Affairs remarks by means of its geostrategic position, Turkey purposes to have a stronger position between energy corridors as a part of its energy strategy (mfa.gov.tr, 2018). Being an energy hub between hydrocarbon resources and consumer states and having a better position to provide the energy security are main aims of that understanding. In the light of these, Larrabee claimed that developing relations between Turkey and KRG makes a contribution to Turkey's policies to become a significant energy hub between Middle East and Caspian Sea (2010, p. 162). In the same line, Park expressed that Turkey's strategy to be a regional energy hub and its energy necessity were reasons of the oil import of Turkey

from Northern Iraq. Furthermore, the improvement of the natural gas fields in northern Iraq is a significant matter for Turkey since the cooperation on energy between Ankara and Erbil could provide a significant contribution to Southern Gas Corridor (2012, p.99).

In the light of above mentioned framework, Turkish state-owned Turkish Petroleum and the private corporation Genel Energy have growingly enlarged their investments in northern Iraq. Genel Energy became the biggest energy company that operates in the region after its merger with Vallares PLC in 2011 (İşeri and Dilek, 2013, p. 30). Besides economic side of these developments, it should be noted that they caused political consequences that are significant in order to understand reasons of the rapprochement between Turkey and Erbil. For instance, a senior official of Pet Oil Company presented political and economic aspects of Turkish oil companies' activities in northern Iraq. He stated that "It is politically good for Turkey and good for Turkish-Kurdish relations. When you invest in northern Iraq, this means that you will stay there for years. Turkish companies will earn money, and Turkey will benefit from pipeline revenues. And if you have so many companies there for years, you will have a say in that country's politics" (International Crisis Group, 2008, p. 14). This statement apparently reveals both political and economic sides of increasing operation of Turkish oil companies in the region. Particularly, the relation between the political influence of Turkey in the region and the investments of Turkish companies in northern Iraq was presented. Therefore, it could be said that Turkey's energy strategy toward northern Iraq implicitly may contribute its political and security concerns since KRG have to establish good relations with Turkey in order to export its hydrocarbon resources. In other words, Turkey could have a crucial opportunity to affect political developments in northern Iraq in terms of its security concerns related with Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

CHAPTER 4

KURDISH ISSUE AND PKK IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY AFTER ARAB UPRISINGS

In the former chapters of this thesis, Gulf War in 1991 and Iraq War in 2003 were taken as the basic dynamics of regional politics in the Middle East. Regarding the scope and aim of this thesis, change and continuity patterns of Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism and the transformation of Turkey's approach towards KRG within the same context were discussed. Particularly, after Iraq War in 2003, in Turkey – Syria relations, PKK turned into a common enemy for both parts which was one of prominent factors of rapprochement in Ankara – Damascus relations. At the same way, as a main subject of Turkey's Iraq policy, Ankara – Erbil relations with regard to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism had experienced a significant transformation thanks to Turkey's domestic and regional interests and goals. In domestic terms, the increasing terrorism threats within borders of Turkey and the sensitivity of ongoing peace process to solve Kurdish issue were effective as well. In addition, the changing foreign policy preferences and energy based economic ties with KRG should be added to the picture. Furthermore, it should be also underlined that the impact of regional developments are undeniable factors that could affect foreign policy making by redefining foreign policy decisions and aims in spite of deep rooted concerns.

In the light of these, since 2011, Arab Uprisings has presented new political, economic and social structures for whole Middle East. Basically, Turkey's relations with Syria has been formed within the context of Arab Uprisings that caused new security threats related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism towards Turkey. On the other hand, as mentioned before in the second chapter, the rapprochement of relations between Turkey and KRG has strengthened as a result of domestic and regional developments in the same period. Therefore, while the impact of Kurdish issue and PKK on Turkey's relations with Erbil and Damascus has continued, Arab

Uprisings changed the context of this impact. Shortly, Arab Uprisings has caused more complex and more raddled regional environment for Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria due to the effect of Kurdish issue and PKK in different levels.

Consequently, at the beginning of this chapter, the Arab Uprisings and Turkey's approach towards it will be discussed briefly in order to present the importance of regional dynamics in Turkish foreign policy making. After that, relations between Turkey and Syria will be evaluated by focusing on Turkey's becoming prominent security concerns due to increasing instability and terrorism activities in Syria as a result of the Uprisings. Finally, Turkey's relations with Iraq and KRG will be examined in order to make a far-reaching analysis of deepening relations of Turkey and KRG in the period between 2011 and 2016 by focusing on Turkey's interest and concerns at domestic and regional levels with regard to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

4.1. Brief History of Arab Uprisings and Turkish Foreign Policy

The brief history and the aftermath of Arab Uprisings should be discussed by focusing on Turkish foreign policy makers' approach towards it in order to grasp regional dynamics in Turkey's foreign relations. The Arab Uprisings has affected not only Arab states but also the regional dynamics of whole Middle East. Therefore, to understand the impact of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on Turkish foreign policy in the period between 2011 and 2016, Turkey's relations with Syria and Iraq should be examined within the context of Arab Uprisings.

Arab Uprisings, also called as "Arab Spring" started on 18 December 2010 in Tunisia with the popular protests. In a short span of time, Arab Uprisings spread Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, so the Uprisings turned into a regional phenomenon for whole Middle Eastern states. According to Altunışık, neo-liberal policies have increased the gap between rich and poor and the nepotistic capitalism has damaged the social justice in the Middle Eastern states. Especially, Arab states which have rapid population growth could not provide enough education and employment opportunities to their youngsters. Furthermore, increasing authoritarianism in Arab regimes had caused serious political legitimacy problems for them. The revealed corruptions, the regimes that becoming more oppressive and

not allowing any opposition movement and the foreign policies of these regimes that do not reflect the expectations of the societies, and it stimulated the public opposition in these states accordingly. Although Arab Uprisings were formed in accordance with states' own dynamics, they reflect a common demand of the people: the regimes that being responsive to the demands of the people (2011, p.94). Therefore, these serious reasons of the Uprisings paved the way for serious consequences for regional actors in Middle East. Particularly, Turkey had to adjust its famous “zero problem policy with neighbour” policy to be able to respond the new foreign policy challenges.

At that point, Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu (2013) claimed that Turkey decided to support popular uprisings in Middle East to promote democratic rights instead of authoritarian regimes. Turkey has pressed ahead this policy regarding its relations with Syria which does not mean that Turkey abandoned “the zero problems with neighbours” policy. Quite the contrary, Turkey would preserve the main pillars of its foreign policy in the relations with Middle Eastern states during the Arab Uprisings according to him. On the other hand, Altunışık stated that Turkey's approach to the Arab Uprisings is composed of four main strategies. First, JDP applied a “pro-change” agenda and took side with popular movements. Second, its strategy towards Arab Uprisings was formed by relying on the Muslim Brotherhood. Third, the government provided technical, economic, political assistance to the opposition movements in Tunisia and Egypt in order to preserve stability and order in these states after the transition. Finally, as considering Arab states where former regimes were overthrown, Turkey formed a policy to establish new links or preserve the built ties (2014, pp. 134-135).

Therefore, as a result of Arab Uprisings, the authoritarian leaders of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya were toppled by popular uprisings in a short span of time, so Turkey developed above mentioned strategies by regarding former examples of Arab Uprisings. On the other hand, in Syria case, the “spring” turned into a dead of the winter for the region and Turkish foreign policy makers. The conflict between the government and the opposition in Syria transformed into a full scale civil war that has been lasted since 2011. At that point, within the Uprisings context, Turkey's Syria relations and Turkey's approach towards Syrian Civil War has formed a new

aspect of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in the formation of Turkish foreign policy.

4.2. Turkey's Relations with Syria after Arab Uprisings

As mentioned before, in the period between 2007 and 2011, Turkey established good relations with Syria, so the main dynamics of the relations are economic and political cooperation but not security concerns and conflict between two parts. On the other hand, Turkey's approach towards Syrian Civil War and Bashar al-Assad administration has caused rapid deterioration relations between them, so it could be said that Turkey's Syria relations in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism after Arab Uprisings have significant structural similarities and differences with the relations that was examined in the first chapter. Therefore, Turkish foreign policy towards Syrian Civil War should be examined in order to clearly understand the effect of Kurdish issue and PKK on the formation of Turkish foreign policy.

At the beginning, in the Arab Uprisings, Turkey's relations with Syria were the most complicated foreign policy challenge for it since JDP presented the cordial and close relations between Turkey and Syria as the paragon of Turkey's new Middle East understanding. Turkey could put an end conflicting relations with Syria and could form good relations based on political and economic cooperation with this country after the Adana Agreement. Therefore, the inception of popular uprisings in Syria has caused a very difficult situation for Turkish foreign policy makers. Preliminarily, Ankara's policy was to find a political solution by convincing Assad to begin a reformation process (Altunışık, 2014, p. 136). Furthermore, Philips stated that Ankara's first aim was to bring over Assad to cease the use of force against opposition and to launch reform. Erdoğan and Davutoğlu had close personal relations with Assad, so they thought that they could convince Assad to realize political reforms. In this context, Davutoğlu and other state officers realised many meeting with Assad in Damascus to find a political solution for the demand of the opposition between March and August 2011 (2012, p. 5). At the same time, in addition to the diplomatic efforts, Turkey increased its support to the opposition groups which are against the Assad administration. For instance, "Transition in Syria Conference" was

held on 1-2 June 2011 in Antalya with the participation of different opposition groups. Furthermore, Turkey's inclusion became more concrete after the foundation of the Free Syrian Army in July. In addition, Turkey is one of 20 states that have legitimized Syrian National Coalition, formed in Qatar to congregate different opposition groups, as a rightful representative of the Syrian opposition (Yakış, 2014, pp. 99-100). In this context, the failure of diplomatic negotiation with Assad to make necessary reforms in Syria has started a new period in Turkey-Syria relations. In the following period, the all diplomatic relations between Turkey and Syria was totally terminated by Turkey as a result of ineffectiveness diplomatic attempts. Moreover, at the international level, Turkey became a part of the pro-opposition coalition that includes Saudi Arabia, France, the US and Qatar. These states gave financial, technical, military assistance to the opposition groups in Syria against the Assad administration. Furthermore, in the following process, international and regional actors have increased their involvement in the uprisings, in addition to the above-mentioned actors, Iran, Hezbollah and Iraq at the regional level and Russia and China at the international level have involved to Syrian Crisis. In this context, different groups in Syria found an opportunity to be more influential as proxies of regional and international actors (Hinnebusch, 2014, p. 23). Regarding Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, the increasing influence of proxies of regional and international actors and the escalation of violence in Syria were seen as the source of possible security threats by Turkey.

