Turkey and the European Union:
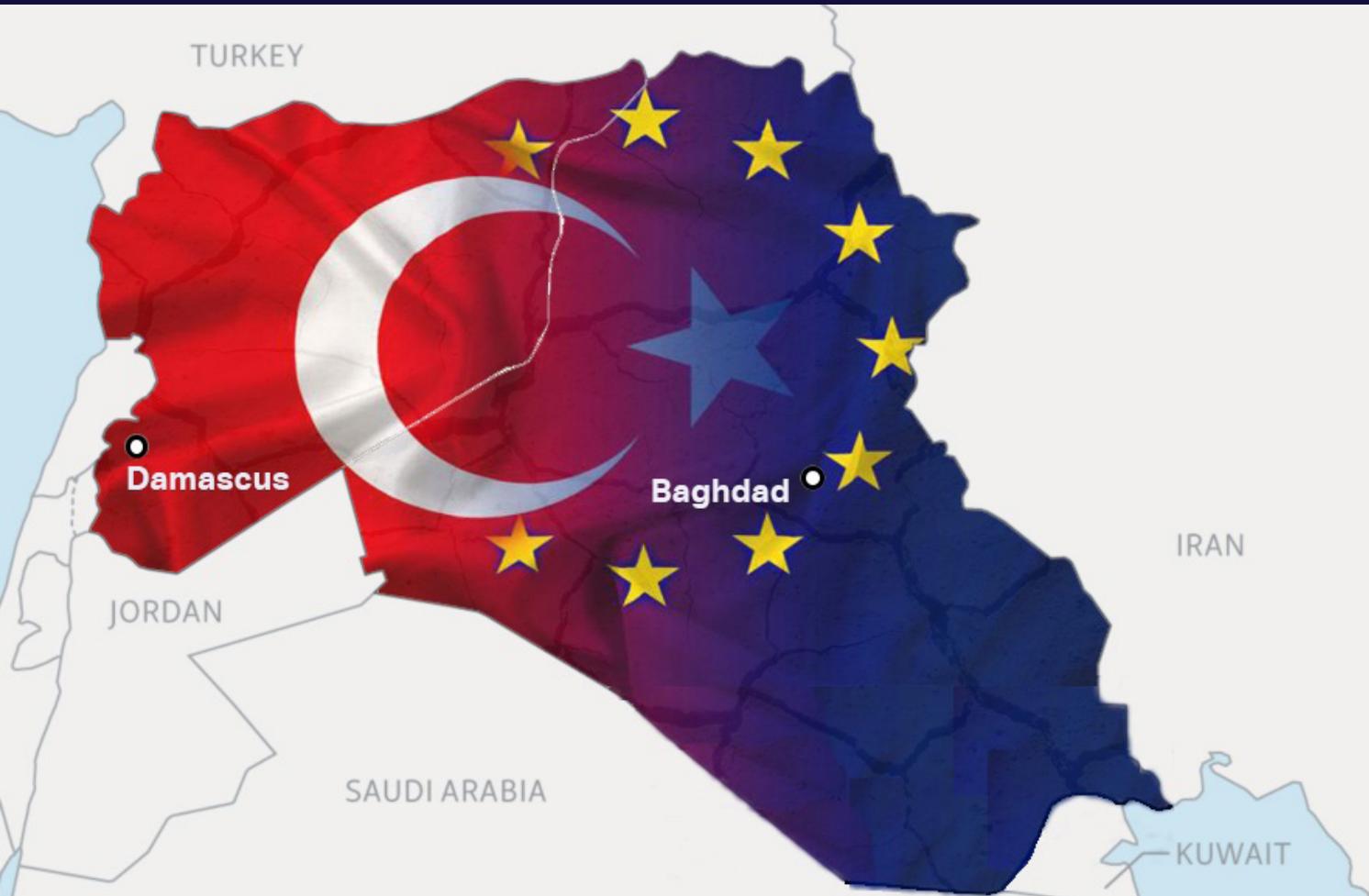
Conflicting Policies and Opportunities for Cohesion and Cooperation In Iraq and Syria

Kamaran Palani

Dlawer Ala'Aldeen

Susan Cersosimo

MERI

Middle East Research Institute

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The Middle East Research Institute engages in policy issues contributing to the process of state building and democratisation in the Middle East. Through independent analysis and policy debates, our research aims to promote and develop good governance, human rights, rule of law and social and economic prosperity in the region. It was established in 2014 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation based in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

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MERI Policy Report

Kamaran Palani
Research Fellow, MERI

Dlawer Ala'Aldeen
President of MERI

Susan Cersosimo
Associate Research Fellow, MERI

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Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

AFIRI Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran

AKP   Justice and Development Party

EU   European Union

FSA   Free Syrian Army

GCD   Global Coalition against Daesh

HW   al-Hashd Watani

IDP   Internally displaced persons

IS   Islamic State

ISF   Iraq Security Forces

KRG   Kurdish Regional Government

KRI   Kurdistan Region of Iraq

MENA Middle East North Africa

OES   Operation Euphrates Shield

OOB   Operation Olive Branch

KDP   Kurdistan Democratic Party

PKK   Kurdistan Workers' Party

PMF   Popular Mobilization Forces

PYD   Democratic Union Party

SDF   Syrian Democratic Front

TSK   Turkish Armed Forces

YBS   Shingal Resistance Units

YPG   People's Protection Units

Executive Summary

The aim of this paper is to explore how key security events, issues and trends within Iraq from 2003 and Syria from 2011, have influenced and impacted Turkey-European Union (EU) relations. Through conducting interviews with experts and extensive literature review, we deconstruct the causal mechanisms that act as the primary drivers impacting bilateral relations. We then compare and contrast Ankara's and Brussels' current security interests, priorities and perceptions toward security threats originating in this troubled neighbourhood. Finally, we classify opportunities as culminating in three possible discrete or combined security policy scenarios: conflict, cooperation and/or convergence and make recommendations to improve Turkey-EU relations.

To address how Iraq's and Syria's security environment evolved to its current state and predict the subsequent outcomes and impacts on EU-Turkey relations, we look back and critically analyse Ankara's and Brussels' views on the following key events, issues and trends: security and political dynamics following the second term of al-Maliki, the withdrawal of the US forces in 2011, the 2011 Syrian revolution, the war against the Islamic state (IS), The Global Coalition against Daesh (GCD) backing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in northern Syria, the rise of Kurdish nationalism and aspirations for statehood in Iraq and autonomy in Syria, the enhanced influence of Iran in Iraq and the growth of IS with subsequent mass displacement of person across both Iraq and Syria.

Iraq is now largely free of IS reign, yet is still threatened by terrorism, mass population displacement and weak governance, among other ills. In parallel, now that the Syrian civil war enters its seventh bloody year, generating large numbers of casualties and millions of displaced persons, Brussels and Ankara are strongly incented to converge and/or cooperate on security policies which mitigate the escalating humanitarian crisis and ease the path to a durable peace agreement. However, finding durable solutions to address high value, high impact problems stemming from Iraq and Syria requires identifying and mitigating the causes vs symptoms of these countries' instability and insecurity affecting Ankara's and Brussels' own security interests, priorities and threat perceptions.

Central security priorities for the EU in post-IS Iraq include stabilization, the return of internally displaced people and refugees and eliminating violent jihadist organizations and ideologies. While Turkey shares these objectives in principle, Ankara's security interests concentrate primarily on neutralizing the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and its affiliates' presence and influence. Since 2014, Ankara and Brussels have mostly bifurcated on how they perceive security threats in Syria. Turkey-EU leaders continue to disagree on the Kurd's role in the Syrian war and how Turkey should control its borders to cut flows of foreign fighters into Syria. As the IS invaded parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014, European states began providing PKK affiliated Kurdish groups in Syria with both intelligence and military support. Alternately, since the Kurdistan Region of Iraq held its referendum for independence on 25 September 2017, EU and Turkish leaders have mostly converged on how they perceive security threats in Iraq with both staunchly supporting the country's territorial integrity, thus, both refused to recognize the referendum's legitimacy.

We consider the issue of terrorism as a highly relevant driver of EU and Turkish security policies, perceptions and priorities. Though we see both countries as highly concerned with this issue, they diverge on which organizations pose the greatest threat. Ankara places the PKK at the top of its terrorist list - both within its borders and across the region - while Brussels prioritizes neutralizing jihadi terrorist threats on its soil, thus, the probability of convergence and cooperation and positive impact on EU-Turkey relations is moderate for

this issue. Moreover, the IS is not given the same degree of priority by the two sides in the neighbourhood, including Iraq and Syria. Unlike the EU, Turkey considers the threat posed by the IS equal to the one posed by the PKK, but not as strategic. Here, the two sides diverge.

In sum, dissent between Brussels and Ankara is highly likely given the Turkish Armed Forces' broad kinetic engagement in both Iraq and Syria which negatively impacts EU and US efforts to roll back terrorism, stabilise the region, deliver humanitarian aid and help displaced persons return to their homes. Thus, regardless of whether Baghdad and/or Damascus formally grant Ankara permission to launch assaults, the EU views these actions as bellicose destabilizers competing with its own interests, thus, degrades EU-Turkey relations.

Ultimately, this study calls for the EU and Turkey to prioritize mending cracks and fissures in their relationship and focus on the gains to be made through rapprochement on security issues originating in Iraq and Syria. Likewise, the EU can use its tremendous mediating capacity as an honest broker to settle entrenched disputes between warring parties in Iraq and Syria and for Turkey restart the peace process at home. More than ever, both must develop a long-term strategic security framework to ensure that bilateral security interests, priorities and interventions do not derail current stabilisation and reconstruction procedures in Iraq and/or progress toward a durable peace in Syria.

1. Introduction

It's no mystery that Iraq is a fragile state cursed with a menagerie of political, security and economic imbroglios which frustrate local, national and international efforts to achieve a durable peace and prosperity. Conventional wisdom also holds that Syria is a failed state cursed with worse imbroglios in the context of inveterate civil war which frustrate possibilities for a lasting peace agreement and a modicum of prosperity. Now that Iraq is largely free of Islamic State (IS) reign, yet is still threatened by terrorism, mass population displacement and weak governance, among other ills, the EU and Turkey are, strongly incented and positioned to converge and cooperate on security policies preventing and mitigating existing and future threats like these. Similarly, now that the Syrian civil war enters its seventh bloody year, generating almost 300,000 casualties, 6.6 million displaced persons within Syria and 4.8 million Syrians refugees by the end of 2017 (Amnesty International, 2018), and the Assad regime appears poised to maintain power, Brussels and Ankara are also strongly incented to converge and/or cooperate on security policies which mitigate the escalating humanitarian crisis and ease the path to a durable peace agreement. However, Turkish officials concede that "the two speak to each other but don't act together" (2018).[1] They also noted that, after 2002, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) leaders were happy with the Justice and Development Party (AKP)'s attempts to accede to the EU as they believed Ankara's membership would strategically position Turkish leaders to represent the Islamic East's worldviews, values and interests in the West. Likewise, in acceding, these officials also held that Turkey's ability to influence EU and Western decisions regarding the ME would exponentially increase (2018).

