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Turkish-Iranian Rivalry over Iraq and Syria

By

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Turkish-Iranian Rivalry over Iraq and Syria

Sandra Khairallah

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Turkish-Iranian rivalry over Iraq and Syria after the 2003 United States led invasion and the 2011 popular Arab uprisings. It examines the viability of Realism in explaining sectarian-laden regional disputes. It reviews the geopolitical and historical struggle between the Ottoman and Safavid dynasties in order to reveal contemporary relevance. It entertains different strands of Realist propositions, as they are unraveled in the current power struggle over Syria and Iraq. By focusing on contemporary foreign policy developments, this thesis reveals that the geopolitical considerations of both Turkey and Iran remain the most relevant to theoretical interpretations. This runs in contradiction to the proclaimed sectarian and identity-politics paradigms.

Keywords: Turkey, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Realism, Foreign Policy, Identity, Politics, Middle East Politics

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Research Question

The thesis aims to answer the following question: How are Turkey and Iran vying for influence in Iraq and Syria? As regional powers, Turkey and Iran are major influences on the politics of Iraq as well as Syria. They have been playing a major role in Iraqi elections. Iran tends to support a number of Shia factions in particular the Sadrists. On the other hand, Turkey backs the Sunni and secular elements in Iraq such as Iraqiyya. Furthermore, Turkey and Iran have a common interest in preventing the Kurds from establishing an independent state as well as countering the threat of the Kurdistan's Worker's Party (PKK). Nevertheless, they both have significant economic ties with the Kurdish Region in Iraq, and both desire to maintain and strengthen these ties for economic and political reasons. As in to Iraq, Turkey and Iran are vying for influence over Syria. This is manifested by the Iranian support to the regime of Bashar Al Assad and the Turkish backing of the opposition. Indeed Turkey is one of the principle supporters of the various factions of the Syrian opposition. These factors raise two important questions: how are Turkey and Iran seeking influence over Iraq and Syria, and for what reasons? What international relations theory best explain Turkey and Iran's regional strategies?

1.2 Thesis overview

The thesis will highlight the competitive relationship between Turkey and Iran to assert influence over Iraq and Syria. This assertion clearly shows how the two countries are acting according to realist motives. Realist scholars in general assume that states are rational actors that act according to their own interest for the purpose of survival. According to Waltz, the actions of states are based on their interests. Morgenthau continues by stating that these actions do not take into consideration universal moral principles. Mearsheimer and Keohane stresses that states are rational actors that seek to survive and increase their benefits. A central tenet in realist theory is that interest is the driving motive of all actions.

Over the centuries, specifically from the sixteenth century on, the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid Empire (the precursors of Modern Turkey and Iran) vied for control over contested territories. Since then their relation had been based on rivalry with few instances of cooperation. Two major turning points in the 21th century reasserted this rivalry, the 2003 war on Iraq, and the 2011 Syrian Uprising. In both cases the two countries adopted opposite positions towards Iraq and Syria. At the beginning of the war on Iraq, when the United States ousted Saddam Hussein from power and invaded the country, Tehran changed its policy. It sought to support various Shia factions in the 2005 and 2010 elections. It also armed and trained these factions. Its objective was to prevent the creation of a regime linked to the U.S. and ensure the emergence of a government made up mostly of Shiites. On the other hand, Ankara sought to support the Sunni, the secular parties, and groups in the 2005 and 2010 election process. Iran has been acting vigorously towards Iraq. It is keeping a close eye on the situation in Iraq since any threat emanating from the country would have detrimental

repercussions on Iran. Turkey and Iran enjoy political and economic ties with the Kurdistan Regional Government but share the same concern which is the Kurds establishing an independent state. For that they fought the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) in fear that the Kurds in their respective countries would seek their independence. When the uprising began in Syria, Turkey asked Bashar to initiate reforms but soon after, it sided with the opposition, which is mainly composed of Sunni Islamists. Iran on the other hand sided with Al Assad; both countries share an alliance since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This alliance has evolved along seven phases starting from the 1979 Revolution and until the 2011 Syrian uprising. The support for Al Assad took the shape of backing the security apparatus through an advisory and assistance mission, the military whether by air, land, and sea, the paramilitaries that would be linked to it in case the Syrian regime falls, and the intelligence unit through material backing and personnel. This support is also due to geopolitical, ideological and security reasons. Syria is seen as a resistance to Israel, an important route by which military and technical assistance can be provided to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Several analyses have been drawn regarding the way Turkey is conducting its relations towards Arab states. These consist of two distinct policies, which are Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism. Neo-Ottomanism is based on embracing secularism in Turkey; they consider Turkey as a regional superpower, and conduct relations with the West and Islamic countries. In this sense, Turkey seeks to separate the Islamic religion from the state, and to engage at the economic, political, and diplomatic level with other states. Kemalism is based on secularism, nationalism, and a refutation of multiculturalism. Turkey abolished religious education and the Arabic alphabet. It integrated all Muslim minorities. Muslims and non-Muslims are considered Turkish citizens but the

latter are not treated equally as their Muslim compatriots. In short, a number of internal and external factors shape the way Iran and Turkey influence Iraq and Syria.

1.3 Historical Review

The Turkish-Iranian relationship over the course of history, and depending on the political events these countries passed through, was marked with periods of bitter rivalry at times, as well as close and friendly relations at other times.

In the sixteenth century the Safavid Empire and the Ottoman Empire strived to extend their influence and power over the nomads of Eastern Anatolia. These nomads adopted an unorthodox type of Islam but shared similar beliefs to the Shiite Islam practiced by the Safavid Empire. Persia, under Shah Ismail, persuaded the nomads to rise against the Ottoman rulers. However, in 1514, the Shah engaged in a battle with the Ottoman Empire led by Sultan Selim the First in Chaldiran East of Anatolia. Since that time, the Safavid Empire suffered a defeat at the hands of the Ottomans, prompting Persia to abandon any nomad rebellion, which subsequently was suppressed by the Ottomans. Over the next 125 years, both empires entered into a five-year war related to territorial ambitions (Jenkins, 2012).

In 1693, the Shah Safi and Sultan Murad the fifth signed the treaty of 'Zuhab' that demarcated the borders between them. However, the treaty of 'Zuhab' did not change the situation dramatically between the two countries. On the contrary, for the next 300 years, both empires continued to clash over their borders. The bloody rivalry between both empires persisted, each empire tried to capitalize on the other's weakness (Jenkins, 2012).

In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans were deeply concerned about the impact of the Persian Empire's influence in the provinces of Basra and Baghdad, which were at the time under the Ottoman rule. The main concern was that the number of Shiite Muslims would be greater than the Sunni Muslims. For this reason, Sultan Abdelhamit encouraged the Persian rebel Jamal Adin Alafghani in Istanbul to persuade the Shiite religious men to accept him as their religious leader. On the other hand, the Persian Shah Nasser Aldin incited the Armenian nationalists to fight the Ottoman Empire from Persia. The relation with the Ottoman Empire exacerbated further with the assassination of the Persian Shah Nasser Aldin by one of the followers of Jamal Aldin Alafghani, the Iranian rebel residing in Istanbul. When the son of the slayed Persian Shah came to power, he established good relations with the Ottomans and visited Istanbul, in 1900, as a good will gesture. But this relation was short lived as both sides resumed their bitter verbal war and occasional skirmishes. Few years later, in 1908, the Young Turks ousted Sultan Abdelhamid from power (Jenkins, 2012).

During World War I, Iran became an ally to the allied forces while the Ottoman Empire took a different course and waged a war against Russia, Britain, and France. As the Ottoman Empire suffered a big defeat in the war, the Persian state reaped great benefits from its alliance with the Western nations and managed to consolidate its grip on the country (Jenkins, 2012).

Both Iran and Turkey witnessed the rise of two leaders who are Reza Khan who proclaimed himself as Shah of Iran and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who was credited for building the modern Turkey. The relation between Iran and Turkey deteriorated further in

the year 1925 and onward, when the Kurds in Turkey rebelled in certain province in the country. These rebellions, which took place over the years, created conflicts between Turkey and Iran, which demanded demarcations of their borders. In 1934, Turkey and Iran's relationship saw a rapprochement owing to the official visit of Reza Khan to Turkey. The visit's purpose was to personally see the reforms that Ataturk introduced in his own country (Jenkins, 2012).

During the Cold War in 1952, Turkey joined NATO. In 1955, Turkey along with Iran, Iraq, the United Kingdom and Pakistan founded the Baghdad Pact. The Baghdad Pact, backed by the United States, was seen as a barrier against the spread of the Soviet influence in the Middle East region. In 1959, Iraq exited the Pact after the king was overthrown. As a result, the Baghdad Pact was changed to become the Central Treaty Organization. The Central Treaty Organization did not have sufficient military authority; it was established to deter any Soviet act against any of its members. The treaty did improve to a small degree the relation between Turkey and Iran. But tensions eventually rose following the military coup in Turkey in the year 1960 (Jenkins, 2012).

In 1979, the Islamic revolution in Iran benefitted Turkey as this uprising has reduced the threat and rivalry posed by the Shah. The Islamic government that emerged following the revolution withdrew Iran from its Central Treaty Organization membership, which was eventually dissolved. The international community after the revolution isolated Iran as the country was plunged in serious domestic problems. In light of the events that surrounded Iran, Turkey's position in the West drastically improved and many Western countries saw in Ankara a buffer against communist expansion and radical Islam. Turkey also grasped a

golden opportunity to strengthen its relations with Iran and at the same time with the West. In 1979, following the declaration of triumph of the revolution of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Turkey announced its support to the new regime, and forewarned the US and USSR against intervening in Iran's domestic affairs (Jenkins, 2012).

In 1980, after the Iran-Iraq war occurred, Turkey adopted a neutral stance towards the rebels in both countries. This stance remained for the entire period of the war. Turkey was concerned about the war and the effects that may rise from it which include the possible demand of a Kurdish secession and the increase in the desires and abilities of Iran and Iraq. Since Turkey adopted a neutral stance, Iran did not play on the Kurdish issue against Turkey. Through this policy, Turkey thought that Iran if isolated would be forced to stand with the USSR. The Iran-Iraq war benefitted Turkey on the economic level. Since the start of the war Iran proposed to promote economic relations between them in return for Turkey's neutrality. Turkey advocated for its policy of neutrality in the international arena as well. It rejected to participate with the international community in condemning Iran for initiating the war. Rather, it demanded as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 598 for both countries to terminate the fighting. Iran saw in Turkey's neutrality position as an opportunity to reduce the isolation policy exerted on it. Thus, Iran applied pragmatic policies and renounced from ideological policies and ambitions against Turkey. Due to this, the economic relations improved between Turkey and Iran and the Kurdish issue was not given much importance. Thus, The Iran-Iraq war persuaded Turkey and Iran to embrace pragmatic policies.(Gundogan, 2003, p.3-4)

During the 1990s, Turkey and Iran vied to stretch their power and influence in Central Asia to fill up the vacuum left by the downfall of the Soviet Union. However, Turkey and Iran could not exert their power over Central Asia and competition characterized the relation between both countries. In 1995, during the Turkish national elections, the Islamist Welfare Party snapped up most of the parliamentary seats, winning 158 seats out of a total of 550 (Jenkins, 2012).