Considering escalated civil war and increasing instability in Syria, Turkey's foreign policy strategy towards Syria should be discussed by focusing on Turkey's security concerns related with Kurdish issue. According to Philips, Turkey's approach to the Syrian crisis is not based on a proactive understanding. Prime Minister Erdoğan aims to make certain that post-Assad Syria would not be threat for Turkey's interests at domestic and regional levels. Moreover, Turkey's another objective is to ensure the preservation of territorial integrity of Syria. Turkey is averse to any border revision in the region due to territorial claims of Kurds over its territory (2012, pp. 8-9). In the same way, Öniş stated that within the scope of Arab Uprisings, Turkey's response to Syrian Civil War reveals a different foreign policy approach than the traditional understanding of Turkey. Syrian Civil War was not

seen as an internal problem of Syria by Turkish foreign policy makers who were opposing to keep away from internal affairs of a sovereign state understanding of Turkey. Furthermore, Turkey's approach the crisis is not only based on moral and humanitarian concerns but also political and security concerns. Therefore, Ankara wanted to affect the route of the forthcoming political process in Syria, particularly regarding the fact that the Kurdish population in Syria would take a more effective position in the future of Syria, with reasonable impacts on Kurdish issue in Turkey in the scope of internal politics (2014, p. 211). Therefore, as mentioned before, Qamishli Uprising of 2004 was a significant example of the unsolved tension between Assad administration and Syrian Kurds, so any power vacuum or long-lasting instability were seen as potential reasons of security threat related with Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

Finally, in a short span of time, the popular uprisings in Syria have turned into a regional crisis and ultimately a civil war with the impact of the involvement of regional and international actors. In this context, Turkey decided to side with the Syrian opposition after the failure of diplomatic attempts to convince Bashar al-Assad to make necessary reforms in Syria. According to Turkish foreign policy makers, this policy was a natural outcome of Turkey's new foreign policy based on moral and humanitarian considerations. On the other hand, in the ongoing process, the escalated violence and the increasing threats due to the continuing civil war in Syria made a realist understanding which was compulsory for Turkish foreign policy makers. Particularly, regarding Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, Adana Agreement of 1998 became an efficient solution for the security threats against Turkey, however; the deteriorating relations between Turkey and Syria, the involvement of international actors and the emerge of radical Salafist terrorist organisations in Syria within the context of the civil war has caused the rise of new and old security concerns of Turkey. In the light of these, the rise of radical Salafist terrorist organisations such as al Qaeda and ISIS (DAESH) and the increasing threats related to PKK in Syria have become essential points of Turkey's security concerns. Due to the scope and the aim of this thesis, Turkey's Syria policy will be examined by focusing on only its security concerns in the context of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

4.2.1. The Emergence and the Rise of PYD in Syria

Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism has regained their significant place in Ankara – Damascus relations. In a sense, Turkey has faced with structurally similar security concerns in terms of its Syria policy same as before Adana Agreement of 1998. Therefore, in spite of domestic and regional repercussions of Turkey's security concerns related with Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, these concerns will be examined within the context of Turkey's Syria relations as an introductory part. Therefore, in this part of the thesis, relations between Assad administration and PYD and the impact of PYD on Turkish foreign policy will be discussed in terms of security concerns of it.

Primarily, Ünver Noi said that escalating tension between Ankara and Damascus deteriorated relations of these two states. This situation formed a political environment where Assad administration decided to use Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism against Turkey. Within this context, Arab Spring could probably turn into a Kurdish Spring for Turkey (2012, p. 23). Furthermore, Turkish foreign policy makers gave voice to Turkey's concerns about the possible exploitation of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism by Syria. For instance, Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu stated that:

“We expect three basic things from Kurds in Syria... Firstly for them not to cooperate with the regime. The second is for them not to form a de facto foundation based on ethnic and religious bases. The third is for them no to engage in activities that could endanger the security of the Turkish border” (Gunter, 2014, p. 38).

In the light of these, it could be said that Turkish foreign policy makers are aware of that in spite of domestic developments in Kurdish issue, PKK terrorism and Kurdish issue could give serious damages to Turkey's political and security concerns in domestic and regional levels. Therefore, the historical development of PYD in Syria should be examined in order to make full scale analysis of Turkish foreign policy by regarding its security concerns. At the beginning, Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD) was officially established in 2003 in Syria as the branch of PKK after the Adana Agreement of 1998 that ended the activities of PKK in Syria territory while PKK members were banned and PKK leader Öcalan was deported by Syria. In the period

following the foundation of PYD, it has started its activities as a proxy of PKK in Syria. PYD does activities covertly, so most of PYD members did not reside in Syria (International Crisis Group, 2014, p.1). In this framework, Assad administration explicitly initiated to use Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism anew against Turkey that gave support to the opposition groups in Syria, so Salih Muslim, leader of PYD, was invited to Syria and allowed to conduct his activities (Gunter, 2014, p. 106). Therefore, it could be argued that Kurdish issue and PKK were still Achilles' heel for Turkish foreign policy in its relations with Syria. The strengthening existence of PYD in Syria is an obstacle for Turkey's policies towards Syrian Crisis as well as is a security threats for Turkey in domestic and regional levels.

Primarily, Turkey has recognized the Syrian National Council (SNC) as the legitimate representative of Syrian opposition, so Turkey's strategy towards Syrian Crisis is based on supporting SNC for the possible political transition in Syria. Furthermore, Park stated that Turkey expressed its will that Kurdish population of Syria should engage to the Syrian National Council in the fight against the Assad administration (2013, p. 44). On the other hand, Gunter claimed that Salih Muslim has intensely bear against the influence of Turkey on the Syrian National Council and Syrian National Coalition, formed instead of the Council, and Kurdish National Council, since these organizations are extensions of Turkey and other regional and international forces. Furthermore, Muslim openly said that Turkey which supported various opposition groups in Syria was a more serious adversary than the regime (2014, p. 106). Thus, one of the Damascus's strategies was to prevent the formation of a united opposition organisation that supported by Turkey and other actors, by using the influence of PYD on Kurdish population of Syria. At one point, both the continuation of Syrian Crisis and the existence of PYD in Syrian soil make Turkey open to security threats.

Secondly, the developments and the power vacuum in Syria as a result of the civil war have provided the opportunity to PYD to expand its sphere of influence which was unacceptable situation for Turkey regarding its security concerns. Within this context, on 19 July 2012, Assad administration withdrew its military forces from the northern part of Syria in order to intensify on sustaining condition in the strategic positions in Syria. As a result of this situation, PYD had opportunity to establish a de

facto autonomous administration in the northern part of Syria (Gunter, 2014, p. 37). Moreover, Yakış stated that after the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Hasakah in July 2012, this province was captured by PYD that was especially a significant development for Turkey since Hasakah has geographical proximity to the Kurdish populated provinces of Turkey and Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq (2014, p. 100). Therefore, the de facto autonomous administration establishment of PYD affiliated to PKK, in the northern Syria where is contiguous with Turkish territory could be the worst nightmare of Turkish foreign policy makers. Considering Kurdish issue and PKK in domestic level and PKK-PYD in regional level, the mind of Turkish foreign policy makers should be understood properly in order to analyse the reactions of Turkey.

In this perspective, the historical and the contemporary aspects of the withdrawal of Syrian army from northern Syria and the rise of PYD in these regions should be examined. First of all, according to Park, the withdrawal of the Syrian army from north and northeast parts of Syria and the exploitation of this power vacuum by PYD reminded of the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from the northern Iraq and the establishment of the KRG. Within this perspective, these developments presented the same opportunity to the PYD to gain control of these areas and to create an autonomous administration formation (2013, p. 43). In spite of the good relations between Turkey and KRG in the last period, the establishment of KRG and political instability had been seen as a serious threat by Ankara in the context of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism which was examined in the first chapter of this thesis. Therefore, the possibility of being neighbour with an autonomous area governed by a terrorist organisation would cause a more enormous threat at domestic and regional levels for Turkey than the developments occurred in 1990s in the northern Iraq.

In the current context, above mentioned developments in north and northeast parts of Syria could affect adversely domestic and regional security of Turkey in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. Gunter claimed that Turkey refrained from that the new position of the PYD after the withdrawal of Syrian troops would be seen as an undesirable example for Turkey's own Kurdish population and the PKK's actions. Furthermore, he alleged that the probability of the unification of

KRG and the autonomous area in north and northeast parts of Syria administered by PYD and the establishment of a Kurdish state as a result of this possibility were serious sources of security concerns. Therefore, Turkey planned to use its force on the opposition groups in Syria and good relations with KRG to prevent any probability of forming of a Kurdish state (2014, p. 112). At that point, it should be noted that the relations between Turkey and KRG will be examined within the context of Kurdish issue and PKK by focusing on PYD and Syrian Crisis. On the other hand, regarding the historical rivalry between Kurdish groups in the Middle East, Turkey's main concern could be the escalation of tension between different Kurdish groups because of political rivalry since a potential conflict between them could have significant repercussions for Turkey at domestic and regional levels in terms of its Kurdish issue. Furthermore, the establishment of autonomous areas in Syrian territory by PYD and the increasing field of activity of PKK/PYD organisation in Syria could be easily used to affect Kurdish population of Turkey.

In the light of these, political and military developments in Syria and their repercussions on internal affairs of Turkey increased its security and political concerns in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK. Primarily, on 13 November 2013, PYD declared the foundation of an interim government in Raqqa, Aleppo and al-Hasakah provinces of Syria and claimed its de facto administrative authority over these regions. Administratively, the interim governance of PYD is called as Rojava (it means the west in Kurdish) that consists of three administrative districts: Jazeera, Kobani and Afrin. Furthermore, YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel) was formed by PYD as the dominating military force in above mentioned provinces of Syria. Therefore, PYD started to administer political, social, economic and security affairs in these regions (International Crisis Group, 2014, p. 1). From political and military aspects, the establishment of an autonomous administration by a terrorist organisation was not an acceptable situation for Turkey since PKK/PYD organisation, a direct threat for vital interests of Turkey, could have a permanent location to conduct terrorist activities against Turkey. Furthermore, the length of the border between Turkey and Syria is 911 km, so the PYD controlled this border was a serious obstacle for geopolitical interests of Turkey regarding ongoing civil war in Syria.

Secondly, within the context of Syrian Crisis, the regional dynamics and developments caused emerge of new security threats for Turkey. At the same time, these dynamics and developments became the part of the troubled position of Turkey due to the PKK/PYD. In this context, the gaining influence of ISIS in Syria and Iraq changed the regional dynamics which was the major threat against the stability in the Middle East. Basically, ISIS is a radical salafist terrorist organisation which strengthened due to political instability and power vacuum in Iraq and Syria. Moreover, in the following parts of this chapter, ISIS will not be discussed because of the scope of the thesis, however; it will be mentioned to understand the general political framework. On the other hand, it should be noted that ISIS is a serious threat not only for Iraq and Syria but also all other Middle Eastern states. Particularly, ISIS became an immense threat for Turkey in 2014 because ISIS achieved to spread a vast territory in Syria and Iraq soils and started to target Turkish border. In the light of these, the military conflict between PYD and ISIS caused another significant security problem for Ankara regarding its Kurdish issue.

In 2014, the ISIS launched an offensive against the PYD to capture the territories controlled by it. On 16 September 2014, the Battle for Kobani broke out between two mentioned parts which caused the rise of new aspects of Turkey's security concerns in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK at domestic and regional level. According to Altunışık, keeping the PYD under control is one of the priorities in Turkey's Syria strategy which is challenged by refugee flow of approximately 140,000 Syrian Kurds into Turkey as a result of the Battle for Kobani between PYD and ISIS (2015, p. 80). At the same time, Turkey had to face with domestic developments since Turkey was asked to open a corridor in its territory to provide access of KRG military forces to help PYD in Kobani. Altunışık claimed that the reluctant attitude of the government to assist Kobani, particularly by providing access for KRG forces to cross the border, paved the way for domestic protest and rampancy by Kurdish political parties and PKK in Turkey. In this context, the Battle for Kobani between ISIS and PYD endangered the peace process that launched by Turkish government in 2012 to solve Kurdish issue (2015, p. 80). Thus, at domestic level, it was easily observed that Turkey's Kurdish issue could be under influence of regional developments which may be turned into violence acts by PKK. Therefore,

this incident was a concrete proof of that the security concerns related with PYD was not limited in regional level since Kurdish issue was still a sensitive subject for Turkey in spite of ongoing peace process to solve Kurdish issue. By the way, the PYD started to be regarded as the most significant military power against the ISIS in the field. In this context, the US provided military and humanitarian assistance to Kobani as well as ISIS positions were shelled by the US and its allies. These regional and domestic developments along with international urgency prevailed on Turkey to allow the military forces of KRG to through to Kobani (Altunışık, 2015, p. 81). Thus, the PYD's existence and position in Syrian Crisis directly affected Turkey's internal Kurdish issue, so PYD/PKK and Kurdish issue was intermingled in terms of Turkey's security concerns. Thus, while Turkish government unwaveringly continued the peace process to solve Kurdish issue at domestic level, the significance of Turkey's security concerns related with PYD/PKK has continued at regional level. In this context, the above mentioned situation was a serious obstacle for Turkish foreign policy makers regarding Turkey's approach Syrian Crisis, PYD/PKK and radical terrorist organisations. Therefore, the alteration of Turkey's strategy in this period could be seen as a solution to the said political situation and an initiation point of the new foreign policy understanding of Turkey.