Finding durable solutions to address high value, high impact problems stemming from Iraq and Syria requires identifying and mitigating the causes vs symptoms of these countries' instability and insecurity affecting Brussels' and Ankara's own security interests, priorities and threat perceptions. As the EU Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development states: "The situation in Iraq has become closely intertwined with that in Syria, with the conflicts in both countries spilling over into the other. Moreover, the instability in the two countries has enormous regional implications and ramifications, and resonates as far away as Europe" (European Commission, 2015). Much less explored in policy circles and academia, alike, is how key security events and trends within Iraq and Syria, have influenced and impacted Turkey- EU relations since 2003 and 2011, respectively.

To address how Iraq's and Syria's security environment evolved to its current state and predict the subsequent outcomes and impacts on EU-Turkey relations, we look back and critically analyse Ankara's and Brussels' views on the following key events, issues and trends: security and political dynamics following the second term of al-Maliki, the withdrawal of the US forces in 2011, the 2011 Syrian revolution, the war against the Islamic state (IS), The Global Coalition against Daesh (GCD) backing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in northern Syria, the rise of Kurdish nationalism and aspirations for statehood in Iraq and autonomy in Syria, the enhanced influence of Iran in Iraq and the growth of IS with subsequent mass displacement of person across both Iraq and Syria.

Turkey's primary guiding security body — the National Security Council — wrestles with the above and other challenges in its National Security Policy Document ('The Red Book'). And though the EU currently lacks a formal National Security Council, the Union for Foreign and Security Policy has published a body of foreign and security policies to address these and others, as well. Both Ankara and the EU apply a spectrum of hard and soft power strategies and tools to threats they prioritize as relevant and credible.

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1 Chatham House meeting at The Middle East Technical University in Ankara conference on the future of EU-Turkey relations

1.1 Turkey's Perspective

To begin with, the principles guiding the Turkish Republic's Iraq policies are many and varied inter alia: (a) pragmatism, as Turkey, from 1923 to 2002, didn't possess sufficient hard and soft power to influence regional geopolitics;[2] (b) desire to maintain a regional security order status quo based on territorial integrity; and (c) fear that an increasingly autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) would inspire Turkey's own Kurdish population to seek independence.

From 2011 to 2015, Turkey's national security stance in responding to game-changing tumult in the MENA, transitioned from reactive, cautious and passive — with the desire to maintain regional order status quo — to more proactive, expansionist, and aggressive — with the desire to expand regional influence as a model of democracy for the Muslim world. For the first time in its modern history, Turkey openly engaged in regime change and proxy wars in the region. For example, Turkey provided financial assistance, technical expertise and civil society support to democratize countries in transition such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya in 2011 (Bengio, 2012: 58) then backed the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Syria to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad's Arab Socialist Ba'ath regime.

The fact that some of the leading groups within the so-called 'Arab Spring' movement were Islamists further motivated the Turkish Republic's own pro-Islamic AKP to advocate for these groups and subsequent regime change, believing that common identities and political demands would create foundations for common action once regional geopolitical dusts settled. Back then, Turkey believed that change was inevitable and firmly threw its political weight behind the uprisings. As Turkey saw the battle in binary terms, it adopted a comprehensive language and region-wide vision, foreseeing a new regional order in which it would play a lead role.

Since 2015, Turkey prioritised expanding regional influence and crushing any Kurdish movements toward statehood and/or autonomy and self-governance. However, Ankara's revised doctrinal approach also makes salient rolling back security threats on its borders, increasing cooperation with former foes like Moscow and Tehran while concurrently inhibiting Iran's influence in Iraq and Syria (Dalay, 2017: 3). As Turkey continues to exert significant influence as the preeminent geopolitical Eurasian land bridge, amicable EU-Turkey relations marked by high levels of convergence and cooperation, not only on security, but multi-sectoral policies, are increasingly essential to stabilising the MENA. However, since the beginning of so-called 'Arab Spring' in 2011, events, divergent regional interests and priorities accompanied by disperate perceptions of threat type and level, have only deepened their relationship divide.

For the last three years, Brussels has focused on crushing regional and global terrorist threats from any source, settling intractable disputes, and reconstructing war-torn territories. As Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission confirms

> On top of crisis management, we are putting stronger emphasis on preventing new wars, new humanitarian disasters, new refugee crises. And we are doing more to plan in due time for post-crisis reconstruction, from Syria and Iraq to Nigeria – because if we want peace, we must prepare for peace. The Global Strategy notes that events outside our border impact directly on our own security. So we have increased cooperation with our neighbours and partners, from the fight against terrorism to a better management of migration flows (European Union External Action, 2017: 7).

Ankara, conversely, concentrates on razing Kurdish nationalism and state-building aspirations though prioritizing on paper to

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2 See Gokay, 2015.

contribut[e] to collective defense and crisis management operations (such as peacekeeping, humanitarian operations and police missions); ... support[ing] disarmament… [and prevent] uncontrolled mass movement of people as a consequence of armed conflicts [through an] acceleration of cooperation on a global scale and development of a security perspective based on partnership, dialogue and "soft power" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018a).

The two are also at odds in the way the 'new' more Islam-leaning AKP frequently re-prioritizes and pursues its security interests in Iraq and Syria through an increasingly 'neo-Ottoman' policy approach (Kagan, et al., 2016; Pierini, 2016). In this approach, Ankara is seen as re-asserting Turkey's political, economic and cultural hegemony over former Ottoman territories of the MENA with a self-imposed mandate to protect the Muslim World as a pan-regional Islamic state. With this approach, the AKP has adopted a more amicable attitude towards Sunni Islamist governments such as Egypt under Mohamed Morsi and Qatar under Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and non-state Sunni actors such as Jaysh al-Islam, Ahrar al-Sham and Hamas.

Due to persistently volatile geopolitics in the region, Turkey is, once more, revising its security policies and plans for implementation, thus, calling into question whether Brussels and Ankara will choose to conflict, cooperate and/or converge on future iterations. In a November 2016 conference of the Turkish National Police Academy, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan voiced as much when he stated that "Turkey's New Security Concept" will "not to wait for threats knocking on its door" (Keskin, 2017). For example, Turkey's interventions in Syria under Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) and later Operation Olive Branch (OOB) reflect this new strategy in abandoning prior expansionism for precision targeting to neutralize threats posed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its affiliates in northern Syria.

Post-AKP Turkey not only reacts to threat shocks radiating from immediate neighbours, but also responds to fortuitous opportunities to shape-shift regional issues, events and trends in Ankara's favour by flexing its impressive geopolitical muscle as the geographical threshold linking East to West. Iraq, in particular, as a country within Turkey's immediate sphere of influence, weighs heavy in the Turkish Republic's national security strategy calculations. Because AKP leaders believe Turkey has formidable historical and geopolitical obligations to protect national security interests within Iraq, the Turkish Republic is also willing to interfere in Baghdad's and Erbil's internal affairs to meet these ends.

In 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan suggested Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi read Ottoman Parliament's 1920 National Pact, to understand Turkey's interests and historical claims in northern Iraq, including Mosul and Kirkuk. Signed after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, The Pact identifies the Nineveh and Kirkuk governorates, among others, as those parts of the Empire Ankara is prepared to fight for (Danforth, 2016). Thus, on numerous occasions during the prolonged Battle of Mosul (2016–17) and Western Nineveh offensive (2017), Erdoğan stressed the Turkish Armed Forces Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri (TSK)'s imperative ongoing role, asserting that "Turkey has a historical responsibility there. So we will be there" (Al Jazeera, 2016). Similarly, regional and global observers alike, including those in Iraq, view the AKP's alliance with Turkmen minorities and ever-burgeoning interventionist policies in the region as reflecting the Turkish Republic's evolving 'neo-Ottoman' goals.

1.2 The EU's Perspective

Iraq's and Syria's proximity to Europe also directly exposes the EU to Middle Eastern instability. And, as contiguous neighbours to Turkey, these countries also dramatically sway Ankara's, thus, Brussels' domestic and foreign policy interests and priorities. Issues, events and trends from Iraq, Syria and the MENA region, at large, therefore, remain geopolitically vital for the EU. Because Europe hosts large and growing migrant communities from states, disputes and dilemmas from this region resonate more intensely than in more distant nations like the US. The EU, for instance, treats counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation, as both domestic and foreign policy concerns (Youngs, 2015: 116-117).

The EU's thematic security priorities in Iraq are to promote security and stability by fighting IS remnants, protecting and reconstructing liberated areas, minimizing forced migration and reforming the security sector within a rule of law context. In its 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), for example, Brussels leaders congealed the entity's interest to see a secure, peaceful and well-governed MENA region; cultivate bilateral and multilateral regional security cooperation and; prevent the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (Youngs, 2015: 116-117). To achieve these objectives, the EU Council's declared mission is to:

> provide support to the Iraqi authorities' reform efforts in the civilian security sector with the deployment in November 2017 of an EU Advisory Mission (EUAM Iraq)... [offer] advice and expertise to the Iraqi authorities at the strategic level in order to contribute to the implementation of the Iraqi National Security Strategy; and analyse, assess and identify opportunities for potential further Union engagement in support of the needs of the Security Sector Reform in Iraq in the long term (Council of the European Union, 2018: 9).

Despite provisioning the above and stating that "Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security" in its ESS (European Union, 2003: 1), Brussels has abstained from direct kinetic involvement in Iraq and Syria. However, individual Member States such as France and Germany have taken up arms with seventy one other countries eradicate IS presence through partnerships in the US-led GCD (Blockmans, 2016).

While the European Council has formulated a largely coherent and comprehensive security framework, it has implemented predominantly, politicized band-aid measures to eliminate terrorist threats on European soil. Additionally, as some observers espy, the Syrian war has demoted the EU from a first to second tier actor among international peers. Damascus' brutal zero-sum policies, Russia's meddling, Turkey's ambivalence toward the self-proclaimed IS, and the EU's own internal divisions have lent Brussels little leverage on the course of events in Syria (Pierini, 2016).