As a result of the parliamentary election, the president of the Islamist Welfare Party Necmettin Erbakan was declared the first outspoken Islamist Prime Minister of Turkey. In October 1996, Prime Minister Erbakan decided to establish the Developing Eight similar to the Group Seven, it is composed of several Muslim states; Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey. The Developing Eight is a bid to create a common market and to compete with the European Union. In 1997, the Developing Eight were launched. Despite their effort, this new group failed to meet Erbakan's expectations. Moreover, it failed to strengthen the relation between Turkey and Iran. Prime Minister Erbakan backed Iran and tried to warn against the establishment of a secular regime in Turkey headed by the military. In 1997, the relation between Turkey and Iran received a further setback when both countries expelled each other's diplomats. In June of that same year, Prime Minister Erbakan stepped down from power. However, diplomatic ties between both countries were not fully severed. In 1998, the relationship between Turkey and Iran improved following the efforts made by the Turkish Foreign Minister to enhance relations with its neighboring countries. In 1999, relations between both countries further improved when Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdistan's Workers Party leader, was arrested and imprisoned (Jenkins, 2012).

The 2003 invasion of Iraq and later on the Arab Spring defined the relation furthermore between Turkey and Iran. Turkey tried to engage in finding solutions to prevent the war in Iraq in order to preserve the territorial integrity of the country and prevent any threat on its lands that may result from the war. At the onset of the United States invasion of Iraq, Turkey did not seek to participate in the invasion, or to have any influence over post-invasion Iraq. But, the influence of Turkey was clearly seen in Iraq's 2005 and 2010 national election process. Unlike Iran, which supported the Shia parties, Turkey sought to support the secular and Sunni parties to guarantee their coming to power. Similar to Iraq, when the Syrian uprising took place, Turkey sought to prevent it by demanding that Assad introduce political reforms. However, this policy changed gradually as Turkey showed support for the opposition. Turkey's policy in Syria aims in short to protect its interests and assert itself as a regional power. It can be seen from Turkey's attitude towards Iraq and Syria, that the Davutoglu policy of zero problems with its neighbors is no more relevant.

On the other hand, Iran has two aims in Iraq. After the start of the 2003 United States invasion, Iran's aim was to promote security and maintain its relations with the government, and to establish economic and cultural ties. These aims are shaped by several factors including the Iranian people, the Iranian elites and intellectuals, the political, military, and religious elites in addition to other relevant parties (Barzegar, 2008, pp.47-56). The influence of Iran over Iraq has taken the shape of hard and soft influence, by supporting insurgents and political factions, interfering in the national elections of 2005 and 2010, and by expanding trade with Iraq. Iran's objective in Syria differs from other countries, especially since both share an alliance since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This alliance has gone through a number of stages starting from its establishment in 1979 up until the Syrian

uprising in 2011. Iran's goal is to keep President Bashar Al Assad in power for as long as possible, as Syria is an important geostrategic country and a gateway to its allies in the Middle East, especially Hezbollah.

The Iranian-Turkish rivalry over Syria and Iraq is part of a broader struggle to gain influence over the entire region including the Gulf. Turkey, since the Justice and Development Party came to power has been backing Sunni movements and traditional Sunni monarchies e.g. Saudi Arabia. Iran, on the other hand, has been supporting secular regimes such as the Baath party in Syria, as well as Maliki's Shia leading government in Iraq, and various Shia movements in Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, and elsewhere.

Turkey and Iran both have common perceptions regarding the Kurdistan Regional Government. It is of the upmost importance to suppress any Kurdish movement seeking their independence from Iraq and Turkey, as well as from Syria and in Iran.

In conclusion, Turkey and Iran are clearly shaping their policies towards Iraq and Syria in light of their interests and future development that may guarantee or not the following interests.

1.4 Significance

Following months of escalation and militarization, the conflict in Syria reached the point of a civil war. Since the beginning of the conflict, a number of states expressed their view regarding the situation and became involved either through supporting or suppressing the uprising. Among these countries are Turkey and Iran whose relation of rapprochement in the past few years changed with the commencement of the civil war in Syria. The 2003 Iraq

War also had major impacts leaving the country entrenched in violence and sectarian civil war. Thus, the significance of this thesis is to show how Turkey and Iran are acting towards Syria, and are trying to influence the course of actions according to purely realist notions. Significance is that it will point out how the two countries are seeking to fill in the power vacuum left by the 2003 Iraq War. A third significance is that the thesis will reveal how the competition between Turkey and Iran comes in the domain of how each state is trying to assert itself to become a regional power. It will also show how this influence is taking several shapes ranging from ideological, sectarian, political, and military. Realism is then the primary theory that determines how states conduct their relations with theories such as constructivism, idealism, and liberalism being a lesser determinant.

1.5 Methodology

In light of the latest developments particularly the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and the intensification of struggle over influence in both Iraq and Syria which realist theory best explains Turkey and Iran's regional struggle. In order to determine this struggle, we will examine and compare each country's positions separately as to highlight aspects of realpolitik embedded in their foreign policy. The thesis will thus reflect on the different types of realism including offensive realism, defensive realism, structural realism, classical realism, and radical realism. They will all be discussed in detail. Additionally there will be reference to the work of Hans Morgenthau's 'Politics Among Nations' published in 2005, and to the work of Mearsheimer 'The Tragedy of Great Power Politics' published in 2001, Kenneth Waltz's 'Theory of International Politics published' in 1979, and Keohane's 'Neorealism and Its Critics' published in 1986. Their works belong to the different schools

of realism and give their explanation of it. All of the mentioned realist scholars have similar views regarding realism specifically concerning power and interests of states. Based on the above schools, the thesis will show to which type Turkey and Iran belong.

This thesis examines the rivalry over Iraq and Syria from a historic scholarly narrative as well as by examining case studies of contemporary political struggle following the 2003 United States led invasion and the 2011 Syrian uprising. It will be based also on the statements issued by either countries with respect to the conflict in Iraq and Syria, evaluation of events as they unravel as well as relying on analysis. Then we will triangulate our assessments in order to reveal evidence supporting or refuting either version of realist theories. As a result we will analyze the current rivalry between Turkey and Iran over Iraq, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Syria according to the theory of realism.

1.6 The Argument

The thesis argues that Turkish-Iranian rivalry is not of sectarian or religious orientation struggle. It is not based on identity theories but rather on geopolitics and realism. Both countries are trying to assert themselves on the regional scene through supporting certain Sunni, Shiite, and secular groups. It will show whether realism is a viable theory in explaining the rivalry between Turkey and Iran, and their behavior towards Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, it will justify this behavior and the reasons for which both countries are influencing Iraq and Syria.

In the coming chapter the thesis will discuss about the theory of realism and its various strands and prominent scholars. The third and fourth chapter will focus on Turkish

policy towards Iraq and Syria. Moreover, it will highlight the ways of influence and the goals intended to achieve in the latter countries. The fifth chapter will sum up what has been stated and analyzed in the thesis and will state to which strand of realism does Turkey and Iran belong to.

Chapter Two

Realism: Its Main Typologies and Scholars

"We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual and these interests it is our duty to follow.'' Lord Palmerston

Theories of international relations are numerous and differ in their assumptions regarding important concepts such as power, interest, status quo, war, peace, and justice. They range from liberalism to constructivism, Marxism, and structuralism. Based on the above quote by Lord Palmerston, this chapter will elucidate on an important theory in International politics which has been adopted by statesman over the centuries and which focuses on interest as a core belief. The theory is realism.

2.1 Definition of Realism

Building on a long tradition of theorizing on international relations that dates back to Thucydides, Hobbes and Rousseau, twentieth century Realist scholars include prominent figures such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, E.H. Carr, Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer. Some Realist scholars consider Realism to be a theory of politics while others consider it as a theory of international politics. Realism highlights a number of beliefs and practices, which can be considered as its basic elements. First realism believes in selfishness and the presence of anarchy. Rationality and state centrism as well as the recognition that human needs are diverse and differ are other beliefs of realism. International relations according to the theory of realism cannot be ruled by moral norms. A

related belief is that a strong state that infringes a moral rule can be not punished but when it gets punished the reason would be another strong state (Donnelly, 2000).

2.2 Typologies of Realism

Realism is divided into many variants, among which are structural realism, radical realism, classical realism, liberal realism, and neoclassical realism. The focus of the chapter, however, will be on four stands of Realism: structural realism, radical realism, classical realism, and neoclassical realism since they clearly explain the behavior of Turkey and Iran and the foreign policy they are adopting towards the two states the thesis is highlighting on Iraq and Syria. The following part will also highlight on the main scholars of realism who are Morgenthau, Mearsheimer, Keohane, and Waltz in each type of realism since the theory, which they defend, clearly explains foreign policies of states towards one another. In this case, Turkey and Iran are the two competing countries, and Iraq and Syria are the countries of influence.

2.2.1 Classical Realism

Classical Realism believes that states are the major actors in the international system. They are unitary players and their actions are rational. The international system is characterized by anarchy and it is anarchy that encourages states to seek security. Renowned International Relations scholar Ole Holsti states, "in a self-help system one nation's search for security often leaves its current and potential adversaries insecure, any nation that strives for absolute security leaves all others in the system absolutely insecure, and it can provide a powerful incentive for arms races and other types of hostile interactions.''(Holsti, n.d, p.p. 4-

5) Conflict to classical realism is a natural state of affairs and not the result of historical factors, cruel leaders, weak sociopolitical systems, and comprehension between states. States act according to their interests to increase their power, security, survival, and capacities (Holsti, n.d, p. 4-5).

Hans Morgenthau a prominent classical realist elucidates on his concept of political realism. In his book 'Politics among Nations' he attributes six determinants of political realism.

The first determinant is that "political realism is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature''. Realism must differentiate between truth and opinion that is what is objective and rational, and what is subjective. (Morgenthau, n.d, p.2).

The second determinant is the indicator that allows political realism to be present in international politics and which is interest termed in power.

The third determinant of political realism is that interest and power are not static rather they are changeable. The motive behind how interest and power affect political behavior relies on the political and cultural situation in which foreign policy is founded.

The fourth determinant is that political realism affirms that universal moral laws cannot be directed on states' behavior absolutely. However, universal moral laws must be directed according to situations that occur over time and in certain places.

The fifth determinant is that political realism does not believe in a link between the moral motives of states and the universal moral laws that are present and that direct the world.

The sixth determinant is that political realism gives importance to political notions, where it believes in interest and power (Morgenthau, n.d,).

2.2.2 Neoclassical Realism

In the article Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy(1998), Gideon Rose states the different theories of foreign policies, but stresses his work on one theory that is Neoclassical Realism. Accordingly, he explains that Neoclassical realism believes that a state conduct its foreign policy according to its significance compared to other states and its material power abilities. It does not believe that states do not pursue security; rather it believes that states react to the insecurities of international anarchy by trying to influence the external environment. Thus, a basic element of neoclassical realism is that the material power capabilities that a state owns will determine the degree of influence of its foreign policies. This means that if a state has enough material power it will strive for more influence and if it has a shortage in material power then it will seek to adapt its influence respectively. Other elements of neoclassical realism consist of internal and external ones and they are: decision maker's opinions, the robustness of the state's machinery and its relation to the society (Gideon, 1998, p.146-152). Neoclassical realism differentiates between the state and society and refers to the works of German classical realists such as Webber, Otto Hintze, and Leopold Von Ranke to support this. In neoclassical realism, the state that consists of military and political organizations and its representatives is not entirely independent from society. It considers that policy responses are a result of the cooperation between the state and society at times, and at other times of the disparities between them. Moreover, neoclassical realism believes that a number of states do not operate as unitary

actors (Lobell, Ripsman, &Taliaferro, 2009, p.26). Neoclassical realism believes that each state has a different level of power and this power changes over the course of history. It also deems that weak states do not necessarily need to embrace authoritarian and centralized organizations, and strong states do not need to embrace liberal and decentralized institutions. Furthermore, it acknowledges that there is no perfect transmission belt relating the distribution of power and the actions of a state's foreign policy (Taliaferro, 2006, p.479-485).

