

TURKEY'S CURRENT CHALLENGES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ARAB SPRING

Alan Salehzadeh*

Turkey is a significant player in the economic and political scenes of the Middle East and North Africa. Right now, the EU membership candidate Turkey is facing many complex domestic issues related for instance to the Kurdish question, the Armenian genocide, the Alevit problem, the political struggle with AK party, the fear of new *coups d'états*, and the increasingly worrying situation regarding freedom of speech. Turkey is, for the second year in a row, the country having jailed the most journalists in the world, closely followed by China and Iran. Between 2002 and 2011, Turkey experienced a phase of rapid economic growth and maintained good relations with its neighbors. Things changed after the Syrian uprising and the Egyptian coup, and now Turkey is again facing challenging relationship with most of the Muslim world. The country's finances are also shaking; now that the world economy is healing from an international recession period, Turkey's economy is in turn slowing down.

Introduction

Turkey is a country located between South-eastern Europe and Southwest Asia, with some parts belonging to Europe and most of the area belonging to Asia. It has three different seas as borderlines: the Black Sea, Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. It has eight border countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq and Syria.¹

Out of Turkey's 75.5 million inhabitants², many are ethnically non-Turks. Turks

constitute only about 60% of the population. Kurds form the largest ethnic minority group in Turkey. They represent between 15 to 25% of the whole population, amounting about 20 million persons. Other ethnic minority groups include Armenians, Assyro-Chaldeans, Arabs, Greeks, Lazers, Tatars, Circassians, and peoples from the Balkans.³

In fact, the region currently known as Turkey was originally inhabited by some of these ethnic minority groups, mostly Kurds, Armenians and Assyro-Chaldeans. Turks moved to the region from Caucasia some 1000 years ago during the dissemination of Islam, and have stayed there since.⁴

Modern Turkey was founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (*Atatürk* meaning "father of the Turks" in Turkish, his original name was Mustafa Kemal Pasha). He installed a secular and nationalist system in

* Alan Salehzadeh is a researcher and expert of the Middle East and North Africa. He has previously worked in different universities as a researcher and lecturer and in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. He worked as a researcher at the National Defense University in the Department of Strategic and Defense Studies until the end of December 2013.¹ Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 21 November 2013.

[<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>].

² *Today's Zaman*, "Turkey's Population Exceeds 75.5 Million As Growth Rate Decreases", 28 January 2013. [<http://www.todayszaman.com/news->

305332-turkeys-population-exceeds-755-million-as-growth-rate-decreases.html]

³ A. Howard Douglas, (2011), *The History of Turkey*, London: Greenwood Press, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31–32.

the country in 1923, after the Ottoman Empire had collapsed and the Republic of Turkey had been founded.⁵ Atatürk's ideology is known as Kemalism, and it consists of six principles or "arrows". These principles are republicanism, nationalism, revolutionism, populism, statism and secularism.⁶

By leaning on these principles, Atatürk managed to set Turkey on a path of economic growth and modernization. Although he died in 1938, the Kemalist ideology was used to rule the country until 2002 with the active help and support of the armed forces.⁷ Throughout modern Turkey's history, the armed forces played a major role in ruling the country, until 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) stepped into power and the armed forces' role was reduced.⁸

Atatürk's ideology, and the ruling system that relied on it, have been widely criticised and many experts feel that Kemalism as an ideology is neither democratic nor liberal, but mainly authoritarian and elitist.⁹ What has especially awoken concern is the role Kemalism left for the minorities; many believe that Atatürk's ideology was only beneficial for the Turks, and the other ethnicities civil rights weren't guaranteed. Even nowadays most Turks have a high esteem towards Atatürk and regard him as a national hero. On the other hand, minority groups such as Kurds, Armenians and As-

syro-chaldeans have a totally different feeling towards the founder of modern Turkey, blaming him for plotting genocides and consider him as an enemy.¹⁰

Either way, the current Constitution of Turkey states that Turkey is a democratic and secular constitutional state that *follows the principles set by Atatürk*. The ethnic minorities regard this as an obstacle for a truly renewed constitution that would guarantee them full civil rights, since they feel Atatürk's principles are *de facto* unfavourable for them.¹¹

Even though Turkish state is secular, geopolitical specialists often view it as the greatest influencer among the Islamic countries and as a "democratic example" for them.¹² However, Turkish democracy differs in many ways from the Western democratic ideology.¹³ In Western countries, *coups d'états* happen seldom and the armed forces have very little role in governing the country. Ever since the Republic of Turkey was founded in the 1920s, the armed forces have had a big role in ruling the country. Until 2002 when the AK party took power, the armed forces were a "state within a state" or a "shadow state", and have been the actor behind several *coups d'états*. In modern Turkey's times, only few parties have been able to access to power without

⁵ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 11–12.

⁶ Aksin Sina, "The Nature of the Kemalist Revolution". [<http://www.unaturkey.org/dergiler-bulletins/38-say-02-number-02-october-1999-/58-the-nature-of-the-kemalist-revolution-.html>]

⁷ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 29–44.

⁸ Birand Mehmet Ali (1991), *Shirts of Steel, An Anatomy of the Turkish Armed Forces*, London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, p. 71–72.

⁹ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a globalized world*. Oxon: Routledge, p.13.

¹⁰ Bloxham, Donald (2005), *The Great Game of Genocide, Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman – Armenians*, Oxford: university Press, p. 102.

¹¹ Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, p. 3, 07 January 2014. [http://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf]

¹² Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 127.

¹³ A. Cook, Steven & Koplow, Michael, "How Democratic Is Turkey?", 03 June 2013. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/02/how_democratic_is_turkey#sthash.DV6FffdW.dpbs]

being in the favour of the armed forces' key generals.¹⁴

Since AKP stepped into power, it has conducted measures to reduce the armed forces' influence over the country's political and economic life in order to gain more power for itself. AKP made some structural reforms in the armed forces by pulling out some generals in key positions by either captivating them or sending them to early retirement, and installing their own men in their places.¹⁵ However, even now AKP is worried about the armed forces rising to power or overthrowing the government.¹⁶

AKP is the biggest player in Turkey's fairly vibrant political scene that otherwise consists of diverse Islamic parties, Atatürk's supporters and Turkish and Kurdish nationalists. AKP is a moderate Islamic party, whose supporters are mostly moderate and conservative Muslims, businessmen and representatives of the private sector, and people who're against the armed forces having too much power. By a rough estimation, half of the Kurdish population is AKP supporters, as they are keen on having the armed forces' power reduced.

1 The Fethullah Gülen Movement

In December 2013, a major conflict emerged between AKP and the followers of the spiritual leader Fethullah Gülen, living in the USA, resulting in the discharge of ten ministers representing AKP. The conflict is predicted to have a negative impact on

AKP's supporting figure, which is now a major concern for the party. Other concerns of AKP are the Kurdish question and Turkish nationalist parties. Until now moderate and conservative Muslims alike have been AKP supporters, but since this corruption scandal, it's an open question whether the more conservative Muslims will stay supporters of AKP, or will there be an ideological separation between AKP's and the spiritual leader Fethullah Gülen's supporters.¹⁷

The Turkish Sufi scholar Fethullah Gülen¹⁸ and his followers known as Fethullahci, are highly influential both in Turkey and abroad. Fethullah Gülen is Sunni Muslim and a follower of the Kurdish theologian Said Nursi. In practice, he is strongly Turkish-minded and would like ethnic Turks to lead the whole Middle East and North Africa area like under the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹

In Turkey, his followers hold key positions in the intellectual world, police forces, courtrooms, and in the educational and social fields. The Gülen movement owns dozens of media corporations and important news web sites such as the Zaman newspaper in Turkey. It's no wonder that the situation with Gülen has been compared to Khomeini's position in Iran in 1979. Right now, the Gülen movement is probably one of the most powerful and best-connected networks in the whole Muslim world.²⁰ Apart from Turkey, the Gülen movement is very influential and has many followers abroad, especially among the Turkish dias-

¹⁴ *Al-Jazeera* "Timeline: A History of Turkish Coups", 04 April 2012. [<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/04/20124472814687973.html>]

¹⁵ *Voice of America*, "Erdogan Seeks to Further Curb Turkish Army's Power", 11 October 2011. [<http://www.voanews.com/content/erdogan-seeks-to-further-curb-turkish-army-power/1690642.html>]

¹⁶ Reynolds James, "Turkey 'Coup Plot': PM Erdogan 'favours retrial'", 06 January 2014. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25617637>]

¹⁷ Akyol Mustafa, "What You Should Know about Turkey's AKP-Gulen Conflict", 03 January 2014. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/akp-gulen-conflict-guide.html#>]

¹⁸ *BBC-News*, "Profile: Fethullah Gulen's Hizmet Movement", 18 December 2013. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-13503361>].

¹⁹ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and ForeignPolicy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 187.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 185–186.

pora, in Caucasus and especially among speakers of Turkey's cognate languages, Islamic parts of Russia, and the Middle East and North African region.²¹

Currently Gülen is living in the USA and he's reported to have good relations with his host country.²² It remains to be seen whether the USA is using Gülen to have some control over the Islamic world, or if the situation vice versa. In Turkey, if the conflict grows bigger between AKP and Gülen, it will strongly decrease AKP's influence and power.

Under AKP's rule until 2011 Turkish economy experienced unprecedented growth and Turkey maintained good relations to practically all its neighbouring countries and the Islamic world. In this study, we'll analyze Turkey's economic development between 2002 and 2011, and the economic slowdown that started in 2012.

The study also focuses on Turkey's domestic policy, especially the armed forces' role in politics, the Kurdish question, the Armenian genocide, the Alevit problem and obstacles to the EU membership of Turkey. We will also shed light on how Turkey is influencing other Middle Eastern and North African countries. Because Turkey has strained relations with Shiite regions like Iran, Syria and the Iraqi Shiites, we will analyze these relations more in-depth.

2 The Role of the Turkish Armed Forces

As explained in the introduction, the ruling party AKP has reduced the role of the Turkish armed forces in domestic affairs. Instead, they have increased the responsibility of the Turkish National Police in internal security affairs, such as combating Kurdish nationalist groups.

However, the armed forces continue to play a big role in politics as it has done for

the last century, and consider itself guardian of the Turkish secular state. The armed forces considers as primary domestic threats fundamentalism, Kurdish separatism and the extreme left wing.²³ It also considers itself to be guardian of the founding values of the modern Turkey, known as the Kemalism ideology.²⁴

The armed forces are very popular especially among the ethnic Turks of the country, who often perceive it as a guardian of their values, unity and nation. It is a popular profession among the youth. The father of the founder of modern Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was an army man, which might have had an impact on the high esteem ethnic Turks mostly have towards their armed forces.²⁵ The armed forces have also been very active in creating a nationalist feeling among the people, as the conquering of Cyprus and the ethnic cleansings or genocides demonstrate.

Turkey became a NATO member in 1952 and now has NATO's second-largest armed forces after the USA.²⁶ Turkish armed forces are formed of three branches: army, navy and air force. In 2011, these three branches consisted of 613,000 active men, with an additional 412,000 men in the reserve list and 162,000 paramilitary members.²⁷ The military expenditures of Turkey are estimated to be 5.3% of the GDP.²⁸

²³ Turkish Armed Forces, 22 December 2013. [http://www.tsk.tr/ing/1_about_the_taf/1_1_history/history.htm]; Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 22 December 2013.

[<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>]

²⁴ Turkish Armed Forces, 22 December 2013. [http://www.tsk.tr/ing/1_about_the_taf/1_1_history/history.htm]

²⁵ A. Howard Douglas, (2011), *The History of Turkey*, London: Greenwood Press, p. 83.

²⁶ Turkish Armed Forces, 22 December 2013. [http://www.tsk.tr/ing/1_about_the_taf/1_1_history/history.htm]

²⁷ Alai, Hussein, "Strategic Military Actions in the Region and Their Impact on the Iran-Turkey

²¹ Ibid., p. 189.