Since 2014, Brussels and Ankara have mostly bifurcated on how they perceive security threats in Syria. Despite both supporting the moderate Sunni Arab rebel struggle for regime change, Turkey-EU leaders continue to disagree on the Kurd's role in the revolution and how Turkey should control its borders to cut flows of foreign fighters into Syria. As the IS besieged Iraq and Syria in 2014, European states began providing PKK affiliated Kurdish groups in Syria with both intelligence and military support. In September 2014, Erdoğan responded "While the ISIS terror organization is causing turmoil in the Middle East, there has been ongoing PKK terror in my country for the last 32 years … and yet the world was never troubled by it. Why? … Because this terror organization did not carry the name 'Islam.'" (LaFranchi, 2014).

Alternately, since the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) held its referendum for independence on 25 September 2017, EU and Turkish leaders have mostly converged on how they perceive security threats in Iraq with both staunchly supporting the nation's territorial integrity, thus, both refused to recognize the

referendum's legitimacy (Delegation of the European Union to Iraq, 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). However, much to the EU's chagrin, when Erdoğan and the AKP target threats originating in Iraq and/or Syria, they won't hesitate to unleash TSK's full fury to eliminate them even devoid prior authorization from Baghdad, Erbil or Damascus and despite jeopardizing relations with allies: "This is what we have to say to all our allies: don't get in between us and terrorist organisations, or we will not be responsible for the unwanted consequences" (Osborne & Stevenson, 2018). For example, to this day, TSK continues to bombard PKK insurgents in the Shingal Mountains even without the Government of Iraq's (GoI) consent and without coordination with the GCD (Reuters, 2017). In response, Erdoğan exclaimed in a 2016 televised meeting with Islamic leaders: "Turkey cannot intervene against the threats right next to it? We will never accept this... We don't need permission for this, and we don't plan on getting it" (Karadeniz & Gumrukcu, 2016).

2. The Middle East 2010-17

2.1 Iraq between 2010-14

In the 2010 general elections, al-Maliki was re-elected Prime Minister (PM) after securing the second largest bloc of votes and winning support from both Iran and the US. Despite gaining US support for his election, he refused to renew the Status of Forces Agreement with Washington and committed to usher the US military, permanently, out of Iraq (Cordesman & Khazai, 2014: 8). The Obama administration, already committed to withdrawing some 147,000 US troops (86%) from Iraq by 2009, eventually accepted his decision, thus, enabled al-Maliki to offset the already delicate regional balance in multiple ways.

First, it opened the door for a plethora of violent networks like the al-Qaeda inspired IS and neo-Ba'athists such as Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandi (Army of the Men of the Naqshbandi Order) to coalescence control over large swaths of territory as they did, previously, in western and northern Iraq by June 2014. For example, ill-equipped and outmanned Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and police units were not able to quell al-Qaeda's re-appearance in Iraq, domestic insurgency and inter-sectarian militia violence. In 2013, confrontations between vulnerable and marginalized Sunnis and repressive Shia-led ISF drove death tolls in Iraq to their highest since 2008 at 7,818 (Cordesman & Khazai, 2014: 11).

Second, al-Maliki was enabled to proliferate and implement sectarian policies with little resistance leaving Sunni and Kurdish minorities marginalised and vulnerable. As part of his divisive policies, the PM targeted Sunni Arab leaders like then Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi and Finance Minister Rafa al-Issawi accusing them of supporting Ba'athists and terrorist groups (Wicken, 2013: 2). al-Maliki also alienated the Arab Sahwa tribes whose contribution to the Surge (US-led military campaign) in 2006 was critical in countering al-Qaida. al-Maliki also imposed military, political and economic punitive measures on the KRI such as deploying ISF/ Dijla forces to Kirkuk to assert central government control resulting in armed clashes with Peshmerga forces in Tuz Khurmatu (Wicken, 2012) with enduring and severe implications for future GoI-KRG relations. Furthermore, the PM added insult to injury when he directed the Iraqi Ministry of Finance to cease paying the KRG's 17% national budget allotment for salaries in 2014,[3] forcing KRG leaders to pursue fiscal alternatives independent of Baghdad's politics.

Starting in 2013, consequently, enraged Sunni Arabs took to the streets in Ramadi and Fallujah to protest al-Maliki's actions and KRG leaders took to widening and deepening ties with Ankara on key energy and security policies to distance the Kurdistan Region from Baghdad politics. The AKP, in turn, enthusiastically cozied to the KRG to strengthen its own leverage over Baghdad.

Third, in the absence of an appreciable US military presence to protect pro-Turkey Sunnis, AKP-GoI relations reached all-time lows. Ankara viewed al-Maliki's Shia-favouring policies and subsequent uptick in Sunni-Shia sectarian violence as undermining to its Kurdish and Sunni allies in Iraq. As a result, in 2010, Ankara made a failed attempt to prevent al-Maliki from getting re-elected by supporting Kurdish and Sunni parties and favouring the Iraqi National Movement, or al-Iraqiya, led by Ayad Allawi, the prominent secular political activist and former Iraqi interim prime minister (Cagaptay & Evans, 2012). Baghdad-Ankara tensions peaked when the Federal Supreme Court of Iraq sentenced in absentia Vice President al-Hashemi to death charged with commandeering death squads to kill Shi'ite during the 2005-07 sectarian war and the AKP granted him asylum in December 2011. Ankara, then, turned north to develop political and economy-boosting trade and energy agreements with the KRG.

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3 Still in force as of 11 April 2018

Fourth, in addition to diminishing Iran's influence in Iraq and railing against the PM's policies, Turkey rallied the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) support to combat the PKK in the KRI and united with the Sunni Ḥizb Al-Hadba (the Leaning Minaret Party) and Irak Türkmen Cephesi (Iraqi Turkmen Front) parties to protect Ankara's geopolitical interests in Mosul, Kirkuk and other northern cities.[4] Without this cooperation with the KRG, the AKP could not maintain political leverage with Baghdad. Likewise, without this cooperation with the AKP, the KRG could not pursue economic independence.

al-Maliki viewed this new detente as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and criticized the Turkish president for meddling in Iraqi affairs: "We advise Erdoğan to settle the affairs of the Turkish minorities and stop the policy of interfering in the regional problems and crises since it will negatively affect Turkey and its people" (Hussein, 2012). To this Erdoğan replied, "Esteemed Maliki… if you start a period of conflict in Iraq within a sectarian struggle, it will be impossible for us to remain silent" (Burch, 2012).

In short, al-Maliki's policies marginalizing both Kurdish and Sunni Arabs, dissolved Baghdad's governing structure and power monopoly, catalysed nationwide ethno-sectarian divides, and incited insurgency, particularly in Sunni Arab territories. In this political climate, corruption reached all-time highs in 2013 to the point that Iraq ranked among the lowest 10% (number 205 of 214) of nations in terms of its rule of law strength (World Bank, 2013). Moreover, because these convoluting drivers reached feverish levels during this period, foreign actors like Turkey could easily capitalize on rampant chaos and dysfunction to leverage its own regional agendas through kinetic means, thus, chafe relations with the EU.

2.2 State Authority in Crisis and the Battle for a New Order

The fragility/failures and disorder/chaos of Middle East states has severely compromised EU-Turkey relations with tensions arising mainly from diverging threat perceptions on security issues. Central security priorities for the EU in post-IS Iraq include stabilization, the return of Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and eliminating violent jihadist organizations and ideologies. While Turkey shares these objectives in principle, Ankara's security interests concentrate primarily on neutralizing PKK and its affiliates' presence and influence.

In addition, geopolitical developments in Iraq and Syria impact the larger regional security architecture, thereby, inevitably shape Ankara's overarching security and foreign policies. Likewise, security developments in Turkey – especially those related to the Kurds – impacts the region; Iraq as a whole; and the KRI, in particular. Turkey has long viewed Iraq through a Kurdish question-centric lense narrowing its security concerns aperture on the emergence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Thus, beginning in 1992, Turkey ensconced several[5] permanent bases and conducted numerous of military campaigns in the KRI and northern Iraq (Ergan, 2015; Kasapoglu & Cagaptay, 2015). "The strategic rationale of this Turkish forward deployment can be traced back to a paradigm shift in the 1990s, when the TSK adopted a low-intensity conflict strategy in response to terrorist threats from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)"(Kasapoglu & Cagaptay, 2015). At present, Turkey maintains an armoured battalion at Bamarni, tank battalions at Amedi and Suri and a commando battalion at Kanimasi in Duhok governorate near the Turkish border. These are largely connected to the permanent presence of the PKK in Qandil Mountain and along the border areas inside the KRI. Turkey also deploys approximately 130 special forces personnel based in Erbil, Zakho, Duhok and Amedi to perform covert operations. With the latest surge of reinforcements sent to augment GCD troops, the number of uniformed Turkish soldiers in Iraq has reached almost 3,000, making Turkey

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4 See Alaaldin, 2016; Rudaw, 2017b; Mansour, 2016.
5 The exact numbers of Turkey's military bases in Iraq isn't available.

the third-largest foreign military force in Iraq after Iran and the US (Gurcan, 2015).

Ankara's concerns then grew when the PKK and its affiliates gained a foothold in the Shingal district of Nineveh governorate and Iran gained significant influence in Baghdad and southern Iraq, especially after backing Shia Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) to play a dominant role in liberating the IS-occupied governorates and posting security forces, thereafter. As a countermeasure, Turkey boosted TSK presence at the Bashiqa Camp to, promote their own Sunni Arab and Turkmen[6] PMF in Nineveh (Gurcan, 2015). TSK were then poised to direct further strikes in Iraq and Syria as the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Parliament) approved additional Iraq operations in September 2017.

In Brussels' view, by acting without Baghdad's blessings, Ankara's direct and proxy military operations expanding its armed support to Iraq's ethnic and religious communities only add to the entrenched quagmires plaguing the region. As one of Brussels' primary aims is to stabilize Iraq and the Middle East, at large, Ankara's deeds threaten to drive a wedge between the two, or, at least drastically reduce chances for cooperation.

The EU recognizes Turkey's security priorities and interests in Iraq and Syria while simultaneously acknowledging the sovereignty of both states, thus, expects the TSK to operate in these volatile countries within a framework of consent with Baghdad and Damascus. The GoI has already complained of these violations to the UN Security Council in December 2015, but cooperation between these neighbours in protesting Kurdistan's referendum (2017) postponed negotiations and rapprochement on this issue. Military flashpoints can, thus, morph into interstate warfare if TSK operations continue without consent from Baghdad and Erbil.