Robert Keohane is a neoclassical realist who believed in State Centrism, Rationality, and Power. In his book Neorealism and its Critics, he refers to Thucydides Peloponnesian War and Morgenthau's Politics among Nations to give his explanation of realism. Both realist scholars state three notions in their works. The notions are that states are the main actors in international politics, the actions of states are rational, and that states strive for power and interest. The Peloponnesian War discusses the reasons that led to the war in the fifth century between Athens and Sparta. Thucydides says that in order to explain the reasons one must look at the actions of states that are engaged in the war. According to Thucydides and Morgenthau, states work on safeguarding their status of power to the level of striving to increase their power.

Robert Keohane also refers to classical realism through mentioning three basic concepts of it. First, he mentions the state-centric concept where states are the major actors in international politics. Second, he mentions the rationality concept where states are rational actors in international politics. Here states assess the effects of their behavior while at the same time they try to increase the benefit they may get. Third, he mentions the power

concept where states pursue power and weigh their interests according to power (Keohane, 1986).

2.2.3 Structural Realism

Structural realism is customarily divided into two distinct forms with clashing assumptions and predictions: offensive realism and defensive realism (Lobell, 2010).

Offensive Realism

According to offensive realism, states strive to increase their power, which means they seek to maximize their authority and influence. The system of anarchy and the distribution of power encourage major powers to increase their power and influence without consideration of competing states in order to become more secure (Lobell, 2010,).

Expansion for offensive realism demands the presence of economic, political, and military strategies to change the balance of power, to achieve power by benefiting from the circumstances, to achieve power at the cost of other states, and to wane competitor states by means of preventive wars to reduce their rise. This entails that major powers work towards becoming the most influential or hegemon and not be in a similar position with other great powers (Lobell, 2010).

Offensive realism believes that status quo states are few and can be narrowed to major powers. States measure their economic and military power or apply their offensive competencies to acquire more power (Lobell, 2010).

Structural realism distinguishes between bipolar and multipolar distribution of power. It states that bipolar states are more secure and less susceptible to engage in war than multipolar states and that bipolar and multipolar states are more secure than unipolar states (Lobel, 2010).

Offensive realism notes that the formation of the international system determines how a state balances or buck passes against a belligerent. In a bipolar system, a major power that feels at risk balances against a competing state since another major power is not present to buck pass while in a multipolar system states buck pass more than balance when they feel threatened by another state (Lobell, 2010).

Mearsheimer, a neoclassical realist, has a different view of realism. In his theory on realism, he focuses on great powers by stressing that they seek security as well as non-security goals with the basic goal of achieving survival and power, and becoming a hegemony.

In the book the Tragedy of Great Power Politics, Mearsheimer explains the aims that states have, and the policies they adopt to maximize their power.

Great powers aim at achieving regional hegemony. They seek to govern their own areas and at the same time prevent their competitors from achieving hegemony. However this prohibition relies on the balance of power.

Great powers aim at increasing the total sum of the wealth that they have. They work on to ensure a robust economy, as well as strive to thwart other competitive great powers from taking control of the world's wealth.

Great powers seek to control land power since it is a mean to increase their military power.

Finally they strive to achieve nuclear advantage compared to their competitors (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Defensive Realism

Defensive realism believes that anarchy leads states to embrace defensive, temperate, and nonaggressive policies. Nevertheless, it states that fight should occur at times especially with the attacking states, when these states feel that their security is in peril. Moreover, defensive realism believes that states aspire to increase security and maintain the current allocation of power. They try to prevent defeats because of change in their status and level in the international system (Lobell, 2010).

Regarding security, defensive realism points out that the methods the state applies to enlarge its security, will decrease the security of the other states especially major powers who aspire for security. Also, it points that states that accept the status quo can show their aims towards one another, and even recognize each other. Defensive realism affirms that the international system cannot alone induce states to increase their power. Geography, technology, military policies, the division of collective capabilities and other elements help to justify expansion, war, and aggression (Lobell, 2010).

Waltz is a defensive realist who explains domestic political structures according to three factors. These factors are elaborated in his book Theory of International Politics. Waltz

starts by the first factor, which is the ordering principle. Relations of subordinate and dominant define political structures; they are centralized and hierarchic. On the other hand, international structures are decentralized and anarchic. Waltz points that states aim at maintaining survival. However, there are also other aims such as for states seeking to invade other states, or to live in isolation. Thus, survival is essential for states to attain any aims they have and to guarantee their security.

He continues by the second factor, which is the character of the units. For Waltz, states are not the most important international actors. Political structure does not comprise of all the actors that exist in it but of the main actors. States resemble each other in the duties they encounter; however each has different capacities to execute them.

The third factor for Waltz is the distribution of capabilities. Here, states in an anarchic world are homogeneous, yet they are distinguished by their abilities to implement the duties they have whether they have larger or limited capabilities. Consequently, the formation of the system is altered with the changes in the allocation of capabilities between states (Waltz, 1979).

Waltz believes that the behavior of states is determined by the interest they have. He explains also that the unregulated competition of states shapes the requirements of strategies, and that the assessment of these requirements allows states to establish the best strategies that will benefit its interests (Waltz, 1979).

2.2.4 Radical Realism

Radical realism can be attributed to two major historians and political scientists Thucydides and Machiavelli.

Thucydides

Thucydides in his book the History of the Peloponnesian Wars writes about the Melian Dialogue between Athens and Sparta. Athens at that time was striving to include the island of Melos in its domain, and for that it sent envoys to the island to convince them to succumb. The Athenians allowed the Melians to raise the issue of their security, power, and interest. The Melians nonetheless objected but they subordinated. In spite of their subordination, they got determined to gain independence no matter what the consequences would be. Nevertheless, The Athenians invaded Melos, and the Melians were defeated. The Athenian invasion of Melos shows that international politics is characterized by power and interest.(Donnelly, 2000)

Machiavelli

Machiavelli, a sixteenth century diplomat, historian, theorist, and playwright debated realism. In his theory of realism he belittles human nature where he depicts it as “insatiable, arrogant, crafty, shifting, malignant, iniquitous, violent, and savage”. (Donnelly, 2000). He also states that men seek reward and commit good actions if there is interest behind it. Eventually in this world, system power and security should be principal matters. The wicked and egoistic intentions that characterize human nature are suppressed by force and even by violence (Donnelly, 2000).

2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, The Turkish-Iranian struggle over the Middle East, in particular Syria and Iraq, as discussed in this thesis is part of their competition to influence the region and achieve their aims and desires. Realism stresses that states are the main actors in the International system, and that they strive to become hegemons. This can be seen through how Turkey and Iran are the main regional players on the Iraqi and Syrian scene and are putting all their efforts and available means to influence these countries and shape the events there. Another element in realism is that states aspire to increase their power to become secure. Turkey and Iran interfered in the elections in Iraq to allow parties linked to them to rule the country. When parties and groups affiliated to them rule the country, then Turkey and Iran will indirectly have leverage over Iraq and consequently over the neighboring countries. This leverage will in turn provide guarantees and security for both regional powers. By this, their influence would be greater in the region. The Turkish-Iranian struggle shows their behavior in the region and the intentions they have. It also reveals that these two countries act according to the interests that benefit most their countries and their citizens. This would allow us to analyze the region from the perspective of two competing states. Furthermore, it would allow us to see in which direction the Middle Eastern states are heading towards and their fate. This direction and fate will affect and identify the interests of Turkey and Iran and will reflect on the stability or instability of the two countries. Keohane pointed to the rationality of states and to the way they pursue power and weigh their interests according to power. This is true in the case of Turkey where it tried at first to prevent an escalation of war in Syria and Iraq but soon after assessed its interest it has in the

region and its aim to achieve power over the regional countries. Realism is clearly the best theory to explain Turkey and Iran's policy towards Iraq and Syria and will continue to be so as long as the war continues in both countries and as long as these two countries remain to be strategic and important on the political and economic level.

Although realism has distinct types, its basic principal remains the same, which is power and interest. States have always followed their interest in any action they undertake against another state or a number of states. This chapter of the thesis discussed realism and its different types. It was sustained with the main scholars who wrote about realism and advocated it as the main theory of international relations. All of the realist scholars stress the importance of power and interest in the behavior of states.

The below table will highlight on three types of realism with respect to the Iranian and Turkish position in Iraq and Syria by stating their main features. However the Turkish and Iranian position will remain unanswered, as it will be determined in the third and fourth chapter. The features of realist proposition and the Turkish and Iranian standpoints in the subsequent parts of the thesis will allow us to answer and identify the type of realism Turkey and Iran are adopting. According to the table, Neoclassical realism believes that states are conducting their foreign policy in relation to the material power they own and that they are not autonomous from the society. Offensive realism points that states seek to influence to become hegemon by exploiting their economic and military power. Defensive realism on the other hand, emphasize that states seek security and to preserve the distribution of power. To both defensive and offensive realism the international system is governed by anarchy.

1.1 Hypothesis of Realism

Realism	Hypothesis	Turkish Position	Iranian Position
Neoclassical	• States conduct their foreign policy according to the material power they own. • Features of Neoclassical realism include the opinions of decision makers, the strength of states machinery and the relation of the states with the society. • The state is not completely autonomous from the society.	?	?
Offensive	• States strive to increase power and influence. • States seek to become a hegemon. • The international system is characterized by anarchy. • States exploit their economic and military power to maximize their power.	?	?
Defensive	• States strive for security. • The international system is governed by anarchy. • States strive to preserve the distribution of power.	?	?

The following chapter will discuss the behavior and policy of Turkey towards Iraq and Syria after the 2003 United States led invasion of Iraq and the 2011 Syrian uprising. It will highlight the aims of Turkey in Iraq and Syria, and the means it applied to reaching these aims. It will also state the Turkish position on Iraq and Syria according to realism theories.

Chapter Three

Turkey's Policy towards Iraq and Syria

Over the years, Turkey's relationship with its neighboring countries has been inconsistent. Its rapport is based on the political contexts and events. Particularly, its relation and policy with and towards Iraq and Syria were mainly aimed at preserving and securing its borders. Its policy is based and will always be based on these notions, and on promoting its interests in these two countries, as well as other countries of influence. The chapter will begin with discussing Turkish foreign policy in general and will continue by explaining its Iraqi, Syrian, and Kurdish policy.

3.1 Turkish Foreign Policy between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism

In pursuit of its interests in the Middle East, Turkish foreign policy has wavered between two competing schools: Kemalism and Neo-Ottamanism.

Kemalism revolves around two main pillars: revolutionary and militant secularism and assimilationist nationalism. Secularism, which was the brainchild of the builder of modern Turkey, was mainly created to separate religion from the state, and to encourage the citizens to embrace the idea of nationalism over religious ideology. Kemalism also saw the demise of Arabic letters and traditional Islamic principles. Inspired by the French revolution and specifically laicism, Kemalism allows the central authority to impose secularism in the country through different means such as education. But there was a stark difference between the Turkish laicism version and the French one. In Turkey, the rulers, who were supposedly

secular politicians, still sought in intervening in the religious affairs instead of seeking to separate the state from religion. Under nationalism, Turkey strived to integrate its Muslim minorities. This policy refused multiculturalism and multiethnic cosmopolitanism. It fully advocated for Turkish-ness, which is defined as a national, linguistic and territorial identity. Non-Muslims nationals are considered Turkish citizens. However they are treated as second class citizens and are prohibited from holding any governmental jobs. These citizens are mainly composed of Jews, Greeks, and Armenians (Taspinar, 2008).

Neo-Ottomanism is characterized by three elements. First, Neo-Ottomanism supports secularism in the homeland and more engagement in foreign policies. Through its diplomatic ties, Turkey has a bigger influence economically, politically and culturally in the countries that were under its rule during the Ottoman Empire, and in countries where it has vested interests in. Second, Neo-Ottomanism recognizes Turkey as a regional superpower. It deems that it should conduct diplomatic, political, and economic activities in the world, and Ankara to be the center stage in these relations. Third, it seeks to maintain relations with the West and Muslim world, as well as backing western policies, while preserving its Muslim heritage (Taspinar, 2008).