4.2.2. The Operation Euphrates Shield

From the very beginning, Syrian Civil War has had regional and international aspects because of the involvement of many actors in different levels. This situation caused the continuation of the crisis and the rise of new and different security threats for the regional order. In this context, in September 2015, Russia started to support Assad administration by using its military force in Syrian territory at the request of Damascus. The aims of the airstrikes conducted in Syria by Russia were declared by President Putin as fighting against ISIS and helping Syrian President al-Assad (Osborn & Stewart, 2018). Within this context, the involvement of Russia into the Syrian Crisis limited the influence of Turkey on the ground since Turkey's Syria policy is based on supporting the opposition against al-Assad administration. At the same time, Turkey had to face with serious security threats related with ISIS and PYD. Particularly, regarding domestic and regional aspects of Kurdish issue and

PKK terrorism, Turkey had to be effective actor in Syrian Crisis to prevent these security problems. On the other hand, on 24 November 2015, the tension between Turkey and Russia reached the highest point as a result of that a Russian warplane was shot down by a Turkish warplane in the border area between Turkey and Syria. Furthermore, regarding the scope and the aim of this thesis, it should be noted that Turkey's military and political options against PYD were restricted by Russian forces in Syrian territory. For instance, Özpek and Mutluer argued that the Russian strategy which was inclined to keeping Turkey out of Syria became instrumentalised thanks to the said tension between two countries and Russia also used "the Kurdish card" against Turkey in the region by strengthening the ties with PYD. This was resulted in Turkey's loss of capability to manoeuvre and to protect the Syrian opposition groups against Assad regime (2016, pp. 138-139). In this context, PYD was seen as only military forces against ISIS which provided political legitimacy of the existence of PYD in Syria.

In the light of these developments, Orhan stated that with the US air support, PYD seized Menbic and started the preparation to seize al-Bab to connect Afrin and Kobani which means that a quasi-state formation would be created under the control of PKK/PYD in a vast area that exceeds the Kurdish populated areas in the northern Syria. Moreover, it means that Turkey and PKK would be neighbours on Turkish-Syria border and more importantly, PKK could have opportunity to be a legitimate political actor in regional and international levels in the long run. In addition to that, the rise of ISIS's terrorist activities in Turkish territory and its assaults towards Turkish province in border region increased security concerns of Turkey (2016, p. 12). In this context, the establishment of a quasi-state formation that governed by PYD or PKK is an unacceptable situation for Turkish foreign policy makers because of two main reasons. Primarily, the dominance of PYD in northern Syria would provide a safe haven and a military base for PKK and PYD to conduct terrorist activities against Turkey. Secondly, the formation of a political structure by these organisations could be source of any provocation Kurdish population in Turkey in terms of Kurdish issue.

At that point, Erşen claimed that during the period when terrorist activities of PKK and ISIS against Turkey became intensified, Turkey had to make a

rapprochement with Russia to take cross border military measures against these threats. Furthermore, the normalisation of the relations between Turkey and Russia could be seen as a significant turning point of Turkey's Syria policy. Particularly, Turkey had a significant room for manoeuvre towards the security threats due to ISIS and PYD in Syria after the meeting between Putin and Erdoğan (2016, p. 23). Therefore, regarding the differences between Ankara and Moscow in terms of Syrian Civil War, it may be said that the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia is a significant evidence of that security concerns related with Kurdish issue and PYD/PKK in Syria have a determining impact on the formation of Turkish foreign policy. In this respect, Ankara stated that it was using its rights of self-defence that were indicated in the UN Charter Article 51 and on 24 August 2016, the Operation Euphrates Shield was launched. NSC declared that the operation's aims were to sustain border security and fight against ISIS terrorism within the scope of the UN Charter; it was also stated that the PKK terrorist organisation, along with its extension PYD/YPG, will not be permitted to form a terror corridor on the southern frontier of Turkey (Kasapoğlu & Ülgen, 2017, p. 2). Within this perspective, the practical goals of said operation were preventing ISIS terrorism and ensuring border security, hindering advance of PKK/PYD to west bank of Euphrates River and blocking the enclosure of Turkey from its southern border together with restriction of the US and some European states to be in an extensive relation with Turkey's opponents during Syrian Civil War (Özcan, 2016). Thus, Turkey's security concerns became the most significant part of its approach the Syrian Crisis. The Operation Euphrates Shield gave the opportunity to Turkey to face with terrorist organisations in Syrian territory and to prevent any possible formation of quasi-state by PKK in northern Syria. At that point, it should be noted that Kurdish issue and PYD/PKK terrorism became the determining factor of Turkey's approach Syrian Civil War. The exploitation of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism by Assad administration as a strategic choice against Turkey has caused a serious setback for Turkey's domestic and regional goals and concerns. Within this framework, the launch of the Operation Euphrates Shield was a reactive move of Turkish foreign policy makers to resolve security problems of Turkey in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism.

4.3. Turkey's Relations with KRG in 2011-2016

In the previous chapter, the transformation period of Turkey's relations with KRG was discussed in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. This transformation term between 2007 and 2011 arrived to the conclusion of the rapprochement of Turkey and KRG and developing relations in many fields. Within this context, the changing security understanding of Turkey in its approach towards KRG regarding Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism was examined. However, as mentioned above, the Arab Uprisings has changed main dynamics of the Middle East in many ways, so the course of Turkey's relations with KRG took shape within this framework. Therefore, altering domestic and regional dynamics in Turkish foreign policy paved the way for more strengthened relations between parties. Consequently, Turkey's relations with KRG in the period between 2011 and 2016 could be named as cordial relations in spite of still continuing Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. For instance, Park stated that President of Kurdish Regional Government Barzani participated as the guest of honour in JDP convention. It is a proof that Barzani is especially seen as a trustworthy partner and as a competent ruler who has deep ties with his peoples (2014, p. 12).

In the light of these, the ongoing Syrian Civil War and the existence of PYD in northern Syria emerged as a new aspect of Turkey's approach towards KRG because of the increasing security threats Turkey's vital interest. At the same time, Turkey's foreign policy choice regarding Syrian Crisis and regional political structure has induced serious consequences at regional level for Turkey, so KRG became significant actor in the relations of Turkey with regional actors. Therefore, it could be said that while Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism has gained new domestic and regional dynamics in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy makers, they started to try to form multi-layered foreign policy approach towards KRG.

Eventually, this chapter will be composed of three main parts to form a comprehensive analysis of Turkey's relations with KRG by focusing on Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. In the first part of this chapter, the altering role and effect of KRG in Turkey's foreign policy towards regional actors will be discussed in order to understand reasons of the cordial relations between two parties. In the second part of the chapter, Turkey's security concerns will be examined by regarding significant

domestic developments and regional alterations as a result of the Arab Uprisings in the context of Ankara-Erbil axis. Finally, before mentioned Turkey's energy policies and goals in its relations with KRG will be evaluated by focusing on deepening and developing aspects of these policies and interests.

4.3.1. Turkish Foreign Policy and the KRG

In order to understand reasons behind the cordial relations between Ankara and Erbil, main dynamics of Turkish foreign policy should be examined by focusing on its relations with Iraq, Syria and Iran. Furthermore, Turkey's bilateral relations with these states or its regional foreign policy have generated a new dimension for its relations with KRG. Therefore, as a result of the rapprochement between two parties in 2007-2011 period, KRG turned into a serious regional actor for Turkish foreign policy makers.

At the beginning, in order to determine the role and the effect of KRG in Turkish foreign policy, Turkey's Iraq policy constitutively should be examined by focusing on conflicting issues between parts. At that point, Tocci stated that the deteriorating relations between Ankara and Baghdad are one of the reasons that explain close ties between Turkey and KRG. Nouri al-Maliki's government apparently preferred sectarian understanding, enhanced its authoritarian administration and was under the influence of Iran which were main reasons of the worsening relations of Turkey with Iraq (2013, p. 70). At this juncture, Iraqi parliamentary elections held on 7 March 2010 and Turkey's attitude towards it could be seen as the starting point of deteriorating relations between Turkish government and Iraq central government. According to Oğuzlu, Turkey explicitly supported the Iraqi National Movement (al-Iraqiyya) and gave support to Ayad Allawi, leader of al-Iraqiyya, to be the prime minister of Iraq. On the other hand, Turkey did not object the formation of Iraqi government by al-Maliki after the failure of al-Iraqiyya to establish government in spite of its majority in Iraqi parliament (2011, p. 20). In the same vein, Park emphasized the support of Ankara for Allawi's non-sectarian movement in the elections. He also stated that Turkey's goal was to promote power sharing, good management, economic restoration and stability in Iraq, not to back one political group against another. Moreover, Turkey's Iraq policy was in accordance with its

enormous efforts to form proactive foreign policy in the Middle East (2014, pp. 15-16). Thus, Turkish foreign policy makers thought that the political stability in Iraq was a serious factor for the security of Turkey and the region, so Ankara gave support to the formation of non-sectarian political movements and the involvement of Sunni Arabs in Iraqi political structure, however; Ankara's attitude towards the elections turned into a source of conflict between Turkish government and Maliki government.

In the following process, Turkish foreign policy makers did not believe any possibility that the stability in Iraq would be provided and the balance of power at domestic level would be formed by Nouri al-Maliki. At that point, ever increasing authoritarian approach of Maliki and his continuing policies to segregate the Sunni people and to factionalise the Sunnis in his coalition government solely enhance the division between Shiite and Sunni that affect negatively Turk-Iraq relations (Bengio, 2013, p. 70). Therefore, after Iraq parliamentary elections, worsening Turkey-Iraq relations was a problematic situation for Turkish foreign policy makers since Turkey achieved to establish significant connections with almost all groups in Iraq by regarding its political and security concerns. However, the effectiveness of Turkey's Iraq policy was limited by al-Maliki government as a result of deteriorating relations. Therefore, the importance of KRG has increased in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy makers since politically and economically developing KRG could be a crucial actor for political goals and interests of Turkey.