Clearly, the EU has not and will not intervene with force to thwart TSK's engagement in places like Bashiqa, albeit, if Turkey's military operations disrupt counterterrorism, stabilisation and reconstruction efforts, then the EU may be forced to revisit existing neutrality policies.

2.3 The Rise of Armed Non-State Actors/Sub-State Actors

Through repeated radical shake ups of the delicate power balance in the Middle East over the past two decades, state authority was weakened and incumbents dethroned as the sole entrepreneurs of violence in several countries, including in Iraq and Syria. The changing dynamics since 1991 have created opportunities for Iraqi Kurds to ascend as constitutionally and internationally recognised sub-state actors (SSAs) with national, regional and international pull. Moreover, the region's weakening state structures with consequent power vacuum emerging after the 2003 Iraq invasion and followed by the Arab Spring uprising, Syrian civil war and rise of the IS, created ample opportunities for numerous non-state actors (NSAs) and SSAs to emerge and challenge classical systems of governance (House of Lords, 2017: 64). Many of these NSAs secured control over strategic territories like the IS did in Mosul governorate and pursued their own security policies (Berge, 2016: 1). Prominent among these NSAs are Hamas in the Palestinian territories, the PYD in northern Syria, Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and al-Hashd al-Shaabi (PMF) in Iraq. Not only do they assume roles that states traditionally fill, but NSA's, like the, yet-to-be-state- incorporated PMF became seen as heroes and saviours.

The Middle East presents a veritable Gordian Knot of security threats amidst persistent turmoil including the threat of inter- and intra-community violence, terrorism, and civil and proxy war, to name a few. As such, central governments like those in Iraq since 2003 and in Syria since 2011, no longer monopolize

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6 Turkmen is singular and Turkmens is plural.

power, violence or territorial control, as NSAs/SSAs frequently replace Baghdad's and Damascus's authority to direct their countries' internal and external affairs. What's more, regional power and security dynamics have reached such a threshold of complexity that regional powers such as Turkey realise that they need to adapt because classical approaches or national security priorities taken out of context, no longer apply and what one state or non-state actor considers a national security interest may be considered a threat to another, even within the same country.

2.3.1 Armed Non-State Actors & the State

In Iraq and Syria, the emergence of armed NSAs is both a symptom and cause of state weakness.[7] NSAs like the PKK and its affiliates, snatched this opportunity to expand territory and power in Iraq and Syria. Turkey, therefore, capitalized on the security vacuum left in the absence of central control by infusing TSK militants into the void to ratchet up their anti-PKK campaigns. Since 2014, NSAs have swarmed to this vacuum after the collapse of the ISF following the IS onslaught. In the post-IS environ, demobilizing, disarming and reintegrating these armed groups, essential for reconciliation efforts and the return of IDPs, is one of the greatest challenges facing Iraqi authorities and their allies and partners, including the EU.

Moreover, Brussels and Ankara do not always see eye to eye on how they perceive the menagerie of NSA's operating in Iraq. For example, they both consider PKK a terrorist organisation, but unlike Turkey, the EU does not label the PYD, a PKK affiliate and frontrunner of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as such (BBC, 2016). Thus, divergent security conceptions and perceptions bearing polarized security priorities and policies, cleave relations between the AKP and the EU.

2.3.2 Armed Non-State Actors in Nineveh

In Nineveh governorate, alone, dozens of heterogeneous state (ISF), sub-state (Peshmerga) and non-state actors manoeuvre on the ground including:

- Dozens of Shia affiliated militias: Muadhamat Badr (Badr Organization) led by Hadi Al-Amiri, Kata'ib Hezbollah (Brigades of the Party of God) led by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and al-Sadiqoun/Asab Ahil al-Haq (League of the Righteous People) led by Qais al-Khazali, among others;

- al-Hashd al-Watani (National Mobilization) (HW): a predominantly Sunni militia led by erstwhile Mosul governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, founded in 2014, renamed Haras Nainewah (Nineveh Guard);

- Hêza Parastina Êzîdianê (The Yezidi Protection Force): a PKK affiliated Yezidi militia led by Haydar Shesho, founded in 2014;

- Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şengalê (The Shingal Resistance Units) (YBS): a PKK affiliated Yezidi militia led by Sheikh Khairy Khedr, founded in 2007;

- *Ḥḏāywāṯ* Setārā d-Šṭāḥā d-Nīnwē (The Nineveh Plain Protection Units): a Christian militia led by Yonadam Kanna, founded in 2014;

- and terrorist networks like the IS and al-Qaida/affiliates among others (O'Driscoll & Zoonen, 2017; Kaválek, 2017).

These NSAs represent the full microcosmic spectrum of Iraqi ethno-religious demographics in Nineveh,

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7 See Gaub, 2017.

including Kurds, Arabs, Yezidis, Christians, Turkmens, Shabaks and Kaka'is, thus, are deeply embedded within all polarised ethnic, religious and sectarian communities. In reality, they have little in common and even less that brings them together. For example, HW is on the complete opposite end of the spectrum to the Iran-backed Shia militias as it was formed with the help of the KDP, Turkey and other Sunni Gulf states (O'Driscoll & Zoonen, 2017: 24). One thing they do share in common is a desire to act independently, while engaging in alliances or proxy relations with other regional and international state, non-state and sub-state actors as in the case of al-Hashd al-Shaabi. And their political, security and economic interests in Iraq are now deeply rooted, thereby, decreasing the likelihood of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in the near term. Even if an international third party were to revoke their arms and dismantle the organization's infrastructure, issues surrounding membership loyalty, agenda competition and recruitment incentives, persist. As a result, enhanced NSA presence and activities in conflict zones (e.g., along Turkish borders) complicate already entangled regional power dynamics and obstruct the nuanced stabilisation process in the short and long term.

Ankara's methods to protect coveted political and security interests in Nineveh hinge on alliances with Sunni Arab and Turkmen groups and, to a limited extent, Peshmerga. For example, Turkey has long regarded the Turkmen population living in Iraq, particularly in Kirkuk, Diyala, Erbil and Nineveh governorates, as both a liability and asset.

2.3.2.1 Turkish Armed Forces in Nineveh: Objectives and Implications

In light of the above discussion, Turkey's desire to play an instrumental role in the administration of this governorate is not surprising. Turkey's now-embedded military presence in the KRI and northern Iraq all but ensures that Ankara's interests will be factored in as part of post-IS calculations (Kaválek & Manis 2016: 7). As indicated above, the GoI adamantly objects to TSK's presence and AKP's growing influence in northern Iraq. The ensuing 'war of words' between Baghdad and Ankara prior to the Battle of Mosul, are a clear manifestation of both government's mutual distrust and mutual struggle for influence in the governorate.[8] In October 2016, for example, Erdoğan rejected al-Abadi's demand that Turkey withdraw its troops from Iraq: "You are not my interlocutor. You are not at my level. You are not my equivalent. You are not of the same quality as me" (Bora, 2016).

Given power dynamics as they stand, no single actor, alone, can stabilize or shape the security environment in Nineveh governorate. Additionally, without a political agreement among local and regional actors the offensive started and Nineveh's residents and local, national, regional and international state, non-state and sub-state actors, have not reached a consensus on what post-IS Nineveh should look like. For example, Christians, Sunni and Yezidis have submitted a smattering of contrasting governance proposals for Nineveh but none have reached the draft or approval phases. Intra- Christian views alone, range from wanting a stand-alone Nineveh Plain region, to wanting a Governorate tied to Baghdad or Erbil, to introducing new ethnic-based administrative units within the current arrangement (Wirya & Fawaz, 2017: 11). While groups like the Sunni HW advocate converting the governorate into a 'Region' (Saeed, 2014; Rudaw, 2016), and promoting some districts such as Nineveh Plain and Shingal to governorates within the new Region.

Baghdad on the other hand, after proclaiming recent victory over the IS and preventing the KRI from gaining independence, asserts that it has capacity enough to restore dominion over the motley armed groups operating in the governorate. As NSAs can use force to manipulate civilians in their own social and territorial

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8 See Karadeniz & Gurses, 2016.

contexts and shape agenda-setting, thought control and decision-making, their influence will likely collide with that of central government intent on imposing its own authority. Nationally, the Iraqi army is still recovering and has not yet regained its prior strength or potential credibility. The disparate NSAs, such as the near-independent components of the PMF, have played lead roles in defending the state and liberating parts of Iraq from IS occupation. These PMFs have gained moral, social and legal legitimacy and become increasingly influential as political entities and pawns. Now, PMF leaders are officially publicising their intent to run for elections or join future Cabinets. However, their behaviour and rhetoric plant doubt as to their loyalty to the state and willingness to submit to a single, unified command and control structure. Questions concerning the PMFs' role in moulding Iraq's future and how this emerging role empowers/impedes the nation's unity and state functionality are, yet, unanswered (O'Driscoll & Zoonen, 2017: 9).

The PMFs' hawkish strategies and tactics paired with long term, far-reaching visions to carve out ever-widening spheres of power, render any credible steps toward demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration, implausible. PMF presence coupled with heavy-handed means and ways also impede the GoI's ability to produce a coherent and complete policy addressing dilemmas related to post-IS security and the return of IDPs. Moreover, in addition to apprehensions over the future status of armed non-state actors, Iraqi leaders must confront revived sectarian clashes between Sunnis and Shia and deteriorating relations between Erbil and Baghdad including aggravated tensions between Shia and Kurds. Inevitably, these tribulations coupled with a lack of unified leadership serve to bar nationwide stabilisation and reconstruction progress in Iraq.

2.4 Turkey's Perception of the PKK in Shingal

Turkey's military engagement with the PKK in KRI territories dates back to the late 1980s after the PKK launched its insurgency. Turkey already had an agreement with the GoI during Saddam Hussein's rule for cross-border military engagement against the PKK militants (Kasapoglu & Cagaptay, 2015). Indeed, Turkey's large-scale military incursions under varying Iraqi administrations beginning in 2007 were motivated by desires for strategic influence in the long term vs ad-hoc tactical gains made in the short-term (Cordesman, 2008).