²² Ibid., p. 186.

The NATO membership has been an important political trump for Turkey. According to the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs website “Turkey’s NATO membership has played a important and central role in Turkey’s security and contributed to its integration with the Euro-Atlantic community”.²⁹ The NATO membership has influenced the economic relations Turkey has with some other countries. In the Middle East and North Africa, the membership has influenced the way neighbouring countries perceive Turkey’s armed forces, which are now considered to be one of the strongest in the region (with Israel³⁰ being the strongest).³¹ Turkey has also tried to use the membership as a gate for EU membership, so far without results.

2.1 A History of Turkish Coups

Until the early 2000s, Turkey’s armed forces have been directly or indirectly ruling the country and are responsible for several *coups d’états*.

Between 1923 and 1950, the ruling party in Turkey was the Republican People’s Party (CHP), founded by Atatürk. The party had direct contact and tight ties with the armed forces, and was thought to be the

“civilian front” of the Turkish armed forces.³²

After 1950, many governments have been overthrown in Turkey. Between 1950 and 2000, the Turkish armed forces overthrew the government four times in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997. ³³ After 2002, when AKP stepped into power, the armed forces have tried to overthrow the government many times without success. This indicates that even though the power of the armed forces has been reduced, there is a risk that a new *coup d’état* takes place.³⁴

All in all the armed forces are a major player in the domestic political scene of the country. At the moment, the armed forces’ main concerns are:

- Keeping Cyprus integrated to Turkey.³⁵
- Keeping the Northern parts of the Iraqi Kurdistan integrated to Turkey (they were conquered in the 1990s).³⁶
- Keep on fighting against Kurdistan’s Workers’ Party PKK, because it is a means for the armed forces to justify its strong role and be popular among Turks.

Relations”, *Irdiplomacy*, 05 March 2012.

[<http://goo.gl/uPlc3O>].

²⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 22 December 2013. [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>]

²⁹ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Turkey’s Relations with NATO”, 22 December 2013. [<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/nato.en.mfa>]

³⁰ Marcus Jonathan, “Israel Plans Military ‘Revolution’ to Face New Regional Threat”, *BBC-News*, 13 July 2013. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23287787>]

³¹ Sabah, “Turkey’s Army Is NATO’s Second Largest”, 16 April 2012. [<http://english.sabah.com.tr/National/2012/04/16/turkeys-army-is-natos-second-largest>]

³² Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 16.

³³ *Al-Jazeera* “Timeline: A History of Turkish Coups”, 04 April 2012.

[<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/04/20124472814687973.html>]

³⁴ Reynolds James, “Turkey ‘Coup Plot’: PM Erdogan ‘Favours Retrial’”, 06 January 2014. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25617637>]

³⁵ *Hürriyet Daily News* “No Sympathy for Turkish Army in Cyprus: Report”, 04 July 2012. [<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/no-sympathy-for-turkish-army-in-cyprus-report.aspx?pageID=238&nID=24685&NewsCatID=338>]

³⁶ *Al-Monitor*, “Iraq to Expel Foreign Troops, End Turkish Military Presence”, 03 October 2012. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/01/10/iraq-ejects-turkish-armed-forces.html#>]

- To establish a safety zone in Syria³⁷ and prevent the Syrian Kurds from gaining autonomy.³⁸
- To maintain a strong armed forces. At the moment, the armed forces have many plans for development, including increased international peacekeeping responsibilities and a heavier involvement of the navy in multinational, NATO and UN operations. It is also developing its army towards a smaller, more highly trained and agile group with a capacity for higher mobility and firepower.³⁹
- The diminution of their role in politics and economy, and the reduction of their budget.⁴⁰

Now that the role of the armed forces and the AK-party in Turkey have been briefly presented, we will peruse some of the burning issues that are influencing Turkey's domestic policy.

3 Major Issues Influencing Turkey's Domestic Policy

The Kurdish question and the Armenian genocide are problems that have existed and

³⁷ Orhan Oytun, "Debating Safe Zones in Syria", *Al-Monitor*, 05 October 2012. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/01/10/military-options-for-change-in-syria-turkey.html>]

³⁸ *Foxnews*, "Turkey Warns Syrian Kurd Leader against Autonomy Plans", 26 July 2013. [<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/07/26/turkey-warns-syrian-kurd-leader-against-autonomy-plans/>]

³⁹ Turkish Armed Forces 22.12.2013. [http://www.tsk.tr/ing/1_about_the_taf/1_1_history/history.htm]; Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 22 December 2013. [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>]

⁴⁰ Yavuz Ercan, "Turkish Military Nurtures an Economic Leviathan", *Today's Zaman*, 08 August 2010. [http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action;jsessionid=1CCE61D4A56B36C70CF3FAF215C31082?newsId=218447]

remained unsolved ever since the founding of modern Turkey, and they continue to have major impact in the country's internal affairs.⁴¹ First, we will shed light on the contradicted Armenian genocide and the Kurdish massacre.

3.1. Genocides and Massacres

Turkey strongly denies there ever was genocide against the Armenians.⁴² However, over 20 countries such as France and the USA have recognized the genocide.⁴³

We will first go through some facts related to the controversial Armenian genocide, and then move on to the Kurdish massacre of the 1930's. In the following chapter, the Kurdish question is presented in a wider way, as it is such a big part of modern Turkey's problems and is the cause for a civil war that has been going on for nearly a century.

3.1.1 The Controversial Armenian Genocide

It is claimed that in Turkey, two major ethnic genocides have taken place within the last century or so: first with Armenians, then with Alevite Kurds. Turkey denies that these events were genocides, and claims the casualties were caused by war. That is one reason why the genocide issues have grown to be a major source of conflict between Turkey and the ethnic groups concerned, and with the international community.

Armenians, a non-Islamic people, have long inhabited the region covered by the Ottoman Empire and especially the area currently known as Turkey. According to

⁴¹ Fernandes, Desmond (2007), *The Kurdish and Armenian Genocides, from Censorship and Denial to Recognition?*, Sweden: Apec Förlag AB, p. 103.

⁴² Turkey's Prime Minister talks about the Armenian Genocide, 16 May 2008. [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqcjaPsJHXI>]

⁴³ Countries that recognize the Armenian genocide, 20 November 2013. [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition_countries.html]

Armenians, groups of Turkish nationalists that called themselves “Young Turks” practiced systematic ethnic cleansing against them, which led to the loss of over one million Armenians.⁴⁴

The Armenians claim that the first act of genocide was committed between 1894 and 1896 when Turks reportedly killed a few hundred thousand Armenians⁴⁵. Turkey denies the killings. A more systematic killing of Armenians reportedly started a couple of decades later in the 1900s, led by the front called Young Turks, who were leaning on Atatürk’s principles to justify ethnic cleansing. Their aim was to remove all non-Turkish and non-Muslim groups from the Ottoman Empire, and especially the region now known as Turkey. Back then, Armenians were regarded as anti-Islamic allies of the West, close to Greece and Russia.⁴⁶ Turkish authorities deny all of these claims and states that Armenians were killed during riots and guerilla war, and that no genocide took place in Turkey.⁴⁷ However, there are some 20 countries such as USA, France, Sweden, Russia, Germany and many other Western countries that have acknowledged the genocide.⁴⁸ In addition many influential persons have acknowledged both the Armenian and the Kurdish genocides, such as the Nobelist writer Orhan Pamuk,⁴⁹ human right activist Ragıp Zarakolu and famous

politicians such as PKK imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan, alongside many historians and high-rank soldiers.⁵⁰

The genocide issue has significantly worsened the relations between Turkey and Armenia. Their current relations are poor, even though AKP has tried to improve them. There is also the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the frontier region of Nagorno-Karabakh, currently a part of Armenia that influence the countries’ relations. Turkey is very close with Azerbaijan and claims that with Azerbaijanis, they are “one nation living in two states”⁵¹, and that is why they are strongly taking Azerbaijan’s side in the territorial conflict.⁵²

According to the definitions, genocide happens when a group aims to destroy a national, ethnical, racial or religious group by killing and/or severely harming them.⁵³ In order to have complete clarity on whether an ethnic genocide took place or not with the Armenians, it would require several impartial studies conducted by international researchers or research groups. However, Turkey has denied access to the archives of the Ottoman Empire, and thus no such study has been possible. One can wonder if there was nothing to hide, why would Turkey deny access? Also one needs to consider the fact that over 20 countries have acknowledged the genocide after lobbying from the Armenian side. These suggest that

⁴⁴ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p.157–158.

⁴⁵ Seppälä Serafim (2011), *Armenian kansanmurhan perintö*, Helsinki: LIKE, p.19.

⁴⁶ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 159.

⁴⁷ N. Simsir (Shimshir) Bilal (2006), “Ermeni Meselesi 1774–2005 (Armenian question)”, Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Countries that recognize the Armenian genocide, 20 November 2013. [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition_countries.html]

⁴⁹ BBC-News, “Turk 'genocide' author faces jail”, 1 September 2005. [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4205708.stm>]

⁵⁰ Fernandes, Desmond (2007), *The Kurdish and Armenian Genocides, from Censorship and Denial to Recognition?*, Sweden: Apec Förlag AB, p. 24, 106.

⁵¹ *Today's Zaman*, “Nagorno-Karabakh is Turkey's problem too,' says Erdoğan”, 13 November 2013, [<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-331310-nagorno-karabakh-is-turkeys-problem-too-says-erdogan.html>]

⁵² *Trend-News*, “PM: Turkey to Continue Supporting Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict”, 13 November 2013. [<http://en.trend.az/news/karabakh/2210849.html>]

⁵³ BBC-News, “Analysis: Defining Genocide”, 27 August 2010. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-11108059>]

more likely than not, ethnic genocide indeed took place against Armenians.

3.1.2 *The Kurdish Genocide*

Turkey is also accused of committing genocide against its Kurdish-Alevite population between 1936 and 1939. Compared to the Armenian genocide, the Kurdish massacre is surrounded by less ambiguity since the Turkish officials have admitted the *massacre* (being careful not to call it *genocide*) and presented some kind of public apology over it. The issue at stake is the killing of many thousand Kurdish guerilla fighters as well as ordinary families during the Kurdish uprising, when Turkish authorities also forced the rest of the Kurds to live elsewhere in Turkey. This genocide is known among Kurds as the *Dersim genocide*, due to the name of the city the massacre mostly took place in.⁵⁴

In 2011, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan apologized for the 1937 massacre in the predominantly Alevi region of Dersim on behalf of the Turkish state, but said the main opposition party Republican People's Party (CHP), which was the only political party at the time, is the actual culprit and called on the party's current leader to apologize for the incident on behalf of the CHP. It was the first official apology from the Turkish government over the killing of thousands of people in the southeastern town of Dersim (now known as Tunceli as a result of a name change in 1936) between 1936 and 1939.⁵⁵

Kurds have repeatedly been asking for compensations and wider recognition over their suffering, but so far the Turkish gov-

ernment hasn't assented. Apart from the Dersim massacre, there are many more issues that are severely festering Turks' and Kurds' relations. These are presented in the following chapter.

4 The Kurdish Question

Kurds live on a stretch of land divided between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, which is sometimes referred to as *Kurdistan*. Ascertaining the numbers of Kurds is not an easy task, mainly because the denial of existence of the Kurds has led to understating their numbers for political reasons.⁵⁶ Another reason is that throughout the regions they inhabit, it has not been of habit to gather official census data. All in all, Kurds form a population of about 40 million, with their own distinct culture and language. It is generally thought that the Kurdish population in Turkey (called *Northern Kurdistan* by the Kurds) is the largest in the regions, both numerically and in terms of the percentage of the overall population in the country it comprises. It currently amounts to approximately more than 20 million, and makes up around 15–25%⁵⁷ of Turkey's population of 75.5 million.⁵⁸ Some other sources estimate that the amount of Turkish Kurds is around 15 million, so around 20% of the population.⁵⁹

In the aftermath of the First World War, the winner countries draw borders in the Middle East. Some places with less than 30,000 inhabitants became independent states (such as Kuwait), but the Kurdish area was

⁵⁴ Mc Dowall, David (1997), *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I.B. Tauris, p. 207–210.