3.2 Turkey's Iraq Policy

Maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq and preserving its stability are the key goals to Turkey's foreign policy with Iraq. Ankara's support of Iraq's territorial integrity and stability stems from its fear, that any security deterioration in the country could have grave consequences on Turkish territories (Muftuler, 2014, p.1).

As the United States set the stage in 2002 to intervene militarily in Iraq, Turkey was busy conducting two diplomatic moves to protect Iraq's territorial integrity. As a first step, Turkey initiated diplomatic negotiations to solve the differences between Iraq and the United States in a desperate bid to avert a catastrophic war. During this period, Turkey held direct talks with U.S. officials to assess the extent to which the Bush administration was determined to wage war on Iraq. The discussions also focused on the economic benefits Turkey will reap if it coordinated with the United States. The talks between the two sides touched on several points and most notably on the possibility of allowing the U.S. forces to use Turkey's military bases to launch attacks on Iraqi forces. It also discussed deploying U.S. forces near Northern Iraq and examined the possibility of any problem that may arise from this intervention (Benli Altunisik, 2007, p.76).

Following the invasion, Turkey sought to ensure the territorial integrity of Iraq. To this end, it contested the federal system suggested by Iraqi Kurds since they thought that a federation would set up the foundations for an independent Kurdish state. Turkey feared that a federalist state based on sect or ethnicity would bring problems to Iraq and Turkey, and that it could ultimately trigger sectarian or ethnic clashes. However, Turkey eventually altered its position by supporting a Kurdish autonomous region near its border after the Americans persuaded Turkish officials that such an entity would not pose any danger to Turkish territories. The Americans also persuaded Turkey that an autonomous state will not pose a threat to Iraq's territorial integrity. However, Turkey did not completely support the idea of an independent Kurdish region even if it reluctantly accepted the idea of an autonomous region. For Turkey, if the Kurdish region controls Kirkuk, then it will subsequently contribute to the fragmentation of Iraq (Benli Altunisik, 2007,.p.79-80).

After discussing Turkey's policy in Iraq following the 2003 United States led invasion, the thesis will point to the mean Turkey used to influence the actions in Iraq. This mean allows us to better understand Turkey's goal and policy in Iraq.

3.3 Turkey's influence in Iraq

The Iraqi National Elections: 2005 and 2010

In 2005, Turkey had a crucial role in persuading different Sunni political parties, which were marginalized after the U.S led invasion of Iraq, to take part in the parliamentary elections (Ozcan, 2011, p.88). Nevertheless, Turkey established relations with Shiite political parties in Iraq but in 2010 elections it backed the Sunni political parties and the secular *Iraqiyya* political list. It has also played a fundamental role in uniting the Sunni political coalitions in Iraq such as the Arab Nationalist *Al-Hadaba* Bloc, neo Baathist, Sunni Islamist, and Turkmen. These initiatives are seen as a guarantee to a stable political system and to counterbalance the Shiite parties that are allied to Tehran (Kane, 2011). Related to this, Turkey held training programs on democratization and good governance for the political parties in Iraq who belong to different ethnicities and sects. Hundreds of Iraqi politicians participated in these trainings. Also, the political parties in Iraq attended in 2006 a conference on Iraq's constitution in Turkey. This conference was held with the assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq. (Turunc,n.d)

3.4 Turkey and the Iraqi Kurdish Problem

An important issue in Turkey's relations with Iraq is the threat of Kurdish secession and upsurge in Kurdish nationalism in Northern Iraq. Turkey is worried about a possible

Kurdish nationalist sentiment among its own Kurdish population, and the consequences that an effective Kurdish Regional Government might have on them. However, Turkey has also two main fears in Northern Iraq. The first is the Kurdistan's Worker's Party which has found protection from the Kurdistan Regional Government and staged several attacks along its border. The second is the integration of Kirkuk, a province rich in oil, to Kurdistan. Thus, the Regional Government allowing Kurdish independence to occur is a high risk. Turkey tried to assuage these worries by the use of military, and by encouraging political groups and parties such as *Alhadba* and the *Iraqi Turkmen Front* (Barkey, Lasensky,& Marr, 2011).

In addition to discussing the policy and aims of Turkey to Iraq, the following part will elaborate on Turkey's relationship with Syria and its policy and goals towards it.

3.5 Turkey and Syria: A turbulent relationship

Turkey's relations with Syria have fluctuated over the years, experiencing difficulties at times and stability at other times. Four difficulties surrounded this relationship. First, there is the province of Hatay. In 1938, the Sanjak of Iskenderun became the Republic of Hatay after it got its independence from the French mandate. In 1939, under a referendum vote, it chose to join and be a part of Turkey as the Hatay province. Turkey believes that Hatay province belongs to its land, on the other Syria believes the opposite and has not accepted this annexation. (Mertek,n.d)

Second, there is the problem of water resources. The Euphrates and Tigris rivers extend from Turkey until Syria and the water reserves of these rivers posed a dilemma. Syria needed additional water supply as a result of agricultural development programs that were to

be established in 1987 and 1992. Turkey also wanted water supply for Ataturk and Karakaya dams, and for irrigation of the Southeast Anatolia project. This competition for water worsened the relationship between both countries. (Mertek,n.d)

The third problem is the cold war period. During this period, Turkey and Syria supported different groups. Turkey was part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. While Syria, not a member of the Soviet bloc, was backed and provided with military supplies more than any other country in the Middle East. Therefore, during that period, both states had opposite interests. The fourth problem is Syria's backing of the Kurdistan's Workers Party. Backing different fronts almost led to a war between Turkey and Syria in 1998. The leader of the Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK) was taking refuge in Syria, which extended its support to that party as a means to undermine Ankara. Turkey threatened Syria of military action if it maintained in aiding the Kurdistan Worker's Party. Syria eventually changed its position and both states signed the Adana treaty, which stressed on fighting the Kurdistan Worker's Party. Thus, the relation improved on the political, economic, security, and cultural level. Turkey's foreign policy focused on zero problems with its neighbors. Upon the death of President Hafez Al Assad, the succession of his son Bashar and his continued stance on the Kurdistan's Worker's Party, Turkey sought to strengthen its relations with Syria. In 2004 Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan visited Syria to sign a free trade agreement between the two countries. In 2008, Turkey acted as a mediator, tried to solve the dispute between Syria and Israel regarding the Golan Heights through negotiations with the two parties. In 2009, Turkey and Syria founded the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council, which further improved their relationship (Mertek, n.d). As a result,

trade relations increased between both states from 1.6 billion dollars to 2.5 billion dollars. Also they were involved in joint military exercises. (Bishku,2012,p.7)

3.6 Turkey and its Post 2011 Syrian Policy

Turkey's policy towards Syria in 2011 can be divided into three stages. The first stage was advice and guidance. This stage occurred from the middle of March until the middle of April 2011. In this period, the Turkish government demanded that the Syrian regime implement reforms to contain the crisis in the country. Turkey declared that it would provide means to conduct the necessary reforms quickly. On 25 March 2011, the Turkish Foreign Minister issued a statement on the conditions happening in Syria. The statement focused on the following: Turkey is monitoring the situation in Syria. Turkey hopes that the Syrian leader abide by their earlier commitments to pass economic, social, and political reforms, and that Turkey encourages the reforms announced by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and will aid Syria if it is asked to implement these reforms. On April 6th, 2011, Ahmad Davutoglu headed a delegation to Syria. He met with Syrian President Bachar Al Assad. The consultation confirmed that Turkey will provide the means to conduct the reforms and asserted that the situation occurring in Syria has repercussions on the rest of the region (Bakir, 2011).

The second stage was reassessment, which extend from the middle of the month April until the end of April 2011. In this period, President Assad made a speech in front of the parliament and announced the end of the emergency law. He also disclosed the number of civilians who died during the protests debating that number provided by the United Nations Human Rights Council was exaggerated. On 26 April 2011, Turkish Prime Minister

Erdogan contacted Syrian President Bashar Al Assad and urged him to carry out the reforms; stressing that the lifting of the state of emergency is not sufficient to end the crisis in Syria (Bakir, 2011).

The third stage was transformation and pressure. In this period, Turkey changed its position on Syria in a number of matters. These matters consisted of the enforcement of the United States and European sanctions, the Syrian crisis in the human rights council and the noncompliance with the demands of Turkey. Turkey cautioned the effects of the politics of Bashar Al Assad and condemned the acts of killing that were being done by the Syrian Regime. Towards the end of April, Turkey organized and sponsored the Istanbul gathering for Syria. The gathering demanded the implementation of the reforms, the replacement of the one party system with a multiparty system, the release of political prisoners, to guarantee freedom of the press and the right to demonstrate, and resistance of any foreign intervention or any incentive that might divide Syria (Bakir, 2011)

In 2012, Turkey sought to establish a "Friends of Syria coalition" to ensure that the regime of President Al Assad would change. Turkey demanded intervention and the creation of a no-fly zone in Syria; however country members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization refused any kind of military intervention in Syria. Turkey felt secluded after it hosted the Free Syrian Army on its lands and, as the opposition parties could not progress on the ground. Nonetheless, this feeling of isolation began to change as the United States and other countries showed an importance to the Free Syrian Army. Thus, Turkey encouraged diplomatic attempts including the demand of Egypt of a regional quartet and that of Russia for a political resolution. The United States condemned the Syrian National Council, which

is supported by Turkey and its desire to create the Syrian National Coalition. Due to its disappointment with President Al Assad and western countries, Turkey started to act independently where it backed the rebels in Syria. (Yilmaz,2013). In 2013, in the Turkish town of Reyhanli at the borders with Syria, a bomb attack took place resulting in the death of over fifty Turks. Turkey accused Syria of carrying out the attack. It has stopped using military activities especially since the attack on Reyhanli and has focused on utilizing force for defensive matters. Internationally, Turkey refrained from advancing offensive goals and has concentrated on acquiring security assurances from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Consequently, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization placed missile defense in Turkey. Ankara hoped that the United States consult with Russia to reach a solution to terminate the war. Also, it endeavored to restore its relationship with Iran and Russia.(Ananicz,2014)

In 2013, it objected the condemnations expressed by countries allied to it in regards to backing the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and the Nusra Front. Turkey had decreased its assistance for the moderate opposition groups and moderated its stance on the Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria. As a result, Turkey decided to end any military intervention in Northern Syria although the Democratic Union Party took power over the region and announced autonomy.(Ananicz,2014)

Turkey was critiqued for acting along sectarian lines in its engagement in Syria. The Syrian uprising showed that Turkey could not act according to the policy of zero problems with neighbors. Instead it relied on hard power as well as soft power and diplomacy. (Yilmaz, 2013)

3.7 Turkey and the Syrian National Council

In 2011, when Turkey was trying to reach a solution by communicating with Bashar Al Assad, it allowed the Syrian opposition to gather on its territory. That same year, Turkey stopped negotiations with President Al Assad and started to demand changes in the regime. It also helped the Syrian opposition to unite under the Syrian National Coalition and it facilitated the establishment of relationships between the Syrian opposition outside of Syria and the military resistance inside Syria by defending the Free Syrian Army. Turkey pushed hard the different Syrian opposition groups both inside and outside Syria to operate under the Syrian National Council in a bid to win recognition from foreign countries. Turkey, joined by the United States, declared the formation of the Friends of Syria, which gathered in Tunisia. Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu stated "we see the Friends of Syria as a platform which should function to exert collective diplomatic efforts for the protection of civilians in Syria." The Friends of Syria asked for the recognition of the Syrian National Council and solicited provisions of humanitarian aid (Walker, 2012). Once again, they gathered in Istanbul and addressed the same demands that were previously raised in Tunisia. The gathering successful as the Syrian National Council was recognized as the legitimate representative of Syrian People (Kardas, 2012).