Within this context, Turkey enhanced its influence on Iraqi politics in accordance with its foreign policy interest, however; developments between two parties escalated the tension among them, so the worsening relations of them turned into a conflictual situation for each party. As Park stated that Prime Minister Erdoğan's warnings about Maliki's sectarian policies in Iraq was condemned by Maliki with the allegations of Turkey's interference in domestic affairs of the country in January 2012. Within this scope, the synchronisation of the formal termination of US troops withdrawal from Iraqi territory and the attempted arrest of Tariq al-Hashemi who was Vice President of Iraq was seen as the continuation of Maliki's sectarian policies and the deepening of crisis between two sides (2014, p. 16). Tariq al-Hashemi was accused of being supporter of the terrorist organisation and the capital punishment

was decided for him as a result of a trial in absentia. Furthermore, Yakiş stated that al-Hashemi firstly fled to Kurdish Regional Government and then left from Iraq for Turkey. In April 2012, Prime Minister Erdogan said that Maliki's order of the arrest of al-Hashemi escalated the tension among ethnic and sectarian groups of Iraq (2014, p. 100). In the following process, the reciprocal statements of both sides' state officials caused worsening of the relations between Turkey and Iraq. For instance, in April 2012, Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki declared that Turkey was an enemy state due to above mentioned developments and developing economic relations among Turkey and KRG. Furthermore, Ankara did not waver to give political asylum to al-Hashemi to protect him after the death sentence decision (Kumral, 2013, p. 110). In addition to that, according to Erkmen, al-Hashemi incident was not a personal matter for both sides. For Turkish side, this incident was a part of Maliki's policies to establish authoritarian administration by oppressing Sunni groups in Iraq. Furthermore, Sunni Arabs in Iraqi politics were seen by Turkey as vital actors to sustain the territorial integrity of Iraq, so this incident was a death blow to the stability of Iraq (2013, p. 91). Therefore, Shiite-Sunni division in Iraq increased as a result of domestic developments in the country, so political stability in Iraq became more fragile as a result of sectarian fragmentation. Turkish foreign policy makers evaluated this situation as a setback for Turkey's political goals and security concerns hence Turkey tried to increase its involvement into Iraqi politics to preserve its interest. Within this context, the conflict between the sectarian policies of Maliki and the foreign policy goals of Turkey became inevitable.

Secondly, Turkey's Syria policy has deeply affected its relations with Iraq and Iran since the beginning of Syrian Civil War. Although the scope of this thesis is related with Turkey's Iraq policy, Turkey's relations with Iraq and Iran should be examined jointly because Tehran has increased its sphere of influence on Iraq as a result of the overthrow of Saddam administration and Maliki's close links with Iran. Within this framework, Kumral stated that the political problem between Turkey and Iraq has been further worsened by the reflections of Syrian Civil War. While Turkey chose to give support to the opposition groups against Assad administration, Maliki government was under the influence of Tehran based on Shiism and clandestinely collaborated with Assad regime in Syria (2013, p. 110). At the same way, Özpek and

Demirağ stated that Turkey inclined to build its policies in a narrower perspective in a sense that it focused on specific groups in the conflict which are moving in contrast with the groups that are acting under the influence of Iran and Iraq (2014, pp. 343-344).

Thus, KRG could become a significant actor in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy makers regarding their security concerns because of rapidly increasing instability in the region as a result of sectarian and ethnic conflicts (Kumral, 2013, p. 110). At the same way, Larrabee claimed that according to Ankara, Maliki was the extension of Tehran's political influence on Baghdad. He has continuously tried to augment his political power and followed a progressively pro-Iran path, permitting Iranian weapons and forces to get into Syrian territory. Thus, Maliki's attempts to increase his influence on Iraq's political structure, particularly the security forces, and to restrict the impact of the other political groups had caused serious concerns in the mind of Turkish foreign policy makers (2013, p. 142). Therefore, Syrian Civil War has caused the formation of a new dimension of Turkey's bilateral relations with Iraq and Iran, so it could be said that Turkey had significant problems with its southern neighbours. At the regional level, Tehran's strategy is to enhance its sphere of influence from Tehran to Beirut by using Shiite card to get better position in Middle East. Regarding Tehran's ties with Maliki government and Assad administration, Turkish foreign policy makers evaluated these developments as a Shiite containment against Turkey to reduce its effect on the regional politics. Furthermore, a probable containment policy of Iran could cut the link between Turkey and the Middle East that would cause a serious blow to Turkey's political and economic interests.

In this context, preferring a sectarian policy would mean play the game by someone else's rules for Turkish foreign policy makers, so they had to act upon realpolitik understanding. Thus, the cordial relations between Turkey and KRG could be evaluated within this framework because KRG was the only viable actor that Turkey could cooperate to preserve its interest in Middle East. At that point, as Nihat Ali Özcan argues, it exemplified by Iran's prior policy towards Turkey in the region to destabilizing KRG which was in clear contrast with Turkey's regional interests (2014). As a consequence, while Iran had the opportunity to increase sphere of influence in Middle East thanks to regional developments, Turkey's relations with

Baghdad and Damascus turned into serious foreign policy challenges for Ankara. Although KRG is a minor actor in regional politics, Turkey had to enhance its relations with KRG due to above mentioned foreign policy restrictions. Therefore, Ankara's relations with Baghdad and the aftermath of its Syria policy on its relations with Tehran and Baghdad had emerged significant foreign policy concerns of Turkey. Particularly, increasing sectarian tension in Iraq and the extension of Syrian Civil War because of regional and international actors' involvement had caused the deterioration of Turkey's relations with Iran, Iraq and Syria. Within this context, the developing ties between Turkey and KRG in 2007 and 2011 turned into a cordial relation in 2011 and 2016.

4.3.2. Turkey's Security Concerns and the KRG

Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism at domestic and regional level in 2011 and 2016 were one of the main reasons of the cordial relations between Turkey and KRG. In the previous chapter, Turkey's changing security understanding and reasons behind this change in terms of Ankara-Erbil relations were discussed by Turkey's efforts to find a political solution to Kurdish issue. At this juncture, the mentioned part could be seen as a starting point by comparing with the impact of the cordial relations between parties on Kurdish issue. Furthermore, the ongoing Syrian Civil War and PYD's attempts to establish an autonomous administration in northern Syria have affected domestic and regional aspects of Turkey's Kurdish issue. At the same time, PYD/PKK evaluated regional developments as a significant opportunity to augment its political and military power in the region. As a consequence, Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism had formed a complex security challenge in both levels for Ankara, so Turkey had to form a foreign policy considering above mentioned regional and domestic developments. Within this context, Turkish foreign policy makers decided to use Turkey's close ties with KRG as a solution for its security concerns. In order to understand the effect of Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on its relation with KRG, the role and the impact of KRG on these concerns should be examined at domestic and regional levels.

At the beginning, PKK regarded the Arab Uprisings as a model for its terror activities by using Turkey's Kurdish issue, so Turkey had to face with a serious security problem with its political and military aspects. Furthermore, Pusane stated that the terrorist attacks conducted by PKK in Şemdinli on July and August 2012 and the armed clash between Turkish security forces and PKK for weeks were evaluated as attempts by PKK to initiate a "Kurdish Spring" in Turkey. In this context, PKK wanted to launch a civil war between Turkish security forces and Kurds in Turkey, so PKK preferred to apply urban warfare methods to ignite an uprising in southeast of Turkey (2014, p. 119). Therefore, the raddled structure of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in this period could be the cause of an enormous security threat for Turkey's vital interest as in the past. However, Ankara's close ties with Erbil was one of the most significant differences in terms of Turkey's security concerns in this context. For instance, Ankara started to assess its strengthened cooperation with KRG as a significant factor that would enhance its efforts in its fight against the PKK and to form warm relations with its Kurdish population. Moreover, Barzani paid a visit to Turkey on April 2012 and he repeated his call for the PKK to terminate its armed actions, assured to pressure the PKK to put an end its assaults against Turkey, and stated that he will not permit it to predominate in the region (Park, 2014, p. 13). Thus, it was an important turning point for Ankara-Erbil relations since for the first time, Barzani gave its support in no uncertain terms to Turkey for its fight against terrorism. In the following period, the tangible cooperation among Turkey and KRG for political solution of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism became apparent.

In the light of these, Prime Minister Erdoğan announced the negotiations between state officials and PKK leader Öcalan on 28 December 2012 and it was the official beginning of the solution process. The examination of the solution process is out of the scope of this thesis; however, the role of KRG in the solution process is a crucial factor in order to understand the impact of Turkey's security concerns on Ankara's cordial relations with Erbil. For instance, Bengio claimed that Ankara launched the solution process towards its own Kurdish population and Erbil synchronically since it seemed as an element that could assist to contain, more precisely to appease Kurds in Turkey (2013, p. 77). In the following, the path of the solution process presented the significant role of KRG in the process. Romano stated that withdrawal of PKK from

Turkey into the northern Iraq was the first step of the solution process and KRG took part as a mediator between parties. He also added that requesting help from KRG in such a case was unimaginable situation for former governments of Turkey (2015, p. 97). Therefore, it could be said that the active participation of KRG in the solution process facilitated the negotiation between two parties, so KRG was taken as a part of solution instead of a part of security concerns by Turkish foreign policy makers. Furthermore, Barzani attended the public meeting of Prime Minister Erdoğan, held on 16 November 2013 in Diyarbakır and made a speech in this meeting. This situation was a clear example of that Ankara evaluated Barzani as a significant political actor for the success of the solution process. Thus, domestic aspect of Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK affected the structure of Turkey's relations with KRG as well as the position of Barzani in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy makers.

Secondly, as mentioned before, PYD obtained an effective position in northern part of Syria which was a significant threat for Turkey's vital interests. Within this framework, PYD is the source of Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in regional level. Therefore, in order to fully understand the cordial relations between Turkey and KRG, the role of KRG in Syrian Civil War should be analysed by regarding Turkey's foreign policy goals and interests. Furthermore, particularly the impact of Barzani on the developments in Syrian Crisis was seen as a significant opportunity by Ankara to curb the effectiveness of PYD.

Since the beginning of Syrian Crisis in 2011, Ankara tried to hinder all attempts of PKK/PYD to get a better position in Syria that could be security threat on Turkish border. In the following process, Turkey decided to contain PYD's political and military capacity by using its cordial relations with KRG, dealing by Kurdish National Council (KNC), pro-Barzani Kurdish organisation in Syria, as the only rightful representative of Kurdish population of Syria and rejecting to make bilateral relations with PYD (International Crisis Group, 2014, p. 18). In the same vein, Tocci stated that Turkey mostly counted on Barzani to affect political structure in terms of Kurdish population of Syria by preventing PYD's gaining strength and giving support to KNC within the body of Syrian Kurdish groups affiliated with KRG in Syrian Crisis (2013, p. 71). Therefore, Turkey could not prevent political and

military rise of PYD due to regional developments within the context of Syrian Civil War, Turkish foreign policy makers had to assess other options to downgrade PYD's position in Syria. Considering Turkey's relations with neighbouring states, supporting Barzani to be an active actor among Kurdish opposition groups in Syrian Crisis was the sole viable option of Turkish foreign policy makers. In addition to that, Ankara and Erbil had same feelings towards PKK/PYD and were in trouble with PYD's clear influence on largely autonomous northern Syria and Syrian Kurds. Furthermore, Barzani tried to limit certain influence of PKK/PYD on Syrian Kurds by mediating the formation of a unified front between PYD and KNC (Park, 2013, pp. 47-48). Thus, the attempts of Barzani and KNC to increase their influence on Kurdish opposition in Syria was quite significant in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy makers since it was their only political option to prevent the dominance of PYD in the region. Moreover, the disruption of territorial integrity of Syria cannot be ignored according to Turkish foreign policy makers. In case of the realisation of this possibility, Turkey's cordial relations with KRG would be vital for Ankara to curb the impact of PYD on Syrian Kurds and to affect them to expand its sphere of influence. Ironically, Turkey was tacitly encouraging a pan-Kurdish genesis that is the worst nightmare of Ankara, as long as it keeps going in Turkey's orbit (Tocci, 2013, p. 72). In the same vein, Park stated that regarding the solution process and Turkey's close ties with KRG, Ankara makes ready itself to handle territorial and political changes in northern Syria. The case of the formation of an autonomous zone in northern Syria may be more reasonable for Turkey if it were administered by KNC instead of PKK (2013, p. 56). On the other hand, it should be noted that Park's and Tocci's interpretations on Turkey's approach towards an autonomous zone in northern Syria under control of KNC and KRG could be controversial. However, above all are the change of effect of KRG in the formation of Turkish foreign policy and the depth of Turkey's cordial relations with it.