⁵⁵ Poyraz Dogan Yonca, "PM Erdoğan Apologizes over Dersim Massacre on Behalf of Turkish State", 20 November 2011. [<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-263658-pm-erdogan-apologizes-over-dersim-massacre-on-behalf-of-turkish-state.html>]

⁵⁶ Mc Dowall, David (1997), *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I.B. Tauris, p. 1–17.

⁵⁷ A. Howard Douglas, (2011), *The History of Turkey*, London: Greenwood Press, p. 5.

⁵⁸ *Today's Zaman*, "Turkey's population exceeds 75.5 million as growth rate decreases", 28 January 2013. [<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-305332-turkeys-population-exceeds-755-million-as-growth-rate-decreases.html>]

⁵⁹ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 82.

divided between the four states mentioned above. It is commonly thought that the reason for the unfounded divisions were economic and political interests of the Western countries, who wanted to be able to practice “divide and rule” politics in the Middle East.⁶⁰

The Kurdish people were loosely autonomous under the Ottoman administration up until the 19th century.⁶¹ While the Treaty of Sèvres was recognizing the existence of Kurds and allowing them to found their own state where they are the majority, the Treaty of Lausanne⁶² not only denied Kurd’s right to self-determination, but also their existence.⁶³ Only non-Muslims, or religious minorities, were recognized as Turkish minorities under this treatment, which prevented the Kurds to enjoy minority rights recognized to Greeks, Armenians and Jews.⁶⁴

Kurds had no real voice in the discussions over the future of their traditional lands.⁶⁵ Turkey had promised to provide its Kurdish population with an own territory where both the Kurds and the Turks could live together as equals. But Turkey quickly forgot its promise. Now, the imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan claims that after the Armenian genocide, Turkish officials have led “Turkization politics”, aiming to

assimilate Kurds with the Turkish population.⁶⁶

Another Kurdish leader, the President of Iraq Jalal Talabani stated in a television interview “the Treaty of Sevres is the source of all the problems of Kurdistan. Had the Treaty of Sevres been realized, and France and Britain kept their own promises, the Kurds as well as Arabs, Turkish, Armenians and others would have established their own states”.⁶⁷

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Kurds rebelled against discrimination. Turkish government cruelly suppressed the rebellions and forced thousands of Kurds to leave their native land. When it became clear that the Treaty of Sevres was not to be carried out, many uprisings and guerrilla wars broke out in Northern Kurdistan, mostly against Turkey. To mention one of those outbreaks, there was Kochgiri rebellion. But other rebellions followed in a few years’ intervals, such as Sheikh Raid Reza rebellion in 1925, Khoybun and Ararat in 1927, Azadi in 1937 and PKK rebellion in 1978.

Nowadays the Kurds are fighting for their rights in Turkey and Iran. In Iraq, they’ve obtained autonomy, which has existed since 1991. In Syria, resulting from the civil war, at the moment the Kurds are governing their own territories and have a *de facto* autonomy. In other parts of the Kurdistan area, or Iran and Turkey, the situation has not evolved and the conditions are similar to those in the days following the First World War.⁶⁸

Basically, Kurds in Turkey have demands the state is unwilling to fulfill. The Turkish Kurds want to have an

⁶⁰ For more information see the following report: The treaty of peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey signed at SÈVRES 10 August 1920.

[<http://www.fransamalingvongesusau.com/documents/dl1/h1/1.1.18.pdf>]

⁶¹ Ozoglu Hakan (2004), *Kurdish Nottables and the Ottoman State*, New York: State University of New Yorks Press, p. 47–49.

⁶² The Treaty of Lausanne was the peace treaty signed in Lausanne between the Ottoman Empire and Western allies after the annulment of the Treaty of Sèvres (1920).

⁶³ Mc Dowall, David (1997), *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I.B. Tauris, p. 137V142.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 115, 116, 125, 126.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 132V134.

⁶⁶ Fernandes, Desmond (2007), *The Kurdish and Armenian Genocides, from Censorship and Denial to Recognition?*, Sweden: Apec Förlag AB, p. 106V107.

⁶⁷ Iraqi President Jalal Talabani’s interview with Kurdsat on 01 June 2006. [http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Mam+jalal+2006&sm=30]

⁶⁸ Burch Jonathon, “Syrian Kurds Take Fragile Steps towards Autonomy”, *Reuters* 2 August 2013. [<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/02/us-syria-crisis-kurds-idUSBRE9710B320130802>]

autonomous region within Turkey that they could govern themselves. Their main wish is to be able to use Kurdish language in all official contexts, and to be able to freely express their culture.⁶⁹ Turkey is opposed to founding an autonomous Kurdish region, justifying it by the country's slogan installed in 1923: "one state, one nation, one language".⁷⁰

Ever since the founding of modern Turkey, Kurds have been proclaiming their civil rights, to which Turkey has answered using military force. This has led to an on-going conflict between Turks and Kurds that has lasted for almost a century now, killing dozens of thousands on both sides and destroying many villages. The relation between Turks and Kurds is highly conflicted. There have been many attempts to build peace, but they have been unsuccessful so far. We'll briefly present the main steps taken towards peace in the following.

4.1 Peace Process between Turkey And Kurds

Since 1993, the biggest Kurdish party PKK has declared several unilateral ceasefires (1993, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2008, 2009 and 2013) to stop the war. But neither the military nor the political leadership of the Turkish state was willing to extend a conciliatory hand to the Kurdish liberation movement. Turkish officials claimed they do not want to negotiate with "terrorists", which is what they call PKK. This was Turkey's official stand.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Gursel Kadri, "Erdogan's Domestic Challenges of Peace with the PKK", *Al-Monitor*, 15 January 2013. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/iw/contents/articles/originals/2013/01/pkk-peace-talks-turkey.html#>]

⁷⁰ Schleifer Yigal, "Turkey: One Nation, One Flag, One State, One Man", *Eurasianet*, 17 June 2013. [<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67131>]

⁷¹ Laizer Sheri, "Five Previous PKK Ceasefires since 1993 – Better Prospects for the Sixth

However, unofficial peace negotiations were conducted in 2009, which was a completely new turn in a war that has lasted for almost a century now. In 2009, both parties acknowledged that neither of them is going to win the war, and that a peaceful solution must be found to the problem.

So in 2009, representatives of the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party PKK gathered in Oslo to conduct secret negotiations. As a result, PKK offered a ceasefire, to which Turkey did not assent and armed conflicts erupted again between the two groups.

These were the demands of the Kurds in the negotiations:

- Kurds should be able to govern their own territories and found a democratic confederation or self-government within Turkey
- The imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan as well as thousands of other Kurdish political prisoners must be released
- Legislation should be made secular and it should represent and grant full civil rights to all the Turkish people, not just ethnic Turks
- The genocides of Kurds and Armenians should be properly acknowledged.⁷²

The negotiations in 2009 ended without any real results, since Turkey wasn't ready to accept any of these demands. The Kurdish representative Zübeyir Aydar blamed Turkey for ending the negotiations and claimed that the Kurdish side was willing to contin-

Ceasefire of Newroz 2013?", *Kurdmedia*, 29 July 2013. [<http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=16943>]

⁷² Gursel Kadri, "Erdogan's Domestic Challenges of Peace with the PKK", *Al-Monitor*, 15 January 2013. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/iw/contents/articles/originals/2013/01/pkk-peace-talks-turkey.html#>]

ue in order to find a peaceful solution to the problems.⁷³

Either way, the negotiations of 2009 were an important step in the relations between Turkish officials and Kurds, even though after the negotiations nothing changed and the hostilities continued.

The next big step in the peace process was taken in 2013. During the Kurdish New Year *Nezroç* in March 2013, the imprisoned Kurdish leader Öcalan declared a ceasefire and invited Turkish official for new peace negotiations, to which Turkey consented.⁷⁴ So new negotiations took place in Oslo in 2013, and this time they were not kept secret but were official negotiations.

In January 2014, the negotiations still continued between Turkish officials and Kurds. In a recent interview, a PKK leader stated “the peace process is continuing and has reached a critical point now. Despite all negative developments, we are determined on our will for peace.”⁷⁵ This is a sign that Kurds are determined to find a peaceful solution.

Although no real achievements have been made since the first negotiations in 2009, small and careful steps, perhaps even merely cosmetic, have been taken towards peace. For instance, the ruling party in Turkey AKP changed some of the articles in the constitution, but the Kurdish side claimed that they were not improving the

minorities’ situation at all, but in contrary only consolidated Erdogan’s position.⁷⁶

International specialists that have been observing the peace negotiations have stated that a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question would be a step forward regarding the democratization and towards possible EU membership of the country.⁷⁷ Turkey joining the EU without first solving the Kurdish issue indeed seems highly unlikely. If Turkey is accepted to the EU without having first solved this question, it is probable that the conflict will come ashore to Europe. If no results are found through the peace negotiations, it is possible that a civil war similar to that we are witnessing in Syria will erupt in Turkey. Neither party would benefit from it, and it would bring chaos to the region and the EU.⁷⁸ In the following chapter, we will present Turkey’s long walk towards EU membership and the main issues that need to be solved before it can happen.

5 Turkey’s EU membership

For several decades now, Turkey has been trying to become a EU member. The EU took Turkey as a candidate in 1999 and negotiations regarding membership were launched in 2005.⁷⁹ Especially France and Germany are opposed to Turkey joining the

⁷³ *Hürriyet Daily News*, “PKK Wants to Restart Negotiations”, 24 September 2012. [<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/pkk-wants-to-restart-negotiations-report.aspx?pageID=238&nID=30904&NewsCatID=338>]

⁷⁴ Cengiz Candar, “Öcalan’s Message Is Much More Than a Cease-Fire”, 24 March 2013. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/ocalan-ceasefire-newroz-speech-farewell-to-arms.html>]

⁷⁵ *Firat-News*, “Öcalan: Process on but at Critical Stage”, 09 November 2013. [<http://en.firatajans.com/news/news/ocalan-process-on-but-at-critical-stage.htm>]

⁷⁶ Burch Jonathon & Solaker Gulsen, “Turkey Presents Reforms Aimed at Pressing Kurdish Peace Process”, 30 September 2013.

[<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/30/us-turkey-reform-idUSBRE98T09D20130930>]

⁷⁷ *Hürriyet Daily News*, “EU Parliament Shows Full Support for Kurdish Solution”, 06 February 2013. [<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/eu-parliament-shows-full-support-for-kurdish-solution.aspx?pageID=238&nID=40638&NewsCatID=351>]

⁷⁸ Candar Cengiz, “Turkey Must Refocus on Kurdish Peace Process”, *Al-Monitor*, 25 October 2013. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/10/turkey-kurdish-peace-process-syria.html#>]

⁷⁹ European Union, “EU-Turkey Relations”, 08 January 2014. [http://eeas.europa.eu/turkey/index_en.htm]

EU, because they feel that the country does not meet the standards set for members.⁸⁰ Some other countries such as Finland⁸¹ on the other hand actively support Turkey's membership, even though Turkey is not currently meeting the standards for a EU member.⁸² Also the USA is actively supporting Turkey's EU membership⁸³, especially through its European ally UK.⁸⁴

Turkey is involved in numerous international organizations. It has been a NATO member since 1952, a founding member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)⁸⁵, a member of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)⁸⁶, a member of the Council of Europe since 1949,

⁸⁰ Trainor Ian, "EU to Restart Turkey's Membership Talks in Move to Encourage Reforms", *Guardian*, 21 October 2013.