Turkey directly supervised and sponsored the Syrian armed opposition. The Syrian military opposition groups, under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army, were headquartered in Turkey. The Turkish authorities allowed these armed groups to use the common borders with Syria to smuggle weapons to fight the Syrian army. Hence, Turkey's interest forced it,

to oversee these opposition groups and their actions, and claimed that supporting them would give them more power (Hokayem, 2013, p.116).

Turkey's full-fledged support to the various Syrian opposition groups was aimed at overthrowing the old regime; establish a democratic system as well as safeguarding Ankara's interest in Syria. In this regard, two concerns are of significance to Turkey, and they are its relation with the party that will succeed President Bashar Al Assad and the Kurdish secession. The Syrian National Council is a Sunni Muslim organization and 25 percent of its members are affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was banned by the Syrian regime. Turkey, which is a Sunni state, established relations with Alawite regime of Syrian President Bashar Al Assad long before the uprising in Syria. But it was obvious that Turkey prefers to deal with a government in Syria, which is controlled by Sunnis, who are the majority in the country. The ruling Justice and Development party of Turkey is considered a moderate Islamic movement; nevertheless it maintained strong ties with the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria as well as similar groups in the Arab countries (Balci, 2012).

As The Kurds of Iraq, the Kurds in Syria constitute an important part of Turkey's policy towards Syria.

3.8 Turkey and the Kurds in Syria

Historically, Ankara was always concerned about any possible uprising by its Kurdish minority against its rule, and for this reason it closely monitored the activities of the Kurdish parties in Syria and Iraq and the consequences of their actions on Turkey. The Kurdish parties in Syria since the uprising began to embrace a wait and see policy. The Syrian

Democratic Union Party, a Kurdish party, maintains good relations with the regime in Syria and with the Kurdistan Worker's party. This relation between the Democratic Union Party and the Syrian regime was a cause of concern for Turkey, as it feared that the creation of a Kurdish autonomous enclave would encourage the Turkish Kurds to demand an autonomous state (Balci, 2012).

Prime Minister Recep Tayyib Erdogan was deeply concerned about the presence of the Syrian Kurds near the Turkish border and for this reason he proposed a buffer zone along the southern border with Syria to keep the armed Kurds from entering his country. Turkey realized that if the Syrian Kurds decided to create an autonomous enclave in Syria then this would make it very difficult for Ankara to reach a political agreement with the Kurds in Turkey. If the Syrian Kurds, who established relations with the Turkish Kurds particularly the Kurdistan Workers Party, claim their autonomy, then this may pose a serious problem for a solution regarding the Kurds in Turkey. In the beginning, Turkey backed the Syrian opposition and allowed the Kurdish political parties in Turkey and Syria to grow stronger. As a result, Erdogan was obliged to alter his position on Syria to stop any activities that may happen on behalf of the Kurds (Bahman, 2013).

3.9 Turkey's Perception of Syria

Turkey has changed its perception of Syria and this can be attributed to several reasons. The first reason is the demonstrations that occurred inside Turkey starting from Istanbul, which spread to other regions. In Egypt, a military coup deposed President Morsi. The coup raised concerns with Prime Minister Erdogan, as he feared that the persistence of the demonstrations might encourage the Turkish army to take the same course of action as

the Egyptian military. The second cause is the opposing views of Turkey and Saudi Arabia with respect to regional issues. Following the spread of the Arab Spring in the region, Prime Minister Erdogan began to support political parties, which are associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. However, as the Muslim Brotherhood was ousted from power by a military coup in Egypt, it was considered as a big setback to Turkey's influence in this country. The third cause of concern for Turkey was the reluctance of the United States to stage military strikes against military basis of the Syrian regime in a bid to oust Assad. As a result Turkey hasn't gained any support with respect to Syrian matter (Bahman, 2013).

4.0 Turkey's Goals in Syria

Turkey has several goals and designs in Syria. The most important goal of Turkey in Syria is to encourage the establishment of a stable democratic system. A number of Turkish commentators stated that Turkey, under the Justice and Development party, prefers a moderate Sunni Islamist party to hold power in order to restore the political and economic relations that occurred in the 2000s. Another goal would be to ensure that President Al Assad will be overthrown from his position, and whoever succeeds him favors Turkey's domestic and regional interests. (Philipps, 2012) In November 2014 in a press conference with the United States Vice President Joe Biden, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmed Davutoglu stressed on establishing a no-fly zone in Northern Syria as well as overthrowing the Assad regime. He stated "In Syria, you can't bring peace trying to destroy a terrorist organization on one side of the country, while a regime in Damascus is using all sorts of weapons to exterminate a portion of its own people on the other,". (Silo, 2014) Turkey's third aim is to ensure the territorial integrity of Syria. It has stood against the return to any post-colonial borders in the

Middle East, since the Greeks, Armenians, Kurds and also Syria claimed its lands. If Syria were divided along sectarian or ethnic lines then this would create an atmosphere that would encourage those who want to partition Turkey (Phillips, 2012). Turkey's fourth aim in Syria is establishing peace with the Kurds. In Southeast of Turkey and since the peace process between Turkey and the Kurds, the Kurdistan Workers Party was targeted by the Turkish military. Although Turkey sought peace with the Kurdistan Workers Party it characterized the party as a terrorist one. Turkey is in a tight situation. For Turkey the victory of the Islamic State in Kobani Syria means that the peace process would be put on hold. However, if the Kurds win then it would be hard to prevent the Kurdistan Workers party from disarming. When the United States was determined to support the Syrian Kurds through weapons and military means, Turkey was forced to open its borders and allow for the entry of weapons and of Peshmerga forces. (Tocci, 2014)

The chapter discussed the Turkish policy towards Iraq and Syria. The following table will highlight how the Turkish position fits in each strand of realism and will state confirmation of this position. Turkey adopted neoclassical realism when it conducted direct diplomatic negotiations between Iraq and the United States leadership to try to prevent any war on Iraq. Turkey's intervention military in Iraq to curb Kurdish secession and in Syria through smuggling of weapons clearly shows how it is acting according to offensive realism. Although there is a strong confirmation, not much evidence is released that proves these interventions. Turkey encouraged the Sunni political parties to participate in the national elections in Iraq and President Al Assad to initiate reforms in Syria. In addition Turkey supported the Syrian opposition and helped in the establishment of the Friends of Syria. Much evidence is shown on how Turkey was interfering in Iraq and Syria. This table shows

that Turkey relied on defensive and offensive realism in directing its policy towards Iraq and Syria depending on the situation in these countries and based on the interests and ambitions it had that increased due to the changing circumstances.

1.2 Turkish Position and Realism Theory

Realism	Turkish Position	Confirmation and evidence
Neoclassical	• Turkey conducted diplomatic negotiations between Iraq and U.S to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq. • Turkey extended talks with U.S officials to understand the degree President Bush wants to wage a war on Iraq.	Turkey was involved directly to prevent a war on Iraq.
Offensive	• Turkey interfered militarily and encouraged political parties in Iraq to curb any movement towards Kurdish independence. • Turkey permitted the Syrian military groups, which are under the Free Syrian Army to smuggle weapons through its borders.	There is a strong confirmation however not much evidence is given or made public.
Defensive	• Turkey persuaded Sunni political parties to participate in the parliamentary elections of 2005. • Turkey demanded President Bashar Al Assad to implement economic, social, and political reforms. • Turkey aided the Syrian opposition to unite under the Syrian National Coalition. • Turkey suggested a buffer zone to prevent the armed Kurds in Syria from entering Turkey.	Turkey got involved in the politics in Iraq and in the uprising in Syria. There is much evidence on how Turkey was interfering in Syria after 2011.

As this chapter has discussed, Turkish policy towards Middle Eastern countries was divided between Kemalism based on secularism and Neo-Ottomanism based on considering Turkey as a regional power. Its policy towards Iraq and Syria stressed on maintaining the territorial integrity and preserving the stability of these two countries. Based on the information provided in the chapter, we can understand that Turkey not only backed but also supported factions and political parties opposing the ruling party in Iraq and Syria. We can recognize that its foreign policy is ideological rather than religious. This was established in Turkey's refusal of an independent Kurdish state, despite the fact that the Kurds who are Sunni Muslims, as the majority of the Turkish nationals. In both Iraq and Syria, we can see that Turkey, fearing repercussions, attempted to prevent the uprising to lead to war by conducting diplomatic negotiations and by encouraging the regimes to implement reforms. However, later on, Turkey changed its strategy and got involved indirectly in the war. What can this change be attributed to? The answer is self-interest embedded in the theory of realism. Realism is divided into different branches as stated in the table drawn in this chapter. Turkey is applying defensive realism in conducting its policy towards Iraq and Syria. It is relying on conducting diplomatic and direct negotiations with the concerned parties to reach its goals while preventing and causing minimal threat to its lands. This goal consists of imposing its ideology on its neighboring countries.

The next chapter will point to the Iranian policy towards Iraq and Syria. It will analyze the Syrian-Iranian alliance, the Iranian support to Syria and Iraq, and the goals it aspire to achieve in each of these countries.

Chapter Four

Iran's Policy towards Iraq and Syria

It has become common knowledge in Western diplomatic circles that Iran has strategic interests in Iraq and Syria. This strategic policy towards both countries was put to test following the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003, followed by the popular uprising in Syria in 2011. These events prompted Tehran to exert more efforts to protect its interest in these war-torn states. This chapter will examine Iran's policy towards both countries and the influence it exerted on them, in addition to other topics.

4.1 Iran's Iraq policy

Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq after the US led invasion in 2003 was based on two key goals. The first aim of Iran was to prevent the United States from turning Baghdad into a U.S. base. In order to achieve that goal, Iran pressed the United States to remove all of its military forces from Iraqi land and to transfer power to the United Nations (Taremi, 2005, p.36).

Tehran assumed that this pressure would decrease capacity of the United States to shape Iraqi politics. It also rejected a suggestion by Washington to form a body of U.S. advisers to help authorities rule Iraq. For Tehran, this suggestion would be a means to establish a puppet regime. Also, Iran was seeking to aid in establishing a government controlled by the Shiites by conducting elections. Iran saw that peace and stability were

necessary steps to set up the elections and for this reason it asserted its power to maintain stability in south and central Iraq (Taremi, 2005, p.36-37).

Iran's second goal was to prevent the United States on conducting any forced actions on its territories. Tehran demonstrated support for the U.S. efforts to stabilize the situation in Iraq and hold free elections, in a bid to avoid any future military showdown with Washington. To achieve this task, Iran encouraged the Shiites political parties to participate in the political process suggested by the United States (Taremi, 2005, p.38-39).

When the United States waged the war on Iraq, Iran endorsed, as well it rejected the policies of foreign states. Consequently, Iran's policy towards Iraq centered on four main phases. The first one is active neutrality. Before the US led invasion took place, Iran stated that it would not interfere in Iraq's domestic affairs. However to please foreign states, Iran asserted that it will engage in finding solutions to the conflict. The Iranian Foreign minister at the time stressed that his country's stance is "neutral but not indifferent." (Barzegar, 2005, p.53)

The second strategy is double tracking. As the war began, Iran firmly stood against the invasion. Tehran voiced support to all the efforts made to disband the former Baath ruling party, and held it responsible for all the crimes it committed. Iran feared that the creation of an Iraqi regime linked to the United States would serve the latter's interests (Barzegar, 2005, p.53).

The third strategy is engagement. When Saddam Hussein got ousted from power, Tehran was deeply concerned by the military attack the United States led against Iraq. To

avoid a confrontation with the United States, Iran hinted that it would not mind if the U.S. participates in the political process in Iraq (Barzegar, 2005, p.54).