The fall of Mosul to the IS in the summer of 2014 lead to structural changes in the security and military architecture of Turkey's immediate neighbourhood. In August 2014, IS besieged Kurdish-majority towns and cities in Nineveh, Erbil and Kirkuk governorates. The ISF and Peshmerga forces were weakened. The PKK and its affiliates came in and played a critical role in fighting IS on all fronts in these governorates and saving civilian lives in places like Makhmour and Shingal (Holland-McCowan, 2017: 9). In August of 2014, IS militants executed 5,000 Yezidi men, and captured 7,000 Yezidi women and girls as sex slaves in Shingal (Spencer, 2014). Survivors were able to escape as the PKK, along with its military wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG), and the PYD, arrived from Syria to open a corridor to Shingal Mountain. Since this event, the PKK has provided security and governance to tens of thousands of Yezidis in the area and recruited and trained Yezidi men and women to fight in the YBS and Yezidi Women Units.

What's more, Turkey is highly sensitive about PKK affiliate's increased role in Shingal area and the PKK's ideological, organizational and military links with forces such as the PYD in close partnership with the GCD in anti-IS operations in Syria.[9] Turkey's fears were then realized when international support for the PYD encouraged Syrian Kurds to establish a semi-autonomous region - Rojava - with ostensible links to the PKK. The US and the EU, though treading carefully to preserve a delicate accord with Ankara, have repeatedly

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9 See Clawson et al, 2016

pressed Turkey to cease strikes on the PYD in northern Syria. However, Ankara's National Security Council "emphasize[d] that the implementation of a policy to support the PKK/PYD-YPG terrorist organization in the guise of the SDF, ignoring Turkey's expectations, does not befit a friendship and alliance" (Hürriyet, 2017b).

Shingal region became central to securing the PKK's own strategic security, thus, was unlikely to withdraw due to its importance as an operations base camp merging strongholds in Iraq with those in northern Syria (Al-Hamid, 2017).. Given Shingal's proximity to the PYD-ruled Jazira canton in Syria, the AKP feared that, if the PKK entrenches itself in Shingal, the PKK/PYD may form a control belt from Iraqi Shingal to Syrian Afrin, threatening Turkey's southern border and cutting ties to the Arab Middle East. Therefore, in October 2016, Erdoğan warned that he would use all available TSK muscle to prevent Shingal from becoming 'a new Qandil' serving as a new PKK mountain base in the KRI (Ugurlu, 2016). Turkey demonstrated its resolve, for example, when it mobilized warplanes to bomb PKK targets in Shingal district on 25 April 2017. This shelling reflects Erdoğan's 2016 preemptive security doctrine tackling both domestic and foreign threats (Duran, 2016; Keskin, 2017). Speaking to the public, he said that Turkey will no longer defensively wait for security threats to reach Turkey's borders. Instead, the country will offensively pacify threats at their source (Dalay, 2017: 3) revealing that the PKK/affiliates have fundamentally shaped Turkey's security policies both at home and across the region.

KRG's stance against the PKK in Shingal has been another area of grave security concern attracting unwanted Turkish incursions in the KRI. In April 2017 Peshmerga ministry spokesman Halgurd Hikmat reiterated that "The presence of PKK fighters in Sinjar is a dangerous threat to the region... and the Turkish attacks will continue because Iraq is weak and cannot protect its territory" (The New Arab, 2017). And the PKK has dug in its heels. Reza Altun, head of foreign relations for the PKK and high ranking official of the Kurdish Communities Union, states as much when he said that the group "would respect no boundaries in [the] Kurdistan Region" to spill TSK and KDP blood in Shingal, elsewhere in Iraq, and the region (BasNews, 2017). What's more, the district is a disputed area and has the potential to inflame existing combustive strain between the two as, while the Kurdistan Region demands that PKK-affiliated groups leave Shingal, the Iraqi government recognises the YBS as an official component of the ISF (Chulov, 2016).

In essence, the TSK's presence in Iraq in the absence of an overarching Iraqi political and security policy which squarely involves Turkey's input, only fuels existing fires scorching prospects for peace and prosperity. One of the key preconditions for stabilizing Mosul and other recently liberated areas, for example, is securing control and command functions solely under GoI leadership to free Iraq of competing rivalrous armed factions backed by Iran and Turkey. TSK engagement with local NSAs already provokes reactions from Iran's proxy forces and exponentially increases the possibility for another nationwide sectarian civil war. Such complex and heated internal security dynamics, therefore, limits the EU's ability to de-escalate flashpoints.

2.5 Turkey and Sunni Arab Militant Group Cooperation in Iraq

In the fight against the IS and to support its allies in Mosul, Turkey established the 'Bashiqa Camp' in Nineveh governorate to train the HW and the *Peshmerga* in late 2014 as Erdoğan emphasized that "Right now we have fellows in Mosul. There are Arabs, Turkmens, Kurds. It is not possible for us to be insensitive here" (Bianet, 2016). The HW is comprised of former Iraqi police and volunteers from Mosul and receives funding from Turkey and other Sunni Gulf states (Pamuk & Coskun, 2015). In addition, the HW was formed with AKP and KDP help specifically to oppose Iran-backed Shia militias (O'Driscoll & Zoonen, 2017: 24).

Moreover, Turkey's military support and training for Sunni elements is part of an aforementioned broad regional strategy to pivot towards the Islamic East (Kagan et al., 2016: 36) by bolstering relations with Arab Gulf States (Taşpınar, 2015: 3) as part of Ankara's 'neo-Ottoman' leanings. For example Ankara has a military base in Qatar, with the capacity to accommodate up to 5,000 troops, already hosts 200 Turkish soldiers (Bora, 2017). However, in doing so, Turkey has also positioned itself in opposition to the US-led anti-IS GCD including the EU, because Turkey's support extends beyond state actors to non-state Sunni jihadist groups and it "seems to have tolerated IS's activities, even if it didn't actually encourage them" (Alterman, 2014). These actions have inevitably escalated tensions with the EU and traditional enemies like Tehran.

Standing up the Bashiqa Camp also coincided with the AKP's realisation that 'Assad will not go' and that regional developments would likely render Turkey more vulnerable by narrowing its foreign policy options (Uzgel, 2015). Ankara's strategic rationale for this forward deployment can be traced to a policy paradigm shift in the 1990s when the TSK adopted a low-intensity conflict strategy toward PKK violence. Apart from Turkey's historical claims on Mosul, the current deployment is an extension of Ankara's geostrategic attempt to thwart threats posed by both the PKK and the PMF (Duran, 2017) and oppose Iran's ambitions to hegemonise Iraq (Ali, 2016: 5). As a consequence, however, the Turkish Republic raises Brussels' ire as the EU views these TSK priorities and strategies as aggressive and highly antagonistic (Nissenbaum, 2015).

2.6 Ankara-Baghdad Relations

Turkey's troop deployments have also vitiated fragile Ankara-Baghdad relations as when former Iraqi Defense Minister Khaled al-Obeidi observed that Turkey ordered about 1,000 TSK soldiers - too many for a training mission in his estimation - into Iraq in 2015 without Baghdad's permission (Tastekin, 2015). The AKP, however, feels eminently justified to perform unannounced and unauthorized military operations within its neighbours borders to cripple the PKK/affiliates and, up until the KRG referendum, Shia, especially Iran-backed, PMF elements. In April of 2017, Erdoğan labelled the PMF a terrorist organization (Wahab, 2017) and PMF spokesperson Ahmed al-Asadi pegged Turkey an 'invader' threatening the homeland (Daily Sabah, 2016). Ankara initially rejected the Hashd al-Shaabi's participation in retaking Mosul and Tal Afar, as Erdoğan in October 2016 said "I conveyed this to all authorities loud and clear. Tal Afar is entirely a Turkmen town. Half the town is Shiite and the other half Sunni. We are looking at them holistically as Muslims rather than Shiite or Sunni. However, if Hashd al-Shaabi terrorizes [Tal Afar], our response would certainly be different." (Paksoy, 2017).

The AKP went on to state that PMF constituents, besides the self-backed HW and Turkmen Front, are mostly composed of ungoverned death squad criminals bent on revenge toward, if not genocide against, Iraq's Sunni and Turkmen communities (Paksoy, 2017). While Baghdad has formally absorbed the PMF as a legal defence entity in Iraq, Ankara deems it a non- state actor. Therefore, the potential for intra-PMF hostilities is high as this force is a hodge podge conglomerate lacking a unified command and control structure and comprised of adversarial pro-Iranian Shia and pro-Turkey Arab and Turkmen Sunni components. Amnesty International confirms Ankara's view in reporting that "the predominantly Shia PMF have used their extensive arsenal of weapons to carry out or facilitate a systematic pattern of violations, seemingly as revenge in the wake of IS onslaughts. These include forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings, as well as the torture of thousands of Sunni Arab men and boys" (Amnesty International UK, 2017).

Despite ending the mass campaign against the IS, Ankara is also committed to making the Bashiqa Camp permanent as the TSK intend to continue pummelling the PKK in Iraq from this base (Ergan, 2015). Cavuşoğlu emphasized in 2017 that Turkey must "maintain its troops at Bashiqa until the situation at Sinjar changes" (Tastekin, 2017). Turkey's threat perceptions are also significantly informed by political, historical and ideational forces. In addition to previously discussed concerns, the AKP adds securing regional influence to the list after Mosul liberation (Sputnik, 2016). In this vein, Turkey wants to ensure that Mosul's demographic composition remains largely Sunni as "only Sunni Arabs, Turkmen and Sunni Kurds should remain there" (Bora, 2016). These threat perceptions still exist, albeit, Ankara has chosen to stay silent on the expansion of the PMFs into disputed territories, including Kirkuk and Mosul, in light of Kurdistan's referendum. Otherwise, a confrontation between pro-Iranian and pro-Turkey factions would be highly probable.

3.Most Probable Scenarios for Future Turkey-EU Relations

By examining the mechanisms driving the most impactful current security policy-related issues and trends in Iraq and Syria affecting EU-Turkey relations, we predict the most probable outcomes for these drivers in the future. These events and trends are listed from most to least relevant, negatively impactful and probable relative to each actor's security interests and priorities. We then characterize these as leading to conflict, cooperation and/or convergence:

• 'Conflict' means that Brussels' and Ankara's security policies collide, thus, undermine their partnership in the security and, possibly, other foreign policy sectors;

• 'Cooperation' means that the EU and Turkey work together to promote each other's security interests and projects without deepening their dialogue on other foreign policy sectors;

• 'Convergence' means that their security policies fully overlap.