[<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/21/turkey-eu-membership-talks-restart-reforms>]

⁸¹ *Anadolu Agency*, "Finland Reaffirms Support for Turkey's EU Bid", 25 March 2013.

[<http://www.aa.com.tr/en/news/147501--finland-once-reaffirms-support-for-turkeys-eu-bid>]

⁸² *Anadolu Agency*, "Finland Has always Supported Turkey's EU Membership, Gul Says", 29 March 2011. [<http://www.aa.com.tr/en/news/35189--finland-has-always-supported-turkey-s-eu-membership--gul-says>]

⁸³ Champion Marc & Fassihi Farnaz, "Obama Urges EU to Accept Turkey, But Member Nations Remain Cool", *WSJ*, 06 April 2009.

[<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB123897560753691203>].

⁸⁴ Norman Laurence & Parkinson Joe, "U.K. Backs Turkish EU Candidacy", *WSJ*, 28 July 2010.

[<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748703977004575392574015033774>]

⁸⁵ OECD, "Turkey and the OECD", 08 January 2013. [<http://www.oecd.org/turkey/turkeyandtheoecd.htm>].

⁸⁶ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)", 08 January 2013.

[<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-and-the-organization-for-security-and-cooperation-in-europe-osce.en.mfa>]

and since 2009, a rotating member of the United Nation's Security Council (UNSC).⁸⁷ Turkey is also committed to the integration programme of the EU, which resulted in a renewed constitution in 2013. In the new constitution, the power of the armed forces was reduced and some "anti-Islamic" laws were revoked. For instance, it used to be forbidden for women who work in public functions to wear a scarf to cover their hair or faces, but the new constitution of 2013 revoked this law. The new constitution allowed the use of Kurdish alphabet and letters unknown in the Turkish alphabet such as Q, W and X. Before 2013, the use of these letters was forbidden for example in children's names.

Ethnic and religious minorities have deemed these constitutional reforms insufficient and are not satisfied with the results. The new constitution still states for instance that the only official language in the country is Turkish, and learning any language of the ethnic minorities is forbidden in public schools. For a child to learn his mother tongue Kurdish for instance, he must be sent to an expensive private school, which is out of the financial reach of most.⁸⁸

Apart from the ethnic and religious minority groups, also secular and liberal groups in Turkey are dissatisfied with the constitutional reforms, stating that the changes were only cosmetic and insufficient. They are also blaming AKP for trying to "Islamize" Turkey.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "International Organisations", 08 January 2013. [<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sub.en.mfa?7cafe2ef-78bd-4d88-b326-3916451364f3>]

⁸⁸ Daloglu Tulin, "The Democratization Package That Missed the Point", *Al-Monitor*, 02 October 2013. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/democratization-package-missed-opportunity.html#>]

⁸⁹ *Middle-East-online*, "Erdogan Paves Way for Islamisation of Public Institutions in Turkey", 30 September 2013. [<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=61676>]

5.1 Obstacles between Turkey and Its EU Membership

There are several reasons why Turkey has not been able to integrate the EU, even though it has tried it for several decades. Here are listed the main factors.

Issues Regarding Human Rights

Turkey has been blamed for treating all non-Turks as second-class citizens. The school system in the country relies heavily on Turkish nationalism and principles of Sunni-Islam. According to the constitution, ethnic minorities have no right to learn their language in public schools. Those who try to fight against inequalities are categorized systematically as terrorists.⁹⁰ Especially the situation with Kurds and Alevites⁹¹ is considered to be in a bad state.⁹² There are thousands of political prisoners in Turkey, including over twenty Kurdish Members of Parliament, as well as underage and physically ill prisoners.⁹³

The official system in Turkey relies on Atatürk's legacy, and follows the ideology of strong Turkish nationalism and secularism. Minorities and religious groups haven't been content with the system.

⁹⁰ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 08 January 2014. [http://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf]

⁹¹ Idiz, Semih, "Turkey's Alevi Question", *Al-Monitor*, 19 November 2013. [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/turkey-erdogan-alevi-strengthen-relations-sectarian-policies.html]

⁹² The Presidency of Religious Affairs focuses on issues regarding Sunni Islam. No similar institute exists in Turkey for Alavites or other religions. [http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/tr/anasayfa]

⁹³ Kestler-D'Amours, Jillian, "Turkey: 'World's Biggest Prison' for Media", *Al-Jazeera*, 17 February 2013. [http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/02/2013217124044793870.html]

Turkish nationalist ideology is very visible in schools, where study books present Turks in a much better light compared to the other ethnicities of the country. School walls are often decorated with nationalist slogans, such as "Be Proud to Be a Turk" and "One Turk Is Worth the Whole World". In other Western countries, this kind of promotion for one ethnicity in a multi-ethnic country would not be tolerated.⁹⁴

Even though the renewed constitution of 2013 allows for ethnic minorities to study their own languages in private schools, it still states Turkish as the only national language of the country. The European Commission has urged Turkey to pay attention that the civil rights of all its citizens are respected, but many feel that the measures taken by the Turkish authorities have mostly been cosmetic.⁹⁵

With some ethnic groups, the problem extends well beyond national borders. The situation with Kurds is especially delicate, since Kurds are a people without their own nation. The Kurdish question is acute in Iraq, Syria and Iran as well. If Turkey would become a EU member, the whole unsolved issue of Kurdistan would in turn become an internal problem for the EU. Apart from human rights issues, there are many other factors that have so far prevented Turkey from gaining membership, presented below.

- Freedom of expression is widely disrespected in the country. According to the U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists, Turkey jailed more

⁹⁴ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, "Ataturk Declares, Turkish Nation", 08 January 2013. [http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN,31629/turkish-nation.html]

⁹⁵ *Hürriyet Daily News*, "Package Is Cosmetics, Main Opposition Leader Kılıçdaroğlu Says", 01 October 2013. [http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/package-is-cosmetics-main-opposition-leader-kilicdaroglu-says.aspx?pageID=238&nID=55511&NewsCatID=338]

journalists than any other country for the second year in a row, with Iran and China close behind.⁹⁶

- Turkey occupied the Northern parts of Cyprus in 1974, and the Cyprus issue has been a major hindrance to Turkey's EU membership. So far, it is the only country in the world to have acknowledged the Turkish parts of the island as an independent state. The Greek part of the island is represented in the EU. Turkey has not opened its harbours and airports to Greek Cypriote vessels.⁹⁷
- The big role the armed forces have in the country has also been perceived as problematic. In recent times, the armed forces have overthrown the government several times (1960, 1971, 1980).⁹⁸ Even though the armed forces' power has been reduced under AKP's reign, it is still widely considered as a state within a state or shadow-state by many experts. The worry is that the armed forces are still able to impose rules to the government, and there is still the risk for it to organize a new *coup d'état*.⁹⁹
- Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the AK party, has formed for the third time in a row a

one-party government. He has been blamed for trying to increase his own prerogative and power through legislative reforms, and for trying to "Islamize" Turkey's secular legislation.¹⁰⁰

- Religiously and culturally, Turkey is very different from other European countries. Especially Turkish democracy is very different from other Western countries. The AK party has tight bonds with Muslim Brotherhood, and if Turkey becomes a EU member, it is possible that Islamic ideology will gain a strong representation in the Union.¹⁰¹
- Corruption in Turkey is a big problem. For instance in December 2013, the Turkish Prime Minister discharged ten ministers due to a massive corruption scandal.¹⁰²
- If Turkey joins the EU, it would mean that EU's bordering countries will include countries such as Syria, Iraq and Iran, which would be a big security issue.
- Integration to the common agricultural policy of the EU is likely to cause difficulties for Turkey.
- The economic development of the country is unequally segmented, and there is a clear division between the poor Eastern Turkey and wealthy

⁹⁶ Beiser Elana, "Second Worst Year on Record for Jailed Journalists", Committee to Protect Journalists, 18 December 2013.

[<http://www.voanews.com/content/group-turkey-iran-china-lead-world-in-jailing-journalists/1813379.html>]

⁹⁷ DW, "Turkey Stumbles over Cyprus on Way to EU", 05 November 2013. [<http://www.dw.de/turkey-stumbles-over-cyprus-on-way-to-eu/a-17204257>]

⁹⁸ *Al-Jazeera* "Timeline: A History of Turkish Coups", 04 April 2012. [<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/04/20124472814687973.html>]

⁹⁹ *Today's Zaman*, "Turks Still Fear Military Coup despite Ergenekon Verdicts", 29 August 2013. [<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-324878-turks-still-fear-military-coup-despite-ergenekon-verdicts.html>]

¹⁰⁰ *Middle-East-online*, "Erdogan Paves Way for Islamisation of Public Institutions in Turkey", 30 September 2013. [<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=61676>]

¹⁰¹ Friedland Roger, "Turkey's Body Politics: Can Turkish Democracy Survive?", *Huffingtonpost*, 12 March 2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/roger-friedland/turkeys-body-politics-can_b_4367715.html]

¹⁰² Coskun Orhan & Toksabay Ece, "Hit by Scandal and Resignations, Turk PM Names New Ministers", *Reuters*, 25 December 2013. [<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/25/us-turkey-corruption-idUSBRE9BN0D720131225>]

West.¹⁰³ As clear a segmentation is undesirable for a EU candidate.

If Turkey would manage to solve some of the issues listed above, it would have big impact on its membership appliance, and it would also bring the country towards more democratic and secure grounds.

6 The Development of Turkey's Economy

Now that we have become acquainted with Turkey's major domestic problems, it is time to take a look at the country's economy. This chapter focuses on analyzing the reasons behind the economic growth Turkey has experienced especially under AKP's ruling period since 2002, and also the slowing down of the economic growth since 2012.

According to the British lecturer and Middle East expert Bill Park, until 1960 Turkey's economy was largely "self-sufficient, protectionist and barely engaged in external trade."¹⁰⁴ Since then a lot has happened, and nowadays Turkey is the world's 16th economy, with the EU being its biggest trading partner.¹⁰⁵

If we look at things historically, under the Ozal's rule between 1983 and 1993 Turkey's economy experienced rapid growth. Ozal wanted to see Turkey integrated in the European economic and political networks, and he applied to join in the EU as early as

1987.¹⁰⁶ After Ozal was murdered for political reasons, Turkey's economy experienced a more stagnating phase and had to wait until the AK party stepped into power in 2002 to enter a new phase of economic growth.

Since AKP stepped into power, Turkey has experienced an unparalleled growth. Even in the midst of the global economic crisis in 2012, Turkey's economy grew an astounding 8.5%¹⁰⁷ and in 2011 some 9%.¹⁰⁸ Between 2002 and 2013, Turkey has developed its trade relations with the Middle Eastern and North African countries, the Balkan Peninsula and the Caucasus.

So Turkey has not been hit by the global economy crisis but on the contrary, now that the world is bouncing back, Turkey is in turn experiencing a slight slowdown. According to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) recent report, Turkey is likely to experience growth close to 4% in 2013.¹⁰⁹ This is still a good development for the Turkish economy, even if the rate of growth is indeed slowing down.

So what are the reasons behind the economic growth and recent slowdown? There are several factors that can explain the rapid growth; the main ones are listed here below.

- The ruling party AKP is an Islamic party, close to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. The fact that an Islamic party is ruling in Turkey has contributed significantly to other Is-

¹⁰³ Sonmez Mustafa, "Kurds Still Migrating to Western Turkish Cities", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 04 May 2013. [<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/kurds-still-migrating-to-western-turkish-cities.aspx?pageID=238&nID=46198&NewsCatID=344>]

¹⁰⁴ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p.65.

¹⁰⁵ Invest in Turkey, "Economic Outlook", 09 January 2014. [<http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-us/turkey/factsandfigures/pages/economy.aspx>]

¹⁰⁶ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 69.