The fourth strategy is stabilization. Iran tried to encourage the efforts to establish peace in Iraq, even if this came from the U.S. administration, for this reason Tehran encouraged some Shiite militias to hand over their weapons to the newly formed Iraqi forces in the country. Iran used this tactic to gain more time and to establish a foothold in Iraq. Also Iran emphasized that elections be carried on in January, and that it will support the formation of a cabinet composed of different parties as a result of these elections. (Barzegar, 2005, p-54)

The following part will focus on the features affecting Iran's policy towards Iraq and its influence on the latter country.

4.2 Factors shaping Iran's policy towards Iraq

Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq is shaped by a number of factors. An important factor of Iranian policy towards Iraq is the history of deep animosity between the two countries under the deposed regime of Saddam Hussein, and the perception that the Sunni minority controlled all the natural resources in the country such as oil and gas. Iran was also concerned about the pilgrimage religious sites, which are cherished by the Shiites (Barzegar, 2008, p.48). The Iranian people were eager to strengthen ties with the Iraqi people since both nations shared similar cultural and religious concerns, among which is the right to visit the sacred cities of Najaf and Karbala (Barzegar, 2008, p.50).

The second factor is related to the elites and intellectuals. This must take into account the historical relation between Iran and Iraq and the dangers posed by Iraq. The elites and intellectuals have maintained their view that Iraq could present a strategic risk, if its political problems are not properly and thoroughly assessed. Accordingly, the economic, geopolitical, and cultural importance of Iraq posed a threat to the security of Iran. Hence, Iranian intellectuals stress the need to ascertain relations with Iraq in order to maintain the regional interests of Iran. (Barzegar, 2008, p.50)

A third factor is the political, military, and religious elites where they argue that Iraq after the U.S. invasion, poses both challenges and opportunities. According to most accounts, the Iranian government desires Iraq to be stable, secure and united because a fragmented neighboring country near its border could pose a security threat (Barzegar, 2008, p.51).

The Iraqi political parties are a fourth factor. The relationship of Iran with the political parties in Iraq is based on joint religious and ideological principles. These political parties embrace different political and ideological principles, and most of them have different views regarding the foreign policy of Iraq towards Iran. However, most of these parties believe that Iran can play an important role in Iraq due to the common religious, political, and cultural relations between the two countries' and its communities. Most Iraqi Shiites prefer to maintain close political, economic and cultural ties with its Persian neighbor. Iraqis in general realize the importance the Iranian influence has on their country. For this reason, the successive governments in Baghdad were keen to maintain good relations with Tehran. Thus, Iran's goal since 2003 was to establish links with the Shiite parties in Iraq.

ideology and pragmatism is the fifth factor. A number of specialists believe that ideology is an important element in Iran's policy towards Iraq. This is clearly demonstrated in the relation Iran holds with the Shiite political parties in Iraq, in particular the Sadr party. (Barzegar, 2008, p.51-52)

Although the state was founded on religious and dogmatic principles, Iran's foreign policy tends to be pragmatic, since this factor can be attributed to geopolitical reasons. In other words, Teheran realizes that the balance of power in the region and the influence of the United States on some regional countries compels it to adopt a cautious and realistic policy. As part of its foreign policy towards Iraq and its strive for projecting power in Iraq, the behavior of Iran especially to those who seek to spread its influence in the region stems from security reasons rather than expansionist objectives (Barzegar, 2007, p.6)

4.3 Arming and Training of Military Groups

Iran has strived to back different Shiite parties, by influencing the 2005 and 2010 parliamentary national elections, and by maintaining trade relations with its neighbor. Eisenstadt, Knights, and Ali state that since the Iranian revolution in 1979, Iran has armed, trained, and funded Shiite rebels, militias, and factions. Arming was intended to allow its political allies to weaken their political rivals and to thwart any possible U.S. military action in the region. After the removal of the Iraqi regime in 2003, Iran turned to its allies. The Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Badr Corps ran clandestine paramilitary actions in the 1980's and 1990's. However, Badr Corps participated in the political activity in Iraq. They became actively and openly involved in the country's daily political life and Badr's military wing was preserved by Tehran to achieve certain goals if the need arises. The Islamic

Supreme Council of Iraq is a Shiite party; it was created in the 1980s in Iran. It advocates the theory that the Islamic government must be ruled by Islamic scholars (Irfad, 2014). Iran has supplied a number of weapons and explosives to militia and rebel groups through smuggling routes in Basra, Maysan, Wasit, and Diyala provinces (Eisenstadt, Knights & Ali, 2011).

In 2005, there were eight Islamic groups, which were linked to Iran. These consist of the Badr Brigades, the Dawa Party, the Mahdi army, the Mujahidin for Islamic revolution in Iraq, Thar Allah, the Jamaat Afudalah, the Alfadila, and the Qawaid Alislamiya. As of 2010, Iran militarily backed three factions; they are the Promised Day Brigade affiliated to the Sadr movement, Asaib Ahl Alhaq, and Kataib Hizballah. (Eisenstadt, et al., 2011)

The alleged Iranian weapons that have been provided to rebels in Iraq were composed of mortars, homemade bombs, explosively formed projectiles, and missiles. Iran has trained Iraqis in camps within its territory. The Qods force officers and Hezballah of Lebanon trained the Iraqi militants. They trained them to use basic weapons and superior tactic expertise. The artilleries and tactics are composed of vehicular ambushes among other, sniper attacks, and kidnapping (Fishman,& Felter, 2008).

4.4 Iran and its influence in the Iraqi Elections

In the Iraqi parliamentary national elections, Iran played a significant role in endorsing certain candidates and parties. Since 2003, it conducted political negotiations after each national election to establish a government linked to it. Iraq went through two rounds of elections in 2005. The first round of elections was intended to secure 275 Member of

Parliament that would be responsible to draft the constitution of Iraq. But the Sunnis boycotted the elections; as a result 240 seats out of 275 seats were composed of three parties. These include the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance, which won 140 seats, the Kurdistan Alliance won 75 seats, and the Iraqiyya list won 40 seats. Iran had a significant role in uniting the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance. This alliance was made up of the majority of the Shiite political parties in Iraq among, which is the Daawa party and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. The Daawa party was established in the 1950s, and has since grown strongly under Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki. Al Maliki considered his party to be nonsectarian and engaged in fights against Shiites and Sunni militants (Bruno, 2009). In 2005, a second round of elections took place; as a result 275 members of parliament were elected for the second time for a mandate of five years. The Shiite United Iraqi Alliance won the biggest number of seats with 128, the Kurdistan Alliance won 53 seats, and the Iraqiyya list won 25 seats. Iran contributed in uniting the Shiite Unified Alliance, they were able to create a government with Daawa's party Nouri Al Maliki, as the Prime Minister (Cordesman, Mausner, Khazai, Alsis & Loi,, 2011)

The 2005 national elections were seen as a milestone in Iran-Iraq relations and this can be attributed to two causes. The first cause is, the Iraqi government that was named the Iraqi Transitional Government was not chosen by the United States but rather elected by the Iraqi citizens, reflecting the political ambitions of the Iraqi people. The second cause is, in the national elections the endorsed Iranian Shiite parties won, especially the ISCI and the Daawa party, allowing the forging of closer relations between Iran and Iraq (Taremi, 2005, p.42).

When Iran faced with the negative consequences that might be born of a division in the Shiite votes in Iraq, it supported the United Iraqi Alliance to run in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Maliki's party, who was also backed by Iran, grabbed more votes in the elections than the other Shiite political parties who were united under the United Iraqi Alliance. Furthermore, in the 2010 elections, the secular list of Iraqiyah headed by Iyyad Allawi won the most number of seats in the parliament, accounting to 91 out of 325 (Eisenstadt, Knights, Ali, 2011). The party appealed to Shiites and Sunni voters, and it was thought to represent the liberal and moderates. It had a nonsectarian policy in which it rejected a federal Sunni and Shiite districts (Crisis Group, 2012). Iran used its influence among some of the parties' loyalist to jeopardize Allawi's efforts to form his government. As a result, Iran supported the Iraqi National Alliance and the State of Law Alliance to run as a coalition in which they created the National Alliance. Iran accepted Al Maliki to be Iraq's Prime Minister for a second term, and was able to convince the Sadrists, ISCI, and Iraqiyah List to endorse him (Eisenstadt, Knights, Ali, 2011, p.4). The Sadrist is an Islamic movement backed by the Shiites, which believes that society should be ruled by religious laws. (Irfad, 2014)

Besides discussing Iran's policy towards Iraq, this part will elaborate on the relationship of Iran with Syria and will continue by pointing Iran's goals and elements of influence in Syria. Then, it will highlight on Iran's position towards the Kurdish issue.

4.5 The Iranian-Syrian Special Relationship

The Iranian-Syrian alliance has evolved along several phases and has undergone modification in its power organization, as a result of regional and international

developments. Goodarzi divides the relationship into seven. The first phase is the foundation of the Iranian Syrian alliance from 1979 till 1982. In 1979, when the regime of the Iranian Shah was toppled, Syrian President Hafez Al Assad saw this as an important opportunity to expand his alliance with the new rulers in Iran. He quickly recognized the new government arguing that Tehran fully backed Arab interest and the Palestinian cause. The thaw in Iranian-Syrian relations has compensated the deterioration in relation between Damascus and Baghdad, as well as Tehran and Baghdad. Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, waged an offensive war on Iran in 1980, a war that has further consolidated the ties between Damascus and Tehran. Damascus openly slammed Baghdad for launching an attack on Iran. Saddam Hussein's refusal to end the war with Iran has also prompted Assad to fully back Tehran diplomatically and militarily. Diplomatically, Syria, during the Amman Summit, blocked the establishment of a United Arab Front against Iran in 1980. Militarily, Syria used its lands as a route to furnish weapons to Iran in addition to providing other means of military aid. In 1982, the Iranian Syrian alliance became official. This happened when a Syrian delegation visited Iran and signed bilateral agreements on oil, trade, and military issues (Goodarzi, 2013,.p.40-41).

The second phase witnessed both the peak-in and the limits of the Iranian Syrian power, which extended from 1982 until 1985. Iran and Syria maintained the cooperation against the regime of Saddam Hussein although the Iraqi Army retreated from the Iranian territories. In this regard, Iran opted to invade Iraq aiming to overthrow the Baath regime. The war dragged on for years with no end in sight and has drained the resources of both countries. The conflict turned into a war of attrition. Cooperation between Iran and Syria was also the result of problems in the Levant that occurred between the Arabs and Israel,

specifically after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Iran showed its readiness to help Syria in interfering in Lebanon to halt the Israeli invasion. Meanwhile, as Iran persevered in its involvement in the conflict in Iraq through its allies, the Iraqi government at that time decided to take a different course. Iranian and Syrian power and influence in the region weakened, while an Iraqi, Jordanian and Egyptian alliance supported by Washington and Riyadh became stronger. On the regional level, Russia and France supported Iraq militarily to decrease the ability of Iran to win. Thus, by 1985, the Iranian Syrian alliance that reached its peak was being suppressed by regional and international players (Goodarzi, 2013, p.42-43).