3.1 Conflict: Turkey's Military Engagement in Iraq and Syria

We consider Turkey's military engagement in Iraq and Syria as a highly relevant driver to both Brussels' and Ankara's security policies, perceptions and priorities. We see that TSK leaders believe their mostly PKK-targeted campaigns in both countries to be vital to national security while the EU regards them as provoking strife and fueling further conflicts in the region, thus, the probability of conflict and negative impact on EU-Turkish relations are also high for this trend. Ankara characterizes the PKK and all of its affiliates as terrorist entities which pose an existential threat to Turkey's national security through their presence and anti-Turkish Kurdish nationalist activities in Iraq and Syria. Brussels views PKK's affiliates - especially the PYD - as critical partners in countering its primary threat in Syria: the IS. The EU (and several member states, particularly France) deems Turkey's kinetic actions in the region as undermining to stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and peace settlement and humanitarian crises mitigation efforts in Syria. Therefore, policy conflict is inevitable and convergence and cooperation unlikely unless the AKP ceases and desists from its current cross-border campaigns.

3.1.1 Iraq

We consider TSK interventions in Iraq as highly relevant drivers to both Brussels' and Ankara's security policies, perceptions and priorities. We see that the AKP regards these as critical to defending Turkey's national security interests, whereas, the EU views them as moderately threatening to its own insofar as these maneuvers violate Iraq's sovereignty and impede crucial rebuilding, reconciliation, demilitarisation and displaced persons return efforts. Thus, the probability of conflict and negative impact on EU-Turkish relations are also high for this trend despite Ankara's view that its forces have 'a legitimate right' to intervene vowing to sustain military operations "until the last terrorist is eliminated… and until Baghdad works on removing PKK militants from northern Iraqi cities" (The Arab Weekly, 2017). The EU along with Iraqi Council of Ministers condemn TSK presence in Iraq and these operations as jeopardizing "the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq" (IUVMPRESS, 2016).

Withdrawal of Turkish troops from Bashiqa in the Nineveh Plain would be welcome by the EU, but is unlikely in the foreseeable future as long as the PKK sustain operations in Shingal and Erdoğan maintains a hard line: "Leave Bashiqa. Nobody should expect us to leave Bashiqa" (Bianet, 2018). To prevent Turkey's

attack, after striking an agreement with the GoI, the PKK announced its withdrawal from Shingal in March 2018. The issue is that the PKK-trained YBS, a force made up of local Yezidis, will remain there. Iraqi forces were deployed to fill the vacuum left by the PKK. However, Turkey believes that the presence of the YBS is a PKK attempt to continue its presence in the town by changing its name (Daily Sabah, 2018). For this reason, Shingal will remain an area of conflict as Turkey has already expressed its determination to expand the scope of the OOB to Shingal. Hence, Turkey will likely continue deploying infantry and launching airstrikes inside Iraq's borders to strike perceived enemies, and support local allies/proxy organizations such as the HW to undercut Iran's influence. Irrespective of Turkey's rationale for mobilizing cross-border military operations, the EU censures Ankara's actions as highly destabilising to the region and highly unpopular among European citizens.[10] To this latter point, Europeans are largely united in the belief that, because PYD/PKK forces were instrumental in defeating the visible IS scourge, they are freedom-fighters who bravely defended their homeland battling shoulder-to-shoulder with Europe's own to oust a shared preeminent terrorist threat (Isik, 2016). Thus, the EU condemns any assaults on them whether inside or outside Iraq and Syria.

Moreover, lacking this settlement in Turkey, TSK engagements in the KRI will likely continue. However, expanded cooperation agreements between Ankara and Erbil, producing extensive bilateral benefits may, at times, be conditioned on their cooperation against the PKK in the KRI and northern Iraq. Erdoğan draws a hard line in this regard: "Those who stand on our side in the fight against terrorism are our friend. Those on the opposite side, are our enemy" (Dearden, 2016). This issue will remain decisive in shaping AKP-KRG future relations. On the other hand, though Turkey considers the KRG an elemental partner in limiting PKK threats in Iraq, Kurdistani leaders are strapped with their own multitude of domestic challenges and vulnerabilities including budget cuts, strained relations with Baghdad and a resurgence of IS hazards within and just outside its borders. Thereby, the KRI can little afford the additional security and political roils inherent in ratcheting up cooperation with Turkey in its scorched policy to eradicate the PKK in Iraq. However, if Ankara does not see Erbil as providing enough substantive assistance in this campaign against Turkey's arch nemesis, the KRG may jeopardize all other areas of policy cooperation.

3.1.2 Syria

Similarly, we consider TSK interventions in Syria as highly relevant drivers to both Brussels' and Ankara's security policies, perceptions and priorities. We see that the AKP deems these critical to Turkey's national security while the EU views them as moderately threatening to its own insofar as these sorties detract from fully destroying IS presence and degrading the entities' influence in the region. Thus, the probability of conflict and negative impact on EU-Turkish relations are also high for this trend. During the 2016-17 OES, TSK Special Operations commandos along with FSA militiamen launched intense artillery fire against the PYD, and IS troops while the Turkish Air Force bombed them between Manbij and Tel Abiadh "to secure [Turkish] border security, to prevent DEAŞ [IS] threats and attacks from targeting [the] country, to give an opportunity to our displaced Syrian brothers to return their homes and to continue their lives in peace and security" (Hürriyet, 2017a).

During the OOB, Turkey launched ground attacks against PYD militants while the Turkish Air Force shell them with devastating air strikes in villages, towns and cities in and around Afrin in an effort "to block the separatist terror group from forming a terror corridor along [Turkey's border with] Syria" (Avundukluoglu, 2018). The EU fears were realised when – because the PYD forces in Syria are mostly concentrated in densely populated urban centers such as Afrin - Turkish attacks on operations in these cities will amass

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10 See Sulaivany, 2018.

devastating numbers of casualties. As of 14 March 2018, experts report that almost 225 civilians have been killed, over 300 wounded (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 2018), and since 20 January 2018 about 137,070 men, women and children have been displaced as a result of the OOB (OCHA, 2018). And despite Erdoğan's insistence that OOB's sole intent was to eradicate Kurdish-held 'terror nests' he believes subvert his nation's security, France's Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian intoned: "Ensuring the security of [Turkey]... does not mean killing civilians and that should be condemned. In a dangerous situation in Syria, [Turkey] should not add war to war" (France24, 2018).

On 8 February, the European Parliament passed a unanimous resolution (a) emphasizing that EU lawmakers are "seriously concerned about the humanitarian consequences of the Turkish assault and warn against continuing with these disproportionate actions" and (b) denouncing the arrests and detentions by Turkey's General Directorate of Security (civilian police) of hundreds of journalists, doctors and others who criticized Ankara's armed intervention in Afrin as clearly violating the protected right to free speech and freedom of the press (Millet Press, 2018). During the drafting of the resolution, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) like Germany's Rebecca Harms agreed that Ankara's increasing human rights abuses are alarming to Brussels and that future funds to the Turkish Republic should be contingent upon reform: "The rule of law in Turkey, as we knew it, doesn't actually exist anymore… the level of violence has been raised and there is no more respect for human rights." Kati Piri added "that human rights must remain on the top of EU-Turkey relations" (Staudenmaier, 2018).

In addition, Brussels recognizes that, because the PYD in Syria govern Rojava as a quasi-state with wide support from diverse Arab, Yezidi, Christian and Kurdish inhabitants, isolated military incursions, or even large scale military sorties, are unlikely to eliminate their regional influence. On 9 February, the EU's High Representative Mogherini reminded that

> The war in Syria is not over yet. People are still dying even if it is not headline news. That is happening in Afrin as well as in Idlib… Opening new fronts is no solution and I am afraid it will not make Turkey more secure… Real security can come only from a negotiated political solution to the conflict. We believe that all military action should focus on UN-listed terrorist organisations, not others (Wilgenburg, 2018).

On the other hand, Ankara believes that "the EU isn't aware of what is going on in Afrin... isn't aware of Turkey's security concerns in northern Syria. [The] EU calls us [only] when it needs us... Now only France talks about Syria, because it has interests there and wants to have a say in the political transition and settlement in Syria" (2018). Ultimately, Turkey wants the EU to be more outspoken in backing their counter terrorism campaign by naming the PKK and PYD as a terrorist network on Brussels' common position 2001/931/CFSP EU Terrorist List, thus, treating this Turkish nemesis and its affiliates like any other List member (2018).

Relations between Turkey and an EU Member State France have been tense in recent weeks, with Erdoğan criticized French President Emmanuel Macron's plan to support the SDF in Syria and accused France of "abetting terrorism" (Reuters, 2018), and importantly Ankara warned that Paris's decision amounted to support for terrorism and could make France a "target of Turkey" (Ibid.). France has been one of the most vocal critics of Turkey's two-month-old military operation in northern Syria against the YPG. Macron's office stated "He assured the SDF of France's support for the stabilization of the security zone in the north-east of Syria, within the framework of an inclusive and balanced governance, to prevent any resurgence of Islamic State" (Irish & Pennetier, 2018). The statement indicates that Paris has an intent in supporting the SDF despite Turkey's objections and threats.

In addition, the EU and the Turkish Republic clash on border security issues as Brussels feels that Ankara

has failed to sufficiently control its frontiers with Syria, Iraq and Iran from IS and other jihadi terrorist infiltrations into Europe through Turkey and from Europe into Iraq and Syria (Arango & Schmitt, 2015; Perchoc, 2017: 3). A senior Turkish border security official in Ankara summarizes the situation:

> In Turkey, the military gives priority only to the security of the border strip to a width of up to 600 meters, as it has no legislative authority in border areas outside the border strip and customs gates. The Ministry of Customs is tasked with dealing with exports and imports. Border crossing security is its secondary mission. Police are responsible for law and order in cities, and their presence at the border crossings is a secondary function. In short, while in Europe borders are supervised by a single body, we do exactly the opposite. If you study how the Reyhanli bombing attack in 2014 was carried out, you will see that the Turkish security bureaucracy has miserably failed on border security (al-Monitor, 2014).

Of course, this at present will require the, highly unlikely buy-in and coordination of Damascus, Baghdad, Tehran and Erbil. Despite the apparent mutual benefits possible through cooperating to better secure shared borders from jihadi terrorist infiltrators like the IS, al-Qaida and Jabhat al-Nusra feared by all four countries, - however, strained relations between Turkey and each of Iran and Syria for aforementioned security and political reasons, render such agreements, improbable. Moreover, though critical to sealing the two porous triangles nexused on the Turkey-Iran-Iraq and Turkey-Iraq-Syria borders, attaining these will prove near-impossible until the AKP and the PKK and its affiliates negotiate a final ceasefire, and Ankara and Tehran withdraw conflict-fueling aid and assistance to armed groups in Syria and cease armed engagement by Turkey's Armed Forces and Iran's Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran (AFIRI).