¹⁰⁷ *The Economist* 07.04.2012, "Turkey Has One of the World's Zippiest Economies, But It Is Too Reliant on Hot Money". [<http://www.economist.com/node/21552216>]

¹⁰⁸ Economic Outlook of Turkey, 20 December 2013. [<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/prospects-and-recent-developments-in-the-turkish-economy.en.mfa>]

¹⁰⁹ International Monetary Fund (IMF), 20 December 2013. [<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2013/CAR122013A.htm>]

lamic countries warming towards Turkey and tightening their economic and political relations. Due to this, Turkey has made unparallel deals with Middle Eastern and North African countries.¹¹⁰

- Many finance experts believe that the worsening of Turkey's relations with Israel has had a positive impact on Turkey's economy. In May 2010, Israeli troops attacked the Mavi-Marmara vessel containing humanitarian aid on its way to Palestine, killing nine Turkish Muslim activists. This led to a significant deterioration of the two countries' relations, and Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan became a sort of hero in the eyes of the international Islamic community. This brought to Turkey dozens of new deals with Arab countries, especially Saudi-Arabia, Syria and Libya.¹¹¹
- After 2002, the Turkish government has made large-scale reforms regarding health care, education and banking, which revived the economy.¹¹²
- Turkey gained authority and influence among ethnic Turks of the ex-USSR countries, which had a positive impact on the economy.¹¹³
- Despite the international sanctions imposed on Iran, trade between these two

countries grew in an unparallel way.¹¹⁴ One of the biggest trading has concerned gas, which Turkey has been purchasing from the sanction-inflicted Iran at a very low price. In December 2013, Turkish police forces arrested the grown-up children and relatives of several Turkish ministers due to corruption and secret trade with Iran. They are accused of having secret trade relations with Iranian authorities despite international sanctions.¹¹⁵

- In Iraq and especially its northern parts (Kurdistan), Turkish businesses have gained considerable market share especially in the building and service sectors.¹¹⁶ The Syrian civil war has brought chill to the otherwise warm relations between Turkey and Iraq, because Turkey has been supporting the Syrian opposition, while Iraq's president Maliki is Shiite and has been supporting Al-Assad's front.¹¹⁷ However, even despite these political disagreements, their economic relations continue warm.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ G. Merley, Steven, "Turkey, the global Muslim Brotherhood and the Gaza Flotilla", Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, May 2010. [http://jcpa.org/text/Turkey_Muslim_Brotherhood.pdf]

¹¹¹ Arbell Dan, "The Beginning of a Turkish-Israeli Rapprochement?", Brookings 03.12.2012. [http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2012/12/03-turkey-israel-arbell]

¹¹² Aşık Özgür, "Legal reforms in Turkey: ambitious and controversial", January 2012. [http://www.turkishpolicy.com/dosyalar/files/2012-1-OzгурAsik.pdf]

¹¹³ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey's Relations With Central Asian Republics", 09 January 2014. [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa]

¹¹⁴ Coughlin Con, "Iran's secret trade links to bypass sanctions", *The Telegraph*, 29 September 2013. [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/10343023/Irans-secret-trade-links-to-bypass-sanctions.html]

¹¹⁵ *Hürriyet Daily News*, "New details revealed about Turkey's ongoing graft probe", 18 December 2013. [http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/new-details-revealed-about-turkeys-ongoing-graft-probe-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=59792&NewsCatID=341]

¹¹⁶ Van Heuvelen, Ben, "Iraq's Kurdish region pursues ties with Turkey – for energy revenue and independence", *The Washington Post*, 09 November 2013. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraqs-kurdish-region-pursues-ties-with-turkey-for-oil-and-independence/2013/11/09/ffae210a-41a5-11e3-8b74-d89d714ca4dd_story.html]

¹¹⁷ Gearan, Anne, "Kerry: Iraq helping Syria's Assad by allowing arms flow", *The Washington Post*, 24 March 2013. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kerry-asks-iraq-to-stop-syria-arms-flow/2013/03/24/61eec97e-9467-11e2-95ca-dd43e7ffec9c_story.html]

¹¹⁸ Barkey, J. Henri, "Turkey-Iraq Relations Deteriorate With Accusations of Sectarianism", *Al-monitor* 14 April 2012. [http://www.al-monitor.com]

- Many of the gas and oil purchased to Europe has to go through Turkey, of which Turkey benefits economically

These are the main reasons why Turkey has been able to sustain an impressive economic growth in the midst of the global economic crisis. However, now that the global economy seems to be taking a slight turn to the positive, Turkey's growth is retrospectively slowing down. Below are listed five reasons why the rate of growth isn't the same anymore.

- Direct foreign investments to Turkey reduced in 2012 and 2013. When the global economy started to heal, foreign investments were increasingly directed to these recovering big economies, which led to the decreasing of foreign investments to Turkey.
- Western countries have been engaging with Iran in negotiations about their atomic energy and enriching of uranium. This has ameliorated the Iran-West relations, which in turn has led to increased trade between Iran and other countries. Turkey's share of the Iranian trade thus reduced.
- After Muslim Brotherhood's leader Mohammed Morsi was dislodged in Egypt, the relations with Turkey and Egypt deteriorated. As is commonly known, Turkey had good relations with Morsi. After he was dislodged, Egyptian authorities cut down political and economic relations between the countries.¹¹⁹

/pulse/ar/contents/articles/originals/2012/al-monitor/turkey-iraq-ties-sour-brover-syr.html#]

¹¹⁹ Fahim Karim, "Egypt Expels Turkey's Ambassador, Further Fraying Diplomatic Ties", *The New York Times*, 23 November 2013. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/middleeast/diplomatic-ties-fraying-between-egypt-and-turkey.html?_r=0]

- The Egyptian uprising also influenced the relations between Turkey and Saudi-Arabia. Saudi-Arabia considered Morsi as an enemy and supported the uprising, whereas Turkey was strongly on Morsi's side.¹²⁰ The deterioration between the countries had an impact on Turkey's economy as well.¹²¹
- At the moment (2014), Syria has cut all economic and political relations it had with Turkey after Turkey started its support to members of the Syrian Sunni opposition, against Bashar al-Assad.¹²²

Here are the main factors that have slowed down economical growth in Turkey in 2012 and 2013. Now it looks like the year 2014 is also going to be a year of economic slowdown, with many domestic and foreign conflicts at hand.

6.1 Turkey's general economic profile

Turkey has a moderately low-cost, educated and young work force, with the average citizen being under the age of 30. Although there are no reliable data on the unemployment in the country, the officials claim it to be less than 10%¹²³, while other sources estimate it to be around 15%.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Hearst David, "Why Saudi Arabia is taking a risk by backing the Egyptian coup", *The Guardian*, 20 August 2013. [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/20/saudi-arabia-coup-egypt]

¹²¹ F. Worth, Robert, "Egypt Is Arena for Influence of Arab Rivals", *The New York Times*, 09 July 2013. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/10/world/middleeast/aid-to-egypt-from-saudis-and-emiratis-is-part-of-struggle-with-qatar-for-influence.html]

¹²² Daloglu, Tulin, "Is Turkey Digging a Hole With Its Syria policy?", *Al-Monitor*, 05 September 2013. [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/erdogan-enemy-salafists.html]

¹²³ Fontes, Nuno, "Turkey unemployment rate", *Tradingeconomics*, September 2013. [http://www.tradingeconomics.com/turkey/

Turkey's main production industries are textiles, domestic appliance, automobile and glassware. Other main sources of income are agriculture, especially fruits and cereals, and tourism. Turkey is one of the top 10 travel destinations in the world, and is a gate between Asia and Europe.¹²⁵

Turkey does not produce enough energy for its own needs and thus relies on energy it purchases from Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Russia, Alger and Nigeria. The import of Iranian, Russian and Azerbaijani oil to Turkey happens through pipelines. It is estimated that between 35 to 40% of Turkey's oil and gas come from Iran.¹²⁶

Turkey is also a very important pass-through country for energy that Europe purchases from the Middle East. The Nabucco and Trans Adriatic pipelines will bring natural gas from the Caspian Sea region to Europe, passing through Turkey. The pipelines will be ready in 2014, and once they are working, they will reduce Europe's dependence on Russia's gas deliveries.¹²⁷

All in all, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) report presents Turkey's economy as one containing many possibilities, even though it is undeniably facing also some critical challenges. According to

unemployment-rate]

¹²⁴ Sonmez, Mustafa, "Turkey's real unemployment rate 20 pct when all jobless considered", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 30 November 2013.

[<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-real-unemployment-rate-20-pct-when-all-jobless-considered.aspx?PageID=238&NID=58769&NewsCatID=344>]

¹²⁵ Carter Ben, "What is the world's favourite holiday destination", *BBC-News*, 04 August 2013.

[<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23433149>]

¹²⁶ Coskun, Orhan, "UPDATE 1-Turkey's Tupras to extend Iran oil purchase contract", *Reuters*, 07 January 2013. [<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/07/tupras-iran-idUSL5E9C736D20130107>].

¹²⁷ Bruno Greg, "Turkey at an Energy Crossroads", *CFR*, 20 November 2008. [<http://www.cfr.org/turkey/turkey-energy-crossroads/p17821>]

IMF's mission chief Ernesto Ramirez Rigo and the IMF report, the biggest challenges for Turkey now are to reduce its external deficit and to become more competitive. The IMF's report suggests that in order to solve these issues, Turkey has to go through some major structural reforms concerning especially the labor market and education, but also fiscal policy. This should make the country more appealing for foreign investors. Only this would help reduce deficit and bring Turkey to "join the ranks of high-income countries". The best opportunities for Turkey are seen in its "geographical location, young population, and vibrant private sector", and the IMF seems fairly positive that when Turkey has tackled these challenges, it "will assure Turkey's place as one of the world's most promising emerging economies."¹²⁸

As seen in this chapter, the relations Turkey has with other Islamic countries has a big influence on its economy. The following chapter presents the biggest problems Turkey now has with its neighbours.

7 Turkey's Strained Neighbour Relations

The relations that have been the most strained in the recent turmoil are the ones with Syria, Iran and Iraq. These are analyzed in the following.

7.1 Turkey's Relations with Syria

Turkey is now enmeshed in the Syrian conflict, and the two countries' relations have taken a turn to the worse during the Syrian civil war.

The relations between Syria and Turkey have traditionally been bad. They have been festered by Turkey's NATO member-

¹²⁸ International Monetary Fund (IMF), 20 December 2013. [<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2013/CAR122013A.htm>]

ship, territorial disputes, disputes over water sources and the Kurdish question.

The two countries made the Adana contract in 1998, which ameliorated their relations significantly.¹²⁹ Then, in 2011, civil war erupted in Syria and Turkey began to support the opposition groups, which re-frosted the countries' relations.

A central factor in the Adana contract was that Syria stops supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party PKK and protecting Kurdish activists.¹³⁰ It also settled territorial disputes, installed a free-trade area and visa-free travel area, and stated that the two countries would not interfere in each other's domestic affairs. After signing the contract, Syria restricted PKK's actions in the country and handed in dozens of Kurdish activists to Turkey.¹³¹

In this chapter the complex relations between Syria and Turkey are analyzed, to give a clear picture of Turkey's role in the current civil war of Syria. If it was not for Turkey's support, Syrian opposition would not have had a stronghold and the conflict would have been completely different.

7.1.1 Territorial Disputes

One of the problems that has been festering Turkey's and Syria's relations is an old territorial dispute over an area called Hatay in modern Turkey. The dispute dates back to when Syria was under French mandate.¹³²

¹²⁹ Adana Agreement 20 October 1998, Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Relations between Turkey–Syria". [<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey%E2%80%93syria.en.mfa>]

¹³⁰ Watson Ivan & Comert Yesim, "Report says Turkey's Kurdish conflict has turned more violent," CNN 18 September 2012. [<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/18/world/europe/turkey-war-within>]

¹³¹ Cagaptay Soner and Evans Tyler, "The End of Pax Adana", The Washington Institute, 25 August 2012. [<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-end-of-pax-adana>]

¹³² Hourani Albert & Khoury Philip & C. Wilson Mary (1993), *The Modern Middle East*, London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, p. 429.