The third phase extended from 1985 to 1989 saw both disagreements and agreements over regional issues. While the two sides had collaborated in past in the Gulf and Levant, they later confronted opposite goals. Syria's inability to end the Lebanese civil war and Iran's determination to continue the war in the Gulf region has temporarily shaken the alliance. Syria planned to help build a secular state in Lebanon once the devastating war came to an end. However, Tehran was pushing for the establishment of theocratic state based on the principles of Islamic doctrine. As Iran continued the war on Iraq, several regional and western powers stepped forward to provide all the necessary means to help Saddam Hussein confront Tehran. As Iran almost found itself isolated in the war against Iraq, the rulers in Tehran realized that this conflict saw no end in sight and neither side were able to advance in the battlefield. In light of these developments, Damascus was reluctant to continue supporting Iran in its war efforts, and instead voiced support for a diplomatic solution to end the on-going conflict. In spite of these contradicting positions, from 1985 till 1988, Syria and Iran were able to focus on their interests, to settle their dissimilarities, and to

coordinate once again. Subsequently, the Iranian Syrian alliance was strengthened (Goodarzi, 2013, .p.43-44),

The fourth phase is the hostile policies of Saddam in the Levant and the Gulf, which lasted from 1988 until 1991. In 1988 during the Iran-Iraq war, followed in 1990 by the invasion of Iraq in Kuwait, Iran and Syria maintained their alliance as Iraq was increasing and proclaiming its power in the region. During the Kuwaiti crisis of 1990 and 1991, Iran decided not interferes and to maintain a neutral stance as a result of its eight year war with Iraq. Syria on the other hand decided to join the United States led coalition to defeat Saddam Hussein. There were talks that the Iranian-Syrian alliance was falling apart as a result of the crumbling Iranian-Iraqi alliance, however the opposite ensued. Both countries fortified their alliance by creating the Joint Higher Syrian-Iranian Cooperation Committee, which aimed at building political, economic, and military relationship through constant discussions (Goodarzi, 2013, p.45-46).

The fifth phase is the Iranian Syrian cooperation. It is the period following the cold and it lasted from 1991 until 2003. After the Cold war ended and Iraq lost the Gulf war in 1991, Iran and Syria maintained their alliance for four main purposes. First, Iran and Syria preserved their economic, military, and political relationship. This relation between the two countries was aimed to reduce the mounting U.S. influence in the Middle East following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which used to play a prominent role in the region. The second purpose is that Syria realized that an alliance with Iran is crucial in order to take a firmer stand in the Arab Israeli conflict. The third purpose is that Iran and Syria believed that since President Saddam Hussein still held a grip on power, the alliance would be an instrument

that will limit Iraqi power. The fourth purpose is that from 1991onward, Iran and Syria began a joint program that would allow them to produce ballistic missiles in their respective countries (Goodarzi, 2013, .p.46).

The sixth phase is the consolidation of the collaboration that ensued following the 2003 United States invasion of Iraq. The cooperation between Iran and Syria augmented following the United States led invasion of Iraq. Iran and Syria had conflicting views regarding the ousting of President Saddam Hussein. They favored the toppling of Saddam Hussein but at the same time they worried that the U.S. would invade them once it has settled in Iraq. Subsequently, Iran and Syria interfered in Iraq in order to prohibit the United States to use Iraq as a platform to target them. In consequence, Iraq supported the Shiite parties and Syria gave access to Sunni and Arab Muslim fighters to cross into Iraq from its borders. (Goodarzi, 2013, p.47-48)

The seventh phase is the 2011 Syrian uprising and the interference of Iran since then. When the Syrian uprising occurred in 2011 Iran faced two options: To back President Bashar Al Assad at the detriment that it could be interpreted that Tehran supports the uprising in the Arab states with the exception of Syria; or not to back the Syrian president and this option would lead to the formation of a new government which will not have ties with Iran. Iran assumed that by supporting the Syrian President the Syrian uprising would come to an end in a small period. For this reason, Iran encouraged President Bashar Al Assad in his fight to suppress the Syrian opposition by offering him technical support and the means to achieve this. Personnel from the Iranian security, among which the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, police, and intelligence where positioned on Syrian territories

with the aim to help overcome the armed fighters, who belonged to the Free Syrian Army and Sunni Islamists factions. In 2011 as the Syrian uprising soared, the crisis took a regional and international shape. On a regional level, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states financially supported the opposition; while Iran and Hezbollah supported the Syrian regime. On an international level, the United States and the European Union tried to put pressure Syria. (Goodarzi, 2013, p.49-51)

4.6 Syria's importance to Iran

The relationship between Iran and Syria is founded on geopolitical rather than religious notion. Syria to Iran is seen as a counterbalance against Israel, the United States, and other competitor Arab countries. Iran views Syria as gateway to its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon. The weapons Iran provides to Hezbollah are shipped through Syria. Another route would be through Turkey but the latter has prohibited Iranian planes and trucks from sending weapons to Hezbollah and Syria. Iran is concerned that if the Syrian borders were closed then it would not be able to provide arms to Hezbollah in case of a confrontation with Israel. If that scenario occurred then Israel may not only target Hezbollah but may pose a threat to Iran and its nuclear amenities (Nader, 2013).

Iran has ideological and security reasons for backing the Syrian regime according to Hasan Firouzibadi who is the chief of staff of Iran's armed forces. Firouzabadi stated that Iran's support to the Syrian people is in relation with Islam and the commands of Imam Khomeini. He stressed also that "We are not involved in Syria…we are not enemies of the Syrian people…. Syria is a friendly country that is left standing at the front line of resistance to Israel and we provide it with moral and ideological support." Mohammad Reza Naqdi the

head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps- Quds Force declared that as long as Syria remains defiant against Israel then Iran would continue backing it. According to Firouzabadi and Naqdi, Syria is considered as a significant country for Iran. First, Syria is a strategic and loyal country, it maintained its stance on Israel and has so far refused to sign a peace treaty. Furthermore, Syria provides Hezbollah in Lebanon with the necessary military and technical means it requires to confront Israel in the south. In addition, Syria is an important actor in the struggle to redesign the Middle East and is a major scene for Iran's battle with the west and the moderate Sunni Arabs headed by Saudi Arabia. (Segall, 2012)

4.7 Iran's Influence in Syria

Iran is influencing the war in Syria through advisory mission, military supply, and the backing of paramilitaries.

Advisory Mission

Iran is working on keeping President Bashar Al Assad in power, by training and backing the security apparatus in Syria. This backing is made up of advisory and assistance mission and has been supervised by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and al Quds force. The purpose of the advisory and assistance mission is to help President Assad in his war against the uprising. Iran is backing the state security apparatus to establish paramilitary forces that will assist President Assad. These forces were significant to Iran, especially after the uprising in Syria became a full fledge civil war, as they would be the tool that will allow Iran to influence Syria and other Middle Eastern countries. Iran is assisting the Syrian security forces by guiding military groups. An example of this was a video displaying a

Syrian Republican Guard saying to his army "we are forming the 416th Special Forces battalion and we are being trained now by domestic and foreign trainers." The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps through their ground forces were operating in Syria as well. This was confirmed when among the 48 Iranians who were kidnapped in 2012, were released, some were commanders in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Shohada unit. The commander of the Imam Sadegh brigade and personnel of Al Mahdi brigade was also among the released hostages (Fulton, Holliday & Wyer, 2013).

Intelligence Backing

In 2011, President Assad, as he was repressing the protestors in Syria, realized that it was necessary to seek Iranian intelligence support. The United States Department of Treasury revealed that among the Iranian organizations that aided in repressing the opposition, were Law Enforcement Forces, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and Iran Electronics Industries. Iran sent Law Enforcement Forces to Syria in 2011 and according to the United States Department of Treasury "provided material support to the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate (GID) and dispatched personnel to Damascus…to assist the Syrian government in suppressing the Syrian people." The Law Enforcement Forces are under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior; the Supreme National Security Council administers it, which informs the Supreme Leader. The ministry of Intelligence and Security afforded technical aid to the General Intelligence Directorate of Syria to help President Assad in the suppression of the protestors. (Fulton et al,.2013)

Military Support

Regarding the military resources Iran is providing, aerial contribution is considered as the most important one. The United States Department of Treasury statements emphasize that Iranian commercial airlines are playing an important role. The statements also claim that Iranian air force jets are aiding in this supply but that they do not have access to ground and sea gates. The United States Department of Treasury stated that three Iranian airlines were shipping military weapons and personnel into Syria. Some of these personnel are working as advisers and providing assistance in Syria. There are four main routes from Iraq to Syria: in the north there is Rabia Yaaarabya, Sinjar an illegal border, Al Kaim Abou Kamal border point, and Alwalid Attanf border point. Since 2012, Alwalid Attanf is a supply route between Syria and Iran. It still is the only gateway for Iran to send military weapons to Syria. By 2012, the other routes were not viable for provision of weapons. Regarding the sea route, Iran has positioned naval vessels in the Suez Canal in order to be sent to Syrian ports in case they were needed. Thus, it established supply route through the sea. In 2013, the Syrian Economic Task Force stated that freighters related to Iranian oil companies crossed the Suez Canal to transport oil between Syria and Iran. Iran is also assisting Syrian paramilitaries. (Fulton et al., 2013)

Paramilitary Backing

The IRGC Commander Major General stated in a news conference that no necessary foreign backing is demanded to maintain Syrian security, because there is 50,000 popular

forces of Jaish Al Shaabi who are combatting along the Syrian military. There are two groups of paramilitaries participating in the Syrian uprising. There is the popular committee who are made up of minorities and who provided themselves with weapons. They coordinate with the security forces of the regime in their towns. There is also the criminal Alawite network that is smuggling merchandise to and from Lebanon. Iran is providing training to paramilitaries inside its own territories and in Syria. According to United States treasury designations revealed that Iran's engaged training security forces relates to the regime since the uprising began in 2011. Iran hopes to create paramilitaries that would serve its own interests if the Assad regime is overthrown. (Fulton et al., 2013)

4.8 Iran and Kurdish Independence

Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Iran maintained good relation with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Nevertheless, the Kurdish problem inside Iran caused tensions with the Iraqi Kurds. Echoing the fears and obsessions of Turkey, Iran firmly opposed Kurdish independence and sought to curb Iraqi Kurdish power (Cordesman, et al., 2011).

The Kurdish independence in Iraq will also allow the Kurds in Iran to seek independence. Thus, this will pose problems to Iran politically and to its security in its Kurdish provinces (Abedin, 2014). Moreover, regarding Kurdish independence Iran is worried about two matters. The first is the fragmentation of Iraq, as well as the alliance of the Kurdish government with states in the region, among which is Israel. This fragmentation and alliance would put Iran's interest at risk and provoke instability and conflict inside Iran and along its frontiers (Barzegar, 2005, p.50). It would also decrease Iran's power in Iraq,

since Iran seeks to impose power in an integrated state ruled by the Shiite rather than just a Shiite state in the south of the country. If the Kurds succeed in getting their independence, there would be a possibility that Israeli intelligence might initiate a base on the western frontiers with Iran, which would be utilized at conducting spying and sabotage missions in Iran. (Abedin, 2014)

4.9 Conclusion

Which theory is Iran adopting in taking its actions and conducting its foreign policy? The table below will examine each theory of realism and highlight the Iranian position in respect to each and the degree of confirmation of applying realism. Iran can be seen as applying neoclassical realism where Iran welcomed peace initiatives in Iraq from the United States and encouraged the different groups to conduct of parliamentary elections. Offensive realism is seen in Iran's policy where it funded Shiite rebels and political parties in Iraq. It also provided weapons and trained Iraqi rebel on its land. In Syria, Iran stood with Bashar Al Assad in repressing the Syrian opposition. It is training the security machineries, offering material backing to the Syrian intelligence directorate, providing military weapons, and backing the paramilitaries. There was a strong confirmation and direct involvement by Iran in establishing powerful groups in Iraq and Syria and towards the actions of the US in Iraq.

