

MEETING EVALUATION

No.14, FEBRUARY 2017

“TURKEY-IRAQ RELATIONS” WORKSHOP

A workshop on Turkey-Iraq relations was held on 19 February 2017 by ORSAM and the Nahrain Center in Baghdad. Representatives and bureaucrats from the both countries' embassies, academics and expert researchers attended the workshop.

The latest of the meeting series on Turkey-Iraq relations workshop, which is regularly held since 2014 as agreed upon in the protocol signed by ORSAM and the Nahrain Center, was held in Baghdad on 19 February 2017. Representatives and bureaucrats from the both countries' embassies, academics and expert researchers attended the workshop.

The main issues in the workshop have been the points that were stated in the joint declaration after the Third High Level Strategic Cooperation Meeting between Turkey and Iraq during Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım's visit on 7 January 2017. During the workshop, the participants exchanged opinions about the concrete steps to be taken in order to develop the relations between Turkey and Iraq.

In this context, the following points were discussed in the workshop:

- Developing regional cooperation in security and intelligence domains and cultural and social spheres in order to move towards a comprehensive strategy in the fight against ISIS and violent extremism
- Resolving the problems between the two countries (the Bashiqa camp and the PKK activity in the Iraqi territory)
- Training Iraqi security forces
- Anti-terrorism in Syria and opportunities for political solution
- Opportunities for developing trade and investment between the two countries
- Customs and border gates
- Developing the areas liberated from ISIS and refugees
- Developing tourism and cultural exchange
- Enhancing the oil pipelines between the two countries
- Investment opportunities in oil and natural gas
- Developing the Basra-Istanbul railway
- Cooperation on water



The keynote speeches in the workshop were given by Mr. Fatih Yıldız, Turkey's Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Hisham al Alawi, Iraq's Ambassador to Turkey, Mr. Hamza Sherif, President of the Nahrain Center and Mr. Mesut Özcan, Chairman of the Center for Strategic Research of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SAM).

The following points were raised during the workshop:

- It is natural to have problems. The two brother countries need to develop relations. There are many areas for cooperation between Turkey and Iraq.
- There is a common will for the resolution of the problems about the Bashiqa camp. The two sides have agreed on that.
- ISIS must be swept from the Iraqi territory in the short term. Its presence is a threat to both countries. Its attacks in the Turkish and Iraqi soil must be prevented.
- Turkey's presence in Iraq contributes to Iraq's struggle against terrorism. Turkey does not have claims over any country's territory. Turkish soldiers will be withdrawn from Iraq as soon as ISIS is annihilated and there is no need for Turkish soldiers to be there.
- PKK is a terrorist organization just like ISIS. A holistic approach is required against terrorism. Any measure that Iraq will take against PKK will contribute to Turkey's security.
- The media has a big role in the developing and deteriorating relations between Turkey and Iraq. The bilateral relations should be conducted via direct relations not via the media. Media should be utilized in a positive manner.
- The use of military power as the sole method against terrorism creates worse problems. Terrorist groups such as ISIS benefits from this. Social, political and economic measures are also needed against terrorism and radicalism as well as military measures.
- Turkey needs Baghdad along with the KRG in the fight against the PKK. If Ankara, Baghdad and Arbil agree, a solution about the PKK will be easier.

Turkey and Iraq have areas for integration. Progress is possible through coordination. Long terms strategic projects are needed to enhance and strengthen the bilateral relations.



- Since 2003, Turkey supports Iraq’s territorial integrity. Partnership should endure beyond individuals.
- People are returning to the areas liberated from ISIS. The ISIS rule has worsened the infrastructure which was already inadequate before ISIS. People must be provided with infrastructure, housing and healthcare for a humane standard of living. Turkey’s experience in this aspect is very important. Iraq may benefit from Turkey’s experience about refugees and infrastructure.
- Long terms strategic projects are needed to enhance and strengthen the bilateral relations. For example, there is a canal project that will connect the port of Fav in Iraq to Istanbul via land route and railway. This project requires massive investment. It will contribute to the fraternity between the two countries.
- The most important border gate between Turkey and Iraq is the Ibrahim Halil (Habur) border gate. Yet the KRG’s control of the gate creates some problems. Different customs tariffs that Iraq and the KRG hold officially cause hardships for traders and investors. Besides the need for solving tariff problems, direct border gates are required for

developing relations. Common will and planning are already present for this issue.

- The ninety six percent of Iraq's revenues originate from oil. Fluctuations in oil prices cause massive changes in Iraq's revenues. Therefore, Iraq needs to diversify its income sources. Turkey's experience in investment and privatization may benefit Iraq greatly. Yet, the majority of Iraq's budget is spent for the fight against ISIS. Therefore, investments have almost come to a halt. Savings might go up after the Mosul operation.
- The water level of Tigris and Euphrates has been decreasing over the last two years. Lack of regulations about water management, ISIS and Iraq's deficiencies cause the continuation of the water problem between Turkey and Iraq. Yet, there are joint studies and agreements about this issue. The both countries have to activate these projects and agreements about water. There is no agreed-upon regime in the international law about water. Fair use is taken as a general principle. Therefore, a joint regulation is needed.
- Turkey and Iraq have areas for integration. Progress is possible through coordination.
- The Nahrain center, ORSAM and SAM may form a research team for studying the strategic relations between the two countries.

ORSAM is an independent think-tank specializing on Middle Eastern affairs. ORSAM seeks to diversify sources of knowledge on the region and establish a channel of communication between the local experts and Turkish academic and policy circles. Toward that end, ORSAM facilitates the exchanges of officials, academics, strategists, journalists, businesspeople and members of civil society from the region with their Turkish counterparts. ORSAM conducts studies on the regional developments and disseminates their results to the policy and academic circles as well as the wider public through various publication outlets. ORSAM publications include books, reports, bulletins, newsletters, policy briefs, conference minutes and two journals *Ortadoğu Analiz* and *Ortadoğu Etütleri*.

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