In 1938, a poll was organized to determine whether Hatay should belong to Turkey or France, and the voting resulted in the area being annexed to Turkey. Ever since Syria gained independence in 1946, losing the Hatay territory has been a bitter memory for the people.¹³³

7.1.2 Water Sources

There are currently no contracts made between Middle Eastern and North African countries on the use of water sources in the region. It is possible that in the future, a war will erupt between Syria and Turkey about water sources divided between the two countries.

Turkey has built a giant dam called GAP¹³⁴ along the rivers of Tigris¹³⁵ and Euphrat¹³⁶, which has caused aridity in Syria and Iraq.¹³⁷ The dam has been a major point of dispute between Syria and Turkey.¹³⁸

¹³³ For more information see the following report: "French Mandate of Syria and Libanon".

[<http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/French-Mandate-of-Syria-and-Lebanon.pdf>]

¹³⁴ For more information see the following report: "Southeastern Anatolia Project".

[<http://www.gap.gov.tr/english>]

¹³⁵ The Tigris-river flows south from the mountains of southeastern Turkey through Iraq to the Persian Gulf.

¹³⁶ Euphrat-river flows from Turkey through to Syria and Iraq to join the Tigris in the Shatt al-Arab, which empties into the Persian Gulf.

¹³⁷ For more information see the following report: "Managing blue gold, New perspectives on water security in the Middle East", Luomi Mari, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, FIIA report 2010. [http://www.fiaa.fi/en/publication/154/managing_blue_gold/#.Us_rjvRdXA0]

¹³⁸ Mitchell Christopher, "Thirsting for war", *BBC News*, 05 October 2000. [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/correspondent/958132.stm>]

7.1.3 *The Kurdish Question*

The biggest issue causing problems between Syria and Turkey has been Syria's support to the Kurdistan Workers' Party PKK that is fighting against Turkey. PKK demands that Kurds can self-govern¹³⁹ their regions in Turkey.¹⁴⁰ Until 1998, Syria was a stronghold for the PKK. In 1998 Turkey threatened to attack Syria if it did not stop supporting the PKK.¹⁴¹ After these threats, Syria deported the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan¹⁴² and stopped supporting the party.¹⁴³ After this, the countries signed the Adana contract and their relations immediately grew better.

7.1.4 *The Golden Era Between Syria and Turkey (2002–2011)*

When the AK party stepped into power in Turkey in 2002, the relations between Syria and Turkey got warmer. In 2002, Turkey's economy was in a really bad state and it had strained relations with most of its neighbours.¹⁴⁴ AKP took measures to ameliorate political and economic relations with sur-

¹³⁹ *BBC-News*, "Kurdish PKK rebels tell Turkey to implement reforms", 19 July 2013. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-23371694>]

¹⁴⁰ Mc Dowall David (1996), *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I.B: Tauris & Co Ltd, pp. 418–424.

¹⁴¹ Cagaptay Soner, "Syria and Turkey: The PKK Dimension," The Washington Institute 05 April 2012. [<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/syria-and-turkey-the-pkk-dimension>].

¹⁴² For more information see the following report: "Turkey: The PKK and a kurdish settlement", International Crisis Group, 11 September 2012. [[http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/219-turkey-the-pkk-and-a-kurdish-settlement.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/219-turkey-the-pkk-and-a-kurdish-settlement.pdf)]

¹⁴³ Zaman Anbarin, "Turkey Celebrates Capture of Öcalan", *The Washington Post*, 18 February 1992. [<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/feb99/ocalanturkey18.htm>]

¹⁴⁴ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 111–113.

rounding countries, especially Syria, through a principle launched by the current foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu called "zero problems with the neighbours".¹⁴⁵

7.1.5 *The Critical Era After 2011*

The Arab Spring brought many changes to the Middle East and North Africa, and it also changed drastically Syria's and Turkey's relations to the worse.

In the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, Turkish authorities were demanding that Bashar al-Assad gives up military action and start political reforms in Syria. These demands were not met. After the confrontations between al-Assad's troops and the rebels grew more and more frequent and violent, Turkey started actively supporting the opposition forces against al-Assad. This led to total freezing of all economic and political relations between the two countries.

7.1.6 *Turkey's support to the Syrian Opposition*

Turkey claims that it is supporting the Syrian opposition for humanitarian reasons. However, Turkey has some major interest of its own in supporting opposition forces. Below are presented the main points of interest.

Turkey is Against the Founding of an Autonomous Kurdish State in Syria

In 2003, the allied forces formed by the UK and USA asked Turkey to take part in the war against the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Turkey refused.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, "Policy of Zero Problems with our Neighbors", 24 February 2013. [<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa>]

¹⁴⁶ Cagaptay Soner & Parris Mark, "Turkey after the Iraq War: Still a U.S. Ally?", The Washington Institute, 2003, Weinberg Founders Conference. [<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy->

The allied forces then proceeded without Turkey in their battle and succeeded in overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. But since Turkey did not take part in the military actions, it was left out from the post-war reconstruction projects and the process of forming the new government. Turkey does not want for this to happen again in Syria, but wants to have an active role in the post-war processes. Especially it is important because Turkey feels that if it would have been involved in the forming of the government in Iraq, it might have been able to prevent the autonomous Kurdish federation from being established in Northern Iraq.¹⁴⁷

Turkey is widely thought to be opposed to the *de facto* Kurdish federation that has been unofficially established in Syria, and this is also one key reasons it is supporting the Syrian opposition. Even the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan has stated that Turkey does not want an autonomous Kurdish federation to be established in Syria.¹⁴⁸

In January 2014, the situation is that the Syrian Kurds have declared their autonomous federation, and have installed their own armed forces, a Kurdish-language educational system and their own legislation in the area they self-govern. They also rule the oil fields of their region.¹⁴⁹ The international

analysis/view/turkey-after-the-iraq-war-still-a-u.s.-ally]

¹⁴⁷ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 85.

¹⁴⁸ Bilivi Abdulhamit, "Turkey says won't allow separate entity in northern Syria", *Today's Zaman*, 25 February 2013. [http://www.todayszaman.com/news-308061-turkey-says-wont-allow-separate-entity-in-northern-syria.html]; *The Voice of America*. [http://www.dengiamerika.com/content/article/1610454.html]

¹⁴⁹ Zaman Amberin, "Syrian Kurds jockey for seat at Geneva talks", *Al-Monitor*, 16 December 2013. [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/syria-kurds-geneva-power-struggle-pyd-krp-pkk.html#]

community has not yet recognized the federation (2014). The Syrian Kurds are defending their territory in armed battles against Islamic groups that come both from within and outside Syria.¹⁵⁰

Turkish authorities are worried that if the autonomous federation of the Syrian Kurds stabilizes and achieves official status, the Syrian Kurds will start supporting Turkish Kurds and PKK activists against Turkey.¹⁵¹ Turkey is blaming the Syrian Kurds and especially their Democratic Union Party PYD for collaborating with the Syrian regime and PKK against Turkey.¹⁵² PYD's leader Salih Muslim denies these claims. He told in an interview in January 2013 that PYD is a party founded by Syrian Kurds that fights for the right of the Kurdish people in Syria, not Turkey. He also emphasized that Syrian Kurds want to have good collaboration with the Syrian opposition and Turkey.¹⁵³

Despite these dissents, in March 2013 Turkish authorities and the PKK started peace negotiations.¹⁵⁴ If they succeed in

¹⁵⁰ Spyer, Jonathan, "Behind The Lines: Kurds defending autonomous 'Rojava' enclave in Syria", *Jerusalem Post*, 11 August 2013.

[http://www.jpost.com/Features/Front-Lines/Behind-The-Lines-Defending-Rojava-330940]

¹⁵¹ Parkinson Joe & AlBayrak Ayla, "Ankara Alarmed by Syrian Kurds' Autonomy", *The Wall Street Journal*, 02 August 2012.

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443687504577563183350590066.html]

¹⁵² *The Daily Star*, "Turkey warns against Syrian Kurd autonomy", 15 November 2013.

[http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Nov-15/237945-turkey-warns-against-syrian-kurd-autonomy.ashx#axzz2q0Hvch5g]

¹⁵³ Sherzar Shekhani, "Interview: DUP leader Salih Muslim Muhammad", *Asharq-Alawsat* 08 January 2013. [http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=32478]

¹⁵⁴ Jones Dorian, "Turkey-PKK Peace Deal Gains Momentum With Regional Implications", *The Voice of America*, 01 April 2013.

[http://www.voanews.com/content/turkey-pkk-

finding a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question, Turkey will become stronger because it will have more allies and authority in the Middle East and it will also have the support of the Kurds in its fight against al-Assad.

Turkey's Anti-Alevite Policy and Sunnification Process

Out of Turkey's 79 million inhabitants, between 17 and 20 million are Alevites. Alevism is a religion that is often classified as a branch of Shi'ite Islam. Ethnically, Turkey's Alevites are Turks, Kurds and Arabs. Many critics of the Turkish government believe that the Alevites, among other minorities, are facing constant discrimination in Turkey on behalf of the authorities and Turkish legislation.¹⁵⁵ Bashar al-Assad is Alevite, and the Alevites are ruling in Syria. This gives Turkey yet another reason to support the Syrian Sunni opposition against the Alevite regime. Turkey's ruling party AKP is constantly showing support to Sunni Muslim parties in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁵⁶

AKP claims that it is not a religious party.¹⁵⁷ However, it's a well-known fact that the party is actively fighting the case of Sunni Muslims. It has supported parties close to the Muslim Brotherhood in all Ar-

ab states.¹⁵⁸ AKP would like Turkey to become the leader of the Sunni Muslim world the same way Iran is to the Shi'ite world.¹⁵⁹ In this light, it would be in Turkey's interests that the current Syrian regime is overthrown. If the current Syrian leader, who is an ally of the Shi'ites, goes down, the whole Shi'ite axis in the Middle East would crumble and the Sunni-ideology would gain footing. This would be in accordance with AKP's strategy.

Neo-Ottomanism

The Ottoman Empire led by Turkey collapsed after the First World War. Before it collapsed, it comprised most of the Middle East and North Africa.

Now many experts agree that Turkey would like to consider herself as a similar kind of regional leader as she was during the Ottoman Empire leading all Sunni and Arab regions. In recent times, Turkey has been interfering with Iraq's domestic affairs, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and has offered its own government system as a model for Tunisia, Libya, and other Arab states. All these events have contributed to the feeling that Turkey would like to establish a sort of neo-Ottoman "Empire" led by Turkey herself.

Turkey's Economic Interests in a Post-al-Assad Syria

Economic interests also form one of the key reasons why Turkey is supporting the Syrian opposition. Turkey supported the Libyan opposition and now this scenario is happening again with the Syrian opposition.

peace-deal-gains-momentum-with-regional-implications/1632720.html]

¹⁵⁵ Idiz Semih, "Turkey's Alevi question", 19 November 2013. [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/turkey-erdogan-alevi-strengthen-relations-sectarian-policies.html]

¹⁵⁶ Idiz Samih, "The 'Sunnification' of Turkish Foreign Policy", *Al-Monitor*, 03 February 2013, [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/akp-sunni-foreign-policy-turkey-sectarianism.html]

¹⁵⁷ Taşpınar Ömer, "Turkey: The New Model?" *Brookings*, April 2012. [http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/04/24-turkey-new-model-taspinar]

¹⁵⁸ G. Merley Steven, "Turkey The global Muslim Brotherhood, and the Gaza flotilla", Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2011. [http://jcpa.org/text/Turkey_Muslim_Brotherhood.pdf]

¹⁵⁹ Casertano, Stefano, "Neo-Neo-Ottomanism", *The European* 17 October 2012. [http://www.theeuropean-magazine.com/522-casertano-stefano/864-turkeys-dilemma]

Before the Arab Spring, Turkey had close relations with the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. After the Libyan people started the revolt, it was pretty quickly obvious that Gaddafi was going to be overthrown. At that point, Turkey started hurriedly to support the Libyan opposition against Gaddafi. This has led many financial experts to believe that Turkey is showing support to the Syrian opposition in order to guarantee its own economic relations with future rulers of Syria.¹⁶⁰

These are the main reasons why Turkey is supporting the Syrian opposition against al-Assad's regime. Al-Assad's regime and its biggest support country Iran are of course angry about this support. Turkey is preparing herself for possible acts of vengeance. Through NATO's initiative, Patriot missiles were brought to Turkey in February 2013, so that Turkey could better defend herself against possible air strikes.¹⁶¹

Turkey's relation with Syria have taken a turn to the worse, and the events in Syria have also had negative impact on Turkey's relations with Iran, at which we will take a closer look in the following.