What's more, Afrin assault may escalate to war on more than one front and destroy Turkey's standing in NATO:

> The Kurds of Turkey could exploit an upsurge in Kurdish militancy and intensify their insurgency. Such a ramping up of Kurdish nationalism would also be evident in Iraq and Iran. With a rising insurgency beginning with the success – or even noble failure – of the defence of Afrin, a broader Kurdish revolt against their host states and allies is not beyond the realms of possibility. This possible Kurdish domino would be transformative and unpredictable, even putting in play the very boundaries of the Middle East state system. There is also a further possible domino, already threatened by Afrin and of even greater concern to the west: its effect on the cohesion of NATO (Stansfield, 2018).

In sum, dissent between Brussels and Ankara is highly likely given the TSK's broad kinetic engagement in both Iraq and Syria which negatively impacts EU and US efforts to roll back terrorism, stabilise the region, deliver humanitarian aid and help displaced persons return to their homes.

3.2 Conflict: Turkey-Iran and Turkey-Russia Entents

We consider Turkey-Iran and Turkey-Russia entents as highly relevant drivers of EU and Turkish security policies, perceptions and priorities. We see Ankara as valuing these strategic alliances to help protect vital national security interests while Brussels finds them highly disquieting, thus, the probability for conflict and negative impact on EU-Turkey relations are also high for this trend. Russia's and Iran's common interests and overlapping objectives to reduce US and EU influence in the Middle East has already driven a wedge between Ankara and Brussels. For example, Turkey's sudden rapprochement with these states on Syria in 2016, executed without consulting the EU or fellow NATO allies, was deemed blindsiding, baffling and highly antagonistic by EU Members (Kirişci, 2016). Member state leaders viewed the AKP's actions as vearing Ankara too far and too fast away from Europe's and NATO states' interests despite Ankara's claims to the contrary that the newly formed Turkey-Iran-Russia triumvirate was a transactional, issue-based

coalition limited to cooperation on localized security and economic policies.

Hence, finding no advocacy from the EU to execute its 'Assad must go' policy through force[9] and feeling betrayed by Europe during the 15 July 2016 failed coup attempt (Karadeniz & Pamuk, 2016), Ankara warmed to Tehran and Moscow. Moreover, because the AKP views the EU as a low impact player relative to these regional giants, Turkey allied with the Islamic Republic and the Russian Federation in a neo Triple Entente to protect and advance the Turkish Republic's priorities and interests calculating these EU and NATO adversaries as far more capable to affect geopolitics on the ground. In addition, Erdoğan feels that Ankara has the upper hand in determining the fate of Turkey-EU relations as evidenced by his October 2017 statement

> Europe died in Bosnia and it was buried in Syria. The bodies of innocent children washing up ashore are the tombstones of the Western civilization. Unfortunately, in the last seven years, the old European values have been discredited and destroyed by the very owners of these values … Turkey is not dependent on Europe, in fact it is Europe that is dependent…. accession was a solution to the bloc's chronic problems. Without Turkey, the EU will suffer isolation, desperation and inner conflicts (Daily Sabah, 2017).

Iran, in particular, exerts tremendous geopolitical influence in Iraq and Syria. However, though Turkey and Iran diverge on many other serious policy issues, when it comes to political issues like KRI independence, economic issues like bilateral cooperation on establishing the Joint Economic Commission and Business Council (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018b) and energy issues like gas imports, their interests, threat perceptions and priorities converge. Therefore, opportunities for their convergence and cooperation increase. For example, the KRI referendum has already warmed Ankara to Tehran as their military commanders have met to re-emphasise their commitment to cooperate against the PKK through conducting ongoing cross-border raids. Rouhani shared his and Erdoğan's unequivocal position on the matter: "the independence referendum in Iraq's Kurdistan is a sectarian plot by foreign countries and is rejected by Tehran and Ankara" (NRT, 2017). Though this alignment still operates within a tactical, topical and temporary framework, it will have strategic consequences for many years to come.

Iran and Turkey may not agree on the same levels and type of cooperation against the PYD in Syria, however, both equally oppose all joint US-Kurd operations in the country. On 16 August 2017, Iranian Chief of General Staff Mohammad Baqeri signed an agreement with his Turkish counterpart Hulusi Akar and Erdoğan ensuring that Assad's government reasserts control over Rojava and dismantles the nascent democracy (Khalidi, 2017). Consequently, Iran has acquiesced to Turkey's National Defence decision to launch the OOB in Afrin and surrounding territories to limit PYD expansion in Syrian northern Syria and contain the PKK and affiliates in Shingal via proxy ISF and PMF combatants.

Turkey also continues to cultivate ties with Russia much to EU's consternation. After Ankara-Moscow relations hit rock bottom from 2015–2016 after a Turkish fighter jet downed a Russian plane near the Turkish-Syrian border, relations recovered surprisingly quickly. Then Russia began courting Turkey to enter the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to send a signal to the West that it is pivoting East to better protect vital security, economic and foreign policy issues (Stronski & Sokolsky, 2017). Russia hopes to use Turkey to cause dissent within NATO highlighting Turkey's status as a problematic ally for the West. For example, the two governments lifted all but a few trade restrictions in late spring 2017 (Stronski & Sokolsky, 2017).

What's more, Putin's grand strategic objectives in Syria and the region revolve around aggressive competition with the US (Kagan, et al., 2016: 27-8) as the Russian leader fundamentally views the EU as a vehicle for US

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9 See: Pierini, 2016.

influence in Europe: "In fact, Europe gave up… its powers not to NATO but to NATO's leading country – the United States" (Sputnik, 2015). Thus, Moscow's interest in joining this high octane impact triumvirate is largely shaped by the Federation's overt desire to out-play the West's hand in regional matters with support from both Tehran and Ankara. Therefore, through Turkey's alliance with these two and by establishing a Joint Syria Mechanism with Russia "in an attempt to narrow the positions on the principles for a solution to the Syria conflict" (European Commission, 2016) as some assert, Ankara further distances itself from Brussels.

In sum, the EU encourages bilateral or trilateral alliances between Turkey, Iran and Russia which help eliminate or diminish the root causes of turbulence in both Iraq and Syria and bring peace and prosperity to the region. However, if alliances between Ankara and Tehran, only result in a rapprochement to prevent Kurdish independence in Iraq and de facto autonomy for Syrian Kurds through coercive means, the EU and Turkey will surely conflict over this alliance. Likewise, by stiffening Russia's reassertion in the Middle East, Turkey also spurs a high probability of conflict with the EU.

3.3 Conflict: The Militarisation of Iraq's Ethno-religious Minorities

We consider the militarisation of ethno-religious minorities in Iraq as a highly relevant driver of both EU and Turkish security policies, perceptions and priorities. Ankara holds militarizing Sunni and Turkeman as vital to its own political and security interests while Brussels views this as highly destabilizing, thus, the probability for conflict and negative impact on EU-Turkey relations is also high for this trend.

One of the many nefarious outcomes of the IS war, besides accelerating territorial and social fragmentation, has been the militarisation of Iraq's ethno-religious minority communities, all of which now demand their own army 'to protect themselves. (Zoonen & Wirya, 2017). As previously discussed, in addition to hosting the Shia affiliated PMFs, Iraq is home to a multitude of non-Shia PMFs recruited largely from local minority communities all of which emerged to defend ethno-sectarian communities allied to them against threats posed by home-grown and foreign state, sub-state and non-state actors in the absence of a capable, non-discriminatory state defence force. "It was very difficult, especially for the women and children … If there was a strong central government we would need nothing. If you want to solve the problem, we must have a protection force," (Dehghanpisheh & Georgy, 2017). Groups like the Sunni Tribal Mobilization, the National Mobilization of Turkmens, the Shingal Protection Unites (Yezidis), the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (Christians), the Babylonian Guards (Christians) and others are further divided by their support from adverse domestic and foreign backers. For instance, Sunni Turkmens are supported by Turkey while Shia Turkmens are supported by Baghdad and Tehran. Christian groups are divided into groups either backed by the KRG or Baghdad while others lack sponsorship, thus, demand international protection from the West including EU Member States and others.

Though Ankara is not circumspect to admit that PKK presence in northern Iraq — particularly Shingal — is of primary concern, the arrival of the PMFs in disputed territories has increased the likelihood for kinetic contact with Tehran's AFIRI and proxy militias. Even more provocative to the Islamic Republic are TSK's defensives and offensives to offset Shia PMF dominance's by working with, and through, the Sunni counterpart. What's more, pro-Iran PMFs now vehemently protest AKP's interventionism and 'neo-Ottoman ambitions' in Iraq rousing tensions between the Turkey and the current Iran-friendly Iraqi government. Thus, Turkey's cross-border military activities and its growing potential to undermine relations between various local, governorate and federal level ethnicities and different sects of Iraqi society, will inevitably increase the likelihood of conflict between the EU and Turkey.

Disturbingly, Iraq serves as the classical battle theatre for Ankara and Tehran to hash out deep-seated antipathies and each actor is imminently threatening to both Iraq's and Syria's stability and functionality as sovereign states. Turkish and Iranian leaders both aim to establish their countries as robust regional dynamos tipping the Middle East balance of powers in their favour (Carley, 1994: 12-13) through employing a full arsenal of aforementioned coercive and persuasive tools and methods in the region Iraq and Syria are mutually non-constructive. In this context, confrontation between pro-Turkish and pro-Iranian groups in Mosul is inevitable and potentially disastrous, thus, will negatively impact EU-Turkey relations.

Predictably, Brussels rejects any actions by Ankara and Tehran to advance domestic and foreign policies - security or otherwise - which violate neighbour states' sovereignty or imperil Iraqi peace and reconciliation to advance domestic and foreign security policies through inciting and participating in ethno-sectarian feuds. Brussels especially distastes Ankara's armed meddling in the affairs of against the recognized governments in the region.