Consequently, Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism have experienced a significant transformation in domestic and regional level as a result of Syrian Crisis. In both levels, Turkey's interest and security were under an immense threat due to increasing terror attacks and politically and militarily strengthening PKK/PYD in the region. Within this context, Ankara's close ties with

Erbil gained importance in two ways regarding Turkey's security threat. On the one hand, the solution process was initiated by the JDP government to find a political solution for Kurdish issue. Moreover, Barzani played an active role as a mediator between two parties. On the other hand, PYD/PKK's effort to create a quasi-state formation in northern Syria was a direct threat for Turkey's domestic and regional security understanding. Therefore, Kurdish National Council and other pro-Barzani political elements were seen as a balancing power against PYD by Turkish foreign policy makers. As a consequence, it could be said that Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism convert the scope and the depth of Turkey's relations with KRG into a cordial relation between two parties in 2011 and 2016.

4.3.3. Turkey's Energy Policies and the KRG

As it was mentioned before, Turkey's economic considerations and energy policies played a significant role in the rapprochement between Ankara and Erbil. Turkey's growing and energy-hungry economy and its energy policies to be an important energy hub emerged as effective dynamics that influence Turkey's approach towards KRG. Furthermore, in order to understand transformation of the rapprochement between two parties into a cordial relationship, Turkey's energy policies and goals in northern Iraq should be discussed by focusing on deepening and developing economic and energy relations between Turkey and KRG. On the other hand, it should be noted that the regional developments in the context of Syrian Crisis had also affected Turkey's energy policies since Bashar al Assad's allies Russia and Iran are main oil and natural gas exporters for Turkey. Thus, being dependent on hydrocarbon resources of Russia and Iran was a serious weakness for Turkey's ambitious foreign policy goals and interests. Consequently, Turkey's policies to satisfy its energy need and the probable repercussion of regional dynamics became one of pillars of the cordial relations of Turkey and KRG.

At the beginning, in November 2011, Exxon Mobil, one of the biggest oil companies in the world, signed a bilateral oil agreement with the KRG directly about the disputed areas in Iraq in spite of all objections of Iraqi central government which could be seen as a turning point for other international and Turkish companies.

Furthermore, this agreement caused that Turkey revised its economic relations with Kurds in Iraq and changed its energy policies (Erkmen, 2013, p. 93). At that point, it should be noted that Baghdad had been against any energy agreement signed by KRG and international oil companies since economic development of KRG was seen as a first step of the independence of KRG. Regarding Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism, its energy policies towards KRG could be seen contradictory as KRG's economic independence thanks to oil revenues could turn into the KRG's political independence from Iraqi central government. For instance, İşeri and Dilek stated that the increasing cooperation between Turkey and the KRG on energy could cause a dangerous position for Turkey since Turkey's economic and energy investments in northern Iraq could pave the way for the independence of Erbil from Baghdad in the future (2013, p. 30). However, Mills stated that JDP government seems to have adopted the opinion that a prosperous KRG with political stability would be dependent on Turkey economically that contributes Turkey's efforts solve the Kurdish issue (2013, p. 60). Therefore, according to JDP government, KRG's strengthening economic structure thanks to developing economic and energy ties with Turkey would make it to be under the influence of Turkey, so this situation would not create a possible security threat related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism for Turkey. In the same vein, Nihat Ali Özcan claimed that the development of energy related commercial relations with KRG tends to create political, cultural, military and societal consequences accordingly since long term economic projects such as energy projects requires political stability and security. Therefore, new roles and responsibilities reflected itself in Turkey's relations with Barzani and peace process as game changer factor (2014).

In the following process, Turkey's developing ties with the KRG on hydrocarbon resources in northern Iraq will be discussed by considering the tension and the dynamics in the region in order to understand energy aspect of the cordial relations between two parties. First of all, the growing energy cooperation between Ankara and Erbil was especially imperative. The estimations of hydrocarbon reserves in northern Iraq have augmented profoundly because KRG decided to sign exploration agreements with third parties bilaterally although it was seen as illegal by

Iraq central government (Park, 2013, p. 45). The raise in proven hydrocarbon resources in northern Iraq had motivated Ankara to establish closer ties with Erbil in spite of strong opposition of Baghdad. In this respect, a significant agreement was signed in March 2012 by Turkey and KRG to directly provide natural gas and oil to Turkey without gaining Baghdad's consent. Even though the scope of agreement have not been known, it is estimated that Turkey obtained significant prerogatives to explore new hydrocarbon resources areas in northern Iraq and beside granted ratio of energy exports (Larrabee, 2013, p. 143). Furthermore, another considerable agreement was signed by Ankara and Erbil in May 2012 after the visit of Prime Minister of KRG Nechirvan Barzani to Ankara. The agreement was on the construction of two new pipelines to transport hydrocarbon resources of KRG to directly Turkey. However, Baghdad was left out of the agreement since both parties had worse relations with it (Park, 2014, p. 27). Therefore, these two agreements presented an opportunity for Turkey to be energy hub in the region considering goals of its energy policies. Moreover, private energy companies, based on Turkey, such as Genel Energy became more effective in energy market of KRG in trust of Turkey. On the other hand, the US and Iraq stated their strong oppositions to Turkey's developing energy relations with KRG without Baghdad's consent since both of them evaluated increasing cooperation of Turkey and KRG on energy as a threat for Iraq's territorial integrity. For instance, the statements of Namık Tan, the ambassador of Turkey to the United States, after the meeting of the Undersecretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sinirlioğlu with his counterparts in the US, indicated the position of Turkish foreign policy makers towards the developing ties with Erbil on energy and strong opposition of the US and Iraq. Ambassador Tan stated that "we will talk and find a common basis for a solution. However, if they think that we will turn our back on those resources and shelve this opportunity, they cannot convince us of that" (Turkey, US to hold intensified Iraq talks, 2013). Thus, according to Turkish foreign policy makers, hydrocarbon resources of KRG were not ignorable for Turkey's economic interests and energy policies. At this juncture, it should be noted that any possibility of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq was an unimaginable incident for Ankara until 2007. However, in spite of the warnings of the US and Iraq on probable outcomes of Turkey's developing economic ties with KRG, Ankara

decisively continued its ambitious energy policies on oil and natural gas resources in northern Iraq. Within this context, it could be said that Turkey did not see KRG as a security threat for itself in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism since Turkish foreign policy makers relied on Turkey's economic and political power over KRG, so the KRG, economically dependent on Turkey, would not attempt to be independent from Iraq. Although the accuracy of this approach could be debatable in many ways; it clearly presented the energy aspect of the cordial relations between Turkey and KRG.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the role of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria in 1991-2016 was questioned by focusing on regional dynamics that determined the change and continuity patterns of Turkish foreign policy. Within this context, cooperation and conflict period in Turkey's Iraq and Syria relations as a result of the impact of regional dynamics on Turkey's security concerns related with Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism and national interests were discussed.

At the beginning, the second chapter aimed to reveal the importance of Kurdish issue in terms of Turkey's security concerns for foreign policy makers. Gulf War paved the way for serious consequences for regional politics. Furthermore, Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Poised Hammer provided a suitable environment for Kurdish groups in northern Iraq to establish an autonomous administration. Therefore, the foundation of Kurdish Regional Government was seen as an immense threat by Turkish foreign policy makers. Possibility of any change in regional status quo and of emerge of any threat against Turkish territory due to this regional development became the main pillar of Turkey's Iraq policy. In this respect, Turkey did not have a genuine Iraq policy, so Turkey-Iraq relations were determined by Turkey's security concerns related to the formation of KRG and Kurdish issue. In addition to that, PKK's strengthening position in northern Iraq and increasing its attacks against Turkey made a security oriented foreign policy obligatory for Turkish foreign policy makers.

On the other hand, Turkey-Syria relations served as another model of the impact of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on Turkish foreign policy. Historical and contemporary dimensions of the relations presented serious problems for Turkey. Damascus's claims on Hatay province of Turkey and water issue between parties were evaluated as significant threats against Turkey's territorial integrity and national interests by Turkish foreign policy makers at the present time. Regarding the

balance of power in the region after the Cold War, Syria decided to exploit Turkey's Kurdish issue and to use PKK card as a political and military tool to get leverage against Turkey. Within this framework, the securitization of water issue by Ankara due to security concerns related to PKK and Kurdish issue particularly could be seen as a crucial decision of Turkish foreign policy makers. Thus, Turkey accepted its security vulnerability related to Kurdish issue and PKK in regional level. As a result of this political decision, Turkey could not isolate Kurdish issue as its own domestic problem. On the contrary, Kurdish issue turned into the main subject of Turkey-Syria relations and other crucial were overshadowed by Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. Consequently, Kurdish issue and PKK threat altered the nature of Turkey's Iraq and Syria relations. Turkish foreign policy makers preferred to use a security oriented approach in both cases. In spite of different contexts, Kurdish issue became main determiner of Turkey's Iraq and Syria relations as a result of its security culture.

Iraq War in 2003 had change and continuity patterns in Turkish foreign policy in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK. On the one side, overthrown of Saddam administration and growing influence of KRG in post-Saddam period extended the magnitude of impact of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism on Turkish foreign policy. Particularly, Turkey's restricted room for manoeuvre in post-Saddam Iraq as a result of rejection of 1 March Motion by GNAT and increasing attacks of PKK against Turkey had caused the continuation of security oriented foreign policy of Turkey. On the other hand, as another result of Iraq War in 2003, Kurdish issue and PKK also became a threat for Syria, so it had to abandon exploitation of Kurdish issue as a political tool against Turkey. Thus, transformation of Kurdish issue and PKK into a common threat for both sides paved the way for rapprochement of Turkey and Syria. Hence, in the period between 1991 and 2007, scope and impact of Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK had determined the degree of Turkey's security oriented approach in its relations with Iraq and Syria.

The third chapter of this thesis was formed to discuss the alteration of Turkey's security oriented approach by focusing on different aspects of domestic and regional developments. Furthermore, above mentioned alteration was examined on the basis of Turkey's relations with KRG because Turkey had developed close relations with Syria in many areas since Iraq War in 2003 until 2011. Within this

perspective, change of security understanding of Turkish foreign policy makers and economic and energy concerns of Turkey were discussed as the most significant reasons of the alteration of security oriented approach of Turkish foreign policy.

First of all, it should be noted that Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK were the driving force of change of Turkey's approach towards KRG. According to Turkish foreign policy makers, KRG could be a significant asset for Turkey's national interest since the rapprochement between Turkey and KRG could contribute containment of Kurdish issue and to fighting against PKK for Turkish side. Particularly, new foreign policy understanding of JDP and Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu presented a new perspective for Turkey's regional policy, so they mostly emphasized the importance of good relations and cooperation among regional actors for the solution of long lasting problems. Basically, it could be stated that in this transition period, Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK did not change but the position of KRG in these concerns in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy makers did. Furthermore, the cooperation of Erbil in the context of the opening process in 2009 revealed security dimension of the rapprochement between two parties. At the same way, developing relations with KRG were seen as a strategic foreign policy decision by Ankara because of probable outcomes of regional developments. Especially, withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq and Iran's increasing influence in Iraq were evaluated as a potential source of threat for Turkey's vital interest in Iraq and the region. In short, the third chapter presented that changing regional dynamics had caused different effects of Turkey's relations with Iraq, Syria and KRG, so positive and negative reflections of regional dynamics in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism set the tone of Turkey's relations.