7.2 Iran and Turkey

If Turkey's relations with the Syria are bad, its relations with Iran are somewhat better. Several factors are bringing the two nations closer to each other: common economic interests, political Islam, and collaboration against the birth of Kurdish federations.

However, the relations all but roseate, with the Syrian civil war bringing additional chill. The relations between Iran and Turkey

have been negatively influenced by many factors as follows:

- The conflict between Shiites and Sunnis
- Turkey's NATO membership and its relations to Israel
- Iran's nuclear program
- The Kurdish question in Turkey and Iran's Turkish minority (Azeris)
- Syria's civil war

In the following, some key factors in the Iran-Turkey relations are further explained.

7.2.1 Background

Turkey and Iran are both influential countries in the Middle East. They share a border of almost 500 km. To this day, the bloody battles that were fought between the Ottoman Empire's led by Turkey and the Shiite Safavidi Dynasty led by Iran between the 1500s and 1700s and after still have a negative impact to the countries' relations.¹⁶²

But there is more than that. Twenty percent of the Turkish population is Ale-vite. These people have tense relations with the Sunni rulers of Turkey, but good relations with Iran. Nationalist and secular governments ruled Turkey until AKP stepped into power in 2002. Until that, Iran had been supporting Islamists in Turkey against the nationalists and secular groups and parties, which was one thing that influenced the countries' relations in a negative way.¹⁶³

During the 1990s, the Turkish government wanted to limit the amount of interaction between its citizens and Iranians,

¹⁶⁰ Dagher Sam, "Turkey Reveals Quiet Rebel Payments", *WSJ*, 24 August 2011. [<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424053111903461304576526173935320088>]

¹⁶¹ NATO, "All NATO Patriot batteries in Turkey operational", 16 February 2013. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_98494.htm]

¹⁶² A. Howard, Douglas, (2011), *The history of Turkey*, London: Greenwood Press, p. 41.

¹⁶³ Makovsky Alan & Lesser IAN, "Erbakan's Turkey: An Early Assessment", The Washington Institute, 29 July 1996. [<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/erbakans-turkey-an-early-assessment>]

out of fear that Kurdish separatism ideology would spread in the country. Iran, much for the same reasons, also tried to limit the interactions. However, since the AK party took power, the relations between Turkey and Iran have been ameliorating. They kept on getting better until the civil war in Syria started in 2011. During the past five years, Iran and Turkey have actively promoted bilateral investment and trade in their shared border regions. This proves that the governments are taking steps to build better relations between each other. Now, since the civil war started in Syria, the relations are no longer warm, but the countries keep on maintaining good trade relations for the benefice of both countries.¹⁶⁴

7.2.2 Turkey's NATO Membership

Since 1952, Turkey has been a NATO member and an ally of the US. In a statement, the country's authorities claimed that

*“Ever since our NATO membership [...], the North Atlantic Alliance has played a central role in Turkey's security and contributed to its integration with the Euro-Atlantic community. Turkey, in return, has successfully assumed its responsibilities in defending the common values of the Alliance”.*¹⁶⁵

Turkey holds its NATO membership and companionship with the West very high, as this statement demonstrates.

In Iran's point of view, Turkey's NATO membership and somewhat close connections with Israel are irritating. Iran also wants and needs allies; otherwise Turkey would win the power battle. Thus, Iran

¹⁶⁴ *Fars-News*, “Iran Warns Turkey to Stay Away from War on Syria”, 27 August 2013. [<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13920605001171>]

¹⁶⁵ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Turkey's Relations with NATO”, 08 January 2013. [<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/nato.en.mfa>]

has tightened its relations to China and Russia.¹⁶⁶

Turkey is worried about Iran's nuclear program and especially about the fact that Iran might build a nuclear weapon. If this happened, Turkey would interpret it as an immense threat.¹⁶⁷

During the Syrian conflict, NATO moved a missile defense system to Turkey for protection in case Syria or some other country would attack Turkey.¹⁶⁸ Iran perceives the missile defense system as a threat and has expressed its concerns over it to the Turkish authorities.¹⁶⁹

7.2.3 Minority Issues

From the 80 million people living in Turkey, 20% are ethnic Kurds. Respectively, from the 80 million Iranians, 20% are ethnically Azeris and Turkmens, which mean that they have Turkish roots.¹⁷⁰

Whether it is in Turkey or Iran, minorities' civil rights are trampled on. They cannot study in their native language nor express their culture freely. Iran aims to “Persianize” all of its minorities, and Turkey re-

¹⁶⁶ Dresen F. Joseph, “The Uncertain Russian-Iranian Partnership”, Wilsoncenter, 24 September 2011. [<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-uncertain-russian-iranian-partnership>]

¹⁶⁷ *Today's Zaman*, “Gül: Turkey will not accept Iran possessing nuclear weapons”, 03 January 2013. [<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-302965-gul-turkey-will-not-accept-iran-possessing-nuclear-weapons.html>]

¹⁶⁸ NATO, “German, Dutch, Turkish and American officials from NATO in Brussels visit Patriot deployments”, 02 March 2013. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_98936.htm]

¹⁶⁹ *Haaretz*, “Iran warns Turkey against deploying NATO missile defense system”, 08 September 2011. [<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/iran-warns-turkey-against-deploying-nato-missile-defense-system-1.383241>]

¹⁷⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook, 07 January 2013. [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>]

spectively wants to “Turkicize” its Kurdish population.¹⁷¹

The Kurdish question has been a source for ongoing confrontation between Turkey and Iran. Turkey blames Iran for supporting the Turkish Kurds’ separatism ideology. In Turkey’s opinion, Iran tries to sabotage Turkey’s unity. Ironically, Iran says the exact same thing about Turkey.¹⁷² It is a fact that some headquarters of the PKK, who fights for the rights of the Kurds in both countries, lie on Iran’s side of the border. Turkey sees this as a reason to support the Turkish minorities of Iran, providing their political parties the possibility to assembly in Turkey and putting pressure on Iran to give the Turkish minorities their full civil rights. Despite their different point of views, Iran and Turkey collaborate in their anti-Kurdish efforts. However, this is a fact that causes friction in their relations.¹⁷³

7.2.4 Iran and Turkey’s Relations and the Syrian Civil War

As seen in the previous chapter, Syria’s civil war has caused the relations between Iran and Turkey to deteriorate. Turkey has been showing massive support to the opposition forces. For instance, the headquarters of the opposition lay in Turkey’s side of the border. International jihadist groups coming from several different countries first gather in Turkey before entering Syria and the war scene to fight in the rows of the opposition.

¹⁷¹ Ganeha Nazila & Hass Binesh, “Seeking justice and an end to neglect: Iran’s minorities today”, Minority Right Group International, February 2011. [<http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4d8ae8852.pdf>]

¹⁷² *Hürriyet Daily News*, “Turkey cooperates with Iran against PKK”. [<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/turkey/9105127.asp?gid=231&sz=54202>]

¹⁷³ AlBayrak Aydin, “Iranian Azeris set up national council in Turkey, aspire for independence”, *Today’s Zaman*, 14 May 2012. [<http://www.todayzaman.com/news-280353-iranian-azeris-set-up-national-council-in-turkey-aspire-for-independence.html>]

On the other hand, Iran is the biggest supporter of Bashar al-Assad’s regime – and intends to stay that way. In a recent interview, Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani (elected in 2013) stated “no force in the world would shake the alliance between the two countries”.¹⁷⁴

7.2.5 Economic Relations

Despite all discords listed in this chapter, Iran and Turkey are maintaining good economic relations. Turkey is one of the biggest buyers of Iranian oil and gas. For Iran, these purchases are more and more valuable, since the economic situation of the country keeps on getting worse due to international sanctions. Iran is not only in a seller’s role; each year, more and more Iranians choose to spend their holidays in Turkey, bringing money to the country’s tourism industry.

The U.S., who has been one of the most eager countries to inflict sanctions upon Iran, is not pleased about the trade that is taking place between the two nations. It has threatened its good partner Turkey with limited access to the U.S. market if Turkey doesn’t stop trading with Iran. So far, the threats have led to no action.

Turkey, Iran and Pakistan also form a trade union called Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) that has been trying to facilitate trilateral trade for decades now. ECO membership has also increased trade between Iran and Turkey.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ *Fox-News*, “Iran’s new president vows support for Assad regime”, 05 August 2013. [<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/08/04/iran-new-president-says-no-force-in-world-will-shake-tehran-alliance-with-syria/>]

¹⁷⁵ Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is an intergovernmental regional organization established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for the purpose of promoting economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the Member States. ECO is the successor organization of Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), which

All the factors presented in this chapter influence the relations between Iran and Turkey. Right now there are less binding factors than there are divisional ones. Iran has a difficult time accepting that it is neighbors with a NATO membership country that is an ally with all its enemies. On the other hand, Turkey will not accept Iran to become a nuclear power. These factors will keep on chilling their relations, until power and the whole political system have been changed in Iran.

7.3 Turkey's Relationship with Iraq

Ever since Saddam Hussein's regime was overthrown and a new government was established in 2003, Iraq and Turkey have had distant relations even though they have many connecting factors.¹⁷⁶ For instance, they were both part of the Ottoman Empire, now share a border, have important trade relations and share the Kirkuk-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline, have to face the Kurdish question and they have both good relations with the USA.

However, there are many factors that are bringing chill to the countries' relations as presented below.

7.3.1 Conflict between Shiites and Sunnis

Iraq is part of the Shiite axis, led by Iran. Turkey on the other hand belongs to the Sunni axis, together with countries such as Qatar and Saudi-Arabia. Historically, Shiites and Sunnis have always had bad relations. The Syrian civil war has deepened the gap between the two religions and has directly contributed to the worsening of the relations between Iraq and Turkey. Iraq's government supports Bashar al-Assad, whereas

remained in existence since 1964 up to 1979.

[<http://www.ecosecretariat.org/>]

¹⁷⁶ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 85.

Turkey supports opposition forces. Basically this means that Turkey and Iraq are fighting against each other's ideologies in Syria.¹⁷⁷

7.3.2 Interfering in Each Other's Internal Affairs

Al-Maliki, the Iraqi Prime Minister, has accused many times Turkey of interfering in Iraq's internal affairs. He blames Turkey for supporting Iraqi Sunni groups and the small minority group of Iraqi Turkmen. He also demands that Turkey hands in some Iraqi terrorists that have committed terrorist acts in Iraq and are now living in Turkey.¹⁷⁸ Another demand is that Turkey must withdraw its troops it has been keeping in the Northern parts of Iraq, in the Kurdistan region, since the 1990s. Respectively, Turkey blames Iraq for letting the Kurdistan Workers' Party PKK have their stronghold in the Iraqi Kurdistan, and is pressing for Iraq to engage in joint actions against Kurds.¹⁷⁹

7.3.3 Turkey's Trade Relations with the Iraqi Kurdistan

The trade relations and contracts Turkey has with the Iraqi Kurdistan is annoying the Iraqi central government.¹⁸⁰ The Iraqi cen-

¹⁷⁷ Hasan Harith, "Iraq's Sunni-Shiite Divide About Governance", *Al-Monitor*, May 2013.