1.3 Iranian Position and Realism Theories

Realism	Iranian Position	Confirmation and evidence
Neoclassical	• Iran endorsed the U.S. endeavor to calm the situation in Iraq and conduct parliamentary elections. • Iran opposed the U.S invasion at first in order not to create a regime supportive of the U.S. • Iran then welcomed peace initiatives from all side including the U.S.	There was a strong confirmation by Iran towards the actions of the US in Iraq.
Offensive	• Iran funded Shiites rebels, militias, and political parties. • Iran trained Iraqi rebels in its camps. • Iran stood with President Bashar Al Assad in repressing the Syrian opposition through technical support. • Iran is training and supporting the security machineries in Syria, offering material backing to the Syrian Intelligence Directorate, and providing military weapons by air, sea, and land. • Iran is backing paramilitaries.	There was a strong confirmation and direct involvement by Iran in establishing powerful groups in Iraq after the 2003 invasion and Syria after the uprising. It has played an important role in trying to shape the events in these countries.
Defensive	• Iran backed specific candidates and parties for the elections. • Since 2003, Iran led political negotiations following national elections.	There were several interferences by Iran in Iraq's politics and in Syria's through either backing President Bashar Al Assad or certain parties in Iraq.

Iran's main goal in Iraq is to ensure that an allied Shiite government comes to power. While its main goal in Syria is to preserve it, as it is a crucial geostrategic country. It tried to prevent a war in Iraq by demanding peace efforts from all parties. Also it supported the ruling party in Syria after the 2011 uprising but it abandoned President Saddam Hussein in 2003 in favor of several Shiites groups where it put all its effort to allow them to hold grip on power. Similar to Turkey, Iran's policy towards Iraq and Syria is based on ideological reasons rather than religious reasons. Both countries are geostrategic. President Bashar Al Assad belongs to the Alawite sect, while Shiite dominates Iran. Regardless of that both have been allies since the 1979 Islamic revolution. According to the above table, one can clearly acknowledge that Iran is relying on offensive realism. It will fight with all available means to remain a regional power and keep President Bashar Al Assad, and the ruling parties in Iraq in power to serve its regional interests. These interests comprise of backing Hezbollah in Lebanon through Syria and inhibiting the Kurds in Iran to demand secession through its influence in Iraq.

The last chapter will be the concluding chapter to the thesis. It will summarize what has been mentioned, it will also analyze to which type of realism each of Iran and Syria belong to, and it will state limitations and future research.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1 Summary

This thesis focuses on the rivalry between Turkey and Iran over their influence in Iraq and Syria. The first chapter was an introductory chapter to the thesis. It gave an overview of the relations between Turkey and Iran over the centuries until present time, the policies of both states in Iraq and Syria, and the means of influence they exerted. The second chapter discussed realism and its different typologies. The third and fourth chapter emphasized on Turkey and Iran's policy towards Iraq and Syria.

Turkish foreign policy towards its neighboring states can be attributed to two policies: Kemalism, which is based on nationalism and secularism and Neo-Ottomanism, which believes Turkey to be a regional power. Turkey's policy towards Iraq stresses on preserving the territorial integrity and the country's stability. Thus it is against Kurdish secession and the establishment of a Kurdish state due to the effect this would have on its own Kurdish population. Turkey's influence in Iraq can be seen in the national elections of 2005 and 2010, were it sought to support the Sunni and secular parties to hinder the Shiite parties from coming to power.

Turkey's policy at first towards Syria following the 2011 uprising was based on demanding that President Bashar Al Assad to initiate political and social reforms. Then it

changed to backing and assisting the Syrian opposition. Turkey's goal in Syria is similar to Iraq's; it is to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria. Other goals include the toppling of President Assad and founding a stable democratic regime in Syria.

Iran's foreign policy regarding Iraq is centered on promoting a government regulated by Shiites and to thwart the United States from establishing a base in Iraq. Regarding its policy, Iran at first rejected any U.S invasion in fear of any attack against Iran and the formation of a government linked to U.S. However, Iran's stance changed, it encouraged peace initiatives in Iraq.

This foreign policy is influenced by a number of elements, it includes the historical relation between Iran and Iraq, the common culture and religion they share, political, and military elite, and the political parties. These elites considered Iraq following the U.S. led invasion to present a danger to the security of Iran.

Iran has provided arms and weapons to Iraqi groups and factions, it has trained them on within its territory. It has also encouraged particular parties to run for elections to ensure that a government linked to Iran comes to power and fulfill its regional interests and goals.

Syria is considered as an important country for two reasons. The first reason, it is regarded primarily as a counterweight to Israel. The second reason, Syria is considered as passage route Iran can use to provide material support to Hezbollah and its allies in Lebanon. Therefore, Iran's support to the Syrian regime is for security and ideological reasons.

This support for the regime was seen with Iran's assistance of the Syrian security machineries and intelligence bodies through material and technical aid and military assistance by land, air and sea, and its support of paramilitary groups.

This thesis aim is to examine the dynamic of Turkish-Iranian rivalries with the purpose of revealing a theoretical framework that best explains this relationship. In order to do this, the thesis attempts to review the various propositions of realism and assess these propositions within the dynamic struggle between Turkey and Iran over Iraq and Syria. Two major turning points were picked in order to examine this relationship. The first is following the 2003 Gulf war, which was endorsed by the United States, and the 2011 Syrian uprising. We examined the different realism hypothesis in comparative perspective and we reveal the following results as stated in the tables. Based on the table there will follow a summary of the points that were discussed in the thesis. The table aims to analyze to which type of realist school each of Turkey and Iran's behavior belongs to.

1.4 Comparative Turkish-Iranian Position and Neoclassical Realism

Realism	Hypothesis	Turkish Position	Iranian Position
Neoclassical	• States conduct their foreign policy according to the material power it owns. • Features of Neoclassical realism include the opinions of decision makers, the strength of states machinery and the relation of the states with the society. • The state is not completely autonomous from society. • The international system is characterized by anarchy.	• Turkey conducted diplomatic negotiations between Iraq and the U.S. to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq. • Turkey extended talks with U.S. officials to understand the degree President Bush wants to wage a war on Iraq.	• Iran endorsed the U.S. attempt to calm the situation in Iraq and conduct parliamentary elections. • Iran opposed the U.S invasion at first in order not to create a regime supportive of the U.S. • Iran then welcomed peace initiatives from all sides including the U.S.

1.5 Comparative Turkish-Iranian Position and Offensive Realism

Realism	Hypothesis	Turkish Position	Iranian Position
Offensive	• States strive to increase power and influence. • States seek to become a hegemon. • The international system is characterized by anarchy. • States exploit their economic and military power to maximize their power.	• Turkey interfered militarily and encouraged political parties in Iraq to curb any movement towards Kurdish independence. • Turkey allowed the Syrian military groups which are under the Free Syrian Army to smuggle weapons through its borders.	• Iran has funded Shiites rebels, militias, and political parties. • Iran has provided weapons and explosives to militias and insurgents. • Iran has trained Iraqi rebels in its camps. • Iran stood with President Bashar Al Assad in repressing the Syrian opposition through technical support. • Iran is training and supporting the security machineries in Syria through advisory and assistance missions. • Iran offered material backing to the Syrian Intelligence Directorate to aid in repressing the Syrian people. • Iran is providing military weapons by air, sea, and land. • Iran is backing paramilitaries.

1.6 Comparative Turkish- Iranian Position and Defensive Realism

Realism	Hypothesis	Turkish Position	Iranian Position
Defensive	• States strive for security. • The international system is governed by anarchy. • States strive to preserve the distribution of power.	• Turkey persuaded Sunni political parties to participate in the 2005 parliamentary elections. • Turkey through its Foreign Minister and Prime Minister demanded President Bashar Al Assad to implement economic, social, and political reforms. • Turkey aided the Syrian opposition to unite under the Syrian National Coalition. • Turkey professed the creation of the Friends of Syria. • Turkey suggested a buffer zone to prevent the armed Kurds in Syria from entering Turkey.	• Iran backed specific candidates and parties for the elections. • Since 2003, Iran led political negotiations following national elections.

5.2 Turkey and Iran: Between Defensive and Offensive Realism

Turkey and Iran applied offensive and defensive realism in their policies towards other states; however one strand of realism dominated their policy. Both of them seek to expand their influence and dominate Iraq and Syria through certain means to ensure that their goals are preserved, and that they become a regional power. Turkey wants to see a democratic and stable regime in Syria, while Iran wants to maintain the status quo. In Iraq, Iran and Turkey strives to create a regime linked to them. However, Turkey conducted negotiations with the different parties while Iran applied technical and military assistance.

Turkey can be seen as applying defensive realism in its policy towards Iraq and Syria, while Iran as applying Offensive realism in its policy towards the stated countries.

Turkey employed diplomatic and peaceful means as well as negotiations to settle the Iraqi and Syrian problem. In Iraq since 2003 and Syria since 2011, Turkey tried to engage in negotiations with the conflicting parties and encouraged reforms pertained to maintain the territorial integrity and stability of both countries. Turkey also has played an active role in helping certain parties to come to power in Iraq, and for the opposition in Syria to form and establish itself as an entity with specific goals. It used these peaceful means to reduce and even eliminate any threat or danger that may come from Iraq and Syria against its lands and borders, and any repercussions that may have a negative effect on its population and political system.

Iran on the contrary is supporting President Bashar Al Assad through the use of force and military means. It employed military and material means in its dealing with war in Iraq

and the uprising in Syria. As mentioned above, it provided military weapons to Shiite groups and rebels in Iraq and Syria through land, air, and sea: it trained them on its lands to ensure their victory and in turn preserve a regime allied to it that would satisfy its ambitions. Iran has relied on its military and economic power in dealing with conflicts in other states, especially those that it considered as important.

Turkey and Iran were not able to prevent each other from supporting Syria and Iraq. Every state, as part of its own policy, conducts internal and foreign policy. Turkey and Iran conduct a foreign policy towards Iraq and Syria that does not seek to create radical changes at their expense.

The influence and intervention of Turkey and Iran, in Iraq and Syria, is not based on identity and sectarian policies. Rather, it is solely based on realism. Turkey and Iran are not supporting certain groups because of similar sectarian background. They are supporting them due to the benefit they would reap, which will help them in their expansionist policy. Each state strives to achieve power and security, to preserve the status quo, and to become a hegemon at the expense of weaker states. Turkey's backing and assistance of the Syrian National Council and Iran's technical and material aid to the Syrian regime represent clear examples of goals that are to be achieved by Turkey and Iran, and of the strong influence they are exerting in the region.

5.3 Limitations

Some researches on Turkish-Iranian rivalry over Iraq and Syria following the 2003 United States led invasion and the 2011 uprising, was not exhaustive and deep and did not elaborate on certain topics. Among These topics include the interference of Turkey and Iran in the national elections of Iraq. The researches and analysis were general interpretations of reality and debated the same arguments. There are a number of authors who wrote about the competition between Iran and Turkey; however some of their analysis was repeated in every study they wrote. For example Barzegar and Donelly wrote the same arguments in several works and in different years. Events are still unfolding in Syria and Iraq, and several changes have occurred which required taking a certain time span and talking about it in this thesis. Since 2014, fights have been occurring in Syria between the Kurds or Peshmerga and in Turkey in Kobani. In addition, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has spread its military and terrorist activities and changed the scene in Iraq and Syria. Turkey and Iran' policy towards both countries changed after the appearance of the Islamic State and other Islamist groups.

5.4 Future Research

The arguments and topics discussed in the thesis should be expanded and developed in the future. There should be more work and analysis on Turkey's and Iran's involvement in the national elections of Iraq and Syria, through extensive details of the means and resources applied. Furthermore, future researches should shed light on how and where Iran trained the groups in Syria and Iraq, and the means it provided them. Scholars should not only analyze the current situation happening but should also provide material facts on the circumstances,

address them, and make them public. Several studies should be done in different time spans to explain the behavior of Turkey and Iran, and their goals based on the developing situations in the region.

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