In the third chapter, Turkey's economic interests and energy policies also were examined as significant factors that contribute the transformation of Turkey's approach KRG. On the one hand, considering trading state concept, Turkey could not ignore economic opportunities in northern Iraq for its developing economy. On the other hand, developing economic relations paved the way for economic dependency for KRG side. It means that KRG would have to pay attention to security concerns of Turkey for the sake of its economic interests. Thus, Turkish foreign policy makers

developed a liberal approach to strengthen cooperation with KRG and to eliminate Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism. Furthermore, regarding ambitious foreign policy goals of JDP, energy dimension of Turkey's relations with KRG was highly crucial for Turkey, so developing energy relations between two parties became an important aspect of above mentioned economic dependency of Kurdish side.

Therefore, in spite of increasing political and economic cooperation between Ankara and Erbil, Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK did not lose its significance in Ankara-Erbil relations. Merely the position of KRG in Turkey's security concerns was redefined by Ankara as a part of its new security understanding. Diversifications of foreign policy issues and emerge of economic, social and domestic subjects as parts of foreign policy making paved the way for change of Turkish foreign policy in 2007-2011. Considering theoretical discussions on the transformation of Turkish foreign policy in this period, JDP government found a significant opportunity to include different internal and external elements into foreign policy making. Thus, regarding Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK, the rapprochement between Turkey and KRG could be realized with the change of foreign policy and security understanding of Turkey. Consequently, ongoing security threats and changing security understanding of Turkey preserved the role of Kurdish issue and PKK in Turkey's relations with KRG. Changing security understanding of Turkey did not take KRG out of the context of Turkey's security concerns. It just redefined the role of KRG in Turkey's internal and external security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK.

Fourth chapter aimed to evaluate the impact of Kurdish issue and PKK on Turkey's foreign policy toward Syria and Iraq by considering regional developments and challenges. Particularly, Arab Uprisings and Syrian Civil War has caused intense involvement of regional and international actors into regional politics, so Turkey had to take regional developments and foreign policies of these actors to response its security concerns into account. Thus, similarities and differences between Turkey's Iraq and Syria policies were discussed by regarding Syrian Civil War in terms of Kurdish issue and PKK.

Primarily, explicit support of Ankara to Syrian opposition groups has caused the deterioration of Turkey-Syria relations. Especially, after the failure of Ankara to

convince Assad for political reforms in Syria, Turkey's support to the Syrian opposition became more explicit and remarkable. One of the reasons of active role of Turkey in Syrian Civil War was to be an influential actor in post-Assad Syria by considering its security concerns. Thus, Kurdish issue and PKK became a significant part of Turkey's approach toward Syrian Crisis. On the other hand, withdrawal of Syrian troops from northern parts of Syria and increasing activities of PYD as Syrian branch of PKK has created new domestic and regional security concerns for Turkish foreign policy makers. It could be said that Syria's response to active support of Turkey to Syrian opposition was a repetition of exploitation of Kurdish issue and PKK by Damascus in 1990's. Furthermore, the autonomous administration of PYD in northern Syria and increasing security threats due to different terrorist organisations in Syrian Civil War emerged as serious security challenges for Turkish foreign policy makers. Within this context, regional dynamics and involvement of Russia into Syrian Crisis limited foreign policy options of Turkey towards its security concerns. Particularly, escalating tension between Turkey and Russia had restricted military options of Turkey against terrorist groups in northern Syria. At that point, it could be noted that Turkish foreign policy makers could not foresee possible consequences and challenges of Turkey's involvement into Syrian Crisis in terms of its security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK. In the following term, the normalisation of Turkey-Russia relations provided a suitable environment for Turkish foreign policy makers to conduct an active security oriented realist approach. Within this framework, the Operation Euphrates Shield was launched by Turkey to secure its borders from security threats of PYD and ISIS. Moreover, Turkey's decision to use of force against Syria because of its support to PKK in 1998 paved the way for Adana Agreement of 1998 between Ankara and Damascus. However, in 2016, Turkey had to use its military power to terminate security threats against its national interests since political and diplomatic attempts were not enough to give an end to security concerns of Turkey in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy makers.

Secondly, Turkey's relations with KRG were discussed by considering three main focus points in order to understand the cordial relations between Ankara and Erbil. At the beginning, Turkey's relations with Iraq and Iran in the context of Syrian

Civil War and dynamics of Iraq's internal political structure had presented new challenges for Turkey in the region. At that point, Ankara developed its relations with KRG to preserve its interests in the region since worsening relations with Iraq and regional rivalry with Iran had caused serious obstacles for Turkey's foreign policy goals in Middle East. Furthermore, domestic and regional dimensions of Kurdish issue and PKK/PYD became an immense threat for Turkey's internal and regional security understanding because the establishment of autonomous administration by PYD in northern Syria and increasing influence of PKK/PYD in the region became reason of Turkey's increasing security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK. A probable statehood formation by PKK/PYD in Syria could affect adversely Turkey's Kurdish issue since PKK would find an institutional foundation to conduct its armed and political actions against Turkey. Within this context, Turkey's cordial relations with KRG and its leader Barzani gained a crucial importance for Ankara because Turkey's solutions towards Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in domestic and regional levels provided a significant role to KRG and Barzani.

Finally, the effect of Turkey's energy policies on its foreign policy was the last focus point in order to understand the cordial relations between Turkey and KRG. In spite of strong opposition of Baghdad and Washington, Turkey preferred to develop its energy relations with KRG. Strengthening economic structure of KRG was not evaluated as a first step of political independence of KRG by Turkish foreign policy makers. According to them, the hydrocarbon resources of Erbil could not be ignored due to energy hungry growing economy of Turkey. Furthermore, Turkish foreign policy makers thought that KRG would not pursue a fully independence state considering political and economic power of Turkey.

In short, fourth chapter presented that increasing and expanding security threats related to Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in both domestic and regional level as a result of Arab Uprisings became dominant determinant in Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria. At the same way, the cordial relations between Turkey and KRG were built by Turkish foreign policy makers to respond the repercussions of regional dynamics on Turkish foreign policy. Furthermore, this chapter examined that Kurdish issue and PKK could be used as a political leverage by any regional or

international actor against Turkey, so these subjects continue to preserve their impact and roles in Turkey's relations with regional and international actors.

Consequently, this thesis showed that Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria between the years of 1991 and 2016 had been determined by Turkey's security concerns related to Kurdish issue and PKK. As regional turning points, Gulf War in 1991, Iraq War in 2003 and Arab Uprisings have had significant effects on Turkey's relations with Iraq, Syria and KRG, therefore it could be easily observed that cooperation or conflict between parties could occur as result of regional dynamics and Kurdish issue. Furthermore, in the case of Syria, Damascus administration preferred to use PKK card against Turkey in two different periods. On the other hand, Turkey's Iraq policy has been formed by considering the position of KRG regarding Kurdish issue and PKK. In spite of the influence of different factors in Turkey's Iraq policy in different time periods, the main determinant of Turkey's approach towards KRG has remained unchanged which is its security-oriented foreign policy understanding. In other words, in spite of being a domestic problem, Kurdish issue has become internationalized and constituted to be a prominent factor in Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria. At that point, regional dynamics determined the scope and the magnitude of impact of Kurdish issue on these relations. In short, this thesis presented the role of Kurdish issue and PKK in Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria. Turkey-Syria and Turkey-Iraq relations had experienced significant cooperation periods in the years between 1991 and 2016, however; Turkey's security concerns related with Kurdish issue and PKK terrorism in the frame of regional dynamics and its changing security understanding determined these relations.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tezde, Türk dış politikasının devamlılık ve değişim süreçlerini belirleyen bölgesel dinamikler temel alınarak, Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörünün 1991-2016 yılları arasında Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ile olan ilişkileri üzerindeki etkisi sorgulanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ile olan ilişkilerindeki işbirliği ve çatışma dönemleri, bölgesel dinamiklerin Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörüyle ilgili güvenlik endişelerine ve ulusal çıkarlarına etkisinin bir sonucu olarak tartışılmıştır. Bu çerçevede, 1991 Körfez Savaşı, 2003 Irak Savaşı ve Arap Ayaklanmaları temel bölgesel dinamikler olarak ele alınmıştır. Bu bölgesel dinamiklerin ve bölgesel ve uluslararası aktörlerin etkileri dikkate alınarak; Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ile olan ilişkilerinde Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörünün etkisi tartışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak bu tezin temel iddiası Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ile dönemsel olarak işbirliği ve yakınlaşma süreçleri yaşamasına rağmen, bölgesel dinamiklerin etkisiyle Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörü temelli güvenlik endişelerinin söz konusu ilişkilerin temel belirleyicisi olduğudur.

Tezin birinci bölümü Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörünün Türkiye'nin güvenlik endişeleri bağlamında dış politika yapıcılarını için önemini göstermeyi hedeflemektedir. Özellikle Körfez Savaşı'nın yarattığı bölgesel etkilerin en önemlilerinden olan Huzuru Temin Harekâtı ve Kalkık Horoz Harekâtı; Kuzey Irak'ta Kürt gruplarının özerk yapılar kurmalarına imkân sağlayacak bir ortam yaratmıştır. Buna müteakip süreçte Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi'nin (KBY) kurulması Türk dış politika yapıcılarını tarafından Türkiye'nin güvenliği ve ulusal çıkarları açısından büyük bir tehdit olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Irak'ın toprak bütünlüğünün değişmesi ve bölgesel statükonun bozulması ihtimali Türkiye tarafından Kürt sorunu ve PKK temelli güvenlik tehditleri bağlamında ele alınmıştır. Bu sebeple Körfez Savaşı sonrası dönemde Türkiye özgün bir Irak politikası geliştirmemiştir bu yüzden Türkiye-Irak ilişkileri Türkiye'nin güvenlik endişelerini temel alarak KBY ve Kürt sorunu üzerinden şekillenmiştir.

Türkiye'nin Irak ile ilişkileri KBY ve Kürt sorunu üzerinden şekillendiği için Türkiye'nin 2003 Irak Savaşı'na kadar yürüttüğü kuzey Irak politikası tezin ilk kısmında incelenmiştir. Türkiye bu dönem kuzey Irak politikasını üç temel üzerinden şekillendirmiştir. Bunlar; Irak'ın toprak bütünlüğünün korunması, Türkiye'nin meşru güvenlik kaygılarının gözetilmesi ve kuzey Irak'ta yaşayan Türkmenlerin korunması olarak belirtilmiştir. Açıkça görüldüğü üzere Türkiye'nin kuzey Irak politikası Türk dış politika yapıcılarının güvenlik temel dış politika anlayışının bir sonucu olarak meydana gelmiştir. Bu yüzden, Türkiye kuzey Irak'taki Kürt grupları arasındaki siyasi mücadeleyi yakından takip etmiştir. Özellikle KDP ve KYB arasındaki çatışmaya bölgesel aktörlerin dahil olmasıyla birlikte Türkiye ve Irak, İran ve PKK'nın destek verdiği KYB'ye karşı KDP'ye destek vermiştir. Kuzey Irak'taki Kürt gruplarının arasındaki güç mücadelesi Türkiye açısından hem olumlu hem de olumsuz sonuçlar içermektedir. Bir yandan KDP ve KYB arasındaki mücadele Kürt gruplarının bir araya gelip bağımsızlık hedefi olan bir siyasi irade ortaya koyması yönünde engel teşkil etmektedir. Bu durum Türkiye'nin güvenlik anlayışı bakımından Irak'ın toprak bütünlüğünün korunması ve bölgede statükonun korunması anlamına gelmekteydi. Öte yandan, kuzey Irak bölgesinde Kürt grupları arasındaki çatışmanın bölgede istikrarsız yaratması PKK'nın daha rahat faaliyet göstereceği bir ortam yaratma riski taşımaktaydı. Bu noktada Türkiye'nin Türkmen politikasının temel amaçlarından birisi kuzey Irak'taki Kürt gruplarını dengeleyecek siyasi bir oluşum yaratmaktı. Kuzey Irak'taki siyasi ve silahlı çatışma ortamının varlığına rağmen bölgede bir Kürt devleti kurulması ihtimali Türk dış politika yapıcıları için ciddi bir tehdit oluşturmaktaydı. Türkiye, Türkmen nüfusun haklarını üzerine vurgusunu arttırarak Türkmenlerin Irak'ın geleceğinde yer alan önemli bir aktör olmasını sağlamayı hedefliyordu.