[<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fa/contents/articles/originals/2013/05/syria-iraq-political-crises.html#>]

¹⁷⁸ Idiz Semih, "Turkey charts new course in Iraq", *Al-Monitor*, 15 November 2013. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/turkey-middle-east-fresh-approach.html>]

¹⁷⁹ Erkus Sevil, "Turkey snubs Iraq's call for troop pullout", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 04 October 2012. [<http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkey-snubs-iraqs-call-for-troop-pullout.aspx?PageID=238&NID=31618&NewsCatID=338>]

¹⁸⁰ Salman Raheem, "Iraq denounces Kurd oil exports via pipeline to Turkey", *Reuters* 10 January 2014. [<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/01/10/>]

tral government is not pleased with Turkey doing trade and making oil contracts with the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq.¹⁸¹ They would prefer these kinds of deals to be made through them, not directly with the Kurdish region. Despite these wishes, the Kurdish region has made numerous oil deals with international oil companies.¹⁸²

7.3.4 Trade Relations between Turkey and Iraq

Turkey is Iraq's biggest trading partner, with an annual trading worth over 20 million euros. Around 60% of all trade is between Turkey and the autonomous Kurdistan region in Northern Iraq.¹⁸³ Turkey is competing with Iran about the Iraqi markets. Turkey has good relations with the Iraqi Sunnis and Kurds. On the other hand, the Iraqi central government has bad relations with Turkey, but good relations with Iran.¹⁸⁴

Traditionally Turkey is opposed to Kurds gaining independence in the Middle East, and yet Turkey maintains good relations with the autonomous Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq. This is due to the following:

- Through maintaining good relations with the Iraqi Kurds, Turkey is trying to gain authority and control over Kurds in the Middle East and espe-

cially in Turkey, since they are in war with the Turkish government.¹⁸⁵ Turkey wouldn't want Turkish Kurds to collaborate with the Iraqi Kurds.¹⁸⁶ Turkey has succeeded in cracking the Kurdish front in Syria. Turkey collaborates with the Iraqi Kurds and especially the Barzani party to prevent the autonomous Kurdish region of Syria gaining official status.¹⁸⁷ In 2013, Turkey collaborated with the Iraqi Kurds to close their borders. The borders between Syria, Iraq and Turkey are now partially closed for Kurds, but not for other ethnicities. Together with Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey has for instance prevented international humanitarian aid from being delivered to the Syrian Kurdish regions.¹⁸⁸

- Iraqi Kurdistan has good economic relations with Turkey. The Kurdistan region in Iraq is very rich, and almost half of all Iraqi oil fields are located in the Kurdish parts of the country.¹⁸⁹ The Iraqi Kurdistan's economy is in a mode of fast growth. On the Iraqi Kurdistan's market, Turkish companies are widely represented. Turkey is

iraq-kurdistan-oil-companies-idUKL6N0KK0TR
20140110]

¹⁸¹ Al-Jazeera, "Iraqi Kurdistan's oil flows to Turkey", 02 January 2014. [http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/01/iraqi-kurdistan-oil-flows-turkey-2014129192983835.html]

¹⁸² RFERL, "U.S. Urges Iraq, Kurds To Discuss Oil Conflict", 10 January 2014. [http://www.rferl.org/content/iraq-kurds-us-oil-dispute/25225981.html]

¹⁸³ KRG, "Prime Minister Barzani: Kurdistan's energy relations with Turkey to enter a new phase", 21 May 2012. [http://www.krg.org/a/d.aspx?s=02010100&l=12&r=223&a=44020&s=010000]

¹⁸⁴ Pashang Ardashir, "Roots of the problem between Iraq and Turkey", Peace Research Center (Iran), 31 December 2012. [http://goo.gl/tr6RUI]

¹⁸⁵ Charountaki Marianna (2012), "Turkish Foreign Policy and the Kurdistan Regional Government". [http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/8-Marianna_Charountaki.pdf]

¹⁸⁶ Park, Bill (2012), *Modern Turkey, People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 84.

¹⁸⁷ Dettmer Jamie, "Kurdish Independence Movement in Syria Worries Turkey", VOA, 18 November 2013. [http://www.voanews.com/content/kurdish-independence-movement-in-syria-worries-turkey/1792250.html]

¹⁸⁸ Van Wilgenburg Wladimir, "Syrian Kurdish party calls on Turkey, KRG to end embargo", *Al-Monitor*, 25 November 2013. [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/syria-kurds-embargo-end-turkey-border-crossing-trade.html]

¹⁸⁹ Kurdistan Board of Investment, January 2014. [http://www.kurdistaninvestment.org/trade_industry.html]

buying oil from the Iraqi Kurdistan at a low price, and they have agreed on building an oil pipeline from Kurdistan to Turkey, and from there to the European markets, even though the Iraqi central government is not pleased about this kind of direct collaboration.

- By maintaining good relations with the Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey tries to prevent them from forming their own independent state, and on the other hand use the collaboration as a weapon against the Iraqi central government.¹⁹⁰
- Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds have both good relations with the West especially with the USA¹⁹¹, which is one binding factor for them.¹⁹²

Towards the end of 2013, Turkey and the Iraqi central government have tried to work on their relations, but they still have not managed to find solutions to the problems mentioned above. In any case, the economic relations between the two countries are continuously developing, despite political dissents.

Conclusions

Turkey's geostrategic location, the size of its population, the country's good economy, its close relations with the USA, its second largest NATO armed forces as well as its

position as a leader of Turks and high influencer of the Sunnis are all factors that have enabled Turkey to become a big influencer in the economic and political scenes in Europe, Caucasia, Middle East and North Africa.

Especially Turkey's strong armed forces, NATO membership and alliance with the USA have granted Turkey its strong position. Turkey plays well its role as a country between the East and West. Turkey uses its good relations with the West to influence the political and economic life of the Middle East, Caucasia and North Africa. On the other hand, it uses also its relation with its neighbouring countries and the wider region to influence Western politics and economic life, and to get accepted to the EU. In the West, Turkey represents the East, and vice versa.

Even though Turkey is a secular state, geopolitical specialists often view it as the great power of the Islamic countries and as a "democratic example" for them. However, Turkish democracy differs in many ways from the Western democratic ideology.

For decades now, Turkey has been trying to integrate the EU and has done many concessions, without being able to realize this ambition. Apart from joining the EU, one of Turkey's main ambitions at the moment is to preserve the Northern parts of Cyprus under its rule. However, as long as Turkey is occupying Northern Cyprus, it seems almost impossible that it will be granted EU membership.

After Israel, Turkey has the most developed economy in the Middle East and is a big political influencer in the world politics. However, Turkey is facing many problems regarding its domestic policy: the Kurdish question, the Armenian genocide, the Alevit problem, human rights violations, the fear of armed forces gaining more political footprint, the battle over power between Islamic and secular groups and Turk-

¹⁹⁰ Caliskan Koray, "Why Did Maliki Invite Turkish Opposition Leader to Iraq?", 23 August 2013. [<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/politics/2013/08/iraq-maliki-meeting-turkey-opposition-leader.html>]

¹⁹¹ Ajami Fouad (2006), *The Foreigner's Gift, The Americans, The Arabs, and the Iraqis in Iraq*, New York: Free Press, p. 258.

¹⁹² The Washington Institute, "Iraqi Kurdistan as U.S. Ally and Partner in the Middle East", 10 April 2012, [<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iraqi-kurdistan-as-u.s.-ally-and-partner-in-the-middle-east>].

ish nationalists, and the Cyprus issue are all major sources of concern.

Turkey is divided into two; there is the rich and democratic Western part, where most of the inhabitants are ethnic Turks, and then there is the poor, militarized region of the East that is mostly inhabited by Kurds. The Kurds are demanding autonomy, which Turkey is refusing. So far, the war between Kurdish PKK and Turkish authorities has claimed the lives of over 50 000 people, and thousands of villages have been destroyed. This has led to great hatred and bitterness between Kurds and Turks. If the problem is not properly addressed, there is a great risk that things will escalate into a full-blown civil war between Turks and Kurds, which would also weaken Turkey's position in the area.

In the beginning of 2014, the competition about power within Turkey is fiercer than ever. In December 2013 a major conflict emerged between AKP and the followers of the spiritual leader Fetullah Gülen, resulting in the discharge of ten ministers representing AKP. The conflict is predicted to have a negative impact on AKP's supporting figure, which is now a major concern for AKP.

If the battle over power between the conservative Islamist (supporters of Fetullah Gülen), and moderate Islamists (supporters of the AKP) accentuates, this will lead to the division and thus weakening of Islamic parties in Turkey and AKP would no longer be able to rule the country by itself. And if in turn AKP becomes weaker, there is a chance that the armed forces and Turkish nationalists gain more footprint in the domestic policy. This would bring Turkey back to where it was in 2002, when the armed forces were a central player in the country's economic and political life.

Between 2002 and 2011, Turkey maintained good relations with the Middle Eastern and North African countries, and this period is known as the golden era of Tur-

key's economy and foreign policy. Back then, Turkey was the second largest military and financial giant in the region after Israel. However, things took a turn to the worse in 2010 when Turkey's relations with its then good ally Israel experienced a major bump. In 2011, Turkey's relations with other Middle Eastern and North African countries worsened as well. With Israel, what caused the break in the countries' relations was *Turkey's humanitarian* aid vessel that tried to ship goods to Gaza, trying to break the embargo, resulting to Israel killing several Turkish crewmembers. Since then, Israel's and Turkey's relations haven't recovered.

The "zero problems with the neighbours" policy Turkey had adopted ended in 2011, when Turkey interfered in the Syrian conflict and started supporting opposition forces against al-Assad. This caused for the country's relations with Shiite regions such as Iran, Iraqi Shiites, Lebanese Hezbollah and al-Assad's regime to deteriorate drastically.

With Egypt, Turkey's relations deteriorated in 2013. During the Arab spring Turkey was supporting Islamic parties in North Africa. Egypt's then President Mohammed Morsi, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, used to have tight and warm relations with Turkey. When he was dislodged in 2013 by the armed forces, the Muslim Brotherhood party was abolished and the armed forces established a temporary government. Turkey reacted to this strongly, which led to the deterioration of the two countries' relations.

The strife with Egypt reflected on Turkey's relations with Saudi-Arabia, which deteriorated as a consequence. In 2006, the king of Saudi-Arabia made the first official visit to Turkey after 40 years, and the Arab Council accepted Turkey as a non-member observer state. Back then, the Arab countries were trying to warm their relations with Turkey, in order to have allies in the region against Iran and weaken the Shiite axis. During the Egyptian uprising of 2013,

Saudi Arabia supported the armed forces in its attempts to dislodge the president, because Saudi-Arabia was afraid that the Muslim Brotherhood ideology would otherwise spread to their territory. This led to the deterioration of the relations between Turkey and Saudi-Arabia.

Despite the strained relations Turkey has with the surrounding countries, it is still ambitious about being the Great Power of the region.

The Ottoman Empire led by Turkey collapsed after the First World War. Before it collapsed, it comprised most of the Middle East and North Africa. Now many experts agree that Turkey would like to consider herself as a similar kind of regional leader as she was during the Ottoman Empire leading all Sunni and Arab regions. The Middle Eastern and North African countries are not happy about Turkey's neo-Ottoman ambitions. Turkey will be able to maintain its significant role in the area as long as Iran and Egypt have bad relations with the West. If, on the other hand, Egypt and Iran are able to form better relations with the West, Turkey will lose its economic and military supremacy in the North Africa and Middle East region.