3.4 Convergence and Cooperation: Persistent Population Displacement

We consider the forced and persistent displacement of millions of persons across Iraq and Syria as a highly relevant driver of EU and Turkish security policies, perceptions and priorities as we view their shared economic and security burdens of this humanitarian crises as stifling, thus, the probability of convergence and cooperation and positive impact on EU-Turkey relations are also high for this trend. Turkey is considered the "most generous" humanitarian donor in terms of hosting the world's largest number of refugees including Syrians, providing aid to some 2.75 million through its Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (Jeelani, 2017). The European Commission, through the European Civil Protection And Humanitarian Aid Operations, has also generously contributed over €1.4B in aid to this population in Turkey for 2016-2017 (European Commission, 2018b), and €350M for both displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees inside Iraq for 2015-2017 (European Commission, 2018a). Both Turkey and EU member states like Germany have also cooperated by "repeatedly call[ing] for the creation of a safe area inside Syria where the internally displaced can reside" (Gutman, 2016).

Though the United Nations predicts that IDP flows within and between Iraq and other countries will subside now that major offensives on the IS have terminated, this transnational also portends that refugees from Syria will continue to pour across Iraq's western borders, Turkey's southeastern borders and Europe's southern shores and borders from all sides while IDPs from disputed territories south of the KRI continued to flee north after 16 October 2017 offensives adding further instability to the mound of national volatilities.

As refugees continue to pour across Turkey's frontiers to resettle or migrate onwards to Europe or beyond, the impact of displacement on EU-Turkey relations is high. High too, are the opportunities and incentives to converge and cooperate on mitigating the sources of displacement. Here Turkey and the EU have clear roles to play in stabilising the region by, among other things, assisting combatant actors to: end protracted wars, encourage reconciliation and facilitate the safe and sustainable return of IDPs and refugees to their places of origin.

3.5 Convergence and Cooperation: The Future of Terrorism

We consider the future of terrorism as a highly relevant driver of EU and Turkish security policies, perceptions and priorities. Though we see both actors as highly concerned with this issue, as previously discussed, they diverge on which organizations pose the greatest threat as Ankara places the PKK at the top of its terrorist list - both within its borders and across the region - while Brussels prioritizes neutralizing jihadi terrorist threats on its soil, thus, the probability of convergence and cooperation and positive impact on EU-Turkey relations is moderate for this issue. Though the IS maintains sleeper cells and isolated pockets of support in Iraq and Syria from which to launch ad hoc terrorist attacks, the GCD eradicated the terrorist organisation from 98% of Iraqi territory (Tillerson, 2018), thus, it no longer poses an existential threat to the EU. However, NSAs of various affiliations, continue to threaten Ankara's and Brussels' security interests and priorities, thus, both actors are highly incented to cooperate. However, IS is not given the same degree of priority by the two sides in the neighbourhood, including Iraq and Syria. Unlike the EU, Turkey considers the threat posed by IS equal to the one posed by the PKK, but not as strategic. Here, the two sides diverge.

Though al-Abadi declared on 9 December 2017 that "Our heroes have reached the final strongholds of Daesh and purified it" (Chmaytelli & Aboulenein, 2017). In the western desert and entire Iraq-Syria border,[10] terrorism remains an imminent "eternal enemy" in Iraq and Syria from which the country "must remain vigilant and prepared" (Ibid.). For example, the IS and other insurgents are poised to exploit internal political rifts and frailties between Erbil and Baghdad, if the GoI and KRG do not quickly cooperate to secure the least stable areas in aforementioned disputed areas, and border crossings. If, for instance, the Hamrin Mountains south of Kirkuk where IS fighters have re-emerged, are not sufficiently defended by state and sub-state actors, the IS may commit acts of revenge against the individuals, families, tribes and members of the security forces (formal and paramilitary forces) who aided the GCD. It is in the interest of both EU and Turkey to cooperate and support the improved relations between Baghdad and Erbil to finally eliminate the IS threat.

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10 Sleeper cells and active enclaves of IS fighters still exist throughout Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, they are thought to be concentrated in Nineveh and Kirkuk governorates.

4. Policy Recommendations

Overall, the EU and Turkey must prioritize mending cracks and fissures in their relationship and focus on the gains to be made through rapprochement on security issues originating in Iraq and Syria. Likewise, the EU can use its tremendous mediating capacity as an honest broker to settle entrenched disputes between warring parties. More than ever, both must develop a long-term strategic security framework to ensure that bilateral security interests, priorities and interventions do not derail current stabilisation and reconstruction procedures in Iraq and/or progress toward a durable peace in Syria.

Turkey's Military Engagement in Iraq and Syria

Iraq and Syria

1. Turkey should adopt a long-term security's grand strategy framework for Iraq and Syria which factors in a full range of domestic and foreign policy economic, social, political, military, environmental and energy dimensions. Past ad hoc policies have been too short-sighted and short-lived with either harmful or no beneficial effects. Decisions should not alienate them from the EU.

2. Erbil, Baghdad and the EU should help Ankara resume peace talks to address transnational PKK issues in Turkey, Syria and Iraq. The AKP has a secure parliamentary majority, thus, Erdoğan should seize the opportunity to champion democratic reforms that would meet many of the demands voiced by Turkey's Kurds.

3. The EU should renew accession dialogues with Turkey, if Ankara takes credible steps to limit TSK action to that which the two powers deem absolutely necessary and cannot be solved through diplomatic means.

Iraq

4. The EU and Turkey should encourage the KRG and GoI to pressure the PKK/affiliates to cease and desist from operating within Iraq and using violence against Turkey as a tool to reach political ends.

5. Brussels, the KRG and GoI should encourage Turkey and the PKK/affiliates to resume ceasefire talks and commit to adhering to a new peace process.

6. Turkey should coordinate policy decisions with both Erbil or Baghdad to avoid bilateral agreements with either that may rile tensions between them.

7. Turkey should close the Bashiqa camp and cease TRF operations in Iraq.

Syria

8. The EU and Turkey should communicate more effectively for peace and stability and help all actors in Syria reach a permanent peace settlement.

9. Turkey should immediately seek a permanent peace settlement, including with the PYD and others in Rojava.

10. Turkey should cease any and all TRF operations in Syria.

11. The EU and Turkey should partner with the KRG and GOI to prohibit Iraqis from fighting in Syria for any reason.

Persistent Population Displacement

Iraq

12. Turkey should cooperate with the EU to help Iraq minimize or eliminate the causes of displacement by helping to stabilize and reconstruct Iraq.

Syria

13. The EU and Turkey should cooperate to help Syria minimize or eliminate the causes of displacement by helping Assad and rebels reach a durable ceasefire agreement.

The Future of Terrorism

Iraq

14. The EU and Turkey should encourage the KRG and GOI to hold the long overdue Article 140 vote to determine the governance fate of the disputed territories to help stabilize and reconstruct these most vulnerable areas.

15. The EU and Turkey should help Iraqi leaders strengthen state institutions enabling Erbil and Baghdad to restore their monopoly of power and use of violence by making good on promised aid to help the KRG and GoI stabilize and reconstruct Iraq - particularly for the most vulnerable, war torn areas most susceptible to NSA control.

16. The EU and Turkey should coordinate with leaders from the GoI, KRG, Syrian government and Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (Rojava) to better secure their shared borders against IS and other violent jihadist infiltrators.

Syria

17. The EU and Turkey should work with other influential global and regional powers to help stakeholders in Syria reach a permanent peace settlement.

18. Turkey should resume peace talks with the YPG and YPJ to reach a durable peace settlement.

19. The EU and Turkey should commit resources to help stabilize and reconstruct Syria once the war ends.

The Militarisation of Ethno-Religious Minorities

Iraq

20. The EU and Turkey should help the GoI bolster Iraq's judicial system to protect equal human rights for all citizens in order to curb ethno-sectarian violence. Doing so will empower the judiciary to enforce that all state armed entities observe International humanitarian law covered under the Geneva and Hague Conventions[11] to prevent unconstitutional targeting of these groups, thus, negate Turkey's need to back Sunni affiliated PMFs which clash with Shia counterparts.

21. The EU should continue partnering with the KRG and GoI to fund/implement reconciliation programmes to promote inter-community peacebuilding, relationship-building and social cohesion

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11 Non-discrimination is a core principle of International humanitarian law (IHL), under which all protected people "shall be treated with the same consideration by parties to the conflict, without distinction based on race, religion, sex or political opinion". See Advisory Service On International Humanitarian Law: https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf

across Iraq by engaging local ethno-religious communities and existing civil society structures trusted by local populations, especially among the Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Turkemens, Yezidis, Christians, Shabaks and others. These programmes would also help build trust between ethno-sectarian minorities and security forces responsible for their protection to address perceptions of wrongdoing and lack of accountability. Such programmes can reduce tensions between residents, minimize the likelihood of widespread reprisal killings or further ethno-sectarian conflict and lessen Ankara's perceived need to man, train and equip armed Sunni groups to defend themselves against Shia rivals.

22. The EU and Turkey should help the GoI, KRG and local governments reform political tactics that harm minority populations, inhibit their safe, dignified and sustained return to places of origin and exacerbate ethno-sectarian tensions.

23. The EU should support an international inquiry into Iraqi ethno-sectarian war crimes, human rights abuses and atrocities and facilitate the documentation of abuses for possible future prosecutions.

5. Conclusion

The EU and other international community actors acknowledge Turkey's claims to facing credible threats both from within and across its turbulent borders. However, Brussels and centres of power across the West also chafe against Ankara's virulent anti-Western rhetoric, crackdown on civil society voices and authoritarian drift. Now that bilateral vitriol has reached historic heights, EU-Turkey relations verge on collapse over these issues, events and trends in Iraq and Syria if these powers don't veer towards convergence and cooperation vs conflict on issues deemed moderate to highly relevant to both. To do this, AKP leaders must (a) quickly ease tensions by chiefly employing persuasive and co-optive diplomatic policy which persuade and co-opt regional actors to peace building; and (b) reconcile while embracing security policies of restraint and withdrawal to help stabilize and reconstruct volatile neighbour states. Many unanswered questions remain including: How will domestic politics in the EU and Turkey affect bilateral relations? How will Ankara's 2017 move to adopt an executive presidency and presidential system affect Turkey's foreign policy decisions in the Middle East, thus EU-Turkey relations, after presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2019? What remaining leverage does Brussels have to incent Ankara to reform cited human rights abuses and cease military interventions across Turkey's southern borders now that the AKP voices disinterest in accession? And, most topically, will Brussels castigate Ankara's current incursions in Afrin and other cities across northern Syria beyond rhetoric? Now it remains to be seen if both actors have the political will to transform perceptions and renew dialogues committing to cooperate and converge vs conflict on vital developments in Iraq and Syria.

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