Türkiye'nin Irak ile ilişkileri bu dönemde Türkiye'nin kuzey Irak politikası çerçevesinde belirlenmiştir. Türk dış politika yapıcıları, Saddam yönetimi Irak genelinde devlet yönetimini sağlayamazsa Türkiye'nin PKK'ya karşı yürüttüğü diplomatik ve askeri mücadelenin eksik kalacağını farkındaydı. Bu yüzden ABD'nin tutumu ve Irak'a karşı uygulanan yaptırımlara rağmen Türkiye, güvenlik kaygılarını göz önünde bulundurarak Irak ile iyi ilişkiler kurma yönünde irade göstermiştir.

Öte yandan, Türkiye-Suriye ilişkileri, Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörünün Türk dış politikasındaki rolünü gösteren bir diğer örnek olarak ele alınmıştır. Söz konusu dönemde Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerindeki tarihsel ve dönemsel konular Türkiye açısından ciddi güvenlik sorunların dönüşmüştür. Tarihsel açıdan Suriye'nin Hatay üzerindeki iddiaları ve dönemsel olarak su sorunu Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinin temel sorunları olarak görülmüştür ve Türk dış politika yapıcılarının tarafından Türkiye'nin toprak bütünlüğü ve ulusal çıkarları açısından ciddi güvenlik sorunları olarak ele alınmıştır. Bütün bunların ışığında Suriye tarafı Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörünü Türkiye'ye karşı politik bir kart olarak kullanıp bahse konu bu sorunların çözümünde bir avantaja çevirme politikası uygulamıştır. Bu çerçevede Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu ve PKK temelli güvenlik endişeleri nedeniyle su sorununu bir güvenlik sorunu haline getirmesi Türk dış politika yapıcılarının önemli kararlarından biri haline gelmiştir. Bu yüzden bölgesel seviyede Türkiye Kürt sorunu ve PKK ile ilgili güvenlik zafiyetlerini kabul ettiğini belirtmiş olmaktadır. Türkiye, bir iç mesele olan Kürt sorununu bölgesel ve uluslararası politikadan izole edememiştir bu yüzden Kürt sorunu ve PKK Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinde tarihsel ve dönemsel sorunları gölgeleyen temel bir soruna dönüşmüştür.

Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'nin Suriye ile olan sorunları çözme yönündeki diplomatik girişimlerinin başarısızlığa uğraması Türkiye'nin yeni çözümler aramasına neden olmuştur. Özellikle Suriye'nin PKK ve lideri Öcalan'a açıkça destek vermesi ve Hatay konusu ve su sorunu gibi meseleleri PKK gölgesinde çözmeye çalışması Türkiye için ciddi güvenlik sorunları içermektedir. Bu noktada Türkiye'nin Suriye'ye karşı güç kullanma ihtimalini ciddi bir şekilde masaya koyması ve üst rütbeli ordu komutanlarının yaşanan durumu "ilan edilmemiş savaş" olarak nitelendirmesi Türkiye ve Suriye arasındaki gerilimi yeni bir seviyeye taşımıştır. Bununla birlikte Türkiye'nin kararlı bir tutum sergilemesi ve sınır bölgesindeki askeri varlığını arttırması Suriye'nin geri adım atmasına neden olmuştur. Çok kısa bir süre içinde PKK lideri Abdullah Öcalan Suriye tarafından sınır dışı edilmiştir. Sonrasında Türkiye ve Suriye tarafından imzalanan Adana Anlaşması ile birlikte taraflar arasındaki gerilim son ermiştir. Söz konusu anlaşma temel olarak Türkiye ve Suriye'nin PKK'ya işbirliği yapmasını ve Suriye'nin PKK'ya arasındaki tüm ilişkileri sona erdirmesini içermektedir.

2003 Irak Savaşı, Kürt sorunu ve PKK bağlamında, Türk dış politikasının değişim ve devamlılık süreçlerini etkilemiştir. Savaşın başlamasından önceki süreçte Türkiye yine güvenlik eksenli anlayışı çerçevesinde hareket etmiştir. Savaşın başlamasında önce önemli diplomatik girişimlerde bulunarak Türkiye bölgede gerilimin düşürülmesi yönünde çaba harcamıştır. Ancak devam eden süreçte ABD ve Irak arasındaki gerilimin devam etmesi ve taraflar arasında bir savaşın kesinlik kazanması üzerine Türkiye ve ABD arasında önemli bir müzakere süreci başlamıştır. Bu müzakerelerde Türkiye'nin en çok önem verdiği konular; Irak'ın toprak bütünlüğü ve kuzey Irak'ın geleceği çünkü Türkiye savaş sonrası dönemde bu bölgelerin Kürt sorunu ve PKK ile güvenlik kaygılarını arttıracak unsurlara dönüşeceğini düşünmekteydi. Bu çerçevede gayet sert bir şekilde geçen müzakerelerin sonucunda ABD askerlerinin Türkiye'nin topraklarına konuşlanmasına ve Türkiye'nin askeri üs ve limanlarını kullanmasına izin veren tezkere Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (TBMM) tarafından reddedilmiştir. Bu durum açıkçası hem Türk dış politika yapıcılarını hem de ABD tarafı için beklenmedik bir duruma neden olmuştur. Tezkerenin Meclis tarafından reddedilmesi Türkiye ve ABD arasındaki ilişkilerin bozulmasına neden olmuştur. İlişkilerde bu bozulmanın Türkiye'nin Irak politikası üzerindeki yansımaları kısa sürede görülmüştür. Özellikle, Süleymaniye'de bulunan Türk Özel Kuvvet Kuvvetleri askerlerinin ABD askerleri tarafından tutuklanması Türkiye'nin Saddam sonrası dönemde karşılaştığı sorunların en ciddi örneği olarak tarihteki yerini almıştır. Sonuç olarak bir yandan, Saddam yönetiminin devrilmesi ve KBY'nin Irak politikasında artan gücü Türkiye'nin Irak ilişkilerinde güvenlik ekseninin devamına neden olmuştur. Özellikle 1 Mart Tezkeresinin TBMM tarafında reddedilmesi sonrasında bozulan Türk-Amerikan ilişkileri ve Türkiye'nin Irak'ta kısıtlanan etkinliği Türkiye'nin güvenlik endişelerinin artmasına neden olmuştur.

Öte yandan, 1998 yılında Adana Anlaşması'nın imzalanmasıyla başlayan işbirliği döneminde PKK konusu Türkiye'nin Suriye ile ilişkilerindeki etkisi azalma göstermişti. Bununla birlikte 2003 Irak Savaşı sonrasındaki dönemde Suriye sınırları içerisindeki Kürt nüfusun gerçekleştirdiği eylemler Suriye'nin Kürt sorunu ve PKK'ya bakışını etkilemiştir. Özellikle kuzey Irak'ta güç kazanan Kürt grupların Suriye içindeki Kürt nüfusu etkilemesi Suriye'nin Türkiye ile işbirliği yapmasına

neden olmuştur. Bu noktada Adana Anlaşması'na kadar PKK ve Kürt sorununu Türkiye'ye karşı politik bir kart olarak kullanan Suriye için 2003 sonrası dönemde bu konular Türkiye ile ortak güvenlik sorunlarına dönüşmüştür. Bu sebeple Türkiye ve Suriye arasında yaşanan yakınlaşma döneminin en önemli sebeplerinden biri PKK ve Kürt sorununun iki taraf açısından da ortak bir güvenlik sorunu olarak ele alınmasıdır.

Tezin ikinci kısmı iç politikada ve bölgesel düzeyde yaşana gelişmeleri dikkate alarak Türk dış politikasının değişen güvenlik anlayışını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bölümde bahse konu değişim Türkiye ve Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi arasındaki ilişkiler üzerinden ele alınmaktadır. Çünkü daha önce bahsedildiği gibi 2003 Irak Savaşı sonrası dönemde Türkiye, Suriye ile yakın ilişkiler geliştirmiştir. Bu çerçevede Türk dış politika yapıcılarının değişen dış politika anlayışı ve Türkiye'nin ekonomi ve enerji politikaları; Türk dış politikasının güvenlik odaklı anlayışını etkileyen en önemli unsurlar olarak incelenmiştir.

Öncelikle, Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörü temelli güvenlik endişeleri Türkiye'nin KBY ile ilişkilerinin başlıca itici gücüydü. Türk dış politika yapıcılarına göre Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi Türkiye'nin ulusal çıkarları açısından önemli bir kazanıma olabildi. Çünkü Türkiye ve KBY arasındaki yakınlaşma Kürt sorununun çerçevelenmesinde ve PKK ile mücadelede Türkiye önemli katkılar sağlayabilirdi. Özellikle, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi ve Dışişleri Bakanı Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun dış politika anlayışı Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu politikası için yeni bir anlayışı ortaya koymayı amaçlıyordu. Bu yüzden, bölgesel aktörler arasında işbirliği ve iyi ilişkilerinin köklü sorunların çözümünde önemli bir unsur olarak vurguluyorlardı. Sonuç olarak bu değişim döneminde, Türkiye Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörü ile ilgili güvenlik anlayışını değiştirmede sadece bu güvenlik anlayışı içerisinde KBY ile ilişkilerin ele alındığı konumu değiştirmiştir. İç politikada yaşanan 2009 yılında yaşanan Açılım Süreci ve bölgesel düzeyde ABD kuvvetlerinin Irak çekilmesi ve İran'ın Irak başta olmak üzere bölgede etkinliğini arttırması Türkiye-KBY arasında iyi ilişkilerin kurulmasına katkı sağlamıştır. Bu çerçevede Türkiye güvenlik endişelerini ve ulusal çıkarlarını göz önüne alarak KBY ile iyi ilişkiler kurma yönünde irade göstermiştir.

Yukarıda bahsedilen siyasi gelişmelere ek olarak Türkiye'nin ekonomik çıkarları ve enerji politikaları Türkiye'nin Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi'ne yaklaşımını değiştiren önemli unsurlar olarak tartışılmıştır. Özellikle “trading state” kavramı temel alındığında gelişmekte olan bir ekonomisi olan Türkiye kuzey Irak'taki ekonomik fırsatları görmezden gelemezdi. Öte yandan, Türkiye ile ekonomik ilişkileri gelişen Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi'nin ekonomik açıdan Türkiye'ye bağımlılık geliştirmesi Türkiye'nin güvenlik endişeleri açısından önemli bir gelişme olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Öte yandan, Türkiye'nin iddialı dış politika hedefleri dikkate alındığında, Türkiye-KBY arasındaki enerji ilişkileri büyük bir önem taşımaktadır. Bununla birlikte daha önce bahsedildiği gibi enerji bağlamında artan ilişkiler yine Türkiye-KBY arasındaki bağımlılık ilişkisini güçlendirecektir.

Sonuç olarak, Ankara ve Erbil arasında artan siyasi ve ekonomik işbirliğine rağmen Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörü bağlamındaki güvenlik endişeleri söz konusu ilişkilerde önemini kaybetmemiştir. Sadece Türkiye'nin yeni güvenlik anlayışı bağlamında Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi'nin Türkiye'nin güvenlik endişelerindeki yeri yeniden tanımlanmıştır. Dış politika konularının çeşitlilik göstermesi, ekonomik, sosyal ve iç politika konularının dış politika kapsamında ele alınması 2007-2011 yılları arasında Türk dış politikasında yaşanan değişime yol açmıştır. Türk dış politikasındaki değişim üzerine yapılan teorik tartışmaları dikkate aldığımızda, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi farklı iç ve dış politika unsurlarını dış politika yapım sürecine dâhil etme imkânı bulmuştur. Bu yüzden, Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörü temelli güvenlik endişeleri bağlamında, Türkiye ve Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi arasındaki yakınlaşma süreci Türkiye'nin dış politika ve güvenlik anlayışının değişmesi ile birlikte gerçekleşmiştir.

Tezin üçüncü bölümü bölgesel gelişmeleri ve krizleri göz önüne alarak, Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörünün Türk dış politikası üzerindeki etkisini ve rolünü değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Özellikle, Arap Ayaklanmaları ve Suriye İç Savaşı bölgesel ve uluslararası aktörlerin Ortadoğu politikasına yoğun bir katılım sürecine neden olmuştur. Bu yüzden Türkiye kendi güvenlik sorunlarına çözüm ararken bölgesel gelişmeleri ve bahse konu bölgesel ve uluslararası aktörlerin dış politikalarını dikkate almak zorunda kalmıştır. Sonuç olarak tezin bu kısmında

Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye politikasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıklar Kürt sorunu ve PKK dikkate alınarak tartışılmıştır.

Öncelikle, Arap Ayaklanmaları sürecinde Türkiye'nin Suriye'deki muhalefete verdiği açık destek Türkiye ve Suriye arasındaki ilişkilerin bozulmasına neden olmuştur. Özellikle Ankara'nın Esad yönetimini siyasi reformlar yapma konusunda ikna etme çabalarının başarısızlığa uğramasından sonra, Türkiye'nin Suriye'deki muhalif gruplara desteği daha açık ve belirgin bir hal almıştır. Türkiye'nin Suriye İç Savaşı'nda etkin bir rol oynamasının nedenleri arasında kendi güvenlik endişeleri ve sorunlarını dikkate alarak Esad sonrası dönem için etkin bir konuma geçme isteği yer almaktadır. Bu yüzden Kürt sorunu ve PKK, Türkiye'nin Suriye İç Savaşı'na yönelik yaklaşımının bir parçası haline gelmiştir. Öte yandan, Suriye askerlerinin Suriye'nin kuzey bölgelerinden çekilmesi ve PKK'nın Suriye kolu olan PYD'nin bölgede etkinliğinin artması Türkiye açısından yeni bölgesel ve iç güvenlik sorunlarını yaratmıştır. Suriye'nin Türkiye'nin Suriyeli muhaliflere desteğine cevabının 1990larda Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörünün Şam tarafından siyasi bir kart olarak kullanılmasının tekrarı olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Bununla birlikte Suriye'nin kuzeyinde PYD tarafında özerk bir yönetim kurulması ve Suriye İç Savaşı sayesinde kendilerine alan bulan farklı terör gruplarının faaliyetleri Türk dış politika yapıcılarını için yeni güvenlik tehditleri yaratmıştır.

Bu bağlamda, bölgesel dinamikler ve Rusya'nın Suriye İç Savaşı'na askeri ve siyasi müdahalesi Türkiye'nin güvenlik sorunlarını çözme yönündeki ihtimalini kısıtlamıştır. Özellikle, Rusya'ya ait bir savaş uçağının Türkiye tarafından düşürülmesi iki taraf arasındaki gerilimin yükselmesine neden olmuştur. Türkiye ve Rusya arasındaki bu gerginlik Türkiye'nin Suriye'nin kuzeyinden faaliyet gösteren terör oluşumlarına karşı askeri seçeneklerini de kısıtlamıştır. Bu noktada, Türk dış politika yapıcılarının Türkiye'nin Suriye İç Savaşı'na dâhil olmasını sonucu Kürt sorunu ve PKK bağlamında ortaya çıkacak muhtemel sonuçları ve sorunları öngöremediğini söylemek mümkündür. Bütün bunların ışığında Türkiye ve Rusya arasında diplomatik görüşmeler sonucu gerçekleşen yumuşama süreci Türkiye'nin Suriye'de güvenlik odaklı gerçekçi bir anlayış uygulaması için uygun bir ortam yaratmıştır.

Bahse konu gelişmelerin ışığında Türkiye sınır bölgesinde PYD ve Deash kaynaklı güvenlik tehditlerini sonlandırmak amacıyla Fırat Kalkanı Operasyonu'nu başlatmıştır. Tarihsel açıdan baktığımızda 1998 yılında Türkiye'nin Suriye'nin PKK'ya destek vermesi sebebiyle güç kullanma ihtimalini ortaya koyması 1998 yılında imzalanan Adana Anlaşması'yla sonuçlanmıştı. Öte yandan 2016 yılında ulusal çıkarlarına yönelik tehditlere karşı siyasi ve diplomatik girişimler yetersiz kaldığı için Türkiye kendisine yönelen güvenlik tehditlerine son vermek amacıyla güç kullanmak zorunda kalmıştır.

Tezin üçüncü kısmında Türkiye ve KBY arasındaki yakın ilişkileri anlamak amacıyla Türkiye'nin KBY'ye yönelik yaklaşımı üç ana odak noktası üzerinden incelenmiştir. İlk olarak Türkiye'nin Irak ve İran ile olan ilişkileri Suriye İç Savaşı bağlamında ve Irak iç politikasının dinamiklerinin ortaya koyduğu yeni sorunlar çerçevesinde ele alınmıştır. Bu noktada, Türkiye bölgedeki çıkarlarını korumak amacıyla Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi ile ilişkilerini geliştirmiştir çünkü Irak ile bozulan ilişkiler ve İran ile yaşanan bölgesel rekabet Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu'daki dış politika hedefleri açısından ciddi engellemeler yaratmaktadır. İkinci olarak Kürt sorunu çerçevesinde iç politikada ve bölgede yaşanan gelişmeler ve PKK/PYD yapılanması Türkiye'nin iç ve bölgesel güvenlik anlayışı açısından ciddi bir tehdit yaratmaktadır. PKK/PYD yapısının Suriye'de devlet benzeri bir yapılanmaya gitmesi hem Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu açısından yeni sorunlar yaratacak hem de PKK'nın terör faaliyetlerini yürütmek için kendine güvenli bir alan bulmasına sebep olacaktır. Buna ek olarak böyle bir durumun gerçekleşmesi PKK'nın Türkiye'ye karşı yürüttüğü siyasi ve askeri faaliyetlerine kurumsal bir yapı kazandıracaktır. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'nin Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi ve lider Mesut Barzani ile yakın ilişkiler geliştirmesi Türk dış politika yapıcılarında büyük bir önem kazanmıştır çünkü Türkiye'nin iç politika ve bölgesel düzeyde Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörüne karşı çözümleri KBY ve Barzani'ye önemli rolleri içermekteydi.

Son olarak, Türkiye'nin enerji politikasının dış politikasına olan etkisi Türkiye ve Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi arasındaki yakın ilişkileri anlamak amacıyla incelenmiştir. Özellikle Irak merkezi hükümeti ve ABD'nin yoğun muhalefetine rağmen Türkiye enerji bağlamında KBY ile ilişkilerini geliştirmeye karar vermiştir. Bu çerçevede Bağdat ve Washington'ın eleştirileri Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi'nin

gelişen enerji ilişkileri bağlamında ekonomik bağımsızlık elde edeceği ve bu ekonomik bağımsızlığın uzun vadede KBY'nin siyasi bağımsızlığı ile sonuçlanacağı yönündeydi. Bu ihtimal hem Irak hem de ABD açısından Irak ve bölgedeki hassas dengelerin bozulmasına neden olacağı şeklinde değerlendiriliyordu. Öte yandan, Türk dış politika yapıcıları KBY'nin ekonomik olarak güçlenmesini siyasi bağımsızlığa giden yolda ilk adım olarak değerlendirmemektedir. Ankara'ya göre Türkiye'nin gelişen ekonomisi ve enerji ihtiyacı dikkate alındığında Türkiye'nin Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi'nin hidrokarbon kaynaklarını görmezden gelme ihtimali bulunmamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, Türk dış politika yapıcıları Türkiye'nin siyasi ve ekonomik gücü göz önüne alındığından KBY'nin siyasi bağımsızlık hedefleyen bir politika takip edemeyeceklerini düşünmektedir. Tam tersine onlara göre, ekonomik açıdan Türkiye'ye bağımlılığı artan bir Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörüyle ilgili güvenlik endişelerini dikkate alan bir aktör haline gelmek zorunda kalacaktır.

Sonuç olarak, bu tez, 1991-2016 yılları arasında Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ile ilişkilerinin Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu ve PKK ile ilgili güvenlik kaygıları tarafından belirlendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bölgesel dönüm noktaları olarak ele alınan 1991 Körfez Savaşı, 2003 Irak Savaşı ve Arap Ayaklanmaları Türkiye'nin Irak, Suriye ve KBY ile ilişkilerinde önemli bir etkiye sahiptir. Bu yüzden, taraflar arasındaki işbirliği ve çatışma dönemlerinin bölgesel dinamikler, Kürt sorunu ve PKK bağlamında meydana geldiğini kolaylıkla gözlenebilir. Bu çerçevede, Suriye örneğinde görüldüğü üzere, Şam yönetimi iki farklı dönemde Kürt sorunu ve PKK terörünü Türkiye'ye karşı siyasi avantaj elde etmek amacıyla kullanmıştır. Öte yandan, Türkiye'nin Irak politikası Kürt sorunu ve PKK bağlamında Kürt Bölgesel Yönetimi'nin pozisyonuna göre belirlenmiştir. Türkiye'nin Irak politikasındaki farklı unsurların farklı dönemlerdeki etkisine rağmen Türkiye'nin KBY yönelik yaklaşımının temel belirleyicisi olan Türkiye'nin güvenlik odaklı dış politika anlayışı değişmeden aynı kalmıştır. Bu bağlamda, Kürt sorunu bir iç mesele olmasına rağmen uluslararası bir hal almış ve Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ile ilişkilerinin en önde gelen unsuru haline gelmiştir. Bu noktada, bölgesel dinamikler Kürt sorununun bu ilişkiler üzerindeki etkisinin kapsam ve şiddetini belirlemiştir. Son olarak, bu tez Kürt sorunu ve PKK'nın Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ile ilişkilerindeki rolünü ortaya koymuştur.

Türkiye-Suriye ve Türkiye-Irak ilişkileri 1991-2016 yılları arasında farklı dönemlerde işbirliği ve yakınlaşma süreçleri yaşamıştır. Ancak, Türkiye'nin bölgesel dinamikler bağlamında Kürt sorunu ve PKK ile ilgili güvenlik kaygıları ve değişen güvenlik anlayışı bahse konu bu ilişkileri belirleyicisi olmuştur.

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